



Center for
HEMISPHERIC POLICY
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

U.S.-Latin America Policy Task Force

September – December 2007

The U.S.-Latin America Policy Task Force activities were assisted financially by
the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State.

“The Americas and the 2008 Elections: Ideas for Renewed Engagement”

Roger Noriega

Visiting Fellow

American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research

**This paper expands upon remarks delivered at the first session of the
U.S. - Latin America Policy Task Force.**

January 25, 2008

As the political and economic dynamics shift both in the United States and in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is an opportune time to evaluate our successes, failures, opportunities and challenges, and to renovate our strategy there.

While the 2008 elections will choose a new president and foreign policy team, I do not expect that the campaign itself will present much of an opportunity to ponder the fate of the region and our place in it. Despite some major differences that are discussed below, there is an essential bipartisan consensus buttressing our policy. To be sure, nothing has been said or done in the campaign thus far to suggest that any of the leading contenders for the presidency are proposing radically new approaches or even thinking great thoughts about the Americas.

Some Latin Americanists in the United States might be disheartened by the fact that the 2008 campaign will not likely produce grand new strategies for the region. But that reality may serve to focus attention on the inescapable fact that, for better or worse, the future of Latin America is in the hands of its own leaders. While the United States will remain the engine for growth for most of the Americas, the policies for maximizing, sustaining and sharing the benefits of that economic opportunity must be home-grown. Even the United States' standing in the region depends substantially on Latin Americans' self-confidence and willingness to see U.S. ties as a win-win partnership.

Nevertheless, sound U.S. policies and friendly engagement in the region can defend our interests, advance our agenda and strengthen the hand of those leaders who advocate stronger ties with the United States.

The Dynamics in Our Relationships

Our geographic closeness has spawned some remarkable, mutually beneficial partnerships in the region. However, precisely because of this proximity, the United States casts quite a shadow on our self-conscious neighbors. It seems like the only time Latin Americans are not complaining of U.S. interference is when they are grumbling about perceived indifference. The region's leaders expect vigorous U.S. engagement, but when U.S. diplomats speak clearly on issues or events in Latin America, they are usually excoriated for poking their noses "where they don't belong."

Both U.S. and Latin American policy makers and opinion leaders share the blame for the awkward relations between the two regions. Most U.S. policy makers bring a characteristic pragmatism and impatience to the dialogue, and they become frustrated when the Latins do not readily embrace our recipes for action. On the other hand, at the slightest provocation many in Latin America's political class seek refuge in latent anti-Americanism – which may be one of the few things these elites have in common with the masses in their nations.

Despite the fact that we share Judeo-Christian traditions, Western values and democratic ideals that put us on the same side of a great divide in the post-9/11 world, unresolved grievances toward the United States, which we might dismiss as eccentric or antiquated, are rooted in very real humiliations of the past. The United States has been a force for good the world over, but the way we have thrown our weight around in the Americas has been particularly jarring for our neighbors. These sensitivities existed long before the Texan George W. Bush swaggered into the Oval Office and issued policy statements about "preemption." And, it will take generations of mutually respectful dialogue and cooperation to clear the "static" that complicates communications between north and south.

Pressing Issues and Significant Interests

Overcoming that historic baggage will take time. In the short run, how we address a number of pressing issues will impact our friends, interests and image in the region:

- What we do about pending regional and global trade agreements could propel or stall global commerce that creates millions of U.S. jobs.
- How we treat our Colombian allies could impact our credibility as a reliable partner.

- Whether we respond adequately to Mexican and Andean requests for anti-drug aid will impact the quality of life of a generation of at-risk youth and the innocent victims of deadly drug cartels.
- How to resolve the illegal immigration conundrum may mean helping our neighbors grow their economies so that desperate people do not have to abandon their homes to survive.
- How vigorously we defend representative democracy may determine whether the pendulum swings backward to populism, dictatorship, class warfare and instability.

Whether, when, or how these problems are resolved, the long-suffering citizens of affected countries will muddle through, as they always have. But, just in case the plight of the Latin American people is not enough to stir the interest of U.S. voters, we must remember that the stakes are high for us as well.

The Western Hemisphere is home to three of our top four foreign suppliers of energy. We share thousands of miles of land and maritime borders with Canada, Mexico and Caribbean countries. Cultural and familial ties are growing stronger every day. Elected leaders in the Americas, by and large, respect democratic institutions and work to strengthen the rule of law. U.S. trade with the Americas is growing faster than with the rest of the world in absolute terms,¹ with about half a billion market-savvy consumers whose purchasing power is on the rise and who crave U.S. products. And, U.S. businesses have \$403 billion invested in Latin America and the Caribbean.²

Numbers are important, but geopolitics are, too. The fact is the United States cannot pretend to compete in a global economy with those in our natural market and neighborhood merely treading water. We cannot protect our people against post-9/11 threats if our nearest neighbors are weak, unstable or, worse yet, hostile. We need them growing with us, in every sense of that expression.

A New Paradigm for Addressing Problems and Opportunities

Unlikely as it is that the presidential campaign might actually focus any healthy attention on the region, a genuine debate about these issues now could produce a new framework for engaging these nations – not as clients, but as partners.

The first step in developing a new paradigm for engaging the Americas under a newly elected U.S. president is using the 2008 election cycle here at home to develop a serious domestic constituency for that policy. Then, U.S. policy can be renewed by a conscientious, open, inclusive dialogue with stakeholders in the region. Indeed, how the next administration shapes these terms of engagement is just as important as what it does in the years to come.

What are the problems, the opportunities and the solutions that must be considered when approaching this process of reflection?

The Problems

A Fragile Consensus. It is fair to say that, until recently, U.S. policy has been shaped around a tacit bipartisan consensus in favor of democracy and free markets as a development model for the region. Since the bitter, polarizing debates over President Ronald Reagan's policy to roll back communist threats in Central America, successive administrations have cultivated broad, bipartisan support for helping our neighbors consolidate fragile democracies through market-led growth.

President George H. W. Bush launched the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative and the Brady Plan (which addressed the region's debt crisis). Bill Clinton led the "Mexico bailout," responding to the 1994 peso devaluation, and he launched the modern Summit of the Americas process that same year. Plan Colombia, developed late in the Clinton years, is a prime example of a Democratic administration forging an ambitious initiative with the full backing of congressional Republicans. George W. Bush continued that program, which has produced dramatic results, used the Organization of American States (OAS) and Summit process to shape a broad, ambitious agenda, and advanced a regional trade plan (with Chile, Central America, the Dominican Republic, and key Andean countries) with tacit Democratic support.

That fragile bipartisan spirit is being sorely tested as new Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress take the reins on key issues. Democrats suspicious of the Bush administration were immediately confronted with votes on pending trade agreements with Colombia, Panama and Peru. Those seeking progress will find hope in Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), chairman of the Senate Finance Committee responsible for international trade, and Representative Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, who are more favorably disposed toward trade agreements than the party rank and file. While they approved the agreement with Peru late last year after initial doubts, they appear much less committed to advancing the pending agreement with Colombia. Democrats and their allies in the labor movement cite the deaths of labor organizers in making very harsh judgments about Colombia, despite the progress that this friendly nation has made in improving the well-being of its people.³

The Perils of 'Stiffing' an Ally. If Colombia is left at the altar without a trade deal, the impact on U.S. credibility and influence will be devastating. Some of the same politicians who chide the Bush administration for under-funding aid programs may be among those voting to deny a faithful ally in the region a path to sustainable prosperity. The same people who have served up sober critiques about U.S. indifference or arrogance toward the region will be dealing our image the harshest blow in decades by stiffing a key ally that has done all the right things.

In addition to trade, the U.S. aid program for Colombia faces an uncertain future in the Democratic Congress, despite the fact that most experts regard it as an impressive success story. A staggering amount of cocaine has been interdicted before it could be shoveled onto U.S. streets and schoolyards, and the coca production chain has been severely disrupted. Virtually all of Colombia's opium poppy crop, used to produce heroin, has been eliminated. The Colombian security forces have taken back the streets in urban areas, and kidnapping and murder rates are in steep decline for the first time in two decades. As narcoterrorist networks have been attacked by Colombian security forces, 35,000 paramilitary fighters have laid down their arms. Colombia's economy has rebounded from recession, proving that sound policy--not poisonous populism--is the answer to the region's nagging social unrest.

The Ill Effects of "Bolivarian Imperialism." Another challenge in the region is the discord sown systematically by Hugo Chávez, Venezuela's budding dictator. Chávez has backed anti-establishment candidates throughout the region and has seen allies elected in Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua. Recently, Chávez and his acolytes have experienced dramatic difficulties in imposing their vision in the face of fierce domestic opposition. However, the politics of confrontation and class warfare undermines an image of stability and regional solidarity that managed to reassure foreign investors and attract vital capital for much of the last decade.

Although Chávez is improvising and stumbling, he has managed to polarize the region and shake the consensus on key economic and security issues that had been taking shape within the inter-American system. His petro-dollar diplomacy has managed, at the very least, to silence those who might have criticized his march to dictatorship a decade ago.

Tentative U.S. Leadership and Flagging Solidarity. U.S. diplomacy may be shrinking from the challenge of resurgent populism. Constitutional crises in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador continue with very little comment from U.S. diplomats, who are struggling to look unperturbed, but end up appearing uninterested. Those governments that once joined the United States in speaking their minds in the defense of democratic values – Canada, Chile, Central American countries and Colombia – have gone silent. Those who wished that the United States would work more collegially have failed to coax the OAS to assume its rightful role in the multilateral defense of democratic order.

OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza implies weakly that he has rescued the OAS from nostalgic interventionists, but he has done so at the expense of the Organization's relevance and his own stature. It has been only a few short years since OAS countries agreed to promote and defend a "right to democracy,"⁴ but, now, the grandiose rhetoric about democratic solidarity has not even been given a decent burial.

Sustainable Gains? High commodity prices have produced a windfall for Latin American nations rich in raw materials, fossil fuels and farm products, and there is every reason to believe that these prices will not drop significantly for the foreseeable future. Although this income has buoyed some economies, there is no guarantee that governments will use these resources wisely to support sorely needed institutional reforms, capital investment and sound economic policies. If the commodity boom allows policymakers to defer essential reforms, Latin American nations may find themselves unable to keep pace with Asian countries that have retooled to compete in the global economy.

A Message in Need of a New Messenger. Of course, the election of a new U.S. president is an opportunity for renewal. President George W. Bush's trip to the region this past spring reminded us of his deep-seated commitment to fighting poverty through trade and democracy. But Bush would be the first to admit that discord over the U.S. war in Iraq has undermined his ability to "connect" with the region.

At the same time, in recent years, several countries have chosen leaders who define themselves in opposition to "the empire." Their divisive, populist rhetoric sows unrest in the Americas and challenges the consensus behind free market policies and democracy. The very idea that any government – let alone a foreign one – can resolve the region's social ills with another aid program is simply unrealistic. Nevertheless, U.S. interest is measured by many in terms of the generosity of our aid. And despite the fact that President Bush has doubled aid, visited the region more than any other U.S. president, and developed lucrative incentives for reform, some opinion leaders complain that he has not done enough.

The simple fact is that expectations for a U.S. president who promised to "look south" were always too high. And the fact that we have had to deal yet again with deadly threats in other parts of the world has left the audience in the Americas unimpressed. A new U.S. president can reinvigorate the North-South dialogue, particularly if he or she gives U.S. voters reason to reflect on the untapped potential and tangible threats alive in the hemisphere.

To date, several key presidential candidates have made an effort to describe their views toward the region.⁵

Democratic candidate Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) used several sentences on the region in a *Foreign Affairs* article (November/December 2007), entitled "Security and Opportunity for the Twenty-first Century," to criticize U.S. policy under the Bush Administration, saying, "We have witnessed the rollback of democratic development and economic openness in parts of Latin America." She continued, "We must return to a policy of vigorous engagement; this is too critical a region for the United States to stand idly by."

Illinois Senator Barack Obama (D) commented on President Bush's spring 2007 trip to the region, saying the President "was right to underscore the importance of addressing the basic needs of millions of our neighbors languishing in poverty. The primary responsibility for doing so, of course, lies with the governments and societies throughout the hemisphere. Yet helping to lift people out of widespread poverty is in our interests, just as it is in accord with our values. When instability spreads to our south, our security and economic interests are at risk. When our neighbors suffer, all of the Americas suffer."⁶ In his *Foreign Affairs* offering (July/August 2007), he included Brazil among key developing nations, along with India, Nigeria, and South Africa, that he would engage in "upholding the international order."

Among the Republicans, Rudy Giuliani noted in *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2007), "Latin America faces a choice between the failures of the past and the hopes of the future. Some look to the governments of Bolivia and Venezuela, and their mentor in Cuba, and see an inevitable path to greater statism. But elections in Colombia, Mexico and Peru show that the spirit of free-market reform is alive and well among our southern neighbors.... Only a commitment to free people and free markets will bring a prosperous future to Cuba and all of Latin America."

Senator John McCain (R-AZ) focused on security threats in the region in a June 20, 2007, address to the Florida Association of Broadcasters, noting, "Our security priority in this hemisphere is to ensure that terrorists, their enablers and their business partners, including narcotraffickers, have nowhere to hide.... We must help governments establish sovereignty over the land, sea and air, through broader partnerships with willing countries." McCain criticized Hugo Chávez's authoritarian moves in Venezuela and made explicit commitments to press for democratic change in Cuba, to maintain support for Colombia, and to extend trade and economic opportunities to encourage an "entrepreneurial economy."

Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney (R) has explained that he will "adopt a Latin American strategy that will strengthen human rights and freedom, that will stand by our friends and allies, that will advance our own interests, and that will weaken the threat of the Castro regime, Chávez, and any other dictator with the intent of taking away the freedom of people."⁷ Noting the persistence of poverty, Romney continued, "United States aid and investment programs promote transparency and the economic and political reforms needed to spur development.... We need robust cooperation to expand opportunities in the Hemisphere and address common threats such as drug trafficking and terrorism." He also called for better communication with public opinion in the region and for Congress to ratify the pending trade agreements.

The Opportunities

Free Markets Still Matter. Despite these challenges in the U.S. body politic and in the region, opportunities remain. For example, most countries retain an abiding commitment to free-market policies. One-time labor leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has adhered to far-sighted economic policies as president of Brazil. Left-of-center leaders in Chile, Peru, and Uruguay advance responsible policies at home and are open to free trade with the United States and other countries.

Even the general public in Latin America has an overwhelmingly positive view of free markets. A recent Pew Global Attitudes Project survey showed that in the countries surveyed (Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela), majorities have positive opinions of capitalism, free trade and foreign companies. In fact, respondents in all countries surveyed expressed greater support for increased trade ties than those in the United States. With the exceptions of Venezuela and Bolivia, all countries showed greater support for foreign companies than five years ago, and except for Bolivia, support for free trade has risen in the past five years.⁸ This resilient consensus leaves the next U.S. president room to maneuver in reinvigorating the vision of a hemisphere-wide free trade area. While some countries will opt out of this initiative at the present time, this does not mean that the promotion of this vision and framework should wait on the unwilling.

Chávez Gives Charisma a Bad Name. The flip-side of Chávez's ambitious agenda is that he may be running out of steam in Venezuela and in Latin America at large. On December 2, 2008, Chávez was forced to accept the results of a referendum in which Venezuelans rejected dozens of sweeping changes that were approved by Chávez's rubberstamp national assembly. Predictably, one of the proposed changes would have extended the presidential term and allowed indefinite reelection. Another one proposed to modify the military's nonpartisan character to make it a servant of Chávez's Bolivarian mission.

The December 2 loss confirms the view that Chávez's popular base is not as solid as it once was. Rampant street crime, persistent shortages of basic food staples, sluggish and uneven social programs, breathtaking corruption, polarizing rhetoric and lavish overseas spending have tested the patience of the very poor that are the core of Chávez's support. Even these poor must consider whether it is possible to claim their fair share of Venezuela's oil wealth without having to surrender their freedom and their future and without having to get in line behind Chávez's foreign clients.

Other leaders in Latin America are trying desperately to make democracy serve the ends of all their people. They cannot help but be appalled by the Chavista model of tearing down democratic institutions and putting society on a civil war footing. The December 12, 2008, arrest of several Venezuelans in Miami who U.S. authorities allege were conspiring to conceal an \$800,000 cash contribution to the presidential campaign of Argentina's President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner ruined her first week in office.

This scandal has embarrassed Chávez, as well. Although he is audacious and resilient, he lacks the wit or the political space at home to convert his petrodollar diplomacy into a tangible alternative model for the Americas. The Chávez phenomenon may be burning itself out, and U.S. policymakers may have an opportunity to implement a post-Chávez strategy for rebuilding ties with Venezuela and other key states that have succumbed to his anti-U.S. agenda. And, the expected death of Cuban dictator Fidel Castro presents another opportunity to bury the past in Latin America.

A New Paradigm

A Commitment to Access and Consultation. How the next president devises a new policy for the Americas may be as important as what that policy turns out to be. We might manage to bury paternalism if, rather than delivering a vision for the region on stone tablets, the next president were to lay out some basic arguments for why the region matters and then pledge months of consultation with key neighbors, culminating in a vision statement issued at the Fifth Summit of the Americas, scheduled for 2009 in Trinidad and Tobago.

The new president's early months in office can include Oval Office meetings, phone conversations, and visits to the region. But he or she should not be pressed to map out a ten-year strategy for the future in the first days on the job. Indeed, the greatest contribution to building a solid policy is laying a foundation of mutual respect and consultation. In the meantime, our neighbors should not wait until after our presidential election for their "marching orders." They should embrace an opportunity to shape the new U.S. president's perceptions of the Americas and offer their own ideas to construct a new framework for U.S. engagement.

The new U.S. president should find a way to consult regularly with our key Latin American neighbors, starting with his Brazilian and Mexican counterparts. A semi-annual tripartite meeting could produce a consensus on key political and economic issues. The leaders would not have to issue statements or plans but could instead use a private, *ad hoc* dialogue to discuss confronting threats to security, reanimating the OAS, using the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), launching new initiatives, or bringing the region together on a global issue. Frankly, leaders of our key neighbors deserve this sort of access. It sends a message to the rest of the region that they get it.

Getting over "The Wall" on Immigration. Although border security is a bona fide crisis today in the United States, high-pitched rhetoric about illegal immigration and the spectacle of building an actual wall on our southern border is a disaster for our image in Latin America. The Bush administration appears determined to apply vigorous border enforcement measures that may satisfy the legitimate concerns over a porous border. It is probably too late for President Bush to resuscitate his guest worker program. The next president should be committed to modernizing U.S. immigration laws to accommodate the natural ebb and flow of legal foreign workers who contribute to our economy and have the option of returning to their native countries. Of course, anything that we do to contribute to long-term economic growth in the region will increase jobs so that people can remain in their own countries and become consumers of U.S. goods and services.

Promoting a Free Market Culture. The real reason many policymakers seem single-minded about free trade is because it is all about freedom – not as an afterthought but as a central tenet. The only people who talk about trade as a panacea are those who want to discredit it when it turns out not to be. The rest of us acknowledge that there must be a conscious, tangible link between free market policies, democracy and the rule of law in order to get where we want to go. So we cannot give up on trade, which must remain a cornerstone of a new paradigm. A new president must look beyond congressional vote tallies and diplomatic impasses and offer a plan to knit together willing trade partners by breaking down barriers to commerce by 2010.

World Bank president Robert Zoellick, Bush's former top trade negotiator and deputy secretary of state, has outlined a vision for an Association of American Free Trade Agreements to institutionalize a culture of free trade, target barriers to economic cooperation and engage the private sector in implementing agreements. Free trade agreements are a good starting point, but we need to link trade with "aid, good governance, property rights, and better working and environmental conditions."⁹ Zoellick's vision is a recipe for continued U.S. leadership in engaging like-minded countries to use economic integration to fight poverty and offer people hope.

Even Brazil, which has insisted that a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) is impossible without a global accord on reducing developed-world agricultural subsidies that disadvantage farmers in developing nations, could contribute to a pro-trade consensus. As part of this initiative, Lula could rally the developing world to use Bush's commitment to eliminate all farm subsidies to dislodge Europe and Japan from their self-serving positions.¹⁰ Breaking that impasse at the World Trade Organization talks would rescue the Doha round, open up room to move toward an FTAA and bolster rules-based trade that benefits all humanity.

We should embrace willing partners in Chile and Uruguay, up through the Andes and Central America, and into North America, including those countries with which we already have trade agreements. However, free trade agreements are not the only tools for breaking down barriers to commerce, integrating economies and empowering entrepreneurs. The United States should look at its previous efforts in North America to expand its partnerships with Canada and Mexico beyond NAFTA, such as the Security and Prosperity Partnership for North America, and deploy similar programs in the rest of the hemisphere. Furthermore, trade facilitation agreements can serve as multilateral roadmaps that countries can follow to retool their economies to stimulate broad-based growth within national economies as well as among them. We must also find ways to facilitate trade and investment with Colombia in the months ahead, even if we must do so without a trade accord.

Our words and deeds should emphasize that the first and last goal of free market policies is to propel sound microeconomic reforms to attack the structural poverty in which 200 million of our neighbors live today. The United States should encourage reforms to make it easier to start a small- or medium-sized enterprise or access credit so that individuals can improve their own lot in life rather than have to rely on corrupt and inefficient governments. Eventually, government will catch up, but poor people should not be expected to wait. We should work with our neighbors to identify best practices for educating at-risk youth, helping the poor, and retraining workers displaced by trade agreements. Mexico's housing credit initiative and Brazil's "Bolsa Família" (a stipend for families) are examples of home-grown initiatives that help the poor help themselves.¹¹

At the same time, the small island states of the Caribbean also deserve special attention. While Chávez has offered aid in the form of subsidized oil loans (which saddle these most indebted states with even more debt), the United States has a real opportunity to play a constructive role in the Caribbean. A new administration could help forge an agreement that combines permanent preferential access to markets for goods and services with political and technical support for economic and political integration among its small island states. We could reverse the "brain drain" by mobilizing the Caribbean diaspora to expand its vital but scarce middle-management corps and incentivize trade and investment among the small but growing economies of the Caribbean basin. Such an international plan might encompass the Caribbean states plus the United States, Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Central America and others with an interest in the sub-region. Promoting stability of these small states will enhance their ability to work together (and with us) to control migration and drug trafficking.

Our cooperation should have a security component: transnational cooperation and information-sharing to attack drug syndicates and gangs that operate with virtual impunity across borders. We should reinforce existing international programs to strengthen the capacity of governments to attack the acute threat of gang violence and to cooperate with one another in an integrated strategy to bust up the drug-trafficking organizations that produce, transport and distribute deadly drugs in our countries.

Promoting a Practical Agenda. The next president must advance a practical "competitiveness" agenda in the Americas, modeled on the highly successful Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). While the OAS and the Summit of the Americas churn out diplomatic poetry about defeating poverty in theory, APEC deals in reality. While the OAS political bodies offer up high-minded, long-winded, nonbinding declarations, APEC issues technical to-do lists outlining the measures that participating governments must adopt to break down barriers to economic integration.¹² Latin America must spend its time seeking--and adopting--practical solutions to fighting poverty. We need more prose and less poetry.

Making Governments Accountable for Fighting Poverty by Empowering People. Accountability produces progress. A new U.S. agenda should stress the work that countries must do for themselves in order to jump-start their economies, beginning with a robust respect for the rule of law and democratic institutions. Representative legislatures stand for the wishes and needs of the people and produce practical laws. Independent courts see to it that laws are applied without favor or discrimination. Fair regulations enhance quality of life and protect public health and safety. Even fair taxation has a role to play by supporting a state that has the weight and resources to enforce the rules of the game without fear or favor. Separation of powers provides checks on abuses of power. Democratic institutions intended to empower people have not kept pace with popular dissatisfaction. Many of those living on the margins of life have concluded that democracy has failed them.

Governments that pretend to be democratic without respecting free institutions are condemning their nations to failure. A sound regional policy should promote adherence to these tenets because they produce more just and prosperous societies. U.S. aid should be reserved for countries committed to accountable, effective government. The new U.S. president should be faithful to these ideals and be prepared to take the heat for promoting a policy that values values.

Burying Paternalism in a New Paradigm

The particular ideas and broad strategy suggested here envision robust and creative U.S. engagement to supplement what countries must do for themselves. The 2008 U.S. elections present an opportunity for leaders of both parties to move beyond the past and revive our diplomacy in ways that reflect the respect and intensity with which we view our neighbors. This approach also expects the region's perceptions of the United States and of their own responsibilities in this relationship to evolve in a more modern, mature way.

We can turn the page and bury paternalism if we develop a national consensus recognizing the importance of the region to our own future. In turn, we could produce a genuine partnership with our neighbors committed to solving problems, seizing opportunities, and growing together.

Endnotes

¹ Author calculations based on U.S. Department of Commerce and International Trade Administration TradeStatsExpress database, available at <http://tse.export.gov> (accessed October 25, 2007).

² U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Balance of Payments and Direct Investment Position Data, available at www.bea.gov/ (accessed October 25, 2007).

³ See Richard Lugar, "We Should Help Colombia," Miami Herald, October 8, 2007.

⁴ "The peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy, and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it." (Organization of American States, General Assembly, "Inter-American Democratic Charter," Article 1, September 11, 2001.)

⁵ It should be noted that the author is an advisor to the presidential campaign of Governor Mitt Romney and has been consulted on statements and position papers produced by that campaign.

⁶ Statement by Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) in response to President Bush's trip to Latin America, March 8, 2007 http://obama.senate.gov/speech/070308-statement_of_se_7/

⁷ Governor Mitt Romney campaign website publication, <http://www.mittromney.com/Issues/strengthening-latin-american-allies>.

⁸ Pew Global Attitudes Project, "World Public Welcomes Global Trade--But Not Immigration," October 4, 2007, available at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/258.pdf> (accessed October 25, 2007).

⁹ Robert B. Zoellick, "Happy Ever AAFTA," Wall Street Journal, January 8, 2007.

¹⁰ President Bush made a public commitment before a world audience at the UN General Assembly Summit on September 14, 2005, saying, "We must work together in the Doha negotiations to eliminate agricultural subsidies that distort trade and stunt development, and to eliminate tariffs and other barriers to open markets around the world. Today I broaden the challenge by making this pledge: the United States is ready to eliminate all tariffs, subsidies, and other barriers to free flow of goods and services as other nations do the same." (George W. Bush [statement, 2005 World Summit, United Nations, New York, September 14, 2005], (accessed October 25, 2007). Available at www.un.org/webcast/summit2005/statements/usa050914.pdf

¹¹ See Roger F. Noriega, "Struggle for the Future: The Poison of Populism and Democracy's Cure," Latin American Outlook no. 6 (December 2006), available at www.aei.org/publication25225/.

¹² There are several inter-American organizations dedicated to fighting drugs and terrorism that specialize in practical, technical agendas. The summit process produces reams of recommendations, but governments are not held accountable to adopt these measures.

Roger Noriega is a visiting fellow of the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. He was U.S. ambassador to the Organization of American States (2001-2003) and assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs (2003-2005).

All statements of fact or expression of opinion contained in this publication are the responsibility of the author.