U.S. Involvement in Central America

Three Views from Honduras

David Ronfeldt

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David Ronfeldt
with Konrad Kellen, Richard Millett

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Office of the Under Secretary of Defense
for Policy

RAND

PREFACE

This study was prepared as part of a RAND research project on "The Local Effects of U.S. Involvement in Central America." The research was carried out for the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USDP), within RAND's National Defense Research Institute (NDRI), a Federally Funded Research and Development Center supported by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). The study is based exclusively on unclassified sources.

The basic purpose of the study is to identify key themes and patterns in Honduran elite thinking about U.S. involvement in Honduras and Central America. The study was designed to emphasize insightful, in-depth, written interviews with a few selected Hondurans. It does not claim, and was never intended, to provide a comprehensive or statistically accurate survey of elite opinion.

The authors attempted to obtain about a half-dozen interviews, but the study is finally based on completed interviews with three Hondurans: Gustavo Alvarez Martinez (now deceased), Cesar A. Batres, and Victor Meza. Some readers who know Honduras well may question the "representativeness" of the views of these three individuals, but it turns out that their views, provided in response to a RAND questionnaire, are not atypical. In combination, far from being idiosyncratic or unrepresentative, the three interviews appear to reflect widespread concerns across the political spectrum in Honduras. The authors of this study are very grateful for the frank, forthcoming, and helpful efforts of Alvarez, Batres, and Meza.

This report was completed in September 1988. It was initially drafted and circulated for review in September 1987. The interviews had been conducted still earlier, during 1985 and 1986. The interviews may seem dated, but the issues they raise and the themes they develop continue to be important and will probably remain so in the future. For example, although the interviews were conducted well before the presidents of the Central American nations signed their peace-negotiations accord in August 1987, and long before the forcible extradition of Honduran drug smuggler Juan Ramon Matta Ballesteros provoked anti-U.S. demonstrations in April 1988, many of the concerns that occasioned these significant events are fully anticipated in the interviews.

This volume makes extensive use of quotations from the interviews. These quotations have not been edited, and they reflect the personal

opinions of the interviewees. Their publication here does not in any way constitute endorsement of these views by The RAND Corporation or any of its research sponsors.

SUMMARY

This study reports on the way U.S. involvement in Central America is apparently being perceived in Honduras and how this may affect local political and military behavior, including security cooperation with the United States. The study is based on in-depth interviews with three Hondurans, all very knowledgeable and experienced members of the local elites:

- General Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, the most conservative of the three, served as Head of the Honduran Armed Forces from 1982 to 1984.
- Cesar A. Batres, a prominent lawyer and a political moderate, was a leading civilian official in the military regime of Col. Juan Alberto Melgar Castro, from 1975 to 1978.
- Victor Meza, a leftist intellectual, is the founder and director of the Honduran Documentation Center (CEDOH), a "think tank" that is generally critical of the Honduran political establishment.

The interviews, which were conducted during 1985 and 1986, are surprising for their thematic consistency despite the ideological and political differences among the three men.

The interviews substantiate the enduring and pervasive importance of nationalism as the prism through which local elites look at security issues. An implicit agreement on and adherence to the core principles of national dignity, sovereignty, and independence seem to explain how individuals of such diverse ideological orientation end up holding many similar perceptions, especially perceptions critical of the United States.

The nationalism of the Hondurans and the historical experiences underlying it profoundly color threat perceptions. As a result, Nicaragua does not appear to be a threat that galvanizes nationalist sentiment in Honduras. In contrast, the historical threat from El Salvador, the presence of the Contras in Honduras, and the conduct of the United States all arouse strong nationalist concerns. A Latin American nationalist inevitably sees the United States as part of the problem, even though he may also think it is part of the solution.

While they acknowledge the benefits Honduras obtains from U.S. involvement in the region, the interviews illuminate a growing sense of the costs and risks a small country faces in becoming heavily involved with the United States as an ally in facing an external threat that the

small country shares to a lesser degree and that the United States seems unable to handle directly in an efficient manner. These costs and risks are heightened by the perception growing in Honduras (not to mention the rest of Central America) that the United States has become an unreliable, inconstant, and inconsistent ally. As a result, our local allies now feel they should fear U.S. abandonment, perhaps more than they used to fear U.S. domination.

Finally, the interviews warn about a slowly growing, unexpected potential for anti-Americanism in a country that has never been anti-American. The respondents all complained that the United States neglects Honduran interests and aspirations as a nation, and that it treats Honduras narrowly as a piece of territory to be used to implement U.S. policy. For the time being, this perception is balanced by the fact that the respondents also generally regard the United States as a welcome and needed ally. However, the new potential for anti-Americanism, which derives in part from the presence of the Contras, is considered likely to grow if there is a prolonged, ineffective, large-scale U.S. military presence in Honduras that seems to lead nowhere vis-à-vis Nicaragua. Our interviewees foresee that this kind of U.S. presence would have more adverse effects on Honduras and Central America than would any other likely scenario.

While it is difficult to generalize, the significance of the interviews appears to extend beyond Honduras, reflecting broader trends in strategic thinking in Latin America—trends that are already affecting the bases of U.S.-Latin American security cooperation. If such perceptions are taking hold in Honduras—a nation that is relatively close to the United States and isolated from the rest of Latin America—one wonders what is happening to perceptions elsewhere.

Strategic thinking about the United States appears to be entering a new phase throughout Latin America, and the low-profile struggle currently developing over rival visions of collective security may be one of the more important (and least analyzed) trends affecting the regional conflict environment. The "One Americas" concept of collective security, long favored by the United States and institutionalized in the Organization of American States and the Rio Pact, is in serious decline. A long-dormant "Two Americas" and a newer "Many Americas" concept are gaining strength, as Latin American leaders increasingly resolve to go their own way independent of U.S. policy and to pursue intra-Latin American over U.S.-Latin American approaches to collective security.

The interviews reported in this study were conducted well before the presidents of the Central American nations signed their peace-negotiations accord in August 1987, and long before the forcible

extradition of Honduran drug smuggler Juan Ramon Matta Ballesteros provoked anti-U.S. demonstrations in April 1988. Yet many of the concerns that occasioned these significant events are fully anticipated here.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are most indebted to our Honduran respondents—Gustavo Alvarez, Cesar Batres, and Victor Meza—for agreeing to in-depth written interviews and for providing the frank responses that made this study feasible and worthwhile in the first place.

In addition, we greatly appreciate the thoughtful comments of the formal reviewers of the September 1987 draft: George Tanham, of The RAND Corporation; Ambassador Frank McNeil, of the U.S. State Department (ret.); and Dr. Mark Rosenberg, of Florida International University. We also appreciate the helpful comments of RAND colleagues Edward Gonzalez and Anthony Maingot (who was visiting from Florida International University).

Our gratitude extends to several U.S. government officials concerned with U.S.-Honduran relations, as well as to a Honduran involved in his country's relations with the United States. Their comments provided significant assurance that the study's observations were accurate and timely.

Producing a study based on interviews in a foreign language is never an easy task. Steven Berry, Connie Moreno, and William Stivers each provided able assistance in translating the interviews from Spanish into English.

Once again, Janet DeLand deserves our whole-hearted appreciation for her editing, as does Diane Kelly for her secretarial support.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Honduras has been the key location for support of the Contras' campaign against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua and for a U.S. military buildup that might be used in contingencies against Nicaragua. As a result, U.S.-Honduran relations have expanded dramatically since the early 1980s, and the U.S. presence in Honduras will probably remain strong for the rest of this decade, and even beyond.

Both the U.S. and Honduran governments have expected these expanded military and economic relations to have primarily positive effects for Honduras. And the United States has been trying, by way of consultation and other measures, not to make mistakes that might alienate Honduras as it pursues the broader U.S. strategy toward Nicaragua and other aspects of the conflict in Central America.

U.S. involvement has indeed had many positive political, military, and economic effects on Honduras. At the same time, the growth of U.S. involvement (and perhaps especially the U.S.-sponsored presence of the Contras in Honduras) has been raising Honduran expectations about U.S. responsibilities while also gradually arousing Honduran nationalism. At a minimum, this is leading Honduran elites to question the U.S. role and its local effects; at worst, it may ultimately give rise to anti-Americanism and even a rejection of the U.S. involvement in Honduras.

CENTRAL THEME

This study, based largely on in-depth interviews with three significant Honduran citizens, reports how U.S. involvement in Honduras is being perceived by local political and military elites and how this may affect local political and military behavior, including security cooperation with the United States. A central theme that emerges from the interviews is Honduran nationalism, and in that connection the study shows:

- How nationalism enters into Honduran views of, and relations with, the United States.
- What indications exist of nationalism possibly turning into serious anti-Americanism that could disrupt relations with the United States.

Despite the benefits that Honduras obtains from U.S. involvement, there is strong local concern about the increasing costs and risks for a small country in becoming heavily involved with the United States as an ally regarding an external threat—revolutionary Nicaragua—that the small country shares only to a limited degree. These perceived costs and risks are heightened by an emerging consensus that the United States is no longer a decisive, reliable superpower, and that U.S. behavior may end up exacerbating not only the potential threat from Nicaragua but also—and this is of greater concern to Honduran nationalists—the historic threat from El Salvador and a possible threat from renegade Contras.[1]

The potential utility of inquiring into such local elite perceptions is reflected in points that two of the interviewees make. Gustavo Alvarez noted during an informal conversation that in all his years as a high-ranking official in constant contact with U.S. officials from many different agencies, discussions with them were almost always focused on strategic information of immediate import. Attention was rarely given to learning about the broader, longer-range concerns of Hondurans regarding the future of their country and the effects of U.S. involvement. Yet, as Cesar Batres commented, the "essential factor" that would help the United States and Honduras learn to work better together "is the disposition to listen and understand":

> There is no doubt that the North American [way of] focusing on problems . . . can differ profoundly from the Honduran [way]. We belong to different races and different cultures; we have totally different backgrounds and traditions; and it is only logical to expect that we react to problems and analyze them in a different way.
>
> Thus it is essential for both parties, but probably more so for the representatives of the more powerful party, to keep their eyes and ears open to try to understand the viewpoints of their smaller ally and friend.

SOURCE MATERIALS

This study has a limited objective and a limited database for achieving that objective. Its intent is to identify key themes and patterns of elite thinking about security issues and U.S. involvement in Honduras—themes that play important roles in public policy dialogue

[1]The reverse formulation may also apply: Local concern about costs and risks may also increase when a small country is heavily dependent on the United States in the context of an external threat that the United States does not share—as happened to Honduras during the war between it and El Salvador in 1969. See the discussions in Secs. II and IV.

within Honduras and may affect U.S.-Honduran relations. The research method consists of in-depth written interviews, in response to a questionnaire prepared at RAND.

We initially hoped to conduct about a half-dozen such interviews with selected Honduran elites; in the end, we obtained three. This may not sound like much of a database; yet the study does not claim, and was never intended, to provide a comprehensive or statistically accurate survey of elite opinion in Honduras. It is the quality, not the quantity, of the interviews that counts here. The three interviews seem to serve the study's objective quite well, for the following reasons.

The interviewees were carefully selected. They are all knowledgeable and experienced members of the Honduran elite. They are articulate and have given a lot of thought to the kinds of questions posed in the interview. They also bring to the study very different personal backgrounds, institutional affiliations, and political orientations:

- General Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, the most conservative of the three, was Chief of the Honduran Armed Forces from 1982 to 1984, a critical early period in the buildup of the Contras and the U.S military presence in Honduras. An internal coup conducted by younger officers, and eventually supported by then President Roberto Suazo Cordoba, forced Alvarez out of office. He wrote from exile in the United States.
- Cesar A. Batres, a prominent lawyer and the most centrist of the three, was a leading civilian adviser, first as Foreign Minister and then as Minister of the Office of the Presidency, during the military regime of Col. Juan Alberto Melgar Castro (1975–78). Partly because of this experience, Batres understands both the civilian and military dimensions of the Honduran political system and political culture. He wrote from Honduras.[2]
- Victor Meza, a leftist intellectual who has been given some training in the Soviet Union and Cuba, is the founder and director of the Honduran Documentation Center (CEDOH), a kind of "think-tank" that is generally critical of the Honduran political establishment. He also wrote from Honduras.

It cannot be said that any of these individuals is "representative" of Honduran elite thinking, or even of a particular sector.[3] Indeed,

[2]Batres has recently been appointed by President Jose Simon Azcona to the national reconciliation commission that Honduras has established in connection with implementation of the Central American accord for peace negotiations.

[3]A case can be made that Alvarez's views may, in some respects, be less "representative" of the Honduran military than those of Meza, since the junior officer corps (especially the important young generation of the "sixth promotion") is known to hold many views similar to Meza's.

Alvarez and Meza may be said to have views that are quite controversial—views that many Hondurans might not want to be personally identified with. Nonetheless, whatever else may be said about these three individuals, it turns out that the views they provided in response to the RAND questionnaire are not atypical. In combination, they appear to reflect widespread concerns across the political spectrum in Honduras.

While the study focuses on the three interviews, it does not analyze them in isolation from what is generally known about elite and public opinion in Honduras. Background materials for the project included:

- Informal, supplementary interviews with a range of Honduran political, military, and other elites.[4]
- A limited examination of public opinion polling data.[5]
- A selective review of recent writings by Honduran analysts about their nation and U.S. involvement.[6]

These background materials do not enter into the content of this study, but they were generally useful for gaining some assurance that the interviews do indeed identify broad themes and patterns of thinking in Honduras.

We did not know in advance what the content and quality of the responses to the questionnaire would be. The central theme—nationalism and its implications—became clear only after the interviews were received and proved surprising for their thematic consistency despite the ideological, political, and other differences among the interviewees. For example, all of the interviewees—even Meza—are basically anti-Sandinista and believe that the United States faces a serious threat to its security interests in Central America. At the same time, the interviewees all raise similar doubts about the will and capability of the United States to meet this threat in a timely and effective manner that would benefit Honduran as well as U.S. interests. They

[4]Conducted by Richard Millett in the course of his activities as an expert on Honduras and U.S.-Honduran relations.

[5]In particular, some of the surveys conducted by the Gallup International affiliate based in Costa Rica, Consultoria Interdisciplinaria en Desarrollo, S.A. (CID). The survey conducted in October 1986 is analyzed by former U.S. Ambassador to Honduras John Ferch, "Honduran Foreign Policy and Honduran Public Opinion," mimeo, undated. It should be noted that the opinions registered in these surveys—especially the survey conducted in January 1987—tend to be much more optimistic about the effects of U.S. involvement than are the responses of Alvarez, Batres, and Meza to the RAND questionnaire.

[6]Notably, the articles in Mark B. Rosenberg and Philip L. Shepherd (eds.), *Honduras Confronts Its Future: Contending Perspectives on Critical Issues*, Lienne Riener Publishers, Inc., Boulder, Colo., 1986.

also emphasize similar criticisms that the United States is treating Honduras primarily as a tool of U.S. policy against Nicaragua, while showing little regard for Honduras' own needs, interests, and aspirations as an independent nation.

The interviews have depth and continued timeliness. They are based on a common set of questions, which resulted in a 40- to 70-page response from each interviewee. Thus, each had ample opportunity to express his views. The interview with Alvarez was completed in late 1985; those with Batres and Meza, in mid-1986. In that respect, the interviews may seem dated, but the issues they raise and the themes they develop continue to be important and seem likely to remain so in the future. For example, the interviews were conducted well before the presidents of the Central American nations signed their peace-negotiations accord in August 1987, and long before the forcible extradition of Honduran drug smuggler Juan Ramon Matta Ballesteros provoked anti-U.S. demonstrations in April 1988. Yet many of the concerns that occasioned these significant events are fully anticipated in the interviews discussed below.

II. THE THEME OF NATIONALISM

As noted above, nationalism is the common thread among the three interviews, despite the ideological and political differences of the three respondents. It may be useful, by way of introduction, to briefly provide a few conceptual observations about the nature of Latin American nationalism, before summarizing what our Honduran interviewees had to say on the subject.

LATIN AMERICAN NATIONALISM: SOME CONCEPTUAL OBSERVATIONS

Above all else, nationalism is an act of identity. It expresses the principles that are of supreme importance and value to the individual in his relation to the nation; it expresses what needs to be maximized about the nation to assure and enhance the individual's identity with it and with his countrymen. At its core, nationalism expresses the key political and cultural yearnings that cut across partisan politics and that hold a people together no matter what political, economic, and social distinctions may otherwise divide them.

Nationalism may be used for partisan purposes (e.g., when leftists criticize government leaders for being too accommodating to the United States), but it is not inherently partisan. Instead, where partisan politics are at stake, nationalism is a way of taking the moral high ground and claiming legitimacy in political dialogue about a nation's destiny, its values, and its interests. Nationalism is a way of transcending narrow, mundane definitions of national, sectoral, and individual interests.

Nationalism is different from *national interest*. Nationalism may appeal to national interests, but it does not derive its basic strength from them. Indeed, nationalism, once aroused, often seems to stand above the national interest. This may partly explain why local nationalists in a Latin American country may define their country's national interest in terms that are very different from what U.S. observers think is that country's national interest. We in the United States tend to use language about security, development, and democracy in defining the core concerns of nation-building; yet these are often not the terms of primary concern to Latin American nationalists.

The key imperatives of nationalism generally correspond to local principles about (national) dignity, (political) sovereignty, and (eco-

nomic) independence.[1] These nationalist imperatives appear to be linked in much of Latin America to the crucial importance attached in personal behavior to respect, honor, pride, and dignity. Indeed, the Spanish words—for example, *dignidad*—have connotations that are much stronger and more compelling than those of the same words in English. As personal and cultural imperatives, these values are crucial to the Latin American's sense of identity, worth, and place in the world. Nationalism seems to draw much of its appeal and strength from the need for personal and national behavior to reflect these values. They raise consciousness about how one is treated; they make for great sensitivity to criticism, insult, and injury.

Nationalism thus expresses not only what should be maximized, but also those aspects of the individual and the nation that must not be criticized, insulted, or injured. This may help to explain why the more the United States talks about security, the more nationalist elites may respond by talking about sovereignty. Indeed, from a nationalist perspective, a nation's lack of security or development may be less serious than the loss of sovereignty or dignity. This relative importance of these imperatives is illustrated in Fig. 1.

In order that not all be rhetoric, the spirit of nationalism must, to some extent, be in harmony with the substance of the nation. For this purpose, abstract nationalist concepts are often combined in the

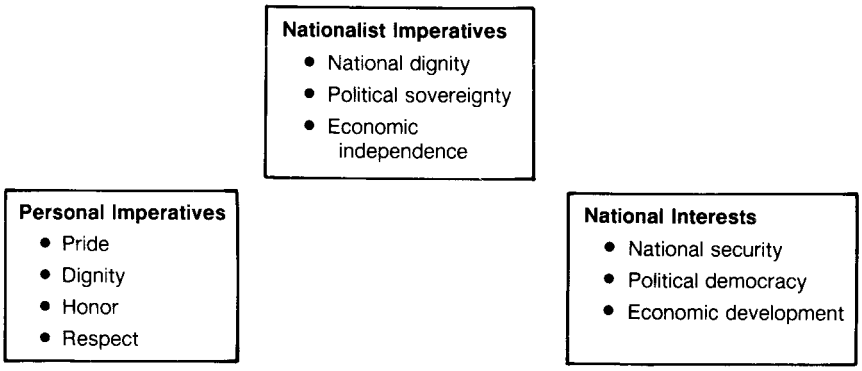

Fig. 1—Hierarchy of nationalist imperatives

[1]For further definition and discussion, see David F. Ronfeldt, *Geopolitics, Security, and U.S. Strategy in the Caribbean Basin*, The RAND Corporation, R-2997-AF/RC, November 1983, pp. 56–62.

definition of a "national project," whereby sovereignty and independence are to be pursued through local long-range plans for socio-economic and political development and national security. A big state may have a much more ambitious nationalism than a small, weak state whose aspirations and capabilities may be limited by geography and resources. Indeed, small-state nationalism, as in the case of Honduras, tends to be preoccupied with limits and vulnerabilities.

TRENDS TO WATCH IN HONDURAN NATIONALISM

In contrast to most Latin American countries, Honduras is usually characterized by a "moderate and patient" nationalism. (Alvarez) Indeed, the interviewees rarely talk about Honduran nationalism per se; they refer instead to "Honduran nationalist sentiment" (Batres) as a kind of incipient but still "weak and undefined phenomenon." (Meza) This sentiment has generally "not been as exacerbated as in some other countries of Latin America." (Batres)[2] It has been

> oriented more toward the neighboring countries and not against the United States. Anti-North Americanism has not been a strong, permanent phenomenon in the history of Honduras. Unlike other countries of the Caribbean area where anti-North American sentiments have become deeply rooted and have generally been connected with U.S. military incursions or occupations, in Honduras such sentiments have not existed, or at least not in the proportion and importance that they have had in other countries. (Meza)

The relative moderation of Honduran nationalism is related to Hondurans' perception that their nation is indeed weak, even in comparison to its immediate neighbors.[3] As Meza puts it, "From an

[2]Batres mentions several reasons to explain this: "Perhaps because Honduras did not have to fight hard to obtain its independence from Spain; perhaps because it does not have any very powerful neighbor, as is the case with Guatemala or with Mexico; probably because it does not suffer from being very small like El Salvador; or because it does not have solid democratic institutions like Costa Rica; or because it has not engaged in great struggles with foreign countries."

[3]According to several reviewers of this study, a fuller discussion of Honduran nationalism and national characteristics should not overlook the following kinds of observations often made about Honduras: It is the poorest, least-developed country in Central America. It has a long history of being dependent upon external powers. And it has been invaded more times than any other nation in the region. Partly as a result, Honduran political culture tends to reflect a pervasive sense of insecurity, if not paranoia, regarding its neighbors and outside powers, a deep concern about being exploited and then cast aside, a belief that whatever happens to Honduras often happens for the worst, and a nagging self-doubt among Hondurans about the future of their country and about their nationalist credentials. However, such observations—useful as they may be for readers who are not at all familiar with Honduras or Central America—digress from the main objectives of this study and the interviews on which it is based.

historical perspective, Honduras has always been the most isolated country in Central America" and "has traditionally remained wrapped up in itself."[4] Thus, Alvarez appears to assert a minority viewpoint—albeit one that is said to be shared within the Honduran military—when he argues that "Honduras is in an enviable geopolitical and geostrategic position in the Central American area," because its location, bordering three countries, should give it advantages vis-à-vis its neighbors. While this location is precisely what has made Honduras attractive for U.S. strategy in the region, Honduras has not yet developed a body of geopolitical doctrine to take advantage of it.

It takes a major threat or conflict—the classic being the 1969 war with El Salvador, the current issue being the Contras—to arouse a strong display of nationalism in Honduras. And unlike many Latin Americans, Hondurans are not easily incited to protest against the United States. Pro-U.S. (in many ways, "need-U.S.") dispositions have been widespread, and Hondurans generally welcomed the plans to expand economic and military relations with the United States in the early 1980s.

By now, however, the expansion of U.S. involvement has begun to arouse nationalist thinking, and Honduras has begun to fit a familiar pattern. Often when the United States expands its military, economic, and political involvement with a relatively small, weak, underdeveloped nation, the recipient initially welcomes its new importance and the opportunity to benefit substantially from U.S. attention and assistance. Before long, however, the recipient may find that the growth of U.S. involvement is a mixed blessing. It creates a range of domestic and international problems, costs, and risks for the recipient. It also raises local expectations about holding the United States responsible for the effects, particularly the perceived negative effects, of its involvement. As this occurs, nationalism begins to come forward and to spread as the language whereby local elites have to conduct domestic politics and relations with the United States. Meanwhile, the United States finds that it has to address the recipient's concerns and sensitivities if cooperative relations are to be sustained and kept smooth. Otherwise, local nationalism may lead to anti-Americanism.

This pattern, if it develops, may be manifested not only in general public policy dialogue but also, away from public view, in official bilateral negotiations between the recipient and the United States. At the risk of oversimplifying, the pattern might be elaborated as follows.

[4]Meza claims that the historical lack of development of a strong national oligarchy may account for the relative weakness of Honduran nationalism. In contrast, Guatemala and El Salvador developed strong oligarchies connected to sugar and banana production.

At first, negotiations tend to revolve around the recipient's efforts to maximize U.S. economic and military assistance and other benefits. Few questions are asked about the overall growth and direction of the new bilateral relationship; negotiations occur in relative isolation on an item-by-item, office-by-office basis; and the recipient's behavior is geared mainly to demanding "more" of virtually everything and anything from the United States. Thus a patron-client type of bargaining process becomes established that works to benefit all the parties involved.

Then, as time passes, new forces come into play. The recipient becomes more organized and may begin examining the overall conceptual framework underpinning the relationship; new nationalist voices demand a role in questioning and shaping the negotiations; and whatever the benefits, some leaders begin to indicate that "more" may not be the answer to the perceived problems, costs, and risks. As a result, new tremors and demands begin appearing for the recipient to reassess and possibly reform the nature of the relationship with the United States. The "rejectionist tendencies" inherent in Latin American nationalism may even grow to challenge the "accommodationist tendencies" that may have prevailed up to this point.

Because the established bargaining process has such a hold, the new tremors and demands may naturally be perceived, at least initially, by the United States in terms of the ingrained bargaining model: as essentially a way for the recipient to raise the stakes, demand a higher price, and perhaps placate domestic critics. It may be far from clear that a substantive shift is in fact occurring in the recipient's posture. An ill-defined tension may thus develop between the established bilateral bargaining process and the recipient's growing reassessment tendency. The tension may be quietly managed through careful bilateral consultation and increased cooperation between high officials. But the tension may also erupt in the form of "nationalist surprises"—indeed, Honduras has a history of occasionally making surprise moves—whereby the recipient, or at least some significant sector, suddenly engages in anti-U.S. measures to assert independence and display seriousness about revising or reforming the relationship with the United States.

There is nothing inevitable about this pattern, but Honduras has moved farther along it than has been expected in either Honduras or the United States. Our interviews about the local effects of U.S. involvement have disclosed great attention to the theme of nationalism, and a related warning about the slowly growing potential for anti-Americanism. Nationalism does not necessarily produce anti-

Americanism—they are different phenomena—but under certain conditions they may easily get fused and become mutually reinforcing.

The interviews indicate that Honduran views have indeed shifted since 1980 from contemplating the benefits to be derived from U.S. involvement to focusing on the costs and risks. The trend in Honduras is evolving, Meza noted in an informal conversation, from a mixture of optimism and indifference regarding the expansion of U.S. involvement (early 1980s), to deep concern (mid 1980s), to an unexpected potential for anti-Americanism in a country that has never been anti-American (late 1980s). In a similar manner, Batres observes that "the present situation is very propitious for Honduran nationalist sentiments to be accentuated and repudiate what is happening."

III. THREAT PERCEPTIONS AND RELATED CONCERNS

The interviewees all appear to agree, even though there are differences of emphasis and interpretation among them, that the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua poses a serious threat to U.S. security interests and to Central America as a whole. They also agree that Nicaragua represents a potential threat specifically to Honduras; a consolidated, militarized Sandinista regime would be a source of subversion and intimidation to their country.

However, the perception of the threat to Honduras is tempered by local situational dynamics which make that threat quite relative from a Honduran perspective. Nicaragua is not the only security problem that Honduras must contend with, and it is far from being a threat that readily arouses Honduran nationalist antipathy. Instead, Honduras finds itself in a situation where nationalist concern and antipathy are aroused primarily by other elements of the situation, including the development of the Salvadoran military and the presence of the U.S. military and the Contras on Honduran territory.

EL SALVADOR AS THE TRADITIONAL THREAT AND ENEMY

Even though Nicaragua is regarded as a long-term threat, it is not regarded as the natural, historical, territorial enemy of Honduras. El Salvador, which attacked Honduras to begin the 1969 war between those two countries, is viewed as the threat of greatest historical and potential future importance—one that has profoundly affected Honduran security and military thinking and that rankles Honduran nationalist sentiment far more than anything about Nicaragua.[1]

Indeed, the resurgence of Honduran military interest in external defense derives more from perceptions of a Salvadoran threat than of a Nicaraguan threat. According to Batres, Honduras never expected a war with a neighbor, and hence, "The war of 1969 demonstrated that

[1]"The Honduran military considers the memory of a war with El Salvador more important than the military presence of the United States. We could say that the nationalism of the Honduran military is more anti-Salvadoran than anti-North American." (Meza) For additional comments by Alvarez and Batres about negative aspects of U.S. behavior toward Honduras during the war with El Salvador, see Sec. IV below.

external security should continue being an important concern." Because of Nicaragua since 1979, the Honduran concept of national security has "stopped being a purely territorial concept vis-à-vis El Salvador, to become a more ideological concept vis-à-vis the regional crisis in its entirety." (Meza)[2] Even so, Hondurans find it very upsetting that to deal with Nicaragua, "North American policy demands ideological and operational solidarity with a country (El Salvador) with which there exists a traditional territorial dispute and an historic antagonism." (Meza)[3] In other words, Hondurans not only worry more about El Salvador than about Nicaragua, their worries are exacerbated by seeing that while for them El Salvador represents a potential enemy, for the United States it represents a friend and ally.[4]

All the interviews imply that for Honduras to fully benefit from U.S. policy toward Nicaragua and from U.S. military assistance to Honduras, the results should strengthen Honduras against El Salvador as well as Nicaragua. Meza sums up the defense dilemma for Honduras by observing a feeling in the military

> that the North Americans want to lead them into a military confrontation with Nicaragua, something they [the Honduran military] feel is neither necessary nor useful. They feel that this is not their war. They know that their basic problem is the border with El Salvador and the need to delineate it.

THE NEW NICARAGUAN THREAT IN CONTEXT

The Honduran concern about El Salvador does not mean that Nicaragua is downplayed as a broader potential threat. But Nicaragua is treated more as a threat to U.S. and regional security interests than as a direct threat to Honduras itself.[5]

Alvarez, who most emphasizes the East-West dimensions of conflict, insists that Nicaragua is consolidating a "Soviet base in Central America that is a threat to the area and represents a mortal danger to liberty and democracy in the whole region over the medium term."

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[2]Meanwhile, says Alvarez, "military doctrine and organization have gradually shifted from patterns that were more suited to 'territorial-political control', toward 'a strategic-defense concept of the country'."

[3]Meza further argues that U.S. "pressure" to establish the Regional Military Training Center (CREM) in Honduras and permit Salvadoran soldiers to be trained there "gravely offended the dignity of Honduran officials and generated a growing feeling of disgust and disapproval" that would later lead to changes in the Honduran high command.

[4]See p. 2, footnote 1.

[5]That the interviewees blame U.S. diplomatic incompetence for enabling the Sandinistas to seize power is discussed in Sec. IV.

"[T]he violence in Central America is not a spontaneous product of the Central American people"; its source is the Soviet Union.

More broadly, Alvarez argues that the United States has simply not grasped the real importance of small-scale wars of national liberation and has placed too much emphasis on the threat of nuclear war. The Soviet Union, he says, exploits the U.S. obsession with nuclear war in order to cover up the fact that it is primarily interested in achieving global conquest through wars of national liberation, without running a direct nuclear risk to itself:

> I do not mean to say that the United States should neglect its nuclear arsenal, because it is essential for deterrence and negotiation. But you should understand that you are not fighting a nuclear war, that you are fighting a real war against the Soviet Union: the "wars of liberation" in different parts of the world, in which the Soviets have the initiative.[6]

Indeed, he believes that "except in rare cases, Russia is increasingly winning" the global struggle.

Though less hardline and global than Alvarez, Batres likewise believes that the "security of the United States is really at stake in Central America." He also believes, as does Alvarez, in the "domino theory," and he warns that "if communism succeeds at taking hold in Nicaragua and extending itself to the other countries of this region, . . . this will cease to be a free continent." In sum, Batres insists that from a global perspective, "if the United States intends to continue exercising the role of a world power in which its allies and friends everywhere can confide and trust, it cannot permit communist doctrine to flourish and expand in Central America."

Meza believes—and Batres seems to agree—that the United States "has an obsessive mania about the problem of the East-West confrontation" and does not pay enough attention to the local structural causes of the conflict in Central America. Meza also suggests that the existence of generalized conflict in the region may be more troubling than the potential threat Nicaragua represents: "The people themselves are fed up with the conflict. They want everything to stop once and

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[6]He goes on to say, "The United States, a peaceful and patient country by tradition and genuinely intent on avoiding a nuclear war, paradoxically will be the one who initiates it when it sees itself beset and isolated by the Soviet Union when the Soviets have control of the rest of the world (of the Third World by means of wars of liberation; and Western Europe, Japan, and other rich countries by means of forced alliances with the Soviet Union once they see the inability of the United States to aid them and lead them)." To correct this, he says, the United States should stand by its allies in fighting low-intensity conflicts, and "recover the initiative by also taking wars of liberation to those territories that belong to the Soviet Union and its satellites." Nicaragua is the country he particularly has in mind for a rollback strategy.

for all, without it really mattering much who comes out the winner." Nonetheless, Meza still treats the Sandinista regime and the related possibility of war in Central America as potential threats to Honduras' security.

Indeed, all three interviewees believe that the United States faces a more serious and complex threat than it seems to realize. Thus, as discussed in Sec. IV, they all lament the apparent policy disarray and lack of will besetting this nation.

DOUBLE-EDGED EFFECTS OF THE U.S. PRESENCE IN HONDURAS

In recognizing the potential threat from Nicaragua, the three interviewees also recognize the need for a U.S. military presence in their country. Thus, according to Alvarez, "the Honduran people know the immediate necessity we have for the presence of the United States in our country." Batres and Meza hold similar conclusions, but to a greater extent than Alvarez they illuminate the costs and risks that the U.S. presence poses for their country.

Batres finds that because of the conflicts in the region, security must "occupy once again the mind and too many of the few resources that Honduras has available." Because of the expansion of Nicaragua's armed forces and because of doubts about the capabilities of Honduras' own armed forces, he and other Hondurans "think it is necessary [to have] a defensive alliance with the United States that will compensate, at least in part, for the multitude of military allies who are ready to support Nicaragua 100 percent." And because of possible domino effects from Nicaragua, Batres says, "To prevent that from happening, for as long as this purpose is necessary, the North American military presence in Central America is accepted, particularly in Honduras." Thus he believes that "involvement with U.S. policy for Central America has been more positive than negative for Honduras from the point of view of national security." Despite all this, he concludes that

> the indefinite prolonging of the existing situation, above all the military aspect, is harmful and in the long run will lead to a generalized war in Central America, or to what may perhaps be worse, to the generalized existence in the area of civil wars like those that are destroying the economy of El Salvador and seriously damaging the economy of Guatemala.

His doubts about the efficacy of the U.S. presence and his concern about its negative side-effects lead him to spell out a worst-case projection that is described at the end of this section.

Meza is even more specific about the double-edged effects of the U.S. presence:

> The North American presence creates a sensation of greater security among the Honduran population vis-à-vis the dangers from neighboring countries, especially from Nicaragua. However, one must consider the fact that this presence also generates a certain spirit of passiveness among Hondurans regarding the defense of their own country.
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> In this sense, on the one hand, national security, facing out toward the exterior, is strengthened by the North American military presence. But on the other hand, facing in toward Honduran society, it is weakened since it [the North American military presence] morally disarms the population and leaves the country virtually in the hands of a foreign ally.
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> . . .
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> The United States declares that its policy is oriented toward keeping Honduras on the margins of the war in Central America. But the growing militarization of the country and the open military support to the Contras stationed in Honduran territory make the country see itself ever more involved in the regional conflict and actually find itself on the threshold of a war with Nicaragua.[7]
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> . . .
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> Many Hondurans still feel that the U.S. military presence in their country is something like a shield that protects the country against communism and serves to deter supposed or real invaders. However, there are also Hondurans, the minority, that believe the contrary, that the U.S. presence makes the possibility of war closer rather than farther away.

With this in mind, Meza observes that "although in a slow and gradual way, national sentiment is swelling up in the heart of the Honduran people, and every day more citizens feel offended by the increasing North American military presence in their country," partly because of a feeling that "this presence violates the sovereignty and limits the autonomy of the country to make its own decisions." It would not surprise him if "a new generation of officers, with more nationalist and

[7]Meza makes this point in the context of a broader statement about "the counterproductive effects that North American policy sometimes has." The other parts of this statement are: "The United States declares that its policy is oriented toward the economic development of Honduras. But in five years of intense economic aid, the country has not been able to overcome even the problem of the high indices of unemployment and underemployment. The foreign debt increases every day and production improves only at very elementary rates, less than the rate of population growth. The United States declares that its policy is oriented toward the consolidation of democracy in Honduras. But its decided support for the military in the end weakens democracy, since it marginalizes the civilians and strengthens the army."

more anti-Salvadoran sentiments than the present ones," would someday subject "the current bilateral cooperation to a profound revision."[8]

In sum, the U.S. response to Nicaragua poses an ever-present, double-edged dilemma for Honduras. On the one hand, Honduras needs U.S. support to defend against the potential threat from Nicaragua. The Hondurans agree that it makes sense for the United States to choose Honduras as the key location for developing its policies against Nicaragua, and they are pleased to receive U.S. attention. But at the same time, the presence of the U.S. military and, perhaps more important, the U.S.-sponsored buildup of the Contra forces in Honduras serve to magnify the potential threat from Nicaragua, because the Sandinistas respond by aiming their attention at Honduras. So Hondurans must be concerned not only about defending against Nicaraguan aggression and expansionism under any circumstances, but also about exacerbating the risk of Nicaraguan reprisals, both internally and externally, should the United States ultimately prove to be an unreliable ally and withdraw from Honduras (as discussed in Sec. IV).

To make matters worse, regardless of what Nicaragua does, the U.S. buildup against that external threat and the relationship that has consequently developed between the United States and Honduras are thought to exacerbate Honduran vulnerabilities for two reasons:

- Because of the location of the Contras in Honduras.
- Because of strains imposed on Honduras' limited capabilities for democratic development.

Out with the Contras

It is not just the U.S. presence per se that lies behind many of the negative effects perceived by the interviewees; rather, it is that presence coupled with the presence of the U.S.-supported Contras on Honduran territory. Two of the interviewees, Batres and Meza, elaborate on how the presence of the Contras in Honduras may be viewed as a potential threat to Honduran security and stability.[9] Batres (like many

[8]Because of this and other such statements by Meza, his views are said (at least by one knowledgeable informal reviewer) to be closer to current trends in Honduran military thinking than are those of Alvarez. In particular, views like Meza's are said to be widespread within the upcoming young officer generation known as the "sixth promotion"—and more so among its so-called "South Group" (largely trained in Latin American countries) than its "North Group" (largely U.S.-trained).

[9]Alvarez is also very critical of the Contras, but for different reasons, as discussed in Sec. V on future scenarios.

Hondurans) believes that when Honduras first allowed the Contras to be in Honduras, no thought was given to "the possibility of the long-term presence of the Contras, and what it would mean for a country to have an armed force within its borders whose purpose was the overthrow of a neighboring country." His government evidently "acted out of a great sense of urgency and without thinking much about the long range—perhaps with too much optimism" about the Contras. He now says that "Honduras should never have permitted" the Contras to be located in his country "without having made the very clear condition that such permission should be very temporary."

The Contras, who were originally supposed to help end the potential threat to Honduras from Nicaragua, have instead exacerbated that threat. As Meza puts it, Honduras is "slowly being dragged into the Central American convulsion," and the Contras' presence in Honduras "convert[s] the possibility of war with Nicaragua into a constant and real threat." Batres conveys a related thought in observing that Honduras, by "loaning its territory" as a base for the Contras, has put itself "in the position of violating international law and exposing itself to reprisals by the Sandinista government." In his view, "the majority of Hondurans believe that the present situation will have to end up with a war against the Sandinista regime, in which the United States will provide the arms, munitions and supplies, and the Contras and Hondurans will provide the fatalities."[10] Honduras also risks suffering from destruction of its economic infrastructure. But even if there is no war, "Honduras now finds itself with an important foreign force . . . settled and operating in a semi-permanent way within Honduran territory, and that could even turn into an adversary of Honduras' own armed forces. This should never have occurred."

In addition, according to Batres and Meza, the Contras create a number of domestic political, social, and economic problems for Honduras, including the reputed corruption of politicians and military officers and the disruption of coffee agriculture along the border with Nicaragua. The Contras are so disliked in Honduras that Batres says "it is very easy to awaken Honduran nationalism by mentioning that in a zone near Honduras' border with Nicaragua, there are more or less permanent camps of Contra troops over which the Nicaraguan flag permanently waves."[11]

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[10]Meza has similar worries, for example, when he says that Hondurans "know that the United States does not want its own soldiers to be the ones that directly intervene in Nicaraguan territory. The United States would prefer that Honduran soldiers be the ones that directly help the Contras in combat against the Sandinistas. And this is what the Hondurans do not want."

[11]These points are further elaborated in Sec. V.

Internal and External Vulnerabilities Heightened

The respondents generally agree that the U.S. involvement in Honduras and Central America has had beneficial effects for Honduran development and security. Alvarez is the most insistent and positive on this score. Batres and Meza also recognize the benefits, but they focus as much on the down-side risks from U.S. involvement, which they claim:

- Strengthens the political influence of the military.
- Burdens Honduras' limited development capabilities.
- Exposes Honduras to international discredit.
- Raises the potential for insurgency and terrorism in Honduras.

These points are briefly elaborated below.[12]

Political Influence of the Military. All the respondents recognize that years of U.S. military assistance have helped, in positive ways, to professionalize and modernize the Honduran armed forces. But they also show varying degrees of concern about the Honduran military's roles in politics. To use Alvarez's words, "the democratic political development we have is weak and incipient, unstable and discontinuous." Batres and Meza in particular feel that, largely because of the U.S. presence and the conflict with Nicaragua, the political power of the military is being enhanced. They worry that the prospects for democracy are at risk of being undermined (even though U.S. pressure to preserve a democratic order in Honduras may at times have prevented a military coup).[13]

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[12]The interviewees also make the point that heavy involvement with the United States may distort socioeconomic development patterns in Honduras. But since this is regarded as a general problem—one not closely related to the problem of dealing with Nicaragua—it is discussed later, in Secs. IV and VI.

[13]Like Batres and Meza, Alvarez generally praises U.S. support for the professionalization and modernization of the Honduran armed forces. While he does not state that U.S. involvement may strengthen the military's roles in politics, he criticizes U.S. policy historically for underemphasizing democratic political development: "The negative part was the fact that if this development caused the beginning of an economic, social, and military modernization, it neglected the political aspect, since the democratic development of the country was not strongly and constantly supported. Rather, the United States accommodated to the dictator, the Chief of State, the president, or to the group in power at the time, always responding to its interests, giving little attention to the people's rights, the legal situation, and the state of corruption. The economic development that was beneficial was also harmful, because in a weak and incipient democracy it permits the groups in power to become economically stronger, making it easier for them to retain power by manipulating and mocking the people's will, at times with the consent and knowledge of the United States. This lack of conscience regarding a just policy toward Central America and especially toward Honduras, created the bases for national groups tied to International Communism to find the conditions needed to initiate their hate campaigns against the United States as 'North American imperialism,' 'neo-

Unfair Burden on Honduras' Limited Capabilities. Batres, more than the other two interviewees, raises the point that Honduras, far from simply profiting from the role it is trying to play in conjunction with U.S. strategy, is carrying a heavy burden and paying a bitter price domestically and internationally:

> Even if Honduras alone, or in combination with the rest of the Central American countries, had the capability to militarily overthrow the Nicaraguan regime, it lacks the necessary resources to embark on an international war. And even if it had those resources, it would be absolutely unjustifiable for a country with as many needs as ours to use its resources in trying to overthrow the government of another country.
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> . . .
>
> Honduras has been carrying a burden disproportionate to its own forces in regard to Central American defense against the wave of communism. . . .
>
> I think that it should be recognized that the excessive burden falling on our country is not just. Up to now, it has borne it graciously. The cost of all the defensive apparatus, which has largely served El Salvador (in the task of impeding the traffic in arms and other supplies) and eventually could serve Guatemala, should be assumed by those countries, or by the United States as the primary hemispheric power.[14]

Because his country is trying to face up to a "particularly complex and dangerous" situation and play "a role for which it is not prepared," Batres concludes that

> its underdevelopment and scarcity of resources are evident, and do not permit it, or should not permit it, to divert funds from what should be its main concern, which is to raise the living standard of the broad masses of Hondurans.
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> . . .
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> Honduras is caught between its desire to defend itself against the subversive infiltration coming from Nicaragua, its desire also to provide the Honduran people with an opportunity to improve their

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colonialist power,' etc." Similarly, he complains that "the U.S. administration does what the government (Honduran) in power at the time believes and wants, but [the government's] positions at times are those of special interests or high-ranking political party interests, not in any way beneficial to the common interest of the nation."

[14]He goes on to say that "development should be fostered in Honduras so that the Honduran people could feel that it really is worthwhile to risk what is being risked in defense of the democratic system. Otherwise the country could become convinced that, [given] the state of poverty in which it now lives, it's all the same [whether it lives] under a system with liberties or without them." This quote is repeated in context in Sec. VI.

> impoverished standard of living, and its military and economic incapacity to fulfill those objectives.[15]

International Credibility Weakened. To make matters worse, Batres finds that Honduras is "constantly in violation of obligations that international law imposes on us, and the international community derides us for this. If Nicaragua attacks us, the international community will consider that Nicaragua does it in exercising its right to legitimate defense."

Exposure to Subversion and Insurgency. One potential result of all this may be to make Honduras more vulnerable rather than more resistant to subversion and insurgency. As Batres puts it:

> If the current situation continues for a more or less long time, which seems most likely, Honduras will sink more and more into international discredit. It will become weaker and weaker economically. Thus it will be more vulnerable to subversion directed from outside, and will shortly fall into a situation similar to that of Guatemala, or worse yet, that of El Salvador.[16]

Beyond this general observation, a rising potential for terrorism, insurgency, and subversion in Honduras figures strongly in many of the scenarios discussed in Sec. V.

CENTRAL AMERICA IS NOT VIETNAM

While many U.S. observers continue to see parallels between the conflict in Vietnam and that in Central America, the Honduran interviewees find far more differences than similarities. The few similarities they mention include the following: Both conflicts have been characterized by gradual escalation, indirect confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the problem of dealing with a country that is exporting violence (i.e., North Vietnam, Nicaragua). The United States has supported democracy and opposed communism in both cases. In addition, U.S. policy behavior has been marked by profound internal divisions and, according to Alvarez in particular, by

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[15]Compounding this dilemma, he notes, is the "barely trustworthy attitude of its regional allies and the United States of America." This point is discussed in Sec. IV.

[16]Alvarez, even though he subscribes to the domino theory, is not so pessimistic about the potential for revolutionary unrest. Thus he notes, "The communists have repeated many times that Honduras has the right conditions to initiate a Marxist revolutionary process . . . nevertheless, the Honduran people have not responded to such 'suggestions.' So subversive movements that have tried to develop themselves have been short-lived."

an inability to do what should be done to end aggression, first from North Vietnam and now from Nicaragua.

The historical, political, and cultural differences that the respondents collectively identify between Vietnam and Central America are acute: Vietnam has a long history as a colony occupied by different foreign powers. The Central American nations have long been independent, and no division exists in this region like that between North and South Vietnam. Vietnamese history, unlike Central America's, is mainly one of war, with no episodes of democracy. The people of North Vietnam evinced an almost mystical dedication to struggle and sacrifice, while in Central America the people are fed up with conflict and inclined to find compromise solutions. North Vietnam had a united and respected leadership, whereas the Sandinistas lack comparable popular support or moral authority.

The geostrategic and military differences between the two regional conflicts are also acute:[17] The Vietnamese conflict was of much larger scale and higher intensity, with much heavier U.S. military involvement and assistance, than what is occurring in Central America. In Vietnam, the United States was trying to defend an ally; in Central America, it is trying to destabilize or overthrow a regime. In Vietnam, U.S. involvement supported a regular army; in Central America, it supports an irregular force. In Vietnam, U.S. officials dominated political and military decisions; in Central America, they have pursued a more cooperative approach toward their allies. Finally, the geographic proximity of Central America makes it more important than Vietnam was for U.S. security interests.

Whatever the specific similarities and differences, the two conflicts serve to raise a larger question that remains unanswered, according to Batres:

> The fundamental question, I believe, rests on deciding whether the United States wishes to continue being a world power present in every corner of the globe, with a system of alliances which it is willing to respect, defending its friends wherever they may be attacked, and bearing the costs in lives and other efforts that this might imply. Or whether, on the contrary, it considers itself a country sufficiently strong internally to pull back to its political borders, live in isolation, and defend itself to the end, leaving the Soviet Union and its allies to do whatever they feel like doing in the rest of the world.

[17]Meza notes, however, without going into specifics, that the case of El Salvador may contain a number of military similarities to the case of South Vietnam.

WORRISOME TRENDS IN THE U.S. RESPONSE

Hence, it is not the Nicaraguan threat per se that worries the interviewees most. What worries them more are the trends in the U.S. response to Nicaragua and the ways in which that response may aggravate the potential threats Hondurans perceive not only from Nicaragua, but also from the Contras, internal revolutionaries, and El Salvador. The interviewees' pessimism is blatant.

A Worst-Case Scenario

Batres summarizes his view that the situation currently facing Honduras "is particularly complex and dangerous" by emphasizing three points. First, his country has been turned into the key protagonist in the regional struggle against communism—"a role for which it is not prepared" militarily or economically, and which is diverting it "from what should be its main concern, which is to raise the living standard of the broad mass of Hondurans." Meanwhile, "the other countries of Central America have adopted attitudes that are very comfortable [for them,] or very difficult to understand." For example, Costa Rica gets away with espousing neutrality even though anti-Sandinista forces operate from there. And El Salvador refuses to settle the boundary problem with Honduras and contributes little to the struggle against Nicaragua, even though it is "much more under attack by the Nicaraguans" than is Honduras. Finally, he laments, "The United States of America has not succeeded internally at shaping a clear foreign policy position toward Central America, one that may be maintained by all branches of its government and supported by North American public opinion. In his view, this complex and dangerous situation "will not change in the foreseeable future unless some very improbable situations develop."

The expectation of more-of-the-same in the future leads Batres to sketch the following premises for a plausible worst-case scenario: Honduras and its neighbors lack the military capability and the economic resources to wage a war to overthrow the Sandinista regime by themselves.[18] Policy divisions within the United States prevent it from being able to intervene in Nicaragua militarily, or to support intervention by others. The Contras based in Honduras have little incentive to move into Nicaragua and create an effective anti-Sandinista insurrection. The U.S. economic blockade produces few or no results—while it

[18]He adds that "even if it had those resources, it would be absolutely unjustifiable for a country with as many needs as ours to use its resources in trying to overthrow the government of another country."

enables Nicaragua to claim it is the victim of aggression, not the aggressor. Only one thing might make the United States respond—an "open and obvious" Nicaraguan attack on a neighbor. But "Nicaragua is conscious of this fact and will never fall into the trap of initiating an open, proved, or provable aggression" against a Central American neighbor. Meanwhile, "each additional day" the Sandinista regime remains in power, it further consolidates totalitarian control over Nicaraguan society and strengthens its defenses.[19] Batres thus concludes:

> If all the previous premises, or at least the majority of them, are correct, we should recognize that the problem is truly ticklish. We cannot think of it in any other terms when we face a situation which cannot be overthrown by force and, so long as it is not overthrown, continues getting stronger every day, so that within a relatively short period of time it will be very difficult to think that a violent change is possible, as I believe is already the case with Cuba.

Time Is Being Wasted and Is Not Necessarily on Our Side

Alvarez expresses similar worries. The Sandinistas, he warns, are waiting for "the support of Contadora" to help them consolidate, "and for the United States to enter into a cycle of political weakness (through elections or a new president that may be weak) in order to begin action and set all of Central America ablaze."

As he sees it, two kinds of errors are being made in the use of time. One error is that time is simply being wasted. In his view, Hondurans could support a quick, decisive military solution to the Sandinista threat, which they initially believed was the U.S. strategy. However,

> [the United States] does not want to take the step it should take to resolve the problem and avoid greater and perhaps irreparable damage. It is playing with time, and time favors the Sandinistas and the blocs that support them.
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> . . .
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> The time for resolving the problem of Nicaragua and Central America is wasting away in favor of the Sandinista-Marxists. And it seems that the United States, instead of directing the events in order to bring them to an end that may be favorable to itself and its allies, is being dragged along by events. It has lost opportunities and has been able to create others but has not done so.

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[19]Premises very similar to these form the basis for a recent report by Gordon McCormick, Edward Gonzalez, Brian Jenkins, and David Ronfeldt, *Future Nicaraguan Security Policy: Trends and Projections*, The RAND Corporation, R-3532-PA&E, March 1987.

Alvarez attributes this to "too much game-playing; the affair is being drawn out. Particularly the political options are being wasted through the apparent indecision, the apparent lack of U.S. will to resolve the problem."

The other error the United States is making in the use of time, according to Alvarez, is to think that low-intensity conflict can be effectively waged in this region long into the future. In assessing the prospects for the Contras, Alvarez observes that a long, drawn-out affair will arouse impatience, anxiety, and ultimately disdain for the U.S. effort in Honduras and elsewhere:

> [A] prolonged struggle against the Sandinistas . . . is politically unacceptable . . . we do not have the mentality to understand or accept a prolonged struggle. This would bring a feeling of failure, impotence, fear and doubt that victory would finally be ours. And this would create political instability and social ills, which would make it difficult to support a strategy based on this concept.
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> . . . The North American people also do not have the mentality to accept prolonged warfare; the situation would last way beyond the current administration, which would make the project politically impossible to continue.

Alvarez's view of time is not simply a Latin American cultural heritage. It reflects the local historical memory that U.S. policy is often inconstant and changeable over the long term—a point that will be discussed in the next section.

IV. THE UNITED STATES AS AN ALLY

The United States is a world power; Honduras is small, weak, dependent, and underdeveloped. This observation has long been a basic starting point for Honduran (as well as most Latin American) views on relations with the United States, and it is reflected in all three interviews. The expansion of U.S. involvement in Honduras and Central America thus raises the classic theme of the great "asymmetry of power" between the United States and its neighbor(s), and the consequences of that asymmetry for U.S. behavior toward them.[1]

NATIONALIST RESPONSES TO ASYMMETRY AND DEPENDENCY

Depending on how one analyzes this asymmetry, the response to it by an ally usually takes one of two forms: insist that the United States act more responsibly and be more forthcoming in its relations with the ally in order to develop closer consultation and cooperation, and/or insist that the ally itself do more to diversify its relations away from the United States. Both types of responses may be associated with nationalism. But the stronger the nationalism and the related aim of reducing dependency on the United States, the more likely the doctrine of diversification will dominate the mainstream of nationalist thinking. The interviews reported here contain both tendencies.[2]

The Call for Joint Consultation

Alvarez, more than the others, tends to accept rather than dwell on the asymmetry. He focuses on his view of bilateral responsibility. His appeals for building a close friendship and alliance between the United States and Central America involve an essential requirement: joint planning and consultation. "[W]hen I speak of a genuine friendship and all that it signifies, I am referring to the fact that those feelings and positive actions should be a two-way affair."

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[1]The phrase "asymmetry of power" does not appear in the interviews, but it is the established phrase for intellectual and political dialogue about the differences in power between the United States and the Latin American countries.

[2]The nationalist doctrine of diversification is further discussed in Ronfeldt, *Geopolitics, Security, and U.S. Strategy in the Caribbean Basin*, pp. 56–59.

Not only do U.S. officials frequently fail to consult, he says, they often try to force their preferred ways of doing things on Honduras. Thus he complains bitterly about U.S. personnel who

> want to impose patterns of development and conduct on us that do not fit with our rhythms of life, our feelings, aspirations as a people, idiosyncracies, etc. Or they determine in their analysis that such and such a recipient country needs such and such a thing and perhaps it is what they least need.[3]

Hence joint policy planning and consultation, in socioeconomic as well as military matters, figure prominently in his final recommendations (see Sec. VI) regarding U.S. development assistance to foster the "integral development of Central America" so that the region will become "less dependent on the United States, instead becoming a productive associate."

The other interviews do not contain such explicit calls for joint planning and consultation—perhaps because Batres and Meza are not as interested as Alvarez in building an ever closer relationship with the United States. Nonetheless, they too show bitterness about the past lack of communication and consultation.

For example, Batres laments the reports "that communications exist between the Nicaraguan rebel forces and Washington, and that on occasions they forget to keep the Honduran government and its armed forces informed about what is happening." In his view, "That is intolerable for any Honduran." Meza observes more broadly that

> in order to facilitate harmonious and coherent collaboration between both governments and between the militaries of the two countries, it is necessary, above all, to design in a coordinated manner economic, political, and military plans that will satisfy the interests and aspirations of both parties and, at the same time, assure Honduras the role of a real ally, and not of a simple instrument of North American policy in the region.
>
> The Hondurans have to feel that they are a part, and not just an instrument, of the regional strategy of the United States in Central America.
>
> . . .

[3]Alvarez balances this criticism of U.S. policy behavior by admitting that "it is fair and realistic to recognize that the failure of all these aid projects of yours for us over the decades has also been in large part our fault. We also have negative attitudes and behaviors that have made things more difficult or contributed to the fact that things do not turn out well, in our relations with you." In this regard, he elaborates a harsh critique of "the mixture of modern and old administrative structures" in Honduras, concluding that "the present structure forces us to spend more money, time, and effort in order to be less efficient. It is paradoxical, but that is the way it is."

> If [U.S. policy] is limited to using [Honduras] as a launching pad against Nicaragua, the strategy will not be joint, nor will it function adequately.

The Doctrine of Diversification

In contrast to Alvarez, Batres argues strongly in favor of diversification. Of all the interviewees, he makes the most pointed statements about the asymmetry of power and the implications for his nation. In general, he says, "Honduras has obtained more benefits than harm" from its relations with the United States, "mainly because it has kept its eyes on [emulating] the impressive development of an eminently democratic society." But he calls attention to the "negative aspects" that arise "especially when one of those countries is very small and poor, and the other is the most powerful nation on earth":

> In many respects we depend on the United States to a degree that I consider unsuitable to relations between any states in the world. This dependency has led us on occasion to carry out projects in Honduras that do not fit with our needs, to introduce specifications which exceed what we need, and to establish and develop organizations that do not conform to the Latin way of doing things. Finally, and worse yet, [this dependency] has led us to believe that the solution to all our big problems should come from the United States; and on occasion, [it has led us to focus,] almost as a policy, on organizing a way to ask for aid from the United States, because we are not able to develop our own criteria regarding other ways to fight our problems.

In sum, and in keeping with a doctrine of diversification, Batres concludes, "I do not believe that Honduran relations with the United States are negative per se; rather [it is] the dependency, the exclusivity of those relations [that is negative]. I think that Honduras should open its relations more with the rest of the world":

> What I do believe is definitely bad at any time is that Honduras depend exclusively on the United States, be this for its own economic development or for its security concerns. My opinion is that the greatest and best interest for Honduras is that, at the same time as it maintains its relations with the United States, it should also be able to count on other powerful friends who may provide it, to the extent possible, with an alternative and not subject it to a total dependence on whatever the United States decides. [This is important] because, as proven in the past, a new situation may present itself in which the interests of the United States and those of Honduras do not coincide at a given moment.

Meza raises a related point about the negative effects that dependency may have on military institutional development. Although U.S. military relations are to be praised where they help professionalize and modernize the Honduran military and strengthen its ability to support the development of democratic civilian institutions, he says,

> From a negative point of view, I believe the most relevant aspects of the military relationship between Honduras and the United States consist in the growing dependency that is being forged in the mentality of the Honduran military regarding North American aid and the disposition of the United States to come to the defense of Honduras whenever conditions so require.
>
> That dependent consciousness makes the Honduran military stop trusting in its own efforts and rely basically on the expectation of prompt and timely North American assistance. Such dependency nullifies the spirit of initiative and limits the possibilities of creative development.

Even so, it should be noted, Meza does not call for his country to diversify its military relations away from the United States.

It is not clear whether Alvarez would agree with all that Batres and Meza say above. But their statements on this score are in the classic nationalist mold.

What is clear is that Alvarez, Batres, and Meza are all deeply concerned about how the United States uses its power, and in particular about the following two trends they perceive that directly affect Honduras:

- The United States is an undependable ally.
- The United States is treating Honduras as a tool.[4]

LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN U.S. RELIABILITY, FEAR OF U.S ABANDONMENT

While the interviewees express little doubt about the serious nature of the Nicaraguan threat and its Soviet and Cuban connections, they all express great doubt about the will and ability of the United States to meet that threat. Honduran images of the United States as a world power and regional ally are fraught with doubts about U.S. credibility and reliability. These doubts, which coexist with traditional images of

[4]The interviews also contain another prominent theme: that the behavior of many U.S. officials toward Honduras has been both arrogant and ignorant. ("What a combination!" as one reviewer of this study remarked.) However, I have chosen not to assemble the interviewees' criticisms on this score for presentation in this study.

the United States as a powerful can-do nation, may be growing with the passage of time. Their growth is leading to a persistent fear not of domination but of abandonment by the United States.

Views Rooted in Local Experiences: El Salvador and Nicaragua

The doubts are rooted in the direct experience of the 1969 "Soccer War" between Honduras and El Salvador, which has left a legacy of resentment and distrust about U.S. intent. As the interviewees and others often note, Honduras has long regarded El Salvador as a greater threat than Nicaragua. What is not widely known is a view Alvarez expresses: The Honduran military believes the United States showed "partiality" toward El Salvador in the 1969 war (possibly because U.S. economic interests were greater in El Salvador) and behaved deceitfully toward Honduras and its military.[5] Batres complains that for years after the war the United States refused to supply weapons to Honduras to enable it to meet its legitimate defense requirements. This experience has left a long-lasting residue of resentment and rejection, particularly in the Honduran armed forces, according to Alvarez.

The war not only raised doubts about the reliability of the United States as an ally, according to Batres, it spelled a fundamental change in the local perception of U.S. power. By the 1960s, "it seemed that all possibility of conflict between the Central American countries, and all possibility of threat to the internal security of Honduras from any of our neighbors, had been averted":

> Prior to July 1969, one of the factors that most influenced Honduras to believe war was not possible in Central America was the underlying belief that "the United States is not going to permit it."
>
> In that era the hegemonic presence of the United States in the area was accepted without doubt. And it was believed that nothing of importance could happen to affect the countries of Central America without the United States sponsoring it, or at least permitting it, except for natural phenomena outside man's control.

Thus, says Batres, the shock of the war with El Salvador led to unprecedented "anti-North American expressions . . . from pro-Western people who have generally been defenders of democracy and supporters of the alliance with the United States." Hondurans discovered that "we could no longer take for granted that the time was

[5]To illustrate the complexity of regional perceptions, it should be noted that Salvadoran military officers reportedly subscribe to the obverse view that U.S. policy toward the border war secretly favored Honduras.

past for war in Central America, or that the 'gringos' would not permit wars to occur in this part of the world." The war experience also demonstrated that the inter-American treaties (e.g., the Rio Pact) were "only relatively effective, and moreover, were dangerously slow."

All three interviewees focus bitterly on the experience of war with El Salvador.[6] Beyond that, as Batres points out, Honduran concerns about U.S. reliability in the region were later reinforced by the "diplomatic incompetence" of the United States to convert the fall of Somoza into a victory for democratic forces. Instead, "When the Marxist-Leninist group that headed the Sandinista front took over the Nicaraguan government, the communist threat in Central America ceased being [potential] and became a reality." By not doing the right things to assure a democratic transition in Nicaragua, the United States "committed an error [that is] very difficult to pardon after the experience it had when the Cuban revolution came to power in 1959." Alvarez likewise expresses considerable dismay that the U.S. government was unable to get Somoza out of the way in order to help Nicaragua develop its future without either Somoza or the Sandinistas in power: "The solution was to find an alternative without Somoza and without the Sandinistas, but this alternative was not sought."

The Changeability of U.S. Policy

Though the 1969 war is the crucial reference point for Honduran perceptions, Alvarez insists that U.S. policy has proven time after time to be vacillating, irresolute, and unreliable. It keeps changing so much and so often that local leaders cannot depend on continuity across U.S. administrations:

> I would say that every time there has been a closeness between the two countries in the military realm, the results have been positive and beneficial for Honduras: A good understanding is achieved, the two parties speak openly, medium-term programs are prepared for the armed forces, and all goes well. Then suddenly things change in Washington . . . : Political decisions change, and from that moment on North American officials begin to apologize and no longer want to deal with the subjects on which we had previously agreed.
>
> This has happened on various occasions during the past few decades. It makes us lose confidence and be uncertain as to when things will change in the United States to our detriment.

Alvarez, Batres, and Meza attribute U.S. unreliability partly to U.S. internal politics—especially congressional politics. Meza points to "the

[6]See additional comments in Sec. III on threat perceptions.

debates in the U.S. Congress, and the difficulties the Reagan administration must face in moving ahead with its Central American policy" to explain that "many politicians in the region mistrust the United States and doubt the permanency of its policy line toward these countries."[7] Alvarez implies that U.S. congressional politics has subjected Central American issues to "a 'heads or tails' toss" and "political games for winning votes" when it should be treating Central America as "a matter of national interest to the United States and vital for its security."

Looking ahead, Alvarez claims the Sandinista regime is waiting "for the United States to enter into a cycle of political weakness (through elections or a new president who may be weak) in order to begin action and set all of Central America ablaze."[8] In addition, Batres worries that an internal realignment within the political leadership of the United States or some dramatic change in the international situation may lead the U.S. government to drop the use of force and negotiate with Nicaragua, the Soviet Union, and/or Cuba about Nicaragua.[9] If this happened, Honduras would find itself "suddenly left unprotected" against a powerful neighbor which it had "continually and seriously offended."

The Global View from a Small Nation

Honduran doubts about U.S. credibility and reliability are rooted in much more than just local and bilateral experiences. Honduran political and military elites, like those of other small nations, are sometimes thought to be provincial and parochial in outlook. Yet in practice they are very attentive to the international context.

Alvarez, Batres, and Meza have all closely watched U.S. behavior around the world for signs of how the United States might behave locally. None of them doubts that the United States is a powerful

[7]According to Meza, as a result of disclosures in the United States about the Contras' activities in Honduras, some Honduran political and military leaders "have learned that the United States is not an ally capable of keeping secrets." They have developed "a deep sense of mistrust and lack of confidence toward the United States" and do not understand that "the functioning of democracy in the United States is more important than keeping a secret about a corrupt politician or military officer."

[8]This quote was also used in Sec. III.

[9]Thus, Batres speculates, "If the group of 'liberals' gains dominance in the North American government who oppose the use of force against Nicaragua and think that everything can be resolved by way of negotiations, the result would surely be that Honduras will be left alone, with an enormous disproportion of forces vis-à-vis Nicaragua. Meanwhile the United States would neglect the security problems in the region and calmly sit down at the conference table with representatives of the Sandinistas, the Cubans, and the Soviets."

nation, but their memories are vivid with anxiety about how "the credibility of the United States as an ally has suffered strong blows in recent times." (Meza) They all believe that many former U.S. allies—including Taiwan, Cuba, Iran, Vietnam, Nicaragua, and Lebanon—were abandoned because of U.S. unreliability; they also all disparage U.S. behavior toward the Falklands/Malvinas conflict. In addition, the U.S. abandonment of the Cuban exile forces during the Bay of Pigs invasion looms large in Alvarez's mind, because he fears a repeat, with the Contras operating out of Honduras.

With this record in mind, the interviewees attest to a deep concern in Honduras that the United States will prove to be an unreliable, irresolute, and vacillating ally that does not stay the course against its adversaries, in this case the Sandinistas. According to Alvarez,

> This doubt and the constant apprehension about what the United States might do tomorrow (most of the time without consultation) is based on a background of concrete historical events that leave in a very bad light the honorability and word of honor of the United States.
>
> . . .
>
> Honduras is well committed to supporting the United States in its actions against the Sandinistas. But if what I fear occurs, Honduras would be the most exposed to Sandinista reprisals and the large consequences that would follow, perhaps on a scale worse than that of El Salvador. I am sure the United States would promise to protect us and make the Sandinistas fulfill the agreements that they sign. But did they fulfill their promises with South Vietnam when they signed the Paris Accord with North Vietnam? Did they fulfill what they had promised to Somoza to make him leave Nicaragua?

This concern about U.S. unreliability underlies Alvarez's belief that neither a U.S. policy emphasizing the Contras nor one resorting to a Contadora-type solution would really end the threat to Honduras.

In a similar vein, Batres declares, "It is difficult to trust blindly in an alliance with the United States." Indeed, from his cultural and global perspective,

> It is difficult for the Latin spirit to accept [the fact that] a great power like the United States has had to accept serious reverses such as those that Nicaragua has dealt it in foreign policy—reverses that mean the Sandinista government continues at the head of Nicaragua despite the open opposition by the United States over a rather long period now.
>
> . . .
>
> I believe the credibility of the United States as a world power is placed in doubt when it permits the Soviet Union to plant its foot in

> Central America without intervening efficiently, decisively, and quickly. One cannot but compare that attitude with Soviet interventions in Hungary, Poland, and any other place where it considers its interests to be affected.

Perhaps, he suggests, Honduras should heed Lord Palmerson's adage about England having no permanent friends or enemies but only permanent interests.

Thus, according to these interviews, Honduras has taken a big risk by engaging in close military cooperation with the United States. The risks are there whether the United States wins or loses in its campaign against Nicaragua. On the one hand, if the United States should ultimately opt to withdraw and abandon Honduras before the Sandinista regime is eliminated, Honduras will be exposed to the retaliatory wrath of the Sandinistas and perhaps others. As Batres puts it, "If our current allies abandon us, we will remain faced with a State much more powerful militarily than ours, one that we have antagonized to an extreme and whose own allies support it without reservation." On the other hand, Hondurans are apprehensive that they may also be abandoned in the event of a successful overthrow of the Sandinista regime, because, as Batres points out,

> once the war is over, the United States would dedicate itself to reconstructing and supporting Nicaragua, to prevent its falling again into the hands of communism. And we Hondurans would remain in our traditional last spot, left to recover from our wounds alone, which would be impossible.

Avoiding U.S. Abandonment as Well as U.S. Domination: A New Concern

Extrapolating from their observations on this score, we appear to have entered a new phase in U.S.-Central American relations during the past ten years: The traditional risk of strong U.S. involvement in a nation's security and development was thought to be U.S. domination, and a related distortion of local economic, political, social, and cultural processes. This risk is still perceived to exist. But in addition—assuming regional conflict will persist in some form for quite some time—Honduran perceptions of U.S. policy debates about Central America, and of U.S. behavior in Vietnam, Iran, and elsewhere, have now resulted in a growing fear of U.S. abandonment that may exceed the traditional fear of U.S. domination and exploitation.[10]

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[10]According to experts on Honduras, Hondurans may be more likely than others in the region to fear U.S. abandonmnt because of their particular past experiences and po-

Hondurans already feel burdened by the image their country has in Latin America as a U.S. proxy. Watching this much-criticized image spread into the U.S. Congress and media has only heightened their concerns about U.S. reliability. The prospect of abandonment is all the more disturbing should it mean that Honduras will be left exposed not only to a militarized Sandinista regime, but also to a combat-tested Salvadoran army, and perhaps to renegade Contras still located in Honduras.

THE UTILITARIAN U.S. TENDENCY TO TREAT ALLIES AS GAME PIECES

Another constant theme in all the interviews is that U.S. policy treats Honduras too much as a means to an end, and not enough as a worthy entity in its own right. That the powerful may be counted on to use the weak is a long-established theme in Latin American nationalism, in part because it is an affront to national dignity. Nonetheless, the theme seems unusually worrisome to the interviewees because of their basic distrust of U.S. reliability and their concern about the riskiness of Honduran cooperation with U.S. policy, as discussed above.

According to Alvarez, "Doubts have begun to surface among the Honduran people as to what the United States is seeking for Central America. The feeling is arising that Honduras is only being used." In his view, positive results cannot be expected if the U.S. government treats its Central American allies with a "utilitarian and egoistic spirit" simply because it needs their help to deal with a crisis:

> We are not a game piece and not disposable today or tomorrow.
>
> Above all we are a human people; we are a nation before we are a state. And by means of that intrinsic worth as human beings we should be valued as a nation, and not as something that is worthwhile today but not tomorrow.
>
> . . .
>
> If the United States builds all of its actions and strategies . . . because it feels threatened and needs us to help it while the crisis lasts, we will repeat past errors. All will be distrust and resentment, and thus any alliance will be fragile and inconsistent. . . . Under this utilitarian and egoistic spirit, the results will be negative in the end.

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litical culture. Nonetheless, for reflections on this theme in another context, see Stephen T. Hosmer, Konrad Kellen, and Brian M. Jenkins, *The Fall of South Vietnam: Statements by Vietnamese Civilian and Military Leaders*, The RAND Corporation, R-2208-OSD(HIST), December 1978.

He warns that if such resentment grows, the opportunities for communist exploitation of local grievances will also grow.[11]

Batres makes a similar point from a global perspective that reflects his concern about how the United States has abandoned small countries in the past. The United States, he says, treats Central America as

> one of its many interests within a wide game board on which world hegemony is disputed with the other great power, the Soviet Union. In that game . . . neither of the powers stops to respect, or to study with much hesitation, the particular interests of the countries that could be within the orbit of influence of each of them.

Thus he worries that if the Soviet Union were to negotiate a deal over Afghanistan, the United States might do likewise over Nicaragua—while "the interests of Honduras would not be taken into account."

In like manner, Meza observes that Honduras is simply being used as a territorial platform to serve higher priorities:

> From the moment in which the United States began to design its policies toward Honduras in terms of two fundamental priorities—El Salvador and Nicaragua—the consequences for Honduras have been negative.
>
> . . .
>
> It is as though there were not a U.S. policy *toward* Honduras, but a North American policy *from* Honduras toward Nicaragua and El Salvador.
>
> . . .
>
> Accordingly, Honduras is valuable to the United States more as a territory than as a country.

In Meza's view, Honduran politicians deserve some criticism for going along with this pattern and trying to exploit the situation through what might be termed reverse instrumentalism:

> There is no doubt that they expect the North Americans to pay an ever higher price for using the national territory and maintaining a deterrent presence here vis-à-vis Nicaragua.
>
> . . .
>
> For Honduran leaders, the importance of the United States as an ally and a friend is measured by the quantity of aid granted rather than by the identification of common principles or ideals.

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[11] "The breach would widen, and the probabilities of success for Soviet plans for conquest and expansion through international communism would be optimal. We have many examples of how they (the communists) have exploited the resentment provoked by the vacillating, indefinite, disloyal, and egoistic attitude of U.S. foreign policy towards its allies on repeated occasions."

> I believe the governing leaders of Honduras would like for North American aid to become ever larger, but for North American control over the destiny and use of that aid to become ever smaller.

Batres makes a related point about aid bargaining dynamics when he observes that "occasionally the representative of a small, poor country will accept the viewpoint of the other party regarding development or security matters 'in order not to lose the opportunity' to obtain some type of aid for his country, since one way or another that aid should be beneficial for the small country."

Meza is not opposed to increased U.S. economic and military aid, but he indicates that the substance and style of aid are as important, if not more important, than the scale of aid. "To strengthen the security of Honduras, it is not enough to increase the levels of military aid. It is absolutely necessary that this aid be accompanied by a true process of the professionalization of the Honduran army." At the same time, he counsels, "Perhaps the best thing that Honduran politicians could do to orient U.S. strategy to the benefit of Honduras would be to behave like allies and not like simple instruments of North American policy in the region."

CONCLUDING COMMENT ON ATTITUDES TOWARD THE UNITED STATES

These disparaging concerns about U.S. behavior as an ally, and related complaints about the occasionally arrogant yet ignorant behavior of some U.S. officials in Honduras, help to explain the slowly growing potential for anti-Americanism that concerns all three interviewees. In many ways, it is not so much the so-called abuse of power as what might be termed the abuse of friendship that grates on Honduran sensitivities.[12]

Despite this, Hondurans paradoxically retain a fairly high opinion of the United States as a friend and wellspring of democratic ideals. And perhaps partly because of their awareness of Honduras' relative weakness, they have learned to live with their ambivalence about the positive and negative aspects of U.S. behavior. As Alvarez remarks,

> In spite of the disappointments that the United States has given us, the evident disloyalties that we have suffered from them, the average Honduran in all social classes has always had an almost natural sympathy and affection toward the United States. I don't know how to explain it, but it is a reality.

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[12]I am grateful to a friend in Mexico for pointing out this distinction.

Thus, strident nationalism and anti-Americanism have not yet taken firm root in this country. Nonetheless, the interviewees' doubts about U.S. reliability and their concerns that Honduras is just being used as an instrument have a marked effect on their assessments of future options and scenarios for dealing with conflict in the region, as discussed in the next section.

V. FUTURE SCENARIOS AND U.S. OPTIONS

The interviewees were asked to assess the likely effects on Honduras of various alternative futures:

- A continued significant U.S. military presence in Honduras.
- An expansion of the Contra forces to fight effectively in Nicaragua, possibly with U.S. military support.
- A continuation of Contra forces strong enough to cause problems for the Sandinista regime but not to overthrow it.
- Implementation of a Contadora-type treaty.
- A U.S. military intervention in Nicaragua.
- A multilateral inter-American military intervention.
- Prolonged, indecisive, ineffective U.S. efforts against the Sandinista regime, while the Sandinista regime consolidates and the surrounding countries are militarized to contain it.[1]

LIKELY EFFECTS OF A PROLONGED LARGE-SCALE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE

The U.S. military presence, at first perceived to be a positive factor, is now increasingly perceived as a wasting asset. All three interviewees foresee that a continued, significant U.S. military presence in Honduras would have detrimental domestic political effects and would end up provoking anti-Americanism in Honduras.

Alvarez depicts grim scenarios evolving if the United States engages in a prolonged, purposeless military buildup in the region. "An extended presence without defined purposes . . . would be hurtful and even dangerously negative with regard to the way the Honduran people feel." The only purpose that makes sense to him is "a total and final solution to the problem." If little is accomplished in this direction, then "a feeling of distrust and frustration could be reborn in Honduras, because of the impression of our being deceived and used. This could produce a strong anti-North American feeling that would perhaps be difficult to control."

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[1]In retrospect, it would have been useful to have also asked a question about the likely effects of a U.S. withdrawal from the region, but this possibility seemed too remote to raise at the time the questionnaire was designed. We also should have asked about the likely effects of a containment-type scenario.

Under such circumstances, he foresees that the Sandinistas would be able to consolidate their regime and strengthen their military forces, while political and social conditions in Honduras and other countries that are U.S. allies in the region would deteriorate. Then "a tremendously explosive and dangerous situation" may come to a head at a time when

> perhaps the United States would not be in condition to face up to or control [it] because it would mean a military force of great power. And at that time (i.e., 1987) we will not know how the delicate situation in the Middle East, Europe, Southeast Asia, Africa and South America will have evolved—a situation which I believe could become serious.

Batres likewise foresees that "a prolonged U.S. military presence . . . would surely have as a result, sooner or later, an upsurge of nationalist and anti-North American sentiment. . . . For the first time now one begins to hear anti-North American expressions from people that do not belong to the belligerent left of this country." Such people feel that U.S. economic aid is benefiting the Honduran military more than the economy and the people. And they blame the United States for creating the possibility of a war that could involve Honduras.[2]

Meza indicates that the evolution from "the spirit of opposition to this presence," to nationalism, to anti-Americanism may be gradual, but he ends up with a forecast similar to those of Alvarez and Batres.[3] In Meza's view, "Foreign military presence of a temporary nature is acceptable at present, as a necessity for national security. However, a prolonged presence, or one which threatens to become permanent, will undoubtedly be questioned and rejected by the Honduran military itself." Broadly speaking, the Honduran people "feel a need to receive North American protection," and they "understand the price they must pay for that protection" is to permit the Contras to operate from Honduran soil. But the undesired result of this situation is "the concrete possibility of a war with Nicaragua. No one wants to live under the constant fear of war." Thus, he concludes in classic nationalist fashion, "Everyone wants this problem to end soon—that is, for everyone to get out and leave us alone."

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[2]In discussing Honduras' future policy options, Batres raises the possibility that at some point "Honduras might eventually denounce the treaties that bind it . . . to the U.S. and ask that country's forces to abandon Honduran territory."

[3]According to Meza, "The growth of nationalism does not inevitably mean that anti-North American sentiment will develop in the short range. I believe that anti-North Americanism will be something like the last stage of incipient Honduran nationalism, and under normal circumstances will only take place in the medium or long range."

In one form or another, they (especially Batres and Meza) warn that a prolonged, large-scale U.S. military presence may make the Honduran political system more fragile, divisive, and unstable. Such a U.S. presence would also raise the risk of subversion and terrorism, some of it sponsored by Nicaragua, to end the "military occupation" of Honduras. As a result, the Honduran military would probably gain a stronger role in politics, even though the U.S. presence would promote military professionalization.

ANTIPATHY TOWARD THE CONTRAS

The prospect of a large expansion of the Contra forces to fight effectively in Nicaragua engages Honduran antipathies toward the Contras that resound throughout the interviews. Alvarez and Batres in particular find this scenario to be unrealistic and objectionable.

Alvarez initially supported the buildup of the Contras as one element of a broader regional strategy which he believed would work quickly and effectively to topple the Sandinista regime. Disappointed that the strategy he subscribed to was not carried out, he is now highly critical of the U.S. emphasis on the Contras, whom he believes lack the capabilities to be the main fighting force against the Sandinistas.

From the standpoint of strategy, he observes that there is not enough time to develop the Contras into a large and effective military force. Besides, that would mean entering into a prolonged struggle against Nicaragua that would prove "politically unacceptable" for the United States and its Central American allies:

> The Contras cannot resolve the problem by themselves; they are an effective means of political pressure and are a tool of great value if used as a complement in a possible decisive action against the Sandinistas. If we expect everything from them, we will fall into the trap of a prolonged fight, which does not sit well with the Western way and even less with the people of the United States.[4]

Meanwhile, Alvarez detects a rising feeling "that Honduras is only being used, that the Contras are likewise being used, that they are cannon fodder for U.S. policy, that the Bay of Pigs disaster is being repeated with the Contras, except in prolonged fashion."

Thus the Contras should grow a bit more and could serve inside Nicaragua as "an important complement" to an invading force. But it is inadvisable to develop them as the "main force" against the Sandinistas. This might work if a general uprising were possible in

[4]See the related discussion about time in Sec. III.

Nicaragua, but the Sandinista regime has been consolidating totalitarian control faster than the Contras have been expanding.

Batres also evinces a deep Honduran pessimism about the Contras and suggests that their only utility might be to provoke Nicaragua into attacking Honduras so that it becomes justifiable for the United States (and Honduras) to openly enter the war against Nicaragua:

> I think the Nicaraguan exiles, so long as they continue their struggle in the form they are presently carrying forward, will have no possibility of overthrowing the Sandinista government, unless they can force them [the Sandinistas] to attack Honduras—and that I consider very difficult.[5]

Whatever the strategy, if the scenario posed in the questionnaire means that the Contras leave Honduras and move into Nicaragua to fight, then Meza points out that Honduras might well "look positively" on the scenario and "feel a certain relief." The prospects for anti-North Americanism, as well as for terrorism and insurgency sponsored by Nicaragua, would probably decrease. But Meza's assessment that "the majority of Hondurans would approve military action by the Contras with North American air support" is contingent upon the scenario "free[ing] us once and for all of each other."[6]

However, if the result of this scenario is an expansion of the Contra presence in Honduras, it would have nothing but ill effects on Honduran politics, according to Batres. It would generate negative nationalist reactions, including anti-North American and even pro-Sandinista sentiments. Polarization of pro- and anti-U.S., and pro- and anti-Contra positions would spread within the political parties. The military would view the Contras with increasing "suspicion." Honduran isolationist sentiments would be aroused. Meanwhile, the Contra-Sandinista conflict would do increasing violence to Honduran residents in the coffee-growing areas along the border. And Nicaragua would have reason to foster terrorism and insurgency within Honduras.

As to the prospect of long-term Contra operations from Honduras that are strong enough to cause problems for the Sandinistas but not to overthrow them, all the interviewees answer in terms of a worsening

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[5]Batres also makes this point in the context of spelling out a worst-case scenario discussed in Sec. III.

[6]Elsewhere in the interview, Meza warns that Hondurans do not want to see a scenario in which "the United States wants to reinforce the Contras with Honduran troops but does not want to risk its own men in the undertaking." He also says that for the Honduran military, the best solution would be for the Contras to succeed in overthrowing the Sandinistas on their own. The second best solution would be for the Contras to succeed with the help of U.S. air support. The third option, the Contras acting "with direct Honduran support . . . and auxiliary U.S. support," is the least desirable option for Honduras, although it has not been discarded.

of their expectations from the prior question. Meza, now turning pessimistic and sounding more like Batres, argues that this kind of Contra presence, and the permanent danger it would spell of war with Nicaragua, would stimulate nationalist antipathy: "More and more the Hondurans would blame the North Americans for supporting the indefinite presence of the Contras on national territory." In addition, this scenario would breed corruption and "inevitably destabilize the Honduran political system."[7] Nicaragua, its "spirit of vengeance" stimulated, and the Honduran "ultra-left" could both be expected to promote terrorism in Honduras.

LITTLE FAITH IN CONTADORA

None of the interviewees expressed optimism or enthusiasm regarding the Contadora treaty process.[8] According to Alvarez, such a treaty might buy some semblance of peace for two or three years, but it would only be to the advantage of the Sandinistas, by helping them consolidate before they later resume the revolutionary offensive. "Believe me, the notion of a Central American region living with a Marxist regime in our midst cannot be played around with." Besides,

> history shows us that no solution can be negotiated with the communists, unless that solution is backed by a powerful military force, as is the case in South Korea, whose armed peace requires enormous economic resources.

Hence Alvarez worries that U.S. policy might become "inconsistent and vacillating" and the United States might "negotiate the Central American problem with the Sandinistas without consultation, making shameful and deadly concessions" that could "condemn Honduras to destruction and seal Central America's fate as a region enslaved to International Communism."

Batres and Meza are not so negative. The stipulations of such a treaty could not be fulfilled without intense international supervision, according to Batres, and he feels this requirement is an "illusion."

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[7]The prospect leads Meza to suggest cynically that the Honduran military could "continue using the Contras in the following way: (a) as a negotiating card vis-à-vis Nicaragua; (b) as blackmail vis-à-vis Washington; (c) as an opportunity to do good business. At times one gets the impression that the Honduran military does not want war, but needs to maintain a latent threat."

[8]In light of recent developments, it would have been interesting to have asked the interviewees additional questions about negotiating options other than Contadora. It may be noted, however, that none of the respondents ever expressed any confidence in bilateral negotiations between Washington and Managua, such as those that used to take place in Manzanillo, Mexico.

Meza views a Contadora treaty as "almost impossible." Yet both observe that if a treaty could be achieved, the effects on Honduran politics and security could be beneficial.[9]

Whatever the ambivalence about the Contadora process per se, Batres is far more doubtful about the direction in which U.S.-Honduran relations have gone. Indicating that some effective diplomatic route might have been found, he believes that Honduras "should not have acted . . . independently of the other Central American countries. Instead, they should have appealed jointly to the Organization of American States (OAS) to put pressure on Nicaragua to live up to the democratic promises the Sandinistas made before gaining power.[10]

SCENARIOS ABOUT MILITARY INTERVENTION IN NICARAGUA

Only Alvarez advocates U.S. military intervention, but Batres and Meza do indicate that this might be a potentially viable scenario:

> This is precisely what the Honduran people are waiting for so that the problem is resolved once and for all. Doubts and fears exist that the United States is never going to decide to act, and as a consequence the Honduran people fear reprisals from the Sandinistas. (Alvarez)
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> . . .
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> If the intervention were carried out over a short time using the enormous forces of the United States to numerically crush Nicaraguan defenses, . . . it could probably count on the support of the principal political parties of Honduras. And upon achieving success, [it] could have beneficial results over the long term for the Honduran political system. (Batres)
>
> . . .
>
> National sentiment supporting the [official] position would be created, something like a momentary and euphoric surge of nationalism that would doubtlessly disappear after the war. It would be difficult for anti-North American sentiment to arise. (Meza)

Alvarez's assessment of the futility of engaging in a prolonged war leads him to question the U.S. reluctance to intervene militarily in Nicaragua. In his view, only a "rapid, surprising, and paralyzing" military action can solve the problem once and for all and clear the way for

[9]Meza raises a doubt, however, that the Honduran military would go along with a reduction or inspection of its arms inventory.

[10]For more on Batres' views about regional strategy, see Sec. VI.

long-term political stability, democratic development, and economic progress. He bluntly argues that U.S. military intervention, though often reprehensible in the abstract, is sometimes imperative in practice—if only because the United States, as a great power, is expected to act like a great power:

> You always talk about being careful not to intervene. I agree that you must not do so; in fact I repudiate intervention. (There is a difference between a call for help and interference without consultation.) But the reality is that you always do it. The weight of your political power especially makes such intervention inevitable, whether it be direct or indirect. Then, if you know it is inevitable, do not do it clumsily; do it correctly for your benefit as well as for that of the recipient country.
>
> . . .
>
> Your political and economic power make it impossible for you to avoid interfering in the destinies of other countries that are within your zone of influence. I do not like this, and do not approve of this happening. But whether we like this or not, it is almost a natural law like the force of gravity.
>
> Then, since it is impossible to avoid intervening, intervene intelligently and with good will. Don't just seek a temporary benefit for yourselves and a permanent bad effect for us, with which over the long run you will lose a friend and an ally. Instead look for a shared permanent benefit in order to consolidate our friendship and mutual trust.

Alvarez may be the only one of the three to blatantly argue for U.S. intervention, but Batres without doing so still notes:

> I believe the credibility of the United States as a world power is placed in doubt when it permits the Soviet Union to plant its foot in Central America without intervening efficiently, decisively, and quickly. One cannot but compare that attitude with Soviet interventions in Hungary, Poland, and any other place where it considers its interests to be affected.[11]

While Batres thinks the broad masses of the Honduran people would view U.S. intervention "with indifference," Meza foresees damage to the prestige, credibility, and stability of the Honduran government because its leaders have said Honduras would not serve as a platform for invasion. Limited protests from some sectors, as well as incidents of terrorism and sabotage, would be likely.

A multilateral inter-American form of military intervention would be politically and legally "ideal," according to Alvarez. In keeping with

[11]This quote is also used in Sec. IV.

his view that neither Contadora nor the Contras will work to remove the Sandinistas from power, he says:

> As a consequence, the only option is a combined military action of the United States and allied countries on the continent, especially from Central America and the Caribbean. . . . The United States should initiate a diplomatic offensive in order to achieve the multilateral support for this action that can now no longer be postponed.[12]

Meza also acknowledges that this scenario would be easier to justify than the former, because "Honduras would consider itself as an important part of an inter-American operation and not simply as a territorial instrument in the hands of the United States." But Meza posits that Honduras would still suffer a range of negative repercussions, if only because "no country that lets its territory be used to invade another can expect to come out politically strengthened from the adventure." An inter-American operation would also raise a special question for Honduras: "whether the army of El Salvador would participate. . . . That, if it were the case, would complicate things, and would generate frictions and additional difficulties."[13]

THE WORST SCENARIO: A PROLONGED, INEFFECTIVE U.S. PRESENCE

The interviewees' greatest worries are reserved for the possibility of a prolonged, indecisive, ineffective U.S. effort against Nicaragua, while the Sandinista regime grows stronger and the surrounding countries are militarized to contain it. Batres appears to represent a widely held view when he declares, "I deeply fear that . . . [this is what] in reality is going to take place in Central America." In the words of Alvarez, this scenario would be "disastrous from all points of view."

The region and specifically Honduras would suffer greatly. The scenario "could easily end up in uncontrollable chaos." (Batres) And "it is almost 100 percent certain that a virulent and generalized subversion would break out in Honduras and the rest of the area." (Alvarez) The expectations of all three interviewees include sabotage, terrorism, and insurgency from the revolutionary left—violence that, according to Alvarez, would signify "the precursor of the communist revolutionary war." Polarization and instability would further undermine the prospects for democracy.

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[12]A fuller text of this quote is used in the next section.

[13]Batres raises no substantial differences between this and the preceding scenario except for the nature of the justification for military intervention.

Then, in the words of Meza, the "North American indecision, the growing might of the Sandinistas, and the inability of the Contras to defeat the Nicaraguan army would lead irremediably to greater militarization in Honduras and also to an increase in the political role of the military." While Meza mentions ways in which the military might benefit materially from this scenario, Alvarez argues that the military would reject "the idea of continuing to support a project without a future that was not going anywhere." In any case, as Meza puts it, the Honduran people could end up as the "principal victim," since they would have to put up with both the Contras and the military.

The certain result of this scenario, according to all three interviewees, would be angry, aggressive anti-Americanism. Honduran feelings of "being used" would be exacerbated, and Honduras would lose confidence in the United States as an ally and blame it for the whole mess:

> The people, seeing the incapacity, inability and indecision of the United States to successfully carry out the project, would enter into a state of frustration, disappointment, and anger with the United States, and as is natural, would blame them for all of the problems that would come to the country as a consequence of the failure to contain the Sandinistas. A state of fear and total distrust of the United States would take hold of the people. (Alvarez)

. . .

> The Hondurans would end up blaming the North Americans for not being strong enough to resolve the Sandinista problem, nor weak enough to permit the Hondurans to free themselves from military influence. (Meza)

To make matters worse, Alvarez says, under such circumstances the U.S. effort to "militarize the Central American countries so that they could contain the Sandinistas" would "only be a placebo that would not provide a solution to the problem." Besides, things would have deteriorated so far by then that "militarization would only prolong the agony of the people," without leading to victory.

VI. THE INTERVIEWEES' POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The three interviewees appear to agree that policy should focus first on solving the conflict with Nicaragua in the near term, in order to then focus on the broader socioeconomic and political challenges facing Central America over the long term. As to what exactly should be done, the sharpest differences of opinion occur over Nicaragua. None of the interviewees denies that military instruments may have some role to play in dealing with the Nicaraguan situation; but their views are not in harmony in this respect, and only one of them recommends a military solution. However, they all agree that political and economic instruments should be emphasized for addressing Central America's structural problems over the medium and long term.

NATIONAL INTERESTS AND POLICY OBJECTIVES

Alvarez represents a view that the basic interests of Honduras and the United States "do not differ," despite his criticisms of how particular Honduran or U.S. leaders may treat those interests. He expresses the highest hopes for U.S. roles to grow in the region in ways that will lead to political democracy and economic progress, and to a "permanent and sincere friendship based on principles of reciprocity, solidarity, loyalty, honesty, and mutual understanding." At the same time, in keeping with the central tenets of Latin American nationalism, he cautions that

> the United States should be careful not to affect or offend the sovereignty and autonomy of Honduras as the free country it is, respecting and accepting the authority that the government has a right to exercise in its own territory.

In a very general sense, Batres and Meza uphold democratic and nationalist ideals in much the same language that Alvarez uses. Like him, they also want to see Honduras' security protected against outside aggression. In these very general respects, the three appear to be basically in agreement.[1] However, if our interviews had probed deeper into

[1]To be more specific, Batres says U.S. and Honduran interests coincide over their mutual desires for democratic political and economic conditions, and over the related U.S. interest in stopping Soviet expansion in the region. Meza says that the two countries' interests basically coincide as to "the declared objective of consolidating the demo-

the differences among the three men, it seems likely that Alvarez, Batres, and Meza would prove to have very different, and contrasting if not conflicting, ideas about how "democracy" and "security" should be defined and implemented, and what role the military should play in a democratic system.

In contrast to Alvarez, Batres and Meza are not so sure that U.S. and Honduran interests coincide entirely, and they see some sharp differences. According to Batres, the basic interests of the two countries are affected by the fundamental asymmetry: The United States is a world power with interests at stake all around the world, while Honduras' interests are focused on its immediate neighborhood. As a result, the U.S. role as a world power may at times require it to adopt positions that may be contrary to Honduran interests. In terms of just the bilateral relationship, Meza raises the point that many of the specific interests and objectives of the two countries differ quite a bit in terms of substance and priority. For example, Honduras wants economic, not military aid, to be the priority; it wants to avoid war with Nicaragua and be rid of the Contras; and it wants El Salvador pressured to resolve the boundary problem with Honduras. But U.S. policy does not seem aimed in any of these directions.

Whatever the specific similarities and differences, Batres and Meza question whether either country's interests, objectives, policies, and strategies have ever been clearly articulated. In keeping with their earlier points about negative aspects of the U.S.-Honduran alliance (see Sec. IV), they both claim that neither country has defined a clear, national policy toward the other (or toward Nicaragua). They implicitly ask for the United States to define a clear policy first, almost as a precondition for Honduras being able to define its own policy.

Calling for Clarification of the U.S. Position

Meza calls upon the United States to design a policy that does not depend so much on "other political objectives, for example, defeating the Sandinistas from Honduran soil." Hondurans, he says, want "a real policy toward Honduras, one that takes into account the interests of the country as such and does not consider it simply as a strategic territory located in Central America's geography." They want the role of a "respectable ally, a worthy partner in promoting the values of liberty and democracy." Indeed, Meza implies that the security of

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cratic system in the region and maintaining a close political alliance . . . in which the two parties mutually respect each other."

Honduras will not be truly strengthened unless Hondurans

> feel that their country plays an effective part in the design and application of the regional policy for the defense of its own interests. They do not want to be just a territory from which some regional policy is put into practice. They want to be a country that participates in the design and execution of the regional strategy. They want to be allies and not subordinates of the United States in the management of the regional crisis.[2]

Batres strikes a similar note in saying "it is necessary for the United States to define . . . what its position is going to be" toward the Sandinista regime. If the United States would clarify that it is going to use force to change the regime, "the Central American governments would have the option of deciding whether or not to accept to participate in a venture of that nature, at what cost, and in exchange for what commitments on the part of the United States." But if the United States is not going to try to overthrow the Sandinista regime, "then Honduras could also define its position vis-à-vis the presence of the Nicaraguan exiles and the harassment they are carrying out against the government of their country." In Batres' opinion,

> My country should demand that clarification of the U.S. position, as well as of the positions of the rest of the Central American countries about the case of Nicaragua. And on the basis of an exact knowledge of the intentions of those allies, Honduras should restudy and redefine, if it has ever defined before, what is its national interest.

Calling for Clarification of the Honduran Position

In calling for Honduras to define its own interests and policy toward Central America and the United States, Batres and Meza protest that as the U.S. presence has expanded in Honduras and the region, Honduras has simply adopted what appears to be U.S. policy.[3] According to Meza,

> The Honduran government ought to begin by defining the national interests and objectives which it is pursuing in establishing a close political and military alliance with the United States.

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[2]Part of this quote is also used in Sec. IV. Elsewhere in Sec. IV, Meza implies it is not all the fault of the United States that this situation exists. "Perhaps the best thing that Honduran politicians could do to orient U.S. strategy to the benefit of Honduras would be to behave like allies and not like simple instruments of North American policy in the region."

[3]The interviews were conducted before Honduras co-signed with its neighbors the Central American peace-negotiations accord in August 1987—reportedly an important step for Honduras in the direction of exercising greater independence from U.S. foreign policy preferences.

> There cannot be a correct and intelligent policy toward the United States if a foreign policy based on national interests has not been previously defined.
>
> What Honduras has had up to now is a foreign policy that has been improvised and subordinated to U.S. interests. . . .
>
> The situation is doubly contradictory: The United States does not have a policy toward Honduras, that is to say, as a function of Honduras. And yet Honduras has made North American policy its own, and has turned it into its policy toward Central America.

Batres makes virtually the same assessment, then adds a pointed warning about its implications:

> In my opinion, as the presence of the United States in Honduras has become more visible, [the policy positions of] Honduras have come to resemble more and more strongly the positions of the United States. And as this resemblance has developed, it appears to be ever more difficult for Honduras to be able to adopt an independent line of action, which could eventually be more suitable for its interests.

Thus, he warns, "the present situation is very propitious for Honduran nationalist sentiments to be accentuated and repudiate what is happening."

DEALING WITH NICARAGUA IN THE SHORT TERM

The interviewees overlap in their analyses of the potential implications of possible future scenarios (see Sec. VI). But they part company over their bottom-line recommendations about Nicaragua. The interviews all indicate that there is considerable agreement in Honduras about the continuing need for some U.S. military presence there. "The area in which there is not consensus, and where opinions are divided," Alvarez notes, "is with reference to how far U.S. strategy towards Nicaragua should go."

For his own part, Alvarez does not hesitate to call for a "total and final victory" against communism in Central America. And he holds to the view that the "majority of Hondurans hope for and have confidence in a definitive victory of the United States over the Sandinistas, with the collaboration of Honduras and the rest of the democratic countries in Central America." Accordingly, the quicker the United States settles the conflict with Nicaragua, by means of a U.S. or preferably a multilateral military intervention, the better for Honduras, Central America, and the United States. This is in keeping with his view (discussed in Secs. IV and V) that the threat must be removed, because

"Central America is weak, and the United States cannot guarantee permanently and directly the security of the region . . . since its policy is very changeable with each administration."

While a strategy of deterrence against Nicaragua has been working since the early 1980s, only a "rapid, surprising, and paralyzing" military intervention can solve the problem once and for all and clear the way for long-term political stability, democratic development, and economic progress.

> Summarizing, it is indispensable to remove from power the Marxist-Sandinista regime that governs Nicaragua, so that the people may have the option and liberty to choose the government that it wants. We know that this situation is not going to come about by means of Contadora agreements or anti-Sandinista (Contra) action. . . . As a consequence, the only option is a combined military action of the United States and allied countries on the continent, especially from Central America and the Caribbean. . . . The United States should initiate a diplomatic offensive in order to achieve the multilateral support for this action that can now no longer be postponed.

Such action, he believes, is risky for Honduras but well worth trying. And he indicates that the longer the United States waits, the more likely U.S. options will be blocked, action will be costly, and victory doubtful.

In contrast, Batres reflects a line of thinking that prefers a strong effort to pursue the very courses of action that Alvarez has little faith in. All things considered, Batres sees no real choices for the United States other than to

> (a) overcome its internal divisions regarding how to proceed, and give massive support to the exiles so that they can penetrate and do battle inside Nicaraguan territory, or (b) effectively support the negotiation of some treaty that will oblige the Sandinistas to guarantee liberties inside Nicaragua and permit political struggle within that country.

As for his own country, Batres feels that Honduras has come to play too antagonistic a role in the regional conflict. Instead, Honduras should avoid being directly involved in war, stop "loaning" its territory to the Contras, and reduce the burden of defense expenditures. He would like to see a broadly based foreign policy consensus developed in his country, and he indicates three possible directions in which it could go: (1) Set a time limit for the Contras to move into Nicaragua; (2) turn absolutely neutral and entrust defense to the inter-American system and the United States, much as Costa Rica has done; (3) negotiate peace with Nicaragua. In any case, he raises the possibility that Honduras might wish eventually to "denounce the treaties that bind it . . . to the U.S. and ask that country's forces to abandon Honduran territory."

Meza is not as explicit in his interview about the policy measures he would prefer. But as a general principle he calls for "a solution in which the military as well as political elements are ably combined, but for sure always subordinating the former to the latter." And he shares with Batres an interest in avoiding direct Honduran involvement in war:

> Just as political elements by themselves are not capable of bringing about a definitive solution to the problems of the region, likewise the military elements alone cannot assure the desired solution.
>
> . . .
>
> In the short term, I believe that Honduran strategy as well as U.S. strategy ought to be directed toward resolving once and for all the conflict that is currently besetting Central America. To accomplish this it is indispensable to have an intelligent combination of political and military factors, but always trying to avoid the expansion of the war and, in the specific case of Honduras, trying to prevent the country from being involved in a direct and total way in the confrontation.

Meza thinks U.S. strategy is headed toward seeking a military solution that would be contrary to Honduran interests and strategy. Hence, "in this sense, both strategies cannot fully coincide" in the short term.

DEVELOPING HONDURAS AND CENTRAL AMERICA IN THE LONG TERM

Ending the threat posed by the existence of the Sandinista regime is only the first, essential step toward a comprehensive long-range approach to the region's security and development problems. Though the details of each interviewee's medium- and long-term perspectives may differ, all three are in agreement that Honduras and the region as a whole are suffering from structural crises whose solutions require a broad range of sustained political, economic, and social programs. In the words of Meza—words that Alvarez and Batres echo on their own—policy should respond to "the structural crisis as a whole."

> It must not be forgotten that the best security for Honduras resides in the intelligent combination of economic development with political democracy.
>
> . . .
>
> The strategy of both countries has to be directed toward resolving the great economic and social problems that are at the bottom of the grave political crisis . . . lashing the Central American isthmus.

The structural crisis is seen to have a socioeconomic core. Thus, right along with solving the problem of Nicaragua, Batres observes that "what is at bottom really necessary to contain the expansion of communism and avoid even worse evils for Central America is to improve the standard of living, education, health, nutrition, and other things for the people of Central America." The policy implications are clear to him:

> The United States and the other Western powers should undertake a coordinated and truly effective effort to aid the economic, social, and cultural development of our peoples. . . .
>
> While we continue being extremely poor, lacking health, education, and all basic knowledge, we will only be a burden for the Western world. And that is not convenient for anyone.
>
> . . .
>
> Development should be fostered in Honduras so that the Honduran people could feel that it really is worthwhile to risk what is being risked in defense of the democratic system.
>
> Otherwise the country could become convinced that, [given] the state of poverty in which it now lives, it's all the same [whether it lives] under a system with liberties or without them.[4]

The United States, according to Batres, thus has an "obligation" to grant economic and technological aid to its Central American allies, in order to prove that "the system of economic and political democracy is a superior framework." A case might be made that the United States is already providing substantial aid, but Batres objects that Honduras

> has not received any special treatment from the United States for economic development. Rather, the flow of additional aid coming to our country is represented by the construction of airstrips and highways for military uses, and by training, weapons, ammunition, and other supplies that in the long term are not going to mean anything beneficial to the Honduran people.

Alvarez, Batres, and Meza all emphasize the socioeconomic and political aspects of their recommendations. But they also all recognize a need for military assistance that will foster the continued professionalization of the military, in ways that support the further consolidation of democratic institutions led by civilians.[5]

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[4]Batres raises this theme in another part of the interview, where he says that "the Central American man who makes up this majority should be clearly conscious of why it is more beneficial for him to defend the democratic system than the totalitarian system—something that up to now does not seem very clear to him."

[5]Alvarez provides the most extensive discussion of U.S. military assistance and Honduran military development issues, including a brief but interesting comparison of such

Against this general background, Alvarez goes into great detail about his recommendations for U.S. policy. Wanting U.S. policies that will be reliable and respectful toward Central America for a long time to come, he proposes that the United States, Honduras, and other allies in the region implement a series of explicit, jointly developed plans:

- An Emergency Plan that would begin with the overthrow of the Sandinista regime and would enable a newly installed provisional democratic government to hold its own over the near term (i.e., over the first year or two).
- A Recovery and Development Plan for Central America (plus Belize, Panama, and possibly the Caribbean) that would cover the medium to long term.
- A Master Plan for the Integral Development of Central America in the long to very long term (i.e., twenty-five years).[6]

Ultimately, Alvarez says, "The integral development of Central America should be sought in order that the region becomes self-sufficient, that is, so it may slowly become less dependent on the United States, instead becoming a productive associate of the United States, . . . so that each day the region may be less of an economic and military burden to the United States."[7]

Each of the plans he outlines would entail a range of political, economic, social, and military actions. Each would also require growing, sustained U.S. involvement in the region, including large amounts of military and socioeconomic aid:

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issues in the 1960s and the 1980s: "During the 1960s the military relation with Honduras only focused on a specific aspect: preparing it militarily for the counterguerrilla struggle . . . leaving a series of holes that affected the integral development of the armed institution. In the 1980s the concept has changed completely; it has become a global focus looking for the integral development of the armed forces over the medium term." But he says there is still a lot to be done, and he mentions specific problems and tasks.

[6]The concept of "integral development" is very important to many Latin American planners and policy analysts. Though not easy to define, it tends to have a strong corporatist content and has been used by both left- and right-leaning leaders. In this regard, one task Alvarez repeatedly recommends is to "initiate an administrative restructuring in the countries of the region where it would be applicable. To a greater or lesser degree all maintain a mixture of modern and archaic organizations in their governments, which makes them very deficient in the area of administration, incapable of absorbing the aid they need or channeling it or using it in the most profitable form." See Sec. IV for additional comments by Alvarez about administrative development in his country.

[7]The point that Honduras and Central America represent a burden for the United States is made not only by Alvarez but also by Batres, as quoted earlier. Yet this contrasts with another point emphasized by Batres (see Sec. III), i.e., that the U.S. presence there imposes a burden on Honduras.

> The United States should have a growing participation in Honduras and Central America in the next ten years, until the area has the necessary mechanisms, system, and self-sufficiency in the political, economic, and military areas for facing regional threats, and the ability to form a true and effective part of the defense system of the American continent, in order to relieve the United States of that heavy responsibility of protecting this part of the continent.

The tentative details of Alvarez's plan for the reconstruction and development of the region bear strong resemblance to the Alliance for Progress and the Caribbean Basin Initiative. He strongly recommends regional integration through the revival of institutions like the Central American Common Market (CACOM) and the Central American Defense Council (CONDECA). Alvarez particularly emphasizes the need to build an effective "regional military defense and security system" in Central America that can contribute to the broader task of hemispheric defense in alliance with the United States.

Alvarez's recommendations are briefly summarized here because so much of his interview is devoted to providing them. We do not know what Batres and Meza might think about such recommendations, or what their own would be. They may have equally detailed and very different ones in mind, but the interviews with them did not elicit as detailed a response in this respect.

PROS AND CONS OF REGIONAL STRATEGY

None of the interviewees treats Honduras in isolation from its Central American neighbors, and the interviewees all agree that the United States should have a better strategy to develop the region as a whole. As Alvarez says, "The countries cannot be seen individually in relation to this problem [of Nicaragua]." They must be seen "as a region as a whole."

In this respect, Alvarez, Batres, and Meza all regard the 1960s Alliance for Progress as the most positive period in U.S. policy toward Honduras and its neighbors. This may be largely because of the socioeconomic assistance programs it set in motion in connection with democratic political objectives—something the interviewees would like to see happen again. But beyond that, as Batres points out, the Alliance for Progress also had symbolic political value because it involved a consultative decisionmaking style that is rare in U.S. relations with the region—a style, he might also have added, that is strongly preferred

in Honduran political culture: The Alliance

> was forged, not individually by the United States, but rather in a meeting of all the Presidents of the Americas. This joint discussion, negotiation, and decision regarding the problems seem to be the main thing that makes that moment different from other periods in Honduran-North American relations, in which the Honduran point of view is almost never sufficiently taken into account.[8]

As for recent times, Batres feels that "our country should not have acted at any time in a form independently of the other Central American countries." Honduras should have insisted on a truly regional (i.e., Central American) strategy to halt communist expansion in Central America and conditioned its own participation on the active involvement of the other "as-yet-uncontrolled" countries in the region. It should then have taken its case jointly to the OAS and the United States.

Yet in contemplating the prospects for a future regional strategy built around socioeconomic as well as political and military objectives, the interviewees point out that any U.S. efforts must attend to the fact that the Central American countries are all substantially different from each other—Honduras being particularly sensitive about El Salvador. As Alvarez says, "We should not forget that within such a universality, we have diversity, individualism, and our own characteristics which should be known and well defined by anyone who wants to help us." And Batres cautions about the need to "examine the possibility that the region's countries could reach agreement on a regional strategy":

> It is a reality that for the United States, in economic as well as military [matters], the positions of the Central American countries may seem from afar [and on the surface] to be close to each other. [However,] at bottom and close up, they may be seen to be very far apart from each other.

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[8]Alvarez, a strong advocate of joint consultation (as discussed in Sec. IV), also notes, "During this period a true closeness existed between the two governments, as well as trust and good will about working together. There was a feeling of sympathy and great appreciation for the United States. This situation provided a glimpse, at least at that time, that an emerging and permanent friendship (or alliance) between the two nations was beginning. But unfortunately it climaxed and later decayed, leaving behind yet another effort that did not reach its goal, like another project that was abandoned for not being viable, in spite of the good will." Meza, who does not directly discuss the Alliance for Progress, seems to be making a related point when he recommends for the future that the United States pursue "a policy of alliances and mutual support that considers Central American countries as allies of the United States and not just as instruments subordinate to the demands of Washington: Make the Central American countries feel like respectable members of the international community and not just simple back-yard peons of the United States."

> It should not be ignored that the national interest of Honduras may be, and in reality is, different from that of El Salvador or Guatemala, in economic as well as military aspects. To assume that they all coincide could be a very costly error.
>
> In my opinion, for the United States to be able to develop a suitable and fruitful policy in Central America, it is essential that it [the United States] begin by recognizing the existence of these different, and sometimes conflicting, situations, attitudes, and viewpoints among the countries of Central America itself.

Thus, he concludes, "developing a regional strategy for Central America may be a much more difficult task than it would at first appear to be."

VII. A FINAL WORD ABOUT THE INTERVIEWS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

What implications for U.S. policy and strategy may finally be drawn from the interviews? Of what significance are they?

The interviews as a whole do not lead to a precise, uniform set of recommendations about what the United States should do in the region. They share some general themes and principles, but they also diverge over specific issues. Thus different readers may derive different conclusions about the implications for U.S. policy and strategy. Nonetheless, to look to the interviews only for guidance about specific policy issues such as the Contras or Contadora would be to overlook a deeper message.

As one of the interviewees noted at the beginning of this study, our friends and neighbors to the South do not look at the world and evaluate their situation the same way we do. They know this better than we do; and they want to be allowed to explain, they want to be listened to—for our sake as well as their own. A central message that emerges from these interviews—a message all the more significant because it spans the ideological spectrum—is that *patterns of perceiving and thinking about the United States are shifting substantially in the region, in ways that are likely to pose new long-range difficulties for U.S. interests in both bilateral and collective security relations throughout the hemisphere.*

There is much in the three interviews worth heeding in relation to this message. Though they constitute a small sample and come from only one nation, they appear to be indicative of broader trends in strategic thinking in the region. It would be a mistake to dismiss the interviews as expressions of "the usual Latin griping" about the United States, as though they contain nothing new. It would also be shortsighted to dismiss them on the grounds that they were prepared during 1985–86 and are thus too dated to be relevant to analyzing the situation in 1987–88 and beyond. If anything, some of the themes raised in the interviews are being fulfilled through recent events, notably the decision by the Central American nations' presidents to sign their peace-negotiations accord in Guatemala in August 1987 and the anti-U.S. demonstrations in Honduras following the forcible extradition of drug smuggler Juan Ramon Matta Ballesteros in April 1988.

A FEW KEY FINDINGS ABOUT HONDURAS

The interviews substantiate the enduring and pervasive importance of nationalism as a prism for looking at local security and development issues. As discussed above, the nationalist thinking in Honduras, as elsewhere, revolves around a set of core principles about national dignity, sovereignty, and independence that are rooted in a set of personal cultural imperatives about respect, pride, honor, and dignity. An implicit agreement on and adherence to these principles seem to explain how individuals of such diverse ideological orientation as Alvarez, Batres, and Meza may nonetheless end up holding many similar perceptions, especially on issues that are critical of the United States.

This nationalism and the historical experiences underlying it profoundly color threat perceptions. As a result, Nicaragua does not appear to be a threat that galvanizes nationalist sentiment in Honduras. In contrast, the historical threat from El Salvador, the presence of the Contras in Honduras, and the conduct of the United States all arouse strong nationalist concerns. A Latin American nationalist cannot but see the United States as part of the problem, even though he may also think it is part of the solution.

Despite the benefits Honduras obtains from U.S. involvement, the interviews illuminate a growing sense of the costs and risks for a small country to become heavily involved with the United States as an ally regarding an external threat that the small country shares to a lesser degree and that the United States seems unable to handle directly in an effective, timely manner. These costs and risks are heightened by the perception growing in Honduras (not to mention the rest of Central America) that the United States has become an unreliable, inconstant, and inconsistent ally that often mistreats its security partners and clients.[1] As a result, our local allies now feel they should fear U.S. abandonment, perhaps more than they used to fear U.S. domination.

Finally, the interviews warn about a slowly growing, unexpected potential for anti-Americanism in a country that has never been anti-

[1]The evidence from this study is inconclusive, but the following may be worth noting. Style of treatment seems to have an important effect on perceptions, and it may well be that the style of U.S. involvement has more important effects on local perceptions than do the scale and/or substance of U.S. programs. While it is difficult to disaggregate and measure effects in terms of these three dimensions of U.S. involvement (style, scale, and substance), the interviewees are clearly sensitive to issues of style. They also all call for U.S. assistance on a larger scale. In so doing, they reflect a common assumption that the effects of U.S. involvement are linear, i.e., the more U.S. involvement the better; or according to others, the less the better. However, the relationship may actually be curvilinear: relatively "moderate" levels of U.S. political, economic, and military involvement may have more favorable and fewer adverse consequences for U.S. interests at the local level than would "high" or "low" levels of U.S. involvement.

American. The respondents all complain of incidents of arrogant and ignorant behavior by U.S. officials who neglect Honduran interests and aspirations as a nation, and treat it narrowly as a piece of territory to be used as a tool of U.S. policy. For the time being, this perception is balanced by the fact that the respondents also generally regard the United States as a welcome and needed ally. However, the new potential for anti-Americanism, which derives in part from the presence of the Contras in Honduras, is considered likely to grow in case of a prolonged, ineffective, large-scale U.S. military presence in Honduras that seems to lead nowhere vis-à-vis Nicaragua. The interviewees foresee that this kind of U.S. presence would have more adverse effects on Honduras and Central America than would any other likely scenario.

RELATED TRENDS IN STRATEGIC THINKING IN LATIN AMERICA

The implications of the interviews are not limited to Honduras; they relate to broader trends in strategic thinking in Latin America. While this study has not involved substantial research on these trends, a few observations may be worth offering.[2] Indeed, with perceptions like those discussed above taking hold in Honduras—a nation that is relatively close to the United States and isolated from the rest of Latin America—one should wonder what is happening to security perceptions elsewhere in the region.[3]

Strategic thinking appears to be entering a new phase, not just in Honduras but throughout Latin America. And leaders in the region seem increasingly resolved to go their own way, independent of U.S. policy, and to pursue intra-Latin American over U.S.-Latin American approaches to regional security problems. This is reflected particularly in:

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[2]Some of the observations offered below are drawn in part from the author's experiences as a participant in a series of seminars on The Future of Collective Security in the Americas, organized by the World Peace Foundation under the direction of Richard Bloomfield.

[3]It might therefore prove useful and illuminating to conduct interviews like those of this study with selected elites in other countries in the region. Occasional U.S. press comments by varied Central American elites indicate that the interviews with Alvarez, Batres, and Meza reflect broader trends—e.g., the comments about potential U.S. unreliability that appear in the interview with Col. Sigifrido Ochoa of El Salvador, "A Voice of Dissent from the Salvadoran Military," *The Wall Street Journal*, Friday, July 17, 1987, p. 15, and the brief quotes from various Central American leaders included in the article by Lally Weymouth, "Dim Hopes for Contras, Say Region Leaders," *Los Angeles Times*, Part V, October 12, 1986, pp. 2, 6.

- Shifts in perceptions about the United States as a power and ally.
- Shifts in views about collective security in the region.

Changing Perceptions of the United States

As discussed earlier, most Honduran as well as other Latin American analyses of U.S.-Latin American relations typically start from observations about the gross asymmetry of power. Whether this is cause for admiration or resentment, the ensuing Latin American perceptions of U.S. involvement in the region have traditionally been double-edged, filled with ambivalence and "compatible contradictions"—a classic example being the "love-hate" disposition toward the United States. At the same time, two key aspects about the United States have rarely been doubted within the region: the gross magnitude of U.S. power abroad and the quality of life within the United States—perhaps the touchstones of asymmetry.

Strategic thinking in the region about the international and domestic conditions of the United States appears to be shifting substantially, such that asymmetry is being viewed differently in both its quantitative and qualitative aspects. To varying degrees, increasingly negative perceptions are taking hold about U.S. power, as discussed in the preceding sections. In addition, the spread of debt, drugs, and other forms of domestic disarray and dissolution within the United States are increasingly perceived as signifying a decline in the quality of life and the moral authority the United States has traditionally represented.

None of this means that the perceived asymmetry of power has declined dramatically. It hasn't; many Latin American thinkers continue to view the United States as awesomely more powerful than their own countries. But the perceived decline is substantial. Accordingly, U.S. vulnerabilities seem to be growing faster than U.S. capabilities, confidence in the United States is eroding, regional and international political dynamics are thought to be unusually fluid, and policy reassessments are occurring throughout the region.

The argument has consequently appeared among some Latin American political and intellectual elites that as the U.S.-Latin American asymmetry declines, a new sense of greater equality may take hold and open the door to better forms of U.S.-Latin American partnership. One may hope this will be the case, but less optimistic implications for U.S. interests seem at least as likely. Latin American perceptions about the relative decline of U.S. power in the region and the world, and related perceptions about the prospects for strengthening the Latin American countries' own national conditions according to nationalist

principles, seem to be strengthening local interests in exploring and developing other options, particularly ones that emphasize Latin American solidarity independent of the United States. In this context, partisan interests may find new opportunities to vent established resentments toward the United States.

Changing Visions of Collective Security in the Region

While the interviews in this study focus on Honduran concerns about bilateral security relations with the United States, they occasionally put those concerns in a collective security perspective. This occurs particularly in the discussions of scenarios about a possible multilateral military intervention or political negotiation to settle the conflict with Nicaragua. The interviewees observe that some kind of collective security approach to solving the region's problems may well be desirable, but also that differing national interests are likely to militate against achieving a regional strategy.

There is a deeper consideration, however, that is not explicitly addressed in the interviews: The very concept of collective security—what it means, how it should be approached, who should bear responsibility—is being subjected to substantial review and revision throughout Latin America. The low-profile struggle currently developing about rival visions of collective security may be one of the more important (and least analyzed) trends affecting the evolution of the regional conflict environment.

Three currents of thought appear to be at odds: One, traditionally favored by the United States with varying degrees of support in the region, has upheld the vision of building a united hemisphere, an inter-American collective security system—what might be termed "One Americas"—on grounds that the United States and its neighbors face common threats and share many Pan-American values, interests, and needs despite the diversity of national characteristics and interests. According to this vision, the United States should play a leading role in the region and accept a heavy share of the responsibility for regional security and development (with the unfortunate presumption sometimes added in some U.S. versions that Latin American governments and leaders are likely to behave irresponsibly).

A rival vision, which many Latin American political and intellectual elites have long harbored, has aspired to eventually create an integrated Latin American system that is relatively independent of, if not separate from, the United States—"Two Americas"—on grounds that the Latin American countries (especially the Spanish-speaking ones) share cultural values, national interests, and political needs that

are different from those of the colossus to the North. This vision—really more a strong sentiment than a fully articulated concept—calls upon the Latin Americans to assume greater responsibility for themselves. In some highly nationalistic versions that focus on past incidents of U.S. intervention, the United States may be viewed more as a threat than an ally. Accordingly, Latin America would best protect its interests and develop its own identity if it could go its own way.

A third vision, perhaps the most complex and pragmatic of the three, recognizes that the traditional inter-American security system is in demise, sees little interest in reviving it, and sympathizes with the long-range goal of an integrated Latin America that can act independently. But this vision emphasizes the distinctiveness of different subregions (e.g., Central America, the Eastern Caribbean, South America) and favors letting ad hoc, subregional mechanisms arise to take the lead in solving local security problems. This vision—"Many Americas"—seems to contain the greatest ambivalence of the three toward the United States. Its proponents may aim to work independently and constrain U.S. power, but at the same time they also may want to engage U.S. cooperation and avoid hostility toward the United States.

None of these three visions is *a priori* in conflict with the others; their relationship depends on the version and time horizon under consideration.[4] For the most part, however, the first two visions contradict each other, and the struggle between them is historic and deeply rooted. The "One Americas" approach has generally prevailed, as epitomized by its crowning achievements from the 1940s through the 1960s, namely the Rio Pact, the OAS, and the Alliance for Progress. During that period, positive aspects of the "Two Americas" vision helped motivate the movement toward Latin American economic integration; but as a security perspective with potentially negative implications for U.S.-Latin American relations, it lay relatively dormant except on the left, as seen in some of Fidel Castro's revolutionary rhetoric.

Since the mid 1970s, the "One Americas" vision has steadily lost ground and the "Two Americas" vision has gained some strength across the ideological spectrum, to the point where U.S. support for Great Britain during the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas war provoked some sentiments within the region toward establishing an OAS without the United States. Meanwhile, the "Many Americas" vision has been gaining even more strength in political and intellectual circles and through

[4]For example, steps toward economic integration in Central America during the 1960s and 1970s could be regarded as consistent with any and all of the three visions.

concrete mechanisms like the Contadora Group, the Cartagena Group, the Group of Eight, and the peace-negotiations process undertaken by the Central American presidents. In the period ahead, this third vision seems likely to dominate the terms of policy debate in the hemisphere about responsibility for collective security.

The interviews at hand do not specifically address these broad trends in collective security behavior, but they help raise the need for concern about them. To the extent that perceptions like those found in Honduras are taking hold elsewhere, the consequences for strategic thinking will affect not only U.S. bilateral security relations with individual Latin American countries, but also collective security behavior around the region. To the extent that collective security is important for the United States, careful assessments are needed not only of how the changing perceptions of U.S. power may affect local behavior, but also of how to relate to the redefinitions of responsibility occurring in the region in connection with the resurgence of democracy. Indeed, with so much disagreement in the region regarding military threat definitions, the commitment to political democracy currently appears to provide the strongest basis for even a limited U.S.-Latin American consensus on collective security.

Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WRITTEN INTERVIEWS

A. General Views about Honduras and U.S.-Honduran Relations

1. What are your key values and concepts about how Honduras should develop and achieve security?
   - historical view of Honduras
     - as a nation
     - as a part of Central America
   - nature and role of Honduran nationalism
   - role of the Honduran military

2. What aspects of U.S.-Honduran relations have been most beneficial to Honduras? What aspects of U.S.-Honduran relations have been most negative for Honduras? In what ways?

3. In thinking about the evolution of U.S.-Honduran relations in general in recent decades, including the present, in what time period would you say that these relations were most positive for Honduras?
   - positive effects for Honduras at the time
   - explanation as to why this type of relationship was so positive for Honduras

4. In what time period would you say that U.S.-Honduran relations may have been most negative or difficult for Honduras?
   - negative effects, errors, and risks to Honduras at the time
   - explanation as to why this type of relationship was so difficult or negative for Honduras

5. What aspects of U.S.-Honduran military relations have been most positive for Honduras? What aspects of U.S.-Honduran military relations have been most negative for Honduras? In what ways? Have these ever been discussed with U.S. personnel? Explain.

6. In thinking about the evolution of U.S.-Honduran military relations in recent decades, including the present, in what time period

would you say those relations had the most positive effects on the development of the Honduran military?
- — positive effects on Honduran military at the time
- — explanation as to why this relationship was so positive for Honduras

7. In what time period would you say that U.S.-Honduran military relations may have been most negative or difficult for the Honduran military?
   - — negative effects on the Honduran military at the time
   - — explanation as to why this type of relationship may be so negative for Honduras

8. Summing up, what seem to be the key factors and considerations, from the perspective of Honduras, that determine whether U.S. involvement has positive or negative effects on Honduras?

9. Also, what seem to be the key factors (considerations, indicators) for determining, from the perspective of Honduras, whether the United States should play a larger or more limited role in Honduras' development and security?

10. How can the United States and Honduras, especially their governments and militaries, learn to work together in better ways?
    - — to promote Honduras' development
    - — to strengthen Honduras' security
    - — to be part of an effective regional strategy

B. Issues and Developments During the 1980s

During this period, the United States has accomplished, with Honduran agreement and support, a large expansion of the U.S. military presence in Honduras. The United States also began to increase its military assistance to the Honduran armed forces, and to use Honduras as a location for regional military training and activity.

11. In your view, what have been the ideas (the purposes, the strategy) that have been implemented?
    - — by Honduras
    - — by the United States
    - — in particular, what have been the key ideas that you would have preferred to implement?

12. How have you seen the U.S. expansion to be affecting Honduras? What have you seen as the main consequences of Honduras' increasing involvement with the United States?
    - for Honduras' nationalism and nationalist dialogue
    - for political party relations
    - for civil-military relations
    - for the institutional development of the Honduran armed forces
    - for the national security of Honduras
    - for the prospects for continued security cooperation with the United States

13. How adequate has been the information about Honduras on which the United States based its policy and strategy? In what respects has it been inadequate, or even in error?

14. How well have U.S. officials and personnel worked together with the Hondurans? How sensitive have U.S. officials and personnel been to Honduran realities, traditions, and concerns? What problems have arisen in this respect? What efforts have been made to resolve them?

C. Future Scenarios and Strategies

In case of the following scenarios (questions 15-21), what would be the probable effects:

- on Honduran nationalism, including possible anti-Americanism;
- on the Honduran political system, its politics, fragility, or stability;
- on the Honduran military;
- on the Honduran people;
- on the possibility of insurgency and terrorism in Honduras.

15. In case of a continued significant U.S. military presence in Honduras during the years ahead?

16. In case of a direct U.S. military intervention against Nicaragua, with some U.S. forces operating from bases and facilities in Honduras?

17. In case of a multilateral inter-American military intervention against Nicaragua, with some forces operating from Honduran soil?

18. In case of a large expansion of the Contra/exile forces to fight effectively, in the end possibly with U.S. air power or other outside military support?

19. In case of a continuation of Contra/exile forces strong enough to cause problems for the Sandinista regime but not overthrow it?

20. In case of prolonged, indecisive, ineffective U.S. efforts against the Sandinista regime from Honduran soil, while the Sandinista regime survives and the surrounding countries are militarized to contain it?

21. In case of an implementation of a Contadora-type agreement?

22. What do you think are Honduran expectations at present as to what the United States will do next with regard to the Sandinista regime? What are the Honduran apprehensions about what may happen to Honduras as a result?

23. If Honduras should do a great deal to facilitate U.S. action against Nicaragua directly or indirectly, do you foresee, as a result, pressure from Cuba? the USSR? other quarters?

23A.[1] Nicaraguan forces have been making incursions across the border with Honduras, in order to strike at Contra forces. What do Hondurans think about this? How does this affect local perceptions of Nicaragua? of U.S. strategy and U.S involvement in Honduras?

D. U.S. Purposes and Strategies in Central America and the World

24. What do you think the United States should really try to accomplish in Central America? What spirit should motivate U.S. interest in the region? In the short run? In the long run? In Honduras specifically?

25. What do you think of U.S. plans and actions in Central America as a whole? Have they been realistic? If not, why not? Have they been beneficial? If not, why not? Has the United States committed any serious errors? If so, please elaborate.

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[1]This question was added for the interviews with Batres and Meza; it did not appear in the interview with Alvarez.

26. Do you see any parallels between the U.S. effort in Vietnam and what the United States is doing, and might try to do in Central America? What are the similarities? What are the differences?

27. Are you concerned about the credibility of U.S. power and the reliability of the United States as an ally? If so, please explain. How does this concern affect U.S. roles in Honduras and Central America?

E. Recommendations for U.S. Policy and Strategy

28. At present, in what respects do the basic interests of the United States and Honduras differ? In what respects are their basic interests similar?

29. What are the key differences inside Honduras regarding U.S. roles and strategy in Central America and the U.S. presence in Honduras? In what respects is there consensus inside Honduras regarding U.S. roles and strategy and the U.S. presence in Honduras?

30. What would be your recommendations for U.S. policy toward Honduras, to improve its political, economic, social, and military conditions?

31. What would be your recommendations for Honduran policy and strategy to influence the United States to do what you believe is best for Honduras?

32. What would be your recommendations for U.S. and Honduran strategy in Central America?
    - — near term
    - — medium term

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