

NFHS Policy Debate Topic Proposal: Latin America

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Proposed Resolutions

1. Resolved: the United States federal government should substantially change its diplomatic engagement with one or more of the following: Bolivia, Cuba, Venezuela.
2. Resolved: the United States federal government should substantially increase its economic engagement with one or more of the following: Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Venezuela.
3. Resolved: the United States federal government should substantially increase efforts to promote democracy in Latin America.
4. Resolved: the United States federal government should substantially change its foreign policy towards one or more of the following: Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Venezuela.
5. Resolved: the United States federal government should promote increased political stability in Latin America.
6. Resolved: the United States federal government should substantially change its foreign policy towards Latin America.

Introduction

After six decades of diminished political relevance, Latin America is in the midst of a fundamental transition. Once a place where the United States and Soviet Union conducted a proxy war between “our dictators” and “their dictators” with precious little concern for the citizens living there, Latin America is discovering its own voice and pursuing policies that serve its own citizens as opposed to some regional overlord. As the Brookings Institute noted in 2011, “Latin American countries have all moved in recent years, from different starting points, away from the extremes of unbridled capitalism on the one hand and state-run socialist economies on the other” (Lowenthal, [www](#)). Partially due to this, Latin America was able to avoid the worst effects of the global economic downturn that began in 2008, to the point where Russell Crandall observed in 2011 that “the region has entered into an era of unprecedented economic, political, and diplomatic success. Most visibly, Brazil has emerged as an economic powerhouse, attracting foreign investment with an economy that grew 7.5 percent last year” (84). More recently, though, the traditional economic challenges that all nations face are coming back to Latin America in general and Brazil in particular, where *The Economist* noted in their May 19 edition that “A reassessment of Brazil’s recent performance is overdue. Between 2000 and 2010 Brazil’s terms of trade improved by around 25%; in the past five years private-sector credit doubled. Such tailwinds cannot continue to blow – and even with them Brazil has grown on average by only 4.2% a year since 2006. Only productivity gains, and more savings and investment, can provide fresh puff. Those are nowhere to be seen: IPEA, a government-funded think-tank, puts annual productivity growth for the past decade at a paltry 0.9%, much of it from gains in agriculture. Investment is only around 19% of GDP. Add soaring labour costs and a still-strong currency, and many analysts are lowering their sights for potential annual growth to about 3.5%”

These developments will create unique challenges for the United States going forward, at least in the near-term. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, American hegemony in the Western Hemisphere was virtually unquestioned, the wistful dreams of Cuba’s Fidel Castro notwithstanding. However, “Latin American countries are increasingly looking for solutions among themselves, forming their own regional organizations, that exclude the United States and seeking friends and opportunities outside of Washington’s orbit” (Crandall 84). While it remains a pretty certain bet that the United States will retain a degree of influence in the Western Hemisphere, burgeoning global powers such as China, Japan, and Russia are beginning to establish economic and political beachheads in Latin America. Thus, the next few years are likely to be the most critical for our foreign policy choices in the region, as we are likely seeing the peak of American foreign policy efficacy in Latin America. It is the choices that we make sooner rather than later that will determine whether these nations choose to pursue a path of cooperation or confrontation with the United States and, in so doing, indicate the future effectiveness of American policy in the region.

Key Issues

Timeliness

To a degree, a policy debate topic based on Latin America will always have some sense of timeliness about it, given the geographic proximity of the region to the United States. That having been said, right now there are a number of developments in Latin America that make it a particularly viable topic for academic debate right now.

First, as mentioned above, the economic picture of Latin America is changing. In a grand irony, an area of the world that had long been considered economically troubled managed to avoid the economic downturn at the end of the last decade that engulfed so much of the rest of the world and is still causing notable trouble in places like the eurozone. In fact, economic growth in Latin America has been at a relatively vigorous clip (between 4 and 6 percent growth in real GDP) over the last decade. Two Latin American nations (Brazil and Mexico) are among the world's twelve largest economies, and many economic prognosticators place Brazil on a path to be among the world's five largest economies by the middle of this century. As such, those nations are now beginning to act more like modern economies and are feeling more pressure from the various factors that are determinative of economic success, as seen earlier in relation to Brazil. Additionally, while there has been notable economic growth in Latin America states, the benefits of that have yet to reach the bulk of their citizens, as evidenced by the Gini Index, as calculated by the World Bank. Of the nations included in the resolutions for which a Gini Index has been calculated, most have scores in the 50s, compared to 41 for the United States and levels in the mid-20s for many Scandinavian nations (the Gini Index measures the level of economic inequality in a nation, scaled from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating perfect income equality).

Additionally on the economy, while the United States remains a key trading partner with Latin America, other nations are beginning to enter the scene with vigor and gusto. As Eric Farnsworth noted in an article from the February 2011 edition of *Current History*, "The US share of regional trade, meanwhile, is declining. From 2002 to 2008, the US share of exports from the region fell from 48 to 37 percent, while China's grew from 4 to 10 percent. This trend is likely to continue, especially as China locks in trade agreements for the long term." (58) One factor contributing to this trend is China's practice of negotiating commercial deals as commercial deals only, in stark contrast to the American tendency to attach strings to such deals, usually related to issues such as political reform, democracy promotion, or the like.

Finally on the economy, we should note the historical context mentioned previously. "Our dictators" tended to support authoritarian political systems with capitalist economies, while "their dictators" ran authoritarian states with centrally planned economies. When there was political change, either at the ballot box or the barrel of a weapon, that resulted in a regime one side or the other did not like, the

immediate impulse was to destabilize and, if possible, remove that government from power. Covert activities by the United States in Argentina to remove Salvador Allende and in Nicaragua to defeat the Sandanista government are well-documented, as are Soviet attempts (primarily via Cuba) to support insurgencies against pro-American governments in Latin America, most notably El Salvador. However, as the Brookings Institute has observed regarding some of the previously left-leaning governments, “the state ‘socialist’ ideological model, in short, is giving way in practice to an evolving attempt, different in each case, to combine the goals of social inclusion, community solidarity, and the integration of disadvantaged sectors with the use of capitalist instruments to expand economic growth.” (Lowenthal, www) This is even taking place in Cuba, where *The Economist* from March 24, 2012 noted that “Raul Castro... is trying to revive the island’s moribund economy by transferring a substantial chunk of it from state to private hands, with profound social and political implications.” (Special Report p.3) In contrast, other nations such as Argentina and Bolivia have made moves towards increasing nationalization of their economies, not to mention the transitions in Venezuela under Hugo Chavez. Simply put, on their own, the multidirectional economic transitions taking place in Latin America make this an opportune time for debate on this topic.

Another reason why now is a most appropriate time to debate Latin America is indirectly related to some of the economic issues alluded to earlier in this section. Other major powers such as China, Japan, and Russia, have shown increasing interest in Latin America over the course of the last decade. While the early initiatives have been aimed principally at building economic relationships, it is not a significant stretch of the imagination to see how those relationships could develop a political character, which would necessarily challenge the perception, if not the reality, of American primacy in the area. Related to this has been the movement of Latin American nations themselves to create their own regional associations to address issues that are seen as their own, examples of such being MERCOSUR and the Union of South American Nations, both of which exclude the United States. Another example of this desire on the part of some Latin American nations to go their own way has been seen in their resistance to the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The FTAA, designed to reduce trade barriers among approximately three dozen Western Hemisphere nations, was not concluded by the initial deadline of 2005, resulting in the negotiation of a series of bilateral trade agreements and the proposal to hold a new round of negotiation, which was done last April at the Sixth Summit of the Americas, held in Cartagena, Colombia. However, no significant progress was made on the FTAA at the recent summit.

This topic was last debated at the high school level during the 1987-1988 season. While elements of this topic were debated collegiately during the 1982-1983 (the resolution called for a prohibition on U.S. intervention into the affairs of Western Hemisphere nations) and 1999-2000 debate seasons (the resolution called for increased economic engagement with one of more of the governments of Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and North Korea), NDT has never debated Latin America as is being proposed here.

Scope, Range, and Quality

Because of its proximity to our border, Latin America will always be seen as an area of the world where the United States has a direct interest. Latin America has a total population of nearly 600 million people, including two of the earth's eleven largest nations by population in Brazil and Mexico. Among these nations is found a wide range of ideologies in government. Conservative political forces currently lead the nations of Chile (Sebastián Piñera), Colombia (Juan Manuel Santos, who previously served as the Minister of Defense under Alvaro Uribe), and Mexico (Felipe Calderon). However, by the time this paper is discussed at the NFHS Topic Selection, Calderon's National Action Party (PAN) will likely have lost the presidency as Mexico holds a general election on July 1, with polls indicating the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) candidate comfortably in the lead. Among left-leaning parties, there is a clear distinction to be drawn between more moderate governments (e.g. Brazil under the leadership of Dilma Rousseff of the social democratic Workers' Party) and what the literature refers to as the "contestatory left", generally measured by the degree of cooperation between the particular government and the United States. The governments of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, the Castros in Cuba, and Evo Morales in Bolivia would most naturally fall under the latter category. The significance of this is that even in interactions with the left-leaning governments, a "one size fits all" approach, similar to the practice of American foreign policy during the Cold War, is unlikely to be successful across the board and would have definite implications for relations between those nations, particularly if the resolution uses "Latin America" as opposed to identifying individual nations for inclusion in the topic area as was done on the military deployment topic in 2010-2011.

The proximity of this relationship manifests itself in the significant amount of trade taking place between the United States and the rest of the Western Hemisphere. Assistant Secretary of State Arturo Valenzuela testified before Congress "in 2009, total U.S. merchandise trade between the U.S. and Latin America and the Caribbean reached \$524 billion and 40 percent of Latin America and the Caribbean's exports flowed to the United States, making us the region's single largest export destination. The Western Hemisphere, including Canada, absorbs 42 percent of U.S. exports and total trade with the hemisphere reached \$1.5 trillion in 2009" (Valenzuela, [www](#)). The geographic closeness is also apparent in the level of immigration between the Latin America to the United States, although some recent literature indicates that there may be now a rough balance between the number of immigrants coming to the United States and those returning to their home countries.

Additionally, there also appears to be this perception a Latin American nations have been perpetually impoverished and remain so in the present day. That view is empirically false, as evidenced by the United Nations Development Programme. According to that organization's Human Development Index (HDI), every Latin American nation (with the exception of Haiti) is categorized as possessing an HDI score indicating

at least medium human development, with Chile and Argentina characterized as having a very high level of human development. When looking at per capita Gross Domestic Product (adjusted for Purchasing Power Parity), nations such as Russia and Turkey can be found in the same range as the Latin American nations of Chile and Mexico while Iran is only marginally ahead of Brazil (CIA, [www](http://www.cia.gov)). However, the benefits of the economic growth have yet to lift all boats in Latin America and there are some questions about whether this growth will be sustainable in the years to come.

Clearly, the range of available cases on this topic will depend some on the precise wording of the resolution. A broader resolution, such as Proposed Resolution 6, is virtually boundless in the sort of plans that could *potentially* be topical, thus increasing the role that the word “substantially” would play as a limiting agent for the resolution. Admittedly, that is likely to initially increase the number of times negative teams will be forced to go for topicality early in the season as a way to combat affirmative plans that push the envelope. Proposed resolutions 2 and 4 are much more limited. In making the suggestion on what countries to include or exclude, this paper includes my thoughts on several candidate nations, an approach similar to that used on the Military Deployments topic paper.

Argentina – Not Included. Despite the fact that Argentina is one of the larger nations both in terms of population and economic power, relations between the United States and Argentina have been relatively uneventful. This coupled with the fact that Argentina lacks the power of a Brazil or Mexico in the region would seem to increase the difficulty of finding specific solvency evidence to support policy approaches.

Bolivia – Included. After years of steps to diminish production, coca began to return as a significant crop with the election of President Evo Morales, who had been heavily involved with the coca economy prior to his election as president. This, in addition to the left-leaning government of Morales, provides an interesting intersection of policy challenges for the United States which would render it suitable for academic debate. Additionally, with a population that is over half Amerindian and the acceptance of approximately three dozen indigenous languages that are recognized as official in Bolivia, it would seem that affirmative teams would have little trouble crafting advantage scenarios calling for the protection of indigenous populations in that country.

Brazil – Included. In terms of both population (192 million) and Gross Domestic Product (\$2.3 trillion, in PPP terms), it is quite difficult to exclude Brazil from any serious discussion of Latin American policy, unless a resolution focuses on those nations more antagonistic to the United States (Bolivia, Cuba, Venezuela). In fact, a good portion of the topic literature uses Brazil as a case study when examining the differences between moderate and contestatory left governments. Further, Brazil (along with Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico) has been identified by Conservation International as a “megadiverse country”, opening up a range of cases based on various environmental impacts. Additionally, past president Luiz Inácio Lula de Silva did receive a significant

measure of press coverage in Brazil, including a relatively recent feature on him on the CBS program *60 Minutes*, so debaters should have little problem developing enough of an understanding about Brazil to create intelligent arguments.

Chile – Not included. While the election of Sebastián Piñera gives Chile an elected right-leaning government, in contrast to most other Latin American nations, it does seem to create a challenge in an academic debate context. Because Chile is one of the more pro-United States governments in Latin America, a lot of potential issues are likely to be addressed between the two nations without a lot of controversy, which may make it difficult to find good harms evidence for affirmative plans. While it could be argued that Chile might be able to be used by the United States to exert leverage in the region, this depends on the relationship that Chile has with other Latin American nations. As an aside, it is interesting to note that Chile, according to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, is seen as slightly less corrupt than the United States and considerably more honest in its governance than nearly all other Latin American nations. (www)

Colombia – Included. While Colombia's struggles to control drug production and trade within would likely be enough to merit inclusion in the resolution, there have also been efforts to control terrorism in Colombia where American assistance might provide fertile ground for both affirmative and negative teams to find evidence and create arguments. More specifically, 2011 saw a shift in tactics and an increase in insurgent activity on the part of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Above and beyond that, Colombia has become the 4th largest oil producer in Latin America, now producing around one million barrels daily, helping to establish the country as part of the CIVETS (Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey, South Africa) group of emerging markets.

Cuba – Included. Similar to the drug trade with Colombia, there is a wealth of discussion on the issue of the Castro brothers and their leadership of Cuba that would be enough by itself to merit inclusion into the resolution. However, beyond that there is the fact that Cuba's population of 11 million makes it the largest nation in the Caribbean. Additionally, as the only nation to meet the World Wildlife Fund's guidelines for sustainable development, one might be able to craft cases using this framework to generate significant advantages regarding the environment. Of course, there will also be the option to run cases that propose to change or eliminate the embargo on the island nation. Finally, since Cuba has been such a focus of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America over the last half-century, finding literature will definitely not be a problem.

Ecuador – Not included. While there have been some issues in the relationship between the governments of the United States and Ecuador (the debt default of 2008, the decision of President Rafael Correa not to renew the United States' lease of Eloy Air Base in 2009, and the expulsion of the U.S. Ambassador to Ecuador in 2011, reciprocated in kind by the United States), it would be hard to build advantage scenarios around these issues that would be likely to outweigh negative disadvantages.

Additionally, the likely cases that involve Ecuador likely would depend on the United States advancing some sort of *quid pro quo* to achieve the desired reaction from Ecuador, for which solvency advocates would likely be difficult to find.

Mexico – Included. Like Brazil, Mexico's population (112 million) and Gross Domestic Product (approximately \$1.6 trillion in PPP terms) make it difficult to exclude in most attempts to craft a topic related to Latin America. Additionally, because of the shared border, issues such as immigration and drug trafficking will have a more direct effect on the United States. Beyond that, there is the added advantage that while novices may not know much about some of the countries on this list at the start of the season, all are likely to know enough about Mexico to be able to say something and craft arguments around issues in the Mexican-U.S. relationship.

Venezuela – Included. While not as large as Brazil or Mexico, Venezuela does have some other intriguing features that make it worthy of inclusion. First is its president. Simply put, Venezuela's leader Hugo Chávez seems to have appointed himself the mantle of being the main irritant to the United States in Latin America. As a result, cases that involve engaging this nation would require a bit of finesse in terms of crafting policy likely to be effective. Additionally, Venezuela is one of only two OPEC members located in the Western Hemisphere, which provides an additional angle that the other nations lack. Venezuela is also considered to be the classic case of a contestatory left government in Latin America, which serves as a good counterexample to nations such as Brazil. Finally, it is worth noting that Venezuela and Iran have some mutual ties, as evidenced by the visit of Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Venezuela in January 2012 (this is actually one of several visits between Iranian and Venezuelan leaders, as Mohammed Khatami made three trips to Venezuela during his tenure as Iran's president). While this would require some deeper investigation, there may be the potential to craft harms scenarios where Venezuela is used as a diplomatic lever against Iran. More recently (in fact, between the submission of the preliminary and final drafts of this paper), reports have surfaced that Chavez may be dealing with end-stage colon cancer and may not survive his campaign to win reelection in October. However, it also must be noted that this particular report is unconfirmed by Venezuelan officials and was based on a single source close to Chavez.

One benefit of a Latin America resolution is that novice debaters are likely to already possess a level of familiarity with some parts of the topical ground. For example, incoming debaters who have paid even a cursory glance at CNN, the *New York Times*, or a major news magazine are likely to have at least heard some about Cuba-U.S. relations, the drug-related violence that has engulfed Mexico (and involved the Mexican armed forces as an active combatant since 2006), Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, and the prominence of the environment. Varsity debaters should find issues such as the rights of indigenous peoples, the efficacy of state versus non-state action, and deeper discussions of environmental issues of sufficient interest to generate educational and interesting debates.

Harms Areas

Latin America offers a significant number of argument areas to the debater willing to seek them out, with many able to be employed on either the affirmative or the negative side of the debate. What follows is in no way intended to be an exhaustive list, but available harms areas include the following:

Capitalism – given the number of countries in Latin America (eight as of April 2012) that are members of ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas – a collection of states with socialist-leaning economies), the debate between capitalist and non-capitalist oriented solutions to policy problems is one that can actually be examined with some measure of empirical evidence. This will support the ability of teams to address the kritiks of capitalism from either side of the debate. Additionally, affirmative or negative teams should also be able to craft arguments that the adherence to the capitalist model inhibits the efficacy of the United States to engage other nations in the Western Hemisphere on key issues such as environmental protection and trade.

China – The question of China fits into a picture involving the foreign and trade policies of Latin America will provide a basis for advantages, disadvantages, and counterplans. A number of authors have been examining the increased role that China is playing in Latin America. As noted by Farnsworth above, some Latin American nations prefer trade with China to the United States given China's preference to keep commercial and political relationships more compartmentalized than the United States typically does.

This increased role of China in Latin America has also been mentioned by former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, where he writes, "In that context, China could also begin to play a more significant role in the post-American regional politics of the Western Hemisphere. As part of China's slowly emerging campaign for greater global influence, the PRC has initiated large-scale investments in both Africa and Latin America. For example, Brazil and China have long been trying to forge a strategic partnership in energy and technology. This is not to suggest that China would seek to dominate this region, but it obviously could benefit from receding American power, by helping more overtly anti-American governments in their economic development." (108) In essence, were China able to secure its economic beachhead in the Western Hemisphere, it would certainly challenge U.S. economic supremacy and would provide the support that Latin American nations may need to develop the backbone to tell the United States "no" as it regards to various issues within the hemisphere. Additionally, there is also the distinct possibility that the United States would attempt to play a "tit-for-tat" game and respond to China's movements in the West by responses in eastern Asia, creating the potential for conflict and miscalculation.

Democracy Promotion – For decades, democracy promotion, or at least the claim of engaging in democracy promotion, has been a central feature of American foreign

policy, particularly during the Cold War. Teams will certainly be able to question whether or not that focus on democracy promotion is beneficial. Beyond that, the rights-based orientation of Western notions of democracy can serve as the basis for kritiks such as Orientalism or other arguments based on cultural imperialism.

Drugs – The efforts on the part of the Mexican government in recent years to control flaring drug cartel violence serve as a reminder that Latin America has a decades-long history of being involved in drug production and trafficking. Impact scenarios here include the economic impacts of drug use, the rise of criminal networks (including the development of narco-terrorism), and the destabilization of governments. Negative teams do have the opportunity to run counterplans to legalize or decriminalize drugs, which could generate traction against “drug war” affirmatives.

Environment – There are several possible scenarios in play here. With six nations identified as “megadiverse countries” by Conversation International, Latin America has a larger portion of such nations than any other region of the world. Arguments about keystone species, speculations on the possibility of undiscovered medicines, and the like will certainly have sufficient evidentiary support to develop advantages.

Beyond the biodiversity angle, there are other issues that merit investigation, including renewable energy. As the online publication Renewable Energy World noted, “Brazil...has laid the groundwork to becoming an international force in wind energy. But the country has been a non-player in the solar industry with just one 1MW solar project under its belt. Now, the state government appears to be ready to make a major investment in the solar industry. According to Bloomberg News, Brazil’s state-run energy agency is set to introduce two significant policies that would allow utilities to receive tax breaks for large-scale projects and would let businesses and consumers sell electricity back into the grid.” (“Latin America Report”, [www](#)) Chile has already moved further along the solar road, as observed by Amanda Maxwell, Latin America Advocate of the National Resources Defense Council: Chile is increasingly tapping into solar energy. Solar energy is now powering schools, clinics, farms, tunnels, residential lighting systems and even neighborhoods in the Atacama region. In addition, six new photovoltaic systems totaling 706 megawatts recently began the environmental review process. (“Latin America Report”, [www](#))

As far as destruction of the Amazon Rainforest, teams may face tougher sledding. Amazon deforestation rates have been on a significant and general decline since 2004 (there was a slight increase in the deforestation rate in 2008) and was at its lowest level in 2011. As the BBC noted on January 1 of this year, “In the decade between 1996 and 2005, 19,500 sq km (7,530 sq miles) of jungle was lost on average every single year. The comparison is overused, but that really is an area about the size of Wales or New Jersey each year. It reached a peak in 2004 when more than 27,000 sq km was lost. Then, in 2004 Brazil declared war - it said it would cut deforestation by 80% by 2020. Seven years later and it has almost reached its goal. The latest figures, released just weeks ago, show

that 2011 had the lowest rates of deforestation since records began three decades ago - just over 6,200 sq km was cut. That's 78% down on 2004, still a lot of trees - an area the about the size of Devon, or Delaware - but a huge improvement." (Rowlatt, [www](#))

On the other hand, global warming remains a viable impact scenario for this topic. The Google search "Latin America global warming" returned over 16,000,000 hits. While the reduction in Amazon deforestation and emerging interest in sustainable energy may help to reduce the pace of global warming, a lot of attention was directed at the results of the June 2012 Rio+20 Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro. It is entirely likely that this conference will generate new policy proposals for the United States to consider going forward.

Hegemony – For decades, the United States' role as the dominant player in the Western Hemisphere was largely unquestioned. Now that the Cold War has been in our rearview mirror for some two decades, the world has more closely looked at whether our foreign policy actions are in accordance with what are typically American goals in diplomacy, such as increased democratization, economic liberalization, and freer trade. While still an essential actor in that region, other nations such as China, Japan, and Russia (particularly China, as evidenced above) have begun to develop their own relationships in Latin America which will serve to generate leverage against American ambitions in the Western Hemisphere. How the United States engages those challenges in the near term will determine our position in the world both in the short and long term. If the United States can retain its position in the Western Hemisphere and maintain a spirit of cooperation in the region, Latin American nations may be more likely to work hand in glove with the United States to address problems.

Indigenous People – The estimated indigenous population in the Western Hemisphere is between 40 and 50 million. While most have been integrated at some level into the culture or government of the country where they live, a few are still considered to be uncontacted peoples, whose precise status depends on where they reside. Affirmatives may seek advantages based on domestic modeling of foreign policy pressures placed on nations regarding their indigenous populations. Teams could also try to craft advantages related to the preservation of these cultures as being an important step towards preventing cultural genocide elsewhere. One particular group that affirmatives may look at are the Amerindians in Mexico linked to the Zapatista movement that was involved in armed conflict in the state of Chiapas during the mid-1990s.

Mexican Nationalism – The essential story behind this argument could go one of two ways: due to either Mexico becoming less dependent on the United States or increasingly frustrated with American meddling in their affairs, a more vigorous and antagonistic blend of nationalism emerges in Mexico, leading to cross-border conflict with the United States. Addressing one of these scenarios, former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski writes:

In the longer run, the potential worsening of relations between a declining America and an internally troubled Mexico could even give rise to a particularly ominous phenomenon: the emergence, as a major issue in nationalistically aroused Mexican politics, of territorial claims justified by history and ignited by cross-border incidents. Political and economic realities have forced Mexicans to sublimate historical memories of territory lost to the United States for the sake of more beneficial relations with the most powerful state in the Western Hemisphere and (later) the sole global superpower. But in a world where Mexico did not count as much on a weakened United States, incidents resulting initially from the cross-border narcotics trade could easily escalate into armed clashes. One could even imagine cross-border raids made under the banner of “recovery” of historically Mexican soil; there are historical precedents for such a transformation of banditry into a patriotic cause. An additional and convenient pretext could be the notion that anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States is tantamount to discrimination, thus requiring retaliatory acts. These in turn could lead to the argument that the presence of many Mexicans on the formerly Mexican territory raises the issue of territorial self-determination.” (108-109)

Trade -- This particular aspect of U.S. relations with Latin America is undergoing some change, as China’s entry into the market here has been noted above. Additionally, as noted previously, the United States has pushed for the creation of the FTAA for at some level since 1994, but has been unable to muster the support from Latin American nations necessary to institute this organization. The most recent failure came at the Sixth Summit of the Americas last April, which became more well-known for the extracurricular activities of the Secret Service than any substantial policy achievements. Affirmatives could put forth plans that address the primary objections of Latin America to the FTAA, paving the way for acceptance and implementation. Additionally, affirmatives could propose some other sort of broad based change, such as fundamental amendments to the trade relationships promulgated under either NAFTA or CAFTA. Finally, it is worth keeping in mind that if Cuba becomes one of the topic nations, a whole range of plans related to the U.S. embargo (which turned 50 this past February) would be in play, ranging from a tightening of the embargo to its total abolition. A couple of impact scenarios come to mind right away: one that involves the U.S. being able to access the resources of nations such as Venezuela when relations are normalized between the United States and Cuba and another that involves the outbreak of a trade war between China and the United States that ultimately descends into a military conflict.

Definitions

change

“make or become different”. Oxford Online Dictionary

“to cause to be different”. American Heritage Online Dictionary

democracy

“rule by the people”. Britannica Online Encyclopedia

“Government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives”. American Heritage Online Dictionary

diplomatic

“of or concerning the profession, activity, or skill of managing international relations”. Oxford Dictionaries Online

economic engagement

According to Miles Kahler and Scott Kastner, economic engagement is defined as “a policy of deliberately expanding economic ties with an adversary in order to change the behavior of the target state and effect an improvement in bilateral political relations” (www)

The basic causal logic of economic engagement, and the emphasis on domestic politics, can be traced to Hirschman. He viewed economic engagement as a long-term, transformative strategy. As one state gradually expands economic interaction with its target, the resulting (asymmetrical) interdependence creates vested interests within the target society and government. The beneficiaries of interdependence become addicted to it, and they protect their interests by pressuring the government to accommodate the source of interdependence. Economic engagement is a form of structural linkage; it is a means to get other states to want what you want, rather than to do what you want. The causal chain runs from economic interdependence through domestic political change to foreign policy accommodation. (Mastanduno, www)

foreign policy

“The diplomatic policy of a nation in its interactions with other nations”. American Heritage Online Dictionary

“Plan of action adopted by one nation in regards to its diplomatic dealings with other countries. Foreign policies are established as a systematic way to deal with issues that may arise with other countries”. Businessdictionary.com

increase

“become or make greater in size, amount, intensity, or degree”. Oxford Online Dictionary

“to become greater or larger” American Heritage Online Dictionary

Latin America

“The countries of the Western Hemisphere south of the United States, especially those speaking Spanish, Portuguese, or French”. American Heritage Online Dictionary

“Latin America is generally understood to consist of the entire continent of South America in addition to Mexico, Central America, and the islands of the Caribbean whose inhabitants speak a Romance language.” Encyclopedia Britannica Online

promote

“to contribute to the growth or prosperity of”. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary

“To contribute to the progress or growth of; further”. American Heritage Online Dictionary

should

“used to indicate obligation, duty, or correctness, typically when criticizing someone’s actions”. Oxford Online Dictionary

“used to express obligation or duty”. American Heritage Online Dictionary

stability

“The state or quality of being stable, especially: **a.** Resistance to change, deterioration, or displacement. **b.** Constancy of character or purpose; steadfastness. **c.** Reliability; dependability.” American Heritage Online Dictionary

“The state of being stable”. Oxford Online Dictionary

substantially

Note – as anyone who has coached or debated will know, several legal definitions exist that assign a percentage to this term. However, those definitions are often, by their context, limited to addressing the issue that was at bar. Thus, while a list of cases could cite substantially as meaning anything from 10 percent up to 90 percent, I will refrain from listing them here.

“to a great or significant extent”. Oxford Online Dictionary

“considerable in importance, value, degree, amount, or extent”. American Heritage Online Dictionary

towards

“as regards, in relation to”. Oxford Online Dictionary

“in the direction of”. American Heritage Online Dictionary

United States federal government

“The United States Federal Government is established by the US Constitution. The Federal Government shares sovereignty over the United States with the individual governments of the States of US. The Federal government has three branches: i) the legislature, which is the US Congress, ii) Executive, comprised of the President and Vice president of the US and iii) Judiciary.” US Legal.com Definitions

“The government of the United States, established by the Constitution, is a federal republic of 50 states, a few territories and some protectorates. The national government consists of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.” Word IQ.com

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