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The Inter-American System: An Evaluation

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THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM: AN EVALUATION

Adapted from lecture delivered
at the Naval War College
on 2 December 1963

by

The Honorable R. Richard Rubottom, Jr.

Writers and lecturers today have almost exhausted the lexicon of apocalyptic terms to classify and describe conditions in Latin America. 'One Minute to Midnight,' 'Race Against Time,' and 'Verge of Revolution'—these are samples of current titles for lectures, books, and articles. Big, black, bold-face type in the press, and video tape on TV only hours after the event, tell us of communist penetration, governments overthrown, military coups, violence in the streets, bombings of United States-owned industrial installations, and Americans being kidnapped. Unfortunately, these things are happening, and thus become newsworthy. However, this is not all! We may have to read the fine print, and even turn to the inside pages to find the other news, but some enterprising and discerning journalists are now reporting positive and more lasting developments which can more than match the negative ones. Just as the reporter should try to avoid distortion in presenting the news, so should the reader, listener, and viewer seek broad enough coverage to obtain a balanced version of what is happening to the south of us.

We need the facts, above all, without emotion. Our people are, for the first time, closely scrutinizing the unfolding drama in Latin America. What is more important, our people are beginning to sense their own involvement, in terms of their future destiny, in what transpires there. We can hope that the awakening is in time. In the past, except for the tourists who visited Mexico and the Caribbean area, all too few United States citizens had any direct interest in their southern neighbors. It is hardly accurate to say that they took Latin America 'for granted.' Actually, they have overlooked Latin America until recently. Of course, students were told about the Pan-American ideal, but with insufficient emphasis on the United States' role in the attainment of that ideal. Our people knew that coffee came from Latin America, but little did they know how the vagaries of the coffee market affected millions

of people south of the border. A coterie of scholars, journalists, businessmen and government officials, of course, have long striven to get more attention paid to Latin America by government and other sectors; but, with few exceptions, the small core of Latin Americanists was outweighed by their colleagues dealing with Europe and other parts of the world.

The Awakening. This situation has radically changed in the past few years. The public reads every day about the problems in and with Panama, Bolivia, Brazil, Guatemala, or any one of the other American republics. We read of the efforts of the Organization of American States (OAS) to deal with some of the more critical problems. We read that the Rio Treaty has been invoked by Bolivia in its dispute with Chile, or by Venezuela because of Cuban efforts to overthrow the Betancourt administration. Since 1961, we have heard much about the Alliance for Progress, certainly a notable step forward in the Americas. Cultural exchange between the American republics has brought us the finest musicians, artists, teachers, authors, and government officials at all levels from every country in the Hemisphere. Ours, returning the favor, have covered Latin America even to the remote interior towns. The spectrum has included presidential and other official visits, tours by the New York Philharmonic and Washington National Symphony Orchestras, tours by the Harlem Globetrotters and Little League teams—both playing before turn-away crowds—performances by Metropolitan opera stars and folk music composers, and countless others.

The Inter-American System. I have chosen to combine each of the above instruments, any one of which is worthy of several lectures in itself, into one all-inclusive designation: the Inter-American System. This responds to my conviction that progress in, as well as relations between, the American republics should be based on a carefully balanced and lasting endeavor. If we can harmonize these highly complex and delicately tuned instruments, that is, by defending Inter-American security through the Rio Treaty while strengthening the role of the Inter-American Defense Board; by deepening our understanding and practicing good will through adherence to the principles of the OAS; by making the gears of the Pan American Union, Secretariat to most of the System, turn more efficiently; by achieving sound social and economic growth through common effort under the Alliance for Progress; and by knowing and understanding each other better through cultural exchange and tourism; we can look to the decades ahead with hope for the progress of partnership in the Americas. In addition, those

who have only recently opened their eyes to the importance of the relations between the nearly half billion people of the Western Hemisphere, will comprehend why, in spite of the almost daily crises which meet the public eye, there is a pulsating rhythm of transition. This transition had to come. It follows a slow process of building which goes back to our independence eras. The forces for constructive transition are not without assets, in spite of the persistent efforts made by those who would change by destroying all that has gone before. Principal among these assets are the aforementioned instruments of the Inter-American System.

Contrasting Motivation. It is fair to state that the United States and Latin America* have not always had the same motives in constructing the System. When the principle of the equal, rather than the weighted, vote was accepted in the security and political instruments, Latin America had succeeded in eliminating the preponderant weight of the United States in hemispheric councils. For the United States, this meant that the fate of its future initiatives would depend on its capacity to obtain the backing of at least half of the twenty Latin-American votes, and on issues involving security under the Rio Treaty, at least thirteen such votes, since a two-thirds majority is required to approve these measures. Ideally, this could signify that all of the American Republics had come into maturity, all of them ready to stand on the fairness and equity of their positions when submitted to the test of principle. Practically, it meant that, despite all the evidence that could be mustered, including open, admitted attempts to overthrow neighboring governments, a communist Cuba could escape meaningful sanctions by nearly all Latin-American states and continue diplomatic relations until now with five of them—Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Uruguay.

Epic debates, at Bogotá in 1948 and 1960, at Rio in 1954, at Buenos Aires in 1957, at Washington in 1959, and at Punta del Este in 1961, have characterized the evolution of the economic instruments of the System. Latin America understandably wanted greater United States public assistance, comparable to the

*While it is usually misleading to treat 'Latin America' in the bulk, this is one context in which it is appropriate. due to the relatively unified positions, as shown by history, taken by Latin American governments over the years.

Marshall Plan. Not so understandably, Latin America seemed to expect the United States, whose economic strength had been founded on the money of European investors and nurtured on the private enterprise system, to be indifferent to the kind of economic climate being established in Latin America. In retrospect, one can see that Hemisphere development might have been expedited had a kind of bargain been struck then.*

Eventually, a compromise was reached in the Alliance for Progress which we shall discuss later. In the meantime, the Export-Import Bank of the United States and the World Bank did lend substantial sums to Latin America according to their business-like criteria. Investors, too, were attracted to Latin America as long as they were welcomed.

No more paradoxical contrast has emerged over the years than that pertaining to attitudes as to how best to attain representative democracy. The United States, from 1945 to 1947, and again during the Kennedy administration, 1961-63, was willing to go farther than all but four or five of its Latin American partners to support 'democratic' regimes, even in the face of leftward drifts, and to frown on rightist military coups. However, in response to a broad interpretation of the doctrine of 'non-intervention,' most Latin American governments have consistently preferred to stand by idly while constitutional governments topple, even while professing their commitment to democratic principles. Venezuela under Betancourt and Costa Rica have been notable exceptions to this practice, expressing their disapproval of coups by breaking relations with the regimes involved.

Politico-Juridical Instruments. The Organization of American States (OAS), chartered at Bogotá in 1948, gave practical expression to the Pan-American ideal which had burned unwaveringly since the independence era. This ideal survived the disillusionment of Bolivar and San Martín, the brutal tyranny of countless dictatorships, the bloody legacy of civil wars, and the acquisition by conquest and purchase of the Great Southwest by the United States. The OAS brought together in aspiring partnership twenty-one Republics. Whether one looks at their population, economic

*Latin Americans themselves may want to ponder whether their own national interests would have been advanced had the United States extended 'massive' assistance to such regimes as those headed by Perón and Pérez Jiménez.

resources, political institutions, or codes of law, they are dissimilar. Yet, the OAS was born and it has survived the hard tests of adolescence.

Perhaps all of us have expected too much of the OAS and its subordinate bodies. After all, these are instruments which can be no better or stronger than the individuals and governments who wield them. They contain noble language—pointing toward individual freedom, human rights and dignity, representative democracy, periodic elections, equal opportunity, peaceful settlement of disputes, nonintervention, and mutual security—but these are aspirations which have not yet been fully achieved in any member country, including our own.

However, it appears to me that the OAS is vulnerable on one point which may vitally affect its future. The point is: how to achieve a proper correlation between the doctrines of nonintervention and mutual security. These states achieved their quite understandable goal of effectively guaranteeing their juridical equality with the United States when we, first, adhered to the doctrine of nonintervention in 1933, and, second, accepted it in the Charter of the OAS in April 1948. However, the United States had witnessed, only seven months before in September 1947, the unanimous acceptance by the other American Republics of their individual and joint commitments under the Rio Treaty. This was our guarantee that Latin America would stand with us to repel aggression of any kind from outside the Hemisphere, including communist aggression. Otherwise, how could the United States, any more than a Latin-American State, have bound itself not to intervene in a situation where its own security, not to overlook that of the Hemisphere, might be threatened?

Security Instruments. At the Inter-American Conference on Problems of War and Peace, held at Mexico City (Chapultepec) in 1945, the American States agreed to consult with each other on common measures to be taken in the case of an act of aggression against any American State, whether committed by a non-American or an American State. The *new* concept was that such an act of aggression would be considered an attack against all the signatory states.

The Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, known as the Rio Treaty, was signed in 1947 and subsequently ratified by all 21 American Republics. The Treaty reaffirmed in Article 3 that 'an armed attack by any state against an American State shall be considered as an attack against all the American States.' It provides that the Organ of Consultation, which may be a meeting of Foreign Ministers, or the Council of the OAS acting for the Ministers, meet without delay to agree on collective measures to resist such an attack, and permits each member, until the Organ of Consultation does meet, to determine the immediate

actions it will take individually in meeting the attack. The important addition in this Treaty was the binding effect on all of the American States of any action agreed to by two-thirds of the member States. The comprehensive language of Article 6 of this Treaty permits resort to the consultation procedure in the face of *any* situation affecting Inter-American peace and security regardless of whether it takes the form of a direct armed attack. Article 8 of the Treaty lists the joint measures which may be taken as one or more of the following: (1) recall of Chiefs of diplomatic missions; (2) breaking of diplomatic relations; (3) breaking of consular relations; (4) partial or complete interruption of economic relations, including the severance of transportation and communication services; and (5) the use of armed force.

However, Article 20 provides that no State shall be required to employ armed force without its consent. The Rio Treaty makes no specific provision for standing armed forces under the control of the OAS or for joint command arrangements.

Thus, we have the circumstance of the Inter-American Defense Board, seated permanently in Washington, with the responsibility for planning the joint defense of the Hemisphere, yet without organic tie to the OAS and limited in its capacity to strengthen the security of the Hemisphere.

The Rio Treaty has proven useful in maintaining the peace in the Hemisphere, having been invoked more than 20 times. However, it has fallen short of attaining its full potential and has failed to prevent the intrusion of communism in the Hemisphere in the presence of Castro Cuba. Those who advanced the idea that the Rio Treaty had multilateralized the Monroe Doctrine have so far not been upheld.

A majority of the Latin-American governments (Peru, Colombia, and Guatemala would have gone farther) refused during 1959 and 1960 to take effective action against Cuba. There was the warning, which did not mention Cuba by name, against 'the acceptance of a threat of extracontinental intervention by any state' which was included in the Declaration of San José issued at the Seventh Meeting of Consultation of Foreign Ministers at San José, Costa Rica in August 1960. This Declaration also contained a warning to 'Sino-Soviet powers' to quit meddling in the Americas. The effectiveness of such warnings may be judged by the events in Cuba of October 1962, more than two years later.

Communist Cuba, no matter how errant and hostile, and except for unilaterally applied United States sanctions, continued its undisguised effort to export destructive revolution to the Americas by subversion and terrorism. It was only after an all-out effort by Secretary Rusk that the Castro Government was excluded from participating in the Inter-American System at the Eighth Meeting of Consultation of Foreign Ministers at Punta del Este, Uruguay, in January 1962. The same sanctions that had been applied against the dictatorship of Trujillo in the Dominican Republic in August 1960, at the Sixth Meeting of Foreign Ministers, were also applied. The OAS Council, however, had later recommended suspension of trade in petroleum, petroleum products, trucks, and truck parts with the Dominican Republic, an action which was never applied to Cuba and which, in any event, would have been of limited practicality because Cuba's source for these products had shifted to the Soviet Union.

Article 39 of the Charter of the Organization of American States, signed at Bogotá in 1948, has provided another security instrument for the Americas. Under this provision, meetings of Consultations of Ministers of Foreign Affairs may be held in order to consider 'problems of an urgent nature and of common interest to American States' and to serve as the Organ of Consultation.

At the Tenth Inter-American Conference held at Caracas in March 1954, the American States agreed that 'the domination or control of the political institutions of any American State by the international communist movement, extending to this Hemisphere the political system of an extracontinental power, would constitute a threat to the sovereignty and independence of the American States, endangering the peace of America, and would call for a meeting of consultation (under Article 6 of the Rio Treaty and Article 39 of the OAS Charter) to consider the adoption of appropriate action in accordance with existing treaties.'

The domination over the government of Guatemala achieved by the communist movement in 1954 created, in the view of many American States, a situation of the type contemplated by the Caracas Declaration. However, the Arbenz Government was overthrown before the meeting of consultation which had been called under Article 6 of the Rio Treaty could convene.

Even though signed in 1954, the anticommunist Caracas Declaration has not yet been tested; this, in spite of the advent of Communist Cuba. Indeed, it has hardly been mentioned at the many Inter-American meetings which have been held during the past five years. The main reason is that most Venezuelans have been resentful over the holding of the Tenth Inter-American Conference in their capital city during the administration of the military dictator Pérez Jimenez. Indeed, their representative at the Santiago Meeting of Foreign Ministers stated publicly that the Caracas Declaration should, in effect, be stricken from the record. Yet, it is ironic that their strong feeling has vitiated the very instrument which might have forestalled Castro communist terroristic attempts, violating every norm of the Inter-American System, to overthrow the Betancourt Government which replaced the regime of Pérez Jimenez.

An instrument which has clearly contributed to the security of the Hemisphere, notably in conflicts between the States, has been the Inter-American Peace Committee which was established under Resolution 14 of the Second Meeting of Consultation of Foreign Ministers at Havana in July 1940. It is not mentioned in the Charter of the OAS, and it has not always been utilized by the American community. However, the Committee has performed a useful role in helping to resolve a number of critical disputes.

Any judgment of the security instruments of the Inter-American System would have to be a restrained one. Certainly, there is good evidence to support the belief that major outbreaks of hostility between the American States are things of the past. It remains to be seen whether the other participants in the System will provide the starch, stamina, and sinew to carry out their responsibilities alongside the United States, for the protection of hemispheric security against outside aggression, particularly of the communist variety.

Socio-Economic Instruments. In 1948 the Inter-American Economic and Social Council (IA-ECOSOC) was created as one of the principal organs of the Organization of American States. While it met regularly for a number of years, with some countries, including the United States, designating full-time representatives with the rank of Ambassador, it never quite fulfilled the hopes which its founders held for it. This was due in considerable part to the fact that most Latin-American governments gave greater support to the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), an organ of the United Nations. The Secretary General of the

latter body, Dr. Raul Prebisch, a distinguished Argentine economist, supported Latin-American claims for much greater economic assistance to the public sector, although he did not deny an important role for private enterprise in Latin America. Dr. Prebisch has since been placed in charge of the preparation for the United Nations Trade and Development Conference which is to take place in the Spring of 1964 in Geneva. He has been replaced in ECLA by the distinguished Venezuelan economist and former Minister of Economy, Dr. Antonio Mayobre.

It was not until the latter part of the 1950s that the forces in support of a broader gauged attack on development problems began to gain momentum in the United States. Significant breakthroughs were achieved which paved the way for President Kennedy's announcement of the Alliance for Progress in March 1961. First, the United States in the Summer of 1958 threw its support behind the establishment of an Inter-American Bank, a Latin-American goal for half a century. After two years of negotiation, the bank opened for business in October 1960. It has made a phenomenal record since that time, lending upward of 800 million dollars throughout the Hemisphere, and already having established its credit rating to the point of being able to float its bonds in world financial markets.

In 1959, the United States gave its informal blessing to the creation of an informal body known as the Coffee Study Group. This led directly to the present-day International Coffee Agreement. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this achievement. There are other important commodity agreements, some of which affect Latin America, but none to the degree that this one does. The United States hopefully will ratify this agreement* and pass the necessary legislation to assume its commitments. While over the long run the agreement may help to remove the extreme fluctuations from coffee prices, it has a much broader objective than this. For one thing, coffee producers should be enabled to plot more carefully their production needs over the years and thereby avoid the heavy glut on the market which excess production in recent years has brought about. It is also hoped that European governments may be influenced to reduce the heavy import taxes which so sharply curtail consumption by their peoples.

*The Senate did so on 27 December 1963.

The United States and Latin America have worked together to achieve a breakthrough in market integration in this Hemisphere. The Central American Common Market is already in business with five of its members having eliminated tariffs on more than 95% of the items on their internal tariff list. There is also a small Central American Bank for Economic Integration which it is hoped will encourage efficient industrialization in that region.

The Latin American Free Trade Area (LAFTA), is moving more slowly, but it is meeting regularly, and hopefully will produce some long-term constructive results. Its headquarters are at Montevideo. Participants are Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Mexico, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

On July 11, 1960, President Eisenhower announced that the United States was prepared to extend its co-operation in promoting *social progress*, as well as economic growth, in the Americas. In breaking this new ground the President pledged that the United States would help Latin-American nations to develop their institutional and human resources, to strengthen the framework of freedom, and to gain a better life for those who were underprivileged, underemployed, and undereducated.

On August 8, 1960, the President requested Congress to authorize \$600 million to support the United States pledge (including \$100 million for Chilean earthquake relief). The Congress approved the requested authorization on August 31, 1960, just prior to the vital meeting in Bogotá, which was to adopt an Inter-American program for 'Social Improvement and Economic Development within the Framework of Operation Pan America.' This is known as the Act of Bogotá, of September 13, 1960.

So we see the stage set for President Kennedy's dramatic announcement on March 13, 1961 of the Alliance for Progress. It should be clear by now that no such plan could have been launched without careful advance preparation. Each of the instruments described above contributed to the establishment of a proper atmosphere for the Alliance. Even with the right setting, the Alliance still had to overcome inertia just in getting started. It has been slowly picking up speed, and it is moving in the right direction.

We must realize that the Alliance has charted a new way of life for most Latin Americans. They have committed themselves

as much politically as they have socially and economically. They have committed themselves to action, not just words. It is no longer sufficient to have tax laws on the books; now the taxes must be collected and accounted for. It is no longer enough to talk about better land utilization; now they must find a way for the woefully deprived peasant family to improve its total way of life. It is not enough to build the schoolrooms (and 8,000 were built in the first two years of the Alliance); now they must prepare the teachers to use them.

We are already seeing such impact as countries holding elections in order to restore constitutional government where, without the influence of the Alliance, no such constraint would have been felt. Whether in the political, economic or social sector, the improvements taking place are in the framework of consent, and not one of duress. However, we need have no fear that the Alliance will convert Latin America into a dull gray sameness. Diversity will still thrive.

As far as the United States is concerned, its position changed substantially in the space of a few years. To one who recalls the great debates in Bogotá in 1948, our participation in the Inter-American Bank and our attitude toward commodity problems represent radical departures from the past. Perhaps the greatest problem for this country is to curb its impatience while waiting for the revolution of ideas and spirit to take place which hopefully will transform Latin America. The fact that the Alliance is a balanced program in concept cannot assure that progress will be even throughout the Americas. The zeal which we feel to have the Alliance succeed cannot alone make it succeed. We must not assume that we possess the capability to accomplish things beyond our reach, let alone that we can work miracles.

However, we have learned better how to work in harness with our Latin neighbors. All of us now are sitting down with each other for the process of Annual Review. By this means we take stock of what has been done, look at what is being done, and plan for what will be done. These meetings are attended by officials of ministerial rank. At the first Annual Review in Mexico City in 1962, former Presidents Alberto Lleras Camargo of Colombia, and Juscelino Kubitschek of Brazil, were appointed to draft recommendations for restructuring the OAS to enable it to play a more effective role in promoting the Alliance.*

*Recently the Organization of American States approved the establishment of an Inter-American Committee for the Alliance for Progress, under the Chairmanship of former Minister of Finance Carlos Sanz de Santamaria of Colombia, and made up of nine full-time technical advisers. The United States representative on the Committee will be the former Alliance for Progress

It is fitting at this point to quote from Dr. Lleras Camargo's report on the Alliance for Progress:

Even with all the deficiencies noted, the Alliance for Progress has made an extraordinary impression upon the old, hardened crust of Latin-American society that is no less important than the change in attitude of the people of the United States toward the problems and situations of the remaining countries of the Hemisphere.

Cultural Instruments. I doubt that all of the other instruments of the Inter-American System can be brought into harmony without the benefit of cultural interchange. Improvement in the broad field of education is, of course, a principal goal of the Alliance for Progress, and has from the beginning challenged the best efforts of the OAS. The United States Government has for more than 25 years supported cultural exchange as a main segment of its foreign policy. Going back to the Fulbright Act of 1946, we have seen the Congress provide funds, usually without controversy, to support United States programs.

The OAS itself is now sponsoring hundreds of exchange scholars each year between the American Republics, as a result of action by the Committee of Presidents in 1956-57. OAS efforts, and those of the member states, reach back at least to the Buenos Aires Cultural Relations Convention of 1936. One of the three dependent organs of the OAS, the Inter-American Cultural Council, meets in Mexico for several months each year.

Not to overlook the role of the individual, each United States citizen who travels south of our borders, and each Latin American who enters our country, becomes an instrument, perhaps the best, to advance the Pan-American ideal.

Conclusion. The instruments of the Inter-American System have bravely charted previously unknown areas of human endeavor. When inclined to join the detractors of the System, one should ask himself: Where would the Americas be if we hadn't tried? The effort itself is constructive and brings a needed sense of at least partial fulfillment to the Member States, even with their differences. After all, what person and what State can claim omniscience and omnipotence. Certainly, we should strive to make the System work better. Then, as our minds reach out to learn, as our hearts reach out to feel, and as our spirits reach out to understand—if we are successful in our quest, we shall achieve true partnership, progress, and peace in our Hemisphere.

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

The Honorable R. Richard Rubottom, Jr.

The Honorable R. Richard Rubottom, Jr. is presently assigned to the Naval War College as State Department Advisor.

Mr. Rubottom is a native of Texas and received his education in that state, graduating from Southern Methodist University, obtaining the M.A. degree there, and doing later graduate work at the University of Texas. After working in business, and at the University of Texas, and a tour of five and a half years' active duty in the Navy during World War II, Mr. Rubottom entered the Foreign Service in 1947.

He has held a variety of positions in the Department of State and on foreign assignments, including that of Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, and just before coming to Newport in October 1961, Ambassador to Argentina.

He holds the rank of Career Minister in the Foreign Service.

Mr. Rubottom will leave the Naval War College July 10 upon his voluntary retirement from the Foreign Service to assume the position of Vice President for University Life at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.