AFTER THE COLD WAR; IN THE WAKE OF THE TERROR

BUSH II IN THE AMERICAS

This is the second in a series of three reports that examine U.S.-Latin American relations after the Cold War. As we go to press in late October, there is a compelling sense that to the phrase "after the Cold War," we must add the words "in the wake of the terror." While as Kate Doyle and Adam Isacson comment in this report, "an image of our *new* new world order has yet to emerge," there are some early signs that the Bush administration's attitude toward Latin America may be shifting, and that these shifts could have a significant effect on things to come.

The original assumptions behind this report still hold: The United States, having "won the Cold War," has become more confident than ever of its role in the region, both as the powerful enforcer of a stable, U.S.-dominated hemispheric order, and also as an exemplar for the rest of the region, a country whose institutions represent the future. While this dual role—enforcer and exemplar—existed during the Cold War, it was reinforced by the collapse of Communism and the apparent validation of "free markets and free elections" as the defining characteristics not only of the "good society," but also, perhaps, of the "only possible society." The ways in which this enforcer/exemplar role is modified and/or reinforced over the coming months and years will be shaped by the ways in which the current crisis plays itself out. While some analysts are hopeful—immigration advocate Michele Waslin hopes the administration's new "multilateral" stance signals a willingness to deal with conflicts on a regional basis—as we write this, it is much too early to tell.

We can, however, note some warning signs: Following the spontaneous national mourning of September 11, there have been wholesale attempts by those in power to link a wide range of dubious measures to a popular "war on terrorism." Restrictive immigration provisions have been included in new anti-terrorism measures; the administration floated the idea of waiving human rights conditions on military assistance; the drug war and even fast-track trade authority have been touted by their proponents as part and parcel of "America's new war." If the United States remains "at war" for a substantial length of time, we may, indeed, be entering a darker period of U.S.-Latin American relations.

U.S. enforcement of its regional interests is now most visible in the Andean region, especially Colombia. The region remains a tinderbox of political and military/paramilitary conflict and, as such, gets the lion's share of coverage in this report. As the "war on drugs" becomes the "war on terrorism," this shift in focus could, as analysts Kenneth Sharpe, William Spencer and Winifred Tate all fear, exacerbate the military conflict in the region. That said, we must note that even before September 11, observers had been reporting a sharpening U.S. role in the militarization of the Andean conflict.

Meanwhile, Washington's promotion of "free markets and free elections" has, since the Cold War's end, involved a tandem policy of "democracy promotion"—now under wraps, reports Elizabeth Cohn—and the promotion and enforcement of "free trade." This latter effort, "a very explicit and direct action to shape the markets of the Americas," is not, argues Arthur MacEwan, a simple and principled engagement with the "free market," but an effort to promote the interests of U.S. business in the region. This effort, notes MacEwan, has generated its own cross-border opposition, an opposition that may play an important role in shaping the future of U.S.-Latin American relations. In the wake of the terror, it is in this broad-based nonviolent opposition to the rule of transnational business that we place our hope for the Americas. ■

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