MEMORANDUM FOR SCUSA 74

SUBJECT: Latin America: Innovation in the Future of American Foreign Policy

1. **Issue**: The purpose of this memorandum is to identify challenges and to recommend innovative policies to foster a mutually beneficial relationship between the United States and Latin America.

2. **Strategic Analysis**: Latin America is geopolitically significant due to its location in the Western Hemisphere, economic ties to the US, and its position as a foothold for democracy. However, after a decline in US-Latin American engagement, priorities must be realigned to address increasing Chinese and Russian influence, regional economic crises contributing to crime and migration, and the worsening effects of climate change.


4. **Strategic Options and Recommendations** :
   
a. **Security**: Implement a 10-year plan to invest resources in Latin America focusing on creating and improving infrastructure, stabilizing violence, and preventing further democratic backsliding with the goal of eliminating the need for citizens to migrate. Civil workers and private sector businesses will aid in educational reform and infrastructure to reinforce US security. Military-civil affairs and advisors will aid local police and armed forces to fight cartel and gang violence in Mexico and Central America, in accordance with the morality of war. We need to leverage militaries in non-traditional ways to stabilize the region because not all are willing to collaborate with the US military. The goal is collaboration with regional governments, with the US military acting as an advisor, providing a foundation for individual countries to have creative freedom to best provide for their people.

   Currently, the priority is opening lines of communication with the countries of the region; priority being Mexico and Central America trying to curb the migrant crisis at the US border. We must reach out to the private sector, which will be tasked with improving infrastructure, gauging interest, and determining what it will take to cultivate support in the region.

   b. **Stability**: The United States must improve the political, social, and environmental stability of Latin America through multilateral cooperation. Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic can be empowered to maintain their democratic institutions through the encouragement of civic engagement, accountability mechanisms and civilian military control. The multilateral approach of cooperation with programs American allies have previously implemented ensures accountability and guarantees a shared fate between actors. Allies such as Japan expanded “networks of solidarity” in the region via the Office of Development Assistance, and the EU has supported political stability via election observations and financing projects that advance democracy. This decreases American
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investment costs, increases transparency, and fosters global cooperation, allowing for allies to invest in the region. It is imperative for the United States to increase the capacity of Honduras, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador to act against civil violence by allocating enforcement resources, expert training for Latin American officials, monitoring of training, establishing reliable reporting systems, and joint military training.

South and Central America response to natural disasters expands through funding and implementation of Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems, carried out by FEMA and OAS. These early warning systems already exist in South and Central America, but for drug emergencies; they need to be expanded to include natural disasters. There is a debate over whether the system should be operated at the national or the regional level. Horizontal collaboration is recommended to ensure success. The UNDP’s approach to strengthening Early Warning Systems shows some Latin American countries such as Cuba already have the technical ability to develop their warning systems, but they require further economic support to provide steady results. Multilateral cooperation between the United States and its allies guarantees sustainable financial support as Latin America makes strides to address the effects of climate on its citizens.

c. Democracy & Prosperity. The US should invest in educational infrastructure to counter the rising trend of democratic backsliding. An increase in educational opportunities and access to free information is a right, not a privilege; this bolsters democracy and enhances civic participation. We draw inspiration from the success story of Medellín, Colombia, which provides universal Wi-Fi access to its community. Significant investments in digital infrastructure, like that to Colombia’s “Vive Digital” initiative, allow students to take advantage of virtual learning. This strategy can be replicated in Belize, Nicaragua, Guyana, and Haiti, where there is a pronounced digital divide, with more than half of their populations lacking internet access. Another example can be seen by USAID in El Salvador. The organization recruits young emerging leaders and offers training and networking opportunities, encouraging participation in democratic processes, while strengthening their ability to advocate for government accountability and access to public information. These efforts should be made to address rural areas in Latin America, where over 46 million people are affected by the digital gap.

Improving social and economic prosperity is critical to the long-term success of US partnerships with Latin America. A bilateral nearshoring model supported by the US and Latin American governments, delivered by the US private sector would increase economic interdependence while strengthening worker rights and safety. Intel’s investment in microchip production in Costa Rica offers a replicable model that advances US interests. Anti-corruption measures require partnering with the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation of the OAS. The US should invest in domestic efforts to diminish the influence of authoritarianism, populist agendas, and corruption, as well as promote economic productivity through a focus on civic and public education.

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