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Canada's Spotlight on the Americas

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Honduras restricts citizen rights

The Honduran military closed a television and radio station and began to enforce a decree that suspended citizens' right to assembly without prior authorization. The military also can arrest people without a warrant. The country's ousted president, Manuel Zelaya, returned Sept. 21 and is in the Brazilian embassy, which is surrounded by Honduran soldiers. Zelaya had called for mass demonstrations on the three month anniversary of the June 28 coup. Hopes for a diplomatic resolution hit another obstacle on Sept. 27 when members of an Organization of American States delegation were refused entry. Interim President Roberto Michelletti has said Brazil has 10 days to grant Zelaya asylum or surrender him to Honduras.

Canadian Foreign Policy and the Coming Elections

Carlo Dade

With the surprising, given recent poll numbers, announcement by the official opposition in Canada that they will bring down the current minority government at the earliest possible opportunity, Canada is heading for its fourth election in five years.

This election will be a test of few things of consequence, but it may offer insights into the staying power of the current focus on the Americas as Canada's number two foreign policy priority.

Outside of sharp debate over Canadian engagement in Afghanistan, the past three elections have, it would be fair to say, pretty much ignored foreign policy issues. In the last election the Conservative government's focus on the Americas and the Liberal party's push for Asia went unnoticed and, except for speeches by Liberal candidates to Asian audiences, unnoticed in the public and media discourse.

One test of the staying power of the Americas as a foreign policy priority will be whether this trend continues in the upcoming election. With three and a half years in power and three free trade agreements negotiated, it would be surprising, though perhaps indicative, if the Conservatives did not run on their record. It will also be interesting to see if the Liberals continue with their historic focus on "Asia for foreign relations and Africa for foreign aid" or if they have taken a peek at the polling data used by the Conservatives, and seek to include some mention of the Americas in their platform.

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Cuba is letting bloggers speak their mind, but for how long? asks Archibald Ritter.

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Note from the Editor - Welcome Back, Multilateralism

A return to multilateralism within the Americas is a welcome shift from strident nationalism and worn-out ideas such as the Monroe Doctrine.

From the Fifth Summit of the Americas to Cuba to Honduras to the Venezuela-Colombia dispute, a multilateral approach to reducing tensions and resolving difficulties is making some headway. It is a welcome change in the region and one that has reduced tensions, although they are far from being dispelled.

In Canada, internal disagreements are absorbing our attention. This country seems to be perched on the eve of its fourth election in five years as politicians read the polls like tea leaves with the earnest and unlikely hope of winning a majority government that would end this run of minority rule. Until then, Canada's foreign policy is likely to remain on the sidelines as domestic affairs and political survival dominate the political agenda, argues Carlo Dade.

Certainly, there are considerable challenges that could benefit from Canada taking a more active role as a multilateral partner. The Honduras coup in June demonstrates the risks still facing the hemisphere. While the Organization of American States and its members, including Canada, have taken a strong stand, the dramatic increase in tensions from the surprising return to Tegucigalpa of Honduras' democratically-elected President Manuel Zelaya this past week demonstrates the risks of letting this type of crisis fester without

more concerted and effective action by the hemisphere's democracies.

Haiti is another focus of multilateral cooperation in the region, from development to the United Nations security mission headed by Brazil. While Canada plays a major role as a donor, a vibrant and capable civil society and private sector is essential to create the political stability, economic growth and hope needed to rebuild Haiti. James Morrell of the Haiti Democracy Project describes just such potential at a meeting of the Haitian Diaspora, intelligentsia, business leaders and others in the Dominican Republic. This potential is also being uncovered by Cuba's courageous independent bloggers, notes Archibald Ritter, Director of FOCAL's Cuba program.

The recent UNASUR meetings to discuss the new military cooperation agreement between the United States and Colombia are another step toward multilateral problem-solving within the region. Tensions between Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador continue to stretch nerves in the region. The deployment of even a small number of U.S. troops on the contentious issue of drug trafficking has dangerous potential. While UNASUR has stopped short of demanding changes to the deal, Freddy Osorio argues in this edition that Colombia ought to have fulfilled its part of the bargain and shared the text of the agreement with its neighbours to open more space for easing concerns.

Despite the easing of regional tensions and the welcome step toward dialogue with Cuba, the region continues to wait for U.S. President Obama's own promises of a more multilateral approach to the Americas, one of working as equals. The waiting, however, is starting to wear on the hope for constructive engagement and a clear strategy. In this sense, the U.S. must come to terms with another reality of multilateralism: one must join the team to play the game and bring skills to stay on the front bench. 

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Canadian Foreign Policy and the Coming Elections

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With Canada scheduled to end its active military presence in the country in 2011, Afghanistan should not be a central issue during the campaign, though questions of success or failure of the Canadian mission will pop up. Not having Afghanistan to toss around is probably the best scenario for having any sort of discussion on “other” foreign policy issues. Though, as in past elections, “other” may mean a solipsistic focus on relations with the United States.

Currently the new idea in U.S.-Canada relations floating around Ottawa is kicking the “sombros” out of North America and, to only slightly exaggerate, closing embassies in order to open more consulates in the U.S. Luckily, this sentiment has not taken hold in the bureaucracy or amongst the parties, at least not yet. However, it does have the backing of formidable elements of the foreign policy community. Something to watch in this election is if this line of thinking is pushed by any candidates and if so, whether it gains traction.

However, the recent financial melt down, near-death of the automobile sector, worries about the economy will more than likely marginalize all non-backyard, non-pocket book issues. The Mexican visa issue likely will not emerge during the campaign. The Conservatives have, so far, successfully framed the issue for domestic consumption and polling data seems to indicate that the imposition of visas is seen favourably in Canada. This should keep the Liberals from raising it during the campaign. In effect, the politics

of a parliamentary system under a minority government makes discussion of foreign policy a luxury that neither party can really afford.

Further, in Canada, elections are not won on foreign policy questions. Foreign success may net a few nods, but will not move many voters or turn a riding (electoral district) from one party to the other. Public concern for foreign policy is above all one of how it reflects Canadians’ self-image as caring, engaged and worldly. It is also an extension of a Canadian penchant not to spend money in general and especially not during a crisis. Polling data is of no use in understanding this as Canadians say one thing on the phone and something different in the voting booth. Foreign policy is important until it comes head-to-head with healthcare, farm subsidies or until one is presented with a request for more money. It remains to be seen if the debilitating cuts to the foreign affairs department is mentioned during the campaign and whether this will generate concern, compassion, anger or, most likely, indifference, amongst voters.

Foreign development assistance is the exception to the general rule of voters not caring about things foreign and, indeed, as promised by both parties during the last election, foreign aid spending has gone up. But the primary concern evinced by the Canadian public is that it not be embarrassed in comparison with its peers in the European Union. Where aid money is spent is less important than just spending it. Should aid levels fall, it would become an elec-

tion issue; however, decisions about who gets the money, for example Ukraine or Rwanda, would not. Most bizarrely and perhaps important to bear in mind for the coming election, is that more press attention and public concern last year was devoted to a few misstated dollars on travel forms in the office of Canada’s Minister for International Cooperation than was devoted to Canadian engagement in Haiti and its over \$110 million per year price tag. If you wish to understand the priorities of the Canadian public and media toward foreign policy, this anecdote is telling.

The lack of foreign policy discussion during elections is exacerbated by the lack of a formal foreign policy infrastructure within Canada’s political parties. There are no politically affiliated foreign policy think tanks in Canada as in the United States to help out. To implement foreign policy, the parties rely on the mandarins at the foreign ministry. To come up with ideas during the campaign, they rely on former foreign ministers and their advisers from within the party and perhaps an academic or two. This has been an area of strength for the Liberals and weakness for the Conservatives. During the last election the Liberals had a fairly decent-sized list of foreign policy positions on their website, while the Conservatives had none.

A minority government by definition has fewer resources, less time and less space to devote to issues that will not show up at the ballot box. This was a painful lesson demonstrated by the loser of the last three

elections in Canada. By not making foreign policy an issue, Canadians are making a tacit endorsement in favour of weakened engagement abroad. 

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La Política Exterior Canadiense y las Próximas Elecciones

Carlo Dade

Con el sorprendente anuncio de la oposición oficial de Canadá, dados los resultados de las encuestas más recientes, de que harán caer al actual gobierno minoritario en la primera oportunidad posible, Canadá se encamina hacia su cuarta elección en cinco años.

Esta elección no será una prueba para muchos temas de importancia, pero puede ofrecer una oportunidad para valorar si América Latina y el Caribe continuarán siendo la segunda prioridad de política exterior para Canadá.

Con excepción del fuerte debate sobre la participación de Canadá en Afganistán, podría decirse con justa razón que en las tres elecciones anteriores los temas de política exterior fueron ignorados en gran medida. En la última elección, el énfasis del gobierno conservador en América Latina y el del Partido Liberal en Asia pasaron desapercibidos y, excepto por los discursos de candidatos liberales dirigidos a audiencias asiáticas, ni en el debate público ni en los medios recibieron atención.

Una prueba de la permanencia de América Latina y el Caribe como una prioridad de política exterior será si la tendencia a ignorar los temas de política exterior continúa en la próxima elección. Con tres tratados de libre comercio en tres años y medio en el poder, sería sorprendente, aunque tal vez revelador, si los Conservadores no utilizaran esos logros

en la campaña. También será interesante constatar si el enfoque histórico de los Liberales seguirá siendo “Asia para las relaciones exteriores y África en cuanto a la asistencia internacional” o si han mirado los datos de las encuestas usadas por los Conservadores, y busquen incluir alguna referencia a América Latina y el Caribe en su plataforma.

Puesto que Canadá ha decidido terminar su presencia militar activa en Afganistán en 2011, dicho país no debería ser un tema central en la campaña; habrán, no obstante, preguntas sobre el éxito o fracaso de la misión canadiense. No incluir a Afganistán en el debate de política exterior es probablemente el mejor escenario para que la discusión se centre en “otros” asuntos. Aunque, como en elecciones anteriores, “otros” puede significar un enfoque solipsista centrado en la relación bilateral con Estados Unidos.

Recientemente, una de las ideas centrales de política exterior en Ottawa ha sido el llamado a volver a la época de oro de la relación “especial” con Estados Unidos. Esto ha dado lugar a llamados a sacar los “sombrosos” de Norteamérica y, sólo exagerando un poco, a cerrar embajadas con el fin de abrir más consulados en Estados Unidos.

Afortunadamente, este sentimiento no se ha arraigado en la burocracia o entre los partidos; al menos por ahora. Sin embargo, tiene abogados prominentes en el medio.

Qué tan agresivamente se impulse esta línea de pensamiento por los candidatos, y el grado de receptividad que reciba del electorado es algo que habrá que observar en esta elección.

Sin embargo, la reciente crisis financiera, el colapso del sector automovilístico, y las preocupaciones sobre la economía muy probablemente harán marginales todos los asuntos no locales y de carácter no económico. El tema de la visa para los mexicanos probablemente no aparezca durante la campaña. Los Conservadores, hasta ahora, han circunscrito exitosamente el tema al ámbito doméstico y los datos de las encuestas indican que la imposición de visas es vista favorablemente en Canadá. Esto probablemente limitará que el Partido Liberal se refiera al tema durante la campaña. En efecto, la dinámica política en un sistema parlamentario bajo un gobierno minoritario vuelve la discusión sobre política exterior un lujo que ningún partido puede realmente costear.

En Canadá las elecciones no se ganan con base a temas de política exterior. Éxitos en la agenda exterior pueden ayudar a obtener la aprobación de la gente, pero no alterarán la intención de voto de muchos electores ni transformarán el carácter partidista de un distrito. El interés público por la política exterior se refiere principalmente a la imagen de Canadá como un país humanitario, comprometido, y cosmopolita. También es una extensión de la tendencia canadiense a no gastar dinero en general y especialmente durante una crisis. Los datos de las encuestas no sirven para entender esto, puesto que los canadienses dicen una cosa por teléfono y algo distinto en las casillas electorales. La

política exterior es importante hasta que se contrapone con otros temas como el de la salud, los subsidios agrícolas, o hasta que viene acompañada de mayores cargas financieras. Aún está por verse si el tema de los severos recortes presupuestales al Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Comercio Exterior es mencionado durante la campaña, y si genera preocupación, compasión, enojo o, más bien, indiferencia entre los votantes.

La ayuda al desarrollo es la excepción, y tal como los dos partidos prometieron durante la última elección, el gasto en ayuda internacional ha crecido. Pero la preocupación más importante del público canadiense es no tener que avergonzarse si se compara a Canadá con los países de la Unión Europea. Dónde se gastan los fondos de ayuda es menos importante que el mero hecho de gastarlos. Si los niveles de ayuda bajaran, se volvería un tema de elección; sin embargo, no sucede lo mismo con las decisiones sobre si el dinero se otorga a Ucrania o Ruanda, por ejemplo. Lo más extraño, y no obstante importante de tener en cuenta en la próxima elección, es la atención que la prensa y del público en Canadá le dieron el año pasado a equivocaciones en la declaración de gastos de viaje de la Oficina de la Ministra canadiense para la cooperación internacional, en lugar de dársela al papel que Canadá ha desempeñado en Haití y los más de 110 millones de dólares al año que ello ha implicado. Esta anécdota es un ejemplo claro de dónde ponen tanto el público canadiense como los medios de comunicación las prioridades de política exterior.

La ausencia de un debate sobre política exterior durante las

elecciones es exacerbada por la falta de infraestructura formal en la materia al interior de los partidos políticos canadienses. No hay en Canadá institutos de investigación afiliados a los partidos para ayudar en esta tarea, como los hay en Estados Unidos. Para implementar la política exterior los partidos recurren a la élite del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. Para generar ideas durante la campaña, recurren a ex-Ministros de relaciones exteriores y sus asesores dentro del partido, y quizás a uno o dos académicos. Ésta ha sido un área de fortaleza para los Liberales y de debilidad para los Conservadores. Durante la última elección los Liberales tuvieron una lista relativamente larga de posicionamientos en materia de política exterior publicada en su sitio de Internet; los Conservadores, no.

Un gobierno minoritario, por definición, tiene menos recursos, menos tiempo y menos espacio para dedicarle atención a aquellos asuntos que no serán de importancia en la elección. Ésta fue una dura lección para el perdedor de las últimas tres elecciones en Canadá. Al no hacer de la política exterior un asunto de campaña, los canadienses están apoyando de forma tácita una reducida presencia en el exterior. 

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Haiti Strives to Tackle Its Democratic Shortfalls

James R. Morrell

The Haitian democratic sector, notable for both its courage and its disorganization, completed an important act of self-definition August 28–30, 2009 at a hotel meeting in Santo Domingo. This was the *Rencontre Patriotique pour une Stratégie de Sauvetage National*, uniting leading lights of the Haitian intelligentsia from Port-au-Prince and the diaspora in a marathon brainstorming session about the country's future. There was also a sprinkling of businesspeople, politicians and former officials, and many Haitian students from the University of Santo Domingo.

The participants committed themselves to challenge the “traditional bastions of irresponsibility, incompetence, corruption, nepotism, influence, and inhumanity which have poisoned the evolution of the Haitian nation for the past 50 years.” They set themselves no less a task than to “restore national sovereignty and re-found the nation-state.”

Fine rhetoric, and there was plenty more of it, but what does it mean? Before dismissing it, one must recall that Haitian civilsociety members and opposition politicians went into this meeting with important accomplishments under their belt:

- On November 17, 2002, the Initiative Citoyenne in Cap-HaVtien came from nowhere to mobilize 60,000 people at the historic VertiPres battlefield in a protest against the abusive ruler of those years, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

- In 2003, a business-backed coalition of 184 civil society organizations (the Group of 184) organized demonstrations including most sectors of Haitian society, and created a climate in which a rebellion of Aristide's armed supporters and bands of former soldiers were able to scare him out of the country on February 29, 2004.

- In 2006, Jacques Bernard, a progressive businessman who administered national elections, delivered the freest and fairest elections in Haiti's recent history.

Each of these exploits pointed to the democratic sector's power to reach the masses. A Haiti Democracy Project trip to the Nord and Nord'Est provinces during Sept. 7–13, 2009, following the *Rencontre Patriotique*, found deep, universal disdain for the government expressed at all levels, from unemployed youths and street merchants interviewed at random to intellectuals and businesspeople. A leadership need only have a clear message, an honest discourse, and not be focused on in-fighting in order to have the broad support of the Haitian masses.

That was the enormous potential of the *Rencontre Patriotique* — it issued the clearest message that has been heard from the democratic intelligentsia since the days of the Group of 184. If coherently delivered, this message will fall on fertile ground. “What Haiti has always been lacking is a strategic partner-

ship between the public and private sectors to assure national salvation. It is this that the Haitian people have always demanded of these sectors and which the meeting in Santo Domingo means to offer.”

Other sections of its declaration hinted at the abiding weakness of the democratic sector—its disunity. “We have come together to discard past differences. [...] Our work will be collective.” If unity of most of the sectors was briefly achieved in 2003 in the drive against Aristide, it was quickly dissipated during the confusing 2004–2006 period when power went not to the victorious movement but to an artificial interim regime imposed by the United States. When Haitians went to the polls in the 2006 elections, they found the mugs of 44 presidential candidates staring at them from the ballot. Most were from the democratic sector, and most had attended numerous unity meetings. Faced with this confused mass, many voters threw up their hands and voted for the candidate they recognized best: Aristide's protégé, former president René Préval.

No wonder then that the renowned peasant organizer Chavannes Jean-Baptiste told the Santo Domingo conference, “It will require serious unity among the social forces that want to save the country. It is essential to resist the ‘presidential disease,’ the craving for power.” Equally poignant was former minister of commerce Danielle Saint-Lot's

reminder to the male-dominated political class: democratic construction could not happen without “much greater involvement of women in political decision-making at the local and national levels.”

The *Rencontre Patriotique* made a valiant effort to bridge another age-old political gap, separating the Haitian business class from government. The separation of the economic elite from the politics is longstanding in Haiti, dating back to an infamous *semaine sanglante* in the 1870s when a president sent mobs to sack and burn the strongholds of the bourgeoisie. Since then, the sector has stayed in its place and been content to pay the tribute demanded by those in power. The government’s announcement of a new tax on the business of one of the conference participants, and a judicial summoning of another, indicates that the price will continue to rise. The Group of 184 had briefly mobilized this important sector; it is modern-minded businesspeople who have pulled countries such as the Dominican Republic and El Salvador out of political morasses as deep as Haiti’s.

Beyond the business component, the Haitian democratic sector both in the country and abroad has deep ranks of competent, uncorrupt professionals who alone have the capacity to govern Haiti rationally. This is another enormous advantage that the civil society movement and diaspora has, and it was fully on display in the brilliance of many of the presentations.

It was surprisingly not a Haitian

nationalist, but a Dominican congressman invited to the conference, Pelligrin Castillo, who delivered the most telling critique of U.S. policy: off-loading the Haitian problem onto neighboring Dominican Republic. Years of aid without meaningful

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reconstruction had accomplished nothing. Most attendees applauded this statement: “*Il a raison!*”

Indeed, poor policy-making, which continues to this day, has sacrificed the effort of two U.S. troop interventions, billions in aid, and a 9,000-person, five-year United Nations military mission. The approach to Haiti is cravenly bureaucratic; it clings to the elected president as the bearer of stability, totally unaware of the historical role of Haitian presidents as incubators of instability. President Préval, with recent elections so fraudulent that they were denounced by the vice-president of the electoral board, and a clumsy but persistent effort to amend the constitution to allow successive presidential terms, is acting fully within this historical tradition of presidential overreaching. The only

difference is that this time he is doing it with the protection of a foreign military mission, an advantage only dreamed of by his predecessors most of whom quickly succumbed to the domestic enemies they had so assiduously generated. The U.N. mission to stabilize Haiti is thus protecting destabilization.

Accordingly, a theme increasingly heard at the conference from intellectuals who are by no means anti-foreign was the need for Haiti to regain full control of its territory. Resolutions called for a negotiated, staged withdrawal of the U.N. force. This theme is not yet a unanimous demand for it to leave, which could unleash chaos. But to the extent that this mission only acts as a Praetorian Guard protecting an abusive president against the inevitable domestic reaction, it sets itself squarely against Haitian nationalism. Once trapped in that unenviable position, its days in Haiti will be numbered.

Thus it was not merely a Haitian default that the *Rencontre Patriotique* sought to cure with its ringing call for national renewal. It was a foreign one as well. 🌐

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The Obama Challenge: Multilateralism in the Americas

Thomas Legler and Anabel López

The Obama administration appears to have gotten its Western Hemisphere policy on the right track. At the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago last April, U.S. President Obama called for a new partnership in the region in which there were no longer junior and senior partners. The question is how to flesh out this partnership and make it a reality.

The policy challenge for the Obama administration in the Americas is twofold. Not only must the U.S. government repair the damage done to U.S.-Latin America relations during President George W. Bush's administration but it must also do so in a way that reinforces the capacity of Latin American and Caribbean governments to assume greater collective responsibility and leadership for resolving the governance problems that plague the region. This calls for nothing short of a dramatic reorientation of U.S. relations with Latin American and Caribbean states. The medium to long-term goal the U.S. ought to have is to let Latin American and Caribbean leadership take the driver's seat.

The Obama government inherited a particularly problematic relationship with its neighbours. The relationship was characterized by distrust toward the United States, loss of U.S. credibility on the democracy issue, increasing efforts to exclude it from new regional and sub-regional multilateral governance and inte-

gration schemes, and growing anti-American sentiment.

Many of the immediate measures adopted by the Obama government have made important progress symbolically and procedurally, helping to ease tensions and gain respect in the region. As a president who had never been to the Americas, at the Trinidad and Tobago Summit Obama showed remarkable humility in refraining intentionally from speaking much in favor of listening to his counterparts. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton conceded that the region had moved from a unipolar to a multipolar system, recognizing the new influence of such countries as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. Obama won additional points by moving quickly to meet his Brazilian and Mexican counterparts, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Felipe Calderón.

With respect to Cuba, Obama announced the closure of Guantánamo, the removal of restrictions on travel and remittances, and a general willingness to dialogue with the Castro government. Although the U.S. government remained firm on human rights and democracy as preconditions for Cuba's rehabilitation in the inter-American system, a historic compromise at the Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly in San Pedro Sula, Honduras overturned the infamous 1962 resolution that had suspended Cuba. It also opened the possibility

for its return and saved the OAS, for the time being, from the threat of collapse.

Regional developments also have the potential to change permanently the nature of the relationship between the United States and Latin America and the Caribbean. Even if relations regain their former cordiality, a return to the status quo before U.S. President George W. Bush Jr., is highly unlikely. We may be witnessing a bonafide "coming of age" in terms of Latin American diplomacy and regional leadership.

What is the evidence for this development? In recent years, the region's governments have become increasingly assertive and confident in inter-American and global affairs, enjoying greater foreign policy autonomy and flexibility as well as unprecedented diversification in their external political and economic relations. External powers no longer cast the same shadow over the region that they once did.

Behind this new Latin American and Caribbean assertiveness is a dramatic regional geopolitical shake-up. Venezuela's petro-diplomacy amply illustrates the newfound capability of these countries not only to pursue independent foreign policy agendas but also to project their ideas with important material support. At the same time, Brazil has successfully projected itself as a regional and global power. Brazil, Chile, and Mexico all have intentions in the

works for joining the club of countries that export development assistance. An effervescence of new regional and sub-regional multilateral forums and integration schemes in recent years both complement and potentially compete with the traditional pillars of the once U.S.-dominated inter-American system: the OAS, the Rio Treaty, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Summits of the Americas. While many Latin American governments are eager to improve relations with Obama and give him a chance to prove his good intentions, they wish to determine the priorities on the inter-American agenda.

Given these changes, the Obama proposal for a new partnership among equals is a realistic and cost-effective approach. Having a secure southern flank managed largely by Latin Americans and Caribbeans is also in the United States' broader global security interests.

Even if the potential for home-grown regional governance is being realized, Latin American and Caribbean regional leadership remains tenuous and challenged by resource limitations and the usual political and economic distractions that countries face on the homefront. This is where the United States can make a key contribution, both in its own interests and toward strengthening the inter-American system. Symbolically, Obama and Clinton sent the right message through their support for a multilateral approach and negotiated solution to the cur-

rent Honduran crisis, resisting the adoption of a more prominent U.S. role. President Obama has received significant criticism from across the region for not having done more to help solve the Honduran crisis. To this Obama rightly responded re-

While many Latin American governments are eager to improve relations with Obama and give him a chance to prove his good intentions, they wish to determine the priorities on the inter-American agenda.

cently at the Guadalajara Summit of North American leaders: "The critics who say that the United States has not intervened enough in Honduras are the same people who say that we are always intervening, and that the Yankees need to get out of Latin America." The United States must coax Latin American and Caribbean leadership to step up, irrespective of U.S. or paradoxical Latin American expectations for the United States to take charge.

Importantly, U.S. Western Hemisphere policy should be geared toward providing material support for "made-in-Latin America and the Caribbean" leadership and governance. Through USAID and other agencies, the United States can help train new generations of Latin

American and Caribbean leaders in order to acquire the skills to help sustain an important, protagonist role for their countries in inter-American affairs. Importantly, the United States can do this in a way that helps strengthen regional cooperation and institutions. For example, the United States could explore arrangements with Brazil, Canada, and Mexico, all of whom have excellent diplomatic academies, to promote inter-American diplomatic training. Similarly, U.S. aid could help strengthen regional and sub-regional educational institutions, such as the FLACSO system, the University of the West Indies, and the Universities of the Andes, as key deliverers of professional training for young leaders.

It is high time that Latin American and Caribbean leaders and citizens truly took the reins of their own destiny. Even though the road to a new, more positive relationship in which Latin American and Caribbean countries assume leading responsibility for regional governance is filled with constraints, the Obama government can do much to help set the region on the right path. 🌐

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Colombia-U.S. Military Cooperation Agreement Attracts UNASUR Attention

Freddy Osorio-Ramirez

It is time for United States soldiers to dust off their English-Spanish dictionaries and for Colombians to remember their English lessons—they will need them when the two militaries start living together at seven bases under a new military cooperation agreement.

The agreement to use three air force, two naval and two army installations has attracted considerable attention from Colombia's neighbours who discussed it at an extraordinary meeting of the Union of South American Countries (UNASUR) on Aug. 28 in Bariloche, Argentina. According to a U.S. Department of State press release, the Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA), which is not public, is for technical cooperation in terms of "narcotics production and trafficking, terrorism, illicit smuggling of all types, and humanitarian and natural disasters".

This agreement has sparked concerns about South American sovereignty and concerns about U.S. military intervention in the region. With the agreement, Washington seems to be sending mixed signals regarding its change in foreign policy toward the region.

The presence of U.S. soldiers in Colombian military bases can be

interpreted differently, too. For the Colombian President, Alvaro Uribe, the presence of up to 800 U.S. military personnel and up to 600 U.S. civilian contractors on Colombian soil it is necessary to fight against

For the region,
Colombia's secrecy
surrounding the details of the
agreement represents
a threat.

the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which supports itself through narco-trafficking and kidnappings. After all, the presence of FARC guerrillas on its borders has forced several confrontations with Ecuador and Venezuela over sovereignty. For Uribe, the use of these bases is not considered a violation of Colombia's sovereignty greater than the existence of the guerrillas. Little wonder the neighbours are sensitive toward the influx of foreign troops, particularly since Ecuador closed U.S. access to its air force base in Manta, which included

220 soldiers, opened for drug interdiction in 1998. It was never the object of such scrutiny. Unlike what happened with Ecuador, Colombia's DCA seems more ample and Uribe's government approach to this affair is disconcerting. For Uribe, the sole intention of the military agreement is to fight narcoterrorist organizations; for the rest of the region Colombia's secrecy surrounding the details of what has been agreed represents a threat.

The mixed track record of military cooperation, including Plan Colombia, to fight drug trafficking is ample warning about the risks of this agreement. After the Bariloche meeting, Ecuadoran President

Rafael Correa cautioned Colombia about the impossibility of keeping close track of U.S. military operations. If Ecuador was unable to monitor only one base, it seems unlikely that Colombia will be able to control the operations of U.S. soldiers in seven bases spread throughout the country. Thus the question remains: how will Colombia monitor the U.S. military's activities in-country?

Other questions beg asking. According to Colombia's constitution, all cooperation agreements should be studied first by the *Consejo de Estado* (Article 237), approved by the

Congress (article 150) and ruled on by the Constitutional Court (Article 241). The Colombian government presented the agreement as the continuation of previous operations. However, the nature and quantity of bases involved in the military cooperation differ substantially. This raises the question: is the agreement legal? The second question that needs to be asked is: Who will guarantee the lawfulness of the U.S. military's actions in Colombia? What international law will apply to U.S. soldiers stationed there? How will it be monitored?

Yet, these type of questions were not asked in the last UNASUR meeting on Sept. 15 in Quito, Ecuador where its presidents, defence and foreign affairs ministers reviewed the DCA. This meeting was scheduled during the Bariloche summit in Argentina in order to explain some details of the bilateral agreement. However, Uribe emphasized that the DCA itself was not open for revision and Colombia did not show the DCA's contents to the Defence Council, backing out of its promise to do so. Colombian representatives

then threatened to abandon UNASUR.

Isolation and distrust of Colombia has dramatically increased in the last two months. The UNASUR meetings in Bariloche and Quito aimed to put pressure on Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and Colombian President Álvaro Uribe to negotiate and debate instead of the increasingly common practice of uttering threats and moving troops to the border. However, since the two presidents locked horns at the beginning of this year, trade between the countries has dropped by over 40 per cent. Rather than appeasing its neighbours, Uribe's behaviour is providing arguments for Venezuela to accelerate its arms race.

Colombia should be more transparent about the DCA. In a Sept. 21 press release, the U.S. Ambassador for Colombia declared that there are no hidden agendas in the DCA, and that it is up to Colombia to share the details. If there is nothing to hide, Uribe's government should fulfill the promise to share information with UNASUR's Defence Council. Uribe's government should be ap-

proaching this matter diplomatically in order to build confidence and maintain greater integration in South America. 

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Peruvian Congress rejects Amazonian decrees that provoked deadly protests

The Peruvian Congress repealed the laws President Alan Garcia passed by decree that sparked deadly violence in the country's Amazonian region on August 23. The decrees allowed the government to lease large parts of the Amazon for development, particularly for oil and gas., with plans to auction land off to foreign companies. President Garcia defended the plans as a way to create jobs and reduce poverty in Peru. The plan outraged Amazonian Indigenous Peoples who fear it will lead to them losing their land, livelihood and way of life.

On June 5, police clashed with thousands of protesters armed with traditional wooden spears, resulting in the deaths of at least 31 people, including 22 protesters and nine police officers. Peru's ombudsman placed the number of injured civilians at 200, with 82 of the wounded suffering gunshot injuries. Interior Minister Mercedes Cabanillas said Peruvian police did not start the attack, and defended the officers as the "victims of the frenzy." While 61 indigenous people were charged with homicide, legal scrutiny of the actions of police and responsibility of government officials is ongoing. Indigenous leader Alberto Pizango said the protesters' demonstration was peaceful and that he believed the government was responsible for the killings. Pizango was granted refugee status by Nicaragua and is currently living in the Nicaraguan embassy in Lima as diplomats try to negotiate his safe passage out of the country. Peru has demanded Nicaragua turn him over for arrest and prosecution.

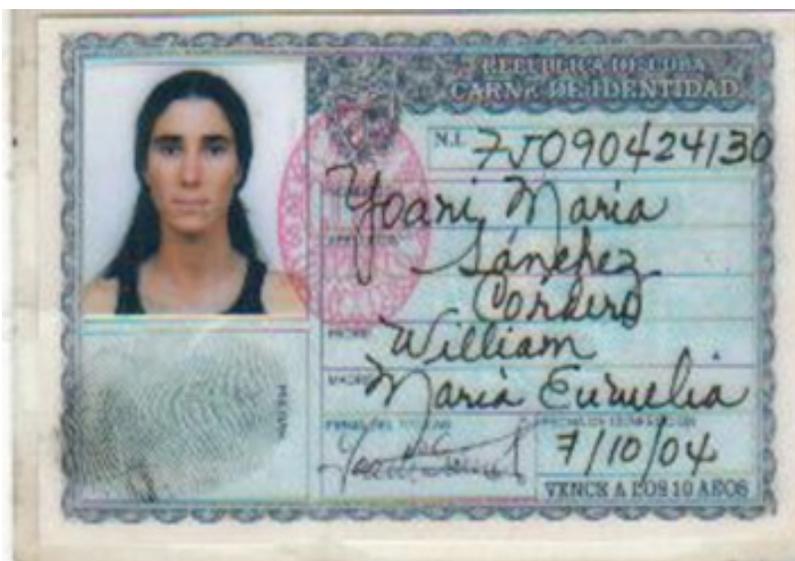
Cuba's Bloggers: Is Cuba Relaxing Restrictions on Freedom of Expression?

Archibald Ritter

For almost half a century, Fidel Castro required the citizens of Cuba to read from the same page and sing the same song. Though Cuba is a signatory to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly basically did not exist. The concept of a "Loyal Opposition" as known in Canada, was alien to the Castro regime; disagreement was considered to be essentially disloyal and in the service of the enemy, the United States.

Under President Fidel Castro dissidence or even serious disagreement was countered effectively; he used measures such as jailing the five authors of "The Homeland Belongs To Us All", a paper calling for political and economic reforms in Cuba; firing professors who were out of line (Gloria Leon and Miriam Gras in 1995); and suspending one's position and party membership (Professor Omar Everleny Perez 1998). The country's former Minister of Higher Education, Juan Vela, stated that ideology trumps science, and that he who is not a revolutionary "does not belong in their classrooms". (A "revolutionary" is one who accepts the Party line and policy, the Revolu-

tion's historical leadership, and the leading role of the Party in Cuban life. Students ostensibly must be "revolutionaries" to go to university.)



Blogger Yoani Sánchez published her national identity card online in 2007. She is one of Cuba's most recognized bloggers.

As a result of this and other forms of repression, Cuban citizens have been effectively cowed into silence and generally refrain from publicly voicing any views that could be construed as being hostile to the government, the Party and the leadership. In private, however, citizens speak frankly and critically. Some say there are 22 million Cubans, not 11 million, because each Cuban has two personalities: the official one that voices the politically correct views and goes on the interminable

marches and the private personality that analyses and discusses issues honestly.

Could this be changing under the regime of Raúl Castro? The answer would be mainly "No". The political monopoly of the Communist Party of Cuba, authorized by Article Five of the Cuban constitution, remains. However, the regime does seem to be tolerating the independent "bloggers" and website authors that have emerged in the last few years. Independent bloggers have ruptured the control of freedom of expression by the government of Cuba and gained international audiences and sup-

port. Overt suppression would now be so exceedingly costly in terms of the international perception of the Cuban government that it has not tried seriously to silence the new citizen journalists.

Independent blogging began in earnest with Yoani Sánchez. Sánchez began her blog, "[Generación Y](#)"—inspired by people like her whose names begin or contain the letter "Y"—on April 9, 2007. In an act of great courage, her blog bore her name openly and also was illustrat-

ed with her ID card. Sánchez' blog is well-written. She possesses an ability to concisely link a day-to-day event or experience or observation with its broad national context. But what is most significant is that her blogs convey the truth of Cuban life in ways that Cubans speak in private but cannot do so in public. In effect she has broken the dual personality or "doble moral" and openly says in public what she thinks privately. Sánchez presents views on Cuba that Cuba's national media, all controlled by the Party machinery, cannot present. There were some 11 to 14 million "hits" per month on Sánchez' blog a few months ago, and it has been translated into 17 languages. Her blog is syndicated in the online newspaper, The Huffington Post. It has won eight international prizes, including Spain's Ortega y Gasset Prize for Digital Journalism, and most recently Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism's Special Mention "Maria Moors Cabot Prize" for 2009. One might venture to say that her voice outside of Cuba rivals that of former president Fidel Castro who has his own quasi-blog, published online and in Cuba's newspapers.

Her initiative opened the gates for others. There are now a large number of innovative, insightful and literary blogs and web site authors in Cuba. Among these are "[Desde Aquí](#)" by Reinaldo Escobar, Sánchez' husband, "[Octavo Cerco](#)", by Claudia Cadelo de Neri, "[Sin](#)

[Evasión](#)", by Miriam Celaya and the web site of [Martha Beatriz Roque](#). These and many others have won significant readership as a result of their high quality.

Still, government tolerance of bloggers is not acceptance. The government has run interference with the bloggers. It has attempted to block the bloggers' access to the Internet and the access of Cuban

Yoani Sánchez has broken the "doble moral" and openly says in public what she thinks privately.

citizens to the independent blogs. It blocks the access of Cuban citizens to the DesdeCuba.com website which houses most of the independent blogs. This means that much of the time, the independent bloggers are "blogging blind", running blogs that they themselves cannot often see. For a while, the right of all Cuban citizens to use the computers in tourist hotels was denied, until the access blockade was filmed and presented in a clip on Sánchez's blog. Sánchez has been prohibited from travelling outside of Cuba to receive awards and she has been under surveillance by plainclothes Ministry of

the Interior officers. Most recently, the Cuban government appears to be trying to "fight fire with fire", by cultivating its own "in-house" bloggers, and providing them with unlimited access to the web.

Still, Sánchez and the other bloggers are not in jail. Much to its credit, the government of Raul Castro has refrained from such drastic action. The high international regard for the Cuban bloggers and the risk of intense fall-out from repression provides some protection. This alone perhaps is not an effective and enduring disincentive for such action by the Cuban government. One can be encouraged that, to date, the government has chosen a grudging tolerance rather than a draconian suppression of Cuba's new citizen journalists who have managed to overcome all obstacles and used new information technologies to make

their voices heard. Perhaps the government of Cuba is beginning to accept the theory and practice of a "Loyal Opposition". One hopes that this may be the case. 

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Canadian government eases Haiti travel rules

The Canadian government decreased travel restrictions for Haiti in response to an improved security situation in the country.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) dropped the level of danger for potential tourists, assigning a new advisory level to the public: "exercise a high degree of caution."

While the overall travel rating for Haiti has improved, the DFAIT Travel Report continues to advise Canadians to "avoid non-essential travel" in some of Port-au-Prince's more dangerous neighbourhoods.

DFAIT updated the official policy change July 6, and the U.S. State Department followed suit and revised its travel warning on July 17, also lowering the degree of caution in its travel warning. Both the State Department and DFAIT credit the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, established in June 2004, with improving the security situation.

Despite the improvement in public safety ratings, crime remains high in the Western Hemisphere's most impoverished country.

Haiti's government hopes the downgrading of the security level will draw more tourists, although it remains to be seen whether Haiti can recover its popularity as a tourist destination prior to the outbreak of political unrest in the Eighties.

Think Tank Initiative to Boost Canada-Mexico Relationship

Olga Abizaid

The Canada-Mexico relationship is of critical and rising importance for each country at the bilateral, North American, hemispheric and global levels. Yet, the relationship has recently come under attack from public figures in Canada. The tenor and nature of this one-sided debate in Canada has misunderstood and mischaracterized the fundamental issues driving both the Canada-Mexico relationship and each country's relationship with the United States. Meanwhile in Mexico, the relationship has fallen into a state of benign neglect.

In response to this challenge to both countries' foreign policy and trade interests, a consortium of Mexican and Canadian think tanks led by the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) and the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations (COMEXI) are undertaking a three-year series of policy research, debate and public dissemination activities on the key issues in the Canada-Mexico relationship.

The project will convene a working group of stakeholders and thematic experts to forge new ideas to strengthen and enliven the Canada-Mexico relationship. Together they will produce policy relevant research on the key issues in the Canada-Mexico relationship and put this information into the hands of policymakers and to the public of both countries through the media. This will complement and enhance

work being done at the ministerial level by enlisting a wider range of resources and actors within Mexico and Canada to create new ideas to invigorate the relationship.

The project will be led by Mexican Senator Rosario Green Macías and the Honourable Bill Graham, who will serve as Mexican and Canadian co-Chairs, respectively. A working group of individuals from each country, chosen for their knowledge of, and direct involvement in, the Canada-Mexico relationship will guide the program research agenda and produce an annual blueprint to strengthen this bilateral relationship.

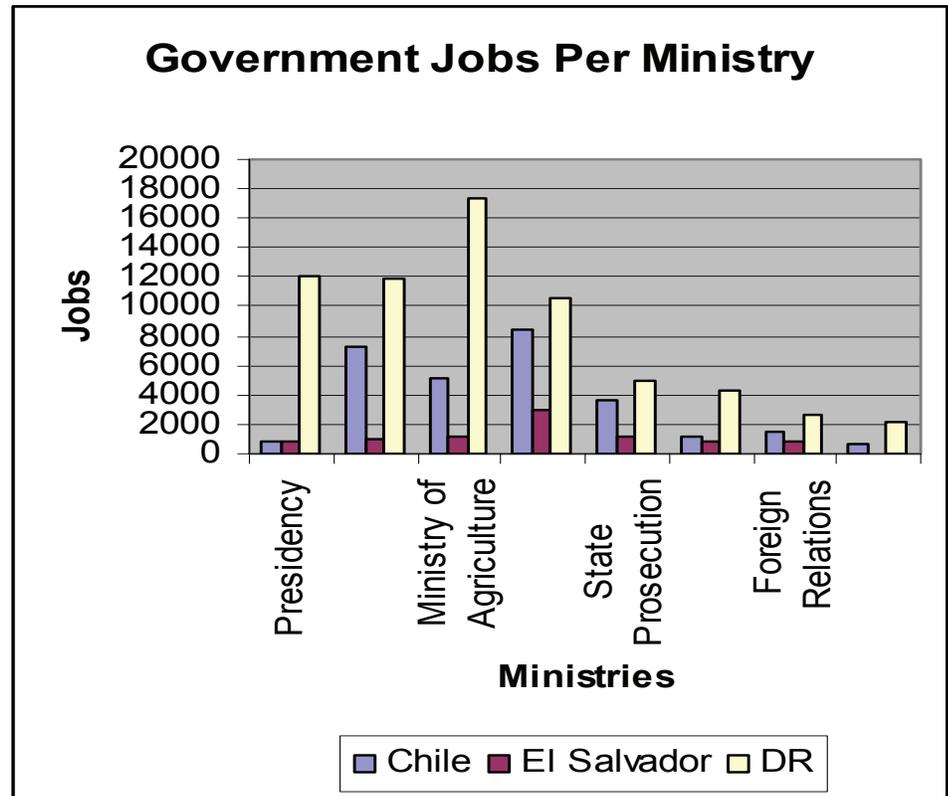
Members of the Working Group include the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE), the Center for Research on North America (CISAN) of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, the Canada West Foundation, the Alberta Institute for American Studies (AIAS) of the University of Alberta, the Conference Board of Canada, the Centre d'études interaméricaines (CEI) at the Université Laval, the Canadian International Council (CIC), as well as representatives from the private sector.

FOCAL and COMEXI believe a sustained, persistent and high-level effort over three years will provide the firm foundation needed to energize both the Canada-Mexico relationship and the public perception of the relationship. An added, and

longer-term, benefit of the project will be the creation of networks of individuals and institutions that will, autonomously, develop new projects and initiatives to support the Canada-Mexico relationship. 

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Public Jobs in Chile, El Salvador, Dominican Republic



Source: Data compiled by economist Andres Dauhajre and published in DR1 Newsletter, <http://dr1.com/news/2009/dnews083109.shtml> (accessed August 31, 2009).

Canada a 'top priority' for Mexico, despite visa controversy

Less than two months after Canada's decision to impose visas to Mexicans, the bilateral relationship with Canada has become one of the main issues on Mexico's foreign policy debate. Opinion leaders in Mexico suggested the decision was a signal of deterioration of the bilateral relationship and called for an articulated vision to strengthen it.

In the full document of the State of the Union submitted by President Felipe Calderón to Congress for analysis, the government described the relationship with Canada as strategic and listed the numerous areas of common work in the context of North America and at the bilateral level. In the latter, the government emphasized achievements in labour mobility through the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) and advances in the creation of pilot projects for the construction and hospitality industries; and in the working groups of the Canada-Mexico Partnership (CMP). It also talked about exchanges on security and justice procurement, as well as increased cooperation with provincial governments, especially with Quebec, but also with Alberta and Ontario. Members of the Senate's Committee on Foreign Affairs expressed their concern about the state of the Canada-Mexico relationship to Foreign Affairs Secretary Patricia Espinosa and questioned about Canada's decision to impose visas on Mexicans, during her appearance in the Senate on Sept. 15.

Peter DeShazo on Countering Threats to Security

Oct. 6, 2009

Ottawa, Canada

FOCAL will be hosting Peter DeShazo, director of the Americas Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). He will discuss a new CSIS report on how Colombia moved from possible state failure in the Nineties to relative stability and growth today.

Bolivia Health Roundtable

Sept. 28, 2009

Ottawa, Canada

FOCAL hosted health experts Rory Narváez and Érika Silva at a roundtable on "Health Policy and Exclusion in Bolivia: Lessons Learned". The discussion explored potential policy options that may contribute to improving health outcomes in Bolivia.

Global Forum on Migration and Development

Nov. 2-4, 2009

Athens, Greece

FOCAL's Labour Mobility Project Manager, Barb MacLaren, will attend Civil Society Days at this year's Global Forum on Migration and Development. On the agenda is how migration and development can work toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals and how policy-relevant migration data and research and policy coherence relate to one another.

August Chronicle on Cuba 2009 Online

Cubasource.org now has available the August editions of the Chronicle on Cuba (in English and Spanish), with a day-by-day summary of occurrences on Domestic Affairs, Economy, Exile Community, Foreign Affairs, Security, and U.S-Cuba Relations.

The views expressed in FOCALPoint are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of FOCAL, its Board or staff.

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