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AND DIPLOMACY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Richard E. Feinberg
Fellow, The Wilson Center

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ABSTRACT

The Recent Rapid Redefinitions of U.S. Interests and Diplomacy in Central America

During the last decade, Central America has passed from being a quiet backwater of little interest to American policymakers to an area of priority concern. This paper distinguishes five phases in U.S. policy toward the region during the 1975-81 period. In the early 1970s, the U.S. was satisfied with the surface stability provided by conservative military-dominated governments. In phase two, the Carter administration's human-rights policies disrupted traditional ties. In the third period (roughly 1978 to mid-1979), the U.S. sought to stage-manage a controlled evolution of disintegrating political systems. When this failed, first in Nicaragua and then in El Salvador, an administration confronted with discontinuity applied distinctive policies to cope with different situations. Finally, in 1981 the Reagan administration redefined Central America as a major theatre of U.S.-Soviet competition. This paper describes and analyzes this rapid evolution in U.S. perceptions of, and policies toward, Central America.

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AND DIPLOMACY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Richard Feinberg
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Introduction

During the last decade, Central America has passed from being a quiet backwater of little interest to American policymakers to an area of priority concern. This paper distinguishes five phases in U.S. policy toward the region. In the early 1970s, the U.S. was satisfied with the surface stability provided by conservative, military-dominated governments. In phase two, the Carter administration's human-rights policies disrupted traditional ties. In the third period (roughly 1978 to mid-1979), the U.S. sought to stage-manage a controlled evolution of disintegrating political systems. When this failed, first in Nicaragua and then in El Salvador, an administration confronted with discontinuity applied distinctive policies to cope with different situations. Finally, in 1981 the Reagan administration redefined Central America as a major theatre of U.S.-Soviet competition. What follows is the story of this rapid evolution in U.S. perceptions of, and policies toward, Central America.

A Difficult Inheritance

Important shifts occurred in the economies and societies of Central America during the 1960s and early 1970s.¹ A dynamic and modern export agriculture transformed the rural sector. Urban industry, stimulated by the Central American Common Market, expanded impressively. The growth of urban professional and entrepreneurial associations attested to the dynamism, however uneven, of the local economies. Nevertheless, the growth in the labor force exceeded the demand for full-time rural and industrial workers, and underemployment rose.

The impressive economic modernization of the region stimulated pressures for political change. The rising urban white-collar and blue-collar workers sought a transfer of political power to more reformist political leaders and parties. Discontent mushroomed among the underemployed in the urban service sectors, and among seasonal workers and other underemployed peasants in the rural areas. Thus, in 1972, a broad centrist coalition of Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, and Communists apparently won the presidential elections in El Salvador. Similarly, in Guatemala in 1974 a broad centrist coalition led by General Efraín Ríos Montt and social democrat Alberto Fuentes Mohr also appeared to have won a plurality of votes. In both cases, however, the armed forces intervened to maintain their hold on

power. In Nicaragua, President Anastasio Somoza's first term ended in 1971, and the constitution prohibited his reelection. Instead, Somoza altered the constitution to permit his effective continuity in office.

In these and other instances, historic opportunities were lost that might have permitted a peaceful adaptation of political systems to the newly emerging social forces. As the 1970s wore on, the governments became increasingly rigid, and their power depended less and less on consent or passivity, and increasingly on coercion.

Just as the political processes were hardening, the central motor of economic growth--the regional common market--began to lose its dynamism. The process whereby local production was substituted for imported light manufactures was rapidly exhausted. The uneven spread of benefits among the member states, foreign-exchange pressures on national balance-of-payments, and the 1969 "soccer war" between El Salvador and Honduras increased tensions within the common market. Global inflation and rising oil prices added to the region's economic problems.

United States foreign policy failed to respond to these new trends. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the U.S. did not question the essential stability of the military-dominated regimes, not understanding that the viability of the existing political models was being undermined by economic modernization. The U.S. failed to react to the electoral frauds and other power grabs which impeded the accession to power of the newly emerging social forces.² Indeed, in some cases, notably in Nicaragua,³ the U.S. gave its benediction to these acts, believing the beneficiaries were conserving an acceptable political status quo.

In addition to supporting conservative military-civilian governments and regional economic integration, the U.S. had fostered the creation, in 1965, of the regional defense pact, CONDECA. But partly as a result of the Honduran-El Salvadorean war, the pact lost much of its vitality.

By 1976, an astute observer might have noticed that the main elements of U.S. policy toward the region, in the political, economic, and security areas, were all in need of revision.⁴ Yet Washington was paying little attention to a region which, on the surface, appeared secure. Not only was high-level attention focused elsewhere, but the size of the U.S. diplomatic, military, and intelligence presence in the area had substantially declined.

Globalism

The Carter administration's first policy thrusts in the Central American region were the negotiation and ratification of the new Panama Canal treaties and the initiation of a process of normalizing relations with Cuba. Neither was seen as a Central American issue per se, although the principles behind each initiative might have been applicable to the region. The new Panama Canal treaties were advertised

as exemplifying new U.S. respect for the national autonomy of small states. The normalization of relations with Cuba was to have symbolized a new willingness to tolerate a wider political diversity.

During its first year, the Carter administration paid less attention to Central America than to any other subregion in the hemisphere. Thus, U.S. policies there tended to reflect hemispheric or even global postures (as well as the personalities of particular ambassadors and middle-level policymakers). When denouncing state terrorism before the Organization of American States in June 1977, Secretary Vance was stating a universalist principle, and to the extent that he was thinking of particular countries, the Southern Cone states were undoubtedly uppermost in his mind. Yet, when Vance warned that governments which abandon respect for the rule of law "descend into the nether world of the terrorist and lose their strongest weapon, their moral authority,"⁵ the Central American governments were deeply resentful. They feared that the international legitimacy of their regimes was being challenged and they worried that this could have consequences for internal stability. The Carter administration's clear preference for such Caribbean-basin democratic nations as Jamaica, Costa Rica, and Venezuela, and for the "transition" states (Honduras, Peru, Ecuador, and for a time, Bolivia) deepened the sense of rejection felt in Managua, San Salvador, and Guatemala City.

It was in response to the human-rights policy in general, more than in opposition to any bilateral slight, that the governments of Guatemala and El Salvador rejected U.S. security assistance in 1977.⁶ In the absence of high-level attention, the Latin American Bureau (ARA) in the State Department took few bilateral initiatives in Central America; if anything there was a tendency to try to protect formerly friendly "clients" from those political appointees pressing for a more activist human-rights approach. During this first phase, the human-rights policy as applied to Central America was not based on a clearcut strategy that, for example, detailed the political actors and institutions in each country and included a game plan for their desired evolution. Indeed, the strong currents of "non-interventionism" present in portions of the administration inhibited such an approach.

The human-rights policy was, of course, based on a liberal conception of freedom which inherently opposed rightist authoritarian as well as collectivist or Leninist models, but the policy was not actively and explicitly targeted toward the prevention of a collectivist outcome. The initial thrust of the policy⁷ in Central America, as well as throughout most of the hemisphere, gave greater weight to the more positive benefits that resulted from improved human-rights conditions than to the barriers democracy erected against radical change. The Carter administration did, however, adhere, to a general theory regarding the nature of social change. Stated simply, the administration believed that social explosions leading to radical outcomes were less likely if tensions could be directed through open government channels.⁸ Exclusivist regimes might retain power through coercion for a while, but a more open system was more likely to be relatively stable in the long run.

In Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, the immediate results of globalist expressions on human rights and democracy were not satisfying. (In Honduras, the more tolerant political atmosphere remained essentially unchanged.) By the end of 1977, all three nations were still under authoritarian rule. In Nicaragua, however, U.S. policy did provoke a dramatic and tangible response. Somoza sought to make some concessions to appease Washington, and more importantly, an already agitated opposition decided that the U.S. would tolerate, and might even support, a change of regime. Oppositionists among the business sector and middle classes especially were encouraged. Thus, U.S. policy reinforced an internal dynamic already underway, and the result was explosive. When a leading opposition figure, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, was assassinated in January 1978, widespread demonstrations, strikes, and rioting ensued. A second, more impressive insurrection occurred nine months later. Washington began to focus more carefully on Central America.

Controlled Evolutionism

During 1978 and 1979, the Carter administration attempted to formulate a more detailed and considered policy toward the region--one which would preserve many of the original intentions of the globalist human-rights policy but would reduce the perceived risks inherent in sudden or rapid regime transformations. In this new policy approach, dubbed here "controlled evolutionism," the U.S. would play a much more active role in trying to control political processes within the Central American states.

The administration concluded that, indeed, the region's existing political institutions had failed to evolve in response to changing economic realities, and new social groupings were being excluded from political participation.⁹ The exclusivist regimes were necessarily becoming more repressive. Otherwise moderately reformist or centrist political movements, deprived of an opportunity to enter a meaningful political process, were being driven toward considering more extreme measures or else were joining other groups already so inclined. In an increasingly polarized environment, an undesirable radical outcome became more likely.¹⁰ The inherited policy of supporting the military-dominated governments no longer guaranteed stability. But an unconsidered globalist human-rights policy was also dangerous.

The advocates of controlled evolutionism (the author's nomenclature for a policy tendency, not a self-identified group) worried that Central American political institutions, always fragile, had become even less secure during the 1970s. A growing proportion of the population no longer had faith in existing political institutions or processes. Thus, a process of political evolution, no matter how gradual, would be a delicate and dangerous affair. The greatest fear was that the existing structures might quickly disintegrate should a leftist political movement capture the popular imagination.¹¹ The threat of a defensive coup by the most intransigent conservative forces--which in turn could lead to rapid polarization and revolution--was another reason for caution.

The advocates of controlled evolutionism believed, or hoped, that the rulers of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua could be prevailed upon to begin a process of political transition. The proponents of evolutionism recognized that Presidents Lucas and Romero were unimaginative and mediocre men, and that Somoza was devious and accustomed to arbitrary rule. Yet, U.S. policymakers hoped that a gradual opening could be sufficiently attractive to each of these three men. The integrity of the institution of first loyalty, the military, would be preserved, any associated political parties would continue to play an important and perhaps dominant role, and their personal wealth, or most of it, would be safeguarded. Moreover, having presided over a praiseworthy process of political transition, they would gain an honorable place in their nations' histories.

The proponents of evolutionism believed that a guiding U.S. hand could compensate for the personal limitations of the Central American rulers. U.S. shrewdness and leverage could also help overcome destructive personal or group clashes that threatened to undo the delicate transition process. U.S. loans and grants could provide economies with the resources needed to compensate those whose financial interests might be sacrificed in the reform process.

The character of the controlled-evolution model can be elucidated by comparing it to two contrasting approaches: supporting the status quo, or disassociating the U.S. from the regime in power. Supporting the status quo was rejected as being unrealistic, illegal, and immoral: propping up visibly decaying regimes would have been costly and perhaps futile, would have contradicted legal prohibitions against providing economic and security assistance to governments guilty of systematically violating human rights, and would have been contrary to the Carter administration's own global human-rights posture. The alternative of sharply reducing or eliminating U.S. aid programs and maintaining a cool, distant diplomatic posture was considered too risky. Accomplished in the absence of a transition plan agreed upon by the incumbent government, a policy of disassociation might weaken the regime without preparing for its replacement. The U.S. could be left without leverage with either the government or its opposition and be unable to shape the outcome of an ensuing power struggle. The U.S. would become irrelevant, and project an image of impotence, both in the region and beyond. Moreover, the disassociation policy was also risky for domestic political reasons. If the situation went sour, conservative critics in the United States would charge that the administration had abandoned its responsibilities and failed to energetically protect U.S. interests. Yet, the proponents of controlled evolutionism had concluded that the globalist human-rights approach, especially as advanced by some liberal members of Congress, was leading U.S. policy in this direction.

How did Central American regimes respond to the evolutionist approach? In Honduras, the military kept its promise, and the civilian parties elected a constituent assembly in April 1980. In El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, however, the presidents resisted U.S. advice and pressures. Somoza preferred to fight from his bunker rather than accept a peaceful transfer of authority. In El Salvador, President Humberto

Carlos Romero became increasingly isolated until he was overthrown in a coup in October 1979. President Romeo Lucas García of Guatemala decided that repression was a better guarantor of stability than even moderate reform. A closer look at each country-case will suggest where some of the obstacles to U.S. policy were hidden.

Honduras. The U.S. human-rights policy reinforced a process already underway in Honduras, where the military had previously announced its intention to hold elections for a constituent assembly and for the presidency. The U.S. embassy in Tegucigalpa, in numerous private meetings and public pronouncements, reinforced Washington's broadly stated preference for elected governments. In addition, when President-General Melgar Castro visited the White House at the time of the signing of the Panama Canal treaties, President Carter personally urged him to proceed with the promised elections. In the year preceding the April 20, 1980 elections for the constituent assembly, the U.S. doubled its economic-aid levels and allocated \$3.4 million for military assistance.¹² And according to some reports, the U.S. also helped prevent a coup by dissident officers in February 1980.¹³

In Honduras, the task was relatively easy: the U.S. simply encouraged the Honduran military to remain true to its own promises. The Honduran military recognized that its de facto government lacked legitimacy, and that popular discontent was increasing; thus, the U.S. was reinforcing an internal process that was obeying its own dynamic.¹⁴

Guatemala. Among the Central American countries, only Costa Rica received less attention than Guatemala from the Carter administration. With the traditional alliance of military, business, and most of the Church hierarchy intact, Guatemala appeared relatively stable, at least in the short run. Moreover, General Lucas scornfully rebuffed the liberal U.S. critique of his methods of rule. Many in the Guatemalan government and military believed that the U.S. was a declining world power, unable or unwilling to meet its commitments to old allies, and dangerously naive with regard to Central American realities. Many blamed the turmoil in Nicaragua and El Salvador on "destabilizing" U.S. human-rights policies. With a firm hold on the reigns of government, a strong balance of payments, and access to alternative sources of weaponry, the Guatemalan government felt no need to sacrifice its perceived security interests to appease the United States.

The U.S. recognized that it had very limited room for maneuver in Guatemala. Nevertheless, concerned that the political situation was gradually deteriorating, the U.S. sought to convince the Guatemalans to undertake social reforms and improve the respectability of the political process. Specifically, the U.S. proposed that the Lucas government try to restrain its security forces and end political assassinations as a necessary precondition for holding legitimate presidential elections in 1982.¹⁵

The U.S. basically followed a low-profile approach inside Guatemala, moving neither to complete disassociation nor granting immediate concessions in hope of inducing the desired behavior.

Instead, "quiet" private diplomacy was employed to advance basic objectives. The embassy avoided public criticism and did not become a focal point for local human-rights activists or political centrists, as occurred in Nicaragua and some South American countries. On the other hand, the administration rejected internal recommendations made throughout 1979 and 1980 that the U.S. offer "carrots" to the Guatemalan government and military to increase U.S. influence and the Guatemalans' own sense of security, as preparatory steps toward persuading them to liberalize. Moreover, a \$250,000 administration request for the renewal of military training (IMET) for Guatemala was deleted from the FY 1980 budget by the House Foreign Affairs Committee, in reaction to Guatemala's then-worsening human-rights situation.¹⁶

Had the Lucas government demonstrated any inclination to work with the United States, the administration would surely have responded favorably, and been supportive of a modest political reform process. Ironically, in the absence of a serious internal challenge, the Lucas government felt it did not require U.S. advice and support.

Nicaragua. The human-rights policy introduced a new, critical tone into the U.S. relationship with Somoza. By alternatively applying pressures and offering positive inducements, the administration sought to improve President Somoza's respect for civil liberties. The administration did not, however, appear to question the legitimacy of the regime itself, and to the extent that a long-term strategy existed, the administration seemed to be hoping to create a climate propitious for genuine presidential elections in late 1980. The U.S. embassy in Managua encouraged the opposition politicians to "dialogue" with Somoza, in order to arrive at mutually acceptable rules of the game.

The popular insurrection of September 1978, convinced the U.S. that a more urgent and deeper U.S. engagement was required. The administration had concluded that Somoza's removal was a sine qua non for avoiding a deepening spiral of radicalization and violence which would consume moderate and centrist elements and present the FSLN with the opportunity to seize power. With the backing of the Organization of American States, the U.S. led a three-nation mediation team to Managua in early October.¹⁷ The opposition parties, including the "Group of Twelve" who spoke for the FSLN, soon presented the mediation team with their proposal: that President Somoza and other Somoza family members in the National Guard immediately resign, and that, in effect, the united Opposition Front (FAO) form a new government. But the mediation team rejected this proposal as being clearly unacceptable to Somoza and as failing to provide for sufficient continuity. In response, the FAO submitted an amended proposal which would have allowed the existing Congress, controlled by Somoza's Liberal Party, to remain in office, and the National Guard would have been reorganized under the purview of a team of incumbent National Guard officers. These concessions to gradual evolution (the "control" was provided by the umbrella of the U.S.-led mediation exercise) contributed to the bolting of the "Group of Twelve" and several other opposition groups, but were not sufficient for Somoza.

When the administration first entered into the mediation, it understood that Somoza's tenure was the issue, and that U.S. pressures would probably be necessary to bring about his resignation. Nevertheless, when the moment came to support decisively the amended FAO plan for an orderly transition, the Carter administration balked. Instead, it allowed the mediation team to drop the FAO proposal and pick up on a proposal by Somoza's Liberal Party to hold a plebiscite, despite the warning of the State Department's Latin American experts that the plebiscite proposal was a diversionary ploy. Following drawn-out negotiations on details, Somoza rejected the electoral reforms and international presence that the mediation team deemed necessary for a fair balloting. The last chance for an orderly transfer of power was lost.

Somoza had used the mediation to splinter the opposition, buy time, and rearm his National Guard. The U.S. chose not to attempt to apply pressures against Somoza until after the FAO had agreed upon a carefully structured transition plan. The U.S. failure to halt the Israeli arms flow to the Guard¹⁸--while the U.S. was pressing other governments to dry up weapons flow to the FSLN--deepened Somoza's confidence that the U.S. was not firmly resolved to force his departure. When the mediation team finally left in frustration, Somoza felt strong enough to resist at least mild U.S. slaps.

Why did the U.S. not act in accordance with the irresistible logic of its own mediation plan and its earlier analysis that Somoza's permanence in power was feeding radicalism? The administration vacillated for several reasons. Some officials had both political and moral qualms about forcing out a friendly head of state; the fear of hostile Congressional hearings was pervasive, and the memory of the McCarthyite period remained vivid in the State Department. It was especially difficult to appear to be opposing Somoza's call for elections. Members of Congress favorable to Somoza were blackmailing the White House with threats of delaying or defeating legislation important to the administration. Some U.S. officials were not thoroughly convinced that Somoza was really vulnerable, or believed that he could at least withstand one more round of fighting, after which another mediation effort might be mounted. Others, notably the Defense Department, simply believed that Somoza was, in fact, the best guarantor of U.S. interests. Some argued that Somoza was unlikely to bow to the relatively mild pressures being considered (e.g., withdrawal of the U.S. military mission, severance of the AID pipeline). The administration would have confronted powerful domestic opposition had it attempted more biting pressures (for example, working alone or in the OAS to curtail official and commercial credits and arms supplies, and/or to sever diplomatic relations). Whether Somoza would have bowed to concerted U.S. pressures will forever remain a hypothetical question.

Ironically, it was the pressure of the conservatives, both within and outside, which inhibited the administration from acting to preempt a Sandinista military victory. The original FAO proposal (supported by the FSLN) would have elevated a truly centrist triumvirate into power, consisting of businessman Alfonso Robelo, traditional

politician Rafael Cordova Rivas, and center-left intellectual Sergio Ramírez. The mediation team tried to forge a center-right transition government by including the Liberal Party and the National Guard, but the U.S. was not even prepared to press this solution with vigor. In the end, Robelo, Cordova Rivas, and Ramírez would all play important roles in the post-Somoza juntas, but in the shadow of Sandinista comandantes.

El Salvador. The U.S. first tried a "carrot and stick" approach with President Romero, a conservative general who took office in July 1977, following a disputed election capped by a harshly repressed protest demonstration. The U.S. delayed a \$90 million loan by the Inter-American Development Bank until Romero responded with what were interpreted by Washington as significant reforms, including a lifting of the state of siege and the inviting of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission to make an on-sight visit. However, only a month after the IDB approved the loan, the Romero government decreed the "Law of the Defense and Guarantee of Public Order," giving the government broad powers of arrest.

The U.S. then decided that political conflict, and the resulting coercive actions of the security forces, would only deepen unless the electoral process was rekindled. Widespread fraud by previous military governments had discredited elections, and the opposition had refused to participate in the March 1978 legislative contest. In December of 1978, the U.S. embassy in San Salvador was instructed to attempt to persuade Romero, the Church, the business organization (ANEP), and the moderate opposition (mainly the Christian Democrats and the social democratic NMR), to "dialogue." The intention was to produce an understanding on the necessary steps Romero would need to take for the opposition to participate, first, in the upcoming March 1980 municipal and legislative elections, and then in the 1982 presidential contest. Such an agreement, it was felt, would draw people away from confrontational and insurrectionary strategies and back into electoral politics, and provide for an orderly and constitutional transition of power.

Senior Romero government officials responded by forming a "high-level commission" to engage in lengthy discussion with the U.S. ambassador, Frank Devine, and the government announced the creation of a "national forum" in which it offered to negotiate, in an open, public meeting, with the opposition. However, contrary to U.S. urgings, even the moderate opposition, while willing to talk privately with the government, interpreted the government maneuver as a ploy to improve its image and divide the opposition, since the more leftist elements clearly would not participate in highly publicized negotiations with government officials. The opposition also argued that, due to the repressiveness of the security forces, the climate was not propitious for a political campaign and fair elections.

The U.S. persisted. In June 1979, Ambassador Devine presented the Romero government with a detailed list of reforms intended to improve the electoral climate and election machinery. Despite lack of progress, in early August the Policy Review Committee of the National

Security Council reaffirmed the dialogue strategy: in the wake of the July Sandinista victory, the PRC gave greater emphasis to the instrumental value an electoral process would have--i.e., that of strengthening Salvadorean moderates and isolating the growing left. On August 16, Romero publicly acceded to several of the U.S. reform proposals, including an invitation for the OAS to attend the 1980 elections. The State Department immediately issued a public statement: "We consider these (reforms) positive and statesmanlike moves which should reduce tensions and establish credible democratic processes." Devine urged the moderate political opposition to react positively to Romero's statement and to engage the government in private conversations.

Once again, raised U.S. expectations were frustrated. In early September Romero abruptly cancelled a private meeting scheduled with the moderate opposition to consider electoral reforms. The government's "national forum" issued conclusions which failed to include significant steps to improve the electoral climate or procedures. Some observers close to the Salvadorean government commented that the very favorable U.S. response to his August 16 speech had led Romero to believe that the U.S. had already been satisfied.

Despite the widening rift and distrust between the government and even the moderate opposition, the U.S. still hoped to work through Romero,¹⁹ and lobbied hard into early October, urging all groups to converse with the government. However, on October 15, Romero was ousted in a palace coup engineered by reform-minded military officers who had concluded that Romero was either unwilling or unable to undertake the reforms needed to halt the spiralling radicalization and violence.

Explaining the Outcomes. Why did the controlled-evolution approach fail in three out of four cases? Two broad explanations are possible: one emphasizes problems in policymaking and implementation, while the other locates the basic cause in the local actors and dynamics.

The carrot-and-stick tactics, which are so important to the controlled-evolution approach, can be extremely difficult to orchestrate. Judging the seriousness and importance of a positive step by the government requires a profound understanding of the nation's history and political structures, as well as good intelligence gathering and analysis. A premature positive response might lead the foreign ruler to believe the U.S. to be either naive or cynical. Responding too slowly can convince the ruler that he can do nothing to placate the U.S.--a conclusion that hardliners in and around his regime will encourage him to reach. The U.S. generally only possesses a limited number of instruments, and they must be used sparingly and well.

U.S. diplomacy is further complicated by intra-bureaucratic rivalries at home. Some bureaucrats may have ideological or sentimental attachments to either the regime in power or the opposition, which cloud their perception of reality. Each agency will object to the use of its particular program for more general diplomatic

purposes. The occasional orders issued by the president or other high officials not following a situation on a close, day-to-day basis can be disruptive. Finally, interference from Congress, private economic interests, and other lobbyists complicates the implementation of a consistent policy.

The alternative explanation argues that the controlled-evolution approach often misjudges the nature of the local actors and the dynamics of their interaction. It overestimates the willingness or the ability of the local governments to compromise. It fails to recognize the fear of opposition leaders that striking deals with the government will cost them credibility with their followers. Moreover, a compromise sufficient to satisfy the government may be acceptable to only the more moderate opposition. Yet if the more radical parties break from their more moderate allies, the government may decide that it no longer needs to yield to a splintered and weakened opposition.

U.S. policymakers are likely to have the interests and leverage needed to pressure a regime toward even a gradual evolution only when the opposition has reached an impressive strength. Yet in this polarized environment, compromise can be very difficult. Conservatives fear that moderate reforms, far from pacifying the opposition, will only encourage it, while radicals are aiming for a thorough regime transformation.

Either policymaking or local dynamics offer sufficient explanation for the failures of the controlled-evolution model in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. The model seemed to demand a sophisticated orchestration of policies beyond the apparent capabilities of the U.S. political system. Yet, even if the U.S. bureaucracy were more unified and intelligent, the controlled-evolution model seemed to demand too much from the local incumbents while being too cautious for much of the opposition. Both bureaucratic inefficiencies and U.S. caution contributed to the frequently noted impression that the U.S. was continually seeking solutions which were running behind local events.

Political systems can, of course, undergo a controlled transformation even from authoritarian to democratic rule, as Spain and perhaps Brazil are demonstrating. But Central America was to witness more abrupt processes of social change.

Dealing with Discontinuity

The Nicaraguan mediation had collapsed by the end of January 1979. By May, the Sandinistas had launched their final offensive. The mainstays of the Somoza regime, the National Guard and the Liberal Party, dissolved and, along with the Somoza family, fled into exile. Discontinuity, not gradual evolution, marked the end of the Somoza era.

The year 1979 also witnessed the fall of the Shah of Iran, an event which accelerated, but did not initiate, important transformations in U.S. foreign policy. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan capped a year in which the United States had become increasingly concerned with Soviet activities in the third world. The Carter administration was bracing for a presidential campaign in which it would be attacked for having "lost" Nicaragua and Iran, and having failed to respond with sufficient vigor to Soviet probes and advances elsewhere. The Carter White House did not want any new countries added to these lists before the 1980 elections.

With these concerns forming the prism through which the administration was perceiving events overseas, the main lesson drawn from the Nicaraguan experience was the urgency of deeper U.S. involvement in Central America. The very day after the Sandinistas entered Managua, the administration decided to augment its economic and diplomatic commitment to the region. To better coordinate the use of these resources, the administration selected three of its most creative and activist hemispheric ambassadors then serving in more prestigious South American posts.²⁰ The appointment of Lawrence Pezzullo (Nicaragua), Robert White (El Salvador), and later, George Landau (never granted agreement by the Guatemalans) illustrated the administration's determination to shape events in Central America to conform with U.S. interests.

In El Salvador, the U.S. continued to try to convince Romero and his more moderate opposition to enter into negotiations not unlike those unsuccessfully pursued in Nicaragua. But only three months after Somoza fled Managua, a bloodless coup ousted Romero. Once again, the U.S. was confronted with discontinuity. The new Salvadorean junta, consisting of reformist colonels and civilians, did not represent as total a break with the past as the Sandinista-dominated government in Nicaragua, but its composition and stated intentions were markedly different from those of the Romero regime.

The October 15 Junta. In retrospect, the junta formed on October 15, 1979 was the golden, last opportunity to avoid civil war in El Salvador. Here was a genuinely broad-based government containing all the centrist elements in Salvadorean society. Once the junta was established, the United States publicly and privately offered its support--a reformist, democratic junta could advance U.S. interests in human rights and, at the same time, be capable of containing the more radical left. Yet, when the junta collapsed at the end of December 1979, the U.S. did not mourn its passing. What had happened?

Most of the civilians in the cabinet and the junta resigned in protest at the military's slowness in implementing the proposed social and economic reforms, especially the agrarian reform, and, more importantly, in opposition to the aggressiveness of the security forces in responding to mass demonstrations, strikes, and sit-ins. The civilians believed that the stability and durability of their progressive experiment would require the participation, or at least the support, of some of the leftist unions and political movements.²¹

The aggressiveness of the security forces undermined whatever opportunities existed for the junta to reach out toward these groups.

The U.S. was not, of course, in control of the Salvadorean security forces. But the U.S. may have, perhaps inadvertently, encouraged their aggressive behavior. In December, the U.S. embassy, while continuing to underline its support for the promised social and economic reforms, began to place greater emphasis, especially in private conversations with military officers, on the need to restore authority.²² This attitude was reinforced by the chilling report of a U.S. Department of Defense survey team. The report, presented in mid-December to the Salvadorean Ministry of Defense, warned that the Salvadorean security forces were ill-prepared to cope with the advancing insurgency, and suggested the immediate purchase of counter-insurgency equipment.²³

The embassy appeared generally unaware that efforts by the security forces to restore "authority" would render the junta asunder. Indeed, poor communications with the civilians in the government resulted in the embassy being taken by surprise by the announcement on December 27 that the civilians were threatening to resign.

The U.S. failed to react with vigor to try to prevent the junta from collapsing. Due to inadequate embassy reporting, Washington had been unprepared for the civilian withdrawal, and was in the midst of the Christmas holidays. The U.S. did not try to mediate the differences between the military and civilian tendencies in the junta. Nor did it suggest to the military that U.S. security assistance was conditional upon a compromise. Instead, the U.S. quickly seized upon the offer of the Christian Democrats to enter the government, and indicated to both the military and the Christian Democrats that the U.S. would support such a new junta.

While the U.S. was not unfavorable toward the civilians in the October 15 junta, it found the Christian Democrats to be more moderate, flexible, and cohesive--in short, easier to work with. Indeed, a Christian Democrat-military understanding has been the basic objective of U.S. efforts during the Romero period.

Whether the October 15 junta could have survived with greater U.S. support and sensitivity is another hypothetical question whose answer cannot be known. Some U.S. government analysts believed that important leftist elements might have come to accept the junta and even participate in elections had reforms proceeded and the security forces been restrained. One of the three civilian junta members subsequently argued that had the civilians and the more reform-minded officers moved immediately to purge some fifty conservative officers, the junta might have steadied itself.²⁴ Instead, the U.S. had counseled the younger officers to compromise with their superiors in the name of institutional cohesion. Perhaps if the U.S. had placed its weight behind the reform-minded officers and civilians, they might have had the necessary strength and determination. But the risk that such a purge could have split the armed forces--and opened the gates to a leftist insurrection--was sufficient cause for the U.S. to demur.

The Christian Democrat-Military Juntas. The U.S. recognized that the CD-military government was extremely weak and vulnerable to either a rightist coup or, in the medium term, to a leftist insurrection.²⁵ The junta did not enjoy the firm support of either business, the Church, most unions, nor of the other civilian political parties and movements. The security forces themselves were politically divided, and the Christian Democratic party was a shell of what it had been during its apogee in the early 1970s. The junta's political base was narrow--considerably narrower than the October 15 junta--and its military capabilities shaky. Nevertheless, the administration's overriding concerns with regional security and domestic politics--the fear of "losing" yet another country--dictated that the U.S. commit its resources and efforts to the new junta.

The U.S. undertook to shoulder a series of major tasks intended to strengthen the junta. The U.S. helped design the agrarian reform,²⁶ and gain military acceptance of it, while giving the officers the backing they needed to break their traditional financial and psychological dependence on the large landowners. The U.S. lobbied hard with the business community, especially the urban industrialists and merchants, to convince them that limited reform was preferable to revolution.²⁷ U.S. economic aid helped fund the agrarian reform, and thereby indirectly financed the transfer of property from the traditional large landowners to the peasantry. The U.S. lobbied, with less success, to persuade the center-left political parties and the Church to back the regime. When disputes arose within the government, the U.S. served as mediator, while threatening aid cut-offs to avert rightist coups. U.S. diplomacy was supported by increasing levels of material resources. Economic assistance reached \$56 million in FY 80 and surpassed \$60 million in FY 81. Though military aid remained modest, it increased steadily throughout 1980, and U.S. military advisers were stationed in the headquarters of the army high command.

The U.S. also lobbied hard throughout the hemisphere and in western Europe to gain international support for the junta, and pressed the multilateral development banks to assist the deteriorating Salvadorean economy. Policy was closely coordinated with Venezuela's ruling Christian Democratic government, which was especially friendly to the junta's leading Christian Democrat, Napoleon Duarte.²⁸

In sum, the U.S. acted as the junta's foreign ministry, close domestic political counsellor and propagandist, arbiter of internal disputes, liaison with business interests, consultant on agrarian reform and labor organization, and, increasingly, military adviser. The U.S. had not become so deeply involved in assisting a government in the hemisphere since the Dominican crisis of the early and mid-1960s.

At this writing, it is still too early to judge definitively the results of Carter administration efforts. A number of successes and disappointments could be listed. The formation and perseverance of the DC-military junta and the implementation of the agrarian reform, however flawed, did seize the political initiative away from the left, and the guerrilla offensive of January 1981 failed to defeat the armed

forces or even splinter the junta. Relations improved between the government and most of the business sector. The Carter administration also succeeded in winning some international as well as congressional support for the junta.

On the other hand, U.S. officials recognized that the junta had failed to gain significant popular support, or the adhesion of other centrist parties, in part because of the widespread terror generated by right-wing "death squads" and the security forces.²⁹ U.S. efforts to make the counter-insurgency efforts more refined and selective were unsuccessful, and the security forces seemed unwilling to move against privately funded assassination teams. If the left was unable to gain the intensity of popular support needed to stimulate a mass insurrection, the guerrilla forces themselves grew in numbers, tactical skill, and armaments during the course of 1980. In this climate of widespread violence and uncertainty, the economy declined by 8-10 percent, and international commercial credit dried up. Finally, as the intensity of the fighting increased, so did the danger of a regionalization of the conflict.

Accommodation with Nicaragua. The U.S. had worked hard to prevent the Sandinistas from acceding to power. When the FSLN columns entered Managua on July 19, 1979, the U.S. faced circumstances not of its own choosing, and a new set of options. The U.S. could either adopt a policy of hostility toward the new Sandinista-dominated government, could simply grant it unqualified acceptance, or else seek to accommodate and moderate the new government. The Carter administration chose accommodation.

The administration had several motives for adopting an accommodationist strategy. Given the strength of the FSLN and its control over the armed forces, a policy of hostility would only serve to radicalize the internal political dynamic and drive the FSLN to look to Cuba for security assistance; a "second" Cuba might be avoided by not repeating the mistakes made with the first Cuba. Moreover, a policy of hostility would create the impression in U.S. domestic opinion that the administration had, indeed, "lost" Nicaragua. But if a policy of hostility seemed counterproductive, a policy of laissez-faire was not even considered. The U.S. was prepared to accommodate itself to a liberalized definition of what could be tolerated in Central America, but outer boundaries would still be drawn.

The U.S. made clear that Nicaragua ought not to allow foreign troops or bases, nor attempt to "export revolution." Otherwise, the U.S. was prepared to tolerate radical rhetoric on international issues distant to the Central American reality. The administration decided to focus less on these immediate foreign-policy postures of the FSLN, and more on assuring the continuity of Nicaragua's material interaction with the rest of the world, and on the maintenance of a domestic private business sector. A Nicaragua enmeshed in trade and financial links with other Central American, Latin, and industrial nations was bound to moderate its foreign policy over time. A strong private sector within Nicaragua would be an important advocate of a pragmatic accommodation to international economic realities. Nicaragua seemed

especially fertile ground for applying this strategy of "neo-realism"³⁰ which was fundamental to the approach of some Carter administration officials to radical change in the third world. Nicaragua was a small, open economy, with tight trading and financial links to the U.S. and western Europe, the Sandinista leadership³¹ were materialists in need of the West's economic resources, and the Nicaraguan business class, having participated in the anti-Somoza struggle, enjoyed some post-revolutionary legitimacy.

The Carter administration did not clearly define, either publicly or in its own mind, exactly what its vision of an acceptable "pluralistic" Nicaragua entailed.³² Many recognized that the FSLN was determined to retain control of the executive branch of government, with Nicaragua perhaps evolving toward a Mexican-like model with a dominant official party within a mixed economy, while other U.S. officials seemed to hope that Nicaragua would become a truly competitive, multi-party system similar to Costa Rica.

The \$75 million aid package announced in late 1979 was intended to signal to the international financial institutions, other bilateral donors, and commercial lenders and traders that they ought to do business with Nicaragua. Some 60 percent of the \$75 million was to be channeled to the Nicaraguan private sector. The large AID program would, of course, provide the U.S. with potential avenues of influence in Nicaraguan society, and allow for a direct U.S. presence to compete with the large influx of Cuban personnel. To reduce distrust, President Carter invited Nicaraguan government leaders to the White House in September 1979. To alleviate regional tensions which threatened to upset the delicate political balance in Managua, the U.S. urged other Caribbean-basin states to befriend the Nicaraguan regime. The U.S. especially urged Honduras to prevent former National Guardsmen from using Honduran territory as sanctuaries from which to harrass the FSLN.

At first the U.S. was reasonably pleased with the FSLN response.³³ The government's economic team was composed largely of businessmen and technocrats. Nicaragua acknowledged foreign debts accrued during the Somoza era and renegotiated its debts with the international banking community.³⁴ Internally, the government sought to moderate wage demands and repressed the ultra-left. Opposition political activity and media were tolerated.

By the second half of 1980, however, U.S. officials were increasingly disturbed with Nicaraguan developments. The reasons were numerous. Those U.S. officials who hoped Nicaragua would become a second Costa Rica became disillusioned.³⁵ Nearly all officials reacted negatively to the FSLN's approach to mass mobilization, which was seen in Washington not as legitimate popular participation but as a form of political control. Since the U.S. looked to the fortunes of the private sector as the key to pluralism and the continued integration of Nicaragua into the international economy, Washington was very sensitive to the heightened, if not yet inflamed, tensions between the FSLN and Nicaraguan businessmen. The presence of large numbers of Cuban propagandists and security advisers was viewed ominously, especially in

light of Washington's growing agitation over Cuban and Soviet activities in the third world. Nevertheless, given the Nicaraguan government's pragmatic economic policies, these developments might have been seen as irritating and worrisome, but not cause for abandoning the accommodationist policy--were it not for the civil war in El Salvador.

The Nicaraguan government had indicated its willingness to support the October 15 junta, in part because it recognized that deepening conflict in El Salvador could threaten U.S.-Nicaraguan relations. But the conflict in El Salvador did polarize, and the U.S. and the FSLN were inevitably drawn in on opposite sides. One of the Carter administration's last acts was to suspend economic-aid disbursements to Nicaragua, on the grounds that the Nicaraguan government was funnelling arms to the Salvadorean guerrillas.

The Reagan Administration

Paralleling the early days of the Carter administration, the Reagan team approached Central America through globalist lens. But whereas the early Carter administration had emphasized human-rights principles, Reagan saw the need to rescue the isthmus from what were perceived as Soviet-bloc incursions. In its campaign to reverse the decline in U.S. power, the Reagan administration made Central America, and El Salvador in particular, its initial foreign-policy priority. This extraordinary show of interest proceeded from two convergent concerns within the administration. First, having argued that the Carter administration had been overly tolerant of leftist political forces in the third world, especially when supported by the Cubans or Soviets, the Reagan administration chose El Salvador to demonstrate its counter-revolutionary anti-Sovietism.³⁶ Second, responding to perceptions in the Defense Department³⁷ and in branches of the intelligence community, the administration sought to reassert U.S. control of the Caribbean basin, and to eliminate any actual or potential threats to U.S. security interests.

Central America offered favorable geopolitical terrain for a demonstration of U.S. resolve to respond forcefully to Cuban or Soviet "risk-taking" (a term used repeatedly by Secretary of State Alexander Haig). If the U.S. failed to act decisively so near to home, the Soviets would not be convinced of the seriousness of U.S. intent. Moreover, Central America had to be secured, and quickly, in order to free U.S. resources for use in theatres of greater inherent strategic or economic importance--notably, the Persian Gulf.

The new administration moved rapidly to provide the Salvadorean security forces with materials and advisers. The failure of the January 1981 offensive by the left had opened a possible window for a mediated solution, but the Reagan administration preferred to pursue a military victory; a political compromise seemed difficult, but, in any case, the administration preferred to illustrate U.S. willingness and capability to successfully project force in the third world against revolutionaries. Moreover, a mediated solution could leave the left with considerable actual or potential influence, and any centrist

solution in El Salvador would be destabilizing in Guatemala. The U.S. did continue to support President Duarte and important elements of the agrarian reform, recognizing that they strengthened the government's domestic and international images.

Mutual distrust between the Reagan administration and the FSLN appeared certain to draw the two nations into conflict. A likely signal of a rupture would be the cancellation of economic-assistance flows, whether due to intelligence reports of continuing Nicaraguan engagement in channelling arms to the Salvadorean guerrillas, or to the violation of other conditions placed by Congress on aid to Nicaragua.³⁸ A hostile U.S. attitude would threaten the internal coalition between the private sector and the FSLN, compelling the FSLN to assert control in order to survive. It also seemed probable that the new administration would renew security assistance to Guatemala to help the security forces combat a growing insurgency, hoping to repeat the success of U.S. counter-insurgency programs against Guatemalan guerrillas in the late 1960s.³⁹ In Honduras, the Reagan administration decided to maintain the policy inherited from Carter, and support the democratization process, albeit with less intensity.⁴⁰

The Evolution of the U.S. National Interest

In the short span between 1975 and 1981, the U.S. government's definition of the national interest in Central America changed with remarkable frequency. These shifts in priorities resulted from rapid changes within Central America, altering perceptions of global trends, lurches in American public opinion, and variations in the relative power of individuals and agencies both within and between administrations.

In the early and mid-1970s, Central America normally received low-level attention, while the permanent bureaucracy concentrated on fostering economic growth and regional stability as the best antidotes against the entrance of forces hostile to U.S. influence. In 1977, the Carter administration's assertion of its concern for human rights automatically provoked a rift in U.S. relations with formerly friendly regimes. U.S. involvement in Central America during this period was tempered by the region's relatively low visibility, the Latin American Bureau's protection of its traditional client governments, and the non-interventionist scruples of some Carter administration officials. By mid-1978, however, the administration became anxious that U.S. influence in the region was potentially threatened by political unrest unguided by the United States. The existing concern for human rights and the heightened security interest both caused the U.S. to favor political change in Nicaragua and El Salvador, although security interests increased U.S. caution and involvement. Moreover, whereas human rights had initially been viewed primarily as an end in itself, increasingly the advancement of human rights and democracy was seen as an instrument whereby U.S. security interests could be pursued.

The Sandinista victory offered an opportunity for the United States to redefine the limits of its tolerance in the region. The presence of a leftist, nationalist government, while never welcome, was judged potentially not threatening to U.S. economic, political, or even security interests.

In apparent contradiction to the policy of accommodation with the Sandinistas, the U.S. worked hard to preclude a leftist victory in El Salvador. In fact, both policies were derived from the same objectives: to work within each reality for non-radical outcomes and to contain the spread of Cuban influence. A policy of cooperation with Nicaragua was considered the best method to preserve pluralism and to lessen the Nicaraguan incentive to invite Cuban assistance. In El Salvador, it was still possible to assure that Marxist-oriented parties and Cuban influence were precluded altogether. The two policies did, however, face a potentially real contradiction: escalating foreign involvement in El Salvador threatened to undermine the U.S.-Nicaraguan entente.

As U.S. interests evolved from an emphasis on human rights to an emphasis on regional security and containing Cuban influence, the degree of U.S. activism increased dramatically. The U.S. decision to launch a mediation effort in Nicaragua signalled a sharp increase in U.S. direct involvement, but the administration was still careful to multilateralize the mediation effort, gain an OAS mandate, and secure the support of the hemisphere's democracies. By 1981, the U.S. was prepared to act alone in playing an extremely activist role in El Salvador, although the support of other governments was encouraged.

On the surface, the Reagan administration represents a return to a traditional definition of U.S. security interests in the region-- that the region ought to be denied to any hostile powers. A public human-rights policy was rejected as threatening to the coherence of military institutions considered the most reliable partners in the defense of these interests. New, however, was the administration's public emphasis on viewing Central America as a testing ground for East-West competition in the third world. This prism momentarily elevated Central America to a theatre of high priority; however, the intention was to quickly secure the isthmus so that U.S. attention could be directed to more distant trouble spots of greater inherent importance. The feasibility of this optimistic scenario is very uncertain. During the last decade, the political dynamics in Central America have become significantly more complex and difficult to control.

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¹For a more detailed description of these developments, see Francisco Villagran Kramer, "Central America in Transition: From the 1960s to the 1980s," Latin American Program Working Paper No. 90 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1981).

²For example, following the watershed 1972 Salvadorean presidential elections, the U.S. made no public statements or even private representations to protest the fraud; nor were on-going security and economic-assistance programs suspended. Moreover, when the defrauded candidate, Napoleon Duarte, led a contingent of military officers in a "constitutionalist" rebellion, the U.S. not only opposed the attempt as reckless but immediately provided the president-elect, Colonel Fernando Molina, with a U.S. Air Force jet to rush him back to San Salvador. Molina had been travelling in Taiwan.

³At least some officers in the Latin American Bureau of the State Department had actually hoped that the election of a non-Somoza Liberal in 1971 could begin a gradual transition away from Somoza rule. However, in late 1970 President Nixon appointed Turner Shelton as envoy to Managua. Shelton, apparently acting on White House instructions, acquiesced in Somoza's rewrite of the constitution, which allowed Somoza to remain in office.

⁴This view, of course, differs from those which argue that Central American societies had remained essentially static and traditional, and that it was the shift of U.S. policies under Carter that generated instability. See, for example, Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," Commentary, November 1979, pp. 34-45.

⁵Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, "Human Rights and OAS Reform," speech before the General Assembly of the OAS, St. George's, Grenada, June 14, 1977, Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State.

⁶The immediate cause was the issuance by the Executive Branch of human-rights country-reports, required at the time by Congress for all nations receiving U.S. security assistance.

⁷For a detailed listing of human-rights-related actions by the United States in these countries, see the forthcoming book by Lars Schoultz on the U.S. human-rights policies in Latin America (Princeton University Press); and Washington Office on Latin America, Update, monthly bulletin.

⁸This view was most frequently expressed by Cyrus Vance. For example, in reviewing progress toward democracy in Latin America, Vance argued: "These moves toward more democratic and open societies in Latin America are distinctly in our interest. The great strength of democracy is its flexibility and resilience. It opens opportunities for broadly based political and economic participation. By encouraging compromise and accommodation, it fosters evolutionary change." Address before the Foreign Policy Association, New York City, September 27, 1979.

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⁹The most complete public presentation of this interpretation of the Central American problematic can be found in Viron P. Vaky, "Central America at the Crossroads," Hearings, U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, 96th Congress, 1st session, September 11, 1979, pp. 9-20. This testimony drew heavily on a major internal study prepared in the spring of 1979 for the Policy Review Committee (PRC) of the National Security Council.

¹⁰The Carter administration never questioned that a leftist accession to power in Central America was contrary to U.S. interests. For example, the idea of supporting, or even possibly accepting, a process leading to a Sandinista-dominated government in Nicaragua was never seriously considered as an option for U.S. policy (until it became virtually inevitable). A full explanation for this deep-seated U.S. opposition to leftist political movements, especially in the Western Hemisphere, is beyond the scope of this paper.

¹¹This rendition of Carter administration attitudes and policies differs sharply from that presented by some conservative critics, who have argued that the administration persisted in carelessly destabilizing friendly governments, and was not altogether unhappy when revolutions followed. See, for example, Jeane Kirkpatrick, "U.S. Security and Latin America," Commentary, January 1981, pp. 29-40.

¹²This military aid was also intended to strengthen the Honduran ability to police its borders with Nicaragua and El Salvador.

¹³Keesing's Contemporary Archives, September 26, 1980, p. 30483.

¹⁴Similarly, U.S. efforts to encourage a transition from authoritarian to democratic rule were more successful in those South American nations where important internal forces were already moving in that direction. See Richard E. Feinberg, U.S. Human Rights Policy: Latin America (Washington, D.C.: Center for International Policy Monograph, Vol. VI, No. 1, 1980).

¹⁵Viron P. Vaky, "Central America at the Crossroads," op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁶"Controversy Looms Over Bid to Aid Guatemala," Washington Post, March 11, 1979.

¹⁷The complete documentation on these negotiations can be found in "Report to the Secretary of State on the Work of the International Commission of Friendly Cooperation and Conciliation for Achieving a Peaceful Solution to the Grave Crisis of the Republic of Nicaragua" (Washington, D.C.: Organization of American States, 1979, mimeo). Critical accounts include William LeoGrande, "The Revolution in Nicaragua: Another Cuba?", Foreign Affairs, 58:1 (Fall 1979), 28-50;

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and Jorge Lawton, "Crisis de la hegemonia; la política de Carter hacia Nicaragua: 1977-79," in Cuadernos Semestrales (Mexico City: Centro de Investigacion y Docencia Economicas, 1979), No. 6, 59-114. In his own account, Anastasio Somoza published edited versions of tapes of some of the conversations between himself and U.S. officials, in Nicaragua Betrayed (Boston: Western Islands, 1980).

¹⁸This decision reflected several facts--including a desire to allow the Guard to recoup from its losses during the September insurrection; an intention to reserve the cut-off as an instrument of future leverage against Somoza; and a hesitancy to raise the issue with the Israelis and complicate the more important Camp David peace process then under way.

¹⁹The policy of working with Romero was reaffirmed in Congressional testimony as late as September 11, 1979. See Viron P. Vaky, "Central America at the Crossroads," op. cit., p. 16.

²⁰This pattern was noticed in an Associated Press story: "U.S. Planning to Appoint New Envoy to Guatemala," the Washington Post, June 28, 1980.

²¹Some of the civilian resignees published an open letter to their former military colleagues explaining the reasons for their resignations: "We do not believe it is possible for the armed forces to continue analyzing the situation of the popular movement in terms of 'extremists' or as enemies to whom the sole response is confrontation." The civilians hoped to differentiate among the leftist groups and incorporate some of them. A review of this period can be found in a two-part series by Karen D. Young, Washington Post, March 8-9, 1981. See also William Leogrande and Carla Anne Robbins, "Oligarchs and Officers: The Crisis in El Salvador," Foreign Affairs (Summer 1980), pp. 1084-1103.

²²See T.S. Montgomery, "El Salvador: U.S. Policy and Revolutionary Process," unpublished paper, May 1980, p. 15.

²³According to the New York Times, DoD had not changed its assessment by February 1981. "Military Aspects of Crisis are Underlined by Haig and a Pentagon Study," February 21, 1981, p. 1.

²⁴In an interview with the author, in Washington, D.C., February 1980.

²⁵Ambassador Robert White later commented: "When I went down to El Salvador one year ago, there was not one intelligence analyst in Washington who said there was a prayer of the present government lasting more than a month or two." "Arms Aid and Advisers: Debating the New Policy in El Salvador," New York Times, March 8, 1981.

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²⁶For details, see U.S. AID/El Salvador, El Salvador Agrarian Reform Sector Strategy Paper, July 12, 1980. For a critical assessment, see Lawrence Simon and James Stephans, Jr., El Salvador Land Reform, 1980-81, Impact Audit (Boston: Oxfam, 1981).

²⁷T. S. Montgomery, op. cit., p. 6.

²⁸See the forthcoming Wilson Center Latin American Program Working Paper by Robert Bond, "Venezuela, the Caribbean Basin, and the Crisis in Central America."

²⁹According to calculations of the Church in San Salvador, approximately 80 percent of the 10,000 violent deaths recorded in 1980 were at the hands of the government and rightist forces.

³⁰For a discussion of this term, see Tom Farer, "Searching for Defeat," Foreign Policy 40 (Fall 1980), pp. 155-174.

³¹The Sandinistas were also more disposed to working with the Carter administration because its human-rights policy had ended the long history of close U.S. association with the Somoza family.

³²Some officials, notably in DoD, disagreed with the accommodationist policy from the beginning, not only because they believed that the FSLN was intent upon creating a "second Cuba," but because even a radical nationalist regime was seen as intolerable in Central America. See "Aid for Nicaragua the Focus of Fierce Internal Policy Dispute," Washington Post, August 8, 1980.

³³For example, in May 1980, Assistant Secretary of State William Bowdler stated that "The revolution's course . . . is still compatible with an open, pluralist society with a mixed economy." Hearings, U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, 96th Congress, 2nd session, May 20, 1980.

³⁴See John Dizzard, "Why bankers fear the Nicaraguan Solution," Institutional Investor, November 1980, pp. 53-62.

³⁵The rather critical 1980 human-rights report on Nicaragua was written from this perspective. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, submitted to the U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations and the U.S. House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, February 2, 1981, pp. 489-498.

³⁶The Reagan administration first announced its intention to make El Salvador a demonstration case in a "backgrounder" for reporters. See "El Salvador: A Test Case," New York Times, February 14, 1981, p. 1. The State Department later released a White Paper

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detailing alleged Cuban and Soviet support for the Salvadorean guerrillas. "Communist Interference in El Salvador," U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, February 23, 1981.

³⁷See the paper presented by Margaret Daly Hayes at the Wilson Center's April 1981 conference on "International Implications of the Central American Crisis."

³⁸The law required that the president certify, "prior to releasing any assistance . . . that the Government of Nicaragua" was not "aiding or abetting or supporting acts of violence or terrorism in other countries." The president was also required to terminate aid if the Nicaraguan government violated freedom of speech or of the press, or inhibited labor-union organization. The Carter administration had disliked the rigidity these amendments imposed on U.S. policy, but had accepted them in order to muster the necessary votes to pass the aid package.

³⁹In congressional testimony which was friendly to the Guatemalan government and failed to even mention its human-rights record, Acting Assistant Secretary John Bushnell stated: "Endemic violence is on the upswing (in Guatemala), spawned in considerable measure by communist exploitation of traditional social and political inequities." Before U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, March 5, 1981.

⁴⁰Ibid.