MEXICO'S NATIONAL SECURITY

by

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Mexico faces two immediate challenges to her national security—an ongoing financial crisis and the potential spillover of the turmoil in Central America. As recently as five years ago, Mexico had no need for a fully integrated national security policy. Her new wealth seemed secure, as everyone expected oil prices to continue their upward trend and Central American problems appeared difficult but manageable. This article will attempt to demonstrate that Mexico has an increasingly effective national security policy; to detail its principal contents; and to show that through this more coherent approach to national security, Mexico stands a much better chance of maintaining its stability into the 1990s.

Traditionally, Mexico has relied for security mainly on socioeconomic actions backed by relatively unsophisticated and largely uncoordinated military and diplomatic efforts.[1] Over the last few years, Mexico's leaders have evinced increasing cognizance of the socioeconomic and financial implications of the debt crisis and the turmoil and expanding militarization to the south. Further, the leadership has recognized that Mexico possesses valuable and tempting strategic assets. Finally, Mexico's leaders perceive a growing need to stop the link-up of Central American revolutionary forces with potential rebels in Mexico's southern states. Mexico has therefore developed, in the last couple of years, its ability to implement an increasingly sophisticated national security response to these challenges, incorporating well-balanced and coordinated financial, socioeconomic, diplomatic, and military actions.[2]

The effectiveness of Mexico's national security policy is of more than passing interest in the United States because we clearly have vital interests at risk. The two nations share a 2000-mile border, through which each year millions of Mexicans and Americans cross legally as businessmen or tourists and more than a million Mexicans cross illegally in an attempt to find work. At present this border requires no defense. In the event Mexico were to shift sharply rightward or leftward as a result of policy changes occasioned by either the financial or regional crisis, however, she might possibly open her economy further and draw even closer to the United States while at the same time instituting harsh repressive measures against all opposition, thus risking a civil war; conversely, Mexico might close her economy,[3] seek closer ties with the Soviets and Cubans, and move as has Nicaragua to place close to ten percent of her population under arms. If either of these extreme scenarios were to take place, the defense requirements of the United States would expand significantly. The latter scenario, especially, would work to the detriment of what should be the overriding US strategic goal for the hemisphere, that of maintaining it as an economy-of-force area. Both for the sake of our neighbor to the south and to protect our own interests, we want a democratic, stable, and prosperous Mexico. As US Ambassador to Mexico John Gavin put it, "We have with Mexico a marriage without possibility of divorce."[4]

Mexico's national security policy is best defined by explaining her responses to the twin crises—financial and regional. In its 1983-88 National Development Plan, the Mexican leadership defines national security as ensuring peace and justice internationally and the integral development of the nation internally.[5] This broad definition is brought into better focus by looking at the socioeconomic, diplomatic, and military programs put in motion to respond to the financial and Central American crises.

THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

The current financial crisis presents an unprecedented threat to the social and political fabric of Mexico.[6] Support for what has been one of the most stable political systems, not only in Latin America but in the entire third world, is in jeopardy. The system's centerpiece, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, has maintained control largely as a result of being able to deliver an improved standard of living for the Mexican people. Since World War II, party leaders have been very successful in doing that, as the average annual economic growth rate has been roughly six percent. In the period 1978-81, however, the average economic growth rate rose to over eight percent. This superheated pace of economic growth unfortunately brought on inflationary pressures, an over-reliance on imports, and excessive public sector external borrowing.[7] The latter rose at an alarming rate from 1980 to 1982. In 1980, the public sector debt was $33.8 billion. In 1982 it had increased to about $58.9 billion. Roughly a third of this debt was to come due within two years. Indeed, 1982 was the breakpoint for Mexico's economy.[8]

As a result of this excessive public sector spending that forced large-scale borrowing, Mexico suffered the equivalent of an economic meltdown. The drop in oil prices, worldwide recession, overeager foreign bankers willing to lend at one-half percent over cost, official malfeasance, and simply a boom that took place too fast to be properly controlled also played significant parts. Subsequently, inflation rose to 100 percent for the first time in 50 years. Mexico's gross national product dropped five percent. Unemployment doubled to roughly 20 percent. With underemployment at or near 25 percent, almost half the work force was under or unemployed.[9] Internal saving dropped in real terms by 13 percent.[10] Over $20 billion left the country as a measure of the lack of confidence of the monied class in Mexico's financial future. Without the dollars to continue to protect the price of the peso, it has been devalued from 25 to 195 to the dollar since February 1982.

All of this has shattered the Mexican people's confidence that their economic bubble would never burst. In order to meet the crisis, the government of Mexico rescheduled $20 billion in public sector short-term debt so that it could be paid off in eight years with a four-year grace period instead of in two years as originally scheduled. In December 1982, the government accepted International Monetary Fund guidelines for a three-year stabilization program. The IMF program consists of a $3.9 billion extended facility loan to Mexico, available over a three-year period. Disbursements are linked to progress toward Mexico's economic adjustment goals. The basic goal has been to reduce the ratio of public sector deficit to gross domestic product from close to 18 percent in 1982 to 8.5 percent in 1983, 5.5 percent in 1984, and 3.5 percent in 1985. The IMF program also calls for constraints on the

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rate of increase of Mexico's external public sector debt owed to commercial banks. A ceiling of $5 billion was placed on such borrowing for 1983. Restraint on monetary and wage policies was also required. The program hopes to set the stage for strong and sustained economic growth.[11]

As a means of meeting IMF guidelines, the Mexican government has undertaken a ten-point "Immediate Program for Economic Reordering," the central objectives of which are to combat inflation, protect employment, and recover the basis for an efficient, just, and dynamic development process. The program focuses efforts on reducing the growth of public sector spending; protecting employment; continuing works in progress to improve the administration of public sector spending; encouraging programs for production, importation, and distribution of basic foodstuffs; increasing public sector income through tax reforms and higher prices for public sector goods and services (lowering or removing subsidies); channeling credit effectively to limit inflation; ensuring "recovery" of the foreign exchange market; restructuring the public administration; and maintaining the principle of having the state as rector of an economy entailing both state and private ownership.

So far, program results have been good, especially regarding its financial aspects. Mexico experienced a balance-of-payments surplus in the first nine months of 1983 of over $3 billion. This was accomplished mainly by cutting imports from $14 billion in 1982 to $9 billion in 1983. Mexico has also managed to lower the rate of debt increase to only 3.4 percent since December 1982, and has increased public sector revenues by 122 percent.

Mexico is clearly meeting IMF constraints with her ten-point program. The only worry at this point is whether her excellent financial reordering effort went too far in the sense that the productive sector may have been badly hurt by lack of imports. In this regard, the private sector experienced a 71-percent drop in imports in 1983. As Mexico hopes to get the economy going in 1984, the productive sector must have the imports needed to produce. In 1983 Mexico experienced, as mentioned previously, a five-percent economic decline. The reality behind that figure is that companies either cut back drastically on production and employees or went out of business. Companies barely managed on what little imports they could obtain, import substitution, or a combination of both. The Mexican government hopes for a one-percent growth rate in 1984, followed by a return to growth rates somewhere around six percent in future years. There is some doubt, however, that she will achieve a fully recovered economy given the damage done in 1983 by the sharp cutback in imports.[12]

Much will depend on how well the Mexican government can get public and private sector enterprises motivated to increase production of products that satisfy internal demands and also can compete in international markets. With the government owning roughly 60 percent of all national productive capacity, and with a less-than-dynamic private sector that is at the same time suspicious of the government, that will not be an easy task. A better balance between financial reordering considerations and necessary imports, and the transfer of some state-owned assets to the private sector, should receive greater emphasis in 1985. Encouragement of foreign investment should also be stressed, and there are signs now that this is occurring.[13] Private sector confidence must be restored if Mexico is to achieve the goal of economic revival and a return to reasonable growth rates in the six-percent range.

Considerable time has been spent explaining how Mexico is dealing with the most immediate threat to her national security—the financial crisis—in order to make clear the sophisticated nature of her response and Mexico's commitment to it. Part and parcel of this effort includes an equally sincere determination to ensure that austerity is not borne excessively by the disadvantaged sectors of society. This is why maintaining employment is given such a prominent part in the program. From January to July 1983,

Mexico claimed to have created 300,000 new jobs despite her still-ailing economy. She did this by focusing on productive and socially useful work in urban and rural areas, reorienting investment to labor-intensive activities, and promoting support for middle-sized and small businesses. This is a considerable improvement over 1982, when unemployment rose considerably. Mexico's goal for 1983 was to create 500,000 to 700,000 new jobs. Given their difficult economic situation in 1983 and realizing that employment data is very soft, it is most likely that they reached only the lower end of that range, which would mean a remaining shortfall of probably 300,000 jobs, since roughly 800,000 new job-seekers appeared in the market that year.[14] The Mexican government is also ensuring that prices of a well-defined list of basic foods are controlled, so as to keep them within reach of the masses.

Finally, despite the austere nature of the 1984 budget, major emphasis continues to be placed on social development by providing an increasing percentage of the budget to socially-related areas. The key areas in this regard are education, health, social security, rural development, and the employment program, which comprised 35.3 percent of the budget. Other areas of indirect social importance are regional development, ecology, communications, and transportation, which accounted for another 13.9 percent, making a total of almost half the budget invested in socially-related programs. By contrast, the Mexican military received only 1.9 percent of the 1984 budget, roughly $575 million. Additionally, the 1984 budget of $42 billion, though 50 percent higher than the 1983 budget, decreased in real terms from 1983's total of $28 billion considering the 80-percent inflation rate.[15] Regardless, the budget reflected a real social concern, which is one of the primary contributing factors to the Mexican government's political legitimacy, stability, and national security.

THE CENTRAL AMERICAN CRISIS

Mexico's involvement in the growing turmoil in Central America began when Mexico withdrew recognition of the Somoza government. The decision to become more heavily involved in Central American affairs has had direct national security effects requiring development of a finely balanced foreign policy using all elements of power. Mexico seeks to protect her interest in regional stability and to minimize foreign influences in the area. Her policy also works toward enhancing Mexican influence and revolutionary prestige, promoting internal stability, and maintaining to the extent possible correct and friendly relations with the United States. The policy is based on traditional Mexican support for self-determination, nonintervention, dialogue with understanding, and peaceful settlement of disputes. These principles have been stretched to a degree over the past five years, but generally they undergird Mexico's foreign policy in support of her national security.

What, then, has Mexico faced since 1978 as a result of her decision to become more actively involved in Central America? First, in a definite break with her past nonintervention ist position, she chose to help a popular revolution in Nicaragua. Her natural sympathies for the revolutionaries and abhorrence of what Somoza represented made this position initially quite easy. Also, her new oil wealth gave her a growing sense of power. These factors, combined with an apparent diminished US interest in the subregion, created a natural opportunity to increase Mexico's international prestige and burnish the party's revolutionary credentials at home; these positions were adopted in part to keep the domestic left at bay and in part to adopt a foreign policy position consistent with the liberal views held by many of Mexico's top political leaders.[16] In the beginning all of this could be accomplished simply by supporting the good guys (the Sandinistas) against the bad guys (the Somozistas). As time passed, however, Mexico's involvement became deeper; the July 1979 broad-based movement against Somoza quickly converted itself into a state retaining some pluralistic features, partially as a result of European and socialist-influenced assistance, but one increasingly

dominated by Marxists and beholden to the Eastern bloc. As East-West competition over the subregion sharply increased, namely in El Salvador and Guatemala, Mexico found that more important Mexican interests were challenged as the growing turbulence moved closer to home.

Guatemala's instability was most directly felt, given its long border with Mexico. Specifically, the 1982 "beans and bullets" program (Plan Victoria 82), implemented in rural areas by General Rios Montt with its "you're with us or you're dead" approach, drove 30,000 to 35,000 Guatemalan refugees across the border into Mexico's state of Chiapas. The increasing turbulence clearly threatened Mexico's interest in regional stability and, should the Central American conflict spill over, would threaten even her internal cohesion.

How is Mexico responding in order to protect her national security? While deploring conversion of Central America into an East-West battleground, Mexico stresses that regional violence has its origins in long-standing socioeconomic neglect and frustration of the peoples' political will. Mexico would like to see both superpowers retire from the area so that the issues could be settled by regional players alone, including those countries who border on Central America to the north and south (Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, and Colombia). With this as the essential intellectual underpinning for actions in support of her interests, Mexico's policy toward Central America consists of using diplomatic and economic tools externally, military and socioeconomic ones internally.

By 1981 Mexico had begun in earnest to urge negotiations in order to resolve disputes between the United States and Cuban-backed Nicaragua resulting from Nicaragua's support for the spread of subversion in Central America and most specifically in El Salvador. At the time, the United States viewed Mexico's efforts as not exactly those of an honest broker, in that Mexican sympathies seemed to be on the side of Nicaragua. Mexico appeared to believe, as did some other regional countries (i.e. Panama, Colombia) that the United States was the root cause of area problems through continued support for what these countries viewed as hopelessly reactionary regimes. Deep suspicions of US interventionist tendencies engendered by historical experience also informed these commonly held views and made it difficult—indeed, they still make it difficult—for Mexico to take a completely objective position regarding the facilitation of negotiations.

By 1983, however, the Mexican position had become somewhat more evenhanded. As Nicaragua's revolution tended more and more toward Marxism-Leninism and 8000 Cubans arrived in the country, Mexico urged the Sandinistas not to push their private sector completely out of the country. They also became one of the prime movers in the formation of what has come to be known as the Contadora Group. This group of four countries (Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, and Colombia) has moved steadily toward resolution of regional conflict. While much remains to be done, by September 1983 the group had helped Central American countries define 21 objectives for which specific agreements needed to be worked out. The salient points include no export of subversion, reduction in arms and force levels, gradual drawdown and removal of foreign advisers, perfection of pluralism, and appropriate verification procedures. In January 1984, agreement was reached to form three working commissions on security, political, and socioeconomic affairs. The work plans of these commissions include development of a registry showing installations, weapons, and troops from which to negotiate ceilings to restore the regional military balance.

Mexican-US goals are the same in that both want regional peace, pluralism, and stability. The difference with regard to Nicaragua lies in greater Mexican ability to accept a government whose electoral process will probably not be totally free, but which at least for now seems to represent a majority of the people. Mexico hopes to use its influence to nudge the Sandinistas into a variation of their own political model and away from a Marxist-Leninist orientation. The United

States has established four measures that Nicaragua must take if it desires improved relations. Primary among these, the United States wants free and open elections and appears willing to accept nothing less.[17] The United States still views Mexican actions as tending to sweep Nicaraguan faults under the rug, as providing the Sandinistas unmerited legitimacy, and as too trusting of a basically Marxist-Leninist regime. Recent Nicaraguan moves to grant limited amnesty and to liberalize past repressive action affecting church, press, labor, and political freedoms are seen by the United States as tactical moves to lighten US and international pressures.[18] On the other hand, Mexico tends to believe they are signs of progress which should be given time to develop.

Turning to economic actions, we find that Mexico has done much to help regional countries regardless of their position on the political spectrum. For example, through the apolitical joint oil facility agreement with Venezuela known as the San Jose Accord, Mexico in 1983 provided $180 million worth of oil savings to Nicaragua and millions of dollars as well to El Salvador. This was accomplished by cutting 20 percent off the market price. In the case of Nicaragua, Mexico has been the major supplier. Venezuela stopped supplying her share of the 13,000 barrels per day Nicaragua needs because payments even at the reduced rate could not be made. This situation has provided Mexico at least a modicum of influence in Nicaragua, although Mexico reportedly also slowed oil shipments recently pending payment of old oil bills.[19]

Reviewing the challenge that Mexico faces in Central America and her political and economic responses, it appears that Mexico has gained. Her regional influence and prestige have increased. The United States appears to be more accepting of her political actions, although irritations persist in the US perception that she still favors Nicaragua too much. Given Mexico's abundant oil reserves, she has provided real economic assistance to regional countries at little cost. Despite some negative political impact resulting from the general public's resistance to what they view as give-away programs during a period of extreme austerity, Mexico's revolutionary credentials have been burnished and the domestic left satisfied. Finally, there is just a chance that the combination of US pressure and Mexican diplomatic efforts, along with those of Panama, Venezuela, and Colombia, may, despite operating on separate tracks, produce a viable peace.

Given Mexico's past and present conditions, her actions on balance appear to be prudent and supportive of her long-term national security, especially those aspects pertaining to preventing the spread of revolution to Mexico itself, and, as discussed in detail below, continue to improve the Mexican military. Despite continued austerity, the Mexican military will continue to improve, though it will take longer to reach their goals than originally thought.[20]

This article has up to this point focused on how Mexico's national security policy has been defined by socioeconomic and foreign relations responses to the financial and Central American crises. The next part will spell out how the Mexican military contributes to national security policy through direct support in meeting these crises, as well as through its efforts to modernize organizations, equipment, and military education—all of which adds up to expanding military influence in national security affairs.[21]

THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY

The Mexican military's growing role in the national security equation can be traced to the 1968 Tlatelolco tragedy, which resulted in many deaths. This watershed event—the culmination of years of political frustration which manifested itself increasingly in student protests, antigovernment propaganda, and ever more violent riots—served as a catalyst which caused Mexican political and military leaders to begin a shift in direction. The Aleman administration (1946-52) had initiated a trend toward limiting political opposition and favoring the industrial sector, a trend brought to a peak by the Diaz Ordaz

administration (1964-70). This generally conservative bent clearly needed toning down if widespread unrest and increasing communist influence, supported by the Soviets and the Cubans, were to be avoided.

This shift in political direction led to the realization that Mexico needed a more modern, sophisticated, and professional military if future internal security challenges were to be successfully met. Fortuitously, the decision to change approaches coincided with the ending in 1970 of an era of secretaries of national defense who came into the military during the Mexican Revolution (1910-20). The advent of secretaries of national defense with more formal military educations began with General Cuenca Diaz (1970-76) and facilitated progress toward measured military modernization. Gone were the days when the military would turn monies back to the government to curry favor. A new sense of partnership and trust between military and civilian leaders was beginning to form.[22]

This new reality and the military influence which grew from it, combined with the effects of modernization itself, formed the principal and interrelated driving forces behind the Mexican military's emerging role in the national security process. Over the last 14 years, modernization has moved forward in three main areas—organization, equipment, and military education. Organizational changes, while not spectacular, have been steady since 1970. A military police brigade and an airborne brigade were formed from battalion-sized units. Two additional infantry brigades were put together from existing units, making a total of three infantry brigades including the already existing Presidential Guards Brigade. An armored infantry unit was formed in 1980. It is possible that an armored brigade, with this unit as the nucleus, either has formed or will form when the financial crisis eases. To provide a better span of control, nine military regions were established to control various military zones. The cost of building new installations will probably slow further organization along brigade lines; however, contingency plans most likely include paper brigades with staffs and units designated. These paper units are exercised during the annual December maneuvers.

Another important organizational change involves the National Military Service system. This program underwent extensive overhaul during General Galvan's tenure as secretary of national defense (1976-82). Essentially, training responsibility shifted from special units commanded by old, "semi-retired" officers to young, aggressive battalion and regimental commanders. This improvement was significant since the program reaches, in terms of its patriotic message, much of the nation's youth.

With respect to equipment additions, these have been both domestically produced and purchased from a variety of Western nations. Mexico's Department of Military Industry, while not quite ready to challenge Brazil as an arms producer, has made respectable progress in terms of producing German G-3 rifles, DN-III armored vehicles, and light trucks. Surface-to-surface rockets are also being worked on, but are still in the experimental stage. With regard to principal purchases from abroad, Mexico has bought 12 F-5 aircraft from the United States; 40 Panhard ERC-90 armored vehicles from France; roughly 57 Pilatus aircraft from Switzerland; two *Gearing*-class destroyers from the United States; and seven amphibious craft, a sailing ship for training, and six *Halcon*-class frigates from Spain. The Mexican navy has also built additional 40-foot *Olmeca*-class patrol boats. Finally, Mexican vehicle production has permitted all but one cavalry regiment to be converted from horse to motorized cavalry units. Most of this accelerated progress was made possible by President Lopez Portillo's decision to exploit Mexico's petroleum riches.

In terms of far-reaching change, progress in military education has had and will have the greatest effect on military influence in national security matters. At the lowest level of officer training, the military academies have undergone curriculum improvements to provide better preparatory education. Mid-level officer education at the Superior War School, which generally takes place five years after graduation from the

military academy, provides an additional three years of studies, mostly on military subjects but also on international law and geopolitics, approximating a college education. The recently inaugurated National Defense College, which graduated its first class in 1982, is the capstone of the Mexican military education system. It provides studies on national and international security matters, military strategy, and resource management, and it incorporates one foreign and one domestic trip. While the college is still in the throes of understandable growing pains, its curriculum and methodology are comparable to that of war colleges in Latin America and in the West in general.[23] National Defense College graduates receive the equivalent of a master's degree in military administration. From the ranks of these graduates will come the generals who will fill the highest military positions. These graduates will probably also be the ones selected to fill key appointive political positions, such as governorships. It is hard to say whether military men will be given more political posts, but it can be said that the ones filling key military positions with high political involvement, such as those of zone and region commanders, will be much better qualified. Their opinions will be listened to with greater respect by their civilian counterparts. The college's full potential will probably take a generation to realize; nevertheless, the college puts the Mexican military in a much better position to participate effectively in national security actions.

In addition, a trend toward younger senior general officers was becoming evident toward the end of the Lopez Portillo period. If this continues, it will tend to add to the military's influence in the sense that younger, more vigorous officers will have more in common with the generally younger civilian leadership. The accelerated retirement of older general officers which began in the late 1970s also is having a good effect on the overall vigor of Mexico's general officer corps. All of these factors add to the potential for the Mexican military to play a greater role in national security affairs as a result of increasing capacity, and this trend will pick up pace once the current period of austerity ends. Mexico's National Development Plan promises that the military will not be allowed to fall behind the rest of society again, as it did in the quarter century after World War II.

THE MILITARY'S GROWING INFLUENCE

First a few words should be said about military influence before enumeration of those areas where the Mexican military's expanding role in national security matters is already being felt. The Mexican military's influence stems from three realities—proven institutional loyalty, pervasive presence both geographically and in government agencies, and increasing sophistication through rapidly improving military education.

In recent times, the Mexican military's institutional loyalty has been proven time and time again. General Barragan, secretary of national defense under President Ordaz, steadfastly supported the president during the 1968 Tlatelolco incident. General Cuenca Diaz stood behind President Echeverria both during the 1971 Corpus Christi march disturbances and during the period of land invasions and financial crisis that occurred in 1976 at the end of Echeverria's tenure in office. In the most recent and severest financial crisis, the Mexican military has stood staunchly behind the government and proclaimed its institutional loyalty to the government and the constitution at every opportunity. Their acceptance of less than two percent of the budget year after year, even in good times, speaks eloquently for their support of the system. In my view, nothing short of total governmental collapse would cause the Mexican military to take the reins of power which they relinquished to civilian control in the 1940s. Since then, generations of officers have developed professionally under civilian rule and are proud of the exceptional political stability that their system has afforded the country. Additionally, most Mexican officers owe

everything they have to the current system, as most come from lower-middle- and lower-class backgrounds. Finally, the Mexican military lacks the political and technical sophistication to confront the nation's problems, and the military leaders know it.[24]

The military's pervasive presence is felt geographically in the military zone system with its hundreds of detachments spread throughout the country, where often the citizens' only contact with the government is the local detachment commander. Within government, military men or former military men fill numerous posts on the police forces, both state and federal. The best example of this is the naming of a professional soldier, General Mota Sanchez, to the post of chief of Mexico City's police force. Where there is a personal or family relationship, military officers are sometimes selected to work for governors and cabinet heads. The Presidential General Staff, which performs functions similar to those of the White House staff in the United States, is also almost totally military. Additionally, there has usually been a small number of military men in the Mexican Congress. In all of these instances, the military institution gains not only a presence but information, and information is easily translated into influence.[25]

Since I have already addressed military education, suffice it to say with respect to the military's influence that a military leadership with an increasingly sophisticated educational experience will be better able to contribute effectively at the national level on matters within its purview. This more able participation will in turn give the military a more respected voice within the councils of state, in effect providing them with greater influence.

While external factors such as the financial and Central American crises, combined with the new-found oil wealth, contributed to the Mexican military's growing role in national security matters, the interrelated factors of increasing influence and modernization have probably played the greatest part in this phenomenon. What it all boils down to is that the Mexican government needs the Mexican military more than ever. As a result, the ability of the military to deal intelligently with the enormous strengths and weaknesses of Mexican society must grow so the military can be an effective member of the government's team.

How has the Mexican military's growing national security role manifested itself in the last few years? First, in support of socioeconomic efforts, military civic action programs have expanded and received much greater emphasis since their beginnings in the 1960s. The list of the military's civic action programs is long and covers a vast range of activities. It includes reforestation; participation in medical efforts against malaria; restoration of schools, using national military service and rural defense force volunteers; prevention of cattle rustling, again using military service volunteers and rural defense forces; escort service for the railroads; security backup to police forces in case of civil unrest and patrolling of highways during national holidays; disaster relief operations; anti-narcotics operations; providing water to remote areas; protection of national treasures, such as archeological sites; immunization programs; and construction of housing and rural roads.[26] Of these many programs, disaster relief and anti-narcotics efforts are areas where the army's public role has increased to the benefit of the nation's security. The army's prominent role in the handling of the Chichonal Volcano eruption disaster in the spring of 1982, wherein the secretary of national defense took personal charge of the operations, underscored the military's increasing importance in this type of operation and its ascendancy over civilian elements when disaster strikes. The national security plus for the government derives from the increased respect and confidence the public has in their military forces and, through them, in the government of Mexico. The Mexican army's role in anti-drug operations under the Mexican attorney general's office expanded sharply in 1977 with the establishment of the Plan Condor Task Force to combat drug traffickers in the states of Chihuahua, Durango, and Sinaloa.

In 1983, this program was expanded with similar but smaller-scale operations, beginning in the states of Oaxaca, Guerrero, and possibly Veracruz. These latter operations have intensified long-standing army efforts in each of these states. Again, this increased effort, along with the military's continued acceptance of a low percentage of the budget, has had important national security implications not only in combatting what drugs can do to society but also in complicating the inevitable alliances between criminal elements and potential insurgent forces.

With regard to actions that serve to counter Central American spillover dangers and buttress internal security, signs of a growing military role in this effort can be seen in General Galvan's effort to strengthen the *partida* system, which, as alluded to earlier, involves hundreds of detachments of varying size spread throughout all parts of Mexico, even the most remote. This system has been improved through General Galvan's insistence that these groups become, in effect, operational bases from which patrolling of an area takes place and not just groups of soldiers providing a presence in one geographical location. The extended coverage provided by this new approach ensures that most citizens feel a positive government presence in their lives. This presence is a vital national security component whose lack has facilitated the rise of rural-based insurgencies in many Latin American countries.

The rural defense corps concept has been going on for many years and primarily provides the army and the government additional loyal eyes and ears in the countryside. Indications are that plans are being made to streamline and improve the effectiveness of these forces, which reinforce the military presence provided by the *partida* system, in that these rural defense forces are drawn from Mexico's communal farm system (the *ejido* system).

With regard to military presence, since the mid-1960s the Mexican military has more than doubled in size.[27] As Mexico recovers from the current financial crisis, it is likely that the military's dormant plans for force expansion will be revived. It is possible that by the early 1990s Mexico's armed forces will reach a level of 140,000 to 150,000. This assumes a considerably slower rate of growth than the last 20 years, given the larger base upon which to build. If this expansion occurs, it will assist Mexico greatly in fulfilling her internal security mission. As things stand now, reinforcement of the southern border area means leaving other parts of Mexico unprotected by military forces.

Another sign of the growing military internal security role is the creation in 1983 of one more military zone (the 36th military zone) with headquarters in Tapachula, Chiapas. This zone is clear evidence of the concern that Mexican national authorities have for what is going on in Central America and its spillover potential. Some spillover has already occurred, with over 30,000 Guatemalan refugees occupying camps in Mexico's state of Chiapas. This state now has two military zones, the 31st in the state's capital, Tuxtla Gutierrez, and the 36th in Tapachula. Only two other states have more than one military zone, oil-rich Veracruz and the traditionally troublesome, aptly named state of Guerrero.

The nature of Mexico's concern over her southern border—where rural poverty and land disputes are exacerbated by oil-driven cost-of-living increases, refugees, and Guatemalan revolutionaries intermingling with Mexican leftist sympathizers—is made clear by two key appointments. The first was the naming of a former 31st military zone commander, General Castellanos Dominguez, as the state's governor. The second was the appointment of General Cervantes, who had extensive counterinsurgency experience in the battle against Lucio Cabanas a decade ago in Guerrero state, as the 31st military zone commander. Clearly, the military will be playing an increasing role along Mexico's southern frontier in terms of getting to know the people and the terrain, conducting expanded civic actions, and signaling to potential troublemakers of the left or right that trouble will be stopped before it can get underway. This role, however, will be a defensive one; practically, the Mexican military lacks a sustainable offensive punch,

and beyond that, offensive operations go against the principles upon which her moral power is based. Mexico would stand to lose more by undertaking offensive operations than she could possibly gain.

At the national level, there is a possibility that a national security council with supporting staff and specialized committees will be formed. This organization would consist of the president, the secretary of national defense, the secretary of government, the attorney general, the secretary of programming and budget, the secretary of the navy, and the secretary of foreign relations. Certain police agencies might also be included. The organization would provide more coherent national security planning and would institutionalize even further the military's voice in national security affairs. Finally, in the last few years there has been discussion of integrating the armed forces under a minister of defense. In the unlikely event that this concept should be undertaken, it would clearly strengthen the military's national security role.[28]

CONCLUSIONS

Mexican national security rests on the triple pillars of her financial and socio-economic actions, foreign relations, and military actions. These elements constitute the main components of a national security policy which promises to help Mexico meet the immediate financial and longer-term socioeconomic challenges while she concurrently works to resolve regional turmoil and inoculate Mexico against its effects. The Mexican military is playing an increasingly active role as these challenges grow, both in assisting to improve socioeconomic conditions through expanded civic action programs and in developing improved capabilities to meet future threats to sovereignty and internal security.

Based on these policy directions, and keeping in mind that there are no guarantees, confidence in Mexico's future stability and the survival of its governmental system against the dangers of revolutionary change would appear to be well placed. First of all, while Mexico is far from out of the economic woods, she has succeeded in restructuring at least $20 billion in public sector debt and as of June 1984 appears to be on the way to restructuring the other $40 billion of public sector debt due in 1985-88.[29] New challenges will probably confront Mexico in the next few years, but a proven team of financial experts led by Finance Minister Silva Herzog should prove able to meet whatever difficulties develop. More critical will be Mexico's ability to expand her exports so that they are not so oil-dependent. Petroleum now accounts for at least 60 to 70 percent of her exports. Also, much will depend on the pace of the US economic recovery and how this affects worldwide recession, as well as on the availability of new capital so that Mexico can fully implement her ten-point economic program and regain solid growth in her economy.

With respect to the other major challenge, that of Central America, Mexico's Contadora Group participation and oil facility agreement with Venezuela have done much to defuse the spread of regional violence. Whether peace can be achieved remains to be seen, but at least there are agreed-upon objectives—a direction to take now, where before there was none. Trust is the commodity which is in short supply and which must be present for Mexico and the other Contadora Group countries to achieve the success they deserve for their efforts.

Clearly, the Mexican military will play an increasingly important and sophisticated defensive role in developing, supporting, and implementing national security policy. Through general modernization of equipment, organization, and especially military education, the Mexican military is better prepared to meet successfully future threats to the southern states, with their vulnerable oil fields, pipelines, and border areas. The Mexican military's increasing influence, gained by improved capabilities coupled with iron discipline and obedience to the system, is reflected in the appointment of increasingly forceful and respected secretaries of national defense. Potential plans for a more formal national security apparatus should provide a

strengthened institutional framework within which the military can make appropriate national security contributions.

In short, Mexico's system will survive because she has not forgotten her people; she has a sophisticated foreign policy and an increasingly effective military, especially with regard to internal security, whose loyalty appears solid beyond question. As a senior Mexican general said recently: "We have had these crises before, and we have weathered them. We will survive this one too."

NOTES

1. Olga Pellicer de Brody, "La Seguridad Nacional en Mexico: Preocupaciones Nuevas y Nociones Tradicionales," a paper presented in a seminar on a socioeconomic analysis of the relations between the United States and Mexico at Stanford University, November 1980, pp. 13-17.

2. Space limitations only permit acknowledging that other important national security factors exist. These would be US-Mexican relationships, moral renovation, demographic initiatives, the critical role of labor forces, the political liberalization engineered by President Lopez Portillo which facilitated participation by marginal political parties, and increased use of the Revolutionary Nationalism theme to warn of alien ideologies and promote unity now being stressed by President Miguel de la Madrid. Finally, Mexico's strengths and weaknesses have been well covered elsewhere. They will not be repeated here except to note that the Mexican army is not modernizing to project power, but to be better able to defend itself from externally supported internal subversion. Attack from without is not considered likely. In any event, Mexico could do little outside of guerrilla resistance to a US invasion, nor need it fear Guatemala acting alone. In a worst-case scenario involving a united leftist Central America, Mexico would probably turn to the United States for help. For an excellent review of Mexican strengths and weaknesses, see the article by Norman Gall, "Can Mexico Pull Through?" *Forbes*, 15 August 1983, pp. 70-79.

3. According to the US State Department, we have a direct investment in Mexico of close to $6 billion, and roughly $24 billion in bank loans. Mexico is our third largest trading partner, as we account for two-thirds of Mexico's imports. In 1981, this amounted to $17 billion of business to US firms. Since then, as a result of Mexican efforts to diversify and, more importantly, to the financial crisis, Mexican imports of US goods have dropped dramatically to approximately $5 billion in 1983. Mexico, our primary supplier, is a near and ready source of significant amounts of still-needed petroleum through supply lines relatively immune to interdiction. The United States imports close to a million barrels per day of Mexican oil. By her own estimate, Mexico has 72 billion barrels of petroleum liquids in her proven reserves and is clearly a major petroleum power. She is in fact one of the top four oil nations today when the key factors of crude oil reserves, production, and exports are considered. Her petroleum industry infrastructure is extensive and well developed. Daniel Levy and Gabriel Szekely, *Mexico: Paradoxes of Stability and Change* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1983), p. 213; Allen W. Lloyd and Associates, "Lloyd's Mexican Economic Report" (February 1984), p. 4.

4. Gall, p. 79.

5. Government of Mexico, Federal Executive: Programming and Budget Secretariat, "National Development Plan 1983-1988," May 1983, p. 59.

6. This is so whether you believe that crises are endemic to the Mexican system and that if none are in prospect, the Mexican leadership will create one to foster needed change and revitalize the Revolution within PRI ranks; or whether you simply feel that the system is corrupt and in process of being increasingly overwhelmed by events. Both of these alternate views distort reality. But they do capture some of it.

7. United States Embassy, Mexico City, "Foreign Economic Trends and Their Implications for the United States," FET 83-078, October 1983, p. 3.

8. Government of Mexico, Treasury Secretariat, "Monthly Treasury Report," September 1983, p. 3.

9. "U.S., Mexico Favor Diverging Paths, Similar Goals," *ARA News Roundup*, 6 September 1983, p. 19. Official sources hold Mexico's unemployment at or slightly below ten percent.

10. "Monthly Treasury Report," p. 3.

11. "Foreign Economic Trends and Their Implications for the United States," p. 3.

12. "Monthly Treasury Report," p. 2, and discussions with Mexican Embassy, State Department, and International Monetary Fund officials. "Balance of Payments," in *Annual Report of the Bank of Mexico, 1983*, Appendix 4, pp. 103-16.

13. "Lloyd's Mexican Economic Report," June 1984, p. 4.

14. "Monthly Treasury Report," p. 8. Programming and Budget Secretariat, *Tenth General Census of Population and Housing, 1980*, August 1981, p. 15.

15. Government of Mexico, Presidency of the Republic, "Mexican Federal Government Budget," December 1983, pp. 49-50. The Mexican military, however, has access to special presidential funds as well as to profits generated by their equivalent of US Army commissaries and the AAFES exchange system. The F5 purchase may have come from special presidential funds.

16. Carlos Rangel, "Mexico and Other Dominoes," *Commentary*, 71 (June 1981), 29, 33.

17. Langhorne A. Motley, "Is Peace Possible in Central America?" U.S. Department of State Current Policy Paper No. 539, 19 January 1984, p. 3. Other measures involve an end to support for guerrilla insurgencies and terrorism, severance of Nicaraguan military and security ties to Cuba and the Soviet Union, and reductions in military strength to restore a balance with neighboring states. Along with establishment of a genuine democratic regime, the United States views these measures as fully consistent with Nicaragua's 1979 commitment to the OAS and her September 1983 commitment to negotiate a treaty that would implement these goals.

18. Ibid., pp. 2-3.

19. Leslie H. Gelb, "Mexico Is Cooling on Latin Rebels, U.S. Officials Say," *The New York Times*, 19 July 1984, p. 1. As the title suggests, there are straws in the wind that indicate Mexico's patience with the Sandinistas may be wearing thin, as is perhaps also the case with their support for El Salvadoran guerrillas. Still, it is too early to tell whether Mexico will stop straddling the fence and converge more with US policy. Clearly, chances for such an outcome increase as centrist forces in the region gain strength. "Managua Gets Bulk of Oil from Soviets," *The Washington Post*, 16 August 1984, p. A1.

20. Information contained in this section was developed during conversations with American Embassy personnel in

Mexico, Central America, and the State Department in Washington. The conclusions, of course, are my own. I also owe Professor Edward J. Williams a vote of thanks for sending me excellent papers which he wrote on Mexico's politico-military realities and their relationship to Central America. Data on San Jose Accords were obtained from G. W. Grayson, "Oil and Politics in Mexico," *Current History*, 82 (December 1983), 419.

21. A very brief review of the general organization, force levels, and mission of the Mexican armed forces indicates that they currently contain approximately 125,000 men, organized as follows: the Defense Secretariat (army and air force) has 98,000, with roughly 92,500 men in the army and 5,500 men in the air force; the Naval Secretariat has 27,000 with 22,000 in the navy and roughly 5,000 marines. There are during any one year an additional 250,000 young men training at varying intensities in the National Military Service program, which provides a manpower pool indoctrinated in national values and in basic military skills for the reserve system—a system which is analogous to our individual ready reserves. The Mexican military's mission consists of protection of the national sovereignty and frontiers, internal security, anti-narcotics efforts, and civic action missions.

22. David F. Ronfeldt, "The Mexican Army and Political Order Since 1940," The Rand Corporation, 1973, p. 29.

23. With regard to the broadening of the senior (COL/BG) Mexican army officers' professional horizons, the National Defense College devotes 39 conferences to the national and international situation, 13 conferences to national policy, 10 conferences to national security, 15 conferences to administration of the Defense and Navy Secretariats and 12 conferences to high-level staff studies. The foregoing represents only a portion of the overall curriculum, but demonstrates the emphasis on developing politico-military expertise, to include management at the highest levels.

24. Professor Edwin Lieuwen of the University of New Mexico, author of many well-known works on militarism in Latin America, including *Mexican Militarism: The Political Rise and Fall of the Revolutionary Army, 1910-1940*, holds a different view. Essentially, he believes that the Mexican military lacks the power to take over. Consistent with his theory that improved levels of professionalism mean less likelihood of military coups, he indirectly suggests that the Mexican military is still at a low level of professionalism. Therefore, were they to have the physical means to grab power, they would do it. My view is that they are at a reasonably high level of military professionalization, and that they do have sufficient power to stage a coup. They do not choose to do so because they are happy with the present political system, which despite its problems remains viable. In Mexico's case, system viability is the key variable, not physical military power or levels of professionalism.

25. The Mexican military leadership probably has no formal mechanism set up to take advantage of the information acquired by its personnel assigned outside the military. For the most part, these people are not tasked to report back to the National Defense Secretariat. Nevertheless, the experience that low- and mid-level personnel gain in these endeavors does help the military understand the problems faced by other governmental groups, which leads to better civil-military relations and ultimately to increased military influence. At higher levels, especially among security agencies, coordination and information exchange are clearly facilitated by military men who operate in or take charge of civilian police forces or work in the Government Secretariat.

26. Jesus de Leon Torral et al., *The Mexican Army: History from Its Origins Until Today* (Mexico City: Secretariat of National Defense, 1979), pp. 520-25.

27. Edwin Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism: The Political Rise and Fall of the Revolutionary Army* (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1968), p. 146.

28. Information in this section is primarily based on three years of observing and working with the Mexican army, from 1980-83, as US Assistant Army Attaché. I am also indebted to Major Stephen J. Wager, Assistant Professor of History, United States Military Academy, for the valuable insights provided by his unpublished manuscript dealing with "The Modernization of the Mexican Military and Its Significance for Mexico's Central American Policy," 27 October 1982. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation for the valuable comments, suggestions, and insights provided by Dr. Caesar D. Sereseres of the University of California at Irvine.

29. James L. Rowe, Jr., "Loan Terms to be Eased for Mexico," *The Washington Post*, 6 June 1984, pp. 1, 22.