



Latin America Topic Paper

Casady School Advanced Debate 2021

Tommy Snider (Coach)

Sophia Armoudian '21

Alex Barreto '21

Colton Braum '21

Eileen Burger '23

Kahner Enderby '21

Connor Evans '23

Rachel Fryer '22

Carlos Henry '21

Michelle Huang '23

Jenna Jiang '23

Matthew McQuiston '21

Kiran Naidu '22

Ria Shah '23

Grayson Wilks '22

Cole Wolfe '21

Index

Index	1
Introduction	3
Initial Note	3
Timeliness	3
Resolution Wording	3
Wording Variations	4
Option 1 – Multiple Mechanisms, Multiple Areas/Countries	4
Advantages	4
Disadvantages	4
Option 2 – Single Mechanism, Multiple Areas/Countries	4
Advantages	4
Disadvantages	4
Option 3 – Multiple Mechanism, Single Area/Country	5
Advantages	5
Disadvantages	5
Option 4 - Single Mechanism, Single Area/Country	5
Advantages	5
Disadvantages	5
Specific Resolution Suggestions	5
Resolution 1 – Democracy Promotion and/or Military Operations in Bolivia, Colombia, and the Northern Triangle	6
Why two mechanisms?	6
Resolution 2 – Democracy Promotion in Bolivia, Brazil, and Colombia	6
Resolution 3 – Military Operations in the Northern Triangle	6
Mechanisms	7
Democracy Promotion	7
Military Operations	7
Counternarcotic Assistance	7
Countries Suggested	8
Bolivia	8
Brazil	9
Colombia	10
Northern Triangle	11
El Salvador	11
Guatemala	12
Honduras	12

<i>Other Latin American Countries</i>	13
Argentina	13
Chile	14
Costa Rica	14
Cuba	15
Ecuador	15
Mexico	16
Nicaragua	17
Paraguay	18
Peru	18

Introduction

Initial Note

This is a topic paper originally written by the Casady School advanced debate class during the 2020-2021 season. It had to be withdrawn from the previous topic committee meeting, but it is being resubmitted this year. The paper was updated in 2022 by the Casady School advanced debate class.

Eileen Burger '23

Connor Evans '23

Rachel Fryer '22

Nathan Hollander '24

Michelle Huang '23

Julia Janknecht '23

Jenna Jiang '23

Kiran Naidu '22

Ria Shah '23

Ryder Walker '24

Grayson Wilks '22

Timeliness

The last time Latin America was the topic in high school was during the 2013-2014 season, but the mechanism and countries selected made the topic much narrower than originally anticipated. The precarity of democratic and state institutions in several parts of Latin America make the topic area ripe for debate. The region has a vibrant literature base including everything from the state of democracy¹ to great power competition.² Combined with the fact that the Biden administration's Latin America strategy isn't a significant departure from the Trump administration's strategy ensures a stable base for a topic.³

Resolution Wording

Before we propose our specific resolutions, we wanted to outline the different wording variations possible under the topic area. This should assist the committee assigned with this topic paper by

¹ <https://agendapublica.elpais.com/noticia/17583/prospects-for-democracy-latin-america-2022>

² <https://warontherocks.com/2022/02/great-power-competition-comes-for-latin-america/>

³ <https://www.wola.org/analysis/bidens-first-year-policies-toward-latin-america/>

providing a framework to guide discussions. The four possible variations give the topic area the flexibility necessary to compensate for most, if not all, concerns. For example, if there is a concern that the topic area is too large then the committee can choose a narrower wording.

Wording Variations

Option 1 – Multiple Mechanisms, Multiple Areas/Countries

The United States federal government should substantially increase its **[MECHANISM 1]** and/or **[MECHANISM 2]** in one, or more, of the following: **[LIST OF COUNTRIES]**.

Example: The United States federal government should substantially increase its military operations and/or democracy promotion in one, or more, of the following: the Northern Triangle, Brazil, Mexico.

Advantages

- Affirmative mechanism flexibility
- Students can learn about the different situations across different countries and have a choice with the mechanism they choose

Disadvantages

- Largest possible resolution in the topic

Option 2 – Single Mechanism, Multiple Areas/Countries

The United States federal government should substantially increase its **[MECHANISM]** in one, or more, of the following: **[LIST OF COUNTRIES]**.

Example: The United States federal government should substantially increase its democracy promotion in one, or more, of the following: the Northern Triangle, Brazil, Mexico.

Advantages

- Maintains affirmative flexibility without making the topic too large.
- Having a single mechanism allows for more stable generic negative ground

Disadvantages

- Different countries have different needs so having a single mechanism may cause some countries to get more focus than others

Option 3 – Multiple Mechanism, Single Area/Country

The United States federal government should substantially increase its [MECHANISM 1] and/or [MECHANISM 2] in [COUNTRY].

Example: The United States federal government should substantially increase its military operations and/or democracy promotion in the Northern Triangle.

Advantages

- Gives the affirmative mechanism flexibility

Disadvantages

- Almost requires the specific country/area be the Northern Triangle (or another region) or else the topic could become stale since it would only be about a single country

Option 4 - Single Mechanism, Single Area/Country

The United States federal government should substantially increase its [MECHANISM] in [COUNTRY].

Example: The United States federal government should substantially increase its counternarcotic assistance in the Northern Triangle.

Advantages

- Great for in-depth education
- Negative generic ground would be very stable

Disadvantages

- Possibility to become stale as the year goes on

Specific Resolution Suggestions

When determining possible resolutions, we wanted to accomplish two goals:

First, we wanted the affirmative to have to actively, and directly, act. We wanted to make it difficult for the affirmative to create a squirrely case to avoid clashing with disadvantages and kritiks. We think the mechanisms we're proposing do this because they require the affirmative to actively work with, or against, a country.

Second, we wanted the affirmative to do something that is controversial and unpopular. The past several topics have allowed affirmatives to find clear-cut instances of injustice and propose a basic solution to it. We wanted to avoid that.

The justification for each of the resolutions are explained more specifically under the write up for the specific countries. There is a short explanation for the first resolution since it includes two mechanisms.

Resolution 1 – Democracy Promotion and/or Military Operations in Bolivia, Colombia, and the Northern Triangle

The United States federal government should substantially increase its democracy promotion and/or military operations in one, or more, of the following: Bolivia, Colombia, the Northern Triangle.

Why two mechanisms?

Allowing two mechanisms allow the affirmative to have the flexibility to address specific needs of specific countries while maintaining some continuity of negative ground. The “democracy promotion” mechanism allows there to be discussions of specific aspects of democratic institutions. The “military operations” mechanism enables other approaches to the countries and prevents topic countries from becoming irrelevant to the resolution because of “say no” evidence (see: Venezuela on the 2013-2014 topic).

Affirmative Ground

While mostly covered in the country-specific write ups, the affirmative would get access to advantages centered on institutional shortcomings of the specific listed countries. This can include everything from specific mechanisms for democracy (for example: judicial independence) to security issues (for example: state monopoly on violence). Importantly, the affirmative will be able to use specific, and nuanced, internal links which would contribute to preventing the topic from rehashing generic debates about democracy and cartels in the region.

Negative Ground

While the two mechanisms may appear to be bidirectional, there is a unifying theme of requiring the United State to increase their presence in Latin America that will create a stable set of negative generics. The Sphere of Influence Disadvantage and Alternative Actor Counter Plan will ensure the negative has a set of generics that will apply to every affirmative. Moreover, there is a substantial literature that is critical of any involvement the United States has in Latin America. This can also include anything from the Imperialism Kritik to impact turning western democracy in Latin America.

Resolution 2 – Democracy Promotion in Bolivia, Brazil, and Colombia

The United States federal government should substantially increase its democracy promotion in one, or more, of the following countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia.

Resolution 3 – Military Operations in the Northern Triangle

The United States federal government should substantially increase its military engagement the Northern Triangle.

Mechanisms

Democracy Promotion

“Democracy Promotion” is a term of art that includes a set of actions with the specific goal of strengthening the capacity of democratic states and/or institutions. There is a deep, historical, and robust literature base about democracy promotion in Latin America that would allow for an entire year of debate. Moreover, several definitions of “democracy promotion” differentiate two different democracy promotion instruments: positive and negative. ‘Positive instruments’ include active assistance and positive conditional instruments. ‘Negative instruments’ include military action and negative conditional instruments. If there is a concern about the under limiting nature of “democracy promotion,” then the resolution could further specify the instrument.

Some examples of democracy promotion include capacity building assistance for democratic institutions, conditioning aid on specific democratic reforms, and independent politic process monitoring. The mechanism allows affirmatives to get advantages over nuanced aspects of democratic governance (such as the rule of law and judicial independence), target country’s institutional capacity, and stability. Even though “democracy promotion” is an expansive definition, the goal-oriented component of it gives the negative access to generics to safeguard them from squirrely affirmatives that only create minor changes to the status quo. There is a literature base around what constitutes as “democracy promotion,” which would allow for a meaningful topicality debate and enable a viable strategy for negatives to limit out topic-adjacent affirmatives.

Military Operations

“Military operations” is a term that is more expansive than what one may think at first glance. It includes various military engagements (security cooperation and deterrence), crisis response (limited and contingent activities), and combat operations. Specifically, military operations can include constructive engagement through security assistance or limited actions to assist with specific crises governments may experience. This means affirmatives are not confined to coercive military action or the ‘invade X country’ affirmatives, but it will still require affirmatives to increase the presence of the United States military in the region.

Counternarcotic Assistance

Counter-narcotics assistance is defined as United States government funds that send military equipment and training to overseas police and armed forces to combat the production and trafficking of illegal drugs.⁴ Most funds are used to export firearms, refurbish surveillance aircraft, and transport planes and helicopters. Some agencies that provide counter-narcotics assistance are the Department of Defense (DOD), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Department of

4

<https://fas.org/asmp/profiles/aid/aidindex.htm#:~:text=Counter%2DNarcotics%20Assistance%3A%20Throug%20International,and%20trafficking%20of%20illegal%20drugs>

State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, and the US Agency for International Development.⁵ Strategies these agencies have done for counter-narcotics assistance include focusing primarily on preventing the trafficking of illegal drugs or creating task force groups that combat trafficking at ports. Countries that the US mostly engages in counter-narcotics assistance are Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, mainly Latin America in general.⁶

An option for how counternarcotic assistance could interact with Latin America would be to help certain countries with combating narcotics use to reduce the rates of drug smuggling organized crime. In the 2018 World Cup, Argentinian authorities seized World Cup trophy replicas, each containing 1.5 kilograms of cocaine.⁷ These drug smuggling campaigns are a threat to the health of humanity, the environment, and well as the economy. Businesses created as front companies to launder criminal fortunes undermine legitimate commerce and trade. Illegal activity undermines the rule of law and contributes to a spiral of instability which leads to corruption, weak institutions, and fragile states that strain social and legal systems.

Countries Suggested

Bolivia

Democracy within Bolivia has been put into question after the 2019 election where Jeanine Áñez was declared president. This stemmed from the Bolivian constitution recently being changed, likely so Evo Morales, the incumbent, could run again. This began to raise suspicion around the election, and after the ballots had declared Morales the winner, organizations began to question the validity of the election. After this question, Áñez, with the help of the Bolivian military, fought in the streets with pro-Morales protesters. To put an end to the violence, Morales abdicated his seat, and took refuge in Mexico. This raised great concern over the validity of Bolivian elections. While the stability of Bolivian elections was put into question in 2019, the democratic process is recovering slightly with the 2020 election, as there were no major disputes other than the delay of the election due to COVID. Bolivia is one of the largest growers of coca, the main ingredient in cocaine. Attempts to reduce the illicit growing of cocaine have gone on for many years. Initially, the strategy of eradication and replacement of coca was used, only allowing for legal growth in Las Yugas for indigenous practices. This was changed later in the Morales presidency, after forcing the DEA to leave and implementing a policy of community policing to monitor what the coca plants were being used for. Evo Morales expanded legal growth of cocaine to the Chapare region, which uses up to 90% of its coca to produce cocaine. President Áñez, with the assistance of the EU, attempted to reinstitute eradication policies of cocaine in the Chapare region. Arce has yet to make a clear stance on coca policy.

With very recent, tense election disputes over the validity of Bolivian elections, the United States could assist the process of monitoring the elections to guarantee they are held freely and fairly. As both major political parties have resorted to shady tactics to win, this could also lead to disputes by both major parties over whether the United States should get involved or not. This could also open the arguments as

⁵ <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-18-10.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-12-824.pdf>

⁷ <https://americasquarterly.org/article/the-threat-that-cannot-be-addressed-alone/>

to whether the United States should be involved with another country's elections at all, and whether this would cause a greater level of distrust in the electoral process. This could also use differing actors to promote the free elections, including supervisors from the embassy, the military etc. This could lead to numerous DAs on whether the United States can or should get involved in another country's elections. Through the Organization of American States, there is already some American oversight in the elections, but research papers have found that the OAS's conclusion about the 2019 election was incorrect, meaning that U.S. monitoring could make the situation worse.⁸ This also would connect strongly to Russia, as they have largely supported the party of Morales and Arce, the Movement for Socialism (MAS). If the United States were to oversee the elections, Russia would likely dispute this intervention, especially if it was likely to harm MAS's chances of winning.⁹ This oversight could also lead to arguments over hegemony and the role the United States should play in promoting democracy, and if that would allow for free and fair elections, or like the United States involvement in Latin America in the 1980s, would just allow for disputed right-wing candidates to win. On the issue of coca, Arce will likely have a stricter policy than Morales, but will probably not continue the eradication policies of Áñez. This would give the United States the opportunity to open new talks about a better plan for preventing the distribution of cocaine while also respecting the indigenous Bolivians coca growth. This could lead to more sustainable coca production, while also limiting cocaine production. The United States would have great reason to limit the cocaine production in the region because the United States has consistently labelled Bolivia as one of the countries that failed demonstrably in fighting the war on drugs. However, most drug enforcement policy within Chapare has led to violence. It is also left to be seen whether Arce would be open to foreign aid in preventing the distribution of cocaine. Bolivians annually meet with the United States to discuss the policy behind their counter-narcotics, so under a new presidency, the United States could supply counter-narcotics forces or training.¹⁰ This means that the United States could attempt to work with the Bolivian government to produce more effective means to cease the trafficking of narcotics, or simply begin monitoring the regions of cocaine production without the consent of the Bolivian government, through the DEA or other similar organizations. This opens the door to numerous arguments about the effect of U.S. hegemony in the War on Drugs or the effect that Morales' plan had on curbing or increasing cocaine production.^{11 12} This would also provide a lot of K ground for arguments over indigenous sovereignty and how or how not to protect the growing of coca for indigenous Bolivians.¹³

Brazil

Although Brazil is a democracy, with its frequent top-level corruption scandals, harassment of journalists and civil activists, and high crime and poverty rates, citizens are becoming disillusioned with the government. According to the OSAC, violent crimes such as murder, armed robbery, carjacking, assault, and kidnapping are a daily occurrence in Brazil, especially in high-population areas such as Rio de Janeiro. A 2020 study shows that around 4.4 million people are affected by turf wars, while 7 million people in Rio's metropolitan area are found to live in the presence of armed groups.¹⁴ Within the first six months of

⁸ <https://cepr.net/report/observing-the-observers-the-oas-in-the-2019-bolivian-elections/>

⁹ <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/10/23/russia-tried-to-influence-disputed-bolivia-elections-proekt-a67870>

¹⁰ <https://bo.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/223/Bollivia-I-and-II.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.state.gov/2020-incsr-volume-i-drug-and-chemical-control-as-submitted-to-congress>

¹² <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/bolivia-ended-its-drug-war-kicking-out-dea-and-legalizing-coca>

¹³ <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=irj>

¹⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/11/20/violence-rises-brazil-state-is-repeating-same-failed-formula/>

2020, there have been 25,712 intentional homicides in the country, averaging at one murder every 10 minutes according. Major drug and arms cartels, such as the Comando Vermelho, control organized crime, working from ungoverned urban areas called favelas and the prison system. Elected governor Wilson Witzel's solution for fighting criminal organizations was to deploy police snipers to shoot suspects from helicopters. This has led to an increase in killings by police officers, reaching 1,810 killed in 2019. Police killings reached a record high in 2020: 6,357. Protests often occur, sometimes targeting buses and public transport and resulting in violence and damage to property. These demonstrations occur for many reasons, such as awful work conditions, low wages, public corruption, and social inclusion.¹⁵ Brazil also has a problem counterfeiting and piracy, remaining in the U.S. Trade Representative's Special 301 Watch List (2019), and has a history of cyber-attacks. It retains one of the most pervasive cybercrime environments worldwide, with billions stolen annually. According to a 2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, LGBTQ+ individuals are faced with violence, with transgender individuals particularly at risk. There were 163 killings of transgender persons nationwide in 2018, and police arrested suspects in only 9% of the cases. According to ANTRA, 129 transgender people had already been killed from January to September 2020, exceeding the total killings in 2019.¹⁶ Currently, Brazil is asking the US and other countries for help with preventing the deforestation of the Amazon Forest, with President Bolsonaro asking President Biden to provide one billion dollars to fund the policing of environmental laws and to create bio-industries to give poor slash-and-burn farmers another possible source of income.¹⁷

A possible advantage of more U.S.-Brazil engagement is ensuring a close trade relationship. Brazil is the ninth largest economy in the world, and the US is its second largest export market. In 2021, Brazil's trade with the US totaled \$4.68 billion in only February, 4.29% less than January. Brazil was ranked 17th in US trade partners. The top imports from Brazil, in both value and tonnage, are pig iron, coffee, iron ores and concentrates, semi-finished iron products, and non-alloy steel. The US also receives crude oil and machinery. A possible disadvantage is that US engagement may offend disgruntled countries who had been insulted by Brazil.¹⁸

Colombia

Democracy is fair in Colombia. The government has agreeable safeguards against corruption and uses the rule of law to prosecute people. There is a growing internal desire for democracy in Colombia, seen through civilian protests in 2020. The United States is the most active foreign actor in Colombia. In 2020, the United States spent 488 million dollars in foreign aid. In July 2020 there was a US bill to investigate unlawful surveillance in Colombia, but it did not go through into law. The largest problem in Colombia is the power of the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) which leads to numerous human rights violations. In 2017 the FARC signed a peace agreement with the government, but rebels still exist that continue to violently control communities. The FARC often commit killings, forced displacement of citizens, abuses against democracy and human rights advocates, and recruits children to join their paramilitary. Government reaction to paramilitary groups like FARC is severely lacking. Public Security forces performed "false positive" killings of civilians to boost their perceived "body count" in the battle against FARC. In Colombia there is a threat to judicial independence, seen when the Supreme Court had

¹⁵ <https://www.osac.gov/Country/Brazil/Content/Detail/Report/9085b10f-2a36-4ca9-b299-18aced68cdd3>

¹⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-lgbt-murders-trfn/reported-murders-suicides-of-trans-people-soar-in-brazil-idUSKBN25Z31O>

¹⁷ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/brazils-climate-overture-to-biden-pay-us-not-to-raze-amazon-11618997400>

¹⁸ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/04/30/brazil-coronavirus-bolsonaro-india-vaccine/>

their credibility smeared by a corrupt government official on trial. The best mechanism for US involvement in Colombia would be military intervention to take down FARC. This would solve for many human rights advantages, and possibly democracy.

There is sufficient affirmative ground to support United States military intervention to take down paramilitary groups and support peace. Scholars agree that the continued violence following Colombia's failed peace agreement necessitates United States involvement. An action of military deployment showing US support would solve for advantages such as national interests, regional stability, and human rights. Democratic involvement might also be possible in Colombia. There is evidence that shows that the Colombian government is intervening suspiciously with other countries, so US guidance could help in that. Some negative arguments to this action could build off the already existing SFAB US military in Colombia. By having a military there, we violate FARC peace agreements. That conflict could lead to an increase in chaos and unintentionally making the illegal drug problem in Colombia worse. Increased military conflict against FARC could lead to malnutrition among vulnerable communities in Colombia.

Northern Triangle

El Salvador

El Salvador's state of democracy is very much so in decline. The election of Nayib Bukele signals that El Salvador is entering into a state of authoritarianism, faux-populism, and other such actions that in many ways mirror the same sort of problems with Trump, yet on a much more extreme scale. The rule of law in El Salvador is in decline and has been in decline since the 2010s. Gang activity has seen a rise in El Salvador, and there has been a large degree of political corruption that paved the way for a more extremist political party like Nayib Bukele's Nuevas Ideas to take significant hold of the country's political process. The persecution of political enemies, and the immense amount of misinformation is only getting worse, and the United States needs to step in, the question is simply how?

As it stands right now, there is no clear and easy way for the United States to engage with El Salvador. Nayib Bukele has a very staunch anti-engagement strategy with the United States, and thanks to President Trump such actions have only been emboldened. Biden will have a hard time diplomatically engaging with El Salvador, and the Northern Triangle Enhanced Engagement act might struggle in this regard. There are many different approaches to handling El Salvador, and I think the country could offer quite a lot to the topic if it is included.

Engagement outside of the U.S. with El Salvador is still in its infancy. China has begun to engage with El Salvador in the same way they have most other countries by loaning money, and then building a port. Beyond that, they have pushed forward a position of neutrality.

With Russia, engagement has originated primarily from El Salvador reaching out to Russia. In 2018, the parties signed a major agreement outlining cooperation in defense, counter-narcotics, education, and trade. Furthering that point, trade has primarily served to facilitate diplomatic relations. I think the problem with El Salvador is that I worry for negative ground. I am sure there are certain topics I am not considering, but the situation in El Salvador seems objectively bad, and that engagement from the US and other democratic nations is extremely important.

Guatemala

State of democracy is declining due to problematic Campaign Financing. Illicitly financed campaigns are central to maintaining the political status quo and are a means to facilitate the quid pro quo bargaining that deprive Guatemalans of their right to representative democracy. For most Guatemalans, addressing systemic corruption is critical to bringing about democracy, improving security conditions, and generating greater economic opportunities as well as social inclusion. Guatemala's overall rule of law score decreased 2.3% in this year's Index. At 101st place out of 128 countries and jurisdictions worldwide, Guatemala fell three positions in global rank. Guatemala's score places it at 25 out of 30 countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region and 38 out of 42 among upper middle-income countries. USAID is responding to rising humanitarian needs in Guatemala and on April 6, 2021, deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to help people facing recurrent drought, food insecurity, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Biden administration is working "to surge humanitarian assistance to" Central American countries and to offer new "legal paths" for migration, according to U.S. officials. President Joe Biden has said he wants to boost U.S. investment in the region by \$4 billion over several years, assigning Harris the same task he was given by former President Barack Obama to deal with irregular migration. Guatemala environmental problems include but are not limited to deforestation, water resources, air quality, resource extraction, and soil erosion.

Advantages to increasing US involvement are campaign finance reform, specifically resolving the illicitly financed campaigns that are central to maintaining the political status quo in the country because they are a means to facilitate the quid pro quo bargaining that deprive Guatemalans of their right to representative democracy. Another advantage to increasing US involvement is resolving the damage wrought by Hurricanes Eta and Iota in November 2020 that exacerbated existing humanitarian needs in Guatemala, affecting approximately 2.4 million people. Disadvantages to US engagement are supporting corruption and human rights violations, specifically shown by the decade of slow progress made to attempt to address the corruption which has only exposed the country's deep ties between itself and criminal actors, engaging them would only circumvent our anti-graft (anti-corruption) stance which would undermine our credibility in the region.¹⁹ Specific actions the United States could take to resolve these issues would be: To send funding and nongovernmental organizations to facilitate a fairer election by advising and funding campaign finance reform. Increase funding for DART and other environmental disaster relief squads and equip them with the material aid to rebuild regions hit by recent hurricanes.²⁰ To decrease aid and support to Guatemala until they adhere to a guideline of anti-corruption standards and policy.²¹

Honduras

Honduras is a member of the infamous "Northern Triangle" of Central American countries currently plagued by gang violence, economic decline, and high levels of emigration. The violence between government forces and violent gangs in Honduras continues to fuel a migrant crisis in which thousands of Hondurans (along with Nicaraguans and Salvadorans) have fled their homes and headed North to Mexico or the United States in hopes of a better life. The gang violence in Honduras is linked to the nation's poor economy, as high levels of unemployment and economic stagnation has led many Hondurans (mainly young men) to join violent gangs that extort local businesses and traffic drugs and weapons. These gangs

¹⁹ <https://www.wola.org/analysis/corruption-in-the-guatemalan-political-system-and-the-2019-elections/>

²⁰ <https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/guatemala>

²¹ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/guatemala#>

prevent local establishments from turning much of a profit, which, in turn, prevents these businesses from expanding and taking on new employees. Thus, the economy remains poor, and more individuals are incentivized to join a gang.

The most impactful way the US could help the situation in Honduras would be to provide military aid to the Honduran government. We already give Honduras millions in foreign aid, which has done little to fix the problem. Also, to ensure the weapons are not used against the Honduran people, the US would likely have to maintain a troop presence. There are far more advantages to engagement with Honduras/the Northern Triangle than there are disadvantages. For starters, engagement now will decrease the risk that instability and violence in the Northern Triangle does not spill over to neighboring countries,²² and the longer the crisis lasts, the harder it will be to get Honduran migrants to return to their native country.²³ Moreover, ending the instability will help stop the humanitarian and migrant crises along the US' southern border, which will be politically beneficial to lawmakers in Washington. There is always the risk of US engagement being seen as imperialistic, but the situation has become so dire in the northern triangle that US military intervention is all but necessary.

Other Latin American Countries

Argentina

Situated between Chile and the South Atlantic Ocean, Argentina has had the past reputation of being one of the pillars of Democracy in Latin America. Although they are still a vivid democracy, President Alberto Fernandez has mishandled the COVID crisis grossly. Facundo Castro disappeared after being apprehended by the police for breaking COVID curfew and was found dead months later. However, the biggest problem in Argentina right now is financial instability. Because of unregulated printing, their current inflation rate is up 40% and they now have a $\frac{1}{3}$ unemployment rate because of COVID. They are also getting close to huge debt problems again on their loan, which the US helped them get. They first defaulted on 500 billion dollars in May of 2020, and they have yet to be able to pay the US back. This default means that future loans to Argentina will be much more costly in terms of interests, and the bondholders in Argentina lose money as the currency becomes more devalued and as do their bonds. Which will lead to large legal battles, and HUGE political instability in the region. Plus, the Argentinian people believe this loan default to have been avoidable so possible protests and dissolution of the current government for their gross mismanagement of all the crises they faced in 2020 are all on the table currently.

Affirmative ground here is that the US could fix this problem by granting Argentina a financial grace period and helping them regain value to their currency plus battle inflation.²⁴ The negative ground here is that getting involved increases US hegemony which could be bad in the long run and gives more money to Argentina which we might not get back, plus it might not even work, and even with all of this, the social

²² <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/central-americas-turbulent-northern-triangle>

²³ <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/why-central-american-migrants-are-arriving-us-border>

²⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/afontevicchia/2021/03/29/argentina-will-need-joe-bidens-support-in-debt-negotiations-with-the-imf/?sh=6225493d56fc>

upheaval and general bad feelings surrounding Facundo Castro's death might still cause the government to be deposed anyway.²⁵

Chile

Chile has had years of political unrest, with small decreases in protests and riots as the COVID-19 pandemic has spread. President Pinera planned for Chile to be a developed country by 2020, instead protests of inequality "rioters turned the center of Santiago into a war zone, setting fire to offices, metro stations and churches in a wave of destruction that then gave way to weeks of tumultuous protests." Due to the incumbent president not being able to run for reelection, many communist leaders are now running for government spots. "The political class is throwing around populist measures, while the conservative government of President Sebastián Piñera is struggling to stay afloat. Without control of parliament, the executive has not been able to bring an end to the crisis that erupted in 2019, when social uprisings – with no visible leaders – backed the government into a corner. But while most opposition groups want to oust Piñera, there are no potential contenders either on the left or the right since the project for political renewal has barely happened. Instead, eccentric lawmakers polarize the debate and appeal for cheap applause. And social media is only adding fuel to the fire." Historical interpretation is broken in Chile," says Ascanio Cavallo, a political journalist. According to this journalist, Chileans have quite different perspectives on the 2019 social uprisings, the first democratic governments and even on the Pinochet dictatorship. "We don't even have a name for the [social] upsurge of two years ago. Some talk of uprisings and others of pre-revolution. There is no way to name what happened because there is still no way to understand it," says Cavallo. Other experts also have opinions on the multiple crises facing Chile, such as the sociologist Rodrigo Márquez, who is one of the coordinators of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report, which has been warning of the social discontent in the country since at least 1998. According to the sociologist, what changed was not the sense of unrest but rather the degree of tolerance. "Certain issues became unacceptable," he explains. "It went from a diffuse discontent to an active discontent over injustices and inequality."

Costa Rica

Costa Rica is a democratic republic with a strong system of constitutional checks and balances. Executive responsibilities are vested in a president, who is the country's center of power. Costa Rica has a long history of democratic stability, with a multiparty political system and regular rotations of power through credible elections. Freedoms of expression and association are robust. The rule of law is generally strong, though presidents have often been implicated in corruption scandals, and prisons remain overcrowded. Among other ongoing concerns, LGBT+ and indigenous people face discrimination, and land disputes involving indigenous communities persist. The Costa Rican government expresses its willingness to continue deepening the traditional relationships that unite it with the United States of America, as well as promoting the development of a green, inclusive, transformative, and innovative agenda towards the achievement of sustainable development, based on the values and shared purposes of respect for freedom, democracy, and human rights. Costa Rica's latest effort to address a nearly \$40bn debt crisis threatens to rekindle anti-austerity protests across the Central American nation, experts say, as the government began talks on Monday with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Advantages to increasing US involvement are resolving the debt crisis, ability to influence environmental policy in neighboring countries, promoting human rights, using the country as a beachhead for democracy

²⁵ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr13/2767/2020/en/>

promotion. Disadvantages to increasing US involvement are, it is not the US's place, Costa Rica does not need it, the money is better spent elsewhere.

Cuba

Currently, Cuba appears to be in this weird crossroads as a country in deciding what to do in the wake of Fidel Castro's death. There are those who are arguing for greater democracy in Cuba, as well as those who want to retain a lot of the authoritarian principles present under Castro. In terms of the rule of law, there are conflicting stories, some saying that the Castros are fading out following Raul Castro's resignation, and that Miguel Diaz-Canel is the sign of a change in power. Other sources say that Raul's resignation "changes nothing", and that ultimately the Castros are still the key decision makers of Cuba.

For U.S. engagement, there are a myriad of different opinions on how the United States should approach Cuba. Some suggest a return to the Obama Era approach to engagement with Cuba: "Behave chivalrously; do it like a big boy, not like a shyster." Others take a far harder stance on Cuba: that there should be no concessions, and that such is a necessity for any form of engagement. There is far more in the articles linked below. Engagement outside of the U.S. with Cuba seems to be heightening in the wake of Trump's foreign policy interactions, and COVID-19 recovery. With China, Xi Jinping seems increasingly interested in strengthening ties with Cuba, and Diaz-Canel is certainly willing to consider such ties. With Russia, Cuba has been reaching out recently to Putin, and ties also seem to be strengthening. The importance for which Cuba puts towards Russia (and China) is heavily dependent upon how Biden handles foreign relations. A hardline, or militaristic, stance would only further ostracize the US from Cuba, and cripple US-Cuba relations. Ultimately, Cuba has a lot of negative ground.

Ecuador

Although newly elected President Moreno has passed laws attempting to reform government corruption, Ecuador still faces issues with human rights infractions. The Judiciary Council process of appointing National Court of Justice Judges is flawed, with allegations of pressure exerted by government officials and a lack of protocol in high profile corruption cases. On March 17, 2020, the Council closed most of its offices in response to COVID. They later implemented virtual hearings, after the Constitutional Court ordered them to, but accessing justice is still an issue.²⁶ Ecuador has been hit hard by COVID, with over 400,000 deaths recorded in 2020.²⁷ Following a request for international aid, the U.S. provided \$18 million in USAID assistance to Ecuador during the pandemic, establishing a USAID presence in Ecuador. An agreement between the government and IMF has led to the dismissal of 3,680 public health workers, blocking citizens off from their constitutional right to health assistance. Excessive police force on protestors is also a serious issue, with officers indiscriminately using tear gas on crowds. On May 29, 2020, the Defense Ministry passed a resolution that gave the military powers to use lethal force at such demonstrations. Prisons in Ecuador face issues of overcrowding, poor living conditions, gang violence, sexual abuse, food shortages, official corruption, and inadequate health care, all of which have been exacerbated by COVID-19. Media reported on the dangerously understaffed prisons, with only 1,447 guards in 53 detention centers holding 37,500 prisoners. There have also been reports and evidence of

²⁶ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/ecuador>

²⁷ <https://thewire.in/world/ecuador-democracy-election-progressive-international-delegation-monitor>

guards torturing and abusing prisoners and suspects.²⁸ To combat COVID, Ecuador has begun using mobile location data and other data to track possible infected, even going as far as to use satellite tracking. The collection and sharing of this information could lead to misuse. Gender violence is also an issue. From January to October in 2020, 81 femicides were reported. Between March 12 and January 20, the 911 number reported receiving 38,288 calls connected to gender violence. Pregnant people are unable to seek an abortion unless their child endangers their life or resulted from the rape of a person with a psychosocial disability. A 2019 proposal that would allow the abortion of fetuses from all cases of rape or severe fetal impairment was rejected. On August 25, 2020, the National assembly approved a new health code that would have prohibited delaying emergency care, reiterated respect of medical confidentiality, reinforced a criminal code prohibition on LGBTQ+ conversion therapy, protected pre-pubescent intersex children from genital surgeries, along with many others. President Moreno vetoed the bill entirely on September 25, 2020. The US has recently signed a deal that will help Ecuador pay back billions in debt to China.

Advantages to increased engagement with Ecuador are collaborations on fighting drug trafficking and closer trade relationships. Ecuador is the United States' 41st largest trading partner, with \$5.5 billion exported and \$7.0 billion imported in 2019. The top imports were mineral fuels, fish and seafood, edible fruit & nuts, and live trees, and plants. The top agricultural imports are bananas and plantains, nursery products, processed fruit, and cocoa beans. The top US exports are mineral fuels, machinery, plastic, and food waste. A possible disadvantage is worsening US-China relations over US interference in Latin America.

Mexico

Situated along the USA's southern border, the United States of Mexico is embattled with a litany of factors that each have detrimental effects on the country's economy and domestic stability. Cartel violence, a poor economy, and endemic government corruption combine in a negative feedback loop, which serves to keep Mexico poor and allows cartels to smuggle drugs into other countries. The current left-populist administration of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, has failed to fulfill its promises of tackling corruption, improving the economy, and addressing the cartels. If anything, these crises have only worsened over his tenure in office. Given Mexico's economic ties to the USA by means of the USMCA, many American firms that manufacture goods in Mexico are directly impacted by the domestic unrest and the chaotic economic situation. Cartels have amassed enough power that they are essentially untouchable by the government and police. Although AMLO promised to address Mexico's endemic corruption, it has become so interwoven with cartel and business influences that stopping corruption is near-impossible without first addressing its root causes and increasing transparency. Sadly, journalists in Mexico are frequently targeted by cartels, and murder rates for reporters dealing with Cartel activity are rising by the year.

By far the most relevant and mutually beneficial form of engagement would involve the United States providing assistance to Mexico's armed forces currently fighting the various cartels. We could also assist in government transparency initiatives, which would improve the efficacy of both Mexico's government and its police force, but corruption runs far deeper than just a "lack of transparency." Mexico is already incredibly skeptical of US involvement in its domestic affairs, especially after Trump, so any actions on the

²⁸ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/ecuador/#:~:text=Significant%20human%20rights%20issues%20included,children%3B%20and%20the%20use%20of>

part of the US risk angering the Mexican people and being seen as imperialistic/overreach. AMLO was elected on the back of a large-scale dissatisfaction with the neoliberal Mexican system, which largely hinged upon the US's complacency attitude towards corrupt officials. However, US assistance is all but required if Mexico wants to mount an effective response to the powerful cartels.²⁹ A potential pitfall of US military involvement would be cartels potentially getting their hands on US military-grade weaponry, which would be disastrous for both countries, but given that many of the cartels already possess weapons that rival those of the actual Mexican military, engagement is likely worth the risk. Overall, the largest advantage to US engagement is border security, as the strength of the cartels has kept Mexico's government from effectively policing its own borders, which has largely fueled America's ongoing drug crisis.³⁰ Unless the US acts soon, a unilateral military response might be necessary in the future.

Nicaragua

In 2007 when President Daniel Ortega won office, people were excited. He was extremely popular with the poor for his promises of eliminating hunger and illiteracy. However, he slowly started restricting the media freedoms and allied himself with Venezuela. Over his terms of presidency, he had taken a 180 from his past freedom of speech values, allowing the rule of law to deteriorate from a democracy into an authoritarian state. He has violently suppressed the protests calling for his resignation. He also passed a law making it illegal for any opposition candidates to run against him in this year's election. His approval rating has dipped below 20% vs his 60-70 % approval 6 years ago. In 2018, when students peacefully protested his cuts of social security benefits, the police clashed with them violently, killing five college students. Now 300 people have been confirmed killed and at least 100,000 people have fled the country 70,000 to Costa Rica alone, causing refugee problems for both the US and Mexico. Plus, his response to COVID was to not respond at all, which caused even more discontent and death. Their economy will grow -2.5% this year plus their COVID death rate is probably 20 x higher than the government has reported.

Affirmative ground for this problem is that the US should sponsor an opposition leader for the upcoming election and ensure through our influence that the election is fair for both candidates, since Ortega has been accused of rigging past elections.³¹ We must do this to ensure that more democratic backsliding does not occur. By sending impartial international election watchers and sponsoring another candidate, the country could finally have a figure to rally around, as currently the sentiment is just that no one likes Ortega, but there is no singular banner everyone is rallying behind. This nonviolent solution will hopefully keep a violent coup or a currently inevitable military crackdown from happening.³² The only reason the protest did not go violent in the past is because of the pandemic. However, people are starting to emerge again, and the country is rearing up for upheavals now. Negative ground is that interfering might cause other countries in Latin America to lash out for fear of also having the US interfere and depose their governments, which could lead to wars. Plus, political turmoil might lead to economic instability for years to come, and the same issue of US hegemony.

²⁹ <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/case-counterinsurgency-approach-mexicos-cartel-wars-drugs-trafficking>

³⁰ <https://www.cfr.org/background/mexicos-long-war-drugs-crime-and-cartels>

³¹ <https://www.cfr.org/blog/ten-elections-watch-2021>

³² <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/nicaragua>

Paraguay

Paraguay's democracy is average; all major officials in their executive and legislative branches were elected in fair and free elections. The people have the right to organize into political parties and vote for whatever candidate they want. But the country's judiciary system is almost nonexistent and major crimes like money laundering and drug trafficking get away scott free because there is no jury in Paraguay and with that much money it is easy to bribe the underpaid judges. This leads to a large amount of corruption and a large problem of drug trafficking and large amounts of cartels. The U.S. government aids the Government of Paraguay in stemming corruption, creating jobs, reducing rural poverty, and countering international criminal organizations operating in the country. Supporting vulnerable groups such as women, girls, indigenous peoples, afro-descendants, and youth receives special emphasis. U.S. assistance aims at improving the prosperity, stability, and security of Paraguay by strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law, increasing economic opportunities, encouraging a more efficient business environment, and institutionalizing democratic reforms. The US has also attempted to end the amount of drug trafficking in the countries but has mostly failed. The U.S involvement has been minimal and many of the programs that are mentioned are barely supported and continue to plague the country. The Paraguay government has also failed to create proper health care systems, and this is not caused by any economic issues, just a lack of support.

If the U.S were to get more involved in the country with more financial aid the problems mentioned above could be improved because at this moment in time all the things the US says they have been helping with over the past 70 years still exist. increased US involvement looks imperialistic and can lead to a hatred of the country and make the citizenry support the local authoritarian leaders. Which in the past has led to decreased foreign relationships and an increased chance for war. Increased US support in Paraguay will also lead to a source of dependency. Dependency will lead to a waste of resources on the U.S side of the deal, and a lack of economic independence for Paraguay.

Peru

Democracy is currently under threat in Peru because Congress is growing in power and stuck in old corrupt standards. Previous president Fujimorista was removed from office loosely under Article 113 of the constitution, which questions Congress' power to remove more people from power. There are several divisions with no cohesive parties, large socio-economic divides, and bribery driving politics. The military has remained loyal to democracy by neglecting to intervene with the political crisis, but the Peruvian police force constantly intervenes and poses a threat to citizens. The rule of law in Peru is slow and ineffective, as several abuses go unresolved. The United States remains active in Peru. As of September 2020, it increased its aid by 65 million dollars for several agendas. Trump also gave 200 ventilators to Peru in the summer of 2020 to fight against Covid-19. The biggest problem area in Peru is corruption and human rights violations taking place by the government against the people. The government is responsible for killings, abuses against women, disappearances, and torture of humans. Going along with democracy, the freedom of expression is under threat, seen when the archbishop successfully sued and prosecuted journalists. The ideal mechanism to act in Peru would be democratic involvement. Many problems outlined could likely be eradicated or solved with democratic aid to help fix political fragmentation.

There appears to be more negative ground supporting a pullback in scale of United States engagement in Latin American countries including Peru. Specifically, there might be K ground for abolishing the organization of American States in Latin America. The status quo has an equal evidence balance of world

power (United States, Russia, China) interest in Latin America. The United States looks up for affirmative action: according to one source, it says Biden plans a return to imperialism in US foreign policy. This supports an action to increase democratic intervention in countries like Peru. There appears to be a history of Marxism and president-parliamentary forms of government in Peru. An affirmative with democratic promotion, promoting a president-premier form of government, could have the advantages of solving party competition structures.