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Review of Foreign Policy V - Foreign Policy for the Americas

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REVIEW OF FOREIGN POLICY - V
FOREIGN POLICY FOR THE AMERICAS

Mr. President:

From time to time during the past few months, I have discussed various aspects of our foreign policy on the floor of the Senate. I have now reached, so to speak, the fifth installment in this series.

My previous remarks were addressed to the need for a review of policy, to the situation in Southeast Asia, to the North African crisis, and to developments in the Middle East. Today, I wish to consider this country's relations with the other American republics. Crisis on crisis elsewhere in the world has diverted our attention from Latin America in recent years. The absence of attention, however, is not necessarily an accurate measure of importance.

Inter-American relations are today, as they long have been, of the greatest significance to the United States. For decades, as a people, we have understood the value of these ties -- of close and cooperative intercourse with the other nations of the Western Hemisphere. Unfortunately, Mr. President, what the American people have long understood has not always been faithfully reflected in our contacts with Latin America.
Over the years we have more than once pursued ill-conceived and irritating policies towards countries in that region. These aberrations in our national attitude ought not to loom large in the total of inter-American relations. I regret to say, however, that they do, for they have left a lingering aftermath of bitterness. They can still lead to sudden and often unreasonable outbursts of resentment against this nation and its policies. They can still lead to misunderstanding and estrangement.

I mention these uncomfortable facts at the outset because I see no value and much potential harm in deluding ourselves into believing that they do not exist. If we are going to strengthen inter-American relations, it seems to me essential that we face them honestly. If we do so, we can avoid the inflaming of old wounds. If we do so, we can act to reduce their importance by advancing against them the positive promise of pan-Americanism, the great promise of hemispheric progress through hemispheric action.

The Senate will recall that that was the purpose of the Good Neighbor policy. With the strong support of this body, it served the purpose admirably.

Out of the Good Neighbor policy came technical aid programs, a steady flow of sound investment capital to Latin America, and joint undertakings like the Falcon Dam on the Rio Grande. These and similar measures provided a powerful impetus for the vast expansion in inter-American trade of recent years.
Out of the Good Neighbor policy came a great increase in travel and in cultural and educational cooperation. This interchange of peoples and ideas promoted widespread understanding among the republics of the Western Hemisphere. It gave rise to a new appreciation on the part of each for the intrinsic worth of the others. It stimulated a rediscovery of the essential unity of the Americas.

Out of the Good Neighbor policy came the Rio Pact and the revivifying of the Pan American Union as the Organization of the American States. These achievements reduced the danger of war within the Western Hemisphere and provided a basis for cooperative defense against threats from external aggressors. The Organization of the American States, moreover, established machinery for common progress in many fields other than defense. That machinery awaits only an inspired leadership to turn it, with great effectiveness toward the mutual benefit of the entire hemisphere.

The Good Neighbor policy, to sum up, explored and enlarged the horizon of common interest among the American States. In so doing, it lifted hemispheric cooperation to its highest point in a century or more. It held the American republics together through the difficult and dangerous years of World War II. It provided a setting in which totalitarian enemies found little opportunity to irritate old wounds to the detriment of freedom in this hemisphere.

Mr. President, I am afraid that what was true of inter-American relations through the war and early postwar years is no longer true. The unity of the American republics has weakened; the ties have grown slack.
I know that some will contend that these observations are unfounded. They will point to the common positions which the American nations continue to take at the United Nations. They will cite unanimous resolutions passed at inter-American conferences. In my view there may well be shadows of unity, not the substance. They may serve only to conceal the dissatisfaction which is spreading throughout the Americas.

The last two conferences of the American Republics will serve to illustrate the point. We obtained passage of resolutions against communism. These merely restated what everyone knows, that the nations of the Western Hemisphere are opposed to communist totalitarianism. Yet on the basis of the passage of these resolutions the Executive Branch proclaimed these conferences to be a great success.

What did the press reports, however, have to say of these conferences? They reported their lack of constructive achievement. They reported the spreading bitterness among the Latin American states over what they believed was our failure to give sympathetic treatment to their problems. An observer even went so far as to describe one of the conferences as "a meeting between two belligerents under a flag of truce."

As further evidence of disunity, we may note that it is not uncommon these days for Latin American officials to be publicly critical of this country. They speak of Latin America as "the Forgotten Continent" in United States policy. Finally, I would point to the shift in attitudes towards the Soviet Union in the Latin American countries. A few years ago a Russian diplomat and
economic offensive directed at Latin America might have been dismissed with ridicule. Today, it is no longer a laughing matter.

Mr. President, we may well ask ourselves what these and similar disturbing indicators mean. They certainly do not mean that the ties which bind the Americas have been damaged beyond repair. Nor do they mean that Latin America is moving from the camp of the free nations to the Soviet bloc.

They do signify beyond any doubt, however, that in Latin America as in other areas of the globe a change of direction has set in and it is definitely not a change for the better.

What has happened, I believe, is that the vast reservoir of goodwill between ourselves and the Latin American nations has begun to run out. Despite warnings from many quarters little has been done to refill it. What was created by two decades of the Good Neighbor policy is now in danger. In our relations with Latin America, in short, we are beginning to pay the price of years of neglect.

I am fully aware of the extenuating circumstances behind this neglect. The demands on our policy elsewhere in the world have been continuous and they have been heavy. It is a tribute to the good sense of the Latin Americans and to the constructive work of the Good Neighbor policy that the neglect has not already done more damage.

Nonetheless, Mr. President, we cannot expect inter-American relations to flourish indefinitely on past momentum, on accumulated capital. Since
it is to our interest that these relations do continue to flourish we must act to strengthen them within the framework of the total requirements of our foreign policy.

When the Executive Branch altered the name of Latin American policy from Good Neighbor to Good Partners, I thought the change signalled an intent to do precisely that. Partner, after all, suggests a more active cooperation even than neighbors. Unfortunately, we have had not more cooperation but less.

We have had over the past three years an acceleration of the trend towards disunity in the Americas. Good Partners, so far, has meant not progress beyond the Good Neighbor policy; it has not even meant the preservation of the achievements of that policy.

In these circumstances, it is important to emphasize once more the dangers of foreign policy by slogans. It is important to counsel the Executive Branch that the peoples of the Western Hemisphere did not respond with enthusiasm to the "Good Neighbor" policy because of some strange magic in the words. They reacted not to words but to the inspiration and the sincerity which were inherent in the policy. They reacted to its solid achievements, achievements which served the interests of all the American Republics.

For my part, I am quite prepared to indulge this Administration in its desire to be different. There is no reason why a policy of "Good Partners" cannot be at least as effective as a policy of "Good Neighbors". If it is, I will support the new as wholeheartedly as I supported the old. I am confident that the Senate, the Congress, and the American people feel the same way.
But, Mr. President, I must reiterate that "Good Partners" is not yet a policy. It is a phrase; and it is destined to remain a phrase unless it begins to promote what it promises -- the greater progress and prosperity of the American republics.

The Executive Branch must begin to unfold the meaning of this phrase in action and it must begin soon. Otherwise, we will find that the good partnership not only has failed but that the good neighbors have been alienated in the process.

I know that such is not the intention of the Executive Branch. The President has made clear his interest in inter-American relations in many ways. One of the early acts of his Administration was the despatch of Dr. Milton Eisenhower, a distinguished citizen and a wise choice, to Latin America to appraise the situation. More recently he convened a conference with the President of Mexico and the Prime Minister of Canada at White Sulphur Springs. It has also been reported in the press that the President is anxious to attend the next inter-American conference in Panama.

Personal contacts of this kind can be helpful. Like slogans, however, they are not enough. If "Good Partners" means anything at all, it means a continuing, a determined, and a reasoned effort to strengthen the ties which bind together the nations of the Western Hemisphere.

It seems to me that any such effort must be based on a clear recognition of what the other American nations mean to us and what we in turn mean to them. This community of interest contains the key to common action for common progress.
If we did not know it before, World War II made clear to all the interdependence of the Americas in the defense of the freedom in this hemisphere. Few Latin American countries failed to recognize their stake in the outcome of World War II. Many joined with us at the outset in prosecuting the war. Before it was over 17 of the 20 Latin American nations were actively opposing our enemies.

On our part, the knowledge that the southern approaches to the United States were secure enabled us to prosecute the war vigorously elsewhere. The availability of strategic materials in Latin America -- of copper, tin, petroleum and others -- helped immeasurably to sustain our war production when other sources of supply were cut off.

The examples of the interdependence of the Americas for defense could be multiplied. I know, however, that the Senate is well aware of it and I shall not labor the point. What I do wish to stress, however, is that this interdependence is only a part of a larger pattern for the defense of our country. We ought not to proceed under the illusion that the safety of this country and, in truth, of all the Americas can be provided for behind the ramparts of a non-existent Fortress America.

A few geographic facts will illustrate the need to regard inter-American defense not as something apart but as a part of a whole. If we consider Madison, Wisconsin, as the geographic center of the United States, we will find that it is closer to Moscow than it is to Buenos Aires or even to
Rio de Janeiro. And Madison is closer to London than to any country in Latin America other than those which face the Caribbean.

In the light of these and similar strategic realities, hemispheric defense can find its validity only in the broader concept of the defense of freedom. But within that concept the validity is very great indeed.

We have, I believe, in the Rio Pact and the Organization of the American States, the instrumentalities for giving adequate recognition to the common defense needs of the Western Hemisphere. There is certainly no requirement for vast grants of military aid such as have flowed to Western Europe. So far as I am aware, the Latin American nations do not seek such aid

We can keep peace among ourselves and contribute to keeping the Americas and the world at peace, I believe, by preserving and perfecting the machinery under the Organization of the American States which was created for that purpose under the Good Neighbor policy. The community of interest of the Western Hemisphere in this respect is clear-cut and unmistakable and it coincides with and supplements the similar interest of free nations elsewhere in the world.

If common hemispheric concern for defense is great, the community of economic interest among the American republics is scarcely less important. The Latin Americans look to this nation as a principal foreign source of investment capital and technological skills. Some $6 billion of private and profitable American investments are concentrated in Latin America. Additional billions have been made available through the Export-Import Bank and
other lending facilities. These, too, have paid a good return. The Latin Americans find markets for their products in the United States and we in turn sell ours in the Latin American countries. In 1955 the level of this trade reached $7 billion annually, 23 percent of our worldwide commercial trade. What this trade means to the United States is highlighted by the fact that some 40 percent of all automobiles and vehicles exported go to Latin America.

What has already been achieved in terms of mutually-beneficial investment and trade relations is only a beginning. Latin America is now on the threshold of what could be a vast expansion in its capacity to produce and to consume. As it is now, the per capita income of most Latin American nations is scarcely $250 per year. Health and educational facilities are for the most part seriously underdeveloped. With both area and population greater than that of the United States, Latin America has less than 10 percent of the paved roads and installed electric power.

The basic resources and the will to use them in economic development are present today in most of the other American republics. These countries, in fact, have set a very rapid pace of development in the years since the end of World War II. They have done so, as is appropriate, largely by their own efforts. The labor is theirs. Except in certain highly specialized areas, the skills are theirs. And 90% of the capital investment is theirs.

This country, and particularly private American capital, has played a part in the phenomenal progress of Latin America during the past 10 years. Technical aid programs have supplied some needed skills and training. Loans
from the Export-Import Bank and other sources have provided funds for many basic undertakings on which the economic expansion of Latin America has rested.

Despite the great mutual benefit which has stemmed from inter-American economic relations, there is widespread discontent in Latin America with the present state of these relations. There are many aspects to this discontent, but I shall cite the one which appears to be at the root of the difficulties. The Latin American countries point to the contrast between the vast aid programs in other regions of the world and comparatively limited aid to Latin America. They seek a greater flow of investment capital from the United States. They argue that failure to maintain a high rate of economic development based on larger capital investment will increase the pressures of communist and other forms of totalitarianism within Latin America.

The position of our government, as I understand it, is that ample sources of sound credit are available in this country. It is contended that private capital as well as loans from official lending institutions like the Export-Import Bank would flow to Latin America, if the countries of that region would provide a more favorable legal climate for investment.

Mr. President, I am not sufficiently versed in the intricacies of international finance to discuss the merits of these conflicting points of view. I shall leave those matters to the distinguished chairman of the Banking and Currency Committee Mr. Fulbright and the other able members of that committee.
As I see it, however, the issue comes to this. There is a danger everywhere, including Latin America, if the influx of foreign capital is of a kind or at a rate which produces a "boom and bust" type of economic development. Conversely, however, there is also a danger everywhere, including Latin America, of adverse social and political consequences if economic development is too long delayed.

Let me say again what I have said many times in the Senate. The primary responsibility for the economic development of any country rests with the people of that country and their leaders. We can supply neither the leadership nor the determination. If both are present, however, and what is lacking is a margin of investment, then I believe it is in our interest as well as in the interests of our neighbors to do what we can to make that investment.

It ought not to be beyond the capacities of the Executive Branch to devise means for meeting the sound capital import needs of the Latin American countries. Whether the formula involves additional incentives to private investors, the expansion of existing official credit facilities, or new regional lending institutions, is a matter which the specialists in these problems are better equipped to comment on than I.

From the point of view of cooperative inter-American relations, however, I do think that the urgent requests of the Latin Americans for expanded credit sources should receive the most serious and sympathetic consideration from the Executive Branch. If these requests are sound and reasonable, we ought to try to meet them. If they are not, then we ought to
have the courage to say so and give our reasons for this conclusion. That this has not been done seems to me to provide one more indication of why a thorough and an independent review of our foreign aid policies is in order.

Beyond common defense needs, beyond economic interdependence, lies still another great area of human inter-relationship in which the American nations can contribute to their mutual enrichment. We of this hemisphere, including Canada, are great repositories of Western cultural achievements. These have flowed to the new world through the centuries in fixed and separate channels running east and west across the Atlantic. There would be nothing incongruous in adding to this pattern of communication additional lines running north and south to link the American continents. The additions would serve only to add to the splendor of the design.

Each of the American nations has added unique contributions to the Western heritage. Yet we still know comparatively little of the newer achievements in Latin America and the Latin Americans of ours. The machinery for stimulating interchanges of this knowledge of the Americas largely exists in the Organization of the American States. What is needed is a full utilization of the potentialities of that body.

I would like to suggest in this connection the possibility of an expanded role for the Organization in carrying out technical assistance within the hemisphere. I would like to suggest, too, that greater emphasis be given to inter-American exchange in such fields as art, literature and the sciences.
Finally, Mr. President, I should like to urge careful exploration of the idea of establishing a great University of the Americas in some centrally located area, perhaps in Puerto Rico, which is in many ways the confluence of all the cultural influences that have shaped the Americas -- the European, the African and the Indian.

I know that there are many difficulties inherent in this concept. But if it is a sound concept ways can be found to surmount the difficulties.

I believe it is a sound concept, a great University of the Americas can provide a focal point for deepening understanding of the shared values of the civilizations of the Americas and for enlarging the interchange of ideas, skills, knowledge and achievements among the American Republics.

What I have been outlining here this afternoon, Mr. President, is merely suggestive of what I would regard as a constructive policy. I believe I have said enough, however, to indicate that there are many avenues to the fulfillment of the promise of pan-Americanism -- the promise of hemispheric progress through hemispheric action. The role of the Senate is to advise and to consent in these matters. It is the business of the President to act. If the Executive Branch has the will to act and the intelligent initiative to act, action will be forthcoming which will once again point us towards rather than away from expanding hemispheric cooperation. If the Executive Branch has the will and the initiative, in time, perhaps, the Good Partner policy may come to mean as much and even more, to the peoples of this country and the other Americas, as its predecessor.