INTERVENTION IN THE 1980s

U.S. Foreign Policy in the Third World

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Lynne Rienner Publishers  Boulder/London
U.S. Intervention in Perspective

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The geographical realm of U.S. intervention in the Third World has evolved from the relatively constrained Western Hemisphere focus of the Monroe Doctrine during the nineteenth century to the worldwide embrace of the Reagan Doctrine as the twentieth century draws to a close. Whereas an intrusive Europe was the target of President James Monroe, containment of the Soviet Union and communism—albeit in varying degrees—became the cornerstone of post–World War II administrations from Presidents Harry S. Truman to Ronald Reagan.¹

Similarly, the intensity of U.S. intervention increased substantially in the aftermath of World War II as Washington's foreign-policy-making elite brought numerous instruments to bear on the cold war struggle with the Soviet Union. Foreign economic and military aid, for example, has totaled nearly $825 billion (in 1988 dollars) during the last four decades. At the other end of the coercive spectrum, direct U.S. military intervention, after a lull in the early post-Vietnam period, has witnessed a resurgence under the guise of the doctrine of low-intensity conflict. Moreover, during the 1980s there has been a significant expansion of covert action led by a rejuvenated CIA, the formalization of a coherent strategy of paramilitary intervention known as the Reagan Doctrine, and the continuation or initiation of thirty-one cases of economic sanctions (out of a total of fifty-two for the entire post–World War II period).

Despite this trend toward greater interventionism, two parallel trends—one domestic and one international—have placed more constraints on the successful application of U.S. power in the Third World. In the domestic realm, a fragmented U.S. political culture is no longer content, as it was during the 1950s and the 1960s, to follow the lead of the executive branch in support of an interventionist cold war policy. Similarly, growing pluralism within the international arena, as the bipolar system of the 1950s evolves toward an emerging multipolar
system, has unleashed new forces that question Washington's simple dichotomies of capitalism versus communism, freedom versus totalitarianism.

The net result of these trends, as Harry Piotrowski eloquently stated in Chapter 12, is that U.S. intervention in the Third World, resting as it has on the faulty premises of the cold war, has become "increasingly more counterproductive, difficult, and costly in terms of political capital, money, and blood." Whether one looks at the failures of U.S. intervention, such as direct military involvement in the Vietnam War, or the possible successes, such as the contributing role of paramilitary aid in securing a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, one cannot deny that there has been a price paid by U.S. society.

My purpose in this chapter is to offer an alternative set of guidelines for U.S. foreign policy that builds upon both past successes and past failures. These guidelines are not intended to be steadfast rules applicable regardless of history or context, but rather to serve as the basis for reassessing over forty years of U.S. interventionist practices. In this sense, my primary purpose in this chapter is to contribute to the ongoing debate over what should constitute a proper U.S. foreign policy, recognizing that there will forever be differences of opinion and interpretation among individuals of intellectual integrity. It is only by presenting these points for subsequent discussion, however, that a policy consensus—the basis for an effective foreign policy in a democracy—can be achieved.

FOREIGN POLICY GUIDELINES
FOR DEALING EFFECTIVELY WITH
A CHANGING THIRD WORLD

One of the most significant dilemmas in the post–World War II period, especially in the wake of Vietnam, has been the balancing of perceived national security interests with the need for openness and public debate required by democracy in the formulation of foreign policy. As noted in several chapters, inherent in this balancing act is the growing conflict between the executive branch and Congress over the role that each should play in the foreign-policy-making process. In the words of one observer, there exists a "chronic tension" between the U.S. democratic domestic political system and its nondemocratic national security system.2

In the wake of perceived executive branch excesses concerning the foreign conduct of the Vietnam War, the domestic abuses of Watergate, and illegal covert activities in the Third World, Congress attempted during the 1970s to strengthen its oversight capabilities by adopting the War Powers Act and creating intelligence oversight committees. The explicit goal of these initiatives was to avoid future Vietnams by requiring that proposed interventions be submitted to reasoned debate apart from that within the limited circle of the president and his immediate staff. The implicit goal, however, was to check what was perceived to be overly powerful national security bureaucracy elites—headed by
simple dichotomy—imperial president—who “circumvented the authority of Congress and the courts, viewed themselves above the law, particularly in foreign policy matters, and used secrecy and distortion to deceive Congress and the public in order to accomplish their policy objectives.”

Indeed, the executive branch steadfastly has resisted congressional attempts at enhanced oversight, sometimes with tragic results. Refusing to recognize the constitutionality of the War Powers Act, for example, and subsequently failing to submit policy to the scrutiny of public debate, President Ronald Reagan unilaterally acted to send the U.S. Marines to Lebanon as part of a “peacekeeping” force, changing course only after their tragic deaths. The Reagan administration similarly refused to submit to congressional scrutiny its Persian Gulf policy of escorting neutral ships, which inevitably led to hostile confrontations with Iran. Yet, it could be argued that, even with congressional consultation at the outset, both policies would have continued exactly as desired by the executive branch.

More significant is when questionable executive branch actions have impinged directly upon the domestic democratic rights of the U.S. population. In the case of the administration of President Richard M. Nixon, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) employed wiretaps and informants to monitor, harass, and suppress political dissent against the growing war in Indochina, eventually applying these covert activities against the Democratic party. An April 1976 Senate select committee report noted that these tactics were “unworthy of a democracy and occasionally reminiscent of the tactics of totalitarian regimes.”

As discussed in Chapter 16, the Reagan administration resorted to similar illegal tactics against the U.S. public to further its paramilitary goals in Nicaragua. These various tactics, declared illegal by a GAO investigation, included pressure on the U.S. media not to print stories; lobbying tactics to manipulate U.S. public opinion against the Sandinistas and, therefore, to achieve congressional support for the contras; and “white propaganda” operations—the planting of false articles in the U.S. press. Yet, the most damaging aspect of the administration’s secret war was the Iran arms-for-hostages deal and the subsequent illegal diversion of profits from these sales to the contras in violation of the Boland Amendment. As Harry Howe Ransom perceptively concluded in Chapter 7, the Iran-contra episode revealed “the corrosive impact of secrecy, which invites serious violations of law and moral standards... Invisible government, based upon a doctrine of ends justifying means, had become a reality.”

The question remains how to restore accountability and reestablish the foreign-policy-making process. Noting the damaging effects of past policies, it is hard to accept the view espoused by proponents of the national security bureaucracy that “saving constitutional democracy may require partially sacrificing it.” Taking a completely different view, Morton A. Halperin has convincingly argued that a successful national security policy, especially as it pertains
to major episodes of military and covert intervention, requires public and congressional approval. 6

Halperin's solution for restoring accountability and fostering a foreign policy partnership revolves around amending the War Powers Act in three aspects and making it inclusive of both military and covert intervention. The first amendment would delete the "60-90" statute that requires the president to withdraw U.S. forces from the combat zone within ninety days if, after sixty days, the action has not been approved by Congress. Not only has the executive branch considered the statute unconstitutional (citing it as its reason for not complying with the reporting and consultative provisions of the War Powers Act), but reformers have viewed it as unnecessarily tying the hands of the president. 7

A second amendment would create a "permanent consultative body" comprising the majority and minority leaders of both houses, the speaker of the house, and the president pro tempore of the Senate, with whom the president would have to consult before initiating any military or covert actions. An expanded consultative body—including the individuals already mentioned as well as the chairperson and ranking minority members of the House and Senate Armed Services, Foreign Affairs, and Intelligence Committees—"would join in consultation with the president and discuss among themselves an appropriate legislative response to the situation at hand." Finally, a third amendment would require advance congressional approval of any military or covert action save for three specific exceptions: to repel attacks against U.S. armed forces located outside U.S. territory; to repel direct attacks against U.S. territory; and to rescue American hostages. 8

Halperin has argued that these amendments ensure a balance between the war-power prerogative of Congress and the necessity for the president to be able to take "immediate action to defend the United States and its citizens" when time is of the essence. Moreover, the proposed policy partnership ensures that (1) questionable or otherwise risky policy would receive a much-needed "second opinion," as the "potential for making mistakes or abusing power increases when the number of alternative views declines"; (2) advance congressional approval would legitimize U.S. intervention once initiated, fostering bipartisanship and a united front to both allies and adversaries; and (3) prior approval would aid in preventing "the backlash from Congress that inevitably follows a foreign policy failure." In short, these reforms would contribute to relieving the "chronic tension" between justified national security concerns and the requirements of democratic society, as well as helping to resolve what Jerel A. Rosati referred to in Chapter 10 as the "crisis of leadership" of the executive branch. With policies built upon the solid foundations of congressional and public support, the president could lead with confidence, charting a consistent and coherent foreign policy in the Third World.

The most important guideline of any future foreign policy is that U.S. policymakers must discard the ill-conceived notion that Third World countries are mere pawns in the greater East-West struggle and that the primary source of
public and con-

flict in these countries is external Soviet interference. As Piotrowski noted in Chapter 11, one of the primary flaws of the administration of President Tru-

man was the failure to recognize that communist movements often acted inde-

pendently of the wishes of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. Indeed, the past four de-

decades have witnessed the growing polycentrism of communism in the Third

World and the growth of actors independent of both Washington and Moscow.

Yet, official tunnel vision, whereby social change is viewed through East-West

glasses, has ensured a reactive policy that is constrained by the blinders of

anticommunism.

In a manifestation of this tunnel vision, the United States assumed the right
to overthrow even democratically elected leftist regimes in Iran (1953) and
Guatemala (1954) in the name of anticomunism and subsequently contributed
to long-term results that have been quite sobering: Iran now boasts a radically
anti-U.S. regime, and Guatemala continues to suffer from a legacy of military
dictatorships and guerrilla insurgencies. The crisis generated by U.S. interven-
tion in Iran and the potential for future U.S. foreign policy crises in Guatemala
suggest that perhaps the United States would have been better off (or at the least
no worse off) siding with each country’s democratic, albeit leftist, regime.

Another significant outcome of U.S. success in these two initial attempts
at overthrowing leftist regimes was that it gave subsequent administrations a
false sense of power and ability to control the nature of other Third World
regimes. As Ransom noted in Chapter 7 concerning U.S. intervention in Iran, “the
political leadership in Washington drew more about the efficacy of covert action
than was warranted from this example. The heady wine of success led them to
believe that this was a foreign policy tool that could be applied with equal suc-

cess in other problem areas of the world.” Yet, both regimes represented fragile
democratic coalitions with powerful domestic enemies—most notably, dis-
enchanted military—that were all too happy to take control in exchange for
U.S. economic and military support. As discussed later, Washington was soon
to learn that unstable democratic regimes are much easier to destabilize than
regimes governed by revolutionary nationalist movements.

A further guideline for U.S. foreign policy is that although it is important
to recognize, as the globalists do, the contributing role that the Soviet Union
plays in a regional conflict, policymakers should place greater emphasis on the
regional economic, cultural, political, and historical causes for a particular con-

flict. In this fashion, the conflict becomes legitimate in its own right and lends
itself to resolution based on internal reform.

The administrations of Presidents John F. Kennedy and Jimmy Carter were
somewhat representative of this regionalist emphasis. Both deviated from the
dominant viewpoint that revolutions are caused primarily by external commu-

nist aggression by centering on the internal causes of upheaval and the need
for structural reform to alleviate them. Despite these reformist interludes, both
administrations’ attempts at resolving the internal conditions that breed in-

surgency failed because, like their predecessors and contemporaries, Kennedy
and Carter still favored excluding leftist groups from political participation. Genuine structural reform, and hence any defusing of the guerrilla threat, "is highly unlikely as long as the left is automatically to be excluded from political participation."11

The case of El Salvador may be instructive. A reform-minded junta took power there in October 1979, aspiring to initiate reformist changes that had the potential of alleviating the country's growing guerrilla insurgency.12 The junta accepted leaders from the centrist opposition and was willing to carry out a dialogue with the radical left with the idea of including them in a future reconciliation government, but they were soon stymied by rightist elements within the military. Although politically willing to move against the rightist elements (a group whose power had to be broken before genuine reform could take place), the junta hesitated for lack of support from the Carter administration. Despite its advocacy of social reform, Washington " balked at the October junta's willingness to bring the popular organizations into the government and to seek an accord with the guerrillas," inevitably leading to a continuing stalemate in the guerrilla war.13 When successor governments in the 1980s attempted to initiate agrarian reform—one of the key problems fueling the conflict—the net result was failure: A still powerful right resisted, and the left, still disenfranchised politically, responded with increasing guerrilla attacks. Although favoring social reform, Carter’s reliance on the cold war precept of limiting leftist participation mitigated its potential benefits. This trend was exacerbated by the Reagan administration’s overwhelming commitment to a military, as opposed to a negotiated, settlement of the conflict.

As noted in Chapter 1, one case stands out as the exception to the traditional U.S. reflex to limit leftist participation: the transition from white minority to black majority rule in Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia), even though this ensured a regime dominated by the Marxist Patriotic Front (PF). The case is significant for three reasons: (1) A more ideological approach would have eschewed supporting the PF because of its obvious communist links and outspoken preference of its leaders for Marxism; (2) the United States recognized the legitimacy of the guerrilla struggle and that its resolution depended on internal political and economic reforms; and (3) the United States recognized the positive role to be played by the radical left in the reform equation. Indeed, despite the Marxist rhetoric of Zimbabwe’s Prime Minister Robert Mugabe, he clearly has followed a pragmatic policy of socioeconomic reform and maintenance of ties with the West—underscoring that ideology should not be the yardstick by which the United States determines enemies or allies in the Third World. Most important, U.S. willingness to involve the left in meaningful political participation where it previously had been denied a role demonstrated that such participation could be the key to alleviating long-term guerrilla insurgency.

These lessons provide the basis for reassessing traditional U.S. responses to left-wing guerrilla insurgencies. In the case of El Salvador, it would require
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recognition by policymakers that the revolution is driven by lack of social reform and not by the Soviet-Cuban bloc—the guerrilla struggle is caused by legitimate, unfulfilled popular needs. Although reliance on massive military aid may be able to prevent short-term victory by the guerrillas, in the long run it merely strengthens those forces opposed to reform, promotes a temporary military stalemate, and almost ensures the future intensification of the guerrilla insurgency. The proper U.S. approach should be to emphasize its belief in the negotiated resolution of the conflict between the Salvadoran government and the guerrillas, based on national reconciliation and socioeconomic reform.

Traditional U.S. mistrust of democratically elected leftist regimes and consistent efforts to suppress leftist insurgencies, however, are part of a greater problem: Washington’s inability to formulate an effective policy that deals constructively with revolutionary nationalism. In this regard, U.S. policy has been excessively driven by ideology: Whereas leftist insurgencies are perceived negatively and are to be suppressed, antileftist insurgencies fighting revolutionary nationalist regimes are perceived positively and are to be supported. The Reagan Doctrine and its commitment to aiding anticomunist guerrilla insurgencies fighting pro-Soviet Third World regimes is a manifestation of this point of view. The primary fault with this ideological focus, which provides a further guideline for U.S. foreign policy, is that opposing ideologies do not in and of themselves preclude a mutually beneficial relationship. Indeed, the Reagan administration’s firm economic and military support for the Marxist government of Mozambique, despite conservative demands that guerrilla forces opposing the government be aided under the umbrella of the Reagan Doctrine, provides an excellent case in point.

Rather than emulate the example of Mozambique, the United States generally has sought a confrontational policy with revolutionary nationalist regimes, especially when they have overthrown former pro-U.S. regimes. Often the relationship between the United States and the revolutionary regime in this context is at first strained. In the case of Nicaragua, the Sandinista leadership was suspicious of U.S. attitudes toward the revolution, primarily because of past U.S. support for a string of Somoza dictatorships and previous intervention in Latin America, whereas the United States feared that the Sandinista regime would become “another Cuba,” providing forward bases for Soviet forces and attempting to expand its revolution throughout Central America by force. Yet, fears should not become the basis for foreign policy; when they do, they create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The parallels between the counterproductive U.S. efforts to overthrow both the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions are especially instructive. As was noted in several chapters, the United States, fearful that the revolutionary leaders of both countries would become the tools of Soviet intervention in the Western Hemisphere, employed various instruments of coercion—ranging from diplomatic isolation, to the adoption of economic sanctions, to the support of paramilitary guerrillas—in an effort to derail their revolutions. In the case of
Nicaragua, the primary problem with the interventionist approach was that it underestimated the popular support of the Sandinista regime and the legitimacy of the 1979 revolution. The same mistake was made with Castro’s Cuba, and nearly thirty years of confrontation with that regime has achieved little if any benefit for U.S. foreign policy. Most important, continued U.S. intervention, coupled with the very real fear of a direct U.S. invasion, provided both regimes with little recourse other than to seek a closer security relationship with the Soviet Union—the exact opposite of what Washington said it was trying to achieve. In the Cuban case, for example, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev ridiculed as “stupid” U.S. efforts to “drive Castro to the wall,” nonetheless relishing the expected results: “Castro will have to gravitate to us like iron filing to a magnet.”

The paradox of U.S. intervention against radical revolutionary regimes, according to Anthony Lake, former director of policy planning in the U.S. State Department, is that “polls have generally shown that while the [U.S.] public wants success (the defeat of these regimes), it must come at little cost to the United States (that is, involve no great losses through intervention, grain embargoes, or other actions).” Thus, although the U.S. public supported the swift, low-casualty Grenada invasion, it undoubtedly would not support the likely protracted guerrilla war and thousands of casualties that a similar operation against the Sandinista regime would entail. Cognizant of this fact, the Reagan administration resorted to the lower-cost strategy of paramilitary intervention. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 8, although this type of intervention has exhibited the ability to disrupt severely the target country’s economic and political system, it is inadequate if the goal is to overthrow the revolutionary regime or force the leadership to dismantle its chosen system of governance. Rather than folding in the face of external pressure, both Cuba and Nicaragua were able to exploit the tension to whip up popular support. Moreover, U.S. intervention allowed both revolutionary regimes to more easily silence domestic opponents, concentrate power, and blame Washington for failed domestic economic policies.

The increasingly evident failure of intervention to achieve the goal of overthrowing revolutionary regimes in Cuba and Nicaragua, short of a direct U.S. invasion, is indicative of what should constitute another guideline in U.S. foreign policy: a deemphasis on the role of military force when pursuing long-term goals in the Third World. This should not be taken to the other extreme, however, to mean that the United States must adopt a strict policy of nonintervention. As Ted Galen Carpenter correctly concluded in Chapter 9, “no great power can eschew the use of military force in all circumstances.” Rather, the challenge lies in establishing those circumstances in which the use of force is both a legitimate and useful tool of intervention. A brief comparison of U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and Nicaragua provides several tentative guidelines:

1. Majority support within the target country. The popular or unpopular
Each was that the legitimacy of the target Third World régime is especially crucial to successful U.S. intervention. In Afghanistan, popular feelings are almost unanimous in desiring a Soviet withdrawal from their country, and traditional Afghani nationalism has ensured a steady stream of recruits to carry out a jihad (holy war) against the atheistic invaders. In Nicaragua, however, the Sandinistas were ushered into power on the back of populist revolutionary nationalism, which, although waning, still remains strong, whereas the contras, primarily because of the great number of Somoza sympathizers among their ranks, are rejected by the majority of the population as an artificial creation of Washington.

2. Majority regional and international support. A second gauge of the legitimacy and the probable success of an interventionist policy is its level of regional and international support. In Afghanistan, the mujahedhin enjoy overwhelming regional and international support. U.S. efforts not only have been supported by traditional regional allies, such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, but also by communist China and revolutionary Iran. A 1987 vote in the UN General Assembly that overwhelmingly called for a Soviet withdrawal (123 voted in favor, 19 were opposed, and 11 abstained) indicates the substantial level of support enjoyed by the mujahedhin. But U.S. efforts in Nicaragua, to the contrary, are opposed by the majority of nations within the region as well as within the international system, most notably U.S. allies in Europe. Most significant are Latin American denunciations of U.S. military efforts to overthrow the Sandinistas. Rather, the Contadora nations, led by Mexico, and the Central American nations, led by President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica, have preferred to pursue a nonmilitary solution to reaching an accommodation with Nicaragua.

3. International law. Although international law prohibiting intervention may be ignored with relative impunity by nations pursuing self-interested policies, as Christopher C. Joyner underscored in Chapter 13, there is no denying its importance as a legitimizing factor (as to what goals and actions are acceptable within the consensual framework of law). In the case of Afghanistan, accepted precepts of international law clearly brand as illegal the Soviet invasion and occupation of that country, legitimizing aid to insurgents seeking to force a Soviet withdrawal. But the International Court of Justice has ruled that U.S. support of the contras violated international legal norms and that the United States should immediately terminate such activities. By refusing to accept the judgment of the World Court, Joyner concluded, "the United States lost legal credibility, appeared diplomatically disingenuous, and allowed Nicaragua to gain a propaganda advantage in view of its lawful appeal to the international legal forum."

Although the combination of these three guidelines cannot, of course, guarantee a successful interventionist episode—indeed, success depends on a host of factors, including the goal pursued—they at least enhance the possibility for success and most certainly ensure that U.S. policies foster a legitimacy that will allow it to lead both regionally and within the international system. The key
to this type of policy is that the United States act in a multilateral framework in coordination with other nations and not according to some self-prescribed ideological litmus test.

The type of goal pursued is very important. In the case of Afghanistan, for example, U.S. military aid should be limited to achieving the withdrawal of foreign occupation forces. As analyst Jonathan Kwitny perceptively noted, "the arms we supply, and our contact with Afghans, must be governed by the knowledge that when the issue of Soviet occupation is resolved, other local issues will continue to divide the Afghans, both within the country and in their relations with their neighbors." Kwitny concluded that the United States "must not be lured into a continuing dispute that would ally us against new and so far undreamed-of-enemies." As was discussed in Chapter 8, U.S. policymakers failed to resist the urge to intervene in Angola's civil war in 1975 and suffered the consequences of a hostile, anti-U.S. regime when its faction lost in the ensuing power struggle. In short, rather than attempting to control revolutionary nationalism in Afghanistan—as was attempted in Angola, Cuba, Nicaragua, and elsewhere (with highly negative results)—Washington should instead build upon its faithful support of mujahedin aims and foster a positive relationship with the government that eventually comes to power. Concrete actions, rather than the ideological makeup of the regime, whether monarchist, socialist, Marxist, democratic, or some variant therein, should be the basis for any future relationship with Washington. Positive steps taken by any future regime should be met by equal enthusiasm on the U.S. side.

Just as ideology often has led U.S. policymakers to oppose leftist regimes blindly, so too has it led these same individuals to support blindly or to place in power right-wing dictatorships who joined the United States in its anticommunist crusade. Examples include Fulgencio Batista of Cuba, Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Jean-Claude Duvalier of Haiti, and the Somoza family dynasty in Nicaragua. The often disregarded long-term problem with this anticommunist strategy is that the elites who become the "bastions for democracy" and, therefore, staunch U.S. allies have usually been traditional dictators who lack popular support, concern themselves primarily with personal aggrandizement, and therefore demonstrate a general disregard for social reform or broadly shared development policies. The core of the problem is that these dictators (whether of the right or the left) seek legitimacy in the form of external economic and military aid in the international arena rather than attempt to build a popular basis for support among their own people. When the United States has been willing to fill the role of patron by dispensing generous amounts of aid, the dictator's need to foster popular domestic legitimacy is sorely circumscribed. Likewise, as dissent against the regime grows, the tendency is toward greater repression than reform.

The negative result of backing authoritarian rulers more willing to repress than reform has been a long string of revolutions that have vented an accompanying anti-U.S. rage, including the case studies of Iran and Nicaragua, as
described in Chapters 14 and 16. This result should not be surprising, as the United States has generally been perceived by the disaffected portion of the population in such countries as both the midwife and primary prop of the hated regime. Although the United States may be able to buy stability in the short term, such successful actions as defeating the nationalists in Iran in 1953 or suppressing Sandino’s forces in Nicaragua during the 1930s often bode ill for stability and U.S. interests in the long term.

Distinguished experts on Central America have formulated a set of straightforward, yet stringent, guidelines for stemming the cycle of repression and resultant anti-U.S. revolutions in that region that are similarly applicable to the entire Third World. First, apart from humanitarian assistance, which should be distributed “strictly on the basis of need,” economic aid should be withheld from regimes “determined to maintain deep social inequality or that are gross and consistent violators of internationally recognized human rights.” The authors have warned that when dealing with such regimes, the United States “must guard against the temptation to reward minimum changes that are no more than cosmetic efforts to influence U.S. aid policy.” Yet, when countries show a genuine commitment to broadly shared development programs that attack the root causes of social inequality—such as land reform, literacy, and rural health care—the United States should be willing to lend a helping hand.

The guidelines for military assistance are even more stringent. This type of aid, according to the Central America experts, “should be limited to governments that enjoy some popular basis of legitimacy so that U.S. aid will not be used for the repression of popular dissent—a more restrictive criterion than the simple absence of gross and consistent human rights violations.” In this regard, the authors noted only two legitimate needs for military equipment that the United States should be willing to meet: “the need for adequate forces to defend a nation against external aggression, and the need to defend democratic institutions against internal violence by a small, well-armed minority.” The necessity for a popular basis of legitimacy (not necessarily a multiparty, democratic system) is extremely important. In instances in which this attribute is missing, U.S. military support becomes the basis for internal repression and control, again working counter to long-term U.S. interests in the Third World.

The key to this restructured foreign aid program, which inevitably would require the reduction of special relationships currently held with authoritarian governments, does not mean that the United States should adopt an isolationist foreign policy. Rather, it underscores the necessity of committing valuable resources only to those nations sharing an interest in promoting and maintaining societies built on popular consent and broadly shared development. In this sense, the United States actively should cultivate close relationships with regimes carrying out these programs, assisting financially when the need arises. Yet, as the authors of these guidelines have warned, regimes that pursue none of these goals “but try to curry favor merely by aligning themselves with the United States against the Soviet Union, do not deserve our assistance.”

In
sum, a regime committed to the principles of broadly shared development and respectful of the human rights of its people inevitably enhances its domestic support and represents a positive, long-term investment for the United States. U.S. policymakers will inevitably find themselves confronted by a situation in which a close ally’s democratic institutions and processes are subverted by a leader or faction desirous of assuming personal control and power. Richard J. Kessler, in Chapter 15, has described in detail how this occurred from 1965 to 1986 in the Philippines under the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos. In cases like this, the United States should utilize its economic and military influence (gradually curtailing both types of aid, beginning with military) with the country in question to foster a return to democratic practices. Kessler noted that the United States lost several opportunities to influence policy, the most notable being when Marcos broached the possibility of declaring martial law and suspending the constitution to illegally remain in office. As Kessler concluded, strong U.S. disapproval could have forced him to reverse the decision. “It was a moment, at least from Marcos’s perspective, of great vulnerability to external factors.”

The most important aspect of the Philippine case study is that five U.S. administrations ignored the dismantling of Philippine democracy because of strategic concerns over continued U.S. access to bases in the country; as Kessler noted, the United States became concerned about democracy in the Philippines “only when democracy became a security issue.” Even the Carter administration’s human-rights program, which questioned the utility of identifying the United States with inherently unstable dictatorships, was compromised by strategic exceptions; when the pursuit of human rights clashed with perceived national security interests, especially in proven allies of strategic importance (such as Iran, the Philippines, South Korea, and Zaire), national security interests won out.23 Putting aside the debate over whether or not the United States actually requires bases in the Philippines or elsewhere in the Third World, long-term U.S. interests logically demand that the United States not turn a blind eye while democracy is destroyed in order to maintain these security interests. As the United States learned the hard way in Ethiopia, Iran, and Nicaragua (that is, in other nations of so-called strategic concern, past or present), ignoring the repressive nature of regimes that lack popular support is a surefire way to lose these strategic assets in the long run, as well as to foster the eventual creation of a government hostile to the United States.

A further reality of the international system is that there exists a whole host of authoritarian governments of both the right and the left that systematically abuse the rights of their people, but which are not reliant upon the United States for either economic and military aid. As the United States cannot and should not be the guardian of all the countries of the world, it should maintain no more and no less than proper relations with these countries, withhold any type of military and economic aid, and make its abhorrence of their human-rights transgressions known within the international system. In extreme cases, however, when
development and preserves its domestic power. Richard Nedick, in a situation where power, as Richard Nedick, noted from 1965 at Ferdinand Marciniecz and military martial law, Kessler noted policy, the most striking martial law. As Kessler concerns the decision, vulnerability to is that five U.S. military because of weakness, as Kessler on the Philippines, the Philippines' charter administration, identifying the compromised by a perceived logic importance of security interests, the United States, and third World, long-term interest blind eye. As Nicaragua (that is, at), ignoring the fire way to lose actual creation of a whole host of United States. As Kessler noted and should maintain no more any type of military, however, when the international system is confronted with a regime that grossly violates accepted international standards of human rights, the United States should join other nations in adopting multilateral sanctions to change the nature of that regime. As the United States should not casually be in the business of dictating the structure of Third World regimes, sanctions should adhere to the same rigorous formula of legitimacy as was earlier applied to the use of military force: (1) The action should comport with internationally accepted standards of international law; (2) the sanctions should be supported by the majority of the target nation's population; and (3) the sanctions should be supported overwhelmingly both regionally and within the international system. Again, the key to this type of policy is that the United States act in a multilateral framework in coordination with other nations and not according to some self-prescribed ideological litmus test. One case study that fits these requirements is South Africa.

Sanctions in the case of South Africa would fall within the bounds of the international legal tenet of humanitarian intervention (see Chapter 13), are supported by the majority of South Africa's black population as well as regionally within southern Africa, and enjoy a large degree of support that transcends ideological lines in the international arena. Yet, as was noted in Chapter 18, South Africa is clearly strong enough such that even comprehensive, well-enforced sanctions in the short term will not force the dismantling of apartheid by its current leaders. Indeed, critics of sanctions underscore that, in the similar case of UN-imposed sanctions against Zimbabwe-Rhodesia from 1966 to 1980, sanctions in the short term did not affect the minority white regime, as the economy expanded and became increasingly self-reliant. Yet, as William Minter has noted, "In the long run, however, sanctions exacted major economic costs and represented a constant drain on the white regime—especially after the rise of oil prices and the escalation of guerrilla warfare in the 1970s." He concluded that "without sanctions, the war would probably have continued for many more years. With stronger enforcement of sanctions, Zimbabwe could have been independent much sooner."

This conclusion, it seems, is most relevant to the South African situation and to sanctions in general. Several authors have concluded that strongly enforced international sanctions could bring greater pressure to bear on the South African regime. Furthermore, nobody, including opponents of sanctions, discounts that majority rule is inevitable. The purpose of sanctions is not to achieve that goal immediately but to hasten the process along and avoid the unnecessary deaths and radicalization of the opposition that a more protracted guerrilla struggle would entail.

A final guideline for U.S. foreign policy is to take advantage of the consensus-building role to be played by multilateral negotiations within the context of the UN or regional organizations. The ultimate goal of any intervention should never be simply to "bleed" the Soviet Union, anti-U.S. revolutionary regimes, or pariah regimes such as South Africa, but rather to achieve a just and negotiated diplomatic settlement. Efforts within a UN framework clearly con-
tributed to the 1988 Geneva Accords concerning Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the truce in the Iran-Iraq war achieved during the same year, as well as provided an important forum for resolving ongoing conflicts in Angola, Cambodia, and the Western Sahara. As was stated in 1988 by Richard Williamson, assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs, indicating a substantial shift in the Reagan administration's stance, "The UN has a tremendously valuable role to play as a facilitator in ending regional disputes." Yet, whereas the Reagan administration obviously was willing to compromise in Afghanistan (as well as in Angola and Cambodia) to achieve a settlement of the conflict, such was not the case in its Central American backyard. The policy of the administration was to make a test case out of reversing the Sandinista revolution, subsequently scuttling any regional attempts at negotiating Nicaragua's peaceful existence that would have left the Sandinistas in power. The inadequacy of this short-sighted strategy is clear in that eight years of military intervention only made the Sandinistas more intransigent and anti-American. If the nations of the region, led by the six signatories of the Arias proposal and the Contadora Group, are satisfied with allowing a socialist neighbor to coexist along their borders—albeit one that does not interfere in their domestic affairs—the United States should respect their wishes. Rather than seek to overthrow the Sandinistas, the administration of President George Bush should wholeheartedly support the major tenets of the Arias plan in an attempt to bring lasting peace to the region. Indeed, just as U.S. economic and military power has been able to impede the prospects for peace on terms undesirable to Washington, so too could the enormous weight of that influence be brought to bear as a means for fostering compliance with the Arias peace plan.

LEADING WITH CONFIDENCE

The last forty years of U.S. interventionist practices in the Third World literally have guaranteed the extension of U.S. power to virtually all corners of the globe. For better or for worse, the United States rose out of the ashes of World War II to become the most powerful nation the world had ever seen. U.S. economic and military power reached its height in the decade immediately following the war, but the twin trends of the fragmentation of U.S. political culture and the rising pluralism within the international system have since seriously changed the parameters within which U.S. policies must be formulated. Yet, as Joseph S. Nye, Jr., perceptively noted, "Although the United States must adjust to a new era of multipolarity and interdependence in world politics, Americans should not underestimate U.S. strength." Indeed, "with more than one-fifth of world military and economic product, the U.S. remains the most powerful state in the world and will very likely remain that way far into the future." For the United States to lead with confidence well into the twenty-first century requires the basic redesigning of U.S. interventionist practices, as outlined
here. In the domestic realm, the president should establish a greater partnership with Congress, formulating policies built upon the strong foundations of congressional and public support. Secure in this support, the president could lead with confidence, charting a consistent and coherent foreign policy in the Third World. In the international realm, interventionist practices should attempt to build upon both a multilateral regional and international consensus, with the United States taking the lead in utilizing the forum of the UN and accepted precepts of international law in garnering support. Although adherence to the guidelines put forth in this chapter may not always guarantee the success of U.S. foreign policy in the Third World, they raise the possibility for success substantially and most certainly ensure the legitimacy that is necessary for leadership both regionally and within the international system.