

ABSTRACT
U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD
CENTRAL AMERICAN REVOLUTIONS

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From the time of the Monroe Doctrine to that of the Reagan Doctrine, U.S. foreign policy has been extremely hostile toward Central American revolutions. America has used direct and indirect military force, economic sanctions, public misinformation, and covert activities to prevent, contain, or destroy revolutions in Central America. The purpose of these acts was to maintain American hegemony over the area, supposedly, since 1945, to protect the "national security" of the U.S. against Communist expansionism in the isthmus.

The revolutions, so often attributed to Communist influence, are really rooted in the indigenous history of these small nations. For more than 100 years the majority of people have suffered social and economic injustice and political oppression by native military-oligarchic elites and their U.S. allies. America was able to defeat revolutionary movements in Central America through most of this century. However, after defeat in Vietnam and loss of global military and economic supremacy, the U.S. has failed to prevail since the late 1970s. Another factor is the rise of population opposition movements against the status quo in Central America. Indeed, even though Washington has utilized every tactic short of direct military intervention, it has failed to overthrow the Sandinista-led Nicaraguan revolution, or to defeat the FMLN-FDR revolutionary movement in El Salvador.

The reason why U.S. has failed to defeat current revolutions in Central America stems from Washington's refusal to recognize that these movements are not communist, but are primarily nationalist. They reflect the desire of highly motivated and extremely determined non-elitist groups, "popular organizations," as well as guerrilla armies, to control their own destiny. For these reasons the U.S. must learn to live with Central American revolutions by developing a policy which utilizes diplomacy instead of military force.