

MEXICO'S FOREIGN POLICY AS
A MIDDLE POWER:
The Nicaragua Connection, 1884–1986*

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The field of international relations and foreign policy in Latin America is presently experiencing tremendous institutional and intellectual growth.¹ These developments are increasingly emphasizing economic and political determinants at the national and international levels over the traditional focus on diplomacy and international law.² This article will address one of the major theoretical issues in the study of international relations: can structural theories provide anything more than very general predictions of international politics? In addition, because most work using this perspective focuses on great powers, I ask whether structural theories can explain the behavior of lesser powers.

This article will focus on an intriguing case of international relations in Latin America—Mexico's support for Nicaraguan challenges to U.S. hegemony in Central America—in order to evaluate hypotheses explaining the international politics of a middle power. The dependent variable in this inquiry is Mexican policy toward Nicaragua during four particularly contentious periods: the 1880s, 1903–1909, 1925–1929, and 1978–1986. During each of these periods, Nicaragua's sovereignty was challenged, and the country was enmeshed in international conflicts that threatened the entire region. Mexico's response varied over these periods: at different times, it supported or opposed Nicaragua's struggle for independence, and at other times, Mexico remained indifferent to this struggle. This article seeks to make theoretical sense of why and how Mexican policy varied during these four periods.

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The methodology chosen for this task is that of comparative case studies. Comparative analysis helps to distinguish the mere correlation of variables from the causal relationships that each theory hypothesizes. Competing explanations thus confront multiple tests through which to demonstrate their explanatory power.³

The case of Nicaragua is a particularly appropriate vehicle for analyzing Mexican foreign policy. Given the contemporary situation in Central America, Mexico's policy toward Nicaragua dominates discussion of Mexican foreign policy. Central America's proximity and poverty combined with traditional U.S. security concerns about the trans-isthmian canal make Central American international crises a major concern for Mexico. In this context, Nicaragua is significant because of its being an appropriate location for a canal⁴ and its geopolitical location as a large country in the middle of the region. Because of this position, Nicaragua has traditionally played a central role in disputes over control of Central America. Four times in the past century, Mexico has become deeply involved in Nicaragua's international politics, a record that offers analysts ample material for historical and comparative analysis.

These theoretical arguments will be assessed in three stages. The first stage will present the major explanations for Mexican foreign policy and develop hypotheses for each explanation about how Mexico would be expected to behave toward Nicaragua in these four periods. Because the international state structure perspective has not commanded as much theoretical attention as the others, relatively more effort will be spent in developing the theoretical bases for these hypotheses. The second section will describe briefly the four cases, and the concluding section will examine the explanatory power of the different hypotheses.

EXPLAINING MEXICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Explanations of international behavior can be classified by the level of the key causal variables employed in the analysis. The first level emphasizes individuals as key causal variables, the second level looks to characteristics of the country for explanations, and the third level finds causality in the international system.⁵ Unfortunately, little systematic study has been made of the individual psyche or political beliefs of any Mexican president, and therefore arguments based on this level of analysis cannot be evaluated here.⁶ Students of Mexican foreign policy have posited explanations at the other two levels, however. Although their arguments are rarely presented as hypotheses to be evaluated, these findings will orient my analysis.

The second level of analysis focuses on the internal characteristics of states to explain their international behavior. Investigators examine cultural and historical experiences, the form of government (democratic or authoritarian), institutional structure, bureaucratic processes, the social coalitions supporting those in power, and the form of the country's economic organization (capitalist or socialist). In the case of Mexico, three domestic characteristics stand out in contemporary explanations of its foreign policy: its history of foreign invasions, its revolutionary experience from 1910 to 1917, and the leadership's need to legitimize an authoritarian and capitalist government for the Mexican left.

Mexican history has been riddled with attempts by more powerful countries to control Mexico, most notably the U.S. annexation of half of Mexico's national territory in the Mexican-American War. This experience has allegedly given Mexican foreign policy a special concern with defending the principle of nonintervention.⁷ Thus Mexico did not support Che Guevara in Bolivia, the Tupamaros in Uruguay, the Montoneros in Argentina, and similar movements in their struggles against right-wing military governments. The hypothesis generated by this historical experience is that Mexico will neither support groups who have not gained power nor withdraw support from a government in power nor impose its choice of government on another country.

Other analysts interpret Mexico's revolutionary past as dominant in foreign policy formulation because of its presumed lessons. According to this "historical lessons" argument, Mexico supports revolutionary governments because its people and leaders understand, through experience, that revolution is often necessary to overthrow oppressive oligarchies. By incorporating the masses into the political, economic, and social life of the nation, revolutions can actually bring stability to a nation previously torn by civil strife. The Mexican Revolution also demonstrated that such upheavals are primarily concerned with domestic, rather than international, issues and are therefore not necessarily a threat to their neighbors.⁸ The Cuban Revolution and Allende's Chile are the main examples cited by these analysts. In terms of relations between Mexico and Nicaragua, the usually implicit hypothesis is that Mexico's foreign policy toward Nicaragua after the Mexican Revolution would support governments seeking to broaden political and economic participation.

Because this article analyzes two cases before the Mexican Revolution, it would be helpful to extend the logic of this theoretical perspective to incorporate those cases. In terms of the historical lessons approach to foreign policy, the historical equivalent to the Mexican Revolution is La Reforma, the reform wars in the 1850s and 1860s, which broke the power of the alliance between the Catholic Church and

the Conservatives and brought the Liberals to power.⁹ This victory paved the way for the installation of a secular, positivist regime (the Porfiriato) that achieved internal peace, economic growth, and international stature for Mexico.¹⁰ Given a similar Conservative-Liberal competition in Central America at this time, the "historical lessons" approach to Mexican foreign policy suggests the hypothesis that in the period between the Reform and the Revolution, Mexican governments would have supported Liberal governments in Nicaragua.

Another domestic factor related to the revolutionary hypothesis has been noted as fundamental to explaining Mexican foreign policy. The myth of the Mexican Revolution (which, like all myths, has some basis in fact) stresses its nationalist and social justice components. Lázaro Cárdenas's administration (1934–1940) represented the high point in implementing these goals. But after 1940, Mexico's political economy evolved toward a highly unequal distribution of wealth, significant penetration by foreign capital, and authoritarian politics. Given this reality, the myth of the Revolution is now being sustained as important for ensuring that the Mexican people continue to support the system. Maintaining the myth is also considered essential for retaining the allegiance to the system of leftist leaders, inside and outside the official party.¹¹

This line of reasoning emphasizes the social coalition behind the Mexican government. This approach leads some analysts to view contemporary Mexican foreign policy as oriented toward meeting domestic political needs, and more specifically, toward providing a sop for the left.¹² The stronger version of this argument asserts that Mexico defends and establishes contacts with foreign revolutions precisely at those moments when domestic repression against the left is being enacted or when the left is moving toward acting outside the system. Hence Mexico defended Cuba in the early 1960s, when President López Mateos was sending the army against communist-led labor strikes, and it supported Allende's Chile after the massacre of Tlatelolco in 1968 and during the Mexican urban guerrilla movement of the early 1970s.¹³

Again, although analysts who employ this argument do not look back to a time when the governing coalition differed, its logic (that foreign policy responds to the needs and interests of the domestic social coalition) must be extendable to these periods if it is to provide a theoretically powerful explanation of Mexican foreign policy. During the Díaz period, the Liberal legacy was seized by a coalition of Positivists known as the Científicos, who were supported by the army, large landowners, the church, and foreign capital. This social coalition seems to have been internally stable, despite the concerns of a few regional aristocrats over electoral fraud. Because of this degree of internal unity,

two alternative hypotheses could be generated according to the social coalition perspective. One hypothesis closely parallels the contemporary focus on tensions within the social coalition: in order to appease the democratic aspirations of some coalition members, foreign policy would support democrats in Nicaragua. This policy would demonstrate the coalition's concern for democratic principles where it would least challenge the coalition's internal dominance, that is to say, in another country.

An alternative hypothesis could be constructed on the argument that the democratically inclined members of the Porfiriato never had much influence. This hypothesis would stress the internal consensus within the social coalition. Because of its internal unity, the coalition would be supposed to have worried about external threats to its internal dominance. At this point, hypotheses about international politics would also come into play. Consequently, this version of the social coalition perspective incorporates a different theoretical perspective but in a subsidiary fashion, that is to say, only after the domestic social coalition variable (internal consensus or disagreement) has been accounted for.

The nonintervention approach based on historical lessons could be merged with these social coalition hypotheses to produce richer hypotheses. One would expect foreign policy to reward dissident members of the ruling social coalition by supporting revolutionary or liberal groups already in power. Another variant would combine nonintervention with an internally united social coalition and support for Nicaraguan governments that oppose the United States. The primacy of the nonintervention variable significantly limits the policy of either social coalition argument by excluding support for Nicaraguans outside the government.

Moving to the third general international relations perspective, two variants emerge. One variant looks to the international economy to explain international politics. According to this argument, there are many sources of influence in world politics. As the world economy becomes increasingly interdependent, military power loses some of its attraction as a foreign policy tool. Because of mutual (although not necessarily equal) vulnerabilities, a military strike against an economic target may also be detrimental to the attacking state. This perspective therefore supplements power in the military realm with power in strategic markets.¹⁴ In the four periods analyzed here, Mexico occupied an important position in a strategic market twice (1904–1910 and 1978–1982) because of its oil reserves.

Proponents of the strategic market perspective have been particularly active in the recent period. They argue that Mexico's posses-

sion of vast oil reserves in a time of worldwide energy crisis (between 1973 and 1982) gave the country clout in international politics. Hence Mexico became an "emerging new power" seeking to play a major role in world affairs.¹⁵ The consequent hypothesis is that Mexico's strident defense of the Sandinistas can best be explained by the new international resources and respect generated by the Mexican oil boom. Proponents of the strategic market perspective would expect in the earlier cases an indeterminately less-active foreign policy, unless Mexico was enjoying a position in a strategic market similar to its petroleum experience after 1977. Only in 1909 was Mexico in a similar situation (again, due to petroleum).¹⁶ The result according to this hypothesis should be two very active periods (1906–1909 and 1979–1982), two significantly less-active periods (the 1880s and 1925–1929), and a decrease in activism after the collapse in the world energy market beginning in 1982.

A second international perspective focuses on the structure of the state system. This approach argues that the international system has an important independent effect on the behavior of the units in the system (the states). In his construction of a systems theory of international relations, Kenneth Waltz has defined international structures in terms of their ordering principles (anarchic), the character of the units (sovereign states), and the distribution of capabilities among the units (unequal).¹⁷ International structure interacts with its units, each affecting the other to produce an international system. International systems change if either the ordering principles or the distribution of power changes.¹⁸

The major theoretical assumption about the motivations of states in this anarchic system is that they seek to survive.¹⁹ Survival under conditions of anarchy requires self-help, which can lead to aggressive behavior for defensive purposes. One state cannot be sure that another will not seek to dominate a key region and subsequently threaten its security. Given the stakes, states seek insurance policies through maintaining armed forces sufficient to offset the perceived benefits of attacking the aggressor nation.²⁰ A "security dilemma" ensues as each country worries over current and future targets of another's military might and responds in kind.²¹

There are, however, structural limits to this aggressive behavior. One is the short-run rational calculation of traditional balance-of-power formulations. The point at which the power of states opposed to further expansion threatens to raise the cost of expansion above the ratio of costs to benefits acceptable to potential aggressors should produce a status quo.²² But the balancing is done not merely with calculations of the moment. States act not only in response to the immediate actions of others but to perceptions of the state's own actions by other states.²³ In addition, states can expect that other states will be around for some

time in the future. A structural realist analysis could therefore profit from incorporating the assumption of strategic rationality.

The assumption of rationality holds that actors behave in a manner that is expected to result in achieving a particular end. Nonstrategic rationality assumes that actors' calculations are made independently of each other, on the grounds that one actor's choices of strategy will not alter the other's choices. This assumption may or may not be true. Often, however, circumstances are such that the choice of a particular strategy among many by one actor determines the strategy of another actor in such a way that the first actor's achievement of its preferred outcome is impaired. This interdependence affects both the decisions and expectations of each other's behavior.²⁴ Consequently, strategic rationality emerges as a better assumption.

One can therefore envision the structure of international politics as an anarchic one in which states seek to survive and continually interact, with their chances of survival and the factors affecting quality of life being determined by the manner in which they interact. A basic general hypothesis about states' behavior under these circumstances is that states will seek to extend their influence over the foreign policies of states in those geopolitical regions that are key to maintaining their sovereignty and position in the international system. Because Mexico has the United States to the north and water to the east and west, only the region to the south offers an opportunity for Mexico to project its influence. In addition, limiting U.S. influence on Mexico's southern border is important for decreasing U.S. options for pressuring Mexico.

Although the initial hypothesis is that all states will attempt to project their influence internationally, two major constraints limit unbridled competition. First, states have limited resources. Priorities must be set even among important areas. A structural argument would contend that such priorities will be set according to the need to balance the power of chief rivals at the particular time. Second, states are not equal in capabilities. A structural realist analysis expects that position in the international system (attained in accordance with national capabilities) will influence significantly the behavior of a particular state.

Four positions within international systems can be distinguished according to the state's impact on the system. In first position are the great powers because the balancing in the system will revolve around them. International systems are therefore defined in terms of the number of great powers, that is, as a bipolar, a multipolar, or a hegemonic system. Secondary powers are those that can disrupt the system but cannot change it through unilateral action. Middle and small powers share an inability to affect the system individually, but with an important difference. A middle power can affect the system when allied with a small enough number of other states so that its own goals are not lost.

By contrast, small powers must ally in such large numbers in order to have an impact that any one small power loses its ability to influence the alliance.²⁵

The manner in which states seek to guarantee their security is sensitive to limited resources and structural position. Given their structural position, great powers will be concerned with events throughout the system. When a great power acts, it does so with the worldwide balance of power in mind. Other powers have the opportunity to make foreign policy without addressing the demands of the worldwide balance. Consequently, when analyzing international politics at the regional level, as in Central America, it is necessary to understand British and U.S. policies as responding to regional and global demands while Guatemalan, Nicaraguan, and Mexican policies focus exclusively on their needs within the region. The subject under consideration being Mexico's foreign policy, hypotheses relating to the international behavior of a middle state will be developed.

Because Mexico is a middle power, its behavior toward Nicaragua is fundamentally influenced by the actions of the greater powers in the region: by the United States in all four periods and by Great Britain in the earliest instance, which occurred before the United States had established its hegemony in the area. Consequently, international structure hypotheses should distinguish between times when the great powers are active or inactive in the region. When Great Britain or the United States or both demonstrate that the region ranks low in priority for them (because events elsewhere are more pressing), the hypothesis is that Mexico will attempt to dominate Nicaragua itself, which follows from the general structural realist hypothesis noted above. But when Great Britain or the United States demonstrates that the priority of the region is high, Mexico would be expected to seek to block British or U.S. attempts to dominate Nicaragua.

This second hypothesis raises an important question. How can a middle power limit the influence of a stronger state in the weak states around the middle power? Direct military confrontation is unlikely to succeed for two major reasons. First, intervention endows the conflict with an objective regional quality that will increase the commitment of an already stronger state to impose its will. Second, this tactic puts the middle state into direct and open military opposition to a stronger state, thereby increasing the threat to the middle state's sovereignty as the stronger state reacts to it.

The challenge for a middle state is to limit a stronger state's expansion without becoming so directly involved in the third country's struggle for independence that the middle state is perceived as the chief cause of that struggle. This imperative means that the middle state's tactics will depend greatly on what is occurring in the third country.

From this point of view, the worst case for a middle country would be to have a politically unstable situation in the third country. Instability would propel the regional great power or powers to intervene in order to avoid giving rival great powers an opportunity to extend their own influence.²⁶

The middle power is thus hypothesized as wanting stability in the third country. But what kind of stability does it seek? One would expect a middle power to prefer a stable government that takes an independent line toward the great power. But if the independent faction cannot provide a stable government (either because it represents insufficient local social forces or because the great power can undermine its rule), a middle power would prefer a stable government that favors the great power. Having assumed that countries value their sovereignty,²⁷ it becomes logical to expect that even a government imposed by force of arms by another country will seek to diminish the imposing country's influence once it establishes a stable rule.²⁸ The inverse of this proposition is that outside influence would be greatest when domestic instability is high: competing factions would seek support from international forces, who would seek to extract a price for cooperation.²⁹ The kind of domestic stability least preferred by a middle power would be that provided by a stable government aligning itself with a rival of the regional great power and using that rival to challenge the regional great power in its own sphere. Such a situation would stimulate the regional great power to assert dominance over the other regional states, including the middle power.

THE CASES

Guatemala's Threat to Nicaragua, 1882–1888

During the latter third of the nineteenth century, the Liberals regained power from the Conservatives in Central America. Mexican President Benito Juárez allegedly contributed to this political revolution in Central America by helping his ideological counterparts overthrow the Conservative government in Guatemala in 1871.³⁰ Because of Guatemala's status as the most powerful Central American country and its willingness to intervene in its neighbors' affairs, the country's turn toward liberalism facilitated the general political conversion throughout the region.³¹

Despite ideological affinities, relations between Mexico and Guatemala became tense. A border dispute, left over from the days when Central America formed part of the Mexican Empire, created such antagonism that Guatemalan Liberals sent aid to a revolt in Chiapas, Mexico, and Mexico dispatched troops to its border with Guatemala for

a war that the Mexican military viewed as inevitable. Other sources of tension also developed. Guatemala sought U.S. protection from possible Mexican aggression. A Guatemala–U.S. alliance on its southern borders worried Mexico because the United States had despoiled Mexico of half of its national territory in the north only a few decades earlier. Finally, Guatemala sought aggressively to recreate a Central American Union under its own control.³² If this effort had succeeded, Guatemala or the United States acting through Guatemala would have become a more powerful neighbor to Mexico.

Guatemala's unionist efforts brought Mexico to Nicaragua's defense beginning in 1882. Mexico sent its first ambassador to Costa Rica and Nicaragua, neither of which had any ambassadors in Mexico.³³ Mexico used these two countries to thwart Guatemalan dominance, notwithstanding Conservative control of the Nicaraguan government. In 1885 Mexico rejected Guatemalan appeals for support in creating a Central American Republic and warned that it would take measures to safeguard its national interests. Given previous U.S. support for Guatemala in disputes with Mexico and other Central American countries as well as U.S. desires to see a Central American Union, Mexico was worried about U.S. reaction to this new Guatemalan initiative.³⁴

U.S. denials aside, Mexico could not be sure that the United States would not intervene forcibly to gain control over territory for a canal across the isthmus in Nicaragua (in 1903, the United States did take advantage of instability in Colombia to foment Panamanian secession and thus gained control quickly over a canal route). Although Mexican Foreign Minister Matías Romero believed that a war with Guatemala could lead to territorial expansion, Porfirio Díaz was worried that the United States could use such a precedent against Mexico at some future date. Aware that he could not act unilaterally, Díaz began to search for allies. He emphasized to the French and British ambassadors the similarity of European and Mexican interests in denying the United States control of a Nicaraguan canal. Díaz appealed for "moral support" in hopes that military aid to Central America would not be necessary, but such support was apparently not forthcoming.³⁵

Guatemala's plans for regional domination were interrupted when its president, Justo Rufino Barrios, was killed while invading El Salvador. Mexico seized the opportunity to press its advantage over a two-year period between 1885 and 1887. Guatemala was alleged to have invaded Mexico, and the Mexican Congress authorized a declaration of war, if necessary. Troops were sent to the Guatemalan border. Meanwhile, Mexico attempted to influence the selection of governments throughout the region and withheld recognition of the new Guatemalan government, which it found disagreeable.³⁶ But this general effort

to take advantage of the defeat of the U.S. ally in Central America in order to establish Mexican influence ultimately failed.

Two factors appear to have contributed to Mexico's failure. First, Guatemalan nationalists were able to withstand Mexican diplomatic pressure as well as a show of military force on the border because the United States continued to view Guatemala as the key to Central American unification. When Guatemala appealed for U.S. support in the face of Mexican pressure, the United States sent the Mexicans a veiled warning by reassuring Guatemala that although Mexico had legitimate interests in the area, the United States was confident that Mexico would not resort to force.³⁷

Second, Mexico felt severely constrained in what it could offer Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and even El Salvador.³⁸ Costa Rica appealed for a secret alliance with Mexico to thwart Guatemala's continued efforts at union. But Mexico rejected such direct action because the United States might have perceived such an alliance as indicating Mexico's intent to dominate Central America.³⁹

The failure of efforts at indirect domination and renewed U.S. interest in the region led Mexico to change its approach to Central America. U.S. Secretary of State William Blaine's desire to set up an arbitration mechanism for disputes throughout the hemisphere failed,⁴⁰ but he was able to impose it in Central America. In 1890 the United States decided to arbitrate the conflict between Guatemala and El Salvador. Mexico insisted on being included as an arbitrator, and the United States agreed.⁴¹ The events of 1906–1907, which are well-documented as to this collaboration, suggest that Mexico's interests lay in limiting U.S. intervention by requiring that such action be seconded. U.S. interest in Mexican collaboration lay in using Mexico's participation to help convince the Central American nations that U.S. intervention could be fair, despite its preferences for Guatemalan leadership in the region.⁴²

The First U.S.–Nicaragua Conflict, 1906–1910

Liberal dictator José Santos Zelaya used his political control and European financial ties to bring peace and prosperity to Nicaragua between 1893 and 1909. From this domestic base, Zelaya competed for influence in Central America that would be commensurate with the country's geopolitical quality (one of the largest countries in the region and ideally located for a canal). By this time, Nicaragua's problem was less Guatemala than the United States, which was intent on securing sole access to a canal and implementing the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in Central America. Implementation of this corollary required that the United States protect European investments in order

to prevent European intervention in the Americas.⁴³ Zelaya's objections to both these efforts precipitated U.S. intervention as well as Mexican efforts to defend Nicaragua.

Zelaya was a nationalist who wanted Central America for the Central Americans, with himself as leader. He fought with his neighbors in order to install governments loyal to him. In 1894 and 1895, he successfully appealed for U.S. support against British efforts to prevent him from exercising sovereignty over Mosquito lands in the country's Atlantic coastal region.⁴⁴ But the United States did not thereby control Zelaya. In 1901 canal negotiations between the U.S. government and Zelaya broke down when he refused to accept any kind of U.S. sovereignty over the zone.⁴⁵ He also refused initially to accept the right of the United States to arbitrate in Central America in 1906 and declined to trade his European loans for U.S. loans guaranteed by a treaty granting U.S. access to Nicaraguan custom houses.⁴⁶

In accordance with the strategy adopted in 1890, Mexico had been involved in joint efforts with the United States to maintain peace in the area. In 1906 war broke out again between Guatemala and El Salvador, and after an unsuccessful U.S. attempt at mediation, Mexico proposed joint leadership of a regional peace conference. Zelaya initially rejected the proposal because of U.S. participation and invaded Honduras, where he installed his own allies in office. But the efforts of Porfirio Díaz and military preparations by Guatemala and El Salvador to attack Nicaragua apparently convinced Zelaya to change his mind and attend the conference.⁴⁷

The 1907 conference established the neutrality of Honduras and called for a regional peace pact in Central America. At this meeting, Zelaya attempted to persuade Díaz to support discussion of a Central American Union but failed. Instead, a general peace and friendship treaty was signed, and the Corte de Justicia Centroamericana was established, with one justice from each country.⁴⁸

But the underlying issue of who would dominate Central America was not resolved by the conference, and the regional intrigues continued. Guatemala and El Salvador fomented rebellion in Honduras to decrease Nicaraguan influence. Nicaragua continued to serve as a haven where political opponents of other Central American governments could plot revolt. Meanwhile, El Salvador and Guatemala were on the verge of war. When the United States again attempted to mediate without Mexican participation, Mexico insisted on its rights in the region, and the United States hesitated to break openly with Mexico. In 1909 Mexico sent gunboats to the region in a joint effort with the United States to keep peace.⁴⁹

By 1909, however, the United States had decided that the political and financial situation in Central America required implementation

of the Roosevelt Corollary. This decision signaled the end of Zelaya's rule. The United States pressured Mexico to participate in a new regional treaty that would exclude Nicaragua and give both the United States and Mexico the right to intervene unilaterally.⁵⁰ Mexico perceived this new intensity in U.S. policy and initially sought to limit the scope and degree of potential intervention. A first step was to convince the United States that Díaz could persuade Zelaya to abandon his aggressive Central American policies.⁵¹

Although Zelaya did accept Díaz's recommendation that he expel active political refugees from Nicaragua, the United States continued to view Zelaya as an obstacle to its plans for the region. In this context, Nicaraguan Conservatives perceived an opportunity to regain power. With the help of Guatemala and the U.S. consul in Bluefields,⁵² the Conservatives revolted. Zelaya's troops quickly routed most of the rebels, and Zelaya ordered the execution of two U.S. mercenaries. The United States severed relations with Nicaragua, and President William Taft informed the U.S. Congress that direct military intervention was probable.⁵³

Mexico became alarmed by this turn of events. Díaz himself telegraphed the U.S. State Department offering to remove Zelaya from Nicaragua and asking the United States to keep its marines out of Nicaragua. Díaz sought to replace Zelaya with another Liberal to act as a counterweight to Conservative control of Guatemala. Díaz also sent a special envoy to Washington to discuss asylum for Zelaya in Mexico, if the United States did not object. Zelaya, recognizing that he might be winning the military battle only to lose the political war, ordered hostilities to cease and attempted to initiate dialogue with the United States.⁵⁴

But the United States perceived an opportunity to eliminate its regional competition with the nationalist Nicaraguan Liberals and their Mexican allies. Consequently, negotiations were rejected, and U.S. warships and marines protected the remnants of the Conservative forces against the Liberal army. With help from the United States and Guatemala, the Nicaraguan Conservatives emerged victorious in the civil war in 1910. The U.S. State Department successfully demanded conditions for U.S. recognition of the new government, including a U.S. loan guaranteed by a customs treaty giving the United States the right to intervene in Nicaragua, which amounted to acceptance of the Roosevelt Corollary.⁵⁵

And what of Mexico? Faced with outright U.S. aggression against Nicaragua in 1909, Mexico broke with the United States on joint security efforts. It reportedly sent arms and money to back Zelaya's successor, the Liberal José Madriz, in his fight against the rebels with whom the United States sympathized.⁵⁶ But in August 1910, the Nica-

raguan Liberals lost the civil war, and in November Mexico itself fell victim to revolution. While the United States was getting bogged down in the quagmire of Nicaraguan Conservative politics, Mexico's attention was forced inward.

Mexico and Sandino, 1925–1929

The U.S. Marines stayed in Nicaragua starting in 1912 because the Conservatives comprised a minority government riddled with factions seeking economic and political gain. By 1922 the United States was actively seeking to pull out of all Central America. A conference was held to convince these countries to accept peaceful resolution of disputes (something the United States itself might have profitably learned), along with democracy and "apolitical" national guards to replace the U.S. Marines.⁵⁷ The 1924 Nicaraguan elections were won by a Conservative-Liberal coalition, and the marines left in January 1925.

After the marines departed, a Conservative faction engineered a successful coup. Liberal Vice President Juan Bautista Sacasa refused to recognize the new government and fled to Mexico, where he found support for armed defense of his legitimate government. The United States countered by negotiating with the coup leaders to turn power over to a different set of Conservatives and sent the marines back to Nicaragua in 1926, ostensibly to protect the customs houses from Liberal attacks but with the added benefit of protecting the Conservative government. U.S. President Calvin Coolidge attempted to impose an arms embargo. With the marines standing by to protect them, the Nicaraguan Conservatives could accept an embargo, but Mexico refused to accept it.⁵⁸

By 1927 the Liberal rebellion had gained sufficient strength to pose a major threat to the U.S.-backed Conservative government. Great Britain sent warships to Nicaraguan waters to protect British interests. This action by a European power clearly challenged the Roosevelt Corollary. U.S. foreign policymakers claimed that "Mexican Bolsheviks" (Plutarco Elías Calles in his radical phase and his followers) were attempting to seize control of Nicaragua. Conservative Nicaraguan President Adolfo Díaz asked for U.S. aid to help combat Mexican aggression. The United States responded by sending additional marines to Nicaragua, this time to do the actual fighting for the Conservative government.⁵⁹

But the U.S. strategy was not solely military. President Coolidge sent his personal envoy, Henry Stimson, to Nicaragua to negotiate a settlement. Unable to convince Sacasa (the political leader of the revolt), Stimson sought out the Liberal military commander, General José María Moncada, who was known to be sympathetic to the idea of a U.S.

role as arbitrator in Nicaraguan politics.⁶⁰ Stimson convinced the general that the United States would prevent a Liberal military victory, and Moncada laid down his arms in return for U.S. supervision of the 1928 presidential elections. Because the Liberals were the majority party, they would have been expected to win a political victory over the Conservatives.⁶¹ But Sacasa could not be sure that the Conservatives and the United States would finally allow the Liberal victory that they had fought for sixteen years. He therefore rejected the compromise and fled to Mexico. Only one Liberal general kept on fighting, Augusto César Sandino.

At this point, Sandino appeared to be Moncada's heir. At his peak, Sandino led three thousand men and women of all ages. Among those troops were individuals who had come from all over Latin America to fight U.S. imperialism. Mexico continued to provide financial, political, and military support to this group. As a result, the United States was compelled to increase its forces in Nicaragua to almost six thousand troops in order to protect the Conservative government.⁶²

The 1928 elections succeeded in accomplishing what the U.S. Marines could not—the defeat of Sandino. When the Liberal party decided to accept the Stimson-Moncada electoral agreement, Sandino's political support was dramatically undercut. A Sandino sympathizer attempted to participate, but the U.S.-controlled election board rejected him.⁶³ Even Sacasa came to terms with Moncada, now President of Nicaragua, and became his ambassador to the United States. Lacking any organized political base, Sandino was reduced to staging isolated guerrilla attacks. His military impotence was manifest enough that the United States began to withdraw its marines in 1929.⁶⁴ The only obstacles to a total withdrawal were the need to strengthen the Nicaraguan National Guard and to neutralize Sandino completely.

At this juncture, Mexico began to reevaluate its strategy toward Nicaragua. Calles, who was no longer President but remained the power behind the throne, had reached an agreement with the United States on Mexican petroleum policy and become a conservative. In addition, events had demonstrated that Sandino did not represent the major political forces in his country, and a Liberal had won the 1928 elections. Finally, the U.S. Marines were leaving Nicaragua.

In search of badly needed support for his struggle, Sandino sought aid from numerous Latin American governments. Mexico seized the opportunity of a new plea from Sandino to begin secret negotiations with the United States to remove Sandino from Nicaragua. Mexican President Emilio Portes Gil asked Sandino to come to Mexico to discuss continued Mexican support. But when Sandino arrived in Mexico, he found himself literally under house arrest in Yucatán while he waited for an appointment with the Mexican President in far-off

Mexico City. During Sandino's absence, dissension among his ranks grew, and he banished Farabundo Martí for being a Communist. Months later, the call to Mexico City came, but it produced no support. After a fruitless nine months, Sandino made a nighttime escape from Mexico.⁶⁵

Sandino's moment had passed.⁶⁶ Sacasa became President in 1932 and the last U.S. Marine left Nicaragua and Central America on 1 January 1933. Sandino laid down his arms, with a prophetic warning to Sacasa to watch out for the head of the National Guard, General Anastasio Somoza García.

The Sandinistas and a New U.S. Threat since 1979

After Somoza seized power in 1936, Mexico seems to have had no bad relations with him or his sons, who ruled following his assassination in 1956. A guerrilla movement, the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), that sprang up in 1961 remained a minor irritant until 1974. Nicaraguan politics were so stable that even Mexican President Luis Echeverría (whose foreign policy was noted for its aggressive Third World rhetoric) welcomed Anastasio Somoza Debayle to Mexico City in 1973.

But in 1978 the situation within Nicaragua deteriorated for the Somoza regime. The Sandinista rebels demonstrated a political and military strength that would have severely taxed any government that refused to come to terms with them. Mexico began to provide the rebels with small amounts of money and political support.⁶⁷ The following spring witnessed a new set of circumstances: the United States was looking for a way to replace Somoza with a non-Sandinista; Venezuela's commitment to the FSLN was under question because of domestic politics; and the possibility was emerging that Cuba could become the dominant foreign influence in a FSLN government. Faced with these circumstances, Mexico decided to step in.⁶⁸

Mexico's first task was to ensure that the most politically and militarily powerful force in the broad national front against Somoza—the Sandinistas—was not kept out of power by U.S. maneuvers. Diplomatic relations with Somoza were broken even as the United States continued to seek a negotiated transfer of power. Mexico led the opposition within the Organization of American States to a U.S. attempt to get an inter-American peace force to stop the fighting (and thereby prevent the rebels from gaining power). Symbolizing the importance of Mexico's role, a Mexican helicopter flew the Sandinista leadership from Costa Rica to Managua when Somoza fled.

The Sandinistas found that taking power did not end their struggle. While the Carter administration maintained friendly relations with

the new regime, it channeled most of its aid to the anti-Sandinista private sector and began a military build-up in Honduras to help convince the Sandinistas that attempts to export its revolution would not be tolerated.⁶⁹ The Reagan administration, however, was not interested in giving the Sandinistas the opportunity to prove or disprove their peaceful intentions. It suspended aid and developed a convoluted plan to drive the Sandinistas from power.⁷⁰

Mexico responded as it had in the past, by providing economic and technical assistance for rebuilding the war-torn country. López Portillo initiated these efforts, the most important being the 1980 San José Pact in which Mexico and Venezuela agreed to provide petroleum to Nicaragua and other Central American countries on very favorable terms. Despite Mexico's own economic crisis beginning in 1982, de la Madrid renewed the pact in 1983 at terms that were less favorable but still below market rates.⁷¹ Mexico's debt problems forced a cutback in supplies when, despite favorable terms, Nicaragua's payments arrears reached five hundred million dollars. But when the Soviet Union announced in 1987 that it would cut back on its petroleum supplies to Nicaragua, de la Madrid's government began negotiating with other Latin American governments to augment supplies.⁷²

Mexico was also active in the international defense of the Sandinistas. In these efforts, Mexico recognized that the United States had interests in the region. Mexico defined these interests much like the Carter administration did after it failed to prevent the FSLN victory: political stability in Nicaragua (which meant coming to terms with the Sandinista Revolution by emphasizing its "uniqueness" to Nicaragua) and a balancing of Cuban-Soviet influence with that of noncommunist states from the Americas and Europe.

Mexico recognized that political stability in Nicaragua was possible only if the Sandinistas had effective control of the government and the United States could be convinced that its security interests were not being challenged. To meet these goals, Mexico undertook a two-track policy. The Mexican government tried to moderate the Sandinistas' position in several ways: by appealing to the promises of the revolution for pluralism (as López Portillo did when he received the Sandino Medal of the Batalla de San Jacinto in Managua); by noting that Nicaragua must share the blame for regional tensions (for example, in 1981 Mexico opposed a French sale of arms to Nicaragua); and more generally, by providing an alternative to Nicaraguan dependence on Cuba and the Soviet Union.⁷³ Mexico also attempted a bilateral approach to reducing tensions by acting as a broker for direct talks between the United States and Nicaragua and by advocating direct discussions between the United States and Cuba. In 1983 Mexico helped create a regional approach with other Latin American countries that became

known as the Contadora initiative. In these multilateral negotiations, Mexico is acting as Nicaragua's staunchest defender.⁷⁴

Unfortunately, the Reagan administration, which took office in 1981, chose to define its security interests as requiring the elimination of the Sandinistas and all Cuban and Soviet presence in Central America. As a result, Mexico's efforts failed to diminish tensions between the United States and Nicaragua, at least up to this writing (1988). These efforts may nevertheless have prevented tensions from deteriorating ever further than they otherwise would have.

EVALUATION OF HYPOTHESES

Evaluation of the power of these competing explanations for Mexican foreign policy will proceed by comparing their ability to explain the greatest number of cases and their generation of new insights into Mexican behavior or international politics or both.⁷⁵

The argument that looks to the political power derived from a country's position in a strategic international market performs the worst. This perspective generated the least-interesting hypothesis: that Mexico would be indeterminately, but significantly, less active in the cases of the Guatemalan threat (in the 1880s) and the Sandino Challenge (1925–1929), as compared with the Zelaya conflict (1906–1910) and the Nicaraguan Revolution (1978–1986), with the last case evolving from a very active to a somewhat less active role. Examination of the cases, however, demonstrates no such rating. Mexico was significantly active in all four cases. During the 1880s, Mexico attempted to place pro-Mexican leaders in power and almost went to war with Guatemala. In the second case, Mexico succeeded in obtaining the resignation of Zelaya and influencing the choice of Madriz and tried to intercede with the United States. The 1920s were perhaps Mexico's most actively anti-U.S. period, when it sent arms to forces fighting a government recognized by the United States. In the contemporary case, Mexico was slow to get involved, waiting until it was clear that Somoza's days were limited. Mexico's support for the U.S.-recognized Sandinista government in its fight against the U.S.-financed Contras continues to be mainly diplomatic, with some economic aid but virtually no military aid. It would be difficult to argue that Mexican activity decreased in any important way after 1982.

Hypotheses derived from the domestic history perspective of international relations yield similarly disappointing results. Two of the cases occur after the Mexican Revolution, but Mexico's behavior differs in each instance. During the Sandino challenge (1925–1929), Mexico wound up collaborating with the United States to help end Sandino's hopes for revolution, while in the case of the Nicaraguan Revolution,

Mexico has performed according to the hypothesis by supporting the revolution. Two cases occurred between the Reforma and the Mexican Revolution, but again, Mexico's behavior varied in each. In the case of the Guatemalan threat (1882–1888), Mexico supported a Conservative government in Nicaragua and, as hypothesized, defended a Liberal government in the Zelayan conflict (1906–1910). The nonintervention hypothesis is the weakest of this group: Mexico participated actively, using diplomatic, economic, and even military means to influence events in Nicaragua in all four cases. As a result, the hypotheses subordinating social coalition and international politics variables to the non-intervention variable also perform poorly.

Next come the hypotheses derived from the perspective that interprets foreign policy as an outgrowth of domestic policy, with foreign policy behavior responding to the needs of the domestic social coalition in power. The internal tensions hypothesis suggested that the Díaz government would support democracy in Nicaragua in order to co-opt democrats in the Mexican coalition. But this concern for democracy never surfaced as an issue in those two cases.

Postrevolutionary foreign policy has also varied considerably from the social coalition predictions. During Calles's radical and nationalistic phase, he did not appear to have to buy off the left; but after his conservative transformation, the left began to coalesce around an opposition that eventually exiled him. In terms of the needs of his social coalition, however, Calles was radical when it was unnecessary (1924–1928) and conservative when he should have been making concessions to the left (1929–1933). Echeverría confronted an urban guerrilla movement as well as increasing alienation from labor, peasants, and intellectuals. Some concessions were made—support of Allende's Chile comes quickly to mind—but policy toward Nicaragua remained conservative. López Portillo supported the Sandinistas at the same time that foreign debt and oil revenues gave the regime the resources to make extensive investments in issues dear to the left and its constituency. In addition, the Mexican Communist party was legalized. Only in the case of de la Madrid's austerity program can one easily contend that Mexico's policy toward Nicaragua had an important domestic payoff.

One might attempt to develop a social coalition explanation to cover the actions of Calles, Echeverría, and López Portillo by arguing that the situation they confronted demanded more concessions than that faced by de la Madrid. But those who would argue thus are faced with two questions whose answers would probably demonstrate further the limited usefulness of this perspective. First, what constitutes sufficient concessions to the left? Calles supported the organization of labor, and his anti-U.S. stances led many in the United States to call him a Bolshevik. Yet, according to the logic of this social coalition argu-

ment, Calles had to complement these leftist domestic policies with an active radical foreign policy. Why, then, were Echeverría's use of Third World rhetoric in the United Nations and support for Allende successful in reincorporating a left that was more severely alienated than the left that Calles had faced? Also, why was López Portillo compelled to establish a radical foreign policy in addition to nationalistic oil-export and food-import policies, massive social overhead investments, and legalization of the Communist party on the domestic front?

Even if systematic answers could be provided to the question of how much concession to the left is sufficient, one must still deal with the question of under what conditions Mexico will actively intervene. Why did Mexico intervene in Nicaragua in 1909 rather than in Cuba, or why did Mexico oppose the United States in Nicaragua in 1925–1928 and Chile in 1970–1973 but not oppose it in Haiti during 1925–1929 or Nicaragua in 1970–1973? Answers based on domestic politics cannot explain the international challenges and opportunities faced, and so they must be either complemented or replaced by a perspective based on international politics.

The internal consensus variant of the social coalition hypothesis, built on the assumption that the internal dynamics of the Porfirian coalition did not require foreign policy payoffs to domestic opposition groups, suggests a complementarity with international politics hypotheses in which domestic variables take primacy. That is to say, once the domestic demands of the social coalition have been met, Mexico can turn to its international interest in thwarting U.S. domination of Nicaragua. At that point, the hypotheses based on international state structure come into play. This approach could explain the Porfiriato's policy in the first two cases examined. But the argument breaks down in the two most recent cases. Unlike the internal tensions hypothesis, the internal consensus hypothesis could explain Calles's support for Sacasa-Sandino during part of the Sandino challenge (1925–1928). But this formulation combining the factors of social coalition and international politics confronts the same problems as the other social coalition hypothesis in the later years of the Sandino challenge (for 1929–1930) and the Nicaraguan Revolution. Consequently, in this argument, the international politics predictions hold up even though the purported antecedent domestic social coalition was not as predicted.

Hypotheses derived from the international state structure perspective perform extremely well. My first hypothesis from this perspective was that if the dominant regional power demonstrated that its foreign policy concerns gave low priority to the Central American region, then Mexico would attempt to step into the vacuum and dominate the smaller countries. The early 1880s constituted precisely such a period, and Mexico sought to place its own candidates in the presidencies of

Central America. In 1925 the U.S. Marines left Nicaragua after thirteen years, signaling a desire by the United States to escape from the quagmire of Nicaraguan politics. Into this breach stepped Mexico, with financial and military support for one of the Nicaraguan factions.

But at other times the United States gave high priority to its security concerns in the region. In 1888 the United States commenced its drive to make the Monroe Doctrine respected in the area by means of William Blaine's Pan Americanism. Secretary of State Richard Olney's declaration that the United States was "practically sovereign on this continent" followed in 1895. The Roosevelt Corollary extended the security concept from military to financial concerns and provided the United States with a new mechanism for dominating the region, the customs house treaties. According to the second state structure hypothesis, Mexican policy should have shifted away from pursuit of Mexican control of Nicaragua to blocking U.S. domination of Nicaragua. Mexico's initial support for Zelaya, Sacasa-Sandino, and the FSLN clearly conform to this hypothesis.

Nevertheless, Mexico also attempted to isolate Zelaya and Sandino, actually collaborating with the United States at these times. How can those policies be interpreted? The third state structure hypothesis, which suggests a Mexican concern for political stability in Nicaragua as a means of diminishing U.S. influence in that country, gains great credibility by these Mexican actions. As noted, by the time Mexico abandoned Zelaya and Sandino, it had become clear that neither could provide political stability. Zelaya's problem was that the United States had decided to intervene militarily if he continued in power, and the complication with Sandino was that he could not count on sufficient internal support to assemble a government, nor would the U.S. Marines depart as long as he represented a serious guerrilla threat to the U.S.-supported government. Thus to limit U.S. influence under these circumstances required Mexico's betrayal of yesterday's allies and limited cooperation with the United States

In short, despite differences in ruling coalitions and domestic political tensions, Mexico played an active role in Nicaraguan external affairs each time the Central American country faced serious challenges to its sovereignty. But Mexico's behavior was not identical in each challenge. Sometimes Mexico defended the left in Nicaragua (in 1909, 1925–1928, and 1979–1988), yet at other times, it recognized and supported the right against the left (in 1884, 1929, and 1973). Sometimes Mexico cooperated with the United States (in 1909 and 1929), but at other times, it opposed the United States (most notably, in 1925–1928 and 1979–1988). As has been shown, the hypotheses not based on international state structure could not explain such variation. But the international state structure hypotheses, which focus on the international op-

portunities and constraints faced by a middle power, perform well across all cases.

Despite the argument presented here, many analysts will continue to be skeptical about structural realism. Two major objections recur regarding structural realist arguments. One is that the elegance and rigor of this perspective depreciates the richness of the cases. A second objection is that structural realists assume that perceptions and misperceptions play only a minor role in international politics.

For purposes of producing a complete picture of an empirical event, national and international levels of analysis are clearly complementary. In order to understand events, however, one must cut through the richness of the case, abstract the essentials, and evaluate the relative explanatory power of each variable. Hence this analysis has treated the variables as competing explanations in order to assess which theoretical perspective is most successful in explaining outcomes. In this case, the structural realist perspective is the most useful.

In order to evaluate the explanatory benefits of reintroducing the richness of historical detail, one can examine how the other perspectives complement structural realism. The strongest complementarity would occur if one of these other variables (market position, historical experience, or domestic coalition) could influence whether or not Mexico supported, opposed, or remained indifferent to events in Nicaragua. In these particular cases, at least, no relationship among structural and nonstructural variables materializes. Rather, these other variables affect the details and nuances of policy that is structurally determined. Their impact is therefore achieved by means of a policy chosen for other reasons.

In the cases involving relations between Mexico and Nicaragua, position in a strategic international market provides a resource to be used in carrying out what is structurally determined. The absence of that resource was insufficient to change Mexican policy after 1982 or to prevent Mexico from acting in the three previous cases. There is no way to control for historical experience, but one can ask this question: once Mexico has decided to act, does its bias toward nonintervention, its Reform experience, or its revolutionary experience significantly affect the way that it acts? Certainly, the rhetoric of Mexican foreign policy is influenced by these historical experiences. Nevertheless, in the cases where the structural realist hypotheses suggested that Mexico would act against nonintervention, Liberals, and revolutionaries, Mexico behaved in accordance with these hypotheses. The social coalition argument also adds descriptive detail without increasing explanatory power. In other words, if leftists again became irrelevant to Mexico's political system, then Mexico would be expected to behave as it did under Por-

firio Díaz by coming to the aid of Nicaraguan opponents of U.S. hegemony as long as they could provide stability in Nicaragua.

The perceptual question can be handled in a similar fashion. Structural realist arguments contend that the objective international conditions are powerful enough to pull even those who object to realist policy in a particular direction.⁷⁶ Hence the unit of analysis is the state, not individual policymakers. This conceptualization is obviously a theoretical abstraction and is not meant to mirror reality. The question to ask is whether hypotheses utilizing this assumption yield more powerful explanations than hypotheses that incorporate perceptual variables. In the cases presented here, Mexican governments did not change policy direction (supporting independents, helping the United States, or disengaging entirely) until U.S. action (threatening to send the marines or beginning to pull them out) and events in Nicaragua (such as Zelaya's decision to negotiate with the United States or Sandino's loss of Liberal political and military support) demonstrated a shift in objective conditions.

In conclusion, comparative case analysis has facilitated evaluation of hypotheses drawn from distinct theoretical perspectives about international politics. Hypotheses derived from a structural realist perspective outperformed the others tested. This analysis, however, is suggestive rather than definitive. What is clearly needed are more theoretically informed case studies that can provide the basis for systematic comparisons across numerous cases. Brazilian and Argentine foreign policy come readily to mind as appropriate subjects, but it would also be beneficial to look outside Latin America and across time as an antidote to the tendency to become overwhelmed by the richness of our own experiences and cases.

NOTES

1. Such growth was already noted in the 1970s. See Jorge I. Domínguez, "Consensus and Divergence: The State of the Literature on Inter-American Relations in the 1970s," *LARR* 12, no. 1 (1978):87-126. But with democratization in the early 1980s, new centers of study mushroomed. Examples abound: in Rio de Janeiro, the Instituto Universitário de Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (IUPERJ) and the Instituto de Relações Internacionais at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica (IRI-PUC); in Campinas, the Núcleo de Estudos Estratégicos of the Universidade de Campinas; in São Paulo, the group around Antônio Carlos Pereira and his journal, *Política e Estratégia*; in Buenos Aires, the Centro de Investigaciones Europeo-Latinoamericanas (EURAL) and FLACSO-Programa Buenos Aires; in Santiago, Programa de Seguimiento de las Políticas Exteriores Latinoamericanas (PROSPEL), the group from RIAL (Relaciones Internacionales de América Latina) coordinated by Luciano Tomassini at CEPAL, and FLACSO-Programa Santiago.
2. The Latin American literature on international relations is reviewed in Domínguez, "Consensus and Divergence"; and in Alberto van Klaveren, "The Analysis of Latin American Foreign Policies: Theoretical Perspectives," in *Latin American Nations in*

- World Politics*, edited by Heraldo Muñoz and Joseph S. Tulchin (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1984), 1–21; see also Kenneth M. Coleman, “On Comparing Foreign Policies: Comments on van Klaveren,” in the same edited work, 22–29.
3. The general tendency in the literature on Mexican foreign policy is to include variables from all three levels of analysis in the “explanation.” While this approach may be descriptively correct, it represents muddled analytical thinking. On the importance of the comparative method for theory testing, see Arendt Lijphard, “Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method,” *American Political Science Review* 65 (1971):682–93; and Alexander L. George and Timothy J. McKeown, “Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision Making,” *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations*, edited by Lee S. Sproull and Patrick D. Larkey (Greenwich, Conn.: Jai Press, 1985), 2:21–58.
 4. As late as 1916, U.S. attempts to secure rights to a canal through Nicaragua by means of the Bryan-Chamorro treaty were sufficiently threatening to other Central American countries that the Corte de Justicia Centroamericana collapsed because it could not resolve the dispute.
 5. Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).
 6. The perspective that takes the individual as the primary cause of international conflict looks either to general traits of human behavior (such as selfishness, aggressiveness, stupidity) or to specific characteristics of individual statesmen (psychology, personal political beliefs, or other aspects). See Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, chaps. 1 and 2. For the purpose of explaining behavior that varies within a case and between cases, the focus on general traits of human behavior is too broad. Rather, individual personality and political beliefs become key factors.
 7. Pellicer, “Mexico’s Position,” 92; René Herrera Zúñiga and Mario Ojeda, “Mexican Foreign Policy and Central America,” in *Central America: International Dimensions of the Crisis*, edited by Richard E. Feinberg (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), 182.
 8. Olga Pellicer, “Mexico’s Position,” *Foreign Policy* 43 (Summer 1981):90.
 9. The two events and their impacts on subsequent Mexican politics are not identical. Nevertheless, for analytical purposes, one can abstract out those qualities relating to the logic of the historical lessons perspectives: a prolonged and violent conflict that lays the basis for peace and prosperity by incorporating the politically neglected.
 10. The most comprehensive examination of the Porfiriato is Daniel Cosío Villegas’s multivolume *Historia moderna de México: el Porfiriato* (Mexico City: Editorial Hermes, 1960).
 11. For an introduction into the complexity of Mexico’s political economy since the Revolution, see Roger D. Hansen, *The Politics of Mexican Development* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971).
 12. For a good review of this position, see Wolf Grabendorff, “Mexican Foreign Policy: Indeed a Foreign Policy?” and Jorge G. Castañeda, “Don’t Corner Mexico!,” *Foreign Policy* 60 (Fall 1985):88–90.
 13. Grabendorff reviews such arguments in the article cited in the preceding note.
 14. See Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977).
 15. Bruce Bagley, “Mexico in the 1980s: A New Regional Power,” *Current History* 80, no. 469 (Nov. 1981):353–56.
 16. At least one work views the Mexican Revolution as heavily influenced by U.S. attempts to wrest control of this petroleum source from the British. See M. S. Alperovich and B. T. Rudenko, *La Revolución Mexicana de 1910–1917 y la política de los Estados Unidos* (Mexico City: Ediciones de Cultura Popular, 1960).
 17. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979), esp. chap. 5. Critiques of Waltz’s theories abound, but the most interesting are collected in *Neo-Realism and Its Critics*, edited by Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).
 18. Waltz recognizes the difficulty of definitional precision on the issue of determining capabilities. He hedges his definition by first noting that it is a combination of seven elements (population, territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military

- strength, political stability, and competence). He then argues that the importance of each element varies over time, that "common sense can answer it," that common sense may be wrong, and finally that only a rough sense of relative ranking is needed. See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 131. The last argument is the most important point for Waltz because his concern with the theory is to understand the behavior of the chief powers in the system, and as a result, he needs to know only if there are one, two, or many powers.
19. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 91.
 20. This goal can be achieved by threatening to defeat the aggressor militarily or by inflicting costs in victory great enough to offset the gains. See the discussion in John Mearscheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), chap. 2.
 21. Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (Jan. 1978):186–214.
 22. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, chap. 6; Robert Jervis, "From Balance to Concert: A Study of International Security Cooperation," *Cooperation under Anarchy*, edited by Kenneth A. Oye (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 58–79; and Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). Note that the balance of power does not require that power be divided equally, only that it make the costs of aggression unacceptable to potential aggressors.
 23. One example of this perceptual argument is the concern with international reputation. Here a state invests resources in projecting a certain perception that it expects to influence the future behavior of other states. For an attempt to develop a formal model of the relationship between international reputation and foreign policy, see James E. Alt, Randall L. Calvert, and Brian D. Humes, "Game Theory and Hegemonic Stability: The Role of Reputation and Uncertainty," paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association Meetings, Chicago, 10–12 April 1986.
 24. The classic work applying this game-theory concept to international relations is Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960).
 25. This typology is adopted from Robert O. Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics," *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (Spring 1969):291–310.
 26. The most favorable conditions for coercion to succeed in creating alliances were found to be the times when the target states are small countries with very weak governments. Stephen Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1985):18, 33.
 27. The fact that an individual state may acquiesce to being absorbed by another does not undermine the point that most states, and all great powers, seek to maintain independence. See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 93–97.
 28. Compare Robert O. Keohane, "The Big Power of Small Allies," *Foreign Policy* 2 (Spring 1971):161–82.
 29. For an example, see Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba: Order and Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), pt. 1.
 30. Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 154. Woodward provides no citation for this affirmation. Cosío Villegas, writing fifteen years earlier in a meticulous and voluminous work on Mexico's foreign policy from 1871 to 1910, claims that no confirming evidence has been found. See *Historia moderna de México*, vol. 5, *El Porfiriato: vida política-exterior*, part 1, p. xxiii.
 31. Woodward, *Central America: A Nation Divided*, 152–55.
 32. Cosío Villegas, *Historia Moderna de México*, xxiii and 174–83.
 33. *Ibid.*, 395.
 34. *Ibid.*, 404–14.
 35. *Ibid.*, 424–26.
 36. *Ibid.*, 444–68; 502–3.
 37. *Ibid.*

38. Mexico also came to El Salvador's defense against Guatemala when asked. *Ibid.*, 565.
39. *Ibid.*, 473–81.
40. Whitaker, *The Western Hemisphere Idea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954), 74–81; and Gordon Connell-Smith, *The Inter-American System* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 39–42.
41. Robert John Deger, Jr., "Porfirian Foreign Policy and Mexican Nationalism: A Study of Cooperation and Conflict in Mexican-American Relations, 1884–1904," Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1979, 220–21.
42. On U.S. interests, see Dana G. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900–1921* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), 147.
43. For the Roosevelt Corollary, see *ibid.*, 65–111.
44. Woodward, *Central America*, 187; for U.S. interests in this episode, see Walter LaFaber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984, 7th printing; orig. pub. 1963), 218–29.
45. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 41.
46. *Ibid.* The customs house treaties were the means preferred by the United States for implementing the Roosevelt Corollary.
47. Cosío Villegas, *Historia moderna*, 635–58; and Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 151.
48. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 152–55; Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Area* (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1934), 195–202; and Whitney T. Perkins, *Constraint of Empire: The United States and Caribbean Interventions* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1981), 23.
49. Cosío Villegas, *Historia moderna*, 687–97.
50. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 165–66.
51. Cosío Villegas, *Historia moderna*, 699–703.
52. The consul was most likely acting on his own, rather than under orders from the State Department. See Perkins, *Constraint of Empire*, 25–26; and Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 174–75. Nevertheless, incentives from Washington encouraged this kind of behavior. If independent action failed to produce benefits for the United States, the consul rarely seems to have paid a price; and if such actions brought benefits, Washington was very happy to accept them.
53. Cosío Villegas, *Historia moderna*, 705–7; Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 175–77; and Perkins, *Constraint of Empire*, 26.
54. Cosío Villegas, *Historia moderna*, 707–31; and Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 179.
55. Cosío Villegas, *Historia moderna*, 708–23; and Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 182–83.
56. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy*, 181.
57. Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Latin American Policy of the United States* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1943), 202–10.
58. Perkins, *Constraint of Empire*, 106–14.
59. *Ibid.*, 115–16.
60. Henry L. Stimson, *American Policy in Nicaragua* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), 56.
61. *Ibid.*; on the negotiations, see 55–77.
62. Standard works on Sandino include two laudatory works by Gregorio Selser: *El pequeño ejército loco: operación México-Nicaragua* (Havana: Imprenta Nacional de Cuba, 1960); and *Sandino: general de hombres libres* (Mexico City: Editorial Diógenes, 1978; English version published by Monthly Review Press, 1981). See also Neill Macaulay, *The Sandino Affair* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967; reissued by Duke University Press in 1985); and Eduardo Crawley, *Nicaragua in Perspective* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), a revised version of his earlier work, *Dictators Never Die* (1979).
63. Perkins, *Constraint of Empire*, 151.
64. Karl Bermann, *Under the Big Stick: Nicaragua and the United States since 1848* (Boston: South End Press, 1986), 200.

65. Selser, *Sandino*, 122–36; Crawley, *Nicaragua in Perspective*, 66–69; and Bermann, *Under the Big Stick*, 211. All fail to mention Sandino's break with the Communists in their discussions of his visit to Mexico. For the problems between Sandino and the Communists, see Macaulay, *The Sandino Affair*, 157–58, 114.
66. Crawley claims in *Nicaragua in Perspective* that Sandino was as strong as ever in January 1933 (p. 78). But even Crawley notes that Sandino's forces were very poorly armed and that Sandino was only able to offer Sacasa six hundred armed men against a possible coup by Somoza (p. 84).
67. Castañeda, "Don't Corner Mexico!," 80.
68. Mario Ojeda, "Mexican Policy toward Central America in the Context of U.S.–Mexican Relations," in *The Future of Central America: Policy Choices for the U.S. and Mexico*, edited by Richard R. Fagen and Olga Pellicer (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1983), 141–44.
69. Carter's policies are described in Bermann, *Under the Big Stick*, 261–74.
70. Even before the current Iran-Contra scandal became public knowledge, much evidence pointed to the Reagan administration's desire to circumvent U.S. Congressional restrictions in order to bring about the overthrow of the Sandinistas. For a collection of evidence, see Central America Crisis Monitoring Team, *In Contempt of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 1985); and Wayne S. Smith, "Lies about Nicaragua," *Foreign Policy* 67 (Summer 1987):87–103.
71. Jorge I. Domínguez and Juan Lindau, "The Primacy of Politics: Comparing the Foreign Policies of Cuba and Mexico," *International Political Science Review* 5, no. 1 (1984):89–90, 94; Bagley, "Mexico in the 1980s: A New Regional Power," 354, 176–79; Herrera Zúñiga and Ojeda, "Mexican Foreign Policy," 176–79; Olga Pellicer, "Mexico in Central America: The Difficult Exercise of Regional Power," in *The Future of Central America: Policy Choices for the U.S. and Mexico*, edited by Richard R. Fagen and Olga Pellicer (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1983), 120–21.
72. See "Arms Shipped to Salvador Rebels, Nicaragua Admits," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 June 1987, pt. 1, p. 15.
73. Mario Ojeda, "Mexican Foreign Policy toward Central America in the Context of U.S.–Mexican Relations," 143–44; on the Contadora negotiations, see Castañeda, "Don't Corner Mexico!," 84–87.
74. Rosario Green, "La política exterior de México hacia Centroamérica: un informe sobre el proceso de Contadora," lecture given at the Center for U.S.–Mexico Studies, University of California, San Diego, 13 Feb. 1985.
75. Robert O. Keohane, "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond," in *Neo-Realism and Its Critics*, 158–203.
76. See Waltz's discussion of the recurrence of balances of power, *Theory of International Politics*, 102–28.