

Behind The Headlines

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Canada in the Organization of American States: The First Five Years

DAVID MACKENZIE

Canada's relations with the other nations of the western hemisphere were given a significant boost at the beginning of 1990 when, after decades of discussion and debate in which both strong support for and serious reservations about membership were expressed, Canada joined the Organization of American States (OAS). If nothing else, this leap of faith reflected an increasing interest in Latin America and the Caribbean and largely symbolized Canada's full entrance into the inter-American system. Now, after five years of active membership, it is possible to look back and assess Canada's performance in the OAS, and to consider whether or not the original hopes have been realized or the concerns borne out.

Background

The OAS was created in 1948, but its roots are to be found in the Pan American Union which evolved from a series of meetings and discussions beginning in 1890 and continuing into the early 20th century. Through a succession of regular conferences and joint committees, the Pan American Union (whose members included the United States and most Latin American countries) was launched in the hope of fostering closer relations between the various states of the western hemisphere. The role of the Union expanded over the years with the signing of international agreements dealing with immigration, aviation, and many other inter-American issues.

At first Canada was excluded from the American club because it was neither a republic nor fully independent (although a chair with 'Canada' inscribed on it reportedly sat empty in the Union headquarters in

Washington). The formal barriers to Canadian membership were gradually lowered as Canadian autonomy became more clearly pronounced, but Canada's initial application for membership in 1941 was rebuffed by the United States, ostensibly because of Canada's continuing membership in the British Commonwealth.

At the same time, Canada began - for security and commercial reasons - to exchange diplomatic relations with south and central American republics: Brazil and Argentina in 1940, Chile in 1942, and Mexico and Peru in 1944. After the Second World War, the government continued to expand diplomatic relations in Latin America, until fully one-fifth of Canada's diplomatic ties were with Latin American states. These states naturally responded with the opening of legations in Canada, but the issue of membership in the Pan American Union lay dormant, despite the waning of American opposition.

In 1948 a new super-organization - the OAS - was established to act as a co-ordinating agency for the many bodies operating within the Pan American Union. (Interestingly, the charter of the OAS refers to member 'states' rather than 'republics' - a slight but significant change in Canada's favour.) The charter of the new organization was based in part on the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (known as the Rio Treaty), a 1947 mutual defence agreement which effectively turned the OAS into a collective security organization. But the OAS was more than a defence pact; its mandate included such areas as trade, boundary and other legal arbitration, and inter-American cultural affairs. It was also affiliated with the United Nations as a regional body.

At first Canada remained outside the OAS. Support for Canadian participation never disappeared either in Canada or in Latin America; it merely wavered over the perceived benefits membership would bring. Without clear advantages or apparent necessity, there appeared little reason (and even less will) to move towards membership. Nevertheless, Canadian interest in Latin America and the OAS increased thanks to the growing number of hemispheric ties in areas such as foreign aid, development loans, immigration and refugee questions, environmental issues, international drug trafficking, and tourism. Gradually Canada edged closer to membership by participating in several OAS bodies, including the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (1961) and the Pan American Health Organization (1971), and by becoming a permanent observer to the OAS in 1972.

At the same time, Canadian interest in seeking full membership was tempered somewhat by the internal divisions within the organization. American policy with respect to Cuba in the 1960s, Nicaragua, El Salvador and other central American states in the 1970s and 1980s, its support for Great Britain in the 1982 Falklands War, and its intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean over the years from the Dominican Republic

in 1965 to Grenada in 1983 had effectively polarized the OAS, with the United States on one side and Latin America on the other. For many Canadians it made good sense to stay away from this divided group and, therefore, despite the continuing desire to enhance Canada's relations with the region, it was not until the late 1980s that an official move was made. In 1989, following a governmental review of Canada's relations with Latin America, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney announced the government's decision to seek membership. Canada became a member of the OAS in January 1990.

The decision was based on the recognition of the rising importance of Latin America and the Caribbean in Canadian affairs. The region had experienced rapid population growth, a surge in economic and political power, a cultural explosion, and the slow but steady spread of democracy. It was widely believed that there were huge opportunities in this hemisphere upon which Canadians could capitalize. These opportunities would be missed if Canadians did not take advantage of all avenues – including the OAS, which could serve as a stepping stone into Latin American affairs and increase Canadian influence in the region. Staying out sent all the wrong signals; by joining Ottawa sent a positive message to all Latin Americans that Canada was taking the area more seriously.

For the critics of the government's decision, the OAS has always been an American-dominated collective security organization that reflects the unique history of United States-Latin American relations. Joining such a group, it was predicted, would force Canadians to choose sides in the endless quarrels between the United States and its Latin American neighbours. Such action would inevitably alienate one side or the other and, in the process, would tarnish Canada's image in the region. The American invasion of Panama in 1989, which again divided the OAS, seemed to confirm these suspicions when Prime Minister Mulroney promptly backed United States actions and, in the process, surprised many Latin America governments:

Moreover, critics charged that membership in the OAS was little more than a high-profile foreign policy gesture designed to mask the lack of a more serious and wide-ranging Latin American policy. Issues of real importance in Canada's relations with Latin America and the Caribbean – including trade and tariffs, loan negotiations, aid and assistance, immigration and refugee issues – were matters normally dealt with outside the OAS. All the benefits of closer relations could be achieved through normal channels, without joining the OAS. The *fact* of membership would produce nothing.

Concerns were also raised about the OAS itself. By the late 1980s it appeared moribund: many members, including the United States, had fallen years behind on their dues and the headquarters in Washington had been hit by labour problems and charges of political favouritism in

its appointments. More seriously, the OAS was regularly bypassed by the United States and others in conducting inter-American relations. The OAS seemed to be falling apart through neglect and a lack of interest; some observers wondered whether there would even be a viable OAS for Canadians to join.'

The OAS in the 1990s

Initial concerns over the health and vigour of the OAS quickly evaporated thanks to the remarkable revitalization of the organization in the first half of the 1990s. Relations between the United States and its Latin American neighbours have improved noticeably since the Panamanian invasion, thanks largely to the easing of civil strife in Central America and the triumph of civilian governments across South America. The OAS has benefited from the improved climate, and, as anxiety over potential American intervention in the area diminishes, the members have begun paying more attention to other hemispheric issues. More than ever the nations of the western hemisphere are acting like allies rather than opponents, and this new interest in the OAS was publicly sanctioned at the June 1991 general assembly in Chile with the adoption of the Santiago Commitment to Democracy and the Renewal of the Inter-American System. This 'rejuvenation' of the OAS was accompanied by concrete action, including Washington's appointment of the first native Spanish-speaking United States representative to the OAS and with the beginning of American payments on present and past dues!

More important for the improving fortunes of the OAS has been the changing international situation, in particular the end of the Cold War. The OAS was created in the Cold War for collective security reasons, and its foundation has always rested upon the bedrock of anti-communism. Much of the history of the organization has revolved around the real and perceived threat of Soviet influence in Latin America and the Caribbean, and concerns over American actions and intentions vis-à-vis the region coloured the way many members approached the OAS. The removal of the old Soviet bogey (and the subsequent reduction in influence of its hemispheric allies such as Cuba) has challenged these ideological underpinnings of the OAS and permitted a shift of focus to more purely hemispheric matters. The end of the Cold War has not eliminated the security component of the OAS's mission, but it has, together with the surge of democratic forces and political stability in Latin America, helped change the agenda of the inter-American system.'

Canadians cannot claim much credit for the revitalization of the OAS – although now that it is a member, Canada is well placed to take advantage

of the revitalization. Under the leadership of Jean-Paul Hubert, Canada's first ambassador and permanent representative to the OAS, Canada launched an activist programme, working within various committees such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, and the Inter-American Commission of Women, and helping to monitor elections in Nicaragua, Haiti, and elsewhere. The high point of the early Canadian efforts was the proposal to create what became known as the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (um) within the general secretariat of the OAS. The role of the UPD was envisioned broadly to promote and reinforce democratic institutions in the hemisphere, to help in the monitoring of elections, and to give practical training to men and women at both the grass-roots and official levels.

Within the first two years of membership the government could boast of a number of successes in the OAS, including the Santiago Commitment, the creation of the UPD, and the passage of an arms limitation resolution which condemned the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the stockpiling of conventional weapons and advocated the establishment of a working group to investigate the whole issue. In addition, at the 1991 general assembly meeting in Santiago, Barbara McDougall, the secretary of state for external affairs, re-confirmed the Mulroney government's commitment to freer trade within the hemisphere, and she welcomed discussions for a hemispheric free trade zone. With discussions on the North American free trade agreement (NAFTA) under way, McDougall noted that 'the possibility of a free trade zone embracing the entire hemisphere is no longer a visionary's dream, but a distinct possibility.' She went on to point to the OAS as a 'useful forum for the discussion of these initiatives.'

In other areas there was less cause for celebration. For example, the original hopes in Latin America that Canada, as a wealthy nation, would give a strong economic boost to the sagging fortunes of the OAS were shaken when the Canadian government committed itself to a lower financial profile and subsequently maintained tight control over increases in the Canadian contribution. And, as Edgar Dosman, the director of FOCAL (Canada-Latin America Forum) in Ottawa, has pointed out, the Canadian delegation was criticized for pursuing its own interests in the general assembly rather than those issues with greater relevance to the other members of the OAS. Other observers were quick to point out those areas where the government failed to measure up to its original promises. While willing to restate the government's commitment to human rights and the prevention of drug abuse, relatively little progress had been made beyond the committee stage; on issues such as the environment and international debt, the Canadians seemed to be complacent at best. Mention was made in passing to the reinstatement of Cuba in the OAS -

the Canadian government looked forward to the day when 'Cuba will retake its place in the Organization as a full member of the hemispheric family' – but no concrete steps were taken in that direction.'

Nevertheless, Canada quickly and easily moved into full membership in the OAS. Prime Minister Mulroney's backing of the United States invasion of Panama did not appear to dampen the initial welcome extended to Canada by the other members; nor did it hinder Canada's freedom of action within the Organization. No one could doubt the sincerity of Canada's new commitment to the OAS or Latin America, and as Canadians moved swiftly into positions of authority they were well-situated to play constructive and important roles in the two major crises facing the Organization in the 1990s – in Haiti and Peru.

Haiti

The OAS has faced its toughest recent challenge in Haiti. The ousting of the popular and democratically elected Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide in a military coup on 30 September 1991 quickly put an end to Haiti's fledgling attempt at democracy. Aristide, who had been in office for less than a year, fled the island for exile in Venezuela and, ultimately, the United States. In his place, a military dictatorship was established under the control of Lieutenant-General Raoul Cedras.

The coup was quickly condemned in capitals around the world, including Ottawa where the government announced the suspension of its bilateral co-operation programme with Haiti. Within forty-eight hours an emergency meeting of OAS foreign affairs ministers was held in Washington to discuss the situation and a number of resolutions were passed denouncing the coup and calling for the suspension of aid to Haiti. A major OAS mediation effort aimed at restoring Aristide to office followed in the first week of October. The OAS team, which included Canadian representatives, was shuttled to Haiti on a Canadian aircraft and spent two days in Port-au-Prince negotiating with the coup leaders. This diplomatic effort began with considerable hope but ended in complete failure, with the OAS delegation scrambling to leave the island without any assurances from the military government.⁶

The failure of the initial mediation effort was followed by additional OAS meetings, further fruitless missions to Haiti, the passing of resolutions in the OAS and the United Nations denouncing the military regime and calling for the reinstatement of Aristide, the introduction of a trade embargo against Haiti, and the creation of a civilian observer group that was to monitor human rights abuses and help in a number of ways to improve the situation on the island. Observers estimated that some 3,000 people were killed within the first eighteen months of the coup;

there were also reports of serious shortages of food and medical supplies and widespread hunger across Haiti. But international condemnation and OAS-backed sanctions appeared to have little or no effect on the coup leaders, who continued to snub Aristide, the OAS, and the United Nations.

The crisis in Haiti became a particular problem for the United States and even evolved into a political issue during the 1992 presidential campaign. The flood of Haitian boat people to the United States – estimated at anywhere from 25,000 to 35,000 within the first eighteen months of the coup – developed into a major concern, especially in Florida which had experienced a similar situation in 1980 with the influx of thousands of Cuban refugees. President George Bush's pre-election decision to return new refugees to Haiti (where they would face an uncertain future) was loudly condemned by Bill Clinton when he was the Democratic presidential candidate. But President Clinton's rapid about-face after the election and his announcement that the policies of his predecessor would continue for the time being seemed to bring the whole of America's Haitian policy into question.

International pressure on Haiti mounted in the spring of 1993 with a June meeting of an ad hoc committee of OAS foreign ministers and, a few days later, a meeting of the United Nations Security Council at which a resolution was passed imposing an oil and arms embargo. The announcement of the tougher embargo was followed by negotiations at Governors Island in New York – supervised by the United Nations special envoy, Dante Caputo (Argentina's former foreign minister) – and culminated in the July announcement of an agreement for the return of President Aristide and for the resignation of General Cedras by the end of October, 1993. A number of conditions which would have to be met before the transition of power, including an amnesty guarantee for the coup leaders, were attached to the agreement.

Over the summer the United Nations lifted the economic sanctions against Haiti and set the stage for the creation of a special United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH). The Canadian government consistently backed the United Nations resolutions and had observed the July negotiations, and, in August, Prime Minister Kim Campbell announced a \$13 million package of humanitarian aid to Haiti. In October, Ottawa agreed to participate in the UNMIH, committing an estimated 150 military personnel and an additional 100 RCMP officers to serve as part of a United Nations civilian police force which would observe and help train the Haitian police:

Expectations of a final settlement were quickly dashed when the USS *Harlan County* - carrying 185 American soldiers and 25 Canadian air force engineers – was met by an angry mob of gunmen as it docked in the harbour of Port-au-Prince on 12 October. The *Harlan County* withdrew, and the Haitian peace agreement collapsed. The United Nations quickly re-introduced sanctions against Haiti, and observers charged

that the net result of the exercise was that it bought time for the Haitian military to stockpile sufficient oil reserves to last an additional six months." The United Nations-OAS policy lay in ruins, with the Haitian military defiant and ensconced in power and with the OAS and the United Nations steadfast in their commitment to the restoration of democracy – and Aristide – in Haiti.

Over time, as the situation in Haiti heated up, the OAS increasingly took a backseat to the United Nations and, more importantly, to the United States in dealing with the crisis. As for the United States, its policy under the Clinton administration has been widely criticized for apparent inconsistencies. On the one hand, the United States refused to rule out the use of military force to restore Aristide and pressed ahead with its goal of tightening sanctions against the military leaders by freezing their assets in the United States and by calling for a complete airline embargo of Haiti. On the other, the humiliating withdrawal of the *Harlan County* was quickly followed by leaked reports of internal divisions in Washington over Aristide's mental stability and his record on human rights. 'It's not up to us to choose who the Haitians elect,' one United States diplomat was quoted as saying late in 1991. 'It is the process we are protecting, not the man.'⁹ But clearly there were wide divisions in the American government over Haiti, and it appeared that the administration was backing off from its complete support for the Haitian president.

Reports of thousands of human rights abuses, including rape, torture, mutilation, and murder, continued to flow from Haiti, and the coup leaders maintained their total disregard for international opinion. In May 1994 a new president, the octogenarian Emile Jonassaint, was appointed by the military to replace Aristide – a move that was universally denounced outside Haiti – and, in response to the growing charges of human rights violations, the coup leaders expelled the United Nations-sponsored human rights mission that had been monitoring the abuses. The OAS, meanwhile, at its 24th general assembly in Brazil in June, voted against military intervention and resolved to continue its sanctions policy. At the end of July the United Nations Security Council authorized a United States-backed invasion of Haiti to oust the coup leaders, and efforts began to organise a multilateral force to act as peacekeepers after an invasion occurred.'

In September, only hours before a full-scale American invasion was launched, a United States-Haiti accord was signed by the Haitian coup leaders and former American President Jimmy Carter. The new agreement called for the 'retirement' of Haiti's major military officers by 15 October 1994, and for American forces to work in co-operation with the Haitian military to restore democracy. The signing of the accord was followed by the arrival of 15,000 American forces to monitor the agreement. In the end, the United States acted unilaterally in an effort to avoid a bloody

military invasion of *Haiti*. Neither the OAS nor the United Nations was involved in the process."

The OAS was unsuccessful in diffusing the Haitian crisis; the missions and sanctions failed, the initial vigour with which the organization responded slowly faded. In the process, the OAS was edged from centre stage by the United Nations and the United States. Indeed, faint cracks began to emerge within the OAS and between the OAS and the United Nations over the issue of military invasion, and old concerns about American intervention in the hemisphere could be revived and potentially polarize the OAS once more.

As an OAS member, Canada came to play an important role in the Haitian crisis, a role which would not have been achieved had Canada remained outside the organization. At the same time, Canada must bear its share of responsibility for the failure of the OAS actions. The new Liberal government in Ottawa has been helpful in recent months, but it has not significantly altered Canada's Haitian policy. As one of the United Nations-OAS-appointed 'four friends' of Haiti (the others being the United States, France, and Venezuela), Canada was a participant in and observer to the developments in Haiti, and it was a strong supporter of the United Nations-OAS actions. A Canadian ship patrolled the waters of Haiti to enforce the oil and arms embargo. Aristide made well-publicized visits to Canada, and the government was committed to its support for his restoration. Before the American invasion, the minister of foreign affairs, Andre Ouellet, raised some concerns over the wavering American policy, noting that it had 'perhaps contributed to the conviction on the part of the Haitian military that the Americans won't intervene.'¹² But the Canadian government was equally clear that it saw tougher sanctions rather than military invasion as the solution to the Haitian crisis, and it declined to participate in the American invasion of September 1994.

Peru

The OAS responded to the Haitian crisis swiftly and with dramatic action; in the case of Peru, the response was muted and very much in a minor key. Early in April 1992, President Alberto K. Fujimori of Peru suspended his country's constitution, dissolved Congress, and took over the judiciary in an effort, he proclaimed, to end corruption and to combat rebels and drug traffickers. The *Sendero Luminoso* or Shining Path rebels reportedly controlled up to one-third of Peruvian territory and, through terrorist activities and clashes with government forces, had been involved in the deaths of some 25,000 Peruvians since 1980. Despite years of matching rebel activity with a government-sponsored terror campaign, Fujimori was unable either to defeat the Shining Path or control the growing

influence of cocaine traffickers. With the help of the Peruvian military, Fujimori staged what was essentially a government coup, which included the military occupation of newspaper offices and radio and television stations and the arrest of opposition politicians, some labour leaders, and anyone suspected of being a Shining Path sympathizer. Fujimori, first elected in 1990, assembled a new cabinet and began the process of appointing a new judiciary, promising that democracy would be restored eventually and that a plebiscite would be held to sanction his actions."

The reaction of the OAS was immediate but restrained. Only Argentina recalled its ambassador from Lima, while the Bush administration announced that it would be freezing American political and economic aid to Peru (an amount estimated at us \$275 million for that fiscal year). At a special session of the OAS, the possibility of applying sanctions against Peru was discussed, but the OAS pulled back from dramatic action.

The rhetoric was harsh: 'The actions taken by President Fujimori, whatever the justification given, are unjustified,' announced United States Secretary of State James Baker. 'All of us recognize that democracy can be inefficient, all of us recognize that democracy can be slow, and all of us recognize that democracy can be frustrating. But there is no alternative. You cannot destroy democracy in order to save it.' Beyond the harsh condemnation of Fujimori's actions however, the OAS was unwilling to take any concrete action – action that might do serious harm to Fujimori's regime or his efforts to battle terrorism and corruption inside Peru. For many at the meeting there were questions over the use of sanctions: if the government of Peru was forced to collapse, what would follow in its place? Peru's immediate neighbours, including Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Chile, reportedly opposed any course of action that might indirectly serve the interests of the terrorists and drug traffickers inside Peru. Speaking for Canada, External Affairs Minister McDougall echoed Baker's words of condemnation, but she displayed little evidence of a Canadian desire to implement sanctions against Peru, at least in the immediate future. In the end the OAS formally 'deplored' what had happened in Peru, and it was announced that a special OAS team – headed by the secretary-general of the OAS, Joao Baena Soares – would be sent to Lima to talk to Fujimori and to investigate the situation. When this mission ended unsuccessfully, McDougall announced that Canada was suspending direct support to the Peruvian government."

Fujimori responded with national elections for a new parliament (which were boycotted by the main opposition party), and in October 1993 Peruvians voted for a new constitution which Fujimori hoped would legitimize his government in the eyes of the world. He seems to have been successful. Criticism of his regime continues, but the focus has largely shifted from constitutional issues to human rights abuses. Peru has consistently been named by human rights organizations as one

of the worst violators in the world. Incidents, such as the July 1992 murder of a university professor and nine students, allegedly by the Peruvian military, sparked outrage and condemnation of the Fujimori regime. Still, early in 1994 the Canadian government resumed its aid programme with Peru, and for others it was business as usual. For example, in the summer of 1994 Ontario Hydro announced plans to invest approximately \$70 million in Edelsur, a Peruvian electrical utility company.'

Serious concerns remain about Fujimori and his commitment to the restoration of full democracy. There is apprehension over the intentions of the Peruvian military which backed the 'Fujicoup' from the beginning and is now very strong and influential. Critics such as Mario Vargas Llosa, the Peruvian novelist and defeated 1990 presidential candidate, remain troubled about the past and deeply suspicious about the future. 'The Fujimori Government,' Vargas Llosa writes, 'helped along by the spirited pinging of the Organization of American States and the indifference or complacency of every government in South America, has been recognized by the international community.' International support sustains Fujimori and the military in power, but the big test will come at the elections scheduled for 1995, when it will be determined if the military leaders and those responsible for the human rights abuses will 'docilely go home because the electorate no longer wants them.'¹⁶

Directions for the future

The Haitian and Peruvian crises outlived the Mulroney government and are now the concern of the Liberals in Ottawa. It is not at all clear what impact the change of government will have on Canada's policies toward either crisis, or, more generally, on Canada's role in the OAS. Foreign Minister Ouellet has echoed the grave concerns of his Conservative predecessors over Haiti, and Prime Minister Chretien's government has agreed to participate in post-invasion peacekeeping efforts there. Change, if it can be called that, has been more in style than in substance.

A process to review Canada's foreign and defence policies was launched in March of 1994, and early indications are that, despite the rhetoric of change and the calls for a greater distancing of Canadian from American foreign policy, the Liberal government will stay the course on the major issues with respect to Latin America and the OAS. Still, the search for new directions continues and the heightened interest in the region in recent years will doubtlessly be maintained. The OAS will not supplant the United Nations or NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) in the Canadian scheme of things, but the continuing importance of hemispheric issues concerning trade, immigration, drug trafficking, and the environment will likely keep Latin America much higher on Canada's foreign policy agenda.

Some indications of the directions in which evolving Canadian policy was headed were given by Christine Stewart, the secretary of state for Latin America and Africa, at the 24th general assembly of the OAS in Brazil in June 1994. Stewart outlined the priorities for the new government: 'chief among these are sustainable development, democratic development and good governance, trade and economic integration, and security issues.' In tackling these issues Stewart advocated several approaches, including a conference on environmental issues, full support to the various inter-American committees, and continuing to work through the UPD. She also touched on a number of other issues that will likely continue to be of importance, such as the work of the Inter-American Commission of Women and the possible extension of NAFTA to other nations of the hemisphere.

On other issues, Stewart re-affirmed her government's support for the existing OAS policy with respect to Haiti, and she directed special attention to Cuba. Although she did not endorse Cuba's full reinstatement, she did note that it was 'important for the OAS and Cuba to examine how we can fulfil the vision of the founders of this organization for universal hemispheric participation.' Canada is not alone in believing that the isolation of Cuba has gone on for too long, and Stewart's statement was accompanied by an announcement that the ban on Canadian aid to Cuba, which had been in effect since 1978, would be lifted."

The Liberals have also taken aim at the internal workings of the OAS and some of its security components. For example, when Canada joined the OAS in 1990, it did not become a party to the Rio Treaty, and the government continues to press for a complete re-examination of the functions of the Inter-American Defence Board. In light of recent hemispheric and international developments, it is argued that the time has come to divert scarce resources from existing bodies that have lost their significance to such worthwhile issues as human rights, the environment, and the strengthening of democracy in the hemisphere. Government belt-tightening has spread to the OAS as well, and the Canadian government is pushing for 'streamlining' as well as 'revitalization.'

Beyond the words, however, it is still too early to tell if the government will live up to its initial promises and intentions. The new government is not in a position to influence the situation in Haiti in any significant way, and the resumption of aid to Fujimori arguably has removed whatever limited leverage the government might have had as Peru moves toward an election in 1995. Critics also have been quick to charge that, in the spring of 1994, the government put free trade over human rights by backing the president of Colombia, Cesar Gaviria, as the new secretary-general of the OAS. Colombia's human rights record during Gaviria's years as president was one of the worst in the world, with thousands of reported murders and disappearances, and it has been suggested that

Ottawa backed Washington's support for Gaviria because of his public stance in favour of hemispheric free trade." Human rights, in any event, will remain a key issue in the future of the OAS.

Conclusion

Joining the OAS was really only one part of a larger hemispheric policy initiated by the Mulroney government in the late 1980s. It was hoped that membership would lead to a higher Canadian profile in Latin America and the Caribbean, improve inter-American relations, and introduce Canadians to the problems of the region without too much additional expense. It might even offset criticism for government cutbacks in other areas of hemispheric relations. On all counts the government has achieved some success.

After five years it is clear that the original concerns over joining an American-dominated organization have not been justified. With the end of the Cold War and the changing nature and 'revitalization' of the OAS, Canada has found itself in accordance with the majority of members (including the United States) on most of the fundamental issues. Fears over polarization of the OAS have not been borne out, and the atmosphere of failure and collapse within the OAS itself has dissipated. There are no guarantees that the situation will remain static – future developments in Haiti might revive old anxieties, for example – but clearly Canada has been able to operate freely within the OAS without fear of having to choose sides between the United States and Latin America on any crucial matter.

With respect to the major hemispheric crises, Canada and the OAS have had much less success, and the inability of the OAS to deal with the internal security matters of its members has been revealed. In particular the problem of Haiti has proven insurmountable, and, until democracy is restored, the OAS sanctions will have done little except make life more difficult for the already desperately poor people of Haiti. Ironically, however, despite the explosive nature of the Haitian crisis and the reverberations it sends through the OAS, the need to respond to the crisis, especially in the early days, contributed to the rejuvenation of the OAS. It has become a stronger organization thanks, in part, to the Haitian experience, and it may now be better able to respond to crises in the future.

Has Canada made a difference? The answer is yes, but a conditional yes. Simply joining the OAS has removed the nagging question and debate over membership, and Canada's activities in its initial five years under two governments suggest that Canada is taking its new role in the hemisphere seriously. But concerns remain that real action on hemispheric problems will be drowned in platitudes and lost in committee work. Should our activities in the OAS become little more than a smoke-screen to hide

the fact that we have no dynamic policy in Latin America, then joining the OAS will have been a mistake. Membership is only the beginning of the process, and the success of the OAS and Canada's role in it will be determined by the time, resources, and spirit that Canadians – and individuals in the other member states – are willing to devote to make it work.

Notes

- 1 For background on the debate over OAS membership, see David MacKenzie, 'The World's Greatest Joiner': Canada and the Organization of American States,' *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 6:1 (1990), 203-20.
- 2 Clara Germani, 'OAS displays new vitality in bid to restore Haiti's ousted leader,' *Christian Science Monitor*, 22. November 1991.
- 3 Hal P Klepak, Security issues in the western hemisphere of the 1990s: a Canadian perspective,' in Jerry Haar and Edgar J. Dosman, eds, *A Dynamic Partnership: Canada's Changing Role in the Americas* (Miami: University of Miami North-South Center 1993), 152-3.
- 4 Quoted in External Affairs and International Trade Canada, *Statement* 91/30, 'Notes for a speech by the Honourable Barbara McDougall, secretary of state for external affairs, to the meeting of the general assembly of the OAS,' Santiago, Chile, 3 June 1991.
- 5 These issues are discussed in Edgar J. Dosman, 'Canada and Latin America: the new look,' *International Journal* 47:3 (summer 1992), 546-7. See also, Sarah Cox and Joe Gunn, 'Canada's 1st year at OAS a diplomatic flop,' *Toronto Star*, 4 July 1991.
- 6 See Peter McKenna, 'How is Canada doing in the OAS?' *Canadian Foreign Policy* 1:2 (spring 1993), 88.
- 7 Government of Canada, News Release, 6 October 1993.
- 8 See 'Troop ship stalled in Haiti,' *Globe and Mail*, 12 October 1993; Alan Ferguson, 'UN imposes trade sanctions on Haiti again,' *Toronto Star*, 14 October 1993; and 'Cedras tells UN to leave guns behind,' *Globe and Mail*, 14 October 1993.
- 9 Quote taken from Cohn MacKenzie, 'Haiti: the force of fear,' *Globe and Mail*, 9 December 1991; see also Steven Holmes, 'Haitian dispute strikes u.s. nerve,' *ibid*, 26 October, 1993; and Steven Holmes, 'u.s. Advisers Weigh French Plan for a Total Embargo on Haiti,' *New York Times*, 28 October 1993.
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