

Alas, United States support for the peace process in Central America has so far been lukewarm at best. Seeing the Sandinista government as an enemy with which it did not wish to deal, Washington has repeatedly attempted to block progress on accords which it feels strengthen the Managua regime's hand and give it increased international recognition and credibility. The U.S. has put substantial pressure on both Honduras and El Salvador to block the progress of negotiations which it feels will hurt United States interests.

Even if United States opposition is insufficient to halt an agreement, as was the case at least temporarily with Esquipulas II, its unwillingness to support it, and perhaps even its continued attempts to undermine it, could prove the end to real progress toward regional peace. As the regional super-power, the damage the U.S. can do to an accord's success is very great indeed. Nor is there any other obvious third party that would be able to provide significant incentives and disincentives on regional actors to push them along to an agreement and to keep them at the job of making it work.

Only a determined international organization, with great support from a wide range of countries, or a new consortium of significant countries with a stake in peace in the region, could hope to do without the United States in such an endeavour as establishing a major peacekeeping and verification regime in Central America.

In general, United Nations' initiatives in Latin America are not welcomed by the United States. Organization of American States initiatives, on the other hand, are considered suspicious by elements on the left in Latin America. Despite this reluctance, however, joint UN/OAS activities have occurred in support of all three sets of negotiations discussed here so there is room for some hope. No consortium of states seems to be forming outside these two international bodies, however, because of fears of getting too deeply involved in the regional imbroglio, because of concerns over U.S. reaction to such a consortium, and because of worries over the financial and other resource commitments involved.

A new administration in Washington could, of course, change all this. A United States government willing to negotiate and live with a Sandinista regime in Nicaragua would be able to stimulate the Salvadorean and Honduran will to peace, calm Managua's fears of imminent U.S. military attack, and provide the technical, logistic and financial support necessary for the implementation of eventual peace accords. Without such a change in United States attitude, however, prospects for success are very much dimmer.

Cost considerations for a verification regime are, of course, extremely important. The three countries so far showing the greatest willingness to participate in a peacekeeping and verification regime have been West Germany, Spain and Canada. Norway, which appeared interested, seems to have given up the idea in the face of what appear to be Salvadorean objections. However, neither Bonn, Madrid nor Ottawa can see itself affording to pay the costs of such an initiative. Indeed, all three show reluctance to be "forward" where financial considerations are concerned.