

## V.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This brings us, finally, to the policy implications of this analysis. These break down into three categories – policy towards the Soviet Union, towards radical regimes in the region, and towards more conservative allies threatened by revolutionary action (El Salvador, Guatemala, and to some extent Honduras). As far as the Soviet Union is concerned, Soviet caution is related to their perception of US capacity and will to defend American interests. The US effort to prevent large-scale direct Soviet involvement in revolutionary activity in the region has been reasonably successful and should be maintained. This requires the maintenance of credible threats – based upon US military superiority – to impose substantial costs on any Soviet attempts to expand their military presence in the area. It makes sense, for example, for the United States to continue to stress that attempts by the Soviet Union to establish bases in Central America or in the non-communist Caribbean carry a high probability of evoking a US military response, which would face the Soviet Union with the choice of retreat or escalation in highly unfavourable circumstances. This diplomatic effort should be backed by the maintenance of significant US military capabilities in the region. It is important to stress, however, that the establishment of credible deterrence in this sense does not require repeated use of force against radical regimes, unless one publicly equates the emergence of such regimes with Soviet expansionism.

With regard to Nicaragua and Cuba, and to other left wing regimes should they emerge, two lines of policy suggest themselves. First, such regimes have displayed a general commitment to support revolutionary activities elsewhere in the Caribbean Basin. Although, in some respects, revolutionary transformation might be preferable to continued oppressive and corrupt government by reactionary military élites, the United States and its allies have an interest in fostering peaceful and incremental change rather than violent revolution. As noted earlier, violent civil conflict creates needs on the part of local actors, which in turn provide opportunities for those external actors willing to address them. Moreover, although revolution in the small republics of Central America (other than Panama) is not, in and of itself, a concern of great significance to the United States, it might come to affect states such as Mexico and Venezuela, which are of far greater intrinsic importance to the United States. For these reasons, states seeking to