

# On Multilateralism, Sovereignty and the Western Hemisphere: Concepts in Jeopardy<sup>1</sup>

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Twenty three years ago this month, when I spoke to the Permanent Council for the first time as the Permanent Representative of the United States, the Ambassador of Brazil commented that only time would tell whether I had spoken as Ambassador Einaudi or as Professor Einaudi. I believe time showed I spoke then for the United States. Later, when I served as Assistant Secretary General and then Acting Secretary General, I did my best to represent all OAS member states. Today, I speak for myself and no one else.

The Organization of American States is a multilateral organization of the sovereign nation states of the Western Hemisphere. This apparently simple definition combines three concepts, all of them now unfortunately in jeopardy

First, Multilateralism

Multilateralism is more than the temporary agreement of two or more countries on a specific problem; it is cooperation based on "generalized principles of conduct

The OAS Charter is based on the sovereign equality of states. Every state has one vote. Unlike the United Nations, democracy among nations at the OAS is not conditioned by a Security Council or members with vetoes. Respect for the principle of non-intervention means that individual states are essentially free to determine their participation in any particular activity.

In recent years, however, it has become increasingly clear that many of the problems of this globalizing age require a more integrated approach.







The Mexico City Declaration recognized of course that “each state has the sovereign right” to determine its own

assistance to local judicial institutions. CICIG depends on the UN, but mainly because the UN has the funds; if requested and funded, the OAS could respectfully and effectively extend this support through SICA to other countries of Central America.

By way of conclusion

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