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US and the Cold War in Latin America

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Summary and Keywords

The Cold War in Latin America had marked consequences for the region's political and economic evolution. From the origins of US fears of Latin American Communism in the early 20th century to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, regional actors played central roles in the drama. Seeking to maximize economic benefit while maintaining independence with regard to foreign policy, Latin Americans employed an eclectic combination of liberal and anti-imperialist discourses, balancing frequent calls for anti-Communist hemispheric unity with periodic diplomatic entreaties to the Soviet bloc and the nonaligned Third World. Meanwhile, US Cold War policies toward the region ranged from progressive developmentalism to outright military invasions, and from psychological warfare to covert paramilitary action. Above all, the United States sought to shore up its allies and maintain the Western Hemisphere as a united front against extra-hemispheric ideologies and influence. The Cold War was a bloody, violent period for Latin America, but it was also one marked by heady idealism, courageous political action, and fresh narratives about Latin America's role in the world, all of which continue to inform regional politics to this day.

Keywords: United States, Cold War, Latin America, Communism, nationalism, Third World, development, dictatorship, Cuba, counterinsurgency

Origins

The Cold War in Latin America, defined either as more than a century of conflict between capitalism and socialist alternatives, or as a forty-year period of US-Soviet competition, had marked consequences for the region's political and economic evolution. Acknowledging that local and regional actors played central roles in the drama, this article analyzes how the United States employed a range of foreign policy options to contain socialist and anti-imperialist tendencies in Latin America. It meanwhile emphasizes not only on well-known protagonists such as Guatemala's Jacobo Arbenz, Cuba's Fidel Castro, and Chile's Salvador Allende but also on the region's broader 20th-century evolution as the Cold War shaped (and was shaped by) countries as diverse as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama. Either approach to the Cold War (as an

ideological conflict or as a historical period) requires consideration of the Cold War's evolution from its origins in the years following Russia's Bolshevik (Communist) Revolution in 1917 through World War II, culminating in the formal declarations of US-Soviet ideological hostility in the late 1940s. This prehistory of Latin America's Cold War was marked by eclectic diplomacy and a short-lived anti-fascist Popular Front that brought US-led capitalist forces together with Communist movements before and during World War II.

During the 1910s and 1920s, the government in Washington attempted to prevent the emergence of socialist influence in Latin America through a host of military, psychological, cultural, and economic initiatives designed to encourage the growth of free markets and varying forms of guided democracy. This ideological framework took the form of US military involvement in Cuba (1898), Panama and Colombia (1903), Nicaragua (1912), Mexico (1914), Haiti (1915), and the Dominican Republic (1916), all of which predated Russia's 1917 revolution. Liberal internationalism also came to define the response by President Woodrow Wilson (1913–1921) to the emergence of a declared Communist state in Europe. Citing the perception of growing Latin American interest in Marxism after 1917, Wilson continued to increase Washington's financial commitment to its colonial occupations in the Caribbean, with the goal of demonstrating that the United States preferred democratic reform (to "teach the South American republics to elect good men") to conservative counterrevolution.[1] Prompted by Wilson's enunciation of progressive principles to achieve peace in World War I, nonstate actors such as the American Federation of Labor also worked closely with the US government to intervene in Mexico and further south to encourage nonsocialist forms of trade unionism. Foreshadowing the liberal internationalism that would mark Washington's interventionism during the subsequent decades of the Cold War, Wilson's southward gaze took place within the context of rapidly expanding US private investment in Latin America, as North American banks and corporations stepped in to replace declining European investment during the upheavals of the Great War.

A subsequent series of business-friendly Republican administrations somewhat tempered Wilson's robust and moralistic approach to international affairs. Fueled by the emergence of isolationist sentiment in the interwar United States, and placing emphasis on winding down Washington's costly occupations in the Caribbean, Presidents Warren Harding (1921–1923), Calvin Coolidge (1923–1929), and Herbert Hoover (1929–1933) all downplayed ideological motivations in US foreign policy. Preferring instead to carry out a narrowly conceived return to early 1900s "dollar diplomacy," the 1920s Republicans aimed to conduct foreign relations, particularly in Latin America, through what they considered to be the more dignified and respectful trappings of business transactions. Never fully committed to the principles of self-determination or democratization, the Republican interlude witnessed an end to US military rule only in the Dominican Republic, while Washington's bloody occupations persisted in Haiti and Nicaragua. Fear of Communism were particularly strong in the latter country, where Washington feverishly attempted to

contain an uprising by renegade Liberal guerrilla leader Augusto Sandino, who was eventually captured and executed in 1934.

The 1929 Great Depression added impetus to Republican efforts to reduce Washington's direct involvement in Latin America, while simultaneously sapping the political will and resources needed to sustain indirect US patronage in the region. This led to the emergence of a host of nationalist reactions, in South America especially, which fueled internal pressures for nationalizing foreign properties and led to a surge in trade unionism. Influenced in part by the rise of fascist governments in Europe, Latin America's first experience with radical nationalism provoked great fear among US politicians and business interests, quickly overshadowing Washington's previous perceptions of a mild Communist threat. Seeking to lessen the appeal of anti-US nationalism in the region, President Franklin Roosevelt (1933–1945) announced the Good Neighbor Policy shortly after his inauguration, thus going further than his predecessors in forswearing direct US intervention in Latin America. Reflecting a global shift toward anti-fascist Popular Front politics, which united liberal capitalists and radical leftists in the 1930s and early 1940s, Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy motivated decisions to finally end Washington's occupations in the Caribbean, abrogate the colonial Platt Amendment restricting Cuba's sovereignty, and eventually pressure US investors to accede to expropriations of oil properties in Bolivia (1936) and Mexico (1938). Perhaps the most wide-ranging manifestations of the Good Neighbor Policy took place in the areas of development programs and psychological operations, including a progressive effort to support Mexico's 1930s land reform, followed by the 1940 launch of a hemispheric cultural support network for writers, artists, and trade unionists overseen by Nelson Rockefeller's State Department Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs.

The US entry into World War II catalyzed a further expansion of Washington's involvement in Latin America, which still hewed closely to anti-fascist Popular Front politics and therefore forged ever stronger alliances between liberal capitalists and the Latin American Left. Some have referred to this period as the region's Democratic Spring, during which the influence of Communist parties and radical trade unionists grew, sometimes leading to their entrance into governing coalitions. This was particularly the case in progressive countries such as Brazil and Mexico, but even occurred in conservative regimes such as Cuba under Fulgencio Batista. Perhaps no country better symbolized the impact of anti-fascism than Guatemala, whose 1944 revolution brought to power a series of progressive governments that legalized and increasingly collaborated with organized labor and the Communist Party.

To varying degrees, Latin America's Popular Front dissipated along with rising postwar tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, and by the end of the decade there were few places in the region where Communists could still operate openly. In most cases, conservative reaction in the late 1940s can be mapped neatly alongside the mutual recriminations issued during these years by President Harry Truman (1945–1953) and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin (1924–1953). For many Latin American political elites, this polarization of international politics helped justify the forging of a hemispheric mutual de-

fense pact subsequently ratified by the creation of the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1948.

The collapse of the wartime Popular Front was apparent not only in the resurgence of oligarchy in the Caribbean but also in the gains achieved by radical nationalist movements in the Southern Cone of South America. Taking advantage of a weakening alliance between capitalists and leftists, nationalists won power in Argentina (1946) and Bolivia (1952), in both cases rushing to distance themselves from their fascist roots. As for Washington, threat perceptions had shifted once again, leading to a more tolerant attitude toward nationalism, in roughly equal proportion to rising US concerns about the postwar Left. By the mid-1950s, however, US allies in both countries had succeeded in tempering the Argentine and Bolivian nationalist experiences, suggesting that Washington could perhaps have its liberal capitalist cake and eat it, too. Seemingly secure from both radical nationalism and orthodox leftism, US policymakers now had only to concentrate on one troublesome exception: revolutionary Guatemala.

Intensification

By the time the Republican Party took back the White House in 1953 after twenty years of Democratic rule, the United States was enmeshed in a worldwide conflict with Communism, including a bloody and costly war with Chinese military forces on the Korean Peninsula. Seeking to lower the cost of containing the Soviet Union and its growing network of global allies, incoming president Dwight Eisenhower (1953–1961) launched what has become known as the “New Look,” which included a reduction in military spending, an increased reliance on nuclear brinksmanship to influence Soviet and Chinese behavior, and a renewed emphasis on covert action as a tool of the Cold War. Since the bipolar conflict remained distant from the supposedly secure regions south of the Río Grande, only the third component of the New Look, covert action, held much importance for Latin America. And until the advent of the Cuban revolution in 1959, Guatemala held the distinction of being the sole target of major intervention in the hemisphere by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

In August 1953 Eisenhower ordered the CIA to reactivate plans for a coup in Guatemala that had been scuttled by State Department meddling in the last months of the Truman administration. His CIA had just successfully directed a coup d’état against Iran’s nationalist government, and Eisenhower was enthusiastic about covert action. Specifically, he hoped the CIA could put a stop to Guatemala’s steady leftward drift since the 1950 election of former army colonel Jacobo Arbenz, who sought to reform the country’s unequal socioeconomic structure and counted on the close counsel of local Communist Party leaders and organized labor. In the wake of a Communist-drafted land reform bill that expropriated the properties of the Boston-based United Fruit Company and simultaneously threatened to expand trade unionism to the countryside, US policymakers labored to depict Guatemala as a Soviet beachhead in Central America. Washington’s resolve further stiffened in the wake of a Guatemalan congressional moment of silence to honor Stalin’s

death in 1953, followed by Arbenz's decision the following year to respond to a cutoff of US military aid by purchasing weapons from Czechoslovakia. Despite Guatemala's desperate pleas for support against US intervention, not a single Latin American country rose up to defend Arbenz, much less did the Soviet bloc provide assistance. Prague's weapons were provided on a cash-and-carry basis, and Western Hemisphere nations (even the nationalist government in Bolivia) lined up behind a US-sponsored OAS resolution in March 1954 that condemned "International Communism in the American Republics."[2]

A few weeks later, the CIA operation codenamed PBSUCCESS commenced. Coupling extensive psychological operations with a less-impressive paramilitary effort led by Guatemalan exiles entering from neighboring countries, PBSUCCESS convinced Arbenz's military that the US would likely intervene if the rebels were defeated. Giving up almost without a fight, the Guatemalan army demanded that Arbenz leave the country, leading to a series of military caretakers, each one vetoed by local US diplomats until Washington's chosen savior, rebel leader Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, was anointed Guatemala's new leader. Citing Moscow's 1948 orchestration of a Communist coup in Prague, US officials characterized its actions as a "Czechoslovakia in reverse."[3] Shots had now been fired in Latin America's Cold War, and the United States had emerged as the clear victor of its inaugural battle.

With the exception of Washington's destruction of the Guatemalan revolution, the 1950s were not a period of high bipolar tension in the Western Hemisphere. Instead, the decade is best described as a time of rising dissatisfaction among Latin American rulers, who frequently complained about what they perceived to be a lack of US interest in regional economic development, particularly when compared with Washington's extensive Marshall Plan aid to Western Europe during the immediate postwar period. The Eisenhower administration attempted to lessen the negative perceptions of its policy as one of "trade not aid" through targeted programs of elevated assistance, half of which went to (in declining order of per capita magnitude) nationalist Bolivia, post-coup Guatemala, and development-oriented Brazil. In order to justify these programs, Eisenhower's secretary of state warned the business-friendly Treasury Department of the Communist threat, predicting, "It might be good banking to put South America through the wringer, but it will come out red."[4]

Nonetheless, little goodwill emerged from such limited country-by-country programs of economic aid, largely because of Eisenhower's cozy relationship with dictators such as Nicaragua's Somoza family, Venezuela's Marcos Pérez Jiménez, and Cuba's Batista. The latter two were overthrown in 1958 and 1959, respectively, leading to explosions of anti-US sentiment in both countries. Vice President Richard Nixon's 1958 trip to the region resulted in extensive anti-US rioting, especially in Caracas, where crowds attacked and nearly overturned Nixon's car. Meanwhile in Cuba, after three years of fighting from their base in the Sierra Maestra mountains, rebels led by Fidel Castro rode victoriously into Havana on January 1, 1959. These events in Venezuela and Cuba prompted the Eisenhower administration to finally endorse Brazilian president Juscelino Kubitschek's proposal

for regional aid, called “Operation Pan America,” leading to the creation of the Social Progress Trust Fund and the Inter-American Development Bank in 1960.

Initially enjoying tepid support from some US liberals, Cuba’s new revolutionary government soon fell out of favor with Washington. Following a wave of expropriations of US investment property and Castro’s demand for a reduction in Washington’s embassy staff in Havana, Eisenhower broke relations in January 1961 and set CIA coup plans in motion. As the new decade began, Cuba’s emergence as the self-declared “Free Territory of the Americas” began to inspire the forging of a more radical Latin American anti-imperialist politics, building on decades’ worth of deep-seated dissatisfaction with US foreign policy. Coupled with the rise of a Third World bloc set between and against the bipolar stalemate, these trends held great importance for the evolution of the Cold War in Latin America, a region that had long been officially aligned with the United States.[5]

The Alliance for Progress

Coming in the wake of near-total dissolution of Western European empires in Africa and Asia, the inauguration of President John Kennedy (1961–1963) took place at a turning point in the Cold War. Explicitly embracing a role in shaping the trajectories of the newly independent nations of the Third World, Kennedy offered implicit links between the Global South’s new politics of nonalignment and Latin America’s overriding demands for greater levels of economic justice. In concrete terms, Kennedy’s Third Worldism relied on anti-Communist ideologies of socioeconomic modernization that justified a massive increase of US foreign aid spending in the Southern Hemisphere, including a buffet of new or rebranded programs addressing all aspects of counterinsurgency: the Peace Corps, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the US Army Green Berets, and USAID’s Office of Public Safety.

In Latin America economic programs took the form of the Alliance for Progress, launched in March 1961. It promised $10 billion over ten years (with another $10 billion predicted from US private investment) in exchange for redistributive social efforts such as land and tax reform. Consciously aimed at supporting Latin America’s weak non-Communist Left, Kennedy’s Alliance also provided a fig leaf for extensive programs of covert action and psychological warfare, including CIA operations to influence elections in Chile, coup planning in Brazil, police repression in Mexico, and union-busting in Bolivia. As Kennedy put it shortly after his inauguration, his response to growing Latin American leftism was to divide the region’s possibilities into three categories: (1) non-Communist modernizing regimes, (2) anti-Communist dictatorships, and (3) Castro-style radical governments. Kennedy stated, “We ought to aim at the first, but we really can’t renounce the second until we are sure that we can avoid the third.”[6]

The less well-known examples of Kennedy’s quiet expansion of covert action occurred alongside his administration’s infamous crusade against Cuba, which began with the CIA’s disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961 and persisted with Operation Mongoose, an extensive program of sabotage and assassination plots against Castro that con-

tinued in some form through 1963. Cuba was also the site of the only direct US-Soviet showdown of the Cold War, which occurred when Moscow installed nuclear missiles (in part to protect the island from US attacks) and then precipitously pulled them out in the face of the Kennedy administration's threats of war. Castro's anger at not having been consulted prior to Moscow's capitulation sparked tensions between Havana and Moscow, catalyzing a renewed Cuban commitment to foreign policy independence and to a multiplying cadre of armed revolutionaries fighting pro-US regimes elsewhere in Latin America.

By the time of Kennedy's death in November 1963, his success at inoculating the region against the effects of the Cuban revolution had largely failed to build a viable non-Communist Left. Although funding from the Alliance for Progress had catalyzed a modest increase in Latin American economic growth, its interventionism had encouraged a polarization of the region's response to Cuba and a resulting deterioration in political stability. During this period, the Cuba issue prompted several coups and attempted coups: Argentina's reformist president, Arturo Frondizi, fell to conservative military officers in 1962, the Peruvian military blocked Kennedy's favorite non-Communist revolutionary, Víctor Haya de la Torre, from taking office after winning democratic elections in the same year, and left-leaning and right-leaning nationalist leaders were on the ropes in Brazil and Bolivia, respectively. In an era of abiding Latin American interest in Third World nonalignment and a declared tolerance for it in Washington and Moscow, Latin America's neutralist center seemed to be disappearing. Kennedy's assassination, by a former marine with a large Federal Bureau of Investigation file and a loose set of obscure contacts in both the anti- and pro-Castro Cuban exile communities, brought to a close the tensest, but not yet bloodiest, period of Latin America's Cold War.

Soon after taking office unexpectedly, President Lyndon Johnson (1963–1969) complained that his predecessor had been "operating a damned Murder Inc. in the Caribbean." Instead, Johnson aimed to reduce the ideological fever pitch.[7] Appointing realist Thomas Mann as Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America, Johnson seemed to signal that the United States had no more patience for progressive crusading and that Washington's approach to the Third World would again favor political stability and transactional, highly conditioned aid agreements. Regarding the Alliance for Progress in Latin America, Johnson complained that the region's elites had moved slowly on redistributive reforms, venting privately, "I'll be damned if I'm going to have it said of me that I was just a numbskull here for four years, and pissed off this money and got nothing in return, because my momma didn't raise me that way!"[8] His administration's abandonment of its predecessor's flighty rhetoric of modernization resulted in bitterness among Latin American elites, particularly those in the embattled nationalist center, a development that further polarized the region's politics.

The one area of continuity between Kennedy and Johnson came in the form of counterinsurgency policy. Within two years of taking office the Johnson administration was scrambling to support Latin American security forces as they struggled to put down guerrilla outbreaks and uprisings in nearly every country in the region, resulting in a negotiated

settlement in Panama, military coups in Brazil and Bolivia, and a US military invasion of the Dominican Republic. From the perspective of the revolutionaries, 1965 seemed to represent a renewed US offensive to bring anti-imperialist forces to heel, and not just in Latin America. Johnson's April decision to send US marines to Santo Domingo should be considered alongside his February move to increase US military forces in Vietnam, as well as his authorization a few months earlier of CIA-funded white mercenaries sent to quell the Simba rebellion in eastern Congo, where Argentine revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara headed a Cuban mission in support of the rebels.

Guevara's presence in Congo reflected Cuba's growing contextualization of the anti-US struggle as a global phenomenon, as well as its concern regarding the Johnson administration's new wave of tricontinental interventionism in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. In January 1966, Fidel Castro convoked the Tricontinental Conference in Havana, which brought together armed liberation movements from across the Global South and gave birth to the Organización de Solidaridad con los Pueblos de Asia, África, y América Latina (Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, or OSPAAAL). Guevara, then hiding out in Tanzania and awaiting his next mission, was the Tricontinental's honorary chairman, delivering a speech *in absentia* that declared Cuba's message to the world: "[Latin] America, a forgotten continent in the last liberation struggles, which is now beginning to make itself heard through the Tricontinental in the voice of the vanguard of its peoples, the Cuban revolution, has before it a task of much greater relevance: to create a second or a third Vietnam."[9] Within a few months, Guevara had convinced Castro to permit him to lead a new internationalist contingent, this time to the middle of South America, that is, Bolivia. As in the heart of Africa, CIA-trained forces defeated the rebels, but this time Guevara did not escape. In October 1967, the best-known revolutionary of Latin America's Cold War was executed by Bolivian soldiers in the presence of a CIA officer.

The Rise and Fall of Détente

Despite US officials' crowing that the death of Che Guevara provided evidence that Washington's "preventative medicine" of indirect counterinsurgency training was working, the late 1960s witnessed the rapid growth of anti-imperialist sentiment in Latin America.[10] Shortly after Johnson announced that he would not seek reelection in 1968, a military coup in Peru brought to power General Juan Velasco Alvarado, who promptly nationalized the oil holdings of US investors and opened diplomatic and military relations with the Soviet bloc. This was followed in 1969 by left-leaning military coups in Panama and Bolivia and in 1970 by the election of socialist Salvador Allende in Chile and nationalist Luis Echeverría in Mexico. All of these events fueled rising ideological interest in anti-imperialism, including a new wave of Third World nonalignment that consequently catalyzed a rapid thaw in regional relations with Cuba.

Inaugurated in early 1969, President Richard Nixon (1969–1974) vowed to reduce the causes of anti-US sentiment in Latin America by forswearing interventionism and deem-

phasizing the “paternalism inherent” in US aid programs and tutelage.[11] Reflecting the realpolitik approach of his national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, White House aides discussed the possibility of publicly abrogating Washington’s rhetorical adhesion to the Monroe Doctrine, a source of much anti-imperialist scorn, and thus offering formal countenance to Latin American countries’ growing interest in diplomatic and economic contact with the East.[12]

In the early 1970s even conservative governments in Argentina, Colombia, and Venezuela capitalized on this opening, with the last-named playing a major role in assertive Third World declarations of sovereignty over raw materials. By the time the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) held its 1970 and 1973 meetings in Lusaka and Algiers, respectively, 11 Latin American countries had attended at least one NAM gathering: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay, and Venezuela. In 1974 Mexico led Third World support for a resolution calling for a “New International Economic Order” at the United Nations General Assembly, and Washington was forced to concede to overwhelming regional sentiment in favor of an end to OAS sanctions on Cuba. Even Brazil’s military rulers had begun to embark on a more independent foreign policy through economic entreaties to the Soviet bloc and diplomatic outreach to Marxist liberation movements in Portuguese Africa. Meanwhile, the previously archconservative Catholic hierarchy was invoking the Third World spirit in the early 1970s, embracing a new brand of left-wing liberation theology prompted in part by the 1968 declaration of the Latin American Bishops Conference that “the principle guilt for economic dependence in our countries rests with . . . economic dictatorship and the ‘international imperialism of money.’”[13]

On one hand, Latin America’s rising identification with Third World anti-imperialism overlapped with major diplomatic shifts in the global Cold War, including the flowering of US rapprochement with China and a lessening of tensions between Washington and Moscow. On the other, it soon became clear that East-West détente could just as easily catalyze renewed Cold War tensions in the Global South. The Nixon administration’s patience wore particularly thin in regard to Bolivia and Chile, where widespread nationalizations of foreign investments provoked the ire of conservatives in Congress and among members of the US business community. Taking a page from the playbook of its predecessors, the Nixon White House approved covert CIA operations that led to the fall of both left-wing governments, in 1971 and 1973, respectively, signaling to Latin America that Washington’s intolerance for socialism was far from over, notwithstanding US-Soviet détente.

After Nixon’s resignation due to an illegal break-in at the Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate Hotel, President Gerald Ford (1974–1977) struggled in vain to avoid a return to high Cold War, which was becoming increasingly likely in the wake of indirect Cuban and Soviet victories in Angola and in the Horn of Africa, followed shortly thereafter by a fresh explosion of bipolar tensions in Central America. In the Southern Cone, a new wave of military dictators began to worry about what they interpreted as the Nixon and Ford administrations’ naïve outreach to the East and their apparent inaction with re-

gard to rising transnational cooperation between rural and urban guerrilla movements in Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay. Prompted in part by Washington's new preference for indirect leadership in the Third World, known as the Nixon Doctrine for its encouragement of anti-Communist repression by local leaders in Vietnam, Iran, and elsewhere, South America's military leaders joined forces in a collaborative approach to counterinsurgency known as Operation Condor, which terrorized left-wing political movements throughout the mid-to-late 1970s. Facilitated in part through relationships forged at the US Army School of the Americas in Panama, Operation Condor's masterminds initially received enthusiastic support from the Nixon and Ford administrations. They soon faced criticism from their superpower patron, however, whose liberal congressional majorities and incoming Democratic leadership increasingly began to embrace the global discourse of human rights.

More than any other postwar US leader, President Jimmy Carter (1977–1981) seemed to embody the overlapping spirits of détente and Third World nonalignment. Shortly after his inauguration he vowed that the United States would never return to its previous "inordinate fear of communism," and he announced plans to transfer full sovereignty of the US military's Panama Canal Zone to its host country. Carter also pledged his administration to the pursuit of human rights as a guiding foreign policy principle, and for the first time since the dawn of the Cold War, Washington began to adopt systematic policies to reduce political repression by anti-Communist dictatorships, leading to the curtailment of military aid to conservative allies, particularly in the Southern Cone and Central America. While a handful of right-wing governments took reformist steps in order to accede to Carter's push for human rights, Nicaraguan strongman Antastasio Somoza moved in the opposite direction as his regime sought to liquidate a growing uprising by the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista National Liberation Front, or FSLN). Despite having received more than a decade's worth of tactical support from Castro's Cuba, the FSLN (named for the early 20th-century anti-imperialist guerrilla leader Augusto Sandino) boasted support from a broad anti-authoritarian coalition. White House pressure on human rights did Somoza no favors, and Carter's attempt to broker a peace deal came to naught. Now uncertain of US military backing, which was briefly frozen in late 1978, Somoza was forced to flee a few months later, resulting in the first successful Latin American revolution in nearly twenty years.

Carter administration diplomacy failed to stem the Sandinista government's leftward drift toward the Soviet Union and especially Cuba, where the Third World NAM meeting of 1979 included formerly compliant Central American republics such as Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and El Salvador. Suddenly adopting aggressive Cold War rhetoric unknown since the early 1960s, the Carter administration authorized an uptick in military aid to the right-wing dictatorship in Honduras, from which Nicaraguan exiles were in the process of launching a counterrevolutionary war that would soon engulf the entire region in cycles of bloodshed. By the last year of his administration, Carter's equivocal diplomatic approaches to the issues of human rights and relations with the Soviet Union had also contributed to US embarrassments in Iran and Afghanistan.

Washington responded to the latter by boycotting the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games and supporting the creation of an Islamic anti-Communist guerrilla force similar to the one that was ramping up operations against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Meanwhile, Carter's earlier negotiation of an end to US sovereignty over the Panama Canal Zone had done little to endear him to a rising chorus of neoconservative hawks at home, whose hopes now rested on a charismatic former actor from California who promised a return to US foreign policy greatness, including steps to reassert Washington's global leadership and offer concrete support to anti-Communist "freedom fighters" struggling to roll back Marxist gains of the late 1970s in southern Africa, the greater Middle East, and Central America.

The Second Cold War and Closure

Using the boldest Cold Warrior language of any candidate in twenty years, President Ronald Reagan (1981–1989) campaigned on a platform of rolling back Communism throughout the world. Excoriating his predecessor for having abandoned Washington's authoritarian allies in Latin America and the greater Middle East, Reagan also criticized the outgoing administration for not doing enough to support anti-Communist "freedom fighters" in Afghanistan, Angola, and Nicaragua. In a controversial move, he selected as his ambassador to the United Nations the Georgetown law professor Jeanne Kirkpatrick, well known for her strident defense of anti-Communist strongmen in the Global South. According to Kirkpatrick, most of these allies permitted some level of free enterprise, leading her to conclude that their supposed authoritarianism contained within it the possibility of evolution toward liberal capitalism and democracy. Anti-Communist dictatorships should not be confused, therefore, with Communist "totalitarianism," which required aggressive antagonism if the United States were to win the last round of the Cold War.

Reagan's embrace of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine, as this set of ideas came to be known, catalyzed a thaw in relations with apartheid South Africa, in addition to sharp increases in military aid to dictatorships in Central America and throughout the Southern Cone. Meanwhile, the Reagan administration continued to employ its predecessor's foreign policy discourse of human rights, now used as a diplomatic bludgeon exclusively against the Soviet Union and its allies throughout the world.

Reagan's pledge of rollback manifested itself most dramatically in Grenada and Nicaragua. In 1983 the former found itself subject to the Western Hemisphere's second outright US military invasion of the Cold War when its progressive government moved closer to Cuba and the Soviet bloc. Meanwhile, in Nicaragua, covert CIA support for the Contras ran up against legislative opposition with the passage of the Boland amendments, which prohibited covert action aimed at overthrowing the Sandinista government. The Reagan administration attempted to circumvent Congress's financial restrictions by redirecting a portion of the proceeds from a secret arms deal with Iran, resulting in the largest presidential scandal since Watergate. Indictments were handed down for more

than a dozen administration officials, resulting in 11 convictions; all had their sentences commuted or were pardoned in subsequent years. Meanwhile, the administration continued to find ways to scuttle Central American peace negotiations by securing aid to the Nicaraguan rebels through friendly dictatorships elsewhere in the region.

In other parts of Latin America the human rights explosion of the late 1970s showed no signs of abating. Despite benefiting from a lifeline with the election of Reagan in 1980, dictatorships in Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile finally responded to civil unrest by orchestrating democratic transitions in 1982, 1983, 1985, and 1988, respectively, ushering in a new period of guided electoral democracy. Foreshadowing how the United States would approach post-Communist states in Eastern Europe, the Reagan administration itself warmed to the Southern Cone's democratic transitions, which often were accompanied by loan conditions that facilitated the entry of international financial institutions to restructure their economies via austerity, mass privatization, and free market reforms. During the subsequent decade, this collection of policies would become known as the "Washington Consensus," leading to a lost decade of economic decline with Latin America representing a laboratory for future US leadership elsewhere.

With US-Soviet negotiations of the late 1980s leading Moscow to abandon its clients in the Western Hemisphere and elsewhere in the Third World, the Cold War essentially concluded as a global bipolar competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. Elected in 1988 to channel global change toward a "New World Order," President George H. W. Bush (1989–1993) took full advantage of the unipolar moment to manage the peaceful decline of Moscow's superpower status. Returning to a prewar approach to US hemispheric tutelage, in early 1990 Bush ordered the invasion and overthrow of Panama's right-wing dictatorship, which had grown increasingly independent as the Cold War wound down, and ousted Iraqi forces from Kuwait a year later. These operations roundly demonstrated Washington's unrivaled global power. Nicaragua's Sandinistas, now cut off from Soviet support, agreed in 1990 to submit to free elections, which they lost by fourteen percentage points. With Moscow's leadership declaring a year later that it would no longer hold onto even its European client states by force, the Soviet house of cards collapsed, leaving Communist parties in control of only a handful of governments, all far from Europe. Washington's hostility toward Communist holdouts such as Cuba continued, now justified through US triumphalism rather than perceptions of vulnerability to threat. For some, the end of the Cold War era meant the "End of History."[14] Yet Latin America's struggle for diplomatic and economic independence, which predated the US-Soviet conflict, continues right up to the present day.

Discussion of the Literature

Notwithstanding dated defenses of US foreign policy in Latin America and its latter-day apologists, historical literature on the United States and the Cold War in Latin America has a reputation for shrill denunciations of the United States. Many scholars have approached the study of US anti-Communism by focusing on concepts of neocolonialism,

drawing on either 1960s economic dependency theory or a later emphasis on Washington's strategic goal of securing the Western Hemisphere against extracontinental political influence. Still somewhat hobbled by a "historiographical Monroe Doctrine," scholarship concerning Latin America's Cold War appears to be embarking on a healthy period of internationalization, with recent works focusing on the agency of local, regional, and transnational actors, including a renewed emphasis on anti-imperialist trends that transcend the narrow chronological period of US-Soviet competition.[15]

One of the earliest apologies of US foreign policy in Latin America was written prior to the Cold War by a founding father of US diplomatic history, Samuel Flagg Bemis. Roundly criticized by subsequent revisionist scholars, Bemis's work nonetheless provides an intriguing foundation for more recent interest in the ideological and cultural motivations undergirding US foreign policy throughout the world.[16] In the 1950s William Appleman Williams issued the most thorough rejection of Bemis's work by an early application of the economic roots of Washington's "imperial anticolonialism," which first targeted the American republics in the late 19th century.[17] Williams's approach served as a catalyst for a fresh wave of critical scholarship about US foreign policy in Latin America, represented most ably by his former doctoral student Walter Lafeber.[18]

In the 1980s, a trend away from economics led historians to explore the political strategies employed by US foreign policymakers to contain Communism in Latin America. Still reliant almost exclusively on US documentation, chiefly that of the White House's presidential library system and State Department records at the National Archives and Records Administration, post-revisionist scholarship incorporated a renewed interest in contextualizing Washington's long-standing fear of extra-continental powers, thus interpreting the Cold War as a particularly aggressive iteration of the 19th century Monroe Doctrine.[19]

A three-pronged debate has emerged within the subfield of US foreign relations with Cold War Latin America. On the revisionist side of the conversation lies Greg Grandin, whose celebrated work draws mostly on Latin American sources to reveal what he argues is Washington's allergy to progressive change. According to Grandin, historians' denunciations of US imperialism concerning the region are fully justified, since "Latin America in particular has long been the Achilles' heel in the hard armor of US virtue."[20] As a kind of mirror image to this approach, Stephen Rabe draws similar conclusions in his scholarship regarding the strategic motivations of US foreign policy. As Rabe puts it, Washington's obsessive fear of foreign Communist threats led a series of US presidential administrations to "compromise, even mutilate those grand goals for the Western Hemisphere" that often decorate official pronouncements.[21] The third approach to the issue emerged with the 2012 publication of Hal Brands's *Latin America's Cold War*. Somewhat ironically relying chiefly on Latin American sources, à la Grandin, Brands downplays US agency in an attempt to shift blame for the region's Cold War bloodshed to regional anti-Communist elites.[22] In a more eclectic study drawing on a combination of US and Latin American

sources, Piero Gleijeses leans toward Rabe's argument while offering some backing for Brands's condemnation of Latin American oligarchs.[23]

Moving beyond the question of blame, recent work has begun to embrace the cultural and transnational turns informing scholarship across the discipline of history. Drawing on Emily Rosenberg's *Spreading the American Dream* (1982), which fleshed out some of the underexplored cultural analysis within Williams's earlier work, US diplomatic historians have increasingly narrated the Cold War experiences of local and nonstate actors, including multinational corporations, humanitarian activists, and trade unionists.[24] Concurrently, growth of scholarly interest regarding the Cold War in the Global South has led to calls for greater appreciation of Latin America's Third World experience. Still in its infancy, this emerging scholarship incorporates economic explanations, while also exploring the region's concrete diplomatic and political engagement beyond the Western Hemisphere.[25]

One of the greatest challenges in the study of Latin America's Cold War is to ensure more cross-pollination between Latin American studies, US foreign relations historiography, and wider trends in international and transnational history. If these literatures continue in dialogue in the coming years, scholars may well become less concerned with condemning particular historical actors for bad foreign policy outcomes, with the result that a new generation of scholars will break new ground for constructing theories that better explain the myriad of methods and motivations behind US relations with the countries of Latin America.

Primary Sources

The US presidential libraries are the best sources of primary documentation on Washington's foreign policy toward Latin America during the Cold War period. Most illuminating and accessible are the country-specific "National Security Files," which comprise extensive records created by the White House National Security Council during each administration. These contain copies of the most important cables to and from US embassies in the region, many intelligence memoranda and reports, and a wealth of correspondence between the White House, the State Department, the Defense Department, and the CIA. The presidential libraries also contain personal papers left behind by protagonists close to elite US policymaking and implementation. Best of all, presidential libraries are well-staffed with competent archivists who facilitate researchers' expedited declassification requests under a mandatory review process created through a series of executive orders since the 1970s.

For those wishing to engage a broader range of documentation, the State Department files (Record Group 59) at the National Archives and Records Administration are also organized by country. Easiest to access are the Secretary of State's Central Files, containing official correspondence within Foggy Bottom in addition to a near-complete set of official cable traffic with the embassies. The State Department Lot Files provide an even deeper look into the workings of the department, particularly at the level of the office of

the Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America. These collections contain official and unofficial correspondence within each country desk (as well as between the desks and the embassies), including draft cables and long-form letters that did not receive the signature stamp of the Secretary of State.

For researchers unable to travel to physical repositories, the State Department has digitized its entire collection of vaunted red books, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, which provide a carefully curated selection of country-by-country diplomatic records. More recently declassified documents can be accessed through George Washington University's Digital National Security Archive, as well as easily searchable Freedom of Information Act online reading rooms, set up by both the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency. In addition, research attention to US foreign relations has increasingly begun to employ transnational methods by mining the documentary collections of nonstate actors such as multinational corporations, humanitarian organizations, and trade unions. These sources are as varied as were the many historical players in nonstate US foreign relations with Latin America.

In Latin America, archival collections have undergone rapid improvement since 2007, thanks in part to the investment of €200,000 by the Mexican government through the Organization of Ibero-American States for the purpose of "contributing to the exchange of information and promoting cooperation between the diplomatic archives of the foreign relations ministries" of each of the twenty participating countries.[26] Research spaces have been opened or expanded in Bolivia, Cuba, and Mexico, with additional improvements made in public access to historical diplomatic records in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru, and many others. As in the United States, Latin American foreign ministry archives are typically organized on a country-by-country basis, with classification categories ranging between *ordinario* (unclassified), *reservado* (confidential), *secreto* (secret), and *alto secreto* (top secret). At present, Cuba provides researchers with access only to documentation marked "*ordinario*," and Chile continues its blanket restriction on country files for neighboring Argentina, Bolivia, and Peru, while otherwise permitting access to documentation at all classification levels.

The most open foreign ministry archive in Latin America is likely the one in Brazil, which is divided between Rio de Janeiro for pre-1959 documentation and Brasilia for records created thereafter. Brazil's aggressive declassification law provides access to nearly all records from the country's military dictatorship (1964–1985), including full researcher access to Brazilian military and national security files, which are generally very difficult to access elsewhere in Latin America. Argentina's similar declassification law applies only to the last period of military dictatorship, between 1976 and 1983.

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(12.) National Security Council, draft, October 31, 1969, speech for President Nixon, folder Latin America, box 15, Henry A. Kissinger Files, Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, CA.

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