

THE COLD WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH IN THE AMERICAS

The Search for a Synthetic Interpretation of U.S. Policy

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Latin America's Cold War: An International History. By Hal Brands. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010. Pp. 408. \$29.95 cloth.

Which Way Latin America? Hemispheric Politics Meets Globalization. Edited by Andrew F. Cooper and Jorge Heine. New York: United Nations University Press, 2009. Pp. xxix + 326. \$36.00 paper.

The United States and Latin America after the Cold War. By Russell C. Crandall. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xiv + 260. \$85.00 cloth, \$24.99 paper.

In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War. Edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. Pp. ix + 439. \$99.95 cloth, \$26.95 paper.

The Obama Administration and the Americas: An Agenda for Change. Edited by Abraham F. Lowenthal, Ted Piccone, and Laurence Whitehead. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2009. Pp. xiv + 235. \$28.95 paper.

More than two decades have passed since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the transfer of the Cold War file from a daily preoccupation of policy makers to a more detached assessment by historians. Scholars of U.S.–Latin American relations are beginning to take advantage both of the distance in time and of newly opened archives to reflect on the four decades that, from the 1940s to the 1980s, divided the Americas, as they did much of the world. Others are seeking to understand U.S. policy and inter-American relations in the post–Cold War era, a period that not only lacks a clear definition but also still has no name. Still others have turned their gaze forward to offer policies in regard to the region for the new Obama administration.

Numerous books and review essays have addressed these three subjects—the Cold War, the post-Cold War era, and current and future issues on the inter-American agenda.¹ Few of these studies attempt, however, to connect the three subjects or to offer new and comprehensive theories to explain the course of U.S. policies from the beginning of the twentieth century until the present. Indeed, some works and policy makers continue to use the mind-sets of the Cold War as though that conflict were still being fought.

With the benefit of newly opened archives, some scholars have nevertheless drawn insights from the depths of the Cold War that improve our understanding of U.S. policies and inter-American relations, but they do not address the question as to whether the United States has escaped the longer cycle of intervention followed by neglect that has characterized its relations with Latin America. Another question is whether U.S. policies differ markedly before, during, and after the Cold War. In what follows, we ask whether the books reviewed here provide any insights in this regard and whether they offer a compass for the future of inter-American relations. We also offer our own thoughts as to how their various perspectives could be synthesized to address these questions more comprehensively.

REVISITING THE COLD WAR

In reviewing the history of the Cold War in the Americas, *Latin America's Cold War*, by Hal Brands, and *In from the Cold*, edited by Gilbert Joseph and Daniela Spenser, consciously seek to include Latin American perspectives and, in the case of the latter volume, to examine the Cold War from a grassroots and a cultural angle. These are certainly welcome additions, but one needs to ask why the Latin American perspective has largely been omitted from literature on the subject. There are two reasons, empirical and theoretical.

First, almost all Latin American archives were closed to scholars; there were no freedom-of-information instruments that allowed access to government documents, and few scholars tried to interview Latin American policy makers, as they commonly did in the United States. As a result, scholars spent time looking under the lamppost of U.S. foreign policy to locate problems in inter-American relations.

1. Thomas F. O'Brien, "Interventions, Conventional and Unconventional: Current Scholarship on Inter-American Relations," *Latin American Research Review* 44, no. 1 (2009): 257–265; Gregory Weeks, "Recent Works on U.S.-Latin American Relations," *Latin American Research Review* 44, no. 1 (2009): 247–256; Andrés Rivarola Puntigliano, "Suspicious Minds: Recent Books on U.S.-Latin American Relations," *Latin American Politics and Society* 50, no. 4 (2008): 155–172.

Even more important than the lack of data was the predominance of a theoretical model in which the United States was the actor and Latin America, the dependent, defenseless object. With this premise, Peter H. Smith concluded that the study of inter-American relations required only a "mediation on the character and conduct of the United States" and how it exercised "its perennial predominance."² The title of his book, *Talons of the Eagle*, evokes a rapacious and unforgiving United States preying on the innocent victim of Latin America. Lars Schoultz similarly extracted almost every morsel of duplicity, arrogance, and interventionism that he could locate in U.S. diplomatic history to cook a broth that would give heartburn to any U.S. president or idealistic citizen. In Schoultz's view, the United States was convinced not only of its superiority but also of Latin America's inferiority, and racism and the desire to dominate motivated its actions.³ Crandall has dubbed this lens "anti-imperialist"; one of us has described it as "radical."⁴ Scholars who use this lens contend that U.S. policy makers used the Cold War to maintain control of the region, suppress progressive movements, and defend an unjust order. United States policy was the only subject worth studying. Latin America's foreign policies were neither important nor influential.

In a prescient essay, Max Paul Friedman noted the prevalence of this approach and suggested that it could not be sustained if historians were to incorporate Latin American sources, archives, and perspectives. The use of U.S. archives alone, he wrote, "may help explain why the only actor in . . . inter-American history is the northern colossus."⁵ *Latin America's Cold War* and *In from the Cold* follow Friedman's call, drawing on Latin American and Soviet archives, as well as Truth Commission reports. At their best, these works recall the work of Friedrich Katz, who delved deeply into the archives of nine countries to discover that Mexican revolutionaries invited and manipulated the "imperialists" more effectively than these foreigners manipulated them.⁶ A few authors in these collections, as well as others whom Friedman cites, dive sufficiently deeply into Cold War sources to test whether Katz's conclusion applies to other cases as well, and thus whether the radical view is confirmed or impugned by the evidence.

2. Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4.

3. Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

4. Robert A. Pastor, "Explaining U.S. Policy toward the Caribbean Basin: Fixed and Emerging Images," *World Politics* 28, no. 3 (1986): 483-515.

5. Max Paul Friedman, "Retiring the Puppets, Bringing Latin America Back In: Recent Scholarship on United States-Latin American Relations," *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 5 (2003): 626.

6. Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

The U.S. interventions in Guatemala (1954), Cuba (1961), Dominican Republic (1965), Chile (1970), Grenada (1983), and Nicaragua and Central America (1981–1989) figure among key events in Latin America's Cold War history. In each case, the radical view is that the United States intervened to suppress popular movements and, as a result of ineptitude, pushed moderate regimes into the arms of the Soviet Union and communism. After reviewing the archival sources available, particularly Soviet and Cuban documents, Brands finds this interpretation "not fully persuasive" (290). This conclusion is actually too modest. In virtually every key event, the evidence shows that the model that radicals favor is inadequate or simply wrong.

As Piero Gleijeses has shown, Guatemala's President Jacobo Arbenz knew that the United States opposed his government, not because of the United Fruit Company but because he was a communist.⁷ This also explains why U.S. policy was benign or supportive to the equally radical but noncommunist revolution in Bolivia and to the social democratic government of President José Figueres in Costa Rica.⁸ In *In from the Cold*, the chapters by Gleijeses and Spenser on the foreign policies of Cuba and the Soviet Union show Fidel Castro aggressively promoting revolution throughout Latin America before the United States reacted with the Alliance for Progress and counterinsurgency efforts. The Soviet Union sometimes helped; at other times, it discouraged the Cubans. From the other side of the battlefield, as Ariel Armony describes, Argentinean foreign policy was equally aggressive while more repressive at home and in its fight against communism in Central America, even when the United States opposed its efforts. One may conclude that Cold War history was made not by the United States but by a clash of Latin American conservatives and revolutionaries, with each side welcoming support—though not necessarily advice—from one of the superpowers. Furthermore, contrary to Walter LaFeber's thesis that revolutions are inevitable in Latin America,⁹ Brands shows that they were rare. Indeed, they succeeded only when they began as demands for democracy against long-standing dictators such as Porfirio Díaz, Fulgencio Batista, and Anastasio Somoza.¹⁰

This is not to excuse U.S. foreign policy or to suggest that it was unimportant but to confirm only that Latin America has also played a sub-

7. Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

8. See Stephen G. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 77–83; Kyle Longley, *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and the United States during the Rise of José Figueres* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997).

9. Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983).

10. Robert A. Pastor, *Not Condemned to Repetition: The United States and Nicaragua* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002), chap. 1.

stantial role in inter-American relations, and that economic interests and the need to dominate are not the sole motivations of the United States. Leaders such as Jimmy Carter sincerely promoted human rights. Others such as John F. Kennedy and Bill Clinton promoted economic reforms and democracy. And still others claimed to support human rights but actually did the opposite. No one captures this hypocrisy better than Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who came to the Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly in Chile in June 1976 to give a speech on human rights. Tom Blanton refers to the memorandum of conversation in which Kissinger privately told the Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet to ignore his speech, which was intended to fool the U.S. Congress. "My evaluation," Kissinger said to the dictator, "is that you are a victim of all left-wing groups around the world and that your greatest sin was that you overthrew a government which was going communist. . . . I want you to succeed" (Joseph and Spenser, 56).

The documents obtained by truth commissions shed light on the repression by Argentine and Chilean military governments, helping us to understand that the most brutal struggles in Latin America's Cold War were between domestic militaries and young revolutionaries and that there were many innocent people caught in the cross fire or the government's web. In that struggle, the left "did poorly" and the far right "saw its luck run out in the 1980s" (Brands, 399). Che Guevara's attempt to replicate *foco* revolution in Bolivia epitomized the failure of Cuba—and to a lesser degree, the Soviet Union—to promote revolution in the region. Sporadic U.S. efforts to promote democracy and reform fared no better. In brief, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union and Cuba succeeded. The conservative roots of the region held back violent change and reform until the Cold War ended. At that point, democracy extended to all but Cuba and Haiti, and reforms also began to spread, though not as deeply or as fast as many hoped.

Some of the best contributions to *Latin America's Cold War* and *In from the Cold* derive from materials in Soviet archives and truth commissions. Largely missing are documents from foreign and defense ministries and presidential offices in Latin America. These would have permitted an understanding of what Latin American governments wanted and how they fared. For example, documents are needed to show how Latin Americans promoted the Panama Canal treaties; how the United States, Brazil, and Argentina addressed the nuclear issue; how Andean governments decided to deal with drug issues and the United States. A true understanding of the rest of Latin America's foreign policies will have to await the opening of these archives and a new generation of scholars.

THE POST-COLD WAR

Within a few years of the Soviet implosion, the wars in Central America came to an end, some with elections and others with negotiated agreements. Those who claimed that the wars were wholly indigenous and those who claimed that they were simply a creature of Soviet or U.S. imperialism were both partially wrong. But there is little question that the Cold War's demise extracted the poison from these conflicts and made possible a sharp change in the inter-American agenda from ideological struggles to democratic contests. The United States remained engaged in the post-Cold War period but at a much-reduced level of attention and resources.

Russell Crandall, a professor at Davidson College with government experience, surveys U.S. policy toward the region since the end of the Cold War. Using mostly newspaper accounts and occasionally interviews, he provides a balanced account of events and issues. At the same time, he interprets policy debates and literature through a simple but helpful frame comprising two groups, whom he calls the establishment and anti-imperialists. Crandall further divides the establishment between liberal/Democrat and conservative/Republican forces, whose different approaches can be equated more broadly with those of scholars and policy makers. Republicans view threats more intensely, act alone more often, are more devoted to private enterprise and free trade, tend to militarize the "wars" on drugs and terror, and are most strongly opposed to undocumented migration, whereas Democrats adopt a more relaxed and multilateral approach, defend human rights and democracy more intensely, are more skeptical about free trade, and are more committed to development assistance. Debate between the two philosophies has influenced the U.S. government's policies toward Latin America. There is much less debate among academics. As Friedman noted, the anti-imperialist or radical perspective has informed most scholarship on U.S. policies toward Latin America.

Although the anti-imperialist label is useful, Crandall employs it without exploring what scholars such as Greg Grandin mean when they refer to a U.S. "empire" in Latin America.¹¹ The concepts of empire and hegemony are too frequently used, and too inadequately defined, in international relations, and the anti-imperialist school uses them as though little had changed since the nineteenth century. Although the United States has been the most powerful state in the hemisphere in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it has not been a colonial empire, and the successful half century of defiance by Fidel Castro calls into question the meaning of U.S. hegemony.

11. Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006).

Crandall's thesis is that much has changed after the Cold War because security is less important. The United States is less constrained and Latin Americans are more able to diversify their relationships. Democratization has made governments more accountable to constituents, and globalization has reduced dependence on the United States and connected the region's economies to the world. Crandall recognizes that some events do not fit comfortably into this framework. How strange, he suggests, that Senator Christopher Dodd, a leading dove during the Cold War, became an energetic hawk, promoting the sale of helicopters to Colombia during the war on drugs. Constituency interests, in fact, easily explain this behavior: helicopters are built in Dodd's state, and the drug war is a domestic concern. The hard question, which Crandall does not address, is whether Dodd would have promoted the sale of Connecticut-built helicopters to repressive military governments during the Cold War. Probably not.

Certain policies and interpretations have not changed as much as we might think. Crandall notes, for example, that criticism of Evo Morales by the U.S. ambassador during Bolivia's presidential campaign in 2002 had the counterproductive effect of lifting Morales's recognition and support. This is not a new phenomenon. The U.S. ambassador Spruille Braden made a similar mistake toward Juan Perón in the 1946 election in Argentina.

FUTURE POLICY

A paradox of contemporary inter-American relations is that Latin America is more distant from U.S. foreign policy and closer to U.S. domestic policy. The U.S. national security policy has focused on the Middle East and Central Asia, particularly since 9/11, and some of the most controversial domestic issues—immigration, drug trafficking, crime, energy, and free trade—involve Latin America. The collections edited by Lowenthal, Piccone, and Whitehead and by Cooper and Heine acknowledge this new reality and propose policies to address it.

Nearly all the contributors to *The Obama Administration and the Americas* observe that Latin America is unlikely to receive great attention during this presidency. Still, they argue that Latin American nations matter "not as areas of dramatic crisis" but because their cooperation is needed to address "intermestic issues" like those identified above (Lowenthal, 4). Of course, the fact that the term *intermestic* was coined in the mid-1970s suggests that these issues are not new; nor are they a post-Cold War idea.¹² And many of them are difficult enough to resolve within a country, let alone among several.

12. Bayless Manning coined the term *intermestic*, in "The Congress, the Executive, and Intermestic Affairs: Three Proposals," *Foreign Affairs* 55 (1977): 306–324.

The Obama Administration expands on a Brookings Institution–sponsored report that emphasized inter-American cooperation on energy, trade, and drugs.¹³ Although its main focus is democracy and the rule of law, the book also identifies a set of country problems—in Colombia, Haiti, Cuba, Venezuela, and Mexico—that point to the most difficult dilemmas that the United States faces in the twenty-first century. The consensus that the Americas seemed to have reached on democracy and trade in the mid-1990s broke down in the following decade, and indeed, the Americas are now probably better understood as four subregions rather than as a single block: the Andean countries, the countries of the Mercado Común del Sur (Mercosur), Central America and the Caribbean, and North America. Each subregion has a different set of concerns and, in some cases in the Andean region, define and practice democracy differently. Few countries, including the United States and Brazil, are as interested in pursuing freer trade in the twenty-first century with the vigor that they pursued it in the last decade of the twentieth century.

When Lowenthal makes the case for focusing “early and strategically on U.S. relations with Latin America” (xi), he is writing about energy security, drug trafficking, and migration, but, from the U.S. perspective, these are not U.S.–Latin American issues. They are North American issues. Canada and Mexico are the two largest sources of energy imported into the United States. About 33 percent of legal immigrants and 60 percent of illegal immigrants originate from Mexico, and nearly 90 percent of all cocaine entering the United States transits through Mexico. North America’s weight is such that one wonders why all these books discuss U.S.–Latin American relations, yet none discusses North American relations. North America alone accounts for 89 percent of the gross product and 75 percent of all trade in the Americas. The North American challenge is that the issues on the agenda—immigration, energy, drugs—are considered domestic, and the three governments have been derelict in allowing the market to expand faster than governance.¹⁴

Other subregions pose different problems for Washington. The small, open, and vulnerable economies of Central America and the Caribbean represent a continuing challenge. In *The Obama Administration*, McCoy, Molina, Shifter, and Pardo astutely describe the populist and increasingly authoritarian regimes of the Andes. The Mercosur countries are more distant from the United States geographically, economically, and socially,

13. The Brookings Institution, “Rethinking U.S.–Latin American Relations” (November 2008) (accessed at http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/~media/Files/rc/reports/2008/1124_latin_america_partnership/1124_latin_america_partnership.pdf).

14. Robert A. Pastor, “The Future of North America: Replacing a Bad Neighbor Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 4 (2008): 84–98.

and they have demonstrated a capacity and desire for regional leadership entirely apart from the United States.

Lowenthal and his coauthors offer pragmatic and progressive policy recommendations along the lines that Crandall would call liberal/Democratic. They propose that the United States avoid militarizing its Latin America policy, increase development aid, and strengthen multilateral organizations including the OAS. On drug trafficking, they suggest that the Obama administration accept U.S. responsibility for the demand for drugs and firearms. In early visits to Mexico, the president and secretary of state both spoke of "shared responsibility." Laurence Whitehead closes the volume by calling for the Project for the Americas, which would promote "the consolidation of peaceful, law-abiding, rights-respecting, and environmentally friendly democracies with respect for local diversity and autonomy, and multilateral game rules" (221). That about covers the landscape, without penetrating it.

Which Way Latin America? offers a comprehensive survey of the region's transformation and fragmentation after the Cold War. Shifter notes the optimism of the first Summit of the Americas in 1994 and the discord of the 2005 summit in Argentina, and attributes this difference to the retreat from free trade by both the United States and Venezuela, albeit for different reasons, and the increasing authoritarianism of Andean countries. Castañeda and Morales offer empirical backing to Castañeda's distinction between new leftist regimes like that of Lula da Silva in Brazil and the less democratic model of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. Cooper explains the consequences of the Bush administration's obsession with Chávez and its disdain for multilateral organizations. Some of the book's best chapters describe the very different impacts of the rise of Asia on fragile Caribbean economies and of the region's new power, Brazil.

In their introduction, the editors write that globalization means an expansion of choice in Latin America, not an erosion of the state. Nevertheless, other chapters show that globalization means very different things to different countries. To Mexico and other nations with a heavy reliance on the U.S. market, globalization means displacement by China and its cheaper manufactured goods, even while those countries remain very much a part of the North American market. To the agriculture-, oil-, and mineral-producing countries of South America, globalization has meant higher prices for resource exports. In brief, globalization paradoxically contributes to fragmentation and subregionalization in the hemisphere.

Which Way America? raises important questions and offers some new answers on apparently leftward trends, the uneven progress of democracy, and the struggle to find a place in the global economy. However, the book does not respond fully or consistently to the challenge of its title to survey the boundary between hemispheric politics and globalization.

THEORIES AND THREADS

If U.S. inattention, diverse experiences of globalization, and increasing “intermesticity” marks the post–Cold War, post-9/11 world, is U.S. policy toward Latin America destined to be hopelessly ad hoc in the future? The answer may reside in two ironies. With Fidel Castro’s departure from the world stage, one would have thought that hemispheric politics might become less personalistic. But instead, other oversize personalities—Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales—have sought to redefine Latin America in their own images. Their success will vary inversely with the progress of democracy, or—to make the same point from the other direction—the consolidation of democracy will arrive when institutions that check and balance one another are more important than leaders.

The second irony is almost too rich to believe. Since Castro’s rise to power, the populist left in Latin America has often accused the OAS of being an instrument of the United States, and thus has shown little interest in it. In 2009, however, the same leftist leaders pushed the OAS into the center of hemispheric politics twice. First, they insisted that the 1962 resolution suspending Cuba from the OAS be repealed. For domestic political reasons, the Obama administration would have preferred to sidestep the issue, but, when that proved impossible, it insisted that the organization heed the Inter-American Democratic Charter. After considerable debate, on June 3, 2009, a resolution unanimously passed the OAS General Assembly in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, revoking the 1962 suspension but declaring that Cuba’s participation “will be the result of a process initiated at the request of the government of Cuba, and in accordance with the practices, purposes, and principles of the O.A.S.”¹⁵ This appeared to satisfy all sides.

Before the month of June ended, Honduras returned to the center of OAS politics when the military arrested President Manuel Zelaya and forced him into exile. Again led by Chávez, the OAS condemned this action as a coup and insisted on his reinstatement. The irony is, of course, that Chávez was reluctant to acknowledge the Inter-American Democratic Charter when he pressed for Cuba’s return to the OAS but discovered its importance when his ally Zelaya was exiled. The leaders, who before had dismissed the OAS and the Inter-American Democratic Charter, now placed them at the center of hemispheric politics. We will need some time to assess whether these two events are a sign of what is to come or a signal of what has already passed.

The books under review survey the past sixty years, although all are conscious that history did not begin with the Cold War. They focus on

15. Organization of American States, 39th General Assembly, “Resolution on Cuba” (A.G. Res. 2438), San Pedro Sula, Honduras, June 3, 2009 (accessed at <http://www.oas.org/dil/AG04688E08.doc>).

events, policies, and bilateral relationships, and some of them offer a framework or a thesis to explain U.S. policies and inter-American relations. Brands's international history shows that the policies of the global superpowers are more easily understandable when one knows what both were doing and that they were not the only important actors in the Cold War. The contributors to *In from the Cold* also document Latin American agency while taking into account cultural and quotidian realities that have played only a minor role in previous histories. Crandall succinctly summarizes the events and perspectives that have determined U.S. policies toward Latin America during the past twenty years. Meanwhile, the essays in *Which Way Latin America?* take important steps in conceptualizing this new reality. Lowenthal and his colleagues offer policy options for how the Obama administration can best cope with a changed inter-American system. Some of the authors critique the radical or, as Crandall calls it, anti-imperialist school; many others continue to find that school instructive.

What is lacking in all of these efforts is a thesis or, rather, a synthesis able to explain U.S. policy from the beginning of the twentieth century through the first decade of the twenty-first. Brands and some contributors to *In from the Cold* encourage an interactive approach in which the United States and Latin American nations are both actors rather than the United States being the actor and Latin America the object.

In fact, U.S. involvement in Latin America during the Cold War reflects a pattern that has defined U.S. policy since the Spanish-American War of 1898, and especially since construction of the Panama Canal: the United States has intervened whenever it perceives that a foreign rival could exploit instability. When the crisis has passed, the United States disengages and shifts its attention elsewhere. This cycle has been described as a whirlpool that first sucks the United States into its vortex, and then allows it to float to the edge, thinking that it has escaped, only to draw it back in when a new crisis occurs.¹⁶ This model stands in contrast to the radical theory that the desire to dominate motivates U.S. policies. Were the latter true, U.S. involvement would deepen and expand after a crisis, because its rivals would be weaker. In this sense, the radical thesis coincides with that of the realist school, which argues that states always seek to expand and that their only deterrent is the force of opponents.¹⁷

The division between the Cold War and post-Cold War eras offers a clear test of the two theses. Radical-realists predict continued and more

16. Robert A. Pastor, *Exiting the Whirlpool: U.S. Foreign Policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001). On the interactive thesis, also see Pastor, "Explaining U.S. Policy."

17. John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001). There is a certain irony in the congruence of views between radicals, who are embarrassed by the pursuit of U.S. power, and realists, who expect it as a rule of international relations.

expansive U.S. efforts in the post-Cold War era; the whirlpool thesis predicts a decline in attention and involvement. The consensus of the policy-oriented books examined here is that U.S. attention has lapsed. "It is unlikely," Lowenthal and his coeditors write, "that the new U.S. administration will find much time to think about the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean" (xi). The United States is at the edge of the whirlpool again.

Works on the Cold War also offer an opportunity to test a second hypothesis—this one on American exceptionalism. Anti-imperialist scholars accuse the United States of failing to live up to its claims that it is different and better than other great powers. They seek to strip away the rhetoric and expose U.S. policy as motivated by a hunger for power, base economic interests, or racial prejudice, leaving the United States no different from other imperialist nations. Again, this perspective is consistent with the realist view that all major powers behave alike. Nonetheless, the idea of American exceptionalism also, ironically, captures anti-imperialists. Their harsh critique of U.S. policy is actually rooted not in how other powers behave but in how the United States professes to behave, that is, idealistically.

The history of U.S. policy toward Latin America is replete with realism and cynicism on the one hand and idealism on the other hand. Realists and radicals would have predicted that, after Mexico's surrender in 1848, the U.S. Army would have marched as far down through Central and South America as it could, whereas it stopped and agreed to the Río Grande as a border.¹⁸ They would have expected the United States to respond positively to requests by El Salvador and the Dominican Republic to be annexed, whereas those requests were rejected. They would have expected the United States to annex Cuba after the Spanish-American War, but President McKinley adhered to the Teller amendment. They would not have predicted the good neighbor policy of Franklin Roosevelt or the human rights policy of Jimmy Carter. Compared with the behavior of past great powers, U.S. exceptionalism has been imperfect but undeniable.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, democracy and free trade seemed to have consolidated, and it looked as though the United States had found an exit from the whirlpool. But as the first decade of this century concludes, that prediction seems premature. Democracy is again endangered, free trade has stalled and threatens to go into reverse, and the exit from the whirlpool is not as clearly marked. As the crisis in Honduras has made clear, instability still threatens. The hemisphere has not escaped

18. It is true that one reason that the United States rejected the idea of annexing all of Mexico was racism and sectional differences. However, realists argue that state expansion responds to the balance of power and not to internal causes.

the rules of the international system; its countries still compete with one another, and some of its leaders still seek ways to remain in power.

These books offer a reinterpretation of the Cold War in Latin America. However, when we turn to the past two decades, it is clear that we have yet to synthesize the concepts necessary to understand today's inter-American system. The job of historians and political scientists is not over.