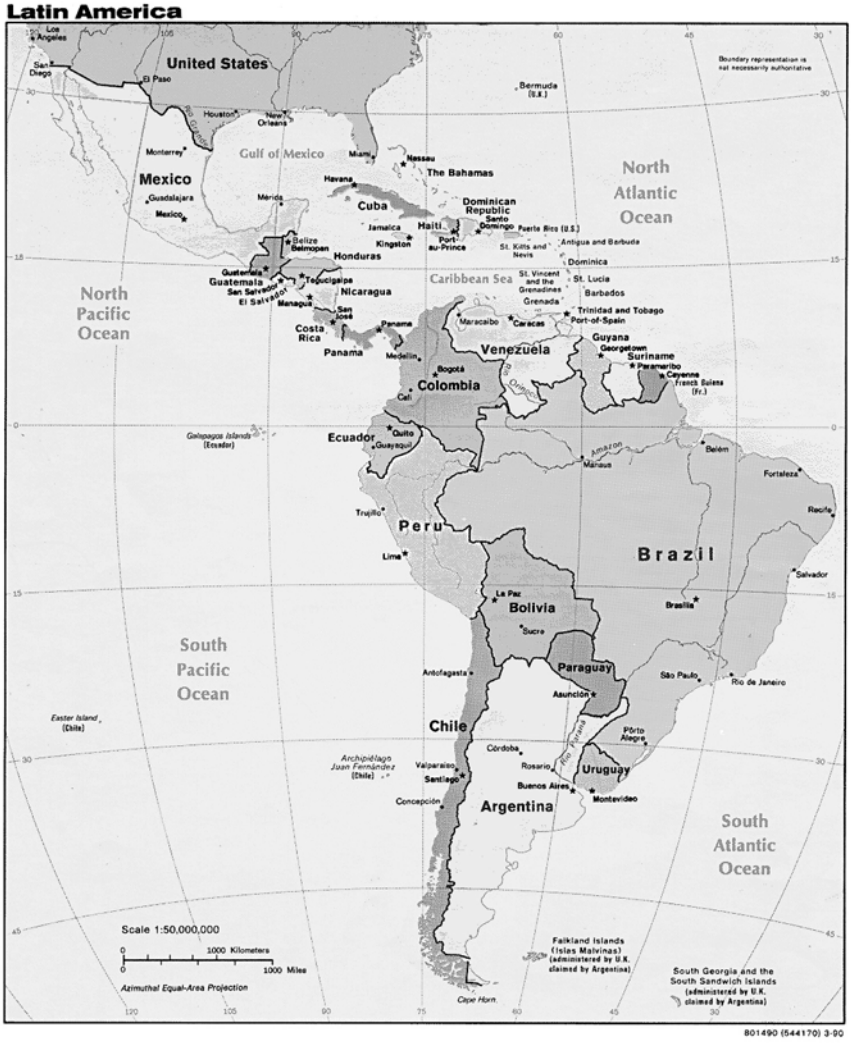
The United States and Latin America after the Cold War

In assessing the relations between the United States and Latin America since the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, Russell Crandall argues that any lasting analysis must be viewed through a fresh framework, one that allows for the often unexpected episodes and outcomes in U.S.–Latin American relations. An academic and recent high-level U.S. policymaker, Crandall examines the policies of three post–Cold War presidential administrations (George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush) through the prism of three critical areas: democracy, economics, and security. The author then introduces relevant case studies of U.S. policy in several Latin American countries, including Cuba, Brazil, Haiti, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, and Argentina.

Russell Crandall is currently Associate Professor of Politics at Davidson College. He has also served as the director for the Western Hemisphere at the National Security Council, special assistant for counterterrorism to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and adviser for Latin American security to the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs. He is the author of *Gunboat Democracy: U.S. Interventions in the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Panama* (2006) and *Driven by Drugs: U.S. Policy toward Colombia* (2002).



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One distinct characteristic of teaching is that the energy spent in the endeavor is largely intended to influence the thinking and behavior of others. That is, teaching is not really about the teacher. Oftentimes, any teacher's impact on a student occurs long after the actual coursework has ended. In many of these cases, the teacher never becomes aware of what was in fact a tremendous influence on a student. In this sense, teaching is holding the faith that what is taught will actually matter – someday, somewhere.

I dedicate this book to one of my teachers, Don Dooley, whose profound influence on me continues to this day. A legendary cross-country coach at San Mateo High School in northern California, Don passed away far too young. I was thus especially blessed to have received his guidance and wisdom. Through tremendous examples of personal behavior but few spoken words, "Dooley" subtly but powerfully taught me to take responsibility for my own efforts, in this case long-distance running. Through him, I now understand that any true greatness requires passion, dedication, and humility.

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Preface

In March 2007 President George W. Bush embarked on a week-long trip to Latin America. While in Uruguay, Bush met with his presidential counterpart, Tabaré Vásquez, who represents one of several left-leaning governments recently elected to power in the region. Polls in Uruguay before the visit suggested that only 12 percent of Uruguayans supported Bush's trip, yet more than 50 percent of the population endorsed entering into a free trade agreement with the United States.

As the two leaders signed U.S.-Uruguayan investment accords and relaxed at the Uruguayan presidential retreat, just across the Rio de la Plata in Argentina a different scene unfolded: the fiery Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez staged an "alternative" rally, denouncing Bush to chants of "Gringo, go home!" Attended by thousands of ardent supporters of Chávez's vehemently anti-American manifesto, the rally stole the headlines from Bush's unexpectedly warm reception from Uruguay's Vásquez.

Had casual observers of United States–Latin American relations not seen the footage or read media reports from these events, many might have already concluded that Bush and Vásquez would be too-strange bedfellows to meet amicably, much less to consider joint strategic objectives. In fact, many might have expected instead to see the leftist Vásquez join Chávez at his anti-Bush rally. Moreover, we might have assumed that, given their reported widespread dislike of President Bush, Uruguayans would have resoundingly rejected a free trade pact with the United States.

In U.S.–Latin American relations today, unexpected alliances, episodes, and outcomes abound. These new realities are in play largely because the end of the Cold War has diminished the ideological and strategic constraints that for decades dictated U.S. policy in Latin America. In this new era, what

is often at the core of U.S. policies in Latin America is an interplay between international and domestic, or "intermestic," politics.

Consider the case of U.S. policy toward Colombia. During a 2000 congressional debate on the amount and type of assistance for the war-ravaged country, longtime Latin America policy "dove" Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT) adopted one of the most "hawkish" positions in the Senate, reflected in his ardent support for sending Black Hawk helicopters to the Colombian military. Amid the acerbic debates in the 1980s over the nature of U.S. policy in Nicaragua, when a Marxist government was in power, Dodd repeatedly denounced what he contended to be President Ronald Reagan's overly militaristic policies toward the Central American country. In 2000, though, Dodd appeared to be supporting a "military solution" to Colombia's conflict through his support for the Black Hawks. Also, and in a clear indication of the increased role of domestic politics in the post–Cold War era, it is worth noting that the proposed helicopters were to be manufactured in Dodd's home state of Connecticut.

Before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, U.S. policy in Latin America was concerned overwhelmingly with stopping communist expansion. Accordingly, the prevailing frameworks for studying U.S. policy in Latin America were equally grounded in anticommunism. Without this threat in the region, most U.S. policies are no longer driven by a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Because U.S. policy has moved beyond the Cold War, those studying the motivations and application of U.S. policy toward Latin America must equally adopt a fresh approach.

The United States' legacy in Latin America is the "Big Stick." President Theodore Roosevelt's pithy maxim, derived from an African proverb, "Speak softly and carry a big stick, and you will go far," epitomized the country's emergence as a self-appointed police force in Central America and the Caribbean at the beginning of the twentieth century. For our purposes, the Big Stick may be described as the assertion that, historically and at times presently, the United States has tended to act in an imperious, unilateral, and paternalistic manner in Latin America. This was certainly the case during the Cold War, when Washington used the Big Stick habitually in order to combat communism.

Although the United States might still act with a Big Stick, that is no longer the entire story of U.S. policy in Latin America. Rather, a variety of hemispheric developments – including not only the end of communism but also globalization and immigration from Latin America – has required and permitted the United States to adopt policies that do not fit this traditional approach. As a result, the years after the Cold War witnessed several key

episodes in which the United States had every opportunity to yield the Big Stick but did not.

Acknowledging the need for this paradigm shift does not mean that observers must endorse the United States' paternalistic historic legacy in Latin America. Nor does it mean that we must necessarily agree with current and future U.S. policies in the region or that there are not elements of the past that still have a great influence on the United States' conduct in the region. It does mean, though, that we must be prepared to look at U.S. motivations and actions in Latin America through a new framework – one that takes into account current realities while not assuming that contemporary policies bear the same intent as in the recent past.

The United States and Latin America after the Cold War aims to shed light on what is new and what is old in Washington's Latin America policy playbook and focuses on four major developments influencing U.S. policies. First, the end of the Cold War dramatically increased the level of flexibility and choices for Washington in its dealings in the Western Hemisphere. Second, unlike during the Cold War, Latin American countries are increasingly democratic and sovereign; few would consider them to be the Cold War "pawns" of the United States or the Soviet Union as was the case in the prior era. This development provides Latin American countries with greater flexibility, similar to that which the United States has always had in the region. This new freedom has at times meant choosing to turn away from Washington to embrace other global powers such as China or Europe or, conversely, to adopt some of Washington's long-promoted policy priorities, such as trade expansion and liberalization.

Simply having to ask whether, for example, China will rival the United States for influence in Latin America reinforces the notion that it is no longer "business as usual" for Washington. Because Latin American countries have far more options than they did in previous eras, a cold shoulder from Washington might not mean as much as it once did; increasingly, to replace U.S. investment or development dollars, countries have the ability to turn to Asia, Europe, or even other energy-rich countries in the region.

Globalization, a third critical development influencing U.S. policy after the Cold War, catalyzes communication and interaction at an unprecedented rate between peoples and cultures in all corners of the world. Yet its dynamism and rapidity carry particular weight in the relationship between the United States and Latin America. For example, nongovernmental activists attempting to free American Lori Berenson, incarcerated in Peru for her alleged collaboration with a Peruvian terrorist organization, used the Internet to deliver their

political message to a global audience. By increasing public pressure on Peruvian and U.S. officials, these new "actors" have forced both governments to respond to challenges that they could have ignored much more easily in previous eras.

Lastly, U.S. domestic politics today "spill over" increasingly into the formulation and implementation of U.S. policies in Latin America. Domestic politics have played an integral role in Latin American policy since the early decades of the U.S. republic. During the Cold War, however, the overarching, bipartisan U.S. effort to combat communism often superseded domestic interests. In the post–Cold War era, domestic politics again play an outsized role in policy toward Latin America. Today, almost all of the hot-button issues related to Latin America policy, such as drugs, immigration, and trade, have their roots in domestic policies.

In addition to considering a new approach for exploring how the U.S. government conducts its policy toward Latin America, this book explores the major events related to U.S.–Latin American relations during the past two decades. The post–Cold War era has thus far spanned three U.S. presidential administrations – those of George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush – and the age of America's struggle against Islamic terrorism. We analyze the key episodes in U.S.–Latin American relations in the context of these three presidential administrations, as well as through the overriding themes of democracy, security, and economics. The events studied in this book should provide the evidence with which to recognize and analyze the emerging trends in the United States' actions toward Latin America.

The United States and Latin America after the Cold War seeks to inform and challenge observers of U.S.–Latin American relations who are coming of age well after the Cold War. It also seeks to help shape future policy decisions by deepening our understanding of what has transpired during the past quarter century. In a study of U.S.–Latin American relations since the Cold War, one should "expect the unexpected." Yet we will uncover these critical but often latent developments only if we push ourselves beyond the increasingly anachronistic frameworks of prior eras.

The United States and Latin America after the Cold War