

BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

Controlling Their Own Destiny: Latin American Agency in the Context of US Hegemony

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This essay reviews the following works:

Contemporary U.S.-Latin American Relations: Cooperation or Conflict in the 21st Century?

Edited by Jorge I. Domínguez and Rafael Fernández de Castro. 2nd revised edition. New York: Routledge, 2016. Pp. xiv + 309. \$49.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781138786325.

Beyond the Eagle's Shadow: New Histories of Latin America's Cold War. Edited by Virginia Garrard-Burnett, Mark Atwood Lawrence, and Julio E. Moreno. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013. Pp. viii + 341. \$55.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780826353689.

The Third Century: U.S.-Latin American Relations since 1889. By Mark T. Gilderhus, David C. LaFavor, and Michael J. LaRosa. 2nd revised edition. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017. Pp. xiii + 303. \$39.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781442257160.

Latin America Confronts the United States: Asymmetry and Influence. By Tom Long. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Pp. xi + 260. \$29.99 paperback. ISBN: 9781107547056.

Cooperation and Hegemony in US-Latin American Relations: Revisiting the Western Hemisphere Idea. Edited by Juan Pablo Scarfi and Andrew R. Tillman. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Pp. ix + 260. \$119.99 hardcover. ISBN: 9781137510730.

Latin America in International Politics: Challenging US Hegemony. By Joseph S. Tulchin. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2016. Pp. vii + 235. \$65.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781626374485.

A fundamental imbalance of power between the United States and Latin America has long characterized the Western Hemisphere and shaped inter-American relations. In the context of such asymmetry, it is perhaps not surprising that scholarship on US–Latin American relations has tended to focus on the material capabilities and actions of the United States and consequently neglected the influence of Latin American actors on hemispheric dynamics. The works under review here seek to move beyond this incomplete picture in several ways. First, they place Latin America in the foreground by analyzing historical episodes in which Latin American leaders exercised agency and influence in their foreign policies. Second, taking a cue from the so-called cultural turn in historiography, they seek to move beyond a focus on statesmen and their actions by exploring the lived experiences of ordinary people in Latin America.¹ The resulting portrait of inter-American relations emphasizes the complex interactions between the United States, Latin American leaders, and a host of nonstate actors.

Taken collectively, these works also present an opportunity to reflect on the current state of scholarship on US–Latin American relations. In one recent assessment, Mariano Bertucci argues that the field needs to make

¹ The “cultural turn” refers to the growing prominence of cultural history within the discipline in the 1980s and 1990s. See, for example, David Chaney, *The Cultural Turn: Scene-Setting Essays on Contemporary Cultural History* (London: Routledge, 1994); and, in the field of US–Latin American relations, Gilbert Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

significant changes to realize its full potential.² In particular, he notes that the empirical scope of US–Latin American relations focuses too narrowly on foreign policy analysis (especially US foreign policy analysis) to the neglect of nonstate actors and transnational issues such as migration and the environment. Furthermore, Bertucci laments that the field is largely descriptive and therefore neglects issues of theory development and explanation central to the subfield of international relations. Given their explicit focus on the agency of various political and social actors in Latin America, the books surveyed here are largely successful in expanding the scope of inquiry beyond the confines of US foreign policy. Bertucci's characterization of the field as largely descriptive is harder to dismiss, but Tom Long's book does stand out for its analytical rigor and should pave the way for more theoretically motivated scholarship on US–Latin American relations.

In Search of Agency

Joseph Tulchin's *Latin America in International Politics* provides a useful starting point for a discussion of Latin America's quest to achieve agency in foreign affairs.³ Recalling an exchange with Heraldo Muñoz, Tulchin opens by noting that “no nation is without power” and, even in the context of US regional hegemony, all Latin American states enjoy “wobble room” to pursue their national interests (5–6). Yet one of the central claims of Tulchin's book is that the historical record provides very little evidence that Latin American states achieved independent and effective foreign policies until quite recently. In this, Tulchin argues, Latin America's history contrasts markedly with that of the United States.

Tulchin's historical narrative traces the development of Latin American foreign policies from independence to the present. The author regrets that the nineteenth century provides precious little evidence of Latin American governments articulating coherent and globally oriented foreign policies. In his view internal instability and territorial conflicts, if not the slow pace of modernization, contributed to foreign policies that were both parochial and reactionary. This situation changed only slowly in the twentieth century particularly because of the Great Depression and world wars. Tulchin's portrait of Latin America's growing but ultimately limited agency in the early twentieth century also finds confirmation in *Cooperation and Hegemony in US-Latin American Relations*, edited by Juan Pablo Scarfi and Andrew R. Tillman. Mark Jeffrey Petersen, for example, explores how the Chilean foreign ministry became increasingly active in the US-led Pan-American movement and sought, with some success, to place Latin American concerns, such as public health, on the hemispheric agenda in the 1910s and 1920s. Similarly, Juan Pablo Scarfi analyzes how Latin American jurists contested US rationales for military intervention through their participation in the US-led American Institute of International Law. He credits international lawyers such as Alejandro Alvarez of Chile and Carlos Saavedra Llamas of Argentina with advancing the principles of multilateralism and nonintervention that eventually became the foundation of Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy.

The Cold War, in turn, is something of a paradox. While Tulchin states that, “There was little space for agency outside of the bipolar struggle” (11), he also argues that several countries proved adept at navigating these constraints, including Costa Rica, Venezuela (under Betancourt), and, more radically, Cuba. For Tulchin, the case of Costa Rica and, specifically, the country's leadership of the Esquipulas peace process, merits particular attention as the “most effective” example of Latin American agency in the Cold War period (11). How did the country achieve “hemispheric and global influence far beyond its size and economic power” (91)? Tulchin attributes Costa Rica's success to the development of a distinctive “strategic culture” that developed in response to a series of national “nightmares” in the twentieth century, namely the rise to power and subsequent assassination of Joaquín Tinoco, the “revolution from the right” led by José Figueres Ferrer, and the experience of Central America's civil wars in the 1970s and 1980s. In Tulchin's view, these national traumas led to an elite consensus that Costa Rica's national security hinged on liberal democracy, regional stability, and a close alliance with the United States. Regrettably, however, Tulchin dedicates only a few pages to this provocative case study and is thus more successful at describing Costa Rica's unique strategic culture than methodically explaining it.

A more detailed, analytical, and cheerful study of Latin American diplomatic initiatives in the Cold War (and beyond) is found in Tom Long's masterful *Latin America Confronts the United States*. The author opens by noting that, in spite of its overwhelming capabilities, “the United States has often failed to determine outcomes or control the course of events in the region that it supposedly dominates” (2). Indeed, the central

² Mariano E. Bertucci, “Scholarly Research on U.S.-Latin American Relations: Where Does the Field Stand?” *Latin American Politics and Society* 55, no. 4 (2013): 119–142.

³ Agency is defined as “an individual's sense of his or her capacity for action ... within the constraints of an institution, a group, or a system” (Tulchin, 17 n. 16).

argument of Long's book is that Latin American states have exhibited more autonomy and had greater influence on policy outcomes in the region than is commonly appreciated.⁴ His argument is illustrated through four painstakingly researched case studies, including two from the Cold War period (Brazil and Panama) and two from the post-Cold War era (Mexico and Colombia). The book is one of the more sophisticated recent contributions to the literature on US–Latin American relations.

In his first case study, Long sets out to demonstrate that Brazil's *Operação Pan-Americana* (OPA), the brainchild of President Juscelino Kubitschek (1956–1961), was an important causal factor leading to John F. Kennedy's implementation of the Alliance for Progress. At its core OPA proposed a hemispheric and multilateral program of economic assistance to combat underdevelopment in Latin America, objectives very much in keeping with Kubitschek's domestic goal of promoting "fifty years of progress in five." In an attempt to garner US support for this bold initiative, Brazil (in concert with Argentina and especially Colombia under President Alberto Lleras Camargo) spearheaded an unprecedented diplomatic campaign. Initially, the Eisenhower administration was cool to the proposal; the United States' primary concern in the region, after all, was Soviet meddling, not development. To increase Brazil's bargaining power, Kubitschek therefore sought to reframe underdevelopment as a security issue, stating in a letter to President Eisenhower that "poverty and frustration of economically stagnant peoples have a much greater capability for agitation" than any external agents (Long, 63). Kubitschek's strategy was a partial success in that the Eisenhower administration eventually agreed to back the creation of the Inter-American Development Bank. Moreover, a series of unanticipated events dramatically increased the salience of the OPA's proposals, namely the Cuban Revolution, the election of Kennedy, and the rise of development-oriented modernization theory in the United States. In this, Long rightly acknowledges that, "on its own, OPA was not a sufficient cause for the Alliance for Progress" (68). But the author makes a convincing case that Brazil's persistent diplomacy elevated the place of development aid on the hemispheric agenda and paved the way for the momentous changes in US policy that followed.

The case of Panama's quest to gain control of the canal from the United States is no less dramatic. Indeed, when Lt. Colonel Omar Torrijos seized power in the late 1960s, Long notes that Panama "faced a steep climb" in winning any serious concessions from the United States (84). But within a decade Torrijos's authoritarian and nationalist government succeeded in attaining most of its foreign policy goals. In a persuasive narrative, Long credits Torrijos's cunning diplomatic strategies for Panama's success. To begin, Torrijos successfully sought to elevate the canal issue among US policy-makers by internationalizing Panama's cause in the United Nations Security Council, where the small country happened to hold a temporary seat. In 1973, a Panamanian-sponsored resolution on the canal garnered overwhelming support and was defeated only because of the United States' veto power. Similar to Brazil and the case of OPA, Torrijos and his diplomatic team next sought to redefine the Panamanian position in terms of US national security priorities, arguing that Panamanian control was the best guarantee of the canal's security. Panama's argument gained traction with US officials, notably Henry Kissinger, and as Long states, "gradually became the conventional wisdom regarding the canal's safety" (103). Of course, the election of Jimmy Carter was another crucial factor in bringing eventual closure to years of negotiations between the US and Panama. For Long, though, the crucial point is that the eventual outcome "resulted from an interactive process" (127).

The Cold War certainly constrained the autonomy of Latin American leaders. As the case Cuba amply demonstrates, the costs of confronting the United States were extremely high. Under these conditions, both Tulchin and Long suggest that cooperation with the United States was often an effective strategy for achieving policy goals, provided leaders could identify and exploit a middle ground between US and Latin American priorities. This truth has not received the scholarly attention it arguably deserves. As Scarfi and Tillman state in their review of the historiography of US–Latin American relations, "little emphasis has been placed on studying cooperation in its own right" (12). While conflict remains a vital topic of inquiry, the studies above suggest that our understanding of hemispheric relations can also benefit from closer attention to areas of convergence between the United States and Latin America.

A New Era of Autonomy

In the post-Cold War period, sweeping changes in the international system and domestic politics of Latin American countries emboldened Latin American leaders to act with unprecedented autonomy. The end of the Cold War itself removed the rigid ideological prism through which the United States interpreted security threats in the region. Furthermore, Tulchin argues that the "double revolution" of globalization

⁴ Autonomy is defined as "the ability to make decisions that are not determined by external pressures" (Long, 17).

and democratization in Latin America greatly enhanced the region's diplomatic capabilities through a mix of enhanced transparency, credibility and economic stabilization (162). In the introduction to the revised edition of *Contemporary U.S.-Latin American Relations*, Jorge Domínguez adds that the rise of China in world markets (to the general benefit of Latin America's export-driven economies), opposition to US policies associated with the war on terror, and the breakdown of the liberal consensus that predominated in the 1990s further emboldened Latin American leaders to assert their independence in foreign affairs. It is not surprising, then, that Latin American leaders have exhibited a tremendous diversity of foreign policy strategies in their relations with the United States and the world in the quarter century since the end of the Cold War.

The countries of Mexico and Colombia represent two of the clearest recent cases in which Latin American leaders pursued their national interests through an explicit partnership with the United States. In both cases, domestic crises (or nightmares, to borrow Tulchin's term) motivated leaders to reorient their foreign policy strategies significantly. In Mexico, the debt crisis of the 1980s (and the growth of regional trading blocs around the world) spurred President Carlos Salinas to cast aside the country's traditional foreign policy tenets and propose a free trade agreement with the United States and Canada, culminating in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In his convincing portrait of the NAFTA negotiations, Long argues that Salinas's skillful diplomatic team gained as much as it conceded against its powerful northern neighbors. Most importantly, the author claims, NAFTA represented a check on arbitrary trade actions by the United States and, as such, "was a way for Mexico to reduce the economic effects of asymmetry through institutions, rules, and interdependence" (172).

Colombia also found itself in a deep crisis when President Andrés Pastrana first proposed a new security partnership with the United States known as Plan Colombia. By the late 1990s, Colombia was under siege from increasingly powerful armed groups including guerrillas, paramilitaries, and drug traffickers. Strengthening the state became a key goal of the Pastrana administration. Against the view that Plan Colombia was dictated by the United States with Colombia playing only a subordinate role, Long seeks to demonstrate that the security initiative is better understood as "the outcome of interactions between the U.S. and Colombian policymakers" (178). In particular, Long notes that while the plan did include significant counternarcotic measures (a key US security priority), it also included support for alternative economic development schemes and Colombia's controversial peace process, two of the Pastrana administration's core goals. Although Pastrana's peace gambit ultimately failed, and US-funded alternative development schemes have exhibited an uneven record of success, Long reminds us that they were central to the origins of Plan Colombia.

The countries of Chile and Brazil illuminate an alternative trajectory that is more global in orientation and less explicitly aligned to the United States. For Tulchin, Chile under the Concertación governments is the paradigmatic case of diplomatic agency in the post-Cold War period. Chile's strategy entailed active participation in multilateral organizations (notably agreeing to international arbitration of the country's nagging border disputes with Peru and Bolivia), a global trading policy that distributes risk across multiple markets, and touting of its newly democratic credentials as a source of soft power in international fora. Tulchin stresses that the global reorientation of Chile's foreign policy was no small achievement as it entailed new thinking on the part of the military's senior officers. Beginning with the administration of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Brazil has also witnessed a revitalization of its foreign policy. Like Chile, Brazil's new foreign policy strategy entailed energetic participation in international institutions and, especially under President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, brandishing its progressive credentials as a source of soft power regionally and globally. While Tulchin's various case studies are revealing, regrettably, his book does not offer much in the way of a systematic comparative analysis. But we may surmise that the success of Chile and Brazil lies not only in their rising diplomatic capabilities and engagement with the existing international order but also in their promotion of core values such as democracy and social justice.

In light of the above, can we sketch some general propositions regarding how, in the context of US regional hegemony, Latin American states can successfully pursue their foreign policy interests? The studies above suggest that there are at least four crucial ingredients. First, as emphasized by Tulchin, a measure of stability and material capabilities is critical. This helps to explain the relatively slow evolution of foreign policy innovations in Latin America in the nineteenth century and its rapid expansion in the twenty-first century. Second, leaders must be poised to take advantage of strategic opportunities arising from changes in the international system such as, say, the Cuban Revolution or the end of the Cold War. As Long states, "Often, these opportunities arise because of unexpected events that cast doubt on the efficacy

of a particular U.S. policy or unsettle the policy agenda" (223). Taken together, these factors confirm realist precepts regarding the importance of the international balance of power. Yet just as scholars cannot ignore power, they cannot ignore agency. This is seen in the importance of the third crucial ingredient, presidential leadership. The innovations in foreign policy outlined above cannot be adequately understood without examining the visions and influence of leaders such as "Don Pepe" Figueres, Kubitschek, Torrijos, or Lula. The final ingredient is strategic in nature and concerns *how* leaders pursue their interests, including how they frame issues to gain international salience and, especially in relation to the United States, whether they deploy tactics of accommodation or confrontation (or a combination of each). In short, leadership, ideas, and strategies are crucial to the study of Latin American foreign policy.

"Thickening" the History of US–Latin American Relations

In addition to challenging accounts of hemispheric relations that focus on the United States to the detriment of Latin America, several of the books under review seek to move beyond the state-centric framework of traditional diplomatic history and orthodox international relations. Historians such as Charles Jones (in Scarfi and Tillman, chapter 1) go so far as to call for a complete reformulation of international relations as a field of study. Taking inspiration from the cultural turn in history, these works emphasize the need to examine nonstate actors, including social movements and corporations, operating in local, national, and transnational milieu. The objective of this approach, as summarized by Tanya Harmer, is a "thickening" of "our understanding of interactions at multiple levels and in different arenas within the Americas" (in Scarfi and Tillman, 79). Yet this approach is not without its own set of challenges. As the editors of *Beyond the Eagle's Shadow* note, one of the difficulties such scholars face is "locating the proper balance between the power of Latin Americans and that of the United States" (Garrard-Burnett, Lawrence, and Moreno, 12). Similarly, in her sharp summary of the emerging literature, Harmer cautions that historians must not neglect economic and political structures (nor national history), stating "historians need to be wary they do not mistake agency for power" (in Scarfi and Tillman, 85).

Among the books surveyed here, *Beyond the Eagle's Shadow* is the clearest representation of this approach. Edited by historians Virginia Garrard-Burnett, Mark Atwood Lawrence, and Julio E. Moreno, the volume proposes, first, to explore the "ways in which Latin Americans determined their own history by resisting US influence or, more often, bending the Cold War to local purposes" (4). Furthermore, by turning the focus toward nonelite actors, several contributions examine "how Latin Americans outside of government experienced the Cold War in their everyday lives," including instances far removed from the bipolar rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union (5). The main body of the book consists of eleven case chapters covering a variety of countries and topics. Together the case studies paint a portrait of complexity that defies easy summary, though a thoughtful introduction and provocative afterword by Alan McPherson help to orient the reader.

Some of the chapters offer fairly conventional accounts of Cold War diplomacy. Aragon Storm Miller, for example, evaluates the triangular relationship between Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Although the United States is a key player in the drama, the leaders of the three Caribbean basin countries—Romulo Betancourt, Fidel Castro, and Rafael Trujillo—take center stage in the story. In particular, Miller seeks to demonstrate that, under Betancourt's leadership, Venezuela played a key role in convincing both the United States and the Organization of American States (OAS) that, in spite of its undeniable anticommunist credentials, Trujillo's autocratic regime was no less a threat to regional peace and stability than was revolutionary Cuba. Then again, scholars familiar with the Cold War history of the OAS will recognize that Betancourt's efforts to revitalize the organization in the name of democracy proved short-lived. Hence the author's claim that the OAS became "a powerful tool for combating both communism and political repression" appears to be overstated (in Garrard-Burnett, Lawrence, and Moreno, 99). That said, Miller's narrative does demonstrate that all three leaders—Betancourt, Castro, and Trujillo—forged distinctive foreign policies in the Cold War.

Whereas Miller focuses squarely on political elites, other contributors explore how Latin America's Cold War impacted nongovernmental actors. Julio E. Moreno, for one, examines how the bipolar conflict created adversity for the US-based Coca-Cola corporation and its business operations in Latin America, specifically Cuba and Guatemala. In Cuba, Coca-Cola was relatively successful in navigating the country's powerful labor demands and rising nationalism in the 1950s but proved unable to survive the revolution. Coca-Cola's operations in Guatemala, on the other hand, "spiraled into a full-blown international crisis that centered on the company's image" (in Garrard-Burnett, Lawrence, and Moreno, 33). The controversy centered on the

draconian actions of John C. Trotter, a US-based manager of Guatemala's Coca-Cola bottling business. In the context of growing repression within Guatemala in the 1960s and 1970s, the author traces how workers at the bottling plant became the victims of threats, intimidation, and even murder (allegedly on Trotter's orders) as they organized a union and sought a collective bargaining agreement. Facing repression at home, the Guatemalan union appealed to the international community for support and gained the backing of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF) in their struggle against Trotter's menacing actions. The IUF, in turn, led an embarrassing campaign against Coca-Cola's corporate headquarters in Atlanta that ultimately led to a shake-up in the management of its Guatemalan operations. For Moreno, it is an important story because it demonstrates that Coca-Cola was not as powerful as its fiercest critics allege and, moreover, "brings into question the view of U.S. companies as synonymous with U.S. foreign policy" (in Garrard-Burnett, Lawrence, and Moreno, 45).

A very different portrait of the Cold War emerges in Jennifer Hoyt's examination of city-planning efforts in Buenos Aires during Argentina's military dictatorship. In what Hoyt describes as "The Other Dirty War," the military-appointed mayor of Buenos Aires, Brigadier Osvaldo Cacciatore, waged an ambitious campaign to modernize the city's waste management system. Consistent with the military government's emphasis on efficient governance, the mayor deployed a new fleet of private trash-compacting trucks across the city. The change enabled the government to collect and dispose of far more trash while generating significant savings. Furthermore, taking inspiration from his secretary of public works, Guillermo Domingo Laura, the mayor sought to clean the city's air by creating a belt of green spaces around the city while restricting trash incineration. As documented by Hoyt, though, citizens found ample grounds to criticize the city's trash modernization program. In the local newspapers, many complained that the trucks did not arrive on time, while others argued that the new regulations on trash incineration were arbitrary and imposed severe costs on city residents. Furthermore, few *porteños* appeared to understand or appreciate the government's environmental objectives.

What is the lesson of this peculiar episode of everyday life in the Cold War? For Hoyt, the public debate around the city's environmental planning effort "identifies an important space where residents could dissent without fear of reprisals" and thus reveals "the limits of the regime's coercive power" (in Garrard-Burnett, Lawrence, and Moreno, 230). However, others may reach the opposite conclusion, namely that the regime's authority was so overwhelming that only mundane and seemingly trivial criticisms of government performance such as trash collection were permitted. In the afterword of *Beyond the Eagle's Shadow*, Alan McPherson suggests a different and perhaps bolder lesson from studies such as Hoyt's, namely that, "the more historians find out about the Cold War in the hemisphere, the more that Cold War itself fades to the background" (in Garrard-Burnett, Lawrence, and Moreno, 307). He concludes by imploring researchers "to question our most basic findings, even the finding that the Cold War pervaded Latin America" (318).

Snapshots of the Present

The final books to be discussed—*The Third Century: U.S.-Latin American Relations since 1889* and *Contemporary U.S.-Latin American Relations: Cooperation or Conflict in the 21st Century?*—share a few things in common. Both are second editions, though a much larger gap—seventeen years—separates the first and second editions of *The Third Century*. Furthermore, both volumes have been revised with an eye to examining the very recent past. My summary highlights what is new in each volume since the publication of the original.

Following the passing of historian Mark T. Gilderhus in 2015, David C. LaFevor and Michael J. LaRosa embarked on the challenging task of updating his seminal work, *The Second Century: U.S.-Latin American Relations since 1889*. This entailed restructuring some of the original content, inserting two new chapters on contemporary events, and adding a short photo essay. In line with the original text, LaFevor and LaRosa situate their work firmly in the revisionist camp of history, entailing a "critical reflection of the role of the United States in Latin America" (xi). Furthermore, influenced by the more recent historiographical trends noted above, they emphasize the importance of cultural factors in relations between the United States and Latin America. The authors' approach is most apparent in the concluding chapter, "NAFTA to Now in Three Keys: Commerce, Conflict, and Culture." The commerce section highlights the rise of free market policies in the 1990s, which the authors largely dismiss as serving big business interests to the detriment of the poor; readers looking for a balanced assessment of the pros and cons of trade deals such as NAFTA will have to look elsewhere. The conflict section summarizes the frosty relationship between US presidents and left-wing leaders such as Jean-Bertrand Aristide and Hugo Chávez, and their warm relations with conservative leaders

such as Felipe Calderón and Álvaro Uribe. Against this discouraging narrative, the book ends on a positive note by emphasizing the increasing cultural interchange between the United States and Latin America, especially in food, sports, film, music, and literature. The editors conclude that in the midst of conflict and economic disparity, “culture continues to draw together the United States and Latin America” (274).

Both editions of *Contemporary U.S.-Latin American Relations* are indispensable references for readers in search of a concise and up-to-date summary of bilateral relations between the United States and critical Latin American countries such as Mexico and Brazil. The updated edition largely maintains the bilateral orientation of the original, though it adds three new chapters on Latino diasporas in the United States, transnational criminal violence, and US immigration policy. The shift away from an exclusive focus on bilateral relationships is welcome. The only disappointment is that the editors do not offer a preface explaining the rationale for the change, though certainly they concur that there are many critical aspects of US–Latin American relations that cannot be encapsulated within a state-to-state framework.

The first and perhaps the most innovative of these new chapters, written by David R. Ayón, examines the impact of Latino diasporas on US policies toward Latin America during the Obama administration. Ayón’s key argument is that the impact of US Latinos is not trivial to the study of hemispheric dynamics. As he states, “the political influence of U.S. Latinos can, under certain conditions, serve as an intervening variable in U.S.-Latin American relations” (in Domínguez and Fernández de Castro, 243). Specifically, he underscores the symbiotic relationship that emerged between President Barack Obama and an increasingly powerful Latino electorate around the issues of immigration reform and détente with Cuba. Immigration reform emerged as the top policy priority among Latino voters, who turned out in significant numbers to vote for Obama. Keen to deliver on his promises of immigration reform but stymied by Congress, Obama used his executive authority to implement incremental policy changes granting significant deportation relief in 2012 and 2014. The issue of normalization of relations with Cuba, in contrast, was not a high-priority issue among the Latino electorate, but Obama’s ability to carry the state of Florida in his 2012 reelection campaign demonstrated that the anti-Castro diaspora had begun to lose its electoral salience in presidential politics. Eager to achieve a foreign policy breakthrough, Obama again pursued a strategy of incremental change utilizing his executive powers. For Ayón, the incremental strategy proved successful because it encouraged significant mobilization on the part of the Latino diaspora that helped expand the support base for further reform. Still, in both cases, Congress proved to be an obstacle to more significant reforms, in part because the influence of the Latino diaspora in Congress is more diffuse.

In conclusion, the books reviewed here suggest that the substantive scope of research on US–Latin American relations is expanding well beyond its traditional focus on US foreign policy. These studies do not ignore US power but rather stress the importance of examining interactions between the United States and Latin America. State-to-state relations remain a critical component of US–Latin American studies, but diasporic communities, social movements, and transnational corporations are also a vital component of hemispheric dynamics. The interactive and multilayered approach advanced in these works should provide a strong foundation for new research on the international relations of Latin America in an age of declining US influence and rising Latin American capabilities. Still, a few challenges remain. First, as noted above, scholars should be mindful of Bertucci’s finding that the literature remains overly descriptive and too far removed from the main theoretical trends in international relations. Long’s study is noteworthy in this regard because of its explicit focus on the dynamics of asymmetry. A second challenge, scarcely contemplated in these works, will be to further incorporate and assess the influence of non-hemispheric actors, especially China, on US–Latin American relations. As Domínguez summarizes, “China’s rise in world markets (and its impact on Latin American trade) has been the most enduring and most general of the international systemic changes thus far in this century” (Domínguez and Fernández de Castro, 6). What strategies can Latin American leaders deploy to take advantage of the new opportunities afforded by China’s rise without sacrificing their own independence?

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