

GOT A GRINGO  
ON THEIR SHOULDERS:  
U.S. Relations with Latin America

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- UNITED STATES ECONOMIC PENETRATION OF VENEZUELA AND ITS EFFECTS ON DIPLOMACY, 1895–1906.* By Charles Carreras. (New York: Garland, 1987. Pp. 252, \$44.00 cloth.)
- THE UNITED STATES AND SOMOZA, 1933–1956: A REVISIONIST LOOK.* By Paul Coe Clark, Jr. (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1992. Pp. 239. \$47.95 cloth.)
- THEODORE ROOSEVELT'S CARIBBEAN: THE PANAMA CANAL, THE MONROE DOCTRINE, AND THE LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT.* By Richard H. Collin. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990. Pp. 598. \$45.00 cloth.)
- THE RICH NEIGHBOR POLICY: ROCKEFELLER AND KAISER IN BRAZIL.* By Elizabeth Anne Cobbs. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992. Pp. 273. \$30.00 cloth.)
- PRIZE POSSESSION: THE UNITED STATES AND THE PANAMA CANAL, 1903–1979.* By John Major. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp. 432. \$49.95.)
- AN UNWANTED WAR: THE DIPLOMACY OF THE UNITED STATES AND SPAIN OVER CUBA, 1895–1898.* By John L. Offner. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992. Pp. 306. \$39.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper.)
- HAITI AND THE UNITED STATES: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENT.* By Brenda Gayle Plummer. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992. Pp. 303. \$45.00 cloth, \$18.50 paper.)
- AMERICAN POLICY IN NICARAGUA: THE LASTING LEGACY.* By Henry L. Stimson, introduction by Paul H. Boeker. (New York: Markus Wiener, 1991. Pp. 268. \$29.95 cloth, 14.95 paper. First published in 1927.)
- KENNEDY Y LOS TRUJILLO.* By Bernardo Vega. (Santo Domingo, D.R.: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1991. Pp. 423.)
- COLD WARRIORS AND COUPS D'ETAT: BRAZILIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS, 1945–1964.* By W. Michael Weis. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993. Pp. 262. \$37.50 cloth.)

These ten books address issues of perennial interest and importance to diplomatic historians and other students of international rela-

tions in the Western Hemisphere. John Offner's work explores the origins of the Spanish-American War, while Richard Collin's study depicts Theodore Roosevelt's policies toward the Caribbean region in the immediate aftermath. Henry Stimson's 1927 account and the studies by Paul Clark, John Major, Brenda Plummer, and Bernardo Vega all scrutinize various aspects and implications of U.S. dealings with protectorates in Nicaragua, Panama, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. Charles Carreras's dissertation addresses the issue of U.S. economic expansion into Venezuela around the turn of the century, while the books by Elizabeth Cobbs and Michael Weis elucidate the full range of U.S. relations with Brazil after World War II. Although by no means uniform in viewpoint, this body of scholarship will heighten understanding of U.S. attitudes toward and perceptions of Latin America while illustrating various methods, direct and indirect, by which the United States maintained its sphere of influence in the New World.

John Offner's long-awaited study of the onset of the U.S. war with Spain, *An Unwanted War: The Diplomacy of the United States and Spain over Cuba, 1895–1898*, employs an approach based on multiarchival research. Offner, a professor of history at Shippensburg University, sought "a balanced and sympathetic understanding of Spanish, Cuban, and American perspectives" (p. x). To this end, he consulted documentary collections in the United States, Spain, Cuba, France, England, Austria, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and the Vatican. His conclusion that the Spanish-American War was not only "inevitable" but "necessary" will startle skeptics, who may wonder whether such characterizations inhere in the actual events or in the language historians choose to describe them (p. 225).

Offner stresses the importance of politics in closing off options and alternatives. His thesis is stated in the preface: "The United States and Spain tried to find a peaceful resolution to the stalemated Cuban-Spanish war," but "Cuban nationalists were unyielding," and "powerful domestic forces propelled Washington and Madrid into a conflict" (p. ix). In Madrid, the strength of nationalist and military influences disallowed much compromise by any government. In Washington, Republicans risked intervention to head off Democratic flanking movements. According to Offner, "In the final analysis, Republicans made war on Spain in order to keep control of Washington." In his view, none of the other influences often cited as causes—"[e]xpansionism, markets and investments, the sensational press, and national security"—took on as much importance as politics "in carrying the United States into war" (p. ix). During the final crisis in the spring of 1898, "irreconcilable political positions" divided the principal players, making the war not only "inevitable" but also "necessary" as the only way "to bring an early end to the Cuban-Spanish colonial war" (p. 225).

Much in the fashion of other modern accounts by David Trask and

Lewis Gould, Offner's analysis credits President William McKinley with high leadership qualities. This revisionist tendency, on the rise since the 1960s, rejects earlier views depicting McKinley as a bumbler and weakling who, in Theodore Roosevelt's phrase, displayed "no more backbone than a chocolate éclair" when ultimately faced with strong public and congressional pressures in support of going to war with Spain. Offner's McKinley, in the newer tradition, held to a steady, rational, and defensible course, seeking legitimate and appropriate ways of restoring peace in Cuba and accepting the war only as a last resort.

McKinley's difficulty followed from the impossibility of the situation. The collision of Cuban nationalism with Spanish colonialism allowed for no compromise. In explaining the deadlock, Offner holds the Cubans especially accountable: "the Spanish made some attempts to end the colonial war and to prevent an American conflict," but "the Cubans were inflexible" (p. 226). Offner argues, "Given the danger of exchanging Spanish rule for American control," the Cuban rebel leaders "showed little imagination in trying to avoid U.S. domination." Indeed, they seemed oblivious to the probable negative consequences when they engaged in destruction of U.S. property, illegal filibustering expeditions, congressional lobbying, and other efforts to manipulate public opinion in the United States (p. 226). Offner wonders "what might have occurred if the Cubans had attempted to cooperate," specifically, by helping "to establish an armistice in Cuba in order to prevent a Spanish-American War." Doing so admittedly "would have required a gamble on gaining independence," but as Offner correctly notes, "antagonizing the McKinley administration and allowing an invasion was also full of risks" (p. 227).

This narrowly conceived political explanation challenges the interpretations of Walter La Feber, Louis Pérez, and others who have connected the U.S. war against Spain with the effects of economic depression, commercial expansion, and surging imperialism at the end of the 1890s. Such considerations hardly appear in *An Unwanted War*. In Offner's rendition, the historical actors functioned more or less exclusively as political creatures who seldom if ever employed other types of thinking in calculating the foreign policies of their country. Publication of Offner's work may signal the onset of a new round in the ongoing debate over the causes and consequences of the Spanish-American War and the nature of U.S. imperialism.

Richard Collin strikes similar blows against radical historiography and the legacies of the New Left, a school of thought that emphasizes the importance of capitalist expansion in explaining U.S. imperialism. His major book, *Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean: The Panama Canal, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Latin American Context*, is richly detailed and forcefully argued. It also affirms the need for proper contexts to ward off errors and misconceptions, which Collin identifies with explanatory models based

on “present-mindedness,” meaning the tendency to project contemporary concerns backward in time when explaining the past. He describes his study as “a serious attempt to shift the major context of early-twentieth-century American diplomacy to its own time and away from its current position as an appendage to post–World War II American history, more concerned about the Cold War or America’s role as a superpower than with Kaiser Wilhelm II’s Germany” (p. ix). Collin concentrates on Roosevelt’s policies toward the Caribbean during a brief transitional period, before World War I “transformed the world and America’s place in it.” As president, Roosevelt pursued a fundamental goal, defined according to Collin as “the exclusion of Europe, not the subjugation of Latin America.” Roosevelt’s apprehensions centered on Germany and for good reason: “not because Germany could conquer substantial parts of Latin America” but because “the introduction of European national rivalries into the New World, combined with the growing instability of Central America—Latin America’s Balkans—would destabilize the whole region. . . . What Roosevelt sought was stability, not dominance” (p. xiii).

Collin acknowledges nonetheless that Latin Americans had rational grounds for fearing U.S. hegemony. After Spain was eliminated from the New World in 1898, the United States threatened “to dominate the fractionalized Latin American republics in politics, economics, and culture” (p. x). In response, Latin American leaders issued warnings and rallying cries, but such reactions failed to address “the fundamental problems that bedeviled Latin America,” characterized by Collin as “economic backwardness, political instability, and an increasing gulf between the elites and the others classes.” The attributes of “modernism” in the United States manifested as profound changes in transportation, communications, and industrial technology left Latin America vulnerable and exposed.

Collin describes Theodore Roosevelt as “a cosmopolitan American nationalist, an aristocrat, and an intellectual” who “saw himself as a citizen of the world” and made foreign affairs “a new and prominent part of American government” (p. 52). As president, he intended “to secure and consolidate United States’ freedom from European interference and to challenge Congress’ dominance of American government” (p. 59). According to Collin, “He had no desire to add to American holdings in Asia, Latin America, or the Caribbean, though he did hope to expand the American people’s sense of global consciousness and to make the United States a world rather than a regional power.”

Roosevelt’s activism came to bear especially in Venezuela, Panama, and the Dominican Republic. In the case of Venezuela, Collin credits Roosevelt with facing down the Germans when they threatened to use force in collecting foreign debts. His strong stand brought about acceptance of mediation and maintained the policy of excluding European presences. In the case of Panama, Collin presents a sympathetic although

not uncritical account that points to the cultural problems of dealing with Colombian President José Marroquín in purchasing the proposed canal route. A zealous and reactionary Roman Catholic, Marroquín resisted the sale of Panama to Yankee Protestants and sometimes overruled representatives of his own government. In the Dominican Republic, Roosevelt set forth his Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, thereby establishing a case for preventive intervention, that is, the exercise of an international police power by the United States to keep out Europeans. These exhaustively discussed episodes make up the body of Collin's work and draw on a formidable array of bibliographical and historiographical information, as conveyed in the footnotes.

The reprint of Henry Stimson's *American Policy in Nicaragua: The Lasting Legacy* (1927) is presented as an example of elite thinking in the United States. The introduction was written by Paul Boeker, once a diplomat and more recently the president of the Institute of the Americas at the University of California, San Diego. According to Boeker, Stimson's account affirmed "the concept of the country's mission in the world" and the readiness of political leaders "to use military force to fulfill it" (p. ix). Stimson's month-long mission in Nicaragua was "a microcosm" in that it stood for larger aims and purposes. His long career in public service, including stints as secretary of state under Herbert Hoover and secretary of war under William Taft, Franklin Roosevelt, and Harry Truman, made him a hero. Stimson also inspired internationalists like Dean Acheson, John Foster Dulles, and George Bush, who supposedly shared his view "that right and wrong could be divined in conflicts around the world and his willingness to use U.S. power on behalf of the right side" (p. ix).

Stimson went to Nicaragua in 1927 as President Calvin Coolidge's envoy, seeking to halt a civil war occasioned by the withdrawal of U.S. military forces two years earlier. According to Boeker, Stimson's account reveals more about the attitudes of U.S. leaders than about Nicaragua. Cheerfully accepting the implications of Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, Stimson never doubted U.S. responsibility for upholding peace and order in Central America. While carrying out his mission, he erred by attributing unduly simplistic solutions to the Nicaragua problem and in supposing that Nicaraguans welcomed his help. Nevertheless, Stimson succeeded in persuading the Liberal and Conservative parties in Nicaragua to accept a cease-fire and a subsequent election supervised by the United States. He failed, however, to win over the more radical contingent headed by Augusto Sandino, who remained in rebellion until 1933, during which time U.S. Marines participated in the campaign against him. Boeker's remarks caution against the bad effects of interventionist impulses and other false assumptions. Additional commentary in this volume appears in the essays by historian Alan Brinkley and political scientist Andrés Pérez and in an official State Department

review of policy toward Nicaragua. Each piece demonstrates the paternalism, hypocrisy, and contradiction pervading U.S. policy toward Nicaragua and the subversion of that country's right to self-determination.

The Somoza dictatorship is the subject of the provocative monograph by Paul Coe Clark, Jr., *The United States and Somoza, 1933–1956: A Revisionist Look*. A former military officer with extensive experience in Latin America and a professional historian, Clark presents what he calls a “revisionist look” by challenging an idea often associated with critics of U.S. policy toward Nicaragua. According to Clark, a “cornerstone argument” holds that “after 1933 the United States established and supported the regime of Anastasio Somoza Garcia as a surrogate to serve American policy ends” and that this relationship “came to symbolize . . . the larger idea that U.S. foreign policy after World War II was predicated upon backing dictatorships worldwide as long as they supported American interests, especially anti-communism” (pp. ix–x). Clark notes that he too believed such claims until his research compelled a change of views.

According to Clark, the elder Somoza was never a creature of the United States, although he created a myth emphasizing special intimacy for his own political reasons. Clark's careful study shows that during the 1930s, “Somoza's native ability to operate more effectively than his opponents within the Nicaraguan socio-political milieu allowed him to consolidate his political power” (p. 197). The Partido Liberal and the Guardia Nacional (the constabulary created by U.S. officials) served as Somoza's power bases and enabled him to take advantage of nonintervention, a central precept of Franklin Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy. This U.S. commitment to keep hands off worked to Somoza's advantage but implied no special favor. His career as a dictator flourished, according to Clark, because of his political skills—not because of the United States.

Clark shows appropriate appreciation for the asymmetries in U.S. relations with Nicaragua and for the legacies of interventionism during the period before 1933. He insists nevertheless that after 1933 a different set of considerations prevailed, allowing some measure of autonomy among Nicaraguan elites. Clark concedes that “U.S. policy may have at times inadvertently assisted Somoza's ambitions and some American officials in the field were favorably influenced by the flamboyant general.” But more typically, “the majority of officials in policymaking positions supported democracy in Nicaragua, fought vigorously against Somoza's continuance in power and worked at least until 1948 to bring an end to his dictatorship” (pp. xvii–xviii). Although susceptible to overstatement, Clark's argument attributes Somoza's long rule to “his innate qualities, including his own dark political brilliance” and to “a cultural legacy in the country that has rarely known anything but tyranny in its political life” (p. xviii).

*Prize Possession: The United States and the Panama Canal, 1903–1979* is

the work of John Major, a senior lecturer in history at the University of Hull. Its purpose is to set forth a "historical analysis of the way in which the U.S. operated and defended the Panama canal and of the impact the canal made on its relations with the tiny republic whose heartland the waterway cut in two" (p. ix). Focusing on administrative and bureaucratic functions, *Prize Possession* "is mainly a study of the way in which successive governments handled their prize acquisition" (p. 9). One of Major's main themes underscores the privileged status of white Americans in the Canal Zone. They possessed access to wealth and influence and structured other relationships in ways that made clear distinctions between superior and inferior castes. Unsurprisingly, considerations of race figured prominently in establishing imperial hierarchies in the Canal Zone. During the years of the protectorate (from 1903 to 1936), U.S. intervention in Panama had "a strictly limited objective" in seeking to counteract any instability that could disrupt the operation of the waterway (p. 116). The United States intended the canal to serve a dual purpose as "a thoroughfare for maritime commerce and as a conduit for seapower," one that would enable the U.S. Navy to concentrate its fleet in either the Atlantic or the Pacific (p. 155). Defense of the canal became a primary ingredient of national security, but its vulnerabilities defied solution. A single terrorist with dynamite could wreak havoc. Even worse, the possibility of an air attack haunted officials during World War II and beyond.

As part of the Good Neighbor Policy, the Franklin Roosevelt administration abandoned the protectorate in 1936, inaugurating a new era. Subsequently, U.S. leaders preferred to stay out of Panamanian politics but had difficulty doing so. As Panamanian President Arnulfo Arias once remarked, the Canal Zone and Panama were "Siamese twins" (p. 261): each was hypersensitive to the reactions of the other. The observation attributed to Talleyrand that *nonintervention* is a metaphysical word meaning the same as *intervention* takes on special poignancy in the Panamanian case, especially because "the Panamanian elite still saw the United States as the arbiter of their power struggles" (p. 261). As Major notes, "The protectorate established in 1903 was officially a thing of the past, but Washington's role in Panama's affairs remained as central as ever." The last chapter concerns negotiation of the 1977 treaty, which provided for liquidation of the Canal Zone and transfer of the canal itself to Panama in 1999. The difficulty of finding language to satisfy nationalists in both Panama and the United States resulted in tortured phraseology. For example, one provision stipulated that any action taken by Washington to guarantee the canal's neutrality "shall not have as its purpose nor be interpreted as a right of intervention in the internal affairs of Panama or interference with its political independence or sovereign integrity" (p. 353). Yet despite such devices, the removal of General Manuel Noriega in 1989 by means of military force "proved that the American urge to

dominate was as strong as ever" (p. 378). Whatever the rhetorical pretensions, the influence of paternalism and hegemony has remained strong in the conduct of Panamanian relations.

Brenda Gayle Plummer's *Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment* employs the language and approach of the new "cultural studies." Part of an ambitious series on U.S.–Latin American relations edited by Lester Langley of the University of Georgia, this work explores its subject within a broad context. Plummer, a history professor at the University of Wisconsin, takes her subtitle from an observation made early in the twentieth century by Elihu Root, Theodore Roosevelt's secretary of state, who understood Haitian suspicions of U.S. efforts to set things right. Root therefore wanted to wait until the appropriate "psychological moment." Plummer describes this insight as "prescient" because "much of the Haitian-U.S. relationship has turned on matters of consciousness" (p. 8). Conceptions of race have figured prominently. U.S. perceptions drew on "age-old fears and fantasies about savage blacks inhabiting a nightmare world of their own making." Such views were partly a consequence of "the cataclysmic slave insurrection" that resulted in an independent Haiti, but they also reflected "psychic tensions deeply embedded in U.S. culture and society" (p. 1). Haitians regarded the United States similarly, as a place made menacing by the legacies of slavery, racism, and expansionism.

Ironically, both countries owed their existence as independent nations to anticolonial revolts, but they then took divergent approaches in matters concerning slavery, self-rule, and economic development. According to Plummer, "The roots of foreign policy in both countries are intimately linked to the development of domestic policy and conditioned by the character of civil society. . . . Conflict between the states has been a natural by-product of their differences, and the search for a common ground, while prescribed by critical elements in their histories, has rarely taken place" (p. 9).

Plummer's main themes center on Haiti's political and economic isolation from the rest of the world during much of the nineteenth century and then on subjugation by the United States during the protectorate era. As a black state in a world dominated by white nations, Haiti had trouble obtaining diplomatic recognition, something the United States would not extend until 1862. Subsequently, Haiti became the focus of imperial rivalries in the Caribbean and suffered the consequences of engaging in a fragmented and often violent form of politics. Seeking to set things right in 1915, U.S. Marines landed in Haiti, fought a nasty guerrilla war, and stayed on for twenty years. After withdrawal, the United States cooperated with Haitian elites to maintain stability. Although usually regarded with distaste, the Duvalier family dictatorship appeared to U.S. officials as a better alternative than chaos and upheaval in times of a cold



war and revolution. Plummer's *Haiti and the United States* spells out the implications of this choice. A consistent critic of U.S. policy, she also depicts vividly the impact of racist thinking on U.S.-Haitian relations.

Bernardo Vega, a leading historian of the Dominican Republic during the Trujillo era, has written a massive chronicle entitled *Kennedy y los Trujillo*. Focused on the single year of 1961, it provides a huge body of evidence and commentary supporting the view that the United States played a key role in Dominican politics at this juncture. Concerned essentially with the complicated maneuvers following the assassination in May 1961 of longtime dictator Rafael Trujillo, Vega's study reviews the Dominican power struggle in immense and impressive detail. Before Trujillo's death, balance and consistency required that the administration of President Dwight Eisenhower press for democratization not only in Castro's Cuba but also in the Dominican Republic. When John Kennedy became president, he too felt a need to maintain this commitment and became deeply embroiled in tactical complexities.

After the dictator was killed, members of his family (mainly his son Ramfis and his brothers Héctor and Petán) advocated a policy of "Trujillismo sin Trujillo" in order to sustain an authoritarian state based on military support, supposedly the best defense against radical subversion. In doing so, they hoped to capitalize on the anticommunist proclivities of the United States. Democratic reformers associated with Juan Bosch, meanwhile, wanted to eliminate Trujillismo. For the United States, the ensuing dilemma required U.S. leaders to decide whether to encourage democratic reform while risking a radical takeover or to stay with the established system. According to Vega's account, U.S. officials under Kennedy had a reasonably accurate understanding of Dominican politics and realized that by acting in favor of reform, they actually would not gamble too much. The forces favoring moderate change were strong. In this instance, Vega implies, U.S. involvement in Dominican politics had a positive effect in encouraging democratization, at least in the short run.

In Venezuela, in contrast, U.S. business interests had greater difficulty obtaining a foothold initially. Publication of Charles Carreras's *United States Economic Penetration of Venezuela and Its Effects on Diplomacy, 1895–1906* (his 1971 dissertation at the University of North Carolina) traces some of the pitfalls of pursuing programs of economic expansion in remote, undeveloped, and unruly places. It also establishes a context for grasping some of the consequences of U.S. involvement in the Venezuela boundary dispute with Great Britain in 1895. Although not directly concerned with that controversy, this book shows that afterward U.S. economic interest in Venezuela's "untapped potential" rose significantly among certain groups of diplomats and businessmen (p. 18). During the next decade, U.S. investments went primarily into asphalt production and mining but never delivered a solid return. This volume consists of a series

of case studies demonstrating how U.S. enterprise initially went awry in Venezuela. U.S. investors, who were often greedy and aggressive, engaged Venezuelan authorities in complicated wrangles over land and concessions that led to an array of diplomatic difficulties and political tensions. Venezuela was not very susceptible to U.S. economic expansion during these early encounters but became much more so later, when the discovery of oil reserves provided the incentive.

The last two books under review convey vivid and comprehensive depictions of U.S. relations with Brazil after World War II. Michael Weis, a professor of history at Illinois Wesleyan University, provides in *Cold Warriors and Coups d'Etat: Brazilian-American Relations, 1945–1964* a conventional kind of diplomatic history that covers familiar ground but also draws extensively on Brazilian primary sources, a commendable attribute. Weis's intention was to investigate "why Brazilian-American relations deteriorated between 1945 and 1964, and why the United States aided in the overthrow of the João Goulart regime" (p. 1). He explains that for nearly half a century, complementary interests had linked Brazil and the United States in an "unwritten alliance." During World War II, Brazil supported the Allies, even to the extent of sending combat troops into Italy, and therefore expected a reward in the form of economic aid and assistance to sustain national development. When a Marshall Plan for Latin America failed to materialize, Brazilian leaders felt a sense of betrayal that undercut the rationale for maintaining close relations with the United States.

Weis argues that the "globalization" of U.S. policy during the early years of the cold war meant "the abandonment of Pan Americanism" and the unwritten Brazilian-American alliance (pp. 1–2). In his view, Brazilian leaders understood these implications but believed nevertheless that the United States would become a major source of capital and technology: "Brazil's quest for rapid economic development became the dominant issue in postwar Brazilian-American relations" (p. 4). Subsequently, profound differences over strategies of development divided the two countries. The Eisenhower administration's initial insistence on trade, not aid, never satisfied Brazilian leaders, and the Brazilian preference for state involvement in the economy offended U.S. Republicans, who liked private investment and free trade.

The rift deepened late in the 1950s during the presidency of Juscelino Kubitschek. Weis's account suggests that U.S. politicians never understood their Brazilian counterparts. What appeared to U.S. leaders as dangerous forms of radicalism actually emerged in the Brazilian context from a debate over different approaches to capitalist development, in the course of which the advocacy of economic nationalism compelled greater independence from the United States. Within the Brazilian Army, meanwhile, pro-U.S. sentiments remained strong, encouraged and maintained by on-

going dependency on U.S. military aid. Weis also implies a high level of U.S. complicity in the military coup of 1964, after which the Lyndon Johnson administration gave up the pretense of promoting Brazilian democracy. Weis presents his case convincingly and with abundant detail.

Some of the same themes are addressed by Elizabeth Anne Cobbs, a professor at the University of San Diego, in *The Rich Neighbor Policy: Rockefeller and Kaiser in Brazil*, but she develops a different line of analysis.<sup>1</sup> Much like Weis, Cobbs is interested in the effects of constricted U.S. economic aid to Latin America following World War II. As she notes, "Latin Americans, in view of a history of dominance by foreign corporations engaged in extractive enterprises, were highly suspicious of any attempt to put forth private investment as the solution to their underdevelopment and resented strongly the postwar lack of interest of U.S. leaders" (p. 4). Yet unofficial U.S. interest never disappeared entirely. Her book focuses on the activities of two major investors: Nelson Rockefeller, "who believed both in the viability of government-supported development in some sectors as well as in the possibility of development as an outgrowth of private investment," and Henry Kaiser, "who thought that, for their own sake, American investors had to respond to the development goals of the countries into which they ventured" (p. 4).

*The Rich Neighbor Policy* recounts an untold story about "the role of certain private individuals and organizations in promoting economic development through the transfer of American techniques, technology and financial resources—as contrasted with the role of the U.S. government in doing the same" (p. 5). Cobbs links her discussion intriguingly with the "corporatist" approach to studying U.S. foreign relations. A subject of heavy interest in recent years, the corporatist critique emphasizes the extent to which the United States after World War II tried "to export to the rest of the world its own domestic model of government-business-labor collaboration" (p. 9). Recognizing the slippery nature of the word *corporatism*, Cobbs defines it as "a form of political and economic organization . . . in which the state plays a strong role in compartmentalizing and directing competing interests to achieve the common good" (p. 10). What makes her discussion unique is her insistence that the corporatist analysis works in Latin America only by leaving out the government component and focusing on the activities of the private sector—hence, her emphasis on Rockefeller and Kaiser.

According to Cobbs's argument, in the postwar period, the U.S. government took less interest in Latin America than did various businessmen in the private sector: as the government "became increasingly impervious to Latin American criticism of its role as global hegemon, U.S.

1. Cobbs's fine work was properly rewarded with the Stuart L. Bernarth Prize from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, as the best book of 1993.

business became increasingly vulnerable to foreign critics" (p. 16). In setting forth her research design, Cobbs acknowledges that "[t]he oppressive actions of certain U.S. corporations have been well documented." She goes on to explain that her goal was to advance understanding of "other aspects of the complex relationship of private Americans to Latin American development" (p. 20). Cobbs's central theme becomes the contrast between "the approaches of certain private groups and those of the U.S. government in attempting to transfer American know-how to Brazil" (p. 18). The result is a rich and illuminating account of a little-known aspect of U.S.-Brazilian relations.

Taken together, these books represent well the recent historical literature on U.S.–Latin American relations. In this field, as in other areas of history, scholars typically favor eclectic approaches and disagree on fundamentals. Some of the central issues examined in these works are the extent to which economic considerations (instead of strategic, ideological, or other kinds) governed the behavior of the United States, the magnitude of imperialist intent on the part of U.S. elites, and the degree of actual Latin American subordination to the United States as hegemon. Interested readers—generalists as well as specialists—can learn a great deal from these accounts, which serve to illustrate the truism that the narratives found in history books are seldom if ever definitive. Rather, they form an ongoing debate over the meaning of human experience. In this instance, the literature focuses on international relationships within a region characterized by great political and economic inequalities and cultural differences, whose causes and consequences are subject to diverse interpretations.