

## **Power and Principle: A New US Policy for Latin America**

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### **Abstract**

*Realists have tended to under-theorize state behaviour in a hegemonic system. A hegemonic power arrangement lies between absolute anarchy and hierarchy, and thus produces some degree of order and stability. Under such a system, legitimacy becomes much more relevant since subordinate states expect the hegemon to provide collective goods. Now that Latin America has embraced democracy and capitalism, the United States has finally achieved hegemony in the western hemisphere. Consequently, the United States must develop a new, more principled foreign policy toward Latin America—a policy that yields security, prosperity, and democracy for all states in the system. Moving beyond criticism, we propose several concrete changes to US policy that would enhance America’s image and leadership in Latin America.*

**Key words:** US-Latin American relations, hegemony, realism

### **1. Introduction**

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Latin America finds itself in an unprecedented period of consensus over economic and political principles. Beginning in the late 1970s, the region was overcome by the so-called “third wave” of democracy that washed away the authoritarian regimes that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s (Huntington, 1991). Along with this democratic tide, Latin America also began adopting “neoliberal” economic policies after the debt crisis of the 1980s. These economic policies have dismantled the statist policies that were popular beginning in the 1930s and have ushered in the opening of the region’s economies to world trade and investment. For the most part, those who years earlier had advocated authoritarian forms of government—whether the communist or militarist variety—or had advocated state control of the economy, decided to embrace democracy and capitalism as the best hopes for the people and governments of the region. The US promoted “American model”—democracy and capitalism—now stands practically unchallenged in the hemisphere.

Since the turn of the century, however, several Latin American countries have elected presidents who are questioning the so-called Washington consensus. If the United States wishes to remain the region’s hegemon, it must act quickly to design a new regional policy, akin to Roosevelt’s Good Neighbour policy or Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress. Only a more “ethical” policy toward the region will ensure that America can continue to exercise hegemony. By employing the term “ethical,” we are suggesting that the US government will need to ensure that its foreign policy benefits the countries of Latin America, providing such universal values as democracy, peace, *and* prosperity. A new, ethical policy will not only guarantee vital US interests, but it will also promote the principles that America has rhetorically stood for since its founding—democracy and self-determination—and will therefore be welcomed by the leaders and people of the region.

We begin our argument by pointing out that realists have mostly neglected to examine hegemony and the policies and state behaviour most favourable for the maintenance of such a systemic power distribution. We argue that to preserve their power, hegemonic states need to promote both their self-interest *and* the interests of subordinate states.

While *realpolitik* may be a necessary approach for states that are attempting to achieve a preponderance of power in the anarchic, balance of power, international system, once hegemony is achieved the hegemon must behave somewhat benevolently, or more ethically, if it hopes to maintain its leadership. Our principal argument is that realists for the most part have under-theorized state behaviour in a hegemonic system.

In our analysis, like realists, we assume that a Great Power like the United States will seldom want to act benevolently and will concern itself principally with maintaining its security. Our goal, nevertheless, is to point out that in a hegemonic system an intersection exists between policies based on selfish interest and ethical considerations. For a great power to be accepted as a hegemon, it must act in ways that provide key benefits to subordinate states, principally democracy, peace, and security. If not, the great power will rely solely on force, rather than leadership, to achieve influence. Therefore, and perhaps ironically, an ethical US policy toward Latin America can better protect vital US interests than a purely realist policy. We will point out, as other scholars have done, that selfish US policies in the past have often been counterproductive in the long run, jeopardizing, rather than protecting, vital long-term interests. But our argument is not the classic conflict between liberalism and realism; rather, it is a recognition that the realist calculus changes when a Great Power becomes a hegemonic power. Nevertheless, if we can show that an ethical policy can preserve US interests more effectively than a policy based purely on selfish, immediate interests, then we can move closer to the acceptance of a policy that is increasingly ethical and help to bridge the gap between two key schools of thought in American foreign policy—realism and liberalism (Harries, 2005).

Moving beyond criticism, we then propose several concrete changes to US policy that would enhance America's ethical stance toward Latin America, thereby enhancing US hegemony. In essence we provide a prescription that shows how a Great Power's policies should change once it becomes a hegemonic power. These modest policy recommendations, if enacted, would preserve US interests by improving America's image, and also result in enhanced security, democracy, and prosperity in the western hemisphere. Taking these steps is important for the United States because Latin America remains a vital region for US strategic, geopolitical, and economic interests (Hsiang, 2003, 59-60). If Washington cannot secure its key interests and be perceived positively in the Western Hemisphere, then attaining goals in the rest of the world will be a pipe dream.

## **2. The Importance of Ethics in (Hegemonic) Realism <sup>1</sup>**

Scholars and analysts are increasingly using the terms "hegemony" and "imperialism" to describe American power in the new world order (See Mearsheimer, 2001; Ferguson, 2004; Bacevich, 2004). Although the issue is not resolved, we can safely assert that the United States is indeed a hegemonic power in the western hemisphere and thus this international subsystem can serve as a prototype for the study of power politics in a hegemonic system. The term "hegemony," although normally used to describe a system where one country simply has the most power in the system, actually refers to an international system or sub-system where one nation-state has achieved a preponderance of power *and* is perceived by the subordinate states as a legitimate leader (See Calleo, 1987; Mann, 1990; Snidal, 1985). In a post-colonial world, "hegemony" has replaced "empire" as the principal term to describe an international system that is dominated by one powerful state. But, in addition to power, under a hegemonic system ideology is as important as brute force for attaining compliance by subordinate states. Soft power—"the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments" (Nye, 2004, p. x)—is thus a key element of hegemony. Power alone cannot lead to hegemony; it leads simply to domination or coercion. In a hegemonic system, rather than always being forced to comply, subordinate states accept the rules of the system designed by the hegemon mostly because those rules are perceived by the subordinate states as beneficial. Consequently, under hegemony power politics alone cannot maintain the system.

In a fully developed hegemonic system, the subordinate states not only abide by the rules of the international system owing to the accepted leadership of the hegemon, they also emulate the domestic economic and political system of the hegemon. In Latin America, the trend toward democracy and neoliberal economic policies is a clear example of emulation.

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<sup>1</sup> Recently, Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman (2006) have suggested ethical realism should drive US foreign policy, but they do not provide a clear rationale as to why it should do so. See their *Ethical realism: A vision for America's role in the world*. New York: Pantheon Books.

From the time the Monroe Doctrine was promulgated in 1823 through the Cold War period, Washington became a preponderant power; however, only after the 1980s can we say that brute force was matched by ideological influence. Therefore, hegemony truly exists only "...when the major institutions and forms of organisation—economic, social and political—as well as the key values of the dominant state become models for emulation in other subordinate states" (Gill, 1990, p. 47). Emulation is deeper than soft power, since it is based on the complete acceptance by the subordinate states of the hegemon's ideologically inspired social order.

Scholars have mostly used the term "hegemony" to describe liberal international economic regimes in which the hegemonic power is seen to provide prosperity through the enforcement of liberal trade regimes that benefit all states; the paramount example is Great Britain during the late 1800s and early 1900s. A hegemon that promotes economic liberalism is perceived as producing a more prosperous international trade system, and those subordinate states that participate in such a system are assumed to benefit economically if they participate in the system.

Using "hegemony" more broadly, scholars who focus on security have pointed out that hegemonic powers also promote stability and cooperation (See Gilpin, 1975; Krasner, 1976; Krasner, 1995). Hegemonic stability theory suggests that a hegemonic power will provide both peace and prosperity to the system at large, meaning that the subordinate states will enjoy these collective goods by cooperating with the hegemon (See Krasner and Webb, 1989). When looking at Latin America, we see a region that since political independence has suffered almost no inter-state conflict. This sustained regional peace can be attributed to the presence of a US preponderance of power. Peace of course is deemed a precondition for prosperity, so in addition to security, hegemony is deemed to be more conducive to prosperity than is an anarchical, conflict-prone, or non-liberal international system. We can argue then that weak states will come to accept the leadership of a hegemonic power only as long as that hegemon offers important collective goods, mainly prosperity and peace. If not, as balance of power theorists suggest, states will seek to challenge, or balance, the would-be hegemon at the first opportunity. Thus, while a preponderance of power is produced and maintained principally by force—*realpolitik*—hegemony constitutes a unique power arrangement that requires more than *realpolitik* from the hegemonic power.

As a free-market, democratic hegemon, the United States through its ideological influence expects subordinate states in Latin America to embrace democratic principles and institutions, as well as free-market policies. Consequently, democracy and self-determination, in addition to peace and prosperity, are also values that subordinate states expect as derivatives of American hegemony. After the Great Depression, the countries of Latin America began to embrace economic policies that placed the state at the economic helm. These statist economic policies, principally import substitution industrialization, were deemed by many nationalist leaders as the best route toward national development. However, since the dominance of the Washington Consensus in the 1980s, which promoted neoliberal policies, the countries of Latin America have eschewed statism and increasingly embraced free trade, privatization, and laissez faire economics in general. Perhaps the most salient example is President Fernando Enrique Cardoso of Brazil. Cardoso was a leading dependency theorist who argued that global capitalism keeps poor countries from developing; however, when he became president of Brazil in 1995, Cardoso promoted neoliberal economic policies.

If a hegemonic power is democratic, an underlying assumption is that as long as the subordinate states accept the hegemon's leadership, the hegemon will preserve their sovereignty and respect their self-determination. More specifically, a liberal hegemonic power, such as the United States, will respect a subordinate state's sovereignty as long as that state accepts the liberal economic international system and models itself after the hegemon by becoming democratic and capitalist. In the case of the United States, as long as the subordinate states incorporate themselves into America's free-trade system and adopt democratic politics, the US hegemon will respect the sovereignty of the region's states. A wise hegemonic power will be able to discern when a subordinate state is or is not deviating from the mould. If, however, a hegemon regularly violates the sovereignty and self-determination of subordinate states to preserve its selfish, short-term interests, then the subordinate states will no longer see the hegemon as a legitimate leader worthy of being emulated, resulting in a decline in the hegemon's leadership, or soft power. As Garrison (2004) states, "Governance cannot be exercised successfully simply by the application of precision warfare. Brute force does not make friends and cannot change a person's mind." Moreover, if it does not provide collective goods for the system, the hegemon will regress toward simply holding a preponderance of power in the system—returning to a realist, imperialist framework.

A hegemonic system based solely on brute force will be less stable and sustainable in the long term in comparison with a system based on power *and* principle (hegemony). Realists normally assume that in an anarchic system states will seize the first opportunity to defect, turning to another Great Power, and thus resulting in what realists refer to as balancing (See Rosenau and Durfee, 2000). But, while agency can be expected from great or middle powers, subordinate states are often unable to act contrary to a preponderant state (See Emerson, 2010). Subordinate state agency in a hegemonic system is severely limited by lack of power, and thus weak states will usually choose to bandwagon rather than balance, simply because it is in their interest.<sup>2</sup> The absence of collective goods in a hegemonic system—like prosperity, peace, and self-determination—will not immediately yield defection or balancing. Nevertheless, in the long-term, a hegemonic power that ignores the interests of subordinate states will find itself alone at any time that subordinate states can assert themselves.

Hegemonic powers, therefore, if they are going to behave differently and be distinguishable from empires, must provide and preserve collective goods, in seeming contradiction to realist theory, which has traditionally eschewed ethical considerations. We submit that hegemony can be perceived as a mid-point between complete anarchy (balance of power requiring the employment of *realpolitik*) and a world government (the existence of a central authority). The farther a system moves away from anarchy and toward hegemony, the greater will be the importance of legitimacy; anarchy will become less salient. Hegemony, while not constituting a formal central authority, represents an international power structure where some order is established and thus cannot be theorized in the same way as a pure anarchical system. As legitimacy acquires greater influence in an international system, the state that claims leadership (the would-be hegemon) must take actions that are increasingly perceived by subordinate states as supportive of collective interests rather than pure self-interest. In essence, a social contract begins to emerge when hegemony exists since the hegemonic power uses legitimacy as a means of justifying its exercise of power. Realism or *realpolitik* is a strategy that nation-states pursue most blatantly in balance of power systems where nation-states are shifting alliances, attempting to maximize their power, and struggling to prevent any one power from achieving a preponderance of power. But once it has achieved a clear preponderance of power, a Great Power's realist calculus must change if it wishes to become a hegemonic power. The hegemonic power needs to be seen as a legitimate leader that provides collective goods and defends universal values. If the hegemon cannot provide collective goods, other Great Powers—and perhaps even subordinate states—will conspire to balance the hegemon; eventually the system will move toward greater anarchy.

As such, we argue that if it wants to preserve its hegemony in Latin America, the United States must find ways to provide the following to the subordinate states:

1. An international economic regime that yields greater prosperity for the subordinate states in the system.
2. A democratic domestic political model and international political regime that promote the stated values of the American political system—self-determination, liberty, and human rights.

Only if the United States promotes and defends these models, and ensures that they yield collective goods, will the countries in the region see America as the legitimate leader for the long term. The most effective manner in which to accomplish these goals is for the United States to promulgate what many would perceive as a more ethical regional policy, or one that will promote the economic and democratic development of the countries in the region. US policy-makers will have to conduct a wise balancing act between US interests and regional interests, ensuring that their decisions do not always veer toward the selfish preservation of US interests at the expense of the interests of the subordinate states and the values that it says it is trying to promote. If key collective goods—security, democracy, self-determination, and prosperity—are not a by-product of the US hegemonic system, then the Latin American states will be increasingly hesitant to accept America's leadership and will look for opportunities to defect.

### ***3. The Counterproductive Nature of Realpolitik in a Hegemonic System***

If we examine US policy toward Latin America historically, we can conclude that by eschewing an ethical foreign policy, the United States has undermined both its relations with its southern neighbours as well as its image.

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<sup>2</sup> In employing the term “interest,” we realize that more often than not national interests are to a large extent the interests of the ruling elite.

Particularly during the Cold War, Washington justified its actions in Latin America on the grounds that communism was worse than dictatorship. George Kennan, creator of the containment doctrine, asserted the following: “The activities of the communists represent our [the US] most serious problem in the area.” Moreover, Kennan stated that “where the concepts and traditions of popular government are too weak to absorb successfully the intensity of communist attacks...we must concede that harsh government measures of repression may be the only answer (Quoted in Bethell, 1991, pp. 64-65). In other words, during the Cold War period, Washington’s *modus operandi* was to support dictatorships over democracies because it believed that the former could better contain communism. This mindset propelled Washington into blatantly undermining democracy and self-determination in Guatemala (1954), Brazil (1964), the Dominican Republic (1963, 1965), and Chile (1973), to list the most glaring examples. US diplomacy and covert operations violated America’s key principles throughout the region during the entire Cold War period. As Domínguez (1999) states, “The U.S. government often behaved as if it were under the spell of ideological demons (Domínguez, 1999, p. 1). Ironically, to make Latin America safe for democracy, the US government promoted and maintained repressive, military regimes that undermined democratic rule (AUTHOR). Did the ends justify the means, both for the United States and for the countries of the region?

Some analysts will look at Latin America today and conclude that the American goals of democracy in the region have been achieved. The argument could go like this: *US military and covert operations effectively contained communist encroachments in the region, resulting in the flowering of democracy that we see today. Thus, supporting dictatorships, while distasteful, was worth the cost.* The problem with this logic is that it assumes that Latin America would have fallen to communism and *not* have become democratic without US meddling. The argument also assumes that US *realpolitik* did not have any residual harm for US power and interests. These assumptions are most likely faulty. Kinzer, for example, demonstrates that US regime change operations beginning with the removal of the monarchy in Hawaii to the removal of Saddam Hussein in Iraq have resulted in great harm to both US interests and the interests of the peoples and nations that America “liberated (Kinzer, 2006).

In the 1950s, Latin America seemed to be on its way toward democratic development. Several analysts pointed with optimism at the region’s movement away from dictatorship and toward democracy. One book, *Twilight of the Tyrants*, presaged the demise of dictatorship in the region (Szulc, 1959). Latin America—while having a centralist tradition—had always been enamoured with European and North American ideas. Liberalism was strong in the region, with every country having gone through battles between Liberal and Conservative parties, and Liberals eventually winning out in most countries. While fascism and communism would at times attract adherents, Latin America was generally predisposed to follow the lead of the United States and Western Europe. The Cuban Revolution of 1959 created a stir and fear about communism, but eventually the Soviet Model was seen for what it was, a poorly disguised version of an omnipotent Leviathan, excessively centralizing both political and economic power. Interestingly enough, the vast majority of revolutionary groups that emerged in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s had little to do with the communist parties in the region, which simply wanted to be elected into office, *a la* European communism. Neither Castro nor Allende were members of communist parties, and the majority of the guerrilla insurgencies that emerged after the Cuban Revolution were at most founded by disaffected members of communist parties.

It is certainly understandable that most US policymakers worried about the influence of communism. After all, communism in the region would mean the loss of markets, as well as the loss of political and military influence. However, in retrospect it is important, and sad, to note how little confidence US decision-makers had in the American model of democracy and capitalism and the appeal of its model in the region. If the Guatemalan democratic revolution had been allowed to proceed, it is very likely that democracy would have flourished in other parts of Latin America in the 1960s, eliminating many popular appeals for socialism and anti-imperialism (read anti-US imperialism). US actions against Guatemala in 1954 and against Cuba in 1961 (the Bay of Pigs Invasion) convinced the left in Latin America that Washington was indeed a “hovering giant,” interested only in preserving its economic and military interests and preventing revolution (Blasier, 1976). America’s aggressive response to communist ideology promoted the rise of dictatorships and radicalized many reformers in the region. Ironically, perhaps the most important factor that led Latin America away from its destiny with democracy was US assistance to the armed forces of the region. Prior to the Cuban Revolution, US military aid to the region was insignificant.

As soon as Castro took power in Cuba and turned to the USSR for help, Washington turned on the spigot, pouring millions of military aid dollars into the region. Only a few years after this surge of US military aid and the growth of US Department of Defence ties with the militaries in the region, many countries in Latin America succumbed to institutional military rule (AUTHOR). Although the armed forces of the region had long been involved politically, seldom had they ruled directly as they did in the 1960s and 1970s. While causation is always hard to prove, the dramatic rise in US military assistance and the subsequent, dramatic and unexpected rise in institutional military rule in the region are difficult to ignore, especially when we have “smoking guns” of direct US intervention like the 1954 Guatemalan coup and the 1973 Chilean coup. And, as noted above, it is clear that US policy makers, under the Kennan Doctrine, favoured authoritarianism during the Cold War period. Indeed, it is no secret that as the militaries of Latin America overthrew civilian governments, Washington rewarded them with increased economic and military assistance.

Even if Latin America were not ready for democracy in the 1960s, it was probably less ready for communism to take over, as US strategists feared. The shining example for US fears was Castro’s revolution in Cuba. Castro, however, was more the traditional, populist *caudillo* than the revolutionary communist, even if he used socialism and ties to the USSR to consolidate his power and check US steps to overthrow him. He represented the pre-1960 rather than the new, more modern Latin America. Twilight had not reached the tyranny in Cuba. The Cuban people adored Castro because he seemed to be a nationalist who was committed to democracy and to ridding the country of the mafocracy that was the Batista regime (Wickham-Crowley, 1992). Once Castro began courting Khrushchev, much of his support evaporated. He has remained popular not because of the system he leads or the ideology he claims to profess, but because he slew, or at least humiliated, Goliath (the USA). Castro will go down triumphantly in Latin American history primarily because of this feat. The fact that Russian support dried up twenty years ago demonstrates that the Cuban revolution was not a Soviet implant; rather, it was the creation of *criollo* (Spaniard born and raised in Spanish America) frustrations and failings. It was not the US containment of Soviet influence that prevented Latin America from turning communist; it was because communism had less appeal to the peoples of the region than liberalism and democracy, since the region has a long liberal tradition (Peeler, 2004). Despite Washington’s fear that communism would be more appealing than democracy, the peoples of Latin America admired liberalism—both political and economic—sufficiently to weather the authoritarian and US interventionist storms of the twentieth century.

If Washington had been able to trust democracy’s appeal and allowed Guatemala’s Arbenz, the Dominican Republic’s Bosch, Brazil’s Goulart, Panama’s Arias, and Chile’s Allende to retain political power when elected, Latin American and US interests would most likely have benefited greatly. The region would have been able to continue asserting its democratic spirit, while America would have been seen as a benevolent, respectful giant rather than a selfish Goliath. The United States would most likely have achieved its goal of containing communism without resorting to the promotion of repressive militarism, which came with great financial and human costs. It is interesting to note that the four countries that experienced the least problems from communist insurgents were all either democratic (Costa Rica, Colombia, Venezuela) or a single-party, civilian-led state (Mexico). Perhaps most importantly, Washington could have rid itself of immoral and unethical policy decisions that allowed the DOD and CIA to run amok in the region, undermining American principles of democracy and self-determination (Schmitz, 1999).

America’s Cold War policies in Latin America, therefore, were very harmful for both US interests and Latin American interests. The United States maintained a cosy, conspiratorial relationship with repressive regimes that routinely violated the rights of its citizens. Worse yet, documents show that Washington at times helped with this repression, playing an instrumental part in establishing paramilitary groups that often turned into notorious death squads (See Haines, 1995). Evidence also suggests that U.S. officials or quasi-officials were at least indirectly involved in murders and torture. The saddest aspect of this drama is that America probably gained little from becoming involved in these nefarious activities, while simultaneously harming the prospects for democracy in the region and its own image in the region. By inflating the power of the armies in the region, the precarious civil-military balance that existed in Latin America in the late 1950s was quickly skewed so that civil institutions were overwhelmed by the power of the new praetorians (See Lowenthal and Fitch, 1986). The result was brutal military government that wreaked havoc on civilians and their weak institutions, the likes of which had seldom been seen in Latin America.



In Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, thousands upon thousands of deaths can be blamed on the domestic armed forces and the complicity of the US government and its representatives overseas. A more ethical, long range policy, on the other hand, could have safeguarded America's vital interests and bolstered the image of the United States as a nation committed to the promotion of democracy, self-determination, and human rights. Even if we were to accept the notion that a hard-line policy was inevitable during the Cold War period of super-power conflict, now that no threat from an extra hemispheric power or ideology exists in Latin America, there is no reason for Washington to continue policies that focus on security and short-term, *realpolitik* strategies. Continuing such policies will most likely undermine US leadership.

#### **4. Behaving Like a Hegemon: Some Modest Proposals**

Pragmatically, we understand that worse case scenarios will often win out in the realist, security-focused decision-making process. US policy-makers probably never considered ignoring the communist "threat" they perceived. Instead, they envisioned impending disaster: that the USSR would gain influence and the region would go "communistic," as President Johnson liked to say. Therefore, Washington carried out policies that emphasized military and covert solutions to the potential of increased Soviet/communist influence. When danger seemed imminent, foreign policy makers believed that the ends would justify the means. The means, however, while not necessarily enhancing US military and economic power, undermined America's soft power.

The Cold War is now a part of history, and despite the recent alarm over the turn to the left, Latin America is completely devoid of any serious threats to democracy, capitalism, or U.S. security interests. If a clear danger exists, it is the threat posed by militaries that still retain some of the power amassed during the Cold War years when Washington gave them extensive material and moral support. If it is going to behave like a hegemon in Latin America, then the United States should introduce a more ethical (hegemonic) foreign policy toward the region. To this end we would recommend a few modest proposals to current U.S. policy. If Washington is not bold enough to take these steps in Latin America, then it is doomed to maintaining an anachronistic *realpolitik* stance that in the long term will undermine America's power and image. A hegemonic power's inability to provide collective, universal goods to subordinate states will necessarily result in its own downfall.

First and foremost, *the United States should unilaterally adopt a policy of non-intervention and non-interference*. Latin American scholars and political leaders have called for these policies almost since the time of independence in the early 1820s. Rather than comply, American presidents issued two interventionist policies, the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 and the Roosevelt Corollary to that doctrine in 1904, also known as Big Stick Diplomacy. In the 1930s, however, when the United States wanted Latin America's cooperation, Franklin Delano Roosevelt announced the Good Neighbour Policy which called for non-intervention, non-interference, and consultation. At the time, the Organization of American States (OAS) did not exist so a regional international organization was not available for multilateral consultation. Along with non-intervention and non-interference, however, Washington should emphasize America's commitment to deal with regional problems through the OAS, rather than unilaterally and via US pressure. If the US government adopted non-intervention as its default position, the nations of Latin America would, as they did in the 1930s, rejoice and begin to admire the colossus to the north.

This policy would be essentially cost-free (if not cost-saving, given the costs associated with intervention) and would go a long way to improve US-Latin American relations. A policy of non-intervention would move Washington away from one of the "sins" of US foreign policy—a heavy reliance on military solutions to global problems (Johnson, 2007, chapter 3). Former undersecretary of defence and noted scholar Joseph Nye underscored this problem when he wrote the following: "While Congress has been willing to spend 16 percent of the national budget on defence, the percentage devoted to international affairs has shrunk from 4 percent in the 1960s to just 1 percent today. Our military strength is important, but it is not sixteen times more important than our diplomacy" (Quoted in Pieterse, 2004, p. 18). This first step would yield a classic win-win situation since it would be enthusiastically welcomed throughout Latin America, would cost nothing, and would almost immediately enhance the US image in the region, thus enhancing rather than limiting US hegemony.

Along with the spirit of non-intervention is the notion of non-interference. Thus, we suggest that *the United States should refrain to the greatest extent possible from using CIA covert operations and refrain from engaging in regime changes in democratic countries*. We are not suggesting that this agency be abolished.

The CIA can be used to collect information, or “intelligence,” that may be useful for US decision-makers to keep well-informed and make sound decisions. Problems with intelligence have emerged in the past not so much from the accuracy of the information but from the way in which presidents have used the information. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 is a dramatic, recent example. Washington’s mishandling of intelligence, however, is not new. For example, prior to the Cuban missile crisis, the CIA became aware via human intelligence that the Soviets were installing missiles on the island. The Kennedy Administration, however, did not consider the information as reliable because Khrushchev had personally given Kennedy assurances that he would take no such action. In the Dominican Republic in 1965, the CIA informed Washington that President Busch’s supporters were for the most part non-communist. Again, US decision makers ignored the information and decided to intervene militarily. On numerous occasions, then, the CIA has acquired valuable information that could have been very useful for making potentially good decisions. Consequently, a CIA that collects intelligence on friendly nations can be an important foreign policy asset. A CIA, however, that engages in covert operations against democracies is something that should be rejected both on ethical and realist grounds. More recently, the rapid U.S. recognition of governments that carried out military coups against elected presidents in Venezuela (2004) and Honduras (2009) shows that Washington continues to be more concerned with promoting pro-US regimes than preserving the principle of democratic rule. The dirty tactics of the Cold War, and earlier, should be terminated immediately, particularly since not one of the countries in the region can be even remotely perceived as an existential security threat to the United States.

Related to ending CIA dirty tricks is the recommendation that *the U.S. government should cease special operations in Latin America by the US military and CIA*. Covert incursions into sovereign territory of friendly and mostly democratic countries should not be a standard procedure conducted by the United States. No “threat” in Latin America can justify a breach of international law against countries that are friendly to the United States, especially those that have accepted the US political and economic models. If the US government believes that the drug trade is such a serious problem that covert operations are warranted, then it should seek and gain the consent of the nations in the region, or the particular country in which the operation is to be carried out, before carrying out such operations. Needless to say, Washington should also terminate its unilateral policy of “certification” of nations that are cooperating in the anti-drug effort.<sup>3</sup> The certification process is mostly used for political purposes and only serves to develop a negative image of the United States. The drug problem is mostly a US consumption problem rather than a Latin American production and transshipment problem and thus Washington should be deal with it principally at home.<sup>4</sup>

Next, *the United States should introduce a socioeconomic development program for Latin America*. In 1961, John F. Kennedy unveiled the Alliance for Progress, a bold, new U.S. policy initiative that called for Latin America’s socioeconomic transformation and development. The region was delighted with the Alliance and to this date there are literally hundreds of schools in the region named after Kennedy. The United States, via the Washington consensus, pressured the countries of the region to adopt neoliberal economic policies in the 1980s—policies that would help the US economy by opening the region to US exports. Latin America, for the most part although with hesitance, embraced these policies even though they were, and continue to be, disruptive politically and economically. Washington needs to ensure that these policies yield economic benefits for the region and thus should establish a new policy that helps the countries of the region with debt payments and to weather economic transformation. One drawback with Kennedy’s Alliance was that it also had a dark, militaristic side. Since the Alliance was designed principally to minimize the appeal of communism, the US government also provided large amounts of military aid to the militaries of the region, helping to undermine democracies and to over-institutionalize the region’s armed forces. Since America currently faces no substantial threat in Latin America, a bold, new economic policy toward the region does not require a military dimension. Rather than instituting controversial initiatives such as Plan Colombia, the United States should instead assist the nations of the region in developing their civilian institutions— but only if those nations want assistance.

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the anti-drug certification process, see *Review of the anti-drug certification process*: Hearing before the committee on foreign relations, United States Senate, one hundred seventh Congress, first session, March 1, 2001. Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office. Available from <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-107shrg71540/pdf/CHRG-107shrg71540.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> The illegal narcotics trade was a hot topic at the recent Summit of the America in Cartagena, Colombia, in April 2012.



Finally, any new economic policy for Latin America should promote competitive capitalism rather than promote the interests of large corporations in both the United States and Latin America.

While these proposals represent relatively minor changes to current US policy, critics would see them as either fool-hardy or simply unacceptable. Adopting non-intervention, ending CIA covert operations, minimizing ties to the region's armed forces, and altering our economic policy in the region, however, would not in any way sacrifice vital US interests. On the contrary, the adoption of these policies would, in our estimation, greatly enhance long-term US interests by dramatically improving US-Latin American relations and cooperation. As Kegley (1988) points out, "... behaviour in the world will tend to conform to a Tit-for-Tat model of interstate interaction: cooperation when reciprocated will breed cooperation ..." (Kegley, 1988, p. 184). Only if America acts as a leader worthy of respect and emulation will the countries of Latin America willingly and gladly cooperate with US goals and interests as fully as could ever be expected. To do otherwise would be irrational in a hegemonic system. Latin America has in the last decade developed stronger ties with other Powers, such as Japan, China, Russia, and Iran (Erikson, 2008; "The Dragon in the Backyard," 2009). If the United States wants to be seen as a preferred partner, the countries of the region must sense that there is a value added to a strong partnership with the United States as opposed to other powers.

When George W. Bush became President in 2000, he declared: "I'll look south, not as an afterthought, but as a fundamental commitment" (Halvani, 2003, p. 50). As a sign of this commitment, Bush's first visit abroad was to Mexico. However, in the years following his inauguration, President Bush alienated the countries of Latin America, not unlike former American presidents. As Isabel Hilton states, "While Washington has been looking elsewhere, a slow revolution in its own backyard has changed the geopolitical map, perhaps forever" (Hilton, 2005, p. 12). While this assessment is a bit of an exaggeration, evidence of political shifts abound: the United States was unable to win Latin America's support for the war on terror or the Iraq invasion; free-trade negotiations stalled with some countries; the Organization of American States failed to endorse Washington's candidate for secretary general; and in June 2005 the OAS would not support Bush's proposal that the OAS should engage countries "where democracy is under threat" (Hilton 2005, p. 13). More recently, although Fidel Castro's days seem to be numbered, Hugo Chavez and other presidents in the region have taken on the anti-US banner (Collins, 2005; Barshefsky, Hill, and O'Neil, 2008).

But we believe that too much is being made of Latin America's move to the left as a significant challenge to the US model. First, the left-leaning parties in Latin America, mostly members of the socialist international, are no more socialist than the French Socialist Party or the British Labour Party. Left parties in Latin America today, like socialist parties in Europe, accept free trade, free markets, and competitive party politics. Like socialist parties in Europe, however, they desire markets that are humane and not dominated by transnational corporations. These parties are not vying for power via the barrel of a gun but via the ballot box. We cannot desire democracy in other countries and then be concerned when the democratic process brings forth leaders who defend the national interests of their countries. When the United States government quickly recognized the coups that ousted Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in 2001 and Honduran President Manuel Zelaya in 2009, the countries of the region could not help but wonder what kind of democracy Washington envisioned for Latin America. When socialist leaders in Europe criticize US power, no one suggests that democracy is at risk in Europe or that the NATO alliance is lost.

Rather than seeing this move to the left as a "threat" requiring military and covert reaction, like the "war on terror," (Emerson, 2010) Washington should laude the democratic process and should embrace the region by giving Latin American nations some of the things that they have always wanted. A hegemon cannot be a hegemon unless it provides collective goods and acts as a leader worthy of emulation. In 1988, Charles Kegley asserted that "To the realists...an irreconcilable tension between politics and morality exists, and the imperatives of power politics rationalize behaviours that breach the norms of private morality." While this rationalization may have been convincing during the Cold War, today it is clear that interest and ethics are not mutually exclusive concerns, even for realists, and particularly in a hegemonic context. Adopting the changes that we have proposed would result in a more ethical US policy that would at the same time enhance US interests in the region. If the United States wants to effectively promote its democratic political model, it must respect all democracies without hesitation.

If the United States wants to effectively promote its global economic model, then it must ensure that subordinate countries reap some benefits from that economic system. Our proposal calls for the United States of America to finally work toward promoting democracy, self-determination, and prosperity in Latin America both to enhance its power *and* its principles. If not, hegemony will continue to be a dirty word, and the countries of the region will see America as a hovering Goliath and look elsewhere for beneficial alliances.

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