

worried whether doing so might lead to "another Vietnam." On the other hand, the Bush administration immediately sent military and social assistance for the drug and counterinsurgency efforts in Colombia. As one high-level Bush appointee at the Pentagon said in 2004, "As long as Colombian troops are doing the fighting, there isn't much else that we shouldn't help them with."¹⁰

George W. Bush's policies toward Latin America are the most controversial of those from the three post-Cold War presidencies. In dealing with Latin American countries, whether it involved the Iraq vote at the UN Security Council or the attempted coup in Venezuela, the Bush administration was willing to press for outcomes favorable to U.S. interests in ways that critics viewed as at least in keeping with the United States' long and controversial history of controlling Latin America.

Yet, contrary to the typical evaluation that Washington is too interventionist in Latin America, others – perhaps Bush's most caustic critics – routinely accused him of not being involved enough. According to these critics, Bush seemed to be so distracted by other international developments that he ignored the region. In fact, the Bush administration did not wield its power or expand its influence nearly as much or as aggressively as some might have predicted. For one, the United States did not invade any Latin American countries during this era. At times, as in the case of Haiti, Bush even resisted domestic and international pressure to become more directly involved.

If anything, the Bush administration's Latin America policies suggest that there are new motivations and interpretations of U.S. policy that do not fall neatly into our traditional categories.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Defense Official in a confidential interview with the author, April 4, 2004.

3

Democracy

The two decades since the end of the Cold War have seen dramatic changes in the nature of U.S. policies in Latin America. As important as it is to understand the nuances of each post-Cold War presidential administration, to evaluate these changes it is also crucial to identify the key policy "drivers" that come into play when considering a particular issue or crisis. This book divides post-Cold War issues and policies into three broad categories: democracy, economics, and security. Not all U.S. policies fit into one of these three; nevertheless, we can assume that *most* of the key policies that the United States has in regard to the region fall into one or more of these general areas.

Often we see significant overlap among the three categories. For instance, the United States has pursued a variety of policies in Haiti, ranging from supporting democratic elections in 1990 to launching a military intervention in 1994 and then supporting another military intervention and a subsequent UN peacekeeping operation in 2004. Should we place Haiti under "democracy policy" or "security policy?" The best answer, of course, is both. By employing this approach to examine the motivations and characteristics of these three areas of policy, the reader will be able to evaluate more effectively the case studies of U.S. policy contained in this book, especially because almost all of these three elements significantly overlap.

Just as scholars continue to debate the United States' impact on democracy in Latin America during the Cold War, we will debate its influence in post-Cold War episodes. There are often competing interpretations of the same events and policies, often depending on the ideological predisposition of the observer involved. For example, should a multimillion dollar grant from the U.S. government to a pro-democracy,

nongovernmental organization in Venezuela be considered a form of democracy promotion, as Washington claimed, or as "neo-imperialism" as the Venezuelan leader Hugo Chávez often contended?

In the post-Cold War period, to evaluate the U.S. government's commitment to both rhetorical and operational democracy policies, we must weigh the particular circumstances of the events in question, as well as the individual decisions of the U.S. officials involved.

THE EVOLUTION OF DEMOCRACY IN THE U.S. POLICY ARSENAL

The United States' preoccupation with democracy – both rhetorically and operationally – long precedes the end of the Cold War. Indeed, democracy as a core component of U.S. policy in Latin America dates back as far as the "gunboat diplomacy" era in the early twentieth century, when presidents such as Theodore Roosevelt, William Taft, and Woodrow Wilson oversaw elections in Central American and Caribbean countries while they were under U.S. military occupation. President Wilson's oft-cited admonishment that the United States "must teach the South American republics to elect good men" reminds us that even during Washington's most imperial era in Latin America, there was still a rhetorical emphasis on democracy promotion, even if U.S. policy was often applied in a very paternalistic and shortsighted manner.

During the Cold War, U.S. officials continued to espouse the axiomatic virtues of democracy; however, the United States was willing to sacrifice democracy promotion to the more pressing priorities of security, especially where communism was concerned. Once the Cold War ended, the United States began to shift away from a more rhetorically oriented democracy policy to a more substantive policy. Indeed, freed from the constraints of the anticommunist strategy, successive post-Cold War administrations made much stronger efforts to promote democracy at the operational level of policy.

This shift in democracy policy was augmented by dramatic changes in Latin America's political landscape. By the end of the Cold War, the Western Hemisphere had become more democratic; during the late 1980s and early 1990s, countries such as Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Chile made impressive transitions to democratic rule. As democracy flourished in Latin America in the post-Cold War era, Washington had an unprecedented opportunity to match its rhetorical support for democracy with its operational and intentional policies.

With this in mind, we can ask to what extent were U.S. policies during the Cold War responsible for this subsequent wave of democracy in Latin America in the 1980s and early 1990s? Supporters of U.S. policies highlight Washington's support for the Salvadoran government in its counterinsurgency war against leftist insurgents and military or American diplomatic pressure against Chile's Pinochet regime as examples in which Washington supported long-term democratic change. In fact, defenders of Reagan often dismiss critics of his administration's regional policies during the 1980s in light of the series of democratic elections and peace agreements that followed in the 1990s.

On the other hand, critics respond that Latin America made impressive democratic gains despite U.S. policies and wishes. They cite controversial U.S. financial and military support for the government of El Salvador in its civil war against Marxist guerrillas and the invasion of Grenada in 1983 to shore up claims that U.S. policies in the 1980s brought more death and destruction than democracy to Latin America or, more specifically, Central America. When Washington seemed to be supporting democratic change, these critics argued, there were likely ulterior motives at work, binding the United States' policies more closely to its raw national interest. Furthermore, critics claimed that Washington supported a certain type of democracy in Latin America, one that appealed to U.S. corporations. In other words, Washington's desire to make the Western Hemisphere safe for democracy was more about making it safe for American-style capitalism.

Whatever might have been the motivations and consequences of U.S. policy during the 1980s, the collapse of communism and the dramatic wave of democracy in Latin America set the stage for a new era in U.S.-Latin American relations.

A NEW ERA IN DEMOCRACY POLICY

No specific date exists for when the United States' policies in Latin America shifted definitively from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era. Two important "post-modern" policies include the 1989 invasion of Panama, an invasion driven not by concerns about fighting communism but rather about apprehending a ruthless "narco-strongman" in Manuel Noriega, and the advent of the U.S.-led drug war in the Andes in the late 1980s.

The Nicaraguan presidential election in the 1990s, though, most clearly symbolizes a new era for U.S. democracy policy in the region. Led by Daniel Ortega, the Sandinista party had ruled Nicaragua since 1979, when it was part of a broader revolutionary coalition that overthrew dictator Anastasio

Somoza. From Reagan's perspective, the Sandinistas were intent on spreading their Soviet- and Cuban-backed Marxist revolution to neighboring Central American countries, namely El Salvador. For the conservative American president, this potential development had to be preempted. During the first part of the 1980s, the Reagan administration made both overt and covert attempts to fund the counterrevolutionary group known as the Contras, in hopes that they would overthrow the newly installed Sandinista government.

Despite economic subsidies from both Moscow and Havana, the Contra War, compounded by economic sanctions from Washington and poor economic management, brought the Nicaraguan economy to the brink of collapse. After a decade in power, the Sandinista regime came under increased pressure to show that it had the support of the Nicaraguan people. To this end, in 1990 Ortega called for elections in order to legitimize his government both domestically and internationally. Despite the economic hardships, Ortega and most international onlookers believed that the Sandinistas would win a free and fair election.

Leading up to its election day, Nicaragua was flooded with international observers, including former president Jimmy Carter (on whose watch the Sandinistas had seized power) and delegations from the OAS and the United Nations. Convinced that the Sandinistas would resort to fraud in order to steal the election, George H. W. Bush's administration distanced itself from the election process publicly; Vice President Dan Quayle even ventured to call the elections a "sham."¹ However, the U.S. government quietly provided millions of dollars in funding to pro-U.S. opposition candidate Violeta Chamorro and her coalition known as the Unión Nacional Opositora (UNO). In the Bush administration's calculus, democracy was important in Nicaragua but even more so if "democracy" meant a Sandinista defeat at the polls.

When election results came back indicating that Chamorro had defeated Ortega in a landslide, the White House reacted with shock and excitement – the outcome was too good to be true. To the Bush administration, Chamorro's victory demonstrated that the Nicaraguan people preferred an alternative to the Sandinista government. The Bush administration quickly endorsed the electoral results, citing the outcome as an indication not only that democracy was taking root in Central America but also that the United States was playing an integral role in this development.

¹ Quoted in Robert A. Pastor, "The Bush Administration and Latin America: The Pragmatic Style and the Regionalist Option," *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* 33, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 6.

Yet, while the White House was celebrating a stunning policy victory, critics cited Washington's funding of the Chamorro campaign as evidence that Washington was meddling in order to ensure an electoral outcome in line with its own interests. In other words, critics contended that Chamorro's victory was not a step forward for Nicaraguan democracy but an indication that the United States favored democracy only when their preferred candidates won the election.

As the Nicaraguan elections indicated, U.S. "democracy policy" in the post-Cold War era was subject to controversy. The Nicaraguan election of 1990 was not the last time that critics would contest Washington's motives surrounding democracy promotion.

THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

Any discussion of the United States' post-Cold War democracy policies would be incomplete without consideration of the role of the OAS. Created with considerable U.S. support at a conference in Bogotá, Colombia, in 1948, the OAS was intended to be the post-World War II regional multilateral body that would resolve conflicts among states in the Western Hemisphere peacefully. Yet during the Cold War the OAS was largely unable to achieve greater legitimacy with regard to democracy. In fact, cases like the U.S.-led intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965 did great damage to the organization's reputation as an impartial body. In the Dominican Republic episode, the OAS hastily approved a resolution that allowed for a multinational peacekeeping force to enter the country even though the U.S. military had already intervened, giving critics the impression that the OAS endorsed American imperialism. Further damaging the hemispheric organization's reputation as a democratic and independent institution, almost all of the OAS member states participating in the peacekeeping mission during the Dominican crisis were *not* democracies.

The post-Cold War era provided the OAS with a new context in which to demonstrate that it was no longer the "toothless" debating society it was often accused of being since its inception. For Washington, the end of communism allowed for a total reconsideration of the OAS's value as an effective forum for pressing its democracy policies. Within months of the fall of the Berlin Wall, to the surprise of many skeptics, the OAS began to push U.S.-backed initiatives that promoted the idea that democracy was the only acceptable form of government in the Western Hemisphere.

This critical development meant that the OAS was now acting as a more effective and legitimate regional body, one capable of defining the terms of democracy in the Western Hemisphere. Was the OAS's new focus on democracy due to U.S. influence or that of the Latin America nations? The answer is that, in the newly democratic Latin America, the interests of Washington and the rest of the hemisphere converged over democracy promotion.

The Santiago Resolution, passed in June 1991, was one of the first signs that the OAS was beginning to emphasize democracy in the post-Cold War era. While the OAS charter had long considered democracy to be a "goal" for the hemisphere's countries, the Santiago Resolution established the first mechanism for addressing breakdowns of democracy. Resolution 1080, which soon followed, stipulated that the OAS had to call a meeting of its Permanent Council should the "democratic process" be interrupted in the region. Over the course of the next several years, the OAS invoked Resolution 1080 in multiple settings: in the 1991 coup against Haiti's democratically elected leader, in 1992 in Peru during Alberto Fujimori's infamous *auto-golpe* (self-coup), and in 1993 in Guatemala during Jorge Serrano's copycat *auto-golpe*. The OAS's condemnation of autocratic behavior served to reinforce the growing post-Cold War consensus that democracy was the only option in the Western Hemisphere.

During all of these episodes, major questions lingered: would OAS and its multilateral, consensus-driven approach be able to handle crises of democratic breakdown? Would Washington work solely through the OAS? Or would Washington fall back on determining outcomes in its "backyard" in its more traditional, unilateral manner? The example of an attempted coup in Paraguay in 1996 reveals some of the impulses surrounding the United States' approach to democracy in the post-Cold War era.

THE COUP THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN

In April 1996 Paraguayan president Juan Carlos Wasmosy asked his army commander, General Lino César Oviedo, to step down.² Oviedo's refusal ignited a political crisis. Many believed it was only a matter of time before Oviedo ousted Wasmosy in a classic Latin American military coup. Yet, contrary to what likely would have occurred in previous decades in a country such as Paraguay, the anticipated coup never took place.

² Arturo Valenzuela, "Paraguay: The Coup That Didn't Happen," *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 1 (1997): 43-55.

Most observers concluded that Oviedo backed down because of the overwhelming diplomatic pressure from the international community, particularly the United States and Brazil. Early on in the crisis, the U.S. Embassy in Asunción put out a statement that recognized President Wasmosy's constitutional right to dismiss the army commander: "Oviedo's refusal to accept the president's decision constitutes a direct challenge to the constitutional order in Paraguay and runs counter to the democratic norms accepted by the countries in the hemisphere."³

Soon after, the ambassadors of Argentina, Brazil, and the United States appeared at military headquarters and demanded to speak directly with Oviedo. OAS secretary-general César Gaviria telephoned President Wasmosy from Bolivia to urge him to resist any call to resign. President Clinton then called Wasmosy, as did representatives from the European Union and the Mercosur customs union, which included Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott represented the United States before the OAS Permanent Council while it deliberated the Paraguay crisis. He urged his fellow hemispheric countries to "take action in support of the proposition that democracy is the right of all peoples in the Americas and that the day of the dictator is over."⁴

It was also noteworthy that Mercosur became involved in the unfolding dispute. Established as a multilateral body for trade among the four countries, Mercosur's intervention into a purely political matter suggested that democracy had become an essential component of hemispheric economic integration. Along these lines, the forceful diplomacy of the Mercosur governments, especially Brazil, reinforced the fact that the United States was not alone in insisting on these new democratic standards in the region.

The Clinton administration's prompt and unyielding response to the attempted coup is an example of engaged, multilateral action that prevented what otherwise would have been one more coup in Latin America's extensive history of military coups. In the Paraguay coup at least, the Clinton administration had put away the Big Stick for a more multilateral approach. Its response also suggested that Washington was willing to play more of a supporting role, allowing the OAS, and even economic integration organizations such as Mercosur, to take the lead. Senior Clinton administration officials suggested that the region's economic interdependence and free trade agreements made old-style military coups increasingly

³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 47.

⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 50.

impractical.⁵ According to Richard Feinberg, Clinton's senior White House adviser, "In the Western Hemisphere, free trade is the best promoter and protector of democracy. That is the lesson of last week's drama in South America, in which Paraguay's trading partners and the United States joined hands with domestic democrats to roll back a blunt attack on that nation's fledgling democracy."⁶

Elements in the Clinton administration's response to the Paraguay coup hinted at a new approach, one differing greatly from the more realist, calculating manner employed in prior eras. In this case, Washington's response was measured and engaged and its rhetorical, operational, and intentional policies all seemed to be consistent with each other.

But did the Paraguay coup represent an exception to the rule in U.S. democracy policies after the Cold War? Was the Clinton administration more multilateral and cooperative in the Paraguay case merely because of the nation's vast geographical distance from the United States and its geopolitical irrelevance? Had the coup attempt not taken place in Paraguay, but in oil-rich Venezuela, the Clinton administration's actions may have taken a very different course.

A MULTILATERAL WESTERN HEMISPHERE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY?

By the time George W. Bush took office in January 2001, democracy was quickly becoming an ingrained part of the multilateral framework in the Americas. This new reality was manifested at the 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec, where the hemispheric leaders endorsed a "democracy clause" that established that "any unconstitutional alteration or interruption of the democratic order in a state of the Hemisphere constitutes an insurmountable obstacle to the participation of that state's government in the Summits of the Americas process."⁷ In simple language, the "democracy clause's" insertion into the Summit of the Americas process ensured that, for better or worse, there would be a link between economic integration and democratic governance. "No democracy, no trade," the clause mandated.

⁵ Alexander F. Watson (Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, 1993–6), in an interview with the author, Washington, DC, February 16, 2007.

⁶ Richard Feinberg, "The Coup That Wasn't," *Washington Post*, April 30, 1996, final edition, sec. A.

⁷ Quoted in Richard E. Feinberg, "Regionalism and Domestic Politics: U.S.–Latin American Trade Policy in the Bush Era," *Latin American Politics and Society* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 127–51, quoted on 141.

While the summit's resolution was strong, the question remained whether the trade body would back its rhetoric with action. One outstanding question is why the conservative Bush administration decided to support these multilateral approaches to democracy in Latin America. A good part of the answer is that these processes were long developed before the Bush administration took office in 2001. Furthermore, in the pre-9/11 era there was no particular reason why a U.S. presidential administration – conservative or not – would opt to oppose such an agenda.

The OAS subsequently integrated the spirit of the summit's democracy clause into its bylaws on September 11, 2001, when it approved the Inter-American Democratic Charter. The charter states emphatically: "The peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it." The charter surpassed previous OAS democratic resolutions by including the defense of human rights and the rule of law as two necessary conditions for democracy, expanding the organization's definition of democracy beyond having a popularly elected government.⁸ This historic development allowed the OAS to condemn a country's democratic practices even if the country was conducting regular "free and fair elections." The charter's key enforcement proviso was that nations must either uphold democracy or face expulsion from the OAS.

In the case of the failed coup against President Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in 2002, critics lambasted the Bush administration for being hypocritical in its response to this unconstitutional action. They claimed that the United States had failed to abide by the conditions of the charter that Powell had signed on the nation's behalf just seven months before. As one observer wrote, "The United States, alone in the Americas, supported the coup, and before then it increased its financial support of the opposition. ... So it is not surprising that the whole conflict is seen in much of Latin America as just another case of Washington trying to overthrow an independent, democratically-elected government."⁹

Critics who further accused the U.S. government – the Bush administration in particular – of hypocrisy for having blatantly unaligned rhetorical and intentional policies also pointed to Bolivia's presidential election in the summer of 2002, when the American ambassador warned the Bolivian people not to vote for the coca growers' union leader Evo Morales or else

⁸ Organization of American States, Inter-American Democratic Charter (Lima, Peru, September 10, 2001), AG/RES. 1 (XXVIII-E/01).

⁹ Mark Weisbrot, "A Split Screen in Strike-Torn Venezuela," *Washington Post*, January 12, 2003, final edition, sec. B.

risk losing U.S. foreign assistance. For Anti-imperialist critics, the Inter-American Democratic Charter might have suggested that Washington had changed its rhetorical and operational tune, but the Bush administration's behavior in Venezuela and Bolivia left no doubt in their minds that the intentional policy remained the same: hegemony in Latin America.

Other voices, while not necessarily arguing that the Bush administration's policies manifested renewed hegemonic tendencies, did criticize the administration for severely damaging successful efforts to bolster respect for democracy and the rule of law in the hemisphere. Arturo Valenzuela, a top Clinton administration official who was involved in the Paraguayan crisis in 1996, chided the Bush administration in an April 2002 opinion editorial in the *Washington Post*: "Unfortunately, the Bush administration did not seem to understand what was at stake in Venezuela. . . . As a result, the United States now risks losing much of the considerable moral and political leadership it had rightly won over the last decade as the nations of the Americas sought to establish the fundamental principle that the problems of democracy are solved in democracy, not resorting to unconstitutional means."¹⁰

Responding to its critics, the Bush administration pointed to its backing of the democracy clause and the Inter-American Democratic Charter as clear indications of its genuine support for democracy. In 2005 Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made a speech in Brazil where she spoke of the United States' key role and interest in the promotion of democracy:

We in the Americas have codified our commitment to democracy in the *Inter-American Democratic Charter*. And we must continue to insist that leaders who are elected democratically have a responsibility to govern democratically. . . . Ladies and Gentlemen, the United States is committed to the success of democracy in Latin America. And we want to expand our cooperation with great nations like Brazil to deepen democratic reform throughout this region. . . . There was a time when cynics thought the diverse people of this region were not fit for democracy, as if freedom were some prize to be won. These cynics once thought the same thing about people like me in the United States, as if freedom were not God's gift to every man and woman. These cynics are still around.¹¹

In Rice's characterization, the United States is a genuine and loyal partner in the effort to deepen and expand democracy in Latin America. Critics, though, read this as simply more "hot air" from an American administration that had lost all credibility on the issue.

¹⁰ Arturo Valenzuela, "Bush's Betrayal of Democracy," *Washington Post*, April 16, 2002, final edition, sec. A.

¹¹ U.S. Department of State, "Remarks by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at the Memorial Museum of Juscelino Kubitschek," Brasília, Brazil, April 27, 2005.

CONCLUSION

With respect to the post-Cold War period, there will never be a consensus on the United States' democracy policies. Does Washington represent a beacon of democracy in the hemisphere, as Condoleezza Rice suggested? Or does Washington purposefully manipulate the concept of democracy in order to serve its narrow national interests?

The United States' position on democracy after the end of the Cold War often depends on the attitudes and priorities of individual policymakers acting with incomplete information on tight deadlines. It also depends on the unique economic, strategic, and political factors that surround a particular episode. That is, unlike during the Cold War, there is no longer a singular focus to guide U.S. policy. This explanation is not intended as a defense of U.S. policies. Rather, it reminds us that even on issues regarding the presence of democracy in the hemisphere – a fundamental point with which most people in Washington agree – the U.S. government usually does not act always on consensus. This said, though, the post-Cold War opened up new areas for the United States' long-standing rhetorical support for democracy to be put into greater operation.