Myths and [mis] perceptions

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The United States in Transition

In both the United States and Mexico, the 1960s are associated irrevocably with the Cuban Revolution, the Vietnam War, assassinations of public figures, and student protests. These dramatic events were the outgrowth of intertwined circumstances and ideas, some of which were first apparent in the preceding decade.

During the Cold War, American society truly was convinced of its own exceptional character and the importance of remaining united around the established order and authorities. Cracks in this serene image as portrayed in the media—especially television—first appeared in the mid-1950s. In 1954, a landmark Supreme Court decision (Brown v. Board of Education) legitimated the African American community’s battle against discrimination and marginalization. A segment of the white community responded with violence, and television cameras transmitted images around the world of whites blocking school entrances to keep out black children, in one blow fracturing the idyllic facade of U.S. society. The civil rights movement transformed the United States with an intensity unparalleled since the Civil War.

The ranks of civil rights protesters were swelled by members of other minorities and the women’s rights movement. Broad sectors of America’s affluent and well-educated youth also lashed out against the system’s ills, both real and imagined. Distrust in authority spread like wildfire, and the consensus that had long sustained U.S. foreign policy crumbled. A perceptive chronicler described the 1960s as

an explosive time. The old order was being challenged in every sense, racially, morally, culturally, spiritually. . . . It was as if all the social currents that had been bottled up for two or three decades . . . were exploding, and every element of the existing structure of authority was on the defensive (Halberstam 1980: 400).
The international system also underwent extensive transformation. In the Soviet Union, Stalin's intransigence was supplanted by Malenkov's and Khruschev's more conciliatory stance internationally as they focused on reducing Soviet military expenditures and resolving a growing number of domestic problems. Khruschev's "secret speech" before the XX Communist Party Congress in 1956, in which he denounced the "excesses" of Stalinism, coincided with a number of international initiatives. With the Soviet Union's cooperation, Austria was neutralized in 1955, the conciliatory "spirit of Geneva" was born, and an era of peaceful coexistence was inaugurated. Conflict did not disappear; it merely underwent a change of venue—to Africa and Latin America, and to Asia, where France's defeat in Indochina paved the way for the U.S. intervention in Vietnam.

By 1960, when John Kennedy, exemplar of the style and image of the 1960s, defeated Richard Nixon in the presidential race, the Cold War was abating. In the arena of ideas, Kennedy's victory allowed liberal theses to retake ground that had been lost to conservative ideologies. These were the early days of a golden age for a brand of liberalism shot through with an optimistic and messianic activism and unaccepting of any limitations, whether in the United States, around the world, or in space. Imbued with this spirit, the Kennedy administration set out to face threats—both concrete and fanciful—to the national security of the United States.

Not everything had changed. U.S. elites still held that both Communism and the Soviet Union were aggressive by nature. They also believed in the importance of exporting their political and economic system around the world. Kennedy—perturbed by the Soviets' apparent lead in the space race and their incursions into Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Vietnam, the Congo, and Cuba, respectively)—sought to revitalize the policies of containment. Under Kennedy, these policies took on extended breadth and force; and they were deployed with marked intensity. Recognizing that the old recipes no longer worked and had to be replaced, Americans were forced to extend the margins of their potential consciousness. Although this resulted from a vast array of shifting factors, the present discussion focuses on a select few: the conflict in Vietnam, the Cuban Revolution, inter-American relations, and the revolution of ideas.

THE VIETNAM WAR

Following Communism's triumph in China in 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War, the Truman Doctrine—originally elaborated in 1947 and intended for Europe—was expanded to include Southeast Asia. In fact, the inclusion of Indochina was largely strategic and
symbolic; Eisenhower never agreed to send troops into this region, even though the Pentagon had claimed in 1955 that a military solution to the conflict could be achieved with as few as sixteen military divisions.

When Kennedy assumed the presidency, he sent the United States into the conflict, justifying U.S. intervention on the following grounds: Vietnam had to remain part of the free world in order to safeguard Asia as a whole (John Foster Dulles's "domino theory"); and only by fully supporting the government of South Vietnam could the United States demonstrate to other nations the strength of its international commitments. (The latter argument and variations on it were the most frequently offered.)

As David Halberstam noted, Vietnam signaled "the end of an era, the end of a kind of innocence. No wonder the Vietnam War cut more sharply to the inner soul of American culture than anything else in this century. No wonder it has spawned an entire generation of revisionist film-making and historiography." He also noted that for the United States, perhaps the most important consequence of the war was that "it raised questions of who we were," thus signaling "the end of the myth that we were different, that we were better" (1980: 490–91).

The United States' defeat in Vietnam was not only military; it was also a political and moral upset. Vietnam became a central issue for civil rights activists, rebelling minorities, and America's youth, with devastating consequences. The very legitimacy of institutions was called into question, and the society's self-esteem was crushed. The 1960s shattered the country's dreams and battered the foundations of its worldview, deflating this superpower's robust ego—at least for a while. Another important consequence was that society became an active participant in the discussion and formulation of American foreign policy, permanently transforming the policy-making process.

The legitimation for society's incursion into foreign policy arose out of an intellectual current far removed from the traditional conceptions of analysts like George Kennan or Samuel Flagg Bemmis, who maintained that U.S. foreign policy was guided by morality and idealism. The new current comprised academics advocating a revision of the full range of American mythology. Critical revisionism was not new; William Appleman Williams published The Tragedy of American Diplomacy in the 1950s (although it had little impact at the time because it transcended the limits of social consciousness). However, during the 1960s and 1970s, the revisionist tendency, also known as the New Left, became widely influential. Its assault on America's most venerated myths coincided with an era of searching and social rebellion. The policies and motivations of Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and Harry Truman all came into question.
Further—and the utmost sacrilege—revisionists concluded that the United States, having betrayed the guiding principles of its worldview, was largely to blame for the Cold War, the interventions in Vietnam and Chile, and a host of other tragedies. To avoid such disasters in the future, society would have to become an active participant in formulating and implementing foreign policy.

Although the revisionists' charges were extremely harsh, they were narrowly targeted; only a limited number of government officials and institutions were charged with betraying American traditions. Only individuals and particular laws—not the system's fundamentals—were condemned. This fact, and the absence of any political movement that could offer an alternative worldview, explains the system's permanence and the way it reappeared, redeemed itself, and reformed after the traumatic events of the 1960s and 1970s.

A METAMORPHOSIS IN U.S. JOURNALISM AND ACADEME

The media inevitably reflect society. During these years the media mirrored the social spirit of the time, serving as a forum for critical opinions and reasserting an autonomy that had been surrendered to the government in the name of national security. The press, in all its ideological diversity, was once again a vigilant watchdog monitoring the authorities and a representative of society's interests. Two contrasting events faithfully reflect this metamorphosis.

In 1961, the Miami Herald, U.S. News and World Report, and the New Republic, acceding to a government request, abstained from publishing reports on CIA operations against Cuba, which included preparations for the island's imminent invasion. The Times also dropped key paragraphs from an article by Tad Szulc on the same subject. One of the few publications to hold an independent and critical editorial line, in this instance and during the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz, was the weekly The Nation.1 Most dailies agreed to collaborate with Washington because they accepted the official interpretation of national security. But only a decade later, the script had changed completely. The New York Times published the "Pentagon papers," detailing exactly how the government had deceived the American people over Vietnam. The Times drafted its story without consulting the White House; and the Nixon administration responded by seeking a legal injunction to halt publication. During these events, the press not only enjoyed the support of the judiciary, it also reclaimed its capacity to determine independently what constitutes a matter of "national interest"

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From that moment forward, the automatic consensus between the government and the media was in ruins. Underlying this metamorphosis was the media's new level of consciousness, heightened by a number of factors. One was the changing profile of the journalist. Journalism called for a new professionalism and was no longer a field dominated by self-taught adventurers. Although its legendary aura suffered, its rigor gained. This critical journalistic spirit reestablished the investigative tradition for which the U.S. press was famed (Gottlieb and Wolf 1977: 327). The media were able to challenge government because American society was rediscovering and exerting a critical attitude. To be wary of government officials and their statements was no longer considered treason; it had, in fact, become a sign of individual responsibility and a symptom of public well-being.

For individual journalists to be able to express critical views meant that the papers' editorial policies had to turn away from conservatism and toward the liberal center, mirroring broader transformations on every level of society (Halberstam 1980: 599). When Otis Chandler took over as publisher of the Los Angeles Times in 1960, he transformed this previously conservative paper into a liberal publication. In 1961 it went so far as to publish a series of articles criticizing the right-wing, Orange County–based John Birch Society (Gottlieb and Wolf 1977: 335, 337). Media watchers agree that the New York Times, Newsweek, Time magazine, and the CBS and ABC television networks all underwent similar transformations, each at its own tempo.

A second factor was a growing public interest in international affairs. The U.S. media now covered events in other countries in greater detail and with a new and critical attitude, leading the public to question some government interpretations of "national interest." A chronicler of the era commented that "for the first time came a growth in our willingness to perceive different dimensions and gradations in our national interest" (Halberstam 1980: 244). Henry Giniger, Times correspondent in Mexico during the late 1960s, suggested that the American press had become far more "wary, questioning, and suspicious of government" (author interview, 1983).

The Vietnam conflict, in which thousands of journalists experienced the trauma of front-line warfare, was an important factor in this transformation. David Halberstam noted the irony of the situation: journalists arriving in Vietnam were upbeat, convinced that the United States could save the Vietnamese and that the latter would be forever grateful. During a second stage, generally about three months into their stay, they realized that the conflict was more complex than they had imagined. Six to nine months in, they blamed the Vietnamese (never the Americans) for every problem. Next came the realization that the United States was losing (or at least not winning) the
war. And finally the journalists would accept that "it isn't working at all, we shouldn't be here, and we are doing more harm than good" (1980: 490–91).

The government had grown comfortably accustomed to an uncensored press during the Cold War. When the media turned critical, the media-government relationship turned contentious, as during the administrations of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon (the latter was well known for his inability to relate to the press). Nixon's vice president, Spiro Agnew, even suggested that the print media had fanned social protests during the 1960s and this made them "fellow travelers of the counterculture" (Halberstam 1980: 599). (During the Cold War, "fellow traveler" was synonymous with "Communist ally.")

The media's new-found independence reflected transformations under way in the American public. It also mirrored an increasingly critical attitude among certain government officials. It was Defense Department analyst Daniel Ellsberg who leaked the Pentagon papers to the press; and the anonymous "Deep Throat" supplied information to investigative reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of the Washington Post from within the administration during the Watergate scandal.

As noted earlier, the Times was one of the few newspapers to maintain its liberal principles almost intact throughout the dark days of the Cold War. In combination with its inherent flexibility, this fact allowed the Times to adapt to changing circumstances. During the 1960s it featured the writings of a new generation of journalists. Tad Szulc and H.J. Mainenberg in Latin America, and David Halberstam in Vietnam covered international affairs with the open spirit of the 1960s (Talese 1969: 466–69), renewing a liberal tradition whose adherents in the 1950s had included Herbert Matthews, Harrison Salisbury, John Oakes, and James Reston.

Even though liberal ideologies permeated the media in the 1960s, certain conservative ideas lingered on. The result was a new equilibrium, based on the principles underlying the U.S. worldview, even as ideas about development, democracy, the role of the State, and hemispheric relations were changing.

Latin America and Cuba in the United States

U.S. perceptions of Latin America and the nature of relationships of domination changed during the 1960s. One reason for this was that social networks took shape that would have important impacts on developments in the hemisphere. Consciousness began to expand during the 1950s, especially after then-vice president Richard Nixon's eventful trip to Latin America in 1958. The hostility he encountered
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caught Washington's attention. President Eisenhower soon dis-patched his brother Milton to report on the situation, and in 1959 the latter recommended an in-depth review of the inter-American system. That same year, the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Relations embarked on a similar process; its report filled seven volumes (USC 1959a).

Confirming changing perceptions and growing interest regarding Latin American affairs, in 1959 the Joint Chiefs of Staff prepared a memorandum criticizing the secretary of defense for perpetuating the United States' "negative perspective" toward the "Communist problem" and for "being against Communism for the sole reason that the United States has stated that Communism is evil." The Joint Chiefs suggested that the time was ripe for a "positive attitude" (JCS 1959). Clearly they were not speaking out in favor of Communism; they simply sought to redefine the strategies being used to combat it.

No twentieth-century event has irritated the U.S. government and affected its perceptions of and policies toward Latin America more profoundly than the Cuban Revolution. Washington's hostility toward Cuba runs deep: by 1995 the United States was ready to re-establish relations with Vietnam, yet its economic, political, and diplomatic blockade of Cuba is still in effect. Perhaps U.S. sentiments on this issue can be illustrated through a comparison of the Cuban and Mexican revolutions. Mexico's revolutionaries realized, as early as the 1920s, that some pragmatic agreement with the United States was both necessary and inevitable, and that the degrees of freedom for the Mexican experiment's independence were determined by the interests of the United States. Even Cárdenas accepted this. The Cubans, however, followed the reverse strategy, supporting guerrilla movements in a number of Latin American nations (though never in Mexico), sending troops to Africa to back anti-American groups, and doing so blatantly, without regard for U.S. sensibilities.

Cuba's chances for success were limited by the fact that it lay within a basically conservative hemisphere. A U.S. Information Agency poll taken in Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, and Caracas in 1964 indicated that "the friendly regard which large majorities [held] for the United States stood in marked contrast to the antipathy [expressed toward] the Soviet Union, Communist China, and Castro's Cuba." These results were "broadly consistent with those of earlier Latin American surveys" (USIA 1964a: 1). Furthermore the Defense Department concluded that the Latin American military "as a whole" were "probably the least anti-American of any political group" in the region (DOD 1965: 35).

Even such positive polling results could not completely allay U.S. fears. In 1964, the CIA conceded that Cuba was "being watched closely" and that any signs that it was extending its revolution "could
have an extensive impact on the statist trend elsewhere in the area” (CIA 1964: 7-8). In 1980, President Jimmy Carter confirmed that the real threat was that Cuba provided an alternative model that might be emulated by populations dissatisfied with the established order (Carter 1980).

To vanquish this threat, Washington resorted to the strategy it had used to good effect against Jacobo Arbenz’s Guatemala; it made ready to crush the Cuban Revolution. The United States used economic blockades and diplomatic isolation against Cuba, encouraged Cubans to flee the island, organized an invasion, and plotted extensively against Castro (Wyden 1979; USC 1975: 71-198). Cuba resisted, reining in American arrogance, but at an enormous cost. In order to survive, Cuba’s system became excessively rigid and dependent on a single leader.

REFORMISM AND REVOLUTION

The United States—determined to rule out the possibility of “another Cuba” in the hemisphere and to curb the spread of Communism more generally—formulated two main strategies. The more conventional one was to reinforce Latin American security structures by increasing military aid and personnel in the region. To justify this new policy, the United States redefined the doctrine of national security, identifying internal subversion as the priority menace.

The second strategy was characteristic of the turbulent 1960s. Emphasizing social transformation, it was intended to preempt extremists from the Right (landed oligarchy and the military) or the Left (radicals and Communists). Its most sophisticated expression was an ambitious program for political and economic reform known as the Alliance for Progress, which sought to bring about in Latin America a “middle class revolution, where the processes of economic modernization carry the new urban middle class to power,” as James Schlesinger, Jr. noted in a 1961 memorandum to President Kennedy (WH 1961: 1; emphasis added).

Economic development was the program’s top priority. In fact, Kennedy called it “today’s most critical challenge.” To promote development, Kennedy proposed a “serious and long-term program” of government loans for productive activities in underdeveloped regions (in Schlesinger 1965: 590-92). Both the language and ideas surrounding political and economic development had changed, as reflected in an increased awareness of the unequal distribution of income in the

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2 Regarding the United States’ migratory policy, see Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo 1989: chap. 7.
region, an acknowledgment of the role played by the State, and a new desire for change (Huntington 1971: 283).

This newly broadened consciousness found multiple expressions. A 1961 Times editorial acknowledged that only after "many years, a frightening revolution in Cuba, and the entrance of the Cold War into the Western Hemisphere" did the United States realize that "economic growth without social progress keeps the great majority of the people in poverty, while a privileged few reap the benefits of growing abundance." The Times also noted that U.S. "policies for 150 years have been with the ruling classes, and not for the people of Latin America"—a mistake that had to be corrected (NYT 1961b).

The revisionist spirit became so widespread that some government officials even admitted that perhaps the United States was not the ideal role model for the region after all. In 1961, James Schlesinger, Jr. prepared a lengthy memorandum for President Kennedy in which he argued that the United States should no longer seek "to remake the other nations of the hemisphere in our own image" (WH 1961: 7). The Defense Department also considered that "although the traditional order [appeared to be] destined to disappear" from Latin America, there was "no warrant that constitutional democracy on the Anglo Saxon model will take its place, either in the short or long run" (DOD 1965: 10).

The fact that such opinions surfaced among high-ranking government officials and conservative institutions demonstrates how far-reaching the revision of old assumptions really was, as well as how far Washington was willing to go in order to avoid another Cuba. For Washington to make concessions was not easy; Under Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Chester Bowles noted that an increased level of independence "might be tougher to swallow in Latin America than elsewhere because of our tradition of relative unquestioned U.S. leadership" (DOS 1961a: 3).

Reformulating U.S. policy toward Latin America called for a new combination of coercion and hegemony. The Kennedy administration showed a preference for hegemony and made every effort to persuade the dominated nations of Latin America that the new U.S. proposal was both viable and desirable. For example, the State Department suggested that its diplomats present the U.S. viewpoint as "the fruit of our own experience, offered by us as background for consideration by the host government in its own interests," rather than as an attempt to intervene in another nation's internal affairs (DOS 1965a: 2; emphasis added). Nevertheless, the United States never renounced the use of coercion; an internal State Department communiqué emphasized that, according to President Kennedy, "the principle of noninterference in the affairs of other nations" did not bind the United States to non-action in instances where U.S. national interests
called for action (DOS 1961b: 1). The attitude pioneered by Dwight Morrow in Mexico in 1927 had now permeated the United States and become the conventional wisdom of the era.

Kennedy's confident reformism suffered from an inherent weakness: the United States' allies, Latin America's ruling cadres, did not share his liberal fervor. In fact, they tended to favor repression, their mechanism of choice to keep malcontents in line. Reformism languished after Kennedy's assassination in 1963. Lyndon Johnson was more concerned with domestic issues and the war in Vietnam; the Alliance for Progress was relegated to the dusty files of forgotten projects. Not everything returned to the status quo ante, however; local power groups in Latin America were now better armed and provided with a security doctrine that viewed internal subversion as a fundamental threat. Guerrilla groups continued to arise; in combination with a steady deterioration in the region's economies, this resulted in a wave of qualitatively different coups d'état. Latin America's military now saw itself fulfilling a new mission: to reorganize whole societies (see Crahan 1982; Corradi, Fagen, and Garretón 1992; Schoultz 1987). And in pursuing this mission, they had full support from the U.S. elite who, by that time, were primarily concerned with stability at any price, and had consequently reactivated coercion.

Part of the United States' academic community fell in line behind their government and those of Latin America in their struggles against insurgency—including giving their support to the notable "project Camelot," funded by the U.S. army to detect potential revolutionary movements in Latin America. Of course, not everybody was willing to collaborate with Washington, and many academics fought to maintain the autonomy of their research (Horowitz 1967). This split within the intellectual community has since become a permanent feature in U.S. interpretations of Latin America.

**Unexpected Consequences**

Historical analyses all too frequently overemphasize the role played by elites, while ignoring that played by societies. In order to understand the nature of inter-American relations from the 1960s forward, our analyses must include the social networks created by three groups. The first was the Peace Corps, established by President Kennedy to encourage economic and social reforms abroad. It was made up of young volunteers who, according to Peace Corps director Derek Singer, sought to reverse "the feelings of uselessness and impotence among the masses of many underdeveloped nations." These volunteers hoped to instill "a consciousness of [the people's] own capacity to improve their lives" (DOS 1961b: 7). Tens of thousands of young
Americans volunteered to revolutionize the consciousness of the Third World's impoverished populations.

The second group was the academic community. Because knowledge is central in the culture of the United States, issues on the national agenda are generally accompanied by funds for research and education. The Cuban Revolution released a flood of resources—both private and public—for regional studies, leading to an important rise in the number of students and scholars working on Latin America, within the context of a generalized resurgence in international studies (Coatsworth 1987: 17). Because both university students and Peace Corps volunteers were exempt from military conscription, there was no shortage of candidates for the Peace Corps or graduate study programs.

The third group comprised the large numbers of Catholic missionaries who traveled to Latin America during the 1960s in what has been called a "twentieth-century crusade" to fight the three enemies of Catholicism there: the Protestant church, Marxism, and spiritism. Mexico played a quiet role in this crusade as a waystation for linguistic and cultural training, primarily at a diocese in Cuernavaca, Morelos, home to the Intercultural Center for Documentation (CIDOC). Here, Americans and Europeans were trained in the languages and realities they would soon encounter in Latin America.

In combination, these three initiatives—unleashed, or at least accelerated, by the Cuban Revolution—motivated tens of thousands of young people, academics, and Christian missionaries to spend relatively long periods of time in Latin America. Their early enthusiasm had its roots in their belief in their own ability to shape society through faith, organization, and material resources; but they were also sensitized by the civil rights movement, antiwar protests, and the prevailing atmosphere of intellectual searching.

Unfortunately, what they found in Latin America had little correspondence with their expectations. Gerald Costello, writing about the Catholic experience, documented his growing awareness of the "specter of oppression," the tragic effects of rural-to-urban migration, and the rigidity of local power structures and their resistance to change (Costello 1979: ix, 5, 16). These groups were also in a position to observe the role Washington played in the intervention in the Dominican Republic and in the coups in Chile and Brazil, and they soon voiced open criticism of their government's actions.

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3This crusade was born in 1961 as a result of Monsignor Agostino Casaroli's address, in the name of Pope John XXIII, before the Second Religious Congress of the United States at the University of Notre Dame. Casaroli called upon American Catholics to send 10 percent—a tithe—of their 225,000 priests, brothers, and sisters, as missionaries to Latin America (Casaroli 1961).
It is an accident of history that the Americans arrived in Latin America at a time of intellectual effervescence, when two important Latin American contributions to Western thought—dependency theory and liberation theology—were emerging. Notions of fair play and the free exchange of ideas—important in U.S. culture—meant that the Americans who had come to study and transform the region felt impelled to recognize and respond to Latin American viewpoints. Many of these tens of thousands of Americans established a dialogue with their Latin American counterparts, the first time in history that such balanced exchanges had taken place. As a result, many who had come to teach became students. In a parallel process, many Latin Americans modified their views of the United States: their consciousness was broadened, and this enabled them to distinguish between American government and American society.

Although the paths that ideas travel are not easily reconstructed, the evidence confirms that the Americans' sojourn in Latin America, as well as the Latin Americans' own intellectual contributions, affected the United States' worldview. Even a swift perusal of the dissertations and bibliographies produced by the revisionists who reinterpreted American history reveals that they were influenced by Latin American ideas, and in particular by dependency theory. One of the harshest—and most prestigious—critics of the dependency school of thought, Robert Packenham, pointed out in 1978 that during the 1960s dependency theory became "one of the most influential in analyses of Latin America and of development in the Third World [at American research centers]" (1978: 1).

This south-to-north flow of ideas was apparent in another area. For the first time, the New York Times published editorials written by Latin Americans, including Felipe Herrera and Jacques Chonchol, the latter a minister in Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government in Chile (NYT, Jan. 22, 1968; Jan. 5, 1971). This openness was not limited to the Times. The thirst for change was so strong among the U.S. elite that in 1961 a State Department memorandum recommended that a "positive effort [be made] to include 'leftist' intellectuals in exchange programs." The recommendation was highly unusual in view of the fact that, as acknowledged in this same document, the United States had "been very reluctant to do so in the past" (DOS 1961c: 6.)

Latin America also influenced Christian thinking in the United States. At least 70,000 copies of Gustavo Gutiérrez's A Theology of Liberation were sold in the United States, and the Christian Weekly chose it from more than 15,000 volumes as one of the twelve most important theological works to be published during the 1970s (Time, Nov. 26, 1979; author interview with John Eagleson, 1984).

In brief, a nucleus of bilingual, bicultural Americans formed during the 1960s. Its members understood Latin American complexities
and broadened the margins of the United States' consciousness. They also formulated a more refined and less ethnocentric vision of Latin America that was clearly different from those that preceded it. This new vision gradually acquired political weight as the young volunteers, missionaries, and scholars returned to the United States and entered into politics, government, universities, foundations, or ecclesiastical hierarchies. Because many of them maintained their ties with individuals and groups in Latin America, they became channels for communication, as well as an important influence on the formulation of U.S. foreign policy. A full understanding of the history of the Western Hemisphere over the last thirty years must, therefore, include the social networks that influenced the United States' worldview, the formulation of its foreign policy, and the nature of hemispheric relationships of domination.

U.S. Views of Mexico in the 1960s

Mexico was not a Washington priority during the 1960s. Mexico was stable, its economy was growing, and it supported the United States when needed. Nonetheless, Mexico's increasing international activism did cause some tension, and its economic and political problems prompted many scholars to modify the parameters they used to analyze the country, in the process laying the foundations for a shift in perceptions of Mexico. It is no coincidence that three seminal texts which appeared in the first half of the decade broke with the existing consensus. Despite these changes, U.S. attention shifted away from Mexico, at least in quantitative terms. Our barometer, the New York Times, indicates that the low point for articles on Mexican affairs was between 1965 and 1973; there was no significant increase in front-page stories, editorials, opinion pieces, and so on (figures 1, 4, 6, 7).

A similar pattern appears in the military literature. Although views on Latin America were evolving rapidly, Mexico merited no more than historical essays or articles praising its low cost of living. Two such articles penned by military spouses—one in 1960, the second in 1969—share the frivolous, paternalistic tone toward "the Mexican" which is characteristic of a certain facet of U.S. perceptions. Both authors aimed to demonstrate that Guadalajara was a veritable

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4This was reflected in the publication of the first North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) Report in 1967. This publication—founded by American Christians, activists, and scholars—has since become a forum for leftist and progressive viewpoints on Latin America.

5Frank Brandenburg's The Making of Modern Mexico (1964), Raymond Vernon's The Dilemma of Mexico's Development (1964), and Oscar Lewis's The Children of Sanchez (1961).
Shangri-la for retired military personnel, due to its good communications, agreeable climate, beautiful surroundings, and, most of all, low prices. In Guadalajara, they stated, the cost of “room and board was a third or a fourth of what they are in the United States.” The inconveniences—bad water, dubious hygiene, and the “horses, donkeys and cows” that roamed the streets and by-ways—were offset by the natives’ inherent good nature. The Mexicans were “friendly, honest and courteous,” and their culture, although diverse, had certain aspects—such as the siesta—that could be emulated (J. Douglas 1960; Brown 1969). The authors’ enthusiasm is as evident as is their ignorance of Mexican history. Their mistakes were extensive. They suggested, for example, that “the Aztecs carried out millions of human sacrifices at the Temple of Quetzalcoatl” in Teotihuacan. In fact, the Aztecs inhabited Tenochtitlan, not Teotihuacan, and there is little evidence that “millions of sacrifices” were carried out at the latter site in any case.

Yet even though the United States did not notice, problems were brewing in Mexico. Rather than address them, the Mexican government postponed reforms and repressed all opposition. The results were acute stress for the economic model and a steady decline for the political regime. Although this was not apparent at the time, the problems that ailed Mexico in 1996 had their roots in the 1960s, a decade that witnessed the emergence of an active social resistance against authoritarianism which evolved along two main lines: a peaceful social and party-based opposition, and an armed opposition of small guerrilla movements.

CONCLUSION

Thus, although the United States paid Mexico scant attention during this period, there were fundamental changes in how it viewed its neighbor country. A review of written material produced in the United States during the 1960s uncovers an apparent willingness to acknowledge problems that previously had been ignored. Mexico’s unequal distribution of income received only 10 negative references between 1946 and 1959; the number rose to 21 during the 1960s. Unemployment had a single negative reference during the earlier period, and 9 during the latter. Poverty went from 12 to 21 (figures 83, 84, 87–90). New problems, such as Mexico’s population explosion, also became apparent during the 1960s (figure 81).

This subtle transformation emerged within the academic community, catalyzed by the Cuban Revolution. In 1966, historian Stanley Ross recognized that “when America’s journalists and politicians were faced with the disagreeable alternative of a Castro-style uprising, they began presenting the Mexican Revolution as the preferred
revolution” (1966: 5). They reinterpreted and reevaluated the system inherited from the Mexican Revolution; during the 1920s they had tolerated it reluctantly, but during the 1960s they praised it. If the Latin American nations would not follow the example set by the United States, Washington hoped that at least they might emulate Mexico, whose political cadres were outspoken yet disinclined to rock the boat. Following chapters explore these paradoxes of history.