Disciplinary Conquest
Salvatore, Ricardo D.

Published by Duke University Press

Salvatore, Ricardo D.
Disciplinary Conquest: U.S. Scholars in South America, 1900–1945.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/64125

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=2279818
U.S. scholars built comprehensive regional knowledge by gathering information about South America. The programs of research imagined by the scholars Hiram Bingham, Isaiah Bowman, Clarence H. Haring, Edward A. Ross, and Leo S. Rowe transcended the boundaries of the nation—they were transnational—and called for the intellectual collaboration of various branches of knowledge. Grand research designs in geography, archaeology, history, political science, and sociology accompanied the period of diplomatic rapprochement with South America. And this development in turn was fueled by the expansion of U.S. direct investment and trade in the region. The vast scope of these undertakings facilitated imperial visibility, at a time when the United States sought to understand its South American neighbors. Some of these research designs made explicit their allegiance to U.S. foreign-policy visions, such as Pan-Americanism and the Good Neighbor Policy. Others invoked lofty ideals—mutual understanding and inter-American cooperation—to rationalize the southward expansion of U.S. knowledge. Either way, by building research projects of hemispheric or transnational scope, U.S. scholars laid the foundations of a comprehensive knowledge that could help diplomats and politicians formulate U.S. foreign policies for the region.

The historian and explorer Hiram Bingham and the Yale Peruvian Expedition carved a space for other scholars to negotiate future U.S. archaeological
expeditions to South America. The geographer Isaiah Bowman persuaded U.S. investors, statesmen, and researchers of the need to thoroughly survey and map the subcontinent. The historian Clarence H. Haring proposed a comparative history of the hemisphere, which would make it possible to distinguish nations that converged toward the U.S. model from those that did not. The political scientist Leo S. Rowe pioneered the study of South American government in comparison to Caribbean dependencies. The sociologist Edward A. Ross in turn presented regional “social panoramas” as a way to synthesize and simplify the complex realities of South America.

All these paths to knowledge aimed to create a comprehensive understanding of the subcontinent. Research projects of macro regional scope were “designs” for the construction of orderly visions that rendered legible the chief phenomena and attributes of a given region. The disciplines themselves (archaeology, geography, history, political science, and sociology in our case) contributed the organizing principles for the chaotic and diverse realities of South America. In this chapter I discuss the concept of “imperiality” of knowledge as key to understanding these disciplinary interventions. By examining the research designs of our five scholars, both to understand their explicit objectives and to ascertain the imperialism implicit in them, I connect the formation of regional knowledge to broader expansionist tendencies of U.S. capital, technology, and culture. At the center of this process stood the U.S. research university, a constellation of fields of knowledge, cultivated by scholars working under a new organizational structure (departmental units, research labs, great libraries, academic journals, graduate programs, and so on).

On the Imperiality of Knowledge

Knowledge-producers create research designs. These are blueprints containing the set of problems to be investigated, the methods of inquiry, the instruments of measurement, and the scope or extent of the research. A research program can take as its object of study a locality, a province, a nation, a region, or a continent. The scope of the field transforms the nature of the inquiry. The passage from national to transnational history (or geography, or political science) presupposes an expansion in the will to know. Disciplines that contemplate projects of knowledge of transnational scope are commonly associated with universities and learned societies located in the advanced, industrialized nations of the West. It is these institutions that have the finances, the human resources, and the academic ambition to undertake the appropriation of local knowledge in order to build comprehensive, transnational, imperial knowledge.
To the extent that all knowledge seeks to overcome a previous vacuum of information and understanding, to illuminate an uncharted terrain of inquiry, or to conquer new territories for the assertion of expert authority, all knowledge can be deemed “imperial.” In exploring the expansion of informal or soft empire, based on cultural influence and economic and financial supremacy, knowledge is one of the expansive forces that we need to consider, in particular expert, disciplinary knowledge stemming from research universities and learned societies. Economic flows and expert regional knowledge are two interacting forces, whose expansion is mutually reinforcing. That is, efforts to gain access to needed raw materials and markets or to favorable conditions for overseas investment are often accompanied by an expansion of regional knowledge—not just of “commercial intelligence,” but also disciplinary knowledge in the natural sciences, the humanities, and the social sciences.

In colonial situations officials produce imperial knowledge under the auspices or mandate of an imperial government, as when the East India Company in India instructed Warren Hasting to collect and translate Sanskrit legal manuscripts or when the U.S. occupation government in the Philippines ordered local officials to take a census.¹ In these cases, the knowledge gathered was instrumental to the administration of colonial territories. Maps, censuses, legal texts, and land surveys gave colonial authorities direct instruments of government. The anthropologist Nicholas Dirks writes,

Colonial knowledge both enabled conquest and was produced by it: in certain important ways, knowledge was what colonialism was all about. Cultural forms in societies newly classified as “traditional” were reconstructed and transformed by and through this knowledge, which created new categories and oppositions between colonizers and colonized, European and Asian, modern and traditional, West and East. (Cohn 1996, ix)

In the case of an informal empire, the relationship between knowledge production and expanded hegemony is not so direct and transparent. The imperialism of knowledge does not stem from the colonial nature of government and its requirements. It is predicated instead on the very discourse of expert knowledge, which promises economic and political power a more accurate and simplified representation of the areas of influence. In other words, the authority rests on the prestige of specialized disciplines and the scholars who enunciate truth claims about the hinterlands and their populations. The knowledge produced renders similar services in terms of expanded and comprehensive visibility, but is not immediately useful to the routines of government. In neo-
colonial situations, rather, scholars make the effort to link their inquiries to the greater problematic of establishing hegemony.

One of the central features of imperial knowledge is extraterritoriality: information is gathered about outlying regions that are to come under the influence of a more powerful economic, technological, or political center. Expanded visibility is a second important aspect of imperial knowledge. The new disciplinary knowledge has to generate ways to enhance the capacity to observe in simplified terms the complex phenomena of areas of influence or hinterlands. Simplification is a crucial function of imperial knowledge; through various representations (charts, maps, tables, narratives, and hypotheses), scholars place the diversity of territories and populations under observation in a platform of comparability.

Expert knowledge that does not clarify or simplify the main problems affecting the hinterlands could hardly be called imperial. A third feature of imperial knowledge is usefulness. It is necessary that knowledge-producers orient their research toward solving problems of governance or influence, as construed by the hegemon. To this extent, imperial knowledge contains always a dose of empiria: data needs to be gathered, classified, and interpreted at the center’s workshops of knowledge. Purely theoretical or deductive work does not render much service to empire.

Imperial knowledge always entails a centripetal circulation of objects. Statistics, artifacts, manuscripts, ethnographic notes, photographs, measurements, surveys, and so forth are constantly flowing toward centers of knowledge. There, scholars attempt to build synthetic and general understandings of a given region and its population. Peripheries, to an extent, function as great repositories of evidence to the center. The imperialism of this centripetal circulation is underscored by the impossibility of a reciprocal relationship: the periphery cannot accumulate the voluminous evidence that the center already has, nor does it have the ambition to do so. To the extent that this constellation of objects-evidence is already displaced and accumulates in the center, it is difficult for the peripheries to imagine or conceive fields of study of transnational scope. The transnational scope of knowledge is, then, derivative of a prior concentration and accumulation of evidence, which is itself tributary to colonial and neocolonial relationships.

Imperial knowledge is not formed simply by an assemblage of “heterologies,” the name given by Michel de Certeau to a set of practices of writing and knowing that center on the study of “the Other”: the mystic’s search for God; the discoveries of curiosities found in travel narratives; psychology’s exploration of the mind; the inscription of savages, barbarians, and cannibals by
Western philosophes; as well as studies of folklore, street poetry, and a variety of other practices. Rather than illuminating the marginal or repressed side of Western modernity, U.S. disciplinary discourse about South America sought to describe the totality of a region. Individual subalternities or characters—the Boricua, the Peruvian “tapada,” the Chilean “roto,” the Argentine “gaucho,” and so on—could not be rendered legible without the understanding of this totality. Instead, the disciplines aimed to form an orderly and synthetic understanding of South America in relationship to “American” models of governance, history, society, and culture. Thus, the resulting regional knowledge contained a balance between homogeneity and diversity, between difference and similitude.

Moreover, central expert authority cannot be built simply from expressions of total alterity. Claims that the center possesses a “superior” or “exemplar” society and culture can help construct the position and perspective of the observer. But an absolute and complete alienation of the areas under observation from the center would not do the trick. Scholarly work about a newly incorporated region should be able to translate this alterity into the national self in order to sustain reasons for primacy, tutelage, or guidance. In other words, the central and the peripheral, the “superior” and the “inferior,” should be put in connection, so as to construct credible pronouncements about the center’s mission in relation to its peripheries.

More generally, the discourse of U.S. expert knowledge should place the given object of knowledge (Peru, the Amazon, South America) in relationship to certain notions of self (“Americanness,” U.S. traditions, U.S. history, U.S. social organization, U.S. mass culture, etc.) in order to transform it into useful knowledge. Traveling scholars created a discourse about South America centered on the region’s obstacles to economic progress, political stability, democratic governance, and cultural modernity. Yet, committed to contribute truthful and reliable representations of the condition of the “southern republics,” U.S. scholars also underscored the differences separating the various countries, regions, and populations. Because of its internally differential nature, U.S. disciplinary knowledge on South America was not another type of Orientalism, that is, an invented other around which a series of study areas emerge, or, as Said put it, “a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western Experience.”

The problem with the emerging field of Latin American studies was therefore not its excessive generalizations and lack of attention to difference, but its constant projection of U.S. understandings into the territory of the other. U.S. experts had to examine the possibility that a region’s economies, societies, politics, and culture might converge with the model of the U.S. center, while also
raising doubts about the feasibility of such convergence. Questions about the backwardness of Latin America vis-à-vis the United States were, therefore, constitutive of the field of Latin American studies. Implicit in this formulation was an imperial gesture: the necessity for a continued transfer of institutions, culture, and ideas from the United States to Latin America. It is when the “problems” of the periphery are integrated as areas of research of the center’s academy that we may characterize a given research design as “imperial.”

Earlier, we discerned three conditions for disciplinary knowledge to be considered imperial: (1) when the scholarly work collaborates with, gives support to, or otherwise advances the cause of supranational hegemony or control; (2) when the discipline itself provides the methods, the measurements, the concepts to attain a comprehensive visibility of the region under influence; (3) when the scholar makes extra efforts to bring his or her own inquiry in line with a given foreign-policy vision or principle. Extraterritoriality, expanded visibility, and utility for expansionist designs are the standards for considering academic designs “imperial.” Now we can see that there is a fourth feature or condition. The most imperial of all predicaments is to take the “problems” of the hinterlands as the center’s own. Here, there is a double responsibility: the collective “we” of scholars taking primary responsibility for solving the puzzles of South American civilization, and also the responsibility of the United States for the region’s development and modernity. In this regard, regional expert knowledge is imperial not only because it provides economic and political capital an expanded and comprehensive visibility, but also because it imagines the possibility for an endless transfer of the center’s ideas, culture, and technology to the periphery.

Studies in Colonial and Neocolonial Governance

The political scientist Leo S. Rowe pioneered the study of government in colonial and neocolonial situations. His writings reveal the pursuit of two grand research designs: one concerning questions of legality, constitutional guarantees, and congressional review in the government of insular dependencies; the other directed toward the comparative study of U.S. and South American forms of federalism, which entailed a reflection on the evolution of democracy in the southern tip of the continent.

Early on, in the last years of the nineteenth century, Rowe had been studying financial and political issues related to municipal government. His appointment to administrative positions in Puerto Rico (1900–1902) and Panama (1912–1913) afforded him a unique opportunity to study government transitions in colonial situations. During these years, the political scientist tried to
answer a set of four related questions: How does the transition from military to civil government proceed in overseas dependencies? Are U.S. constitutional prescriptions valid to occupation governments? How much of local traditions and legal principles should be incorporated in the legal structure of occupied territories? Are U.S. conceptions of property and rights to be extended to overseas dominions?

We know the answers Rowe gave to these questions. Almost without exception, U.S. military occupations gave way, sooner or later, to civil governments. At first, all three powers were concentrated on military governors, but in time these officials began to delegate judicial and legislative powers to local authorities. Transition to self-rule was gradual; U.S. authorities first built a municipal government, then established a national congress, and only later relinquished control of the executive. Though appointed by the U.S. president, military governors of the newly acquired colonies were responsible for their actions before Congress. To this extent, congressional review of the executive was maintained in colonial situations.6

From his experience in Puerto Rico and Panama, Rowe drew insights about Spanish-American political culture. In drafting local legislation, it was wise to pay attention to local traditions and inherited legal principles. Otherwise, the cost of inculcating new legal principles in local populations could override the benefits of “American government.” Local cabildos were forms of political participation that could be used to modernize government in the former Spanish colonies. Thus, the organization of city government—the laboratory of self-government—should be attentive to and aware of Spanish political institutions and culture (Leo S. Rowe 1902d).

The U.S. Caribbean dependencies proved an experimental laboratory for the adaptation of U.S. political ideas and standards of government to colonial situations (Leo S. Rowe 1902b). From his analysis of the “insular cases,” Rowe concluded that the Supreme Court had given colonial authorities a free hand to experiment with hybrid forms of government (Leo S. Rowe 1901). Hispanic political culture, however, could degrade the character of democratic government in colonial situations. Inherited ideas of paternalism could lead to widespread corruption and the colonization of the state by private interests. Consequently, transition governments needed to teach colonial subjects the true meaning political democracy (Leo S. Rowe 1914d).

Out of his experiences in the Caribbean, Rowe delineated an impressive research program. Governing colonial situations necessarily implied a legal transfer from center to periphery, a process whose legal and constitutional implications had to be studied. Legal reforms in the colonies required the hy-
bridization of Anglo and Hispanic legal traditions. The Supreme Court had given colonial governors the freedom to implement flexible, hybrid variants of “American government.” These experiments needed to be monitored in practice to test whether individual liberties and republican government could work in cultures dominated by the Hispanic legacy.

Rowe’s engagement with South America turned his attention away from colonial administration and into the new politics of scholarly brotherhood and cultural engagement. His intellectual production between 1909 and 1919 reveals this shift. In publications of this period, Rowe underscored the great economic transformations and newly acquired modernity of the ABC countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile). He became a reporter of South America’s progress in matters of urban improvement, municipal government, and education reform (Leo S. Rowe 1908a; Leo S. Rowe 1908b; Leo S. Rowe 1910b). This provided a new working hypothesis to his research design: the ABC republics tended to approach “American standards” of governance, civility, and progress. Later on, Rowe collected evidence for testing whether Argentine federalism, in its peculiar incarnation (centralized and presidentialist) could be considered compatible with U.S. notions of democratic government. In other words, he posited the possibility of a convergence of U.S. and South American democratic government, a position that favored a direct and more equal relation with the ABC nations.

Due to his responsibilities as head of the Pau, Rowe never had the time to write a synthesis of his views on “American government” in colonial and neocolonial situations. Nevertheless, his grand vision of politics, constitutions, and republican government in Latin America contributed to shape U.S. foreign policies toward the region. Quite clearly, his implicit research design participates in the features of imperial knowledge: it was transnational in scope; it entailed an enhanced visibility to the question of the transfer of “American government”; and it was certainly a type of useful knowledge, providing principles of foreign policy and guidance in colonial and neocolonial situations.

Transdisciplinary Implications of Machu Picchu

Hiram Bingham’s research program in Peru developed out of the organization of the Yale Peruvian Expedition (YPE). At the beginning, the expedition’s center of interest was the reconnaissance of archaeological sites, particularly those relating to Inca culture. During the first year of exploration, the expedition focused on archaeology, geology, and topography. Bingham, assisted by the naturalist Harry W. Foote and the engineer Herman L. Tucker, identified
and described sites of archaeological interest, among them Machu Picchu, the temple of Yuracrumiu, Vitcos, Vilcapampa, and the ruins near Cuzco. They located the sites, drew plans for each building, and reflected on the possible antiquity and use of each construction. The geographer Isaiah Bowman took samples of soil and gravel to determine the age of each subterranean layer and searched for traces of past glaciations. The topographer Kai Hendriksen drew up maps of the area and plans of the ruins.

In January 1914, after the first stage of the YPE had been completed, Bingham announced plans for expanding the research that transcended both disciplinary and geographic boundaries. The area of research was no longer the Urubamba Valley, but the whole southern Peruvian Andes. The expertise to be tapped included all disciplines that could contribute to a comprehensive view of the region’s problems. Understanding of Inca culture was still the central issue, yet the expedition now incorporated a curiosity about “living Indians.” Bingham’s quest turned to questions of geological formations, natural resources, indigenous cultures, and geographic accidents. With regard to archaeology, his plans were exceedingly optimistic. He expected that interdisciplinary collaboration could “unravel the puzzle of the ancient civilization of South America” (Hiram Bingham 1914d, 677). The newly discovered sites led him to imagine an ambitious and expansive research design. He was now intrigued by questions of Inca agriculture, building methods, metallurgy, roads, tax collection, forms of conquest, and so forth. In this, he was trying to outdo the work of William Prescott or Sir Clements Markham.

By 1915, the YPE had become a large multidisciplinary research enterprise that had overstepped the original interest in Inca ruins and archaeology. At the end, when Bingham decided to abandon the excavation work, he left a researcher in charge of making anthropological and linguistic observations in the selvatic region east and south of the Urubamba Valley. The original archaeological interests expanded into a multiplicity of disciplinary questions. As explained by Bingham, to understand the culture and way of life of the Incas, the archaeologist would require the assistance of geographers, biologists, linguists, historians, and architects. The whole area was now conceived as a reservoir of new evidence for a variety of scientific disciplines. The YPE program now embraced topography, archaeology, geographic reconnaissance, zoology and botany, pathology and anatomy, meteorology, anthropology, linguistics, and economic geology.

Ambitious and interdisciplinary, Bingham’s research vision entailed a temporary occupation of the field—the Urubamba Valley—by U.S. researchers. Unlike
other disciplines, archaeology is a territorial science that demands prolonged settlement near the “sites.” Once discovered, the ruins needed to be uncovered. Territorial occupation and labor demands were bound to present troubles to the ype. Most of the work of the archaeological branch of the ype consisted of excavations to uncover “archaeological treasures.” There followed activities of classification, labeling, and packaging. In addition, Bingham and Foote photographed indigenous peoples and ruins on a daily basis. These two activities must have appeared quite intrusive to local inhabitants.

For several reasons, Andean archaeology, as conceived by the ype, was the most imperial of research designs. It entailed the occupation of land in the Urubamba Valley. The clearing of the Machu Picchu buildings demanded months of arduous work, which took laborers away from the surrounding haciendas. The presence of the ype team disturbed traditional interactions between hacendados and peons, and triggered the reaction of local indigenistas and other cultural nationalists. What the ype wanted—that is, to incorporate Machu Picchu as a free territory for international science—was clearly an overt form of colonial intrusion, one that transferred the enunciatory authority about Peruvian antiquity to university centers in the U.S. Northeast.

**Mapping Latin America**

Isaiah Bowman’s geographic projects were ambitious in scope and dimension. He moved from topographical and physiographic recognition of the central Andes to sponsoring the drafting of a massive collection of maps of Hispanic America. Then he engaged in collaborative work destined to identify frontiers of recent settlement around the world. All of these projects underscored the power of geography to present large amounts of information about regions and resources in an orderly fashion. He had carried into the southern Peruvian Andes a preconceived approach—William M. Davis’s theory of geological cycles—yet, in the field, his research changed in the direction of geographical anthropology.

Bowman’s first work in the Andes of southern Peru (1907–1913) proved that geographical diversity could be simplified by dividing the country into regions, according to land use and type of settlement. He divided Peru into four regions: the forest, the highlands, the coastal desert, and the eastern valleys. Applying geographical survey techniques, Bowman claimed to have captured the realities of Andean South America in a comprehensive and synthetic fashion. In particular, he claimed to understand the enduring relationship between
natives and their natural environment. In the Atacama Desert, the diversity of soil conditions, climate, and land use could be used as a microcosm for a general study of human adaptation to harsh environments.

His early undertaking, the survey of the area along the 73rd meridian, convinced him of the necessity of a map of continental scope. The mapping of Hispanic America was a massive enterprise undertaken by the American Geographical Society (AGS), under Bowman’s directorship. They set a goal of drafting a series of maps on a 1:1 million scale (collectively called the Millionth Map), which required much research and data gathering. Cartographers at the AGS used maps contributed by local geographical societies on the subcontinent, as well as new survey materials collected by U.S. firms in the region. For example, the “Caracas Sheet” (North C-19) was made possible by a donation of surveys and published materials from the petroleum companies. Missing information was completed with the help of aerial photographs provided by the Aeronautical Chart Service of the U.S. Air Force (“Caracas Sheet of the Map of Hispanic America” 1945, 312). It took the work of seven to eight compilers and drafters, working over twenty-five years (from 1920 to 1945), to complete the Millionth Map. The whole operation cost half a million dollars (Martin 1980, 72).

The maps of Hispanic America provided comprehensive visibility of the region and were useful instruments for U.S. investors, foreign-policy makers, and researchers. Promoters of Pan-Americanism considered them essential tools for the arbitration of border disputes. Bowman found that the arbitration of border disputes in South America required the same type of information as that used at the Paris Conference: historical background, legal claims, population settlements, and a map that could reflect these three elements. In addition, Bowman expected the map collection to foster the development of regional studies. Deposited at the AGS Library, the maps would attract the attention of geographers across the continent. Bowman wrote in 1946, “It was the promotion of scholarly studies in Hispanic America on the part of students everywhere on the Western Hemisphere that was the grand objective, and the map was one instrument of such study” (Bowman 1946, 320). By building a unique map collection, Bowman helped lay the foundations of Latin American studies in the United States.13

In 1935, at a meeting of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History, Bowman proposed the elaboration of a Pan-American atlas, a project of Humboldtian dimensions. He presented it as a cooperative undertaking of North and South Americans scientists that reflected the politics of Good Neighbor- hood: “It was not a proposal to learn how to use science to ‘con-
quer’ Latin America after the fashion of the German geopolitikers, but how to work together for common ends, and specifically how to do so through cultural exchange, trade, and general economic improvement” (Bowman 1942b, 649). The Atlas would be a gigantic inventory of hemispheric resources for development, cataloging plant and animal life, population, mineral deposits, water resources, and climatology. “With the millionth sheets for a base, comparable data on meteorology and climatology, water resources, economically important mineral deposits, soils, rock structures, culture and landscape, archaeology and anthropology, plant and animal life, population and the like, can be assembled on a comprehensive map of uniform scale” (ibid., 650). The AGS completed this atlas in 1941. That year, the New York chapter of the AGS presented the finished Atlas to the Pan American Institute of Geography and History at Lima, a gift from U.S. geographers to their poorer southern neighbors. The Atlas covered all the Americas; it was the accomplishment of Pan-American intellectual cooperation in the field of cartography. Only now the idea of a “hemispheric shell” was used to combat German geopolitics, a science at the service of Nazi international aggression.14

These ambitious cartographic enterprises—the Millionth Map and the Pan-American Atlas—were clearly instrumental to providing U.S. policy makers and investors with a comprehensive visibility of Latin America, its natural resources and economic potential. The practical utility of this type of knowledge was commended repeatedly by scientists, investors, and foreign-relations experts. Through these disciplinary interventions, U.S. geography expanded its influence to the whole territory of Latin America.

Assessing the Impact of U.S. Influence

In 1925 Clarence H. Haring presented a “Plan for Research on Economic Internationalism in the Caribbean Region” to Harvard’s Bureau of International Affairs.15 The plan contemplated interdisciplinary research in economics, history, diplomacy, and law in order to assist U.S. foreign policy in the region. A policy-oriented and cooperative inquiry, involving various departments of intellectual labor, could bring about more effective policy options for the Caribbean.16 The research entailed putting a comprehensive type of knowledge at the service of empire. The object of study, “economic internationalism,” referred to the economic penetration and consolidation of U.S. capital in the Caribbean. In a sanitized fashion, the term recuperated Woodrow Wilson’s liberal internationalism together with Theodore Roosevelt’s concerns about the region’s perennial political instability and fiscal irresponsibility. Haring was
candidly explicit about this. At the center of the research program were questions of property rights and the availability of natural resources required for the expansion and reproduction of U.S. economic interests in the Caribbean. The recommendations of the committee that approved this research plan are worth quoting.

The members of the committee believe that scientific research on certain aspects of economic internationalism in Latin America, particularly in the Caribbean countries, will yield valuable results. The utilization of undeveloped resources, the control of raw materials, the protection of foreign investment, are only three of the numerous significant aspects of what may be called economic internationalism, but they are probably enough to indicate the commanding importance of this general topic, and to suggest its close relationship with problems of diplomacy, law, and government. The research calls for an intensive study of the economic, diplomatic, legal and historical aspects of this subject, in the area of most immediate interest to the United States.  

The research areas chosen were consistent with the strategic and economic interests of the United States: Mexico, Cuba, the Caribbean nations. In their effort to assert themselves, these nations might attempt to expropriate the assets of U.S. companies or to default on their external debts. To preempt these dangers, Haring proposed regional interdisciplinary research functional to the formulation of U.S. foreign policy.

Haring’s concerns about U.S. investments in the Caribbean and Mexico were later projected onto South America. By 1927, he was working on a project entitled “Grounds of South American Attitudes towards the United States,” which contemplated the study of three issues: (1) competitive trade methods in South America; (2) negative attitudes of South American merchants and officials to U.S. products and businessmen; and (3) the influence of foreign investment on commerce, with specific studies of Argentine railroads, the Peruvian Corporation, the American Packing Company in Argentina and Brazil, the United Fruit Company’s investments in Central America, and oil companies in Colombia and Venezuela. By studying foreign trade and investment in South America, Haring expected to understand better the interconnection between widespread anti-American feelings and the expansion of U.S. investment. The research program entailed collecting statistics about U.S. investments in South America and conducting interviews among managers of U.S. corporations in the region.

These two research designs—South American attitudes toward the United States and economic internationalism in the Caribbean—were to be the founda-
tion for the Harvard Bureau of Economic Research on Latin America (1930–1932). At the time, European industrial powers (England, France and Germany) were endeavoring to recover markets lost during the First World War, including those on the subcontinent; they used anti-American propaganda that damaged U.S. prestige in the region. So it was crucial to understand and overcome South Americans’ “distrust” of the United States. Haring’s research designs were clearly targeted to the problems posed by the U.S. economic expansion in South America, at the expense of European traders and manufacturers.

Not All Revolutions Are the Same

The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine stated clearly that the United States reserved the right to intervene every time that a small country, through its “misconduct” (whether fiscal disorder or revolution), brought about the possibility of European intervention. In the Caribbean, revolutions were such a common feature of political life that they came to serve as a justification for U.S. interventions. Many in the United States considered Haiti and the Dominican Republic, for instance, to be “lands of revolutions,” where the transition from one government to another usually entailed a military coup engineered by power-hungry individuals. Having spent time discussing problems of government in subjugated territories, the political scientist Leo S. Rowe thought otherwise. Some revolutions in the region were not the result of the personal ambition of local dictators, but reflected the population’s expectations for social and political change.

There is a deeply rooted belief in the United States that there has been no such thing as orderly constitutional development in Latin America. We seem to accept, almost without question, the idea that the political history of these countries has been a long succession of revolutionary movements, and that there has been no continuity, no real orderly progress in the growth of political institutions. Nothing can be farther from the truth. It is true that there have been uprisings, all too numerous, due to personal political ambitions, but practically all the important revolutionary movements have had as deep a social and economic significance as our own Civil War. (Leo S. Rowe 1917a, 274)

By placing “Latin American revolutions” within U.S. misconceptions about the region, Rowe was reopening an important research question: whether the political cultures of Central and South America were in a transition toward democracy. To the extent that true revolutions reflected deep-seated demands
of workers, peasants, and the middle sectors, these upheavals were indicators of underlying democratic aspirations.

Rowe called for a reexamination of Latin American revolutions in a comparative perspective. Political science needed to find out the details about underlying causes of revolutions, identify some basic regularities in government, and advance generalizations about the region’s political development. He reframed the end of caudillo government in the Argentine Confederation (1852), the struggle between congress and the executive in modernizing Chile (1890), and the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917) as signals of important expansions in political rights and political participation. Political unrest, previously an argument for taking control of small Caribbean states, could become a window into a vast research program about the development of democratic government in Spanish America.

It is a matter of very great importance that students of political science analyze with greater care than has hitherto been the case the causes of political unrest in certain sections of the American continent and we distinguish clearly between violent changes that have a deep social significance and those revolutionary movements that represent nothing more than the selfish ambitions of a few unscrupulous leaders. (Leo S. Rowe 1922, 7)

The Mexican Revolution, in particular, had given Rowe and other U.S. observers the distinct impression that underneath its violence and political instability were demands for greater political participation and for labor and social reforms. The revolution was the expression of genuine popular feeling against the misguided policies of Porfirio Díaz (Leo S. Rowe 1912). Díaz’s authoritarian program of progress and order had caused widespread discontent among industrial workers, peasants, and middling rancheros. Industrial progress had created a militant working class, while the strengthening of police forces (the rurales) and of local jefes políticos increased the repressive powers of the state. By 1910, the Mexican people were no longer as ignorant and submissive as they had been in 1877. Therefore, autocratic rule ceased to be regarded by the Mexican people as necessary for the nation’s progress (ibid.).

Understanding the differential political development of Spanish America could illuminate a more informed U.S. foreign policy in the future, Rowe pointed out. It was one thing to meddle in the domestic politics of small Caribbean and Central American nations; quite another to intervene in South American politics. These nations had experimented with republican government for at least fifty years. Improvements in education, public health, and
municipal government constituted evidence of important institutional and social change in the ABC nations. Consequently, it was crucially important to ascertain whether revolutions were part of a learning process leading toward popular government, or if they were symptoms of a pathology affecting small and unstable republics. Political science had to go beyond the study of law and constitutional government, and concern itself with the existing variety of governments in relation to community ideals of good government. The topics that interested Rowe about South America were various, including municipal government, taxation, education reform, and urban sanitation. He saw these topics as indicators of the modernity of their political and social formations.

Rowe never formulated a full blueprint for the comparative study of revolutions in Latin America. His reflections, though, highlighted the importance and true dimension of this research problem. By stressing the difference between small local uprisings and large rebellions aimed at structural social and political reform, he shifted the problematic of government in Latin America, from teaching for self-rule to a more comprehensive understanding of the peculiar national dynamics of sociopolitical change.

Opportunity for Transnational Race Research

The sociologist Edward A. Ross was interested in processes of social change in comparative perspective, and traveled to a number of countries to gather evidence. His study of Andean societies (South of Panama, 1915) provided him with key concepts to contrast modern and premodern sociabilities. In Andean South America he encountered great landed estates, racial oppression, and vestiges of colonialism that he dubbed “medieval.” In Argentina, by contrast, he found a society blessed by European immigration and in the process of rapid social and cultural modernization. These social panoramas helped him envision a transnational research agenda on questions of social hierarchy, social control, and—mostly unlike the other scholars here—race. In 1924 Ross contributed to the Journal of Social Forces a note titled “The Greatest Research Chance in the World.” The paper argued for the need for international, cooperative research on “race crossing.” To counter contradictory assertions about the degrading or strengthening effect of race mixture (usually based on flimsy evidence), Ross recommended a comparative survey of miscegenation. This work, too, would necessarily be transnational.

As never before the world needs a great anthropological survey of the results of race crossing in those regions where it is going on or has recently
occurred. The enterprise would require a board of anthropologists, ethnologists and sociologists to work out the questionnaires which the field workers would strive to obtain answers to, the measurements to be taken, and the data to be sought. Then field expeditions should be sent into the most instructive areas of race crossing, such as Hawaii, Tropical South America, Brazil, Mexico, the South Seas, South Africa, the American South, the West Indies, Egypt, Portuguese Africa, the Sudan. (Edward A. Ross 1924, 550)

Though global in scope, the survey Ross had in mind concentrated on colonies, dependencies, or hinterlands of informal empire. The colonial and the neodependent world would provide the main laboratories of a racially informed sociology. The great universities should divide among themselves the different world regions (ibid.). Ten years of sustained, cooperative, comparative survey research should render conclusive results about “race crossing” and finally put to rest propositions based on stereotypes or elite prejudice.

Making Hispanic American History Your Own

After 1918, the U.S. historical profession witnessed the emergence of a group of scholars who considered the comparative study of Hispanic American history to be their own field. This extension of the spatial frontiers of what until then was considered “American history” was clearly a response to the economic, political, and cultural expansion of the United States over Latin America. While at the beginning the Hispanic American history group was mainly concerned with revising the history of the Spanish empire, their project later extended to a long-term comparative history of the Americas, a project that had two leading figures: Eugene Bolton and Clarence Haring. This project was extraterritorial and comparative by design; it was conceived to provide a useful contribution to foreign policy; and it was supposed to supply a longue durée, comprehensive understanding of the region’s history, a history that would overcome the limitations of national historical traditions.

In May 1937 Haring arrived in Buenos Aires to participate in the Second Congress of the History of the Americas. He delivered the keynote address before hundreds of historians from Argentina and Latin America. Titled “Race and Environment in the New World,” the address defended the project of a parallel and comparative history of the Americas. The project, pioneered by Herbert Bolton in his 1932 address to the American Historical Association, was not popular at the time. Haring explained how Anglo-America and Spanish
America had passed through similar experiences of colonial subjugation, independence wars, nation-building under republican principles, and modernization processes (urbanization, industrialization, universal education, etc.). He characterized this evolutionary progress in differentiated terms, arguing that the ABC republics had reached further, leaving their Andean neighbors behind.

At the center of Haring’s 1937 address was the idea that similarities and differences between Hispanic America and Anglo-America stemmed from race and environment. Within Hispanic America also, these variables served to explain different historical trajectories. In the Andean nations race and environment conspired against rapid development and progress, whereas in the ABC nations convergence with the United States was a real possibility. But political developments in the early 1930s contradicted this expectation: the progressive South American nations fell back into old traditions of dictatorship and populism. The crucial difference between and betwixt the two Americas was to be found in the colonial period. To Haring, the Spanish colonial legacy held the key to understanding contemporary developmental differences. An institutional setting that provided colonial subjects with no experience in self-government made all the difference in explaining Hispanic America’s contemporary backwardness.

Before presenting his essay, Haring explained to fellow historians why U.S. historians had identified and developed the field of Hispanic American history. The reasons had to do with the politics of intellectual cooperation, with the common historical roots of the two Americas, and with the role of history in U.S. research universities. A comprehensive and cooperative history of the Americas promised to build connections among historians of the hemisphere. With time, historians would contribute to a commonwealth of knowledge that would help promote good will and cooperation among the peoples of the Americas. Moreover, U.S. historians recognized that the United States and the Hispanic American republics shared a common heritage: the influence of Spanish discovery and colonization. And their interest in Hispanic American history was also related to the expansion of historical studies in U.S. research universities. Harvard University had forty-six scholars providing instruction in all fields of history, including Europe, Hispanic America, and the Orient.

The interest in South America extended to the whole territory of the humanities. The object of desire was not just history, but the understanding of “Latin American culture.” By the early 1930s, achievements in this area were significant. U.S. scholars were engaged in research in areas of archaeology, anthropology, and geography, from the Rio Grande to Patagonia (Haring 1937). Bringing together the intellectual powers of various disciplines was essential to
Pan-American cooperation. In 1935 a permanent central Committee on Latin American Studies had been established in the United States to further cooperative research. Haring reported, “The ideal of this Committee, and the chief purpose of the Handbook of Latin American Studies, is to integrate research in adjoining, marginal areas to lower the barriers which separate their conventional, academic fields of scholarship, and to emphasize the unity of the study of Hispanic American culture” (ibid., 3; emphasis added). To Haring and other promoters of intellectual cooperation—clearly Leo S. Rowe, but also historians such as Herbert Bolton, Arthur Whitaker, Charles Hackett, J. Fred Rippy, John Tate Lanning, and Irving Leonard, among others—only the cooperative efforts of various disciplines could produce the complementarities needed for understanding the true location of Latin and South America in the historical development of the hemisphere.28

To the historians gathered at Buenos Aires, Haring proposed a continental history committed to finding the similarities and differences in the trajectories of the two Americas. This comprehensive history had to be a collaborative endeavor. In such a project national historians residing in South America had a role to play: that of providing the raw material for the grander narrative of the history of the Americas. Implicit in this communication was a division of labor that subalternized (marginalized and made subsidiary) local and national histories.

Grand Designs: Business Expansion and Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinarity was basic to the research programs of all of these Hispanic Americanists.29 Haring, Rowe, Bowman, and other U.S. scholars made efforts to build a multidisciplinary apparatus for the study of the region. To an extent, they created the institutional infrastructure and the motivating forces for Latin American studies, perhaps one of the first “area studies” to emerge in the United States. This development accompanied and reinforced the expansion of U.S. direct investment and trade in the region.

Yale University and the National Geographic Society joined to launch a vast, multidisciplinary research program in the southern Peruvian Andes. Yale historian and archaeologist Hiram Bingham’s research design entailed taking over the Urubamba Valley and its surrounding area in ways that affected Peru’s sovereignty over its archaeological sites. His program of research was both interdisciplinary and imperialistic. In his view, the hidden citadel of the Incas held the key for correcting the inherited history of the Spanish conquest and, indirectly, for better understanding the origins of humanity in South America. Harvard histo-
rian Clarence Haring directed his efforts to build a comparative history of the two Americas. His project focused on the historical forces that accounted for the convergence or divergence in the developmental paths of Anglo-America and Spanish America. To him, South America’s most advanced nations (the “ABC powers”) were converging toward the U.S. standard of living and modern culture. This was not the case with the Andean nations, whose economies and cultures remained impaired by the colonial experience.

Political scientist Leo Rowe delineated a vast field for the study of colonial governance. From the design of government institutions and legislation in new colonial situations, he moved to the question of the adaptability of “American government” to Hispanic American political culture. Later, his encounter with South America presented him with new issues and problems: among them, economic progress, municipal government, public opinion, and federalism. Revolutions, Rowe suggested, held the key to ascertaining whether the Latin American republics were making progress in their political evolution toward democracy. From his first visits to the region (1907–1909), geographer Isaiah Bowman thought of the Andes of Southern Peru and the Atacama Desert as two great laboratories or great reservoirs of information for the study of the relationship between humans and their environment. He pioneered a method of survey that allowed him to detect differences in land use in large portions of the Peruvian Andes. Data about climate, irrigation systems, plant life, and human settlements could be summarized and used to produce ideal regions. By defining homogeneous subregions according to a typology of human settlements, geography could provide a comprehensive understanding of the western countries of South America.

How did these great designs relate to foreign policy? Implicit in the researchers’ formulation of research objectives and the transnational scope of their inquiries were questions that preoccupied the U.S. foreign-policy establishment: the role the United States should play in relation to the “southern republics,” the contemporary relevance of the Monroe Doctrine, and the degree to which the South American nations might absorb U.S. economic and technological modernity. Sometimes the connection between policy objectives and research designs was more explicit and direct. In Haring’s research proposals we find an attempt to interweave knowledge, foreign policy, and business enterprises. His program on “economic internationalism” was a clear example of multidisciplinary studies at the service of U.S. foreign policy and U.S. economic expansionism.

The arguments these scholars used to “sell” the need for interdisciplinary, regionally based research to foundations, university authorities, and business leaders are worth examining as further evidence of their import to
foreign policy. The structures of knowledge implanted in the aftermath of the First World War persisted after 1939, though the Second World War and then the Cold War presented a quite different scenario and motivation for research. When Haring, as director of the Bureau of Economic Research on Latin America at Harvard, wanted to show the importance of doing comprehensive research on the economics and history of Latin America, he underscored three things: (1) the field as a vacuum of knowledge; (2) the absence of a comprehensive hemispheric history and economics; and (3) the intersection between academic and business interests in the making of regional knowledge. So far, neither political economy nor sociology had advanced in studying business activities in the region. In this territory, where national economic interest—in particular, the conditions for the expansion of U.S. business interests in South America—and academic curiosity converged, there was much work to be done.

The business interest of the U.S. in South America has of recent years vastly increased. We have advanced from the period of adventure to that of permanent and extensive commercial and financial relationships. Yet in view of its importance to us, in both the political and the economic sphere, it is surprising that today in this country there is virtually no specialized study of economic relations. Such things as the observation of business cycles in Latin America, and the construction of economic barometers, have never been given much attention; and the number of economists who know anything at all about Latin America is negligible.31

To Haring interdisciplinary research in law, economics, and history should follow the path of economic flows. In this way, new knowledge of the societies recently incorporated into the sphere of U.S. economic influence might facilitate the expansion of informal empire. Though the necessity of further knowledge was predicated on existing and continuing “economic relations” between the United States and Latin America, at the basis of such academic design was a discourse about the absence of scientific research in the region and the corresponding superiority of interdisciplinary expertise in U.S. universities. By design, this argument rested on the assumption that local knowledge was lacking in both scientific methods and modern library resources.

Conclusion

In the aftermath of the First World War, U.S. scholars imagined vast research projects, whose scope comprised the Andean region, South America, the hemisphere, even the world. The grandiosity of these projects reveals a com-
prehensive, imperial vision. Implicit in these designs was the notion that U.S. knowledge-producers could acquire hemispheric or global visibility and, as a result, make the hemisphere more understandable and legible. Their research designs, rooted in established scholarly disciplines, tried to generate useful knowledge for the formulation of U.S. foreign policy. Some of them (Haring's and Rowe's) were directly interwoven with the cultural machinery of Pan-American cooperation. Others (Ross's and Bowman's programs) aimed for a more global visibility.

Bowman’s geographic studies were perhaps the most ambitious, in terms of scope. He started with physiographic studies of the southern Andes, moved to the production of a map collection of Hispanic America, and then to an atlas of continental scale. By interconnecting studies in economics, history, law, and diplomacy, Haring expected to create a new configuration of knowledge adapted to the needs of the new U.S. Caribbean empire. For South America he designed a research program focused on the attitudes of local inhabitants toward the United States and the behavior of U.S. corporations in the region. In addition, he envisioned a program in the comparative history of the Americas that privileged questions of convergence and divergence in historical trajectories.

Edward Ross’s social panoramas of the Andean nations highlighted a few important research questions that would later become central to Latin American studies: indigenous oppression, landlordism, race, and the persistence of unpaid labor. His views about the Andean nations showed important similarities to those of geographer Bowman, underscoring problems of economic backwardness, political fragmentation, and the enduring legacy of Spanish colonialism. Rowe’s early works established the bases for an inquiry into the constitutional, legal, and cultural aspects of U.S. colonial governance. The reality of “South American progress,” however, shifted his interest toward questions of democratic sociability, the tension between political ideas and social formations, and the role of city government in transitions toward “American democracy.”

Four of the five scholars made clear gestures toward interdisciplinarity. Bingham, a historian-geographer turned archaeologist, felt that only the joint effort of various disciplines could unravel the mysteries of the ancient civilizations of the central Andes. Interdisciplinarity seemed to have developed in the field—in team discussions at the camp in Ollantaytambo. The deployment of U.S. researchers in the southern Peruvian Andes promised results in various branches of knowledge. The same could be said about geographer Bowman. His “science of settlement” called for the coordinated mapping of world regions, and this
required the cooperation of demographers, agricultural engineers, geographers, and ethnographers. Similarly, historian Haring proposed a strictly hemispheric research in which historians would cooperate with linguists, anthropologists, geographers, legal experts, and economists.

The research designs examined shared the features—extraterritoriality, expanded visibility, and foreign-policy usefulness—that make scholarly undertakings “imperial.” Regional history could be used as a platform to argue about the advantages of informal, indirect influence versus territorial dominion. Regional geography provided the maps, the regional subdivisions, and the characterizations that made “South America” readable—not just according to expert expectations, but also in relation to Washington’s ideas of governability. Regional archaeology presented the possibility of an extensive research into the resources and history of the Peruvian Andes. A political science at the service of hemispheric visibility should look at the important economic and social changes that created new political actors, new sensibilities, and new demands for reform. These academic designs produced hemispheric and global visions that tended to concentrate the resources needed for understanding inter-American affairs in U.S. universities and learned societies.