Disciplinary Conquest

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

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In this chapter I examine the construction of an enunciatory position within the U.S. academy: Hispanic American history at Harvard, a position from which a professor, Clarence H. Haring, was able to speak authoritatively about the history and contemporary condition of South America. I emphasize the role of an institutional location, Harvard, in the process of accumulation and dissemination of knowledge in the relatively new field of Hispanic American history. Looking at the classes, publications, conferences, and public addresses of this distinguished Harvard professor, I show how a single location—Harvard— influenced U.S. ways of apprehending Latin America.

While focusing on the career of one of the makers of Hispanic American history, I address a broader question: the parallel and mutually reinforcing relationship between academic prestige and imperial visibility. That is, Haring's cultural and social capital grew in proportion to his comprehensive understanding of Latin America. The Harvard professor was able to shape the formation of a subdiscipline and, at the same time, to influence contemporary debates on U.S. foreign policy.¹ Haring maneuvered within a network of social relations to build a locus of enunciation—Hispanic American history—from which he was able to speak about the challenges facing the United States in its commercial and cultural expansion over Latin America. His grand vision of the historical trajectory
Haring’s vision of Latin American history as an experimental field for the comparative study of governments, societies, and cultures helped the United States transition from Dollar Diplomacy to the Good Neighbor Policy. His scheme of two parallel histories with different temporalities and outcomes placed the United States as a more advanced neighbor ready to guide the southern republics in the road toward progress and democracy. While acknowledging the great economic, political, and social “backwardness” of the region vis-à-vis Anglo-America, his historical master narrative made feasible the expectations of economic progress and good government in South America.

In 1923 Harvard University hired Haring to be the Robert Wood Bliss Professor in Latin American History and Economics, a position funded by a former ambassador to Buenos Aires, Robert Wood Bliss, who was impressed by the economic potential of South America.  

From this prestigious position, most of Haring’s activities and contributions to the field of Latin American history were infused with a profound preoccupation with empire. His lectures, public addresses, academic publications, and policy advice always came back to a central question: the contemporary and projected hegemony of the United States in the American continent. In the parallel but distinct development of British and Spanish colonial America, Haring found the keys for understanding the present. His travels enabled him to adapt the Monroe Doctrine to the new situation of “South American progress” much as Bingham had suggested. At the core of his preoccupations in the mid-1920s were the disdainful and suspicious attitudes of South American elites toward the United States. In his grand historical narrative, Haring was able to reimagine U.S. hegemony as a benevolent force seeking to spill democracy and economic welfare over the sister republics of the south.

_Harry Eustis Haring’s academic work had started with an interest in Caribbean pirates. Soon he moved into the study of the Spanish system of navigation and trade. In 1918 he published *Trade and Navigation between Spain and the Indies in the Time of the Hapsburgs*. But he did his most important work at Harvard, where he taught from 1923 to 1953, holding important positions along with the Bliss chair: he was chair of the history department from 1931 to 1939 and the Master of Dunster House from 1934 to 1948. His influence radiated in many directions. His students—Lewis Hanke, Howard Cline, Miron Burgin,
and Arthur Whitaker, among others—were quite influential in the formation of the discipline. From Harvard, Haring organized and directed the Bureau of Economic Research on Latin America, and in collaboration with his assistants at the bureau, he prepared an important bibliography on economic matters (Haring 1935). In the mid-1920s, his interests shifted to political and foreign-policy analysis. He wrote essays criticizing U.S. intervention in Central America and others alerting the U.S. public to the discontent of South Americans with these interventions. He moved from the question of imperial rivalries of past empires (Spain, Britain, and France) to the most urgent questions of when and how the United States should intervene in the hemisphere. Haring was a founding member of the discipline’s most prestigious journal, the *Hispanic American Historical Review*, and promoted the largest bibliographic enterprise ever made in the field, the *Handbook of Latin American Studies*.

His publications connected well with the U.S. rapprochement with South America in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In 1928 he published *South America Looks at the United States*, followed in 1934 by *South American Progress*, a book more historical in outlook but also oriented toward foreign policy. These two books were the Harvard historian’s most important contributions to the debate on U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America. It was during this period that he developed the idea of a comprehensive and parallel history of the hemisphere. In the 1930s, he served as chairman of the Committee on Latin American Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies. From this position of power-knowledge, he directed students’ attention toward Latin America. In the 1930s and 1940s he helped found different Pan-American societies and clubs in the northeast, motivating students to promote the gospel of hemispheric cooperation through commerce and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Throughout his career, Haring showed a sustained interest in the economic and institutional history of the Spanish empire. He published essays on the Spanish colonial exchequer, on sixteenth-century gold and silver production, and on the Spanish system of trade. His most celebrated book, *The Spanish Empire in America* (1947), was the result of more than twenty years of research and teaching. In the 1930s, as he monitored the politics of South America, he published essays that carried important implications for U.S. foreign policy. He reported about recent military coups resulting from international commercial paralysis and about the growing activities of Nazi sympathizers in the region. Toward the end of his tenure at Harvard, he started gathering information for a book on Brazil, which later became a classic: *Empire in Brazil: A New World Experiment with Monarchy* (1958).
These interests shaped his teaching. He offered courses on colonial Spanish America, the history of the ABC countries (Argentina, Brazil, and Chile), and the history of modern Mexico, courses he developed in that order. Occasionally, he offered courses on Spanish-British relations in the seventeenth-century. At the height of Pan-American enthusiasm (1927–1933), Haring offered a course at Radcliffe that covered the history of Latin America since independence, from Mexico to Patagonia. Titled “History and Contemporary Politics of the Latin American Republics,” the course also included a great deal of commentary on U.S.-Latin American relations.

Haring was probably one of the first professors in the country to teach a special course on the history of the so-called ABC powers. The history of the ABC nations (Argentina, Brazil, and Chile) was a success story. As he explained to his students, the ABC powers stood out from the rest, because of their size, population, and wealth, and also because they had achieved political stability. After overcoming great political instability and social disorder in the post-independence era, they emerged in the twentieth century as institutionally and socially stable nations. Their separate trajectory complicated the great divide between the United States and South America. Here were countries (the ABC nations) whose historical experience contradicted the U.S. view of Latin American nations as inherently unstable politically and incapable of self-government. Sooner or later, the ABC nations would resemble the United States in levels of political maturity, economic welfare, and cultural sophistication.

What was history but a useful laboratory for the study of comparative development? By comparing the ABC nations to the United States, Haring was able to single out similarities and differences and to pose—much earlier than today’s economic historians—the important question of why today’s Southern Cone countries had “fallen behind” the United States. Argentina was, among other things, the most “European” of Latin American countries, for it had removed its indigenous population as successfully as had the United States. And, unlike other South American nations, Argentina lacked a substantial black population. Relieved of racial mixture, the country’s economic progress could be attributed to the two chief forces: environment and institutions. Under “the environment,” Haring included variables such as geography, climate, and natural-resource endowments. Under “institutions,” he included political development.

Of course, Haring’s view about the preeminence of the ABC nations did not withstand the test of time. By the early 1930s, military coups and Nazi sympathies forced Haring to revise his views about the progressive southern republics. Haring thought of South America’s military coups as temporary set-
backs in the long-term trajectory toward institutional and social stability. In the midst of the Second World War, Haring still sustained that Latin American countries may have inherited a dictatorial tradition, but they were not ready to embrace European fascism (Haring 1944). After the end of the period covered by this book, Cold War politics put a halt to the idea of parallel histories and, for that matter, to the whole project of a history of the Americas.

**Concern for Empires and Imperialism**

Whether he dealt with European nineteenth-century history, with colonial Spanish-American history, or with contemporary politics in Latin America, Haring was concerned with the same set of issues: how empires maintained their power over time, how empires served as vehicles of cultural transfer, and what forms of imperial domination generated the least resistance.

Between 1912 and 1915, Haring taught at Bryn Mawr and at Yale, offering courses on English history and on modern Europe. The syllabus of his course “Europe since 1815” shows the importance he attributed to imperialism. The course started with the French Revolution and ended with the Balkan Wars. Though traditional in many regards, the course included topics that were relatively novel, such as the French colonial experience in Algeria and the resistance it encountered (students learned about Emir Abdelkader and his promise to drive the French into the sea). Also nontraditional was the inclusion of the recent “Scramble for Africa” and the diplomatic conflicts generated by European nations’ imperialistic ambitions.

The question of late nineteenth-century imperialism (the Scramble for Africa) would turn out to be central to the course, for it was the origin of the First World War, a war that threatened European civilization. A second issue attracted Haring’s attention: the French Revolution. He saw it as a tragic moment in European history, in which everything—governments, classes, manners, religion, beliefs, passions, and hopes—was thrown into the “melting pot.” In the French Revolution Haring found a narrative model adaptable to post-independence Hispanic America. All the ingredients were there: social and political upheavals leading to prolonged wars, and autocratic regimes forming on the heels of anarchy. Haring’s concentration on these two central topics—the French Revolution and the Scramble for Africa—speaks of his search for historical models to narrate aspects he considered central to the formation of Hispanic America: the tormented experience of self-government after independence, and the ever-present danger of European imperialism to the region.
Haring's interest in empires continued at Harvard. In his History 174 course he presented the Spanish colonial empire as an inefficient but admirable system. Haring admired the fact that Spain could hold on to a vast empire stretching from California to Patagonia for three centuries. On the other hand, he was critical of the Spanish economic and political system. Monarchical absolutism and the commercial monopoly, he thought, were the ultimate causes of the empire's long-term decline after the seventeenth century. Unable to combat contraband or to control governmental corruption, the empire could not withstand the competition of European rival powers. The Spanish empire had given its colonies a long-lasting peace and the gift of Christian religion, yet it had failed miserably in elevating the standard of living for colonial subjects. This was Haring's standard for measuring imperial success: public goods and economic well-being.

Haring's Spanish colonial history contained the elements for a comparative history of empires. He contrasted the Spanish commercial monopoly with the experience of British colonization in North America. Spaniards, having started the process of colonization from a situation of free trade and colonial manufactures, soon closed off all possibility of free enterprise by establishing a rigid commercial monopoly. The experience of the British Thirteen Colonies pointed to a different developmental path: colonization with small farmers, dispersed property rights, ample trade opportunities, and institutions of self-government. These divergent paths since colonial times opened the way to an analysis of Latin American backwardness and to the examination of the U.S. role in twentieth-century hemispheric relations.

Haring's intellectual trajectory shows a spatiotemporal displacement: from the Caribbean, to the Spanish empire, to South America and Mexico in the twentieth century. Not only the research sites but the researcher moved. Before the First World War, he went to Oxford to study inter-imperial rivalries between Spain and Britain in the seventeenth-century Caribbean. Then he did archival work in England and Spain, concentrating on the institutional and economic aspects of Spanish colonialism. And toward the mid-1920s he traveled from his perch at Harvard to South America, where he discovered a different perspective from which to examine U.S. twentieth-century imperial adventures in the Caribbean.

The Mistakes of the Spanish Colonial Empire

In *Trade and Navigation* (1918), Haring undertook a thorough examination of the institutional and economic aspects of the Spanish empire in America—its complex commercial, administrative, and fiscal machinery—in order to
understand the decline of Spain’s global power in the seventeenth century. A free trade versus state monopoly dialectic dominated his interpretation. Other mercantilist empires had used the forces of the market to sustain their accumulation of state power and economic dominance. Spain did not. Its commercial monopoly stifled the forces of free enterprise, bringing stagnation and poverty to the American colonies (Haring 1918, 24). Spain chose to become a monopolistic commercial empire, when it could have benefited from a freer and larger maritime empire.

Haring followed the development of the Casa de Contratación from its humble beginnings as a three-man office until it became, in the mid-seventeenth century, an “elaborately organized institution” in charge of regulating the commerce and navigation of the Indies (ibid., 28–45). The first bureaucracy in the Americas, initially oriented toward the control of royal interests, ended up suffocating the development of commercial capitalism in the colonies. The expansion of bureaucracy brought about increased levels of red tape with regard to relations with the American colonies. Growing deficits forced the monarchy to sell public offices to augment government revenues. Philip II’s decision, in 1625, to sell to the Duke of Olivares the post of alguacil mayor of the Casa de Contratación was the “original sin” that corrupted the machinery of colonial government (ibid., 46, 53–54).

Like the British colonies in North America, the Spanish colonies had also enjoyed a period of “salutary neglect,” but this period had been too short to generate economic development. Before 1600, the Crown had promoted the development of agriculture in the Caribbean islands, introducing wheat, sugar, vines, and olives. In addition, the Spanish Crown allowed and encouraged the production of manufactures in the colonies (chiefly silk and woolen textiles). This, combined with the resistance of local governors and viceroys to enforce royal regulations, permitted the early growth of a limited intercolonial trade (ibid., 124–28). But soon, pressure from the Council of Indies and the Seville monopoly caused the Crown to prohibit most of these activities, drastically curtailing the number of ships allowed to supply American colonial ports. Once the Spanish commercial monopoly was firmly established, the colonies were subjected to the tyranny of exorbitant prices and irregular supplies. These conditions stimulated the growth of contraband trade and corruption.

In the late seventeenth century, Spanish colonial policy was out of tune with the mercantilist policies of her commercial rivals (ibid., 129). The Crown’s advisors did not understand that in order to maximize royal revenue and accumulate state power, it was necessary to grant concessions to chartered companies. Nor did they understand that it was illusory to keep bullion within Spain when the
colonies were already dependent on England, Holland, and France for supplies of manufactured goods. American silver naturally tended to flow out of Spain, and no system of regulations could stop this outflow. To this failure in economic policy, the Spaniards added a new insurmountable problem: the creation of European aristocracy in America. The Crown transferred power to the Church and created a landed aristocracy in the Indies. This was perhaps the greatest blunder, for aristocratic privilege prevented the development of self-reliance, the work ethic, and social equality in Hispanic America (ibid., 130–31).

During colonial times, Haring argued, an alternative model was possible: the U.S. model (ibid., 131). Small-scale holdings, free trade, and greater social equality would have generated in Central and South America a society and economy similar to that of the Thirteen Colonies. Instead, Hispanic America developed into a hierarchical, aristocratic society with great landed estates and servile labor, a place where Indian peasants tilled the land with primitive methods and lived in the greatest ignorance. Overall, Spanish colonialism had had a negative impact on the welfare of the native Americans. To sustain the royal treasury and parasitic social elites, the Crown had failed to elevate the standard of living of indigenous peoples. The Indian masses had accepted Christian evangelization, but this was all they had gained from “European civilization.” Only in the towns, where Spaniards and Creoles dominated, were there clear signs of “civilization.” Measured in these terms, the Spanish empire had not been a “progressive system” of transnational governance.

Three main factors were at the root of the decline of the Spanish empire, said Haring. One was the persistence of erroneous economic ideas: a trade monopoly with fixed ports, annual fleets, and a list of prohibited goods that discouraged local commerce and industrial enterprise. A second factor was the early establishment of aristocratic privilege and large landed estates. This reproduced servile labor and an aristocratic disdain for manual work. The third factor was corruption. The introduction of the sale of public offices undermined all possibility of responsible government (ibid., 150). The imperial bureaucracy, permeated by favoritism and bribery, proved unable to enforce royal regulations on navigation and trade. Contraband grew to alarming proportions, and hence, the royal treasury lost great amounts of revenue.

In the early eighteenth century, the Bourbons tried to revamp colonial trade, creating chartered companies and granting privileges to local and foreign merchants for the introduction of slaves, but it was already too late. Spain could no longer secure its supremacy over the seas. In this context, the American colonies became a liability to Spain. Its supplies came to be provided by foreign
manufacturers, while Spanish industry declined. Trade regulations ceased to be enforced, exacerbating the problems of contraband. Underneath the decline of the Spanish empire were policies inconsistent with Spain’s actual powers and resources. The ultimate folly of Spanish imperial policy was the attempt to keep a territory as vast as a hemisphere under the monopoly of one city (first Seville, later Cádiz) and of a single royal bureaucracy.14

Other forms of imperial engagement proved more effective over time. Haring explicitly mentioned British commercial hegemony in the nineteenth century as one of these new models. Controlling commerce through more flexible rules, enabling the participation of merchants from several nations, while patrolling the seas with a powerful navy, the British established a more productive and enduring empire. Haring’s Trade and Navigation also dealt, albeit less explicitly, with the U.S. informal empire. Since colonial times, the U.S. economy had developed an expanding settler frontier, assisted by policies of free trade and salutary neglect in questions of government. Then, in the nineteenth century, the nation experienced an industrial and transportation revolution. Hence, the union evolved from a relatively wealthy colony into a large industrial power that, from the beginning of the twentieth century, contended for hegemony in the American hemisphere. Combining a British-style maritime empire with frontier development, the U.S. model was, in Haring’s view, a superior mode of imperial engagement.

Haring’s indictment of the Spanish trade monopoly needs to be understood within the framework of a comparative study of empires. He went into the treasury of Spanish archives to find faults in colonial policy and institutions—erroneous economic ideas, the transfer of feudal society, widespread corruption and contraband—that could explain the contemporary divergence between Anglo- and Spanish-America. That is, Haring’s colonial history sought to understand two problems that intrigued the U.S. foreign-policy establishment in the twentieth century: why Latin America was lagging behind the United States; and, crucially, how the United States should expand its influence in Latin America in order to spread peace, progress, and mutual understanding. The Spanish empire stood as a negative example: something that the United States should not attempt to repeat.

Apparently a counternarrative of empire, Haring’s criticism actually aimed to reconsider U.S. hegemonic politics. The same narrative that depicted the Spanish empire as a failed experiment also presented the possibility of another type of imperial governance: a benevolent empire radiating influence through university training, expert advice, consumer advertising, free trade, private property, and democratic governance. In this way, Hispanic American history
became instrumental for differentiating and elevating the “American path” to exceptionality and exemplarity, a new mirror in which contemporaneous Latin American nations could see their future.

**Why It Is Important to “Us”: Teaching Imperial Reasons**

When teaching the history of colonial Spanish America, Haring always started class by pointing out the importance that the subject matter had for “us.” The collective subject invoked was, of course, Anglo-Americans. In his view, there were two reasons to study the subject. First, European colonization was one of the most remarkable phenomena of modern times. Over a relative short span of time, Europe, a small continent, had exported population, institutions, and cultures to other continents in ways that had radically transformed the world. The European expansion of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, he thought, was a world transformation from which U.S. Americans had much to learn. Second, the history of the Spanish-American colonies showed remarkable parallels to that of the English colonies in North America. Similarities of environment, motivation, and historical experience rendered the comparison of the two Americas productive and enticing.

Spanish and British colonies had both developed in environments far removed from their motherlands. Similar motivations—love of adventure, desire for wealth, longing for religious freedom—drove British and Spanish colonizers to the New World. The Americas were the refuge for individuals and groups whose difference Europe could not incorporate. Both colonies developed under “frontier conditions” that stimulated a spirit of personal independence and equality, contrary to European social hierarchies. Over time, both colonies developed social and economic restrictions that made colonials uncomfortable with European policies until, finally, both colonies revolted against their mother countries and obtained independence.

Comparability was central to Haring’s understanding of and interest in colonial history. Haring told his students that Hispanic American history was relevant to understanding the past and the present of the United States, because of its similarities (environment and history) and its differences (locality and race). Each spring, on the first day of classes, he told his “History of Colonial Spanish America” students that Latin American history was important to U.S. Americans not only because they were neighbors whose support was needed, but chiefly because Latin America and the United States shared a “common historical experience.” U.S. scholarly interest in Latin American history rested on a basic premise: the “two continents” had common and par-
allel histories. By this, Haring meant something more than coevalness. He meant similar historical conditions and potentially parallel trajectories, with deviations that could lead to different outcomes in government, economic growth, and societal development.

After independence, imbued with similar ideas of freedom, equality, and democracy, the Latin American nations tried to imitate the United States. But toward the beginning of the twentieth century a great gulf in economic welfare separated the Latin American republics from their northern neighbor. What caused the great divergence between the two Americas? Anarchy, race, and fortune.

Moreover, while the recently emancipated Latin states were a prey of the disruptive forces of sectional jealousy and personal ambition in their domestic life, the U.S., much more homogenous in race, much more European, without the Indian element, than these other states, and much more fortunate in its background of political experience, forged ahead very rapidly in population, industry and wealth.\textsuperscript{17}

The anarchical disposition inherited from Spaniards, the mixed racial experience of Latin America, and the greater “fortune” of the United States were the sources of the great divergence. If this was so, the obstacles for a great hemispheric union did not seem insurmountable. The great economic power of the United States had caused alarm and suspicion among the southern republics, but this was something that a well-informed diplomacy could gradually turn about. Regarded in the mirror of long-term American historical trajectories, Pan-American ideals did not seem ill-founded. Latin American nations had followed a trajectory similar to that of the United States, only to diverge temporarily in the late nineteenth century. The success of a Pan-American union could help Latin America reconnect with its post-independence historical trajectory.

By bringing the different into the terrain of the familiar, Haring caught the attention of his students. Spanish mercantilism could be understood in relationship to English mercantilism. Spanish absolutism made sense when contrasted with English constitutional monarchy. In addition, the Spanish colonial past provided useful lessons with which to interpret the present. In this regard, Haring made a clear connection with the current worldly ambitions of the United States. Starting with military conquest, Spain had created “flourishing civilized communities, with universities, government buildings and monasteries.”\textsuperscript{18} A colonizing power was also a civilizing power, a provider of public goods to colonial subjects. Without naming it, Haring was alluding to the United States and its imperial incursions in the Caribbean since 1898.
To persuade students of the importance of Spanish colonial history, Haring spoke of the importance of Latin American economies to the welfare of the United States. The region was a reserve of food supplies (corn, wheat, coffee, cacao, bananas, beef, mutton, etc.) and raw materials (copper, iron, tin, oil, hides, wool, etc.) crucial to the U.S. economy. (A similar discourse could be found in Leo S. Rowe’s conception of “constructive Pan-Americanism.”) To prove his point, Haring presented students with statistics that showed the importance of Latin American nations as global producers of commodities. A map with icons for export staples (dated 1889) helped to illustrate this contemporary phenomenon. The map and the statistics carried an additional message: the economic colonization of Spanish America remained an open project. The continent was still full of undeveloped natural resources, which presented a “vast field of opportunity” for U.S. capital.

South American Attitudes toward the United States

In his book *South America Looks at the United States* (1928), Haring assessed the attitudes of Latin American intellectuals, politicians, and publicists toward U.S. interventions in the Caribbean and Central America. This book, the product of his 1925–1926 tour of South America, reappraised the phenomenon of imperialism. Haring affirmed that the United States had to redefine the Monroe Doctrine according to the new geographical divide. Central America and the Caribbean were areas crucial to U.S. domestic security, where the United States had to exercise a permanent tutelage to maintain order and political stability. In South America, on the other hand, there was already economic progress and political stability. Consequently, the United States had to maintain a policy of friendship and commercial cooperation with its southern neighbors. Haring argued that the United States had much to learn from South America, presenting the region as the “natural complement” (in artistic talent and poetic ability) to U.S. mechanical civilization. Given South America’s degree of economic development and the spread of anti-American feelings, he argued, a policy of persuasion based on the promotion of “American culture” was the most reasonable means by which to secure hegemony.

Haring thought of U.S. hegemony in Latin America as a type of “modern empire,” one that bestowed public goods on its hinterlands. He considered Pan-Americanism as a sort of hemispheric commonwealth in which the wealthy and more experienced United States had to dispense advice and technical assistance to its less advanced sister republics. If the British had endowed India with railroads and a civil service, the U.S. empire should promote peace
through international arbitration, assist sister republics with medical and economic advice, and provide forums for the discussion of common problems. Pan-American conferences that brought together experts of the two Americas in a wide range of policy areas—international law, journalism, child welfare, natural reservations, public health, and so on—were manifestations of such a form of modern empire. In Haring’s view, an empire committed to the improvement of the well-being of its hinterlands was a better empire. For this reason, South Americans’ “distrust” of the United States was nothing more than a problem of miscommunication, something that could be dissolved with an intelligent cultural diplomacy.

Previously, Haring had believed that in the mechanics of trade, investment, and finance, one could find the answers to the expansion of a benevolent empire. His travels through South America in 1925–1926 changed this view. Now it became clear to him that the makers of public opinion in South America—intellectuals, politicians, the printed press, the radio, and so on—were spreading “anti-American feelings.” The United States was confronting a problem of bad image in South America, not because of misinformation and innuendo introduced by European traders, but because of the emergence of an anti-imperialist movement in the southern republics. Even the traditional press carried articles critical of the United States: about U.S. interventions in the Caribbean, Prohibition, the rise in the divorce rate, and Ku Klux Klan lynchings. Haring was perhaps one of the first U.S. scholars to name the Latin American intellectuals who undermined the prestige of the United States, among them José Ingenieros, Rufino Blanco Fombona, Carlos Mariátegui, Manuel Ugarte, José Vasconcelos, and José L. Suárez (Haring 1928, chap. 7). Twenty years after the publication of José Enrique Rodó’s Ariel (1900), a canonical text of anti-Americanism, South American intellectuals were uniting in defense of Latin American culture, Hispanidad, and anti-Americanism. This reaffirmed Haring’s belief that new research combining history and politics, public opinion and economic penetration, would be greatly beneficial to the field of international relations.

The Pan-Americanist Network

Between 1929 and 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression, Haring organized a series of Summer Round Tables on Latin America at the University of Virginia’s Institute of Public Affairs at Charlottesville. The round tables gathered prominent men in the “Latin American field”: high-ranking officers of the administration; Latin American diplomats in Washington; directors
of U.S. companies; publishers and editors of magazines and newspapers; international lawyers; members of academic societies; and university professors. Each summer the institute offered six to eight sessions, featuring two speakers each, with a discussion session at the end the day. Sessions included topics of actuality and relevance for those involved in policy and business decisions in the region.22

From the list of speakers and participants recovered from Haring’s archives, we get a tentative impression of who the “Pan-Americanists” were. Some of them had administrative experience in U.S. protectorates in Central America and the Caribbean. Others brought to the Round Tables business experience or scholarly knowledge. There were men who had shifted from one area of expertise to the other. Among them were powerful lawyers such as Edgar W. Turlington (advisor to Ambassador Guggenheim in Cuba, assistant solicitor of the State Department, and advisor for the Mexican-American Claim Commission), leading financial men such as W. W. Cumberland (the U.S. general receiver in Haiti), executives of powerful multinational corporations such as William K. Jackson (vice president of United Fruit) or Robert H. Patchin (vice president of W. R. Grace & Company), important journalists and editors such as Wallace Thompson (author of popular tracts about Mexico and Central America, and the editor of Ingeniería Internacional), and famous members of the diplomatic corps at Washington such as Ricardo J. Alfaro (Panama’s minister to the United States).23 Academic authority was also well represented. Among the scholars were historians—Fred Rippy (Duke), William Robertson (Illinois), Dana G. Munro (Princeton), and Leland Jenks (Rollings)—with expertise not only in Latin American history, but also on current political conditions. There were also scholar-statesmen such as James Brown Scott, a lawyer of international renown who was at the time solicitor for the U.S. State Department; he was also secretary of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the leading U.S. institution in the field of “intellectual cooperation” with Latin America.24

These were some of the connections Haring had forged from his base at Harvard, a network of men occupying key positions in academic institutions, government, business, and the press. Some of them were militant Pan-Americanists, while others were simply interested in the expansion of U.S. business in the region. Workshop participants constituted an informal network of relations that could be activated every time there was the need to debate issues crucial for the expansion of U.S. influence in Latin America.

The Round Tables were a common terrain in which experience in academic, business, and imperial government intersected. Aspiring and educated men
used their experience in colonial administration, foreign-policy positions, and overseas investment to claim expertise in the “Latin America field.” Having been in Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America gave them the authority of experience and a comprehensive vision of Latin American “problems.” (Sixteenth-century chroniclers of European expansion in the New World used this very strategy to affirm the credibility of their accounts, no matter how fantastic.) Those who, due to their careers, had perambulated through the territory of the empire were able to issue generalizations about Latin America's great regions.

By uniting the experience and expertise of scholars, diplomats, and businessmen, the organizers expected to translate individual experience “in the field” into a collective policy consensus. By uniting the experience and expertise of scholars, diplomats, and businessmen, the organizers expected to translate individual experience “in the field” into a collective policy consensus.²⁵ Charlottesville offered the opportunity to connect the practical knowledge gathered by administrators and businessmen with the academic knowledge of experts and scholars. At the workshops, well-known historians were able to discuss issues with representatives of United Fruit, W. R. Grace, and other major U.S. railroad or banking interests. At these workshops, “the field” was not restricted to academic knowledge. Gaining a clear and comprehensive understanding of the region's problems (imperial visibility) required scholars to be open to the suggestions and commentaries of producers of practical knowledge. Some voices, however, were excluded. In 1932 Charles Maphis, the director of the Institute of Public Affairs, wanted to invite the writer Waldo Frank, author of America Hispana. Haring strongly opposed this initiative.²⁶

Participants discussed the most recent issues in U.S. foreign policy in Latin America and also crucial trends in economic, social, and political movements: from tariffs to railroads, from national debts to the national character, from geography to politics. Ideas, contacts, and information circulated at these workshops. Business representatives could get from scholars and diplomats a wider sense of the political, social, and economic aspects of inter-American relations. In return, businessmen contributed their own perspectives as to what constituted the “American interest” in each practical area. In the intersection between the general and the particular, between history and foreign relations, between business and politics, the field of “Latin America” acquired a thick presence, a concrete visibility.

But tensions between “practical” and “scholarly” knowledge were unavoidable at Charlottesville. The role of the scholar was to guide the discussion reminding participants to connect their contributions to the “big picture” of U.S. interests—namely, democratic governance, economic growth, international peace, and cultural exchange. In particular, the organizers, Haring and
Maphis, wanted the debates to center on crucial economic and political questions of the day. Businessmen, on the other hand, wished to deal with “practical matters,” such as ocean transportation, road building, public utilities, the sugar industry, or the banana trade. In the end, the scholars had the upper hand, for they framed the questions under discussion and selected the participants. But the organizers first had the program checked by officers from the State Department and the Pan-American Union, as well as by some key financiers.27

The new territory of empire (formal and informal) produced authority: the right to represent and to speak for the dependencies and the hinterlands. To the “Pan-Americanists,” the comprehensive visibility given by colonial situations provided the basis for regional knowledge. That is, the intersection of university power, colonial administration, and business experience made their observations and opinions appear to be “knowledge.” Useful for boosting individual careers, regional knowledge also legitimated their policy opinions. “Pan-Americanists” had accumulated practical experience that, once included into an organized catalog of things observed, could function as truthful statements about “Mexico,” “Central America,” “the Caribbean,” or “South America.” All that Haring and Maphis did was to bring together this plurality of knowledge-producers to generate a productive interaction.

Keeping the Gates of the Subdiscipline

The organizers of the Summer Round Tables at Charlottesville absorbed all sorts of opinions, information, and testimonies to constitute a novel, collective, and experimental type of knowledge. Here imperial visibility required scholars to be open to the suggestions and commentaries of businessmen, journalists, foreign-service officials, and other producers of practical knowledge. In contrast, Haring and others defended the field of Latin American history as a bounded space for the deployment of scholarly knowledge, acting as gatekeepers of professional knowledge.

Since the creation of the Hispanic American Historical Review (HAHR) in 1918, a small group of scholars had dominated the field of Latin American history. By the mid-1920s, Haring of Harvard, Fred Rippy of Duke, Charles Hackett of Texas, and Arthur Whitaker of Pennsylvania were the key figures, controlling both the editorial board of HAHR and the Committee on Latin American History (CLAH), a division of the American Historical Association (AHA). In 1937–1938, when a group of new scholars wanted to open up the profession to a wider set of knowledge-producers, the established “Latin American group” stood together and successfully defeated the attempt. A proposal
by A. Curtis Wilgus for establishing an Academy of Hispanic American History, separate from the AHA and open to nonacademic members, was rejected at the Philadelphia conference of the AHA in 1938. And so was the proposal to democratize the government of the CLAH and of the journal.

Had Wilgus’s proposal for an academy been accepted, a growing number of amateur collectors and writers interested in the “history and civilizations of the countries of Latin origins in the Americas” would have shared the academic prestige conferred by the association and the journal. This was inadmissible. Haring, in a letter to Raúl O. Rivera, executive editor of HAHR, considered the project as a gate through which “third-rate scholars” could enter the subdiscipline and ultimately control its publications. Here we see a network of scholars defending established positions of authority from challenges from outside. Why did they feel threatened by Wilgus’s proposal? Opening the association to the amateur historian, to the explorer-adventurer, to the geographer could mean the debasement of “quality work,” a situation which in the end, they thought, would destroy the new field. That explains why, in 1938, the “Latin American group” decided to remain within the AHA, voted against the proposed new academy, and agreed to change only the name of the section (from then on, the “C” of CLAH would stand for “Conference,” not Committee).

Gathering Intelligence: Networks at Work

In the early 1930s Haring’s prior predictions of a convergence between North and South America were suddenly invalidated by a series of military coups in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Haring wrote in Foreign Affairs, “A wave of revolutions has over the past six months swept over the Latin American world, from the Pacific to the Atlantic and from the Peruvian highlands to the prairies of Buenos Aires” (1931b, 277). In his efforts to understand this new development, Haring gathered fresh evidence about political conditions in the region using informants from various countries.

In 1932–1933 Haring provided the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) with the names of several informants in South America. He had tried to involve true native informants, including the historian Jorge Basadre and Alfredo Alvarez Calderón, without success. He turned to U.S. businessmen who, due to their privileged positions, had access to sensitive political and economic information. Among them were Enrique Chirgwin, manager of the Banco Central of Valparaíso, Walter Van Deusen, from the Peruvian National Loan Committee, and William Scroggs, a member of the council traveling in Colombia. These men were to write letters every three months reporting on economic
and political conditions in the region. Through the reports of these informants Haring, and through him, the influential CFR, came to know about the volatile political climate in Peru, Colombia, and Chile during the Great Depression. As their reports indicated, anti-Americanism played an important role in the new political climate.

In addition to economic intelligence, these reports included news about changes in the cabinet, initiatives taken by different parties in congress, the popularity of various leaders, signs of social unrest, and the activities of the military. In March 1933 Walter Van Deusen reported about political conditions in Peru. The situation was quite unstable. The confrontational politics of Luis Miguel Sánchez Cerro had brought the country closer to a “revolution.” The president’s “civilista” supporters were spreading anti-Americanism and trying to stir up public support for a war with Colombia. The report touched also on government corruption, the new constitution, Sanchez Cerro’s arbitrary arrests of opposition leaders, and the situation of the army and the navy. In addition, Van Deusen informed the CFR about the growing strength of the Aprista opposition, very popular among government employees.

In May that year, Haring received a report about the Chilean situation. Under martial law and with enhanced executive privileges, the Chilean government was facing increasing political and social unrest. A center-left opposition had formed around the charismatic figure of Arturo Alessandri. The economic situation was critical: exchange controls had created a black market in foreign currency, oil companies were unable to obtain the needed pounds or dollars, and the state nitrate company had mounting debts. From Valparaíso, Enrique Chirgwin sent Haring a long report (twenty-seven pages) that went into considerable detail about the history and situation of the nitrate industry in Chile: the technological backwardness of the industry, the lack of adequate port facilities, the dissemination of the Guggenheim amalgamation process, and cost-cutting mergers. The decline in nitrate prices since 1927 had produced increased state intervention in the industry, leading to the liquidation of the Compañía del Salitre de Chile.

Haring was satisfied with the work of these informants. “It is exactly the sort of thing we want for distribution among the members of the Council of Foreign Relations,” he wrote Van Deusen on 29 April 1932. He had reasons to be grateful, for Van Deusen had given him and the CFR precise information about the candidates in the recent Chilean presidential elections and about the explosive political climate. All of the news Haring collected was, he believed, of crucial importance to hemispheric peace and governability. Through these sources, Haring reinforced his own perception of growing anti-American
sentiments, learned about conflicts between neighboring countries, and was informed about nationalistic policies that might harm U.S. interests. Much of the intelligence referred to ongoing political and economic conditions. For instance, Van Deusen sent a condemning report about the Sánchez Cerro administration. The new Peruvian president was unwilling to respect business contracts signed by the Leguía administration; he considered the foreign debt a “forgotten incident.”

Why did a chaired professor at Harvard involve himself in gathering political and economic intelligence? Unexpected political and economic developments in the period 1929–1933 had upset Haring’s vision about South America, introducing new questions to his research agenda, such as nationalism, anti-Americanism, and national debts. Contemporary news helped to correct earlier impressions about the region, resurfacing the legacies of the colonial regime: incapacity for self-government and state control over key economic resources. The informants’ reports placed in doubt much of what Haring had written about North and South American historical convergence in the 1920s. The Great Depression had altered significantly the historical path of South America. In 1933, at a series of lectures delivered at the Lowell Institute in Boston, Haring tried to incorporate this new information into his grand historical picture of South America.

*The Weak Promise of South American Progress*

Haring tried to assess the social and political evolution of the “southern republics” since independence in *South American Progress* (1934). This remarkable work was comprehensive, synthetic, and erudite. Haring addressed the history and current problems of eight countries, using key conflicts to define the nature of each nation’s history. For Brazil, Haring chose to deal with the question of the empire; for Chile, he focused on the conflict between the executive and congress; for Colombia, he addressed the tension between state and church. By focusing on representative problems and on particular moments of change in each republic, he was able to produce an authoritative grand narrative of South America.

The book provided a synthesis of the political and social evolution of each country. Argentina went from the “political chaos” of the post-independence (1820–1852), to a period of political stability presided over by an oligarchic elite (1880–1916), to a middle-class government responsive to popular demands (1916–1930). Chile went from an “autocratic republic” under Diego Portales, to an aristocratic republic under a parliamentary system (1860–1890), to an
incipient experiment with democracy under the forces of organized labor and a new middle class (since 1925). Brazil's peaceful and progressive constitutional monarchy (1822–1889) had allowed for sixty-seven years of political stability. Then the country transformed into an aristocratic republic riddled with sectionalism and financial troubles (1890–1920). More recently, protests by young military officers (the tenentes) brought to the surface latent pressures for democratization. Only two of the countries examined had reached the level of a rudimentary democracy typical of “the Jacksonian era”: Argentina since 1916 and Chile since 1926. The other republics showed demands for democratization, but were still far from reaching democratic governance.

Only Argentina appeared as a country with a level of political maturity comparable to the United States. Here was a country whose parallels with the United States Haring found “very striking.” To begin with, Argentina’s geography was “exactly analogous” to that of the United States, only in the Southern Hemisphere. Like the United States, Argentina possessed all types of climates, an abundance of natural resources, and comparable agricultural regions (“their pampas,” “our prairies”). More important, Argentina was—like the United States—a country of immigrants. Masses of European immigrants had populated the country, turning its population “nearly all white.” This whitening of the population “made for political steadiness” and facilitated “public order and sobriety.”

In international relations, Brazil stood closer to the United States. Haring dealt with the process of abolition of slavery in Brazil as a reflection or learning effect of abolition in the United States. During the First World War, Brazil had decided to ally with the United States and had maintained this position ever since. In other regards, it offered few points of comparison. Brazilian economic development had been tied to Great Britain’s, and its government had been monarchical for most of the nineteenth century. Still, the history of Brazil invited contrasts with the Hispanic American nations. The nation had gained its independence as a concession from the royal family, without the need for prolonged wars. The monarchy provided stability and peace and avoided the intense civil conflicts that characterized Hispanic American neighbors. Yet imperial Brazil left important problems unsolved. Here was a nation sparsely settled, with no reliable means of transportation. Though now a republic, the nation remained dominated by a political oligarchy.37

The march toward republican maturity took distinct roads. Argentina was a country that had run the whole gamut of political regimes: anarchy, caudillo despotism, constitutional order, aristocratic republic, and middle-class democratic government. Haring paid special attention to the conflict between
unitarians and federalists. The Argentine civil wars provided a clear example of federalism turned into “feudalism.” General Juan M. de Rosas was a shrewd caudillo, an authoritarian who had preserved Argentina’s independence in the midst of blockades by imperial powers (1838–1840, 1845–1848), but at the cost of delaying the country’s constitutional arrangement. Another caudillo, General Urquiza, acted as an organizer, calling for the constitutional convention that drafted the 1853 constitution. Then the republic divided into two states (Buenos Aires and the Confederation), a separation that reminded Haring of the U.S. Civil War. General Julio A. Roca received praise for solving the difficult problem of federalizing Buenos Aires and organizing a government coalition that minimized intra-elite conflicts.

During the period 1880–1915, Argentina achieved order and progress, but not democracy. A national party (the Partido Autonomista Nacional) dominated politics and administration. The elite controlled elections to the exclusion of the majority of the population. Only in 1912 was the secret ballot enacted, and with it emerged the possibility for a middle-class party to win the elections. Haring depicted the Radical governments (1916–1930) as a “crude democracy” in which men without experience came to exercise government. With Hipólito Yrigoyen came greater doses of personalist rule, corruption, and machine politics, until finally, in September 1930, the aging caudillo was ousted by a military coup.

Chile exemplified an established constitutional order under the control of the landed class. From the time of Portales, there had been shifts between conservative and liberal elites, between congress and executive dominance, but by and large, political conditions were controlled by a closely knit aristocracy. In fact, what seemed like a modern political conflict—the constitutional crisis of 1890–1891—ended up with the victory of the landed aristocracy. This class supported the party of congress, which, with the aid of the navy, defeated the popular president José Manuel Balmaceda. The protracted conflict about two types of government (executive control versus parliamentarianism) could not obscure the oligarchic nature of the Chilean political order.

Brazil was a peculiar case in which an enlightened emperor, Dom Pedro II, had generated political stability and social order and granted individual liberties. But the regime moved only sluggishly on the problem of slavery, while abolition forces nurtured a movement for republican government; so a year after slavery was ended in 1888, the monarchy, too, was abolished. The old republic was basically an aristocratic regime, dominated by the political machines of the three major states (Rio Grande do Sul, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo), which formed the Mineiro-Paulista governing alliance. The ruling class was
concerned more with economic and financial problems than with enhancing political participation. Starting in the mid-1920s, military revolts called for enhanced political participation. The 1930 revolution, from which Getúlio Vargas emerged, was in fact a challenge to the monopoly of power of the Mineiro-Paulista alliance.

In comparison with the small republics of the Caribbean and Central America, the South American republics had experimented with republican government for over a century. Yet, starting in 1930, military coups and social revolts had suspended this trajectory (Haring 1931). Haring tried to minimize the effects of these revolutions, presenting them as part of the long march toward democracy. He considered coups and dictatorships in Chile to be temporary deviations from the country’s long-term political trajectory. The 1930 conservative revolution in Argentina took Haring by surprise. He thought Argentina had attained “an ordered and reasoned democracy” since the rise to power of the Radical Party and speculated that perhaps the 1930 coup was just a temporary setback in a long-term progressive evolution (Haring 1936).

The political disturbances of the early 1930s reshaped Haring’s research agenda on the ground but did not affect his grand picture of South America. The region had inherited from its colonial masters problematic traits that were difficult to overcome. Emancipation from Spain and Portugal had opened up momentous changes that gradually transformed politics. The southern republics subscribed to new ideals—freedom, equality before the law, and popular sovereignty—difficult to carry into practice. As Haring conceded, “It had taken a century to eradicate the shortcomings of three centuries of colonial rule” (Haring 1934, 12). Military caudillos came to power and the republics soon developed landed aristocracies. In part, Haring thought, this development was inevitable, given post-independence conditions: mass illiteracy, lack of communications, and the absence of a national consciousness. Rather than launching the nations forward, the caudillos took them backward. While the capital cities showed some reforms, the interior provinces lapsed into “feudalism” (ibid., 17).

Geography and race helped explain the nineteenth-century setback in political evolution. Geographical features—mountains, rivers, and forests—divided nations into scattered settlements. Lack of effective communication across these divisions prevented the development of national economies and national sentiments. The exceptions to this trend were the ABC nations, where a better physical environment made possible the construction of railroads and the creation of a national economy. In the Andean nations, Spanish colonial-
ism had left racially divided societies, in which whites had rights but Indians had none. This continued to be the case in the post-independence period.

In spite of great obstacles, Haring believed, South American nations as a whole had made significant political progress in the century following independence. Militarism in its more barbaric form had almost disappeared. So had violent revolutions, now displaced by bloodless coups d’etat. Under the challenge of the middle classes, older aristocracies were everywhere losing their hold on the destinies of the republics. It was still true that, in the Andean region, where colonialism had a long-lasting effect, the republics had failed to elevate the standard of living and education of indigenous peoples, keeping them outside of politics. In contrast, the larger, most stable republics (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Colombia) were “developing a genuine democracy.” Ballots were replacing bullets as means of resolving political conflicts. Sustained economic growth and long-term political stability had created the conditions for “greater moderation” of character and a new “sense of social responsibility.”

Comparative and Comprehensive History

In 1944, at a lecture delivered at the Loomis School, Haring addressed the persistence of dictatorships or personalistic rule in Hispanic America. He explained why, 120 years after independence, the republics were still unable to achieve democratic government: due to Spanish absolutism, the southern republics had not acquired sufficient experience in self-government. In particular, they had failed to learn notions of altruism and public service. Thus, it was the colonial legacy that solved the paradox of how two lands, emerging from a common experience, ended up with different systems of government. The United States was democratic because its colonial experience prepared it for self-government. Latin America was undemocratic because its colonial experience had denied them that training. To an extent, Haring was extending the Black Legend of Spanish cruelty and misdeeds from historiography to the terrain of politics. Here, the Spanish empire had denied the peoples of South America the possibility of learning the public virtues and the sociability necessary for a working democracy. This was U.S. exceptionalism à la Tocqueville.

Searching in the remote past for explanations of the problems of the present showed the practical utility of history. History was a sack full of objective lessons from which one could take whatever best explained the present condition of Latin America. Conversely, the present could damage existing narratives of the past. If the colonial legacy was useful to explain contemporary
dictatorial trends, then the whole post-independent period had been a failed experiment. Anticipating by more than twenty years the Stanley and Barbara Stein thesis of the persistence of the “colonial heritage,” Haring refashioned the post-independence era as a continuity of the colonial period. The revolutions of independence had overthrown the Spanish colonial government but not the old social system. A small ruling class made up of landowning aristocrats continued to dominate great masses of peasants and workers.

It is curious that a New Dealer and admirer of the Good Neighbor Policy (Haring) and a pair of dependentistas (the Steins) resorted to the same thesis of continuity, extracting from the colonial era the code to decipher the present. In both metanarratives Hispanic America carried the burden of an unshakable past in its present underdevelopment and dictatorial governments. As Haring was prompt to explain to his students and audiences, the independence leadership had built republics in paper, not in practice. Latin American constitutions were emptied of real content. Democratic governance could not have flourished in lands where illiteracy, exploitation, and servile labor were prevalent. Like the land of the antipodes, South American republics generated the opposite of what they proclaimed. Seeking social equality, they perpetuated privilege; seeking popular government, they enthroned landed oligarchies; seeking federations, they created regionally fragmented nations.

In his courses as well as in his writings, Haring always returned to colonial history, for this was the nexus that united and gave meaning to present differences between Anglo-America and Latin America. However distant the one appeared to the other, the two Americas were marked by a common historical experience. Both Anglo-America and South America had developed into political adulthood by shaking off the chains of European colonialism. And both had experimented—with different degrees of success—with republican government. Because of this historical commonality, their destinies were united. To Haring, parallel historical experience was the basis for envisioning a peaceful and cooperative system of inter-American relations (Haring 1934, 216–17).

But historical experience also produced difference, and this difference justified U.S. tutelage over the most backward nations of South America. The post-independence period in South America had led to anarchy, political fragmentation, and civil wars, not to apprenticeship in self-government. This apprenticeship could be attained only by transforming the mentality of South Americans through economic and institutional modernization. During the Second World War, U.S. technological and economic superiority over the southern republics became quite evident. To be modern and able to speak as
an equal, South America needed to mimic the United States in matters of economic, social, and technological progress.

Had they managed to build industry, commerce, and middle class, perhaps the southern republics could have attained U.S. political modernity. But they had not, and the reasons for this failure lay deep in history, in the errors of Spanish monarchical absolutism and the failure of post-independence governments. Specifically, Haring blamed post-independence governments for not choosing the right policies: economic autonomy, industrialization, universal education, liberal government, and so on. History thus appears as an overdetermined system, a full circle of explanations. Starting from a contemporary difference, the historian could work his way into the past to recuperate traces that explained, reproduced, and consolidated such difference. The Hispanic American history that Haring practiced was such an exercise. It was “useful” in the sense of making “evident” the gulf that separated Anglo-America from Latin America. If the “great divergence” between the two Americas could be displaced to the colonial past, then the U.S. empire could relax its responsibilities for Latin American development and political democracy while, at the same time, insisting on the necessity for them.

**Conclusion**

From Harvard, Clarence Haring helped build the edifice of Hispanic American history. His stylized historical syntheses of the Spanish empire and of the social and political evolution of the South American republics were influential in the formation of the subdiscipline. He promoted the production of scholarly work on areas of colonial and national regional history and strove to sustain, within the AHA, a scholarly community dedicated to the history of Latin America. Haring’s works translated the complex and elusive realities of Latin America to U.S. American educated audiences. Though simplified to the extreme, his historical narrative of the development of Hispanic American nations presented the advantage of locating the region’s history within the grand scenery of comparative imperial history, something few other writers were able to accomplish.

His most important historical undertaking—the institutional and economic history of the Spanish empire—contained an inventory of errors to avoid: outdated economic policies, the introduction of premodern social relations, and the promotion of racial miscegenation. This rosary of mistakes had brought about the economic decline of the Spanish empire in the seventeenth century
and shaped the social, economic, and political conditions of the independent Hispanic American republics. These nations inherited racially divided societies, political systems dominated by powerful landed elites, and populations with little experience in self-government and free markets.

This gloomy picture of Latin America was somewhat modified by Haring’s visit to the region in the mid-1920s. His observations served to reveal the contemporary realities of South American progress and anti-American feelings. In the late nineteenth century, a group of progressive nations in the south—the ABC powers—had started to separate themselves from the rest, exhibiting by the second decade of the twentieth century political stability and economic progress. These nations, Haring thought, were particularly endowed to successfully adopt U.S. models of economic growth, social equality, and democratic politics. The discovery of South American “distrust”—that is, that members of the South American intelligentsia were criticizing the interventionist policies of the United States in the Circum-Caribbean—refocused Haring’s attention on the question of local intellectuals, leading him to imagine cooperation among historians of the continent.

Haring’s most important legacy was to posit the existence of a common and parallel history between Hispanic America and the United States. Earlier than Herbert Bolton, he envisioned the possibility of a comparative hemispheric history, one organized by race, the environment, political ideals, and institutional trajectories. It was, to be sure, an exemplary history rooted in the presupposition of U.S. technological, economic, and institutional superiority. In his stylized narrative the South American nations were undoing a legacy of colonialism, step by step. Mirrored in the achievements of the northern colossus, the new republics had still much to learn. Yet Haring’s history contained a moment of optimism: the possibility of convergence of the ABC powers toward U.S. forms of modernity.

The Harvard historian was able to put the histories of the “two Americas” on the same plane at the cost of great simplification: reducing differences to the most basic fundamentals (race, environment, and national experience in terms of ideals and institutions); abstracting away important aspects of the geography and history of Latin American countries; and artfully creating forced analogies. It was this reductionist and simplified version of history that served to sustain the belief in the perfectibility of the region’s democracy and welfare, and, therefore, in the possibility of peaceful interaction with the southern neighbors.

Like other scholars discussed in this book, Haring distinguished the progressive nations of the Southern Cone from the rest of the subcontinent, seeing
in their trajectories the past history of the United States. The anomaly of the
ABC powers complicated the simplistic version of the great divide (north vs.
south of the Panama Canal) and served to reinforce the validity of the politics
of U.S. Pan-Americanism. For at the basis of the U.S. desire for mutual co-
operation and friendship among the American republics was a historical tra-
jectory that, despite temporary setbacks and deviations, marched in the long
term toward the same ideals.

Haring’s grand narratives—of the Spanish empire and of the post-
independence South American republics—made it possible to produce general-
izations of hemispheric scope. Contemporary events, particularly developments
related to the Pan-American movement, influenced Haring’s ideas, research pro-
posals, and historical narrative. Because of interconnections between econom-
ics and history, between the region’s political evolution and the possibilities of
Pan-American cooperation, between the history of the Spanish empire and
the potentialities of the U.S. empire, I have presented Haring’s history as useful
knowledge at the service of empire.

One could read Haring’s two most important interventions in the foreign-
policy debate as side-steps in the career of a colonial historian. Yet, examined
in the long-term trajectory of Haring’s intellectual project, these works appear
to be integral to his search for a comparative history of the Americas. His un-
derstanding of the decline of the Spanish empire informed and served as the
background for evaluating and criticizing U.S. policies toward Latin America
in the twentieth century. Indeed, most of his historical works show an endur-
ing concern for empires and imperialism. Haring’s more challenging historical
arguments cannot be understood outside of the framework of a comparative
history of empires.

Networks of scholars consolidate academic credentials and defend institu-
tional positions within the academy. Deployed in the context of an expand-
ing empire, these networks can also facilitate the gathering of information
necessary for imperial visibility. Haring used networks of informants to help
the U.S. foreign-policy community understand Latin American politics. The
mobilization of evidence about South American peripheries through networks
of local informants was crucial for “correcting” earlier predictions about the
subcontinent’s future. A regional history committed to the service of foreign
policy needed to be constantly updated about contemporary developments.
In this, Haring’s commitment to empiricism served to check his otherwise un-
bounded generalizations about South America. Haring’s predictions about the
improvement and perfectibility of the southern republics changed as he made a
constant effort to accommodate new facts to his grand historical narrative. His
lectures at Lowell (1933) and at Loomis (1944) show this process of adjustment clearly.

Harvard and a host of connected institutions vested Haring’s historical narrative and political analysis with scholarly prestige and authority. Haring’s business informants and scholarly connections in Latin America provided fresh information and interpretation that he could recirculate in a variety of forums in the United States. Comparativity and intelligence (being updated on current events) gave Haring’s history a practical and useful value that was appreciated by policy makers and scholars. Through him, Harvard was closely connected to the region.

The prestige associated with the enunciatory location—Harvard—cannot be overemphasized. It was at Harvard where Haring produced his grand historical synthesis of Hispanic America. From Harvard, he coordinated efforts to enhance Latin American studies, in the U.S. northeast as well as in the country as a whole. He promoted the idea of a great bibliographic catalog for researchers in the region. He fostered the formation of Pan-American societies, involving students in their organization. His lectures and public addresses provided students and audiences with an erudite and synthetic grand narrative of the long-term evolution of the southern republics. His research designs represent an attempt to combine economics with history in the search for a multidisciplinary science at the service of foreign policy. This project produced a comprehensive report on the causes of anti-Americanism in South America.

A Harvard professor could build a network of local informants and be in contact with foreign-policy makers and businessmen; Harvard expanded the resonance of Haring’s ideas and predicaments. In the round tables at the University of Virginia, he discussed with businessmen, foreign-policy makers, and other scholars the “problems” of Latin America. The State Department and northeastern audiences alike expected the Harvard historian to keep them abreast of new political and economic developments in the southern republics.

One of my primary arguments concerns the relationship between Harvard’s privileged location and the mobilization of useful knowledge through networks of scholars and businessmen. Harvard granted Haring the authority to articulate a grand historiographical narrative of Hispanic America and, from this enunciatory position, to influence U.S. foreign policy. Harvard concentrated knowledge and enthusiasm about Latin America, and this generated arguments about U.S. policy toward the region. Networks of relationships built around Haring and Harvard—networks that included businessmen, government officials, publicists, foreign-relations experts, and international lawyers—served to circulate those arguments within the sphere of imperial power and policy.
Haring’s simplified narratives, forced analogies, and optimistic projections were sympathetic to a certain vision of empire: the benevolent imperialism of the Good Neighbor Policy. His vision of a common and parallel history of the Americas sustained the politics of Pan-Americanism. A benevolent empire, granting to the hemisphere peace, commerce, technological change, and cooperation in solving “common problems,” appeared to be an improvement over the mistakes of Spanish colonialism and the following blunders of the post-independence “paper republics.”

At Harvard, Haring gave reasons for integrating Hispanic American history into the formation of an educated gentleman. In his lectures, publications, and public speeches we find a set of quite articulate reasons for imperial visibility and engagement. His task was to interest students in Latin America, and to do so, he invoked imperial reasons: the contemporary crisis of governability in the American Mediterranean made it necessary to study the experience of the Spanish empire—in particular, the institutional architecture and cultural legacies it bestowed on South Americans. In this way, looking at the long trajectory of the Spanish empire and pointing out its major mistakes ceased to be an esoteric exercise. It became an urgent task of a regional knowledge committed to the politics of Pan-American unity.