Between 1906 and 1930, five notable U.S. scholars in the fields of archaeology, geography, history, political science, and sociology traveled to South America to evaluate and appraise anew the realities of the region. At the time, U.S. diplomacy, capital, and technology were attempting to incorporate South America as an area of influence. After Secretary Elihu Root’s visit in 1906, Washington opened up the possibility of diplomatic and cultural rapprochement with the southern republics. The works of Hiram Bingham, Isaiah Bowman, Clarence H. Haring, Leo S. Rowe, and Edward A. Ross enhanced U.S. knowledge of the region, making South America more easily apprehensible and legible to students and the general public. Their findings constituted a “rediscovery” of South America: new characterizations, based on disciplinary concerns, observations, and theories, about the present and potential of the subcontinent. These disciplinary interventions brought some order to the apparently chaotic and heterogeneous reality of the region. By simplifying the geography, history, government, antiquity, and societies of South America, U.S. scholars produced a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the different countries and subregions. Their work highlighted problems in comparative development, particularly in the region’s potential for adopting U.S. modernity and democracy.
U.S. scholars “rediscovered” South America in a double sense: they presented novel panoramic vistas of the region, based on closer scrutiny and observation, from a range of disciplinary viewpoints; and they contrasted their findings with the achievements and failings of the Spanish colonial system. References to the Spanish conquest underscored the novelty of the discoveries and the vast research opportunities they opened up. Whether the object of study was Inca ruins, the Spanish commercial monopoly, life in the Andean desert, South American attitudes toward the United States, or the question of South American revolutions, the new knowledge adumbrated a new understanding of the subcontinent that, in turn, provided a new platform to rethink U.S. policies toward the region.

The U.S. scholars who visited South America in the first two decades of the twentieth century themselves viewed their experiences as a second discovery, making explicit references to the sixteenth-century Iberian colonization. Bingham thought of himself as the “second Pizarro,” while Bowman talked of the desert of Atacama as his own “El Dorado.” Haring found in Spanish colonial history a well of unending comparisons with the British colonies in North America. Similarly, Rowe went back to study Spanish cabildos in order to understand Puerto Rico’s political culture. Ross discovered the persistence of “colonial traits” in the contemporary societies of the Andes, presenting highland communities in Peru and Bolivia as living in the middle ages.

While drawing a connection between the Spanish colonial past and South America’s present, U.S. scholars also made clear that their conquest differed because it was scientific: a set of findings made possible by the application of modern research methods. Their discoveries were meaningful only within the boundaries of disciplinary knowledge. Their enunciatory authority stemmed from the prestige of emerging U.S. research universities and learned societies, not from papal bulls, capitulaciones, or royal charters. As the first “scientific observers” of the subcontinent, these scholars felt empowered by a sense of mission: to uncover deep-rooted structures and regularities in its history, societies, environment, and culture.

When Bingham returned to the United States after his discovery of Machu Picchu, he informed reporters that he was the “first white man” to see the ruins that provided refuge to the Incas escaping from the Spanish conquerors. The Yale explorer, a historian and archaeologist, was able to correct a huge Spanish oversight. In their quest for gold and glory, the Spanish colonizers had failed to see major Inca ruins near the Urubamba Valley. Though Spanish chronicles
provided clues to the puzzle of Inca fortresses and citadels, imperfect maps and a deep forest had kept Inca sites hidden from view. Bingham’s discovery made clear that modern archaeology, properly equipped, could generate new knowledge of ancient civilizations in the Andes and thus complete and correct the unfinished narrative of the Spanish conquest. Equipped with modern survey methods, the Yale Peruvian Expedition (1912–1915) was able to locate the sites where crucial events of the conquest of Peru took place (Hiram Bingham 1922, 127). Bingham’s attempt to retrace the escape route of Inca warriors chased by Pizarro’s forces was not metaphorical. Based on William H. Prescott’s account and Spanish chronicles, Bingham knew that the Incas had intended to make their last stand at Urubamba and, defeated by a superior army, had escaped over snowy passes into the “fastnesses of Uilcapampa” (Bingham, Inca Land, 1922, 108).¹

In 1947 Isaiah Bowman told the reporter of a New York newspaper that in the Atacama Desert, back in 1907, he had discovered his “El Dorado.” One moonless night, the sand of the desert seemed to flow like a river of gold; it turned out to be a subterranean water current glowing in the dark (Martin 1980, 37). The underground water was the true gold of the desert, though the evidence of it was not easy for the casual observer to detect. That was his discovery. Water was everything in Atacama, and the scholar who understood this could begin to grasp the life and thought of the peoples of the desert. Apparently poor and empty, the desert was actually full of life; its inhabitants were the “true conquerors” of this harsh environment.

U.S. scholars were the new “discoverers” of the realities of South America, the door-openers of new research opportunities, the utterers of generalizations that could serve as basis for a disciplinary understanding of the region. Their new findings began to come together at a time when U.S.-centered modernity expanded its reach to the southern half of the continent. U.S. scholars saw themselves as pioneers in the knowledge of a subcontinent until recently considered “terra incognita.” Their suggestion that U.S. men of science were replacing the Spanish conquistadors was more than metaphorical. They thought that Spanish colonizers had failed to understand Hispanic American peoples, especially the indigenous inhabitants of the land.

In his work on Andean societies, Ross, a sociologist, underscored the persistent legacy of Spanish colonialism. Under the facade of European modernity lay an infrastructure of premodern social norms, interactions, and prejudices. Indian servile labor, racial oppression, great landed estates, and aristocratic presumption were the marks left by Spanish colonialism in the contemporary societies of Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia. These signs of coloniality hindered
the march of modernity and social reform in the twentieth century. Due to Spanish colonialism, Andean indigenous peoples had been degraded to the condition of “passive beasts of burden.” Living in fear, they shunned the presence of whites and accepted with resignation their subordinate and miserable condition in life. Ross’s observations reignited U.S. interest in the question of colonial persistence, now called “coloniality.”

Contemporary Andean societies exhibited racial divisions and tensions not so different from those of the Spanish colonial period. Despite previous discourse among scholars about racial miscegenation and the role of mestizos in South American politics, Ross discovered that the polarity between whites and Indians still dominated social relations. Deeply divided by race, Andean nations were not prepared to achieve modern nationhood. Only Argentina had broken away from the colonial legacy. Transformed by mass European immigration, the country exhibited all the transformative powers of free labor, small property holdings, and modernizing elites. Here, Ross found the only dominant class in South America that had rejected the foundations of the colonial order.

Haring’s studies on Spanish colonial institutions raised fundamental questions about their effectiveness, durability, and strength. He launched a devastating critique of the Spanish commercial monopoly, showing the extent to which other European powers had benefited from this apparently exclusive regime. The impressive bureaucratic structure of the Casa de Contratación ended up suffocating the development of Spanish mercantile capital while stimulating widespread corruption and smuggling. Colonial inhabitants were subject to the tyranny of irregular supplies and exorbitant prices. The Spaniards deluded themselves trying to control the gold and silver produced by the American colonies. European “price inflation” was hard evidence that bullion flew out of Spain to pay for manufactures that Spain could not produce.

Haring located the fiscal and commercial predicaments of the Spanish empire in the geopolitics of competing empires. He argued that Spanish policies were out of tune with the mercantilist policies of its rivals, France and England. Spaniards had failed to understand that in order to maximize revenue, kingdoms had to charter commercial companies, build a solid navy, and promote local manufactures. At a time in which new ideas about government blossomed throughout the Atlantic, Spaniards created an old-fashioned landed aristocracy in America. The sale of public office put in motion a system of power that undermined all possibility of responsible government. These erroneous policies prevented the development of self-reliance, the work ethic, and social equality in Hispanic America.
The early twentieth century presented Hispanic America with a second opportunity to realign itself with the geopolitics of the time. Latin America’s production of raw materials and foodstuffs became important to the core economies of the North Atlantic. Haring presented this as a “second hemispheric beginning” coincidental with the Pax Americana (1941, 12). The European War (1914–1918) had given the Latin American republics a new awareness of their position in the world economy. In addition, the United States opened to them opportunities to participate in international forums: the League of Nations, the Hague International Court, and the Pan-American Union.

**Ordering through Disciplines**

The new disciplinary panoramic vistas of South America promised accuracy, simplification, and greater insight. The disciplines themselves, with scientific methods of inquiry and verification, aimed to make truth claims that could overcome centuries of prejudicial enunciations and crude generalizations. By providing more accurate visions and narratives, disciplinary interventions sought to order the U.S. debate about what constituted “South America.” Simplification, the reduction of existing diversity and complexity for the sake of rational comprehension of the whole, was perhaps the greatest contribution of disciplinary interventions. New information about ancient civilizations, historical processes, natural environments, human settlements, political institutions, and social norms, now organized under disciplinary concerns and rules, could account for intraregional differences and for the region’s backwardness vis-à-vis the United States. With the help of simplifying devices such as maps, charts, tables, concepts, and theories, the data gathered through direct observation could be accommodated into larger explanatory schemes within disciplinary domains.

Different scholars negotiated the relationship between micro-observations and macro-generalizations differently. Ross imagined his “social portraits” as pieces of a bigger jigsaw puzzle of “world regions” in social transition toward modernity. Mexico, Russia, and China provided materials for a transnational comparative exercise about “great social upheavals.” In the same fashion, Andean indigenous religiosity could be compared with that of Tibetan peoples, and the farming communities in the Argentine Pampas could find parallels in the U.S. Midwest. To Ross, regional evidence served to illuminate international “social trends” that supported his own sociological theories. Others, like Bowman, sought to detect differences in physiography, natural resources, and patterns of settlement in order to identify and delimit subregions. These great
areas of purported homogeneity (the forest, the highlands, the coastal desert, and the inland valleys of Peru) could serve as points of comparison with other subregions (the Argentine Pampas, the Brazilian Mato Grosso, or the Argentina northwest) and thus illuminate discussions about the “potentiality” of South America.

Simplified panoramic vistas (geographic, social, and political) rendered more easily readable the ways of life of local inhabitants in South America. Bowman’s diagrams and sketches exemplify well what James C. Scott (1998) calls “simplification.” Bowman used the term geographic control to refer to the limitations the natural environment imposed on human activities. His geographical surveys of South America were applications of this rather deterministic concept; they could divide a vast territory into homogeneous subregions on the basis of shared features of soil, rain, temperature, or vegetation. Simplified sketches and diagrams could help bring attention to the distribution of land type and use, underscoring the dominant role of the environment.

Bowman connected human settlements, production, commerce, transportation costs, and economic motivations to a single explanatory framework. His various arguments revolved around a single pivotal point: the environment. Physiography, in particular, was at the root of Bowman’s generalizations about economic, social, and political interactions in the Andes. Rivers, mountains, and valleys determined the patterns of settlement and greatly influenced local ways of life. A generalization about the effect of “isolated settlements” in the political development of a country (Peru) could easily be transported to others (Bolivia, Ecuador) to replicate the diagnosis.

Though dominated by physiography and land use, Bowman’s concept of region included a concern for economic connectivity. During his 1913 trip to South America, Bowman followed the 73rd meridian, carefully annotating variations in vegetation, rainfall, temperature, and soil so as to delimit subregions. Though he was initially interested in the Atacama Desert, existing commercial connections made him extend his observations to the grasslands of northeastern Argentina and Bolivia. In the preface of Desert Trails of Atacama (1924) he wrote, “I have not limited the story to the desert country alone but have included a brief account of the Chaco or grasslands of northeastern Argentina and adjacent Bolivia, because the currents of business flow naturally from these border settlements across the Atacama country and deeply affect its life.” He found that centuries before, to overcome the limitations of their local environment, plateau and desert inhabitants had established trade routes connecting Peru, Bolivia, and northern Argentina. These commercial connections remained unaffected by the recent intrusion of foreign corporate capital.
Map-making is a form of ordering the multiplicity of observable phenomena in a given space. The American Geographical Society, under Bowman’s leadership, extended the project of mapping and regionalizing Peru to the whole of Hispanic America. The Millionth Map of Hispanic America, Bowman thought, had brought order to both complexity on the ground and the existing cartographic chaos: “The Millionth Map of Hispanic America has taken a continent and a half out of a state of cartographic disorder into one of order, and thus it has so far advanced the world map that the urge to complete it is now higher than ever” (1946, 321). Now researchers could experiment with various regionalizations, speculate on the reasons behind the concentration of population in certain areas, and think about the possibility of extending the agricultural frontier.

Ross’s “sociological portraits” of South American nations were also exercises in simplification, this time aimed at classifying nations by level of modernity. He followed certain organizing principles in compiling these portraits, looking for social organization, in particular paying attention to race, servile labor, landed property, and democratic sociability. Manners, customs, and shared understandings were important indicators of modernity and backwardness. Ross examined the “rule of courtesy” in South America. Countries that exhibited the “politeness of hierarchy” were still premodern, while those showing the “politeness of equality” were further along the road to modernity. In the latter type of societies Ross expected to see institutions of self-government: transparent voting systems, a competitive free press, youths trained in debating societies, and men pursuing civic goals through association.

Comparative hemispheric history was a productive disciplinary grid tailored to the understanding of the region’s past. Haring tried to bring order to Hispanic American history, emphasizing the need to filter out unnecessary details to concentrate on the parallels in the long-term trajectories of Anglo-America and Hispanic America. By comparing great moments in the history of the two Americas (discovery and colonization, colonial life, emancipation, nation-building), he would bring to light the true differences between the two civilizations. Concepts such as “race,” “environment,” “frontier conditions,” “policy restrictions,” and “independent spirit” helped in articulating the comparison. But it was the disposition to write a comparative history of the two Americas that provided the simplified historical perspective needed to grasp the subcontinent’s developmental state.

Similarly, Rowe’s studies of Caribbean and Argentine government opened a road to understanding comparative politics. He endeavored to distinguish between societies prepared for “republican government” from those already
on the path to “democracy.” In Caribbean dependencies the United States still had the burden of teaching self-government; in the Southern Cone, by contrast, the central question was whether each progressive nation had the means to develop a democratic political culture. Exploring urban reform, federalism, municipal finance, university education, and constitutional government, Rowe posed new questions about political life in South America in relation to Hispanic political culture.

Modern conceptions of institutional and economic history, as well as the use of the best available documentation, characterized Haring’s history of the Spanish colonial empire. Facts and processes were demonstrated with the aid of archival documents, tables, and figures. Statistics supported his statements about the Spanish colonial exchequer. His analysis of the Casa de Contratación was based on the best available archival evidence. His colonial history was organized around certain key questions: why did the largest empire the world had known, in possession of rich mines of gold and silver, go financially and economically bankrupt in the seventeenth century? Why did attempts to reform the colonial system in the late eighteenth century fail? Answering each question with documentary and statistical evidence—and in relation to a model trajectory (the British empire in North America)—kept the historical narrative within clear bounds.

Harvest of Useful Knowledge

U.S. scholars brought a harvest of new knowledge about the nations of South America back to their universities and learned societies. This harvest was doubly useful: for the consolidation of regional disciplinary knowledge and for the formulation of U.S. foreign policies toward the region. It included better maps of land use and physiology, comparative histories, bones and artifacts from Inca ruins, lessons in colonial government, and sociological panoramas, to mention only the most relevant. This knowledge production helped scholars and policy makers understand the role of the United States in the hemisphere. From these disciplinary interventions, policy makers could better comprehend the mission of U.S. capital, enterprise, and culture in South America.

Bingham tried to make the work of the Yale Peruvian Expedition (YPE) useful to various departments of the U.S. government. He thought Inca roads, irrigation methods, and terrace cultivation should interest the Department of Agriculture and other divisions of government. He was right. These government agencies paid attention to the discoveries coming from the Urubamba Valley, not only those relating to roads and agriculture, but also those relating to
metallurgy, taxation, and geology. Some of the materials gathered by the *YPE*—
boxes of bones, textiles, and ceramics—were not immediately useful. These
boxes remained stored in the halls of a college at Yale University for decades.
But other materials—crania, insects, plants, bronzes, and soil samples—
engendered a bounty of research activity at labs, museums, and departments
across the United States. Bingham liked to boast about the impressive array of
scientific publications produced by the members of the *YPE*.

Bowman conceived of geography as a science for government. Hence, many
of his endeavors were oriented toward practical applications. His project for
a comprehensive map of Hispanic America, his work at the inquiry and at
the Paris Conference, his “risk maps” during the Great Depression, and his
vision of the role of a research university all underscored his commitment to
useful, practical knowledge. The Millionth Map of Hispanic America turned
into a compelling reference for scholars, business, and government. Geogra-
phers used this collection of maps as a basic instrument for identifying types of
human activity by region. Merchants, industrialists, and investors resorted to
these maps to locate future investments, plan distribution channels, and target
consumer markets (Bowman 1946). In addition, the maps proved advantageous
in the settlement of boundary disputes between Guatemala and Honduras
(1919), Chile and Peru (1925), Bolivia and Paraguay (1929), Colombia and Peru
(1932), Colombia and Venezuela (1933), and Peru and Ecuador (1941) (Martin
1980, 95). Bowman was proud that the Millionth Map, a major undertaking
of expert knowledge, was employed for the amicable resolution of conflicts
(ibid., 73).

An inquiry assembled by President Woodrow Wilson to anticipate the
challenges of the postwar settlement is another example of useful knowledge.
Dividing the task into six areas of study—government and politics, geogra-
phy, social science and history, economics and business, international law, and
strategy—the inquiry asked experts to compile information about all countries
that could present territorial claims at the peace conference. Most of the 126
members employed by the inquiry came from only five institutions: Harvard,
Yale, Columbia, Princeton, and the American Geographical Society. Though
graphers, cartographers, and historians predominated in the inquiry, there
were also economists, psychologists, lawyers, and classicists. They produced
2,000 reports and 1,200 maps, which were later used to consider the division
of Europe and its hinterlands. At the Paris Conference, expert advice acquired
poignant political significance. The U.S. delegation headed by Bowman was
tasked with translating Wilson’s principles and the demands presented by for-
erm belligerents into “reasonable lines” on maps. The proposals Bowman pre-
sented to the Big Four—Wilson, Clemenceau, Orlando, and Lloyd George—were extremely useful for setting the new boundaries of Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, and various other countries that emerged from the Paris settlement (Neil Smith 2003, chaps. 5 and 6).

As president of Johns Hopkins University, Bowman promoted the development of science in the service of the state. This was especially transparent during the First World War. Johns Hopkins cooperated with a hundred war-related research projects, training college students for jobs in industries producing war materiel, and contributing technological innovations to modern warfare. One of these research teams produced a “proximity fuse” that increased the efficiency of anti-aircraft artillery threefold. The involvement of the premier research university in war-related programs interconnected science and state in unprecedented ways (ibid., 252–56).

Hispanic American history also presented itself as a useful discipline at the service of enhanced visibility and informal empire. Haring’s parallel history of the hemisphere was designed to produce similarities and differences between the two Americas in support of Pan-Americanism. Haring discovered what he considered the fundamental similarities between the British and the Spanish colonial experience in the New World. Making explicit the problem of parallel but divergent trajectories, Haring anticipated the 1960s and 1970s debates on economic backwardness and dependent development. Out of these forced parallels, Haring derived the thesis of convergent trajectories that reinforced the Pan-American movement. The United States and the ABC nations appeared to be moving toward a similar modernity.

In the mid-1920s, Haring proposed a research program to study the reactions of South Americans to the U.S. presence in the region. The results proved quite useful, alerting the foreign-policy community to widespread anti-Americanism among Latin American intellectuals and the media. In the following decade Haring gathered intelligence about the recent military coups in the Southern Cone for the Council on Foreign Relations. In the late 1930s his reports about the Nazi activities in Brazil and how they were neutralized by President Getúlio Vargas served to assess the true dimension of this problem. In the midst of the Great Depression, through a series of round tables held at the University of Virginia, Haring helped businessmen, bureaucrats, and other scholars understand Latin America’s contemporary problems.

Rowe’s studies of colonial governance in the Philippines and Puerto Rico showed that the transition from military to civil rule could proceed in orderly fashion, under U.S. constitutional guarantees. Occupation governments prepared the way for self-rule, organizing the judiciary and the police, training
teachers, carrying out sanitary reforms, and gradually introducing elections and political parties. Rowe's disciplinary intervention granted legitimacy to these acts of colonialism, at least from the point of view of constitutional theory. By contrast, Rowe's study on Argentine government showed that under the mask of federalism hid a centralized form of government that differed substantially from the U.S. model. Argentine centralized federalism was a reflection of Argentine popular traditions and history. South of Panama, one could find working variants of "American government" that supported less democratic interactions between citizens and elected officials.

In addition, the extension of disciplinary knowledge over South America generated useful assessments of U.S.-South American economic relations. Based on their direct observation of transportation and human settlements, Bingham and Bowman evaluated South America as a field for U.S. investment and as a market for U.S. goods. Bingham thought that the opening of the Panama Canal would not by itself mobilize the dormant energies of west coast nations. Bowman presented an even more pessimistic assessment, arguing that foreign investment in mining, oil, and transportation could do little to transform the way of life of inhabitants of the Central Andes. Their insights acted as cautionary tales against the too optimistic predictions of Pan-American ideologues.

Visions of Economic and Cultural Hegemony

The question of empire encompassed the discussion of how to treat the areas north and south of the great divide. U.S. policy toward formal colonies and dependencies in the Caribbean and Central America required little adjustment. But South America presented new challenges that needed to be addressed. The region's political and economic modernity confronted U.S. scholars with the need to rethink U.S. policies with regard to its Caribbean dependencies. Conversely, the experience of teaching self-rule to Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Filipinos informed the ways in which U.S. scholars interpreted South American societies, politics, and cultures. While contributing to the construction of a discourse about the hemisphere, scholarly interventions tended to reinforce, rather than dissolve, the borderline dividing the two areas of U.S. influence and power.

As a result of the rediscovery of South America, the idea of a continent reserved for Americans and free from European interference came under attack. South American elites' distrust of the northern colossus brought about further scholarly criticism of the Monroe Doctrine. By 1910–1915, it was clear
that U.S. adventures in the “American Mediterranean” had become an embarrassment to the United States in its dealings with the southern republics. Some scholars rejected the Monroe Doctrine as an obsolete principle ill-adapted to the realities of contemporary international relations. Others endeavored to transform the doctrine into a multilateral principle of hemispheric defense. Most agreed that in the early twentieth century the Monroe Doctrine had turned into a crude justification for imperialism, no longer acceptable.

On the question of “economic conquest,” both Bowman and Ross contributed pessimistic assessments about the continued growth of U.S. capital and technology in the region. Geographic fragmentation and high transport costs imposed insurmountable obstacles to the penetration of U.S. mass consumer capitalism. To Bowman, the natural environment constituted the greatest hurdle. U.S. corporations were, in comparison to native inhabitants, only temporary settlers, their activities dependent on provisions and labor forces from local valleys and highlands. To Ross, great social inequalities and local custom limited the further expansion of markets for U.S. products. It was only in Argentina, a country of free labor and with a growing class of rural proprietors, that the expansion of the domestic market looked promising.

Criticisms of the activities of U.S. corporations in South America were few and rather mild. While critical of corporate culture in the United States, Ross absolved U.S. enclave economies in Peru from any wrongdoing. He found U.S. managers in Mexico pragmatically adapting to the changes introduced by the revolution. Early in the 1910s, both Bingham and Rowe criticized the sloppy and deceptive methods employed by U.S. firms operating in the region. Haring, who studied the issue in the mid-1920s, concluded that since the economic depression of 1920–1921, U.S. corporations had entered into a phase of economic consolidation, as a result of which their dealings had improved in fairness and transparency.

The anti-Americanism that Haring found in his 1925–1926 visit to South America was not a reaction to U.S. direct investment in the region. The charges of “economic imperialism” leveled against the United States referred rather to the fear of being at the mercy of Wall Street and U.S. banks. The criticism of local publishers and radical thinkers had nurtured anti-American feelings. To alleviate these fears, Haring proposed that the Secretary of State distance itself from private business interests, suggested a code of business ethics for U.S. firms operating in the region, and recommended greater cultural cooperation with the southern republics.

On the question of the expansion of U.S. influence toward South America, Rowe and Bowman provided the clearest formulations. Bowman developed
a vision of the Pax Americana as an economic and technological form of hegemony. In 1919–1920 he anticipated the decline of old empires and predicted that in the future, economic and technological superiority would be the true measures of a nation’s international power. Due to its advantage in mass production, modern distribution, and advertising techniques, the United States would become a contender for world power. Yet, faithful to the imperative of the great divide, Bowman admitted the need for the continued U.S. tutelage of the weak Central American and Caribbean states—adding that now these dependencies should come under the oversight of the League of Nations.

Rowe believed in “influence through example.” His recommendations entailed applying the experience acquired in the “American Mediterranean” to the terrain of informal empire. The United States should present itself as a leading force in technology, sanitation, education, social welfare, and international law. By way of example, cooperation, and advice, the United States could guide its South American sister republics into a future of regional peace and prosperity. South America would become a privileged site for the deployment of the U.S. progressive and benevolent agenda. Rowe projected onto the Pan-American commonwealth the vision of a benevolent empire committed to improving the living standards of its inhabitants. Cultural engagement and intellectual cooperation were the chief policies designed to attract the South American intelligentsia to a common hemispheric agenda.

In Haring’s view the chief contribution of the United States to the Caribbean dependencies had been the provision of public goods: police, sanitation, fiscal administration, and legal reform. In relation to the whole hemisphere, he thought the United States had contributed more, for Pan-Americanism had provided the institutional infrastructure of a lasting peace, secluded from European balance-of-power politics and imperialist wars. Pan-American conferences had built effective institutions for the resolution of disputes among nations, imposing norms of consultation, arbitration, and resort to international courts. Haring believed that Pan-Americanism had acted as an important deterrent force among nations historically prone to initiate hostilities against one another.7

Both Haring and Rowe conceived of informal empires as commonwealths of culture. Haring distinguished “old empires” whose hegemony was based on naval supremacy and territorial control from “new empires” (settler colonies) that spread cultural influences through the exportation of human capital. In the twentieth century, he argued, only by exerting cultural influence could empires maintain strong bonds with their former colonies. In this regard, he supported policies that promoted the continued transfer of “American” notions
of government, economic growth, and social organization to South America. Supporting a cultural conception of the U.S. mission in the Americas, Haring came close to Rowe’s arguments about hemispheric cultural and intellectual cooperation. It was better to pursue U.S. hegemony in the terrain of culture than to insist on the outmoded forms of financial dependency and military might.

Rowe was the Macaulay of the Pax Americana. He wanted the intelligentsia in South America to voluntarily cooperate in making the flows of commerce, investment, ideas, and culture with the Americas more fluid and extensive. In the end, he expected that South American intellectuals would understand and share the core ideas of U.S. modernity and democracy. Ross basically shared most of Rowe’s progressive principles. He wanted to uplift the condition of the Andean indigenous peasant by abolishing racial oppression, improving wages, redistributing land, and providing better access to common education. He greatly resented Chilean landlords who believed that Mapuche peoples did not deserve access to elementary education.

Repeatedly, U.S. scholars contrasted the twentieth-century U.S. expansion in South America against the backdrop of the Spanish colonial legacy. Bowman considered that modern technology and foreign capital would be unable to undo the effects of Spanish colonialism in Andean nations. There, the territory remained fragmented, separated by large distances and high transportation costs, the population so scattered as to prevent the development of a national economy. To Ross, the Spanish legacy was quite visible in contemporary Andean societies. Peru was a nation of landlordism, indigenous oppression, and premodern attitudes toward work and industry. The U.S. sociologist doubted that U.S. modernity could effectively penetrate lands so marked by premodern attitudes, values, and social relations.

Encounters with Native Informants

More often than not, the writings of U.S. scholars tended to obscure the presence of native informants. The visitors interacted with two types of native informants: upper-class intellectuals and indigenous peoples. Their scholarly panoramas of South America gave greater visibility to indigenous subalterns than to local intellectuals. Through their condemnation of Spanish colonialism, U.S. scholars underscored the suffering of Andean indigenous peoples. Before the spread of *indigenismo*, Bowman and Ross took to heart the question of the racial oppression of indigenous peasants in Peru. Haring’s colonial history presented
the exploitation of indigenous peoples as the enduring mark of Spanish colonialism. In their treatment of the “Indian question,” U.S. scholars took, by and large, a progressive position.

Engaging with the Spanish colonial past to highlight the current exploitation and oppression of indigenous peoples was a common feature in the writings of U.S. scholars. They empathized decidedly with the Indian side of the racial divide. As a geographer, Bowman provided extensive commentary to his encounters with native subalterns, chiefly plateau and forest indigenous peoples. Machigangas brought to his attention the existence of slavery in the Peruvian Amazon. From this ensued a sharp criticism of the rubber business as a return to premodern forms of exploitation and brutality. He considered Machigangas to be a degraded ethnic group that had fallen into the trap of white plantation labor. With “plateau” or highland Indians, Bowman established a contradictory relationship. On the one hand, he tried to forcefully impose on them the disciplinary authority of the white man, forcing Indian carriers to work at gunpoint or whipping them into submission. On the other hand, he recognized the indelible marks of colonialism in the Indian psyche. From this followed a progressive indictment against contemporary Peruvian planters’ brutality and racial oppression. His condemnations of Indian slavery in the rubber country and of Indian peonage on the coastal plantations were undoubtedly progressive, a sort of indigenismo avant la lettre.

As a sociologist, Ross came to the Andean nations persuaded that the Spaniards had failed to protect indigenous peoples from brutality and exploitation, something he confirmed with local informants. Yet his greatest condemnation was directed against contemporary Andean hacendados and office-holders, who kept Indian laborers and tenants in a servile dependence and without education. His moral indignation was loud and clear when writing about Chilean landlords who saw no point in educating the Indian or about Ecuadorian elites who compared Indians to monkeys. In Peru he detected that Indians were afraid of the white man and thus avoided contact with him. Here was a racially divided society, still working under the hierarchies built by Spanish colonialism. He admired the solemn and deep religiosity of Indian towns, yet he thought that Andean peasants were a race degraded by the effects of alcohol and coca, unable to escape from the traps of labor peonage. He attributed the laziness and sexually predatory nature of Andean Creoles to their Indian ancestry. Racist presuppositions short-circuited the sociologist’s empathy with the plight of indigenous peoples.

Though Haring probably never interacted with living Indians, his colonial history included an unambiguous criticism of Spaniards’ brutal treatment of
indigenous peoples. He recounted how in the early encomiendas of New Spain, Indians were taken from their homes, forced to travel for long distances, made to sleep on the ground, and subjected to frequent floggings. Decrees to alleviate their suffering were not really enforced. The policy of relocation and concentration of indigenous peoples into reducciones, argued Haring, had disastrous consequences for Indian subjects. This was a “careless and stupid” policy that only led to corruption and injustice. On the fringes of empire, the situation was even worse. Mapuches captured in the Araucanian wars were treated as chattel slaves. With time, in all the Spanish colonies, tribute in money and kind gradually replaced the original encomiendas, yet forced labor remained the rule until the mid-eighteenth century.

The presence of local intellectuals was less visible in the text. Relations varied—from confrontation to friendly partnership—according to individuals and particular circumstances, yet in the politics of citation U.S. scholars showed a dismissive attitude toward their southern colleagues. Of the five U.S. scholars, Bingham was the only one to have a direct confrontation with local intellectuals. The excavation work of the YPE gave local intellectuals a golden opportunity for asserting nationalistic claims over Peruvian patrimony. Tensions started when it became locally known that Bingham had complained about the “stench” of Cuzco. Animosity escalated when rumors spread that the YPE was searching for Inca gold. Later on, the Cuzco and Lima press implicated Bingham in trying to illegally export Inca artifacts through Bolivia. These skirmishes over cultural property left sour memories in Bingham’s diary. Worn out by so much red tape, press opposition, and indigenista meddling in the YPE work, he abandoned field research in 1915 and did not return to South America until 1947. Though he continued to write about the archaeology of the southern Andes into the 1930s and 1940s, he failed to keep abreast of the new literature in the field. He did not acknowledge, for instance, the work of emerging Peruvian archaeologists such as Julio Tello or the new work of his U.S. colleagues, A. Kroeber and P. A. Means.

At the other extreme stood Rowe, who tried to interact with Argentine intellectuals on a fairly egalitarian basis. His 1914 lectures on “American democracy” and U.S. foreign policy constituted an attempt to build bridges with local intellectuals. He interested them in the problems facing U.S. democracy: the rise of big business and organized labor, the need for social legislation, the importance of a vigilant public opinion, and so on. Though agreeing with his fundamental ideas—hemispheric solidarity and partnership in the civilizing mission—the members of the local intelligentsia differentiated their circumstances from “American problems,” making explicit their admiration for
European culture. Having recently experienced an extension of the electoral franchise, Argentine intellectuals were more concerned with the working of republican institutions than with problems of “democracy.”

Rowe’s positive assessment of the economic growth and political maturity of Argentina and his firsthand knowledge of the Argentine university system no doubt contributed to his favorable reception among local intellectual circles. He resided in the Internado of the University of La Plata for a semester, interacting with university students and scholars. He considered the University of La Plata a modern institution, training young men in practical sciences appropriate for an export-agrarian economy. During his repeated visits to Argentina, he cultivated enduring relations with leading scholars in law, constitutional history, and diplomacy. By contrast, Ross found Argentine universities backward in comparison to U.S. colleges. There was in them no spirit of collegiality, no debating societies, and little daily interaction between professors and students. In his view South American university men suffered from the same elitism as the landlord classes, being reluctant to do any manual work and depending heavily on the work of assistants.

U.S. scholars tended to be dismissive of the work of their South American colleagues. In his 1937 address to historians gathered at Buenos Aires, Haring described how, in each country, a bundle of scholars worked with limited library and archival resources to produce “national histories.” Their efforts, however well-intentioned, lacked the scope, rigor, and structure of European or U.S. history. Though acknowledging the isolated efforts of some historians (such as Ricardo Levene in Argentina and Manuel Gamio in Mexico), Haring found most of the production of these national histories parochial. Only the United States, the nation endowed with rich library and archival resources and with a significant number of specialists, could pioneer the cause of hemispheric history. The parochial histories stemming from Central and South America could contribute only “facts” (documents, dates, heroes, and events). In Haring’s *South of the United States* (1928) we can find elements of a disavowal of the local intelligentsia. The local intellectual was busily criticizing the colossus of the North for its imperialistic adventures in Central America and the Caribbean, but producing little original knowledge.

As U.S. experts considered the academic work of local scholars inferior, they tended to borrow from local publications without quoting the sources. Though Ross dedicated his book *South of Panama* to the Argentine sociologist Ernesto Quesada, he did little to emphasize Quesada’s contributions to the understanding of Argentine society. From Ernesto Nelson, Ross learned about the failure
of the Argentine school system to consider the psychology of the child. From Bolivian, Chilean, and Peruvian scholars, Ross received crucial information and observations about race and social relations. But he mentioned these local informants only in passing—naming Julio Tello (Lima), Manuel Ballivian (La Paz), and Valentín Letelier (Chile)—and as contributors of mere social commentary. Nowhere in the book did he cite any of their publications. Though Ross affirmed that he weighed the opinion of various sources before coming to conclusions, he clearly privileged the word of foreign residents over that of local intellectuals.9

The same could be said about Bowman and Haring. When collecting information for Desert Trails of Atacama (1928), Bowman took little notice of the work of local geographers or archaeologists.10 In a narrative full of citations from European and U.S. sources, local sources received were rarely cited.11 From his point of observation—the American Geographical Society Library in New York—European travel books superseded in number and quality local descriptive materials. In the writing of Trade and Navigation (1918), Haring relied mostly on archival sources and printed documents obtained in Spain. Yet he tended to dismiss the work produced by Spanish scholars as antiquated or of “small value.” Works by other European scholars dominated his references in matters of history of navigation, silver mining, and commerce.12 Although he acknowledged some of the production of colonial historians in Hispanic America, he thought their work contributed little to the understanding of economic history.13

With time, Haring became aware of the production of other historians of South America and duly acknowledged their value. In particular, he thought the Buenos Aires Instituto de Historia Americana, directed by Emilio Ravignani, was one of the few centers producing high-quality historical research.14 In this rapprochement we can detect the workings of the new ideology of Pan-American cooperation. As a result, Haring’s 1947 volume, The Spanish Empire in America, included a greater number of citations from Hispanic American authors.15

During his 1911–1915 stay in Peru, Bingham met with local intellectuals. The students at the University of Cuzco were trying to recover Inca culture, reenacting poetry and plays, and reproducing indigenous rituals. Local historians had discovered the importance of the ayllu as an elemental form of social organization in the Andes. Huaqueros and local collectors in turn tried to advise Bingham about other sites that indicated the existence of pre-Inca civilizations. Bingham discarded all these signals of local knowledge as irrelevant to
his historical-geographical quest of Inca citadels and fortresses. With the help of Spanish chronicles and modern methods of survey and exploration, Bingham expected to uncover the secrets of Inca archaeology.

The New South American Difference

U.S. scholarly interventions presented the realities of early twentieth-century South America in a new light: its natural environment, its regional economies, its political development, its social life, and its historical legacies. New observations and interpretations led to further differentiations within the subcontinent in ways that business promoters had been anticipating since the late nineteenth century. One could no longer talk of “South America” without immediately qualifying that generalization with the acknowledgment that great differences separated the east from the west coast, the Andean nations from the ABC powers. The new panoramas, analyses, and generalizations tended to further discredit Andean elites, finding faults in their behavior, attitudes, and beliefs. Rediscovering the subcontinent produced a new array of enunciations that tried to locate South American nations within the developmental scale of U.S. modernity, progress, and democratic civility. The new vistas underscored the gulf separating the progressive nations of the Southern Cone from the backward Indian nations of the Andes.

In Ross’s social panoramas we find a clear example of the subalternizing effect of the new knowledge. The Spanish colonial legacy translated into a new stereotype of the “South American character.” This was a personality structure characterized by excessive pride, disdain for manual labor, want of persistence, distrust of others, and total incapacity to cooperate. Attributed to South American elites in general, these “failings” made evident these nations’ unpreparedness for democratic sociability and modern economic progress. Ross’s indictment against “feudal” relations in the Andes reproduced images of Andean indigenous peasants and laborers as passive and quiet victims, incapable of shaking off the burdens of the colonial legacy.

Bingham coincided in this characterization. South Americans had copied the U.S. constitution, yet they had failed to build a political culture that could sustain representative government. Lack of cohesion characterized the political life of the republics. Hispanic Americans were individualistic, not given to cooperation, attached to cities rather than to the nation. Their provinces constantly rebelled against central power. A “municipal spirit” inherited from Spain prevented the development of national feelings. Thus, when Hispanic Americans gained independence from Spain, they fragmented into multiple,
disunited republics. The contrast between political disunion in South America and political cohesion in North America remained a crucial differential between the two Americas (Hiram Bingham 1910a).

Ross’s sociological panoramas, Haring’s historical generalizations, and Rowe’s commentaries about political development provided nuanced distinctions with regard to the societies south of Panama. This view complicated the picture of U.S. foreign policy, reinforcing the need to cooperate with the nations of the Southern Cone while raising the possibility of U.S. tutelage and expert intervention in the Andean nations. Ross stretched the difference between Andean nations and Argentina along the medieval-modern axis: Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia were clearly premodern and backward, incapable of rapid modernization, while Argentina was already a free-labor, small farming, and entrepreneurial country. Brazil, in turn, was the “land of tomorrow,” still not ready to embrace U.S. modernity (except for its southern states and its principal cities, pondered by Rowe and Haring). Chile was in between, similar to Argentina in some regards, similar to Andean nations in others. The internal differentiation south of the great divide helped to support arguments for a differentiated foreign-policy approach to the region.

Rowe agreed with this assessment. In particular, he pointed out the need for a differentiation between countries that were economically progressive and politically stable and countries that were economically backward and politically unstable. The former were potential partners in the U.S. civilizing mission in the region; the latter were immature republics, similar in nature to those of Central America and the Caribbean. The progressive ABC nations deserved special consideration in U.S. diplomacy. As partners in civilization and progress, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay could help generate productive alliances leading toward the establishment of common Pan-American policies and principles.

The new “South America” that U.S. scholars construed was located midway between the old Spanish colonial regime and the modern United States. Scholars placed Andean nations closer to the colonial pole to underscore their economic backwardness, their failure in nation-building, and the innate incapacity of their aristocratic elites. By contrast, they located the nations of the Southern Cone closer to the United States, converging toward “American standards” of sociability, governance, and economic progress. The Andean nations still had much to learn from U.S. experience. Their elites exhibited an aristocratic spirit, disdain of labor, lack of cooperation, and refusal of social equality. This presented an opportunity for U.S. experts to inculcate lessons in modern sociability, republican governance, and free-market capitalism. Anticipating
the rhetoric of development, U.S. scholars discovered the advantages of backwardness for the continued deployment of hegemonic expertise.16

Curiously, this idealized image of the United States as teacher of South American republics replicated older conceptions of U.S. tutorship in the Caribbean and Central America. Yet, in South America, the call was for a complete social, cultural, and institutional renewal. The United States contained within its own society and culture the appropriate blueprints to export to South America. As Ross boasted, “[We have] the home training, the education, the religion, the ideals of life, the standards of conduct, and the public opinion competent to produce these virtues” (1915, 249). The transfer should include standards of conduct, social organizations, cultural institutions, religious and educational values, the gospel of social equality and democratic political participation, and the architecture of local government. Though some nations would prove more stubborn than others in the reception of these lessons, the region appeared in need of a persistent pedagogy in “American” values and institutions.

By subalternizing South Americans, U.S. scholars built “American civilization” as an exemplar prototype to be gradually replicated in the societies south of Panama. The United States could become the great crucible for the creation of modern, democratic virtues in South America. In an informal, benevolent, and civilizational empire, this model role was crucial for the dispensation of hegemony. Modern “America” was the mirror in which South American elites should look at themselves in order to understand better their own backwardness and incivility and, hence, to anticipate the challenges to confront in order to bring their countries into the modern era. To convince South American elites that this was the case, a persistent persuasion was needed, one that suggested a cultural diplomacy based on education through example.

By advancing the model role of “American experience,” U.S. scholars contributed to pushing U.S. foreign policy into the terrain of culture: that is, intellectual cooperation, cultural missions, and the continued study of “Latin American civilization.” This was, after all, the goal of the collective quest for knowledge: the conquest of the fortress of culture. The imperial question—that is, the question that interested Pan-Americanists in the 1920s and 1930s—was whether the region as a whole would be able to import and adapt “American modernity,” for the economic penetration of U.S. capital, technology, and advertising in South America required a certain convergence and understanding at the level of culture. This may explain perhaps the continued relevance of culture in the agenda of Latin American studies, even after the emergence of the new social sciences. With the advent of Good Neighbor Policy, the State De-
partment had learned the lesson and started to promote cultural diplomacy on a greater scale. Additionally, it fostered the exploration into South America's folklore, music, dance, poetry, and literature as key factors for a more comprehensive understanding of the “South American character.”

A Coda on Influence

Two propositions should by now be clear: (1) that the writings of these U.S. scholars was directly or indirectly connected with the great themes of international relations (the role of the United States in the hemisphere, the nature of future economic and commercial hegemony in South America, the ways to undermine South American anti-American sentiments, the proper conduct of U.S. business in the region, etc.); and (2) that all five scholars collaborated in one way or another with the State Department or other departments of the U.S. government in the conduct of inter-American relations. Bingham's attack on the imperialistic implications of the Monroe Doctrine, Haring's intelligence-gathering on coups and Nazi activities during the Great Depression, Rowe's promotion of ABC mediation during the Mexican imbroglio, Ross's suggestion that the United States should cooperate to prevent Asian immigration to Peru, Bowman's warning about environmental limits to foreign direct investment in Andean nations—all are forms of scholarship concerned with and activated by the preoccupations of U.S. policy.

To what extent did these scholars' interventions affect the direction of U.S. policy toward Latin America? In principle, it is almost impossible to calculate the influence of each scholar on a changing and controversial field (U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America). Nonetheless, if we narrow down the meaning of “influence” in relation to the proximity to power, we can give a partial and tentative answer to this question. Each scholar had a different connection with the U.S. government and, to this extent, could exert a quite different degree of influence.

In this regard, the top ranking goes to Bowman, not only for advising two presidents (Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt), but also for intervening directly in affairs that changed the history of the world, namely, the Paris Peace Conference (1919) and the Dumbarton Oaks Conference (1944). His book *The New World* (1921) was compulsory reading for U.S. consuls abroad and was duly distributed among them. If we add to this his promotion of a “science of settlement” to monitor the expansion of the world's agricultural frontiers, his clash with German geographers over rescuing “political geography” from Nazi appropriation, and his efforts on the home front—as chairman of the National
Research Council and as president of Johns Hopkins University—to put geography at the service of government, it is difficult to find a scholar with greater influence.

Second place would go to Bingham, not only for creating the mythical figure of the “American explorer” who reveals archaeology’s secrets while facing key political opponents, but also for promoting from elected positions issues that were crucial to the U.S. engagement in the colonial world—namely, his interventions in relation to the Philippines and the Samoa Islands while serving as chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories and Insular Possessions (1925–1927). Having gained credentials as a historian and archaeologist of South America, he launched a devastating criticism of the Monroe Doctrine. Later, he used his fame as a war hero to launch a quite successful political career. From his Senate seat, he spoke with authority about South America and U.S. Pacific possessions.

In close third place would be Rowe. As a leading figure of U.S. relations with Latin America over twenty-six years, he carried the message of inter-American friendship, intellectual cooperation, and open circulation of goods and investments. Putting into practice the policies of the U.S. State Department, Rowe was instrumental in building the architecture of ideas and institutions that sustained inter-American cooperation in the interwar period. Though not as directly influential as Bowman, Rowe also promoted the United Nations, to the extent that he presented the Pan-American Union as the blueprint for a world organization. Rowe worked closely with Sumner Welles and Cordell Hull to influence President Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy.

It is quite unfair that, due to the small dimensions of his domain (Harvard University), Haring qualifies only for fourth place. For it is clear that he did much to push U.S. policy toward Latin America in the definite direction of hemispheric cooperation and mutual understanding. Through his teachings, his promotion of Pan-American societies, and the creation of networks of businessmen, scholars, and functionaries devoted to the discussion of inter-American problems, he articulated a form of scholarship that combined academic prestige with activism in foreign relations. He exerted influence over foreign policy through his reports and meetings at the Council on Foreign Policy. His comparative long-term history of the Americas—a project he was unable to complete—offered knowledge that was functional to the intellectual, cultural, and political integration of the continent under U.S. leadership.

And finally, Ross. He was enormously influential in the formation of “American sociology” and in contemporary domestic debates about progressive reform, but less so in the politics of inter-American relations. (The closest he
got to government power was to befriend the future secretary of state William Jennings Bryan when he lived in Lincoln, Nebraska, from 1901 to 1906.) Ross’s social panoramas of South America served to connect the “current problems” of the two Americas. He projected onto the social landscape of South America the U.S. progressive view about land reform, social relations, and democratic culture. In the United States he is remembered for his advocacy of academic freedom and selective immigration, as well as for his influential essays on “world trends.” His books on social revolutions in Mexico, Russia, and China brought into public discussion—much earlier than did the works of Samuel Huntington or Barrington Moore—the potential convulsions in Third World peasant societies. His transnationally comparative sociology anticipated the emergence of social sciences at the service of global knowledge-power.  

In their search for the “true nature” of the southern republics, U.S. scholars traveled across the region, gathered information, took photographs, made maps, and recorded their impressions of the societies and cultures they observed, leaving in print generalizations and simplifications that rendered visible the complex realities of the region. Their intellectual interventions, presented as a “second discovery,” provided new knowledge that proved instrumental to rethinking the role of the United States in the hemisphere, moving the discussion about empire into the territory of culture. Perhaps it was the discovery of the complexities of transferring free-market capitalism, machine civilization, and political democracy to lands permeated by premodern sociability, Hispanic traditions, and colonial residues in culture that led these scholars to imagine the possibility of a different form of U.S. hegemony. They imagined the United States as an empire of educational, technological, and cultural influence, one that would renounce military occupations and devote its expert human capital to the solution of hemispheric problems. These disciplinary interventions tried to add another layer to existing claims of U.S. superiority: primacy in the terrain of specialized knowledge. By building the contours of Andean archaeology, South American geography, and Hispanic American history, U.S. scholars opened the gates to a more comprehensive and empirical knowledge of the region, something that local and national archaeologists, geographers, and historians have failed to do. In the disciplines of sociology and political science, U.S. scholars were not ready to establish regional fields of knowledge, yet they claimed to have attained crucial insights for understanding the political life and social relations in South America. By doing so, they contributed to building the bases of Latin American studies in the United States, an arrangement of disciplinary knowledges whose reason for being remained tied to the debates and questions of U.S. foreign policy.
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