

The United States War on Terror:
A Perpetuation of Cold War Tactics Employed in Latin America

Shivani Gupta

POLI 460-01

Professor Love

11 April 2008

The Cold War marked a period of relative stability in United States foreign policy enduring from the mid-1940s to the last decade of the 20th century in which the American government employed overt and covert military, economic, political, and social measures to purge domestic and foreign enemies in its battle against the Soviet Union and the nebulous ideology of Communism that supposedly threatened the very existence of the democratic, free world according to U.S. policymakers. Latin America, particularly the Caribbean Basin or “America’s backyard,” served as the grounds for the implementation of these policies, often resulting in the deposition of democratically elected socialist leaders, the emergence of guerilla insurgencies, and the perpetration of human rights abuses by U.S. installed authoritarian regimes. However, with the end of the Cold War in the 1990s following the dissolution of the Soviet Empire, these interventionist strategies utilized during the Cold War survived and once again appeared as reliable means of fighting the modern War on Terror, a military and political campaign against terrorism shrouded in President George W. Bush’s rhetoric of democracy promotion. These Cold War tactics that may or may not have succeeded in suppressing the rise of leftist revolutionaries had the detrimental effect of provoking an anti-American, anti-imperialist backlash, which will prove fatal in the War on Terror.

In this paper, I will examine the core features of Cold War policy specifically within the context of Latin America in suppressing the rise of Communist regimes and the similarity of these tactics to those employed in the United States led War on Terror. I contend that the Cold War strategies designed to stop Communism were merely supplanted to the current battle of combating terrorism and Islamic Fundamentalism yet with a much greater emphasis on the significance of democracy promotion due to the consistency of the leadership under George W. Bush. However, I argue that democracy promotion is merely a tool to protect U.S. strategic

interests rather than an end in itself. Furthermore, I will assert that these interventionist policies had a highly negative impact on the United States' reputation in Latin America and will have a similar outcome in fueling the anti-imperialism directed against America by modern-day terrorists.

In the first section of this paper, I will offer an extremely brief overview of the two principal Cold War approaches undertaken by U.S. presidents, specifically within Latin America during the middle of the 20th century, to accomplish the ultimate objective of deposing or preventing the rise of leftist groups and leaders. Additionally, I will assess the detrimental repercussions of these sovereignty-infringing measures on United States-Latin American relations and on the internal dynamics of Latin American nations, as well. In the second section of this paper, I will study U.S. tactics utilized in the War on Terror and relate these strategies to those executed during the Cold War, focusing on the conditions fostering (and perhaps resulting from) these policies including the looming of a vague ideological threat and the unprecedented growth in executive power. I will also pay particular attention to the role of the rhetoric of democracy promotion presented in the Bush Doctrine to justify intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq and how this rhetoric relates to and differs from the oratory of Cold War presidents. The final section of this paper will assess the effect of the War on Terror on U.S.-Latin American relations.

The Cold War: Bringing Ideology to the Forefront of U.S. Foreign Policy

The Cold War represents a concrete shift in U.S. foreign policy from an economically driven agenda under the Age of Imperialism to a period in which ideology reigned supreme in shaping foreign policy objectives and the instruments by which to achieve these results.

Neorealists often characterize the Cold War as a relatively stable period in international relations

due to the lack of direct military conflict between the two superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union resulting from a policy of deterrence.¹ In this bipolar system in which both countries possessed nuclear capabilities, “[n]either side was willing to risk the annihilation of the planet.”² Consequently, instead of waging war with one another in an attempt to emerge as the global hegemon, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. shifted their ideological battle of anti-Communism versus Communism, respectively, to the domestic settings of other nations, particularly those within geographic proximity of each superpower. These battles of ideology often manifested in proxy wars and other interventionist measures involving military action. For the United States, Latin America, especially the Caribbean Basin, served as the setting for promoting U.S. values and eliminating the influence of Soviet- and Cuban-sponsored Communist ideals.

A Battle Close to Home: U.S. Cold War Policy in Latin America

Although U.S. Cold War policy towards Latin America appears to constitute a heterogeneous mixture of strategies varying with each incoming administration, the United States consistently pursued the objective of preventing the fall of Latin American nations to Communist regimes, whether by supporting authoritarian dictators, by advocating the values of democracy, or by carrying out military invasions or other undercover destabilizing operations. The organizing principle of Cold War strategy - preventing the emergence of leftist groups or pro-Communist rulers - is evident in the “pure Cold War” policy advocated by Presidents Eisenhower, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford, in the “mixed” policy under the administration of Kennedy, and in the combination of the two employed by Reagan. (One should note that

¹ Jorge Domínguez, “U.S.-Latin American Relations During the Cold War and its Aftermath,” in *The United States and Latin America: The New Agenda*, ed. Victor Bulmer-Thomas and James Dunkerly (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1999), 34.

² Patrice Olsen, “The Axis of Misunderstanding: The Bush Administration, Intelligence, and Hemispheric Security after September 11, 2001,” in *The Bush Doctrine and Latin America*, ed. Gary Prevost and Carlos Campos (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 51.

President Jimmy Carter, who considered the Cold War at an end, did not practice either “pure Cold War” or “mixed” strategies. Rather, he placed human rights as the top priority on his agenda in place of combating Communism in Latin America).³

In the “pure Cold War” policy, the above listed presidents largely ignored the domestic concerns facing Latin American nations and only intervened in instances of possible leftist uprising.⁴ Examples include the U.S. engineered overthrow of reformist President Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954 under President Eisenhower, which involved the training of a “Liberation Army” to remove Arbenz by force and the promulgation of a negative propaganda campaign by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to detract from his popularity;⁵ Lyndon Johnson’s invasion and occupation of the Dominican Republic in 1965, an operation resulting in the deployment of twenty thousand U.S. soldiers over the course of one year to prevent the war-torn country from becoming a “second Cuba”;⁶ Nixon’s successful mission in 1973 to remove Chilean socialist leader Salvador Allende from power by means of clandestine CIA activities, including the dissemination of libel regarding Allende and the funneling of resources to his opponents, designed to destabilize the regime, thus, paving the way for the rise of dictator Augusto Pinochet to power;⁷ and Reagan’s 1983 invasion of Grenada that resulted in the toppling of the suspected Soviet-linked government in less than one week.⁸ In almost all of these cases, the actual link of the existing regime or the groups vying for power to the Soviet Union was precarious. Yet, the mere hint of Communist leanings comprised a great enough threat in the ideological battle known as the Cold War to require the commitment of an armed response.

³ Thomas Carothers, “The United States and Latin America after the Cold War,” *Working Papers of the Latin American Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*, No. 154 (1990):4.

⁴ Carothers, 3.

⁵ Stewart Brewer, *Borders and Bridges: A History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 118.

⁶ Domínguez, 42.

⁷ Brewer, 134-35.

⁸ Domínguez, 45.

The “mixed” strategy epitomized in President John F. Kennedy’s 1961 Alliance for Progress is distinctive for its higher level of interest in the welfare of Latin American nations and for its comprehensive approach to identifying and eliminating the political and economic motivations for the emergence of leftist groups (rather than attributing all traces of Communism to Soviet infiltration). Along with providing a twenty billion dollar aid package over the course of ten years, the Alliance called for an improvement of standards of living and the establishment of democratic institutions as a counterweight to the allure of the ideology of Communism.⁹

President Reagan engaged in a mixture of the two strategies by striving to return to a “pure Cold War” policy in which he vowed to prevent the fall of another nation to Communism, an objective which he believed his predecessor Jimmy Carter had failed to do by allowing Nicaragua to “turn red.” Thus, Reagan pursued a highly interventionist policy in Nicaragua involving the funneling of financial resources and arms to the anti-Communist insurgency group of the Contras.¹⁰ However, another aspect of his approach involved couching the majority of his policy prescriptions in the language of democratic values as a means to express the moral urgency for combating Communism. Furthermore, Reagan even took credit for an increasing trend towards democracies in Latin America, thus signifying his belief in the effectiveness of democratic promotion as a policy tool against Communism.¹¹ Yet, in all administrations, when the promotion of democratic values conflicted with the objective of depressing leftist risings, “democracy was sacrificed for anticommunism.”¹² This “sacrifice” is apparent in not only the U.S. support of authoritarian leaders, who were viewed as best able to prevent Communist uprisings, but also through the thwarting of the democratic process by the removal of popularly

⁹ Carothers, 3.

¹⁰ Ibid, 4.

¹¹ Ibid, 16.

¹² Ibid, 4.

elected leaders through forcible and covert means (i.e. Guatemala in 1954, Chile in 1973, Grenada in 1983, etc.).¹³

Effects on U.S.-Latin American Relations: The Rebellion against U.S. Hegemony

U.S.-employed Cold War tactics intended to suppress Communist infiltration in Latin America frequently constituted blatant violations of Latin American sovereignty and, consequently, provoked an anti-American backlash by those who perceived the Cold War campaign as simply another attempt by the United States to assert its dominance over its weaker, southern neighbors. Even from the outset of the Cold War, the United States utilized its position of power to steer the political discussion between the two bodies towards issues, specifically those pertaining to security and Communism, of primary concern to the United States. As a result, Latin Americans, who desired to shift the debate to the status of and improvement of interregional economic relations, were displeased with this emphasis on security matters.¹⁴ Once again, the United States' failure to take into account Latin American demands is perceived as a confirmation of its lack of concern and respect for Latin American sovereignty and the position of these nations as international political players.

Furthermore, the repeated armed interventions, particularly the lasting occupation of the Dominican Republic, provoked public protest and resentment for the meddling of the United States in the internal affairs of Latin American nations.¹⁵ The primary factor behind Latin American ire was the repeated decision of the United States to pursue unilateral action against possible security threats in the region without consulting multinational bodies as the United States had pledged to do at the 1936 Pan American Conference of the Pan American Union.

¹³ Susan Purcell, "Latin America after the Cold War," in *Latin America: U.S. Policy after the Cold War* (New York: Americas Society, Inc., 1991), 48.

¹⁴ Mark Falcoff, "Latin America after the Cold War," in *Latin America: U.S. Policy after the Cold War* (New York: Americas Society, Inc., 1991), 28.

¹⁵ Brewer, 131.

Furthermore, the southern nations resented the unrelenting pressure from the United States on the Organization of the American States (OAS) to sanction the Dominican Republic invasion. Consequently, to defy American exploitation, the body of the OAS has become notorious for its refusal to lend its support to United States' proposals, thus, forcing the U.S. to forge ahead unilaterally with its plans or face the inevitable denial of its requests in the OAS.¹⁶

In the context of the Dominican Republic invasion and subsequent U.S. pressure to grant OAS approval, the American engagement in the Vietnam War, and the oil crisis of 1973, Latin Americans began to view the United States as "hellbent upon resolving the problems of the world by indiscriminate use of military force."¹⁷ Furthermore, Latin America felt that the United States would not be able to succeed this time in maintaining its role as global policeman and wished to distance itself from a falling empire, therefore, spurring formerly pro-Western nations to join the Non-Aligned Movement, an international body that claimed allegiance to neither the Soviet Union nor the United States. Additionally, many Latin American nations sought to establish institutions developed to the discussion and resolution of their own regional concerns, including the Latin American Economic System (SELA) in 1975, which allowed Cuban participation; the Latin American Parliament; and the Contadora Group. These newly formed alliances were not just restricted to the region as Latin American nations began to forge transnational coalitions such as the Group of 6 whose member states include Argentina, Mexico, Sweden, Tanzania, Greece, and India.¹⁸

In addition to providing Latin America with outside support to aid in breaking the hold of U.S. hegemony, these alliances and agreements have succeeded in detracting from existing pacts with the United States such as the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Pact).

¹⁶ Falcoff, 29.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Falcoff, 30.

The Rio Pact, which establishes military ties among the member states, has essentially been nullified since Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia are also part of the Non-Aligned Movement.¹⁹ These efforts on the part of Latin Americans to distance themselves from the United States is representative of a growing disenchantment with the unilateral, militarist methods of the United States and its unwavering dedication to protecting its own national interests even at the expense of those less able to defend themselves. Thus, one may view these alliances as part of a budding trend to counter U.S. hegemony that includes elements of anti-Americanism, a dangerous set of conditions with implications for the current War on Terror (to be discussed in a later section).

Effects of the Cold War: The Rise of Terrorism in Latin America

Despite the efforts of the United States to create stable governments resistant to the forces of Communism within Latin America, U.S. support for authoritarian regimes and engagement in measures detrimental to democratic processes during the Cold War had the counter effect of creating conditions conducive to a destabilizing rise in revolutionary and guerilla violence classified as terrorism. These terrorist groups, which emerged in the 1970s, encompass those members of society who were isolated from the political process and consequently took radical action to create political space.²⁰ Andreas Feldmann's 2004 study "Reassessing the Causes of Nongovernmental Terrorism in Latin America" provides evidence to substantiate the claim that the cyclical revolutionary terrorism is a result of harsh social and political conditions depriving individuals and groups of a say in government affairs.²¹ Using data from seventeen Latin

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Synopsis to *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America and the Cold War*, by Greg Grandin (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004).

²¹ Andreas Feldmann, "Reassessing the Causes of Nongovernmental Terrorism in Latin America," *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Summer 2004): 101; 114, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=1531-426X%28200422%2946%3A2%3C101%3ARTCONT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Y>.

American countries between 1980 and 1995, Feldmann concludes that in addition to internal political conditions such as poor institutionalized regimes and the lack of rule of law, the presence of human rights violations contributes to greater levels of non-state terrorism.²² As evidence of this finding, Feldmann cites the creation of nascent terrorist groups in the 1970s that arose to combat repressive rule. For instance, in Chile, the Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez (FPMR) undertook the battle against military dictator Augusto Pinochet, who was indicted in 2002 and 2006 for employing widespread torture, kidnapping, and killing to maintain his nearly two decade hold on the country. Also, the stated purpose of El Salvador's Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) and Guatemala's Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR) terrorist organizations is to overthrow right-wing dictatorships.²³ These findings, particularly in the cases of Guatemala and Chile, imply that due to its support of authoritarian regimes and its undermining of democratic processes, the United States is partially culpable for increasing the destabilizing levels of violence in the region.

Although revolutionary terrorism has had a serious impact on Latin American countries, these levels of violence are miniscule when compared to the fatality count resulting from state-sponsored terrorism. Under the management of Operation Condor, a secret intelligence agency coordinated by South American military regimes in the 1970s, the countries of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil tortured and executed political opponents and other suspected subversives. Many of these human rights violating regimes enjoyed the support of the United States.²⁴ In addition to the countries of Operation Condor, the death squadrons in El Salvador and the

²² Ibid, 101.

²³ Ibid, 108.

²⁴ J. McSherry, "Tracking the Origins of a State Terror Network: Operation Condor," *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (January 2002): 38, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0094582X%28200201%2929%3A1%3C38%3ATTOOAS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-K>.

Contras in Nicaragua received U.S. blessing in order to contain the spread of Communism.²⁵

The endurance of guerilla groups, particularly in Colombia, and the legacy of political violence may have lasting consequences for the United States, especially within the context of the modern War on Terror.

The Bush Doctrine and the War on Terror

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon brought the ideological conflict between democracy and Islamic Fundamentalism that has been brewing since the end of the Cold War to the forefront of the U.S. foreign policy agenda. The resulting contemporary War on Terror, largely a product of the counterterrorist foreign policy plan embodied in the Bush Doctrine, shares many characteristics with the Cold War, ultimately allowing for the application of Cold War tactics employed in Latin America to the fight against the nebulous enemy of Islamic Fundamentalism.

The Bush Doctrine, which was rapidly formulated and delivered to the public in presidential speeches and subsequent documents following the September 11 attacks, focuses on three central concepts: preemption, unilateralism, and democracy promotion. According to the first cornerstone of the Bush Doctrine, as an extension of the concept of self-defense, the United States retains the right to engage in “*preemptive war against potential aggressors.*”²⁶ One may discern that this tenet derives its greatest power from the magnitude in terms of both physical and mental devastation of the September 11 attacks, particularly due to their occurrence on formerly deemed impervious American soil. Furthermore, the category of “potential aggressors” is extended to any nation or body of individuals providing refuge to terrorists because as President Bush states, the United States “[will] make no distinction between the terrorists and those who

²⁵ Feldmann, 109.

²⁶ Gary, Prevost, “Introduction – The Bush Doctrine and Latin America,” in *The Bush Doctrine and Latin America*, ed. Gary Prevost and Carlos Campos (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1.

harbor them.”²⁷ This expanded definition of the enemy would set the stage for the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and possibly future armed conflicts with such rogue states as North Korea and Iran.

The second cornerstone of the counterterrorism plan involves the permissibility of unilateralism in instances in which multilateral action is not an option.²⁸ The application of unilateralism is most apparent in the 2003 invasion of Iraq in spite of large global protest against such a course of action. Yet, as discussed in a later section, unilateral pursuit of U.S. interests is by no means a new concept as the United States has seen the necessity and has possessed the ability to flout international opinion in previous eras. Finally, the third pillar to the foreign policy plan is a concentration on the importance of democracy promotion as a counterweight to anti-Americanism and ideals in opposition to Western, capitalist societies. Although these components of the Bush Doctrine may not have been as readily apparent to the public previously, they all have their roots in the Cold War and in the fight against Communism.

Cold War Strategy Employed in the Afghanistan War

Due to its intimate connection with the terrorist organization Al Qaeda, the Taliban regime of Afghanistan was the first to fall in the War on Terror as a result of the application of the Bush Doctrine’s principle of preemptive action. Soon after the perpetration of the September 11 attacks, Osama bin Laden, the leader of the clandestine terrorist organization of Al Qaeda based in Afghanistan, took credit for the attacks.²⁹ However, with the stated motives of removing all U.S. armed forces from the Middle East, deposing pro-Western governments, and

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Prevost, 2.

²⁹ “Terrorist Attacks on World Trade Center and Pentagon,” *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 96, No. 1 (January 2002): 238, <http://www.jstor.org/action/showArticle?doi=10.2307/2686141&Search=yes&term=al&term=qaida&item=11&returnArticleService=showArticle&tfl=97&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dal%2Bqaida%26gw%3Djtx%26prq%3Dal%2Bqaida%26Search%3DSearch%26hp%3D25>.

impeding the establishment of a peace agreement between Israel and Palestine, Al Qaeda is implicated in other terrorist acts including the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center and the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya.³⁰

Thus, as a result of the tangible connection and vitality of the Taliban regime to such a dangerous organization capable of committing future atrocities, President George W. Bush issued an ultimatum to the regime, demanding that they “hand over the terrorists, or...share in their fate.”³¹ The subsequent refusal of the Taliban to comply with U.S. orders resulted in the October 7, 2001 air strike and bombing campaign against Afghanistan with the unanimous support of the United Nations Security Council.³² The campaign was successful in removing the operational infrastructure and training grounds of Al Qaeda, yet pockets of resistance still remain in the region preventing the entire removal of U.S. troops engaged in the rebuilding of the country.³³

The invasion of Afghanistan and more generally the War on Terror share core features with the conflicts carried out in Latin America during the Cold War. The first discernible similarity is the utilization of preemptive action to stave off a future event detrimental to U.S. national security; in this instance, future terrorist attacks and in the Cold War, the fall of a Latin American nation to Communism. During the Cold War, the United States pursued a similar policy of preemption in Grenada in 1983 to prevent a Communist regime from rising to power in the midst of the bloody civil war and militarily intervened in Panama in 1989 to depose military dictator Manuel Noriega before his growing unpopularity sparked a leftist revolution.³⁴

³⁰ Ibid, 239.

³¹ Ibid, 243.

³² Ibid, 246.

³³ J. C. Black, “The Battle against Terrorism is Necessary to Protect the World from Al Qaeda,” in *America's Battle against Terrorism – Current Controversies*, ed. Andrea Nakaya (Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2005), 18.

³⁴ Paul Rogers, *A War on Terror: Afghanistan and After* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 167.

However, the key shared element between the Cold War and the War on Terror is the casting of the conflict in ideological terms. Once again, ideological concerns are given primacy, currently within the context of the battle between the forces of democracy (no longer utilized solely for its status as a complement to anticommunism) and Islamic Fundamentalism. The significance of ideology to understanding the War on Terror is apparent in George W. Bush's address to the Warsaw Conference on Combating Terrorism on November 6, 2001:

For more than 50 years, the peoples of [Central and Eastern Europe] suffered under repressive ideologies that tried to trample human dignity. Today, our freedom is threatened once again. Like the fascists and totalitarians before them, these terrorists – al Qaeda, the Taliban regime that supports them, and other terror groups across our world – try to impose their radical views through threats and violence.³⁵

Bush's comparison of the terrorists to "fascists" and "totalitarians" is an implicit reference to the "red" enemy of the Cold War, consequently serving as a rhetorical strategy designed to distinguish "them," the opponents of freedom (i.e. terrorists and previously Communists) from "us," the democratic and liberty loving peoples of the Western, capitalist free world. This dichotomy serves as the defining feature of the ideologically based clash constituting the War on Terror.

Furthermore, the usage of the terms of freedom and the associated concept of democracy serves as a vital foreign policy tool by lending moral imperativeness to the U.S. struggle against its enemies, a strategy that initially acquired significance during Kennedy's and Reagan's terms

³⁵ George W. Bush, George W., "The Invasion of Afghanistan is Justified," in *America's Battle against Terrorism – Current Controversies*, ed. Andrea Nakaya (Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2005), 24.

in the White House.³⁶ Secretary of States Condoleezza Rice further draws an explicit connection between the Cold War and the War on Terror that lends weight to the claim of the importance of the dissemination of democratic ideals to winning the war: Rice states, “The values of freedom and democracy -- as much if not more than economic power and military might -- won the Cold War, and those same values will lead us to victory in the [W]ar on [T]error.”³⁷ Although this statement appears as a superficial and overly optimistic analysis of the Cold War conflict, the utilization of democracy rhetoric does hold political value.

Cold War Strategy Employed in the Iraq War

The 2003 Iraq War, undertaken as part of the American campaign against terrorism, is identified as a much more controversial application of the Bush Doctrine due to the uncertainty surrounding the actual motivations for the invasion and the similarities of the unpopular strategies employed to those of the Cold War. On March 20, 2003, the United States pursued a largely unilateral invasion (aside from the aid of a few allies including Great Britain) of Iraq against the protest of the United Nations based upon the supposed intelligence that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and that the military dictatorship under Saddam Hussein was providing support for Al Qaeda. However, following the invasion, revelations emerged regarding the inaccuracy of the intelligence on the presence of the WMDs in Iraq (i.e. Iraq did not possess any), and the connection of the regime to Al Qaeda further deteriorated upon examination. As Edward Kennedy puts it, “Iraq was not an imminent threat, had no nuclear

³⁶ Domínguez, 47.

³⁷ "Rice: U.S. Using Cold War Techniques in War on Terror," *CNN News*, 19 August 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/08/19/rice-muslims>.

weapons, no persuasive links to [the terrorist group] Al Qaeda, no connection to the terrorist attacks of September 11th, and no stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction.”³⁸

However, the reliance on a precarious link between the government in question and that of the sworn enemy (Iraq and Al Qaeda, respectively) to justify intervention is reminiscent of tactics utilized in the Cold War in Latin America. For instance, the United States went forth with the overthrow of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz, although he had no substantiated ties to the Soviet Union nor was he a declared Communist. Rather, Arbenz fell prey to the fear-mongering of the period due to the resemblance of his reformist policies of land and agrarian reforms to those advocated by socialists.³⁹ Another example is the 1983 invasion of Grenada in which the United States suspected the Soviet Union of possibly utilizing the island as a military base. However, documents discovered after the incursion demonstrate the limited presence of the Soviet Union within the country – 636 of the 784 Cubans living in Grenada were construction workers.⁴⁰ Despite the illogical appearance of this employment of excessive force, the actions of the United States are more understandable within the context of the struggle to win an ideological war vital to national security interests, an argument that may be extended to the Iraq War.

Furthermore, the United States has received much public criticism for its decision to ignore the directive of the international body of the United Nations and proceed with the invasion of Iraq. Despite the participation of the U.S. in various international organizations and alliances, the United States has had a reputation dating back to the Dominican Republic occupation of 1965 of pursuing its own policy agenda without the aid of and at times in spite of

³⁸Edward M. Kennedy, “The War against Iraq is Unjustified,” in *America’s Battle against Terrorism – Current Controversies*, ed. Andrea Nakaya (Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2005), 44.

³⁹ Brewer, 117.

⁴⁰ Domínguez, 45.

other countries.⁴¹ This unilateralism has been responsible for isolating the United States in existing bodies such as the OAS and has been implicated in the growing anti-American sentiment that may fuel future terrorist activities.

Another issue that came to the forefront of debate during the Iraq War involves defining the enemy – who actually constitutes a terrorist? During the Cold War, the identification of the enemy was just as difficult as charges of “Communism, pro-Communism or weakness in the face of Communism [were] applied to Arbenz, Mossadegh and Nasser, Quadros and Allende,” thus exemplifying that any hint of Communism constituted a great enough threat to warrant action.⁴² In its attempt to distinguish the term terrorism from other forms of violence, the State Department focuses on two essential features: directing violence against innocents and other noncombatants and attempting to create fear and a state of terror for political purposes.⁴³ Yet, in a less defined international system due to the emergence of various poles of power, the term terrorism may be broadened to include such disparate issues as narcotrafficking, weapons proliferation, ethnic and religious conflict, etc.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the failure to address the distinctions among Islamic Fundamentalist organizations is another pitfall of the same policy of homogeneity in which the United States ignored internal divisions within Communist states during the Cold War.⁴⁵ An inability to identify the enemy and the broadening scope of what constitutes terrorism may prove to be the War on Terror’s downfall.

⁴¹ Falcoff, 29.

⁴² Norman Birnbaum, “The Cold War and the War on Terror,” *Archipelago* No. 9 (2006), <http://www.archipelago.org/vol9/birnbaum.htm>.

⁴³ Feldmann, 102.

⁴⁴ Luis F. Ayerbe, “The Summits of the Americas: Continuities and Changes in the Hemispheric Agenda of William Clinton and George W. Bush,” in *The Bush Doctrine and Latin America*, ed. Gary Prevost and Carlos Campos (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 81.

⁴⁵ Olsen, 51.

Democracy Promotion: Authentic Policy Objective or Empty Strategic Rhetoric?

Although the identification of the true enemy in the Cold War and the War on Terror has posed difficulties, each ideological opponent to the United States shares the common position as “enemies of freedom,” thus positioning the United States as leader of the democratic, free world.⁴⁶ Although certain administrations, particularly those of Kennedy and Reagan, placed greater emphasis than other Cold War presidents on the importance of spreading democratic values to Latin America, as stated previously, “democracy was sacrificed for anticommunism” in instances of conflict between the two principles.⁴⁷ Yet, is this the case for President George W. Bush, who has consistently advocated spreading democratic institutions to other nations in an effort to thwart the rise of terrorism? The repudiation of democratic processes and the expansion of presidential power at the expense of individual liberties appear to offer an affirmative answer. For instance, the limits of democracy promotion are evident in the United States decision to bar the Hamas vote in the Israeli elections, thus silencing a segment of the population and violating democratic principles of universal participation.⁴⁸ Another inconsistency with democratic values is the limiting of individual liberties, currently occurring in conjunction with the unprecedented growth in presidential power at the expense of the other two branches of government that also occurred during the Cold War.⁴⁹ With the greater concentration of executive power, President Bush has granted authority to military courts to charge and try suspected terrorists; in effect, giving himself the ability to decide the fates of suspects without regard to constitutional liberties.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Carothers, 4.

⁴⁸ Birnbaum.

⁴⁹ Detlev Vagts, “Repealing the Cold War,” *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 88, No. 3 (July 1994): 506; 511,

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00029300%28199407%2988%3A3%3C506%3ARTCW%3E2.0.CO%3B2-P>.

⁵⁰ Rogers, 28.

Additionally, Bush has expanded the role of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which has engaged in overt liberty violating measures, including placing gag orders, preventing detainee interaction with defense lawyers, and arresting individuals without charging them or setting bail, in an effort to root out terrorists within the United States.⁵¹ Furthermore, the President has expanded the powers of the Central Intelligence Agency in direct violation of restrictions placed on the agency during the latter years of the Cold War, thus, opening up the possibility of human rights abuses and violations of civil liberties.⁵² Finally, the United States government has worked along with the CIA to restrict the information coming out of Afghanistan and Iraq, which constitutes a barrier to freedom of speech and government transparency, two vital components to the functioning of healthy democracies.⁵³ The evidence appears to support overwhelmingly a belief held by many around the globe: democracy promotion is nothing more than a strategic tool for advancing U.S. hegemony.

The War on Terror and Latin America

The War on Terror, viewed by many Latin American nations as an enduring attempt to assert U.S. hegemony, has once again placed security issues at the forefront of U.S.-Latin American relations to the detriment of the southern partners.⁵⁴ The U.S.-imposed policy agenda was revealed at the Extraordinary Summit of the Americas held in Monterrey in January 2004, which involved the participation of thirteen Latin American nations and the United States. Three prominent themes constituted the bulk of the foreign policy discussion: the War on Terror, the promotion of democratic institutions, and the process of economic liberalization. The War on

⁵¹ "Terrorist Attacks on World Trade Center and Pentagon," *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 96, No. 1 (January 2002): 251, <http://www.jstor.org/action/showArticle?doi=10.2307/2686141&Search=yes&term=al&term=qaida&item=11&returnArticleService=showArticle&ttl=97&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dal%2Bqaida%26gw%3Djtx%26prq%3Dal%2Bqaida%26Search%3DSearch%26hp%3D25>.

⁵² Olney, 50.

⁵³ Rogers, 10.

⁵⁴ Birnbaum.

Terror was granted the status of “new regional threat,” therefore establishing U.S. security concerns as the chief concern of the entire body.⁵⁵ The second component involved the implementation of measures to enhance democracy including the forging of multiparty systems and increasing efficiency and transparency.⁵⁶ However, as noted by political scientist Luis Ayerbe, democracy is not exalted as an end in itself but rather for its “operational significance” in creating a stable government resistant to the penetration of terrorist forces.⁵⁷ Finally, economic liberalization through the expansion of trade and the application of laissez-faire market policies was addressed due to its role in imposing order and strength to ruling governments.⁵⁸ Thus, the policy initiatives embody the U.S. belief in the importance of the strength of governments and their associated economic systems to maintaining security.

These broad policy proposals have effected specific outcomes for Latin American countries by diverting Latin America from formulating its own national security interests and concentrating on its own pressing issues, particularly those associated with elevating standards of living.⁵⁹ For instance, prior to September 11, President Bush and Mexican head of state Vicente Fox were engaging in talks regarding immigration reform and guest worker policy revisions to “regularize [the] situation of millions of Mexicans working illegally in the United States.”⁶⁰ However, this goal was pushed to the side with the advent of more pressing security concerns to the United States, and the focus shifted to the “security of [U.S.-Mexican] borders.”⁶¹ As a result, the United States has granted the Mexican military more than \$57.8 million, primarily in the form of equipment and vehicles such as X-ray machines, helicopters, and computers, to deter

⁵⁵ Ayerbe, 75.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 76.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 85.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 82.

⁵⁹ Olsen, 55.

⁶⁰ Prevost, 7.

⁶¹ Prevost, 8.

drug trafficking and the entering of terrorists into U.S. territory, two objectives benefitting the United States to a greater extent than Mexico.⁶² Furthermore, this funding of military, police, and intelligence forces has been extended to the majority of countries in Latin America, once again shifting the relationship between civil society and the military in favor of the armed forces like during the Cold War. This obstacle to demilitarization has served as one of the greatest impediments to establishing democracies in Latin America as the military retains extensive influence over economic and political issues.⁶³ It appears that democracy once again takes the backseat to the national security interests of the United States, a phenomenon which is likely to persist as long as the United States maintains its position as global hegemon.

Conclusion

Beginning in the mid-1940s, the United States has engaged in ideological battles, whether it be the Cold War fight between anticommunism and Soviet Communism or the current clash between democracy and Islamic Fundamentalism in the War on Terror, to maintain its position as global hegemon. Consequently, because of the shared objective of the Cold War and the War on Terror of winning an ideological conflict in order to impose the United States' image of global order, the U.S. merely supplanted the Cold War strategies employed in Latin America during the mid-to late twentieth century to the modern War on Terror. This institution of an American-imposed world system is deemed vital to U.S. national security interests but has often conflicted with the desires of other nations, particularly those less able to defend themselves. One such region, Latin America, which has served as the battleground for these ideological conflicts has built up resentment and higher levels of anti-Americanism due to U.S. breaches of their sovereignty. These interventionist policies of the U.S. have had the negative repercussion

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Olsen, 62.

of increasing terrorism within Latin America and of diverting Latin American attention away from issues of vital importance to their survival. In light of the failures of Cold War policy, the United States should reevaluate its decision to utilize the very same strategies in the War on Terror or risk inciting an even greater terrorist backlash.

Works Cited

- Ayerbe, Luis F. "The Summits of the Americas: Continuities and Changes in the Hemispheric Agenda of William Clinton and George W. Bush." In *The Bush Doctrine and Latin America*, edited by Gary Prevost and Carlos Campos, 67-90. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Birnbaum, Norman. "The Cold War and the War on Terror." *Archipelago* No. 9 (2006), <http://www.archipelago.org/vol9/birnbaum.htm> (accessed March 10, 2008).
- Black, J. C. "The Battle against Terrorism is Necessary to Protect the World from Al Qaeda." In *America's Battle against Terrorism – Current Controversies*, edited by Andrea Nakaya, 17-23. Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2005.
- Brewer, Stewart. *Borders and Bridges: A History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006.
- Bush, George W. "The Invasion of Afghanistan is Justified." In *America's Battle against Terrorism – Current Controversies*, edited by Andrea Nakaya, 24-26. Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2005.
- Carothers, Thomas. "The United States and Latin America after the Cold War." *Working Papers of the Latin American Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*, No. 154 (1990).
- Domínguez, Jorge I. "U.S.-Latin American Relations During the Cold War and its Aftermath." In *The United States and Latin America: The New Agenda*, edited by Victor Bulmer-Thomas and James Dunkerly, 33-50. London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1999.
- Falcoff, Mark. "Latin America after the Cold War." In *Latin America: U.S. Policy after the Cold War*, 27-46. New York: Americas Society, Inc., 1991.
- Feldmann, Andreas. "Reassessing the Causes of Nongovernmental Terrorism in Latin America." *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Summer 2004): 101-132, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=1531426X%28200422%2946%3A2%3C101%3ARTCON T%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Y> (accessed March 9, 2008).
- Kennedy, Edward M. "The War against Iraq is Unjustified." In *America's Battle against Terrorism – Current Controversies*, edited by Andrea Nakaya, 44-52. Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2005.
- McSherry, J. "Tracking the Origins of a State Terror Network: Operation Condor." *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (January 2002): 38-60, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0094582X%28200201%2929%3A1%3C38%3ATTOOAS %3E2.0.CO%3B2-K> (accessed March 9, 2008).

- Olsen, Patrice E. "The Axis of Misunderstanding: The Bush Administration, Intelligence, and Hemispheric Security after September 11, 2001." In *The Bush Doctrine and Latin America*, edited by Gary Prevost and Carlos Campos, 49-65. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Prevost, Gary. "Introduction – The Bush Doctrine and Latin America." In *The Bush Doctrine and Latin America*, edited by Gary Prevost and Carlos Campos, 1-9. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Purcell, Susan K. "Latin America after the Cold War." In *Latin America: U.S. Policy after the Cold War*, 47-69. New York: Americas Society, Inc., 1991.
- "Rice: U.S. Using Cold War Techniques in War on Terror." *CNN News*, 19 August 2004. <http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/08/19/rice-muslims> (accessed 9 Mar. 2008).
- Rogers, Paul. *A War on Terror: Afghanistan and After*. London: Pluto Press, 2004.
- Synopsis to *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America and the Cold War*, by Greg Grandin. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004.
- "Terrorist Attacks on World Trade Center and Pentagon." *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 96, No. 1 (January 2002): 237-255, <http://www.jstor.org/action/showArticle?doi=10.2307/2686141&Search=yes&term=al&term=qaida&item=11&returnArticleService=showArticle&ttl=97&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dal%2Bqaida%26gw%3Djtx%26prq%3Dal%2Bqaida%26Search%3DSearch%26hp%3D25> (accessed 9 Apr. 2008).
- Vagts, Detlev. "Repealing the Cold War." *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 88, No. 3 (July 1994): 506-511, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00029300%28199407%2988%3A3%3C506%3ARTCW%3E2.0.CO%3B2-P> (accessed March 10, 2008).