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# U.S. Intervention in Latin America: An Evolving Policy, or a Quest for Supremacy?

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**CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE**

**U.S. INTERVENTION IN LATIN AMERICA:  
AN EVOLVING POLICY, OR A QUEST FOR SUPREMACY?**

SUBMITTED TO

PROFESSOR RODERIC CAMP

AND

DEAN NICHOLAS WARNER

BY

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FOR

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## **Introduction**

As the United States has grown from a regional power to a global hegemon, it has undergone consistent foreign policy evolution. Nowhere is this more prevalent than Latin America. The U.S. sought first to rid the New World of European influence with the Monroe Doctrine. As U.S. might grew in North America, the nation sought to expand economically. The earliest expansion occurred in Central America, where the U.S. worked to secure a transisthmian route and battled against the British Presence.

Following the Central American conflict, the U.S. clashed with the most powerful South American country, Chile. The U.S. would manipulate a minor encounter into a diplomatic crisis in order to assert its dominance over Chile with the threat of war. These aggressive tactics would reign supreme in U.S. diplomatic relations, as the isolationism ideals espoused by earlier American leaders done away with.

The U.S. would then look to its southern border, the Caribbean for its next bout of expansion. Aggressive economic and political penetration would render Cuba directly intertwined in the U.S. economy. The U.S. would eventually go to war with Spain, once a major world power, to finalize the European exit from the Caribbean, and create an “American Mediterranean” in the Gulf of Mexico.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century would see the dialing back of direct American intervention. The U.S. would institute new policies of non-intervention, realizing that constant intercession was turning the American countries against them. Though the U.S. would never erase the harm that it had caused to Latin America, it worked to create a sense of unity western hemisphere in the face of growing European powers.

The most recent change comes in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in September 2001. Prior to this, the U.S. had focused its efforts in Latin America on counter-narcotics programs. The U.S. forms of aid would radically shift towards a counter terrorist objective. As the largest change in U.S. foreign policy in recent decades, it begs the question whether the shift is purely reactionary or whether it is calculated. Through careful research of the history and motivations behind U.S.-Latin American Policy, inferences can be made about the future success of current anti-terrorist policy, and whether the need for such a policy is justifiable.

## The Monroe Doctrine

In 1823, United States President James Monroe gave his first State of the Union address to Congress, during which he outlined his foreign policy doctrine that would later bare his namesake.<sup>1</sup> Though the U.S. in no capacity had the military power to enforce this doctrine across North and South America, it represented a strategic shift in U.S. foreign policy thinking; the old world, or European powers, should no longer attempt to interfere or direct the new world. The Doctrine was steeped not only in the desire to prevent European colonization, but also in the desire to increase trade, promote inter-American mercantilism, and foster democratic governments.<sup>2</sup>

The Monroe Doctrine was not just an affirmation of America's previous isolationist principles, it was the first assertion that as a growing power in the new world, The United States would play a central role in shaping affairs in the Western hemisphere. Just prior to this President Monroe and his Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, had negotiated the Continental Treaty with Spain, effectively acquiring Spain's claim on the Pacific coast and removing the majority of Spanish power from the New World.<sup>3</sup> The U.S. victory in the Mexica-American War in 1848, in which California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Texas were ceded to the U.S., solidified the U.S.'s strength in the North America.<sup>4</sup> With the purchase of Alaska from Russian in 1867, there became no doubt that the U.S. was now the dominant force in the Americas, or a 'new empire' as American historian Brooks Adams noted.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Monroe Doctrine, 1823," Office of the Historian.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Cox and Doug Stokes, *US Foreign Policy*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>5</sup> Brooks Adams, *The New Empire*. New York: Macmillan, 1902.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the United States began to shift its foreign policy in the Americas. Washington's policies pivoted from the sole acquisition of territory, to the formation of a sphere of influence, with the purpose of further cementing the growing economic and political hegemony in North and South America.<sup>6</sup> This pivot occurred for two main reasons: First, was the reality that there simply was very little easy land to be obtained, the U.S. could no longer push small Indian tribes off vast swaths of land or purchase land from declining powers. Further, the land that was populated was inhabited with people that would not easily integrate into the Anglo-Saxon society of the U.S., due to the racist doctrines of the time.<sup>7</sup> Second, the very nature of global competition had changed; no longer was the greatness of a nation determined by the expanse of its physical reach, commercial might, spurred by the Second Industrial Revolution, began to signify superiority.<sup>8</sup>

As the U.S. contented itself with expansion westward during the 1840's, Great Britain began to expand its interests into the small isthmus between North & South America. Great Britain's chargé d'affaires, Frederick Chatfield, was able to push British citizen's claims against the governments of the isthmus republics, resulting in special trade treaties between the Great Britain and the republics.<sup>9</sup> Chatfield further pushed for "British claims to the logging region in what is now Belize, to the Bay Islands off the Honduran Coast, and to its self-proclaimed protectorate of the ill-defined Miskito

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<sup>6</sup> Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 27-28.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas M. Leonard, *United States-Latin American Relations, 1850-1903 Establishing a Relationship*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999. 80.

kingdom on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast."<sup>10</sup> These aggressive actions naturally left the impression that Great Britain would move to territorialize the fledgling republics, so much so that the Central American republics unsuccessfully appealed to the United States to counter act the British advances multiple times.<sup>11</sup>

The end of the Mexican-American War in 1848, which expanded U.S. territory to the Pacific Ocean, and the subsequent discovery of gold in California, quickly changed the previously apathetic attitude towards the isthmus. Now a route through the isthmus that would provide quick movement for goods and military equipment was of massive strategic importance. This signaled an awakening of sorts for U.S. foreign policy as the U.S. government would now become increasingly concerned with Central American politics and its effects on U.S. business interests. By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Central America would become a centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy.

### *Removing British Influence From Central America*

Recognizing the danger that British encroachment and continued American non-intervention posed, President James K. Polk dispatched Ephraim G. Squier as a special chargé d'affaires to all Central American states in 1849 to check the British presence in Central America.<sup>12</sup> Squier traveled to Nicaragua and successfully signed a treaty that granted the United States canal rights on the San Juan River, with the obligation of guaranteeing its security.<sup>13</sup> Then Squier traveled to Honduras, where he secured a treaty

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>11</sup> William R. Manning, "Central America, 1831-1850." In *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States: Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1932. 160.

<sup>12</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin American Relations*, 82.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 82.

that ceded Tigre Island in the Gulf of Fonsaca to the United States, an area that was at the time considered as a possible location for a trans-isthmus canal.<sup>14</sup>

The British viewed the cession of the Tigre Islands as an unacceptable encroachment on British interests in the region. Infuriated, British Minister Chatfield ordered Royal Navy gunboats into the region to prevent the U.S. from seizing the island.<sup>15</sup> Faced with the possibility of war, which neither nation particularly desired, leaders in Washington and London were able to avoid the crisis through the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850. The treaty specified that neither country could begin construction on a transisthmian transportation route, construct fortifications in the area, or “occupy, or fortify, or colonize, or assume or exercise any dominion over...any part of Central America.”<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that the treaty was never discussed with the Central American governments, and this would become a staple of U.S. negotiations in Latin America.

The treaty temporarily cooled tensions between the two nations and avoided war, but failed to resolve many of the regional tensions of Central America. The British retained their claims in Belize, the Bay Islands, and the Miskito territory in Nicaragua that extended as far south as the San Juan River. The river was prime importance, as it served as the border with Costa Rica and one of the prime locations for a transisthmian canal. The failure to resolve these issues would lead to a decade of diplomatic skirmishes between the U.S. and Great Britain.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of State, “The Clayton Bulwer Treaty.” 1850.

<sup>17</sup> Wilbur Devereux Jones, *The American Problem in British Diplomacy, 1841-1861*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1974. Chapter 5.

The first of these skirmishes occurred in Nicaragua, as the country became a key strategic interest after the discovery of gold, as it was the fastest way for fortune seekers to travel west prior to the transcontinental railroad. Greytown, a British enclave on the east coast of Nicaragua, became a focal point for Americans who used it as a landing point for transisthmian travel and it saw a massive increase in American travelers. With no entertainment or lodging for travelers, New York entrepreneur Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt stepped into to fill the void by forming the Accessory Transit Company. By 1852, roughly 10,000 Americans per month traveled to Greytown, enjoyed the amusements, gambling houses, opulent hotels, and then took steamboats through the San Juan River to the Pacific.<sup>18</sup> This massive influx of American citizens and trade would result in another serious confrontation between the British and Americans.

According to the Clayton-Bulwer treaty Greytown was a free port, however, the British badly needed revenue in order to fulfill the requirements of port municipal services that had exponentially increased due to the explosion of American travelers. To generate the needed revenue the British circumvented the law by charging harbor fees. Vanderbilt refused to pay for the British harbor fees because his hotel and property were across the bay and did not utilize any of Greytown's harbors. The issue came to a head on November 21, 1851, as Vanderbilt's *Prometheus* began to depart the bay for New York and refused to pay the British port fees. As a result, the British brig o' war *Express* fired a three shot volley across the bow of the *Prometheus*, an internationally recognized warning to stop.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin American Relations*, 82.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

Vanderbilt, who was actually onboard the *Prometheus* at the time, agreed to pay the fees, but as soon as the ship arrived in New York proceeded to lobby his case to the U.S. government. Fillmore's administration agreed with Vanderbilt and pressured the British to make restitution and order its naval officers in Greytown to refrain from pressing harbor fees until an official diplomatic agreement could be reached.<sup>20</sup> With its interests in the region growing, the U.S. asserted that Great Britain had no legal authority to exercise any sort of jurisdiction over U.S. merchant vessels not only in Greytown, but also throughout Central America. Further, U.S. policymakers argued that the Clayton-Bulwer treaty required the British to withdraw from the Miskito Coast. London was willing to negotiate harbor fees, but refused to vacate any ground on the premise that the Clayton-Bulwer treaty only prevented future colonization in Central America.<sup>21</sup>

Despite this serious disagreement, Great Britain provided an opportunity for a reasonable arrangement on the issues of the 1850 treaty; in 1851, Lord Palmerston resigned as British foreign secretary over a disagreement on European politics, consequently the short tempered Frederick Chatfield was recalled from Central America. The rise of Napoleon and other European affairs severely distracted the British, who sought a face saving solution for the Central American disputes. The U.S., despite its growing internal strife that would eventually lead to a civil war, and much to the disdain of the British, remained staunch in its determination to force the British from Central America.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>21</sup> Mario Rodríguez, "The "Prometheus" and the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty." *The Journal of Modern History* 36 (3). University of Chicago Press, 1964. 270-71.

The first prospect for an agreement came in 1852, when the Nicaraguan government pursued control over the Miskito Kingdom. Secretary of State Daniel Webster and British Minister John Crampton debated the issue in Washington and London and eventually proposed a settlement in April 1852.<sup>22</sup> Under this proposal, Greytown became a free city, the Miskito Indian's would have their rights protected, and the San Juan River would become the definitive boundary between Costa Rica and Nicaragua. As had been the staple of U.S.-Great Britain negotiations and treaties, neither the Costa Rican nor the Nicaraguan governments were consulted. Both countries disagreed with the settlement due to the importance of the river in transisthmian trade, and Nicaragua argued that continued British control of Greytown was a violation of the Monroe Doctrine. London however, once again posited that the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty only prevented future colonization in the isthmus, and did not affect current settlements.<sup>23</sup>

Though the British appeared to begin backpedaling in Central America, they remained staunch in their efforts to secure future political and commercial interests in the region. In March 1852, the British issued a royal warrant declaring the Roatán, Bonacca, and four islands off the coast of Honduras the "Colony of the Bay Islands."<sup>24</sup> The British issued the royal warrant under the false assumption that U.S. policy in the region focused solely around a canal project. The British ignored the Honduran government's protests and the U.S. attitude solidified. The Senate Foreign Relations committee in Washington met and concluded that the Bay Islands were an indivisible part of Honduras, and that Britain should withdraw from Belize because it legally belonged to Guatemala. Further,

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<sup>22</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin American Relations*, 83.

<sup>23</sup> Richard W. Van Alstyne, "The Central American Policy of Lord Palmerston, 1846-1848." *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 1936. 356-7.

<sup>24</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin American Relations*, 84.

British interference in the region was not only a violation of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, but also the Monroe Doctrine.<sup>25</sup>

James Buchanan, the new U.S. Minister, arrived in London in September 1853 with the purpose of removing the British from the transisthmian region and Central America itself. The British showed no signs of relenting, with Foreign Minister Villiers describing British honor as requiring, “a paper regard for the interest and wellbeing of the Misquitos because of the old connection with them,” and that the issue of the Bay Islands was not up for discussion.<sup>26</sup> The U.S. would see no headway through diplomacy until the end of the decade.

While the U.S. and Great Britain remained at a diplomatic impasse, their citizens continued to clash in Central America, further heightening tensions. Americans continued to travel through Greytown in ever larger numbers, and Commodore Vanderbilt’s estate continued to swell in Punta Arenas, dominating both passenger and cargo traffic. Vanderbilt continued to refuse to pay harbor fees, and in 1853, frustrated local British officials took matters into their own hands and set fire to some of Vanderbilt’s buildings. This incident would set a tumultuous foundation for the new U.S. minister to Nicaragua, Solon Borland, who viewed British officials in Greytown as nothing more than “pirates and outlaws” from Jamaica.<sup>27</sup> Minister Borland demanded the British provide financial reparations for the destruction of Vanderbilt’s property and diplomatic immunity for Captain T. T. Smith, who was wanted by the British for murder. The British naturally refused Borland’s demands outright, so Borland stood by while Captain George N.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 84.

Hollins of the U.S. Navy commanded his warship, the *Cyane*, to bombard Greytown.<sup>28</sup>

Though diplomatic officials of both countries looked down upon the event, no official reparations took place and nothing ever came of it. The razing of Greytown marks a turning point in U.S. foreign policy as it is the first use of gunboat diplomacy in Central America.

The misplaced U.S. aggression did little to push the British out of Central America; instead, the British appeared to double down. In 1856, the Honduran minister to London, Pedro A. Herrán, settled an agreement that provided the Bay Islands as a free state under Honduran sovereignty, with the purpose of providing protection to British subjects in the region. Believing that all foreign influence should be removed from the region, the Honduran government rejected the deal, yet the British remained on the Bay Islands.<sup>29</sup>

The British mistrust of U.S. aims in Central America steadily increased. Some British believed that the U.S. government supported William Walker's nearly successful hostile takeover of Nicaragua.<sup>30</sup> The already tense diplomatic atmosphere increased when President Buchanan avowed that the U.S. interpretation of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty was the only correct one, and that the British were therefore illegally occupying the territory in Central America.<sup>31</sup> The U.S. senate agreed, resolving that the British should abide by the treaty or abrogate the territory. Concerning the U.S. aggression, Britain's First Lord

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<sup>28</sup> James M. Woods, "Expansionism as Diplomacy: The Career of Solon Borland in Central America 1853-1854." *The Americas* 40, no. 3 (1984). 413.

<sup>29</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin American Relations*, 85.

<sup>30</sup> T. J. Stiles, "The Filibuster King: The Strange Career of William Walker, the Most Dangerous International Criminal of the Nineteenth Century." The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

<sup>31</sup> James Buchanan, "First Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union." December 8, 1857.

of the Admiralty remarked: “We are fast drifting into war with the U[nited] States.”<sup>32</sup> At this point the British stance on Central American policy becomes divided and seemingly contradictory; Lord Clarendon emphasized that the British would not succumb to U.S. jingoism, yet when saddled with the costs of the Crimean War seemed anxious to withdraw from Latin America. Lord Clarendon told the U.S. minister to London, George Dallas, that His Majesty’s government “would not give three coppers to retain any post on the Central American Territory or coast from which she could not honorably retire.”<sup>33</sup>

Faced with U.S. and local government opposition the British began to make efforts to withdraw from Central America. In 1859, British Foreign Minister Lord John Russell sent Charles Wycke to negotiate treaties with Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.<sup>34</sup> Guatemalan dictator Rafael Carrera signed an agreement with Wycke that would allow the British to construct a cart road connecting Guatemala’s interior to the Caribbean coast. Wycke’s treaty with Honduras recognized the Honduran claim to the Bay Islands on the condition that Honduras could not transfer the islands to any third party or interfere with British subjects on the islands. In the final agreement in 1860, the British and Nicaragua agreed that the Miskito coast, including Greytown, would become sovereign Nicaraguan territory.

On the surface, these treaties provided a promising British free future for the Central American governments, though in actuality the British would not be removed so easily. Rather than withdrawing from Belize, the British incorporated it into their colonial administrative system, christening it “British Honduras.” Further, the cart road from the

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<sup>32</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin American Relations*, 85.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

coast to the interior of Guatemala was never constructed, causing a rift between the two nations that would last even after Belize's independence in 1981.<sup>35</sup>

In Nicaragua, the British accused the Nicaraguan government of failing to grant the Miskito Indians self-government, and in doing so refused to surrender their protectorate over the Indian Territory. In the 1879 arbitration case to resolve the situation, Emperor Franz Josef of Austria acknowledged the British control over the territory, which eventually would lead to foreign investment. This would serve to only complicate British interests in the area, by 1885, foreign entrepreneurs, many of them U.S. Confederate expatriates, produced enough bananas to compete in U.S. markets ranging from New Orleans to New York.<sup>36</sup> Within five years, upwards of 90 percent of the regions wealth was controlled directly by U.S. citizens, with investments valued at \$2 million. Three years later the trade between the U.S. and these plantations was valued at \$4 million.<sup>37</sup> The area, in effect, became a colony of life in the Southern U.S.; private clubs, restaurants, estates, and a bottling plant that produced various traditional American drinks opened up.

The U.S. enclave would not last though; in 1894, Nicaraguan President José Zelaya saw the region as a strong Nicaraguan economic asset, moved troops into the area, and imposed martial law throughout the Miskito Territory. With contracts voided, and export taxes levied, the U.S. businesses fared poorly and the U.S. government appealed to Zelaya directly. When appeals failed Washington took no further actions because the

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 85; Wayne M. Clegern, "A Guatemalan Defense of the British Honduras Boundary of 1859." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 40, no. 4 (1960). 573-4.

<sup>36</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin American Relations*, 86.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 86.

expatriates were now technically residents of the foreign country and therefore subject to its laws.

The British disagreed, citing the Nicaraguans failure to grant the Miskito Indians self-government. In March 1894, British troops landed in Bluefields to protect the rights of the Indians and British residents in the region. Though the British were clearly violating the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty and the Monroe Doctrine, the officials in Washington recognized that a forced removal of British presence would do more to damage U.S. interests in the region than to protect U.S. citizens there. Washington adopted a policy of chastisement without any actual interference.

As in the 1850s, Great Britain, faced with growing problems in Europe, and grew weary of its commitment to the Miskito Indians. In the summer of 1894, the British withdrew their ships and soldiers from Bluefields and allowed the Nicaraguans to expel nearly 600 Jamaican administrators.<sup>38</sup> The Nicaraguan government, realizing that the eyes of the U.S. and U.K. were upon them, implemented the terms of the 1860 treaty that incorporated the Miskito Indians into the nation, and then went further to exempt them from military service and personal taxes. The British withdraw pleased both the Nicaraguans and Washington, though the Indians and residents remained at the mercy of the Nicaraguan government.

Although U.S. diplomats and politicians claimed responsibility for the British withdraw from the Bay Islands and the Miskito Coast, most of the responsibility belongs more to an evolving British policy rather than masterful U.S. diplomacy. The British, confronted with growing political changes on the European continent, became decidedly

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

less interested in far away and unprofitable colonies. The failure of the U.S. to enforce the Monroe Doctrine on British territorial gains and actions in Nicaragua strengthened the Central American judgement that the Monroe doctrine was merely a self-serving work of rhetoric.

With the British withdrawal from Central America, the U.S. then faced two key challenges to its sphere of influence in the Americas. The first was Europe's tight political control over the Caribbean: every island, save for Haiti and the Dominican Republic, was controlled by the Spanish, British, French, or Dutch.<sup>39</sup> This stood as a direct contestation of the Monroe Doctrine. The second challenge came from the European's commercial might in the Americas. While the U.S. maintained strong economic influence in Cuba and Mexico, European nations held a strong hold on South America. Argentina's, Chile's, and Peru's largest trading partner was Great Britain, with Brazil also importing the majority of its goods from there. Both Germany and France maintained significant economic ties with Argentina and Brazil.<sup>40</sup> The economic dominance of South America was so substantial that publicist William Eleroy Curtis testified before U.S. Congress in 1886 that the rewards of economic growth in South America were flowing almost wholly to "the three commercial nations of Europe," England, France and Germany, which "have secured a monopoly of the trade of Spanish America.... [with] the Englishmen having the Brazilians by the throat."<sup>41</sup>

European investments in Latin America were similarly one sided towards Europeans. The U.S. expended a previously unheard \$5.2 billion in order to finance the

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<sup>39</sup> Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 28, 30.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

Civil War, incurring a 3,284% increase in the national debt.<sup>42</sup> During the early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the U.S. was in no place to export capital to Latin America. Great Britain was more than willing to pick up the slack, maintaining long-term investments from 1870-1890. By 1914, Great Britain held more than half of all foreign investments in the region.<sup>43</sup> The French and Germans also made significant capital investments just prior to and after the turn of the century.<sup>44</sup>

U.S. policy makers recognized that weak position that they were starting to put themselves in and asserted that they would need to expand exports markets. In 1881, U.S. Secretary of State James G. Blaine sought to expand the Monroe Doctrine with what would later become recognized as the Big Brother Policy. This policy sought to turn the Monroe Doctrine from a mere defensive weapon to keep the European powers out of the Americas, to an active tool to assert U.S. hegemony over the Americas through diplomatic collaboration and economic expansion.<sup>45</sup> Blaine recognized that in order to bring about American dominance, the U.S. would have to cultivate “friendly commercial relations with all American countries so as would lead to a large increase in the export trade of the United States.”<sup>46</sup>

The post-Civil War economic expansion offered a promising start to foreign investment, increasing from an insignificant \$392 million in 1870 to \$1.3 billion by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>47</sup> Senator Albert J. Beveridge opened the Indiana Republican

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<sup>42</sup> "The 19th Century." Bureau of the Public Debt.

<sup>43</sup> Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 29.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>45</sup> Sidney Lens, *The Forging of the American Empire: From the Revolution to Vietnam, a History of U.S. Imperialism*. London: Pluto Press, 2003. 161.

<sup>46</sup> Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 29.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

Campaign in 1898 with a powerful speech arguing the economic need for aggressive American expansion, "...today we are raising more than we can consume. Today, we are making more than we can use. Therefore, we must find new markets for our produce, new occupation for our capital, new work for our labor."<sup>48</sup> New avenues of investment and increased trade were hoped to break the cycles of depression that had plagued the U.S.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Albert Beveridge, "The March of the Flag." September 16, 1898.

<sup>49</sup> Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 29.

## **The *Baltimore* Crisis**

The U.S. was not only interested in exorcising European influence, but also establishing its own hegemony over the American nations. On October 16, 1891, on the streets outside the True Blue Saloon in Valparaíso, Chile, a brawl between American sailors from the *USS Baltimore* and Chilean nationals left two American sailors killed, 17 wounded (five seriously), and many arrested.<sup>50</sup> This seemingly inconsequential skirmish would ignite a diplomatic crisis that would put the two nations on the path to a possible war.

Strains in the U.S.-Chilean relationship dated back about a decade before the Baltimore Affair. James G. Blaine, Secretary of State under President Garfield, supported Peru over Chile in the War of the Pacific (1879-1884), accusing Chile of overt military aggression encouraged by the British.<sup>51</sup> Chile would win the war, establishing its military superiority in the Pacific coast of South America. With the desire to increase U.S. trade in Latin America, Blaine was highly critical of British investment in Chile. Although Chilean nationalists shared an anti-British sentiment with the U.S., they were still extremely wary of American Motives.

When Chile became embroiled in a civil war in early 1891, the U.S. supported the established Balmaceda government, while the British supported the rebels known as the “Congressionalists.” In May 1891, the U.S., in response to a Balmacedan government request, apprehended a Chilean rebel ship, the *Itata*, which was loaded with arms in San

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Kennedy, "The U.S.S. Baltimore Affair." N.Y. Times.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

Diego, California, and headed toward Chile.<sup>52</sup> When the Congressionalists won the war, President Harrison released the *Itata* and recognized the Chilean government, but the entire preceding string of events left a bitter taste in Chilean mouths.

Tension remained so high between the two rising powers that the U.S. Department of the Navy drafted contingency plans in the event of war. U.S. Minister to Chile, Patrick Egan, caused further friction by granting asylum to leaders of the defeated Balmaceda faction, who were taking refuge in the American mission.<sup>53</sup> Egan refused Chilean orders to hand over the refugees, and in October 1891, Chilean secret police surrounded the mission to prevent the refugees' escape.

In addition to the political turmoil, the U.S. and Chile were on an economic crash course. By 1890, Chile had surpassed Peru as the most energetic and powerful commercial nation in South America.<sup>54</sup> Further, Chile had the highest per capita income of all nations in Latin America, and was exceeded on the European continent only by Britain, Belgium and Holland in terms of per capita imports.<sup>55</sup> Following the revolution Chile appeared the most politically stable Latin American nation, and with its excess of natural resources, it was heavily favored by European investors.

By the beginning of the Baltimore Affair, the Chilean government looked upon the U.S. government with a sense of loathing, and rightfully so; the American government had supported the government they overtopped, criticized its largest trading

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Joyce S. Goldberg, "Consent to Ascent. The Baltimore Affair and the U. S. Rise to World Power Status." *The Americas* 41, no. 1 (1984). 25.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 25.

partner, withheld weapons that could have shortened the civil war, and sheltered members of the overtopped government.

*The U.S. Navy in Chile*

Valparaíso, at the time was a thriving commercial center and naval hub for South America. After the Chilean civil war and the decline of the Peruvian port of Callo, Valparaíso became the maritime capital of the Pacific, and a focus for naval enterprises for continental defense.<sup>56</sup> North American traders frequented the port, and it grew into a bustling, industrious, and prosperous city. As such, it was no surprise to see a ship of the U.S. Pacific Squadron, such as the U.S. S. *Baltimore*, there in 1891.

The U.S.S. *Baltimore* was not just any ship though, it was a considerable vessel for its time. Displacing over 4,600 tons and sporting twelve breech-loading guns of various sizes the *Baltimore* was one of three first-rate vessels in the U.S. Navy. Secretary of the Navy Benjamin F. Tracy proudly boasted of the *Baltimore* as “undoubtedly the fastest ship of her displacement in the world. She can whip any that can catch her and run away from any ship that can whip her.”<sup>57</sup> Captaining the *Baltimore* was Winfield Scott Schley, Naval Academy graduate and future Rear Admiral. Schley was known as a raconteur, unreserved, and enthusiastic with an inclination for impulsivity and eager for action.

The *Baltimore* was one of several U.S. Navy ships ordered to Chilean waters during the Revolution in January of 1891. Minister Eagan had asked for naval assets to protect American interest during the tumultuous civil war. Captain Schley and the *Baltimore* steamed from France to Valparaiso, where Schley reported that the presence of

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 22.

the *Baltimore* gave satisfied and contributed to the security of Americans living in Chile.<sup>58</sup> Rear Admiral W. P. McCann, commander of the U.S.S. *Pensacola* and U.S. naval forces in the South Pacific, corroborated Schley's statement when he cabled Secretary Tray that the "arrival of the *Baltimore* on this station has attracted a great deal of attention, and has also had a very good effect in increasing the respect of these people for our navy and showing them that the United States had the power to protect the interests of her citizens should it become necessary to do so."<sup>59</sup>

The *Baltimore* remained in Valparaiso throughout the civil war, taking no action, acting as a not so subtle reminder that of U.S. interest. The Congressionalists victory Battle of Placilla on August 28 and overthrew the Balmaceda government should have lessened the need for a U.S. warship. Rear Admiral Brown telegraphed Tracy, explaining that a "perfect order" existed between Santiago and Valparaiso and that naval warships would not improve the situation.<sup>60</sup> Despite this, Captain Schley was ordered not to move and the *Baltimore* remained in Valparaiso.

### *Sailors and Natives Clash*

Friday, October 16, 1891, clear skies and gentle breezes prevailed in Valparaiso, and 117 crewmembers from the *Baltimore* were granted a twenty-four hour liberty. Because of the civil war, the crew had not been granted shore leave since late July or early August in Coquimbo, unlike the crews of foreign naval vessels who had received

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>59</sup> *Message of the President of the United States Respecting the Relations with Chile*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892. 247.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 288.

liberty throughout the civil war in Valparaiso.<sup>61</sup> When the *Baltimore* had returned to Valparaiso on September 14, the captain of the Valparaiso Port Authority and the senior Chilean naval officer in the port visited the *Baltimore* to render the traditional welcome, courtesies, and hospitalities. Captain Schley had question the Intendente, Juan de Dios Arlegüi, about the possibility of shore leave, and Arlegüi replied that he could find no reason to withhold a privilege that was being enjoyed by other crews.<sup>62</sup> Despite this, Schley cabled Tracy that he felt “strong feeling and great hostility” against Americans, and that although everything was quiet, the threat of what might happen had prevented him from granting liberty.<sup>63</sup> It was not until over a month later that Schley believed he saw a change in Chilean attitude and reported, “Everything is quiet at Valparaiso, and the chances of everything being more settled improve daily.”<sup>64</sup> Only then did he deem it safe for his sailors to go ashore and granted them liberty.

Unfortunately, this was not the case, and the riot outside the True Blue Saloon killed two sailors and wounded many others. President Harrison, who was already upset over the refugee dispute, became deeply angered when news of the casualties trickled in. The United States government demanded, "Prompt and full reparation proportionate to the gravity of the injury inflicted," from Chile.<sup>65</sup> The Chilean foreign minister, Manuel Matta, responded by promising nothing until the judicial process was completed. Both sides blamed the altercation on the other, though some Americans believed that it was a deliberate planned assault on American sailors. The prolonged length of the judicial

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<sup>61</sup> Goldberg, “Consent to Ascent.” 23.

<sup>62</sup> Winfield Scott Schley, *Forty-five Years under the Flag*. New York: D. Appleton and, 1904. 221-22.

<sup>63</sup> *Message of the President*, 290.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

investigation upset many Americans, who interpreted as a refusal to accept responsibility, express the expected regret, punish the murderers, and make reparations for the death of U.S. service members.<sup>66</sup>

The tense situation temporarily cooled for a few weeks until inflammatory remarks on each side brought the controversy to the forefront of international politics. In the President's 1891 State of the Union address in December, President Harrison blamed the Baltimore affair on Chile and criticized the "couched offensive tone" of Chilean Foreign Affairs Secretary Matta.<sup>67</sup> Two days later Secretary Matta publicly responded, declaring the American government was insincere, wrong, and bellicose in its treatment of the Baltimore affair.<sup>68</sup> This outright rebuke of the U.S. government further incensed President Harrison, and Eagan broke off all communication with the Chilean government.

### European Noninvolvement

The European powers watched the events with concern as the U.S. pushed closer to war with Chile, who the Europeans regarded as the most prominent civilized and free nation in South America.<sup>69</sup> President Harrison threatened war in an ultimatum sent to Chile on January 23, 1892, and then again in a special message to Congress on January 25, after the Chilean government had yet to respond to the earlier ultimatum. The Chilean minister in Paris, Augusto Matte, believed that the "influence that the European press exercises on public opinion in the United States," could help quell the calls for war.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Goldberg, "Consent to Ascent." 26.

<sup>67</sup> President Benjamin Harrison, "Third Annual Message." December 9, 1891.

<sup>68</sup> Kennedy, "The U.S.S. Baltimore Affair." 3.

<sup>69</sup> Goldberg, "Consent to Ascent." 25.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

Through careful maneuvering Matte was able to ensure that the most prominent European newspapers favored the Chilean side, relying upon the sympathy for the rising democracy, and the “disfavor that the United States has in Europe due to its economic policy.”<sup>71</sup>

Minister Matte even arranged to meet James Gordon Bennet, who owned the New York *Herald*, and lived in Paris, to discuss how European media might affect the international relationships of the U.S. Despite all of Matte’s efforts, there was no change in U.S. actions; the conversation with Bennet proved ineffective, and though the Europeans showed sympathy for the Chileans, they advised Chile to avoid conflict with the U.S. no matter the merits of the Chilean position. Despite *Le Temps*, *Les Debates*, *La Justice*, and *Le Soir* publishing editorials condemning the war hawk U.S. diplomacy, the French remained firm in their desire to remain uninvolved.

Foreign nations, who recognized the merit of the Chilean position, refused to even mediate the conflict between the two nations. Matte reported to the Chilean Ministry of Exterior Relations, that Britain would not mediate due to “accented animosities” toward the U.S.; Germany would not due to “serious” differences with North America; and Italy was unable to due to pending questions concerning the New Orleans lynching (in which in 1890 U.S. citizens had stormed a prison in New Orleans and murdered several Italians who had just been found innocent of killing the city police chief).<sup>72</sup> Spain, as the parent country of Chile, was unable to mediate the conflict as it looked “with vivid repugnance on United States intervention in South America.”<sup>73</sup> The Swiss minister advised the Swiss

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 27.

government that the notion of war over the *Baltimore* affair as an “absurdity” since the North American public seemed hesitant to go to war, but that it remained a possibility, as Chile seemed unwilling to make any sort of concessions. The Brazilian minister, Salvador de Medoça, made an effort to get his government to mediate the conflict, but the Brazilian government declined to do so.

Of any European power that would intervene, Germany was one of the few that showed the most promise. The Chilean minister in Berlin, Gonzalo Bulnes, had meetings with Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, German Minister of State, who had reports from the German minister in the U.S. that a war between Chile and the U.S. was imminent.<sup>74</sup> Bieberstein concluded that the U.S. was motivated by a desire for commercial monopoly of South America, with the *Baltimore* affair acting merely as a pretext for excluding European economic activity and replacing it with U.S. activity. Minister Bulnes reasoned that the Chilean cause of defending a countries sovereign commercial interests was also defending European investors interests, and therefore worthy of support. Indeed, the former chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, had stated with amazement, “A nation as powerful as the American Union did not show more moderation and respect for a nation as small as Chile, that had just come out of a civil war, and insisted in imposing on it the same qualities that they condemned in the riot.”<sup>75</sup> Despite these promising signs of support, Bieberstein made it clear that it was squarely on Chile’s shoulders to weather the conflict, and that though the German government sympathized with the Chilean cause, no concrete aid would be provided. Bieberstein reasoned that the U.S. was clearly “seeking the

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 28.

pretext for a war” and that Chile should do everything in its power to thwart the fabrication of a casus belli.<sup>76</sup>

The British also showed a marked interest with the Chilean government in the *Baltimore* affaire. The British Foreign office first believed that the trouble had been a result of Minister Egan’s appointment, which had been regarded with great displeasure by the Chilean government, or that the entire conflict was a result of actions that neither side had control over.<sup>77</sup> The affair was thought to be so unsubstantial that the *London Times* reported on October 30, “little or no excitement has been caused in official circles.”<sup>78</sup> John Kennedy, the British minister to Chile, described the *Baltimore* affair as, “merely a question of temper.”<sup>79</sup>

Though viewed as a question of temper, the British still remained concerned that over the affair. Kennedy wrote the Foreign Office that,

Mr. Egan and Captain Schley have changed their previous prudent attitude for one of defiance; this may be explained by their conviction that patience and prudence under direct insults to the United States Flag have been in vain and that the best way to put an end to the systematic annoyance to which they have been subjected was by obtaining authority to defy and threaten the Chilean government.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 28.

Captain Schley's "probably exaggerated language to his foreign colleagues at Valparaiso" worried Kennedy so greatly that he recommended the return of British war ships to the coast.<sup>81</sup>

By December 31, the Foreign Office had realized the magnitude of the situation, and suggested that Chilean Foreign Minister Manuel Antonio Matta be removed from office for the aggressive and undiplomatic note that he had sent the U.S. in December, for fear that the two countries would go to war otherwise. Minister Kennedy had tried, in vain, to persuade Matta to use more tactile language in order to introduce friendliness and calm between the two nations. Kennedy predicted that because of Matta's failure, his successor would "certainly be compelled to drop the defiant attitude hitherto observed toward the United States and also to make concessions to the demands of that Country."<sup>82</sup> The British certainly sympathized with Chile (due in no small part to their massive economic interests in the area), but as with the other European powers, would not start or join a campaign against the United States.

### *The Crisis Ends*

On January 1, 1892, Kennedy's prediction proved true, the Chilean administration replaced Matta with a more peacemaking foreign minister, Luis Pereira. Pereira met courteously with Egan and agreed to have the secret police removed and allow the refugees to leave Chile without threat of arrest. On January 6, the Chilean court investigating the affair indicted three Chileans and an American for their involvement in the affair.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 29.

As the diplomatic dispute began to wind down the Chilean government once again fanned the flames as it asked that Egan be removed as the U.S. Minister. President Harrison reacted quickly, sending a threateningly worded message to Chile, rejecting the Chilean court's findings, labeling the *Baltimore* incident as a deliberate attack on American service personnel, ruling out the discussion on Mr. Egan's position, and demanding, "A suitable apology and...adequate reparation for the injury done to this government."<sup>83</sup> President Harrison presented the correspondence to Congress, with the aim of gearing the government to war.

On January 25, 1892, the Chilean administration, at the entreaty of European ministers for fear of war, conceded on all of President Harrison's points. In February, a Chilean court gave prison sentences for the three Chilean rioters, and in July, the Chilean government agreed to pay the United States \$75,000 in gold bullion as reparation.<sup>84</sup> Minister Egan would remain until President Cleveland fired him in 1893 for again offering asylum during another Chilean civil war. Thus, the hegemony of the U.S. in American politics was further cemented in the minds of Europeans and Latin American Governments.

### *U.S. Naval Machinations*

Unknown to the Chileans, but certainly bearing on the affair, the U.S.S. *Baltimore* itself was representative of an effort by the U.S. to build a new navy of considerable scope, second to none. The goal of becoming a world class naval power did not start with

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<sup>83</sup> Benjamin Harrison, "Message to Congress Reporting on Correspondence Between the United States and Chile Regarding Violence Against American Sailors in Valparaiso." January 25, 1892.

<sup>84</sup> Kennedy, "The U.S.S. Baltimore Affair." 4.

the Republican administration that had ascended to office in March 1889, but the articulation of strong naval principles and organization of public opinion distinguished President Harrison and Secretary Tracy as the founding fathers of the “new navy” and American expansionism.

As the U.S. sought to improve its international position and looked to establish itself as the dominant nation in the hemisphere, it came to the realization that its navy was dwarfed and embarrassed by nations considered of lesser status, like Chile.<sup>85</sup> In 1884, Senator Eugene Haile of Maine described the U.S. Navy with “a sense of shame... There is nothing whatever to prevent Chile or any other South American power which has in its possession...a second or third rate ironclad from steaming along the Pacific coast and laying our towns under contribution, and burning and destroying.”<sup>86</sup> In 1881, the Secretary of the Navy, William H. Hunt, reported to Congress that unless it took action the navy would spiral into insignificance: “We have been unable to make such an appropriate display of our naval power abroad as will cause us to be respected. The exhibition of our weakness in this important arm of defense is calculated to detract from our occupying in the eyes of foreign nations that rank to which we know ourselves to be justly entitled.”<sup>87</sup> President Arthur recognized the deplorable state of the U.S. Navy and signed a bill appropriating funds for the Navy’s first steel vessels, one of which the U.S.S. *Baltimore*.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> George Theron Davis, *A Navy Second to None; the Development of Modern American Naval Policy*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and, 1940. 33.

<sup>86</sup> Brian Loveman, *No Higher Law American Foreign Policy and the Western Hemisphere since 1776*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. 143.

<sup>87</sup> Goldberg, “Consent to Ascent.” 31.

<sup>88</sup> “Key Presidential Events of Chester A. Arthur,” Miller Center.

President Arthur's decision was do in no small part to the awareness of the state of the U.S. Navy in the Americas. Each of the two British built Chilean ironclads that fought in the War of the Pacific in 1879 were considered superior to that of any vessel in the U.S. Naval arsenal.<sup>89</sup> In 1885, Secretary of the Navy, William E. Chandler, in his annual report to congress, mentioned the new Chilean steel cruiser *Esmerelda*, describing it as the "most perfect ship of her class ever built... [a] more formidable vessel than either the *Boston* or *Atlanta*... unsurpassed as a cruising commerce destroyer."<sup>90</sup> Just before arriving in Washington, Theodore Roosevelt wrote President Harrison that "it is a disgrace to us as a nation that we should have no war ships worth of the name, and that our rich sea-board cities should lie at the mercy of a tenth rate country like Chili [sic]."<sup>91</sup> Secretary Tracy realized that even after his plans for expansion were executed successfully, the U.S. would be "absolutely at the mercy of states having less than one-tenth of its population, one-thirtieth of its wealth, and one-one hundredth of its area."<sup>92</sup> The disgraceful state of the U.S. Navy was not only noticed by government officials, *Scientific American* lamented, "We have no navy worthy of the name, and nearly all our seaports are without proper defenses... at the mercy of any single piratical boat that chooses to enter. This is a very humiliating position for a country like ours to be placed in."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Donald E. Worcester, "Naval Strategy in the War of the Pacific." *Journal of Inter-American Studies*, 1963. 37.

<sup>90</sup> William E. Chandler, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy*. United States Naval Department. 1884. 62.

<sup>91</sup> Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1918*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1925. 63.

<sup>92</sup> Benjamin F. Tracy, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy*. United States Naval Department. 1889.

<sup>93</sup> *Scientific American* Vol. 64. #20, (May 16, 1891). 358.

The U.S. Navy, in 1890, was still far behind Britain, France, Russia, and Germany, and even lesser powers as, such as the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Turkey, China, Norway-Sweden, and Austria-Hungary.<sup>94</sup> The early 1880's push for naval funds and subsequent building did pay off though; by the end of Benjamin Harrison's presidency, the U.S. navy had advanced in tonnage and ship numbers from twelfth to about fifth place.<sup>95</sup> This evolution from weakness to strength was achieved through the leadership of Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Tracy, who is credited with the rebirth of the Naval Department and the advocacy of a "two-ocean navy."<sup>96</sup> Through his vigor and efficiency, Secretary Tracy was able to gain the loyalty of his subordinates and the trust of the navy. Tracy recognized the importance of public approval; upon the commissioning U.S.S. *Chicago*, the largest U.S. cruiser at the time, Tracy sent it and its two sister cruisers, the U.S.S. *Atlanta* and the U.S.S. *Boston*, to ports along the Atlantic seaboard, where the public marveled at the display of naval technology.<sup>97</sup> Secretary Tracy then set the precedent of naming new battleships after states and new cruisers after cities, a policy that still holds to this day.<sup>98</sup> Arguably, Secretary Tracy's greatest achievement was not the mere increase in tonnage, but the development of naval yards capable of turning out warships that could compete with the best of any naval power.<sup>99</sup>

Secretary Tracy pushed for the buildup of the U.S. Navy not because of the *Baltimore* affair, but because of those kinds of incidents; Tracy believed that the U.S. had

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<sup>94</sup> Goldberg, "Consent to Ascent." 31.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>96</sup> "Benjamin F. Tracy (1889-1893) – Secretary of the Navy," Miller Center.

<sup>97</sup> Lewis E. Kaplan, *The Making of the American Dream an Unconventional History of the United States from 1607 to 1900*. New York: Algora Pub., 2009. 183-184.

<sup>98</sup> Goldberg, "Consent to Ascent." 31.

<sup>99</sup> Kaplan, *Making the American Dream*. 184.

a need to display its naval power so that the world would pay the proper attention to the growing power of the U.S. The *Baltimore* affair was an indication the change in policy that was occurring: the U.S. would now win prestige, respect, and power status through aggressive assertion. The extensive preparations for war even prior to the ultimatum further support this.

In the 1890s, the most powerful nations on their respective continents were Chile and the U.S. The Chilean victory in the War of the Pacific set it up as the primary naval power in the America's, while the U.S. pursued the expansion of its economic and strategic influence. The U.S. sought to assert its hegemony in the western hemisphere and cement its reputation in the world through threats of war. By the end of the crisis, it was clear that the final page of the isolationism chapter in America's history had been turned, and a new, aggressive United States had emerged.

## The Spanish American War

The aggressive rhetoric in Chile was just a glimpse of future U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. As the European powers began to relinquish control of the Americas, the U.S. rushed in to fill the economic and political void. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the U.S. would become embroiled in a war with Spain over Cuba, and the ensuing occupation of the largest island in the Gulf of Mexico.

By the midway point of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Cuba was deep in the throes of insurrection, a time of constant conspiracies and rumors that would never come to fruition. The future of Cuba was uncertain, and economic difficulties contributed to island wide feelings of discontent. Cuban Creoles were deeply dissatisfied with Spanish rule, as Spain had imposed seemingly arbitrary taxes, discriminatory tariffs, and other levees that were viewed as purposefully harmful to the growing level of trade between the U.S. and Cuba.<sup>100</sup> This economic conflict would eventually become the main point of contention between the peninsular authorities and the Creole producers. The divide was magnified further as the U.S. overtook Spain as Cuba's primary trading partner.

This divide became apparent in both Cuba and the U.S., causing annexationist movements to gain steam in the 1840's and 50's. As expansionist sentiment garnered popularity, political pressure followed; in 1848, President James K. Polk offered \$100 million to Spain for Cuba, and then President Franklin Pierce raised the sum to \$130 million in 1854, once again without success. After this second refusal, the U.S. ministers to Spain, France, and England met in Ostend, Belgium to publicly urge the U.S. to

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<sup>100</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin American Relations*. 35.

continue its efforts to purchase Cuba. The Ostend Manifesto, as it would later become known as, warned Spain that if it refused to sell Cuba then it could be expected that, “by every law, human and divine, we shall be justified in wresting it from Spain, if we possess the power.”<sup>101</sup>

The U.S. annexation efforts did not go unnoticed in Cuba, and in part increased Cuban expectations and encouraged hope of imminent annexation. The Cubans viewed the Texan annexation with a glimmer of hope, as the Texas settlers had seceded from Mexico and joined the U.S. These efforts would ultimately fizzle out, as the U.S. became increasingly focused on difficult domestic issues. Once the U.S. Civil War drew to a close it became clear that Cuba, a slave territory, would not fit into the Union as seamlessly as some previously suggested. Evolving domestic policies made it unlikely that Cuba would be assimilated into the United States.

Sentiments and conditions evolved in Cuba during this time as well. The fervent support for annexation that had petered out left many Cubans disillusioned, with resigned support. Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 had a profound effect on Cuban sugar planters, who had looked at annexation as a way to save slavery in Cuba. After the Civil War the sugar planters became some of the most vocal critics of U.S. annexation for the same reasons.

While the U.S. was in the midst of reconstruction, Cuba became engrossed in its own internal problems. A new conservative ministry in Spain created waves of antidemocratic laws in Cuba. Opposition journalists were silenced, critics exiled, meetings of any political nature were strictly prohibited, and any outspoken opponents

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<sup>101</sup> U.S. Congress, House, *The Ostend Manifesto*. October 18, 1854. 33<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 2 Sess., Vol X. pp. 127-136.

were imprisoned. At the same time, Spain re-imposed old taxes and levied new ones, imposing strict protectionist duties on foreign goods that amounted to four times the price of Spanish goods. These duties were particularly burdensome on the Cubans, who relied heavily upon foreign goods, and caused further harm when the U.S. counter levied a 10 percent tariff on Cuban goods.<sup>102</sup>

Steep new taxes are inconvenient at any time, but were especially problematic during this time. The taxes directly caused the Cuban economy to plunge into a deep recession: sugar production plummeted causing sugar prices to fall to their lowest point in fifteen years.<sup>103</sup> Then, in December of 1868, the major banks on Cuba withheld payments, bringing sugar payments to a halt, and further contributing to the pervasive climate of uncertainty.<sup>104</sup>

The Creoles, discontent with the economic uncertainty and without the likelihood of gaining relief through reforms, began to rise in popularity and seek remedy through revolution. By 1868, established representatives of eastern Cuban creole bourgeoisie, "cattle barons from Camagüey and sugar planters from Oriente-Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, Salvador Cisneros Betancourt, Francisco Vicente Aguilera, Bartolomé Masó, Pedro Figueredo, and Ignacio Agramonte" were deeply involved in anti-Spanish conspiracies.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 36.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>104</sup> Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. 91.

<sup>105</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 36.

### *The First Cuban War for Independence*

On October 10, 1868, the *Grito de Yara* (Ten Years War) kicked off a revolutionary period in Cuba that called for complete independence from Spain. The rebellion quickly expanded from east to west; spreading first throughout the Oriente province, then west into Camagüey, and eventually reaching nearly halfway across the island into the east of the Las Villas province. By the early 1870s, the creole uprising had gained more than 40,000 supporters.<sup>106</sup>

From the outset, the U.S. took a dim view of the rebellion and pursued a two pronged policy approach with Cuba: oppose Cuban independence and support Spanish sovereignty. The U.S., unable to acquire Cuba from Spain, resigned itself to an alternative approach to Cuban annexation; Cuba could remain outside of the U.S. only as long as it remained a Spanish territory. This principle, which came to be known as "no transfer," would become the bedrock for U.S.-Cuban policy in the second half of the nineteenth century. The "no transfer" principal was based upon numerous corollary tenants, the chief of which was a U.S. commitment to defend the Spanish sovereignty against challengers, internal as well as external.<sup>107</sup> U.S. officials firmly believed that Cuban annexation was only a matter of time as long Cuba remained under Spanish rule and did not pass to any third party. Spanish sovereignty over the island played into U.S. interests, it was considered a temporary necessity for the anticipated eventual transfer of the island into U.S. hands.

The decay of Spanish control over Cuba was viewed by many in the United States as a final act of turmoil that would result in the annexation of Cuba. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*. 93.

<sup>107</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 37.

century the U.S. had maintained the status quo and defended the Spanish claim over the island from both internal and external challengers, if only for the eventual goal of securing the island. In 1823, Thomas Jefferson advised President James Monroe to "oppose, with all our means, the forcible interposition of any power, either as auxiliary, stipendiary, or under any other form or pretext, and most especially [Cuba's] transfer to any power, by conquest, cession or in any other way."<sup>108</sup> Two decades later, Secretary of State John Forsyth instructed the U.S. minister in Madrid to reassure the Spanish government that "in case of any attempt, from whatever quarter, to wrest from her this portion of her territory, she may securely depend upon the military and naval resources of the United States to aid her in preserving or recovering it."<sup>109</sup> In 1849, Secretary of State John M. Clary reiterated the U.S. policy on a non-Spanish Cuba: "The news of the cession of Cuba to any foreign power would, in the United States, be the instant signal for war."<sup>110</sup>

The notion that Spain would eventually cede Cuba to the United States was predicated on the maintenance of Spanish colonial rule. Until Spain itself proved incapable of governing the island, the U.S. would support Spanish sovereignty over the island as an effective alternative to annexation. Guaranteeing Cuba's "independence against all the world *except* Spain," Thomas Jefferson asserted, "would be nearly as

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<sup>108</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, October 24, 1823*. United States Congress, Senate.

<sup>109</sup> United States Congress, Senate, *The Miscellaneous Documents of the Senate of the United States for the First Session of the Forty-ninth Congress, 1885-'86*. Washington: G.P.O., 1886. 373.

<sup>110</sup> John Bassett Moore and Francis Wharton, *A Digest of International Law*. Washington: Govt. Print. Off., 1906. 452.

valuable to us as if it were our own.”<sup>111</sup> Later the U.S. minister to Spain, John Forsyth, would further assure the Spanish that the U.S. “interests required, as there was no prospect of [Cuba] passing into our hands, that it should belong to Spain.”<sup>112</sup>

Throughout the Ten Years War (1868-78), the Cuban insurgency appealed to the U.S. for belligerency status, but was consistently denied. President Ulysses S. Grant asserted that recognition of the Cuban provisional government would be, “impracticable and indefensible,” and that the granting of belligerent status would be, “unwise and premature.”<sup>113</sup> Secretary of State Hamilton Fish had serious concerns over the intellectual and moral quality the Cuban population of Indians, Africans, and Spaniards and doubted their ability to self-govern.<sup>114</sup> While Fish comprehended that Cuban independence from Spain was eventually inevitable, the proposition that the separation would result in Cuban sovereignty was quite a different matter, and was heavily resisted in Washington.

Because of these policies and assurances, the United States sustained its commitment to Spanish sovereignty throughout the Ten Years War. However, the U.S. urged the Spanish to consider reforms to appeal to the Cubans and to end the war with Spanish control over the island control. President Grant even offered to mediate an agreement between the creole insurgents and the Spanish in order to maintain colonial rule in exchange for reform.

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<sup>111</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Memoir, Correspondence, and Miscellanies from the Papers of T. Jefferson*. Charlottesville: F. Carr & Co, 1829. 367.

<sup>112</sup> *Correspondence between the United States, Spain, and France: Concerning Alleged Projects of Conquest and Annexation of the Island of Cuba*, London: Printed by Harrison and Son, 1853. 19.

<sup>113</sup> Ulysses S. Grant, *Seventh Annual Message to Congress*. December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1875.

<sup>114</sup> Nevins, Joseph Allan, *Hamilton Fish. The Inner History of the Grant Administration*. New York: Dodd, Mead &, 1937. 176-201.

Though the U.S. remained unwilling to consider annexation with the Cubans, it continued to try to negotiate with the Spanish for the acquisition of the island itself. Secretary Fish presumed that a prolonged and destructive war in Cuba would make Spain realize that the cost of keeping the island was too great and Spain then would part with the island. In a cabinet meeting in April 1869, Secretary of State Fish asserted that the Cuban revolt would expose the "madness and fatuity" of Spain's continued control over the island. Eventually, the revolt would produce "a condition of affairs, a state of feeling that would compel all the civilized nations to regard the Spanish rule as an international nuisance, which must be abated, when they would all be glad that we should interpose and regulate control of the Island."<sup>115</sup> Throughout the insurrection, the Grant administration made continuous inquiries and offers to purchase the island.

By the late 1870's, however, the Spanish were establishing military superiority and ending the war. During the closing period of the conflict, Spain discussed with the Cubans the terms of political reconciliation, promising reforms that would eventually act as the foundation of the peace settlement. Under the Pact of Zanjón, signed in February 1878, the Spanish committed to political reforms and economic concessions, with the insurgents agreeing to lay down their arms in return for amnesty.<sup>116</sup>

### *Integration into the U.S. Economy*

The Ten Years War marked a turning point for Cuba during the nineteenth century. After 1878, Spain worked to remedy some of the structural sources of Cuban disgruntlement, abolished the slave trade, and improved trade policies. In 1884 and 1886,

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<sup>115</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 38.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

the Spanish negotiated limited reciprocal trade agreements with the U.S. to eliminate the differential flag system and some of the most burdensome import duties and levies. The political reforms started promisingly, and early indications pointed to Spain actually making good on its commitment to institute colonial reforms.

Despite this, as some of the more pronounced contradictions of the colonial economy started to become more noticeable it gave rise to a new direction for the pursuit of Cuban sovereignty. The Ten Years War had a prolonged influence on Cuban internal development and international relations in the years that followed. The disruption of Cuban sugar production throughout the war had allowed sugar producers elsewhere to seize upon the lack of supply and expand. Sugar cane production had increased across Latin American and Asia, and beet sugar production had expanded in Europe, resulting in a robust challenge to the former Cuban monopoly of sugar on the world market.<sup>117</sup>

This challenge would lead to economic crisis in Cuba. With the sugar prices collapsing, the island saw its primary source of income dwindle, resulting in a deep depression. Seven of Cuba's largest trading corporations went under, the island's banks closed, and the business houses collapsed. In the first quarter of 1884, the Cuban business failures amounted to more than \$7 million.<sup>118</sup>

The freefall of the Cuban economy provided a ripe opportunity for U.S. economic expansion into the colonial economy. For about a hundred years, the Cuban economy had been structuring and developing itself around a close commercial relationship with the U.S., becoming increasingly dependent on U.S. markets, capital, and imports. This economic relationship had molded Cuban production strategies, swayed local goods and

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

consumption, and inevitably, the trajectory of Cuban politics. By 1878, the U.S. economic relation had shaped the Cuban economy to assume new forms and functions; Cuban producers were desperate for new sources of capital and credit, which were unavailable from Spanish banks or creditors. The Cubans then turned towards the U.S. with long term, permanent consequences. Credit transactions between the U.S. and Cuba increased in both volume and value throughout the 1880s, and helped many organizations stave off bankruptcy<sup>119</sup>

The prevention of bankruptcy was only temporary though, and the economic climate on the island did not improve. This led many of the Cuban planters to slide back into bankruptcy and lose their property to U.S. investors. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, through initial foreclosures and subsequent sales by planters in financial trouble, U.S. ownership of property in Cuba expanded. Despite many of the planters surviving the crisis during the 1880s, they paid for their survival at the cost of their traditional supremacy over the production process. The price of meeting their long-term financial commitments was increasing displacement and eventual dependency on the U.S. financial market. Across Cuba, the grip of the creole planter class over production and distribution slipped, foreshadowing the classes' eventual demise.

The province of Cienfuegos serves as a prime example of the transformation that was taking place in colonial sugar production. In 1883 U.S. Consul William P. Pierce reported that, "For the last ten or fifteen years, every sugar estate in the jurisdiction of Cienfuegos has either changed ownership by reason of debt or is now encumbered with debts to an amount approximating the value of the estate." Pierce specified that the

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

Cuban planter had borrowed heavily from U.S. investors despite exorbitant interest rates in order to “obtain more capital to preserve that which he had,” because the planters believed that “it was the only plank that [they] could hope to float through his troubles.” Pierce unsympathetically concluded that the “planter...has so far failed in his calculations and he may lose the title to his estate.”<sup>120</sup>

Pierce’s conclusions did not take long to come to fruition. Starting in early 1884, Edwin Atkins and Company based in Boston foreclosed on the Soledad estate owned by Juan Sarria, the Carlota plantation from the Ramón de la Torriente family, the Caledonia estate from the heirs of Diego Juláin Sánchez, the Guábairo property from Manuel Blanco, the Linomes farm from the Vilá family, and the Brazo estate from the Torre family. The impoverished Carlos Iznaga family sold Vega Vieja, Manaca, and leased Algoba to Atkins. Atkins then purchased the Santa Teresa plantation from Juan Pérez Galdos, Veguitas from José Porrúa, Vaquería from the Barrallaza family, the San Augustín estate from Tomás Terry, and the Rosario farm from Juan Sarria. The Atkins family was then able to secure long-term leases on San José, Viamones, and San Esteban.<sup>121</sup> These are just a handful of examples of an individual organization acquiring large swaths of land in Cuba, numerous companies and investors were expanding all throughout the island. Eaton Stafford and Company, a New York banking firm, acquired several sugar estates between Cienfuegos and Trinidad. U.S. merchant William Steward acquired the 4,500-acre La Carolina estate. Then, in 1892, the American Refining

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<sup>120</sup> William P. Pierce to John Davis, 20 August 1883, *Despatches[sic] from United States Consuls in Cienfuegos, 1876-1906*. Washington: National Archives, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, 1961.

<sup>121</sup> Edwin Farnsworth Atkins, *Sixty Years in Cuba: Reminiscences of Edwin F. Atkins*. Cambridge, Mass: Riverside Press, 1926. 30-137.

Company acquired the Trinidad Sugar Company. The E. & L. Ponvert brothers from Boston obtained the 4,000-acre Hormiguero estate in Palmira, then either bought out or foreclosed on the surround properties to increase their land.<sup>122</sup>

Throughout the last few decades of the nineteenth century, the U.S. expanded its presence in Cuba in all directions, from Havana and the provinces, to all sectors of the economy. U.S. citizens did not just invest in Cuba; they took up residence there, broadening their roles and importance. They arrived and managed sugar mills, oversaw the construction of railroads and mines, and farmed the land. Further, U.S. capital expanded into the local economies, which included sugar plantations, mines, cattle ranches, coffee estates, and commercial organizations. U.S. citizens began establishing trading companies and boarding houses to increase profits. U.S. citizens with specialized skills began flocking to the budding island, moneylenders, shippers, engineers, and machinists arrived to operate and service the industrial equipment that was now being imported regularly from the United States. The modern steam-powered mill machinery, steamboats, and railroads increased productivity and profits, further reinforcing the U.S. control over Cuban resources.

The strengthening of the relationship between the U.S. and Cuba linked the Cuban company closely with the U.S.'s. The economic crisis during the 1880's both exemplified and reinforced this linkage; as the world price of sugar sharply declined with the price of new competitors, the Cubans began seeking a secure place in the U.S. markets on as favorable terms as possible.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 40.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

The growth of the beet sugar industry in France, Austria, and Germany during the 1870s and 80s displaced the primary Cuban export from the European markets. In 1854, beet sugar accounted for only 14 percent of the total world production of sugar; however, by 1884 it grown to 53 percent of the international supply.<sup>124</sup> This left the U.S., by proximity and demand, as the only market with the capacity to absorb the now excess Cuban production.

During these years, the Cuban economy changed structurally due to the U.S. connection. Cuban production strategies, consumption patterns, and political alignments evolved to reflect the commercial ties with the U.S. The reorientation of trade away from Spain, and towards the U.S., exposed some of the contradictions in colonialism and confirmed that Cuban expansion could no longer be contained within the Spanish colonial structure. Though the Spanish government strained to accommodate the transformations that were taking place in Cuba, it became increasingly apparent that it was incapable of coping with the situation. Spain could not provide the capital, financing, shipping, and technology to continue Cuba's growing trade and production.

The implications of Spain's inability to provide were not ambiguous; the Spanish involvement in the Cuban economy was quickly diminishing due to the lack of material resources and technical knowledge that was required to continue driving the Cuban economy. Cuban economic growth had been swift, in some regions spectacular, and the production techniques and industrial innovations imported from the U.S. had transformed key sectors of the Cuban economy.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

Meanwhile, the U.S. investors continued to expand throughout the different areas of the Cuban economy. The major Cuban cities had U.S. companies operating utilities services. The U.S. companies control over the mineral resources of the Cubans also expanded. The Bethlehem Steel Corporation out of Pennsylvania created the Juraguá Iron Company Ltd. and the Ponupo Manganese Company, in Santiago de Cuba. The Spanish American Iron Company (Pennsylvania Steel Company) managed manganese and nickel mines throughout the island. The Sigua Iron Company seized control of the mining industry near El Caney. In 1892 alone, more than \$875,000 of iron ore was shipped to U.S. cities from the port of Santiago de Cuba.<sup>126</sup>

The U.S. takeover of Cuban utilities and industries was both a product and a foreshadowing of evolving colonial relationships. In ten years, the Cuban economy, revitalized with U.S. capital and dependent upon U.S. imports, had completely restructured itself around the U.S. economy. In the early 1880s, 94 percent of Cuba's total sugar production was exported directly to the United States. By the 1890s, U.S. companies investment in Cuba was tallied at around \$50 million (roughly \$1.3 billion in today's dollars), but in fact could have been much higher.<sup>127</sup> U.S. Consul Ramón noted in 1882 that:

De facto, Cuba is already inside the commercial union of the United States...The Island is now entirely dependent upon the market of the United States, in which to sell its sugar cane products; also the existence of the sugar plantations, the railroads used in transporting the products of the plantations in the shipping ports of the island, the export and import trades of Cuba based thereon, each including

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

hundreds of minor industries, such as the agricultural and mechanical trades, store houses, wharves, lighters, stevedores, brokers, clerks and bankers, real estate owners, and shopkeepers of all kinds, and holders of the public debt, are now all directly related to the market of the United States to the extent of 94 percent of their employment.<sup>128</sup>

The increasing reliance on U.S. markets in Cuban had two immediate consequences. The Cuban local governments demanded a higher level of autonomy and control over trade and commerce regulations. Second, Madrid was further pressured to negotiate a trade deal with the U.S. that provided favorable terms for the Cuban producers and consumers.

In 1891, Madrid gave in; the Foster-Cánovas agreement was signed by both countries, giving Cuba preferential access to U.S. markets in return for Spanish tariff concessions on U.S. imports. The effects of the agreement were dramatic; sugar production in Cuba expanded spectacularly from 632,000 tons in 1890, to 976,000 tons in 1892, and reached a historic peak of one million tons in 1894.<sup>129</sup>

The 1891 agreement only further encouraged U.S. investment in Cuban sugar production companies. In 1892, the American Refining Company acquired the Trinidad Sugar Company. In 1893, a conglomerate of New York sugar merchants created the Tuinucú Cane Sugar Company and established sugar operations in Sancti-Spíritus in central Colombia. A collection of New Jersey investors acquired control of the 3,000-acre Mapos estate in Sancti-Spíritus as well. By far the largest acquisition in land during this

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<sup>128</sup> Ramon O. Williams, "Sugar Interests of Cuba" *Reports from the Consuls of the United States*. Washington D.C.: G.P.O., 1888. 659.

<sup>129</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 42.

period occurred in 1893, when a New York firm, headed by Benjamin Perkins and Osgood Walsh, obtained control of the Constancia estate in Cienfuegos. The 60,000-acre plantation was the largest single sugar property in the world.<sup>130</sup>

The increases in reciprocal trade following the 1891 agreement went far beyond sugar. In 1893, Cuban imports from the United States reached nearly half of the total U.S. exports to Central and Latin America (\$24 million out of \$62 million). Cuban exports to the U.S. increased 46% from \$54 million in 1890 to \$79 million in 1893, twelve times larger than Cuban exports to Spain. Spain accounted for a relatively inconsequential \$10 million of Cuban imports and provided the island with only \$34 million of its import.<sup>131</sup>

### *The Second War for Independence*

By the 1890s, the discontent with colonialism had progressed into a dispute as much between Cubans as between Cubans and Spaniards. The lack of fairness or justice had a peculiar local quality. The oppression in Cuba was more internal than external, social inequality was the premise around which armed separatists rallied. Cubans had, and continued to, advocate for independence, but now they also spoke of war as a technique for redemption and social change. A new constituency formed around the idea of *Cuba Libre*, or free Cuba; the politically displaced, the socially deprived, and the economically desperate, for whom armed struggle appeared to be the only way to address grievances against the colonial regime and the local aristocracy. To this constituency, there were two prime obstacles blocked the way to independence: *peninsulares*, the aristocracy of the island, and the planters.

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

However, there was in fact in fact a third obstacle: the United States. So intensely did the *Cuba Libre* challenge the colonial system and so stubbornly did it declare the primacy of Cuban interests that it placed the separatists onto a collision course with the U.S. The *independentista* concept or plan was simple: Cuba was for Cubans, but nearly a century of U.S. policy had been dedicated to preventing just that. In essence, *Cuba Libre*, as it existed in the 1890s, would not be able to proceed without deeply effecting Cuba's political relations with Spain, class relations on the island, and the major economic relationship with the U.S. So intertwined were these three relationships that one could not be changed without deeply effecting the other two. Throwing off the colonial regime would result in nothing less than the complete overthrow of the structures that had supported the *peninsulares* rule, maintained the privilege and property of the creole elites, and allowed U.S. interests to participating in the local economy.

Political discontent was not the only aspect of colonial disaffection. In 1894, the U.S. passed Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act, which rescinded U.S. tariff concessions on Cuban exports and imposed a new 40 percent ad valorem duty on all sugar entering the U.S. This effectively dismantled the foundation of the earlier Foster-Cánovas reciprocal trade agreement between Washington and Madrid. The Spanish government responded quickly by canceling duty concessions on U.S. imports. An all-out trade war seemed to be brewing between the two nations.

The sudden disentanglement of Cuba from its most prosperous trading market in the U.S. had severe consequences. Cuba lost its preferential access to the only market in the region with the capacity and demand to absorb the growing sugar production and thereby isolate it from the uncertainties of the world markets. Spanish retaliatory tariffs

had then raised the possibility that the U.S. would respond by banning Cuban sugar altogether.

The effect on the Cuban economy was immediate and profound, profits and production plummeted. Sugar exports that had grown from \$64 million in 1893, steadily plummeted to \$45 million in 1895, and then to \$13 million a year later. Two years after the record one million ton sugar harvest in 1894, the sugar harvest was 225,000 tons.<sup>132</sup> Sugar producers not only faced a decline in profits and production, but also faced with the prospect of losing preferential access to the machines, equipment, and spare parts that had revolutionized the sugar industry during the midcentury. In Santiago de Cuba, new duties on material from the U.S. after 1894 drastically raised prices on all imports (table 1). Further, the loss of access to preferential U.S. markets also coincided with a drop in global sugar prices. As a result, the price of sugar fell to below two cents a pound for the first time in Cuban sugar production history.

**Table 1. Select Trade Prices, 1891-1894<sup>133</sup>**

Material	1891-	
	1893	1894
Iron Bridge Material	Free	\$48.00 per ton
Iron or Steel Rails	Free	\$10.00 per ton
Iron or Steel Tools	Free	\$25.00 per ton
Machinery	Free	\$15.00-\$60.00 per ton

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>133</sup> Pulaski F. Hayatt to Secretary of State, 12 October 1894, *Despatches[sic] from United States Consuls in Santiago De Cuba, 1799-1906*. Washington: National Archives, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, 1959.

The impact of the 1894 crisis reached far beyond the sugar system, no facet of Cuban society was insulated from it. Many of the merchants, traders, and retailers who had replaced their traditional commercial ties with Spanish suppliers with U.S. suppliers were now faced with ruin. Unemployment skyrocketed, the price of commodity goods increased, and prices soared. Particularly alarming was the exponential increase in foodstuffs; the government duties were passed directly onto consumers, causing prices skyrocketed to unprecedented levels. The Spanish government's restoration of colonial customs duties meant that the island would pay exponentially higher prices for staple food imports (table 2). As costs for basic goods increased, discretionary spending was sharply curtailed, decreasing the availability of higher-priced goods. This led to a drop in U.S. shipping; by October 1894, half of the U.S. steamers that had been traveling to Santiago de Cuba no longer serviced the port.<sup>134</sup>

**Select Foodstuff Prices per 100 kilos, 1893-1895<sup>135</sup>**

Foodstuff	1891-1893	1894	Percent Change
Wheat	\$0.30	\$3.95	1217%
Flour	\$1.00	\$4.75	375%
Corn	\$0.25	\$3.95	1480%
Meal	\$0.25	\$4.75	1800%

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ramon O. Williams to Edwin F. Uhl, 5 January 1895, *Despatches[sic] from United States Consuls in Santiago De Cuba, 1799-1906*. Washington: National Archives, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, 1959.

The islander's sense of economic deprivation served to highlight the growing recognition of their own political powerlessness. As Cuban producers and consumer's dependence on U.S. markets grew, they became more and more affected by the unexpected fluctuation in this market. The economic safety of Cuba became more and more dependent on forces over which nobody on the island had significant control. Throughout the economic turmoil of the 1890s, Cubans found themselves reduced to passive onlookers in economic drama involving the total meltdown of the Cuban economy, powerless to control the forces that governed their lives.

There was a mounting sense of acquaintance with such powerlessness, and the Cubans began to grow weary of it. *La Lucha* of Havana lamented that, "Here we are tired of protesting against exorbitant levies used to keep Yankee goods out of Cuba. In vain, too, have been our efforts against the imposition of prohibitive duties on American goods. We have not been heard in Madrid; because we are miserable and long suffering colonists, our clamors are undeserving of the attention of those who govern and misgovern."<sup>136</sup>

Questions of Cuba's status and the nature and necessity of its relationship with Spain came to the forefront of political debate and discussion on the island. A looming sense of uncertainty and uneasiness permeated throughout the island. In late 1894, the U.S. Consul in Santiago de Cuba reported that, "the residents and commercial interests here are protesting loud and strong against being thus summarily cut off from their natural commercial allies, and this action on the part of the home government adds

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<sup>136</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 45.

greatly to the feeling of unrest that pervades all classes.<sup>137</sup> The prosperity that the Cubans had seen for nearly half a century was precipitated by the expansion of trade, which had required the reduction of Spanish control. The success from the close economic ties to the United States made the prospect of returning to a regimen of strict Spanish exclusivity as inadmissible as it was inconceivable.

The separatist war, the "Grito de Baire," began in late February 1895, in the same manner that the revolts prior to it had: localized skirmishes broke out in the remote eastern mountains of Cuba, an area that appeared to be too distant to cause planters and politicians in eastern Cuba to worry. Nevertheless, by the summer the once local revolt had grown to a matter of national importance. The insurgent armies had marched out of the eastern mountains and down into the rich cattle-grazing estates of Camagüey in the summer, through the fertile sugar plantations of Matanzas and Havana in the Autumn, and deep into the lucrative tobacco fields of Pinar del Río by the onset of winter. In less than a year, the revolt had reached areas of Cuba that had never before been touched by the armed stirrings of nationality.<sup>138</sup>

The creole elite in Cuba held no delusions of safety after 1896. For decades the local property owners had clung to the Spanish colonial regime protection, but by the final years of the nineteenth century, Spain was practically defaulting on its *raison d'être* for still being in Cuba. The struggling colonial bourgeoisie contemplated their imminent destruction with deepening depression. Certain that the Spanish sovereignty over Cuba was doomed to fail, they were now ready to sacrifice the colonial relationship for any

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<sup>137</sup> Pulaski F. Hayatt to Secretary of State, 12 October 1894, *Despatches/Santiago De Cuba, 1799-1906*.

<sup>138</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 45.

source of protection and patronage. The bourgeoisie was now faced with what they had feared the most throughout the nineteenth century: a successful populist uprising and they needed help quickly.

U.S. intervention, many Cubans concluded, was the only hope of ending the insurrection and restoring the beleaguered social order. In June 1896, close to a hundred prominent planters, lawyers, merchants, and manufactures petitioned President Grover Cleveland to intervene in the conflict. "We cannot," the petitioners pleaded, "express our opinion openly and formally, for he who should dare, whilst living in Cuba, to protest against Spain, would, undoubtedly, be made a victim, both in his person and his property, to the most ferocious persecution at the hands of the government." The petitioners then explained that Spain had nothing further to offer Cuba, save economic destruction and ruin. The property owners did not find solace in the idea of independence either; they believed that if the Spanish rule threatened havoc, independence would lead to complete chaos.

With confidence in Spain nonexistent, and uncertain of their future under Cuban rule, property owners asked Washington to intercede in the conflict: "We would ask that the party responsible to us should be the United States. In them we have confidence, and in them only."<sup>139</sup> "The worst thing that could happen to Cuba," bemoaned one planter, "would be independence," adding that Cubans, "cannot bring a firm and stable government to the island."<sup>140</sup> In early 1879, a U.S. correspondent in Havana noted that planters, merchants, and businesspersons had concluded that Cuba was lost to Spain and

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

hoped for U.S. intervention, and eventual annexation.<sup>141</sup> Later in the year, William H. Calhoun, a special agent deployed to Cuba at the behest of the State department, reported on the local conditions, “Cuban planters and Spanish property holders are now satisfied that the island must soon slip from Spain’s grasp, and would welcome immediate American intervention.”<sup>142</sup>

From the outset of the uprising, President Cleveland’s administration had upheld the longstanding U.S. policy approaches to Cuba: oppose Cuban independence and support Spanish sovereignty. The reasoning behind the policy remained the same; Cuban independence could lead to political instability, social clashes, and economic anarchy. Further, the large number of people of color participating in the insurrection in positions of prominence, and in possession of arms added onto the U.S. apprehension. Secretary of State Richard B. Olney articulated that even the “most devoted friend of Cuba,” and the “most enthusiastic advocate for popular government,” could not look at the turmoil in Cuba “except with the gravest apprehension.” Secretary Olney further reasoned that:

There are only too strong reasons to fear that, once Spain were withdrawn from the island, the sole bond of union between the different factions of the insurgents would disappear; that a war of races would be precipitated, all the more sanguinary for the discipline and experience acquired during the insurrection, and that, even if there were to be a temporary peace, it could only be through the establishment of a white and black republic, which, even if agreeing at the outset upon a division of the island between them, would be enemies from the start, and

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<sup>141</sup> *New York World*, 22 March 1897. 1.

<sup>142</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 46.

would never rest until the one had been completely vanquished or subdued by the other.<sup>143</sup>

The United States once again stood by and supported Spanish efforts to maintain sovereignty over the islands. In 1895, President Cleveland demanded adherence to the U.S. neutrality laws and vigorously enforced them. Washington coordinated with Spain to prevent Cuban filibustering expeditions from forming and departing from the U.S. Between 1895 and 1896, the U.S. government intercepted more than half of the Cuban filibustering expeditions in the U.S. and proceeded to prosecute the offenders. Overall, about seventy expeditions tried to organize in the U.S. throughout the war, but only a third would reach the island.<sup>144</sup>

Despite the outward support for the Spanish, the U.S. had concluded that they were doomed to failure. Secretary Olney wrote in September of 1895, “While the insurrectionary forces to be dealt with are more formidable than ever before, the ability of Spain to cope with them has visibly and greatly decreased. She is straining every nerve to stamp out the insurrection within the next few months. For whatever obvious reason, because she is almost at the end of her resources.” Finally concluding: “Spain cannot possibly succeed.”<sup>145</sup>

As Spain tried, and failed to, subdue the insurrection running rampant in Cuba, the Cleveland administration became convinced that only sweeping reforms in Cuba, including autonomy, could actually bring the rebellion to end while preserving some

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<sup>143</sup> Richard B. Olney to Enrique Dupuy de Lome, 4 April 1896, *Spanish Diplomatic Correspondence and Documents 1896-1900*. Washington: G.P.O., 1905. 6-7.

<sup>144</sup> Lyman J. Gage. "Work of the Treasury Department," In *The American-Spanish War: A History by the War Leaders*. Norwich, Connecticut: C.C. Haskell, 1899. 367-91; John E. Wilkie. "The Secret Service in the War." In *The American-Spanish War: A History by the War Leaders*. 425-436.

<sup>145</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 47.

semblance of Spanish sovereignty. A political solution would be required to preserve even a modified colonial status quo. The U.S. support of Spanish efforts was rooted in the belief that Spain would eventually establish its authority over its rebelling colony, if not through immediate military action, then eventually through political concessions.

### Reconciliatory Efforts

The passing of a year would change everything though. In 1897, President William McKinley was elected leader of the U.S., and his Republican administration pursued colonial reforms with new vigor. The new Liberal ministry in Madrid under Praxedes Mateo Sagasta also ceased to oppose reforms. The Cuban insurrection has devolved into a war of attrition, one that Spain could not possibly hope to win. The Spanish army was constantly on the defensive, walled off in the major cities, while the Cuban army roamed the countryside on the offensive. Because of the war, the economies of both Spain and Cuba were on the brink of collapse.

In the autumn of 1897, due to U.S. pressure and deteriorating conditions, the Spanish Liberal ministry enacted a series of far reaching reforms. In October, Madrid appointed moderate general Ramòn Blanco as the governor of the island. Amnesty was issued to all rebels and political prisoners were released. In December, the Spanish announced a new constitution, which featured an autonomous, and installed a liberal creole government on January 1, 1898.

These colonial reforms had the opposite effect, dooming Spanish control over Cuba. For those who defended Spanish rule over Cuba the liberal reforms were tantamount to treason. The loyalists denounced the autonomous creole government, reasoning that it would leave the island open up to further subversion; the radicals in the

government would overrun the moderates, revolution would outpace reform, and autonomy would lead to independence. U.S. Consul Fitzhugh Lee reported in 1897 that, “All classes of the Spanish citizens are violently opposed to real or genuine autonomy because it would throw the control of the island into the hands of the Cubans and rather than that, they would prefer annexation to the United States or some form of an American protectorate.”<sup>146</sup>

By giving in to a liberal government, the Spanish had convinced the loyalists, *peninsulares*, and creoles that it had lost the will to defend its sovereignty over Cuba. Many postulated that the granting of autonomy was evidence that Spain was organizing to abandon the colony. The most astute among the *peninsulares* and creoles understood that the new Cuban government lacked the ability to wage war and the authority to make peace. The establishment of a government consisting of creole moderates dealt the final blows to conservative resolve in Cuba. Developments during late 1897 and early 1898 weakened the determination of the only forces in Cuba who, besides the insurgents, retained the loyalty and will to win.

The new Cuban government was vigorously denounced by mass meetings and rallies held across the island, swelling the number of appeals for U.S. intervention. In November 1897, the U.S. vice consul in Matanzas conveyed that, “nearly all Spaniards, businessmen, and property holders in this province wish and pray for annexation to the United States.”<sup>147</sup> Fitzhugh Lee’s reports from Havana in November 1897 corroborated this sentiment, “A large majority of the Spanish subjects who have commercial or business interests and own property here will not accept Autonomy, but prefer annexation

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<sup>146</sup> Fitzhugh Lee to William R. Day, 17 November 1897, *Despatches/Havana*.

<sup>147</sup> Alexander C. Brice to William R. Day, 17 November 1897, *Despatches/Havana*.

to the United States, rather than an independent republic or genuine autonomy under the Spanish flag.”<sup>148</sup>

Before the end of the year, the sentiment for U.S. intervention had become public in both countries. In December 1897, a statement was printed in Havana and signed by business people and property owners that claimed to represent 80 percent of the island’s wealth denouncing the autonomist regime.<sup>149</sup> At the same time, a meeting of property owners in Cienfuegos penned a resolution urging President McKinley to establish a protectorate over Cuba. In February 1899, the most powerful *peninsulares* created a formal commission to secure U.S. assistance. “The mother country cannot protect us,” they insisted, “Blanco will not protect us. If left to the insurgents our property is lost. Therefore, we want the United States to save us.”<sup>150</sup>

The same reforms that were too much for the loyalists proved to be too little for the separatists. The insurgents denounced the autonomy and rejected accommodating Spain on anything other than complete independence. General Máximo Gómez vowed, “It is the firm resolution of the army and people of Cuba who have shed so much blood in order to conquer their independence, not to falter in their just cause until triumph or death crowns their efforts.”<sup>151</sup> General Gómez reiterated the Cuban position two weeks later: “We no longer ask concessions... Even were Spain’s proposals bona fide, nothing could tempt us to treat with her. We are for liberty, not for Spanish reforms.”<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Fitzhugh Lee to William R. Day, 23 November 1897, *Despatches/Havana*.

<sup>149</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations* 48.

<sup>150</sup> *New York Herald*, 14 December 1897. 3.

<sup>151</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 48.

<sup>152</sup> *New York World*, 10 February 1898. 1; 6 March 1898. 3.

Rather than conciliating Cubans, the Spanish reforms actually made them more obstinate, and separatist morale soared. Provisional President Bartolomè Masò proudly proclaimed, “Spain’s offers of autonomy is a sign of her weakening.”<sup>153</sup> General Calixto Garcìa agreed: “I regard autonomy only as a sign of Spain’s weakening power and an indication that the end is not far off.”<sup>154</sup>

The reforms had failed; Spain had made the ultimate concession as a last resort to maintain its colonial empire, but its sovereignty over Cuba was ending. The realization lifted separatist morale to an all-time high, never before had it been clearer that they would triumph. Preparations for the last desperate battles around Spanish strongholds began to take place. In the east end of the island, General Calixto Garcìa laid siege to Santiago de Cuba, and in the west, the insurgents began to surround the larger provincial inland cities. General Máximo Gómez seemed as confident as ever when he discussed the preparations for the final assaults against Spanish strongholds; with “cannons and a great deal of dynamite,” Gómez projected that “we can expel them by fire and steel from the towns.”<sup>155</sup>

The United States also recognized that the failed reforms doomed any hope that Madrid would be able to salvage any semblance of control over Cuba. Secretary of State John Sherman lamented ruefully, “Spain will lose Cuba. That seems to be certain. She cannot continue the struggle.”<sup>156</sup> Assistant Secretary of State William R. Day publicly agreed, “The Spanish government seems unable to conquer the insurgents.” In a private memorandum, Day went even further:

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<sup>153</sup> *New York Journal*, 24 February 1898. 1.

<sup>154</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 49.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>156</sup> *New York World*, 10 February 1897. 1.

Today the strength of the Cubans [is] nearly double... and [they] occupy and control virtually all the territory outside the heavily garrisoned coast cities and a few interior towns. There are no active operations by the Spaniards...The eastern provinces are admittedly "Free Cuba." In view of these statements alone, it is now evident that Spain's struggle in Cuba has become absolutely hopeless... Spain is exhausted financially and physically, while the Cubans are stronger.<sup>157</sup>

With the receding tide of Spanish sovereignty, Washington was now faced with a Cuba which had been an anathema to U.S. policymakers since President Jefferson: a strong possibility of Cuban independence. The realities of the "no transfer" policy were now carried to their ugly conclusions. The United States could not permit Spain to transfer Cuba to another power, and it would not permit Spain to now cede sovereignty of the island to the Cubans.

U.S. diplomacy took on a new sense of interventionism, increasing the pressure on Spain. On 27 March, Washington delivered a three-part ultimatum to Madrid; an armistice must be instated until October 5, a halting of resettlement programs with permission to distribute U.S. relief supplies, and the utilization of President McKinley as a mediator to negotiate the end of the rebellion. In return, the U.S. promised that it would use "friendly offices to insurgents to accept the plan."<sup>158</sup>

After ten days of frantic negotiation and avoidance, Spain capitulated. On April 5, the Queen Regent proclaimed a unilateral cease-fire in Cuba, effective immediately and lasting until September. Five days later, Washington received Spain's formal acceptance

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<sup>157</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 49.

<sup>158</sup> William R. Day to Stewart L. Woodford, 26 March 1898, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, with the Annual Message of the President Transmitted to Congress December 5, 1898*. (FRUS). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1898. 704.

of the provisions of McKinley's 27 March ultimatum. On the same day in Havana, Governor General Blanco ordered all Spanish forces to cease operations.<sup>159</sup>

McKinley had scored a major victory save for one important fact; he had failed to make good on the U.S. part of the 27 March ultimatum: to use his “friendly offices to get the insurgents to accept the plan.” The collapse of the U.S. proposal was not due to Spanish equivocation, but to the U.S. inability to obtain Cuban agreement to the cease-fire. The Cuban insurgent leaders would in no way agree to a cease-fire, they argued that it would have calamitous consequences on the Cuban war effort, only benefitting Spain. The insurgent leaders ordered their forces to continue operations; General Calixto García encouraged his troops, “They have to be hit hard and at the head, day and night. In order to suspend hostilities, an agreement is necessary with our Government and this will have to be based on independence.” General Máximo Gómez declared, “More than ever, the war must continue in full force.”<sup>160</sup>

The Cuban denunciation of the Spanish cease-fire ended all U.S. hopes that the summer campaign of 1898 could be averted. Spain had only one condition to its agreement: that the Cubans observe the ceasefire. With the Cuban refusal, Spain had no choice but to recommence full field operations and march to an inevitable military defeat. The tables had been turned; no longer were the U.S. or Spain determining the fate of the island, the Cubans now firmly held the reins. Once Spain refused to transfer Cuba to the United States, and the Cubans rejected Spanish sovereignty in any form, the U.S. politicians were faced with two prospects: independence or intervention.

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<sup>159</sup> Ramón Blanco, “Suspension of Hostilities,” 10 April 1898. *FRUS* (1898). 750.

<sup>160</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 50.

### American Intervention

Cuban independence was not just a threat to the propriety of colonial rule or the property relations in the regime; it directly challenged the expectation of colonial succession. By ending Spanish sovereignty in 1898, the Cubans also endangered the U.S. claim to sovereignty. The U.S. viewed the transfer of Cuba into its hands as the next natural act of colonial continuity. The Cuban rebellions success put all of this into jeopardy. The U.S. was as frustrated with the Spanish inability to maintain control over the island as it was alarmed at the prospect of a Cuban victory. Neither repression nor concession were successful, causing Spanish sovereignty to quickly slip beyond recovery. If Washington did not act decisively, that sovereignty would also be lost to the U.S.

As a result, President William McKinley asked congress in April 1898 to authorize military intervention in Cuba: to declare war against Spain, and by consequence, the Cubans as well. President McKinley's war address provided few references of concrete foreign policy; it contained no mention of Cuban independence, no recognition of the Cuban provisional government, no sympathy for *Cuba Libre*, and did not even make a mention of territorial expansion. The purpose for U.S. forces in Cuba, McKinley emphasized, was the "forcible intervention...as a neutral to stop the war. The forcible intervention of the United States...involves...hostile constraint upon both the parties to the contest."<sup>161</sup> The U.S. planned to neutralize both the Spaniards and the Cubans, thereby establishing its own superiority over the island. McKinley administration opponents in Congress made efforts to officially recognize the provisional Cuban republic, and by mid-April, McKinley was forced to yield to the compromise. Article IV

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<sup>161</sup> William McKinley, "War Message." United States Congress. 1898. Speech.

of the congressional resolution, the Teller Amendment, stated that the United States, “hereby disclaims any disposition of intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction, or control over said island except for pacification thereof, and asserts its determination, when that is accomplished, to leave the government and control of the island to its people.”<sup>162</sup>

### *Independence in Name Only*

U.S. intervention in 1898 would radically alter the situation in Cuba: the Cuban war for independence was now a U.S. war of conquest. The Cuban revolt had been transformed into the “Spanish-American War,” nomenclature that was meant to ignore Cuban participation in the war and revealed the next series of changes. The U.S. forces would not land on the island as allies of the Cuban people or arbiters of their independence; they were going to war, as they always said they would, to prevent the transfer of Cuban sovereignty to a third party.

The exclusion of the Cuban people began almost as soon as the U.S. troops arrived. The U.S. commanders retrograded insurgent forces behind U.S. troops in order to serve in a support role, Cuban commander’s advice and opinions were ignored, and the negotiations for the surrender of Santiago de Cuba in July were conducted without any Cuban representation, with Cubans being prohibited to enter the city as part of the surrender agreement. General Calixto García was floored by the audacity of the Americans and asked U.S. Army Major General William R. Shafter to clarify the terms of the agreement. General Shafter informed General García that Santiago de Cuba was now considered part of the territory conquered by the United States and “part of the

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<sup>162</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 51.

Union.”<sup>163</sup> This was in spite of all the insurgent preparations and campaigns that had led up to the surrender. General Shafter publicly announced that the reason that Cubans were denied access was to the city was based on the fear that the insurgents would be unable to restrain themselves from attacking Spanish soldiers, abusing women, and plundering the city.<sup>164</sup>

Resentment and anger swept through the Cuban camps, General García condemned the notion that Santiago de Cuba was “part of the union:” “I will never accept that our country be considered conquered territory.”<sup>165</sup> General García was incensed that his Cuban soldiers had been labeled as unable to control themselves from raping and killing, stating to General Shafter: “Allow me to protest against even a shadow of such an idea, we are not savages who ignore the principles of civilized warfare. We respect too much our cause to stain it with barbarity and cowardice.”<sup>166</sup>

These issues revealed the fundamentally different situations that the U.S. and Cubans found themselves in 1898. By the end of the war the disconnect was widespread; insurgent commanders became non-cooperative and hostile, withdrawing from joint operations and breaking off contact with U.S. forces. General García turned in his resignation declaring that he could “no longer [be] disposed to continue obeying the orders and cooperating with the plans of the American Army.” He warned his fellow Cubans to avoid ceding any power to the “army of intervention.”<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> *New York Time*, 5 August 1898. 1.

<sup>164</sup> *Washington Evening Star*, 19 July 1898. 5.

<sup>165</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 52.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

The surrender negotiations of Santiago de Cuba in July were not the only negotiations conducted without Cuban participation. Both the peace protocol in August and the peace treaty conclusion in the autumn in Paris were held purely without Cuban influence. The Treaty of Paris formally passed sovereignty over to the U.S., beginning a three-year military occupation of the island. During these three years, an economic revival and reconstruction took place; as production and employment increased, the dilapidated Cuban economy began to emerge from its war paralysis. The U.S. brought sanitary programs to improve the living conditions, public-works programs to build highways, and transportation initiatives to stimulate Cuban revival.<sup>168</sup>

The U.S. occupation of the island also determined the manner of Cuba's future relations with the U.S. In January 1901, Secretary of State Elihu Root discussed four provisions that he deemed essential to U.S. interests: first, "in transferring the control of Cuba to the Government established under the new constitution the United States reserved and retains the right to intervention for the preservation of Cuban independence and the maintenance of a stable Government adequately protecting life, property and individual liberty." Second, "No government organized under the constitution shall be deemed to have authority to enter into any treaty or engagement with any foreign power which may tend to impair or interfere with the independence of Cuba." Secretary Root also asserted that to perform "such duties as may devolve upon her under the foregoing provisions and for her own defense" the U.S. "may acquire and hold the title to land, and maintain naval stations at certified points." Finally, Secretary Root concluded that, "all

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

the acts of the Military Government, and all rights acquired thereunder, shall be valid and maintained and protected.”<sup>169</sup>

These were the crucial features of the Platt Amendment, which was enacted into law by the U.S. Congress in February 1901. Though not a perfect substitution for annexation, it devolved Cuban sovereignty into an extension of the U.S. national system. Cuba was restricted from conducting foreign relations, specifically treaty authority, debt restrictions, and cession territory in order to prevent Cuba from becoming internationally entangled.<sup>170</sup>

News of the Platt Amendment caused widespread criticism and protests in Cuba. Anti-U.S. demonstrations took place across the island, with former insurgent military leaders menacingly alluding to the necessity of returning to the field of battle to defend their *independista* ideals. Veterans associations, city councils, and civic and community organizations cabled their outrage to U.S. authorities in Washington and Havana. The situation caused so much apprehension in the U.S. leadership that the Key West Naval Squadron was prompted to pay a courtesy call to the island.<sup>171</sup>

In April 1901, Cuban apprehensions were temporarily appeased when a Cuban commission visited Washington and received personal assurances from President McKinley that the Platt Amendment would never be utilized to restrict in any way Cuban sovereignty. Though still bitterly divided the commission decided to accept the Platt Amendment. The Platt Amendment met all the original U.S. demands. It restored the longstanding U.S. commercial and security interests in the area with the Teller

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<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>170</sup> *United States Statutes at Large*, Washington: U.S. G.P.O, 1937. 857-858.

<sup>171</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 53.

Amendment. The amendment served as a substitute for direct formal annexation, while transferring Cuban sovereignty into the U.S. national system, thereby preventing Cuban from being embroiled in international entanglements.

Cuba had finally secured its independence, in a manner of speaking, or at least the appearance of independence. In actuality, Cuba obtained self-government without self-determination, and independence without sovereignty. This was not what the Cuban rebels had set out to achieve when they launched a war in 1895, U.S. rule had merely been substituted for Spain's. The vast destruction of property during the rebellion and the U.S. occupation had opened a new and decisive phase in the U.S. economic permeation of Cuba. The total level of urban indebtedness was estimated at \$100 million, more than three-quarters of Cuba's declared property value of \$139 million. The debt was not limited to the urban sphere; rural real estate was in \$107 million in debt with a total property value of roughly \$185 million.<sup>172</sup>

U.S. investors and entrepreneurs flocked to the island after the war, searching for any nonoperational plantations, destroyed farmland, and abandoned agricultural estates to purchase and refurbish for profit. Opportunities abounded, one U.S. investor exclaimed, "Nowhere else in the world are there such chances for success for the man of moderate means, as well as for the capitalist, as Cuba offers today...I advise the capitalist to invest in Cuba, and seriously suggest to the young and ambitious man to go to Cuba and cast his fortune with those of the island." *Commercial and Financial World* described Cuba as "simply a poor man's paradise and a rich man's mecca."<sup>173</sup> In 1898, two former U.S. consular agents reported that, "Land, at this writing, can be bought in unlimited quantities

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<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

at from one-half to one-twentieth of its value before the insurrection. For the ordinarily prudent man with some capital, who is willing to work, the island has opportunities for success and wealth through safe and profitable investments, the equal of which can be found in no other state.”<sup>174</sup>

Speculators looked upon Cuba in wonder of the possibilities: Cuba was the new frontier. The island was described as a “virgin land,” and a “new California.”<sup>175</sup> Isaac Ford remarked that, “Americans...have on their southern seaboard another California.”<sup>176</sup> General Leonard Wood, military governor of Cuba, agreed, describing the island as “a brand new economy.”<sup>177</sup> The cheap land interested miners, farmers, and ranchers, the same kind of people that were enticed by the first frontier. The U.S. gradually accepted control as a substitute for possession, arranged it thus in the 1901 Cuban constitution, and later a formal treaty. Excited with the prospect of a new frontier, thousands of U.S. opportunists traveled to the tropics. Though consisting of a wide variety of citizens, most were farmers and colonists, enticed by the availability of land. They would end up cultivating citrus fruit plantations, pineapple farms, and vegetables to export back to the U.S. markets. The American influence was undeniable, as immigrants swelled, towns with peculiar names began sprouting up: McKinley, Ocean Beach, Riverside, Garden City, Palm City, Omaja, and Bartle.<sup>178</sup>

Powerful capitalists and corporations also flocked to the island, displacing Cubans and acquiring tens of thousands of acres of Cuban plantations and farmlands that had

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>176</sup> Isaac Nelson Ford, *Tropical America*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1893. 279.

<sup>177</sup> Edwin Marshall, “A Talk with General Wood.” In *The Outlook*. Vol. 68. New York: Outlook Company, 1901. 670.

<sup>178</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 54.

fallen into disrepair or default. Control by U.S. companies over the sugar production on the island greatly expanded during the military occupation. In 1899, less than a year after the occupation began, R. B. Hawley formed the Cuban-American Sugar Company and acquired the 7,000-acre Tinguaro estate in Matanzas, the Mercidatas mill in Pinar del Río, and organized the Chaparra sugar mill on 70,000 acres of land acquired in Puerto Padre. A year later, a group of U.S. investors purchased the 80,000-acre Francisco estate in the Southern Camagüey province. The Nipe Bay Company, a subsidiary of the United Fruit Company, acquired 40,000 acres of land in Puerto Padre in 1901. The United Fruit Company would then purchase 200,000-acres near Banes. Ten years after the struggle for independence, the Cubans were not as free as they thought; U.S. corporations controlled almost the entire Oriente north coast, from Baracoa to Manatí.<sup>179</sup> Nearly 500,000 acres were distributed among roughly 2,000 U.S. mining operations during the occupation as well.<sup>180</sup>

During the occupation, U.S. investors also advanced into Cuba's transportation systems. The Cuba Company constructed the Cuban railway across the islands, purchasing 50,000 acres of land, and the right of way for 350 miles of track in the process. The Santiago Railroad Company, the Cuba Railway, the Cuban Easter Railway, and the Guantánamo Railroad were all prominent rail lines owned by U.S. investors. The U.S. also dominated electric transportation; the Havana Electric Railway Company, a

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>180</sup> Lisandro Perez. "Iron Mining and Socio-Demographic Change in Eastern Cuba, 1884–1940." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 14 (1982): 390-95.

New Jersey corporation, gained control of the capital's electric transportation systems, with the Havana Central linking the capital to Marianao and Mariel.<sup>181</sup>

U.S. corporations also moved to take over the utilities on the Island. The Spanish American Light and Power Company of New York was responsible for providing gas to the principal Cuban cities. Havana Central and Havana Electric, both U.S. based corporations, controlled electricity. Contractors from the U.S. set up shop in Havana to compete for lucrative government contracts. The Havana Subway Company was granted monopoly rights to install underground cables and electrical wires. U.S. capital controlled the telephone industry and the water industry as well.<sup>182</sup>

The government contractors, employing U.S. laborers, constructed the public buildings, roads, and bridges of the early republic. Engineering companies constructed the ports in major coastal cities such as Havana. The T.L. Huston Contracting Company acquired the contract to dredge the major ports and construct wharves in Havana and Cuba. The Huston Company also won the contract to build the highway connecting Havana to the Pinar del Río. A subsidiary of the contracting Company was granted the contract to construct the new Havana sewer systems. The Snare and Triest Company of New York built steel bridges, drawbridges, and fixed bridges for railroads, lighthouse along the coast, and a power plant providing electricity to Havana. The Tropical Engineering and Construction Company won the government contract to construct the Havana water supply system and multiple power plants in Matanzas.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Leonard, *United States-Latin America Relations*. 55.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

During the occupation, roughly three-quarters of the cattle ranches with an estimated value of \$30 million fell into U.S. investor's hands. Sisal farms were bought out by International Harvester, banana farms by United Fruit, Standard Fruit, and DeGeorgio Fruit. The Harris Brothers Company supplied the new government with stationery, officer supplies, and paper. The Havana Advertising Company held all the most lucrative advertising contracts and billboards.<sup>184</sup> Though many of the companies operated under Cuban affiliated names, there was no doubt where the capital and direction flowed from.

In 1903, Cuba and the U.S. negotiated three treaties that affirmed over fifty years of relations and ushered in a new era of relations. The Permanent Treaty of 1903 formally and permanently bound the Platt Amendment. The Amendment, which was originally just an appendix to the Cuban Constitution of 1901, was made legally binding under international law. The treaty assured that the U.S. would have an established presence in Cuban internal affairs, serving as the basis of relations between the two countries until 1934.

The U.S. and Cuba also signed a Reciprocity Treaty. This treaty invigorated economic ties by creating a tariff schedule that granted Cuban agricultural exports a 20 percent reduction in duties. In return, Cuba granted the U.S. a 20 percent concession on most imports, with increases to 24, 30, and 40 percent in some specific categories. Most of the imports in the 20 percent category were previously heavily consumed on the island, and were not expected to affect trade. The higher percentage concessions were on goods that had European competition, pricing the European goods out of the market.

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<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

The economic treaty accelerated the integration of the Cuban economy into the U.S.'s. With the elimination of the Spanish colonial trade restrictions, the Cuban economy was immediately opened up to unfettered U.S. investment. This discouraged Cuban economic diversification, and increased reliance on foreign goods, specifically foodstuffs. Preferential access to U.S. markets furthered Cuban dependency on sugar exports and increased the U.S. control over the industry. By 1902, U.S. entrepreneurs owned 55 of the 223 sugar mills, amounting to 40 percent of the islands sugar production. By the mid-1920s, U.S. corporations owned 41 of the 184 mills, and 63 percent of the total production.<sup>185</sup>

Finally, the two countries signed a treaty that established a U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay. This treaty was part of the clause in the Platt Amendment where Cuba would lease the U.S. land in Bahía Honda and Guantánamo Bay. The U.S. would eventually exchange the leasing rights to Bahía Honda for enlarged territory in Guantánamo.

The three treaties between the U.S. and Cuba in 1903 merged and strengthened the political, economic, and strategic position of the U.S. in Cuba and the Caribbean region. Prudent negotiations and military involvement had allowed the U.S., much like it had in Chile, to interject itself into Latin American politics and emerge stronger than before. Washington had effectively cut off points of entry and exit into the Caribbean. By 1903, the Caribbean had become the American Mediterranean, with the U.S. holding the proverbial straits of Gibraltar in Florida and Cuba.

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<sup>185</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, *Cuban Sugar Sales: Testimony Taken By Committee on Relations with Cuba*. 57<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session. Washington D.C.: GPO, 1902. 332, 339-41.

## The Roosevelt Corollary

By 1904, with the expulsion of the Spanish from Cuba, the annexation of Puerto Rico, the binding of Cuba with the 1903 treaties, and the creation of a protectorate in Panama, the United States had clearly established its hegemony in the Central America and the Caribbean. The next logical step was for the U.S. to assume the task of the preserving the stability in the region, as it had now become vital to American security. The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe doctrine would provide the vindication for the U.S. assuming the role as the international police officer. Though the Corollary was hardly in line with the principals of 1823, it was founded with important precursors in mind. President Polk's message on April 29, 1848, questioned the Yucatan's right to transfer its sovereignty to a European power, the McLane-Ocampo agreements in 1859 permitted the U.S. to protect its citizens and their property in Mexico, and most recently the U.S. government takeover of Cuba.

However, in 1904, there was admittedly less precedent for intervention to end financial mayhem. Only once in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had the U.S. considered such action; on February 7, 1880, a delinquent Venezuela, fearing retaliatory action from France, proposed to deliver monthly revenues to Washington for distribution to foreign creditors.<sup>186</sup> On July 23, 1881, Secretary Blaine warned the French that under certain conditions, the U.S. would be obliged to administer Venezuela's customs house, but nothing ever came of the threat.

It was the Venezuelan imbroglio during 1902-1903 that most shaped the Roosevelt Corollary. The reaction from within the U.S. to the Anglo-German blockade

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<sup>186</sup> Richard William Leopold, *The Growth of American Foreign Policy: A History*. New York: Knopf, 1962. 234.

convinced President Roosevelt that European coercion of American republic's debt should be prevented, but his sense of justice told him that the legitimate claims to the debt would have to be addressed. On February 22, 1904, a court in Hague decided that force was a legitimate method to guarantee repayment of debts. This persuaded President Roosevelt that the temptation to declare war and seize assets to repay debt was too great and must be done away with.<sup>187</sup>

Thus, on December 6, 1904, after a triumph in the polls President Roosevelt issued a message stating that the U.S. did not seek additional lands in the Americas. However, "chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of wrongdoing and impotence, to the exercise of international police power."<sup>188</sup> The U.S. would interject itself into disputes between European countries and Latin American Countries, enforcing the legitimate claims, rather than the Europeans pressing their claims directly.

The Roosevelt Corollary, just like the Monroe Doctrine, was a profound statement by the executive branch. When President Roosevelt presented the Corollary in 1904, the legislature did not endorse it, just as it had not endorsed the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. President Roosevelt did not meet opposition until he endeavored to translate the theory into reality. On January 20, 1905, Minister Thomas C. Dawson signed a protocol in Santa

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>188</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, "Theodore Roosevelt's Annual Message to Congress, December 6, 1904" Washington D.C. Speech.

Domino providing a U.S. guarantee that the territorial integrity of the Dominican Republic would remain intact, and that the U.S. would control over Dominican customs houses, including payment of all Dominican debts from the revenues collected.<sup>189</sup> When the U.S. Senate got wind of this agreement, it erupted in righteous indignation and injured pride. The Panama affair had already angered the Senate, and many members considered the agreement an abridgment of senatorial prerogatives.

In order to assuage fears of presidential powers run amok, Minister Dawson was ordered to change the terms of the agreement. On February 7, 1905, the agreement's *guarantee* of territorial integrity was altered to promise to *respect it*, with references to the Monroe Doctrine being inserted into the preamble of the agreement. The renovated agreement reached the Senate on February 15, but no vote was taken before the Senate adjourned for summer recess. President Roosevelt called the Senate back into session, but was unable to overcome opposition and secure the necessary two-thirds majority.<sup>190</sup>

President Roosevelt would not give up on his corollary however. Convinced that he had correctly diagnosed the problems with the Dominican body politic, he was determined to solve the problem in a different way. If an executive agreement garnered too great an outcry and a treaty could not be passed, then he would initiate a customs control via the enforcement of a *modus vivendi*. President Roosevelt was successful, and on April 1, 1905, a temporary arrangement was established that included the major points of the failed treaty.

By April 1905, the American hegemony in the Caribbean was an undeniable fact; Puerto Rico and the Canal Zone had been annexed, Guantánamo Bay was a permanent

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<sup>189</sup> Leopold, *The Growth of American Foreign Policy*. 235.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

American naval base, the authority to intervene in both Cuba and Panama was secured, and the administration of the Dominican customs houses was beginning. The U.S. acquired the jurisdiction to build, operate, and defend a canal that would soon connect the Pacific and Atlantic, increasing American power and security on the seas. The Monroe Doctrine had been greatly expanded and flaunted. The Europeans had been denied a casus belli on American republics via debts and the English were transferring the bulk of their navy from the Caribbean to the North Sea to counteract the German buildup.<sup>191</sup> The United States military and economic supremacy in the Americas was undisputed.

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<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

## The Good Neighbor Policy

In the thirty years after the Roosevelt Corollary, the U.S. had deeply involved itself in the economic and political life of the Latin American nations. In the 1920s, the U.S. occupied the Dominican Republic and Haiti militarily, with Haiti-American officials regulating and directing the governments vital activities. American marines kept a minority government in power in Nicaragua, and in Cuba, a personal representative of the president was directing efforts to ease electoral disputes and manage an economic crisis.<sup>192</sup> The goal of the U.S. military intervention was clear: protection the commercial interests of American businesses above all else. By the 1930s, the Latin Americans grew wary of constant threat of U.S. intervention and hostilities began to fester.

Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized this resentment as he ascended to the Presidency in 1933. In his March inaugural address FDR announced that: "In the field of World policy, I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor, the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others, the neighbor who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a World of neighbors."<sup>193</sup> Roosevelt sought to repair the image of the U.S. by reigning in the blatant protectionism of U.S. foreign investment, and restore U.S.-Latin relations in order to focus on dealing with the Great Depression.

Roosevelt's strategy centered around three main ideas: abandoning the constant military and economic intervention, reverting to just and objective foreign policy, ushering in a new era of Pan Americanism. However, the rhetoric would prove to be

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<sup>192</sup> Dana Gardner Munro, "The Transition from Intervention to the Good Neighbor Policy." In *The United States and the Caribbean Republics, 1921-1933*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974. 371.

<sup>193</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Inaugural Address," March 4, 1933.

stronger than reality, and created an illusion of hemispheric unity more than anything else. For the U.S. psyche, the good neighbor policy served as a way to confess the sins of the past, have them wiped away, and pretend that the growing power and history of U.S. intervention would be overlooked in Latin America.

The U.S., in actuality, had been modifying its Latin American policy and strategy prior to the election of FDR. The Herbert Hoover administration had withdrawn U.S. troops from Nicaragua in January 1933, and scheduled the withdrawal of forces from Haiti in 1934. Nonetheless, FDR was the main proponent and most outspoken supporter of the policy. FDR accelerated the timeline for military withdraw and negotiated a treaty with Cuba that repealed the Platt Amendment. However, the U.S. would still maintain its base in Guantánamo Bay.

To give his inaugural address some substance FDR pledge nonintervention at the inter-American conference in Montevideo, Uruguay, in December 1933. In eyes of Latin Americans, the test of neighborliness would be the U.S. refraining from intervention, but it was considered quite a victory to get the U.S. signature on the clause that read: "No state has the right to intervene in the internal affairs of another."<sup>194</sup> Secretary of State Cordell Hull, however, was not so eager to give up this power, and signed a proviso stating that the U.S. would continue to reserve the right to intervene according to the principles of international law. Finally, in 1936, at the Buenos Aires conference, the U.S. signed on without reservation a promise to refrain from intervening "directly or indirectly

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<sup>194</sup> Cordell Hull, *Report of the Delegates of the United States of America to the Seventh International Conference of American States, Montevideo, Uruguay, December 3-26, 1933*. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1934.

and for whatever reason, in the internal and external affairs of any other parties."<sup>195</sup>

Although this did not create a united Western Hemisphere, the U.S. cooperation at least created a mood of hemispheric cooperation that the U.S. would ride into WWII.<sup>196</sup>

There was more to the Good Neighbor Policy than the U.S. altered the way it handled border disputes and peacekeeping procedures, its major impact was to propagate the myth of a hemisphere of equals, united with a common view of the world. Although the policy was a welcomed change, it would not erase the decades of military intervention and economic exploitation. The Good Neighbor Policy helped build the Western Hemisphere Idea, but the rhetoric alone would not sustain it.

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<sup>195</sup> Cordell Hull, *Report of the Delegation of the United States of America to the Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace*. Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1937.

<sup>196</sup> Harold Molineau, *U.S. Policy toward Latin America: From Regionalism to Globalism*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1986. 23.

## Colombian Counter-Insurgency

The most recent significant shift in U.S. foreign policy in Latin America occurred after terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in 2001. This pivot is best explained through a careful examination of U.S. involvement in Colombia in the post 9/11 period. However, to understand the significance of this pivot it is important to be familiar with the 20th century Colombian history and its relations with the U.S.

### *La Violencia: Setting the Stage for U.S. Intervention*

Since the midpoint of the nineteenth century, the Conservative and Liberal parties had dominated Colombian politics. Historically, the Conservative Party had represented the large landholding oligarchy and the Catholic Church, while the Liberal Party had aligned with the commercial sector and viewed the church as a “backwards social institution that prevented economic modernization.”<sup>197</sup> Though their specific policy agendas had aligned for a number of years, the rise of Jorge Gaitán in the Liberal party during the 1940s reoriented the party with its left wing base. Gaitán brought an egalitarian agenda to the table, advocating for progressive reform to the labor laws and land laws.<sup>198</sup> Gaitán’s popularity was established through his appeals to the poor and dispossessed in Colombia. Gaitán tried to make “capitalism socially responsible, not abolish it.”<sup>199</sup>

Gaitán took the reins of the Liberal Party in 1947, and was a heavy favorite to win the 1950 presidential elections. However, Gaitán’s populist popularity, criticism of

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<sup>197</sup> Doug Stokes, *America's Other War: Terrorizing Colombia*. London: Zed Books, 2004. 67.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>199</sup> Jenny Pearce, *Colombia, inside the Labyrinth*. London: Latin America Bureau (Research and Action), 1990. 45.

unequal distribution of goods and services, made Colombia's ruling class, largely aligned with the Conservative Party, increasingly worried and aggressive. In 1984 in Colombia's capital, Bogotá, Gaitán was assassinated. His death ended the populist challenge of the oligarchic authority that gripped Colombia, and dashed the hopes of the poor majority who he had championed. His death "ruptured the breakwaters holding back years of discontent," and was followed by riots and an uprising in Bogotá that would destroy traditional symbols of oligarchic power and privilege.<sup>200</sup> The Colombian military quickly put down the uprising, but the spark had lit a great fire in the hearts of the Colombian people, and a large-scale civil war known as *la violencia* erupted.

The U.S. interpreted the instability caused by the assassination and the subsequent civil war as dangerously threatening U.S. interests. The U.S. sought to stabilize the Colombian political system, which, because of two Colombian government collapses in 1948-1949, was on the verge of complete disintegration.<sup>201</sup> The proximity of Colombia to the Panama Canal marked the Colombian crisis as a "vital concern to the United States," according to the U.S. State Department.<sup>202</sup> The U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Colonel Edward Lansdale, argued for aggressive engagement on the part of the U.S. to protect its access to the canal: "During the expected two years remaining in the Presidency of Lleras Camarago, there is a real opportunity for the U.S. to undertake assistance to Colombia to correct the situation of political insurrection which reportedly has caused a

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<sup>200</sup> *Colombia Besieged: Political Violence and State Responsibility*, Washington, D.C.: Washington Office on Latin America, 1989. 39.

<sup>201</sup> Stephen J. Randall, *Colombia and the United States: Hegemony and Interdependence*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992. 196.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

quarter-million deaths and displaced over a million and a half people since 1948 in this area neighboring a place so vital to our own national security as the Canal Zone.”<sup>203</sup>

The U.S. also maintained significant economic interests in Colombia. In 1959, Colombia was among the largest markets in South America for U.S. direct foreign investment (FDI). Of the \$339 million of U.S. FDI in Colombia, \$225 million was in oil, followed by manufacturing, public utilities, and general trade.<sup>204</sup> This enhanced the economic importance of Colombia to the U.S., as access to oil is not merely manufactured good that can be easily replaced.

The civil war lasted nearly a decade and pitted Conservative and Liberal peasants against one another, with the death toll of the war estimated to be upwards of 200,000. Peace was secured in 1958, through the formation of a National Front rotational government, under which the Liberal and Conservative parties agreed to trade off the presidency every four years.<sup>205</sup>

The majority of the armed groups, referred to pejoratively as bandoleros, surrendered to the Government and were thereby granted amnesty. One of the key leaders, Manuel Marulanda, began supporting the Communist Party after feeling alienated by both the Conservative and Liberal parties. Marulanda would later go on to form the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army (FARC), the military wing of the Colombian Communist Party. The FARC, bolstered by government sponsored dispossession peasant lands, would become the most armed and dangerous

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<sup>203</sup> Stokes, *America's Other War*. 68.

<sup>204</sup> Randall, *Colombia and the United States*. 241.

<sup>205</sup> Stokes, *America's Other War*. 68.

guerilla movement in South American history, representing the spread of communist sentiments into Latin America.

### U.S. Counter-Insurgency Policy

During the Cold War, the U.S. intervened in more states in Latin American than any other continent, utilizing counter-insurgency (CI) as the primary tactic of coercion.<sup>206</sup> U.S. strategists used CI, in accordance with President Eisenhower's Domino theory, to internally police U.S.-backed dictatorships and silence left wing insurgencies to prevent Soviet expansionism.<sup>207</sup> CI was formally recognized as a tool of U.S. statecraft when President Kennedy signed the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act into law, sending U.S. aid to developing states in order to increase bilateral military connections and encourage capitalist economic development.

Walt Rostow, one of President Kennedy's National Security Advisors, is responsible for developing the modernization theory as the theoretical element of U.S.-sponsored CI. The modernization theory posited that the developmental process of Third World societies occurred in stages that would eventually result in industrial capitalism. This evolution was most vulnerable to communist revolution as the economy began to "take off" through modernization. Rostow posited that internal security arrangements provided by the U.S. were a necessity in preventing any such revolutions during the take off period.<sup>208</sup> David Bell, the director of the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), concurred, arguing that a "general theory of economic development," required a

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<sup>206</sup> Stokes, *America's Other War*. 67.

<sup>207</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, "The President's News Conference." April 7, 1954.

<sup>208</sup> W. W. Rostow, "The Stages of Economic Growth." *The Economic History Review* 12, no. 1 (1959). 7.

“minimum degree of personal security,” with the Cuban revolution bring to light the fact that “we must often make special adaptations to achieve this, [as] guerrilla warfare and terrorism [are] obstacles to the peaceful concentration on the problem of economic growth.”<sup>209</sup>

Kennedy’s Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 devoted the U.S. to improving “the ability of friendly countries and international organizations to deter or, if necessary, defeat [Communist] aggression.” The U.S. sought to achieve this via “arrangements for individual and collective security,” and by assisting “friendly countries to maintain internal security...essential to their more rapid social, economic, and political progress.”<sup>210</sup> The U.S. CI doctrine was founded to fight a war on communist expansion on ideological, political, and military fronts. The internal security role of the recipient nation’s military was to police their populations, thereby preventing indigenous communist rebels from challenging the status quo.

As the past century and a half had been a time of constant turmoil and revolution, the internally focused Latin-American states committed fully to the U.S. CI strategy and formed the core of U.S. strategy in Latin America throughout the Cold War. U.S. support included security assistance, the legitimization of repressive regimes, and the training of Latin American military personnel at U.S. training academies. The U.S. Army established the School of the Americas (SOA), which ended up training over 40,000 members of various Latin American militaries by the end of the Cold War (the school has since been renamed the Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), and

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<sup>209</sup> Stokes, *America's Other War*. 58.

<sup>210</sup> US Congress, *The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961*. Chapter 22, Title 32, Section 501.

continues to train Latin American military members to this day).<sup>211</sup> In 1947, Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson explained the reasoning behind setting up these academies and what benefits would flow from them:

[T]he provision of United States Equipment is the keystone since United States methods of training and organization must inevitably follow its adoption along with far-reaching concomitant benefits of permanent United States military missions and the continued flow of Latin American officers through our service schools. Thus will our ideals and way of life be nurtured in Latin America, to the eventual exclusion of totalitarian and other foreign ideologies?<sup>212</sup>

The U.S. policy planning process recognized strong, authoritarian states as the best supporter of U.S. interests in Latin America. These authoritarian states often became despotic, carrying out massive violations of human rights, putting the U.S. at odds with its publicly declared objective of preventing human rights abuses. The U.S. was not just guilty of supporting the states that committed these violations by association, practices had been developed and passed on from U.S. CI doctrine. The U.S.-sponsored CI doctrine advocated for not only the confronting of armed insurgencies, but also the policing and disciplining of unarmed civilians. Though the Colombian government was repressive prior to the U.S. CI aid, the intervention further strengthened and legitimized the strategy of state terrorism in the name of anti-communism.

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<sup>211</sup> Stokes, *America's Other War*. 58.

<sup>212</sup> Michael McClintock, *The American Connection*. London: Zed Books, 1985. 7-8.

### CI Strategy in Practice

U.S. Special Forces took the leading role in training indigenous military and paramilitary forces in CI tactics. “The Special Action Force [U.S. Special Forces]... provides advisory personnel and mobile training teams to advise, train and provide operational assistance for paramilitary forces.”<sup>213</sup> A 1962 special warfare field manual described the training program for the U.S.’s allied forces; training encompassed, “guerrilla warfare, propaganda, subversion, intelligence and counter-intelligence, terrorist activities, civic action, and conventional combat operations.”<sup>214</sup> *Counter-Insurgency Operations*, a Special Forces manual that was used to teach foreign militaries on how to fight asymmetrical warfare against insurgents, stressed the “maintenance of the initiative by prompt offensive actions, economy of force and employment of suitably organized and trained troops and police in all-weather field operations utilizing guerrilla/terrorist tactics.” The manual broke down CI warfare into eight distinct categories; “a) Meeting engagements; b) Attacks; c) Defense; d) Ambushes... ; e) Raids; f) Pursuit actions; g) Interception actions; h) Terror Operations.”<sup>215</sup>

Psychological warfare against the recipient’s population was not just tolerated, the U.S. Army had a manual for it, stating that psychological operations were a central component in the CI arsenal. The *Psychological Operations* manual specifically stated, “although most past experiences of the military in the conduct of propaganda campaigns has been limited to periods of general war or limited war, the realities of the Cold War

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<sup>213</sup> *US Army Counterinsurgency Force*, FM31-22. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 1963. 85.

<sup>214</sup> *Concepts for US Army Counterinsurgency Activities*, Fort Bragg, N.C.: U.S. Army Special Warfare School, 1962.

<sup>215</sup> Michael McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counterterrorism, 1940-1990*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1992. 105-7.

indicate that military psychological operations has a major and essential mission to fulfill in activities not involving full-scale hostilities.” The manual explicitly declared that the primary target “for tactical psychological operations is the local civilian population.” If all other methods failed, the manual advocated the targeting of civilians to instill terror:

Civilians in the operational area may be supporting their own government or collaborating with an enemy occupation force. Themes and appeals disseminated to this group will vary accordingly, but the psychological objectives will be the same as those for the enemy military. An isolation program designed to instill doubt and fear may be carried out ... If these programs fail, it may become necessary to take more aggressive action in the form of harsh treatment or even abductions. The abduction and harsh treatment of key enemy civilians can weaken the collaborators’ belief in the strength and power of their military forces.<sup>216</sup>

Another military manual on handling sources also advocated the harsh treatment of civilians. *Handling Sources* was used by U.S. Special Forces to teach recipient nations how to cultivate government informants from within insurgent operations. The manual encouraged techniques to gain formation such as the targeting of family members, threats and use of physical violence. The CI operation should “cause the arrest of the “employee’s parents, imprison the employee or give him a beating as part of the placement plan of said employee in the guerrilla organization.”<sup>217</sup>

The use of torture and intimidation was the cornerstone of U.S. CI operations. Recipient militaries received expert training via U.S. Special Forces in the use of

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<sup>216</sup> *Psychological Operations*, FM33-5. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 1962. 122, 125, 115-16.

<sup>217</sup> *Manejo de Fuente*, Department of Defense, U.S. Army School of the Americas. 65, 66, 26.

terrorism, and “abduction and harsh treatment” in order to make civilian dissent extremely unsavory. This policy of terror was used so widely throughout Latin America that it was generically termed “disappearances” by the victims’ families and human rights group that began to monitor such activists.<sup>218</sup> The Colombian government would make wide use of the U.S. CI methods and training to put down regime threatening guerilla movements during the second half of the twentieth century.

### *The Colombian Peace Process*

Though Colombia enjoyed a stable economy from the 1960s to the 1980s, the majority of the Colombian populace did not see any economic growth. In 1986, Colombia’s National Administrative Bureau of Statistics showed that 40 percent of Colombians lived in poverty and 18 percent in absolute poverty (unable to meet basic nutritional needs).<sup>219</sup> The level of poverty was further highlighted by the fact that the “top three percent of Colombia’s landed elite own[ed] 71.3 percent of arable land, while fifty-seven percent of the poorest farmers subsist[ed] on 2.8 percent.”<sup>220</sup> The poverty was most severe in rural areas, contributing to the mass urban migration that took place during this time. In 1951, 61 percent of Colombians resided in rural areas, by 1983, that number had fallen to only 26 percent.<sup>221</sup>

This mass migration resulted in extensive shantytowns on the outskirts of Colombia’s urban cities. The squalid conditions precipitated the rise of the urban lower-

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<sup>218</sup> "Fighting Against Forced Disappearances in Latin America," FEDEFAM.

<sup>219</sup> *Colombia Besieged: Political Violence and State Responsibility*, Washington, D.C.: Washington Office on Latin America, 1989. 8-9.

<sup>220</sup> Jamie Fellner, *The Central-Americanization of Colombia?: Human Rights and the Peace Process*. New York, N.Y.: Americas Watch, 1986. 11.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

class, leading to increased protests, strikes, and support for the FARC. The continued growth of the guerrilla movements, internationally visible signs of poverty in Colombia's urban centers, and the failure of the Colombian military to destroy the guerillas, forced President Betancur to begin peace proceedings in 1982. The peace process was the first of its kind in Colombia, and started with complete amnesty for guerilla fighters, which was incentivized via financial credits, land, and housing to re-enter the civilian sector.<sup>222</sup> President Betancur the created the Peace Commission, which would advise him on the peace process, and meet and negotiate with the representatives of the guerilla movements. In response, a number of Colombia's guerrilla groups agreed to a ceasefire in 1984.

The entire peace process sought to turn Colombia's traditionally bipartisan political system into more reform inclined parties. The FARC "was particularly interested in the government's promotion of reforms that would facilitate meaningful participation in Colombia's political life."<sup>223</sup> The FARC established the Patriotic Union (UP) to represent the left in Colombian politics and represent the peasant and working class Colombians. The UP called for reform to end the supremacy of the Conservative and Liberal parties in Colombian politics. The UP advocated for the popular election of local officials, rural land reform, and the nationalization of foreign business, Colombian banks and transportation."<sup>224</sup>

In spite of the seemingly successful peace proceedings, the Colombian military and paramilitaries, supported and trained by the U.S., increased their CI offensive against the guerrilla groups and civilians. Human Rights Watch noted that the majority of the

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<sup>222</sup> Stokes, *America's Other War*. 74.

<sup>223</sup> Fellner, *The Central-Americanization of Colombia*. 38.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

Colombian military's "security measures" were designed to control the "local residents" in militarized areas. The Colombian military continued attacking guerrillas and even assassinated former fighters who had received amnesty.<sup>225</sup> Americas Watch described the situation during the first year of the peace talks, "Large parts of the country are exclusively governed by the armed forces. To all intents and purposes, the armed forces are the only government, their rule is harsh. It is marked by torture and massacres."<sup>226</sup>

Throughout the peace process, the U.S. continued to support the Colombian military crackdown. The State Department's annual human rights reports made no mention of the extensive human rights abuses committed by Colombian military personnel. The U.S. military continued to train the Colombian military and sent over \$50 million worth of arms in the first year of the official "ceasefire."<sup>227</sup> Continued U.S. CI military aid and training thus legitimized the Colombian military actions and undermined the peace proceedings.

### *The War on Drugs*

When the Cold War came to a close, the U.S. substituted the "war on communism" with the "war on drugs" as the justification for continued U.S. military aid to South America. In a counter-drug strategy paper the State Department argued that the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in South America needed to "draw more equipment and doctrine from the military as the task at hand ceases to be the traditional law enforcement for which the agency was created." Adding that the U.S. objective

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>226</sup> *Human Rights in the Two Colombias: Functioning Democracy, Militarized Society*, New York, NY: Americas Watch, 1982. 3.

<sup>227</sup> Javier Giraldo, *Colombia: The Genocidal Democracy*. Monroe, Me: Common Courage Press, 1996. 12.

“should be a steady withdrawal of DEA” from the counter-drug role “as military and economic assistance allows local [military] forces to take up these tasks.”<sup>228</sup> President George Bush Sr. explained the logic of the expansion of anti-narcotic operations: the “cheapest way to eradicate narcotics is to destroy them at their source” by destroying the “crops wherever they are grown,” and the “labs wherever they exist.”<sup>229</sup>

In September 1989, President Bush announced the Andean initiative, a five-year plan that would send \$2.2 billion in aid to Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia. This initiative would make these three states the leading recipients of U.S. military aid in the western hemisphere.<sup>230</sup> One of the main conditions that Colombia would have to accept before receiving aid was the restructuring of their economy to further allow the influx of U.S. capital. In 1990, in return for accepting the conditions Colombia received \$65 million in military aid and 100 U.S. military advisors (Special Forces), to aid Colombian security forces in the new counter-narcotics operations.<sup>231</sup>

The Andean Initiative expanded the role of the Colombian military, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the Central Intelligence Agency directly into counter-narcotics mission. Unfortunately, the counter-narcotics initiatives often combined the insurgency movements that had been brewing in Colombia for decades with the drug-traffickers. National Security Directive 18, which outlined the White House’s counter-narcotics strategy, described the Andean Initiative as involving “expanded assistance to indigenous police, military, and intelligence officials” which would be used to allow

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<sup>228</sup> Stokes, *America's Other War*. 82.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>230</sup> "Guerrillas, Drugs and Human Rights in U.S.–Colombia Policy, 1988–2002," National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book, 69 (2002).

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol I.

“them to regain control of their countries from an insidious combination of insurgents and drug traffickers” with increased “military assistance to neutralize guerrilla support for trafficking.”<sup>232</sup> From the very inception of the Andean Initiative, insurgents and drug traffickers were intrinsically linked. This delineates an important shift in the justifications for U.S. policy in Latin America; U.S. national security interests shifted from the containment of insurgents linked to the spread of communism, to the containment of insurgents linked to international drug traffickers. The longstanding military aid and training itself was marginally repurposed, but the public rationale was completely different, making it a fresh issue in the eyes of the American people.

### Post 9/11 Policy

When President George W. Bush was elected in 2001, his administration wanted to lower the military aid that had been flowing to Colombia for decades by 24 percent. This decrease was accompanied by nearly exact increases in the countries that surrounded Colombia.<sup>233</sup> This new aid package, the Andean Regional Initiative (ARI), was justified as part of the U.S.’s ongoing war on drugs. The U.S. State Department, in their rationalization for the appropriations of the 2002 budget, stated that the goal of U.S. aid in Colombia was to “help the Government of Colombia to eliminate all illicit cultivation and the infrastructure which supports production of illicit drugs.”<sup>234</sup> The 2002 ARI distributed \$367 million in military aid and \$147 million in social and economic aid to Colombia. The military aid was used to maintain and repair military equipment that was

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<sup>232</sup> *National Security Directive 18: International Narcotics Strategy*, 1989.

<sup>233</sup> Stokes, *America's Other War*. 105.

<sup>234</sup> “International Narcotics and Law Enforcement: FY 2002 Budget Justification,” Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, (2001). 26.

provided to Columbia and continue military training programs. Of the total aid package that was sent to Colombia, 75 percent was going directly to Colombia's military and police.<sup>235</sup> Though supporters of the 2002 ARI pointed out that the initiative lowered the number of U.S. military advisors in Colombia from 500 to 400, it placed no limits on how those military advisors trained and employed local forces, nor the number of active nationals.

During the aftermath of September 11, the U.S. foreign policy pivoted to exhibit a strong counter-terrorist orientation. The primary shift towards a war on terror in Colombia has maintained the substantial funding for the Colombian military, but has altered its context to the language counter-terrorism from that of counter-narcotics. Statements by US Senator John McCain, future Chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services, in 2002 revealed thought process behind this shift: "American policy has dispensed with the illusion that the Colombian government is fighting two separate wars, one against drug trafficking and another against domestic terrorists." Senator McCain explained that the U.S. has abandoned "any fictional distinctions between counter-narcotic and counter-insurgency operations."<sup>236</sup>

After the terrorist attacks on 9/11, the U.S. dropped the pretense that the military assistance that it provided to Colombia as being driven solely for counter-narcotics, and began to justify its funding as a strategy of counter-terrorism directed at the FARC, who were reportedly linked to international terrorism in addition drug trafficking. U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft labeled the FARC as the "most dangerous international

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<sup>235</sup> Adam Isacson, "Why We Oppose the Andean Regional Initiative." Center for International Policy. September 24, 2001.

<sup>236</sup> Stokes, *America's Other War*. 106.

terrorist group based in the Western Hemisphere.”<sup>237</sup> The U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Otto Reich, ironically declared that the “40 million people of Colombia deserved freedom from terror and an opportunity to participate fully in the new democratic community of American States.”<sup>238</sup> Even Secretary of State Colin Powell drew comparisons between the FARC and Al-Qaeda to justify aid, stating that there was little “difficulty in identifying [Bin Laden] as a terrorist, and getting everybody to rally against him. Now, there are other organizations that probably meet a similar standard. The FARC in Colombia comes to mind.”<sup>239</sup> Secretary Powell’s Assistant Secretary, Rand Beers, declared in a sworn statement that it was the position of the State department that it “believed the FARC Terrorists have received training in Al Qaeda terrorist camps in Afghanistan.” Assistant Secretary Beers was later forced to admit that this statement was in fact a lie.<sup>240</sup> However, the point had already been seared into the minds of the American people: the U.S. military aid that was sent to Colombia supported pro-U.S. democracy and suppressed “terrorists.” Nowhere is it mentioned how actual U.S. strategy and doctrine worked, the U.S. backed CI, which could have itself been classified as state terrorism.

With the new counter-terrorist orientation the Bush Administration approved the emergency Supplemental Appropriations request to review be reviewed by Congress. The \$28 billion global counter-terrorism bill contained numerous provisions that military aid provided to Colombia should not only be used to wage a war on drugs, but to also fight “terrorist organizations such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC),

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<sup>237</sup> John Ashcroft, *DEA/Drug Enforcement Rollout*. U.S. Department of Justice, March 19, 2002.

<sup>238</sup> Otto J. Reich, "The Crucial Battle For Colombia." July 19, 2002.

<sup>239</sup> Stokes, *America's Other War*. 113.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

the National Liberation Army (ELN), and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC).”<sup>241</sup> This counter terrorist pivot continued in 2003 when the Bush administration’s aid packaged appropriated nearly \$538 million for Colombian military funding. Most importantly though, is the fact that the 2003 ARI package softened the language used to monitor how the Colombian military collaborated with paramilitary forces. Previous policy had specified that the Colombian military must “vigorously prosecuting in the civilian courts,” whereas the ARI called for “effective measures to sever links” between the armed forces and paramilitaries. Further, the Colombian military was no longer required to “cooperate fully,” now merely some ambiguous level of “cooperation” was acceptable.<sup>242</sup> The ARI increased the levels of U.S. funding to the Colombian military, while simultaneously decreased the protections that ensure Colombia complied with the basic safeguards of human rights.

Ultimately, U.S. intervention in Colombia has attempted to stabilize the social, economic, and political arrangements of the country, in order to align with the best interest of the U.S. The Cold War provided a justification for the U.S. CI operations and training to solidify the stability of the Colombian government through whatever means necessary. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. continued its CI operations and military aid under the guise of the war on drugs. Finally, after the September 11 attacks, the U.S. has further incorporated the war on terror as one of its numerous justifications for continued aid.

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<sup>241</sup> U.S. Congress, *2002 Supplemental Appropriations Act for Further Recovery from and Response to Terrorist Attacks on the United States*. Washington, D.C.; U.S. G.P.O, 2002. 22.

<sup>242</sup> Stokes, *America's Other War*. 107.

## **Concluding Remarks**

United States foreign policy, as with any nation's foreign policy, has attempted to create social, economic, and political conditions in the world that would most favor the interests of the U.S. As the U.S. grew in power during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, President Monroe outlined a doctrine that prohibited European interference in the affairs of the New World. Though, at the time, the U.S. retained neither the military nor the economic power to enforce the doctrine, it revealed the future designs of U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. viewed the Americas as off limits to Europeans, and wholly open to U.S. interests. This doctrine served as the basis for the later notion of Manifest Destiny, and would guide U.S. foreign policy in Latin America for well over a century.

Bolstered with the Monroe Doctrine and an increasingly well-funded navy, the U.S. looked to strike away the influence of the British from Central America. The discovery of gold in California had raised both the American civilian presence, and transisthmian interest in the Central American nations. This interest was economic in its foundation; Latin America was ripe for investment and European nations were viewed as unfairly reaping the benefits of investment. U.S. clashes with Great Britain in Central America were characterized by aggressive tactics, after the fact negotiations, and native non-participation. Through these methods of diplomacy, the U.S. began blocking out the Central American nations from European control, and secured their economic and strategic interests for itself.

After the confrontations with the British the U.S. was faced with conflict from within the Americas itself, Chile. After the War of the Pacific, Chile had positioned itself as the most powerful nation in South America, a possible challenger to the U.S.'s rising

power. The U.S. turned a minor diplomatic hiccup, the *Baltimore* Affair, into an international crisis and threatened war against Chile. Chile, at the strong urging of the European powers, gave into U.S. demands, thereby cementing the U.S.'s status as the major power in the Americas.

The U.S. then looked to its southern border, and saw Cuba, a nation troubled with internal and external uncertainties, as an economic opportunity ripe for the taking. The U.S. invested heavily in the island, essentially incorporating it into the U.S. economy in a way from which it could not be untangled without devastating effect. At a time of crisis between Cuba and Spain, the U.S. landed military forces on the island, severing the last major European connection in the Caribbean, and secured the island for its own economic and political interests. At this point, the U.S. political and economic hegemony was undisputed in the western hemisphere.

With the election of President Roosevelt in the 1930s, we see an important shift in U.S. foreign policy. Recognizing the growing discontent and hostility in Latin America, Roosevelt proclaimed that he would dedicate the nation to being a good neighbor, and respect the rights of Latin American nations. Henceforth the U.S. would need a sufficiently credible reason for intervention other than pure economic interest. Following World War II the U.S. began supplying military aid and questionable training techniques to stabilize the Latin American nations fighting against insurgencies. This aid was justified as preventing the spread of communism, a very real fear throughout the western world, though the U.S. undoubtedly reaped the economic benefit of stable, friendly administrations. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. once again needed a justification for continued aid to Latin America, and President Bush provided just that

when he declared a war on drugs. Aid continued to flow the Latin American countries, as nations that had fought communist insurgents now rebranded the insurgencies as drug traffickers.

From the view of the average American, the post 9/11 world looks radically different from the era of the cold war and its aftermath. Americans are constantly reminded that the U.S. is in a “war against terror” by the NSA, the TSA, increased security across the nation, and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Latin American military and training aid that was once appropriated to fight the communist insurgencies, then the narco-insurgencies, is now used to fight insurgencies rebranded as terrorist organizations. The tactics and procedures have not been radically changed, nor has the aid packages themselves, which begs the questions what has really changed? While there have been credible threats made from the Middle East, the answer in terms of Latin America is nothing. For the cynical American interventionist, the 9/11 attacks were a dream come true: the constant and unseen threat of terror that frightens most Americans to their very core has written a blank check to the American government. Military aid justified under the cloak of counter-terrorism is rarely challenged, and has provided the pretext for American intervention in Latin America to secure U.S. economic and political interests for the foreseeable future.

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