

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

RETHINKING LATIN AMERICA'S COLD WAR*

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ABSTRACT. *This review outlines some of the key interventions in the literature on Latin America's Cold War produced since the early 1990s, concentrating largely on broad shifts in anglophone historiography. With questions of periodization and definition in mind, it offers a new, multi-layered model of the Cold War in the region, though with wider application. Using the example of Mexico, it then demonstrates some of the weaknesses of the current literature's assumptions and argues for the potential usefulness of a new way of seeing the period and its interconnected conflicts.*

This review has three connected purposes: to provide an overview of some of the key interventions in anglophone literature on Latin America's Cold War produced since the early 1990s; to offer a new, multi-layered analytical model; and finally to use the example of Mexico to demonstrate both the weaknesses of the current literature and the potential utility of a new approach. At its heart are two seemingly simple questions: what, and when, was the Cold War in Latin America? Unlike some of the authors cited below, this review argues these do not have straightforward answers – if they even have answers at all.¹ In this, as in other respects, it takes its cue from Tanya Harmer's recent observation that

[W]hat the Cold War meant in a Latin American context or to Latin Americans is still relatively unclear. Scholarship is largely fragmented between different countries and time periods. There is little agreement about when the Cold War in the region began and ended, whether it was imposed or imported and precisely how it evolved

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¹ See M. Hajimu, *Cold War crucible: the Korean conflict and the postwar world* (Cambridge, MA, 2015), esp. 'Introduction: what was the Cold War?', pp. 1–10.

over time. Some argue that the very concept of the Cold War is irrelevant in a Latin American context. Others contend that the region's Cold War set something of a precedent for what happened elsewhere. In short, we still have a lot to learn.²

Indeed, the growing literature on Latin America's Cold War has spawned a paradox, which Alan McPherson has summed up neatly: 'the more historians find out about the Cold War in [Latin America], the more the Cold War itself fades into the background' – a point that many Latin American scholars have, I think, well understood for some time.³ From these 'hot zones' often regarded as mere peripheries, nuclear codes and presidential summits seem so very far away. Vanni Pettinà recently synthesized these 'problems of interpretation and chronology' and this review builds upon some of the structural points he has raised.⁴ His definition of the *period* as one during which the region saw 'a substantial increase in US interventionism, dramatic internal polarization, and the long term strengthening of conservative forces' is a very useful point of departure.⁵ Pettinà's motivation 'to evaluate the ways in which Latin American actors adapted to the regional changes that were produced by mutations in the US hegemonic project, global and regional, registered after the confrontation with the USSR began' is shared here, though I pay particular attention to the links between such changes and adaptations, and longer-term structures and processes.⁶

In attempting to map a route *towards* possible answers to some of these quandaries, this review offers a new interpretative and chronological framework for Latin America's Cold War. It stresses both the importance of underlying and long-standing economic, political, and ideological conflicts, and the need to consider regional particularities and different scales of analysis. At what point do the specificities of, say, Guerrero's Cold War negate the idea of Mexico's Cold War, undermining in turn the idea of Latin America's Cold War, and ultimately pulling the rug from under the concept of the global Cold War? It is clear, then, that it is not enough to ask when the Cold War took place in Latin America, importing frameworks from elsewhere. We must ask, instead, when, and how, the Cold War was Latin American. This article rejects the general weighting of the anglophone literature towards 'late' and 'mostly

² T. Harmer, 'The Cold War in Latin America', in A. Kalinovsky and C. Daigle, eds., *The Routledge handbook of the Cold War* (Abingdon, 2014), p. 133.

³ A. McPherson, 'The paradox of Latin American Cold War studies', in V. Garrard-Burnett, M. Atwood Lawrence, and J. E. Moreno, eds., *Beyond the eagle's shadow: new histories of Latin America's Cold War* (Albuquerque, NM, 2013), p. 307. Among recent publications in Spanish which address some of these questions, see, inter alia, R. García Ferreira and A. Taracena, eds., *La guerra fría y el anticomunismo en Centroamérica* (Guatemala, 2017); A. Marchesi, 'Escribiendo la guerra fría Latinoamericana: entre el Sur "local" y el Norte "global"', *Estudios Históricos*, 30 (2017), pp. 187–202; T. Harmer and A. Riquelme, eds., *Chile y la guerra fría global* (Santiago, 2014).

⁴ V. Pettinà, *Historia mínima de la guerra fría en América Latina* (Mexico City, 2018).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22; see also V. Bevins, *The Jakarta method* (New York, NY, 2019).

⁶ Pettinà, *Historia mínima*, p. 30.

peripheral' interpretations, and its latter sections use Mexico to illustrate an 'early' interpretation of Latin America's Cold War which emphasizes the under-appreciated importance of the 1940s and the significance of longer-term continuities.

I

We begin with the question of definition. This seems, on the face of it, alluringly straightforward. Most of us, after all, think we know what the Cold War was *more generally*, so ought we not just find its manifestations in Latin America and fold them into broader narratives? The Cuban Revolution and attempts to defeat it; Allende's government and Pinochet's coup; the Sandinistas' victory in Nicaragua: these all *feel* unequivocally like Cold War events or processes. Yet things get murkier when we think about the Brazilian military coup of 1964, or the US invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965. Were the Costa Rican civil war and the Colombian *Bogotazo* of 1948 Cold War conflicts? And looking beyond the received wisdom of leftist narcosis in 1950s Latin America, we find a panoply of ideas, movements, and parties which intersect with the broader global conflict in awkward and surprising ways.⁷ With just a little interrogation, all that is solid melts into air.

In what remains the most rigorous effort to address these issues of definition, Tanya Harmer has offered four qualifications. The first is that the adjective 'cold' is inappropriate in our context: Latin America's conflicts 'left hundreds of thousands dead, tortured or disappeared, forced millions into exile and yet millions more to change their way of life'.⁸ As a corollary, 'war' might not be much use either, for while 'there was violence on all sides, more often than not it was the state that carried out the majority of this violence'.⁹ Harmer's second point is that, in sharp contrast to Europe and several other regions, 'revolution and counter-revolution characterized the Cold War' here. Third, this was a complicated and internationalized conflict: 'events in one country had an impact across the region'. And finally, US 'intervention' 'underpinned' Latin America's Cold War.¹⁰ This builds upon Greg Grandin's assertion that 'what most joined Latin America's insurgencies, revolutions, and counterrevolutions into an amalgamated and definable historical event was the shared structural position of subordination each nation in the region had to the United States'.¹¹ These specificities have increasingly led scholars to speak of Latin America's Cold War rather than of the Cold War in Latin America, treating it

⁷ See W. A. Booth, *A prehistory of revolution* (London, forthcoming).

⁸ Harmer, 'Cold War', p. 135.

⁹ See also G. Grandin, 'Living in revolutionary time: coming to terms with the violence in Latin America's Cold War', in G. Grandin and G. Joseph, eds., *A century of revolution: insurgent and counterinsurgent violence during Latin America's long Cold War* (Durham, NC, 2011), pp. 1–42.

¹⁰ Harmer, 'Cold War', p. 135.

¹¹ Grandin, 'Revolutionary time', p. 1.

as a distinctive regional event with its own particular dynamics, and not just another iteration of a global conflict driven by superpower rivalry.¹² Recent scholarship, such as the work of Harmer, Grandin and Gilbert Joseph, and Daniela Spenser, has also urged us to think of the 'long Cold War', a protracted conflict with its origins well before the 1954 Guatemalan coup or the 1959 Cuban Revolution.¹³

In response to this call to consider the *longue durée*, I suggest that we should take a geological approach to Latin America's Cold War. This reveals several stacked layers of conflict. While some very much bring to mind an Atlanticist vision of the mid- to late twentieth-century Cold War (capital C, capital W) – capitalism versus socialism, for instance, and the contraposition of US- and USSR-led blocs – others are much older, and have far less (if anything at all) to do with a Washington–Moscow bipolarity. For how can we think about Guatemalan, Cuban, Chilean, or Nicaraguan attempts at revolution without factoring in long-standing tensions between landowner and peasant and state and citizen, or between the US quest for pseudo-imperial hegemony and local assertions of national sovereignty? While different conflicts stacked up over time, all were, in one way or another, struggles over the mode of economic production whose origins long predated Latin America's Cold War. It is clear that this conflict did not begin in 1492, 1810, or 1898. Some of its major constituent parts, however, did. The processes and structures which gave this conflict its own set of unique conditions are mostly very old indeed.¹⁴ It is thus fair to cast the new alignments and conflicts of Latin America's Cold War as a new and distinct phase in a much longer bundle of struggles for control of the region's population, land, and natural resources. This new phase, it would appear, began not in the late 1950s, but a decade earlier, in the 1940s. Explanations which overlook 1917, 1948, and 1959 as linked points in an escalating pattern of regional conflict are thus likely too narrow in temporal focus, just as are those that set aside pre-1917 structures of property rights, empire, citizenship, race, gender, and labour.

Those seeking to assert control over Latin America's resources were, after the region's opening to US capital in the later nineteenth century, almost always an – often asymmetrical – alliance between local elites and US interests. As Greg Grandin argued early this century in an excoriating critique of the 'myopic obsession[s]' of diplomatic history and grand abstractions of new left revisionism, 'in nearly every...nation the conflict that emerged in the immediate period after World War II between the promise of reform and efforts taken to contain that promise profoundly influenced the particular shape of Cold War

¹² G. Joseph, 'Border crossings and the remaking of Latin American Cold War studies', *Cold War History*, 19 (2019), pp. 141–70, at p. 149.

¹³ See e.g. T. Harmer, *Allende's Chile and the inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2011); Grandin and Joseph, eds., *A century of revolution*; D. Spenser, *The impossible triangle* (Durham, NC, 1999).

¹⁴ Harmer, 'Cold War', p. 135.

politics in each country'.¹⁵ For Grandin, as for other scholars of the time, Latin America's Cold War was a complex and multi-scalar conflict driven not just by transregional and regional processes, but also by the way they interacted with particular national and sub-national trajectories. There is little room here for what Gilbert Joseph has described as the 'veritable obsession with first causes, with blame, and with the motives and roles of US policy-makers [which] often served to join realist historians and the New Left Revisionist critics at the hip'.¹⁶

Though coming from a rather different standpoint, Max Paul Friedman also called for greater attention to 'Latin American agency', making a persuasive case for foregrounding local power structures and elite actions and retreating from the reflexive assignation of both blame and ultimate power upon the United States.¹⁷ For, as noted below, it is the recurring entanglement of local repressive elites with the United States which made for such a powerful combination.¹⁸ American support made the former 'especially intransigent in defending their privileges while discrediting them further to nationalist reform movements', even as they retained the ability 'to distort local conflicts even further than U.S. "hegemons" wished them to'.¹⁹ Despite these arguments' weight, an older received wisdom persists in some quarters.²⁰

II

Indeed, it remains the case that Latin America is still largely overlooked as a site of Cold War conflict – especially prior to the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Though this is changing, much greater attention has been paid over the last two decades to conflicts in Asia and Africa.²¹ And while scholars have recently conceded the

¹⁵ G. Grandin, 'Off the beach', in J.-C. Agnew and R. Rosenzweig, eds., *A companion to post-1945 America* (Oxford, 2002), p. 426.

¹⁶ Joseph, 'Border crossings', p. 147.

¹⁷ M. P. Friedman, 'Retiring the puppets, bringing Latin America back in: recent scholarship on United States–Latin American relations', *Diplomatic History*, 27 (2003), pp. 621–36, at pp. 631–2.

¹⁸ See G. Joseph, 'Latin America's long Cold War', in Grandin and Joseph, eds., *A century of revolution*, p. 402.

¹⁹ Friedman, 'Retiring the puppets', p. 632; McPherson, 'Paradox', p. 310.

²⁰ See e.g. H. Brands's *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA, 2010) and its diminution of both pre-1959 conflicts and – particularly – the intersections of race/indigeneity and political economy. See also Kurt Weyland's flabbergasting 'Limits of US influence: the promotion of regime change in Latin America', *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, 10 (2018), pp. 135–64.

²¹ See, inter alia, O. A. Westad, *The global Cold War: Third World interventions and the making of our times* (Cambridge, 2005); H. Kwon, *The other Cold War* (New York, NY, 2010); A. Getachew, *Worldmaking after empire: the rise and fall of self-determination* (Princeton, NJ, 2019); L. Lüthi, ed., *The regional Cold Wars in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East: crucial periods and turning points* (Stanford, CA, 2015); V. Shubin, *The hot 'Cold War': the USSR in southern Africa* (London, 2008); P. Gleijeses, *Visions of freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the struggle for southern Africa, 1976–1991* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2013); C. Lee, ed., *Making a world after empire: the Bandung moment and its political afterlives* (Athens, OH, 2010); S. Onslow, ed., *Cold War in southern Africa* (Abingdon, 2009).

importance of the Guatemalan coup of 1954, there remains a broad narrative of 'lateness'.²² Key contributions such as the three-volume *Cambridge history of the Cold War* relegate pre-1959 Latin America to just a few paragraphs – sometimes, and uncomfortably, as a footnote to narratives of decolonization.²³ Similarly, popular histories like those of Ian Buruma and Victor Sebestyen entirely omit the region perpetuating the idea that the Cold War simply had not arrived there yet.²⁴ When scholars do examine the region, it is often through the lens of US–USSR conflict, tracing what Jürgen Buchenau has described as 'the loud repercussions of international conflict'.²⁵ This is an awkward fit, for as Tanya Harmer has argued, this was not a 'bipolar superpower struggle projected from outside', but a 'unique and multisided contest between regional proponents of communism' – to whom we can add economic nationalists and perceived communists – and advocates of capitalism.²⁶

There are important exceptions to this trend. Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough have argued that the Cold War began in Latin America in 1948, while Darlene Rivas has made the case that the 1947 Rio Pact and the creation in 1948 of the Organization of American States 'were...a product of the Cold War and US efforts to protect the hemisphere from "Soviet" communism' – though with the qualifier that 'their origins were in Latin American attempts to contain the United States and to provide a means for collective...action'.²⁷ In their work, the US–USSR conflict is thus overlaid on an existing tension between national sovereignty and US influence, with anti-communism papering over the cracks. At a more general level sits Odd Arne Westad's latest work, which aims to drag us out of the George Kennan world in which we have all been living. In many ways, Westad's book marks a welcome departure within scholarship on the 'global Cold War'. It notes the deep roots of conflict in Latin America, dating back to the nineteenth century and the supplanting of British economic dominance by that of the United States. It explicitly makes the case for the 1920s and 1930s as part of the same battle as later struggles with which we are more familiar. And it also makes clear that the Cold War wove an international conflict – or, rather, an aggregation of US offensives, whether economic, diplomatic, or military – with long-standing domestic tensions over class, ethnicity, and nationalism.

²² Most obviously, consider the dozen or so pages on the pre-1959 period in Brands's *Latin America's Cold War*.

²³ See M. P. Bradley, 'Decolonization, the global south, and the Cold War, 1919–1962', in M. Leffler and O. A. Westad, eds., *The Cambridge history of the Cold War* (Cambridge, 2010) pp. 464–85.

²⁴ I. Buruma, *Year zero: a history of 1945* (London, 2013); V. Sebestyen, *1946: the making of the post-war world* (Basingstoke, 2014).

²⁵ J. Buchenau, 'Ambivalent neighbor: Mexico and Guatemala's "ten years of spring", 1944–1954', *Latin Americanist*, 61 (2017), pp. 458–73.

²⁶ Harmer, *Allende's Chile*, pp. 1–2.

²⁷ D. Rivas, 'US relations with Latin America, 1942–1960', in R. Schulzinger, ed., *A companion to American foreign relations* (Oxford, 2003), p. 240; L. Bethell and I. Roxborough, eds., *Latin America between the Second World War and the Cold War* (Cambridge, 1992).

Going further, Westad wonders whether ‘the roots of the Latin American Cold War fed on high levels of inequality and social oppression’. In describing the violence of the late Cold War, Westad notes that its victims were mostly ‘labor organizers, journalists, student leaders, or human rights activists’, not doctrinaire leftists. This resonates with one of this article’s central claims: Cold Warriors of the classic ’45–’89 vintage folded in a series of long-standing grievances and conflicts under the totalizing banner of anti-communism. And yet a note of criticism can be struck. Like Friedman, Westad concludes that ‘the United States did not have subservient ideological allies in power in Latin America’. This is true – and Westad is certainly correct that ‘a Betancourt, a Barrientos, or even otherwise despicable creatures such as a Videla or a Pinochet, were not straw men for the United States’.²⁸ But does this really matter, when both sides shared the same enemies? In the end, the apocryphal ‘our son of a bitch’ foreign policy dominated.

Despite such works, the years between 1945 and 1954, in particular, are overlooked. There are two reasons for this neglect. Far from suggesting an absence of Cold War context, both can be seen as *results* or *symptoms* of the Cold War. The first is that the Second World War weakened Communist party ties to the Soviet Union. The relationship between the Comintern and Latin American communists had been ambivalent for some time.²⁹ And though Soviet interest did not disappear entirely, it goes without saying that an under-resourced and under-informed USSR had higher priorities elsewhere. This renders the region relatively uninteresting for those who think of the Cold War as a bipolar superpower conflict.³⁰ While Soviet interest in the region eventually (re-)grew, sensitivity to regional specificity did not: Moscow remained markedly nervous of talk of revolution, as did many orthodox communists, particularly in northern Latin America.

The second is that Latin America’s leftist parties were, with few exceptions, in retreat from 1948 onwards.³¹ In some cases – Mexico, Brazil, Argentina – this happened rather earlier. Many communist parties split, saw precipitous declines in membership, and even went underground. The Mexican Communist party, for instance, collaborated in its own oppression to a quite remarkable extent, but the difference between its treatment by Lázaro Cárdenas in the mid-1930s and Miguel Alemán in the late 1940s is striking.³² There were local

²⁸ O. A. Westad, *The Cold War: a world history* (London, 2017), pp. 340, 358.

²⁹ V. Figueroa Clark, ‘Latin American communism’, in N. Naimark, S. Pons, and S. Quinn-Judge, eds., *The Cambridge history of communism* (3 vols., Cambridge, 2017), II, p. 398.

³⁰ Bradley, ‘Decolonization’, p. 471.

³¹ Bethell and Roxborough, eds., *Latin America*, pp. 16–19.

³² See, inter alia, B. Carr, *Marxism and communism in twentieth-century Mexico* (Lincoln, NE, 1992), esp. ch. 4, ‘The *frenesi* of developmentalism: Miguel Alemán and the taming of the left, 1946–1950’; J. Mac Gregor Campuzano, ‘Browderismo, unidad nacional y crisis ideológica: el Partido Comunista Mexicano en la encrucijada (1940–1950)’, *Iztapalapa*, 36 (1995), pp. 167–84; W. A. Booth, ‘Hegemonic nationalism, subordinate Marxism: the Mexican left, 1945–1947’, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 50 (2018), pp. 31–58.

ideological and geopolitical reasons for these shifting fortunes, but the shift, after the Rio Treaty, towards anti-communist domestic policy across much of Latin America was vital – doubly so after the outbreak of the Korean War.

What we are left with, then, is a period of US geopolitical dominance and anti-communism in most local political contexts. The impression given by the breakdown of negotiations over a hemispheric economic settlement was that the United States was in some way ignoring Latin America, but as Steve Niblo put it, this was an ‘indifference based on supremacy’.³³ By the late 1940s, the argument had been won. In many ways, this was the first battlefield of the post-1945 Cold War for the US, and it was one which brought a swift victory. Under the terms of this victory, ‘the donkey work of “containment” [was] largely undertaken by Latin American elites, while the principal costs [were] borne by Latin American societies’.³⁴ The lack of ongoing, large-scale conflict between ‘communist’ and ‘anti-communist’ forces, however, should not exclude this period from Cold War narratives. Rather, the successful outsourcing of anti-communism between 1945 and the Guatemalan coup should be seen as one chapter *in* that narrative.

Thus, as Stephen Rabe suggests, Eisenhower’s charge that Truman had no policy for Latin America was an over-reach. While their emphases were different, both presidents used various means at their disposal to ‘wage cold war’ in or through the region.³⁵ Truman’s decision to work with dictators and to favour ‘security concerns’, whether it ‘frustrat[ed], demoraliz[ed], [or] even radicaliz[ed] Latin American progressives’, ultimately served Cold War grand strategy.³⁶ Peter Smith concurs, seeing 1950 as ‘a turning point in American attitudes toward the region’ with the National Security Council memorandum on ‘Inter-American military collaboration’ bringing significant military aid, regardless of the nature of the recipient government. The United States’ over-riding consideration throughout this period remained the securing of regional allies to confront global communism. Grandin is surely right that ‘it was on Kennedy’s watch that the United States, building on hemispheric military relations established during World War II, helped lay the material and ideological foundations for subsequent Latin American terror states’.³⁷ But regional political elites’ receptiveness had its roots in the 1940s in Mexico, the 1930s in Brazil, El Salvador, or Nicaragua, or even earlier in Chile and Argentina. Though the Castroist challenge quickened the pace of conflict, its fundamentals were already in place.

³³ S. Niblo, *War, diplomacy and development: the United States and Mexico, 1938–1954* (Wilmington, DE, 1995), p. 259.

³⁴ A. Knight, ‘US imperialism/hegemony and Latin American resistance’, in F. Rosen, ed., *Empire and dissent: the United States and Latin America* (Durham, NC, 2008), p. 36.

³⁵ S. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: the foreign policy of anti-communism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988), p. 24.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁷ Grandin, ‘Off the beach’, p. 429.

Those local and regional studies that have emerged have acquired a magnified significance to our understanding of both the importance of the Cold War for Latin America and the importance of Latin America for the Cold War. One cannot overlook, for instance, the impact of Aaron Coy Moulton's work, which has recentred the conversation around the Caribbean Basin. In a series of articles, Moulton has cemented the idea of the region as its 'own backyard', crafting a careful balance between broader structures and local agency in the region. Luis Trejos Rosero has made a similar case for a rather different set of structures and agents in Colombia – again bringing together a raft of older conflicts under the unifying banner of 'anti-communism' – as has Marcelo Casals for Chile.³⁸ In similar fashion, Robert A. Karl's recent work has revealed both the need to delve deeper into local dynamics, and the difficulty of inserting these patterns into broader narratives. His account of Colombia's 'forgotten peace' is an exemplary piece of scholarship, combining tremendous research with a healthy scepticism for received truths and a keen sensitivity for his subject's ongoing relevance.³⁹ While this essay largely focuses on problematizing the Cold War's beginning in the region, Karl's work reminds us that pinpointing its *end* can be just as tricky. But it is also a reminder of the need to account for particularities, both national and sub-national. When we consider the immanence of the peace–violence dyad across Colombia's modern history, attempts to insert the country into a grand supra-national narrative may seem entirely quixotic. More than this, the specificities of local conflicts and processes – around peace and citizenship in particular – render even a national approach deeply problematic. Here one might draw parallels with Alexander Aviña's work on the Mexican state of Guerrero.⁴⁰ Just as importantly, Karl shows that conflict over land, the contested nature of citizenship, engagement with the law, and relationships with ideas and ideology are all complicated and interwoven.⁴¹

³⁸ A. C. Moulton, 'Building their own Cold War in their own backyard: the transnational, international conflicts in the greater Caribbean Basin, 1944–1954', *Cold War History*, 15 (2015), pp. 135–54; A. C. Moulton, 'Militant roots: the anti-fascist left in the Caribbean Basin, 1945–1954', *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe*, 28 (2017); A. C. Moulton, 'Counter-revolutionary friends: Caribbean Basin dictators and Guatemalan exiles against the Guatemalan revolution, 1945–1950', *The Americas*, 76 (2019); L. Trejos Rosero, 'Comunismo y anticomunismo en Colombia durante los inicios de la guerra fría (1948–1966)', *Tiempo Histórico*, 3 (2011), pp. 85–103; M. Casals, 'Against a continental threat: transnational anti-communist networks of the Chilean right wing in the 1950s', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 51 (2019), pp. 523–48. See also L. Herran, 'Las guerrillas blancas: anticomunismo transnacional e imaginarios de derechas en Argentina y México, 1954–1972', *Quinto Sol*, 19 (2015), pp. 1–26.

³⁹ R. Karl, *Forgotten peace* (Berkeley, CA, 2017).

⁴⁰ A. Aviña, *Specters of revolution* (Oxford, 2014).

⁴¹ R. Karl, 'Los mitos de Marquetalia', *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* (forthcoming), p. 14, author's original draft.

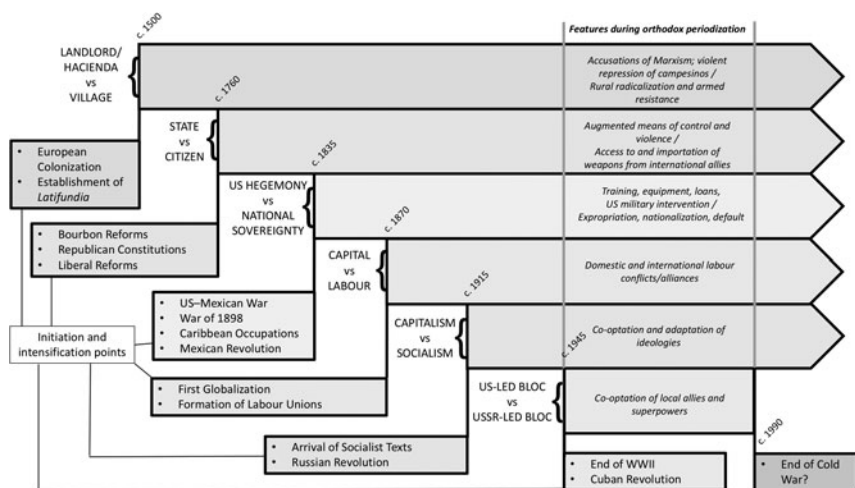


Fig 1. The Cold War as a 'layered stack' of Latin American conflicts

III

Perhaps the best way to think about this complex skein of conflicts is to see it as a set of layers (see Figure 1). In doing so, I build on the work of Greg Grandin, who pointed in a groundbreaking 2004 study to three interwoven struggles that defined Latin America's Cold War: a local left-right conflict, into which the US either inserted itself or was invited; a wider battle between social democratic norms and a deeply conservative, often murderously racist authoritarianism; and, broadest of all, the (by then) almost two-hundred-year-old confrontation between enlightenment and counter-enlightenment.⁴² This interweaving gave Latin American conflicts a heterodox, patchwork nature that ideological frameworks birthed in the global north-west have continually struggled to integrate. As Corey Robin put it, 'the entire continent was fired by a combination of Karl Marx, the Declaration of Independence and Walt Whitman.'⁴³ Even the term 'left-right conflict' must be used with caution, as a cursory reading of the Costa Rican civil war, for instance, makes abundantly clear. Thus, though I borrow Grandin's organizing principle of layers, I propose going rather further, and suggest six layers of conflict: between landowner and peasant; state and citizen; US hegemony and national sovereignty; capital and labour; capitalism and socialism; and, finally, between a US-led bloc and a USSR-led bloc.

The first layer to consider is that of the long-standing conflict between landowners and peasants – and between the region's *latifundias* or haciendas and its

⁴² G. Grandin, *The last colonial massacre* (Chicago, IL, 2004).

⁴³ C. Robin, 'Dedicated to democracy', *London Review of Books*, 18 Nov. 2004, pp. 3–6.

villages. While imperial rule and slavery were present in the pre-colonial Americas, European conquest folded multiple political and economic repressions into a fairly unified (albeit uneven) system. As the initial *encomienda* tribute system gave way to the more procrustean *repartimiento*, the infamous *latifundia*, large rural estates characterized by unfree labour, were constructed. In many areas, political economy came to be defined by the hacienda–village dyad, a symbiotic – if asymmetric – mechanism for extracting resources and exercising power. This relationship continued to define most of rural Latin America – until the late twentieth century home for the majority of the region’s population – throughout colonial times and into the national period. Relationships between hacienda and village, and more generally between landowner and peasant, embedded norms around race, gender, land, and labour – some of which still persist – which were certainly important local determinants of Cold War era conflicts. As Knight has shown for late nineteenth-century Mexico, in areas where the hacienda–village relationship remained important, it acted as a potential *brake* on local capitalist development, relying as it did ‘on combinations of coercion, corporal punishment, monopoly of land, “paternalism”, and political backup’.⁴⁴ Victor Figueroa Clark, meanwhile, reminds us that we must leave Eurocentric assumptions about peasants and landlords at the Atlantic shore. ‘Although the campesinos lived in conditions that bore a superficial resemblance to feudal structures’, he writes, ‘they were also often indigenous and therefore held a different worldview, particularly toward private property and the land’. As for the bourgeoisie, ‘[o]utside the Southern Cone...rather than being a productive capitalist class, [it] tended to be dependent upon large foreign-owned enterprises and foreign capital’.⁴⁵

This lends weight to the contention that, where these socio-economic structures persisted, the systemic struggle between capitalism and communism central to certain interpretations of the Cold War is inherently limited in relevance. Mid-twentieth-century capitalists, like mid-nineteenth-century Liberals, often wished to ‘unlock’ the potential profit of these seemingly feudal institutions rather than intervene to preserve unwaged, unfree labour, while many communists overlooked rural and/or indigenous labour regimes as pre-capitalist, and therefore politically irrelevant – a position considerably easier to maintain when fortified with prejudices of racial hierarchy and urban superiority. Thus, the label of ‘progressive’ or ‘reformer’ is not easily applied.⁴⁶ By contrast, *hacendados* – on the whole authoritarian, conservative, and white – and their military allies used Cold War conflicts as a means of strengthening or re-establishing paternalistic, repressive, often violently abusive, and even

⁴⁴ A. Knight, ‘Land and society in postrevolutionary Mexico: the destruction of the great haciendas’, *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 7 (1991), pp. 73–104.

⁴⁵ Figueroa Clark, ‘Latin American communism’, p. 395.

⁴⁶ See e.g. S. Garfield, ‘From ploughshares to politics: transformations in rural Brazil during the Cold War and its aftermath’, in Garrard-Burnett, Atwood Lawrence, and Moreno, eds., *Beyond the eagle’s shadow*, pp. 150–74.

genocidal dominance over rural villagers.⁴⁷ This was understood and – naturally – used as propaganda by the left; Che Guevara notably identified ‘the permanent roots of all social phenomena in America’ as ‘the *latifundia* system, underdevelopment and “the hunger of the people”’.⁴⁸ This takes us all the way back to Bartolomé de Las Casas, who sounded positively Kolkoesque even in 1561, writing that ‘our work was to exasperate, ravage, kill, mangle and destroy; small wonder, then, if they tried to kill one of us now and then’.⁴⁹

The second long-standing conflict is between the state, an entity which developed and mutated in particular phases – notably under the Bourbon Reforms of the 1760s, the creation of republican constitutions in the independence period, and liberal reforms in the mid- to late nineteenth century – and its putative citizens.⁵⁰ Timo Schaefer neatly sums up the developments – formalizations is perhaps a better word – that took place during the nineteenth century in his survey of legal cultures in post-independence Mexico. This was a period, he writes, which ‘began with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and ended with the triumph of new class- and race-based hierarchies’.⁵¹ In a similar vein, Elizabeth Dore has demonstrated persuasively that for women, nineteenth-century liberalism represented ‘one step forward [and] two steps back’.⁵² This transformation did not happen in a political vacuum. To quote Schaefer again, ‘any vestige of the liberal ideal collapsed in the second half of the century under the pressure of economic modernization schemes premised on elite control over indigenous land and labor’.⁵³ It is important to stress, then, that the legal-constitutional process by which colonial subjects passed through a contested and unevenly experienced period of revolutionary semi-autonomy to become frequently oppressed subjects of modernizing republics happened –

⁴⁷ On the ‘continually evolving and adapting’ – and indeed transnational – nature of Latin American rights, see the *Nuevo Mundo, Mundos Nuevos* 2016 colloquium ‘Las derechas en América latina en el siglo XX: problemas, desafíos y perspectivas’, esp. M. Power, ‘Afterword’.

⁴⁸ Guevara quoted in R. Gott, *Guerrilla movements in Latin America* (London, 1970), p. 13; though any mention of ‘underdevelopment’ ought to be accompanied by directions to J. P. Leary, *A cultural history of underdevelopment: Latin America in the US imagination* (Charlottesville, VA, 2016).

⁴⁹ B. de Las Casas, *History of the Indies*, II, trans. A. Collard (San Francisco, CA, 1971), p. 78.

⁵⁰ Readers may note some superficial consonance with Richard Morse’s periodization here, in the shift from his ‘Spanish’ phase (1520–1760) to his ‘Colonial’ phase (1760–1920). R. Morse, ‘Independence in a patrimonial state’, in J. Tulchin, ed., *Problems in Latin American history: the modern period* (New York, NY, 1973), p. 12.

⁵¹ T. Schaefer, *Liberalism as utopia: the rise and fall of legal rule in post-colonial Mexico, 1820–1900* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 1.

⁵² E. Dore, ‘One step forward, two steps back: gender and the state in the long nineteenth century’, in E. Dore and M. Molyneux, eds., *Hidden histories of gender and the state in Latin America* (Durham, NC, 2000).

⁵³ Schaefer, *Liberalism*, p. 3. Schaefer argues that the Mexican case is exemplary in both directions – in ‘the profundity of its liberal experiment and the oppressiveness – indeed, the pervasive indecency – of the regime that came to power in the final quarter of the nineteenth century’ (p. 4).

for most of the region – *before* the shift to domestic capitalism was complete – if, indeed, it is.

Some parts of this process, particularly the formalization of unfree labour regimes in majority-indigenous areas, represented returns to pre-existing conflicts. Others – including the hollowing-out of individual and communal rights in the face of novel, aggressively enforced conceptions of property – were new, or at least given new vitality by the means available to a late nineteenth-century state. And none went away: in all of our ‘definitive’ Cold War conflicts, personal or communal rights faced off against private or blended elite interests, while race and class informed battles over ongoing labour exploitation. Crucial to this model, I think, is Schaefer’s notion of ‘revolutionary liberalism’. The simple idea of equal treatment before the law is fundamental in so many manifestations of Latin America’s Cold War; its frequent denial underpinned myriad grievances.

Schaefer concludes that three kinds of legal manipulation – whether the creation of legal exceptions or elite interference with the law – developed in late nineteenth-century Mexico. The first comprised attempts to deny townspeople – often, but not always, *mestizo*, not usually well-off, but with a good working legal-constitutional knowledge – the ‘full exercise of their legal rights guaranteed by successive Mexican constitutions’.⁵⁴ The second was the blurring of lines between private and public roles such that wealth (often, though not only, meaning landownership) brought with it the assumption of pseudo-legal-constitutional roles in census-taking, policing, and the definition or transference of property rights. The net result was ‘a creeping privatisation of law’ which naturally favoured the class holding the gavel. The third was the fact that while, formally, the repressive apparatuses of state were embedded in the legal-constitutional order, both *de facto* ‘concrete institutional arrangements’ and the collective belief of Mexicans in general reveal the existence of armed forces operating outside the law.⁵⁵

In each of these three areas, the conflict between state and citizen – which sometimes mapped onto that between ‘the elite’ and ‘the people’ – would have ruinous Cold War consequences. Bolstered by modern military training, equipment, and materiel, a colonial-era zealotry on matters of race, and the US’s implicit backing, it was *states* that ultimately prosecuted the Cold War in Latin America. In McPherson’s words: ‘the overwhelming...burden of the violence should be attributed to conservative military states’.⁵⁶ As Grandin’s account of the Panzós massacre in Guatemala, in which ‘between five hundred and seven hundred Q’eqchi’-Mayan women, men, and children’ were killed, suggests, ordinary people were aware of their rights and theoretical means of recourse, but a combination of ‘privatised law’ and ‘armed forces

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁵⁶ H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews, vol. XI, no. 27 (2011), p. 26.

operating outside the law' prevented such recourse, by hook or by crook. Schaefer's ideas thus have application far beyond nineteenth-century Mexico.

The next dyad to consider is that of US hegemony and national sovereignty. Caitlin Fitz has demonstrated the shift in US political culture from 'the idea of a united republican hemisphere' towards one of superiority and 'rightful' dominance.⁵⁷ While for Fitz the intellectual change occurred in the 1820s, its most obvious practical unveiling was in the US–Mexican War two decades later. Having provoked Mexico into military conflict, President Polk had no qualms about placing the blame on the United States' southern neighbour, insisting 'we are called upon by every consideration of duty and patriotism to vindicate with decision the honor, the rights, and the interests of our country'.⁵⁸ The framing of a war of conquest as springing from 'duty and patriotism' is important, and the precise nature of that duty and patriotism in the 1840s bears closer examination as it frames many later interventions.⁵⁹ This war came shortly after journalist John L. O'Sullivan coined the idea of manifest destiny, asserting that the United States was free 'to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions'.⁶⁰ What followed – filibustering, occupations, imposition of leaders – revealed a conflict within Latin America's politics – and, at times, its elites – between those urging national sovereignty, whether in a diplomatic or economic sense, though the latter is conceptually slippery, and those urging co-operation – or, for opponents, collaboration – with the US. In vulgar terms, this was a struggle between – often nationalist – anti-imperialism and – often comprador – colonialism, with the latter finding encouragement and support in a US with a very clear sense of its 'own' backyard.

During Latin America's Cold War, the banner of anti-imperialism was wafted rather feebly by the Soviet Union (and to a degree China), but the most notable promoter and corraller of Latin American national liberation movements was Cuba. This purposing of national liberation as the left position necessitated a folding of non-communist figures such as José Martí and Augusto Sandino into doctrinaire revolutionary narratives, marking the Cold War as a new, albeit relatively distinct, phase in another older conflict. However, this fracture could be subsumed within, or subordinated to, other conjunctural priorities. Thus, Mexico's economic nationalism – particularly in the petroleum sector – was tolerated for many decades, outweighed by the solidity of the government's anti-communism and the lack of serious challenge to either capitalism or to US regional dominance.⁶¹ That said, it is worth at least considering whether the

⁵⁷ C. Fitz, *Our sister republics: the United States in an age of American revolutions* (New York, NY, 2016), p. 248.

⁵⁸ R. W. Merry, *A country of vast designs: James K. Polk, the Mexican War, and the conquest of the American continent* (Riverside, NJ, 2009), p. 245.

⁵⁹ See M. Fellman, ed., *Around the world with General Grant* (Baltimore, MD, 2002), p. 376.

⁶⁰ T. R. Hietala, *Manifest design: American exceptionalism and empire* (Ithaca, NY, 1985), p. 255.

⁶¹ The Bolivian case has some consonance. See T. Field, *From development to dictatorship: Bolivia and the Alliance for Progress in the Kennedy era* (Ithaca, NY, 2014).

additional pressure of the final layer – the formalized US–USSR conflict and the muscular and ill-informed anti-communism it fostered – would have prevented a *cardenista* politics being tolerated by the United States after 1945. The panic induced in diplomatic correspondence over the National Liberation Movement in 1961 suggests so.⁶²

In a recent essay, Stuart Schrader makes a compelling case for seeing US–Latin American relations since 1898 as a ‘Long counterrevolution’.⁶³ Schrader suggests ‘the persistence of a strong relationship between security objectives and political economy’, reminding us that the heuristic distinction between conflicts over sovereignty and those between capital and labour is always somewhat artificial. Indeed, ‘US security assistance in the region...was marked by sovereignty’s abrogation’, and its economic policy by a twin commitment to fostering ‘the most basic forms of economic development while also repressing revolutionary movements that might rebel against the prevailing socioeconomic order’.⁶⁴ This was evident – if unevenly so – during the early Cold War, just as it was in earlier decades. Daniel Immerwahr’s recent *How to hide an empire* reminds us that ‘empire might be hard to make out from the mainland, but from the sites of colonial rule themselves, it’s impossible to miss’. Even absent formal colonization, ‘clearly this is not a country that keeps its hands to itself’.⁶⁵ A final note of caution here: national sovereignty is just as slippery a concept as hegemony or imperialism. While diplomats could agree on a common principle of ‘non-intervention’ *in theory*, there are enough instances of elite factions inviting or facilitating intervention, or other less dramatic breaches of ‘sovereignty’, as to render the principle problematic at best, and meaningless at worst. To return to an earlier point, Latin America has never lacked elite actors ready to amplify or leverage their strength by calling upon US resources.

With the onset of capitalism in the region comes another layer of conflict – that between capital and labour. Here, though, is one of the thorniest sites of contention in both political economy and historiography; the question of when Latin America was capitalist is even more vexed than that of the timing

⁶² See various documents of ‘After the revolution: Lázaro Cárdenas and the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional’, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 124, 2004, <http://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB124/index.htm> (accessed 24 Jan. 2017); for a more localized demonstration of the conjunctural shift, see Elisa Servín on the Mexican state’s reaction to revived Zapatismo and Villismo during the Cold War – ‘Reclaiming revolution in light of the “Mexican miracle”’, *The Americas*, 66 (2010), pp. 540–1.

⁶³ S. Schrader, ‘The long counterrevolution: United States–Latin America security cooperation’, *Items: Insights from the Social Sciences*, 18 Sept. 2018, <https://items.ssrc.org/the-long-counterrevolution-united-states-latin-america-security-cooperation/> (accessed 20 Sept. 2018) – also see Schrader’s subsequent book covering the topic more broadly, *Badges without borders: how global counterinsurgency transformed American policing* (Berkeley, CA, 2019).

⁶⁴ Schrader, ‘The long counterrevolution’.

⁶⁵ D. Immerwahr, *How to hide an empire: a history of the greater United States* (New York, NY, 2019), p. 14.

and nature of its Cold War. The problem lies not so much in the realm of capital as it does in that of labour. For various reasons, not least the institutions and mechanisms introduced by European occupiers, there were severe distortions in the labour market, which is a way of saying that many (usually indigenous) Latin Americans were set to work in conditions which approximated – both at the time and in hindsight – to slavery.⁶⁶ While critics may have exaggerated – or rather over-generalized – the ‘black legend’ of indebted peonage, its existence – and, *a fortiori*, that of ‘voluntary peonage’ – throws a significant spanner in any Marxian efforts to locate incipient markets.⁶⁷ This is apparent from a plethora of cases, not least recent work such as that of Casey Lurtz on the integration of Chiapas and its coffee-growing economy into the capitalist circuit by 1920, or Andrew Torget’s study of the Texas borderlands.⁶⁸ There are, of course, studies of Latin American labour which feel more familiar to a (globally) north-western audience. While still attentive to local specificities, the works of Ernesto Semán and Paulo Drinot offer fruitful comparisons with those on, say, Italian or US labour.⁶⁹

Yet it is important to recognize that the onset of Latin America’s capital–labour conflicts took place – broadly – many decades, and in some places, a century, before it was defined by the dichotomy of capitalism and socialism. This dislocation was far more dramatic than the lag between, say, continental European industrialization and the growth of socialist ideology and organizations.⁷⁰ While versions of the capital–labour conflict had been playing out across the region throughout the later nineteenth century, the framing of a distinct, though closely associated, conflict – of capitalism against socialism (and/or, in many areas, anarchism) emerged more fitfully as leftist ideas arrived via oral, textual, and organizational transmission. Both Marxism and anarchism arrived and spread in Latin America in the second half of the nineteenth

⁶⁶ The use of the word ‘slavery’ as applied to the coercive and unremunerated systems of indigenous labour (particularly following the outlawing of slavery *de jure* in 1542) is controversial in and of itself.

⁶⁷ See esp. A. Knight, ‘Mexican peonage: what was it and why was it?’, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 18 (1986), pp. 41–74.

⁶⁸ See B. Traven’s ‘Jungle Cycle’ novels and C. Lurtz, *From the grounds up: building an export economy in southern Mexico* (Stanford, CA, 2019); also S. Washbrook, *Producing modernity in Mexico: labour, race, and the state in Chiapas, 1876–1914* (Oxford, 2012); A. Torget, *Seeds of empire: cotton, slavery, and the transformation of the Texas borderlands, 1800–1850* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2015); S. Topik, C. Marichal, and Z. Frank, eds., *From silver to cocaine: Latin American commodity chains and the building of the world economy, 1500–2000* (Durham, NC, 2006); and J. Tutino, ed., *New countries: capitalism, revolutions, and nations in the Americas, 1750–1870* (Durham, NC, 2016).

⁶⁹ E. Semán, *Ambassadors of the working class: Argentina’s international labor activists & Cold War democracy in the Americas* (Durham, NC, 2017); P. Drinot, *The allure of labor: workers, race and the making of the Peruvian state* (Durham, NC, 2011). See also Field, *From development to dictatorship*.

⁷⁰ See R. Saull, ‘El lugar del sur global en la conceptualización de la guerra fría: desarrollo capitalista, revolución social y conflicto geopolítico’, in D. Spenser, ed., *Espejos de la guerra fría* (Mexico City, 2004).

century, though there were some Fourierist interlopers as early as the 1840s. These ideologies put down roots, syncretizing in places and dogmatizing in others, and provoked the ire of both elites and populist or nationalist alternatives.⁷¹ Without this endogenous oppositional lineage, the anti-communism of the 1940s and 1950s could not have expanded so easily. That said, the rapid growth of support for socialist ideas in general, and membership of communist organizations in particular, no doubt stiffened opponents' resolve. Between 1935 and 1947, aggregate Communist party membership in Latin America is estimated to have grown from 25,000 to 500,000.⁷²

Counter-mobilization was swift. Paulo Drinot has shown that a 'creole anti-communism' was securely in place in Peru by the mid-1930s; Mexico made a similar institutional turn a few years later.⁷³ By the mid-1940s, it was clear that the US had begun to overtly 'encourage and reward' communism's opponents.⁷⁴ Anti-communism had a devastating effect. As Figueroa Clark puts it, '[w]hile the repression of subaltern challenges...was not new, and while communists were not the only targets, their presence in all of the key...moments of conflict combined with elite fear of communism to ensure that communists were particularly hard hit by repression'.⁷⁵

The historiography bears testament to the amplitude of this conflict. While many anti-communist Latin Americans, like the Montoneros and their rallying cry of 'a socialist country without Yankees or Marxists' have insisted upon an anti-Marxist socialism often combining radicalism and nationalism, both historical actors and scholars have embraced the simple dichotomy of 'The' Cold War. As Patrick Iber has noted recently: 'to simplify enormous and complex bodies of scholarship to their barest essences, orthodoxy held communism primarily responsible, while revisionism blamed capitalism'.⁷⁶ And yet we should keep in mind that 'the politics and culture of anti-communism cannot be divorced in any meaningful way from the political economy of the Cold War'.⁷⁷ More broadly, the temporal consonance of 'Latin America's efforts to overcome its inequitable and stunted development *and* the United States'

⁷¹ See A. Cappelletti, *Anarchism in Latin America* (Oakland, CA, 2018); L. E. Aguilar, *Marxism in Latin America* (Philadelphia, PA, 1978); and C. Illades, *El marxismo en México: una historia intelectual* (London, 2018).

⁷² See Bethell and Roxborough, eds., *Latin America*, p. 173.

⁷³ P. Drinot, 'Creole anti-communism: labor, the Peruvian Communist party, and APRA, 1930–1934', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 92 (2012), pp. 703–36. For Mexico, the state's method of dealing with various leftist challenges was fairly consistent: co-option where possible, otherwise repression. See e.g. T. Padilla, *Rural resistance in the land of Zapata* (Durham, NC, 2008); E. Servín, *Ruptura y oposición: el movimiento henriquista, 1945–1954* (Mexico City, 2001).

⁷⁴ Harmer, 'The Cold War in Latin America', p. 139.

⁷⁵ Figueroa Clark, 'Latin American communism', p. 389.

⁷⁶ P. Iber, 'Cold War world', *The New Republic*, 30 Oct. 2017), <https://newrepublic.com/article/144998/cold-war-world-new-history-redefines-conflict-true-extent-enduring-costs> (accessed 10 May 2019).

⁷⁷ Grandin, 'Off the beach', p. 436.

rise, first to hemispheric and then to global hegemony' contributed to shaping a 'century of revolution', a long Cold War in which the conflict between 'reds' and 'whites' was a consistent thread.⁷⁸ In a more direct fashion, Pettinà synthesizes recent historiography on this dichotomy, it – problematically – seeing 'the Cold War principally as a dispute between two competing visions of modernity: capitalist and socialist'.⁷⁹ While this layer of conflict is certainly important, I agree that to place it above all other factors is to obscure variance over both time and space.

Finally we arrive at the geopolitical conflict many generalists would consider the *bona fide* Cold War – that in which the United States and its allies engaged, against a bloc of nations led by the Soviet Union. However, we are immediately forced to problematize this binary, as no Latin American nations were formally associated with either NATO or the Warsaw Pact. The Soviet Union, in particular, was 'more of an active bystander than a main participant'.⁸⁰ In Latin America – with the exception of Cuba – *this* conflict was contingent, illusory even. Affiliations to or affinities with the Soviet bloc were often tenuous, particularly for subnational manifestations of the armed left, various incarnations of which drew upon pre-1945 traditions and organizations. Such affinities are also complicated by 'south–south' relationships, most notably in the case of Cuban support for anti-colonial struggles in Africa.⁸¹

I am therefore not sure I would go quite as far as Gabriel García Márquez, who claimed in 1982 that 'superpowers and other outsiders have fought over us for centuries in ways that have nothing to do with our problems'.⁸² The Cold War powers *did* try to fold Latin America's problems into their conflict. However, the only coherent consonances that did exist were between some Latin American elites and some parts of the US state apparatus. As I have suggested, these pre-dated the Cold War, but were re-badged, beefed up, and made more Manichean from the late 1940s. As Grandin suggests, local ideological concerns came together in this period with global geopolitical considerations, with baleful effects: 'in many countries the promise of a postwar social democratic nation was countered by the creation of a Cold War counterinsurgent terror state'.⁸³ Socio-economic demands born out of local structural conditions but encouraged by a wider democratic moment were opposed by existing elites augmenting their pre-Cold War strength with new methods and technologies, new allies, and a more coherent ideology.

⁷⁸ Joseph, 'Latin America's long Cold War', p. 400. This also raises an important directional reappraisal, with the conflict 'as least as much North–South as East–West' (p. 401). For the Brazilian case, see R. Patto sa Motta, *Em guarda contra o perigo vermelho* (Sao Paulo, 2002).

⁷⁹ Pettinà, *Historia mínima*, p. 32. Pettinà also goes into more detail on temporal variance *within* the orthodox periodization; see pp. 57–61.

⁸⁰ Westad, *The Cold War: a world history*, p. 359.

⁸¹ P. Gleijeses, *Conflicting missions* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002).

⁸² M. Simons, 'A talk with Gabriel García Márquez', *New York Times*, 5 Dec. 1982.

⁸³ Grandin, 'Off the beach', p. 426.

This ‘layered stack’ model is designed to provoke discussion, and will necessarily need modification and augmentation. Four areas already seem to demand further interrogation, though perhaps as contextual factors rather than separate axes of conflict. Race, its conceptions, and its hierarchies, are woven inextricably into Latin America’s political economy. The conflict outlined between landowner and peasant is, almost everywhere throughout the region, profoundly racialized, though with significant variation between Mexico, Central America, the Andes, Brazil, the Caribbean, and southern South America.⁸⁴ Moreover, racial thought has shaped access to labour markets, geographical mobility, and remuneration. Racial preconceptions were not the preserve of the right: long-standing leftist befuddlement with indigeneity and autonomy had profound effects in our period.⁸⁵ Furthermore, while racialized slavery as such was essentially outlawed across the region by the end of the nineteenth century, its legacy lived on throughout the Cold War, not least in the persistent repression and marginalization of Afro-Latino communities.

Alongside race must be considered gender. Latin America’s Cold War had distinctly gendered facets, many in place before the Second World War. These are teased out in studies such as Elizabeth Quay Hutchison’s account of domestic workers’ shifting political solidarities in Cold War Chile, or Margaret Power’s analysis of the 1964 Chilean election, in which long-standing social attitudes rooted in religion and class were repurposed, the anti-communism being old, but nimble. In similar fashion, Benjamin Cowan has traced the roots of Brazil’s Cold War gender politics to the Vargas era, Isabella Cosse has foregrounded the nineteenth-century roots of ‘a family type based on the indissolubility of marriage, gender inequality, and patriarchal power’ for Argentine Cold War *guerrilleras*, and Michelle Chase has examined Cuban women’s revolutionary agency both before and after 1959.⁸⁶

While the literature on religious change and conflict in Latin America remains somewhat fissiparous, possibly reflecting its subject matter, divisions between – very broadly – conservative Catholic hierarchies and grassroots

⁸⁴ See, inter alia, C. Leal and C. H. Langebaek, eds., *Historias de raza y nación en América Latina* (Bogota, 2010); M. Seigel, *Uneven encounters: making race and nation in Brazil and the United States* (Durham, NC, 2009); F. Mallon, *Peasant and nation: the making of postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley, CA, 2009); P. Wade, *Race and ethnicity in Latin America* (London, 2010).

⁸⁵ See e.g. J. Jenkins, ‘The Indian wing: Nicaraguan Indians, Native American activists, and US foreign policy, 1979–1990’, in Garrard-Burnett, Atwood Lawrence, and Moreno, eds., *Beyond the eagle’s shadow*, pp. 175–99.

⁸⁶ See E. Quay Hutchison, ‘Shifting solidarities: the politics of household workers in Cold War Chile’, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 91 (2011), pp. 129–62; M. Power, ‘The engendering of anticommunism and fear in Chile’s 1964 presidential election’, *Diplomatic History*, 32 (2008), pp. 931–53; B. A. Cowan, *Securing sex: morality and repression in the making of Cold War Brazil* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2016); I. Cosse, ‘Infidelities: morality, revolution, and sexuality in left wing guerrilla organizations in 1960s and 1970s Argentina’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 23 (2014), pp. 415–50; M. Chase, *Revolution within the revolution: women and gender politics in Cuba, 1952–1962* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2015).

radicalism and, latterly, the rise of evangelical Protestantism are now fairly well covered in the historiography. Whether they quite fall into the Chomskyan framing of a continental Cold War battle between liberation theology and CIA-funded Pentecostalism remains rather more contentious.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the role of the Catholic right in underpinning vernacular pre-Cold War anti-communism is clear, as Romain Robinet has shown in his work on Mexican organizations like the Federal District Student Confederation and National Union of Catholic Students, established respectively in 1916 and 1931.⁸⁸

Finally, we cannot neglect violence and its growing historiographical prominence. The emergence of radical left-wing guerrilla groups and the development of better-educated, better-equipped militaries certainly pre-dates the orthodox periodization of the Cold War in many parts of Latin America. As McPherson put it: 'much of the violence perpetrated in the Cold War was not necessarily of the Cold War'.⁸⁹ The 1930s, for instance, saw a plethora of such developments, with the growth of the Sandino- and Martí-led movements pitted in an asymmetric confrontation with militaries that were increasingly autonomous, not just of national states and elites, but after 1970, of the US. Stephen Neufield and Thom Rath have shown that military modernization stretches back into the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary periods respectively in the Mexican case, playing a crucial role in state formation; Erik Ching has traced similar developments for the case of El Salvador.⁹⁰ Another aspect of state formation – the dyadic tension between democracy and dictatorship – may also deserve special consideration. Though I remain uncomfortable with these as *primary* categories of organization, Bethell and Roxborough, McPherson, and many others make a strong case for thinking around this axis of conflict.⁹¹

⁸⁷ See, inter alia, G. Colby and C. Dennett, *Thy will be done – the conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and evangelism in the age of oil* (London, 1995); F. Hagopian, ed., *Religious pluralism, democracy, and the Catholic church in Latin America* (Notre Dame, IN, 2009); E. Colón-Emeric, *Óscar Romero's theological vision* (Notre Dame, IN, 2018). K. Burke, *Revolutionaries for the right* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2018), is an example of the (mostly later) phenomenon of the semi-autonomy of right-wing paramilitaries.

⁸⁸ R. Robinet, 'Christianiser la révolution mexicaine: l'idéologie de l'Union Nationale des Étudiants Catholiques (années 1930)', in *Nuevo Mundo, Mundos Nuevos* (2016). For the persistence of such links, see L. Herrán Ávila, 'The other "new man": conservative nationalism and right wing youth in 1970s Monterrey', in J. Pensado and E. C. Ochoa, eds., *México beyond 1968: revolutionaries, radicals, and repression during the global sixties and subversive seventies* (Tucson, AZ, 2018), pp. 195–214.

⁸⁹ McPherson, 'Paradox', p. 314.

⁹⁰ See S. Neufield, *Blood contingent: the military and the making of modern Mexico, 1876–1911* (Albuquerque, NM, 2017); T. Rath, *Myths of demilitarization in postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920–1960* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2013); E. Ching, *Authoritarian El Salvador: politics and the origins of its military regimes, 1880–1940* (Notre Dame, IN, 2014).

⁹¹ See McPherson, 'Paradox'; and Bethell and Roxborough, eds., *Latin America*.

IV

I now turn to the Mexican case, and in particular the idea that Mexico's Cold War was delayed, or even absent. In 2010, Hal Brands made an implicit case for a late Cold War for Mexico, beginning only with the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Renata Keller took up this claim in 2014, making rather more persuasively the case that 'in Mexico, the Cold War began when the Cuban Revolution intensified the pre-existing struggle over the legacy of the Mexican Revolution'.⁹² To Keller, the contestation movements that emerged during the 'early years of the global Cold War' 'were not yet connected to that geopolitical confrontation', but 'independent responses to specific conditions in Mexico'.⁹³

In arguing for the Cold War's late arrival, Brands and Keller concur with Bethell and Roxborough that 'to the extent that US policy figured in the conservative restoration, it was as a matter of neglect and indifference, rather than pro-authoritarian intervention'.⁹⁴ Yet in Mexico, the US neither neglected nor was indifferent to the campaign, election and presidency of Alemán in 1945–6. On the contrary, it began by seeking reassurances that he was genuinely anti-communist and rapidly moved to cement good relations by arranging the first presidential visit since the Mexican–American War of 1846–8. In its wake, Alemán agreed to a substantial opening up of Mexico to US capital. The evisceration of the political left in 1945–7 was followed by the *charrazo*, the defeat of radical labour between 1948 and 1951.⁹⁵ In 1950, fearing that leftist opposition to his government might use primaries to infiltrate the Institutional Revolutionary Party, Alemán declared a 'systematic anti-Communist campaign' and outlawed primaries.⁹⁶ These processes – an ever closer relationship between the US and Mexican governments defined in opposition to the Soviet Union and under the rubric of the Rio Treaty, a populist anti-communism with charges of fifth column membership, an agreement to open the Mexican market to US capital and imports, and the repression of radical left opponents of such changes – cannot, I think, be conceived of separately from the Cold War. McPherson concurs, noting that 'Latin America was fully engaged in Cold War-related ideology and violence for a full decade before the Cuban Revolution, if not earlier in places such as Mexico'.⁹⁷ Iber

⁹² R. Keller, *Mexico's Cold War* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 5.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 34.

⁹⁴ A contention supported by the fact that Mexico is not referred to in Brands's study until 1959 (in reaction to the Cuban Revolution). See Brands, *Latin America's Cold War*, p. 25.

⁹⁵ See I. Roxborough, 'The Mexican *charrazo* of 1948: Latin American labor from world war to Cold War' (Kellogg Institute Working Paper #77, 1986).

⁹⁶ P. Gillingham, 'Fraud, violence and popular agency in elections', in B. Smith and P. Gillingham, eds., *Dictablanda* (Durham, NC, 2014), p. 163.

⁹⁷ H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews, vol. xi, no. 27 (2011), p. 26.

goes further still, arguing that 'studies' that begin with the Cuban Revolution are 'at least ten if not forty years too late'.⁹⁸

We can push this claim beyond culture: the Cold War diplomatic and economic dances took place early, were settled quickly, and placed Mexico firmly at the side of the United States. As Niblo suggests, the alliance was clear by the time of the Bretton Woods conference of 1944.⁹⁹ Despite rumblings of official discontent about Guatemala in 1954, and statements – however insincere – of concern about US policy towards revolutionary Cuba, Mexico's geopolitical relationship to its northern neighbour was such that critical rhetoric could not escalate into the sort of direct opposition seen before the Second World War.¹⁰⁰ And yet, while Mexico's structural position was overdetermined, Christy Thornton's forthcoming monograph shows that Mexican officials used what means they had – primarily the promotion of multilateralism – to contain their northern neighbour's looming power.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, the Cold War was normalized by the mid-1950s. The *charrazo* had absterged supposedly communist elements from Mexican labour, and the covert *oficialista* anti-communism of the mid-1940s was now more explicit. Jaime Pensado has noted the anti-communist nature of attacks on student leaders during the 1956 strikes, which described them as 'dangerous puppets' of the 'International Communist Party' (sic).¹⁰² Similarly, Renata Keller shows very clearly that the re-radicalized railway workers' movement of 1958–9 was deliberately framed as being under Soviet control.¹⁰³ Of course, we can go back further, and it makes a great deal of sense to examine the degree to which regional anti-communism appeared in the wake of the Russian Revolution – and in some cases, earlier still. Here, Daniela Spenser's works provide an invaluable guide to the genesis and course of Latin America's 'long Cold War'.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ P. Iber, *Neither peace nor freedom: the cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge, MA, 2015), p. 15. See also P. Iber, 'The Cold War politics of literature and the Centro Mexicano de Escritores', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 48 (2016), pp. 247–72.

⁹⁹ Niblo, *War, diplomacy and development*, p. 252.

¹⁰⁰ See Buchenau, 'Ambivalent neighbor'; and H. Aguilar Camín and L. Meyer, *In the shadow of the Mexican revolution* (Austin, TX, 1993), p. 165.

¹⁰¹ C. Thornton, *Revolution in development: Mexico and the governance of the global economy* (Berkeley, CA, forthcoming).

¹⁰² J. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico: student unrest and authoritarian political culture during the long sixties* (Stanford, CA, 2013), p. 83.

¹⁰³ Keller, *Mexico's Cold War*, pp. 39–41.

¹⁰⁴ See Spenser, *The impossible triangle*; D. Spenser, *In from the cold*, ed. with G. Joseph (Durham, NC, 2008); D. Spenser, *Stumbling its way through Mexico* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2011), a kind of trilogy telling the story of the long Cold War at various structural layers covering the agents of Bolshevism, the intergovernmental machinations of the 1930s, and the interventions and influences of the United States.

V

There is no doubt that for Latin America, the 1945–54 period falls under the contextual shade of the *geopolitical* Cold War. However, historians must go further and examine the *local* and *ideological* contexts. In the case of Mexico, a North American, anti-communist, anti-worker, pro-business alliance blossomed between Presidents Alemán and Truman. In the Caribbean Basin, Moulton's argument that anti-dictatorial and pro-dictatorial transnational networks made 'their own Cold War' seems incontestable, and fits neatly as an earlier chapter of Harmer's Inter-American Cold War.¹⁰⁵ For the region as a whole, the Rio Treaty of 1947 tied Latin American foreign policy to that of the US, implicitly pitting it against the USSR. My hope is that future synoptic accounts of the Cold War include a chapter – unpalatable though it may be – detailing local and international anti-communist forces' successful prosecution of the early Cold War. The relative dearth of left-wing governments and the weakness of labour movements and guerrillas in this period has seemed to stem scholarly curiosity, but just because the 'right' side was winning does not mean that the Cold War was not happening. In 2013, McPherson urged scholars to 'question our most basic findings, even the finding that the Cold War pervaded Latin America'.¹⁰⁶ For my part, I still believe it did. As the 'layered stack' model suggests, the Cold War streamlined, bludgeoned, and bundled together a panoply of other, older conflicts. But in the broadest sense, we can detect a headline-level clarity even when the most cursory local digging throws up all manner of uncomfortable oddities.

¹⁰⁵ Moulton, 'Backyard'.

¹⁰⁶ McPherson, 'Paradox', p. 318.