ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS OR ALIANZA PARA EL PROGRESO?

A REASSESSMENT OF THE LATIN AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS

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Submitted by Roberto Porzecanski

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http://fletcher.tufts.edu

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TUFTS UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION: THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH, A NEW APPROACH

On March 13th, 1961, President John F. Kennedy gathered the representatives of the Latin American governments in the White House to officially ask them "to join in a new Alliance for Progress -Alianza para Progreso- a vast cooperative effort, unparalleled in magnitude and nobility of purpose, to satisfy the basic needs of the American people for homes, work and land, health and schools."[1] With those words, one of the most outstanding periods in inter-American history had *formally* begun. The Alliance for Progress (henceforth the Alliance) was a remarkable venture.[2] It was evidently so, in President Kennedy's words, because it was unparalleled in magnitude –it aimed to direct 20 billion dollars of foreign economic aid to Latin America in a period of 10 years- and nobility of purpose –as it pursued very ambitious social objectives. It was also so because, as a consequence, it was received with unparalleled expectations and, though this could be foreseen at the time, was followed by unparalleled disappointment.

The Alliance's remarkableness, as well as and the expectations and the disillusionment it generated, made it the subject of a substantial amount of research, study and analysis. The Alliance has been looked at extensively from as almost as many perspectives as possible: its origins, its institutional instruments, its implementation, and its results. However, the Alliance's origins, by which I mean its conceptual foundations and its evolution as a policy,

[1] John F. Kennedy, "Address at a White House Reception for Members of Congress and for the Diplomatic Corps of the Latin American Republics," March 13th, 1961 in Theodore Sorensen, ed., *"Let the Word Go Forth" The Speeches, Statements and Writings of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1988), 352.

[2] A full description of what was the Alliance for Progress is beyond the scope of this paper. In this paper, I will assume the reader is familiar with its central elements. A full and thorough description of the Alliance and all its elements can be found in L. Ronald Scheman, "Concept and Creativity," in *The Alliance for Progress: A Retrospective,* ed. L. Ronald Scheman (New York: Praeger, 1988.)

despite having been extensively researched and written about, have not been accurately portrayed.

I will argue that this is the case because most studies of the origins of the Alliance for Progress suffer from a common shortcoming: they have approached the Alliance looking at it exclusively as a policy of the United States government (henceforth the United States-centric approach.) These studies have taken President Kennedy's invitation to the Latin Americans to "join" in a new Alliance for Progress literally, therefore looking at the Alliance as something that was conceived in the United States to be presented to the Latin American countries.

The Alliance for Progress, an alternative definition

If the Alliance for Progress was not an American[3] policy, then what was it? The Alliance can, theoretically, be defined in two different ways: it can be defined as a specific proposal of the Kennedy administration or, differently, as an inter-American policy. Undoubtedly, named as such, the Alliance for Progress[4] was a specific proposal of the Kennedy administration. But, clearly, the Alliance was much more than that. If President Kennedy's words wouldn't have been well received and acted upon in Latin America, we would not be thinking about the Alliance for Progress today. As a consequence, I will argue

[3] Although in the context of inter-American relations the term "American" may not be the most appropriate word to refer to something of United States origin, I will still use it with this connotation for purposes of simplicity.
[4] For a detailed account of the origin of the name, see: Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House (*Boston and New York: Mariner Books, 2002,) 193.

that the Alliance for Progress can only be understood as an inter-American policy,[5] albeit with an American name.

More importantly, as we will see in the next pages, when we look at the origins of the Alliance for Progress it will become clear that the Latin American participation in the Alliance did not start with President Kennedy's words. In fact, President Kennedy's words were the result of an inter-American dialogue that started in the early 1950s and that involved both the Eisenhower and the Kennedy Administrations.

Comparing approaches, broadening the perspective

Beyond being inaccurate, an additional problem of the United States-centric approach to the history of the Alliance is that it provides incorrect interpretations. I will argue that by looking at the Alliance exclusively as an American conception and therefore focusing their attention entirely on the policy-making process in the United States, scholars adhering to the United States-centric approach (henceforth scholars presenting the "conventional interpretation"[6]) have only presented a partial picture about the origins of the Alliance. As a result, the relative importance of the different factors that played a role in the creation of the Alliance for Progress has been misrepresented. In particular, by looking at the Alliance exclusively through the lens of American policy makers, scholars have generally

[5] Embodied in the "Charter of Punta del Este" the foundational document of the Alliance. The *Charter of Punta del Este* is available from http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/interam/intam16.htm

[6] Two examples are Roger Leeds, "The Origins of the Alliance for Progress: Continuity and Change in US Policy toward Latin America" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1976) and Gaddis Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine, 1945-1993* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994.)

characterized it as Cold War phenomenon, the response of the United States to challenges posed by the Cold War in Latin America.

In this paper, I will approach the issue of the origins of the Alliance for Progress in a more comprehensive manner, focusing my attention not exclusively on the policy-making process in the United States but also on the inter-American policy-making process. Among other things, approaching the issue in such manner will shed light to the fact that although the Cold War did play a role in the formulation of the Alliance for Progress, it was only one of many factors that drove its adoption, together with true concerns with the conditions in Latin America, which I believe to be the most important driving force behind what came to be known as the Alliance for Progress.

Those who approach the study of the Alliance for Progress from a United States-centric approach have produced what I will call the "traditional account"[7] about the origins of the Alliance, an account that is the direct result of exhaustively tracing the origins the Alliance for Progress focusing almost entirely on the U.S. policy-making process. In this paper, I will show that when the focus of study is broadened to include the inter-American policy-making process, it will become evident that the traditional account provides incorrect assessments about three important dimensions of the origins of the Alliance for Progress: its purpose, its nature and its conceptual foundations.

[7] A detailed version of which can be found, for example, in: Harvey S. Perloff, *Alliance for Progress, A Social Invention in the Making* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969) and Leeds, "The Origins of the Alliance for Progress."

The paper is organized in three sections. In the first section, I will present the "traditional account" produced by those who study the Alliance from a United States-centric approach. In the second section, I will provide a critique to this approach along the three mentioned dimensions: purpose, nature and conceptual foundations. I will end with a conclusion.

THE TRADITIONAL ACCOUNT

Focusing exclusively on the policy-making process in the United States, scholars have reached the consensus that the origin of the Alliance for Progress is to be found somewhere in between the very end of the first or the early days of the second Eisenhower Administration. These scholars point to the fact that Eisenhower's original policy towards the hemisphere slowly started to change as a result of a series of process unfolding and particular events that took place.

The early policy of the Eisenhower administration towards the Third World in general and towards Latin America in particular was, roughly, twofold. In the security sphere, the policy could be summarized as one that stressed military pacts and military aid to support governments that were aligned with U.S. interest in the Cold War. In practice, this meant governments that were actively opposed to all perceived, real or not, communist threat.

In the economic realm, the policy was based on the belief that economic development would only come as a result of the flow of private capital. Therefore, the U.S. assigned great importance to the existence of governments that provided both the economic stability and the legal security that were required for private capital (in particular, U.S. investments) to flow and stay in Latin America.[8] Almost tautologically, governments that fulfilled one

[8] The economic side of the "traditional" Eisenhower policy was also eloquently described by his most important advisor regarding Latin American affairs, his brother Milton Eisenhower (who would later become an advocate for change). Writing about his first trip to South America, in 1953, he describes the extent to which, up to that point, the policy premises were unquestioned, even though he realized how critical the situation in Latin America was: "I have given this abbreviated account of my visit in 1953 because I want to emphasize as strongly as I can that both United States and Latin American leaders were then thinking solely in terms of orthodox economic aid to Latin America as the solution to perplexing problems. By the end of the trip I personally had become painfully aware of the need for social reform –for misery, poverty, ill health, and

condition also fulfilled the other, as a belief in the importance of state action for development (in the lines of land reform, for example) was perceived as a penetration of communist ideas.

Reasons for Change

As said before, scholars have argued that a series of processes and particular events started to question the adequacy of this approach to Latin American policy. The first of these underlying processes is said to be the deterioration of the economic and social conditions in Latin America, mainly driven by the important increase in population and by the continuing deterioration of the economic situation in the different Latin American countries. In the late 1950s these countries were facing a severe deterioration in their terms of trade that was significantly slowing their economic growth, together with overwhelming population growth and mass migration to the cities.[9]

On top of that, scholars argue, in the mid 1950's the Soviet Union started to realize that the deterioration of conditions in Latin America and the inadequacy of U.S. policy to respond to

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illiteracy obviously haunted the land like evil specters. But except for an uneasiness and a feeling of compassion, I did not relate this to what we were doing and should do officially, except to hope that our efforts might aid countries improve production and thus provide funds for internal social development. Certainly instigating social change did not seem to be the responsibility of the United States." Milton Eisenhower, *The Wine is Bitter; The United States and Latin America* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963,) 199.

[9] More specifically, as Ronald Scheman points out summarizing the ideas presented in L. Ronald Scheman, "Concept and Creativity" in *The Alliance for Progress; A Retrospective,* Scheman, 4: "As Walt W. Rostow points out in Chapter 24… It was a young continent in which over half the population was under the age of 20 and was rapidly approaching a job market in economies that were providing unable to generate employment. Mass migration to the cities was transforming the countryside, as it was throughout the western world, resulting in dismal urban sprawl and slum conditions. Forty million people were expected to migrate to the cities during the 1960s while job creation was proceeding at a pace that would produce only 5 million new jobs. Illiteracy abounded. Agriculture lagged behind population growth, forcing increased food imports, while commodity prices for Latin America's exports, particularly coffee and sugar, were continually falling."

the challenges posed by that deterioration provided an opportunity to extend Soviet influence to the Western Hemisphere. As Roger Leeds relates:

> In January 1956, the subject of growing communist influence shifted from Africa and Asia to Latin America, when Soviet Premier Bulganin announced that his country was prepared to expand economic and commercial ties with Latin American countries. The Premier's statement was particularly noteworthy because at that time the Soviet Union had regular diplomatic relations with only three Latin American countries –Argentina, Mexico and Uruguay. The [New York] Times interpreted the statement as 'the strongest bid to date to win an economic and commercial tie with Latin America'.[10]

Bulganin's announcement was relevant, it is pointed out, not only because it signaled that the Soviets recognized that the economic and social situation in Latin America provided an opportunity to extend Soviet influence. His announcement was also relevant because it awakened some Americans about the inadequacy of U.S. policy and how the economic problems in the Americas could bear Cold War significance.

In light of the rising challenge posed by the situation in Latin America and the new communist strategy, a debate started to take shape in the political and policy-making circles in the United States about what would be the most appropriate policy towards Latin America, in particular, and the Third World in general. The key issue of this debate, that is, the main point of argument and disagreement, was whether the policy that the Eisenhower

[10] Leeds, "The Origins of the Alliance for Progress," 46.

administration had pursued up to that point was appropriate in light of the new challenges or if, to the contrary, a new approach was needed, and, if so, what should this new approach look like.

The debate about a new policy towards Latin America was *to a certain extent* part of a broader debate regarding American policy towards the Third World, a debate in which the U.S. Congress played a very significant role. In July 1956, the Senate created a Special Committee to Study the Foreign Aid Program, Chaired by Senator Francis Green, a Democrat from Rhode Island who would a year later become Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. The hearings held by this Special Committee soon became a forum for the exchange of ideas regarding the role that foreign aid would play if a new strategy towards the Third World was adopted. As part of this debate, two M.I.T. economists that worked at the Center for International Studies, Max Millikan and Walt W. Rostow, devised and articulated a new strategy that placed a significant and crucial emphasis on a new foreign aid policy for the United States. The core assumptions and recommendations of these two economists were contained in a book published in 1957 called A Proposal; Key to an Effective Foreign Policy,[11] in which a case was advanced to significantly increase foreign aid as a foreign policy tool, particularly for achieving Cold War policy objectives.[12]

Specifically regarding Latin America, in simultaneous with the broad debate about a need for a new strategy towards the Third World that took place in policy-making circles in Washington, a similar process of reassessing the adequacy of the traditional Eisenhower

[11] Walt W. Rostow and Max Millikan, *A Proposal; Key to an Effective Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper, 1957.)
[12] The evolution of this debate is traced with extreme detail in Leeds, "The Origins of the Alliance for Progress."

policy happened on a more personal level, involving particular officials within the Eisenhower administration. Specifically two officials, Milton Eisenhower, who advised the President on Latin America, and Douglas Dillon, Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs in the late years of the Eisenhower Administration, realized early than most than a change in policy was badly needed.

Milton Eisenhower, for example, spent the eight years of his brother's Administration dealing with Latin America and he had traveled extensively throughout the region. In those years, he grew to realize that the policy that was being pursued was ineffective and started to lobby, inside the administration, for a change.[13]

But, scholars point out, while the deterioration of the economic and social situation in Latin America, the change in the Soviet's strategy and the availability of a new approach played a significant role in the change of U.S. policy towards the region, a series of specific events that were, nonetheless, related to the deterioration in conditions and to a growing dissatisfaction with U.S. policy towards the region, provided the final stroke.

The first of these specific events was what came to be known as Vice-President Nixon's failed trip to South America in May, 1958. As Harvey Perloff recounts:

> But the change in the U.S. view of Latin America did not come from logic. It came as a result of the shock that followed the hostile and violent reaction to Vice

[13] A more detailed account of the evolution of the thinking of Milton Eisenhower and Douglas Dillon can be found in: Eisenhower, *The Wine is Bitter* and C. Douglas Dillon, "The Prelude," in *The Alliance for Progress; A Retrospective,* Scheman, 63.

> President Richard M. Nixon's so-called "goodwill tour" of South America [probably, to address the growing dissatisfaction with U.S. policy] in the spring of 1958. The fact that a Vice President of the United States could be spat upon, insulted, and his life threatened [in Venezuela], focused U.S. attention forcefully on the disintegration of its Latin American policy.[14]

The second of these specific events was something that came immediately after and to some extent as a consequence of what happened to Nixon in Venezuela. Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek used Nixon's failed trip as a trigger to call for what he named "Operation Pan America," which essentially was a request for substantial financial assistance from the United States targeted to the development of Latin America. Although *this was not the first time* Kubitschek articulated an idea as such, the call for "Operation Pan America" was certainly his more formal and visible proposal.

Moreover, President Kubitschek's "Operation Pan America" essentially echoed and articulated a widespread feeling in Latin America, particularly among democratically elected officials and leaders of democratic forces, about the inadequacy of United States policy towards Latin America, and put forward a relatively specific set of proposals for change. Behind President Kubitschek's proposal was the feeling that Latin America had been forgotten in the post World War II years, particularly vis-à-vis the American attitude towards Europe embodied in the Marshall Plan.

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[14] Perloff, *Alliance for Progress*, 13. Nixon's own account of what happened in Caracas, Venezuela can be found in Richard M. Nixon, *Six Crises* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1962.)

Finally, the last and perhaps most important event that is referred to as a trigger of change in United States policy was the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, in January 1st, 1959. As Perloff accounts:

> The need for a new policy had been given urgency by the Castro victory in Cuba. As his government and the Cuban press increasingly anti-American and pro-Communist in tone during 1959 and 1960, U.S. policy shifted from a position of patience and tolerance. In March, 1960, President Eisenhower approved initial work on a contingency plan to overthrow the Castro regime. Four months later, while U.S. embassies were reporting from all parts of Latin America that the Castro victory was exciting interest in a revolutionary approach to winning long-denied reforms from the ruling elites, President Eisenhower said the United States would support sweeping reforms in Latin America with financial assistance. The Latin Americans were quick to respond.[15]

A new policy emerges

It is evident, by Perloff's account, that by late 1959 the American policy towards Latin America had gone through a deep revision. This revision resulted in a new policy that produced the creation of the Inter-American Development Bank, something the Latin Americans had been insistently requesting for long and finally took place in 1959, that took President Eisenhower on a goodwill trip to South America in February, 1960, but, most

[15] Perloff, *Alliance for Progress*, 16.

importantly, that drove to the adoption of the Act of Bogotá[16] with full American support. The Act of Bogotá, approved by the Council of the Organization of American States on September 13, 1960, recommended "Measures for Social Improvement and Economic Development within the Framework of Operation Pan America" and established, by decision of the United States "a special inter-American fund for social development" for which Congress had previously authorized 500 million dollars.

Leeds' main conclusion about the Act of Bogotá is worth quoting because it underscores all the elements in which the United States-centric approach fails to fully grasp, as we will see, all the elements that played a role in the creation of the Alliance for Progress. About the Act of Bogotá, he says:

> [It] came after eight years in which government officials gradually shifted their outlook about the importance of the hemisphere to the Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union. Also, it came only after Congress had debated the issues and tentatively concluded that aid to developing countries was an important device in the United States arsenal of weapons to combat perceived Soviet threats. And finally, the Act of Bogotá signaled that the Administration felt reasonably confident that the American people had at least concluded that a large foreign aid program was acceptable and even important in terms of U.S. national interest.[17]

[16] A full text of the Act of Bogotá is available from http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/interam/intam08.htm
[17] Leeds, "The Origins of the Alliance for Progress" 187.

About this same process, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.[18] has said:

> The combination of [Douglas] Dillon, Milton Eisenhower and, in 1959, Fidel Castro finally began to have its effects. The Cuban revolution convinced Dillon that the United States simply could not go into another hemisphere meeting without solid recommendations of its own to lay on the table. When President Eisenhower returned from his own Latin American trip early in 1960, Dillon persuaded him in June to take a new step and propose American assistance in establishing a hemisphere fund for social progress.[19]

The Kennedy Administration

For Eisenhower, there was little time left after the Act of Bogotá was adopted. Two months later John F. Kennedy was elected President and both the rhetoric and the commitment of the United States towards Latin America were revolutionized, although clearly building on the process just described.

President Kennedy talked about a new Alliance for Progress in his inaugural speech, in his first State of the Union address and on the evening of March 13th, 1961, when he gathered the representatives of the Latin American governments in the White House to officially launch the Alliance. After a few months and several preparatory meetings, the Charter of

[18] Special Assistant to President John F. Kennedy, involved, among other things, in Latin American policy.
[19] Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 190.

Punta del Este[20], the founding document of the Alliance, was adopted on August 17th, 1961 in Uruguay.

It has been bitterly debated whether President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress proposal represented the logical and unavoidable next step to what had been done during the late years of the Eisenhower Administration or, to the contrary, if President Kennedy actually substantively modified the policy of the previous administration.[21] To illustrate this debate, I will present two contrasting views that show the most important arguments advanced by both sides. For example, while Milton Eisenhower has argued that:

> A critical reading of those addresses [in reference to the addresses President Eisenhower gave in his late Latin American trip], of his special message to Congress in August 1960 (conceived on the trip), and of several talks made later by President Eisenhower, will convince even an ardent political partisan that the Alliance for Progress proposal made by President Kennedy in 1961 did not envision a major shift in policy; on the contrary, it was the logical next step in our constantly evolving programs.[22]

On the other hand, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. has said that the Alliance for Progress proposal represented a revolution in U.S. policy towards Latin America, even in light of the late moves of the Eisenhower administration:

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[20] The *Charter of Punta del Este* is available from http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/interam/intam16.htm

[21] A detailed and objective discussion of what elements of continuity and change existed between the Alliance for Progress as proposed by Kennedy and the developments that preceded it is beyond the scope of this paper. This has been done thoroughly by Roger Leeds in: Leeds, "The Origins of the Alliance for Progress."

[22] Eisenhower, *The Wine is Bitter,* 12.

> Under the prodding of Douglas Dillon, Milton Eisenhower and, more specially, Fidel Castro, the Eisenhower Administration had come by 1960 to support the Act of Bogotá and asked Congress to appropriate $ 500 million for social development in Latin America. The *Alianza* went considerably beyond this to lay down three goals for the hemisphere: long-term economic development, structural reform, and political democratization.[23]

I believe that an objective assessment of the history undoubtedly points to the fact that President Kennedy's proposal for an Alliance for Progress, while clearly building on the shifts in Latin American policy that took place in the late years of the Eisenhower administration (embodied in the Act of Bogotá,) represented an innovation in terms of American commitment (both rhetorical and financial) and in terms of the breadth of the agenda.

[23] Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "Myth and Reality," in *The Alliance for Progress; A Retrospective,* Scheman, 67.

A CRITIQUE

What is missing in the picture presented so far? As said before, the United States-centric approach has two problems. The first is one of accuracy. As I explained before, the Alliance was not an American policy but an inter-American policy, and its study should be approached as such.

The second problem with the United States-centric approach, also mentioned, is that it provides incorrect interpretations in emphasizing that the Alliance for Progress' *purpose* was to prevent communist and Soviet infiltration in Latin America; that the most important characteristic of its *nature* was its form, a massive aid program, and not its policy recommendations; and, finally, that its *conceptual foundations* are to be found in a new theory about the role of foreign aid in foreign economic policy and not in a new theory of development in Latin America.

Purpose

I shall argue that the main purpose of the Alliance for Progress was not, as scholars argue, to prevent Fidel Castro's assertion that the Andes would become the Sierra Maestra of South America. Of course, counter-communism and the prevention of revolution, by providing an appealing 'revolutionary' alternative, were undoubtedly part of the intentions of the United States in changing its policy towards Latin America, both in the Eisenhower and the Kennedy years. This rationale should not be underestimated, as the officials involved in the Alliance have publicly acknowledged. Moreover, the generous commitment of funds by

the United States Congress to the Alliance for Progress can hardly be understood without this underlying justification.

But, even within the United States, counterrevolution was not the sole objective being pursued by the change in policy. There is strong evidence that points to the fact that many of the American officials involved in the creation and implementation were genuinely committed to Latin America, and saw a change in policy as the 'right thing to do.' This was the case in the Eisenhower years, as eloquently expressed by Milton Eisenhower:

> We should remember that the Alliance was evolved largely without reference to Castro-communism, that the program would be imperative even if there were no communist threat, that it is wholly in harmony with our deepest religious and democratic convictions, and that our abiding purpose in positive, not negative. But the Alliance is, coincidentally, our best hope for smothering the evil that seeks to destroy the concept of associated free nations and to substitute an absolute reminiscent of social man prior to the dawn of human freedom.[24]

There is also strong evidence that in the Kennedy years many of those who worked on the Alliance also shared a vision in which security and Cold War concerns were not the exclusive driving force. This has been argued, for example, by Lincoln Gordon, a member of the Kennedy transition task force that dealt with Latin America:

[24] Milton Eisenhower, "The Alliance for Progress, Historic Roots" in *The Alliance for Progress, Problems and Perspectives,* ed. John C. Dreier (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), 23.

> Alongside these negative motivations [in reference to counter communism motivations] was the positive side –the hopes for a major advance in social and economic development in a region of long standing special interest to the United States. For me and for most North Americans initiators of the Alliance, these positive expectations were the dominant force behind our actions. That may surprise listeners in the 1980s when superpower rivalries are again so prominent. It can be understood only against the background of the Kennedy Administration's wider policies of aid for the world's underdeveloped regions –in part ideological, but also, in the famous phrase of the inaugural address, "because it is right."[25]

In sum, a careful look at the purposes of those in charge of putting together the Alliance, even if we restrict the analysis to the policy-making process in the United States, portrays a much nuanced and comprehensive picture about the origins of the Alliance, a picture in which Cold War considerations were clearly not the only driving force.

But, if we take the analysis one step further, and look at the inter-American policy-making process instead of looking exclusively at the policy-making process in the United States, we see clearly that counter communism was not the main driving force behind the Alliance for Progress. Ironically, this is even recognized by those who more strongly defend the pure Cold War rationale for the Alliance for Progress. For example, Howard J. Wiarda, while arguing one the one hand that "the Alliance for Progress was a direct response and outgrowth of the Cuban revolution…. this was not just some starry-eyed, altruistic,

[25] Lincoln Gordon, "The Alliance at Birth: Hopes and Fears" in *The Alliance for Progress; A Retrospective,* Scheman, 74.

humanitarian giveaway program, as it was sometimes portrayed at the cartoon level and as some of its supporters actually believed,"[26] at the same time acknowledges that:

> A powerful and earlier impetus to the Alliance had also come from Latin America. As early 1955 President Juscelino Kubitschek of Brazil had began to call for a vast program of assistance to and self help for Latin America, which he [later] called "Operation Pan-America" and which incorporated most of the main elements of the Alliance. He was later joined by President Alberto Lleras Camargo of Colombia in pushing for such a program. Other Latin American presidents advocated similar measures. The founding in 1959 of the Inter-American Development Bank, a regional, multilateral, but largely U.S.-funded assistance bank, was an integral part of the same campaign. Indeed, one of the unique aspects of the Alliance as an assistance program was the degree to which it initially grew out of, and particularly incorporated, ideas emanating from Latin America.[27]

Wiarda's argument is important for two reasons. Firstly, because it underscores the extent to which the Alliance was the result of an inter-American policy-making process (something that, I would argue, by this point should be beyond any question.) As such, it becomes evident that one should look for the motivations behind the Alliance for Progress not only among American policy makers but also among Latin American policy makers. And about that there is widespread agreement that the motivation was not a counter communist one, but a true concern for addressing the key development issues facing Latin America. For

[26] Howard J. Wiarda, "Did the Alliance 'Lose Its Way,' or Were Its Assumptions All Wrong from the Beginning and Are Those Assumptions Still with Us?" in *The Alliance for Progress; A Retrospective,* Scheman, 99.
[27] Ibid., 96.

Latin Americans, the Alliance's main and most important objective was development as an end, not as a means. The purpose was not to reduce the incentives for Communist revolutions throughout the hemisphere; it basically was to take their countries out of the situations of stagnation and despair in which they were immersed. In addition, Latin Americans were trying to set up the conditions for democracy for flourish and stabilize, which they saw highly correlated with economic development, a vision they shared with their American counterparts.

The second reason for which Wiarda's argument is important is because is highlights the extent to which the substantive provisions of the Alliance emanated from Latin America. I will come back to this point later, when I discuss conceptual foundations.

I believe it is patently clear that when we approach the Alliance for Progress from a comprehensive perspective, it becomes evident that its main purpose was not to prevent the spread of communism or revolutions 'Castro style' in Latin America. On the contrary, the most important objective being pursued was the achievement of a significant improvement in the conditions for Latin America, economically, socially and politically. I argue that this is the case not only because this was certainly the overarching most important objective for one of the two partners in the Alliance (Latin America) but also because many of the policy makers in the United States (including, to a great extent, President Kennedy) were also, essentially, pursuing the same objective. The fact that both objectives could to some extent be achieved simultaneously should not obscure the relative importance of the two different motivations.

Once again, the importance that counter communism played in the creation of the Alliance, essentially in the United States, should not be ignored. However, broadening the perspective displays the relative importance of this motivation. The problem of the United States centric approach, as I said, is one of emphasis.

Nature

Beyond misrepresenting the purposes of the Alliance, emphasis is wrongly placed by scholars in a second important dimension of the Alliance for Progress: its nature. To explain what I mean by nature, let me go back to President Kennedy's words on March 13th, 1961, when the Alliance for Progress was presented as "a vast cooperative effort, unparalleled in magnitude and nobility of purpose, to satisfy the basic needs of the American people for homes, work and land, health and schools."[28] The issue at stake here is: what was the most important characteristic of the Alliance, its "magnitude" or its "nobility of purpose"? A possible answer to this question is that the question itself is irrelevant, that the exceptionality of the Alliance was such because it was *both* unparalleled in magnitude *and* nobility of purpose. Although it is hard to disregard this argument, I will argue that comparing the relative importance of "magnitude" –the amount of funds involved- and "nobility of purpose" –the ambitious social objectives of the Alliance- is important in the sense that it sheds new light on the origins of the Alliance.

Scholars have constantly argued that the most important feature of the Alliance was its magnitude and, to support this claim, they point to the exceptionally ambitious goal that the

[28] John F. Kennedy, "Address at a White House Reception for Members of Congress and for the Diplomatic Corps of the Latin American Republics," March 13th, 1961 in Sorensen, ed., *"Let the Word Go Forth"*, 352.

Alliance established. As Roland Scheman points out, "The daring ambitions of the Alliance were to channel to the region $20 billion in foreign assistance in a decade, with $10 billion coming from official sources and $10 billion from private sources."[29] The Alliance aimed to entail, undoubtedly, an unprecedented financial effort, both in general and specifically in terms of the American commitment. By focusing on the United States, and seeing such a deep and unmatched financial commitment to Latin America, scholars concluded that this was the most striking feature of the Alliance.

However, if we analyze the substantive elements of the Alliance for Progress[30] even from a pure American perspective, it becomes strikingly clear that if the American financial commitment was unprecedented, its support for the substantive policies involved in the Alliance was much more so. Regarding these substantive policies and for purposes of my argument, the summary provided by Scheman is descriptive enough:

> The Charter of Punta del Este, signed on August 17th, 1961, set forth 94 specific objectives toward national economic and social goals, according to the Organization of American States. They covered almost every aspect of social and economic activity. They ranged from the major objective of achieving sustained economic growth by raising per capita income not less than 2.5 percent a year, to more general goals of social justice and more equitable income distribution. In a number of areas specific targets were set forth, such as reform of tax and agrarian structures,

[29] L. Ronald Scheman, "Concept and Creativity" in *The Alliance for Progress; A Retrospective,* Scheman, 8. A much more detailed discussion about the economic aspects of the Alliance for Progress can be found in this chapter.
[30] I understand that an argument can be made that the magnitude was also a substantive element, and I will tend to agree with that assertion. However, for analytical purposes, I will treat the magnitude and the substantive elements separately.

provision of low-income housing and health services, strengthening of labor organizations, and the achievement of economic integration.[31]

It is impossible to overestimate the radical departure that the support by the United States to progressive tax and land reform, strengthening of labor organizations and Latin American integration represented from previous United States policy. Even when looking exclusively at the American side of the Alliance for Progress, it is clear that its most striking characteristic was not its magnitude but the policies it committed the United States' support to.

But, if we, once again, take the analysis one step further, and look at the nature of the Alliance from a Latin American perspective, it becomes even more evident that the most outstanding characteristic of the Alliance for Progress was not the enormous amount of resources that would be poured into the region by a previously reticent United States (although that element can hardly be underestimated) but the fact that the U.S. was not only willing to accept but to support policies (such as land reform, Latin American integration, etc.) that until recently had seen with much suspicion.

I believe it is now clear, in light of the preceding discussion, that while the Alliance for Progress was unprecedented both in its magnitude and in its substantive policy recommendations the most striking characteristic about it, both from a change in U.S. policy

[31] L. Ronald Scheman, "Concept and Creativity" in *The Alliance for Progress; A Retrospective,* Scheman, 12. Most of the same substantive elements were already present in the Act of Bogotá. For a thorough comparison between the two documents (the Charter of Punta del Este and the Act of Bogotá, see: Leeds, "The Origins of the Alliance for Progress."

perspective and from a Latin American perspective, were the specific policy recommendations that were included as an integral part of the Alliance.

The immediate logical question that follows this assertion is: why is this important? It is important because the Alliance's magnitude and the Alliance's substantive provisions have very different conceptual foundations. While the foundations for a massive program of foreign aid are partially to be found in the United States, the foundations for the substantive provisions involved in the Alliance undoubtedly came from Latin America. The fact that the most striking characteristic of the Alliance were its substantive provisions not only speaks about the purposes of the Alliance, but also highlights the crucial role that Latin America played in its formation. A more detailed discussion of this issue will make the case even stronger.

Conceptual Foundations

Two different sets of ideas played part, to different degrees, in the formulation of the Alliance for Progress. These are, on the one hand, the ideas that Max Millikan and Walt Rostow developed and articulated in their book A Proposal and, on the other, what has grown to be called structuralism, a truly indigenous current of Latin American thought about the development problems of Latin America, spearheaded by the work that Argentinean Economist Raúl Prebisch did in the framework of the ECLAC, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. A brief summary is necessary to illuminate the discussion that will follow.

I have already briefly touched upon the ideas articulated in Millikan and Rostow's A Proposal,[32] saying that the core argument of the book (and the theory behind it) was that foreign economic aid should be given a much important role as a foreign policy tool, particularly for achieving Cold War policy objectives. Additional important elements were the requirement of government planning in the receiving countries and the assurance that the economic aid offered should be guaranteed for at least several years, as "even quite a large program will lose most of its effectiveness if it teeters along on the verge of Congressional disapproval with no more than a one-year lease on life."[33] Interestingly, beyond advocating for an increase in foreign aid and requiring temporal stability and planning in the receiving countries, the proposals of Millikan and Rostow did not advance any other policy recommendations for the potential receiving countries.

On the other hand, the ideas of what is known as "structuralism" can be traced back at least to the mid 1940s although its founding document, Raúl Prebisch's El desarrollo económico de la America Latina y algunos de sus principales problemas[34], was published in 1949. In brief, structuralism advocated industrialization and programs of price stabilization as ways of overcoming the structural problem of the deterioration of terms of trade for Latin America, progressive redistribution of wealth, land reform, the need to improve the technological capacity and infrastructure, the importance of national planning and the need for the creation of a Latin American common market. Finally, structuralism recognized the need for

[32] Rostow and Millikan, *A Proposal.*
[33] Ibid., 67.
[34] Raúl Prebisch, "El desarrollo económico de la América Latina y algunos de sus principales problemas" in *La Obra de Prebisch en la CEPAL*, ed. Adolfo Gurrieri (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1982.)

an important increase in foreign funds to supplement the insufficient internal resources existing in Latin America.[35]

Scholars adhering to the conventional interpretation of the origins of the Alliance, by looking exclusively at the policy-making process in the United States, and seeing as the Alliance's most outstanding feature its magnitude as a foreign aid program, have pointed to the theory advanced by Millikan and Rostow as the conceptual foundation of the Alliance for Progress.

However, even if we agreed with the assessment that the Alliance's most outstanding feature was its magnitude as a foreign aid program it is important to recognize that the claims by Latin Americans that a new inter-American policy was needed and that such a policy would *necessary involve an increase in U.S. development assistance* clearly predated the diffusion of Millikan and Rostow's ideas. President Kubitschek call for "Operation Pan-America," which was formalized with a letter to Eisenhower in 1958, was far from being his first attempt to request an increase in U.S. assistance.

In addition, at the beginning the link between Millikan and Rostow's ideas and the problems of Latin America was, at best, weak. There is strong evidence that the theory presented by Millikan and Rostow was clearly developed not thinking about Latin America but about other areas of the world, particularly India and South East Asia. This is evident not only because nowhere in their book can a mention to Latin America be found, but also by the

[35] A thorough description of structuralism can be found, for example, in: Victor Urquidi, *The Challenge of Development in Latin America*, trans. Marjory Urquidi (New York: Praeger, 1964.)

fact that in 1958 when then Senator John F. Kennedy, advised by Rostow,[36] attempted to turn the broad debate taking place in the Senate into a more concrete proposal he put forward a bipartisan initiative that would come to be known as the Kennedy-Cooper Initiative, aimed at providing enlarged and long-term international support for the economic development of India.

Moreover, when we switch our focus to what I have argued was the most important element of the Alliance, its substantive recommendations, there can be no doubt that the Alliance owns its policy prescriptions, embodied in the Charter of Punta del Este, to the ideas of structuralism. A simple comparison of the structuralist literature and the Charter of Punta del Este (and to some degree, the Act of Bogotá) would render this evident. However, this wasn't how it was perceived at the time (and to a great extent, it is not how it is perceived today), what drove Raúl Prebisch himself, in an article written in 1963, to stress the point:

> Indeed, the basic ideas underlying this document [in reference to the Charter of Punta del Este] were conceived and gradually developed over a period of years in Latin America. For a long time we have constantly maintained the view that a vigorous movement of industrialization was imperative in the process of development. We have also reaffirmed the inevitability of land reform and other changes in the social structure, in order to facilitate the massive adoption of modern technology and the progressive redistribution of the fruits of development. We called

[36] A thorough account of Kennedy's interest in India can be found in: Walt W. Rostow, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Foreign Aid (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985.) About Rostow's influence on Kennedy, Leeds has said: "In the case of Professor Rostow, a close association with John Kennedy developed at the same time his ideas about foreign economic assistance were gaining increasing credibility. According to the M.I.T. professor, beginning in early 1958 'I became Senator Kennedy's principal advisor on foreign economic policy… This was well before other intellectuals began to jump on the Senator's bandwagon'." Leeds, "The Origins of the Alliance for Progress," 108.

the attention to the importance of terms of trade, and the need to counteract their tendency to deteriorate through transformations in the economic structure; and we insistently advocated measures to attenuate their fluctuations. The idea of the Latin American Common Market emerged in our countries. And the need for a considerable enlargement in foreign funds to supplement a more intense mobilization of internal resources in order to accelerate the rhythm of development, was also preached for a long time in Latin America.

Moreover, though facing strong opposition, we, the Latin Americans, were the ones that launched the idea of the need for systematic planning as a means to act in a conscious and deliberate way upon the economic and social forces and thus expedite the achievement of the great goals of development in an orderly and progressive fashion. In times that are not yet far behind some of these ideas encountered very strong resistance, which was frequently couched in intractable and dogmatic terms. Now they are recognized as sound and valid and are largely embodied in the Charter of Punta del Este. However, there has developed a rather peculiar tendency to present these ideas as having been conceived in the United States, or as constituting a ready made American blueprint to be applied in Latin America. I am really concerned about this trend, for not only is it contrary to the facts, but its political implications are highly detrimental to the Alliance itself and to the broad popular support it requires in Latin America.[37]

[37] Raúl Prebisch, "Economic Aspects of The Alliance" in *The Alliance for Progress, Problems and Perspectives,* ed. Dreier, 25.

Prebisch's words are eloquent, and I believe them to be particularly important for two reasons. Firstly, because they show that the spirit and the core foundations of the Alliance for Progress are to be found more than anywhere in the structuralist paradigm. Moreover, as important as the conceptual influence that structuralist thought had in the formation of the Alliance, its imprint was also felt at a more practical level. Two examples will illustrate this.

At the institutional level, between President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress speech (March, 1961) and the Conference of Punta del Este (August, 1961), very significant preparatory work for the conference took place. In this context, the most important preparatory document that was elaborated for the Conference of Punta del Este was called Planning for Economic and Social Development for Latin America[38] and was written, in the framework of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (Pan American Union), by a Group of Experts, most of them strongly affiliated with structuralist thought and assisted by Raúl Prebisch and Osvaldo Sunkel of ECLAC. The substantive proposals contained in that document, which was circulated to all countries before the conference, were not only a manifestation of structuralist thought but also prefigure almost entirely the provisions of the Charter of Punta del Este.

The influence that Latin Americans had in the Alliance for Progress in general and in the drafting of the Charter of Punta del Este in particular becomes even clearer when we look at the communication between Richard Goodwin, Kennedy's Assistant Special Counsel and the President. Although in his published account of the origins of the Alliance for Progress[39]

[38] Pan American Union, *Planning for Economic and Social Development for Latin America*, Washington, D.C., 1961.
[39] Richard N. Goodwin, *Remembering America: A Voice From the Sixties* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1988.)

he barely makes any reference to the Latin American influences on the project, the records of his communications with the President show that influence with clarity:

> During the same week in April [in reference to the week of April 14th, 1961], Lincoln Gordon and I met in Rio with Jorge Sol (Chief of the IA-ECOSOC[40] staff), Raul Prebisch (Chief of the UN Commission for Latin America), and Felipe Herrera (President of Inter-American Bank). Out of this intensive series of discussions, lasting a week, emerged a general consensus of the objectives of the July meeting – what we hoped to accomplish, a proposed agenda, and the manner in which the preparatory work should be organized.[41]

At a more personal level, the influence and the degree of involvement that Raúl Prebisch himself had with those planning the Alliance for Progress in the United States can be seen through the eyes of Adolf Berle, an American diplomat with a long and outstanding career who was asked to chair the Latin American task force, the transition group in charge of advising President Kennedy in Latin American policy. In his diary entry for December 10th, 1961, he wrote:

> December 10 continued. To take Raúl Prebisch (Argentine Economist) out to breakfast. This pursuant to instructions from Senator Kennedy's office…. He [Prebisch] said the whole job was to give economic and social content to the idea of freedom, and that a strong statement by Kennedy along those lines would be a great deal of help to him…. In his view, this was an historical moment and required

[40] Acronym for Inter-American Economic and Social Council
[41] Goodwin to Kennedy, 12 June 1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963 12: 27.

> everyone to get on board…. ECLA contemplates a closed common market for Latin America. I asked whether the United States might come in on it-opening its own markets now to Latin American manufacture against their commitment to reduce their tariffs on our manufactured goods over a period of X years. This brought him all up standing (he is alleged to be anti-American) and he thought it would be wonderful.[42]

Moreover, Prebisch's words are important because they highlight the negative consequences that the conventional interpretation of the origins of the Alliance entails. As he said, the perception that the Alliance was something created in the United States would to a great extent undermine a very much needed support for the enterprise in Latin America. Of course, Prebisch's was not taking in theoretical terms; he knew what the reaction in Latin America had been and would be if the perception of the American imposed Alliance for Progress prevailed. An example will clearly illustrate this.

If popular support for the Alliance was important throughout Latin America, in 1961 it was particularly important in Uruguay, where the Conference that would launch the Alliance was due to take place. On the eve of the Conference of Punta del Este, Vivián Trias, the leading figure of Uruguay's socialist party wrote:

> The idea of utilizing the international organizations and the advice of "chemically pure" technicians to cover the looting of the resources and the interests from investments that allow extracting 4 dollars for each dollar invested was gaining

[42] Beatrice Bishop Berle and Travis Beal Jacobs ed., *Navigating the Rapids 1918-197; From the Papers of Adolf A. Berle* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973,) 721.

> momentum […]. Between the gestational process of the Conference of Punta del Este and the preparation of the aggression to the revolutionary Cuba there a clear dialectic link. […]. On March 13th and in a speech delivered to the Latin American diplomatic corps in the White House, Kennedy announces his Alliance for Progress. On April 14th he makes public his intention to gather the CIES [in reference to the Inter-American Economic and Social Council] in the middle of the year and on the 17th the landing in the Bay of Pigs takes place […]. Behind the smiling and childish face of this new image of Pan Americanism, behind the interested propaganda implicit in the Alliance for Progress the usual imperialism is the driving force […]. The Alliance for Progress is a complete expression of the neo imperialism of the United States, adapted to the condition of its structural crisis and projected on the background of the Cuban revolutionary process.[43]

It is clear that, as Prebisch said, a misconception about the origins of the Alliance could certainly undermine its support in Latin America and, consequently, its effectiveness.

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[43] Vivián Trias, *El Plan Kennedy y el desarrollo de América Latina* (Montevideo, Uruguay: Ediciones del Sol, 1961), 210. Cited in Adolfo Garcé, *Ideas y Competencia Política en Uruguay (1960-1973): Revisando el "fracaso" de la CIDE* (Montevideo: Ediciones Trilce, 2002), 46 (my translation.) The original text in Spanish reads as follows: "La idea de utilizar los organismos internacionales y el asesoramiento de técnicos "químicamente puros" para encubrir el saqueo de las materias primas y de los intereses de las inversiones que permiten extraer 4 dólares por cada uno invertido fue tomando cuerpo […]. Entre el proceso gestador de la Conferencia de Punta del Este y la preparación de la agresión a la Cuba revolucionaria hay una vinculación dialéctica nítida. […]. El 13 de marzo y en un dicurso pronunciado ante el cuerpo diplomático latinoamericano en la Casa Blanca, Kennedy anuncia su plan de Alianza para el Progreso. El 14 de abril hace público su propósito de reunir al CIES para mediados de año y el 17 se produce el desembarco en Playa Girón […]. Tras la cara sonriente y aniñada de esta nueva imagen del Panamericanismo, tras la propaganda interesada implícita en la Alianza para el Progreso, alienta el imperialismo de siempre […]. La Alianza para el Progreso es una expresión cabal del neoimperialismo estadounidense, adaptada a la coyuntura de su crisis de estructura y proyectada en el transfondo del proceso revolucionario cubano."

The Alliance for Progress' conceptual foundations: a conclusion

As with the assessment regarding purpose and nature, the conventional assessment about the conceptual foundations of the Alliance for Progress misrepresents the relative importance that different factors played. I believe it should now be evident that the Alliance was, more than anything, a child of structuralist thought and it is there where its essential conceptual foundations are to be found.

This does not mean that I believe Millikan and Rostow's ideas played no role in the formulation of the Alliance for Progress. The broader discussion about the need to increase foreign economic aid although originally was not inspired in Latin America did help pave the way for a program such as the Alliance for Progress, as it was instrumental in convincing public officials in both the executive and legislative branches that foreign economic aid could be an important element in the toolbox of U.S. foreign policy.

Moreover, Rostow slowly became more and more interested in Latin America and started to advocate the application of his ideas to the western hemisphere. He finally played an important role in the creation of the Alliance, both through his ideological influence on Kennedy and as a policy maker himself, as in the Kennedy Administration Rostow acted as Deputy Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (1961) before becoming Chairman of the Policy Planning Council at the Department of State (1961-1966.) But the shape that the Alliance took, its very nature, its most revolutionary and substantive provisions are clearly a materialization of structuralist thought. Without that conceptual foundation, the Alliance wouldn't have existed.

CONCLUSIONS

I started this paper saying that the origins of the Alliance for Progress, despite having been extensively studied and written about, had not been portrayed with full accuracy. I argued that this was the case because students of the Alliance had approached it largely as a policy of the United States government, what, in turn, resulted in a series of conclusions that misrepresented the origins of the Alliance for Progress by assigning the wrong relative importance to the different factors that played a role in its creation.

By redefining the Alliance as what it really was, an inter-American policy, and approaching the study of its origins, including its Latin American origins, in the preceding pages I have reassessed the origins of the Alliance for Progress. I have shown that, contrary to what it is generally believed, the Alliance's main purpose was not only or even mainly to prevent the spread of communist revolutions and Soviet infiltration in Latin America but to genuinely pull the region out of economic, social and political despair.

I have also demonstrated that the most important characteristic of the Alliance's nature was not its magnitude as a foreign aid program but the revolutionary features of its policy prescriptions. As a consequence, I have established that the Alliance's most important conceptual foundation was not a new theory of foreign aid in the United States but the rich, sophisticated and influential Latin America structuralist school of thought, which, it is important to acknowledge, gained notoriety and augmented its influence by being developed in an agency part of the United Nations system. Moreover, even regarding its dimension as a major foreign aid program, I have shown that the original idea about the need for a more

engaged participation of the United States in inter-American affairs, accompanied by a more generous commitment of funds, also originated in Latin America.

Without underplaying the key importance of the leadership of the United States, rhetorically, politically and particularly economically, all these facts point to the conclusion that *the Alliance for Progress was much more a child of Latin America than of the United States*. It may be too late to rename it, as the "Alliance for Progress" has become a powerful and symbolic mark. Perhaps, in light of this reassessment, we could do justice by referring to it, even in the United States, as the *Alianza para el Progreso*.

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