

To what extent did U.S Imperialism impact Latin America during the Cold War?

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**Criterion A: Identification and Evaluation of Sources**

The US has had an extensive history of interfering with other nations' affairs; however, none equate to the intervention seen during the Cold War. Particularly the intervention in Latin American countries. One must begin to wonder, "To what extent did US Imperialism impact Latin America during the Cold War?" Understanding different perspectives from the 1947-1970's time frame are vital for discovering the impact the US had and understanding the scope of the US' actions.

Two relevant sources for this investigation are "Neither peace nor freedom" and "Arbenz's Resignation Speech." The first source, "Arbenz's Resignation Speech," is an English translation of Jacobo Árbenz's resignation speech broadcasted to Guatemala on June 27, 1954. This origin is valuable to this investigation as it is a primary source written from a Latin American perspective; however, it is limiting because it was written approximately 69 years ago, and crucial information could have been lost through time. The purpose of the source was for Jacobo Árbenz to express his concern regarding the United States' recent involvement in Guatemala and to publicly resign as a result of the 1954 coup. This purpose is valuable in a historical setting because it shows the cause-and-effect relationship between the United States' economic interests and the political state of Latin America. However, the purpose was also a political speech with bias, limiting the source in that regard. The context of the source is after Guatemala's 1954 coup, in which Jacobo Árbenz was overthrown. This context is valuable as it was a historical event backed by several outside sources. Even so, the context is limiting due to the lack of context shared from the United States perspective. The second source is "Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America" (Iber 1). This book was created by

Patrick Iber and was published by the Harvard University press on October 13, 2015. The book's origins are valuable since the Harvard University Press is a scholarly publication site, and the author is a renowned history professor. Yet the origin is limited since it is a secondary source not written by a Latin American author. The source was written to examine Latin American figures in relation to the Cold War and to highlight the struggles they faced in achieving their visions. The purpose is valuable as it is meant to share the perspective of many different Latin American figures; however, the purpose is also limited due to the selective bias of which figures were discussed. The context of the book is set during the Cold War in Latin America, which is valuable because it is relevant to this investigation. The limitation of the context is that the Cold War ended around 53 years ago, while the book was published eight years ago. During the 45-year gap, information was likely mistranslated, misinterpreted, or forgotten over time; hence the context is limited in that regard.

### **Criterion B: Investigation**

The Cold War was one of the most pivotal events in Human History, especially for Latin America. One simple truth can be derived through the extensive examination of primary and secondary sources: United States imperialism led to the destabilization and corruption of many Latin American countries through interference, corruption, and economic factors.

However, it holds that the United States initially intended to utilize Latin America to swing the war effort against the Soviet Union in favor of the United States, demonstrating semi-good-natured intentions. The United States supplied Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua with military forces showing the support the US was willing to give to Latin America

to root out Communists, supporting the idea that the US held good-natured intentions (UVM, *Recent Central American History*). However, due to Latin American nations engaged in diplomacy with the Soviet bloc, the United States had to take a more progressive approach to cease communist ties within Latin America (UVM, *Recent Central American History*). This battle between ideologies can be tied to the tension created between the United States and Latin America, as Latin Americans were the recipients of targeted influence from both sides of the Cold War. Despite initial "righteous" intentions from the United States, their efforts clashed with Soviet Influence, leaving Latin Americans to deal with the social chaos instituted by the two considerable powers (UVM, *Recent Central American History*). Thus it becomes inappropriate to state that the US utilized Latin America to swing the war effort against the Soviet Union because it was less utilization and more manipulation, given how the US used Latin American countries as a foothold (UVM, *Recent Central American History*). Understanding the imperialism seen between the United States and Latin America is critical for understanding the global perspective that must be maintained while considering historical events and their effects on growth and development.

The very stepping stone for the United States' interference was foreign policy. This foreign policy led the United States from developmentalism in Latin American society to organizing coupes and installing right-winged leadership (Bond, *America's Dirty Wars*). The US began to interfere with Latin American politics through foreign policy to gain footing and influence in Latin American countries, leading to political consequences from the US government. The first act of significant interference was the end of President Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy (Becker, *The FBI in Latin America*, 8). FBI secret intelligent agents invaded

Latin American countries in the shadows, without the awareness of Latin American governments and even without attention from US diplomatic officials (Becker, *The FBI in Latin America*, 8). The FBI was not the only tool for spying on so-called 'communist' groups; the CIA was dispatched to infiltrate the Ecuadorian government around 1960, and they set up radio stations and news networks to influence the Latin American people (Becker, *CIA In Ecuador*). The CIA bombed churches and right-winged organizations and blamed the Latin American left (Becker, *CIA In Ecuador*). The CIA also would march in right-winged parades to antagonize the left (Becker, *CIA In Ecuador*). This uprooted chaos was intended to bring down the democratically elected Velasco Ibarra. The United States directly interfered with a foreign country's democracy to gain control. When Velasco Ibarra's replacement, Carlos Asormera, was incapable of breaking down relations with Cuba's Communist-supported government, the CIA conducted a funded military invasion (Becker, *CIA In Ecuador*). They canceled the 1964 elections and outlawed communism, completing the United States' intended goal in mind (Becker, *CIA In Ecuador*). Not only did the FBI illegally spy on an international scale under the pretense of communism and nazi ties, but the CIA overthrew a democratically elected leader after organizing chaos within the country through terrorism. These actions demonstrated the United States's ferocity and showed the first signs of international imperialism, starting with interference and international political investigations.

The next phase of imperialistic ventures was the seed of corruption, which was utilized to destabilize Latin America further, continuing the dirty war against communism. Jacobo Arbenz led a progressive government in Guatemala until US CIA agents bribed higher-up military officers and started propaganda that preached anti-government ideals. The CIA organized

military corruption and led a coup against a democratic government to justify fighting communism (Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*). This destabilized Guatemala for over 40 years through the usage of intervention and corruption. Jacob Arbenz even said that the US has “taken the pretext of communism” while the truth lies within the “financial interests” of the US (Árbenz, “Árbenz’s Resignation Speech”). There is a directly observed cause and effect relationship shown between the United States and the destabilization of Guatemala, which supports the idea that US imperialism was a direct factor in Guatemala's recession. Other Latin American countries faced a similar threat, not the threat of communism, but the threat of those who were willing to uproot democracy to fight Communism (Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*). In the Dominican Republic in 1963, Juan Bosch was elected as the first democratically elected president since the '20s. He was one of the most liberal leaders the Dominican Republic has seen; however, seven months after being elected, the US inspired a military coup to overthrow his government (Saunders, *Geopolitical monitor*). This was a successful attempt to overtake the Dominican Republic's government to push US agendas through the country. The people made to reelect Bosch; however, the United States sent military troops to stop any revolutionaries. The CIA conducted propaganda against the Dominican Republic's government during this event until Bosch lost the election (Saunders, *Geopolitical monitor*). There are various other events dealing with Corruption in Latin America inspired by the United States. Such as sabotaged revolutions in Nicaragua, The CIA overthrowing Salvador Allende in Chile, the CIA training police in Uruguay on how to torture guerrillas who exposed corruption, and much more (Saunders, *Geopolitical monitor*). Despite being under the context of 'stopping communism,' the United States went as far as bringing real democracies down, as seen

throughout the CIA's operations uncovered by the Freedom of Information Act. This is directly linked to the central idea of imperialistic ventures seen throughout history in which one nation strives to implement itself into another to gain more power.

Delving a little deeper into the United States government's corruption in Latin America, one can find various roots of economic chokeholds that strain countries to allow US intervention. This requires looking back to the Chilean democratic elected president, Salvador Allende, and how the United States implemented economic policies to break the country down (*Bond, America's Dirty Wars*). Specifically, the US enforced an economic embargo on Chile to pressure Chile to stop them from becoming a socialist nation (*Bond, America's Dirty Wars*). The United States stopping socialism using economic factors was also utilized in Cuba. When Fidel Castro was gaining power, he refused to accept US aid. When Cuba turned to the Soviet Union for assistance, The United States cut off connections with Cuba, forming a trade embargo. This would choke Cuba's resources and demonstrate a message to other Latin American countries (Iber 160). The United States essentially forced nations to crack down before US pressure, showing the ferocity held by the US to intervene with these countries. Overall this intervention via economics had a colossal effect on the destabilization of Latin American countries. Fear was a tool that came out from the intervention, corruption, and economic abuse seen within foreign policy regarding Latin America. Socialist leaders were taken out of power, and insurrections were formed, all under the impression of fighting against communism. However, what was genuinely being fought was the will and steadfastness of the Latin American people.

The evidence presented within this document has fortified the existing position of US imperialism concerning destabilization in Latin America through the works of several sources



analyzing data gained from the Freedom of Information act. Using these sources, the idea of power struggles presents itself even in history's most confusing times, such as the Cold War. Nations such as the United States used this power struggle to infiltrate other countries in the hopes of winning dominance over another, while those other nations suffered chaos and bloodshed; and in the case of this investigation, those nations are that of Latin America.

### **Criterion C: Reflection**

Throughout my investigation, I have had the opportunity to explore several primary and secondary sources, experiencing the struggles and hardships a historian faces in gathering knowledge. Most importantly, the battle of gathering an array of sources that complement each other and share accurate historical information, specifically from both perspectives. Patrick Iber helped open my eyes to the specific values a basis may have if it is based upon a differing view; in the case of my investigation, that was the Latin American perspective of US foreign policy. Unfortunately due to length constraints while writing this exploratory assessment, I was unable to look at the effect on all Latin American countries. Thus I had to look at a select few, using those countries to represent all of Latin America. This was a limitation that I overcame by carefully picking multiperspective based sources, which I found to be accurately depictive of different Latin American nations. Despite learning the values of considering different perspectives, I still struggled to gather information. The scarcity of sources was something I frequently encountered, which limited the results of my paper in terms of comprehension. While digging for information, I learned to appreciate the time historians put forth to gather historical data, especially when I finally gathered my sources to form my investigation.

Utilizing methods that historians use on a day-to-day basis aided me immensely in forming my investigation, as I had to gather primary and secondary sources to use as tools within my research. Using a systematic method to determine accurate historical information is critical for having credible sources, and this data analysis consists of comparing one reference to a comparable basis to see if the information lines up. Using comparison was a reliable method I could use to help filter sources out via credibility. I grew to appreciate these types of procedures when selecting sources, especially regarding the works of Marc Becker and Richard H. Immerman regarding US foreign policy.

My perspective played a significant role in my investigation, and this was a vast challenge I faced in my analysis. From the philosophy of an American, US imperialism during the Cold War isn't considered mind-breaking. However, for a Latin American, the Cold War changed the course of lives. To maintain a neutral standpoint, I had to consider these two different perspectives without incorporating my own feelings in my research. Understanding that I had to keep an unbiased view was crucial for considering new sources that challenged my perspective, such as Jacobo Árbenz's resignation speech. While it was a severe challenge, I overcame this by writing my investigation, overall helping me grow in my global perspective.

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