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Introduction by Dustin Walcher

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Introduction by Dustin Walcher, Southern Oregon University

Until recent years, few authors had attempted to take as their subject an overview of the history of U.S.-Latin American relations during the Cold War. To be sure, the broad history of U.S.-Latin American relations has received attention in specialized textbooks and interpretive surveys.¹ However, the Cold War era was rarely treated as a distinct subject. That situation has changed; Stephen Rabe's *The Killing Zone* is the third effort to encapsulate Latin America's Cold War to appear since 2007.² It also joins the influential volumes that have been edited by Gilbert Joseph, Daniela Spenser, and Greg Grandin in an effort to frame more effectively Latin America's Cold War.³ In a sense, this book has been a career in the making. Since he published *The Road to OPEC* in 1982, Rabe has been at the center of discussions about U.S. policy in the Western Hemisphere within the community of historians of U.S. foreign relations.⁴ As Andrew Kirkendall observes, "no one has more of a right to feel confident in his conclusions after a decade of research and thinking on U.S. Cold War policy in Latin America."

Those familiar with Rabe's scholarship will not be surprised by the interpretive thrust of *The Killing Zone*. At its core, the book argues that Cold War triumphalism has masked the human cost born of anticommunism in Latin America. Primarily because of the violence perpetrated by rightwing authoritarians, who received significant aid and support from the United States, hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans died. For Rabe, the Cold War in Latin America was characterized by its hot spots. He details cases of military and paramilitary violence, of armed intervention, and of disappearances. In this part of the

¹ Kyle Longley, *In the Eagle's Shadow: The United States and Latin America*, 2ed. (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2007); Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World*, 3ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Don M. Coerver and Linda B. Hall, *Tangled Destinies: Latin America and the United States* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999); Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Brian Loveman, *No Higher Law: American Foreign Policy and the Western Hemisphere since 1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Thomas F. O'Brien, *Making the Americas: The United States and Latin America from the Age of Revolutions to the Era of Globalization* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007).

² Alan McPherson, *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles: The United States and Latin America since 1945* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007); Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

³ Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In From the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Greg Grandin and Gilbert M. Joseph, eds., *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁴ Stephen G. Rabe, *The Road to OPEC: U.S. Relations with Venezuela, 1919-1976* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anti-Communism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988); *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999); *U.S. Intervention in British Guiana: A Cold War Story* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

world the United States was on the wrong side of history. Rather than supporting democracy, U.S. administrations under both political parties supported anticommunist governments without serious concern for the humanitarian costs. Indeed, Rabe consciously endeavors to refute the *teoría de los dos demonios* (theory of the two demons), which holds that Latin America's left-right violence was basically symmetrical – violence inaugurated by one side was quickly matched by the other. As a result, according to this view, neither the right nor the left bore primary responsibility for the consequences. Rabe responds by cataloging the overwhelmingly disproportionate degree to which the right was liable for loss of life throughout the region. He makes his argument from within the national security framework. Anticommunism-associated Cold War strategic objectives, as opposed to the perceived needs of capitalist market expansion or an inherent ideology of militarism, drove U.S. decision-making.

The reviewers approach the book from different starting points. Michael Donoghue and Darlene Rivas were trained primarily as historians of U.S. foreign relations, while Kirkendall and Eric Zolov are Latin Americanists. Their assessments include no small degree of praise. Donoghue calls *The Killing Zone* “an excellent and critical study of U.S. Cold War policy in Latin America that includes an insightful reassessment of the period through the lens of historical memory.” It is, he concludes, “a superb work that will serve as a fine adoption in U.S.-Latin American relations and U.S. foreign relations history courses.” Rivas lauds the “pedagogical and civic purposes that Rabe’s very cohesive and up-to-date book can serve.” Zolov concludes that “[b]y emphasizing the immense tragedies of the [Cold War] period Rabe accomplishes an important, even noble objective.”

They also advance a number of critiques and reservations. Perhaps the aspect of the book questioned most consistently by the reviewers – albeit in different ways – centers around its scope. Kirkendall would like to have seen Rabe situate his narrative in a broader comparative perspective. He writes, “one might have hoped that Rabe would reflect more on when Latin America mattered and how much, and what other world events might have shaped U.S. policy toward Latin America.” Donoghue takes a different approach. Acknowledging that Rabe set out to write a book analyzing U.S. policy toward Latin America, he nonetheless argues that the narrative would be strengthened “with additional Latin American voices and sources, especially from the earlier phases of the conflict between the 1940s and the 1960s.” Meanwhile, both Zolov and Rivas find that by limiting his analysis of Latin America’s Cold War to episodes of violence, Rabe misses many other aspects of the history. The resulting picture that emerges is consequently incomplete. “The Cold War,” Zolov reasons, “in short, was more than simply a playing out of political violence, which is not to diminish or dilute the relevance of such violence, by any means.”

On some important issues, the reviewers differ with one another. Zolov, for example, asserts that “Rabe acknowledges Latin American agency, yet he appears to do so somewhat reluctantly.” Ultimately, “opportunities to engage an emergent historiography of what transpired in Latin America, from a *Latin American* perspective as well as a more internationalist one, seem to have been passed up.” [emphasis in original] By contrast, Rivas contends that “Rabe highlights Latin American agency ... and incorporates scholarship that relies on newly available sources that relate the extent not only of U.S.

involvement in the region, but also that of its Cold War antagonists Cuba and the Soviet Union.” She goes on to identify as “[o]ne of the great strengths of the book ... the completeness with which individual chapters illuminate ... the relative roles of Cuba and/or the Soviet Union and the United States.”

However, Rabe’s underlying interpretation – that the Soviet Union, and after 1959, Cuba, were not especially active in the hemisphere – is challenged by Kirkendall, Rivas, and Zolov. Kirkendall finds that “Rabe, at times, understates the impact of Cuba in Latin America, particularly in the 1960s.” He goes on to note that “there were justifiable national security reasons for the United States to be concerned with Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara’s actions and those of others he inspired. And if the United States effectively contained that threat by the late 1960s, its fears in Central America in the late 1970s and 1980s were not wholly unwarranted either.” Rivas agrees that Rabe “overly minimizes the broad appeal that Guevara and the romantic left subsequently had and the further violence that the dead Che and his cause would inspire.” She concludes that while “[a]bsolutely nothing excuses the disproportional response by both Latin American regimes and the United States to perceived and real threats ... it is relevant that it was not mere shadowboxing.” In suggesting a greater degree of Soviet influence than Rabe concedes, Zolov highlights the role of ideology in particular. “Soviet and Chinese ideological influence ... was significant and the status accorded to individuals who traveled and studied in the Communist nations was often profound,” he writes.

Rivas and Kirkendall also call for greater effort to distinguish between different countries within Latin America. “A perennial problem in U.S. studies of Latin America as a region is the easy way in which, perhaps for convenience, scholars who understand better homogenize Latin America, obscuring its tremendous diversity and contributing unnecessarily to the perpetuation of stereotypes of the region,” notes Rivas. Kirkendall agrees, and “would have liked to have seen Rabe distinguish between particular Latin American countries and their relations with the United States.” He adds that “[I]t is hard ... to understate the impact of the United States on El Salvador prior to the 1980s, while it is just as difficult to overstate the impact of the United States on Nicaragua.”

The Killing Zone represents an interpretive point of view that dominated the historiography of U.S.-Latin American relations for a generation. Rabe makes his argument forcefully and unapologetically. With very few exceptions, the scholarship produced over the past decade or two does not so much seek to overturn Rabe’s interpretation as it does add additional layers to the story, enhance the voice of Latin Americans, and complicate some of the conclusions. The reviewers who participated in this roundtable embody those pursuits. They do not argue, as Samuel Flagg Bemis did (albeit in reference to an earlier era), that U.S.-Latin American relations fundamentally proceeded upon the basis of mutual interest and friendship.⁵ Nevertheless, the most basic critique offered by the reviewers is, in Rivas’ words, that by “labeling Latin America a killing zone and then describing only those horrible

⁵ Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Latin American Policy of the United States: An Historical Interpretation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1943).

examples in which this is true,” Rabe’s story is at a minimum incomplete and the resulting interpretation skewed. Nonetheless, as Kirkendall concludes, if the emergent scholarship adds layers of analysis and complexity at the expense of sympathy for ordinary Latin Americans, then “we older types will certainly urge our students and our colleagues to read and reread the work of Professor Rabe.”

Participants:

Stephen G. Rabe is the Ashbel Smith Professor at the University of Dallas at Texas, where he has taught for thirty-five years. He has taught or lectured in nineteen countries, including leading seminars in Argentina, Brazil, and Ecuador. Among his other books is *John F. Kennedy: World Leader* (Potomac Books, 2010).

Dustin Walcher is Assistant Professor of History at Southern Oregon University and a review editor for H-Diplo. He received his Ph.D. in 2007 from the Ohio State University. A specialist in the history of U.S. foreign relations, he is currently examining the failure of U.S.-led development initiatives and the rise of political violence in Argentina during the 1950s and 1960s.

Michael Donoghue received his BA and MA from the University of Rhode Island. In 2006 he received his Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut where he studied under Thomas G. Paterson and Frank Costigliola. He was a 2002-2003 recipient of a Fulbright Overseas Research Grant which he spent in the Republic of Panama. He currently works as an Assistant Professor of History at Marquette University where his specialty is U.S. foreign relations history and the history of U.S.-Latin American Relations. His book *Borderland on the Isthmus: Zonians, Panamanians, West Indians, and the Struggle of the Canal Zone 1939-1979* is forthcoming from Duke University Press.

Andrew J. Kirkendall is an Associate Professor of History at Texas A&M University. He is the author, most recently, of *Paulo Freire and the Cold War Politics of Literacy* (University of North Carolina Press, 2010). He is at work on a book on the Cold War and Latin American democracy.

Darlene Rivas is Professor of History at Pepperdine University and a scholar of U.S.-Latin American relations, publishing on such topics as economic development, technical assistance, and anti-Americanism. Her emphasis on public and private U.S. efforts to promote economic development and the interrelationship of domestic and foreign policy resulted in the book *Missionary Capitalist: Nelson Rockefeller in Venezuela* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002). She is currently writing a biography of Rockefeller.

Eric Zolov is Associate Professor in the Department of History at Stony Brook University and serves as Senior Editor of *The Americas*. He is the author of *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (1999) and co-editor of *Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Popular Culture in Mexico Since 1940* (2001), *Rockin’ Las Américas: The Global Politics of Rock in Latin/o America* (2004) and *Latin America and the United States: A Documentary*

History (2000; 2nd edition, 2010). His current research focus is on Latin America in the “Global 1960s.”

Stephen Rabe has written an excellent and critical study of U.S. Cold War policy in Latin America that includes an insightful reassessment of the period through the lens of historical memory. Rabe posits his analysis as a strong admonition against the U.S. Cold War triumphalism so prevalent in the wake of the 1991 Soviet collapse and China's turn towards a capitalist economic model. The author emphasizes the human cost of the Cold War in blood and suffering, as well as U.S. culpability in much of the state terror that victimized millions of ordinary Latin Americans. The numbers and revelations that Rabe marshals are horrific: some 400,000 dead in Central America and nearly 100,000 brutalized victims in the Southern Cone in just the last two decades of the conflict. To these harrowing figures must be added thousands more who perished under state oppression in the earlier phases of the war. Though he does not go anywhere near as far as Hal Brands' *Latin America's Cold War* in assigning blame on local conservative forces, Rabe acknowledges their central role while concentrating more on the malevolent effect of U.S. policies and strategic fallacies that crushed the aspirations of democratic and left-leaning reformers.¹ A great advantage that Rabe brings to this work is his mastery of U.S.-Latin American relations garnered from his production of many fine monographs on the subject which his colleagues have often assigned in their classes.

Rabe begins his analysis by setting forth his thesis powerfully and with moving anecdotes of the cruelties that Latin Americans endured for over forty years thanks to the anti-communist crusade. Scholars of the European Cold War have emphasized the success of containment and deterrence that brought the "Long Peace" to its largely pacific conclusion with the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Vietnam disaster has also preoccupied much of U.S. perceptions regarding the Cold War. But far less attention has been devoted to the nightmare struggle south of the Rio Grande. Rabe provides the historical context of U.S. interventionism in the Americas in the early decades of the twentieth century that predated the Cold War. He then moves onto the Kennan Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in which the author of containment decried Latin Americans as incapable of democratic self-governance and pronounced them more suited to strongman rule. This racist attitude prevailed in Washington during the 1940s and 1950s, and along with growing paranoia and exaggerated fears of Soviet capabilities helped fuel the 1954 Guatemalan coup. Rabe not only sees this CIA intervention as a key turning point to the Cold War where the United States chose dictatorship over democracy, but also as the beginning of the massive Latin American bloodletting that Washington preferred to any scintilla of Soviet or leftist influence. The corresponding nationalist threats to U.S. investments in the region reinforced this hard line.

Kennedy's obsession with Castro's Revolution followed, adding the brutality of counterinsurgency and the School of the Americas to the battle cry of "no more Cubas!" Lyndon Johnson's crushing of democratic yearnings in the Dominican Republic gave way to an equally cynical policy of backing military strongmen, such as the Brazilian generals and

¹ Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

later under the Nixon administration, General Augusto Pinochet in Chile and the Argentine junta. U.S. acquiescence and support for these right-wing destroyers of democracy and sponsors of state terror exposed the Nixon, Ford, and Reagan administrations to a partnership with the Devil that would only worsen when Reagan white-washed the atrocities of U.S. conservative allies during the Central American civil wars. Reagan officials prosecuted the illegal Contra War and mustered a willful blind allegiance to the mass murdering regimes of El Salvador and Guatemala with a single-mindedness unmatched until the Bush administration's fever for the Iraq invasion in 2003.

Rabe's arguments and narrative are compelling but could have been strengthened even more with additional Latin American voices and sources, especially from the earlier phases of the conflict between the 1940s and the 1960s. It is important to critique the work written and not the one which reviewers wished the author had produced. Rabe's analysis relies heavily on U.S. records but this makes sense since it is primarily a study of U.S. policy. It should also be acknowledged that many Latin American state documents from this period are still closed, censored, or unavailable to scholars. But Rabe makes such a powerful impact when Latin American voices do emerge from his narrative that this reviewer wishes there could have been more of them. The work also could have addressed Greg Grandin's recent study *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence in Latin America's Long Cold War* that situates the struggle in a much longer time frame dating back to the Mexican Revolution and the anarchist/socialist influences that followed.² But these are small critiques to an otherwise superb work that will serve as a fine adoption in U.S.-Latin American relations and U.S. foreign relations history courses. Particularly strong is the author's analysis of the truth, peace, and reconciliation commissions that emerged in the aftermath of the Central American wars and the "dirty wars" of the Southern Cone. Rabe demonstrates how a lack of accountability against the perpetrators of atrocities has left a sense of anti-climax and injustice for so many victims. Hundreds of assassins and torturers still live comfortably in Latin America shielded by immunity guarantees from political agreements or sentenced to slap-on-the-wrist home confinement. U.S. officials from the period either deny their culpability or perversely brag about their salvation of "Western civilization." Given the depth of the human carnage these killers perpetrated, their impunity only serves as a continuing atrocity. But thanks to Rabe's work, the record of U.S. complicity is clearly established.

² Greg Grandin and Gilbert M. Joseph, eds., *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

One welcomes the arrival of a general history of U.S.-Latin American relations during the Cold War by Stephen G. Rabe. Certainly, no one has done more in recent decades to keep Latin America on the radar of historians of U.S. foreign relations. His books on a variety of topics will remain on the short list of essential works. This particular book will be of use for those who teach advanced undergraduate courses which emphasize this period. Certainly, no one has more of a right to feel confident in his conclusions after decades of research and thinking on U.S. Cold War policy in Latin America. As a Latin American historian who grew to adulthood during the Cold War but only received his Ph.D. after it was over, I am sympathetic to much that he writes here. I certainly agree with his contention that the region bore many of the frequently unacknowledged costs of the Cold War containment policy. But I also think that he could have usefully made some more distinctions as well as connections.

As a South Americanist, in particular, I think it remains important to stress the distinctiveness of the Cold War era, a time when U.S. influence stretched further south than before or since. Certainly, many who knew little about Latin America at the time tended to speak glibly of the traditions of military rule in the region, and so, therefore, no casual observer was surprised particularly that, say, Brazil and Chile suffered under long periods of military dictatorships during this period. Yet anyone who knew only a little about the history of these two countries would have had to have recognized that the military had spent only brief times in power prior to the 1960s and 1970s. The relative importance of the political role of the Brazilian military under civilian governments tended to get exaggerated by scholars following the 1964 coup. And Chile had an even more impressive record of constitutional, stable government and an increasingly pluralistic and competitive political system. One cannot explain the military dictatorships that developed in these two countries and elsewhere, and their unprecedented record of torturing and murdering their own citizens, without placing them in their Cold War context. And it is hard to ignore the extent to which the United States cultivated the Latin American militaries from the 1940s on, with only a short interruption in the late 1970s when President Jimmy Carter made some effort to distance himself from many of the military governments.

I would have liked to have seen Rabe distinguish between particular Latin American countries and their relations with the United States. It is hard, for example, to understate the impact of the United States on El Salvador prior to the 1980s, while it is just as difficult to overstate the impact of the United States on Nicaragua. And Argentina was not really in the U.S. sphere of influence for much of its history. I remain unconvinced that the United States bears a significant amount of responsibility for the Argentine Dirty War, Henry Kissinger's shameful comment notwithstanding, and I must say that I regret the decision to put the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo on the cover of Rabe's book.

Even as a Latin Americanist, however, I would have liked to have seen some more comparative perspective. While I often wonder how my colleagues in the history of U.S. foreign relations can ignore Latin America prior to, say, 1942, I have to recognize that after

that time, while the United States loomed large in Latin America, the United States frequently neglected the region. Even as U.S. influence had reached its peak, the United States often grew complacent, until some particular event sparked an exaggerated sense of danger. U.S. officials at the highest levels then made momentous decisions with longstanding ramifications for Latin American countries and then failed to examine the consequences as they returned their focus to other, presumably more important parts of the world. U.S. officials always exaggerated the extent of Soviet interest, let alone influence, in Latin America (outside of Cuba of course). But, again, rhetoric aside, one might have hoped that Rabe would reflect more on when Latin America mattered and how much, and what other world events might have shaped U.S. policy toward Latin America. Perhaps one should ponder how similar U.S. policies in Guatemala from 1954 on compared to those in Indonesia, perhaps, beginning in 1965.

Rabe, at times, understates the impact of Cuba in Latin America, particularly in the 1960s, and he could have usefully integrated (and not merely cited) the arguments of scholars like Paul Dosal and Thomas Wright. Certainly, there were justifiable national security reasons for the United States to be concerned with Ernesto “Che” Guevara’s actions and those of others he inspired. And if the United States effectively contained that threat by the late 1960s, its fears in Central America in the late 1970s and 1980s were not wholly unwarranted either. Generally Rabe could have usefully distinguished between places where U.S. fears seem more unjustified (Brazil in the early 1960s, for example) than others, even if U.S. officials failed to do so. In any case, from the U.S. perspective, its Latin America policy was a success. Communism, even Castro himself, was contained. The costs were high, but the United States did not have to pay them.

I eagerly await the appearance in print of work by my up-and-coming junior colleagues who seem to have the emotional distance from the passions of the era which I struggle to achieve intellectually. Nevertheless, there will be many times when we older scholars will think the younger scholars have missed the point, and we will want to say that no, it wasn’t like that. I fear that the trend may be not toward a more balanced approach but toward one that is simply less sympathetic toward Latin America. If the pendulum swings too far in that direction, we older types will certainly urge our students and our colleagues to read and reread the work of Professor Rabe.

Review by Darlene Rivas, Pepperdine University

Stephen Rabe is particularly well suited to write a synthesis of U.S. Cold War policies in Latin America. Among other works, he is the author of monographs on U.S. bilateral relations with Venezuela and British Guiana/Guyana and in-depth analyses of Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy's presidential administrations. *The Killing Zone* is his synthetic interpretation of U.S. policies during the Cold War that builds on extensive secondary readings and decades of primary research. In it, Rabe focuses on U.S. policy during the Cold War while also devoting attention to many of the latest scholarly trends and engaging recent arguments.

In his attention to recent trends, Rabe highlights Latin American agency, notes the limits of U.S. power, examines not just the creation of and motivation for U.S. policy but also its impact, and incorporates scholarship that relies on newly available sources that relate the extent not only of U.S. involvement in the region, but also that of its Cold War antagonists Cuba and the Soviet Union. Through the use of chilling anecdotes of some individual experiences, primarily those of victims of repression and violence, he also incorporates their perspective. Whether or not this shows that the Cold War led to the "politicization and internationalization of everyday life and familiar encounters," as Greg Grandin suggests, it certainly illuminates the terrible cost many Latin Americans paid for policies with distant origins.¹ In delimiting his study, Rabe makes clear that he has chosen deliberately to retain focus on U.S. policy, while borrowing some insights from those who use an international or global analytical framework. He also has chosen for the most part not to broaden his focus to interactions and events beyond those of traditional foreign relations history, and there is little on such topics such as trade, aid (except for the Alliance for Progress), migration, the role of non-governmental actors, or on newer cultural approaches.

One of the great strengths of the book is the completeness with which individual chapters illuminate the political and material conditions and key players of a particular nation, the development of U.S. policy toward that nation, the relative roles of Cuba and/or the Soviet Union and the United States, the course of violence and the roles played by various groups in the violence, an assessment of the consequences of U.S. policy, and the long-term legacy. The concision and yet comprehensiveness of some of the hot-spot accounts is extremely valuable.

Rabe frames the book in his introduction and epilogue (titled "Aftermath") by claiming the need for greater attention to Latin America in Cold War studies. Rabe draws on personal experiences of lecturing in Europe and Latin America to highlight the very different memories and attitudes that he encountered in the two regions toward the Soviet Union and the United States. Triumphant accounts of U.S. policy tend to incorporate details of

¹ See Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 17.

the Cold War's horrors in the Soviet Union and its East European sphere of influence. He argues, as have others such as Hal Brands and Gilbert M. Joseph, that the horrific experience of Latin America, where many endured shocking cycles of violence and where repressive military regimes terrorized their own societies with U.S. complicity, needs more analysis and incorporation into the history of the Cold War.²

Rabe engages in several important arguments, some implicitly, some explicitly. By providing a history of U.S.-Latin American relations dating to the 1890s, he makes clear that enduring patterns of interactions preceded and continued into the Cold War. In particular, he notes U.S. attitudes of superiority and a willingness to intervene to promote stability and reform, to foster U.S. trade and direct investment, to challenge radicalism, and against extra-continental influence. Even the Good Neighbor policy of the 1930s and early 1940s, a period in which overt intervention was repudiated, resulted during World War II in an opportunity to eliminate further extra-hemispheric influences and strengthen U.S. hegemony in the region.

So what makes U.S. policy in the Cold War different from this earlier era? For Rabe, the Cold War led to a further devaluing of Latin America as the U.S. globalized its policies and interests, and to a greater willingness in the face of anti-communism and national security concerns to sacrifice or compromise on trends that had been toward greater openness to popular movements and social democracy. During the Cold War, the United States manipulated elections, toppled elected governments, contributed to political polarization, and provided intelligence, military assistance and police training to anti-communist military regimes which perpetrated ninety percent of the killings during the violence between left and right, making Latin America a "Killing Zone" of the Cold War.

To support this interpretation, Rabe begins with the understudied story of the Truman administration's interest in the social democratic opening of 1944-1948 paired with neglect of the region due to global concerns. Then, as the Cold War emerged, the Truman administration militarized its policy, an ominous development. Rabe also sets the stage for his argument that American policymakers disdained the region by suggesting (as did Gaddis Smith) that the "Kennan Corollary" epitomized subsequent U.S. attitudes. Kennan, in harsh and patronizing language, argued that the region was vulnerable to Communist subversion and that harsh measures by repressive regimes would likely be necessary to resist Communist advance. Moreover, repression and violence were really all one could expect of the Latin Americans. To Kennan, Latin America mattered little to the United States except for its vulnerability to Communism. Rabe notes that the lengthy memorandum "evoked no discussion" yet he still concludes that "although undebated and disowned, Kennan's report revealed the style and substance of Cold War policies for Latin America." (24.) It sat in a drawer unread for decades. I have two responses to this: by offering cohesion, the Kennan episode is a brilliant rhetorical device, as the memo deftly

² Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, Eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

sets up much of what follows (the attitudes and policies of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger leap to mind), and yet, using Kennan as a template for what follows means that much will necessarily be left out—for Latin America also had its champions among U.S. policymakers (Rabe does offer some dissenting examples) and U.S. Cold War policy was more multi-faceted than Rabe allows (more on this later).

The Kennan Corollary sets the stage for subsequent chapters that detail the hot-spots of Latin America's Cold War—starting with Guatemala in an episode that Rabe labels the “Mother of Interventions.” As does Greg Grandin, Rabe argues that Guatemala was a seedbed for revolutionaries, including Ernesto “Che” Guevara. The mother—covert support to topple Jacobo Árbenz and derail the Guatemalan Revolution—birthed political polarization in the region. The CIA learned deplorable (and wrong) lessons from its ‘success,’ and most egregiously, its consequences included a cycle of violence that reached the most horrific of the Cold War era, resulting in the deaths of some 200,000 Guatemalans by the end of the 1980s (many in the early 1980s). Guatemala warrants the label “killing zone” more than any other Latin American nation during the Cold War. The CIA's destabilization of the government, support for Castillo Armas, U.S. complicity with the military regimes and provision of military and police training to counter subversives in the 1960s and again in the 1980s had such terrible consequences that a later American president (Bill Clinton) would commit a rare deed for the breed—apologize for U.S. actions. And all this took place despite the lack of a serious communist or extra-continental threat. If Guatemala is the mother, the offspring are monstrous. Further debate on the consequences of the 1954 intervention to Latin America's Cold War violence will no doubt proceed, as Hal Brands has recently minimized its importance to subsequent events in the region.³ That Guatemala's experience in the Cold War from the 1950s through the 1980s requires critical attention in the global narrative is surely indisputable, but whether Guatemala epitomizes the larger region's experience is debatable.

Any examination of Latin America's Cold War must deal with Cuba, and Rabe incorporates recent scholarship on Cuba and Cuban involvement in supporting revolution in the region, particularly assessing whether or not Fidel Castro's regime and policies posed a danger to the United States and its interests. Following Piero Gleijeses, Rabe notes that Castro provided much greater support to Africa than to Latin America, although Cuba did supply support to insurgents in Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, and Venezuela. Rabe emphasizes the limits of Soviet-Cuban involvement, highlighting Soviet-Cuban tensions after the Missile Crisis through about 1968, as the Soviet Union was much more conservative in the region, which it recognized as falling within the U.S. sphere of influence. As have others, Rabe notes that Castro's fears of U.S. invasion were understandable given U.S. policies, and thus the United States was largely responsible for the conditions that led to the Missile Crisis of 1962. Rabe is right to acknowledge the limits of Soviet aid and support for counter-insurgency, differences with Cuba, and Castro's accommodation of the Soviet perspective to some extent after 1968. And he is correct that Guevara lacked the support of Bolivia's indigenous *campesinos*, and that his arrogance and romantic insistence on dying showed

³ Brands, *Latin America's Cold War*.

the bankruptcy of the violent left (a position he shares with Jorge Castañeda), yet he overly minimizes the broad appeal that Guevara and the romantic left subsequently had and the further violence that the dead Che and his cause would inspire. This rhetorical appeal to violence and its broad acceptance inflated the sense of threat felt by anti-communists in both Latin America and the United States who feared that the numbers of those who resorted to violence would grow. Rabe also notes that Soviet trade and aid to the region was relatively small in comparison to other regions and that in some cases Americans deliberately made up threats to support their policies. This is undeniably true and important to explain. Still, Rabe underplays the significant role Soviet aid did have in individual cases and that increased perceptions of threat, such as in Venezuela in the 1960s for armed revolt, and most notably, in Soviet support of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua in the 1980s. Absolutely nothing excuses the disproportional response by both Latin American regimes and the United States to perceived and real threats, but it is relevant that it was not mere shadowboxing.

Cuba's radicalization and alignment with the Soviet Union had a profound effect on the Cold War in Latin America. An important motive for U.S. policymakers became preventing another Cuba. 'No more Cubas' became an obsession of Kennedy, Johnson, and subsequent presidents, and led to more interventions, including approval for a military coup in Brazil in 1964 and actual intervention in and occupation by U.S. troops of the Dominican Republic in 1965, a proliferation of covert actions, manipulation of elections, and of course, the Alliance for Progress that promised a commitment by the U.S. and Latin Americans for a "Decade of Development." It was in the 1960s that the U.S. committed to intense counterinsurgency assistance and police training with deadly consequences.

In the 1960s and 1970s, political polarization intensified in Latin America, violence escalated as repression of popular movements gave way to guerrilla violence and the cycle of repression grew more intense. Rabe supports the view that the "chronology" makes clear the idea that government repression preceded left sponsored violence. (xxxii, 110.) While I do not think this is true in all cases (for example, Venezuela, a case not much studied) it does seem warranted in general, especially after 1968.⁴ Rabe does not let the violent left off the hook, but he makes very clear that he does not buy into the alleged 'theory of the two demons' that left wing and right violence are morally equivalent or that they are equally responsible for various military regimes' disproportional and extra-legal reign of terror that included kidnapping, detention, torture, mutilation of bodies, disappearance and killing, and baby-stealing. While he goes into some detail regarding the murderous activities of right wing regimes, he does not spend much time detailing their motives or beliefs, for which one could consult Hal Brands' *Latin America's Cold War*.

Chile is one of the most heavily documented Cold War hotspots, and Rabe recounts Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger's response to the election of Salvador Allende, the economic strategy of their attack, and their subsequent support of the Pinochet dictatorship. He

⁴ Jeff Gould, "Solidarity Under Siege, The Latin American Left, 1968." *The American Historical Review* 114:2 (April 2009): 348-375.

notes the transnational cooperation of Chile with Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Brazil, and Paraguay in Operation Condor, and makes clear that Kissinger, despite protestations of his support for human rights, encouraged both Chile's and Argentina's military regimes to do what they had to do to eliminate "subversives" by "getting it over quickly." (143.) The final terrible story is that of Central America in the late 1970s and 1980s, really the story of the Reagan administration's complicity in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala in providing the military and intelligence support that led to the deaths of at least 43,000 Nicaraguans where U.S. proxies fought the Sandinista government, and to the murders of 75,000 Salvadorans, some 50,000 who died at the hands of the military or military sponsored death squads. (164, 168.) Guatemala's experience in the 1980s is reprised as well.

In his "Aftermath," Rabe provides a fitting epilogue to the horrible stories told in the preceding chapters. Latin Americans continue to grapple with the legacy of the Cold War. Searching for missing children, documenting crimes and abuses of the past, and deciding whether or not to prosecute perpetrators began first in Argentina in the 1980s, and fittingly, even as Argentina led the way in exporting violence (including to Central America), Argentines began to lead by example in developing tools for seeking truth, finding ways to deal with historical memory, bringing justice to victims, and promoting social reconciliation. Rabe notes the wrenching emotional costs that have resulted from efforts to unravel history's legacy, as the adopted children of the disappeared have experienced. He points out that various nations have handled the legacies somewhat differently, with Uruguay and Brazil more circumspect in digging into the details of their pasts than Chile, Argentina, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Rabe concludes his assessment of U.S. policy with a distressing summation of U.S. Cold War policy, noting that:

The United States undermined constitutional systems, overthrew popularly elected governments, rigged elections, and supplied, trained, coddled, and excused barbarians who tortured, kidnapped, murdered, and 'disappeared' Latin Americans. The United States allied with groups and individuals who stole babies. U.S. officials rationalized this criminal behavior, because they had a profound contempt for Latin American thought, society and culture. Disdain for the people and the region ran through George Kennan right through to Jeanne Kirkpatrick and Ronald Reagan.

A sad sentence sums up why he surely wrote this book, as he states, probably accurately, that "only small numbers of U.S. citizens are aware of the dimensions of the Cold War that the United States waged in Latin America." (194.)

A perennial problem in U.S. studies of Latin America as a region is the easy way in which, perhaps for convenience, scholars who understand better homogenize Latin America, obscuring its tremendous diversity and contributing unnecessarily to the perpetuation of stereotypes of the region. Greg Grandin, in *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, suggests we can understand U.S. relations with Latin America through the lens of Guatemala's particularly horrific experience, which could say more about U.S. policymakers than Latin Americans, yet leaves the impression that U.S. policies did or would have similar effects elsewhere. Rabe's analysis is more regional in scope, yet this book is essentially

about particular kinds of experiences – the most violent, brutal, and repressive ones – and focuses primarily on Cuba, the Dominican Republic (briefly), the Southern Cone, and the Central American nations of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. These were hot spots, the ‘Killing Zone’ of Latin America. But was all of Latin America a killing zone (at least to similar degrees) during the Cold War? How did Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Panama, Costa Rica (to name just a few) experience the Cold War and U.S. Cold War policies?

And what other ways did the U.S. wage Cold War? Rabe has shown convincingly that while there was some variation over time, there was a kind of common style and substance to U.S. policy that extended over the course of the Cold War that led the United States to support murderous regimes over and over again, but one wonders whether these policies represent the full complement of U.S. policies or reflect the range of ways in which Latin Americans experienced the Cold War? I agree with Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser in *In from the Cold*, that we need to include cultural and other sources and analyses of Latin America’s Cold War, while also agreeing with Rabe that we need works that focus on U.S. policies in the region. While one book, even a synthetic one, cannot do everything, I think we must find ways 1) to include a broader variety and contrasting national experiences, and 2) to incorporate some of the other tools beyond covert and black ops, military and police assistance and training that the United States used at such terrible cost as it ‘waged’ the Cold War. A study of such tools—we might call them ‘tools of attraction’ designed to challenge Cuban or Soviet appeal with U.S.-friendly alternatives—would require the integration of not just U.S. government documents but also sources that would help us understand the Latin American reception of varieties of economic and technical assistance, cultural programs, propaganda and public relations techniques, and interactions among Latin Americans and elements of U.S. civil society and corporations.

I have some reservations about the book—such as labeling Latin America a killing zone and then describing only those horrible examples in which this is true. Ultimately, I welcome the pedagogical and civic purposes that Rabe’s very cohesive and up-to-date book can serve. To prevent such policies from happening again, perhaps in the cause of fighting terrorism rather than leftist ideologies, citizens, and especially students, need to read this account, and I expect it will be widely adopted for classroom use.

Today's college-bound students were largely born after the Cold War came to its dramatic yet equally unpredictable end, a fact many of us tend to overlook as we teach the history of U.S.-Latin American relations to undergraduates. The collapse of the Soviet Union came not with a nuclear bang but the loud whimper of an unyielding cry for democratic principles, personal freedom, and greater access to consumer goods. This ending has tended to reinforce a triumphalist narrative emphasizing the success of American (read: U.S.) skilled and persevering leadership. Winning the Cold War—seeing the Soviet Empire implode from within—became one of the most successful foreign policy achievements of the United States, in line with victory over the Central and Axis Powers during the two World Wars.

The collapse of the Soviet Union indeed “liberated” millions at relatively low cost—the dreaded nuclear conflagration never transpired—yet the price born by the peripheries was high indeed. For Stephen Rabe, who has spent an entire career excavating the diplomatic narrative of U.S.-Latin American relations, there is a pressing need to underscore just how high a price Latin Americans paid. While the predominant impact of the Cold War on Eastern Europe was that of limiting political expression and suppressing consumer demands, “the Cold War ravaged Latin America.” (xxxv) “The legacies of the Cold War,” Rabe underscores in this new synthesis of the period, “are woven into the fabric of contemporary Latin American life.” (Ibid)

For some time now, Rabe's diplomatic histories of U.S. policymaking toward Latin America during the Eisenhower and Kennedy eras have remained benchmark texts for subsequent investigations.¹ His dogged pursuit of U.S. State Department and other governmental records opened up new lines of inquiry and greatly assisted a younger generation of historians in their efforts to conceptualize U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America in the postwar era. As Rabe has cogently demonstrated in these earlier works, whatever ‘good intentions’ were meant for Latin American development and its people, during the Cold War these considerations were superseded by the perceived imperative of stabilized government. The dangers of democratic governance—letting the popular vote decide the fate of nations—were too much to bear, given the prospect of leftwing political agendas that would directly challenge U.S. economic, military and diplomatic predominance. Despite the promised transformations wrought by the policies of the Good Neighbor and later, the Alliance for Progress, Latin America ultimately remained subject to the unwritten rules of ‘backyard diplomacy.’ In the end, the strategic priorities and neo-colonialist thinking on the part of U.S. policymakers prevailed.²

¹ Stephen Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

² For an excellent case study see Stephen Rabe, *U.S. Intervention in British Guiana: A Cold War Story* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

Rabe's latest work, *The Killing Zone*, explores the strategic logic of U.S.-Latin American relations during the Cold War. He sets up this analysis by posing an important question at the outset: "Had the United States chosen not to destabilize popularly elected governments in Guatemala, British Guiana, Brazil, or Chile, would the global balance of power have been fundamentally altered?" (xxxiv) Put more succinctly, he asks: "Did the collapse of the Soviet Union hinge on keeping leftist politicians out of power in Latin America?" (Ibid) It is not an altogether new question, though the explicit manner in which he frames it is refreshing. In any event, the question remains a relevant one that tends to get overlooked (at least in the popular mindset) when discussing U.S. "victory" in the Cold War. In short, did Latin America truly matter in the defeat of Soviet-backed Communism, or were U.S. priorities in Latin America merely *framed* in terms of winning the Cold War, while in fact reflecting an outgrowth of goals established much earlier in the century?

Although *The Killing Zone* incorporates some new primary research (mostly drawing from published volumes of *Foreign Relations of the United States* [FRUS]), this is largely a work of synthesis that rests on a rich secondary literature, including Rabe's own previously published monographs. This is not a weakness *per se*, as the clear intent of this project is to present a coherent, narrative analysis to a largely undergraduate audience for whom many of these tales and the broader historical storyline Rabe weaves will surely be novel. The book also includes a detailed "Cold War Chronology" (1945-2010). By bringing this chronology into the present, Rabe underscores his central point that the Cold War remains relevant in the course of Latin American nations. He also includes a useful "Recommendations for Further Readings and Research" which correlate to the different chapter themes throughout the text. Rabe's prose is clear, precise and oftentimes riveting in its narrative reach. Few others have his extensive knowledge of the diplomatic forces at work and the actors who implemented the U.S. policies he describes.

And yet in reading the response to his opening question, it strikes me that the narrative unfolds in ways that seem somewhat predetermined, or at least comfortably resting on the historiographical consensus that Rabe himself has done much to establish. Rabe carefully reiterates the principal arguments for why the reach of the Soviet Union was more smoke than fire: the relatively small numbers of guerrilla fighters (against the ramped-up counter-insurgency capacity of governments); the limited logistical reach of Cuba (epitomized by the failure of Che Guevara's mission in Bolivia); the contravening interests of the Soviet Union in Latin America (where trade and diplomacy trumped the pursuit of revolutionary subversion); and the nationalist (rather than Communist) ambitions of (most) Latin American political leaders. Rabe's central argument is that U.S. responses toward Latin America during the Cold War can be understood in terms of "the same interventionist policies and superior attitudes that had characterized U.S. behavior in the first part of the twentieth century." (20) The Cold War, in other words, reflected not rupture but continuity. This macro assessment on its own terms is perfectly acceptable and, indeed, is

reflected in the emergent historiography on the subject, one which emphasizes longer-term trends and trajectories over the impact of relatively shorter-term policy shifts.³

But Rabe's stated aim is to approach the Cold War as a coherent historical epoch, and in that regard, Rabe's interpretation leaves out as much as it asserts. Though well written and drawing on his vast knowledge of diplomatic history, Rabe's approach seems to side-step some of the murkier and still unexplored aspects of the Cold War. In turn, he tends to affirm a narrative born largely out of the official (U.S.) governmental record yet misses (or chooses to by-pass) opportunities to problematize that narrative and, as Thomas Bender would argue, "expand the frame" of historical analysis.⁴

It may indeed be the case that U.S. interventions and support of military repression "did not weaken the Soviet Union and lead to the liberation of Eastern Europeans" (193), as Rabe ultimately concludes. But I am not convinced that Rabe has addressed the question fully. In turn, he may have overlooked not only an important set of responses to his question but, more fundamentally, an opportunity to establish a much wider framework of analysis for the period more generally. For instance, shouldn't one take into consideration the vast expenditures in military hardware and economic subsidies granted to Cuba? The U.S. encirclement of Cuba after 1959—and of Nicaragua in the 1980s—clearly represented a substantial drain on the Soviet economy, requiring the Soviets to spend much more than they would have preferred. Arguably, U.S. strategy (however loathsome) helped to over-extend the Soviets in a way ultimately detrimental to the regime's survival. At the very least, a fuller accounting of Soviet priorities and expenditures—not to mention, diplomatic and cultural objectives—in Latin America is necessary in order to substantiate the premise that the Communist nations "played minor roles" (xxx) in the region. Moreover, Soviet and Chinese ideological influence—the impact of Maoism is left out entirely from Rabe's analysis—was significant and the status accorded to individuals who traveled and studied in the Communist nations was often profound. Latin America may indeed have been a "workshop of empire," as Greg Grandin has argued, more so than a front line in the defense of America's (democratic?) empire.⁵ But it was a battleground all the same, one on which the fundamental question of the Pan-American 'idea' was itself at stake.

One aspect Rabe misses is the important opportunity to discuss the implications of the Good Neighbor Policy, in particular the cultural project of Pan-Americanism. In writing about George Kennan's extensive excursion throughout Latin America and the long letter sent back to the State Department disparaging of the region, Rabe concludes: "Latin America had no significance of its own. It existed to serve U.S. Cold War interests." (24)

³ Greg Grandin and Gilbert Joseph, *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁴ Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁵ Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Holt-Macmillan, 2007).

“No significance” to the American public or U.S. policy makers? If that was in fact the case, then the cultural and diplomatic edifice of the Good Neighbor strategy was entirely hollow. Certainly, the shift to a strident anti-communist discourse, epitomized by the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz in 1954 (Rabe rightfully dedicates a chapter to this critical turning point) did much to shape leftist opinion throughout the region. But by the 1950s, Latin America was enjoying a renaissance in the United States, as a secure, prosperous “Good Neighbor”—a trajectory shattered (though not immediately) by the Cuban revolution. In short, the Good Neighbor policies, which built upon a deeper discourse of ‘shared history,’ had a transformative impact, not only on Latin Americans, across class and regional alignments, but on the U.S. public as well. By concentrating solely on the power-making roles of the diplomatic inner-circles, however, Rabe overlooks a much wider and ultimately more nuanced cultural framework in which Cold War policies were both enacted and received.

A second problem with Rabe’s interpretation, one that tends to get replicated within the dominant historiography, is that he approaches the Cold War in Latin America as a dichotomous struggle between forces on the right (backed by the U.S.), and those on the left (backed, nominally in Rabe’s interpretation, by the Soviets). “National security fears triumphed over U.S. dreams for the good life for Latin Americans,” he writes in reference to the failures of the Alliance for Progress. (85) Yet the varieties of military repression were unevenly distributed. More significantly, many if not most Latin Americans preferred stability over radical propositions for change. Thus a mostly untold story of Latin America during the Cold War belongs to the growing swath in the middle: the upwardly-mobile middle and working classes who took advantage of, if not necessarily embracing ideologically, the developmentalist approaches to economic modernization, whether heralded by left-leaning regimes (such as in Mexico) or right-leaning ones (such as in Brazil). Rabe’s objective in *The Killing Zone* is to underscore the “brutal price” (143) paid by Latin Americans as a result of U.S. Cold War policies. The result is that the reader is mostly left with the impression that Latin America was characterized by unrestrained violence and dashed political outcomes alone.

The other side of this picture, however, is that of a vibrant, consumerist culture, one in which the very ideas of Pan-Americanism and nationalist identity were examined, played with, and reconstituted. This was the case, for instance, via the countercultural movements in Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay and elsewhere—everywhere, in fact. To his credit, Rabe does mention the *tropicalismo* movement in Brazil. Yet he does so, once again, to underscore the violence of the epoch, not the cultural play (and pleasures) also afforded by the capitalist-oriented development strategies and spaces for expressions of a modernist sensibility that were characteristic of the period.⁶ The Cold War, in short, was more than simply a playing out of political violence, which is not to diminish or dilute the relevance of such violence, by any means. But even the title of the book, “Killing Zone,” makes it seem that Latin Americans were little more than victims of unrestrained repression. The fact that this period was also one of the most economically productive in Latin America since the opening decades of the twentieth-century becomes, strangely, relegated to the background.

⁶ I explore this problematic further in my essay, “Expanding our Conceptual Horizons: The Shift from an Old to a New Left in Latin America,” *A Contracorriente* 5:2 (Winter 2008): 47-73.

A third problem is that *The Killing Zone* leaves little room for assessing outcomes that would seemingly go against Rabe's conceptual premise that U.S. policy toward the region was single-mindedly "anti-communist." Thus in writing that Latin American governments needed to pass "Kennedy's Cold War test" (95) regarding relations with Cuba, he ignores the more complex question of Mexico's relationship with Cuba except to write that Mexico "resisted U.S. pressure" (78) to rupture ties. In fact, the United States needed to come to terms with the logic of Mexican nationalism during the 1960s, a logic that at once befuddled U.S. policy makers even as they acknowledged how essential Mexico was to U.S. strategic planning in the region. President Kennedy's highly successful trip to Mexico in the summer of 1962—at the very moment when Mexico was "going it alone" with regard to Cuba—and President Johnson's subsequent visit in the spring of 1966 were essential to the deepening of a bilateral strategic partnership between the United States and Mexico, one grounded explicitly in the language of "Good Neighbor" relations. (Rabe overlooks both trips in his discussion and notes that Johnson "made only one major trip to Latin America, meeting leaders at Punta del Este in 1967 to review the Alliance" [90].) Mexico is not the only unexplored anomaly. More surprisingly is that of Velasco Alvarado's leftist military regime in Peru, which is not mentioned at all in the text. Yet after 1968 the military government in Peru established close ties with the Soviets (including military relations) and with Cuba, policies which apparently did not provoke U.S. covert or overt intervention, though Rabe might have told us something about that.

In sum, *The Killing Zone* drives home a series of central and by now, somewhat familiar points: U.S. policies single-mindedly focused on defeating left-wing forces in the region; Soviet influence was negligible; Latin American citizens were mostly caught in the middle. That the United States exerted a dominant impact on Latin American political outcomes is, on the whole, indisputable. Yet Rabe emits a degree of skepticism, if not obliquely cloaked disparagement, of alternative interpretations of Latin American Cold War history. While acknowledging rather cursorily that it was "Latin American reactionaries, not U.S. officials" (p. 194) who were primarily to blame for the traumas suffered by Latin Americans, in the same breath Rabe is somewhat dismissive of more recent scholarship that attempts to go beyond assumptions of U.S. dominance *over* Latin America. "But scholars can exhaust themselves," he concludes in the second to last paragraph of the book, "attempting to parse out the domestic and foreign dimensions of the violence and terror." (p. 194) Rabe acknowledges Latin American agency, yet he appears to do so somewhat reluctantly. This downplaying of nuance and complexities—"parsing out" what happened on the ground is regarded by Rabe as little more than intellectual exercise—becomes something of a prerequisite in order to establish his underlying premise that U.S. policies defined Latin American outcomes.

By emphasizing the immense tragedies of the period Rabe accomplishes an important, even noble objective. The violence of the Cold War mattered for Latin America in ways that most students in the United States can scarcely fathom. It will surely be hard for anyone reading this book to embrace uncritically the triumphalism of an American-led "victory" in the Cold War. Nevertheless, opportunities to engage an emergent historiography of what transpired in Latin America, from a *Latin* American perspective as well as a more internationalist one,

seem to have been passed up. The Cold War may be over, but its many histories are still being written.

Author's Response by Stephen G. Rabe, University of Texas at Dallas

At the outset, I thank Dustin Walcher for organizing this H-Diplo Roundtable on my new book, *The Killing Zone*. I also appreciate that Mike Donoghue, Darlene Rivas, Andy Kirkendall, and Eric Zolov agreed to review the book. I consider them friends and outstanding scholarly colleagues. Dustin Walcher also did an astute job in choosing reviewers who have written about different countries in Latin America, with Donoghue known for his work on Panama, Rivas on Venezuela, Kirkendall on Brazil, and Zolov on Mexico. And Walcher has focused on Argentina.

As noted by Rivas, I intended for *The Killing Zone* to serve “pedagogical and civic purposes.” Like college and university instructors everywhere, I find it challenging to identify monographs to assign to undergraduate and M.A.-level students that are accessible, compelling, and priced fairly. As templates for this study, I thought of books such as J. Samuel Walker’s *Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of the Atomic Bombs against Japan* and Don Munton and David A. Welch’s *The Cuban Missile Crisis: A Concise History*. Concise books can also contain a provocative thesis, as Louis A. Pérez, Jr. demonstrated in his path-breaking book, *The War of 1898*. Quite obviously, I was thinking about Greg Grandin’s *The Last Colonial Massacre*, when I envisioned my book.¹ But undergraduate, and even graduate students, find Grandin’s superb study dense and a bit formidable. So I tried to write for the student and the educated person rather than just for the scholarly community. Oxford University Press is the perfect publisher for this kind of work, because Oxford, a non-profit company, keeps the price of books affordable.

Just like my companions in this Roundtable, I am always eager to introduce students and citizens to the beauty, splendor, and perhaps sorrow of Latin American history and the role that the United States has played in the course of Latin America’s development. So far, things seem to be working. In the bibliography, I encouraged students to contact me with questions about the book or bibliographic advice for their research projects. I included my postal and e-mail addresses. *The Killing Zone* first appeared in March 2011. Since then, students in the United States have written to me, seeking advice about their independent study proposals. Immigration advocacy people have also contacted me, asking how the Cold War policies of the United States in Central America contributed to poverty and instability. These good folk try to help “non-documented detainees” from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras who are incarcerated in U.S. jails and are scheduled to be deported. I have also learned from a professor at another university that his student discussed the opening section of my book with a friend native to Guatemala. This is the story of Suzanne Marie Berghaus, the young Massachusetts woman who had been

¹ J. Samuel Walker, *Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of the Atomic Bombs against Japan*, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Don Munton and David A. Welch, *The Cuban Missile Crisis: A Concise History* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

kidnapped as an infant by the military in El Salvador and then adopted in the United States. The Guatemalan native, who lives in the United States, began to wonder about the circumstances of her own adoption.

My reviewers agree that my book serves, in Donoghue's words, "as a strong admonition against the U.S. Cold War triumphalism so prevalent in the wake of the 1991 Soviet collapse and China's turn toward a capitalist economic model." That was easy enough to do. But I had another, more barbed objective in writing a provocative, "in your face," book. Scholarly analyses of the U.S. role in the world too often give scant attention to the significance of inter-American relations. Studying the growing U.S. influence in the Southern Cone during the Cold War, for example, somehow seems less instructive to some historians than analyzing policies in Asia or Europe. Innumerable times I have been greeted by colleagues at the annual meetings of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) with the question: "Hi, Steve, are you still studying Latin America?" I have always interpreted that salutation to mean "why are you wasting your time on an area and people of insignificance." Other scholars in our field have told me that they have had similar experiences. In the history of SHAFR, only one inter-Americanist—the worthy Mark Gilderhus of Texas Christian University—has served as president of the organization. Too infrequently, scholars of inter-American relations serve on the editorial board of the major journal, *Diplomatic History*. Praise accrues to our editor, Dustin Walcher, for taking advantage of H-Diplo to highlight research in our field.

My unpleasant point to my good friends in SHAFR is that the implicit scholarly disdain for the subfield of inter-American relations reflects the attitudes of U.S. policymakers. As I noted in the book, running from George F. Kennan to Thomas Mann to Jeane J. Kirkpatrick was the judgment that Latin Americans were children of a lesser god or even, to use the term cited by Tina Rosenberg, "the children of Cain."² In the aftermath of President/General Efraín Ríos Montt's genocidal assault on the Mayan people of Guatemala in the early 1980s, the excuse from the Department of State was that Guatemala had a history of violence and that Ríos Montt, as President Ronald Reagan would have it, was a misunderstood man. Historians of inter-American relations apparently need to reiterate constantly to other historians that Latin America served as a testing ground or "the empire's workshop" for U.S. global policies. In the Cold War, the symbiosis is evident. The inter-American military alliance, the Rio Treaty of 1947, presaged the NATO alliance of 1949, the Alliance for Progress of the 1960s was inspired by the Marshall Plan, the ghastly U.S.-sanctioned violence in El Salvador in the 1980s anticipated the torture and "the journey to the dark side" associated with the George W. Bush administration's war against terror.³ Perhaps it is enough to say that in 2012 approximately one billion people live in the Western Hemisphere. Their relationships are and have always been historically momentous.

² Tina Rosenberg, *Children of Cain: Violence and the Violent in Latin America* (New York: William Morrow, 1991).

³ Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Holt-Macmillan, 2007); Jane Mayer, *The Dark Side* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

The very valid criticisms and inquiries raised by my four friends flow, in part, from the forceful approach I took in *The Killing Zone*. The book title itself is jarring. I anticipated the critiques, because I had seen them already in the eight referee reports that my editor at Oxford University Press, Brian Wheel, solicited. In essence, the critiques center on two questions—did I err in focusing on U.S. policies to the exclusion of Latin American initiatives, and did I dwell too long on the violent characteristics of the Cold War in Latin America. Remembering Donoghue’s always appropriate dictum for book referees that “it is important to critique the work written and not the one which reviewers wished the author had produced,” let me address each question.

I thoroughly agree with Zolov that we need a history of the Cold War that incorporates a strong Latin American perspective. I contemplated writing such a tome and perhaps someday I will tackle that assignment. It would give me something to do in my declining years. But such a comprehensive study is likely to be massive undertaking, leading to a lengthy book. As explained above, I made the strategic decision to “delimit” the study, to use Rivas’s characterization. Nonetheless, we are making progress on this issue. I pointed to Steve Stern’s awesome books on the Chilean struggle to come to terms with life and liberty in the aftermath of the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet in a recent review in *Diplomatic History*.⁴ The essays in the edited collection, *In from the Cold*, in which Eric Zolov has a good piece, also make a solid contribution to a comprehensive history of the Cold War. I highlighted Virginia Langland’s brilliant essay on how the Brazilian military attacked female university students, because the Brazilian generals interpreted their incipient feminism as a manifestation of communism.⁵ I could not, however, as suggested by my reviewers, incorporate ideas in the new collection, *A Century of Revolution*, edited by Greg Grandin and Gil Joseph.⁶ The collection appeared after *The Killing Zone* went into production. Outstanding work is also emanating from the London School of Economics from students of the great historian of international relations, Odd Arne Westad. I had the privilege of being the outside examiner of Thomas J. Field’s excellent multi-archival dissertation on U.S.-Bolivian relations. Tanya Harmer, another Westad student, has written a terrific study, *Allende’s Chile and the Inter-American Cold War*, which I and others will be reviewing in the near future in H-Diplo.⁷ The multifaceted study of Latin America’s Cold

⁴ Stephen G. Rabe, “Human Rights, Latin America, and the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 36 (January 2012): 231-36.

⁵ Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). Virginia Langland’s essay is “Birth Control Pills and Molotov Cocktails: Reading Sex and Revolution in 1968 Brazil,” 308-49.

⁶ Greg Grandin and Gilbert M. Joseph, eds., *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America’s Long Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁷ Thomas C. Field, Jr., “Conflict on High: The Bolivian Revolution and the United States, 1961-1964” (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011); Tanya Harmer, *Allende’s Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

War that we all want is just waiting for similar studies. Conducting archival research in over twenty counties is a near impossible task for any one scholar. Embarking on whirlwind tours of the Western Hemisphere, drawing a document or two from individual Latin American archives, and then announcing you have carried out multi-archival research violates every code of scholarship that I was taught by the soul of professionalism, my mentor Thomas G. Paterson.

I concede that Darlene Rivas is correct that I did not emphasize enough the ideological impact of Fidel Castro, Ernesto “Che” Guevara, and the Cuban Revolution in Latin America. This was brought home to me in examining Tanya Harmer’s book. She makes the valid point that the ferocity of the right’s attack on Allende, constitutionalism, and *La Vía Chilena* was driven by an intense, often irrational fear by Chilean conservatives of Cuban-style radicalism. Harmer proves, however, that, whereas Castro was eager to shape the course of Chilean history, President Salvador Allende largely ignored Castro’s advice and limited Cuba’s influence. A disappointed Allende also found out that the Soviet Union declined to aid Chile with economic largess.⁸ The tangible influence of Cuba in Latin America, as the relentless researcher Piero Gleijeses demonstrated, remained limited during the 1960s and 1970s.⁹ Rivas cites Castro’s encouragement of Venezuelan radicals in the early 1960s. But taking a “Latin American perspective,” we are informed by the insight that the Venezuelan leader, Rómulo Betancourt, bore responsibility for provoking the Cuban meddling. Betancourt volunteered to President John F. Kennedy to take the lead role in assassinating Castro.¹⁰¹

The issue that particularly troubled me was a fear that my book would leave the impression with undergraduates that the region was uncommonly violent, thereby reinforcing the “children of Cain” stereotype. Several of the referees raised this alarm. I have checked with instructors who have assigned *The Killing Zone*, and, so far, it does not seem to be a problem. Students understood the context. My reviewers do not challenge the accuracy of the various incidents in which I argue the United States aided and abetted wholesale violations of basic human rights. To be sure, Andy Kirkendall questioned whether I should have analyzed violence in Argentina, suggesting that *la guerra sucia* rose entirely from Argentina’s violent and unstable political milieu. I think the jury is still out on what role, if any, the United States played in encouraging the Argentine military to unleash indiscriminate murder. President Richard M. Nixon repeatedly observed that Argentines were unsuited to civilian rule. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger emboldened Argentines with his indifference to political repression. The Argentines could not also help but be aware that that Nixon administration had embraced the tyrannical Brazilian generals and

⁸ Harmer, *Allende’s Chile*, 190-275.

⁹ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 5-222, 373-79.

¹⁰ Stephen G. Rabe, “The Caribbean Triangle: Betancourt, Castro, and Trujillo and United States Foreign Policy, 1958-1963,” *Diplomatic History* 20 (Winter 1996): 55-78.

the vicious General Pinochet and showered them with economic and military assistance. The Jimmy Carter administration confronted the Argentine military over its criminal ways. But the Ronald Reagan administration restored peace and harmony with the Argentines, at least until the invasion of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) in 1982. Both Secretary of State Alexander Haig, Jr. and U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick fawned over Argentina. In turn, the Argentine government trained remnants of the National Guard of Nicaragua, helping to transform the loyalists of dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle into the anti-Sandinista *contra* army.¹¹

Again, I agree with the reviewers that U.S. Cold War policies did not always involve the promotion of violence and that the United States used “the tools of attraction,” like the Alliance for Progress, to maintain its sphere of influence during its four-decade-long confrontation with the Soviet Union. Eric Zolov is correct that we need to explore the unique nature of the U.S. relationship with Mexico, the one Latin American country that refused to break relations with Castro’s Cuba. And we need further explanations for why the Nixon administration tolerated Peru’s leftist military regime led by General Juan Velasco Alvarado.¹² Perhaps a better, albeit wordy, subtitle for my book would have been “Those Cases in Latin America Where the United States Waged Violent Cold War.” Let it be noted, however, that those cases are numerous and not all are covered in *The Killing Zone*. I say little about the tragedy of Uruguay in the 1970s. U.S. records on Uruguay remain classified. I suspect that scholars will eventually be able to document what the great French film, *State of Siege* (1972), portrayed about the insidious work of U.S. intelligence and security agents in fomenting repression and torture in Uruguay.

Finally, as Zolov appropriately notes, “the Cold War remains relevant in the course of Latin American nations.” *The Killing Zone* includes a concluding “Aftermath” section, exploring how Latin Americans have tried to come to terms with their sickening Cold War past. This struggle of memory against forgetting has continued in 2011 and 2012. An Argentine court convicted Captain Alfredo Astiz, the “Blonde Angel of Death,” of murder and sentenced him to life imprisonment for the execution of human rights activists. Argentines also learned the poignant story of Victoria Montenegro, a young woman and mother of three, who learned that her father by adoption, a military officer, had murdered her biological parents during *la guerra sucia*.¹³ President Mauricio Funes of El Salvador apologized for and acknowledged the government’s responsibility for the massacre in 1981 of 936 civilians in the village of El Mozote. Outraged Chileans, led by Senator Isabel Allende, daughter of Salvador Allende, beat back an attempt by the present conservative Chilean government to

¹¹ Ariel C. Armony, “Transnationalizing the Dirty War: Argentina in Central America,” in *In from the Cold*, ed. Joseph and Spenser, 134-68.

¹² A good start on this issue can be found in Richard J. Walter, *Peru and the United States, 1960-1975: How Their Ambassadors Managed Foreign Relations in a Turbulent Era* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

¹³ Victoria Montenegro’s story can be found in Alexi Barrionuevo, “Daughter of ‘Dirty War,’ Raised by Man Who Killer Her Parents,” *New York Times*, 8 October 2011.

remove the word “dictatorship” from school textbooks in reference to the government of General Pinochet. And a Guatemalan judge ordered military dictator Efraín Ríos Montt to appear in court. Ríos Montt had enjoyed immunity from prosecution because he was elected to Congress in 2000, but the immunity ended in January 2012, when his term in office expired. Perhaps Oxford will see fit to publish a second edition of *The Killing Zone*, and I will be able to update the “Aftermath section.” It would be satisfying to report that Ríos Montt stood trial for authorizing the murder of the Maya-Ixil population. Perhaps also such a trial would lead U.S. students and citizens to reconsider the legacy of Ronald Reagan, the public defender of Ríos Montt. One always lives with hope.

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