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Introduction by Thomas C. Field Jr

**Glenn J. Dorn. *The Truman Administration and Bolivia: Making the World Safe for Liberal Constitutional Oligarchy*.** University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-271-05015-7 (hardcover, \$79.95).

*and*

**James F. Siekmeier. *The Bolivian Revolution and the United States, 1952 to the Present*.** University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-271-03779-0 (hardcover, \$64.95); 978-0-271-03780-6 (paperback, \$29.95).

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Introduction by Thomas C. Field Jr., Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Arizona

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During the Cold War, the United States government had something of a love affair with Bolivian nationalism. In the wake of Bolivia's dramatic 1952 revolution, Republican and Democratic administrations alike graced the ruling *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR; Revolutionary Nationalist Movement) with hundreds of millions of dollars in economic aid, even as the party nationalized three of the world's largest tin mining companies and expropriated millions of acres of land (without compensation), redistributing them to 170,000 indigenous families.<sup>1</sup> In sheer dollar terms, this was exceptional: no other Latin American country came close to receiving as much per capita aid as revolutionary Bolivia (1952-1964), and by the MNR's last year in office, its government was the second largest per capital recipient of U.S. economic assistance in the world.<sup>2</sup>

For anyone trying to make sense of this paradox, the books under consideration represent excellent places to start. Like the two previous major studies of U.S.-Bolivian relations,<sup>3</sup> these have appeared almost simultaneously. Moreover, the authors – Glenn J. Dorn and James F. Siekmeier – “employ markedly different approaches,” in the words of reviewer Robert Karl. Those of us who study U.S. operations in Cold War Bolivia can take heart: our small field is vibrant and growing.

Despite its modest title, Dorn's book represents nothing less than the most thorough treatment available on Washington's unwitting role in helping to create the conditions for the 1952 Bolivian revolution.<sup>4</sup> By holding to a stingy line in the face of Bolivian leaders' pleadings for a more generous tin contract, the U.S. government's Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) pulled the fiscal rug out from under four postwar Bolivian governments, thus helping to pave the way for a nationalist takeover in 1952. Dorn does not mince words, arguing toward the end of his book that “the Truman administration's dealings with Bolivia must be considered a failure on almost every level” (185).

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<sup>1</sup> *Departamento de Estadística, Servicio Nacional Reforma Agraria* (February 8, 1966), published in Melvin Burke, “Land Reform in the Lake Titicaca Region,” in James M. Malloy and Richard S. Thorn, eds., *Beyond the Revolution: Bolivia since 1952* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), 303.

<sup>2</sup> United States Agency for International Development [USAID], *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants [Greenbook]*, available online at <http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/>.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth D. Lehman, *Bolivia and the United States: A Limited Partnership* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1999); James F. Siekmeier, *Aid, Nationalism, and Inter-American Relations: Guatemala, Bolivia, and the United States, 1945-1961* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> A note of disclaimer is necessary: Dorn and I are formally colleagues. He is Professor of History at Embry-Riddle's flagship campus in Daytona Beach, Florida. I teach in the Global Security and Intelligence Studies Program at the university's western campus in Prescott, Arizona.

A newcomer to Bolivian studies, via U.S.-Argentine relations, Dorn writes like a veteran, and he receives praise from reviewer Robert Robinson for his “obvious comfort within the world of postwar Bolivian politics,” which makes for an “eminently readable...thorough and convincing interpretation” of U.S.-Bolivian relations during the *sexenio* (1946-1952).<sup>5</sup> Karl, too, approves of Dorn’s “monographic” style and his “international approach,” which is “attuned to the multiplicity of actors within the U.S government,” while it also “brilliantly demonstrates” Bolivia’s roller-coaster relationship with Juan Perón’s Argentina. Nonetheless, Karl writes that Dorn’s blow-by-blow narrative is “bound too tightly to its subjects,” and that it fails to “explore...broader contexts” that are only intimated in the “finely-focused account.”

Jeffrey Taffet also believes that Dorn’s “fine book” is “quite effective,” though he goes further in questioning “some of [Dorn’s] grand arguments,” which Taffet finds “less convincing.” Principally, he wonders if an “alternative reading of Dorn’s evidence” might place RFC officials in the role of the “heroes” of the story for having denied Bolivia’s pre-revolutionary governments a lifeline. As Taffet writes, “[i]n this case we have a set of officials who seemed not to care much about keeping oligarchs in power. Are these really the bad guys?” A similar point was made in these pages by Kenneth Lehman, in his review of Dorn’s recent *Diplomatic History* article. Lehman argued that Dorn’s analysis “suggests that if Truman’s policy had been more effective, feudalism and domination by ruthless tin barons might have continued.” Lehman concluded his review by pondering a troubling possibility: “Sometimes, perhaps U.S. policies in the hemisphere can best succeed by failing.”<sup>6</sup>

The commenters also diverge in their interpretations of James Siekmeier’s most recent offering, a “synthetic account,” in Karl’s words, “which focuses (in spite of its title) on the two decades after the 1952 revolution.” Siekmeier is something of a pioneer amongst diplomatic historians who are interested in Bolivia, and this work builds on a 1999 monograph in which Siekmeier argued that U.S. officials used foreign aid during the 1950s to moderate and eventually undermine Bolivia’s revolutionary government.<sup>7</sup>

Siekmeier’s current perspective, complemented now by a wealth of Bolivian sources, has undergone substantial evolution. Rather than seeing Eisenhower-era aid programs as a tireless drive to dominate the Bolivian revolution and subvert economic nationalism, Siekmeier now describes them as the culmination of deft Bolivian diplomacy. Central to this story is Bolivia’s Ambassador to Washington, Víctor Andrade (1944-1946, 1952-1958, 1960-1962), whose private papers Siekmeier utilizes to impressive effect. Siekmeier cites

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<sup>5</sup> The *sexenio* is the term used by Bolivian nationalists to refer to their period of exile and repression between the 1946 overthrow of populist General Gualberto Villarroel and the 1952 MNR-led revolution.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Lehman, H-Diplo review of Glenn J. Dorn, “Pushing Tin: U.S.-Bolivian Relations and the Coming of the National Revolution,” *Diplomatic History* 35:2 (April 2011), <http://www.h-diplo.org/~diplo/reviews/PDF/AR303.pdf>. Published by H-Diplo on 5 May 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Siekmeier, *Aid, Nationalism, and Inter-American Relations*.

James C. Scott's *Weapons of the Weak*,<sup>8</sup> expressing a desire to give voice to the “nonelite majority – the *campesinos* [peasants] and other subaltern classes” (27). Due to the fact that, like most of Siekmeier's subjects, Andrade was a state actor,<sup>9</sup> this book is actually more reminiscent of Nick Cullather's excellent monograph, *Illusions of Influence*, in which postwar Filipino officials “skillfully employed a variety of tactics to make United States policy conform to their interests.”<sup>10</sup> Cullather called on historians to avoid “accept[ing] U.S. officials' own assessment of their influence,” and Siekmeier readily delivers, identifying important spaces of autonomy hallowed out by Bolivian leaders in their relations with a vastly more powerful partner.<sup>11</sup>

Robinson characterizes Siekmeier's “broad survey” as a “useful resource” for those in search of a “brief and readable primer on the [U.S.-Bolivian] relationship.” He praises the “impressive breadth of [Siekmeier's] research,” particularly in uncovering the deftness with which Bolivian leaders negotiated with their counterparts in Washington. Nonetheless, Robinson is less enthused by Siekmeier's long sections on Ambassador Andrade, which seem “more like a stand-alone biographical essay than a blended addition.” Robinson also rejects Siekmeier's contention that Bolivia represented the “earliest example of U.S. nation-building in the nonindustrialized world” (2), citing “U.S. occupations of Cuba and the Philippines,” which “[s]urely...qualify as nation-building.”

Karl seconds Robinson's critique, adding that Siekmeier fails to offer a clear definition of “nation-building,” and “indeed confuses the straightforward growth strategies of the 1950s...with the array of social, political, cultural, and economic changes that modernization theorists pushed for in the 1960s.” Karl also wonders if the “wholly bilateral approach” hinders Siekmeier from uncovering a “richer history, which involved not only twos, but also threes.” Of the reviewers, Taffet is the most effusive, calling Siekmeier's book an “insightful text...fascinating, well-argued,” and reflecting “careful and thorough research.” Like Robinson, however, Taffet writes that some sections of Siekmeier's book feel disjointed, giving the reader the feeling of “reading two separate books.”

Of all the insightful comments brought up in regards to these two books, the last half of Karl's review is especially enlightening. Although he praises Dorn and Siekmeier for their “commitment to revealing Latin American agency,” Karl nonetheless believes that both

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<sup>8</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> Siekmeier does include a few lines regarding “José Rosa” (78-9), which I presume is a reference to the MNR's long-time *cacique* in Ucureña, José Rojas. See James V. Kohn, “The Cliza and Ucureña War: Syndical Violence and National Revolution in Bolivia,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 62:4 (1982): 607-28.

<sup>10</sup> Nick Cullather, *Illusions of Influence: The Political Economy of United States – Philippines Relations, 1942-1960* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 185.

<sup>11</sup> Cullather, 3.

authors “reveal prevalent historiographical provincialisms.” In short, they “counterpoise U.S. aspirations for liberal capitalism and democracy with Latin American nationalism,” a perspective that has the “inadvertent consequence of reducing Latin American concerns to the parochial realm of the national...unintentionally present[ing] the global/universal – liberalism, capitalism” – as if it were the “sole purview of the United States.” Such “common framings of nationalism,” according to Karl, “limit our potential understandings of agency,” particularly by reducing sophisticated, complex, and varied Latin American political ideologies to “inferior southern variants” distorted somehow by the “amorphous forces” of nationalism.

Karl’s thoughtful critique aside, Robinson is correct that “both books have much to offer,” particularly in providing the background for Washington’s alliance with Bolivian nationalism in the 1950s and early 1960s. Taffet goes as far as wondering if they demonstrate that it may be “impossible to extricate U.S. diplomatic history from Bolivian history.” Even if this contains a touch of hyperbole, the books clearly support his contention that the history of U.S. foreign policy in twentieth century Bolivia continues to hold “vital” importance to “U.S.-Bolivian relations today.”

During a 1988 interview, in a moment of characteristic frankness, former U.S. Ambassador to Bolivia Douglas Henderson (1963-1967), said, “I shouldn’t say this, but one of the great advantages of being ambassador to Bolivia is that Washington doesn’t pay much attention to what’s going on there until you’re in trouble.”<sup>12</sup> A few years earlier, another former U.S. Ambassador, Ben Stephansky (1961-1963) offered a different portrayal in conversations with Kennedy Library historian Sheldon Stern. Stern mentioned that he was “struck by the fact that the U.S. mission in Bolivia is very large, much larger for example than those of Brazil or Chile.” Ambassador Stephansky offered no direct answer, but he detailed the extent of a very intimate U.S.-Bolivian relationship during the early 1960s, at which time Bolivia “scared the bejesus out of the Kennedy administration.”<sup>13</sup>

For better or worse, Bolivia is often “in trouble,” and this was certainly the case during the Cold War. As Dorn and Siekmeier have ably demonstrated, Bolivia’s revolutionary milieu ensured that a generally indifferent U.S. policy would be punctuated by bouts of feverish interventionism. While the meaning and eventual outcome of U.S. intervention in Cold War Bolivia remains a contested field of study, these two works demonstrate the need for continued scholarly attention to Bolivia, if for no other reason than the fact that Bolivia continues to scare “the bejesus” out of some in Washington.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Douglas Henderson Oral History, 29 April 1988, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, 12.

<sup>13</sup> Ben Stephansky Oral History, 6 June 1983, John F. Kennedy Library, 8, 30ff.

<sup>14</sup> See “Bolivia Becoming a Hotbed of Islamic Extremism, Report Concludes,” *FoxNews.com*, 16 June 2009, accessed 2 February 2013, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,526753,00.html>. *Fox News* cites a May 2009 report by the Open Source Center, the self-styled “premier provider of foreign open source intelligence” for the U.S. government. For the report, see “Bolivia – Key Muslim Converts Assert Local Peril, Ally With Zealots Abroad,” *Open Source Center*, 12 May 2009, accessed 2 February 2013,

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**Thomas C. Field Jr.** is Assistant Professor of History in the Global Security and Intelligence Studies Program at Embry-Riddle University, Prescott. For his research on U.S.-backed military-led modernization programs in the years leading up to Bolivia's 1964 coup d'état, Field received the 2013 Stuart L. Bernath Article Prize from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR), and the 2011 Betty M. Unterberger Dissertation Prize, also from SHAFR. His first book will be published by Cornell University Press in 2014.

**Robert Karl** is Assistant Professor of Latin American history at Princeton University. His research concentrates on the political history of mid-twentieth century Colombia, particularly practices of peace and violence. His current book manuscript, "Colombia's Forgotten Peace: Improvising Reform in the Cold War Era," looks at the politics of security and property in central Colombia between 1957 and 1966, a "revolutionary" conjuncture for Colombia and the rest of Latin America. The manuscript additionally considers the meanings of the "cold war" at the start of the 1960s, including the origins of the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia).

**Robert S. Robinson** currently teaches United States history at Liberty Common School, a charter high school in Colorado. He has been a visiting assistant professor of U.S. foreign relations history at Ohio University, and in 2007 he received his Ph.D. in history from the Ohio State University. His dissertation, "Creating Foreign Policy Locally: Migratory Labor and the Texas Border, 1943-1952," dealt with U.S.-Mexican relations, state-level politics, race, and the bracero program. Grants from the Harry S. Truman Library Foundation, the Mershon Center for International Security Studies, and the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) have supported his research.

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<http://www.fas.org/irp/dni/osc/bolivia.pdf>. For a tongue-and-cheek treatment of the Green Scare in Bolivia, see Belén Fernández, "In Search of the 'Islamic Menace' in Bolivia," *Al Jazeera*, 29 February 2012, accessed 2 February 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/02/2012226115755915312.html>.

Review by Robert Karl, Princeton University

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The 2010s are shaping up to be a stimulating decade for Bolivian history in the United States. The recent fourth edition of Herbert S. Klein's history of Bolivia offers a master historian's updated account of the grand sweep of the country's history, including his personal reflections on how the country has changed since the book's first appearance thirty years ago.<sup>1</sup> From younger scholars, there come the books reviewed here, as well as Thomas Field's new work on Bolivian-U.S. relations in the early 1960s.<sup>2</sup> Coverage of Bolivian history will likely only increase in the coming years, with the fiftieth anniversaries of the 1964 coup and – most irresistibly attractive – the 1967 execution of Ernest Che Guevara.

Commemoration alone does not explain the surge in interest in Bolivia. The 2006 election of Evo Morales grabbed headlines and scholarly attention around the world: here was a man who simultaneously embodied the aspirations of Bolivia's indigenous peoples, a larger leftward shift in Latin American politics, and a revolutionary challenge to particularly pronounced forms of U.S. influence and global capitalism. This last characteristic was made all the more meaningful by the legacies of Bolivia's 1952 revolution, the third and least appreciated of Latin America's five twentieth-century social revolutions.

Morales leaves an unmistakable imprint on James F. Siekmeier's *The Bolivian Revolution and the United States* and Glenn J. Dorn's *The Truman Administration and Bolivia*. Both historians begin and end their accounts with contemporary Bolivian politics. Through explicit comparison and implicit analysis, their books provide background for comprehending this latest manifestation of Bolivia's longer revolutionary trajectory.

Siekmeier and Dorn employ markedly different approaches to U.S.-Bolivian relations. Siekmeier's largely synthetic account, which focuses (in spite of its title) on the two decades after the 1952 revolution, argues that Bolivia possessed an outsized importance in U.S. foreign policy. By virtue of the strategic value of Bolivia's tin, and because of the tumultuous social and political arrangements that tin engendered, Franklin D. Roosevelt and his successors committed the United States to an active relationship with the Andean country. Following a precedent set in 1942 (20–21, 48), the Eisenhower administration committed large amounts of aid to the new revolutionary government in La Paz, even as it rebuffed requests for development assistance from other Latin American nations and overthrew a contemporaneous revolutionary project in Guatemala.

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert S. Klein, *A Concise History of Bolivia*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press), 2011 [2003]. The book had previously been published as *Bolivia: The Evolution of a Multi-Ethnic Society* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press) [1982, 1992].

<sup>2</sup> Thomas C. Field, Jr., "Conflict on High: The Bolivian Revolution and the United States, 1961-1964" (Ph.D. diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2010), winner of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations' 2011 Betty M. Unterberger Dissertation Prize; idem, "Ideology as Strategy: Military-Led Modernization and the Origins of the Alliance for Progress in Bolivia," *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 1 (January 2012): 147–183.

By Siekmeier's reckoning, Bolivia marked "the earliest example of attempted U.S. nation-building in the nonindustrialized world" (2). The country, he asserts, would continue to play the role of "pioneering test case" (1), for development strategies in the 1950s and '60s (8, 71, 52–55, 69, 84, 92–93), and for neoliberal and counter-narcotics policies in the 1980s (155, 166).

Siekmeier is right to highlight Bolivia's unique position in U.S.-Latin American relations. I am nevertheless less than convinced by his specific claims. Siekmeier puts forward Bolivia's pioneering role, without proving that Bolivia in fact received U.S. development aid ahead of other countries. Some of the vagueness of Siekmeier's argument results from the fact that he does not define "nation-building" (and indeed confuses the straightforward growth strategies of the 1950s (41, 54–55) with the array of social, political, cultural, and economic changes that modernization theorists pushed for in the 1960s).

In addition to emphasizing what was novel in the U.S.-Bolivian relationship, Siekmeier stresses Bolivian agency in cultivating U.S. interest and influencing U.S. actions. Two instances of this – a profile of Bolivian Ambassador to the United States Víctor Andrade (55-72) and an examination of the 1971 Bolivian expulsion of the Peace Corps (133–134, 140–151) – represent the most compelling sections of *The Bolivian Revolution and the United States*. However, these are also instances where comparative analysis could have further strengthened Siekmeier's argument. For instance, having noted that Peru is the only other Latin American country to have evicted the Peace Corps (134f3), Siekmeier might have examined that political process, drawing out similarities and differences to sharpen his evidence on Bolivia.

Overall, Siekmeier takes a wholly bilateral approach to the U.S.-Bolivian relationship. There are nonetheless tantalizing suggestions of a richer history, which involved not only twos, but also threes. Bolivia did not undertake its revolutionary process alone. Siekmeier notes in passing that the Bolivian government reached a "verbal agreement" with Iran in 1952 to discuss the nationalization of the two countries' oil sectors (50–51). Readers are left wondering what U.S. diplomats made of this fascinating, if ultimately abortive, global connection. Siekmeier also neglects a more concrete manifestation of transnational revolutionary ties, the Mexican consultant Edmundo Flores' role in the formulation of Bolivia's sweeping agrarian reform law.<sup>3</sup> Siekmeier thus misses an opportunity to shed light on more nuanced elements of the U.S.-Bolivian relationship. Did U.S. officials express concern over Flores' involvement, or did his presence reassure them that the Bolivians were taking a more moderate, familiar revolutionary path? How did Flores' affiliation with the United Nations' mission modify U.S. opinion? In raising such questions, Siekmeier might have better accounted for the U.S. perceptions that shaped policies toward Bolivia.

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<sup>3</sup> See Carter Goodrich, "Bolivia in Time of Revolution," in *Beyond the Revolution: Bolivia Since 1952*, ed. James M. Malloy and Richard S. Thorn (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), 20, 23e11; idem, "Bolivia: Test of Technical Assistance," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1954.

The advantages of a more international approach are on clear display in *The Truman Administration and Bolivia*. Dorn's monographic treatment of U.S.-Bolivian interactions, which centers above all on the annual tin price negotiations, embeds its subject in a global context. Importantly, this is not the usual Cold War story. On one side are actors such as Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Belgium – European powers which the United States cajoled out of dealing with the Bolivians (84), and whose war-wrecked possessions in Southeast Asia posed a long-term threat to the higher tin prices that Bolivian governments needed to push ahead with their agendas (82, 112). On another side are Bolivia's larger neighbors, including a wary Chile (169), and a Brazil locked in rivalry with Perón's Argentina (54, 67). Outside of the United States, Argentina is the most significant foreign player in Dorn's story, a would-be regional hegemon (see especially 49, 52, 54–55, 64–68). Dorn's previous work on U.S.-Argentine relations shines through in these parts of the book.<sup>4</sup> In a light-handed presentation of Latin American agency, Dorn brilliantly demonstrates the opportunities and perils that the Argentine alternative posed for Bolivian politicians during the tin negotiations of the late 1940s (80, 85).

Dorn is also attuned to the multiplicity of actors at work within the U.S. government. Tin diplomacy relied not only on the State Department, but also on the extraordinarily influential Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), the agency encharged with protecting U.S. strategic interests relative to commodities. Dorn captures the ways in which the RFC and its chairman, W. Stuart Symington, undermined the construction of a coherent U.S. policy toward Bolivia (50, 147, 159–160, 192, 197, 199–200). *The Truman Administration and Bolivia* introduces an array of lesser meddlers as well, including a series of incompetent ambassadors (123, 193, 240e4) and Texas Senator Lyndon Johnson (see in particular 158–160).

By contrast, Siekmeier is less sensitive to inner tensions within the U.S. and Bolivian governments, and how these rivalries generated contradictory missions. For instance, his book's final chapter posits that “[t]he Bolivian government works with the United States to quell the narcotics trade in order to stay on good terms with its giant ‘neighbor’ in North America in order to maintain the flow of U.S. assistance – a goal of Bolivian foreign policy going back to the 1950s” (167). The chapter misses the 1980 coup, which was carried out by Bolivian military officers with close ties to the Argentinean military government and Bolivian cocaine traffickers. The officers were so intertwined with the traffickers that one Bolivian businessman preemptively dubbed the takeover “the Cocaine Coup.”<sup>5</sup> As Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall have shown, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency tapped into these transnational military networks to organize and fund the Reagan administration's war against the revolutionary *Sandinista* government in Nicaragua.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Glenn J. Dorn, *Peronistas and New Dealers: U.S.-Argentine Rivalry and the Western Hemisphere (1946-1950)* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Peter Dale Scott, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America*, Updated ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 45. The coup is discussed in *ibid.*, 44–46.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 46–50.

Bolivia's precise role in this story, and the ways in which different U.S. agencies related and responded to 'cocaine politics,' deserve attention in the history of late-twentieth century U.S.-Bolivian relations.

Of the two books, Dorn's narrative is more engaging, conveying in particular Bolivian policymakers' urgency and frustrations. However, Dorn's narrative is bound too tightly to its subjects as well. Larger conjunctures go under-explained. Argentina lamentably disappears from the book's second half. Dorn hints at the economic troubles behind Perón's declining influence (141), in much the same way that he mentions the general "postwar inflationary spiral" (77) that contributed to Bolivian political turbulence. To explore these broader contexts, Dorn might have followed the model provided by Piero Gleijeses's *Conflicting Missions*,<sup>7</sup> and zoomed out from his finely-focused account to put forward mini-chapters on how shifting economic and political circumstances altered American geopolitics.

Through their differing approaches, Siekmeier and Dorn exemplify the potential methodological amalgamates available to historians of U.S. foreign policy.<sup>8</sup> Siekmeier embraces cultural relations, while adhering to a more traditional bilateral framework. Dorn, in turn, adopts a more international perspective, even as he concentrates on the diplomacy of economic relations.

Taken together, *The Bolivian Revolution and the United States* and *The Truman Administration and Bolivia* present a snapshot of current thinking on Latin American agency and nationalism in the field of diplomatic history. I would suggest, however, that common framings of nationalism limit our potential understandings of agency. Historians frequently counterpoise U.S. aspirations for liberal capitalism and democracy with Latin American nationalism. Witness, for instance, Dorn's introductory statement about "the efforts of President...Truman to forge a global liberal capitalist order by overcoming South American nationalists" (2), and Siekmeier's motif of "economic nationalism" (17). Such framings can have the inadvertent consequence of reducing Latin American concerns to the parochial realm of the national. In other words, historians can unintentionally present the global/universal – liberalism, capitalism – as being the sole purview of the United States.

Historians have, of course, long pointed out the discrepancies that exist between expansive U.S. rhetoric and selfish U.S. action. Among Dorn's critiques of the Truman administration's policy is an instructive observation about the distance between the purported goal of liberal capitalism and "the arbitrary unilateralism manifested in the tin negotiation" (198). To take this critique a step further, was not the United States itself thus manifesting a form

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<sup>7</sup> Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). See Chapters 1 and 10.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. my comments in the H-Diplo roundtable review of Bradley Lynn Coleman, *Colombia and the United States: The Making of an Inter-American Alliance, 1939-1960*, H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online, March 2010, <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XI-17.pdf>.

of economic nationalism? To be certain, the United States had unrivaled globalist aspirations and power. To treat the United States and Latin American countries on more equal terminological ground – to provincialize the United States – may nonetheless lead to fuller appreciations of the ways in which Latin Americans exercised agency.

The question of difference between America and Latin America manifests itself on another plane in works such as Dorn's. *The Truman Administration and Bolivia* does not address what might have differentiated Truman's liberal capitalism from the liberalism of the "constitutional oligarchy" referenced in Dorn's title. In the absence of more systematic explanations, the question risks becoming viewed in terms of backwardness, whereby such amorphous forces as nationalism (or culture) produce imperfect ("Latin") forms of liberalism and capitalism.

U.S. relations with Latin America in the twentieth century were far more than a contest between U.S. political, social, and economic systems and their inferior southern variants. Guided by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century debates over the place of the state in socio-economic life, and additionally influenced by Catholic social thought, Latin American political thinkers developed distinct notions of the common good and how to achieve it. These ideas and practices did not preclude commitments to capitalism and democracy. Instead, as Greg Grandin has recently suggested, they represented an alternative American political "tradition."<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the more classical liberalism found in the United States, which defended the rights of individuals as absolute, Latin American republicanism stressed the idea of equity, and posited a more activist role for the state in order to foster it.<sup>10</sup>

Beginning with revolutionary Mexico in 1917, numerous Latin American countries drafted new constitutions that gave concrete, institutional expression to republican principles.<sup>11</sup> A common provision defined property as having "a social function," and thus established for states the legal basis to regulate and expropriate property in order to advance the national good.<sup>12</sup> In Bolivia and elsewhere, citizens quickly seized on this and other constitutionally-

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<sup>9</sup> Greg Grandin, "The Liberal Traditions in the Americas: Rights, Sovereignty, and the Origins of Liberal Multilateralism," *American Historical Review* 117, no. 1 (February 2012): 68–91.

<sup>10</sup> General differences between republicanism and liberalism are discussed in Maurizio Viroli, *Republicanism*, trans. Antony Shugaar (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Klein defines this phenomenon as "social constitutionalism" (Klein, *A Concise History of Bolivia*, 191; see also his earlier article, "'Social Constitutionalism' in Latin America: The Bolivian Experience of 1938," *The Americas* 22, no. 3 (January 1966): 258–276). However, as I argue below, constitution-making represented only one facet of a more comprehensive order.

<sup>12</sup> See the discussion in Grandin, "The Liberal Traditions in the Americas," 76. The "social function" of property first appeared in Bolivia under Article 17 of the 1938 constitution. The 1945 reform added supplementary language about "the collective interest." The texts of Bolivia's constitutions, and a useful comparison table, can be found at <http://comisiondeconstitucion2002-2003.awardspace.com/cpehistoria/reformas.htm>.

defined rights and obligations to press their governments to protect worker rights, nationalize key economic sectors, and (re)distribute land.<sup>13</sup> Constitutions facilitated actions by governments and popular sectors that U.S. officials, and subsequent generations of historians, have defined as ‘nationalist’ or ‘socialist.’ Latin American historical actors themselves may have presented or understood such actions in nationalist language, but those actions simultaneously reflected a larger set of assumptions about society and the state.

The notion of a hemispheric struggle between competing socio-political visions is not lost on Siekmeier and Dorn. Siekmeier fleetingly references the 1970s/’80s literature on “corporatism” (119), which also provided the foundation for Dorn’s first book.<sup>14</sup> The question remains of how the more evident corporatism of the 1930s and ’40s related to ideas that were described at other times as republican. The terminology used by historical actors themselves would be highly revelatory in this regard. Given their inherent and increasingly transnational vantage, diplomatic historians may be uniquely positioned to offer insight into these crucial historical dilemmas.

In *The Truman Administration and Bolivia* and *The Bolivian Revolution and the United States*, Dorn and Siekmeier contribute to North American understanding about U.S.-Bolivian relations. In their own ways, both works manifest increasingly widespread methodological trends in the field, chief among them multi-archival research and a commitment to revealing Latin American agency. Both books also reveal prevalent historiographical provincialisms. By further broadening our scope of inquiry to encompass not only political attitudes and actions, but also the interconnected ideas and institutions that inform them, historians can build a more unified picture of how political leaders and citizens from across the region related to one another, their counterparts in other countries, and the United States.

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<sup>13</sup> Bolivian constitutions go almost unmentioned in *The Truman Administration and Bolivia* and *The Bolivian Revolution and the United States*. Dorn includes a brief allusion (29), while in his sole reference to the subject Siekmeier mistakes the 1938 Constitution for subsequent regulatory legislation (35).

<sup>14</sup> See especially Dorn, *Peronistas and New Dealers*, 2.

Review by Robert S. Robinson, Liberty Common High School

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Glenn J. Dorn's *The Truman Administration and Bolivia: Making the World Safe for Liberal Constitutional Oligarchy* is an engaging read that expertly encapsulates the drift and inconsistency which characterized much of the Truman administration's policy toward Latin America during the early Cold War. Bolivia, like a number of Latin American states, was important to the United States, but never quite important enough to engage the sustained attention of top policy-makers, or to prompt them to craft a cohesive and rational regional policy. Bolivia's importance derived mostly from its production of tin, a key wartime resource to which U.S. leaders desired continued and cheap access. After the war, the drive to acquire tin continued almost unabated, justified by military preparedness and eventually by the immediate needs created by the Korean War.

Perhaps the most fascinating feature of Dorn's work is his description of the tug-of-war between the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) and the State Department over the direction of U.S. policy in Bolivia. Simply put, the RFC wanted tin at the cheapest price it could squeeze out of a succession of Bolivian governments. Success for the RFC was defined by the number of American tax dollars saved (138). The RFC was strongly supported in its quest for savings by then-Senator Lyndon Baines Johnson. The State Department on the other hand considered a whole host of complicating factors. Perhaps most importantly, State worried about which factions in Bolivian politics would likely be strengthened or weakened by setting a particular price for tin. Largely, State sought to give more generous contracts to Bolivian leaders in order to promote hemispheric solidarity, to stabilize and support moderate and pro-U.S. elements in Bolivia, and to send a message to other Latin American states that their wartime contributions had not been forgotten. Dorn credits State Department officials with displaying an often nuanced and accurate view of Bolivian politics.

What is fascinating, however, is how rarely State Department officials analyses and advice made any difference. The RFC often ran rough-shod over State's objections and treated the acquisition of tin as a purely financial transaction which ought to be divorced from its political implications. Try as it might, State was mostly unable to alter this state of affairs. Only rarely, as when RFC chairman Stuart Symington was removed after Harry Truman's personal intervention, did State's concerns with Bolivian politics achieve any significant influence.

The result of the RFC's single-mindedness, as Dorn clearly shows, was that Bolivia drifted closer and closer to the revolution which brought the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR) to power despite most U.S. analysts' agreement that an MNR government would mark a significant shift to the left and be among the worst possible outcomes for the United States. Dorn's book captures the inter-departmental strife over the creation of foreign policy in a compelling and detailed manner.

Another of Dorn's great strengths is his obvious comfort within the world of postwar Bolivian politics. Dozens of politicians, factions, parties, army officers, tin barons, labor

leaders, and other Bolivian power brokers appear in the book, and Dorn does a remarkable job of tracking their interrelationships, providing compelling motivations for their actions, and tracing their influence over Bolivian policy. The book's chapters are organized around each of the Bolivian governments from 1945-53. This organization highlights the instability in post-War Bolivia as only one regime during that period held power for more than two years.

*The Truman Administration and Bolivia* also has much to recommend it from a stylistic perspective. Charting the repeated renegotiation of tin contracts could easily be quite dull, but, on the contrary, Dorn's book is eminently readable due to at least two factors. First, he is sharply focused. Chapters have clear arcs and Dorn has the discipline to stick assiduously to his key themes. Second, the author has a talent for finding the eye-catching quote in the documents. For example, Junta leaders in 1946, working to convince U.S. leaders that they would be a better ally than the previous administration, suggested that the assassinated President Gualberto López Villarreal had been intended to "assure 'Anschluss' with Argentina," in a striking comparison to the German absorption of Austria (49). Dorn's writing is one of many fronts on which his book succeeds.

James Siekmeier's *The Bolivian Revolution and the United States, 1952 to the Present* picks up chronologically about where Dorn's work leaves off. Siekmeier provides a broad survey of U.S.-Bolivian relations which will doubtless serve as a useful resource for upper division students and professionals in the field who need a brief and readable primer on the relationship. Siekmeier's overview is grounded in the impressive breadth of his research in Bolivian and U.S. archives as well as in published primary and secondary sources.

One of Siekmeier's more interesting arguments is that the U.S. relationship with the MNR after the revolution of 1952 was generally positive and productive, despite the anxieties of U.S. observers that the new left-leaning regime would be extreme and intractable. This welcome reality for U.S. policy makers is consistent with the conclusions of other studies on U.S. foreign policy in the 1950s suggesting that U.S. leaders, while not simplistically equating third world nationalism with communism, regularly overestimated the threat it posed to the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The later chapters in the book are in many ways the most interesting. For example, Siekmeier's excellent treatment of the Peace Corp being pushed out of Bolivia in May of 1971 highlights the importance of symbolism, image, and culture to international relations. Among the many tasks of Peace Corps volunteers was a birth control program which Siekmeier describes as "nonaggressive, small, and voluntary" (141). Many Bolivians, however, sensed a lack of respect or understanding for their culture inherent in this program. Not only did Catholic teachings forbid the use of birth control, but Bolivia, with its

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Robert J. McMahon, "Eisenhower and Third World Nationalism: A Critique of the Revisionists," *Political Science Quarterly* (Fall 1986), 453-73 and *Empire and Revolution: The United States and the Third World since 1945*, Ed. Peter L. Hahn and Mary Ann Heiss (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2001), 273-274.

3,500,000 or so citizens, seemed to be nowhere near a population crisis. The program became a symbol of U.S. imperial attitudes and overreach. Siekmeier intriguingly argues that ultimately it was the popular reception of a feature film called *Blood of the Condor*, which portrayed Peace Corps volunteers as “arrogant, ethnocentric, and narrow-minded imperialists,” that led to the organizations ouster (144). Kicking out the Peace Corps allowed Bolivia’s leaders to co-opt rampant anti-Americanism without threatening the more fundamental aspects of the relationship.

Also, a later chapter on the growth of coca leaf production and how the drug war grew to dwarf almost any other issue in the bilateral relationship reveals a fascinating transformation from the Cold War years. This chapter also allows Siekmeier to draw a direct line between the 1952 Revolution’s focus on the rights of the indigenous and the modern political landscape, since coca leaf farming often represents the clearest possible path to financial solvency for indigenous farmers in today’s Bolivia. He carries this connection all the way through to the election of Bolivian President Evo Morales in convincing fashion.

Although Siekmeier accomplishes much that is to his credit, there are a couple of ways in which the text could be improved. For example, there is an error on page 33. Siekmeier reports there that the 1950 Bolivian census was the “first for the country in the twentieth century,” but he has already cited data from the 1940 census on page 27. Also, the last half of chapter two is devoted to a lengthy treatment of Ambassador Víctor Andrade, who at several points represented Bolivia to the United States government. There are multiple subsections on Andrade which read much more like a stand-alone biographical essay than a blended addition to the chapter. Andrade’s influence seems to have been significant indeed, but no other figure in the text gets anything like this lengthy treatment, which feels somewhat out of balance.

Siekmeier also occasionally seems to overstate some claims, as when he suggests that “Bolivia represents the earliest example of attempted U.S. nation-building in the nonindustrialized world” (2). Surely the U.S. occupations of Cuba and the Philippines beginning in 1898 qualify as nation-building. U.S. efforts at shaping the national trajectory of those nations were much more systematic and involved than they were in Bolivia. Jeremi Suri’s new work, *Liberty’s Surest Guardian: American Nation-Building from the Founders to Obama*, will doubtless be the subject of much debate, but at the very least the book definitively shows that U.S. nation-building began before the 1940s.<sup>2</sup>

Ultimately, however, both books have much to offer. Dorn’s work represents a thorough and convincing interpretation of U.S.-Bolivian policy during the early postwar period. Siekmeier’s survey is an effective introduction to a relatively lesser-studied bilateral partner of the United States.

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<sup>2</sup> Jeremi Suri, *Liberty’s Surest Guardian: American Nation-Building from the Founders to Obama* (New York: Free Press, 2011).

Review by Jeffrey F. Taffet, United States Merchant Marine Academy

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In *The Bolivian Revolution and the United States, 1952 to the Present*, James Siekmeier recounts the well-known story of Henry Kissinger's 1969 meeting with the Chilean foreign minister, Gabriel Valdés. The Chilean was in Washington to explain the results of a conference in Viña del Mar in which a set of Latin American leaders discussed their belief that the United States was responsible for Latin America's historical underdevelopment. Kissinger did not care. He told Valdés that "nothing of importance happened in the Southern hemisphere" (124).

Siekmeier notes appropriately that Kissinger was "arrogant," and suggests that Valdés was reasonably "startled and insulted" (124). He also uses this scene to pivot towards explaining that this meeting does not capture the reality of the Nixon administration's concerns about the region. Siekmeier's challenge to the historiography on this point is important and I will get to it later, but first it is worth briefly dissecting Kissinger's reaction. While obviously Kissinger expressed himself inelegantly and undiplomatically, it is not hard to understand his position. Latin American states generally operated on the periphery of global conflicts and were economically and militarily weak. None had presented a real challenge to rising U.S. power, and it was hard to imagine that one ever would. Cuba certainly was a problem, and as Siekmeier appropriately notes, Chile would become one, but it is easy to see that Kissinger had more pressing issues to deal with. He needed to worry about the war in Vietnam, about instability in the Middle East, and about complex relationships with European allies, the Soviets, and the Chinese. Perhaps Kissinger should have paid more neighborly attention to the region, but it cannot be a surprise that he did not and that he rebuffed Valdés so strongly.

This idea is important in thinking about the broader thrust of Siekmeier's insightful text, and also in considering Glenn Dorn's fine book, *The Truman Administration and Bolivia: Making the World Safe for Liberal Constitutional Oligarchy*. Both authors work to explain why U.S. leaders cared about Bolivia, which at first glance can be hard to understand. While Bolivia had moments of instability, and U.S. policymakers sometimes worried that its leaders might not be entirely reliable allies, the likelihood that the country would ever align itself with Moscow or challenge broad U.S. regional supremacy was negligible. Even compared to other countries in the region, it needs to be explained why Bolivia, which was poor and relatively small, garnered attention. If Kissinger was not concerned about Latin America in general, it is hard to imagine that he would have been concerned about Bolivia in particular. Further, it is easy to see that top policymakers in other administrations might have agreed with his larger point, especially in the era before the Cuban Revolution.

Dorn and Siekmeier follow quite different strategies in dealing with this issue. Dorn explores the period immediately preceding the 1952 revolution, attempting to discern how the U.S.-Bolivian relationship impacted the complicated turns in Bolivian politics. On this point he is quite effective. Most importantly, he is able to demonstrate that small changes in tin prices, generally dictated by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), an independent agency within the United States government, had a tremendous impact on

successive Bolivian administrations. Indeed, the drama within Dorn's text mostly centers around the renegotiation of tin contracts and disputes between U.S. State Department officials, the RFC leadership, the Bolivian government, and the major Bolivian 'tin barons.' Dorn argues that U.S. officials generally worked at cross purposes, with State Department officials hoping to prop up various Bolivian regimes through the speedy negotiation of tin purchase agreements, and RFC officials looking more broadly at global tin production and working to get the best price possible. On the Bolivian side, the tin barons and the government sometimes had different interests, though this is a secondary consideration in the text. The tin barons wanted high prices, limited regulation, and low taxes. At least part of the time, Bolivian centrist and left-leaning nationalists were able to gain power and push the idea that conditions in the tin industry undermined social peace.

Dorn argues that if U.S. officials had been united, and if they had appreciated the fairly obvious consequences of their policies, Bolivia would have been more stable. He quotes approvingly a report by William Hudson, a U.S. embassy officer in La Paz, conceding that the tin issue "probably contributed in some degree to the success of the [1952] revolution" (184). While Dorn's explanation of this narrative is impressively thorough, some of his grand arguments are less convincing. Dorn's larger conclusion is that Truman administration policies in Bolivia were a thorough mess. He argues that some of the chaos came from the lack of unity among U.S. officials and that top officials in the Truman administration rarely, or quite slowly, intervened to direct lower level officers. These lower level officials often did not understand the stakes and sometimes, like the U.S. Ambassador in La Paz, Irving Florman, they were bafflingly incompetent.

But it seems fairly clear from the text that a general lack of concern about Bolivia was the reason for this mess. It is hard to understand why any top U.S. official might have thought it necessary to pay significant attention to Bolivia in the late 1940s or early 1950s. There is a simple reason for this. As Kissinger might have noted, threats elsewhere were orders of magnitude more significant than the possibility that economic nationalists or proto-fascists might gain control of Bolivia (even if they were inspired by Juan Perón). Truman only makes his first appearance halfway through the text, and then only to refuse to commit to any course of action. Dean Acheson, the Secretary of State, also plays a conspicuously limited role in the narrative. For a book whose title begins with the words "The Truman Administration," it is notable that the highest-level Truman officials are mostly absent. Dorn over-relies on the convention of claiming that "Washington" or "the administration" acted, as if they were persons. The footnotes indicate that most of the time the officials involved were fairly low down on the diplomatic food chain.

Without real executive control over bureaucrats in the State Department and the RFC, it is not at all surprising that disorder reigned. Rather than a study of the Truman administration's failure, Dorn's text can be read as a study of how uncontrolled bureaucracies operate and how the results might be chaotic. The easiest way to make this case is by noting that if Bolivia had been even the slightest bit important to Truman or Acheson, they would never have allowed Florman, who had been a Broadway songwriter and who had no diplomatic experience or background in Latin American affairs, to represent the United States in La Paz.

Dorn's criticisms of the disorder among U.S. officials as leading to the 1952 Revolution also deserve consideration, largely because he argues that the United States played a part in the crumbling of the Bolivian constitutional oligarchy. While that may be true, it may also be hard to classify this as a failure in the broadest context. Dorn notes the deep inequities in Bolivian society, and is critical of the tin barons' dominance of that society. Yet, he also seems to argue that the RFC was wrong to push the barons toward a cliff by not helping them keep power against the MNR. But why? As Siekmeier demonstrates, the Eisenhower administration worked quite well with the revolutionary regime and supported its genuine efforts to advance social justice. In an alternative reading of Dorn's evidence, RFC officials could be the heroes in that they helped create a more equitable Bolivia. This is important because much of the historiography on U.S.-Latin American relations in the Cold War period is deeply critical of the United States for blindly backing regimes that did not reflect its core national values. In this case we have a set of officials who seemed not to care much about keeping oligarchs in power. Are these really the bad guys?

Siekmeier's book picks up essentially where Dorn stops, concentrating mostly on the post-revolutionary period. Why U.S. officials cared about Bolivia emerges as a central question in the text, and one that seems to get a more convincing answer, especially for the 1950s. Part of Siekmeier's strategy is to focus on the Bolivian Ambassador in the United States, Victor Andrade, and his lobbying of Eisenhower administration officials and members of the U.S. Congress. Andrade was successful on two counts. First, he was able to explain that, although the MNR was a revolutionary regime, it was not a threat to U.S. power. He convinced U.S. officials that the MNR was both anti-communist and pro-American, and that it could bring stability to the region by dealing with regressive social structures. This accomplishment was impressive, as the MNR shared some of the traits of Jacobo Arbenz's Guatemalan movement, which Eisenhower found to be deeply unacceptable. But Andrade's successes did not end there. He was also able to convince Milton Eisenhower, Nelson Rockefeller, both of whom were influential in formulating U.S.-Latin American policy in the 1950s, and many others within the U.S. government that his country needed massive economic aid. This was impressive because during this period the United States was not distributing much aid anywhere else in Latin America.

As his subtitle suggests, Siekmeier follows the story of U.S.-Bolivian relations past the MNR revolution, but argues that the patterns set in the 1950s continued to define the bilateral relationship. In chapters on Che Guevara's insurgency and on the expulsion of the Peace Corps in 1971, Siekmeier demonstrates that U.S. officials and Bolivian leaders deftly handled populist concerns about U.S. hegemony by symbolically allowing anti-Americanism to run its course without threatening the more fundamental government-to-government relationships. U.S. officials understood that Bolivians had to take the lead in hunting Guevara, and understood that accepting the expulsion of the Peace Corps was, in Siekmeier's words, a "tactical retreat" (151). These sections, and a very strong piece on drug policy, represent a divide in the text. In the early parts of the book, Siekmeier travels along with the basic political narrative, but as he advances forward, he starts to move toward a case-study approach to bilateral relations. Both parts are fascinating, well-argued, and the obvious products of careful and thorough research, but it can feel like one is

reading two separate books.

An interesting tension bubbles up a number of times in the text because Siekmeier attempts to do so much analytically. He mostly argues that U.S.-Bolivian relations were exceptional, and clearly they often were. But, at other times Siekmeier argues that U.S. policy toward Bolivia speaks to larger trends in U.S.-Latin American relations, either as a test case or as symbolic of Washington's regional policy. Here he could be a bit clearer. This is apparent in his brief discussion of Nixon's regional policy, noted at the outset, in which he tries to connect worsening U.S.-Bolivian relations to broader difficulties for the United States and the growth of anti-Americanism. This problem, Siekmeier notes in passing, led the Nixon administration to embrace right wing military regimes such as General Emilio Garrastazu Medici's junta in Brazil. Siekmeier notes that Hugo Banzer Suárez, who took power in Bolivia in 1971, was friendly to the United States and anti-Communist, but he does not really make it clear how the Nixon administration's approach was either similar or different in the two cases. Especially following the Allende victory, as Tanya Harmer has recently demonstrated, it becomes hard to make the case that top officials ignored the region.<sup>1</sup> Siekmeier opens the door to discuss questions about the embrace of right-wing governments, and he suggests that the Bolivian experience speaks to larger trends in U.S. regional policy, but here at least, more detail would help.

Siekmeier's text can be read another way though. It may not be particularly important how much policy in Bolivia represented larger U.S. regional efforts, and it may not even be an issue whether Bolivia was a priority or a sideshow. As he amply demonstrates, and as Dorn also does, U.S. policy deeply and continuously impacted the domestic politics and cultural life of Bolivia. It matters little that Kissinger or Truman might not have been able to find Bolivia on a map; the relationship clearly mattered to the Bolivian government and its people. Siekmeier demonstrates that it is impossible to extricate U.S. diplomatic history from Bolivian history. His scholarship illuminates both sides of the equation, but it is much more powerful in explaining the Bolivian side. I imagine that it is not an accident that this book is titled, *The Bolivian Revolution and the United States*, rather than "The United States and the Bolivian Revolution."

I must confess that I am not sure what it means that two books about Bolivia and the United States have been published at roughly the same time, other than that they represent the wonderful commitment that Penn State Press has made toward focusing on Latin American political history in the past few years. Perhaps it is just coincidental. But Siekmeier's final section about antinarcotic efforts, and the discussions about Evo Morales that both he and Dorn place at the beginning of their texts offer a potential tantalizing explanation. It may be possible to argue that the patterns established in the Cold War period remain more vital to U.S.-Bolivian relations today than to most other countries in the region. U.S. relations with countries like Chile, for example, may have matured to a point where it becomes harder to argue about the relevance of the historical narrative of

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<sup>1</sup> Tanya Harmer, *Allende's Chile & the Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

the Cold War in the contemporary moment. Chileans have put their international history away in quiet museums where they can visit and contemplate their past. I would not want to push this argument too far and say that the past is irrelevant elsewhere, yet how many scholars of U.S.-Latin American history could say that their scholarship is compelling because it enlightens the present moment in a particular bilateral relationship? Both Dorn and Siekmeier may be arguing about the vitality of the past for Bolivians, but they may also be explaining that the Cold War carries different levels of relevance today for different Latin American countries.

**Author's Response by Glenn Dorn, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Florida**

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I would like to begin by thanking Dustin Walcher for arranging and coordinating this roundtable and Robert Karl, Robert S. Robinson and Jeffrey F. Taffet for their time, effort and keen insights. I must admit, however, to a certain amount of trepidation upon learning that my monograph was going to be compared with that of James F. Siekmeier, a historian whose work I have long held in the highest regard.

The first theme emphasized by Robert S. Robinson is the impotence of the State Department in the face of the nascent National Security State. Although The Truman Administration and Bolivia begins with embassy official William Hudson's definition of Bolivia as a "liberal constitutional oligarchy (1)," I almost used instead Assistant Secretary of State Edward Miller's lament that "the State Department [is] in many respects only a switchboard operator; its power to assist the Bolivians in attacking their economic problems [is] limited, since many of the means for doing this [rest] in the hands of other Government agencies or even of private agencies." Any number of scholars have remarked on the militarization of U.S. diplomacy in the Cold War period and the supplanting of the State Department by the Defense Department, but in the case of U.S.-Latin American relations immediately after the war, that trend can at times be difficult to discern. As a case study, U.S.-Bolivian relations during the six years after World War II, the sexenio that encompassed the time period between the 1946 overthrow of Gualberto Villarroel and the 1952 revolution, offer a rare opportunity to view the early, uneven stages of the process by which the State Department was marginalized. That Miller was compelled to conspire with two South American presidents to spur his superiors to action is a dramatic demonstration of the declining role of the State Department and of the tensions within early-Cold War Washington.

Robinson also praises the emphasis on Bolivian politics in The Truman Administration and Bolivia. Historians of the sexenio have tended, with a good deal of justification, to dismiss the era as little more than a gestation period for the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario MNR and the prelude to the National Revolution. The Bolivian politicians of the period tend to be portrayed as some combination of irredeemable agrarian overlords, pawns of the tin barons, ruthless persecutors of the MNR, or negligent incompetents. Although each of those descriptions has some merit, the political climate in which the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario emerged deserves attention, if only for the ways it shaped the nature of the National Revolution and U.S. policy. State Department analysts may well have "display[ed] an often nuanced and accurate view of Bolivian politics," but their inability and unwillingness to understand the MNR stands out as a major failing. Embassy officers, in particular, seem to have been able to offer insightful critiques and analyses of Bolivian politics with some frequency, but suffered an almost inexplicable myopia with regard to Paz Estenssoro, Juan Lechín, and the other revolutionaries. It is almost inexplicable that no U.S. official seems to have made much of an effort to even talk to Paz Estenssoro when he was in exile and even more unthinkable that U.S. policymakers had almost no contact with Lechín in the months after the National Revolution. Therefore, any praise of the State Department must be balanced with its refusal to learn any more about

the MNR than it could learn from opponents' polemics, slanderous rumors in La Paz, or gossip from Buenos Aires or Montevideo.

Jeffery F. Taffet's thought-provoking review takes a different approach, emphasizing U.S. disinterest in Latin American affairs after World War II. Indeed, there can be little doubt that presidents and secretaries of state, preoccupied with more pressing issues and dangerous threats, only turned their attention south during extraordinary circumstances. Secretary of State Dean Acheson and President Harry Truman, in particular, were regularly, if quietly, accused of ignorance of and negligence toward the Western Hemisphere by their underlings, and rightfully so. At one point, Truman made what he almost certainly considered to be an innocent comment at a press conference to the effect that every nation deserves an outlet to the sea; he was blissfully unaware that this statement would open wounds dating back to the 1870s and ignite a minor diplomatic firestorm among Bolivia, Chile and Peru. Despite such gaffes on Truman's part, while Taffet is certainly correct in noting that Truman's inaction allowed bureaucratic strife to fester and impede policy toward Bolivia, he might have overstated the case somewhat by arguing that Bolivia was not the "slightest bit important" to high-level U.S. officials. Unfortunately, the "lack of concern" that senior Truman and Eisenhower officials showed toward Latin America has led diplomatic historians, in Steven Rabe's words, to "frequently lump the years between 1945 and 1960 together as an unhappy, dull, and insignificant interregnum between the Good Neighbor and the Alliance for Progress."

It might be better, or at least more useful, to consider senior officials' inattention to reflect satisfaction with the status quo in Latin America after the war. So long as the regional aspects of Truman and Acheson's global policies were being achieved by officials "fairly low down on the diplomatic food chain," there was little reason for senior officials to become involved directly. If Bolivia had not been the "slightest bit important" to Truman, then he would not have become involved at all. Admittedly, the threshold for presidential involvement was significantly higher for Latin America than for other regions, which led leaders of those nations to invent or exaggerate communist, nationalist or Argentine threats to attract Yankee attention. Still, even without consideration of Truman's constant involvement, an examination of his administration's goals and priorities can be as revealing and instructive as the examination of high-level policymaking in moments of extraordinary crisis.

In the case of U.S.-Bolivian relations, U.S. goals and priorities were clearly destroying the global tin cartel that had been a thorn in the side of U.S. manufacturers for decades, securing a reliable source of cheap tin for the Cold War stockpile, and preventing a nationalist revolution that might have unleashed racially-charged radicalism in the Andes. President Franklin Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull, spurred by a perceived Nazi threat, had been deeply involved in the establishment of policies during World War II to achieve these goals. With the ouster of Gualberto Villarroel and the exile of Paz Estenssoro in 1945, however, Truman and his secretaries of state had little reason for involvement because U.S. national interests were acceptably being served by the lower-tier bureaucrats. For four years, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) generally succeeded in achieving the first two goals (albeit with a number of missteps) and the

possibility of an MNR resurgence seemed remote. However, the 1950 global spike in tin prices and the concurrent regeneration of the MNR all pointed to the failure of U.S. policy and a threat that mandated presidential attention; first Acheson and then Truman became more involved, with Truman ultimately taking a major role for several months when revolution seemed imminent.

But just as significant as what interested or scared U.S. leaders was what did not. Alleviating iniquities in Bolivia that might have spawned communism, protecting individual liberties in Bolivia, preserving democratic forms in Bolivia, protecting the tin barons, and securing Bolivian support for military solidarity against the Soviet Union were rarely, if ever, a high priority of high- or low-level U.S. officials. In other words, Truman and Acheson's involvement at a moment of crisis accentuated, and was generally quite consistent with, the more mundane activities of ambassadors, undersecretaries, and embassy officials. For the Latin American divisions of the State Department of the 1940s, the policy goals, as well as the tactics employed to achieve their goals, were dictated by precedents, directives and, perhaps more often than not, inertia. Although historians predictably focus their attention on the major crises that periodically arose, the more mundane interactions and smaller crises can be just as instructive and are probably more representative of deeper and long-term trends and attitudes. Indeed, as Taffet points out, U.S. policy has a disproportionate impact on Latin American nations. If diplomatic historians focus their attention exclusively upon the crises that provoked presidents and secretaries of state to action, then opportunities to better understand inter-American relations will be lost.

As Taffet notes, Ambassador Irving Florman does merit special attention, although I am hesitant to draw too many conclusions about his appointment, despite his incompetence. Truman sent him, along with several other inexperienced political appointees, to sensitive posts such as Peronist Argentina, presumably as a reward for domestic political support. Whereas Florman's ineptitude may have been exceptional and unusually flamboyant, political appointments to ambassadorships are hardly uncommon. It is curious and more than a little disturbing that Florman was apparently able to defy Acheson and the entire State Department bureaucracy for a time.

Taffet's alternate interpretation of the RFC as the heroes of the story also merits attention. Senator Lyndon Johnson, RFC head Stuart Symington and their assistants certainly and justifiably saw themselves as heroes, saving the American taxpayer and the defense establishment from extortion by the tin barons. Their cause certainly enjoyed popular support. In the process, however, they also demonstrated varying degrees of ignorance, arrogance, xenophobia, close-mindedness, and inconsistency. They not only pushed the tin barons, but three Bolivian governments "toward a cliff." Those governments may have been oligarchical and deeply flawed, but they were not mere puppets of the tin barons. In the eyes of Truman's diplomats, they were as close to ideal as any Bolivia had ever produced. Whatever the role the RFC played in provoking the National Revolution and creating "a more equitable Bolivia," it was entirely accidental. Certainly, RFC officers did not celebrate Paz Estenssoro's triumph, run to the New York Times to claim credit, or gloat to Acheson.

Instead, defense planners expressed remorse and gloomy apprehension. Any satisfaction that they may have gained from the knowledge that their nemeses, the tin barons, were going to suffer was more than offset by the fear that nationalization might hinder U.S. tin acquisition or lead to a price increase. The Eisenhower administration may have come to an accord with Paz Estenssoro, but to the best of my knowledge, no one in Washington viewed the success of the National Revolution as anything other than a defeat in April 1952. While it is possible, with a good deal of hindsight, to see the RFC's role in the National Revolution as positive, Truman, Acheson, Miller, the State Department, and the RFC most assuredly did not. I suspect that economic historians might be more sympathetic toward the RFC's frugality and desire to keep political considerations out of negotiations, but I would not be surprised if diplomatic historians tend to view it as short-sighted and dismissive of international consequences.

In the end, Robert Karl's telling critique most closely parallels my own view of the strengths and shortcomings of *The Truman Administration and Bolivia*. Karl suggests that the study is too narrow, both in argument and narrative, and should have included a more thorough discussion of the long-term political, economic, and social dynamics in Bolivia and the United States. Specifically, he suggests an examination of the corporatist underpinnings of the U.S. and Bolivian political systems. Unfortunately, Bolivian politics during the sexenio, which were characterized by petty intra-elite squabbling and partisan infighting, does not lend itself particularly well to a corporatist analysis (unlike Perón's Argentina, the syndicalism exhibited by elements of the MNR, and even the Villarroel or Paz Estenssoro governments). Indeed, the fundamental conflict between the U.S. and Bolivian governments after the war centered upon the U.S. effort to break an effective global tin cartel and secure better access to a key mineral that could not be produced domestically. That issue is as much geological as corporatist. I suspect that a corporatist analysis of comparative labor history, the MNR and the United States, the Cochabamba-Santa Cruz highway or other aspects of the U.S.-Bolivian relationship might be very fruitful, but for tin diplomacy, it seems to be a tool of limited utility.

Neither did comparative constitutional analysis seem to be especially useful in this case. Examining the political tactics and maneuverings of the politicians and factions illuminates the priorities, values, and traditions prevalent in postwar Bolivia as effectively as and more succinctly than an extended summary of abstract constitutional principles, which were ignored as often as honored. In other words, I was not as concerned with the differences between Bolivian "liberal constitutional oligarchy" and Truman's liberal capitalism as much as with how the governments of the sexenio defined their interests and why the State Department embraced them. Those may well be more parochial concerns, but, in this case, the topic almost dictated the treatment.

I suspect that Karl would have been more satisfied with the first draft of *The Truman Administration and Bolivia* because it further addressed a number of the critical themes he raises. Indeed, despite the major differences between "liberal constitutional oligarchy" in the United States and Bolivia, there were far more similarities than either side would have cared to admit. However, it became clear that the price of incorporating these broader

social and intellectual themes was diluting and diverting the tightly-focused narrative and argument that Robinson praised. A passing or casual treatment of these themes risked oversimplification and all but ensured major omissions. A more comprehensive examination of the broader themes posed several other problems as well. The Truman Administration and Bolivia provides a detailed, narrow study of seven rather atypical years of the U.S.-Bolivian relationship. Therefore, its conclusions had to be limited and clearly defined. Shifting the focus of the book as Karl suggests would have given it more value in some ways, but would have diminished its value as a case study. I agree almost entirely with the direction that Karl hopes to see historians of inter-Americans take (and the manuscript I am working on currently should reflect as much), but not every topic lends itself well to illuminating these themes.

On the other hand, I take issue with Karl's arguments that liberal capitalism was somehow more "global/universal" than economic nationalism. As a prescription for underdevelopment, protection for vulnerable industries, or vehicle to serve the interests of a class or economic sector, economic nationalism was far more prevalent than liberal capitalism, at least in the 1930s and 1940s. The language of liberal capitalism may have been more globalist, but U.S. policymakers adopted and sought to promote it to serve their perceptions of U.S. national interest on any number of levels. Similarly, every Bolivian government sought to shape the international order, albeit with far more limited tools and success, to its interests, most effectively through the tin cartel. Although Karl cites my statement that the Truman Administration was dedicated to derailing economic nationalism through a global liberal capitalist order, it would be equally appropriate to suggest that Latin Americans employed economic nationalist variants to permit their interests to flourish within that order. U.S. policymakers may have enjoyed, and even believed, their high-minded rhetoric about the merits of global liberal capitalism, but, in the end, it was only another national policy calculated to serve perceived national interests. That the State Department and the RFC saw those interests differently is not entirely surprising.

Indeed, as Karl notes, many of the RFC's monopolistic policies could easily be characterized as economic nationalism (although Symington and his friends would undoubtedly have preferred them to be labeled something like 'temporary measures to serve the larger interests of global capitalism' or 'saving the world from the scourge of communism'). Both the Truman Administration and the governments of the sexenio were primarily concerned with blocking the MNR's brand of populist statism, but the lines between economic nationalism and liberal capitalism became very blurred with regard to almost every other issue. This is one of the merits of examining U.S. relations with the more traditional governments of Latin America. Because so many studies emphasize the dramatic battles that occurred between the United States and various populists, statistes, nationalists, or communists, it is possible that a somewhat distorted picture of U.S. policy has emerged. More often than not, when examined closely, U.S.-Latin American relations contain more gray areas than the black-and-white dichotomy of economic nationalism and liberal capitalism would initially seem to allow. A study of the U.S. and the MNR might highlight stark differences in vision and practice, but an examination of the sexenio reveals more subtle and complex distinctions.

Taken together, the three reviewers offer an array of thoughtful and perceptive critiques, and I must again express my appreciation. The opportunities for constructive critiques, are, for me, among the most attractive aspects of life in academia, and these scholars have offered superb commentary.

First, I would like to thank Dustin Walcher, and the entire H-Diplo crew, for organizing the H-Diplo roundtable review of both Glenn Dorn's book and my book. Given that both books are on the same general topic, I thought the idea of a joint review was an excellent idea. The reviewers read my book very carefully, and offer insightful comments. No author could ask for better, more thoughtful, reviewers. Although it is impossible to know this when selecting reviewers, this experience has been particularly helpful for me since the reviewers offered divergent analyses and conclusions. This diversity of views has made the experience that much richer for me. I have learned a great deal from the reviews, and it will inform my future work. I thank them for pointing out errors and shortcomings, as well as suggesting avenues for future research in this area.

Robert S. Robinson, in his review, picks up very well on the themes of Bolivian agency—that is, the important role Bolivian leaders played in shaping United States-Bolivian relations during the 1950s and 1960s. Robinson also comments on my treatment of the long-lasting nature of the Bolivian Revolution and the (surprisingly, I would say, given the long sweep of United States-Latin American relations) close relationship between revolutionary Bolivia and the United States. These are some of the key themes, and contributions, of my book. Robinson also noted that I spent quite a bit of time discussing the role of Victor Andrade. However, since he was a long-serving ambassador, who managed to quickly 'crack the code' of how Washington, DC works, I thought it important to highlight his activities. (And indeed, he was one of the first ambassadors from the nonindustrialized world to significantly influence U.S. policy towards his nation.) In the past, when I have presented papers at conferences, often-times people would come up to me afterwards and tell me they had never heard of him. So, I thought a thorough description of his multifaceted abilities was warranted in a book-length study.

Jeff Taffet's thoughtful review helped me think of U.S.-Bolivian, and U.S.-Latin American, relations in different ways. His reviews of my work, and of others, help me to re-conceptualize my work. His question about how U.S.-Bolivian relations fit into U.S.-Latin American relations is a very important one. I confess I have not systematically conceptualized what I see as the precise relationship between Bolivian-U.S. relations and inter-hemispheric relations as a whole. (But, below, I'll address the issue head-on). What I argue is that Bolivia in some ways reflects the broader contours of U.S. policy towards the region—for example, in Bolivia, the United States tried, with some success, to quash economic nationalism. (I've dealt extensively with economic nationalism in my previous work).<sup>1</sup> Also, the U.S. accommodation of left-wing, even communist, membership in the Bolivian government in the 1950s and 1960s—as long as Bolivia was pro-United States—can be seen in other examples. For example, a similar dynamic can be seen in U.S. policy towards other left-wing governments in the region, which were perhaps even a smidge

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<sup>1</sup> James F. Siekmeier, *Aid, Nationalism, and Inter-American Relations: Guatemala, Bolivia, and the United States* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 1999).

communist (or perceived to have been by Washington): Cardenas's Mexico; Figueres's Costa Rica; and Betancourt's Venezuela, for example. U.S. officials tolerated/accommodated these governments, which, like the Bolivian governments during the Bolivian Revolution, with the exception of that of J.J. Torres from 1970 to 1971, were pro-United States. However, U.S. officials have unleashed a wrath of fury with regard to stridently anti-United States left-wing governments. U.S. leaders tried, of course, to topple the left-wing, anti-United States governments of Arbenz's Guatemala, Castro's Cuba, Allende's Chile, and Sandinista Nicaragua, among others.

Yet in other ways, Bolivian-U.S. relations remain distinct from their inter-American counterparts. In particular, the sheer amount of per-capita U.S. assistance to Bolivia since the mid-1950s proves a unique two-edged sword (from the perspective of Bolivia). On the one hand, U.S. assistance helped to fulfill critically important, and urgent immediate needs, in one of the hemisphere's, and the world's, poorest nations. And the assistance helped the Bolivian revolutionaries to consolidate their revolution and to some extent their state—in a country with arguably one of the historically weaker states in the region. (Even though, as Robert Karl noted in his review, I did not clearly define “nation-building” in my book, I see this very early U.S. experiment in giving a great deal of assistance to a very poor nation, for many different types of projects/purposes, as an example of “nation building.”) However, Bolivian dependence on U.S. assistance gave U.S. leaders a significant degree of control over Bolivia's policy. I would argue that as U.S. aid continued to flow decade after decade, Bolivian leaders could not conceive of a termination of such assistance—thus, an “aid dependency” developed, giving Washington influence over La Paz. This U.S. influence over Bolivian policy was (and is) thrown into high relief during the ‘drug war,’ when U.S. officials even threatened a cutoff of assistance in the run-up to the 2002 election if the left-wing (and, according to Washington, insufficiently anti-coca and cocaine) candidate Evo Morales won the election. Of course, he narrowly lost in 2002, but won in 2005.

Robert Karl's analysis of my work is very important and useful. He perceptively points out, among other things, that U.S.-Bolivian relations cannot be understood without placing them in a global context. In my work, I tried to ‘start a conversation’ with regard to placing the Bolivian Revolution and its relationship with its giant North American counterpart in a broader context. Karl correctly points out that I did not do much in this regard; however, in my future work I will be more thorough in placing U.S.-Latin American relations in a global context. As historians engage globalization and its history more and more, writing less bilateral (U.S. and... country x)-type history, and more international history, will become more and more important. As is often the case with writing and publishing, the process takes so long that historiographic developments overtake the author. I plead guilty to this. I especially appreciate Karl's call to more carefully, and systematically, examine how the Latin American worldview (taken on its own terms) shapes the region's policies towards the United States and the world. That way, historians can avoid the pitfalls of viewing Latin American actions as being guided only by (as Karl states) “amorphous forces as nationalism (or culture) [that] produce imperfect (‘Latin’) forms of liberalism and capitalism.”

Again, thanks to Dustin Walcher and H-Diplo for sending out copies of my book to these fine reviewers. (And thanks, too, for asking for my response.) My future work, informed by their comments and criticisms, will be the better for it.

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