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Lars Schoultz. *In Their Own Best Interests: A History of the U.S. Effort to Improve Latin Americans.*
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Introduction by Dustin Walcher, Southern Oregon University

For more than two generations, Lars Schoultz has focused a well-trained eye on the dynamics of U.S.-Latin American relations. Schoultz is a political scientist by training, a historian by methodology, and a gifted writer by practice. He is likely best known for his book, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America*, which thoroughly overviews the efforts of the United States to dominate its neighbors, and pulls no punches in its critical assessment of U.S. policy over time.¹ *In Their Own Best Interest* functions as something of a companion to that earlier survey. It, too, explains U.S. policy toward Latin America over the *longue durée*. It, too, is based on a careful reading of U.S. primary sources. The differences emerge from the book's central organizing focus; *In Their Own Best Interest* analyzes the myriad ways that various U.S. citizens sought to 'uplift' Latin Americans. Those efforts, argues Schoultz, have been at the heart of the United States' misguided and often hostile interactions with the countries of Latin America.

In recounting the story of U.S.-Latin American relations around the theme of 'uplift,' Schoultz argues that U.S. policymakers operated on a continuum ranging between altruism and realism. Thus virtually all U.S. policymakers ultimately sought to uplift Latin Americans, albeit with different justifications, and oftentimes via divergent policy approaches. Nonetheless, this U.S. drive to improve the country's neighbors operated as a critical continuity in U.S.-Latin American relations since the nineteenth century.

The reviewers' assessments of *In Their Own Best Interest* are divided. Max Paul Friedman and Debbie Sharnak find the most to praise. By contrast, Tom Long, Abraham Lowenthal, and Jeffrey Taffet are more critical. Sharnak explains that "Schoultz effectively lays out how the idea of civilizing Latin America has become ubiquitous over the last century" – which was, after all, a central objective of the book. Friedman offers that "Schoultz is second to none in his ability to go deep-sea diving in the depths of U.S. records, some quite far afield from the major collections, and surface with little gems." While Lowenthal finds the book "gracefully written, with wry and elegant wit," he would like to see Schoultz set altruism and realism against other potential explanations for the behavior of U.S. policymakers. Long declares that the conclusion, which is "laced with hypotheses is frustratingly incomplete." Finally, while Taffet applauds the book's "appreciation of the ways in which the early twentieth-century record of U.S. engagement in Latin America illuminates contemporary, post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy in Latin America," he ultimately concludes that "[i]n other respects the book is more problematic, and its promise unfulfilled."

Schoultz's relative inattention to Latin American voices emerges as one of those potentially problematic areas. As Long in particular makes clear, *In Their Own Best Interest* is a book about U.S. policymaking. Sharnak observes that, "[p]erhaps what is most obviously missing from this impressive volume is Latin American voices." If one of the dominant trends in the field has been the internationalization of the history of inter-American affairs, Schoultz unapologetically writes a history of U.S. policymaking from the standpoint of the U.S. government; businesses and non-governmental organizations, as Sharnak points out, are minimized in this narrative. For their part, Latin Americans remain in the background when they make any appearance. While recognizing the value of exploring deeply the records of a single powerful country, the reviewers explore ways that the inclusion of Latin American voices in a serious and sustained manner could have altered the contours of Schoultz's argument. As Taffet suggests, "[a] deeper dive into Latin American sources of the era

¹ Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

would have revealed the existence of a widely-held view in the region that the exertion of U.S. power in uplift endeavors was good and welcome.”

Another critical issue the reviewers confront centers on Schoultz’s overall framing of the question of uplift. Friedman, Long, and Lowenthal in particular argue that Schoultz’s definition of uplift is, in Friedman’s words, “so flexible that one could argue [Eisenhower Treasury Secretary George] Humphrey wanted to uplift Latin Americans by telling them to eschew statism and adopt free-market thinking and austerity measures,” while also, more intuitively, incorporating the president’s brother and informal advisor, Milton Eisenhower, who encouraged enhanced foreign aid expenditures to Latin America simultaneously. These two figures opposed one another within the Eisenhower administration, but could each be seen as promoting uplift, albeit via wildly different pathways. The reviewers question how meaningful and useful ‘uplift’ is as a category of analysis given such remarkable elasticity.

Another widespread area of critique concerns Schoultz’s lack of serious engagement with the secondary literature. Friedman, Lowenthal, and Taffet each raise the issue. While his employment of primary sources from the United States across a substantial time horizon is impressive and praiseworthy, the reviewers observe that Schoultz is not in dialogue with the extant literature. The omission of major works of scholarship—many of which Lowenthal and Taffet list—is surprising. It limits the book’s utility in so far as *In Their Own Best Interest* could have built upon, or explicitly challenged, the conclusions of other scholars. Instead, the book exists in isolation—presenting an engaging narrative without addressing ongoing conversations between other scholars.

Importantly, the reviewers come away from reading *In Their Own Best Interest* with additional questions that Schoultz broaches but does not ultimately answer. Given that Schoultz finds that the drive to uplift the United States’ neighbors entails a paternalistic approach to international affairs that ought to be avoided, what would an alternative policy framework look like? In particular, when Latin Americans from different parts of the region and different sectors of society asked for various kinds of assistance—as was the case, for example, in the aftermath of World War II—what ought U.S. policymakers have done? Put another way, are there ever circumstances when policies of uplift are desirable and effective? Questions of causation also percolate. Where did this drive to provide uplift come from? To what extent did the global Cold War matter to the story of U.S. efforts to provide uplift after World War II? Why did senior U.S. officials focus on Latin America to greater degrees at some times than others? *In Their Own Best Interest* has the potential to provide inspiration to future scholars who seek to address these challenging questions.

Finally, it is notable that in some ways Schoultz’s most recent work harkens back to an older tradition in writing about the history of U.S. foreign relations. In his most famous work, historian William Appleman Williams explained U.S. support for “torture and terror” in Cuba, arguing:

That sad result was not caused by purposeful malice, callous indifference, or ruthless and predatory exploitation. American leaders were not evil men. They did not conceive and ex[ecute] some dreadful conspiracy. Nor were they treacherous hypocrites. They believed deeply in the ideals they proclaimed, and they were sincere in arguing that their policies and actions would ultimately create a Cuba that would be responsibly self-governed, economically prosperous, and socially stable and happy. All, of course, in the image of America.

Precisely for those reasons, however, American diplomacy contained the fundamental elements of tragedy.²

The phenomenon that Williams discusses fits within Schoultz's broad definition of 'uplift,' and Schoultz's analysis reinforces Williams' fundamental argument, albeit while rejecting the latter's well-known emphasis on economic factors of causation. Both agree, however, that many U.S. officials pursued policies that they genuinely believed would lead to uplift among the people of Latin America. Most of the reviewers also concur with that basic proposition.

Participants:

Lars Schoultz is the William Rand Kenan, Jr., Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He received a B.A. in English (1964) and an M.A. in Hispanic American Studies (1966), both from Stanford University, and a Ph.D. in Political Science (1973) from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His revised dissertation was published as *The Populist Challenge: Argentine Electoral Behavior in the Postwar Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983). His five books on U.S. policy toward Latin America are: *Human Rights and United States Policy toward Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); *National Security and United States Policy toward Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) and *In Their Own Best Interest: A History of the U.S. Effort to Improve Latin Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018) which received the William M. LeoGrande Prize for best book on U.S.-Latin American relations published in 2017-2018.

Dustin Walcher is Professor and Chair of History & Political Science at Southern Oregon University. He specializes in international affairs, U.S. foreign relations, and Latin America's international history. With Jeffrey F. Taffet he published *The United States and Latin America: A History with Documents* (Routledge, 2017). He is currently revising a manuscript that examines the link between the failure of U.S.-led economic initiatives and the rise of social revolution in Argentina during the 1950s and 1960s. Dustin is also the co-host of *Historias*, the podcast from the Southeastern Council of Latin American Studies.

Max Paul Friedman is Professor of History and International Relations at American University in Washington, D.C. He is the author of *Rethinking Anti-Americanism: The History of an Exceptional Concept in American Foreign Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), and *Nazis and Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War II* (New York: Cambridge

² Melvyn P. Leffler, "Reflections on SHAFR at Forty," *Diplomatic History* 31:3 (June 2017): 413-417, highlights William Appleman Williams' passage. I also quote it in Dustin Walcher, "The Ongoing Tragedy of American Diplomacy," "Roundtable Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Publication of William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*," *Passport: The Newsletter of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations* 40:2 (September 2009): 34-35. Williams made minor alterations in the text between the second and third editions of *Tragedy*. Although Leffler refers to the 1962 edition, the above quotation reflects Williams' 1972 edits. See William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 4th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 2.

University Press, 2003), winner of the Herbert Hoover Prize in U.S. History and the A.B. Thomas Prize in Latin American Studies. He is co-editor, with Padraic Kenney, of *Partisan Histories: The Past in Contemporary Global Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). He has published some 30 articles and book chapters on diplomatic, political, social, and cultural history. With the support of a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Award, he is at work on a history of Latin American efforts to contain the United States.

Tom Long is Assistant Professor in Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick and Affiliated Professor at the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas in Mexico City. He was 2017-2018 Fulbright Visiting Professor at the Pontificia Universidad Católica in Santiago, Chile. He is author of *Latin America Confronts the United States: Asymmetry and Influence* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), which was named one of *Foreign Affairs* “best books of 2016.” His articles have appeared in journals including *International Security*, *International Affairs*, *International Studies Review*, *Diplomatic History*, *Foro Internacional*, and *Latin American Research Review*. His research focuses on international relations of the Americas, the dynamics of international asymmetry, and the role of small states. He is currently conducting multinational research on Latin America in the post-Second World War critical juncture as part of a larger project on Latin America and the liberal international order. He holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from American University.

Abraham F. Lowenthal, professor emeritus of International Relations and Robert F. Erburu Professor Emeritus of Ethics, Globalization and Development at the University of Southern California, has combined his academic career with program and institution-building at the nexus between the worlds of scholarship and public policy. He has published three single-authored books—including *The Dominican Intervention* and *Partners in Conflict: The United States and Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns University Press, 1987)—and some fifteen symposium volumes on Latin American politics, U.S.-Latin American relations, democratic governance, California’s global role and other topics, as well as numerous book chapters and journal articles, including eight in *Foreign Affairs* and three in *World Politics*. He was the founding director of the Latin American Program at the Woodrow Wilson Center, founding director of the Inter-American Dialogue, and founding president of the Pacific Council on International Policy in Los Angeles.

Debbie Sharnak is a Lecturer for the Committee on Degrees in History and Literature at Harvard University. She is working on a book manuscript entitled *Of Light and Struggle in Uruguay: The Contested International History of Human Rights*. She has published in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, *the Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, *TALLER*, and several edited volumes on topics such as U.S. foreign policy, Latin America, human rights, and transitional justice. She was a Fulbright Scholar in Uruguay.

Jeffrey F. Taffet is Professor of History at the United States Merchant Marine Academy. He is the author of *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Latin America* (Routledge, 2007) and *The United States and Latin America: A History with Documents* (Routledge, 2017, with Dustin Walcher). His current book project explores the history of opposition to foreign aid programs in the United States.

Review by Max Paul Friedman, American University

In 1987, while studying development in the Dominican Republic alongside Peace Corps volunteers based in that country, I heard that if I really wanted to see an example of their work, I should meet Carl the Wonderman. That volunteer nearing the end of his term had a last name, but everyone called him Wonderman because of what he had been able to accomplish. From Santo Domingo I rode a bus for four hours into the interior followed by a jitney for another three, paid a motorbike driver to take me further up into the hills, forded a swollen river on a borrowed horse, and walked another couple of miles to reach his village, where he was easy to find because everyone seemed to know him. Carl and I chatted with men smeared with sweat and red earth, hacking away at the hard clay with hand tools under a burning sun to create a deep latrine at a safe distance from the creek. “They’re not doing that because I told them to, and no one is paying them,” Carl observed. “They’re doing it because I asked them what causes them pain in their lives, and they said the deaths of their infants. I talked with them about preventing water contamination. They understood immediately.” This is a good story of uplift by a U.S. program to improve Latin Americans. But not everything was that easy. When he first arrived, Carl followed instructions: he gave lectures telling impoverished Dominican women to feed their children high-protein foods. They would smile and go home and feed their children boiled yucca root because they had no money. The Reagan administration forbid Carl from discussing the two topics, birth control and land reform, that he soon learned from his neighbors were the only things likely to make a real difference in their lives. So he started buying and distributing contraceptives on request, and hosting meetings of political organizers. He visited large landowners and told them their selfishness was the driving force behind communism in the Dominican Republic. I asked him if he would face discipline if Washington found out. “What are they going to do,” he asked, grinning and wiping the dirty sweat from his forehead—“send me to the Dominican Republic?” Carl understood that to truly help Latin Americans to help themselves achieve what they told him they wanted, he had to violate the U.S. policy that was designed not so much to improve as to hold back Latin Americans.

That same year, I read Lars Schoultz’s influential new book *National Security and United States Policy in Latin America*, a compelling case that U.S. officials have been motivated by an obsession with security and stability when making policy toward the region.¹ I continued to learn from Schoultz through *Beneath the United States* (1998), an equally compelling case that a deeply ingrained sense of superiority to Latin Americans has conditioned generations of U.S. policymaking toward the region.² Now Schoultz has written a book that alternately celebrates and condemns people like Carl the Wonderman for the altruistic spirit and realistic orientation that he finds animating not only volunteers in development organizations, but policy-makers at the highest levels of the U.S. government throughout the twentieth century.

Schoultz is second to none in his ability to go deep-sea diving in the depths of U.S. records, some quite far afield from the major collections, and surface with little gems. One such sparkle that caught his eye for the book under review was Harry Truman’s marginal note on his daily appointment sheet next to a courtesy call by the supercilious ambassador to Mexico George Messersmith—“To tell me how to run the govt,” Truman

¹ Lars Schoultz, *National Security and United States Policy in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

² Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

noted acridly (170). Schoultz's trademark love of irony is evident on every page. Sketching Spruille Braden, the hard-charging U.S. diplomat who ruined postwar relations with Argentina and about whom Secretary of State Dean Acheson once remarked that he was the only bull to carry around his own china shop, Schoultz observes drily that he acquired fluency in Spanish, "which served primarily to increase the number of people he could offend without a translator" (169). His marvelous writing style and sound judgments make it a pleasure to read Schoultz's books, and this one is no exception.

In some ways, *In their Own Best Interest* is the logical corollary to *Beneath the United States*. That book demonstrated through exhaustive archival research that U.S. officials believed Latin Americans to be their inferiors. From 1898 onward, as the scale of U.S. economic and security interests in Latin America grew rapidly to become substantial, it made sense that those same prejudiced U.S. officials would want to change the allegedly inferior Latin Americans—to 'improve' or 'uplift' them—in order to ensure that the new investments and strategic concerns would not succumb to alleged Latin American incompetence. Just as *Beneath* presented myriad occurrences of U.S. policymakers using a language of superiority to Latin Americans, *In their Own Best Interest* shows that a researcher as tenacious and wide-ranging as Schoultz can identify another discursive tendency that is pronounced among policymakers across many decades of stating that their policy du jour is intended for the 'betterment' or 'improvement' or 'uplift' of Latin Americans.

As I read the book, in contrast to the other two, I wondered what exactly Schoultz understands to be the function of this drive to improve Latin Americans. Was it generative of policy? A rhetorical flourish, useful for convincing certain constituencies? A form of self-persuasion or even self-deception? At one point, for example, Schoultz makes a generative claim, writing of 'dollar diplomacy' and the establishment of customs receiverships that "President Taft should be taken at his word: 'In Central America the aim has been to help such countries as Nicaragua and Honduras to help themselves.' The protection of U.S. economic interests appears to have been a minor concern, and the security of the Panama Canal of even lesser importance..." (51). Elsewhere he cautions the reader not to be too credulous about such statements: "Because altruism is the obligatory idiom of U.S. policy toward Latin America, it is not helpful to ask senior policymakers for an answer" to the riddle of whether altruism or selfishness are at work (290). So how should we understand the uplifting impulses, or at least language, surrounding the Caribbean occupations? As Marines reintroduced forced labor to a republic of former slaves in order to build roads that would make counterinsurgency and export-based agriculture more efficient, they may well have been literally paving Haiti with good intentions, but the alternatives were not only either U.S.-fostered uplift or indigenous squalor. Progressives could also blithely destroy indigenous uplifting projects when their blinders of racist superiority prevented them even from expressing curiosity about what might already exist or what Haitians might themselves want. The U.S. occupation authorities insisted on pushing technical and vocational schools on Haiti, for example, closing down high schools and libraries in a program designed to replace the traditional *belles-lettres* education centered on literature, law, and medicine that Haitians favored.³ On the taking of Panama, Schoultz finds President Theodore Roosevelt to be "no Mother Theresa, but he belongs on the altruistic side of the continuum"; "perhaps the best single document to capture his policy comes from a few days after he was sworn in as president, in a private letter to his secretary of state: 'The true interest of our people...lies in helping the Latin-American countries...and not in seeking to aggrandize ourselves at their expense'" (291). That would come as a surprise to the Colombian senators who were ready to cooperate in the construction of

³ Alan McPherson, *The Invaded: How Latin Americans and the Allies Fought and Ended U.S. Occupations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 120.

a canal if only the United States would recognize their sovereignty over their own territory and provide a fair share of the proceeds for Colombian public services. Instead, Roosevelt carried out the first covert operation for regime change of the twentieth century, and forced upon the Panamanian government he midwived into existence a treaty that, despite his claims to be serving all of civilization, stripped them of sovereignty over their country's primary asset, and ensured disproportionately high returns to U.S. investors, businesses, and consumers—hardly an altruistic act.⁴

The occasional inclusion of Latin American voices encountered in English-language records shows just how different this history looks when such sources are added to the U.S. archive. For example, after hearing from many U.S. officials assuring one another of the beneficence of their occupation of the Dominican Republic, Schoultz cites Fabio Fiallo, a poet whom U.S. authorities had imprisoned, who wrote in *Current History* that 99 or 100 percent of Dominicans wished the Americans to leave his country.⁵ Schoultz also does a lot with a little from Costa Rica's President, José Figueres, who at one point explains that the U.S. mercantilist approach of fostering low-wage production of raw materials for export to high-value industrial economies ensured lagging Latin American development. Figueres also called the push to privatize public services an attack on Latin American "economic sovereignty" (193). Whereas Schoultz depicts Latin Americans during World War II as supplicants, "standing in line to request Washington's help with their economic problems" (9), he lets Figueres explain that in fact Latin American countries were rendering the United States a service as an act of sacrifice and solidarity. Although Schoultz describes wartime commodity purchases as another form of U.S. aid, Latin American countries held their prices down below market rates in order to subsidize the Allies, and largely abstained from providing materials to the Axis even though demand was strong. As Figueres wrote in an English-language journal, by accepting a price for coffee at half market value, Costa Rica was effectively donating half the value of its chief national export to the U.S. war effort for four years.

For Schoultz, the lesson of the war is that the United States government would no longer send Latin American supplicants to private banks but was now ready to help in grand style: "FDR's generation had taught Latin Americans that Washington was where important uplifting decisions were made, and that the United States could be uncommonly generous when security interests were at play" (183). And so "Latin Americans were now asking to be uplifted" (162) through their demands for the creation of a multilateral economic development bank. But as Figueres and many other Latin Americans saw it, rather than supplicants requesting largesse, they were creditors owed payback for the huge sacrifice they had made instead of gouging the United States for whatever the market would bear for their crops, tin, copper, quinine, and other essential materials. They had essentially spent four years in voluntary austerity and reduced revenues in the expectation that victory would bring economic fairness, not northern charity. That helps explain the widespread postwar disappointment that while Europe, including former adversaries, got the Marshall Plan, Latin America got lectures on fiscal discipline.

⁴ A study of the "social rate of return" of the Canal showed that it brought significant benefits to the United States, but much less to Panama or other countries engaged in interoceanic trade. Noel Maurer and Carlos Yu, "What T.R. Took: The Economic Impact of the Panama Canal, 1903-1937," *Journal of Economic History* 68:3 (September 2008): 686-721.

⁵ Fabio Fiallo, "The Evacuation of Santo Domingo," *Current History* 14 (May 1921): 291-294, cited in Schoultz, *In their Own Best Interest*, 329.

Thanks to the quotations from Figueres, we see that rather than Latin Americans having learned that Washington was the capital of uplift, they learned that they needed to bargain hard to protect their own interests from exploitation by even the best of neighbors. And we learn that Schoultz's analysis of U.S.-Latin American relations—that is, what actually happened in the relationship, as opposed to his masterful and richly granular depiction of the making of US policy, that is, what might have been asserted—is at its best when it includes a Latin American perspective.

Even before the Cold War, intervention could be less about uplift and, to coin an awkward neologism, more about 'downlift.' Beyond Monroe Doctrine-themed obsessions with outside powers, U.S. policy in Latin America across the long twentieth century has often been aimed at opposing economic nationalism, in order to protect an investment climate predicated on undervalued land prices, minimal taxes, and low labor costs, yielding a rate of repatriable profit that would be considered exorbitant in other parts of the world. The U.S. confronted challenges to this particular vision of the ideal investment climate, even when aimed at uplift. When Mexico's president Álvaro Obregón noted that the Doheny Group oil syndicate had repatriated \$28,000,000 in profits in 1920 alone and was promising its stockholders another 225 percent increase in profits for 1921, he argued that more of that wealth derived from Mexican oil could remain in Mexico to fund development projects—to fund the uplift and improvement of Mexicans, one might say. Obregón appealed to U.S. citizens to help "a sister Republic attain peace and prosperity" by respecting its sovereign right to set tax rates, rather than siding with the oil companies, but Washington refused to recognize his government and sent warships to the Mexican coast.⁶ In Nicaragua, U.S. Marines kept Conservatives in power when Liberals threatened to raise taxes on U.S. companies like the Rosario & Light Mines, even though the Conservatives were a political minority. This kind of downlifting, that is, thwarting the self-improvement of Latin Americans by using hard power to prevent popular and reform-oriented leaders from gaining or holding onto high office, required considerable effort and organization. When Chile's President, Salvador Allende, explained that Kennecott Copper was taking home an average of 10% profits on its operations worldwide but from Chilean mines it harvested profits of 52.8%, he received widespread Chilean backing for a legal process of expropriation, so that more of Chile's resources could be used for Chilean development.⁷ The United States destroyed this Chilean improvement program through a ferocious and multi-pronged strategy of downlift.

Schoultz makes clear that after 1945 the overriding concern for U.S. policymakers was not uplifting Latin Americans for their own sake, but as a method of pursuing Cold War objectives. Even in this period, we read that on the "altruism-to-selfishness continuum" in Washington, "everyone at every point on the continuum believes the United States should do something to improve underdeveloped peoples. They differ only about why" (7). I suppose one can fit people like Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, President Richard Nixon, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and National Security Council staffer Lt. Col. Oliver North into that sentence, if we define 'improve' to mean 'deprive them of their duly elected representatives by force of arms' and 'underwrite the jailing, torture, and murder of reformers.' Nixon had so little faith that Latin Americans

⁶ *New York World*, 26 June 1921, reprinted in Senate Finance Committee Hearing, "Tariff Act of 1921 (H.R. 7456), Schedule 15 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1922), 4588–89. See Lorenzo Meyer, *Mexico and the United States in the Oil Controversy, 1917-1942* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 86-87.

⁷ Lubna Z. Qureshi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and Allende: U.S. Involvement in the 1973 Coup in Chile* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 124.

could be turned into his image of responsible citizens that he openly wished them to be ruled by strongmen instead of democratic governments, and took steps to try to downlift them into the passive subjects of autocracies.

Even before Allende, under the U.S.-favored Christian Democratic President Eduardo Frei Montalva, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had made clear how little he was interested in improving Latin Americans. Frei's foreign minister Gabriel Valdés complained to Kissinger that for every dollar that the United States provided to Latin America in investment and aid, Latin America sent 3.8 dollars back north – an extractive relationship to Latin American development that helped explain the region's endemic poverty. "You come here speaking of Latin America," Kissinger retorted. "But this is not important. Nothing important can come from the South. History has never been produced in the South. The axis of history starts in Moscow, goes to Bonn, crosses over to Washington, and then goes to Tokyo. What happens in the South is of no importance. You're wasting your time." Valdés was surprised, and exclaimed, "Mr. Kissinger, you know nothing of the South." "No," Kissinger retorted, "and I don't care."⁸ Nixon thought similarly. "Latin America doesn't matter. Long as we've been in it, people don't give one damn about Latin America, Don," he advised the young Donald Rumsfeld.⁹

Downlifting is also a more accurate characterization of the signal event that brought the Cold War to the Americas, the CIA-orchestrated 1954 coup against President Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán of Guatemala. Schoultz is hardly alone in repeating the erroneous claim that the 1954 Meeting of Consultation in Caracas "authorized Washington's effort to overthrow Guatemala's democratic government" (179). While Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and President Dwight Eisenhower indeed later wrote to the effect that they had "obtained a vague green light to overthrow the government of Guatemala" (186), the record shows that their draft interventionist resolution at the Caracas meeting was changed by Latin American delegations into a noninterventionist resolution.¹⁰ The aid that then flowed to coup leader Carlos Castillo Armas—"the first major Cold War foreign aid program for a Latin American country"—came, Schoultz continues, "100 percent from the realist side of the altruism/realism continuum" (187). Perhaps, but a realist looking out for U.S. interests might have taken the spirit of President John F. Kennedy's later dictum about the choice between peaceful revolution or violent revolution seriously and supported reformers rather than obstructionists in order to foster a reduction in the acute inequality that has always been at the root of Latin American instability. If the Eisenhower administration had truly wished to uplift Guatemalans, in other words, it should have provided that aid to Arbenz, instead of destroying the most uplifting government which that traumatized country has ever enjoyed. The same could be said about the Reagan administration's illegal support for the contras in Nicaragua, an expensive and complex operation carefully designed to prevent the Sandinistas from uplifting and improving Nicaragua, right down to the destruction of one-room clinics and schoolhouses in the countryside.

⁸ Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Random House, 1983), 263.

⁹ James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 16.

¹⁰ Max Paul Friedman, "Fracas in Caracas: Latin American Diplomatic Resistance to United States Intervention in Guatemala in 1954," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 21:4 (2010): 669-689.

A good deal of the book focuses on the evolution of U.S. foreign aid policy, from an ideological reliance on private capital until the 1930s, through the gradual expansion of government initiatives under the Franklin Roosevelt administration, retrenchment under the penny-pinching reign of Eisenhower's Treasury Secretary George Humphrey, to the loosening of public purse strings after the Cuban revolution concentrated the minds of late Eisenhower and Kennedy officials on preempting rebellion by satisfying more Latin American needs. When Schoultz writes that the president's brother Milton Eisenhower was "slowly convincing others to consider uplifting Latin Americans" (195), he means that he was pushing them to consider spending public funds on foreign aid; based on the interpretation on this page, it seems that Humphrey was a rare example of a U.S. official who was not interested in uplift. However, the term as used elsewhere in the book is so flexible that one could argue Humphrey wanted to uplift Latin Americans by telling them to eschew statism and adopt free-market thinking and austerity measures.

When we get to the eras of extensive foreign aid, launched under Eisenhower in response to Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek's *Operação Pan-Americana* initiative, then expanded into the Alliance for Progress, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and related agencies, there is rich material for Schoultz to demonstrate that U.S. officials' desire to transform Latin Americans expanded into many realms, from economics to governance. The story told here, like most of Schoultz's work, is a story of what people in Washington (and sometimes New York) were thinking and doing. Here, too, studies that integrate Latin American sources wind up less dismissive of Latin American agency; the phrase 'improving Latin Americans' that I am convinced is written with tongue always in cheek would not even occur to authors who have traced Latin American actions.¹¹

And so we make our way to our own time, with the same lingering questions. Is twenty-first century aid to Central America altruistic or intended to stanch the flow of migrants fleeing poverty and violence, as well as narcotics bound for the insatiable northern market? Schoultz acknowledges that this desire lies behind a recent focus on aid to Honduras, for example, and so here the tone of his remarks about altruism has an appropriately cynical ring. But what of the policies that helped turn Honduras into a major drug and migrant entrepôt in the first place? Was it altruism that brought the vast and corrupt Contra program leaving the country awash in guns, or the militarization of a public health problem, including maritime interdictions of Andean cocaine in the Caribbean that, like pushing on a balloon, shifted trafficking routes and their social pathologies to Central America and Mexico? Do uplift and improvement help us understand any of that?

In the end, Schoultz seems to land on an argument buttressed by so much of his scholarship: U.S. policymakers have long believed that "assisting with the improvement of other peoples is a useful way to protect and promote a nation's interests" (290). So if altruism and realism can both lead to a policy of uplift, but uplift is principally a *means* to the end of promoting economic and security interests, it is easier for this reader to see why the means could just as readily become a policy of downlift to try to achieve the same ends. If there is a broad consistency in the U.S. approach to Latin America, it has been that everyone involved, naturally enough, has sought to enhance U.S. security and economic interests in the region, and that nearly everyone involved, unfortunately, has been afflicted by a sense of superiority that discouraged them from taking Latin Americans' own views, desires, and capacities seriously. That rule was thoroughly documented in *Beneath the United States*. The exceptions that proved it—in the Good Neighbor era, or Barack Obama's

¹¹ On Kubitschek and the broader point here, see Tom Long, *Latin America Confronts the United States: Asymmetry and Influence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 25-73.

disavowal of the Monroe Doctrine and opening to Cuba—showed that when condescending policies of uplift or downlift were occasionally eschewed in favor of a posture of listening and mutual respect, U.S. officials were actually able to achieve important policy successes that were in *their* own best interest. This lesson will be readily available when the current U.S. administration, dedicated as it is to aggressive downlifting, yields to the next one—especially if members of the new administration read Lars Schoultz’s many books. I hope they will.

Review by Tom Long, University of Warwick

Once again, Lars Schoultz has written a sweeping, synthetic history of U.S.-Latin American relations.¹ The book is a pleasure to read. Schoultz peppers his narrative with anecdotes, witty asides, and cringe-inducing quotations culled from deep engagement with a multitude of U.S. sources. As with many scholars of my generation, Schoultz's 1998 *Beneath the United States* was one of the first serious accounts of U.S.-Latin American relations that I read. It deeply shaped my view of what constituted the field of study of U.S.-Latin American relations and how one might approach the topic. Like *Beneath the United States*, Schoultz's new book, *In Their Own Best Interests*, stretches from Latin American independence to modern times. Much more explicitly than in his previous two books,² however, this new study aims to shed light on contemporary practices of U.S. foreign policy and to set them in historical context. While *Beneath the United States* focused on how U.S. policymakers' biased perceptions shaped the making of U.S. policy, Schoultz now turns his keen eye to the related matter of how these perceptions fuse with the U.S. sense of mission into specific practices intended to 'uplift' and improve Latin Americans.

In brief, Schoultz argues that U.S. policy and actions in Latin America—from military interventions to foreign aid and economic policies—cannot be understood as being driven simply by security or corporate and investor interests. Instead, we must account for the 'uplifting impulse' of U.S. policymakers. In Schoultz's reading, there is an element of altruism in these U.S. policies, though there is also much realism dressed in altruistic language. As Schoultz's previous work emphasizes, even altruists are afflicted by debilitating vices—namely racism and paternalism. Altruists' actions are affected by a sincere belief in their ability to 'improve' Latin Americans, or at least to better Latin American institutions, politics, and economies. Schoultz is clearly sceptical about the benefits of these interventions over the last 120 years, though most of his attention is not devoted to the projects' outcomes. Instead, the book's focus is squarely on the 'uplifters,' that is, on U.S. policymakers, their views, and their practices. The book is, in many ways, a critical evaluation of bureaucratic politics, in which altruists, realists, and altruist-realist hybrids muddle through the problems of their day, guided by an often-dubious set of assumptions.

As with much of Schoultz's previous work, the book sits at the juncture of history and political science and international relations (IR). In the following pages, I will focus my evaluation on the following areas. First, I will discuss the historical narrative and argument Schoultz presents, which occupies the core of the book's 304 pages (excluding notes). I will then present and evaluate Schoultz's claims that relate to and emerge from political science and IR; though best known for his deeply historical work, Schoultz is a professor of political science at the University of North Carolina and was trained in that discipline. These claims are concentrated in the introduction and conclusion and relate to questions of what has driven more than a century of U.S. 'uplifting' in Latin America. Third, this book is, unapologetically, a study of the United States and its policymakers, based overwhelmingly on U.S. sources. As something of a proponent of multinational historical accounts and archival research in U.S.-Latin American relations, I offer a few thoughts about the strengths and limitations inherent in Schoultz's deep, but largely mononational, approach.

¹ The first was Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

² Schoultz. *Beneath the United States*; Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

Finally, given the book's evident desire to relate history to today's policies, I assess how Schoultz's argument connects to contemporary policy in an environment and Latin American region that have changed more rapidly than Schoultz's concluding remarks suggest.

Schoultz's main argument, woven throughout the historical and contemporary narrative, is that U.S. interventions in Latin America—military, economic, diplomatic, and political—have been shaped by a belief in both the ability and desirability for U.S. policy to improve Latin Americans and their institutions, societies, politics, and economies. This desire was not born with U.S. or Latin American independence, emerging instead in the late-nineteenth century and flowering during the post-1898 Progressive era. Though it is closely related to U.S. policymakers' beliefs in the superiority of the United States, in racial and political terms, uplifting is also presaged on the assumed mutability and improbability of the targets of one's efforts. Starting from the claim that “one secondary belief almost shouts for attention: *a belief that the United States should seek to improve underdeveloped peoples, to help them become more developed, less backward*” (10, emphasis in original), Schoultz marches through two centuries of U.S.-Latin American relations. The book is at its best when it combines historical synthesis with piquant quotes that give readers insight into the worldviews of U.S. foreign policymakers.

The belief and practice of uplifting, Schoultz makes clear, is almost always related to other interests. Security takes pride of place, with economic interests decidedly secondary in his judgment. Not surprisingly, Schoultz's account takes a deep dive into 1898 and ensuing U.S. occupations in Cuba, followed by interventions and occupations in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and on the Central American isthmus. While bolder interpretations of the Monroe Doctrine and the need to exclude European powers play a part in this account, Schoultz emphasizes the U.S. effort to train Latin Americans in self-government. U.S. perceptions of Latin American failures in this regard drove further interventions by the Marines, as well as by money and democracy doctors sent to improve countries' finances, laws, elections, and political cultures: “Until this training was complete, the United States would insist upon order, and then, once that was achieved, it would promote progress” (42).

Economic concerns—investments in protectorate-era Cuba or revolutionary Mexico—spurred attention but were not deciding factors. In Nicaragua, Schoultz concludes that, “The protection of U.S. economic interests appears to have been a minor concern, and the security of the Panama Canal of even lesser importance” (51). If economics were more means than ends during the hey-day of Dollar Diplomacy, they were further relegated by interventionist-in-chief President Woodrow Wilson, who proselytized elections and favored (supposedly) apolitical national guards as a solution to Latin Americans' recurrent failure to behave quite as Wilson would have liked. Opposition from South America helped shaped a turn away from U.S. military interventionism, even as the Great Depression and the coming Second World War provided demand and opportunity for new varieties of uplifting in the form of economic and military assistance. Nelson Rockefeller's wartime efforts, first as coordinator of the Office for Inter-American Affairs and then as the first Assistant Secretary of State for American Republic Affairs, are discussed as “the first formal U.S. foreign aid program” (149), complemented by extensive loans from other divisions of the U.S. government. After the war, U.S. uplifting efforts in Latin America slowed as they expanded in Europe and Asia (162). Schoultz places the blame here largely on bureaucratic politics. Just as Latin American demands for economic assistance grew, the State Department's Latin Americanists “dropped the ball” due to misplaced concerns (Assistant Secretary of State Spruille Braden's obsession with Argentina's Juan Perón) and long vacancies at senior levels (168-170). Certainly, personnel matters for policy, but Schoultz largely leaves the meta-question unaddressed: Why would senior leadership allow such vacancies or questionable competence at such an important moment?

While most explanations in IR emphasize ‘threat,’ this again begs for exploration of U.S. perceptions and priorities, if uplifting was indeed so central.

As one advances through the narrative, many activities are swept up into the category of ‘uplifting,’ which tends to obscure important differences in motivation and method. Some of the events discussed at length, such as the Brazilian coup of 1964 or the Chilean coup of 1973, appear to have been much more directly tied to U.S. attempts to ensure friendly governments, consequences be damned, than uplift those countries. This same motivation seems to have been more central in U.S. animosity to Fidel Castro’s Cuba, which was expressed most directly at the Bay of Pigs, than a desire to improve Cubans. On the other hand, the mentality of uplifting is more helpful in explaining the form that John F. Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress took. This program was made salient—and legislatively possible—by concerns about Castro, of course. But that fear did not determine the shape of the broader response; here, Schoultz wonderfully dissects the uplifting sensibilities that suffuse modernization theory. Security concerns, hegemonic presumptions, and uplifters’ optimism merged into policy and rhetoric “with all the trappings of a religion” (200). After President Kennedy’s death, though, the optimism quickly dropped out of the picture, leaving the darker aspects of that Cold Warrior’s policies to stand alone: assistance to internal security forces with little consideration of their commitment to democracy or human rights. Somewhat oddly, Schoultz sees the transformation of this moment as a novel one toward political uplift, writing, “Up to this time, most foreign aid officials had thought of themselves as economic and not political uplifters” (235). This seems starkly at odds with the inherently political focus of modernization theory and the Alliance, as well as Schoultz’s own argument that the institutionalization of foreign aid was driven by “Hans Morgenthau realists seeking to protect U.S. security interests and, of far lesser importance, U.S. economic interests” (240). The emphasis on political uplifting grows during the Reagan years, especially under the auspices of the National Endowment for Democracy, the institutional history of which receives more than a ten-page aside.

There is an odd near-absence in Schoultz’s accounting of the Cold War. The administration of President Jimmy Carter barely merits mention, with discussion totalling about two scattered pages. The lack of analysis is made even stranger given that in the first brief mention, Carter’s focus on human rights is called “perhaps the most altruistic uplifting activity in the history of U.S.-Latin American relations—with no payoff other than the pleasure of seeing a reduction in torture and other forms of cruel and inhuman treatment” (224). Setting aside the matter of whether there was perhaps more realism to Carter’s policies than meets the eye, it is odd that an episode of unequalled altruism is so marginal to Schoultz’s frequent discussion of realists versus altruists. Beyond that, given the importance that human rights would assume in the later uplifting efforts that Schoultz emphasizes, this is an area where more attention would have been helpful.

In the transition from Cold War to post-Cold War uplifting, Schoultz emphasizes three facets of the now-permanent effort to improve Latin American governance: the focus on infinitely improvable institutions, the increased complexity of U.S. agencies and legal structures involved in foreign aid, and the boom in outsourcing and aid contracting. These combined to create a never-ending mission supported by an expansive lobby and underlying consensus that it is “in the interests of the United States to help other countries improve their governance” (261). Schoultz illustrates this in the transitions in Nicaragua and Chile. However, post-Cold War U.S. policies in Cuba—discussed at great length and programmatic detail—and the drugs-and-crime missions explored in Honduras seem of substantively different natures. To what extent can ‘uplifting’ capture such distinct policies?

The book's historical narrative is framed by questions that Schoultz ties to social scientific approaches to politics and IR. Schoultz initially refers to his study as a type of ethnography, soaking and poking in policymakers' meetings as a way of understanding their world (4-6). However, in fact Schoultz's approach is historical and largely archival, and the ethnographic metaphor foreshadowed in the introduction appears unevenly in the central narrative. This is probably for the best, as Schoultz is wading into policymakers' documents and not their meetings, surely an important distinction. The words of the notetaker or the letter writer are quite different than the dynamics—especially the power dynamics—among humans in the briefing room.

In sharp contrast to the ethnographic introduction, the book's conclusion is laced with 'hypotheses' regarding what drove and maintains the U.S. focus on uplifting. However, the discussion of these hypotheses is frustratingly incomplete, in part because it is not placed in the context of relevant literature in history, political science, or IR. More discussion of broader historical work on 'civilizing missions' in European colonialism would provide context for—and perhaps reason to question—the conclusion that Progressives demonstrated the greatest degree of altruism: "in most of the cases, they were not trying to do something akin to containing communism or ending drug trafficking. They were trying to be helpful" (292). This inference seems largely disconnected from the historical context that Schoultz meticulously constructs elsewhere. Civilizational and racial narratives may have done much of the work of legitimation for Progressives that securitization performed during the Cold War. Expanding U.S. interests certainly affected policies in Latin America, but there were also new domestic demands to justify uplifting budgets to an often-sceptical Congress and public. As Schoultz notes, the claims of uplifters today are much less bold than those of Progressives (or modernization theorists); the lack of inspirational, if unrealistic, promises means more conjunctural justifications are needed.

Schoultz's key question for the conclusion posits a competition between altruism and realism in explaining U.S. policy. In the text, this is often framed as a competition between altruists and realists for resources and influence (esp. 297-302). Given Schoultz's reiterations that nearly all policymakers blend the two qualities, the attempt to measure the balance between the two as if they were separable and competing makes little analytical sense. Related to these claims, there is little attention to an extensive literature on foreign aid. This is particularly bemusing given assertions that "No research exists on this question" of altruism and realism in foreign aid and that "no one has tested these two hypotheses" (298-299). Those claims are true only in the narrowest sense. Much work does exist on the driving causes and frequent failures of foreign aid. Perhaps most prominently, this would include the work of Economics Professor William Easterly, who shares with Schoultz an affinity for sardonically critical book titles: *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* and *The Tyranny of Experts: Economists, Dictators, and the Forgotten Rights of the Poor*.³ The study of U.S. aid in Latin America has a long trajectory as well, dating at least to a 1965 article by another contributor to this roundtable, who emphasized its limitations as a foreign

³ William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (New York: Penguin, 2006); William Easterly, *The Tyranny of Experts: Economists, Dictators, and the Forgotten Rights of the Poor* (New York: Basic Books, 2014)

policy tool.⁴ Beyond that, there has been a great deal of study of who supports U.S. foreign aid and why.⁵ Given Schoultz's (certainly correct) assertion that individual policymakers blend the two qualities, his hypotheses are untestable, and the late introduction of hypothesis-testing language is unhelpful to the book's larger purpose.

As noted above, the book is essentially a U.S.-centric account. Schoultz wants to analyze the worldviews and habits of U.S. policymakers and political leaders. His use of U.S. sources is extensive, going well beyond the bounds of Record Group 59, where the State Department's files reside. Many of his choicest quotes and insights emerge from private papers, diaries, and personal correspondence. The depth of his archival research is a reminder, in an academic era that emphasizes multinational and global histories, of the value of deep research on one country's foreign policy, even when that country is the heavily studied United States. This is difficult to accomplish as well as Schoultz does as one's geographical scope expands.

While underscoring the value of this research, it is also worth asking what trade-offs this focus entails. Put differently, what might a multinational perspective add to an account of U.S. policies of uplift. I think the answer is: a great deal. In the book's final pages, Schoultz makes some rather strong claims about the Latin American perspective on these U.S. efforts. One is that the Latin American message to the United States today is, "we have created a dominant political culture that accepts being uplifted. You have a habit of giving, we have a habit of receiving" (303). Another is that "the day when self-respect provokes Latin Americans to resent U.S. uplifting will be the day Washington's realists bring their soft-power altruists home" (303). These claims receive little attention or support in the previous three hundred pages. Here, and elsewhere in the book, 'Latin America' is poor shorthand, given that such statements have lesser relevance, historically or today, to huge swaths of the region. While some Latin American leaders sought U.S. intervention and used U.S. support to strengthen their own positions, many others pushed back or were highly strategic. What explains this variation in Latin American behavior? How are these choices affected by domestic political conditions, in addition to the constraints imposed by international asymmetries? Over a longer timeframe—such as that examined by this book—how does this context, as well as specific efforts at uplift, shape the constitution of elites in Latin American countries, their definitions of the 'national interest,' and their relations with domestic societies and institutions? We cannot address any of these questions meaningfully from such a U.S.-centric perspective. We cannot really say much about this notion of a "dominant [Latin America] political culture [that] accepts being uplifted," or whether and in which countries such a thing indeed exists.

Finally, what does this tale of uplift and sorrow tell us about U.S.-Latin American relations today? Schoultz's final line emphasizes continuity: "Clearly, the United States has only begun its effort to improve Latin Americans" (304). Perhaps, but the emphasis on U.S. policy sidesteps fundamental questions about the Latin American and global context. In doing so, these claims overstate the importance of the United States in

⁴ Abraham F. Lowenthal, "Foreign Aid as a Political Instrument: The Case of the Dominican Republic," *Public Policy* 14 (1965): 141-160.

⁵ For just two examples, see Carol Lancaster, *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Helen V. Milner and Dustin H. Tingley, "The Political Economy of US Foreign Aid: American Legislators and the Domestic Politics of Aid," *Economics & Politics* 22:2 (2010): 200-232, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0343.2009.00356.x>.

determining Latin American politics and understate dramatic changes in the region, as well as in U.S. policy. While the foreign aid machine may rumble forward, the Trump administration has proposed deep cuts both in its general budget proposals and to punish particular countries. At the same time, much aid has moved away from the framework Schoultz describes. International financial institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and Interamerican Development Bank receive little attention. Should these be understood as mere instruments of U.S. policy or perhaps as ways to escape such direct reliance on the United States? Other sources of aid are not discussed, whether the governance-oriented European Union's programs or the massive expansion in supposedly condition-free aid and loans from China. Honduras' Juan Orlando Hernández and Guatemala's Jimmy Morales may look to the United States for support—and political affinity—but few other states in the region evidence anything like the sort of single-minded dependence suggested in the conclusion. For most of Latin America, U.S. aid and uplift today play second or third fiddle to domestic and other international factors.

If 'uplift,' even if well-intentioned, is injurious to self-respect, as Schoultz suggests, what would be a preferable approach? If the most extreme options are discarded (though President Donald Trump's rhetoric in Venezuela and U.S. policy elsewhere suggest that are not), one still faces difficult choices about how to deal with troublesome governments and situations of human suffering. In many ways, Schoultz's account is suffused, like the Good Neighbor Policy, as he presents it, by the tension between respecting Latin American wishes—evinced in the proclamations of sovereignty of Latin American leaders—and how to respond to repression and violations of human rights. If non-intervention is praiseworthy while the tolerance (or opportunistic embrace) of authoritarianism and repression is condemnable, U.S. policy can find itself back on the horns of the Good Neighbor's dilemma.

These are questions and critiques spurred by the book's strengths as well as its weaknesses. Lars Schoultz has given us a highly readable, engaging, and provocative treatment of U.S. policy toward Latin America.

Review by Abraham F. Lowenthal, University of Southern California

Lars Schoultz, a veteran and well-recognized historian of U.S. attitudes and policies toward the diverse countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, has long emphasized the paternalist, prejudiced, and racist approaches by U.S. officials in dealing with the countries to the South, “Beneath the United States,” in multiple senses, as he argued in his 1998 volume with that title.¹

His new capstone volume is extensively researched and gracefully written, with wry and elegant wit. Schoultz goes over much of the same ground that he covered in his 1998 book but uses a different framework to discuss this history: the coexistence and juxtaposition of ‘uplifting’ and ‘altruistic’ motives with ‘realist’ paradigms in motivating and explaining U.S. policies. In this book Schoultz reports what U.S. officials said, publicly and privately, in framing and justifying policies toward Latin America from the earliest days of the United States to recent, buzz-word filled USAID program statements about reforming Honduras; the latter statement, used to introduce the volume, effectively draws the reader into noticing the extraordinary attitudes U.S. bureaucrats routinely express.

Schoultz draws on many primary sources: U.S. government documents and reports, published and unpublished, from multiple government agencies; biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, published and unpublished letters, oral histories, speeches and memoranda; as well as specialized scholarly volumes and journal articles; journalistic reports; masters and Ph.D. dissertations from more than a dozen universities; and a handful of personal interviews.

Strangely, however, the book hardly engages the work of other scholars who have written broadly on inter-American affairs nor presents their respective positions on the drivers and contours of U.S. policies in the Western Hemisphere. An incomplete list of major scholars on U.S.-Latin American relations who are not cited by Schoultz would include, in alphabetical order: Cynthia Arnson, Sean Burgess, Elizabeth Cobb, Richard Fagen, Gregory Grandin, Tanya Hamer, Monica Hirst, Patrick J. Iber, Richard Immerman, Gilbert Joseph, William LeoGrande, Tom Long, Abraham F. Lowenthal, Jennifer McCoy, Shannon O’Neil, Robert Packenham, Robert Pastor, Thomas Skidmore, Joseph Tulchin, Howard Wiarda and many Latin American writers who publish in Spanish or Portuguese.

The core issue Schoultz discusses is the ongoing coexistence, which he sometimes describes as a tension, between two rationales advanced by U.S. policymakers and opinion-shapers for the policies they have espoused and practiced in the Americas, i.e. those based on a values-driven impulse to ‘uplift’ Latin Americans, or alternatively, those based on frank, unvarnished pursuit of U.S. self-interest. Schoultz sometimes discusses these tendencies as if they were situated at opposite ends of what he calls a ‘continuum.’ In the course of the volume, however, he mainly treats these as a dominant and a less important underlying argument, expressed at different levels of explicitness: more extremely tilted toward ‘uplift’ over time, but varying in one direction or the other in different eras, and vis-à-vis different regional and global realities, which Schoultz only lightly and generally discusses.

¹ Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998)

Schoultz treats U.S. policies toward Latin America as if they were almost entirely defined by the attitudes, assumptions, and prejudices of U.S. officials—what he calls “their constellation of beliefs” (5). U.S. officials projected these beliefs, Schoultz suggests, onto a region they have not understood well nor much cared for. They have paid little attention to the views, claims, and policies of Latin American actors, and indeed often not much more to the specific interests and pressures of U.S. and other governmental non-governmental actors: business, labor, academic, religious, and issue-based. He concentrates on the underlying mindset of U.S. policymakers in expressing a continuing, only rarely interrupted, impulse to improve Latin America’s socioeconomic, political, and cultural realities, “in their own best interest,” and to make these more like the conditions the officials apparently sincerely, if uncritically, believed exist in the United States, and on the less explicitly expressed pursuit of concrete U.S. interests, more selfish than charitable.

Schoultz knows a lot about United States-Latin American relations. This book, however, is not by any means a complete or reliable history of those relations, or of the various conflicting and compatible interests they involve. It does not deal extensively with the structures, asymmetries or ideologies on both sides, nor with the diverse perspectives within the United States or among the different countries of Latin America and the Caribbean about how those countries connect with the United States and the world economy. It does not take up migration flows or the transnational impacts of technology, culture, or ideas. It is, rather, an extended, anecdotal discussion of how U.S. government officials have thought about and communicated with each other about whether and how the United States should attempt to influence the social, economic, educational, and political conditions within Latin America.

The main story line is that a mix of altruistic and interest-driven motives has expanded diverse U.S. efforts (not “the U.S. effort” in the book title’s phrase) to improve Latin America’s circumstances. It emphasizes how these activities have given rise to policies, programs, and bureaucracies in the United States that have achieved a substantial presence, corporate and bureaucratic structures, and impact of their own. They have become what Schoultz calls, with evident irony, the ‘uplift industry,’ perpetuated by expressed needs but also by inertial momentum, and by the practical needs of many of its employees to pay their rent, an imperative they presumably share with professors and others.

Schoultz does not analyze the ‘uplift industry’ in depth or detail. There are no specific discussions of governmental departments and agencies, of private companies, of budgets or of the backgrounds and experiences of personnel. Nor are there case studies of projects, programs or their impacts. The book opens up a subject for explanation and analysis, without taking it very far.

Schoultz seems both suspicious of ‘uplift-mongers’ and skeptical of ‘realists’ with a tendency toward mission-creep. He criticizes the reluctance by Latin American clients to blow the whistle on programs of little demonstrated utility, seeming to suggest that they are in on the scam. He does not set forth a recommended approach that might provide constructive guidance for policymakers.

Within its limits, the book has attractive qualities, beyond its engaging prose and command of sources, for different kinds of readers. A veteran observer will be vividly reminded of many of the motley cast of characters that over decades dominated U.S. policymaking toward Latin America. These officials hardly ever got much attention from the top of the U.S. government, but they managed U.S. relations with Latin America. They exemplified the WASP elite that long controlled and nearly monopolized U.S. diplomacy. There is rich material in Schoultz’s book on the multiple foibles and contributions from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1950s of men like (in alphabetical order) Willard Beaulac, Albert Beveridge, Spruille Braden, Ellis Briggs,

Enoch Crowder, C. Douglas Dillon, Lawrence Duggan, Joseph Grew, Henry Holland, Charles Evans Hughes, Cordell Hull, George M. Humphrey, Frank Kellogg, Philander Knox, Robert Lansing, Henry Cabot Lodge, Boaz Long, Breckenbridge Long, Alfred Thayer Mahan, Thomas C. Mann, Edward M. Martin, Dana G. Munro, Nelson Rockefeller, Elihu Root, Thomas Snowden, Henry Stimson, Sumner Welles, Francis White, Huntington Wilson, and Leonard Wood. These and other such figures populate the text and are sprinkled through its many footnotes. Schoultz draws from them remarkably apt quotations to sustain his theses and lend credence to his account, and he conveys much of the flavor of U.S. approaches to Latin America over many decades.

There is scarcely any mention of their counterparts over the past sixty years, i.e. such leading participants in shaping U.S. policies in the Americas during Schoultz's (and my) professional lifetimes as Bernard Aronson, Richard J. Bloomfield, Philip Bonsal, Jeffrey Davidow, John C. Dreier, Luigi Einaudi, Carla Hills, Roberta Jacobson, Sol M. Linowitz, Michael McKinley, Robert Pastor, Thomas Pickering, William D. Rogers, Richard R. Rubottom, Thomas Shannon, Harry W. Shlaudeman, Viron P. Vaky, Alexander Watson and Robert Zoellick.² Given his insistence that the naïve pursuit of 'uplift,' coupled with pure self-interest, has characterized U.S. policy toward Latin America to the present, it is noteworthy that such figures, who are unlikely to have uttered comparable tailor-made quotations, rate literally no mention. More attention to the key players of the past few decades would have been necessary to sustain claims about the persistence of U.S. attitudes encountered in previous years.

A researcher wanting to plumb the mindsets of U.S. diplomats more recently working on Latin America might have conducted probing interviews of such figures. Very early in the book, however, Schoultz dismisses interviews as a useful source because policymakers "may not want to tell the truth" or "may not know what the truth is." He, therefore, explicitly relies on public or private statements, to "provide the raw data that you can use to infer beliefs" (6). Schoultz's methodology has its merits and the quotations he adduces often stunningly illustrate his arguments, but one is left wondering whether the book employs the process of inference that he proposes or began with a core argument that was buttressed with quotations.

For readers who did not experience the Cold War, Vietnam, the frequent U.S. interventions in the Caribbean and Central America, and covert activities in South America—and the ways these interventions were presented by U.S. officials—the Schoultz volume may well sensitize them to cross-examine what officials say, either because those officials are consciously prevaricating, or because they have unconsciously internalized prevailing premises they do not challenge.³ For that purpose, it might be preferable, however, for students to compare the two policy frames that Schoultz emphasizes with others—such as imperialist ambition, economic advantage, domestic political considerations, bureaucratic politics, asymmetric interdependence, intermestic

² These men and women, among the leading U.S. government officials working on inter-American affairs over the past 60 years, listed above in alphabetical order, include U.S. ambassadors to the Organization of American States (Dreier, Einaudi and Linowitz); assistant secretaries of state for inter-American affairs (Aronson, Jacobson, Rogers, Rubottom, Shannon, Shlaudeman, Vaky, and Watson); ambassadors (Bloomfield, Bonsal, Davidow, Jacobson, McKinley, Pickering, Shannon, Shlaudeman, Vaky, and Watson); a senior director for Latin America on the National Security Council (Pastor); a Special Trade Representative (Hills); and a deputy secretary of state (Zoellick)

³ In Abraham F. Lowenthal, *The Dominican Intervention* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), I focused on the power of unchallenged premises and misplaced analogies to shape what officials perceived, reported, and acted upon.

mutual dependence, and international geopolitics—as complex and competing drivers in tension with each other, and with the positions and actions of Latin American and other international players. Such contradictory influences are sometimes resolved in public statements or implemented practice, but they often simply coexist, creating policy outputs and outcomes that lack coherence. Case studies drawing on these various perspectives to gain a fuller understanding of how policies are formulated and implemented would likely be more illuminating than even a well-chosen set of declaratory statements by public officials.

Review by Debbie Sharnak, Harvard University

In March 1946, U.S. Ambassador to Cuba Raymond Henry Norweb wrote to President Harry Truman's Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes, about the potential influence of the USSR in Cuba and Latin America more broadly. Worried about nationalist strains that might encourage anti-American sentiment and the popularity of Communist ideas across the island, particularly to poor farmers, Norweb ultimately concluded that continued U.S. influence would be largely predicated on both the success or failure of Communism within the Soviet Union as an advertisement to American republics, as well as "the extent to which our own country [the United States] may improve in the elimination of poverty, ignorance, racial prejudice, and in other ways."¹

Norweb was unique in looking inward at the ways the U.S. could improve as a way to influence in Latin America. In *In Their Own Best Interest*, Lars Schoultz explores instead how U.S. foreign policy makers have justified policy and oftentimes intervention in the region as part of a larger civilizing mission to improve what they considered underdeveloped countries. Schoultz has made a career of teasing out different strands within U.S. policy towards Latin America. Such volumes include *Human Rights and United States Policy toward Latin America*, *National Security and United States Policy toward Latin America*, and *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America*.² In each impressive volume, Schoultz—a "historically minded political scientist"—explores how policymakers take these concepts into account in shaping policy towards the region.³

In Their Own Best Interest follows this model as an organizing concept. Schoultz again takes a broad historical and geographical scope that spans the entire region to analyze how the perceived mission of civilizing Latin American countries has played a part in U.S. foreign policy. From Mexico and the Caribbean to the tip of South America, Schoultz analyzes different cases to understand how the U.S. came to embed uplift as a formative part of the U.S. foreign policy apparatus that employed thousands of people and operated as an institutionalized norm throughout U.S. bureaucracies. In this project, Schoultz explains the tension between altruistic intentions, which were held by those that believed the wealth and expertise of the United States imbued the country with a duty to help those less fortunate, and those who were primarily concerned with national interest, or how uplift could maintain U.S. influence in the region as a particular economic or security concern, particularly during the Cold War. While noting that few policymakers were purely in one camp or the other, Schoultz's book traces the back and forth struggle at different moments of historical

¹ Memo, The Ambassador in Cuba (Norweb) to the Secretary of State, March 29, 1946, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, The American Republics, Volume XI*, Velma Hastings Cassidy and Almon H. Wright eds., (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969), Document 651 <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1946v11/d651>, accessed 20 December 2018.

² Lars Schoultz, *Human Rights and United States Policy toward Latin America*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Lars Schoultz, *National Security and United States Policy toward Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

³ Andrew Kirkendall, "U.S.-Latin American Relations in the Age of Donald Trump," *H-Diplo/ISSF Policy Series, American and the World—2017 and Beyond*, 16 February 2017, <https://issforum.org/roundtables/policy/1-5O-Latin-America>.

import where one side tended to be more prominent. Stemming from progressive values that were exported abroad, Schoultz explores a “special culture that guides Washington’s effort to improve other peoples around the globe” (4) and concludes ultimately that all policy makers fall somewhere on this continuum. While a racial prejudice and belief in the backwardness of Latin American countries often undergirded many policymakers’ belief in uplift, Schoultz demonstrates the consistency with which U.S. bureaucrats believed they should do something to improve that part of the world. The questions of how much and how to accomplish uplift is what permeates debates throughout the last century.

Schoultz does not offer a teleological, linear increase in this thinking; instead, he carefully constructs the way these impulses ebbed and flowed over time. For example, Schoultz explains how the idea of civilizing Latin America was applied on an ad hoc and interventionist basis that was largely earnest in belief during the Progressive Era. From that initial compulsion, he then traces the institutionalization and range of tools to promote uplift that grew with fits and starts over the subsequent century and ultimately helped found institutions that ranged from the Export Import Bank to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). These types of institutions, particularly when combined with perceived Cold War national-security imperatives, Schoultz explains, helped produce “relentless low-intensity uplifting” as the new norm (289).

Drawn from an impressive array of cables, memos, and personal papers, Schoultz’s expansive examples span the region. One of the more interesting aspects of this story, however, is actually when and why Latin America fell off the radar of policymakers. At various moments throughout the twentieth century, Schoultz explains how bureaucracies ignored the region and turned concern away from uplift as either the result of missing personnel in key positions or infighting among State Department or administration officials. Most spectacularly, Schoultz explores the contentious relationship between Undersecretary of State for Latin American Affairs Sumner Welles and Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who clashed in diplomatic style and over the chain of command. Hull eventually pushed Welles out of his position, allegedly by helping spark accusations about Welles’s sexuality at a time when homosexuality disqualified people from public service. The result was the absence of a point person on Latin American affairs that stayed largely vacant for the next several years (153-162). At a precarious moment of political change with the end of the World War II and beginning of the Cold War, the State Department’s Latin America division stood rudderless. The periodic moments where there was an absence of policy, and the resultant chaotic approach that often followed, provide an instructive historical lesson to the effect of gutting any diplomatic initiatives as much as the moments of uplift trace a larger institutionalizing norm.

During the Cold War, institutions and expanding ideas about what constituted uplift ensured that these gaps at high levels of policy making were filled by an expanding workforce dedicated to these ideas. USAID and NED were founded as part of the growing toolbox that multiplied what constituted ideas about improving Latin America. In this way, the U.S. began to define improving police and military capability as part of this broader mission of development (223) to ultimately disastrous effects both in Latin American and around the globe in places like Vietnam. From creating repressive protectorates in the early part of the century to supporting dictatorial military dictatorships in the 1960s and 1970s, U.S. ideas of civilizing ultimately occurred at the expense of Latin Americans while simultaneously creating a self-perpetuating industry invested in the continuation of these activities, as Schoultz effectively illuminates.

Perhaps what is most obviously missing from this impressive volume is Latin American voices in these projects. On the one hand, this makes sense. Reading memos from this period by State Department officials,

it is clear that except for occasional elite perspectives, Latin Americans were barely mentioned and their opinions were infrequently taken into account when officials fashioned these policies. On the other hand, volumes such as Eve Buckley's *Technocrats and the Politics of Drought and Development in Twentieth Century Brazil* increasingly show the Latin American viewpoint and initiative on these ideas of improvement.⁴ Such works illustrate how debates about these concepts were occurring at a national level that no doubt impacted the possibility and nature of U.S. foreign policy towards the region. This emerging scholarship is essential to understanding the path of development that might be fashioned in Washington conference rooms but is implemented in communities across the region where the success or failure is predicated on the relationship between the implementers of these policies and the people that they impact.

As such, it is important to recognize that this volume is focused on state actors in the United States. While frequently mentioning the economic interests of companies that ranged from the United Fruit Company to Standard Oil, Schoultz also brushes over mentions of missionaries and cultural institutions that had a role in shaping ideas about uplift and civilization over the decade (146). How non-state actors impacted these debates could also offer a richness to the development of shifting ideas of American civilizing notions.

In the end though, Schoultz offers a compelling historical view as to how the U.S. initiated a project of uplift and how this idea grew and intersected with national interests that ranged from economic imperatives to national security concerns. Schoultz argues that while couched in the language of improvement, this growing bureaucracy has been ultimately predicated on the United States' own anxieties about Latin America—leaning closer to the idea of realism than altruism over the last 100 years.

In the current moment of U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America, uplift and improvement are hardly a concern of the administration. Instead, there has been a similar absence of any policy toward the region, in large part as a result of missing personnel and the gutting of the State Department bureaucracy that perhaps mirrors most closely to the post-Welles period.⁵ However, the difference between the two periods largely stems from the way that USAID and other U.S. institutions continue to operate without high level directive. In this way, Schoultz effectively lays out how the idea of civilizing Latin America has become ubiquitous over the last century. How Latin Americans feel about these developments, however, is perhaps the topic for a future historian to explore in more detail.

⁴ Eve E. Buckley, *Technocrats and the Politics of Drought and Development in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

⁵ Franco Ordonez, "Latin American diplomats: Is There anyone we can talk to?," *The Kansas City Star*, 19 September 2018; Doyle McManus, "Almost Half the Top Jobs in Trump's State Department Are Still Empty," *The Atlantic*, 4 November 2018.

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

A strength of Lars Schoultz's new book is his appreciation of the ways in which the early twentieth-century record of U.S. engagement in Latin America illuminates contemporary, post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. In both periods, and during the Cold War as well, U.S. political leaders imagined that 'uplifting' other societies would advance U.S. interests. While economic models and governmental institutions were always products of their own era, the rhetoric (and the strategic assumptions behind that rhetoric) were relatively constant. Schoultz thus spends more than half of his text on pre-1945 U.S. policy, and in the later sections of the book constantly returns the early twentieth-century as he explains events through the lens of that period. He wants to explain the centrality of uplifting agendas to U.S. approaches, and connect the occupations of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Nicaragua with the Alliance for Progress, President Ronald Reagan's opposition to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and the bureaucratic institutionalization of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In this effort Schoultz is effective.

In other respects the book is more problematic, and its promise unfulfilled. Most importantly, Schoultz explains in his introduction that the text will not only explain what the United States did, but how philosophies about uplift worked. He writes, "this book focuses on the beliefs that underlie the effort to improve other peoples" (6). He rejects, at least in the introduction, a hard distinction between 'altruists,' who see foreign aid as a kind of charitable giving, and 'realists,' who see foreign aid as just a foreign policy tool, and suggests that policymakers are "arrayed along an altruism-to-selfishness continuum." The key similarity, he argues, is that "everyone at every point believes the United States should do something to improve underdeveloped peoples" (7). He writes that he wants to understand the culture that made uplifting ideas so powerful; he wants to understand how people developed this idea and how a whole community of people in the United States accepted it.

As he moves into the initial chapters though, the text begins working through a play-by-play of U.S. interventionist efforts in Latin America. Schoultz notes, accurately, that policymakers justified these interventions as part of uplift, but does not seek to explain why ideas were powerful or where in U.S. culture and society they came from. He does not really do an intellectual or cultural history of uplifting instincts, as he proposed he would, and thus the reader never really gets answers as to why he believes uplifting ideologies were powerful and pervasive, or where instincts about altruism and realism came from; they are just there. The narrative is generally well-written and informative, and clear about what political leaders thought they were doing, but Schoultz does not interrogate beliefs in a complex way. For example, he writes that President Theodore Roosevelt believed "war as an indicator of superior character" (23), but does not include an explanation of why, and how, in a cultural or ideological way, his ideas resonated with the public-at-large. In short, the narrative consistently emphasizes the power of specific policymakers' day-to-day perceptions without digging into their ideological and cultural baggage.

The lack of analysis of motivations, ideology, or discussion of U.S. culture is surprising beyond just the fact that the book promises it at the outset. The lack of engagement with these issues is surprising in that it has been such a central piece of the burgeoning historical literature on development, and in U.S. foreign relations

more broadly; this scholarship is essentially absent in the notes.¹ To be sure, at times Schoultz notes that U.S. policymakers had racist or classist sensibilities, but there is no systematic explanation of how these factors altered a culture of policymaking; there is no systemic discussion about the nature of ideas suggesting that Latin Americans could be uplifted and that people in the United States (or wealthy countries) had a responsibility to do that uplifting.

Schoultz does toy with an answer to the question of why culture might be irrelevant. In one of the most forceful statements of the text he writes that Cold War development policies were created not “by... altruists, but by realists seeking to protect U.S. security interests, and of far lesser importance, U.S. economic interests” (240). If this is the case, then it becomes less necessary to explore culture because development programming was just a means to an end. If the goal of U.S. development programming was to advance a set of specific foreign policy objectives, then the rhetoric of altruism may be no more than a kind of wallpaper hiding a structure of realism. This thesis, it seems, is often borne out by much of Schoultz’s narrative. U.S. policymakers, in his vision, were mostly concerned with power and control, and were genuinely worried about threatening external forces they understood to be genuine. Schoultz does not endorse a purely realist argument though, suggesting at multiple points, including in the introduction and conclusion, that U.S. policy was a hybrid of realism and altruism. He rejects the notion that altruism was not real, and that talking about altruism was not just a way (consciously or even subconsciously) to justify the exercise of power.

Schoultz mostly suggests that as a way of controlling Latin American political evolution, uplifting was a kind of imperialism, and his tone is mostly critical as a result. A survey of the history of U.S.-Latin American relations, writ large, certainly makes that tone appropriate and in-line with the bulk of the extant scholarship. Yet looking more closely at Latin American voices would have demonstrated more nuance about questions of uplift and imperialism, and would have raised additional questions about the relationship between altruism and realism.

Throughout the text, with limited exceptions, Latin American visions do not emerge in a meaningful way. The fourth chapter, for example, entitled “Latin American Opposition and the Retreat from the Protectorates,” is almost entirely about the ideas of U.S. policymakers in the 1920s, and almost entirely viewed from their perspective. A deeper dive into Latin American sources of the era would have revealed the existence of a widely-held view in the region that the exertion of U.S. power in uplift endeavors was good and welcome.

Similarly, later, many Latin Americans were wildly enthusiastic about the Alliance for Progress; there had been anger in the immediate postwar period that the United States had not engaged in foreign aid programming for the region, and President John Kennedy’s altruistic rhetoric (and his even realist

¹ Key pieces of the scholarship on development and ideology, which are absent from the notes, include Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); David C. Engerman et al., *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the History of the Global Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); Michael Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); and David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

implementation of policy) resonated with Latin Americans who agreed that communism was dangerous and who hoped for economic transformations in their own societies. Beyond the Alliance for Progress, exploring the ideas about the uplift of influential Latin American development economists like Raúl Prebisch and Celso Furtado, along with Chile's Chicago Boys (and even dependency theorists such as Andre Gunder Frank and Fernando Henrique Cardoso) would have suggested a much more complex relationship between imperialism and uplift. As with questions about culture, the lack of engagement with Latin American actors is surprising because working from a transnational perspective and engaging non-U.S. voices has been a defining feature of contemporary historical scholarship. With few exceptions, this literature is mostly absent from the notes.² Most assuredly here, an exploration addressing the Latin American-ness of the Cold War in Latin America would have greatly strengthened the text.

The takeaway, which Schoultz addresses most effectively in his conclusion, is that altruism and realism operate concurrently and that their instincts are not mutually exclusive. Advocates for entering the Cuban independence wars really did think they could help advance the cause of liberty and justice, and U.S. Marines occupying Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic in the Progressive Era really did think they were doing good. The same holds for Reagan-era policies in Nicaragua, and contemporary aid efforts in Honduras. In all of them, U.S. officials appreciated that the beauty of doing good was that it advanced U.S. political and economic interests. This has led, in the contemporary era, to the construction of a massive aid 'industry' which uses altruistic language, but in reality serves realist state goals. In this way, Schoultz's ending position may not be that different from anthropologist Arturo Escobar's oft-cited conclusion about the nature of economic development programs as imperialistic, even if he traveled along a very different road than Escobar to get there

² Schoultz does cite Tanya Harmer's excellent *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), but not scholarship like the essays in Gilbert Joseph and Greg Grandin, eds., *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010) and Gilbert Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In From the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) that emphasize how the Cold War was Latin American.

Author's Response by Lars Schoultz, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

I thank the five reviewers for their comments and Dustin Walcher for his introduction. And I appreciate the generosity of a historian, Tom Maddux, for allowing a political scientist to hijack H-Diplo for a ride around the track. It's a short track, he tells me, so this response to 23 pages of comments has been compacted into four major topics. First, a synopsis:

In Their Own Best Interest examines a central part of Washington's foreign policy culture—the part responsible for today's effort to help other peoples with their 'development.' Using Latin America as a focus, the book explores the beliefs that underlie this culture and is framed by two competing theories.

One has long been associated with Adam Smith, who believed it is a part of human nature to assist others who are less fortunate. He would not be surprised by what visitors see today when they enter the Washington headquarters of the Agency for International Development (USAID): a large brass tablet declaring that "Through USAID, our government is committed to expanding the circle of human dignity to every human being."

The rival theory was captured best by realist Hans Morgenthau, who believed that "foreign aid is no different from diplomatic or military policy or propaganda. They are all weapons." He would not be surprised by what the agency's current chief executive, Mark Green, recently told the *New York Times*: "Our job is to be a vibrant tool in the toolbox of American foreign policy.... Foreign assistance must always serve American interests."¹

In Their Own Best Interest conceives of individual U.S. policymakers as arrayed across a continuum from Adam Smith's altruism to Hans Morgenthau's realism, with everyone at every point on the continuum believing the United States should do something to improve other peoples. They disagree about why.

Proceeding chronologically, the book explores how individuals who are guided by these two beliefs have cooperated with one another, working hand-in-hand for over a century to create what we have today: an uplifting industry.

What the Book Definitely Is Not

Tom Long refers to the book as "a sweeping, synthetic history of U.S.-Latin American relations" and, thank you, "a pleasure to read." Offering little praise beyond "extensively researched and gracefully written," Abraham Lowenthal also appears to believe that the book is a history of U.S.-Latin American relations—and "not by any means a complete or reliable history of those relations." He laments that it "hardly engages the work of other scholars who have written broadly on inter-American affairs nor presents their respective positions on the drivers and contours of U.S. policies in the Western Hemisphere," and he suggests that anyone interested in a more complete history should explore "imperialist ambition, economic advantage,

¹ Hans Morgenthau, "A Political Theory of Foreign Aid," *American Political Science Review* 56 (June 1962): 309; *New York Times*, 4 November 2018, A12.

domestic political considerations, bureaucratic politics, asymmetric interdependence, intermestic mutual dependence, and international geopolitics.”

Certainly they should, but I never intended to do it for them. Instead, I wanted to explore a narrow but prominent component of U.S. policy: Washington’s century-long effort to improve other peoples. And although I have profited from their work for decades, in this book I am not interested in directly engaging the twenty scholars Lowenthal suggests I should have engaged, including himself. I engage Adam Smith and Hans Morgenthau.

Latin American Agency

Four of the five reviewers (Friedman, Long, Sharnak, and Taffet) argue that the book should have included the consideration of Latin Americans’ agency—their capacity to act independently. In our case that would be to influence U.S. policy. As Debbie Sharnak gently points out, “what is most obviously missing from this impressive volume is Latin American voices.”

I do not believe their voices are missing. The book’s attention to Latin Americans’ agency begins in the introduction, which warns readers that changes in U.S. policy are difficult to predict because of “*Latin Americans’ stubborn refusal to be passive.*” (11, emphasis added). The chapters that follow repeatedly emphasize how major shifts in U.S. policy have been largely determined by Latin Americans—by Mexicans’ resistance at Veracruz, for an example, and by Dominicans’ campaign in Europe and South America to end Washington’s protectorates, for another, plus the arguments about sovereign authority by Latin American jurists and the theorizing of Latin American structuralists. Then there is Latin Americans’ post-World War II demand for economic aid, followed by the next chapter devoted to the Cuban Revolution’s mega-impact upon U.S. policy: “The effect of the Cuban revolution on Washington’s policy toward the rest of Latin America was to blow open the uplifting floodgates” (196). The title of this chapter is “Cuba Determines the Answer”—the answer to the question of why the United States changed its policy after 1959. The basic architecture of today’s uplifting industry was created at the insistence of Latin Americans.

Even so, Max Paul Friedman agrees with Sharnak: “Studies that integrate Latin American sources wind up less dismissive of Latin American agency.”

Pause for a moment to digest that sentence: a problem is identified (dismissing Latin Americans’ agency) and a solution is offered (using Latin American sources). Is there a problem? As readers of Friedman’s review will see, that sentence appears in his paragraph devoted to Brazil’s Juscelino Kubitschek and his proposed Operation Pan America, about which I am as un-dismissive as I have the ability to be. Three pages of my book (206-208) are devoted to explaining how “this Brazilian initiative was the Alliance for Progress three years before the Alliance for Progress.” A second reference is to “JFK’s version of Operation Pan America,” and a third to “the Kennedy administration’s appropriation of Operation Pan America.” Indeed, all of the preceding chapter is built around Latin Americans’ agency—around their decade-long effort, ultimately successful, to obtain from the United States what the United States did not want to give: development assistance.

That said, no one would challenge the wisdom of the younger generation of scholars whose hallmark is the exploration of Latin American archives and other sources. They enrich us all. They certainly enriched this book. In the U.S. archives I found no adequate substitute for what Tanya Harmer found in Latin American

archives about U.S.-Chilean relations, and I say so (233). I say the same about what Carlos Gustavo Poggio Teixeira found in Latin American sources about U.S. policy toward Brazil (230-231), about what Juan Gabriel Valdes found in Chilean archives about the Chicago Boys (193-194), about what Nancy Mitchell found in German sources about U.S.-Latin American relations in World War I, and about what Kirk Tyvela found in Paraguayan archives about how dictators played Cold War Washington like Yo-Yo Ma plays the cello. The book is also improved by Tom Long's research in Brazilian archives about Washington's reaction to Operation Pan American, and by Friedman's research in German archives about Axis activities during and especially preceding World War II.²

The point: To assert that a scholar has not explored the archives of Country X is not the same as to say that a scholar is dismissive of that country's agency. Latin American voices can be heard in many ways, some, as above, with the aid of reliable secondary sources. And Latin American voices can be heard in many archives, some in the United States. If the agency you are exploring is the impact of Latin Americans on U.S. policy, then, as Long found in his own study of Operation Pan America, U.S. archives are an especially important place to listen. Why? Because agency is lost if there is no connection between what is being sent and what is being received. If a tree falls in the forest....

Individuals vs. Institutions

A quite different methodological question focuses on how scholars identify and examine the beliefs of recent policymakers. Lowenthal wonders why so much attention is given to individual policymakers in the early years, while "there is scarcely any mention of their counterparts over the past sixty years." He provides a list of nineteen recent officials who merit attention.

Since their papers are not yet available and since most are still alive, that would require interviewing. But as I found in researching my first two books about U.S. policy,³ both of which are interview-heavy, and as I now warn in this new book's introduction, individuals "may not want to tell you the truth [or] they may not know what the truth is," (6) especially when the questions are about beliefs. I note in particular the tendency of Washington's realists to consider their behavior to be altruistic—that they are acting in Latin Americans' own best interest.

² Tanya Harmer, *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Carlos Gustavo Poggio Teixeira, *Brazil, the United States, and the South American Subsystem: Regional Politics and the Absent Empire* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012); Juan Gabriel Valdes, *Pinochet's Economists: The Chicago School in Chile* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Nancy Mitchell, *The Danger of Dreams: German and American Imperialism in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Kirk Tyvela, *The Dictator Dilemma: The United States and Paraguay in the Cold War* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019); Tom Long, *Latin America Confronts the United States: Asymmetry and Influence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Max Paul Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign Against the Germans of Latin America in World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³ Lars Schoultz, *Human Rights and United States Policy toward Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Schoultz *National Security and United States Policy toward Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

One way of working around this interviewing problem is to do what we all do in everyday life—we infer beliefs by observing behavior. Unfortunately, this approach is not useful in today’s Washington because individual behavior, except at the highest levels of government, is generally not directly observable. As Tom Long points out, researchers are not invited to observe policymakers’ meetings. Until the notes of the meetings are declassified, all that we observe today is the result of the meetings: the behavior of institutions.

Yesterday was different. Tucked away in the archives from the first half of the twentieth century are the papers of mid-level individuals who controlled policy at levels unimaginable today. Examples from the first four decades of the twentieth-century Department of State include Francis White, Sumner Welles, Adolf Berle, Nelson Rockefeller, Spruille Braden and slightly lesser lights like Francis M.H. Wilson, Dana Munro, Walter Thurston, Laurence Duggan, Ellis Briggs, and George Messersmith. Add the U.S. Army and you would have to include Leonard Wood and Enoch Crowder.

This was at a time when today’s institutions either did not exist or were far more rudimentary. There was no Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor to direct Enoch Crowder’s democracy promotion, nor was there an Agency for International Development to harness Nelson Rockefeller’s aid-giving. They could not do whatever they wanted, of course, but they regularly had enormous latitude and exceptional access to the most senior U.S. officials. Between 1933 and 1943 Sumner Welles appears 400 times on Roosevelt’s daily calendar—on average, once every nine days.

And a second feature found in the archives is that most of these lightly tethered individuals were frequently outspoken—full-throated and unvarnished. They often did not bother to be politically correct. They told us what they believed.

Then the breed became extinct. Most were gone by the early Cold War years; arguably, Thomas Mann was the last, lingering until retirement in 1966. In his papers at four presidential libraries he repeatedly attributed the meager results of Washington’s improvement efforts to Latin Americans’ refusal “to move towards discipline, responsibility, simple Christian values, respect for law, and dedication to the right values.”⁴ He said something like that over and over again; I am certain he believed it.

Unlike their outspoken predecessors, the nineteen recent officials on Lowenthal’s list are unfailingly circumspect, discreet and judicious—careful not to say anything controversial. Lowenthal makes the point for me: They “are unlikely to have uttered comparable tailor-made [?] quotations.”

What happened? Institutionalization.

When placed alongside those early officials, nearly all of the nineteen on Lowenthal’s list rose through the ranks of a large government bureaucracy, especially the State Department, and an Everest-high mountain of research (and this book’s discussion on 211-215) explains how the typical government agency operates within a culture that demands respect for hierarchy and refuses to tolerate brash individuals who think too far outside the boxes they inherit from their predecessors. They do not design; they curate. Replace one of Lowenthal’s nineteen with another and you will see little difference. Personalities change, of course, but not policy. On the

⁴ Mann to Marvin Watson (LBJ’s informal chief of staff), December 16, 1965, National Security Files, Country File, Latin America, box 2, folder “Latin America Vol IV (1 of 2) 7/65-8.66,” LBJ Library.

other hand, replace Nelson Rockefeller with Spruille Braden, as occurred in the 1940s, and policy is turned upside down.

So I would be surprised if a dissertation is ever written about anyone on Lowenthal's list, while there are many about the pre-Cold War individuals. No room on State's ceremonial eighth floor will be named after anyone on the list, unlike the Walter Thurston Gentlemen's Lounge. And you can bet that none will appear on the cover of *Time* magazine, as Sumner Welles did in 1941, nor will one be featured in a *New Yorker* Profile titled "Best Neighbor," as Nelson Rockefeller was featured in 1942.

And so the first half of the book places significantly more attention on *individuals*, while the second half gives more attention to *institutions*, especially the Agency for International Development (AID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Since the NED is on the cutting edge of today's effort to improve Latin Americans' governance, the pages devoted to its design are not an aside, as Long suggests—not if you are trying to determine the balance of beliefs between altruism and realism on today's issue of democracy promotion.

In contrast, a researcher who is focused on the intense U.S. effort to promote democracy in the first half of the twentieth century would have seen only ad hoc democracy doctors, most of them moonlighting professors who all but tattooed their beliefs on their foreheads. Those early uplifters might or might not be surprised to learn that the United States now has an Agency for International Development, but they surely would be astounded by AID's 61-page Branding Guide, managed by a Senior Advisor for Brand Management who supervises a posse of 'Branding Champions,' one in every overseas mission. Note in particular the branding guide's section on 'Clearance and Enforcement.' It is an *institutional* warning to anyone inclined to climb outside the box.

The Conclusion

The conclusion is framed as two questions:

First, *how much of each belief—Adam Smith's v. Hans Morgenthau's—explains the U.S. effort to improve other peoples?*

Unlike the Progressive years, when altruism appears to have had a slight edge in explaining Washington's uplifting effort, today realism is unquestionably the dominant explanation. The balance shifted as the United States emerged as a superpower with ever-increasing overseas interests to promote and protect. In the process, improving other peoples became a weapon, sometimes wielded with sledgehammer subtlety and sometimes with development assistance—soft subjugation, an alibi for power.

This is not breaking news, of course, but the conclusion added this: "What is less understood about this grossly unbalanced relationship is why any self-respecting altruist would continue to serve as the realists' handmaiden" (297). And that leads us to...

Second, *what do these eleven chapters suggest about the future?*

The book is not on solid ground here in the final pages, 297-304; of the future, only educated guesses based upon the preceding eleven chapter are possible. Two major hypotheses are offered, one about the altruists and

one about the realists. Each is discussed separately in the context of a single question: Will the uplifting ever stop?

First are the altruists. If left to their own devices, which the realists would never permit (see below), my guess—my obviously untestable hypothesis—is that they are going to keep uplifting until hell freezes over. Their bedrock belief is that development assistance produces development. When it fails to do so, as in today's Central America, altruists turn to tinkering, trying everything they can imagine to improve their effort to improve the recipients. For Central America, AID is currently enamored of "outreach centers." For Latin America overall, note the slow switch from economic to political development—from housing and highways to re-forming institutions and re-making civil society.

We can attribute the altruists' tenacity to human nature and let it go at that, as Adam Smith did, but we also can look for something more concrete. The book's post-Cold War chapters suggest self-interest: altruists may keep going because both they and the realists have a personal stake in continued uplifting. They need to pay the rent, just like the rest of us. Although one reviewer overlooked it, I quickly added that "it seems uncontroversial to recognize that Washington's altruists are human," as presumably are professors. I then invited readers to

give personal self-interest as much weight as you see fit, but give more attention to the data collected by observing more than a century of uplifting. These data indicate that most altruists, regardless of their subservient role in the uplifting industry, are driven primarily by a belief that to them is utterly unassailable: *development assistance produces development* (299-300).

Even though I have come to believe that today's realist-dominated uplifting institutions are, *on balance*, doing more harm than good, I go out of my way to express my respect for the altruists' motivation: Their "stubborn refusal to give up their uplifting in the face of unrelenting criticism, much of it laced with undeserved contempt, suggests a nobility of character that anyone can admire" (300).

On the other hand, the Hans Morgenthau realists might stop. If they do, it will have to be because they no longer believe it is in the interest of the United States to continue. What seems most likely to me? The Latin Americans I began studying in the early 1960s, when they were insisting Washington help with their improvement, are not today's Latin Americans. Today's Latin Americans are likely to understand that the receipt of development assistance *by definition* brands them as underdeveloped. Should an unease with that status become widespread, Washington's realists will see what their predecessors saw in the 1920s, that it was not in their own best interest to continue their effort to improve Latin Americans. Then and now, resentment is the last thing realists would want their uplifting to produce. The realists' idea is to win hearts and minds, not to lose them.

Tom Long read all this and took issue with "the single-minded dependence [of Latin Americans] suggested in the conclusion." That is the opposite of what I tried to say. The book's penultimate paragraph concludes that Washington's uplifting effort "*all depends upon Latin Americans insisting Washington's realists stop.*" [304, emphasis added] Latin Americans are not simply assigned some agency; here in the conclusion they are assigned *all* the agency.

As someone who likes to place himself fairly far over on the altruistic side of the continuum—Don't we all?—I wish the five reviewers had told me where I am mistaken. Long criticizes the second half of the conclusion—the “What does the past suggest about the future?” section—because it is openly hypothetical. What else is possible except a set of educated guesses? I would be willing, even pleased, to be educated otherwise, especially about the altruists' future. Reviewers who do not agree with a conclusion should do more than criticize the act of hypothesizing; they should explain why.

Until then, this response ends with my conclusion that Latin Americans will eventually become uncomfortable with their Washington-assigned status; no doubt many already have. As Colombia's president-elect told reporters in 2010, “we would like to stop being a simple country that begs for help every year.”⁵ Some day a newly elected president will tell reporters that “Colombia has stopped being a simple country that begs for help every year.” By that time Washington's realists will have told their altruists to pack their bags.

We shall see.

⁵ *New York Times*, 21 June 2010, A10.