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'The Cuban Question' and the Cold War in Latin America, 1959-1964.

Tanya Harmer

In January 1962, Latin American foreign ministers and U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk arrived at the Uruguayan beach resort of Punta del Este to debate Cuba's position in the Western Hemisphere. Unsurprisingly for a group of representatives from 21 different states with varying political, socio-economic, and geographic contexts, they had divergent goals. Yet, with the exception of Cuba's delegation, they all agreed on why they were there: Havana's alignment with "extra-continental communist powers" along with Fidel Castro's announcement that he was a life-long Marxist-Leninist on 1 December 1961 had made Cuba's government "incompatible with the principles and objectives of the inter-American system." A Communist offensive in Latin America of "increased intensity" also meant "continental unity and the democratic institutions of the hemisphere" were "in danger."¹

After agreeing on these points, the assembled officials had to decide what to do about it. Divisions immediately surfaced on this matter. Ultimately, delegates at Punta del Este voted by two-thirds to exclude Cuba's revolutionary government from the Organization of American States (OAS) with six nations abstaining. The foreign ministers also agreed to an arms embargo, to suspend Cuba from the Inter-American Defense Board, to examine the possibility of further trade restrictions through the OAS Council, and to establish a Special Consultative Committee on Security.²

¹ "Eighth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs Serving as Organ of Consultation in Application of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, Punta del Este, Uruguay, January 22-31, 1962: Final Act," available online at: <http://www.oas.org/consejo/MEETINGS%20OF%20CONSULTATION/Actas/Acta%208.pdf>.

² Department of State, Internal Paper, "Specific Steps Taken to Isolate and Weaken the Castro Regime," 25 September 1962, in National Security Archive, Digital National Security Archive, Cuban

However, protracted disputes about Cuba's revolutionary government's position in Latin America and what to do about it—*la cuestión cubana* or “the Cuban question” as it was known at the time—would continue, dominating regional politics throughout the early 1960s. As host of the Punta del Este meeting, Uruguayan Foreign Minister, Homero Martínez Montero, reflected that “no other event” in the twentieth century had shaken the region and disturbed the established order in the hemisphere to the same extent as the Cuban Revolution.³

The 1962 Punta del Este meeting raises two important issues. First, the unanimity with which delegates regarded Cuba's position in the Western Hemisphere is striking. We tend to think of the Cuban Revolution as polarizing opinion in Latin America and feeding into Cold War divides. The scholarship that exists on Punta del Este also emphasizes differences among delegates at the meeting—particularly between the United States and the six Latin American governments that abstained on the Cuban government's suspension from the OAS.⁴ Yet, by early 1962 *all* regional governments subscribed to the view that Cuba's revolutionary regime was directly at odds with inter-American system. The question is why and what this tells us about the history of the Cold War in Latin America.

Second, we need to know more about Latin American disagreements when it came to what the inter-American system should do about this “incompatibility.” In this respect, it is important to read the Punta del Este meeting as part of a longer dynamic process that began with the Cuban Revolution and ultimately led to an OAS

Missile Crisis Collection online at: <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/digital-national-security-archive> (DNSA/CMCC).

³ Homero Martínez Montero, “Informe sobre la VIII Reunión de Consulta de los Ministros de Relaciones Exteriores de las Republicas Americanas, Punta del Este, Uruguay, 22 a 31 de enero de 1962,” n.d., in RC.VIII/2/Archivo Histórico Diplomático, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Montevideo, Uruguay (hereinafter referred to as AMRE-Uruguay).

⁴ See for example, Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 59-60.

majority voting for collective sanctions in July 1964. Three major inter-American conferences were convened to deal with the Cuban Question during this period: the Seventh Meeting of Consultation of Foreign Ministers in San José, Costa Rica (September 1960), the Eighth Meeting of Consultation of Foreign Ministers in Punta del Este (January 1962), and the Ninth Meeting of Consultation of Foreign Ministers in Washington DC (July 1964). Inter-American meetings before, during, and following the Cuban missile crisis also served as forums for debates on Cuba. Together, these diplomatic encounters offer windows through which to grapple with the evolution of the Cuban Question in the inter-American system, with the emphasis here being the contested move to exclude Cuba's government from the OAS and then the difficult road to imposing collective sanctions against it.

Given the impact of the Cuban Revolution on Latin American governments and the inter-American system in the early 1960s, it is surprising that Cuba's relationship with the region has received little attention from international historians. Scholarship on Cuba's international relations since 1959 has focused mainly on U.S. responses to the Revolution.⁵ We also know quite a bit about Cuba's foreign policy goals and support for revolutionary movements.⁶ But how Latin American

⁵ See for example, Lars Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Thomas G. Paterson, *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003); William M. LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations between Washington and Havana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Vanni Pettinà, *Cuba y Estados Unidos, 1933-1959: del compromiso nacionalista al conflicto* (Madrid: Libros de la Catarata, 2011); Jules R. Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution: An Empire of Liberty in an Age of National Liberation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); Carlos Alzugaray Treto, *Cuban-U.S. Relations in the 21st Century: Another 100 Years of Conflict?* (Beloit, WI: Beloit College Press, 2001).

⁶ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p. 23; Jorge I. Domínguez, *To Make a World Safe for Revolution: Cuba's Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Luis Suárez Salazar, "The Cuban Revolution and the New Latin American Leadership: A View from Its Utopias," *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (2009); Thomas C. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001); Jonathan C. Brown, *Cuba's Revolutionary*

governments and diplomats reacted to the Revolution and what they did about it is far less clear. To some extent this is because diplomatic archives in the region have only recently opened. But it is also to do with a strong narrative spread by the left—promoted effusively by Castro—that explained inter-American sanctions against Cuba as being forced on Latin America by the United States with the OAS acting as a “Ministry of Yankee Colonies.”⁷ Historians who have exclusively consulted declassified U.S. documents would also be forgiven for thinking that Washington masterminded the region’s response to the Cuban Revolution.⁸ This was certainly how U.S. government officials privately represented their interactions with regional counterparts. They saw themselves teaching Latin Americans to understand Cuba’s threat, expending enormous efforts managing the “noise-level” of information on Cuba through hemispheric media outlets. When U.S. officials spoke about the OAS, they referred to it as instrument of foreign policy, discussing “the action against Cuba we want the OAS to take.”⁹ They also fed information to regional governments and supported them in pushing OAS resolutions against Cuba.¹⁰ U.S. documents can often give the impression that the Latin Americans passively awaited instructions. Adoption of a United States vs. Latin America binary account of the Cuban question can also be tempting.

World, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Dirk Kruijt, *Cuba and Revolutionary Latin America: An Oral History* (London: Zed Books, 2017).

⁷ Fidel Castro, “Second Declaration of Havana,” 4 February 1962, online at:

<http://www.walterlippmann.com/fc-02-04-1962.pdf>

⁸ See for example, LeoGrande and Kornbluh, *Back Channel*, pp. 82-83; Stephen G. Rabe, *The Killing Zone: The United States Wages Cold War in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 78. For another hegemonic narrative of U.S.-Latin American affairs see Greg Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan/Owl Books, 2006).

⁹ Memorandum for the Record, 21 February 1964; Telegram, Department of State to Secretary of State Rusk, 22 February 1964; Draft Paper, Gordon Chase, National Security Council Staff, “OAS Action on Venezuelan Arms Cache—U.S. Objectives and Expectations,” 24 February 1964, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXXI: South and Central America; Mexico* (Washington, D.C.; United States Government Printing Office, 2004), pp. 12-21 (hereinafter referred to as *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. XXXI).

¹⁰ Schoultz, *Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, pp. 117, 128-132, 173-175, 227-229.

Important as the U.S.'s role was, the problem with this narrative is that the Cuban Revolution elicited strong reactions in Latin American corridors of power as well. Regional governments did not need to be fed stories about Castro to the extent U.S. policymakers believed, nor did their diplomats need coaching in anti-Communism to be alarmed by the radicalization of the Cuban Revolution or its relations with the Soviet Union with alarm, although U.S. efforts to raise the "noise level" undoubtedly helped. Rooted in Catholicism, the military, and elites' fear of hierarchical power structures being uprooted anti-Communism had a long internal history in Latin America prior to the Cuban revolution.¹¹ Communist parties were banned in eight countries by 1948 and all but three of fifteen states that had established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union before or during World War II had broken off ties by the mid-1950s.¹² Declassified Latin American documents show that this longer tradition of anti-Communism in turn fed into interpretations over Cuba. Even those governments that held out on imposing sanctions, and were perceived by Washington as "soft," moderate, or "trying to sit on the fence" when it came to the Cuban Question, privately condemned Castro's revolutionary regime.¹³

¹¹ Gilbert M. Joseph, "What We Now Know and Should Know: Bringing Latin America More Meaningfully into Cold War Studies," in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In From the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 21-22; Sandra McGee Deutsch, *Las Derechas: The Extreme Right in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, 1890-1939* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Jeffrey L. Gould, "On the Road to 'El Porvenir': Revolutionary and Counterrevolutionary Violence in El Salvador and Nicaragua," in Greg Grandin and Gilbert M. Joseph, eds., *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Paulo Drinot, "Creole Anti-Communism: Labor, the Peruvian Communist Party, and APRA, 1930-1934," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 92, No. 4 (2012); Aaron Coy Moulton, "Building Their Own Cold War in Their Own Backyard: The Transnational, International Conflicts in the Greater Caribbean Basin, 1944-1954," *Cold War History*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2015).

¹² Peter Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World*, 3rd ed. (New York/Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 126-127.

¹³ "INR Contribution to NIE 80/90-61: Latin American Reactions to Developments in and with Respect to Cuba" and "Traducción Literal al español de las instrucciones secretas dirigidas por el departamento de estado norteamericana a sus embajadas en América Latina sobre el caso de Cuba," U.S. Embassy, Caracas, 8 June 1961, Cuba/1961/Oficios., Telegramas. Res.-Pub./No.1, Archivo General Histórico, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Santiago, Chile (hereinafter referred to as AMRE-Chile). On "soft" see Memorandum for the National Security Council's Executive Committee, "United States Policy Re: Cuba in the Organization of American States," c. 22 January 1963, DNSA/CMCC.

At least from early 1960 onward, no government in Latin America *sympathized* with Castro. Leaders in the region often deferred to the United States, shared similar concerns about the Cuban Revolution with U.S. officials, and were also influenced by U.S. actions. But not *all* conversations regarding anti-Communism and Cuba were routed through Washington.

The story of the Cuban question in Latin America fits within a historiography that emphasizes the importance of decentralizing Cold War narratives and recovering Latin American agency.¹⁴ As Odd Arne Westad argued in 2005, we need to pay closer attention to ideas and protagonists in Latin America, Asia and Africa to get a sense of the conflict's global dimensions.¹⁵ And, to this end, historians like Renata Keller, Robert Karl, Eric Zolov, James Hershberg, Aragorn Storm Miller, Thomas Field, and Jonathan Brown have recently begun to shed light on the way in which the Cuban revolution was construed in Latin America. Hershberg has tracked Brazilian attitudes to Cuba and Brasilia's mediation in U.S.-Cuban conflicts of the early 1960s. Keller, Karl, Zolov, Field, and Brown have also emphasized the domestic implications that Cuba had and the way in which regional actors interpreted the Cuban question "through the lenses of their own local conflicts."¹⁶ More than three decades ago, the

¹⁴ On Latin American agency, see Max Paul Friedman, "Retiring the Puppets, Bringing Latin America Back In: Recent Scholarship on United States-Latin American Relations," *Diplomatic History* Vol. 27, No. 5 (2003); Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Tanya Harmer, "Fractious Allies: Chile, the United States, and the Cold War, 1973-76," *Diplomatic History* Vol. 37, No. 1 (2013); Tanya Harmer, "Brazil's Cold War in the Southern Cone, 1970-1975," *Cold War History* Vol. 12, No. 4 (2012); Moulton, "Building Their Own Cold War."

¹⁵ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁶ James G. Hershberg, "The United States, Brazil, and the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962 (Part 1)," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2004); James G. Hershberg, "The United States, Brazil, and the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962 (Part 2)," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2004); James G. Hershberg, "A 'Friend of the Revolution' or a 'Traitor'? Vasco Tristão Leitão Da Cunha, Fidel Castro (and His Sister), and Brazilian-Cuban Relations, 1956-1964" (paper presented at the ISA/FLACSO Conference, Buenos Aires, 2014); Renata Keller, "The Latin American Missile Crisis," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2015); Robert Karl, "Reading the Cuban Revolution from Bogotá. 1957-62," *Cold War History*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (2016); Eric Zolov, "¡Cuba Sí, Yanquis No! The Sacking of the Instituto Cultural México-Norteamericano in Morelia, Michoacán, 1961," in *In From the Cold*; Thomas C. Field, *From Development to Dictatorship: Bolivia and the Alliance for Progress in the*

Chilean historian, Joaquín Fernandois concretely examined Chile's interaction with the Cuban Question drawing on the Chilean press and congressional records, and in my own work I have also examined Cuba's influence on the left in Chile.¹⁷

Despite the important literature that has already appeared, a great deal remains to be learned. In particular, we need to know more about the influence the Cuban Revolution had on inter-American relations and institutions. The aim of this article is not to contribute another nationally- or bilaterally- framed study of Cuba's impact but to begin piecing together a regional picture of diplomacy surrounding the Cuba question. The article builds on the valuable research that Fernandois, Keller, Hershberg, Karl, and Field have already undertaken on Chile, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, and Bolivia's relationship to Cuba respectively, adding new perspectives from my own research in Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, and Mexico in addition to declassified sources from online U.S. collections. Such an approach has obvious drawbacks. For one thing, it is impossible in one article to examine *all* diplomatic and state-level discussions regarding *la cuestión cubana* throughout the Americas over a five-year period and in my analysis here I did not pretend to provide a *full* picture of all Latin American governmental perspectives on the crisis. Second, I have not had access to all the diplomatic archives in the Americas, and the coverage of those I have consulted has been problematic. Tranches of documents one would expect to find in a foreign ministry archive, such as regular correspondence from the Argentine embassy

Kennedy Era (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014); Brown, *Cuba's Revolutionary World*; Aragorn Storm Miller, "Season of Storms: The United States and the Caribbean Contest for a New Political Order, 1958-1961," in Virginia Garrard-Burnett, Mark Atwood Lawrence, and Julio E. Moreno, eds., *Beyond the Eagle's Shadow: New Histories of Latin America's Cold War* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013); Aragorn Storm Miller, *Precarious Paths to Freedom: The United States, Venezuela, and the Latin American Cold War* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016).

¹⁷ Joaquín Fernandois, "Chile y la 'cuestión cubana', 1959-1964" (1982) in Joaquín Fernandois, ed., *Fragmentos acerca del fin de mundo: Artículos y ensayos sobre Chile* (Santiago, Chile: Centro de Estudios Bicentenario, 2015); Tanya Harmer, *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

in Washington, are reportedly “missing,” and more often than not, diplomatic cables from the field are far more extensively available than records of internal governmental meetings making it hard to discern the way that diplomats’ reports were processed.

Based on what *is* currently available, however, this is an initial opportunity to take a broader, inter-American view of the Cuban revolution’s diplomatic impact and its significance for the inter-American system. Diplomatic sources from four Latin American countries, in addition to existing scholarship and declassified U.S. sources, can also provide insight into patterns and views that existed in the hemisphere beyond the selected countries that this article zooms in on. We can already begin discerning the main turning points, fault-lines, and frameworks used within Latin America to interpret the Cuban revolution, as well as how they helped shape, and were shaped by, the Cold War in the region.

Rather than zooming in on countries that advocated a straightforward hardline position against Cuba from 1959, such as those in Central America governed by dictatorships, this article pays particular attention to countries that were democratic in the early 1960s and that opposed a hardline stance against Cuba in inter-American forums such as Chile, Uruguay, Brazil, and Argentina, and also Mexico’s nationalist revolutionary one-party state. To be sure democracy did not endure in these countries. Brazil and Argentina had three different governments each in the period between 1959 and 1964, with the democratically elected reformist governments of Jairo Quadros and Arturo Frondizi falling in 1961 and 1962 at least in part as a result of domestic military opposition to both leaders’ moderate position on the Cuban Question.¹⁸ Together, however, the more complex perspectives offered by the

¹⁸ Brown, *Cuba’s Revolutionary World*, pp. 239, 243.

Chilean, Uruguayan, Brazilian, Argentinean, and Mexican diplomatic histories can help us to grasp the differences that existed vis-à-vis the Cuban Question in Latin America. Collectively, these perspectives illustrate that resistance to sanctions did not imply sympathy and support for Cuba's revolution and that even those opposing them were Cold Warriors when it came to resisting Communism in the hemisphere.

The picture that emerges is of a region's leaders more united than divided over Cuba's significance. Far right dictators, conservative democrats, nationalist revolutionaries, and centrist reformers were bound together by a shared anti-Communism that put them directly at odds with Havana's leaders. With Cuba magnifying the Communist threat in the region, conceptualizations of the Cold War in the region also changed. Although anti-Communism had been prominent in the region for decades, many now spoke about Cuba having brought the "iron curtain" to Latin America.¹⁹ Some Latin American leaders increasingly saw themselves and the inter-American system as a whole, as part of a global Cold War in the early 1960s directly as a result of the Cuban question. Uruguay's Martínez Montero, who hosted the Punta del Este meeting in 1962, for example, wrote that Latin America had become enmeshed in "constant tensions and clashes between those who defend freedom and democracy and those who seek to supplant them with a totalitarian communist political conception." Until now, "these calamities had not been felt" in Latin America, he added, but Cuba had changed that.²⁰ Or as Frondizi's Foreign Minister put it, "Communism has arrived in our America."²¹ U.S. policymakers in the 1960s—as well as historians—have all too often underestimated Latin American governments

¹⁹ See for example, Memorandum, "Relaciones diplomáticas, consulares o comerciales de la Unión Soviética y naciones que se encuentran detrás de la cortina de hierro con países Latino Americanos," 15 June 1961, in Departamento Político/1961-1963/AMRE-Chile.

²⁰ Homero Martínez Montero, "Informe Sobre la VIII Reunión de Consulta." See also Ferandois, "Chile y la 'cuestión cubana,'" p. 303.

²¹ Miguel Angel Carcano, Speech to the Eighth Meeting of Consultation, 25 January 1962, in Doc.42, OEA 8^a Reunión, RC.VIII/I/AMRE-Uruguay.

and their diplomatic representatives' own ability to interpret the Cuban revolution as a Cold War threat.

On the question of what to do about Cuba, the picture is more complicated. The states that resisted sanctions did so for four main reasons. First, they were constrained in acting more openly against Cuba due to domestic pressure from non-governmental political actors who sympathized with the Cuban Revolution or actively supported it. Second, they did not agree that the inter-American system's post-war institutions and collective security agreements mandated punitive actions against Cuba. The principle of non-intervention at the heart of the inter-American system, in place mainly to contain the United States, was still considered sacrosanct. Third, they argued that sanctions would be ineffective and counterproductive. Finally, they worried about the precedent that intervention against Cuba would set. They were meanwhile disdainful of extreme regional anti-Communists who sought aggressive action against Cuba. Furthermore, they often regarded their U.S. interlocutors as more rational hemispheric players. On the other side of the sanctions argument, particularly in the wake of the Cuban missile crisis, extreme anti-Cuban lobbyists bemoaned what they perceived as lackluster U.S. action against Castro. Latin Americans did not therefore line up neatly against or for the United States; inter-American disagreements were multisided rather than binary. Only by paying attention to perspectives from *within* the region can we appreciate the complexity that U.S. policymakers often missed in their simplistic belief they had to instruct their regional counterparts how to think and act.

Shared Concerns

Before Latin America's Foreign Ministers met at Punta del Este, diplomats throughout the region had already come to view the Cuban revolution with concern. When Castro gained power on 1 January 1959, he was widely regarded as nationalist, anti-dictatorial, and anti-Communist. However, opinions rapidly changed, with diplomatic observers in the Americas concluding by late 1959 or early 1960 that first impressions had been misguided. There are several reasons for this change of heart, including the radicalization of the Revolution inside Cuba, the growing influence of Communism on the island, its alignment with the Soviet Union, and Havana's support for revolutionary insurgencies in the region. Although left-wing groups in Latin America celebrated these developments, elites inside and outside the government, democrats, religious groups, members of the armed forces, and business sectors were increasingly worried. Disenchantment with Cuba was also closely related to how diplomats conceptualized Latin America, its vulnerabilities, and their own domestic political contexts.

At a meeting of OAS Foreign Ministers in Santiago in August 1959, Cuba's new revolutionary government had committed itself to respect representative democracy and human rights but the evidence available to observers suggested otherwise. In particular, the new Cuban government's reluctance to hold elections and its revolutionary tribunals drew criticism from regional observers.²² We tend to associate this kind of condemnation with the United States, but Latin Americans were also outspoken. As Hershberg has found, Brazil's ambassador in Havana, Vasco Tristão Leitão da Cunha, an early admirer of Castro, had been one of the first diplomats to try and stop summary executions days after Castro came to power.²³ While resisting open condemnation of such practices on the grounds of non-

²² "Eighth Meeting: Final Act," in RC.VIII/I/AMRE-Uruguay.

²³ Hershberg, "Friend of the Revolution' or 'Traitor'?" p. 22.

intervention, the Mexican government also instructed its ambassador in Havana to talk privately with Cuba's foreign minister and explain the negative effect the executions were having on public opinion in Mexico.²⁴ Admittedly, the complaints against revolutionary trials could also be farcical, such as Central American and Caribbean dictators denounced Cuba for being un-democratic and violating human rights. However, it would be a mistake to dismiss all concerns with Cuban policies as the preserve of anti-Communist dictators. Already in April 1959, previously sympathetic Colombian journalists were warning of "The Danger of Excesses" in Cuba.²⁵ A year later, one Chilean diplomat stationed in Havana—representing President Jorge Alessandri's democratically elected conservative government—reported on "hundreds of executions by firing squads (nearly a thousand according to the foreign press) carried out by a dreadful sadistic apparatus [designed] to produce calculated terror and the sensation of . . . naked revenge." Castro was a "shrewd, vicious, inflexible," he added; "men in the street are tremendously fearful and keep quiet about the negative aspects of the regime."²⁶ Such reports would have chimed with Alessandri and much of Chile's domestic political elite who had come to similar conclusions based on news of the trials that circulated widely in the country.²⁷

Castro's revolutionary tribunals were only part of the picture. What made Cuba different in a region familiar with repressive dictatorships was the increasingly prominent role of Communists in government. As Hershberg argues, Brazil's democratically elected nationalist president, Juscelino Kubitschek, told the U.S.

²⁴ Giliberto Bosques, Embamex, Havana, to Sr. Secretario, 23 January 1961; Relaciones to Embamex, Havana, 24 January 1961, in III-2516-6, Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City, Mexico (hereinafter referred to as SRE).

²⁵ Karl, "Reading the Cuban Revolution," p. 343.

²⁶ Memorandum, Antonio de Undurraga, First Secretary, Embachile, Havana, 31 March 1960, enclosure, Edwards Bello to Señor Ministro, "Observaciones sobre el régimen cubano," 11 April 1960, in Cuba/1960/Oficios Conf. y Ord./E-R/AMRE-Chile. Estimates for those executed range from 500 to 1,000. Schoultz, *Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, pp. 87, 90-91.

²⁷ See for example, media coverage and Senate discussions between 1959 and 1961 in Fermandois, "Chile y la 'cuestión cubana,'" p. 307.

ambassador in Brazil in January 1960 that he was “thoroughly disgusted with what was going on in Cuba” and believed that Raul Castro “was certainly a commie and that Cuba was disturbing the whole Caribbean.”²⁸ Drawing attention to the growing influence of Communists in Cuba in March 1960, the first secretary at the Chilean Embassy in Havana meanwhile reported that Fidel Castro’s “thought, in one way or another, coincides with [Josip Broz] Tito, [Wladyslaw] Gomulka, or Mao Zedong. He has a clear concept of . . . socialism . . . It is a totalitarianism without a name.”²⁹ By July 1960, Argentina’s ambassador in Havana, Julio Amoedo—representing Frondizi’s democratic government—similarly observed that Castro was “practically controlled by Communists.”³⁰

Seeking to explain this growing Communist influence, Chilean diplomats, in particular, demonstrated the sort of crudeness and racism towards Cuba that we more commonly associate with U.S. policymakers’ attitudes.³¹ Rather than exploring the historical appeal of Communism stretching back to the 1920s and 1930s in Cuba, for example, Emilio Edwards Bello, Chile’s ambassador, belonging to one of Chile’s most influential and elitist families, ascribed its influence to the island’s late independence. “While Latin America is born, historically, in the era of the French Revolution,” he reported, “Cuba emerges at the time of Lenin’s revolution.”³² Another Chilean diplomat singled Castro out as “extraordinarily intelligent . . . compared to the people in his geographic area.”³³ Similarly, the ambassador explained his appeal by pointing to the Cubans’ inferior “culture” and “capacity,” which made

²⁸ Juscelino Kubitschek, 25 January 1960 in Hershberg, “‘Friend of the Revolution’,” p. 32.

²⁹ Memorandum, Undurraga, 31 March 1960.

³⁰ Julio Amoedo, Embargentina, Havana, to Señor Ministro, 24 July 1960, OEA-ONU, AH/0161: “Organo Provisional de Consulta,” Archivo, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto, Buenos Aires, Argentina (hereinafter referred to as AH/0161/AMRECIC).

³¹ Schoultz, *Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, p. 90.

³² Emilio Edwards Bello, Embachile, Havana, to Señor Ministro, “Cuba y la OEA. Aspectos internacionales,” 19 July 1960, in Cuba/1960/Oficios Conf. y Ord./E-R/AMRE-Chile.

³³ Memorandum, Undurraga, 31 March 1960.

them susceptible to the regime's "hypnosis." With many white members of Cuban society leaving the island after the Revolution, Edwards Bello also reported "the island already looks . . . blacker." He warned that "Cuba is heading in the direction of Haïti," evoking the eighteenth-century slave revolt and the fear it inspired across the Americas.³⁴

Alongside these Chilean prejudices, Latin American diplomats were increasingly concerned with Cuba's international alignments. With the U.S.-Cuban relationship deteriorating in 1960, Castro's ties to the Soviet Union loomed large.³⁵ Diplomats from Brazil and Argentina henceforth engaged in mediation to improve relations between Havana and Washington, and the Mexican government also offered to facilitate dialogue.³⁶ Latin American diplomats from these countries calculated that if further conflict could be avoided, Cuba's position in the hemisphere and its relationship with the USSR, could be managed. At least as far as the Chilean Foreign Ministry was concerned, U.S.-Cuban hostility was helping Cuba to mobilize support and boosting anti-U.S. sectors in the region. Chile's domestic Cuban problem would "disappear" if U.S.-Cuban relations improved.³⁷

However, by July 1960, the mediation efforts had stalled. Even as U.S.-Cuban relations broke down decisively, Soviet ties to Cuba increased when the USSR offered to purchase the island's sugar and invest heavily in its economic development. Latin America's diplomats kept a close eye on Cuba's evolving relationship with the Soviet bloc. As an Argentine note passed to the Cubans on 13 July underlined,

³⁴ Edwards Bello to Señor Ministro, "Política internacional interamericana," 9 July 1962, in Cuba/1962/Oficios, Telex/E-R/No.4/AMRE-Chile.

³⁵ See Informe, Bosques to Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, "Visita a Cuba del Viceprimer Ministro de la U.R.S.S. Sr. Anastas Mikoyen," 19 February 1960, in III-1986-13/SRE.

³⁶ Hershberg, "Friend of the Revolution," pp. 36-40, 47-49, 52-53; LeoGrande and Kornbluh, *Back Channel*, pp. 30-31, 100; and Schoultz, *Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, pp. 128-129.

³⁷ Chilean Foreign Ministry, "Memorandum Confidencial Sobre Situación Cubana," 2 March 1961, in Departamento Político/1961-1963/AMRE-Chile.

Fronzizi's government was "seriously concerned" about "threats made by an extra-continental state" and the possibility of its "intervention in hemispheric affairs."³⁸ In the context of Cuba's growing economic and military ties with the Soviet Union, Chile's ambassador meanwhile reflected Cuba now had two "orbits:" the West's and the Communists'. It only remained in the inter-American system to "hide its position as a Russian satellite," he added.³⁹ Mexico's ambassador in Havana, Giliberto Bosques, similarly reported the same month that "eagerness for exchange between Cuba and socialist countries" seemed destined for "a complete identification of economic, political, and social systems." He also noted 300 *campesinos* had arrived from the Soviet Union to advise on agrarian development. These specialists, he said, encountered language problems and the Cubans would have preferred Latin American specialists. But regional governments had not shown the same "enthusiasm" for helping Havana's new leaders.⁴⁰ The Chilean ambassador was more ominous. Soviet *campesinos* looked like "soldiers" and were staying in the prestigious Habana Libre hotel, he warned, implying an ulterior military purpose on the island.⁴¹

In many ways, the Cuban Revolution made the Soviet Union more visible in Latin America than it had been before. As Edwards Bello reflected, Cuba allowed Latin Americans in the capital to watch the Soviets closely, providing "a kind of observation tower" for "Russia, [countries behind] the Iron Curtain, and other satellites (Vietnam, North Korea etc.)." Based on these observations, he argued that Cuba demonstrated that the Soviet bloc's "myth of progress" was false and that its

³⁸ Diagonos Taboada to Embargentina, Havana, 13 July 1960, in AH/0161/AMRECIC.

³⁹ Edwards Bello to Señor Ministro, "Cuba y la OEA," 19 July 1960.

⁴⁰ Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, "Memorándum Para Información Superior," 22 July 1961, in III-2516-6/SRE.

⁴¹ Edwards Bello to Señor Ministro, "Política internacional latinoamericana," 22 June 1961, in Cuba/1961/Oficios, Telex/No.1/AMRE-Chile.

production was “scarce and inferior, qualitatively and technically” to the United States’.⁴²

Had the Cuban revolution and its association with the Soviet bloc been confined to Cuba, Latin American governments may have been prepared to watch from a distance. However, very soon after 1959, the revolution’s outward looking nature and its potential to mobilize revolutionary fervor abroad caused alarm. After all, no government—in Latin America or elsewhere in the world—wanted (and wants) to be overthrown. In 1959, Cuba’s revolutionary regime supported anti-dictatorial insurgencies in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua, while in Panama, Cubans, without the apparent backing of their government, participated in an insurrection against the government.⁴³ Latin American diplomats also quickly perceived Soviet presence in Latin America to be growing thanks to Cuba. As diplomats in Santiago noted, the region had not been a priority for the Soviet Union before 1959 even if Moscow had been ready to seize any opportunity “in the name of world revolution.”⁴⁴ Cuba had then provided that opportunity. With it, concerns over Soviet goals grew. Brazil’s Ambassador Leitão de Cunha told a U.S. official in late 1960 that he was

extremely concerned over Cuban Government’s acquisition of huge stores of arms which he is convinced are destined for Castro-type extremist groups throughout Latin America. He expressed opinion entire continent is facing grave hour and that action must be taken very quickly to remove danger posed by Castro.⁴⁵

⁴² Edwards Bello to Señor Ministro, “Política internacional interamericana,” 9 July 1962.

⁴³ Domínguez, *To Make a World Safe*, pp. 117-118; and Kruijt, *Cuba and Revolutionary Latin America*, pp. 92-94.

⁴⁴ Memorandum, “Relaciones diplomáticas, consulares o comerciales de la Unión Soviética,” 15 June 1961.

⁴⁵ Quotation from Hershberg, “Friend of the Revolution’ or ‘Traitor?’” pp. 59-60.

Diplomatic sources also suggest Latin American governments paid growing attention to Soviet propaganda in the region. In late 1960, Amoedo warned that, according to “confidential sources,” “communist propaganda” was being sent from Cuba to Argentina via Montevideo.⁴⁶ Around this time, Argentina’s Foreign Ministry also ordered all its diplomats to report on Communist influence in host countries. From Santiago, Argentina’s ambassador responded unequivocally: Latin American diplomats in the city were reporting that Cuba acted “synchronously with Russia” and that close political and commercial relations between them facilitated “communist work in [Latin] America more every day.”⁴⁷ Edwards Bello meanwhile warned Santiago that the Soviet Embassy in Havana was using Cuban publishers to print “a mountain” of subversive materials destined for Latin America.⁴⁸ According to the Chilean Foreign Ministry, Cuba had revealed the “real threat posed by Soviet intervention in the hemisphere.”⁴⁹

Latin American governments considered the region to be particularly susceptible to Cuban and Soviet influence in the early 1960s because of its poverty. The Argentine Chargé d’Affaires in Tegucigalpa warned Buenos Aires in early 1960 that “Communist penetration” was growing “every day” in Honduras as a result of the country’s standard of living.⁵⁰ In conversation with U.S. Secretary of State Christian Herter in August 1960, Argentina’s Foreign Minister Diagoes Taboada pressed a similar point. Economics and underdevelopment were intricately linked to “political

⁴⁶ Amoedo to Señor Ministro, 12 September 1960, Asia y Océania, AH/0016 “Informes Sobre El Comunismo,” AMRECIC (hereinafter referred to as AH/0016/AMRECIC).

⁴⁷ Enrique Nores, Embargentina, Santiago, to Señor Ministro, 30 November 1960, in AH/0016/AMRECIC.

⁴⁸ Edwards Bello to Señor Ministro, “Política internacional latinoamericana,” 22 June 1961.

⁴⁹ Memorandum, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, “Las Actividades Comunistas y Soviéticas en América Latina,” 28 June 1961, in Departamento Político/1961-1963/AMRE-Chile.

⁵⁰ Angel Carrasco, Embargentina, Tegucigalpa, to Señor Ministro, 18 March 1960, in AH/0016/AMRECIC.

instability,” he argued.⁵¹ The U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research understood these sentiments well: “increasing misery and discontent among the mass of Latin American people will provide opportunities for pro-Castro elements to act,” its analysts concluded.⁵²

The fear among governments in the region that the Cuban Revolution could mobilize left-wing opposition and/or support revolutionary insurgencies inside their own countries made it an “internal problem” as much as an external one.⁵³ Rightwing dictators tried to control the effect that Cuba’s revolution had on their opponents’ increasing militancy through repression and militarized counter-insurgency. However, nationalist and democratic governments like those in Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela were more constrained. Although repressive tactics were used at times against left-wing opponents in these countries, authorities also tried to ameliorate criticism by implementing reforms (or at least paying lip service to them) as promoted by the Alliance for Progress, and adopting a more moderate stance on Cuba. As Keller has suggested, these countries were forced to take, “a more ambiguous approach to avoid alienating significant sectors of the population.”⁵⁴ This was the stance adopted by Mexico and Bolivia, where Cuba’s revolutionary example challenged the legitimacy of states founded on their own revolutions. As President Adolfo López Mateos told the Director of the U.S. Central

⁵¹ Aide Memoire, “Resumen de la conversación sostenida el día 17 de Agosto de 1960 entre el Canciller Diógenes Taboada y el Señor Secretario de Estado de los Estados Unidos, Christian Herter,” enclosure, Taboada to Señor Ministro Interino, 20 August 1960, in OEA-ONU, AH/0121, “6a Reunión de Consulta,” AMRECIC (hereinafter referred to as AH/0121/AMRECIC). For a similar Chilean perspective, see Edwards Bello to Señor Ministro, “Cuba y la OEA,” 19 July 1960, in Cuba/1960/Oficios Conf. y Ord./E-R/AMRE-Chile.

⁵² “INR Contribution to NIE 80/90-61.”

⁵³ Uruwashii to Diplomacia Montevideo, 8 March 1961, in EEUU/Box 27/Telegramas/AMRE-Uruguay; DCI Briefing, “Latin American Reaction to Cuban Developments,” 16 May 1961 in CIA Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room online at www.cia.gov/library/readingroom (CIA/FOIA); and CIA Report, “Cuba-Latin American Reactions to Cuban Situation,” 2 January 1961, CIA/FOIA.

⁵⁴ Keller, “The Latin American Missile Crisis,” p. 198.

Intelligence Agency in January 1961, his country could not openly oppose Castro or take any direct action against it on account of the Mexican left's support for Havana's revolutionary leaders.⁵⁵ As Field argues, Bolivia's nationalist President Víctor Paz Estenssoro similarly believed he could only resist pressure from left-wing opponents—and Cuba's support for them—by refusing to break relations with Castro.⁵⁶ Chile's Eduardo Frei, the reformist Christian Democratic senator and presidential candidate in 1964 campaigning against a left-wing coalition that included Communists and Socialists, also confided that advocating sanctions against Cuba could cost him 100,000 votes.⁵⁷ And Chile's conservative President Jorge Alessandri, conscious of critics to the left and the right, repeatedly insisted he did not want the Cuban issue to exacerbate divisions in Chile.⁵⁸

Elected Latin American governments also had to respond to the right and the military within their own countries by proving they were dealing with the problem of Communism effectively. Just as he faced pro-Castro protests and mobilization, Alessandri faced sharp criticism in the National Congress for what conservative senators insisted was a lack of sufficient anti-Communism when it came to dealing with Cuba.⁵⁹ When Cuban Foreign Minister Raul Roa visited Caracas in March 1960, for example, students, workers, the Communist Party of Venezuela, and the media enthusiastically welcomed him. However, others in the country—above all people from banking, industry, and commerce—voiced their disquiet. As the Chilean ambassador in Caracas reported, Venezuela confronted a “serious internal crisis” over Cuba.⁶⁰ In

⁵⁵ LeoGrande and Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba*, p. 99.

⁵⁶ Field, *From Development to Dictatorship* p. 160.

⁵⁷ “Telephone call to Mr. McCone, 24 July 1964, in CIA/FOIA.

⁵⁸ Fermandois, “Chile y la ‘cuestión cubana,’” pp. 347-348.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 312-313.

⁶⁰ Embachile, Caracas, to Señor Ministro, “Relaciones venzolano-cubanas. Influencia de Cuba en la situación interna de Venezuela. Posición del Partido Comunista,” 1 April 1960, in Venezuela/1960/Oficios Conf./E-R/AMRE-Chile.

Colombia, which had just emerged from a decade of violence and internal conflict, conservative sectors targeted the country's new democratically elected President, Alberto Lleras, as a result of the "momentous proportions" the Cuban question gained during 1960.⁶¹ Argentina's President Frondizi and Brazil's President Quadros likewise faced significant pressure from their country's armed forces to take a more hardline position against Cuba.⁶²

This was the context in which inter-American foreign ministers approached the first major meeting to deal with the Cuban Question in September 1960 in San José. Delegates denounced Communism's growing influence in the hemisphere and the "intervention or the threat of intervention by an extra-continental power."⁶³ As Argentina's Diágoes Taboada proclaimed, "from other continents they want to introduce ideologies, institutions and regimes . . . into American countries which are absolutely contrary to our idiosyncrasy, our tradition, our form of life, our reciprocal interests and our most rooted ideals."⁶⁴ But at least partly for domestic political reasons, they also refused to name Cuba or recommend further action against its revolutionary regime.

Castro was enraged by what he saw as a surge of regional hostility to Cuba, and he now issued what became known as the First Declaration of Havana, denouncing the San José Declaration as being "dictated by North American imperialism."⁶⁵ To some extent he was right to point the finger at the United States. The Eisenhower administration was instrumental in calling the meeting and pushing

⁶¹ Karl, "Reading the Cuban Revolution," pp. 349-353.

⁶² Rabe, *Most Dangerous Area in the World*, p. 59; and Brown, *Cuba's Revolutionary World*, pp. 236, 238, 243.

⁶³ Schoultz, *Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, pp. 130-131.

⁶⁴ Memorandum, Taboada, "6a Reunión de Consulta," n.d., in AH/0121/AMRECIC.

⁶⁵ Fidel Castro, "First Declaration of Havana," 2 September 1960, online at: <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1960/19600902-2.html>

for condemnation of Cuba.⁶⁶ However, many Latin American diplomats—including those that represented the so-called moderate group of regional states resisting more hardline action against Cuba – harbored concerns prior to the meeting that were similar to those of their U.S. counterparts. By late 1960, the Cuban revolution was already isolated informally, and even formally, within the hemisphere. True, it could count on strong support from leftwing parties, trade unions, and students in Latin America, many of whom were prepared to go out onto the streets to express their solidarity with the Revolution and who put considerable pressure on democratic governments not to oppose Cuba.⁶⁷ Others, mostly in Central America and the Caribbean, took up arms and vowed to overthrow their governments by force of arms following Cuba’s example.⁶⁸ On the other side of the Cold War divide, stood a growing state-led consensus among governments and diplomats of many different political persuasions that Cuba—and the growing Communist and Soviet influence it brought to the region—was a cause for significant concern. By 1960, at least on the regional level, the fault-lines of the Cold War did not run between countries but between anti-communist governments on the one side and groups of their citizens who sympathized with, or actively supported, Havana’s revolutionary leaders on the other. The situation in Venezuela grew particularly acute in this regard from October 1960, with the development of a Cuban-inspired revolutionary insurgency that received Havana’s support in the form of training at least from 1962.⁶⁹ As well as breaking diplomatic relations with Havana and adopting a militarized counter-

⁶⁶ Schoultz, *Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, p. 117.

⁶⁷ See for example, Luis Suárez Salazar and Dirk Kruijt, eds., *La Revolución Cubana en Nuestra América: El internacionalismo anónimo* (Havana: Ruth Casa Editorial, 2015), pp. 19-21; and Renata Keller, *Mexico’s Cold War: Cuba, the United States, and the Legacy of the Mexican Revolution* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015) pp. 6, 51-52, 85.

⁶⁸ See for example, Brown, *Cuba’s Revolutionary World*, pp. 47-72.

⁶⁹ Hollis Micheal Tarver Denova, *Venezuelan Insurgency, 1960-1968: A Successful Failure* (United States: Xlibris Corp., 2001), pp. 70, 85; Kruijt, *Cuba and Revolutionary Latin America*, p. 102.

insurgency campaign, President Romulo Betancourt, leader of the centrist reformist party, Acción Democrática, henceforth also adopted an increasingly hardline anti-Cuban position in hemispheric forums demanding action against Havana. The question that the inter-American system had to face was whether to turn shared governmental concern into collective action.

“Incompatibility”

The Cuban Question was considered a regional problem for two key reasons: the security challenge Cuba’s revolutionary regime was believed to pose and the impact hemispheric disagreements about it had for the validity of the postwar inter-American system. It did not help matters that the United States was regarded as not communicating its own position effectively. As the Uruguayan ambassador in Washington warned after the Bay of Pigs, the lack of U.S.-Latin America consultation over the crisis had threatened the legitimacy of the Western Hemisphere’s institutional architecture.⁷⁰

The inter-American system rested on the regional framework established after World War II. Comprising the 1947 Treaty of Inter-American Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR or Rio Treaty) and the OAS, created in 1948, they committed the United States and Latin American states to collective defense of each other’s territory, non-intervention, and regional governance. Member states had also agreed to a resolution on the “Preservation and Defense of Democracy in America” which labeled international Communism as “incompatible” with the inter-American system when they signed the OAS Charter in 1948. This anti-Communist pledge had subsequently been updated in 1954 at the Tenth Inter-American Conference in Caracas. Following

⁷⁰ Uruwashu to Diplomacia Montevideo, 20 April 1961, in EEUU/Box 27/Telegramas/AMRE-Uruguay.

a U.S. lead, governments in the Americas had resolved to “take the necessary measures to protect their political independence against the intervention of international Communism” and vowed that “the domination or control of the political institutions of any American state by the international Communist movement extending to this Hemisphere the political system of an extra-continental power, would constitute a threat to the sovereignty and political independence of the American States, endangering the peace of America.”⁷¹

Without concrete proof of such a situation, Washington had failed to get support for collective action against Jacobo Arbenz’s democratically elected government in Guatemala on the basis of this Declaration but a CIA-sponsored coup d’état had toppled him the same year. After 1959, Cuba was then in the spotlight with the San José meeting having been the first effort to deal with it. However, the San José Declaration’s failure to name Cuba and recommend decisive action against Castro left many governments in the region unsatisfied. U.S. officials believed San José had fallen “considerably short” of desired objectives. Fearful of setting a precedent for intervention in Cuba’s internal affairs (and other Latin American states in the future), eight foreign ministers had spoken in favor of the right to self-determination at the meeting. With implied reference to the United States, the Declaration of San José included renewed commitment to “non-intervention.”⁷²

The San José meeting had therefore placed the question of action against Cuba’s revolutionary government on hold. The meeting had also been convened under the OAS Charter and not the Rio Treaty, meaning it could only *recommend* measures to be taken. Under the Rio Treaty, a consultative meeting could be convoked to consider a threat to peace or armed attack against a member state and

⁷¹ “Caracas Declaration of Solidarity,” 28 March 1954, The Avalon Project, online at: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/intam10.asp.

⁷² Schoultz, *Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, pp. 130-131.

would have the power to impose punitive measures against an aggressor. It was this latter mechanism that the United States and Latin American governments that ardently opposed Castro had subsequently begun pushing for in early 1961. Despite broadly shared concern in Latin America concerning Cuba's trajectory, governments in Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Ecuador, and Bolivia nevertheless resisted such a meeting. Until proof emerged of an armed Cuban attack on a Latin American state or a decisive threat to hemispheric peace, they preferred to deal with the situation in the OAS.⁷³ Domestic politics also factored into their position. Aside from the legalities of a meeting under the TIAR, for example, the Chilean Foreign Ministry wanted to avoid the domestic political "complications" that could arise from a new "tribunal" on Cuba.⁷⁴ However, U.S. analysts, seemingly unable to understand that opposition for further action did not mean sympathy for Havana's leaders, worried that these countries were "still trying to sit on the fence."⁷⁵

Even so, momentum for holding a second Meeting of Consultation built up towards the end of 1961. In October, Peru's rightwing democratic government launched an initiative to invoke the Rio Treaty on the grounds of Cuba's "Communist infiltration" in Latin America via "diplomatic functionaries and secret agents."⁷⁶ With this initiative having failed, Colombia's government, facing left-wing insurgencies of its own and having broken relations with Havana as a result of evidence to suggest Cuban support for them, then succeeded in tabling a vote at the OAS in December.⁷⁷ In the interim, Cuba's leaders tried to secure support from Latin American countries

⁷³ "INR Contribution to NIE 80/90-61."

⁷⁴ "Memorandum Confidencial Sobre Situación Cubana," 2 March 1961.

⁷⁵ "INR Contribution to NIE 80/90-61."

⁷⁶ Chilean Foreign Ministry "Memorandum," 17 October 1961, in *Memorandos Políticos MINREL/1961-1990/AMRE-Chile*.

⁷⁷ On the situation inside Colombia, see Doc. 56, Telegram from Bogota, 12 October 1961, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, American Republics; Cuba 1961-1962; Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath, Vols. X/XI/XII, Microfiche Supplement* online at: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v10-12mSupp>.

that still had diplomats in Havana.⁷⁸ Presumably having failed to get reassurances, and with the OAS vote days away, Castro suddenly announced he was a life-long Marxist-Leninist on 1 December. As Edwards Bello noted from Havana, observers were “extremely surprised” by the announcement, “not because they did not think he was a Marxist-Leninist,” but because of its timing. There was “no doubt” the move was “challenging and aggressive,” Edwards Bello concluded; Castro was “deeply disdainful of the OAS, and of Latin American diplomacy in general.”⁷⁹ Days after the announcement, with Cuba’s political institutions now unequivocally controlled by a Marxist-Leninist, the OAS Council voted by a majority of fourteen to two (Cuba and Mexico), with five abstentions (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador), to convene a Meeting of Consultation on 22 January in Punta del Este.⁸⁰

For the Foreign Ministers who met in Uruguay, Castro’s announcement—coming seven months after he had declared the Cuban Revolution socialist—confirmed the “incompatibility” of the island’s revolutionary regime with the inter-American system. The difference for many of those who had been reluctant to condemn Cuba explicitly at San José was that Castro had explicitly rejected Article 5 of the OAS charter, which stated members had to ascribe to “the effective exercise of representative democracy.”⁸¹ Although hardly a representative of liberal, pluralist democracy, Mexico’s Foreign Minister, Manuel Tello, recognized this was the “first time in the history of America” that a government “definitively declared it was assuming an ideology and political system totally extraneous to what has until now

⁷⁸ Edwards Bello to Señor Ministro, “Informaciones varias de carácter internacional,” 29 November 1961, in Cuba/1961/Oficios, Telex/No.1/AMRE-Chile.

⁷⁹ Edwards Bello to Señor Ministro, “Castro, comunista marxista-leninista,” 7 December 1961, in Cuba/1961/Oficios, Telex/No.1/AMRE-Chile.

⁸⁰ On Uruguay’s decision to vote for a meeting as a direct result of Castro’s announcement and Chile’s decision to move from opposing one to abstaining see Fermandois, “Chile y la ‘cuestión cubana,’” pp. 343-344. Those abstaining or voting against the meeting did so on the grounds that there had been no Cuban “aggression” and thus the Rio Treaty could not be invoked.

⁸¹ OAS Charter, 1948, The Avalon Project, online at: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/decad062.asp#art5

been the common denominator of . . . the new world.” He admitted that other governments had rejected representative democracy, but none had ever openly opted for a “different political philosophy.”⁸²

Others echoed this position. Brazil’s Foreign Minister, Clementino de San Tiago Dantas, noted the absence of democratic governance did not imply “radical incompatibility,” but “the deliberate and permanent acceptance” of a confrontational political ideology was a problem.⁸³ Uruguay’s Martínez Montero also privately reflected “a government that self-proclaims itself Marxist-Leninist and receives military assistance from the Sino-Soviet bloc has deliberately positioned itself in open conflict with other members of the region.”⁸⁴ More extreme anti-Castro delegates at Punta del Este made the case less subtly. Guatemala’s Foreign Minister, Jose García Bauer, representing President Miguel Ydígoras Fuente’s conservative government, proclaimed the existence of a Communist state in the Americas went against nature: “it is like trying to mix water and oil; night and day; liberty and tyranny.”⁸⁵

The foreign ministers seemed to be suggesting that Castro had somehow plucked the island out of the Caribbean and geographically moved it elsewhere. They therefore agreed by twenty votes to one (Cuba opposed) that the island no longer fitted within the inter-American system. Reflecting on this vote, the Peruvian Foreign Minister insisted Punta del Este had demonstrated the “solidity” of the inter-American system; “on all essential questions” he declared, “there was unanimous agreement.”⁸⁶ Fidel Castro certainly took note of this fact, privately lamenting that “not a single

⁸² Manuel Tello, Speech to Eighth Meeting of Consultation of Foreign Ministers, 24 January 1962, in Doc.25, OEA 8^a Reunión, RC.VIII/I/AMRE-Uruguay.

⁸³ Francisco Clementino de San Tiago Dantas, Speech to the Eighth Meeting of Consultation, 24 January 1962, in Doc.32, OEA 8^a Reunión, RC.VIII/I/AMRE-Uruguay.

⁸⁴ Martínez Montero, “Informe Sobre la VIII Reunión de Consulta.”

⁸⁵ José García Bauer, Speech to the Eighth Meeting of Consultation, 25 January 1962, in Doc.48, OEA 8^a Reunión, RC.VIII/I, AMRE-Uruguay.

⁸⁶ Alvarado Garrido, Speech to the Eighth Meeting of Consultation, 31 January 1962, in Doc.76, OEA 8^a Reunión, RC.VIII/I, AMRE-Uruguay. See also Martínez Montero, “Informe Sobre la VIII Reunión de Consulta.”

country had a friendly attitude” at the conference.⁸⁷

However, agreeing on the Cuban revolution’s “incompatibility” was one thing. Deciding what to do about it was another. As had been the case in San José, a number of concerns complicated agreement. In addition to domestic constraints, the inter-American system’s commitment to non-intervention and different interpretations of the legal frameworks that existed to manage hemispheric security were key. Moreover, questions were raised about the efficacy of sanctions. Together, these issues contributed to what Chile’s Foreign Minister called the “profusion of contradictory ideas” at the meeting.⁸⁸

Ultimately, delegates split into three groups: those that wanted to apply comprehensive sanctions against Cuba (Central America, the Dominican Republic, Paraguay, and Peru); those that were against them because they did not see any legal premise under the Rio Treaty for imposing them or for excluding Cuba from the inter-American system (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico and, opportunistically, Haiti); and those that were prepared to drop the idea of sanctions but wanted some practicable action to reflect Cuba’s incompatibility with the system such as excluding Cuba from the OAS (the United States and Colombia).⁸⁹ Those calling for sanctions made their case loudly. As Carlos Martínez Sotomayor, Chile’s new young centrist Foreign Minister (since September 1961), who tried to broker an agreement at the Meeting, reported home, the Central Americans’ “intransigence” on the issue was so extreme that not even the U.S. delegation shared their position.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Quotation in Schoultz, *Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, p. 175.

⁸⁸ Martínez Sotomayor, Chilean Delegation, Punta del Este, to Señor Ministro, 26 January 1962, in OEA/VIII Reunión de Consulta de Ministros de RREE/Punta del Este/Oficios, Telex. Ord./E-R/Vol.287/AMRE-Chile. On Martínez Sotomayor’s mediation efforts, see also Fermandois, “Chile y la ‘cuestión cubana,’” p. 349.

⁸⁹ Martínez Montero, “Informe Sobre la VIII Reunión de Consulta.”

⁹⁰ Martínez Sotomayor to Señor Ministro, 26 January 1962. On Martínez Sotomayor’s appointment, his sympathy for the recently formed Non-Aligned Movement, his support for independence struggles in

Those arguing against sanctions meanwhile did so on legalistic grounds and on the basis of their purpose. Tello, for example, rejected the idea that there was any proven threat to hemispheric peace or territorial integrity of any member state, meaning that the TIAR could not be evoked to apply punitive measures. On the other hand, Tello had privately told the U.S. Ambassador in Mexico City, Thomas Mann, earlier that year that any action against Cuba would only “strengthen the Cuban government and pro-Communist groups” in Latin America. Sanctions—despite whatever psychological value the United States attached to them—were also likely to increase Soviet bloc assistance to Cuba rather than reduce it.⁹¹ Brazilian and Uruguayan ministers additionally voiced their own opposition to sanctions on the grounds they would be, in San Tiago Dantas’ words, “unfruitful, and in the worst case, counterproductive.”⁹² As Uruguay’s Martínez Montero noted, thirteen American states (the United States, all Central American states, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Peru, Paraguay, Colombia, and Venezuela) had already broken relations with Cuba, which undermined the impact diplomatic sanctions would have and, if carried out, would remove all possibility of offering Cubans asylum from Castro’s regime. Because 85 percent of Cuba’s trade by early 1962 was conducted with Communist countries, economic sanctions would also have little effect. Moreover, Uruguay’s foreign minister noted that, given regional differences, a vote on sanctions would “seriously affect the unity of the inter-American system, weakening, rather than strengthening, its collective security.”⁹³

Algeria and Angola, and his desire for alignment with Brazil and Argentina on Cuba, see Fernandois, “Chile y la ‘cuestión cubana,’” p. 341.

⁹¹ “Memorandum Estrictamente Confidencial Para el Señor Presidente de la Republica,” 19 May 1961, in Leg.SPRE-400-9/SRE. I am grateful to Renata Keller for sharing this document with me.

⁹² San Tiago Dantas, Speech, 24 January 1962.

⁹³ Martínez Montero, “Informe Sobre la VIII Reunión de Consulta.”

Because of this opposition, sanctions were removed from the meeting's agenda. However, delegates voted seventeen to one (Cuba) with three abstentions (Brazil, Mexico, and Ecuador) for an arms embargo against the island and with a two-thirds majority to exclude Cuba's government from the OAS with six abstentions (Chile, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, and Ecuador).⁹⁴ Even so, this decision came at a cost. To reach a two-thirds majority, the U.S. delegation had been forced to offer Haiti substantial economic aid.⁹⁵ Individual governments also faced concrete domestic political costs as a result of their position at the meeting. Most dramatically, Frondizi was overthrown by a military coup d'état the following month in part because his government had not taken a harder line against Cuba. Shortly before his overthrow, military generals had forced him, almost with a "pistol [pointed] at his head," to break diplomatic relations with the island.⁹⁶ Directly in response to Punta del Este, Fidel Castro issued his most explicit pledge to date to "make revolution" in Latin America in what became known as the Second Declaration of Havana.⁹⁷

The Cuban Question and the Cuban Missile Crisis

With Castro increasingly committed to supporting revolution in the region and the relationship between Havana and the Soviet bloc growing closer, the centrality of the Cuban question for the inter-American system grew more acute during 1962. The region had plenty of warning in the region that some sort of showdown was looming. In July, August, and September 1962, Mexican and Chilean ambassadors in Havana warned of growing U.S.-Cuban tensions on the border of the U.S. military base in

⁹⁴ Martinez Sotomayor to Señor Ministro, 26 January 1962.

⁹⁵ Haiti's vote cost USAID \$2.8 million. Schoultz, *Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, p. 175.

⁹⁶ Brown, *Cuba's Revolutionary World*, p. 238.

⁹⁷ Castro, "Second Declaration of Havana."

Guantanamo.⁹⁸ Counterrevolutionary bands and skirmishes appeared to be rising in Cuba and the number of asylum cases grew as Castro's opponents sought exile in Latin American embassies.⁹⁹

Meanwhile, in early September 1962, Edwards Bello reported that there had been a noticeable increase in people, goods, soldiers, and arms arriving in Cuba. He bemoaned the Soviet bloc's ability to reach Latin Americans who visited the island: "Indoctrination is being perfected," he warned, with "hundreds of emissaries from Iron Curtain Communist parties" in Havana giving "instructions to thousands of Latin Americans who visit Cuba." Ominously, he also warned ten Soviet ships were on their way to Cuba with "unspecified cargos."¹⁰⁰ In early October, with Edwards Bello apparently away from his post, another Chilean embassy official reported that at least 7,000 Soviet troops were on the island. While he surmised that Soviet weapons being erected by Soviet technicians did not appear aimed at "armed aggression," he underlined that "Communist infiltration" remained a serious problem in Latin America. Attending a major rally held by the Cuban government in late September 1962, he also appears to have been particularly struck by the sight of 30,000 "sincere and convinced communists" singing the *Internationale*. It was "an electrifying and breath-taking spectacle," he reported.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Memorandum, Mexican Foreign Ministry, "Information about the situation in Guantanamo," 25 September 1962, "The Global Cuban Missile Crisis at 50: New Evidence from Behind the Iron, Bamboo, and Sugarcane Curtains, and Beyond," eds., James G. Hershberg and Christian F. Ostermann, "The Global Cuban Missile Crisis at 50: New Evidence from behind the Iron, Bamboo, and Sugarcane Curtains, and Beyond," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, No. 17/18 (2012), pp. 193-194

⁹⁹ Mexican Embassy, Havana, to Mexican Foreign Ministry, 1 September 1962, in Hershberg and Ostermann, eds., "The Global Cuban Missile Crisis at 50," p. 193; Savlador M. Ferrer Serra, Rio de Janeiro, to Señor Ministro, 23 August 1962, in Fondo-Brasil/Box 145: "Rio de Janeiro (1920-1968)/AMRE-Uruguay; and Edwards Bello to Señor Ministro, "Política internacional interamericana," 9 July 1962.

¹⁰⁰ Edwards Bello to Señor Ministro, "Extraordinarias medidas de ayuda a Cuba acuerda la URSS," 4 September 1962, in Cuba/1962/Oficios, Telex/E-R/No.4/AMRE-Chile.

¹⁰¹ Oficio, Fernando Maquieira, Encargado de Negocios, Havana, to Señor Ministro, "Los hechos más sobresalientes de la política cubana en lo interno e internacional," 1 October 1962, in Cuba/1962/Oficios, Telex/E-R/No.4/AMRE-Chile.

Chilean diplomats were not the only ones to comment on the growing Communist and Soviet presence in Cuba in late 1962. In early September, Guatemala's ambassador in Rio de Janeiro tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Brazilians to support a call for a formal new inter-American meeting to discuss "the arrival of arms and . . . Russian troops" in Cuba. As Afonso Arinos, Brazil's former foreign minister and senior diplomat at the Brazilian Foreign Ministry, told Uruguay's ambassador after this meeting, more proof of what had arrived and its importance was needed before a meeting could be convoked. In a conversation with Colombia's ambassador, Arinos also reportedly stated that he was only aware of "technicians" having arrived in Cuba. To Chile's ambassador, Arinos meanwhile stated that another divided inter-American session on Cuba would be "catastrophic" for the hemisphere.¹⁰² Even so, Latin American Foreign Ministers ultimately met *informally* in Washington on 2-3 October 1962, "to consider the increasing seriousness of the Cuban situation particularly in the light of a Soviet arms buildup." The result was an agreement to undertake "special studies . . . urgently on the transfer of funds to other American Republics for subversive purposes, the flow of subversive propaganda and the utilization of Cuba as a base for training in subversive techniques."¹⁰³ Ultimately, however, the declaration's belligerence did not alter Punta del Este's resolutions. Foreign ministers also noted the significance of the principle of non-intervention and Chile's Foreign Minister Martínez Sotomayor argued the inter-American system would need sufficient cause to intervene further.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ferrer Serra to Señor Ministro, "Posición del Brasil frente a la propuesta de Guatemala para realizar una reunión de consulta con respecto a Cuba," 11 September 1962, in Fondo-Brazil/Box 145/AMRE-Uruguay.

¹⁰³ Memorandum for the National Security Council's Standing Group, "Multilateral Efforts to Isolate Cuba and Combat Castro-communist Subversion [Annex 4]," 21 April 1963, DNSA/CMCC.

¹⁰⁴ Fermandois, "Chile y la 'cuestión cubana,'" p. 356.

Then, following Kennedy's announcement regarding the discovery of Soviet short-and medium-range missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads in Cuba on 22 October, Latin American governments were called on to respond. Vindicated, Guatemala's president hit back. The "moment has arrived when they will believe us," he proclaimed immediately after the announcement. Kennedy's speech had demonstrated "that the giant finally woke up and that it will abandon its paralysis and lack of foresight."¹⁰⁵ In private, the U.S. ambassador in Guatemala City reported that government officials were arguing "now is [the] time [to] act despite any dangers [of] global conflagration which probably would increase later anyway if [the] threat [was] not ended now."¹⁰⁶ The (inaccurate) impression from the most ardent anti-Cuban governments in the region was that the United States had been doing nothing about Castro and it was now the chance to act. As Keller has argued, Nicaragua's dictator, Luis Somoza Debayle was on the "warpath" and highly critical of Washington. "If the United States does not accompany us in the liquidation of Castro, Latin America will see this business through to the end," Somoza proclaimed.¹⁰⁷ However, it was not just right-wing anti-Communists who responded to the crisis as a wake-up call. The Dominican Republic's democratically elected president, Juan Bosch, declared it finally proved Cuba was an "imminent danger to peace."¹⁰⁸

When the OAS Council met at a special session on 23 October, all Latin American governments subsequently demanded the missiles' withdrawal. The

¹⁰⁵ Ydígoras Fuentes as quoted in Mexican Embassy, Guatemala City, to Mexico Foreign Ministry, 23 October 1962, in Hershberg and Ostermann, eds., "The Global Cuban Missile Crisis at 50," pp. 195-196.

¹⁰⁶ Telegram, Bell (Guatemala City) to Secretary of State, "President's Cuba Speech," 23 October 1962, in DNSA/CMCC.

¹⁰⁷ Quotation in Keller, "Latin American Missile Crisis," pp. 199-201. On U.S. intervention before the Crisis, see Schoultz, *Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, pp. 170-183; James G. Hershberg, "Before 'The Missiles of October': Did Kennedy Plan a Military Strike against Cuba?," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1990), pp.163-198.

¹⁰⁸ Telegram, Mexican Embassy, Santo Domingo, 23 October 1962, in Hershberg and Ostermann, eds., "The Global Cuban Missile Crisis at 50," p. 196.

majority of Latin American states also took direct action. President João Goulart ordered Brazil's air force to prevent the Soviets flying cargo to Havana via Brazil. Argentina and the Dominican Republic provided naval units to support U.S. navy operations. Following a coup d'état against Frondizi in March 1962, Argentina's position had shifted firmly in favor of the United States and different branches of the country's armed forces now competed to offer Washington military support. Governments in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and El Salvador pledged assistance in imposing the quarantine and made their territories available to the U.S. should they be needed. At the same time, domestic politics across the region grew tense. In Venezuela, President Betancourt ordered full-scale mobilization of the country's armed forces, in part to control domestic upheaval generated by the Crisis that included armed attacks on U.S. targets and an electrical plant. In Mexico, Bolivia, Argentina, and Brazil, too, police and military forces were called on to contain demonstrations and protect key infrastructure.¹⁰⁹

Paradoxically, at an inter-American level, the resolution of the crisis only *exacerbated* the growing sense of urgency that Cuba generated. Latin American governments that had long-since been arguing for punitive action against Cuba were angry Castro was still in power. Caribbean states would have preferred "the invasion of Cuba and the overthrow of Castro's regime" as part of the resolution of the crisis, Argentina's ambassador in Washington reflected.¹¹⁰ Facing an insurgency in Venezuela, Betancourt complained that "Cuba, before transforming into a Soviet atomic base, was already exporting slogans, money and weapons to . . . destroy

¹⁰⁹ Keller, "Latin American Missile Crisis," pp. 199-217; and Telegram, Department of State to USUN, "Summary of Offers of Military Assistance Made by OAS Members for Quarantine Action," 6 November 1962, in DNSA/CMCC. .

¹¹⁰ Rodoleo Alberto Weidman (Washington) to Señor Ministro, 29 October 1962, in AH/0008/AMRECIC.

democratic American regimes.”¹¹¹ Now, as the Venezuelan ambassador protested, the United States and Latin American countries *guaranteed* the Cuban revolutionary regime’s existence despite its intervention in the region.¹¹²

Kennedy’s pledge not to invade the island in return for Khrushchev removing the missiles appeared to many Latin American governments to have left Cuba more dangerous than ever before.¹¹³ Latin American diplomats at the United Nations were reported as being “anxious” for news of what the United States would now do to resolve the Cuban problem. As Washington’s UN ambassador, Adlai Stevenson, reported to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, requests for clarity and action meant that the “stakes and importance [of] making [the] right decision on next step” had risen substantially.¹¹⁴ When U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs Edwin Martin met the region’s ambassadors in Washington on 13 November, he listened to Latin American “preoccupation over [the] continuing threat” Castro posed and calls for further action. According to U.S. and Mexican reports of the meeting, ambassadors from Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic challenged the idea that Castro without “rockets” was “no longer a danger,” arguing “communist penetration is the most deadly of its weapons.” Meanwhile, Guatemala’s ambassador raised the alarm that preparations were rumored to be underway to readmit Cuba into the OAS. As the Mexican Ambassador at the Organization reported, these governments “will not be satisfied while the United States, directly or indirectly, does not overthrow the

¹¹¹ Memorandum regarding Message from Mexican Embassy, Caracas, 30 October 1962, in Hershberg and Ostermann, eds., “The Global Cuban Missile Crisis at 50,” p. 204.

¹¹² Pablo Santos Muñoz (New York) to Señor Ministro, 6 November 1962, AH/0008/AMRECIC.

¹¹³ See Memorandum of meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Rusk with Latin American Ambassadors, 28 October 1962, enclosure, Vicente Sanchez Gavito, Mexican Ambassador, OAS, to Manuel Tello, 29 October 1962, in Hershberg and Ostermann, eds., “The Global Cuban Missile Crisis at 50,” pp. 202-204. For similar concerns voiced by Latin American delegations at the United Nations, see also, Telegram, Stevenson (UN) to Secretary of State, “Cuba–LA views on next step,” 2 November 1962, in DNSA/CMCC.

¹¹⁴ Telegram, Stevenson (UN) to Secretary of State, “Cuba–LA views on next step,” 2 November 1962, in DNSA/CMCC.

Cuban regime.” In response, Martin and Secretary of State Dean Rusk found themselves on the defensive, reassuring representatives that there was “no basis for [Cuba’s] return to [the] OAS” as long as it kept up its subversive actions in the hemisphere.¹¹⁵ However, “trying to find a way of pleasing [the U.S.’] most dedicated allies” was not easy. “The violent reaction to any suggestion that the Cuban people are the only competent ones to resolve this problem,” Mexico’s ambassador reported, “is . . . symptomatic of the current mood.”¹¹⁶

In a secret session of the OAS Council in January 1963, Adlai Stevenson was able to confirm that missiles and Il-28 bombers were leaving Cuba but admitted permission to verify this or guarantee arms would not be reintroduced had not been obtained. Many Latin American representatives refused to be mollified by these reassurances, this time raising concerns about continued presence of Soviet troops on the island. As Venezuela’s representative argued, Cuba was being left alone, “fiercely armed . . . and committing all sorts of subversive acts.” Stevenson replied that troops had not been included in the agreement with Khrushchev. Although he estimated that at least one of 21 thousand troops had withdrawn from Cuba, he could offer little more reassurance. When Argentina’s ambassador asked if Soviet “propagation of Communism” would continue, Assistant Secretary Martin, who was also at the meeting, answered that there were no signs it was likely to decrease; he then added, “the problem of Cuba and its relations with American countries” needed to be resolved by the OAS Council.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Telegram, Department of State to All Diplomatic Posts, “Highlights of Edwin Martin’s November 13 Briefing to OAS and Latin American Ambassadors on the Cuban Situation,” 14 November 1962, in DNSA/CMCC

¹¹⁶ Sanchez Gavito to Manuel Tello, 14 November 1962, in Hershberg and Ostermann, eds., “The Global Cuban Missile Crisis at 50,” pp. 210-212; Telegram, DOS to All Diplomatic Posts, “Highlights of Edwin Martin’s November 13 Briefing.”

¹¹⁷ Memorandum, Mexican Delegation, OAS, 7 January 1963, in Hershberg and Ostermann, eds., “The Global Cuban Missile Crisis at 50,” pp. 212-214.

Meanwhile, Kennedy's non-invasion pledge meant the U.S. held hardline governments and Cuban exiles back from further action against Castro, much to their chagrin. Although unilaterally involved in various actions against Castro under Operation Mongoose, the Kennedy administration was fearful that an invasion of the island would lead to another serious U.S.-Soviet confrontation. As Chile's ambassador in Washington reported home in May 1963, "ultimately, no one wants a war . . . over the Cuban Question."¹¹⁸ "The only efficient way [of removing Castro]" a Chilean Foreign Ministry report observed, "would be a U.S. invasion of Cuba and this would lead to armed Soviet intervention, with the consequence that [Latin] American countries would be forced to take part in a profoundly unpopular war whose results and consequences are unpredictable."¹¹⁹

The Cuban question therefore hung heavy over inter-American affairs into 1963, with member states divided between those who wanted to do something to increase pressure on Castro and an important minority who feared the consequences of doing so. U.S. officials meanwhile sat uncomfortably in between, apparently unable to reassure their most steadfast Cold War allies that they had a solution to the Cuban problem. When the OAS Council met with U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Alexis Johnson, in June 1963, he underlined that the United States position was "not coexistence."¹²⁰ Quoting from testimony by Edwin Martin to the Senate Sub-committee on Refugees and Escapees on 22 May, Johnson stated unequivocally:

¹¹⁸ Sergio Gutiérrez Olivos, Embachile, Washington, to Señor Ministro, "Desarrollo de la cuestión cubana," 20 May 1963, in EEUU/1963/Oficios/E-R/No.23/AMRE-Chile.

¹¹⁹ Memorandum, "Denuncia Venezuela contra Cuba," n.d., in Memorandos Políticos MINREL/1961-1990/AMRE-Chile.

¹²⁰ Airgram, Rusk to All ARA Diplomatic Posts, "Meeting of the COAS/OC June 28, 1963 to Hear Report of Deputy Under Secretary U. Alexis Johnson on the Cuban Situation," 5 July 1963, in DNSA/CMCC; emphasis in original.

We want to get rid of Castro and Communist influence in Cuba. [U.S. policy] is not passive. We are engaged in a variety of measures, unilateral, bilateral and multilateral, which are designed to increase the isolation of Castro; to increase his serious economic difficulties; to prevent by military means, if necessary, any export of aggression from Cuba; to thwart Cuban-based and supported subversion of Latin American governments; to increase the costs to the Soviets of their maintenance of Castro; to persuade the Soviets that they are backing a losing and expensive horse; to effect the withdrawal of Soviet military forces in Cuba; and to maintain surveillance of Cuba to ensure that it does not again become a military threat to the United States or its allies in the Hemisphere.¹²¹

Despite these reassurances, Argentina's ambassador asked Johnson what the OAS could do to intervene against Castro. Johnson responded that the U.S. government "did not have in mind any proposal that the Organization of American States could intervene in." As he told Latin American representatives, he also did not think Cuban exile groups were the answer to the Cuban problem: opposition would have to come from within Cuba with exiles supporting "their compatriots on the island." For now, he said, the United States would continue to "consult" Latin American governments and notify them "at such time as we think further action on [a] hemispheric basis might be useful."¹²²

The Path to Sanctions

Five months later, the situation changed when proof of Cuban intervention was presented to the OAS. Following the discovery of a three-ton arms cache in the Paraguana Peninsula on 1 November 1963, the Venezuelan government called for action. Within days, government officials had traced the arms to Cuba, proving

¹²¹ Ibid.; emphasis in original.

¹²² Ibid. Unfortunately, I was not able to locate an Argentine record of this meeting. See also Andrés Fenochio, Mexican Chargé d'affaires, OAS, to Undersecretary of Foreign Relations, 28 June 1963, in Hersberg and Ostermann, eds., "The Global Cuban Missile Crisis at 50," pp. 214-216.

Havana's aggressive policy towards Venezuela.¹²³ It may well be that the CIA planted this arms cache. Philip Agee certainly believed it to be the work of the agency's Caracas Station or a joint U.S.-Venezuelan intelligence operation.¹²⁴ Although Castro acknowledged that the Cubans provided moral support, "sympathy," guerrilla training, radio broadcasts, and a location for Venezuelan revolutionaries to retreat to, he denied sending arms to guerrillas in Venezuela.¹²⁵ However, Jonathan Brown's research in newly opened Cuban archives suggests that Cuban diplomats themselves accepted the arms cache came from the island.¹²⁶ A recently declassified internal CIA memorandum also refers to "incontrovertible evidence" that weapons came from Cuba.¹²⁷

Whatever the case, the repercussions of the discovery were important, bringing lingering questions about Cuba to a head. The Betancourt administration asked the OAS Council to convoke a Meeting of Consultation in line with Article 6 of the Rio Treaty to consider sanctions against states that practiced aggression affecting territorial integrity and sovereignty. Meeting in late November, on the eve of Venezuela's presidential election, the OAS Council agreed to form an investigating commission comprising representatives from Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and the United States.¹²⁸ A report subsequently published on 24 February 1964 confirmed Venezuela had been an "object of acts sponsored and directed by the

¹²³ Fernando Cousiño Besa, "Memoria presentada por el Secretario de la Delegación de Chile [a la IX reunión de consulta de cancilleres de América, 21-26 de Julio de 1964]," n.d., in DelChile OEA/1964/Oficios/E-R/Vol.341/AMRE-Chile.

¹²⁴ Philip Agee, *Inside the Company: CIA Diary* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 322; and Rabe, *Most Dangerous Area in the World*, p. 107.

¹²⁵ Tarver, *Venezuelan Insurgency*, pp. 85, 87-88; and Che Guevara, *América Latina: despertar de un continente* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2002), pp. 315-316.

¹²⁶ Brown, *Cuba's Revolutionary World*, p. 288.

¹²⁷ Current Intelligence Memorandum, "Cuban Subversion in Latin America" 9 December 1963, in CIA/FOIA.

¹²⁸ Memorandum, "Proyecto de instrucciones para la delegación que representará al gobierno de la republica en la IX reunión de consulta de cancilleres de América, 21 de Julio de 1964," 8 July 1964, in RC.IX/1-4/AMRE-Uruguay.

Cuban government, aimed at subverting its institutions.” The report put this in a broader context, namely Cuba’s “policy of intervention in the continent with methods of propaganda, financing, sabotage and guerrilla training, and the provision of arms.”¹²⁹

Following the report, OAS members agreed to convene a Meeting of Foreign Ministers on 21 July in Washington. U.S. State Department officials welcomed a pause until July, believing, it allowed wide dissemination of the report’s findings to prepare the ground for punitive measures against Cuba. Pushing for OAS sanctions amounted to “shoring up and extension” of a pre-existing “isolation policy” rather than a decisive new venture. However, U.S. officials hoped they could insert a “juridical umbrella for use of force in future” against Cuba into the resolution by classifying subversion as aggression. By imposing comprehensive sanctions, the Johnson administration also hoped the OAS would achieve “at a minimum, a delay in upswing of Cuban economy;” “increased burden . . . on the Soviets;” and “further political isolation” to “psychologically . . . wound Castro deeply.”¹³⁰

By early 1964, five countries (Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, and Bolivia) still had relations with the island. To obtain a majority in favor of sanctions prior to the Foreign Minister’s Meeting, the Johnson administration helped Raúl Leoni’s incoming administration in Venezuela (who had been elected in Venezuela on 1 December 1963 and assumed power in March 1964) to prepare a resolution and encouraged it to consult other regional governments.¹³¹ With Latin Americans

¹²⁹ Ibid., and “Memoria presentada por el Secretario de la Delegación de Chile.”

¹³⁰ According to Thomas Mann, Venezuela’s government wanted to “get an MFM under way as soon as possible” but the State Department wanted “to slow up the pace.” Memorandum for the Record, 19 February 1964, in *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. XXXI, pp. 8-11.

¹³¹ Schoultz argues the delay was also attributable to riots in Panama and subsequent U.S.-Panamanian negotiations. However, documents suggest there were a number of reasons for the delay. Schoultz, *Infernal Little Cuban Republic*, p. 228. On Venezuelan-U.S. collaboration, see Storm Miller, *Prekarious Paths to Freedom*, pp. 116-120. Leoni was elected on 1 December and assumed power in March 1964.

historically resentful about U.S. intervention, the Johnson administration was keen for Venezuelans to take the lead, which they did enthusiastically.¹³² By May, however, the U.S.-Venezuelan resolution still faced obstacles.¹³³ In particular, the inclusion of a U.S.-designed article giving hemispheric states the right to act if similar proof of Cuban intervention was discovered as contentious. As one Chilean Foreign Ministry official noted, this was “blank check” and an “unacceptable” precedent for interventionism.¹³⁴ Moreover, in Santiago’s view, the resolution lacked “appropriate coordination between its premise and conclusions,” faced “easy legal objections,” and was “too drastic.”¹³⁵

Secretary of State Rusk therefore suggested Johnson approve a “milder alternative” that removed the “blank check” article and proposed sanctions as recommendations rather than obligations.¹³⁶ With this amendment in place, Washington was confident it could gain a majority, and possibly even bring Mexico on side. The military coup d’état in Brazil that toppled Goulart’s government brought an anti-Communist dictatorship to power on 1 April 1964, thus not only removing a powerful opponent to sanctions but also signaling a new counterrevolutionary direction for the Southern Cone and a shift in the Cold War’s dynamics within the Americas. The Brazilian government formally broke relations Havana in mid-May 1964, thus underscoring the Brazilian coup’s impact on the hemispheric balance of power—and the Cuban question.

¹³² Memorandum for the Record, 19 February 1964.

¹³³ Secretary of State Rusk to President Johnson, 18 May 1964, in *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. XXXI, pp. 38-39.

¹³⁴ “Memorandum,” 4 April 1964, in Memorandos Políticos MINREL/1961-1990/AMRE-Chile. On U.S. efforts to insert this ‘blank check’ into the resolution see Department of State to Rusk, 22 February 1964, in *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. XXXI.

¹³⁵ Memorandum, “Denuncia Venezuela contra Cuba.”

¹³⁶ Rusk to President Johnson, 19 May 1964.

Even so, the problem with the State Department's "milder alternative" was Venezuela. Although Venezuela was thought to be a mere tool of U.S. policy, Venezuela's foreign minister stridently opposed making sanctions mere recommendations. As he told Mann, Johnson's new assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs, the issue was a "a serious domestic problem" and the future of Leoni's administration was at stake.¹³⁷ Counting on strong support from eleven hardline OAS members, Venezuela was also confident of gaining a majority. The Venezuelans thus acted much like the Central Americans had done at Punta del Este in putting forward an intransigent position.¹³⁸ Leoni also dispatched envoys to Uruguay, Chile prior to the Washington meeting to pressure their governments to support sanctions.¹³⁹ Rusk, after meeting Leoni, eventually backed down and agreed to revert to a resolution that *required* member states to impose sanctions rather than recommend them to.¹⁴⁰

Ultimately, delegates at the meeting in Washington were asked to consider a resolution presented by Venezuela, the United States, Peru, and Colombia (the latter two joined preparations in July) to suspend all trade with Cuba, impose diplomatic sanctions, classify subversion as armed aggression, and help enforce an economic blockade against Cuba through pressure on non-abiding European states. Delegates quickly settled into three groups: firm "*sancionistas*," those against sanctions (Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, and Bolivia), and those that were undecided (Argentina, Brazil, and Peru. Venezuela could not vote).¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, The Secretary et al., 16 July 1964, in *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. XXXI, pp. 56-59.

¹³⁸ Storm Miller, *Precarious Paths to Freedom*, p. 120.

¹³⁹ Fermandois, "Chile y la 'cuestión cubana,'" pp. 364-365. Venezuelan envoys had also travelled to Brazil to put similar pressure on Goulart's administration prior to the Brazilian coup. Brown, *Cuba's Revolutionary World*, p. 288.

¹⁴⁰ Storm Miller, *Precarious Paths to Freedom*, p. 120.

¹⁴¹ "Información sobre el desarrollo de la IX reunión de consulta de ministros de relaciones exteriores (Washington 1964)," 4 August 1964, in RC.IX/1-4/AMRE-Uruguay.

Those in favor of sanctions therefore had to work hard yet again to assemble a two-thirds majority (fourteen). As Venezuela's foreign minister urged his contemporaries, "nothing will be achieved" without the imposition of collective sanctions.¹⁴² Mann and Rusk approached Uruguay's new Foreign Minister, Zorrilla de San Martín, to pressure him to change his position. As Mann explained, with Republican Barry Goldwater running against Johnson in the U.S. presidential elections later that year, an OAS impasse "would be interpreted and exploited as a failure of the current administration's policy."¹⁴³ As Zorrilla de San Martín reported, Rusk meanwhile described the "presence of Cuban diplomatic missions in [Latin] America... as 'a cancer'...used to disseminate propaganda, advance subversion." Increasing Castro's isolation, he added, could "finish" his regime.¹⁴⁴

Bolivian, Uruguayan, Chilean, and Mexican governments nevertheless stood firm against sanctions and other aspects of the resolution that appeared to change the inter-American system's institutional architecture. True, these countries' diplomats agreed to condemn Cuba for aggression against Venezuela, reaffirm Punta del Este's conclusions, and take action to stop Cuban infiltration and subversion. However, there were significant reasons for opposing any further action. As Field has found, domestic concerns were key for President Paz in Bolivia. Already facing mounting opposition to his government, he feared that a break with Cuba would "radicalize leftist opposition" who would regard him as a "traitor to revolutionary principles . . . a puppet of the U.S."¹⁴⁵ Meanwhile, Uruguay's Foreign Ministry argued that continued diplomatic relations helped to "neutralize" dangerous elements in international

¹⁴² "Memoria presentada por el Secretario de la Delegación de Chile."

¹⁴³ "Información sobre el desarrollo de la IX reunión de consulta," 4 August 1964.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Chile's new Foreign Minister, Julio Philippi later recalled that he had not been subjected to as much pressure from the United States given U.S. policymakers' understanding of the Chilean domestic political situation but that Chile had faced pressure from other Latin American states and particularly Venezuela as noted above. Fernandois, "Chile y la 'cuestión cubana,'" p. 364.

¹⁴⁵ Field, *Development to Dictatorship*, pp. 161-162.

relations. Cuba's embassy in Montevideo and Uruguay's embassy in Havana did not act as a base for propagating ideology or subversion and closing the four remaining Latin American embassies in Havana, "would end . . . political support for the [Cuban] opposition" while removing "a source of direct and reliable information" about the island. Montevideo's diplomats also argued sanctions "lacked realism."¹⁴⁶ Whatever the State Department believed, they predicted Mexico would not break relations with Cuba. They also reasoned that support for Cuba inside Chile, along with the country's forthcoming presidential elections, in which the left-wing coalition led by Salvador Allende was predicted to do well, made it unlikely that President Jorge Alessandri's outgoing conservative government would vote for sanctions. Moreover, as Chile's new Foreign Minister, Jorge Philippi, underlined, Latin America accounted for one percent of all Cuban trade, so economic sanctions would be ineffective.¹⁴⁷ Finally, Zorrilla de San Martín openly told delegates he was worried about the "precedent" that classifying subversion as "aggression" could have: it could be "exploited against the sacred and legitimate struggle of populations against oppression and tyranny." "If we want to sincerely eliminate diplomatic missions for fear they could be permanent centers of infiltration and support for subversion," he added, "the measure should extend to the whole Communist world and not just Cuba."¹⁴⁸

The Chilean Foreign Ministry similarly argued there was no proof the four countries that had diplomatic relations with Cuba had contributed to that country's intervention in Venezuela. Even if Chile was prepared to condemn Cuban aggression and increase hemispheric surveillance and vigilance, classifying subversion as aggression was "unacceptable" as it meant "modifying the Rio Treaty, which cannot

¹⁴⁶ Memorandum, "Proyecto de instrucciones," 8 July 1964.

¹⁴⁷ Fermandois, "Chile y la 'cuestión cubana,'" p. 369.

¹⁴⁸ "Memoria presentada por el Secretario de la Delegación de Chile."

be done without another treaty.”¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, U.S. observers described Mexico’s delegation as being “bitter about the possibility of being forced to suspend relations and air service. They regard this move as a sanction against Mexico, not Cuba.”¹⁵⁰ However, the issue went beyond trade. As Mexico’s representative told the conference,¹⁵¹ he had serious doubts Venezuela’s territorial integrity had been violated in line with Article 6 of the Rio Treaty. Six months after arms were discovered, the country’s government was in control and at no point had the continent been in danger.¹⁵²

Despite these arguments, the four countries lost the argument when the Brazilian, Argentine, and Peruvian delegations decided to vote in favor of the resolution.¹⁵³ Although Mexican, Uruguayan, Chilean, and Bolivian representatives unsuccessfully tried to modify it and then abstained from the vote, the resolution to impose collective diplomatic and economic sanctions against Cuba passed by 15 votes.¹⁵⁴

Whether the four abstaining countries would abide by this vote was not clear. Mexico never did. This decision had been sanctioned at the last minute by a secret U.S.-Brazilian-Mexican deal, apparently because (as Zorrilla de San Martín had argued) retaining one Latin American embassy in Havana open could prove useful once all others closed.¹⁵⁵ The futures of the Uruguayan, Chilean, and Bolivian embassies in Cuba were nevertheless still in the air after the meeting. When Chile’s outgoing administration announced its decision to break relations with Cuba and

¹⁴⁹ “Memorandum,” 4 April 1964 and Memorandum, “Denuncia Venezuela contra Cuba.”

¹⁵⁰ Memorandum, the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to Johnson, 20 July 1964, in *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol. XXXI, pp. 59-61.

¹⁵¹ Mexico’s new foreign minister, José Gorotiza, worried that he would be in the minority and outvoted, and he therefore refused to attend the conference. *Ibid.*

¹⁵² “Memoria presentada por el Secretario de la Delegación de Chile.”

¹⁵³ “Información sobre el desarrollo de la IX reunión de consulta.”

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*; and “Memoria presentada por el Secretario de la Delegación de Chile.”

¹⁵⁵ LeoGrande and Kornbluh, *Back Channel*, pp. 99-100.

impose sanctions two weeks later this came as a surprise. With a large sector of the population against the move either on centrist grounds of non-intervention or left-wing sympathy for Castro, the Chilean foreign minister had assured his Uruguayan counterpart that Santiago would stand firm.¹⁵⁶ Then, on 11 August, less than a month before the Chilean elections, the country's outgoing President, Jorge Alessandri, made a sudden, personal decision to break relations. According to the explanation Chile's Foreign Minister offered his Uruguayan counterpart, Alessandri made the decision after a 90-minute meeting with representatives of the left-wing coalition that Allende was standing for who had visited him to try and persuade him not to break relations. The concerns this meeting raised regarding Cuba's influence in Chile, and his fear of Chile being isolated in the inter-American system, meant that he did not want to leave the Cuban question to his successor.¹⁵⁷ After Chile's decision, facing "unremitting" pressure from the United States along with other hemispheric powers, Bolivia and Uruguay quickly followed suit, with Montevideo being the last to break relations with Cuba in early September.¹⁵⁸ As Field reveals, after Chile's decision to break relations, Bolivia's President Paz had told his ministers "the alternative . . . would be to disavow the Rio Treaty, isolating ourselves in the Latin American community, and losing U.S. aid."¹⁵⁹ And yet, as predicted by Paz, the Bolivian left subsequently came out openly against him as an "agent of Yankee imperialism" adding to the mounting pressure against his government and creating the conditions for a coup d'état that overthrew him in November 1964.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Julio V. Vignale, Santiago, to Señor Ministro, "Ecos de la Reunión de Cancilleres en Chile," 3, 5 August 1964, in RC.IX/1-4/AMRE-Uruguay.

¹⁵⁷ Vignale to Señor Ministro, "Ecos de la Reunión de Cancilleres en Chile," 12 August 1964 and "La actitud de Chile frente a Cuba," 13 August 1964, in RC.IX/1-4/AMRE-Uruguay; Fermandois, "Chile y la 'cuestión cubana'," p. 372.

¹⁵⁸ Field, *Development to Dictatorship*, p. 161; Agee, *Inside the Company*, p. 389.

¹⁵⁹ Field, *Development to Dictatorship*, p. 163.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

By the end of 1964, with the exception of Mexico's calculated stance, Cuba was formally isolated in the Americas. As those who resisted sanctions had predicted, this did not economically endanger Castro's position. Castro's regime survived, continued to sponsor revolution abroad, and attract support from Latin American populations. Cuba's isolation meanwhile arguably boosted local actors who viewed Castro sympathetically and fought against their governments to change their approach to the island. Reestablishing relations with Cuba and ending economic sanctions henceforth became a rallying cry for those opposed to U.S. intervention in Latin America. The problem for those campaigning to overturn sanctions is that it was not just the United States that they had to convince. Governing elites and diplomats also held strong views. In the mid-to-late 1960s, with Cuba no longer part of the OAS and collective sanctions imposed, the Cuban question therefore shifted more than ever to internal, domestic arenas, where it determined the course of an acute new phase of the Cold War, one that was fought *within* countries.

Conclusion

The 1959 revolution did not result in an overnight change to Cuba's position in the inter-American system. Latin American states did not act together as one regional unit, even if they often collaborated in smaller groups. They argued about how to react to Cuba even if they agreed on the threat Havana's revolutionary government represented for the region. The road to sanctions was long and problematic because the Cuban question intersected with domestic preoccupations, fundamental principles governing the inter-American system's post-war architecture, and questions regarding the efficacy of sanctions. As diplomats adjusted to the global Cold War's new intrusion into hemispheric affairs, the Cuban question became increasingly perceived

as a measure of the inter-American system's legal underpinnings, character, and framework. Leaders seemed impelled to define themselves, each other, and the inter-American system in relation to the Cuban Revolution. The Cuban question also brought Latin America's identity into focus. As diplomats at Punta del Este suggested, geography and colonial experiences were no longer enough to qualify a country and its government as "Latin American." Ideology and extra-continental relationships also mattered, having the power to disqualify states from the Americas, a message long-since promoted by the United States. From the time of the Monroe Doctrine, Washington's diplomats had called for excluding all non-hemispheric influences from the Western Hemisphere. The OAS Charter had included reference to the Cold War and the need to exclude Communism from the hemisphere. However, recently declassified Latin American documents illustrate these ideas about the prerequisites for inclusion in the inter-American system were also strongly held within the region. At least among political elites in the early 1960s, the fight against Communism and fear of Soviet intrusion into the hemisphere mattered. This is unsurprising given Cuba threatened domestic political balances of power by mobilizing groups demanding radical change. The political and diplomatic elites who governed international affairs in the Latin America during the 1960s—and the history of anti-Communism in the region going back to the 1920s and 1930s—nevertheless need more attention lest we mistakenly relegate them to mere supporting roles in the history of the Cold War.

The notion of a U.S. vs. Latin American binary story of Washington telling regional partners what to do and them resisting such instructions also needs to be challenged. All governments in the hemisphere were broadly on the same side of the Cuban question and the Cold War, even though the vehemence of some states

reminds us to explore the different shades of anti-Communism that existed in the hemisphere. Important as the United States was, it does not appear to have been the only driver of hemispheric policy toward Cuba. Nor was it able to control the way the Cuba question played out – at least not to the extent the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations would have liked. To the contrary, particularly after the Cuban missile crisis, it was often on the back foot of more strident calls to do something about Castro. Only by placing U.S. Cold War policies towards Cuba in an inter-American context can we begin to evaluate the significance and specificity of Washington’s role in the hemisphere. At key moments, U.S. diplomacy and covert intervention were able to keep momentum going against Cuba and affected the calculations that regional governments made. However, others were pushing—often more aggressively—for intervention. Anti-Communism and hostile reactions to the Cuban Revolution were explicit and abundant in Latin America as well as the United States, and to understand the Cold War in the region we must take them seriously.

What is perhaps most surprising is how important the Soviet Union and its involvement in Cuba were deemed to be by Latin American political elites. Although we now know that the USSR was not hell-bent to spread revolution in the region—and that the Cubans and Soviets argued bitterly about this—recently declassified documents show the Soviet Union was an important ingredient in regional diplomats’ calculations. The USSR’s significance—and the threat of international Communism—was not so much direct as indirect: it was imagined, exaggerated, and perceived as being more relevant than it was. The Cuban question, spanning the five years between 1959 and 1964, nevertheless crystallized this threat and brought it into focus. And in doing so, it brought the global Cold War to the region in a way that it had not been present before. In what would be a new violent chapter of the region’s history, this

conflict, in turn, was subsequently internalized, Latin Americanized, and bitterly fought out within the region. At the heart of ideological divides within different countries that followed were sharp disagreements over Cuba, its example, its role in supporting revolutionary activity in the hemisphere, and what it meant for the region's relationship with the rest of the world. There is still much to be learned about the Cuban question and its disruptive impact in Latin America both at a state and a non-state level. My hope is that this article contributes to scholarship that is shifting narratives away from an exclusive discussion of the United States *plus* Latin America by delineating multilateral patterns within the region and how these then intersected with U.S. policy goals.