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Evaluating the Role of Race in Foreign Policymaking: U.S. Public Diplomacy in Latin America during Kennedy's Alliance for Progress

An Honors Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Politics
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts

By
Sophie Mackin

Lewiston, Maine
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Abstract

This thesis examines how racial assumptions influenced U.S. public diplomacy in Latin America during the Alliance for Progress program in the early 1960s. As a soft power mechanism, public diplomacy aims to shape the mindsets of a targeted group by appealing to their cultural values and creating a receptive environment to promote certain ideas. However, the identities and beliefs of the policymakers behind this work often define the methods they choose and the impact they can have. This thesis thus grapples with the question of how the U.S. balances its formal foreign policy positions with more informal forces, such as race, identity, and culture, that are woven into institutions and public thought. I analyzed internal documents from the United States Information Agency (USIA) archives as well as memorandums from the Kennedy administration and Department of State to gain insight into the assumptions motivating foreign policy decisions in Latin America. Then, I evaluated ten USIA films to compare their themes with those in the internal correspondences and research. Although overt expressions of white supremacy are no longer present in these sources, I found that ideas about modernization and the exceptionalism of the U.S. model, which are still inherently tied to whiteness, remain. I argue that this framing is a response to the movements to rearticulate racial identity domestically and internationally during the 1960s. These findings show that while U.S. foreign policy shifts as cultural norms evolve, core institutions of U.S. identity have withstood these changes.

INTRODUCTION

The United States' approach to foreign policy is a direct outcome of its national identity and the dominant institutions and ideological visions that it is based on. Some of these guiding beliefs are spelled out in the nation's founding documents like the Constitution, while others are not necessarily transcribed into law or voiced explicitly by politicians and are instead reinforced and rearticulated through evolving social and cultural norms. Conceptions of race and class are examples of these more subtle elements that are embedded into the motivations and strategies behind U.S. foreign policy. As the public conversation about these topics shifts over time, so does the way they appear in statements of policy.

The 1960s were a defining cultural moment in U.S. history in terms of ideas about race, which were being rearticulated and renegotiated at home during the Civil Rights Movement as well as abroad through the growing rhetoric about the "Third World." President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress program is a representation of the United States' foreign policy shift that resulted from these new dynamics. The Alliance for Progress shows how the U.S. was able to sanitize the role of white supremacy in its foreign policy while still asserting the dominance of the U.S. model and the aspects of U.S. identity that are inherently tied to whiteness, specifically in its emphasis on modernization, U.S. exceptionalism, and the U.S. mission to promote civilization. This framing was able to get across many of the same ideas without mentioning race so that the messaging could be palatable to the rest of the world as well as to the U.S. population.

The 1960s and the Alliance for Progress marked a turning point in the United States' understanding of its relationship with Latin America, as the U.S. seemed to claim some accountability for its history of intervention and recognizing the roots of distrust. However, even during this period of more concerted efforts to uplift Latin America and improve the inter-

American relationship, the U.S. foreign policy approach was still defined by the notion that its model for modernization is the best model for other countries as well. The key thread throughout my thesis will be grappling with the tension between the United States' formal foreign policy positions and the more informal forces, such as constructions of race, identity, and culture, that become structurally embedded in those foreign policy positions regardless of stated intention. Specifically, I will be examining the ways in which the Alliance for Progress, a program that claimed to have the goal of helping Latin Americans help themselves, still embodies the beliefs that characterize the United States as “a manly, racially superior, and providentially destined ‘beacon of liberty,’ a country which possesses a special right to exert power in the world.”¹

To do so, I will be looking at U.S. public diplomacy efforts during the first years of the Alliance for Progress and examining how the United States Information Agency (USIA) as well as the Kennedy administration and the Department of State attempted to market the U.S. model to Latin America. As one of the leading governing bodies for U.S. public diplomacy, the USIA was in charge of directly interacting with other countries to gain their trust and promote U.S. ideals. Therefore, on one hand, in striving to bolster America's image abroad, the USIA inevitably had to respond to the state of race relations at home, and the 1960s during the Civil Rights Movement were a period in which U.S. racial tensions were widely broadcasted. On the other hand, U.S. identity is ultimately rooted in racial hierarchy, so constructions of race have shaped its foreign policy decisions since its founding.

I hypothesize, therefore, that assumptions motivated by race and American superiority will continue to be apparent in the United States' public diplomacy efforts, even though the USIA was working to positively portray domestic race relations abroad as well as repair strained

¹ Walter L. Hixson, *The Myth of American Diplomacy: National Identity and Foreign Policy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008, 1.

international relations rooted in the legacies of colonialism, paternalism, and intervention. My thesis will aim to dissect the impacts of these factors within the context of Latin America, a region that has been uniquely racialized through U.S. discourse and policy through history. The Cold War context of the 1960s also brings an added element to the racial dimensions of foreign policy with the creation of the “Third World” designation for Latin America and the changing power dynamics in the global order. Importantly, the theories about modernizing the Third World gained increased momentum during this period and allowed the United States to frame its interventions in Latin America as acts of generosity and salvation.

Public Diplomacy & the USIA

I chose to focus primarily on U.S. public diplomacy because it is a subsection of foreign policy that places particular emphasis on the role of culture and was especially relevant during the Cold War, a conflict in which ideology and public opinion were important battlefields. Soft power was one of the most sought after resources during the Cold War because it is not coercive and instead involves the ability to shape the preferences of others by influencing their mindsets to match yours.² Soft power uses tools of culture, values, and policies to draw in these target populations and convince them of the morality and legitimacy of a certain ideology.³ Joseph S. Nye Jr. said it best: “Attention rather than information becomes the scarce resource.”⁴ During the Cold War in particular, attention was power, and those in charge of the narrative that garners the most attention became the most powerful.

² Joseph S. Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 95.

³ Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” 96.

⁴ Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” 99.

The term “public diplomacy” was coined in the United States in the 1960s as a preferred alternative to “propaganda,” which carried negative connotations by that point.⁵ Public diplomacy appeals to the cultural values of a targeted group, aiming to communicate with the people directly, not just their governments. Scholars still do not have a consensus on a clear definition of public diplomacy, though several models have been proposed. Early definitions in the 1980s described public diplomacy as direct communication with foreign populations, aiming to influence their thinking and eventually their governments’ thinking; these earlier definitions also implied that only governments used public diplomacy. By the 1990s, scholars provided more specificity, identifying the actors and content involved in public diplomacy and emphasizing the importance of private individuals and groups as well.⁶ In the early 2000s, scholars started to use the term “new public diplomacy” (NPD) to define the interactivity between states and non-state actors, two-way communication, media framing, information management, public relations, and nation branding, among other strategies.⁷ For example, today, social media would be a powerful tool for public diplomacy.

Typically, the vehicles for public diplomacy are the public’s existing cultural systems such as radio stations, films, newspapers, magazines, and television broadcasts. Public diplomacy is more than propaganda because it involves a long-term process of building up credibility and creating an environment that is receptive to communication of policy goals. Public diplomacy has evolved since the Cold War, but because this thesis is focusing on the 1960s, the Cold War model will be most relevant: “The assumption was that if public opinion in

⁵ Kadir Jun Ayhan, “Competition for Hearts and Minds: Cold War Public Diplomacy,” *International Studies Review* 22 (2020): 988.

⁶ Eytan Gilboa, “Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 57.

⁷ Gilboa, “Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy,” 58.

the target society is persuaded to accept a favorable image of the other side, it will exert pressure on its government to alter existing hostile attitudes and policies.”⁸ Understanding the target society, its own identity, and its perception of American identity was crucial to this process. As Joseph S. Nye Jr. states, “effective public diplomacy is a two-way street that involves listening as well as talking.”⁹ Therefore, U.S. public diplomats had to cater specific messages to the different countries they were working in, and extensive research about the history of the region, as well as its relations with the U.S., was required in order for any sort of “persuasion” of public opinion to occur.

My thesis will involve critically examining the branch of the U.S. government that was dedicated to public diplomacy during the Cold War: the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), known abroad as the U.S. Information Service (USIS). The USIA was an independent executive agency founded during the Eisenhower administration in 1953. Its mission was to “understand, inform and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions, and their counterparts abroad.”¹⁰ The four arms of the Agency were the International Bureau of Broadcasting, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Bureau of Information, and the Bureau of Management.¹¹ During the peak of the Cold War, the USIA was in charge of communications for over 150 countries and had an operating budget of \$1 billion after the fall of the Berlin Wall.¹²

⁸ Gilboa, “Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy,” 59.

⁹ Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” 103.

¹⁰ William M. Chodkowski, “Fact Sheet - The United States Information Agency,” The American Security Project. November 2012.

¹¹ Office of the Federal Register. “United States Information Agency.” In *The United States Government Manual*. Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1995.

¹² Chodkowski, “Fact Sheet - The United States Information Agency.”

The primary elements guiding USIA activities were the desire to understand foreign public opinion in order to help clarify U.S. policy decisions as well as to “inform others about American life and values, policies, and interests as a nation; and, if possible, to eliminate misperception and move others to action in ways that serve the national interest.”¹³ The USIA spearheaded U.S. public diplomacy efforts to uplift American positions and policies abroad through international broadcasting, publication of materials, as well as cultural and educational exchanges.¹⁴ Some examples of their materials distributed abroad included movies, radio broadcasts, books about U.S. culture, press and publication services, exhibitions, scientific magazines, and research program opportunities. Looking at some of these materials and documents from the USIA will provide a unique perspective into the way that the U.S. government understands U.S. identity; by examining how they hoped to market the U.S. abroad and how they refashioned different aspects of U.S. identity to serve different audiences and goals, I will be able to gain greater insight into the tension between the formal and informal forces affecting U.S. foreign policy.

In chapter 1, I will discuss the theoretical framework of constructivism, which serves as the foundation of my argument about the relationship between U.S. foreign policy and U.S. identity. Constructivism holds that actions and behaviors are informed by social context and cultural norms as they evolve. This lens helps provide insight into the process of “othering” and how national identity construction facilitates that process through both domestic and international forces. This chapter will also cover the social construction of race and the notion of civilization, which are products of repeated and continuous efforts of social categorization. Both

¹³ Office of the Federal Register, “United States Information Agency.”

¹⁴ Chodkowski, “Fact Sheet - The United States Information Agency.”

are tied to the politics of state-building and the efforts from Western societies seeking to impose a racialized hierarchy internationally. In the United States specifically, state-building and race-making processes merged to create its unique ideas of American exceptionalism. To conclude the chapter, I will unpack the work of several leading scholars who connect the “myth of America” to U.S. racial ideology and how U.S. foreign policy is made.

In chapter 2, I will dive into the history of U.S.-Latin American relations and how the role of race has evolved over time. To show how U.S. racial ideology is reflected at home as well as abroad, I begin the chapter by looking at racialized rhetoric and policies directed toward Latinx immigrants in the United States. I examine the nativist rhetoric about Mexican immigrants and the range of stereotypes about their character as lazy, filthy, ignorant, primitive, and resistant to assimilation. These characterizations and ideas of paternalism were similarly present in the nature of U.S. foreign policy over the same time period. Because of their entrenched judgments about Latin Americans, U.S. policymakers often expressed their motivation to “civilize” and “Americanize” the indigenous populations. The standards for civilization were frequently invoked in U.S. political rhetoric, especially through the use of the frontier as a boundary between savagery and civilization. Lastly, I discuss the evolution of U.S. policies in Latin America from expansionism to armed intervention to the “good neighbor” mindset that led to the Alliance for Progress in the 1960s.

In chapter 3, I first provide background about the Alliance for Progress and the history behind its creation as well as some of the Cold War motivations. Then, I will highlight the program’s roots in modernization theory and how the ideas of modernization echo the pillars of U.S. identity. I will discuss how modernization theories have been applied to foreign policy and intervention in Latin America as well as how the notion of “development” became the basis of

U.S. assistance programs in the region by the 1960s. Within this context, I will stress the connection between modernization and U.S. exceptionalism, as the U.S. has long taken pride in being the most modern nation and the most capable of imparting the wisdom of modernization in other countries.

In chapter 4, I will contextualize the 1960s as an era of racial formation and rearticulation. I will summarize Omi and Winant's theories about the reciprocal relationship between racial movement mobilization and formal politics that can lead to a reframing of identity. Omi and Winant posit that there was a paradigm shift in the 1960s in which the public's demands amidst growing social movements became less supportive of the ethnicity paradigm, which advocates for assimilation, and instead had a new focus on class and nation-based paradigms. The class perspective views race in the context of the constraints that racial minorities experience in terms of economic mobility, while the nation-based perspective emphasizes that racial ideologies and categories are fundamentally rooted in colonialism.

Because the ideas of the class and nation-based paradigms represented a threat to the theories of modernization and American greatness, I suggest that the Alliance for Progress was an effort to reassert the ideas of the ethnicity paradigm and restore its prominence at the institutional level by promoting the U.S. development model as a framework that all should assimilate to and learn from. Then, I will discuss the rearticulation of race in regards to international politics during the rise of "Third World" rhetoric. In particular, I will analyze how the racialization of the Third World and the perception that formerly colonized people aren't capable of governing themselves pervade into foreign policy. Lastly, I will show how modernization leads to attitudes of white saviorism and a narrative of morality surrounding U.S. intervention in the Third World while still maintaining a hierarchy in the global order.

Then, I will analyze three categories of archival data. The first section will cover documents related to the Alliance for Progress, such as speeches, internal memorandums, research reports, and meeting notes from members of the Kennedy administration. I organize the section according to three major themes I found in the documents: efforts by the U.S. to understand the roots of the tension in their relationship with Latin America, an emphasis on inciting a middle class revolution in Latin America, and the idea that Latin America is too stubborn to help itself. I will show evidence in the documents that speaks to each of these themes and how they uphold the previously discussed patterns of U.S. superiority, racial thinking, and modernization.

The second section of archival data will cover documents from the United States Information Agency, including foreign policy backgrounders, research memos, and guidelines for programming in Latin America. The three themes that stood out in reading these sources were the importance of cultivating an image of the U.S. as a strong yet benevolent power, projecting sincerity and a new progressive mindset, and targeting specific regions and groups based on assumptions about class, education, and occupation. The goals and themes articulated in these documents also manifest in the last section, which is a discussion of ten USIA films from the time period. The first three films, which follow President Kennedy on his trips to Latin America, highlight the strength of the U.S. and portray leaders like Kennedy as white saviors for the region.

The next three films are about the progress of several Colombian villages that were able to get past their distrust of outsiders and accept that U.S. help will bring them forward into modernity. Meanwhile, the last four films respond to the perceptions of racial unrest during the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. and work to convey that U.S. laws are on the side of racial

equality. On top of that, the films present the ongoing violence and discrimination as learning experiences that helped the U.S. become stronger and more progressive than ever. Overall, all ten films underscore that despite obstacles, the U.S. model, and by extension the principles of U.S. identity, can withstand cultural changes while continuing to find success in their core values; therefore, there is no reason to doubt the security of the U.S. in representing the focal point for modernization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Constructivism & Identity

Constructivism, a key theory within international relations, is the most applicable model for understanding the role of race in foreign policy and evaluating the USIA's motivations.

Constructivism offers an alternative perspective from theories like neorealism and neoliberalism, creating new definitions for concepts such as the meaning of anarchy and the balance of power, the relationship between state identity and interest, an elaboration of power, and the prospects for change in world politics.¹⁵ Ted Hopf unpacks the key elements of constructivism and highlights some of the ways it can be used when trying to understand and research international relations.

Constructivism operates under the foundational assumption that meaningful actions and behavior are determined by the social context and set of norms involved. Given this understanding, power can come in both material as well as discursive forms; knowledge, ideas, culture, ideology, and language all produce meaning and create structures that govern the social practices both at home and abroad that influence decision-making.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 172.

¹⁶ Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," 177-179.

Constructivism is a particularly useful framework when thinking about the role of identity and interests in world politics. Put eloquently by Rawi Abdelal, “what societies want depends on who they think they are.”¹⁷ Hopf argues that identities are necessary for ensuring a level of predictability and order.¹⁸ Identities, according to Hopf, answer the essential questions of who you are and who others are, implying interests and preferences associated with those respective identities. Constructivism emphasizes the historical background of identity creation and the role of cultural and political forces that shift over time, leading to new identities.¹⁹ Constructivism seeks to shed light on why certain interests came to be involved with certain identities and why other interests did not. Therefore, constructivism can help explain the role of national identities in global politics as well as the correlation between national identities and state interests.

Through the lens of constructivism, scholars are able to recognize that the formation of national identity requires a process of “othering,” or creating boundaries that designate who constitutes the nation-state and who does not. According to Felix Berenskoetter, identity is formed through boundaries that are not necessarily physical, but rather, part of a collective consciousness; Berenskoetter proposes a biographical narrative to define the “self,” which can encompass a nation-state or society. This approach highlights the experiences that provide the “self” with “knowledge about its place in ‘the world’... to provide us with a necessary sense of orientation about *where* we come from and *where* we are, or could be, going.”²⁰ In this biographical narrative, the “self” is understood within its specific context of space and time,

¹⁷ Rawi Abdelal, *National Purpose in the World Economy: Post-Soviet States In Comparative Perspective*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005: 1.

¹⁸ Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” 174.

¹⁹ Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” 176.

²⁰ Felix Berenskoetter, “Parameters of a national biography,” *European Journal of International Relations* 20, no. 1 (2014): 269.

while knowledge about it comes from historical memories and myths as well as visions for the future.

In a similar vein, Rawi Abdelai argues that national identities exist at two levels: the individual and the collective. The individual level is subjective for the nation's members, while the collective level involves a shared understanding of the nation. Different definitions of national identity may exist in any given society, especially at the individual level. However, the collective ideas about identity, rooted in shared culture and ideologies, have the most impact on state institutions and therefore, foreign policy. Abdelai emphasizes that national identities are socially constructed but often seen as objective facts since the collective imposes a sense of legitimacy onto these ideas and gives them power.²¹ Altering national identity from the collective perspective is possible, according to Abdelai, but changes must be plausible to the majority of the society and fit in with historical memory.²²

Importantly, the context of the creation of national identity and the priorities associated with it are informed by the international environment, not just the national setting. Constructivists argue that the state and the international system are mutually constitutive.²³ James Richter develops this argument more, highlighting the politics of national identity and the ways that politicians maneuver popular or institutional resources to fulfill certain goals. Due to the inherent designation of an "us" in comparison to a "them," national identity must belong to a larger system organized along similar principles.²⁴ In other words, by constructing its own

²¹ Abdelal, *National Purpose in the World Economy: Post-Soviet States In Comparative Perspective*, 25.

²² Abdelal, *National Purpose in the World Economy: Post-Soviet States In Comparative Perspective*, 28.

²³ James Richter, "Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of National Identity," In *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, edited by Celeste A. Wallander. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996: 69.

²⁴ Richter, "Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of National Identity," 70.

identity and defining who can belong to “us,” a nation is also clarifying who cannot belong - i.e. “them.”

Through national identity creation, these categories of “us” and “them” are then assumed to be relevant to the organization of all of humanity and are advertised within this context of global importance. In turn, international politics can influence national identity as well, operating in “continuous negotiation between the traditions, symbols, and institutions specific to the polity on the one hand and the repertoire of state forms and behaviors recognized by the international system on the other.”²⁵ Interactions between domestic and international forces are present at every level of society, as they help define and organize each other. National identity is translated into international politics and foreign policy decisions, as nations seek to protect and promote their vision of themselves.

How is national identity enforced and maintained? The citizens themselves play a significant role, according to Richter. Citizens are incentivized to uphold certain ideas about what it means to belong. Richter states that those who conform to the institutionalized definitions and standards for national identity ultimately gain access to resources, while those who do not are denied access.²⁶ Due to the dual forces of institutions and the sociocultural dynamics that encourage citizens to consent to the nation’s goals, the constructed elements of national identity are so pervasive in cultural practices and daily life that they often go unquestioned. That being said, politicians and other policy leaders also manipulate the use of certain symbols and historical circumstances as well as the support of international institutions in order to work in favor of their interests.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Richter, “Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of National Identity,” 72.

Constructing Race and “Civilization”

Institutionalized racial hierarchies that serve as the basis for dominant notions of U.S. identity also have an impact on international politics, as global and domestic conceptions of identity interact and intersect on the world stage. The United States has a national identity that rests upon white supremacy and cultural superiority, guiding foreign policy decisions as the U.S. projects racial hierarchy abroad. Race has become a defining principle for human categorization around the world, and it is widely accepted that race is a socially constructed phenomenon that evolves and changes with time. While race is linked to features of human bodies, it is the sociohistorical contexts that inform the racialization of these features. Specifically, Michael Omi and Howard Winant define race as “a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies,” and they assert that “even though race is socially constructed, the phenotypic, the ‘fact of blackness’ (or whiteness, or brownness, etc.), continues to matter.”²⁸ They argue that race is constructed simultaneously as a visual marker of “otherness” as well as an element of power relations that underpins hierarchical structures.²⁹ In this sense, race is not biological – instead, it is a concept that is integrated into societies culturally through repeated and continuous efforts of social categorization as well as structurally through policy and law.

How exactly did social distinctions and conflict come to be defined by physical differences such as skin color? Anthony Marx argues that race-making is tied to state-making. Using South Africa, the United States, and Brazil as case studies, Marx shows how early explanations of race were tied to differences of slavery, culture, colonial rule, miscegenation, and

²⁸ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, “Blinded by Sight: The Racial Body and the Origins of the Social Construction of Race,” *Law and Social Inquiry* 41, no. 4 (2016): 1064.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

economic development. For example, notions of race were tied to racial projects of Jim Crow in the U.S. and apartheid in South Africa, both of which were intertwined with their efforts to build and define their nation-state. As Marx puts it, “racial domination was repeatedly reinforced to consolidate the nation-state.”³⁰

In Marx’s analysis of the United States as a case study, he discusses how Jim Crow was a product of the systematic effort to protect whites from Black competition. Industrialization and capitalism supported the development of Jim Crow racism, as “capital benefited from segregation, employing cheap Black labor to increase profits and to break strikes by white workers.”³¹ Additionally, according to Marx, the American racial order united white workers, uplifting their power and social status and reducing conflict. In order to reduce any ambiguities between the physical descriptors of racial groups, the U.S. created strict racial boundaries, limited mobility, and fostered an environment of antagonism.³² The circumstances and elements of race-making are dependent on place, time, and specific moments. Through this lens, therefore, the state is a major player in defining citizenship and belonging, and through that process, constructing race.

Relatedly, the notion of civilization has also been constructed through international discourse and the politics of state-building and is undoubtedly tied to racial categories as an additional means of defining belonging. Gerrit Gong unpacks the standard of civilization that was used during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in conjunction with European imperialism and expansion. “Those who fulfill the requirements of a particular society’s standard of civilization are brought inside its circle of ‘civilized’ members, while those who do not so

³⁰ Anthony W. Marx, "Race-Making and the Nation-State," *World Politics* 48, no. 2 (1996): 182.

³¹ Marx, "Race-Making and the Nation-State," 190.

³² Marx, "Race-Making and the Nation-State," 188.

conform are left outside as ‘not civilized’ or possibly ‘uncivilized,’” Gong explains.³³ The standard of “civilization,” according to Gong, emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century and became a “catalyst for change” in European international society and the non-European countries joining it.³⁴

This notion of civilization was inherently racialized because the motivation behind it was to situate Europeanness and Christianity as grounds for the “universally acceptable identity,” creating a hierarchy for international society.³⁵ Because “Western” society had the economic and military capacity to impose this hierarchy, the standard of civilization became a key factor in determining international law and policies, becoming the justification for rights and privileges, or lack thereof. Western civilized societies then adopted the responsibility of “civilizing” other nations and engaged in violence, forced religious conversions, and cultural exclusion to maintain the hegemony of these ideas. Civilization has remained a defining feature in modern interactions between nations and has allowed Western Europe and the United States to act on the global stage according to this supposed authority granted to them as “civilized” leaders.

Identity, Race, & American Foreign Policy

In the United States, the race-making process has been motivated by white supremacy and distinct ideas of American exceptionalism that are intertwined with whiteness. Through the lens of these priorities, one can also understand the U.S. approach to foreign policy. In his book *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Hunt argues that American ideology during the twentieth century manifested in foreign policy through “three mutually reinforcing elements: an active quest for national greatness linked to the promotion of liberty abroad, the classification of other

³³ Gerrit W. Gong. *The Standard of ‘Civilization’ in International Society*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1984: 3.

³⁴ Gong. *The Standard of ‘Civilization’ in International Society*, 4.

³⁵ Ibid.

nations and peoples in a racial hierarchy that reflected the Anglo-Saxon bias of the country's ruling elites, and a suspicion of foreign revolutions that failed to subscribe to the American model."³⁶ Hunt shows that these beliefs trace back to early ideas of American greatness and have continued to guide the way that the U.S. views the rest of the world as well as the way it presents itself abroad.

National identity and racial constructions overlap and intersect with national ideology. National ideology is informed by social norms, laws, constitutions, opinions, and the voices of citizens; it is used as a mechanism to explain and justify policy decisions, maintain a sense of security, as well as establish national solidarity and a strong morale.³⁷ Nationalism is a form of national ideology that has been particularly dominant across the globe throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; Abdelal describes nationalism as the effort to link the idea of a nation to specific goals.³⁸ Nationalism has become a significant means of asserting national identity, certainly in the United States. Scholars such as Earl Ravenal and Richard Feinberg highlight that American foreign policy ideology is driven by the notion that America is a unique force in the world with a special responsibility to impose its ideas onto others, due to an underlying assumption that American concerns are universal.³⁹ To assert this special responsibility abroad, the U.S. has leaned on its model of racial hierarchy and its national ideology that is defined by those in power – white males with access to wealth – who have been able to shape ideological priorities throughout U.S. history.⁴⁰

³⁶ Richard E. Welch, "Reviewed Work: *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* by Michael H. Hunt," *Pacific Historical Review* 58, no.1 (1989): 131.

³⁷ Knud S. Larsen et al, "Ideology and Identity: A National Outlook." *Journal of Peace Research* 32, no. 2 (1995): 166.

³⁸ Abdelal, *National Purpose in the World Economy: Post-Soviet States In Comparative Perspective*, 1.

³⁹ Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987: 3.

⁴⁰ Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 12.

In order to understand how U.S. racial ideology has been built upon and reinforced since the colonial conquest of indigenous land, Hunt follows this ideology back to the early years of constructing U.S. national identity, detailing Benjamin Franklin's racism against Native Americans as well as African slaves and the construction of pseudo "science" to prove racial distinctions and white superiority. He notes that this racial hierarchy has influenced American foreign policy-making throughout the nation-building process, and by the nineteenth century, race had become a powerful and institutionalized component of U.S. relationships with other regions and countries in Latin America, East Asia, and Europe.⁴¹ Anglo-Saxonism, the belief in the unity of American and British people, was at the forefront of U.S. foreign policy, and Anglo-Saxons were associated with traits such as intelligence, industry, moral purpose and talent for government.⁴² Ultimately, U.S. foreign policymakers "used racial hierarchy to underwrite their claim to lands they wanted and, once possession was secure, to justify the imposition of Anglo cultural values and institutions as well as the expulsion or political and economic subordination of less peoples."⁴³

Walter Hixson expresses a similar analysis about the role of race in American foreign policy, arguing that "foreign policy flows from cultural hegemony affirming 'America' as a manly, racially superior, and providentially destined 'beacon of liberty,' a country which possesses a special right to exert power in the world."⁴⁴ Hixson describes this national identity as the "Myth of America" and explains that it not only guides American foreign policy but also persuades the American public to consent and support their government's decisions abroad.

⁴¹ Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 52.

⁴² Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 78.

⁴³ Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 90.

⁴⁴ Hixson, *The Myth of American Diplomacy: National Identity and Foreign Policy*, 1.

Hixson argues foreign policy operates within boundaries that are dictated by heritage, tradition, faith in progress, and the cultural constructions of race, religion, and gender. Because of the historic foundations of these boundaries, U.S. foreign policy, for example, has remained relatively continuous, characterized by its sense of imperial nationalism that has persisted since independence when the U.S. began expanding its territory and increasing its global standing.⁴⁵ U.S. foreign policy should be analyzed through the lens of the “mutually reinforcing relationship between the domestic and the foreign, under the canopy of national identity,” which is ultimately responsible for *creating* as well as maintaining the Myth of America and its ideals of white supremacy, patriarchy, and militarization as power.⁴⁶

Thomas Borstelmann looks at the ways in which American national identity and racial thinking impacted foreign policy specifically during the Truman administration amidst the Cold War. He explains that Truman’s approach to foreign policy was a product of “the segregationist culture in which all members of the administration had lived.”⁴⁷ Borstelmann dives into the history of Truman’s upbringing and racial thinking that ultimately influenced his foreign policy choices; Truman opposed the “social equality” of the races and was openly discriminatory toward people of color. His foreign policy advisors carried viewpoints that were even more to the right than Truman, as they were “profoundly comfortable with the world they had grown up in and succeeded in, a world marked by European power, Third World weakness, and nearly ubiquitous racial segregation.”⁴⁸ Borstelmann uses a constructivist approach of analyzing

⁴⁵ Hixson, *The Myth of American Diplomacy: National Identity and Foreign Policy*, 5.

⁴⁶ Hixson, *The Myth of American Diplomacy: National Identity and Foreign Policy*, 8.

⁴⁷ Thomas Borstelmann, “Jim Crow’s Coming Out: Race Relations and American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (1999): 550.

⁴⁸ Borstelmann, “Jim Crow’s Coming Out: Race Relations and American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years,” 552.

historical context, discourse, and creation of the “self” through racial boundaries to make these conclusions.

Importantly, as Hopf and others suggest, identity is not permanent and changes with shifting cultural priorities and events. The role of race evolved in the face of changing norms and international pressures leaning left and pushing for equality. Truman sought to appease both the growing movements for civil rights at home and independence abroad as well as maintain the structures of white supremacy at home and white rule abroad. This tension between domestic and international constructions of race is indicative of a broader trend. Tilden J. LeMelle finds that there “appears to be almost a direct relationship between the severity of these internal racial problems and the defensiveness or openness of a white nation’s policy toward the nonwhite world, as reflected in support for human rights conventions and international collective action to abolish discriminatory practices within and between nations.”⁴⁹ LeMelle draws parallels between the treatment of Black Americans and African-U.S. relations during the Cold War; U.S. white supremacist interests are reflected in its efforts to interfere with African liberation movements, revealing the same racial biases at work domestically.⁵⁰

Ruth Gordon agrees that the racial dictatorship, segregation, and subordination that exist in the United States are replicated on the international stage. Gordon uses Critical Race Theory to understand the way that racial subordination is woven into the contemporary international system and how racial thinking drives U.S. foreign policy. “Given the domestic milieu, it is not surprising that the historical record is replete with examples of a racialized American foreign policy,” Gordon explains.⁵¹ The genocide of Native Americans and the enslavement of Africans

⁴⁹ Tilden J. LeMelle, “Race, International Relations, U.S. Foreign Policy, and the African Liberation Struggle,” *Journal of Black Studies* 3, no. 1 (1972): 101.

⁵⁰ LeMelle, “Race, International Relations, U.S. Foreign Policy, and the African Liberation Struggle,” 107.

⁵¹ Ruth Gordon, “Racing U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law* (2003): 12.

are two early examples of racial projects that are representative of a trend that would continue characterize U.S. foreign policy in years to come.

As the United States carried out its “manifest destiny,” the idea that the U.S. is destined to expand its domination across North America, Gordon argues that the racial hierarchy was further entrenched, placing Anglo-Saxons as the superior race. For example, manifest destiny promoted the mindset that “because Mexican people were inferior to Anglos, their land and political power could be appropriated and the theft could be rationalized”; the Texas revolution was a manifestation of this race war. The Spanish-American War, the annexation of Hawaii, and later the Philippine-American War were also violent outcomes of this rationale, driven by these same racial hierarchy constructions.⁵² Put concisely, so long as race continues to shape the politics and lived experiences of those in the United States, it will continue to play a role in international politics.

RACE & U.S.-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS

Race, Rhetoric, & U.S. Domestic Policy regarding Latinx Immigrants

Peter Brimelow wrote in his book *Alien Nation* that “race is destiny in American politics,” and he believed that “any change in the racial balance must obviously be fraught with consequences for the survival and success of the American nation.”⁵³ Overtly racist thinkers like Brimelow have been espousing these ideas about preserving whiteness in the United States and associating whiteness with success since America’s inception. Nativism and fearful attitudes toward immigrants are outcomes of this pervasive white supremacy. As one of the closest

⁵² Gordon, "Racing U.S. Foreign Policy," 14-15.

⁵³ Peter Brimelow, *Alien Nation: Common Sense About America's Immigration Disaster*, New York, NY: Random House, 1995: 264.

neighbors to the United States, Latin America, particularly Mexico, is consistently incorporated into domestic discourse about immigrant “invasion,” and when the border is discussed using the terms like “controlling” the “swarms” of migrants, people are almost always referring to the southern border with Mexico as opposed to the border with Canada, a distinction that is driven by racism. During the Cold War in the 1980s, surveys of public opinion about immigration in the U.S. rated mainly Europeans as “good for this country,” while those “bad for this country” were Cubans, Haitians, Puerto Ricans, Vietnamese, Koreans, and Mexicans.⁵⁴

Ongoing domestic discourse about Latin Americans fueled this narrative that they were “bad for this country.” For example, nativists have argued that “Latino and black immigrants are, at least in the short run, putting some downward pressure on the distribution of intelligence.”⁵⁵ Latinx immigrants and migrants in the U.S. were frequently associated with qualities such as laziness, indolence, tendencies for drug and alcohol abuse, disease, inability to assimilate, “primitiveness,” and animalistic characteristics. This racialized rhetoric has been weaponized throughout history and utilized often in the context of immigration debates about whether or not Latinx people were deserving of citizenship and resources. These beliefs have been so prevalent among the U.S. politicians and the broader public that they have defined the U.S.-Latin American relationship from a foreign policy standpoint.

Latinx immigrants posed a unique challenge for the U.S. racial hierarchical system, as they did not neatly fall into a specific racial category. The treatment of Mexicans in the U.S. is perhaps the most well-documented example for the context of the trajectory of Latinx racial categorization, given the proximity of Mexico to the U.S. and their complicated relationship

⁵⁴ Charles Jaret, “Troubled by Newcomers: Anti-Immigrant Attitudes and Action during Two Eras of Mass Immigration to the United States,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18, no. 3 (1999): 13.

⁵⁵ Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray. *The Bell Curve*. New York, NY: Free Press, 1994: 360-361.

throughout history. After the annexation of northern regions of Mexico in the mid-nineteenth century, this issue came to light almost immediately. The U.S. government did not create a category for the Mexican people who now lived in U.S. territory, so sociocultural as well as legal and political confusion was the result. Mexicans were sometimes seen as white, but because of their indigenous ancestry, they were not classified as “Caucasian.” Most Mexicans were still subject to segregationist laws and excluded from “white” spaces.⁵⁶ Eventually, border states began to make their own laws to specifically target Mexicans, labeling them as indigenous and denying them rights.

By the twentieth century, the question of the “race” of Mexicans in the United States became a topic of frequent discussion, as Mexican workers were exploited for their labor, particularly during the wartime eras. The U.S. Commission on Immigration in 1911 described Mexicans as “notoriously indolent and unprogressive in all matters of education and culture” and fit only for “the lowest grade of nonassimilable native-born races.” The report also noted that their usefulness as laborers was “much impaired by [their] lack of ambition and [their] proneness to the constant use of intoxicating liquor.”⁵⁷ Senator Dillingham’s report on the Commission even went so far as to say that when “Mexican laborers come into contact with native or with European immigrants, they are looked upon as inferiors... thus, it is evident that in the case of the Mexican he is less desirable as a citizen.”⁵⁸ Mexicans were racialized through this type of discourse, classified as inferior and placed on the lower rungs of the racial hierarchy.

⁵⁶ Martha Menchaca, “Chicano Indianism: A Historical Account of Racial Repression in the United States,” *American Ethnologist* 20, no. 3 (1993): 596.

⁵⁷ U.S. Commission on Immigration. “Immigrants in industries: Part 25: Japanese and other immigrant races in the Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain States: Agriculture.” Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911: 59, 94, 110.

⁵⁸ William Paul Dillingham, “Report of the Immigration Commission, vol. 1.” Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1911: 6901-691.

The 1924 Immigration Act, though it did not restrict Mexican immigration, also invited much debate about the role and cultural perception of Mexicans in the United States. During a 1928 congressional hearing on Western Hemisphere immigration, a member of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization claimed that Mexicans’ “minds run to nothing higher than animal functions – eat, sleep, and sexual debauchery” and ranted about their “filthy children with faces plastered with flies, disease, lice, human filth, stench, promiscuous fornication, bastardy, lounging, apathetic peons and lazy squaws, beans and dried chili, liquor, general squalor, and envy and hatred of the gringo.”⁵⁹ In addition to the blatant racism in statements like these, fear of racial mixture was a driving factor of these characterizations, and the racists and nativists in Congress were concerned with the possibility of dwindling racial purity.⁶⁰ Mexicans, and Latin Americans in general, may not have had a clear racial categorization or designation on the U.S. hierarchy, but regardless, they were never considered to be purely “white,” and that was a threat.

As another example at the Western Hemisphere immigration hearings, California representative John Garner also read a letter sent to him by eugenicist C.M. Goethe who spells out this fear of racial mixture and its supposed threat to American prosperity. Goethe wrote, “Does our failure to restrict Mexican immigration spell the downfall of our Republic? Athens could not maintain the brilliancy of the Golden Age of Pericles when hybridization of her citizenry began. Rome fell when the old patrician families lost their race consciousness and interbred with servile stocks.”⁶¹ While this is an extreme example, this type of racist rhetoric that associated the loss of civilization with racial mixture was not uncommon.⁶² For this reason,

⁵⁹ Roy L. Garis, "Mexican Immigration: A Report by Roy L. Garis for the Information of Congress." Western Hemisphere Immigration, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, 71st Congress 2d session, 1930: 436.

⁶⁰ Leobardo F. Estrada, “Chicanos in the United States: A History of Exploitation and Resistance,” *Daedalus* 110, no. 2 (1981): 116.

⁶¹ Garis, "Mexican Immigration: A Report by Roy L. Garis for the Information of Congress," 165.

⁶² Natalia Molina, “The power of racial scripts: What the history of Mexican immigration to the United States teaches us about relational notions of race,” *Latino Studies* 8, no. 2 (2010): 164.

domestic conversations about Mexicans and Mexican-Americans were often geared toward birth rates and reproduction during the first half of the twentieth century.⁶³

By the 1950s and the beginning stages of the Cold War, racism and nativism reached new heights as international tensions rose and fears of the “other” mounted. In 1954, “Operation Wetback” was launched, and the militarized U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service used its resources to organize mass arrests of Mexicans by working with state and local law enforcement. “Mexican looking” people were targeted in this effort, and racial profiling was institutionally accepted. As a result of “Operation Wetback,” 3.8 million Mexicans and Mexican-Americans were apprehended and deported over the next five years.⁶⁴

The 1960s, however, marked a turning point in terms of the rhetoric about race and immigration in the U.S. as the Civil Rights Movement took form. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was a product of the mass organizing for civil rights and the effort to dismantle the racialized national origins quota system instituted in the 1924 Act. The 1965 Act eliminated those quotas and created an equal distribution system for visas with no more than seven percent given to any nation in a given year.⁶⁵ The 1965 Act was successful in diversifying the immigrant population in the U.S., but Elizabeth Keyes argues that this legislation introduced new rhetoric of “worthiness,” which undermines the goals of equality. “The criteria for worthiness that dominate today’s rhetoric of reform are, I argue, race-blind in name only,” Keyes explains. The rhetoric of worthiness excludes the group that Keyes calls the “super undocumented,” many of whom are Latinx. The new racialized narrative became that if you

⁶³ Molina, “The power of racial scripts: What the history of Mexican immigration to the United States teaches us about relational notions of race,” 165.

⁶⁴ Estrada, “Chicanos in the United States: A History of Exploitation and Resistance,” 120.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Keyes, “Race and Immigration, Then and Now: How to Shift to Worthiness Undermines the 1965 Immigration Law’s Civil Rights Goals,” *Howard Law Journal* 57, no. 3 (2014): 906.

didn't have documentation, it was the result of your personal failings and your undeservingness or unworthiness of citizenship.⁶⁶

Race & U.S. Foreign Policy toward Latin America

The racist discourse present domestically toward Latinx immigrants and workers has carried over to U.S. foreign policy approaches toward Latin America. Racism and paternalistic ideals have largely characterized the U.S. mindset toward Latin America since the days of colonialism. The accounts of colonists, as well as merchants and diplomats, from the early nineteenth century speak to the legacy of racial stereotypes and subordination of Latin America. Michael Hunt describes the stereotypes associated with Latinos as belonging to four primary categories: servility, misrule, lethargy, and bigotry.⁶⁷ Importantly, “the darker the complexion of the people in question, the sharper was the attack,” Hunt explained.⁶⁸ During this era, Latin males were seen as superstitious, obstinate, lazy, cowardly, vain, pretentious, dishonest, unclean, impractical, and corrupt, while Latin women were seen as damsels in distress that could be saved and introduced to civilized life.⁶⁹ By the mid to late nineteenth century, the U.S. image of Latin America had morphed, transforming elements of previous racist and sexist thinking into a more outright paternalism: the Latino as the Black child. These images aimed to justify foreign policy decisions like the continued use of the Monroe Doctrine, dubbing the Western hemisphere as the United States’ sphere of interest, as well as U.S. domination of Cuba and Puerto Rico in later years.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Keyes, "Race and Immigration, Then and Now: How to Shift to Worthiness Undermines the 1965 Immigration Law's Civil Rights Goals," 926.

⁶⁷ Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 59.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 59-60.

⁷⁰ Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 61.

Similar to the ways that domestic discourse about Latin Americans emphasized primitive, animalistic qualities and an overall lack of “civilization,” Fredrick Pike argues that the issue of “civilization” has been at the core of the U.S.-Latin American relationship. U.S. citizens see themselves as “prime exemplars of all that it means to be civilized” and leaders in moral, spiritual, and cultural advancement, while Latin Americans are “trapped in a primitive state of nature, the victims rather than the masters of nature.”⁷¹ The child, therefore, became a metaphor for this gap in civilization. Pike argues that the construction of this civilization mindset toward Latin America stemmed in part from the threat of racial mixing, but also the myth of the frontier. The frontier image was used to draw a line between those who belonged to the U.S. identity and those who did not, such as Mexicans and indigenous people; beyond the “frontier” was seen as undeveloped, unmastered, and essentially, uncivilized wilderness. This distinction led to a plethora of racial stereotypes and rhetoric of “savagery.”⁷²

According to historian Frederick Jackson Turner, the frontier is the meeting point between savagery and civilization. Even to this day, for many people, hearing the word “frontier” brings to mind Turner, who read his famous “frontier thesis” at a meeting of the American Historical Association in 1893. Turner’s frontier thesis fostered further sentiments of American exceptionalism and encouraged continued territorial expansion. “The peculiarity of American institutions is, the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life,” he writes.⁷³ The primitiveness

⁷¹ Fredrick B. Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1992: xiii.

⁷² Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature*, 111.

⁷³ Frederick Jackson Turner, 1893, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” National Humanities Center, 1.

of the lands beyond the frontier is consistently emphasized in his speech. Turner encourages those at the meeting to pursue “continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society” and “furnish the forces dominating American character.”⁷⁴ Ultimately, Turner’s assertions are representative of U.S. identity, its tradition of celebrating white male territorial conquest, and the idea that expansion was an essential element of societal progress.

Between 1845 and 1854, the United States acquired Mexico’s northern frontier, and the four bordering states, California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, gained large numbers of Mexican residents. After the Mexican-American War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was meant to guarantee political rights to Mexicans in these ceded territories, but ultimately, American legislators refused to grant Mexicans full citizenship, violating the treaty.⁷⁵ In the period that followed, there was much debate within state legislatures and courts about the rights that Mexicans would be afforded. In California, legislators at their constitutional convention in 1849 concluded that Mexicans would be given the right to vote if they were “white,” but did not define what it meant to be a “white Mexican.” Local entities were tasked with interpreting that category on a circumstantial basis, leaving significant room for discrimination and inequality.⁷⁶

By the 1890s, the United States was grappling with how to articulate its justifications for expansionism in Latin America and what its role there would be. As the twentieth century began, U.S. foreign policymakers were faced with the tension between previous strategies of land grabbing, race exterminating, and annexing, and newer approaches to domination through naval base placement, overseas investment, and “moral” reform.⁷⁷ Because the U.S. majority viewed

⁷⁴ Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” 2.

⁷⁵ Menchaca, “Chicano Indianism: A Historical Account of Racial Repression in the United States,” 584.

⁷⁶ Menchaca, “Chicano Indianism: A Historical Account of Racial Repression in the United States,” 589.

⁷⁷ Jules R. Benjamin, “The Framework of U.S. Relations with Latin America in the Twentieth Century: An Interpretive Essay,” *Diplomatic History* 11, no. 2 (1987): 94.

Latin Americans as backward, lawless, and rebellious, policymakers shifted their focus to ways they could “Americanize” or “civilize” these populations.⁷⁸ The racism embedded in U.S. assumptions about Latin America ultimately propelled the implementation of a foreign policy that utilized both military force as well as economic manipulation to reach expansionist goals in the region.

Into the twentieth century and the first World War, the narrative of American greatness and superiority was bolstered even more, with a growing motivation to export the U.S. model abroad. The U.S. had become the center of global capitalism and a leader in modern industrialization after World War I. The U.S. was pouring resources into Latin America to expand its influence and address the cycle of hostility and instability that their frequent armed interventions in the region caused.⁷⁹ The high costs of this approach, however, eventually prompted President Coolidge to ease the militarized interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine and instead “leave those countries as undisturbed as possible to work out their own salvation.”⁸⁰

Odd Arne Westad discusses how themes of “ungratefulness” and “wasted opportunities” characterized early twentieth-century U.S. views of Latin America. This rhetoric emulates the domestic rhetoric that associated Mexicans in the U.S. with laziness and unwillingness to work hard. U.S. leaders were frustrated that these Latin American countries weren’t following suit with the American model; in the eyes of Washington, Latin American leaders were neglecting the offer of “liberty and progress” that the U.S. could provide.⁸¹ In the mid-1920s, a State Department instructor even told new envoys to Latin American nations that the responses they

⁷⁸ Benjamin, “The Framework of U.S. Relations with Latin America in the Twentieth Century: An Interpretive Essay,” 95.

⁷⁹ Michael H. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance*, Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007: 106.

⁸⁰ Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance*, 107.

⁸¹ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007: 23.

were receiving to U.S. intervention was “only to be expected in a world where gratitude is rarely accorded to the teacher, the doctor, or the policeman, and we have been all three. But it may be that in time they will come to see the United States with different eyes, and to have for her something of respect and affection with which a man regards the instructor of his youth and a child looks upon the parent who has molded his character.”⁸²

By the 1950s, the “good neighbor” mindset toward Latin America was starting to fade, and the U.S. focused on supporting military regimes, conducting covert CIA operations, and deploying large numbers of U.S. forces in Latin America. By the time President Kennedy took office in 1961, he realized that the covert operation approach used by his predecessors was ineffective, and he proposed the “Alliance of Progress,” which was the first U.S.-funded development program to prevent the spread of communism in the Third World.⁸³ The Alliance of Progress was dedicated to what Kennedy described as the hemisphere’s common mission and involved funding inter-American organizations to address social goals in Latin America such as combating disease and poverty, supporting free-trade, as well as improving existing aid programs.⁸⁴ In the spring of 1961, Kennedy’s adviser Arthur Schlesinger reported that the administration’s goal was to facilitate a middle class revolution in Latin America through economic modernization and “necessities of modern technical society as constitutional government, honest public administration, a responsible party system, a rational land system, an efficient system of taxation.”⁸⁵ Notably, Westad points out that the underlying reasoning behind

⁸² Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of US Policy Toward Latin America*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998: 386.

⁸³ Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance*, 212.

⁸⁴ Michael Dunne, “Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress: countering revolution in Latin America,” *International Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2013): 1319.

⁸⁵ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 35.

this mindset is clearly the U.S. belief that in order for Latin America to develop, it has to replicate American systems.

THE ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS, MODERNIZATION, & U.S. EXCEPTIONALISM

Alliance For Progress

The Alliance For Progress was established just eight weeks after President Kennedy's inauguration in 1961 and was presented as a one hundred billion dollar, ten year program to support social, political, and economic development in Latin America. The Alliance was made up of the members of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, as well as private agencies and the citizens of the hemisphere.⁸⁶ Much of the initial thinking that informed the Alliance arose from Brazilian President Kubitschek's conversations with the Eisenhower administration that centered around the importance of preserving the security of the free world through economic development in Latin America and a reorientation of the Western hemisphere.⁸⁷ In 1958, Kubitschek proposed an "Operación Pan America," which contained eight basic social and economic goals for the region.⁸⁸

As Kubitschek's ideas took hold, leaders at meetings of the OAS began to make plans for pursuing an inter-American regional development institution, which would be funded in large part by the United States. However, the U.S. delegations were not convinced of the necessity of

⁸⁶ CQ Almanac 1967, 23rd ed, "Summit Meeting Reviews Alliance's First Six Years," Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1968.

⁸⁷ Dunne, "Kennedy's Alliance for Progress: countering revolution in Latin America," 1399.

⁸⁸ CQ Almanac 1967, 23rd ed, "Summit Meeting Reviews Alliance's First Six Years."

these plans and initially cast aside the suggestion of such a program as unrealistic.⁸⁹ It wasn't until the Cuban revolution that the notion of a coordinated inter-American regional development program started to have more appeal from the U.S. perspective. At a conference in Bogota in September 1960, the U.S. proposed a compromise, the Act of Bogota, which served as a broad outline for what would eventually become the Alliance for Progress.⁹⁰

With the rise in the strength of leftist ideas in Cuba, the Kennedy administration's task force on "immediate Latin American problems" underscored the urgency of separating social transformation in Latin America from communist politics. With this in mind, in August of 1961, the OAS met for its Inter-American Economic and Social Council in Uruguay, where they developed the Declaration to the Peoples of America explaining their charter and the formal description of an Alliance for Progress within the Framework of Operation Pan America.⁹¹ The Declaration asserted that the promotion of democracy would help facilitate additional aspirations such as decent housing, employment, land availability, good health, and access to education in Latin America.

On March 13, 1961, Kennedy delivered a White House address to diplomats explaining the program and his administration's commitment to Latin America. He emphasized the common history between the U.S. and Latin America and their shared responsibility to spread economic progress, social justice, and democracy.⁹² Throughout the speech, he also stresses that the Latin American people must be determined to put in the work required to help themselves, for "they alone can mobilize their resources, enlist the energies of their people, and modify their social patterns so that all, and not just a privileged few, share in the fruits of growth." He added,

⁸⁹ Dunne, "Kennedy's Alliance for Progress: countering revolution in Latin America," 1400.

⁹⁰ CQ Almanac 1967, 23rd ed, "Summit Meeting Reviews Alliance's First Six Years."

⁹¹ Dunne, "Kennedy's Alliance for Progress: countering revolution in Latin America," 1406.

⁹² Dunne, "Kennedy's Alliance for Progress: countering revolution in Latin America," 1390.

“If this effort is made, then outside assistance will give vital impetus to progress; without it, no amount of help will advance the welfare of the people.”⁹³

In this widely publicized address directed toward his “longtime friends,” Kennedy aimed to bind the U.S. and Latin American together as united by history and experience, relating their colonial struggles for freedom. True freedom, he implied, can only be achieved through a framework of democratic institutions. He admitted that the United States has not yet achieved this ultimate goal nor have they always understood the significance of their relationship with Latin America. In this sense, the Alliance for Progress marked the turning of a new leaf in the level of U.S. appreciation for “the urgency or the need to lift people from poverty and ignorance and despair.”⁹⁴

Their common enemy was tyranny, and societal advancement would only be possible by collectively resisting tyrannical forces, though those forces were not explicitly named. At the end of his speech, Kennedy exclaimed that the Alliance will “once again awaken our American revolution until it guides the struggle of people everywhere - not with an imperialism of force or fear, but the rule of courage and freedom and hope for the future of man.”⁹⁵ By making this point, Kennedy seems to acknowledge, and simultaneously challenge, the possible assumption that his efforts stem from imperialist roots, claiming instead that he is strictly motivated by the allure of freedom and what it can bring to the hemisphere.

In addition to improving per capita income and wealth distribution, the social goals that the U.S. and inter-American organizations would work to address included combating illiteracy,

⁹³ Dunne, “Kennedy's Alliance for Progress: countering revolution in Latin America,” 1391.

⁹⁴ John F. Kennedy, “Address at a White House Reception for Members of Congress and the Diplomatic Corps of Latin American Republics.” March 13, 1961. From JFK Library, White House Audio Collection, White House Audio Recordings, 1961-1963, Audio tape, 20:58. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKWHA/1961/JFKWHA-017-004/JFKWHA-017-004>

⁹⁵ Ibid.

disease, and poverty as well as reforming tax structures and land ownership rules. The U.S. would also help promote free trade, stabilize commodity prices, improve existing aid programs, and institute educational exchange programs.⁹⁶ There were two major categories of U.S. contributions to the Alliance: public economic aid in the form of loans, grants and technical help, and private assistance largely through direct long-term investment.⁹⁷ From a more ideological perspective, however, the U.S. was primarily striving to incite a social revolution in Latin America through a self-help program that was not intended to be perceived as traditional foreign aid or as dominated by the United States.⁹⁸

The Kennedy administration held out hope that the Alliance would have an impact and global reception similar to the Marshall Plan, or European Recovery Plan, that followed World War II. The consensus view of the Marshall Plan was that it was not only quite successful but also produced relatively quick results. Much of support for the program was rooted in the assumption that “countries with stable and prosperous economies made for more reliable allies”; therefore, the U.S. and Western Europe would surely be politically and economically intertwined for years to come.⁹⁹ The Marshall Plan thus became the benchmark for how modern states can cooperate together to address crises, and there were similar expectations regarding the potential of the Alliance for Progress to create long-lasting partnerships with Latin America.

However, despite the comparisons to the Marshall Plan, Dunne suggests that an accurate description for the Alliance for Progress might be “noble in aspiration, problematical and perhaps unquantifiable in detail.”¹⁰⁰ Particularly in light of unrest in major regions of Latin

⁹⁶ Dunne, “Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress: countering revolution in Latin America,” 1407.

⁹⁷ CQ Almanac 1967, 23rd ed, “Summit Meeting Reviews Alliance’s First Six Years.”

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ Christopher Hickman, “The Kennedy Administration’s Alliance for Progress and the Burdens of the Marshall Plan.” *Federal History* (2013): 80.

¹⁰⁰ Dunne, “Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress: countering revolution in Latin America,” 1408.

America such as Brazil and Argentina, the notion that democratic institutions and a strengthened middle class would bring significant reforms and legitimate peace started to become less believable.¹⁰¹ Additionally, measuring the effectiveness of the program proved difficult, especially since the results of a “decade of development” could not necessarily be assessed based on short term changes, so continued support for the Alliance required continued theoretical rearticulation of the pressing need for modernization.

Modernization

Modernization theorist Walt R. Rostow sent President Kennedy a memorandum in March of 1961 adamantly arguing that it was the right time for the Alliance for Progress in Latin America because “the underdeveloped world will, during the 1960s, either complete the take-off process or be very far advanced in it. When take-off is complete, a nation may be poor but it is normally in a position to draw its external capital from private commercial sources.”¹⁰² He felt that financial aid and assistance from the U.S. could drive these underdeveloped nations toward the pathway of “self-sustained growth.” Doing so would, importantly, keep the Latin American countries in the program “off our necks as we try to clean up the spots of bad trouble.”¹⁰³

The notion of curing “backward” societies through modernization was not new to U.S. foreign policy with Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress. Modernization theories can be traced back to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment period in Western Europe and emerged largely as a justification for Western Europe’s, and later the United States’, power positions and moral authority in the global order. Enlightenment principles of conscious rationality, freedom, and the value of science over religion converged to define a common doctrine for societies: “the idea that

¹⁰¹ CQ Almanac 1967, 23rd ed, "Summit Meeting Reviews Alliance's First Six Years."

¹⁰² Rostow, W. W. "W. W. Rostow memorandum to John F. Kennedy." March 2, 1961. From JFK Library, President’s Office Files (POF), box A, “Rostow, 3/61– 5/61.”

¹⁰³ Ibid.

anything new is necessarily good and desirable because we live in an era of progress.”¹⁰⁴ What is considered “good” and “progress,” however, is ultimately defined relative to Western thinkers and Western political norms.

Ramon Grosfoguel explains that by the late eighteenth century, the Enlightenment emphasis on individual freedom was translated to the nation-state level, with each “modern” nation state considered to be “sovereign and free to rationally control its progressive development.”¹⁰⁵ Lynn Thomas also emphasizes the relationship between sovereignty and modernity in her description of some of its other specific components. Though noting that understandings of modernity have shifted over time, Thomas writes that modern nation states generally prioritize “political divisions between the religious and the secular and the public and the private; the cultivation of scientific rationality and critical self-reflection; liberal political ideals that challenge social hierarchies rooted in kin, class, gender, or race; constitutional, representative, and bureaucratic forms of government; industrial production and expanded markets; mechanical reproduction and mass media; heightened urbanization, monetization, and consumption; accelerated transportation and communication; and a future-oriented conception of time that figures the present as a radical rupture from the past.”¹⁰⁶

Inherent in these qualities, or what Gurminder Bhambra would describe as the grand narrative of modernity, is the assumption that Europe’s pathway to development is synonymous with the proper process for becoming modern. Pillars of early modernization theories, now widely contested by present-day scholars, were that there is only one modernity – that which has

¹⁰⁴ Ramon Grosfoguel, “Developmentalism, Modernity, and Dependency Theory in Latin America.” *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 2 (2000): 348.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Lynn M. Thomas, “Modernity’s Failings, Political Claims, and Intermediate Concepts,” *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): 737.

been modeled in Europe – and that “development” can be understood as originating in the West and expanding to the East, beginning with feudal Europe and transforming into the capitalist world economy.¹⁰⁷ Though these framings have since been debunked as Eurocentric, they have continued to be repurposed and incorporated into Western political thought and foreign policymaking.

During the nineteenth century, Richard Wolin explains that the discourse of modernity, rights, and sovereignty fueled European colonialism, particularly in Africa. “The fact that native inhabitants lacked the Western concept of sovereignty was employed as a pretext both to deny them the right to self-rule and, correlatively, to justify colonial legal and political trusteeship, with its attendant horrors and excesses,” Wolin states.¹⁰⁸ These ideas allowed Europeans to describe their domination and intervention in these colonized regions as acts of service and products of their moral responsibilities. In this view, those who had not yet been able to “discover their own autonomous identities, their own intrinsic idiom, [and] their own indigenous narrative voice” needed European help and guidance in order to become properly modern.¹⁰⁹ After all, the overall goal of modernization during this period was to have all societies look the same, matching the European model; therefore, only Europeans themselves were capable of imparting wisdom and adequate assistance.

Scholars have looked primarily at Africa to understand the role of Europe’s modernization theory and to track some of the changes in its definitions over time. Lynn Thomas explains that Western social scientists, politicians, and journalists alike have tended to view

¹⁰⁷ Gurinder K. Bhambra, “Historical Sociology, Modernity, and Postcolonial Critique.” *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): 658.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Wolin, “‘Modernity’: The Peregrinations of a Contested Historiographical Concept,” *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): 741.

¹⁰⁹ Wolin, “‘Modernity’: The Peregrinations of a Contested Historiographical Concept,” 742.

“Africa as the inverse of all things modern: a bastion of backwardness, or at best, tradition.”¹¹⁰

However, the use of “modern” has evolved with changing global circumstances and the intended appropriate outcomes; for example, European colonizers pointed to modernity as the motivation for their “civilizing missions” in African societies, while Western powers in the post-World War II period used modernization as a justification for interventions to dismantle traditional social and political institutions in developing nations.¹¹¹ That being said, the connecting thread between interpretations of modernization is its implication of “the notion that some societies are ‘ahead’ and others are in need of ‘catching up.’”¹¹²

Because Western powers have historically defined modernization theories, they can maintain a dynamic where they always have the upper hand and therefore possess something to teach others. For example, at a 1963 Chamber of Commerce meeting in Mexico City, modernization theorist Rostow compared the development of societies to the development of humans, suggesting that societies in the “childhood” stage of modernization can grow to full personhood by learning from more advanced countries. Countries who were successfully modern could guide others through the different challenges they might face along the way, in the same way that one might identify the sequence of “the kinds of problems which, inevitably, must be confronted by an infant of nine months; a child of five; an adolescent of fourteen; a young man of twenty-one.”¹¹³

Implications for Latin America

¹¹⁰ Thomas, “Modernity’s Failings, Political Claims, and Intermediate Concepts,” 727.

¹¹¹ Thomas, “Modernity’s Failings, Political Claims, and Intermediate Concepts,” 734.

¹¹² Thomas, “Modernity’s Failings, Political Claims, and Intermediate Concepts,” 734-735.

¹¹³ W. W. Rostow, “Economic Development: Some Lessons of a Common Experience,” August 1963. Mexico City, MX. Moscoso Papers, “Speech Materials, 6/63–9/63.”

Though Africa has been a focus for testing modernization theory, Latin America has also been subject to these ideas and significantly affected by the way they manifested in foreign policy. Latin Americans recognize that they were viewed as less “modern” or even “pre-modern” in comparison to Europe. As Mexican essayist and author Octavio Paz put it, “there was frequent talk of ‘Europeanizing’ our countries: the modern was outside and had to be imported.”¹¹⁴ Sergio Costa explains that ever since the independence movements of the nineteenth century, modernization became a topic of focus in Latin America. Modernization was treated as something not found in Latin America or as something that could hopefully be achieved at some point in the future. Importantly, according to Costa, it was “equated with a specific (distant) social formation and simultaneously represents a vision of the future whereby different forms of domination, also including dictatorships, are legitimized in the name of modernization.”¹¹⁵

In terms of the evolution of modernization theory in Latin America, Costa explains that when it was initially invoked during the nineteenth century, it was associated with explicit scientific racism and the idea that Europeanization could be achieved by whitening the skin.¹¹⁶ By the 1920s and throughout the rest of the twentieth century, the focus shifted away from biology, and there was a new emphasis on identifying the cultural, social, and political processes that could bring about modernization in Latin America. For example, theorists argued that modernization would require a new emphasis on prioritizing urban life, restructuring land ownership, and decentralizing politics to foster a separation of powers. Those changes, coupled with the promotion of the values of hard work, secularism, individualism, autonomy, and

¹¹⁴ Sergio Costa, “The research on modernity in Latin America: Lineages and dilemmas,” *Current Sociology Review* 67, no. 6 (2019): 838-839.

¹¹⁵ Costa, “The research on modernity in Latin America: Lineages and dilemmas,” 839.

¹¹⁶ Costa, “The research on modernity in Latin America: Lineages and dilemmas,” 842.

rationalism, would transform Latin American societies previously stuck in a feudal or backward stage into successful, modern societies.¹¹⁷

However, following the Cuban Revolution as the 1960s began, U.S. foreign policymakers shifted their application of modernization theories in the Latin American context. The notion of “development” emerged as the basis of U.S. foreign assistance programs and was guided by the presumption that there was “a linear path of evolution in which the United States sat hierarchically above Latin America.”¹¹⁸ The aims of development were more palatable than modernization and blatant colonialism, though they were repackaging the same ideas. Ultimately, undergoing “development” translated to the same goal of building societies more like the United States.¹¹⁹

An important framing of underdevelopment also stemmed from Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch, who headed the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America from 1950 to 1963. Prebisch interpreted the world as divided between a core and a periphery – the core being made up of the wealthy superpowers, while the periphery consisted of the poorer countries who relied on natural resource exports and assistance from the core.¹²⁰ For the United States, in order to resist the radical movements that took form in resistance to this dynamic between the periphery and the core, policymakers started to realize that providing aid for development might diminish social inequalities and poverty, and their help would assuage the tensions of radicalism, serving to protect the stability and longevity of the core-periphery structure.¹²¹ Kennedy’s Alliance For Progress is the tangible manifestation of this line of

¹¹⁷ Costa, “The research on modernity in Latin America: Lineages and dilemmas,” 843-844.

¹¹⁸ Jerry Dávila and Jerry Dvila, “Dependency, Development, and Liberation: Latin America in the Cold War,” In *Dictatorship in South America*. Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2013: 10.

¹¹⁹ Dávila and Dvila, “Dependency, Development, and Liberation: Latin America in the Cold War,” 11.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Dávila and Dvila, “Dependency, Development, and Liberation: Latin America in the Cold War,” 16.

thought, and especially in a Cold War context, it was a program made to help preserve the reign of capitalism, democracy, and modernity in the Americas.

Connecting Modernization to U.S. Exceptionalism

Embodying “modernity” and imposing those ideals upon others has long been at the center of U.S. identity. The United States’ definitions for what qualifies as modern and its understanding of which institutions can produce modernized societies are directly related to how the U.S. views and conceptualizes itself. Part of U.S. identity is the belief that the U.S. is the best example of modernity in action and the most equipped to assist other nations with becoming more modern. In other words, modernization helps boost America’s message of its exceptionalism abroad and can be incorporated as leverage to add to the legitimacy of its domestic as well as foreign policies.

According to Siobhán McEvoy-Levy, U.S. exceptionalism is rooted in the implication of “the United States’ moral superiority as well as the uniqueness of its origins, political system, social organization and values and cultural and religious characteristics.”¹²² The institutions referenced in this definition stem from the traits that similarly define modernity: liberal democracy, political divisions between the religious and the secular, mass industrial production, and a capitalist economy, among others. Siobhán McEvoy-Levy points to U.S. exceptionalism as the “para-ideological umbrella” beneath foundational American ideas and assumptions, such as “manifest destiny,” becoming a “city upon a hill,” the American dream, America’s moral responsibility, American credibility, and the protection and extension of democracy.¹²³ These ideas are reinforced and emulated in modernization theories, allowing the U.S. to readily employ

¹²² Siobhán McEvoy-Levy, *American Exceptionalism and US Foreign Policy: Public Diplomacy at the End of the Cold War*, New York, NY: PALGRAVE, 2001: 23.

¹²³ Ibid.

them for not only its national identity construction but also its policy decisions. Importantly, U.S. exceptionalism has been used as a justification, either directly or indirectly, for U.S. leadership during every significant geopolitical transition since the late nineteenth century.¹²⁴

Exceptionalist discourses, according to Nymalm and Plagemann, represent a link between a state's foreign policy and its self-understanding as a unique society. This self-understanding is rooted in ideas of civilization and modernization, as it places the state's uniqueness as part of a "higher order revelation or spiritual or otherworldly character," thereby associating it with a stage that other societies would not be able to reach on their own but might, by accepting guidance through the exceptional state's foreign policies, catch up enough to sufficiently serve the common good.¹²⁵ At their core, exceptionalist discourses aim to foster a sense of morality and set of values that are presented as universal goals for every other nation – or even, all of humanity – to aspire to meet.¹²⁶

Nymalm and Plagemann clarify that exceptionalist discourses are inherently forms of national identity construction, but not every country's foreign policy or national identity is exceptionalist.¹²⁷ Nymalm and Plagemann explain that U.S. exceptionalism is distinct from other nation's exceptionalist discourses. The "exemplary strand" of American exceptionalism that they define has specific roots in the "city upon the hill" goals from the founding of the United States and the principles laid out in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Modernization and related Enlightenment-era ideas, such as the rule of law, private property, representative government, freedom of speech and religion, and commercial liberty, made this

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Nicola Nymalm and Johannes Plagemann, "Comparative Exceptionalism: Universality and Particularity in Foreign Policy Discourses," *International Studies Review* 21 (2019): 14.

¹²⁶ Nymalm and Plagemann, "Comparative Exceptionalism: Universality and Particularity in Foreign Policy Discourses," 15.

¹²⁷ Nymalm and Plagemann, "Comparative Exceptionalism: Universality and Particularity in Foreign Policy Discourses," 14.

strand even more widely popularized in later years.¹²⁸ By the second half of the nineteenth century, another strand of U.S. exceptionalism also emerged, which Nymalm and Plagemann call the “missionary strand.” The missionary strand coincided with manifest destiny and U.S. expansionism, supporting the idea that the U.S. was destined to share its values and moral code with other societies, “civilizing” them while inevitably overtaking their territory.

U.S. exceptionalism sheds light on the unique perspectives that Americans have in regards to the rest of the world and the way they perceive their role globally. This culture of superiority is pervasive not only in politics but in everyday life, social interactions, education, economic structures, and more. Paul R. Pillar argues that this “culture and everything that has gone into it constitute a prism that slants, distorts, and colors how Americans see what is around them.”¹²⁹ As a result, policymakers are shaped by these same circumstances and have absorbed the identity of American exceptionalism, which ultimately informs their policy choices.

The depth of these ideas and their prevalence in all facets of the American experience are intentional, because as McEvoy-Levy notes, the self-confidence of American citizens is critical for achieving U.S. foreign policy objectives.¹³⁰ After all, Pillar points out that the power of policymakers stems from the public, so they are responding to public opinion and are limited in their options based on what will appeal to the values and beliefs of their constituents.¹³¹ These dynamics create an elevated image of the U.S. and a deflated perception of those who live elsewhere, Pillar explains. Due to the distorted prism of exceptionalism, Americans can continue identifying themselves as champions of freedom and revolutionaries of the New World without

¹²⁸ Nymalm and Plagemann, “Comparative Exceptionalism: Universality and Particularity in Foreign Policy Discourses,” 21.

¹²⁹ Paul R. Pillar, “American Good Fortune and Misperception about the Outside World,” *Political Science Quarterly* 131, no. 4 (2016-17): 685.

¹³⁰ McEvoy-Levy, *American Exceptionalism and US Foreign Policy: Public Diplomacy at the End of the Cold War*, 27.

¹³¹ Pillar, “American Good Fortune and Misperception about the Outside World,” 687.

acknowledging the violent domination, colonial activity, and “civilizing” missions motivated by the same exceptionalist discourse.

RACE AND MODERNIZATION

Racial Formation & the 1960s

The 1960s are a critical moment to study the role of race and the renegotiation of racial identity in the U.S. during the Civil Rights Movement as well as abroad during the post-World War II period of independence movements in previously colonized states. Omi and Winant describe the reciprocal relationship between racial movement mobilization and formal politics, which led to a process of racial formation and rearticulation. It is a reciprocal transformation because “racial movements not only pose new demands originating outside state institutions, but may also frame their ‘common identity’ in response to state-based racial initiatives.”¹³² The demand for state reforms in the 1960s brought about a transformation in terms of how to define and understand race, resulting in a rearticulation of racial ideology due to the nature of interactions between the state and civil society. Omi and Winant suggest that there was a paradigm shift during this period in which “the established system of racial meanings and identities, based in the ethnicity paradigm of race, experienced increasing strain and opposition.”¹³³

The previously accepted ethnicity paradigm asserted that race is an important social category but only one of many factors of an ethnic identity that is based primarily on culture and descent.¹³⁴ The ethnicity paradigm was often used to support the notion of assimilation as a

¹³² Michael Omi and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1994: 89.

¹³³ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 96.

¹³⁴ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 15.

response to racism. Scholars and policymakers such as Gunnar Myrdal and E. Franklin Frazier argued that assimilation could resolve the shortcomings and “pathological” aspects of non-white cultures through complete integration and assimilation. In line with this thinking, Myrdal writes in his 1944 book *An American Dilemma* that “if America in actual practice could show the world a progressive trend by which the Negro finally became integrated into modern democracy, all mankind would be given faith again – it would have reason to believe that peace, progress, and order are feasible... America is free to choose whether the Negro shall remain her liability or become her opportunity.”¹³⁵ Based on this paradigm, racial integration could be depicted as an essential tool for modernization and progress. When the Civil Rights Movement initially began with its focus on fighting racial segregation in the South, the ethnicity paradigm continued to be invoked and remained relevant for some thinkers, but as the movement expanded to become a national campaign against racism, new paradigms for conceptualizing racial ideology emerged and became more mainstream.¹³⁶

While the ethnicity paradigm became less dominant, class and nation-based perspectives started to gain greater attention as the 1950s and 1960s unfolded. According to Omi and Winant, the class perspective on racial ideology argues that framings of racial politics and ideologies of equality often mask the reality that economic opportunities are blocked for certain racial groups.¹³⁷ The class perspective focuses on the constraints that racial minorities experience in terms of economic mobility.¹³⁸ The nation-based perspective, on the other hand, emphasizes that racial ideologies and categories are fundamentally rooted in the dynamics and legacies of

¹³⁵ Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, Volume 1*, New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962: 1021-1022.

¹³⁶ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 96.

¹³⁷ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 26.

¹³⁸ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 28.

colonialism. In this view, race was a mechanism for distinguishing “members of the oppressor and oppressed ‘nations’ – the colonizers and the colonized,” as Omi and Winant explain.¹³⁹

A greater awareness began to take shape due to the events and voices of the Civil Rights Movement that showcased how race affects all elements of one’s lived experience from the individual, to the social, to the political and economic levels. Omi and Winant also identified that the development and mobilization of the Black Power movement, which extended beyond the Civil Rights Movements and promoted additional goals and visions, also brought key changes to the process of racial formation in the 1960s. These simultaneous movements, all contesting the norms of racial politics and working to overthrow the racial state, “irreversibly expanded the terrain of political contest, and set the stage for the general reorganization of U.S. politics.”¹⁴⁰

In light of these dynamics, it is not a coincidence that the Alliance For Progress and its refashioning of the tenets of modernization were enacted during this era of significant racial renegotiation and alternative approaches to identity construction. Based on Omi and Winant’s frameworks, the Alliance For Progress could potentially be understood as an effort to reincorporate the ethnicity paradigm back into popular rhetoric and policies amidst these new ideologies that threatened the feasibility of modernization theories as well as the credibility of the United States’ position of leadership within the global hierarchy.

During this period, U.S. institutions were encountering significant resistance to their most fundamental notions about identity and the role of race, so the Alliance for Progress had an especially urgent ideological mission of reminding the world of the previous paradigm for racial thinking in order to keep the global hierarchy securely intact. The ethnicity paradigm, which could be molded more easily to fit ideas of assimilation and integration, allowed for the U.S. to

¹³⁹ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 37-38.

¹⁴⁰ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 96.

continue championing its model for development and rejecting the growing interest in “radical” ideas about economic inequality and the legacies of colonialism. To complicate matters even more, similar pressures regarding norms of identity were present on the international stage, which was also grappling with new ways to define racial distinctions and how to connect them to class and nation-state identities.

The Cold War & Racialization of the “Third World”

The “Third World” framework stems from the idea that colonized people weren’t capable of managing independence or self-government; as Michael Hunt puts it, “they were children for the knowing American to tutor. They were miscreants for the U.S. policeman to curb and if necessary call to account. They were a force of nature - a flood, a hurricane, an avalanche - driven by racial fury, civilizational animosity, or communist fervor.”¹⁴¹ The American public knew little about the Third World, even their Latin American neighbors, so they were quick to adopt these paternalistic perceptions of the region.¹⁴² Latin America belonged to a broader narrative of inferiority that applied to the entire Third World, and U.S. perceptions of the “Third World” were relevant to the way that ideas about race, woven with modernization theories, were exported abroad.

The Third World developed racial connotations, particularly during the Cold War, that characterized U.S. foreign policy positions toward those regions. Alfred Sauvy, a French demographer and economic historian, coined the term “Third World” in 1952. In its 1952 usage, the “Third World” referred to ideas of neglect, exploitation, and revolutionary potential as well as the distinction of non-alignment.¹⁴³ In the realm of political non-alignment, Leslie Wolf-

¹⁴¹ Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance*, 190.

¹⁴² Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance*, 197.

¹⁴³ Leslie Wolf-Phillips, “Why ‘Third World’?: Origin, Definition and Usage,” *Third World Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (1987): 1312.

Phillips explains that “tiers monde,” or “Third World” was used “by the leaders of newly-independent nations in the 1950s – such as Kwame Nkrumah – when they called for the establishment of a bloc of uncommitted nations as a ‘non-nuclear Third Force’ between the East-West confrontation of the ‘Cold War’ period.”¹⁴⁴ However, by the 1960s and 1970s, the “Third World” was used primarily to distinguish poor versus rich countries and the divide between the Northern and Southern hemispheres. The “First World” included the industrialized capitalist countries, while the “Second World” was attributed to industrialized, or industrializing, socialist countries.¹⁴⁵

M.D. Litonjua emphasizes that Third World countries “are united in one most important way: they share a common history of colonialism. They therefore carry the DNA of anti-colonialism.”¹⁴⁶ The Third World was at the center of the Cold War, not only because the United States and the Soviet Union intervened and fought their wars, both militarily and economically, in these countries but also because Third World countries collectively were inspired to partake in anti-colonial revolutionary movements and fight for independence during the Cold War.¹⁴⁷ Notably, however, their anti-colonial struggle existed alongside the implementation of a new kind of colonialism in the Third World, which Litonjua characterizes as the era of corporate-led neoliberal globalization.¹⁴⁸

By the 1970s, the term “Third World” had been generally accepted and incorporated in academic contexts, starting to appear in everyday conversation as well. Today, most people still think of countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa when they hear “Third World.” Keith Aoki

¹⁴⁴ Wolf-Phillips, “Why ‘Third World’?: Origin, Definition and Usage,” 1313.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ M.D. Litonjua, “THE MAKING OF THE THIRD WORLD: IS THE TERM STILL MEANINGFUL AND USEFUL?” *Journal of Third World Studies* 31, no. 1 (2014): 118.

¹⁴⁷ Litonjua, “THE MAKING OF THE THIRD WORLD: IS THE TERM STILL MEANINGFUL AND USEFUL?”, 118-119.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

argues that “identifying the Third World as existing in the spaces of the periphery as opposed to the core is a continuation of this marginalization process.”¹⁴⁹ Aoki invokes the theorizing of Balakrishnan Rajagopal, who seeks to consider the Third World as an ideological category. On the one hand, the Third World is tied to geography, and on the other, Rajagopal argues that the Third World is associated with a “certain set of images: of poverty, of squalor, corruption, violence, calamities and disasters, irrational local fundamentalisms, bad smell, garbage, filth, technological ‘backwardness,’ or simply lack of modernity.”¹⁵⁰ Many of these images correspond with racist characterizations of non-white societies as inferior and reinforce ideas of racial hierarchy.

Odd Arne Westad argues that America’s interventions in the Third World are indicative of how the ideology of America as “an empire of liberty” evolved during the post-World War II era as well as the way it plays into foreign policy. Westad points out that interventionism and territorial expansion have been elements of the United States’ power since its inception, characterized by the notion that America offers freedoms and privileges that are so unique that there is an obligation to spread its model to the rest of the world.¹⁵¹ He explains that after nineteenth-century conflicts over slavery and the Reconstruction era, the twentieth century approach to the Third World was marked by two key images – emancipation and guidance. The premise of emancipation was a response to “the need to remove the stigma of slavery from American ideals of liberty,” while guidance seemed from the idea that former slaves in the U.S. might “fall easy victim” to their previous, underdeveloped societies or worse, get drawn into

¹⁴⁹ Keith Aoki, "Space Invaders: Critical Geography, the Third World in International Law and Critical Race Theory," *Villanova Law Review* 45, no. 5 (2000): 925.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 9.

ideologies such as socialism.¹⁵² These aims of protecting the Third World from itself can sum up the motivations of American foreign policy during the entirety of the Cold War period, according to Westad.

Following the Cold War, scholars and foreign policy advisors began to discuss the “backwardness” of the Third World in more explicitly racial terms by incorporating and adjusting the rhetoric of the “standard of civilization” that Gong initially described. Writings from scholars like Samuel Huntington prove how this notion of civilization has been persistent in U.S. foreign policy and has continued to seep into the way other countries were categorized during the Cold War. Huntington’s steadfast belief that Western civilization differs so fundamentally from other civilizations is likely representative of how other U.S. foreign policy-makers felt about the Third World. He is adamant that Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, separate the West from other cultures and traditions like those of Asia and the Middle East.¹⁵³

Huntington is a prominent example of an American political scientist who had influence over the theorizing of the Third World and foreign policy considerations during the Cold War era. He was the director of Harvard University Center for International Affairs for many years and also served as the White House Coordinator of Security Planning for the National Security Council during the Carter administration. To understand the ways that U.S. foreign policy was infused with these deeper notions of racial and cultural superiority, the “clash of civilizations” offers insight into how some of the elite policymakers of the Cold War considered different groups.

¹⁵² Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 22.

¹⁵³ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 40.

Huntington spearheaded this prevailing narrative of the “clash of civilizations,” which was the idea that there was a great division among humankind based on cultural differences that inevitably leads to conflict. Huntington posits that civilizations are “the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species.”¹⁵⁴ According to his theory, civilizations differ from each other based on history, language, culture, tradition, and religion; therefore, he suggests, Western civilizations have drastically different qualities from Latin American, Arab, Japanese, or Chinese civilizations. In painting the West and the “non-West” as two opposite ends of a spectrum, Huntington describes a rigid line of division where coexistence and cooperation don’t appear to be on the table. Seeing no alternative, he basically condones violence as a response to cultural and geographic difference, which is reflective of Western imperialist ideology throughout history.

Modernization & White Supremacy

Modernization is a concept born of white supremacy. Lilly Wilcox describes 1960s modernization theories as a means for the United States to wield “the seductive idea of development to convince other countries that American involvement in their affairs was the best way forward” as part of a larger system of “neocolonialist mystification.”¹⁵⁵ This larger system produces a white savior complex, which Wilcox defines as the view that citizens of the Global North, fueled by their paternalistic good will, can somehow save citizens of the Global South from themselves.¹⁵⁶ Ranjan Bandyopadhyay elaborates on this narrative and explains that even within contexts of independence and national sovereignty, the white savior complex helps

¹⁵⁴ Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?”, 24.

¹⁵⁵ Lilly W. Wilcox, “Reforming the Unreformable: The Peace Corps, Neocolonialism, and the White Savior Complex,” *Undergraduate Journal of Global Citizenship* 4, no. 1 (2021): 4.

¹⁵⁶ Wilcox, “Reforming the Unreformable: The Peace Corps, Neocolonialism, and the White Savior Complex,” 6.

perpetuate “a ‘colonization of the mind’ (Ngugi 1986), wherein whiteness is associated with progress, power and domination.”¹⁵⁷ The colonization of the mind is so ingrained through continued structures of racial oppression that it becomes difficult to alter or eliminate these assumptions, even when one’s intention is to do so; tropes of white saviorism and its paternalistic mentality continue to show up not just in foreign policy but also in everyday cultural objects such as films, books, and TV shows.

Matthew Hughey, who studies white saviorism in film, explains that whiteness is typically associated with normativity, often hidden in plain sight, or idealism, denoting a set of behaviors that are linked to social and economic mobility.¹⁵⁸ White privilege is typically either not acknowledged, he finds, or it is “justified in reference to whites’ supposed possession of ‘good values,’ such as a strong work ethic and commitment to sovereign individualism.”¹⁵⁹ These ‘good values’ associated with whiteness are also some of the elements often described as essential to modernization. White savior narratives, according to Hughey, help maintain this understanding of white superiority by asserting “a tale of normal and natural white paternalism.”¹⁶⁰ Through this lens, whites have a greater sense of morality, which helps them be the ones to teach nonwhites right from wrong.

Relying on the pillars of the ethnicity paradigm, the white savior emerges as a figure who can help facilitate racial integration, serving the common good. In the films that Hughey analyzes, this figure is someone who brings some sort of salvation to the “dysfunctional ‘others’ who are redeemable as long as they consent to assimilation and obedience to their white

¹⁵⁷ Ranjan Bandyopadhyay, “Volunteer tourism and “The White Man’s Burden”: globalization of suffering, white savior complex, religion and modernity,” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 27, no. 3 (2019): 333.

¹⁵⁸ Matthew W. Hughey, *The White Savior Film*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2014: 5.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Hughey, *The White Savior Film*, 7.

benefactors of class, capital, and compassion.”¹⁶¹ These same dynamics also manifest in foreign policy. The notion of the “white man’s burden,” for example, worked to spread this framing of the world “in terms of a stark civilized-savage dichotomy,” a gap that could only be mended by white paternalistic intervention, Christian missionary activity, colonization, and later, modernization and development.¹⁶²

METHODS AND ANALYSIS

Documents relating to the Alliance for Progress

To understand the thinking and strategy behind the Alliance for Progress and the role of racial assumptions within the program, I have collected a variety of documents to analyze, including speeches, internal memorandums, research reports, and meeting notes from members of the Kennedy administration. I was able to access these documents by looking through the digital archives at the John F. Kennedy Library and the Department of State’s historical documents archives. With an eye for discussions of modernization and freedom, U.S. exceptionalism, and other elements of U.S. identity, I will summarize the relevant documents I found and point to key themes. Importantly, these are documents that were not produced by the United States Information Agency but will provide ample insight into U.S. foreign policymaking and the mindsets that informed the U.S. approach to Latin America at the time.

The major patterns that stuck out to me in my reading of these documents ranged from efforts by the U.S. to understand the roots of the tension in their relationship with Latin America, to an emphasis on inciting a middle class revolution in Latin America that aims for higher civilization, to the idea that Latin America is too stubborn to help itself and resistant to the

¹⁶¹ Hughey, *The White Savior Film*, 8.

¹⁶² Hughey, *The White Savior Film*, 10.

success of the U.S. model for development. These patterns are all intertwined with race, class, modernization, and American superiority in ways that I will point out in each section. From these sources, it is clear that while the Kennedy administration was certainly making progressive strides in Latin America and had sanitized almost all of the overt racism from its professional written exchanges at this point, they were still operating from the baseline assumptions about American identity that create the distorted prism Pillar theorizes.

There are a few leading voices in these documents who require some introduction in order to best understand their perspectives. One is Teodoro Moscoso, a Puerto Rican businessman and politician who was named the ambassador to Venezuela in May of 1961. In November of 1961, Moscoso was also sworn in as the coordinator of the Alliance for Progress. As the coordinator, he made many speeches about the Alliance and was often in the position of defending it against ongoing criticism. Another key figure is President Kennedy's special assistant Arthur M. Schlesinger, who was previously an American historian, advocate for progressive politics, and college professor. Schlesinger was a primary proponent of modernization in Latin America and communicated an awareness of the power dynamics between the regions, making some attempts to alleviate the recognizable historical tensions. Other voices present in the memorandums on these topics include Director of Intelligence and Research Thomas Hughes, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Edward Martin, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Robert Woodward, and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs Arturo Morales Carrión.

Roots of Tension

At the outset of Moscoso's 1962 speech at the World Affairs Conference at Marquette University about Latin American perceptions of the Alliance for Progress, he acknowledges that

the Alliance still does not have the full involvement or commitment of many Latin American countries. He notes that “the distrust and the skepticism which for a long time have been ingredients in the relationship between the North and Latin American peoples have not been wiped out by the proclamation of this program.”¹⁶³ Moscoso seems particularly aware of some of the tensions that have impeded the goals of the Alliance. He is able to identify that many Latin Americans harbor resentment toward the U.S. in light of past disappointments with foreign intervention and aid in the region, recognizing why Latin Americans might suspect that the intentions of the Alliance are imperialist at heart.

Morales Carrión also makes note of this issue in a 1962 memorandum about some of the difficulties facing the Alliance. He understands that the lack of trust in Alliance among Latin Americans can be traced to the fact that the program “still looks ‘foreign’ and ‘imported,’ it still looks as a ‘Made in U.S.A.’ product.”¹⁶⁴ Though Morales Carrión clarifies that “most of its conceptual framework is derived from recent Latin American economic and social thinking,” he seems to recognize nonetheless that the Alliance won’t succeed unless it is associated more deeply with a Latin American background and point of view. One mechanism for enhancing the role of those ideas, he suggests, is linking the Alliance to nationalism, which he identifies as “the single, most powerful, psychological force now operating in Latin America.”¹⁶⁵ As long as the Alliance appears disconnected from the current psyche of Latin Americans, Morales Carrión knows that historical tensions will continue to play a role in inhibiting the progress of the program and the involvement of Latin Americans.

¹⁶³ Teodoro Moscoso, “The Latin American View of the Alliance for Progress,” September 29, 1962, Milwaukee, WI: Department of State, From JFK Library, James S. Bradshaw Personal Papers. Subject Files, 1959-1972. Alliance for Progress: Speeches by Teodoro Moscoso: 2. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JSBPP/001/JSBPP-001-007>

¹⁶⁴ Arturo Morales Carrión, “Memorandum by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Morales-Carrion),” April 9, 1962. Washington: United States Department of State. From Department of State, S/P Files: Lot 69 D 121, American Republics, 1962. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v12/d44>

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

More specifically, Moscoso's speech also draws attention to the barriers of U.S. aid and the ways that it remains subject to suspicion in Latin America. Even though President Kennedy is widely respected in Latin America and his visits to Latin America helped bolster the program's appeal, Moscoso explains there is a "prevailing psychology that the Alliance is just another United States aid program," and "this view is interwoven with the old feelings of distrust and frustration; the stereotype of the debts the rich uncle owes the poor nephews, is reinforced, and in the final analysis – this whole psychology tends to slow down rather than galvanize national effort and self-help."¹⁶⁶ This ability to define and articulate U.S. paternalism, attributing Latin American resistance to these dynamics, is a clear sign of the more progressive nature of the Kennedy administration and the political environment of the 1960s.

Moscoso cites a gap in understanding when it comes to the issue of aid but seems to describe both Latin America and the U.S. as legitimate in their opinions. From the U.S. perspective, he says, "we tend to feel that we have poured billions into Latin America without much to show for it. As a result, we get impatient and we wonder whether ten more years of the same will produce anything more."¹⁶⁷ Latin Americans, on the other hand, "are more aware that out of the grand total of 90 billion dollars from fiscal year 1946 through 1961, they – our closest neighbors and faithful allies – received a little less than five and a half billion dollars, or about six per cent."¹⁶⁸ Moscoso shows a level of empathy about how U.S. policies may be perceived in Latin America while maintaining that it is fair for U.S. citizens to want to see tangible results from their financial investment in the region.

¹⁶⁶ Teodoro Moscoso, "The Latin American View of the Alliance for Progress," September 29, 1962, Milwaukee, WI: Department of State, From JFK Library, James S. Bradshaw Personal Papers. Subject Files, 1959-1972. Alliance for Progress: Speeches by Teodoro Moscoso: 2. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JSBPP/001/JSBPP-001-007>

¹⁶⁷ Teodoro Moscoso, "The Latin American View of the Alliance for Progress," September 29, 1962, Milwaukee, WI: Department of State, From JFK Library, James S. Bradshaw Personal Papers. Subject Files, 1959-1972. Alliance for Progress: Speeches by Teodoro Moscoso: 4. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JSBPP/001/JSBPP-001-007>

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

In addition to having an appreciation for the roots of Latin American distrust in aid, he recognizes the difficulties that Latin America has faced in light of the declining export prices and rising important prices since the end of World War II. He seems understanding of the bitterness that may stem from these economic shifts. However, Moscoso also uses these economic struggles as a segue to bolster the benefits of modernization. He explains that Latin America is going to have to come to terms with the direction the global economy is going in and take steps toward “diversifying their economies, stepping up their industrialization and creating a common market which will immeasurably increase their economic strength.”¹⁶⁹ Failing to follow suit with these economic trends will make it more difficult for Latin America to catch up and exacerbates their existing frustrations. Latin America needs to start embracing the Alliance, for progress and modernization are still a ways away, Moscoso suggests. The lesson in this argument is that adjusting to the U.S. model will ultimately help solve some of their problems.

In a different speech at the National Conference on International Economic and Social Development in 1962, Moscoso encouraged his audience to imagine themselves being in the position that many Latin American countries are in. If the United States were say, battling corruption or managing separate state-owned industries, “we would all pay more for the products we consume, and our tax burden would be far greater, because each State government would have to grant subsidies to its inefficient industries, and employ a large bureaucracy to administer the innumerable controls required.”¹⁷⁰ His message at this point seems to be that the U.S. is lucky to have the structures it does, and not everyone is so lucky; Latin Americans need

¹⁶⁹ Teodoro Moscoso, “The Latin American View of the Alliance for Progress,” September 29, 1962, Milwaukee, WI: Department of State, From JFK Library, James S. Bradshaw Personal Papers. Subject Files, 1959-1972. Alliance for Progress: Speeches by Teodoro Moscoso: 5. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JSBPP/001/JSBPP-001-007>

¹⁷⁰ Teodoro Moscoso, “The Alliance for Progress – One Year Later,” July 19, 1962, Chicago, IL: Department of State, From JFK Library, James S. Bradshaw Personal Papers. Subject Files, 1959-1972. Alliance for Progress: Speeches by Teodoro Moscoso: 61. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JSBPP/001/JSBPP-001-007>

sympathy and understanding from the U.S. as they navigate the changes they have to make in order to arrive at a stage of development similar to the United States. Moscoso is of the view that the more the U.S. makes an effort to empathize with Latin America's challenging circumstances, the more Latin Americans might be willing to accept a helping hand from the United States and start to emulate its success.

However, a different approach to explaining the problems facing Latin America was presented by Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Edward Martin. In an interview with the *New York Herald Tribune* following the 1963 military coup in the Dominican Republic, Martin suggested that military leaders do not always represent an opposition to social and political change and that effective democracy would not have been possible "by keeping a man in office through use of economic pressure or even military force when his own people are not willing to fight to defend him."¹⁷¹ His suggestion that military coups are acceptable or even necessary to stabilize developing societies working toward democracy evoked a very negative reaction amongst Latin Americans and caused even more strain on the existing controversies surrounding the Alliance for Progress. This idea leans on stereotypes that associate Latin America, and the Third World in general, with chaos, anarchy, and a unique vulnerability to violence due to their failure to achieve civilization. Martin's statement could be interpreted as a manifestation of Huntington's "clash of civilizations" argument, coupled with the perception of the Third World as incapable of self-government.

In response to the immediate backlash to Martin, Schlesinger wrote to President Kennedy in a memorandum to shed light on the gravity of these ideas and how they may impede future

¹⁷¹ United States Department of State Historical Office. *Historical Study: U.S. policy toward Latin America, recognition and non-recognition of governments, and interruptions in diplomatic relations, 1933-1974*. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Historical Office, 1975: 88.

relations. Schlesinger relayed the feedback he received from the Venezuelan ambassador, Moscoso, who emphasized the increasing apprehensiveness and consternation resulting from the “Martin Doctrine.” Schlesinger underscored the need for the administration to reiterate its goals and make an authoritative declaration in regards to Martin’s statements before further damage is done. “The trouble with the Martin statement,” Schlesinger writes, “is that it gives the impression that, since they have failed to triumph overnight, we have lost interest in them and are now looking to military rule to produce progressive regimes.” Schlesinger is concerned with retaining support for a fundamental faith in democracy, as Martin seems to signal that military regimes can be tolerated “so long as the military regime ‘announces’ reform programs and observes the proper etiquette.”¹⁷² Since this notion departs from the policies spelled out in the Alliance, it represents a threat to cooperation and trust in the region.

Schlesinger also points out that the tone of the statement “seems unduly cold and condescending and to suggest a lack of sympathy with the problems of Latin American democracy and with the dignity of the Latin American people.”¹⁷³ Whereas other figures like Moscoso have attempted to build up that sympathy, Martin seemingly tears it down with one statement. According to Schlesinger, Martin also promoted an inaccurate understanding of Latin American political history in his suggestion that “the traditional method of transferring political power has been by revolution or coup d’état,” which “is offensive to countries like Chile, Uruguay, Mexico, Costa Rica, Brazil, Argentina, etc., where this has not been the traditional method.”¹⁷⁴ Schlesinger is cognizant of the way that this kind of rhetoric would exacerbate

¹⁷² Arthur Jr. Schlesinger, “Memorandum from the President’s Special Assistant (Schlesinger) to President Kennedy,” October 8, 1963, Washington: United States Department of State. From JFK Library, National Security Files, Regional Security Series, Latin America, July-November 1963. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v12/d65>

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

existing frustrations toward the U.S. and give the impression of a lack of respect for Latin America. The Alliance was framed as an infrastructure for mutually beneficial reforms, yet this becomes a difficult message to sell if it appears as though the U.S. doesn't take Latin America seriously or envision that democracy is truly possible for them.

A Middle Class Revolution

In a 1961 memorandum to President Kennedy, Schlesinger argues that the promotion of a middle-class revolution in Latin America is of utmost importance to the United States. Modernization, he argues, is only possible through “a drastic revision of the semi-feudal agrarian structure of society which still prevails through much of the subcontinent.”¹⁷⁵ In Schlesinger's view, a middle class revolution is the best way to eliminate these backward, feudal structures, and the alternative of a “workers-and-peasants” or Communist revolution is even more frightening than the shortcomings of the existing conditions. Latin America, he argues, faces the obstacle of the indigenous populations, who have long lived outside the requirements of modern society, though now they are starting to strive for greater goals.

Modernization, he says, is “the problem of the peaceful incorporation into their national economic and political societies of a vast submerged population, largely Indian, which has existed for centuries outside both the money economy and party politics but which is now uneasily stirring with (and being ruthlessly stirred by) new aspirations and new expectations.”¹⁷⁶ The indigenous populations are painted as barriers to modernization in this memorandum, and Schlesinger implies that part of the burden of this effort for a middle class revolution is dragging them along and trying to integrate them in the process. One can glean from this memorandum

¹⁷⁵ Arthur Jr. Schlesinger, “Memorandum from the President's Special Assistant (Schlesinger) to President Kennedy,” March 10, 1961, Washington: United States Department of State. From JFK Library, Schlesinger Papers, White House Files, Latin America Report. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v12/d7>

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

that an important reason why the indigenous populations have not been seen as representative of the qualities that the U.S. associates with modern civilization is related to the racial stereotypes discussed above about laziness, indolence, and an unwillingness to assimilate to the American capitalist work ethic.

In addition to the backwardness of the indigenous people, Schlesinger explains that the semi-feudal agrarian structures have been so long-lasting in Latin America because there is a class of the land-holding oligarchy that benefit from this design and work to keep it in place in order to protect their own power. A middle class revolution, therefore, would help dismantle the reign of the land-holding oligarchy and the structures they enforce. Schlesinger's understanding of a middle class revolution necessitates that "the processes of economic modernization carry the new urban middle class into power and produce, along with it, such necessities of modern technical society as constitutional government, honest public administration, a responsible party system, a rational land system, an efficient system of taxation, mass education, social mobility, etc."¹⁷⁷ In other words, a middle class revolution is one that would help build societies that uphold U.S. values and follow the model of U.S. structures.

In Moscoso's speech at Marquette University, he also touches upon what a middle class revolution would require in order to reverse existing primitiveness, and he highlights education as a guiding force. He criticizes the structure of current Latin American educational systems and their focus on the humanities, suggesting that there is not enough preparation or support for the types of constructive training that lead to development. He recognizes that "the pursuit of liberal arts studies is fine for youth everywhere, and an important element in building up a civilized society" but claims that students also "must be willing to sacrifice some traditional university

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

pursuits in the interest of training urgently needed manpower for development.”¹⁷⁸ The notion of “civilized society” and its inherently racialized implications are a critical part of this conversation, as Moscoso insinuates that a truly civilized society, of which the United States is a great example, must be able to balance a liberal arts education with practical skills for economists, statisticians, and engineers.¹⁷⁹ Failing to offer the proper training for these types of skills brings Latin America only to the cusp of civilization, teetering on the edge of what’s required.

Given that the racial and class hierarchies these assumptions reinforce were not exactly subtle, Schlesinger often had to restate the benevolent, good natured intentions of the Alliance and reject accusations of imperialism, paternalism, and materialism. In two memorandums, Schlesinger makes a point to advise the Kennedy administration to reassure Latin Americans that the U.S. is not trying to remake the other nations of the hemisphere according to one image. “We must also make it clear that, in our zest for economic growth and the middle-class revolution, we do not propose to remake the other nations of the hemisphere in our own image. We must show our respect for the distinctive cultures and traditions of the other American republics,” he stresses.¹⁸⁰ Even though, by most accounts, the goal all along was to install the U.S. model throughout the hemisphere, Latin America surely would not have been inclined to partake in a collaborative effort if this were explicitly stated. Schlesinger is steadfast in his assertion that economic growth is not their sole focus. While the idea of a middle class revolution does focus in some ways on the production and consumption of material goods, he

¹⁷⁸ Teodoro Moscoso, “The Latin American View of the Alliance for Progress,” September 29, 1962, Milwaukee, WI: Department of State, From JFK Library, James S. Bradshaw Personal Papers. Subject Files, 1959-1972. Alliance for Progress: Speeches by Teodoro Moscoso: 7. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JSBPP/001/JSBPP-001-007>

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Arthur Jr .Schlesinger, “Memorandum from the President’s Special Assistant (Schlesinger) to President Kennedy,” March 10, 1961, Washington: United States Department of State. From JFK Library, Schlesinger Papers, White House Files, Latin America Report. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v12/d7>

clarifies that these are not efforts geared toward material abundance for its own sake, “but to promote the higher aims of culture and civilization.”¹⁸¹ In this way, he argues, they can work together to maximize the potential of a united hemisphere.

Interestingly, by 1963 during the backlash related to the Martin Doctrine, Schlesinger seems to express some concerns related to this previous approach to the middle class revolution. In his memorandum to Kennedy about the Martin Doctrine and its condescending tone, he notes at the bottom that “the suggestion that the goal of the Alliance is to ‘strengthen in each society the power of the educated middle class’ suggests that we have forgotten all our fine words about helping the campesinos, and the workers and that our basic concern is with the business community.”¹⁸² He seems to modify previous ideas about education and supporting the urban middle class, perhaps, because his previous approach, which was exclusionary and racially motivated, had proven ineffective.

Latin American Stubbornness

The notion that Latin America is missing out on a critical opportunity to benefit from U.S. assistance and not making the effort necessary to help themselves is a frequent point of emphasis throughout these documents. It is almost impossible to separate this argument from the pillars of U.S. identity and the sense of American greatness, because it assumes that the U.S. has superior knowledge and therefore, access to such knowledge should be treated as a gift. In a summary of a 1962 working group meeting on the problems of the Alliance for Progress, the report stated that “despite our talk of ‘self-help,’ many government leaders in Latin America just don’t take us seriously. In part this is because they do not see how they can insist upon further

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Arthur Jr. Schlesinger, “Memorandum from the President’s Special Assistant (Schlesinger) to President Kennedy,” October 8, 1963, Washington: United States Department of State. From JFK Library, National Security Files, Regional Security Series, Latin America, July-November 1963. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v12/d65>

measures of self-help and still remain in power. In part, too, they believe our assistance to be largely politically motivated.”¹⁸³ Because they can’t get past their distrust of U.S. motivations, they are not meaningfully participating in the program in such a way that they could reap its benefits.

The barriers of this suspicion are also highlighted in the feedback from Morales Carrión in regards to the attitudes of the Foreign Service officers in Latin American affairs. In a 1961 memorandum from Schlesinger to Kennedy, he relays Morales Carrión’s analysis that these officers “have enjoyed an undisturbed monopoly for a long time and who now keenly resent the intervention of ‘outsiders’ in the field. Their attitudes are entrenched, their minds are set, and they regard new approaches and ideas with automatic skepticism. They are predominantly out of sympathy with the Alianza.”¹⁸⁴ Because of these tensions and the overwhelming stubbornness of the officers, Morales Carrión found it impossible to carry out the goals of the Alliance in the region and struggled to put U.S. assistance to good use.

This inability to put U.S. assistance to good use seems to be present among all classes involved in the efforts of the Alliance. In one of Schlesinger’s other memorandums to Kennedy, he explained that “Latin America’s landed oligarchy does not understand the gravity of its own situation. It constitutes the chief barrier to the middle-class revolution and, by thwarting the middle-class revolution, may well bring about the proletarian revolution.”¹⁸⁵ In other words, Latin Americans are standing in the way of their own path to progress, and the level of

¹⁸³ “Highlights of the First Meeting of the Working Group on Problems of the Alliance for Progress,” January 16, 1962, Washington: United States Department of State. From Department of State, S/P Files: Lot 69 D 121, American Republics, 1962. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v12/d37>

¹⁸⁴ Arthur Jr. Schlesinger, “Memorandum from the President’s Special Assistant (Schlesinger) to President Kennedy,” June 27, 1961, Washington: United States Department of State. From JFK Library, Schlesinger Papers, White House Subject File, Alliance for Progress. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v12/d13>

¹⁸⁵ Arthur Jr. Schlesinger, “Memorandum from the President’s Special Assistant (Schlesinger) to President Kennedy,” March 10, 1961, Washington: United States Department of State. From JFK Library, Schlesinger Papers, White House Files, Latin America Report. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v12/d7>

stubbornness is too high for U.S. influences to overcome. According to this framing, there is only so much the U.S. can do to help, given how resistant Latin America is.

Even before the Alliance was officially established, the 1961 task force on immediate Latin American problems expressed concern about the United States' capacity to help Latin America, given that progress requires Latin American participation as well. Specifically, the task force recommends that one of the underlying assumptions for policy choices toward Latin America should be a "recognition of the fact that the United States is neither omnipotent or omniscient; that it cannot solve, but can only help the Latin Americans try to solve, most of the problems of their highly diversified region in their own way."¹⁸⁶

Importantly, Moscoso, who has made significant efforts to promote compassion in articulating the reasons for tension between the U.S. and Latin America, also supports this line of thinking about Latin American stubbornness in some ways. He suggests in his Marquette University address that Latin American ambivalence about their relationship with the U.S. is "born out of a complex mixture of feelings: reliance on us, resentment of that very reliance, and the tendency to exaggerate the faults and minimize the achievements of the strong and powerful brother."¹⁸⁷ This seems to imply that while he understands why the paternalistic dynamics are frustrating to Latin Americans, that doesn't mean there isn't a good reason for them. Latin America needs the U.S., Moscoso explains, and they might be better off if they appreciated the strengths of the U.S. instead of criticizing their attempts to help. Instead of looking at the history of U.S. domination in Latin America that produced conditions of dependency, these sentiments

¹⁸⁶ The Task Force on Immediate Latin American Problems. "Report from the Task Force on Immediate Latin American Problems to President-elect Kennedy." January 4, 1961. Washington: United States Department of State. From JFK Library, Pre-Presidential Papers, Transition Series, Task Force Reports 1960, Latin America. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v12/d2>

¹⁸⁷ Teodoro Moscoso, "The Latin American View of the Alliance for Progress," September 29, 1962, Milwaukee, WI: Department of State, From JFK Library, James S. Bradshaw Personal Papers. Subject Files, 1959-1972. Alliance for Progress: Speeches by Teodoro Moscoso: 2. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JSBPP/001/JSBPP-001-007>

play into the attitudes of U.S. exceptionalism and convey that there is no sense in resenting the U.S. for its greatness.

In addition to a distrust in the United States, Moscoso's explanations for why Latin American countries oppose reform also include short-sightedness and an inability to imagine a better alternative. He postulates that there are the sectors of the public that are intentionally trying to sow doubt and discontent among the wider population, attempting to discredit the authenticity of the United States' aims for the Alliance. These feelings, he assumes, are "placed in a chauvinistic context in which national pride is stirred up against alleged imperialistic attempts to impose foreign ideologies on the nation. The merits of the reforms and their needs tend to be lost amid the emotionalism stirred up by the exploiters of national pride."¹⁸⁸

Moscoso's true opinions are difficult to fully decipher due to his previous attempts to balance different points of view, but at this moment later in the speech, he is chalking up some of Latin America's resistance to mere exaggeration and emotionalism. This latter idea has a tone of the rhetoric of ungratefulness, which Westad explained was a common framing in the early twentieth century, and describes Latin Americans as too preoccupied with making critiques to appreciate the merits of U.S. assistance. However, this implication is soon masked with Moscoso's reminder that Americans should avoid self-righteous judgment and make an effort to reconsider U.S. history in order to better understand Latin American history; this progressive sentiment may overshadow the exact kind of self-righteous judgment that he employed moments earlier.

United States Information Agency internal documents

¹⁸⁸ Teodoro Moscoso, "The Latin American View of the Alliance for Progress," September 29, 1962, Milwaukee, WI: Department of State, From JFK Library, James S. Bradshaw Personal Papers. Subject Files, 1959-1972. Alliance for Progress: Speeches by Teodoro Moscoso: 10. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JSBPP/001/JSBPP-001-007>

The Alliance for Progress and the Cold War elevated the need for the United States Information Agency's involvement in Latin America during the early 1960s. The agency distributed a wide range of films, cartoon booklets, magazines, radio broadcasts, television programs, content for local newspapers, and other materials surrounding these topics throughout the region. To uncover the goals and assumptions motivating the USIA's outreach during this period, I have collected a variety of agency documents to analyze, including foreign policy backgrounders, research memos, and guidelines for programming in Latin America. I was able to access these documents by looking through the digital archives at the John F. Kennedy Library and focused on the folders of memoranda relating to 1961-1964, the agency's efforts surrounding the Alliance for Progress, and any discussion of USIA strategy geared toward Latin America more generally. Similar to my analysis of the other Alliance for Progress and State Department documents, I will summarize the main threads among these USIA documents and point to key themes through the lens of modernization and freedom, U.S. exceptionalism, and other elements of U.S. identity.

The major patterns that stuck out to me in my reading of these sources ranged from emphasizing the importance of cultivating an image of the U.S. as a strong yet benevolent power, to projecting sincerity and a new progressive mindset, to targeting specific regions and groups based on assumptions about class, education, and occupation. Similar to the other sources from the Kennedy administration I examined above, the level of caution surrounding racialized language is clear, and the documents show a concerted effort to substitute class as a descriptor for some of the same racial stereotypes. Unsurprisingly, however, given that the USIA was the public diplomacy arm of the U.S. government, the role of U.S. greatness and exceptionalism is

even more pronounced in these documents and substantially defines their stated objectives, driving their sense of purpose as an agency.

A Strong yet Benevolent Power

In a foreign policy backgrounder that was circulated throughout the USIA to “convey to USIA officers a more immediate sense of the flavor and tone of the current Administration thinking,” one of the first points was to stress the “firmness” and strength of the United States in public diplomacy efforts abroad while monitoring the intimidation factor. “You can be firm without threatening people. And we think it’s awfully important to get language that does not sound arbitrary or arrogant or antagonistic,” the report reads.¹⁸⁹ There seems to have been a concern about scaring away potential allies by being too provocative or violent, which may indicate an unspoken acknowledgement of the historical tensions discussed in the Alliance for Progress documents above.

The report also advises taking steps to combat the perception that the U.S. is only focused on money and wants to manipulate other countries through financial aid. “Another thing you will find, I think, is that we realize that our money isn’t going to buy friends,” it states.¹⁹⁰ According to the report, what is more important for USIA officers to convey than an interest in sharing American wealth is an interest in sharing American values like freedom, which other countries deserve to enjoy too. In this view, the kind-hearted U.S. only wants other nations to experience the simple but widely sought-after glories of freedom: “We want one thing and one thing only. We want the ability of other peoples to make their own choices, to be free, to have a right to

¹⁸⁹ Thomas C. Sorensen, “Foreign Policy ‘Backgrounder.’” From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records 1961-1965, Memoranda, 1961-1964 (1 of 3 folders): 75. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/001/USIA-001-010>

¹⁹⁰ Thomas C. Sorensen, “Foreign Policy ‘Backgrounder.’” From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records 1961-1965, Memoranda, 1961-1964 (1 of 3 folders): 76. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/001/USIA-001-010>

stand up and be free, and have the confidence to be free.”¹⁹¹ More than just value messaging, the report emphasizes that helping more countries achieve freedom is part of the U.S. mission, and succeeding in this mission would mean that the U.S. “would have performed our function in history.”¹⁹² This is a glaring example of the way that U.S. identity, the notion of moral responsibility, and U.S. exceptionalism merge to inform foreign policy choices and priorities.

That being said, the aforementioned firmness cannot be overlooked. The report reminds USIA officials that while the U.S. may be charged with giving to others and their assistance should be treated as uniquely kind, the U.S. cannot be the only one putting in the work. When it comes to development and modernization, the U.S. can provide a model to follow and some of the funding to facilitate the process, but “this doesn’t mean we can do it for them... all we can do is make it a little easier.”¹⁹³ Assuming otherwise is counterproductive, the report holds, and it goes on to claim that in fact, “you will find it’s useless demanding developing countries jumping around and agreeing with us on everything.”¹⁹⁴

Lastly, social and emotional investment in the cause of progress is once again underscored and framed through the lens of the American emphasis on productivity and a work ethic informed by capitalist goals. “We are interested in people who are prepared to work hard to build their own countries, who are prepared to give this high priority,” the report reads.¹⁹⁵ It also goes on to state that just as money can’t solve all problems, neither can arms. This idea might carry an implication that civilized societies must not lean into the temptation of violence and

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Thomas C. Sorensen, “Foreign Policy ‘Backgrounder.’” From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records 1961-1965, Memoranda, 1961-1964 (1 of 3 folders): 77. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/001/USIA-001-010>

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Thomas C. Sorensen, “Foreign Policy ‘Backgrounder.’” From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records 1961-1965, Memoranda, 1961-1964 (1 of 3 folders): 78. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/001/USIA-001-010>

must instead engage in the more rational, perhaps more difficult, task of planning for how to achieve freedom and justice. “Unless you can get a sense of justice and dignity and participation by people, I don't care how many tanks we give them, or how many weapons or how much food or whatever, you still aren't going to get a result,” it clarifies.¹⁹⁶ This belief serves as a basis for the public diplomacy work of the USIA because it holds that soft power and molding minds of a target population can be more effective means for producing change than violence and arms building.

Projecting Sincerity and Progressivism

With some of the tensions of the U.S.-Latin American relationship in mind, the USIA frequently highlighted the need for the U.S. image abroad to be one of trustworthiness and sincerity. An important component of this goal was to be realistic about the types of promises that were being made in order to come across as honest and not produce circumstances for inevitable disappointment. In a 1961 memorandum from the USIA to Richard Goodwin, assistant special counsel to the president, in regards to the Alliance for Progress, the agency underscored the timing of their propaganda based on these concerns. “It will be some time before the effects of the program can be actually felt in Latin America: if we beat the drum too loudly and hold out promises that glitter too brightly, delays may generate skepticism and give our enemies an opening. Also we may create ‘great expectations’ impossible of fulfillment, with inevitable Latin American disillusionment,” the agency explains.¹⁹⁷

The memorandum goes on to share some more specific advice about the President's upcoming speech introducing the Alliance and which points he should hit. From a propaganda

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ U.S. Information Agency. “Memorandum for Mr. Richard N. Goodwin.” March 6, 1961. From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records 1961-1965, Memoranda, 1961-1964 (1 of 3 folders): 18. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/001/USIA-001-010>

perspective, the agency argues that focusing more on the social elements of the program than the economic pieces will be more effective among Latin Americans. “It is the people of Latin America we want to reach, and to involve in the success of the program; and this we can do best by concentrating on the things of direct interest to the people – health, education, housing, land reform,” they recommend.¹⁹⁸ Emphasizing this shift to progressivism and encouraging an appreciation for society’s social needs seem to be key elements of the time period’s propaganda. Associating the United States with facilitating social welfare rather than just rigid economic practices helps boost its exceptional image of firm benevolence that the agency is hoping to cultivate.

The focus on portraying social inclusion, even at a more superficial level, is clearly important to the USIA. For example, the agency advises that the president incorporate Spanish into his speech about the Alliance. “The President’s use of the Spanish name of the program will have great appeal, although it may offend Portuguese-speaking Latin Americans. Perhaps he should introduce the name of the program, at the outset, in both Spanish and Portuguese, and thereafter refer to it in English,” they state.¹⁹⁹ This symbolic measure is supposed to demonstrate the mutual nature of the program and send the message that Latin American involvement is integral. This goal is further reinforced in a separate memorandum from Voice of America’s Director Henry Loomis to USIA’s Deputy Director Donald Wilson in reaction to the president’s March 1961 speech. The USIA is pleased that Kennedy’s portrayal of the Alliance for Progress was able to simultaneously highlight the urgent need for Latin Americans to put in the work required to see results from the program while still “projecting sincere and continued US interest

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ U.S. Information Agency, “Memorandum for Mr. Richard N. Goodwin,” March 6, 1961, From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records 1961-1965, Memoranda, 1961-1964 (1 of 3 folders): 19. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/001/USIA-001-010>

in Latin American progress” and putting into perspective the “criticisms of what Latin American nations consider to be traditional US attitudes.”²⁰⁰

The desire for the U.S. to be seen as sincerely invested in progressive change was even more evident in the USIA’s guidelines for agency programming to Latin America. Specifically, one of the three main area objectives detailed in the guidelines was to “build the image of the United States as a progressive, dynamic and strong force worthy of leadership in a cooperative hemisphere effort toward a peaceful and secure future.”²⁰¹ To support this image of the U.S. and articulate its qualifications for leadership, the USIA points to the high levels of creative and intellectual activity, the economic and social benefits, and the continual expansion of freedom in the United States.

In fact, the guidelines suggest that the agency should describe the U.S. as an example of a “nearly classless society” that has made great strides in terms of limiting racial discrimination over time. “The United States is a progressive, changing society which does not at all have the type of 19th century capitalism which Marx criticized, nor the same degree of social injustices which John Steinbeck described in the 1930s, nor the same degree of racial discrimination which existed even ten years ago. As for its faults, it is continually seeking improvement through democratic procedures,” according to the USIA.²⁰² This framing somehow manages to recognize the existence of social injustice and racism in the U.S. while minimizing the current magnitude and assuring that any lasting effects of these apparently historical forces will be adjusted in due time through the institutions of American democracy. However, in addition to the obvious

²⁰⁰ Henry Loomis, “IBS/RL ‘Alliance for Progress’ Program,” April 11, 1961, From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records 1961-1965, Memoranda, 1961-1964 (1 of 3 folders). <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/001/USIA-001-010>

²⁰¹ Hewson A. Ryan, “IAL Guidelines for Agency Programming to Latin America.” June 2, 1964. From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records, 1961-1965. Memoranda, 1961-1964 (3 of 3 folders): 54. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/002/USIA-002-002>

²⁰² Ibid.

inaccuracies of this framing, I find it to be curious that the USIA would want the U.S. to come across as a classless society while they were also trying to sell the merits of capitalism, to which class and hierarchy are inherent, amidst the Cold War context. This argument seems to put more emphasis on the greatness of American democracy than American capitalism and deems the former as a primary cure to social injustice and immorality.

Targeting Regions and Groups

When Edward Murrow was appointed as director of the USIA under Kennedy's administration, one of the major structural additions he introduced to the agency was a more refined approach to regional specialization. By 1963, the agency made clear to its employees in a memorandum from the Office of Public Information that "regional specialization for foreign service officers has been made the rule" and officers should "now spend the bulk of their overseas careers in a single cultural or ethnic region."²⁰³ Audiences are carefully selected, the memorandum explains, and the agency's messaging should be specifically targeted to the relevant segments of the population in order "to achieve maximum influence leading to political action."²⁰⁴ This declaration is evidence of the USIA's conscious efforts to understand the identities of the groups they're trying to persuade and appeal to those different perspectives.

Murrow implemented not only country and region-specific strategies but also helped organize outreach that catered to different social groups based on their class, education, and occupation. For example, in the USIA guidelines for programming in Latin America, the agency differentiates its approach for achieving the three main area objectives among students, labor groups, rural populations, and the elite. For programming that targets students in Latin America,

²⁰³ U.S. Information Agency Office of Public Information. "Some Changes in USIA since March 1961." October 28, 1963. From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records, 1961-1965. Memoranda, 1961-1964 (3 of 3 folders): 3. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/002/USIA-002-002>

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

the agency recommends focusing on how modernization is accomplished through democratic procedures. “Through democratic processes, better economic conditions for the masses of people can be obtained and at the same time preserve respect for human dignity, human freedom and human personality,” the report reads.²⁰⁵ The report’s strategy for students also recommends clarifying that a democratic society is far from stagnant and is constantly changing and progressing. This reminder may be an added element of the previously discussed point about minimizing the United States’ racist past and focusing on the future, trusting in democracy to address previous flaws in the system.

Additionally, for students, the guidelines prioritize publicizing the idea that “education plays an important role in the modernizing process, not only in providing the necessary technical training, but also in creating those attitudes which are necessary for development: self-control, self-discipline, honesty, reliability, and the dignity of work.”²⁰⁶ This suggestion seems to have class implications and is likely tied to the goal of a middle class revolution that would bring Latin America closer to the higher aims of civilization. Students were logical targets to help with preparing Latin American societies for these technical and creative requirements of a modern, civilized economy.

To target Latin American labor groups, USIA messaging focused on other U.S. institutions that also contributed to the United States’ success and experiences with development. Organized labor was championed as a positive force for social and economic improvement. Specifically, the USIA guidelines stress that “the free labor movement in the United States has played a significant role in bringing about the greatest prosperity to the great number” and that

²⁰⁵ Hewson A. Ryan, “IAL Guidelines for Agency Programming to Latin America.” June 2, 1964. From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records, 1961-1965. Memoranda, 1961-1964 (3 of 3 folders): 50. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/002/USIA-002-002>

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

“the practices and ideas of American industrial relations and union administration should be made known to Latin American works, as should their political sophistication and immunity to Communist and demagogic appeals.”²⁰⁷

Learning from what has worked for the U.S. is once again described as the best way to achieve progress and modernization, relying on the supremacy of the U.S. model for development. Democratic procedures bring about not only political freedom but also economic freedom and raise the standards of living, the report emphasizes.²⁰⁸ Overall, the clear message from the USIA to Latin America is that integrating as much as possible with the U.S. economy, whether that is by engaging with international labor organizations, investing more in domestic and foreign capital, or taking cues from the lessons of U.S. labor groups, will allow Latin Americans to reap the most benefits.

Meanwhile, to appeal to Latin America’s rural populations, which include campesinos and people living in small towns, the USIA shifts its focus to agrarian reform as an important means toward modernization. According to the guidelines, agrarian reform should be explained as an objective of the Alliance for Progress that requires “supervised credit, technical help, education in modern agricultural practices, guidance in marketing and access to markets by improved transportation” as well as that “the land be efficiently used and the product of the land effectively marketed.”²⁰⁹ The guidelines emphasize that the land should be used not only for subsistence purposes but also for the benefit of the economy as a whole.²¹⁰ To help the rural

²⁰⁷ Hewson A. Ryan, “IAL Guidelines for Agency Programming to Latin America.” June 2, 1964. From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records, 1961-1965. Memoranda, 1961-1964 (3 of 3 folders): 51.

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/002/USIA-002-002>

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Hewson A. Ryan, “IAL Guidelines for Agency Programming to Latin America.” June 2, 1964. From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records, 1961-1965. Memoranda, 1961-1964 (3 of 3 folders): 52.

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/002/USIA-002-002>

²¹⁰ Ibid.

people of Latin America help themselves, the U.S. is once again generously offering its agricultural wisdom, and the USIA wants to “show how the U.S. shares its own knowledge and experience with others to raise their agricultural productivity.”²¹¹

The guidelines also suggest that the campesinos will need extra help and guidance from the U.S. when faced with competing ideological messaging, as “the campesino in Latin America is particularly vulnerable to Communist agitation because of his struggle to supply himself with the bare necessities of life.”²¹² Another class-based assumption, this association of the lower classes with greater susceptibility to propaganda and failure to access the benefits of modernity is perhaps racialized, or an outcome of the capitalist culture in the U.S. that focuses on rewarding individualism and productivity.

Lastly, the USIA considered the “elites” in Latin America to be a separate target group, including the well-educated who are no longer students, those who have a career or an established societal role, and those who are reasonably informed about current events to hold independent opinions.²¹³ Though not explicitly stated, the elites almost certainly do not belong to the indigenous populations of Latin America and therefore escape the impact of the racial stereotypes in relation to their ability to fuel cultural progress. The agency strove to put the elites in charge of modernization efforts and stressed that their cooperation was essential for progress to be made.²¹⁴ The elite, to which the wealthiest members of society belong, can predictably be

²¹¹ Hewson A. Ryan, “IAL Guidelines for Agency Programming to Latin America.” June 2, 1964. From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records, 1961-1965. Memoranda, 1961-1964 (3 of 3 folders): 55.

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/002/USIA-002-002>

²¹² Hewson A. Ryan, “IAL Guidelines for Agency Programming to Latin America.” June 2, 1964. From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records, 1961-1965. Memoranda, 1961-1964 (3 of 3 folders): 57.

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/002/USIA-002-002>

²¹³ Hewson A. Ryan, “IAL Guidelines for Agency Programming to Latin America.” June 2, 1964. From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records, 1961-1965. Memoranda, 1961-1964 (3 of 3 folders): 52.

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/002/USIA-002-002>

²¹⁴ Hewson A. Ryan, “IAL Guidelines for Agency Programming to Latin America.” June 2, 1964. From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records, 1961-1965. Memoranda, 1961-1964 (3 of 3 folders): 53.

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/002/USIA-002-002>

persuaded through economic means, so the USIA suggests emphasizing the promises of tax structures that can work in their favor and of ample opportunities for private enterprise. Once again, U.S. tax structures should be used as a model where appropriate, the guidelines explain.²¹⁵

According to the guidelines, the elites would also be comforted and thus more apt to assist with modernization and the Alliance for Progress if the U.S. demonstrates “our great strength in technology and the sciences, along with our willingness to share our knowledge with other nations.”²¹⁶ By this line of thinking, the Latin American elite would be inspired by the elite in the U.S. and the way they’ve led advancements in U.S. society, so this awareness of success in the U.S. might unlock a newfound motivation for the Latin American elite to become the leaders of domestic progressive change in their own communities.

USIA Films

The motion picture division of the United States Information Agency was one of the agency’s primary vehicles for promoting the United States abroad and appealing to the cultural interests of specific regions with targeted messages. Distributed throughout the world and in many different languages, USIA-produced films hit a peak during the Cold War, especially under Kennedy and Johnson’s administrations. Because the USIA’s films were catered directly to populations outside of the United States, many USIA films were not available to the American public until the end of the 1990s due to the “tangle of legislation enacted out of fear of what might happen if the federal government were to ‘propagandise’ the unwary American viewer.”²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Hewson A. Ryan, “IAL Guidelines for Agency Programming to Latin America.” June 2, 1964. From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records, 1961-1965. Memoranda, 1961-1964 (3 of 3 folders): 55. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/002/USIA-002-002>

²¹⁷ Nicholas J. Cull, “Auteurs of Ideology: USIA Documentary Film Propaganda in the Kennedy Era as Seen in Bruce Herschensohn’s ‘The Five Cities of June’ (1963) and James Blue’s ‘The March’ (1964).” *Film History* 10, no. 3 (1998): 295.

In order to better understand the messages that the United States Information Agency hoped to export, I analyzed ten short films that the agency released during the early 1960s. Three of them are centered around President Kennedy's visits to Latin America, specifically Venezuela, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Mexico, with the Alliance for Progress being a main point of emphasis during the trips. The next three all highlight successful examples of some of the social initiatives facilitated by the Alliance for Progress in Colombia in 1962. Though these films are produced by the USIA, they are all written, directed, and narrated by James Blue, a well-known filmmaker and documentarian who collaborated with the USIA on five films. The last four, one of which is also directed by James Blue, are films about the Civil Rights Movement and race relations in the United States during this time period, providing clear insight into how the U.S. hoped to portray race in the context of its own identity and reputation abroad.

I accessed these films through Knight Library's YouTube, the U.S. National Archives' YouTube, the John F. Kennedy Library archives, and C-Span's website. Below, I will summarize each film while offering my interpretations of the ideals they demonstrate to uplift the national image and how they connect with the ultimate goals of freedom, modernization, U.S. exceptionalism, and preserving U.S. identity. In terms of the national image, the films reinforce the strength of the U.S. and all it has to offer and teach Latin Americans to advance development. Meanwhile, in terms of messaging to Latin American populations, the films underscore self-help, self-motivation, and trusting outsiders who are bringing salvation through modernization. While not explicitly advocating white supremacy, these films are made from a U.S. perspective with the goal of celebrating U.S. identity, which cannot be separated from its sense of global superiority and the racial hierarchy at its core.

The first three films all share common themes of celebrating American leadership, demonstrating attitudes of white saviorism, and highlighting the basis of unique friendship and generosity that guides the Alliance for Progress. Only applause, cheering, and excitement accompany the Kennedys on their visits to Latin America. The films can serve as evidence to the effectiveness of the American model for economic development and modernization as well as the benefits that emulating this model would bring Latin Americans. All three aim to tie the fates of the U.S. and Latin America together, advancing a moral obligation to act as one hemisphere in order to adequately improve the common good. In this sense, they are particularly representative of the USIA's objective to portray the U.S. as a strong yet benevolent power.

Forging the Alliance - President Kennedy Visits Venezuela and Colombia (1961):

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USG/USG-01-A/USG-01-A>

This film opens with a clip of waves crashing against a rocky shoreline as a visual representation of the spirit of freedom and aspiration “surging against the shorelines of American republics from Cape Horn to the Arctic Circle” (00:27-00:32). The narrator explains that everyone has a sense of hope in freedom and a longing to escape dictatorship as well as economic and social injustice. “Everywhere, there is the desire to eliminate the age-old tyrannies of poverty, hunger, and ignorance” (00:55-01:01), the narrator continues, as the film shows clips of Venezuelan men and women working in the fields. The necessary reforms to land use, medicine, and education that will bring about success into these “backward and abandoned” rural areas (01:09–01:11), and these goals “can only be met by a new kind of cooperative effort” (01:23-01:26), proclaimed the film before introducing President Kennedy as an integral figure for inciting this change in trajectory. As President Kennedy and the First Lady are exiting their airplane in Caracas, the narrator describes the Alliance for Progress and cites Kennedy’s

inaugural address, referring to Kennedy's description of the program as responsible for assisting the sister republics "in casting off the chains of poverty" (01:57-01:58). Despite this invocation of the language of slavery, the next clips of crowds cheering for Kennedy's motorcade are coupled with an emphasis on the friendship between the North and South.

Then, the film follows Kennedy as he visits nearby agricultural regions to see the progress of the Alliance's first projects in Venezuela. He cuts a ribbon and signs several documents in front of the crowds at the village site, where he is met with many applause and handshakes. Kennedy speaks to the audience gathered there and stresses that this is their program, "for no real progress is possible unless the benefits of increased prosperity are shared by the people themselves" (05:15-05:23). First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy then addresses the crowds in Spanish and receives enthusiastic applause as well. After meeting with the Venezuelan president, Kennedy also attends a service for the 130th anniversary of Simon Bolivar's death. The narrator champions Bolivar as the great liberator, "who first saw and predicted that the Western hemisphere would be bound together by the closest of paternal ties" (07:47-07:54), and paints Kennedy as the heroic man who has stepped up to finally make this great mission a reality.

The second half of the film captures Kennedy's similar visit to Colombia. In the same way that Bolivar is invoked as a Latin American leader's voice for unity, the narrator quotes the Colombian president, who said that "to meet our responsibilities, we must count on the ability of the underdeveloped people of the world to solve the problem of overpopulation, of misery, of despair, of inequality and of injustice" (09:01-09:14). The narrator describes President Camargo as a leading advocate for the necessity of the Americas to work together. There have already been incredible accomplishments through the Alliance for Progress in Colombia so far, according to the narrator, but everyone understands the urgency and importance of the continued

work to be done. Just like their visit in Venezuela, the Kennedys are walked around two housing projects outside of Bogota and then brought back into the city, greeted by cheering crowds. Later, the First Lady also visits a local hospital and waves at the patients who are excited to see her. President Kennedy's speech that concludes the film reaches out to the workers, campesinos on the farm and women, and he pledges to satisfy their basic needs, conquering the evils of poverty and injustice.

What stands out in *Forging the Alliance* was how positively received the Kennedys were by the Latin American nations they visited. The large crowds, cheering citizens, and waving flags seemed to create an image of the U.S. as a beloved presence abroad, which is surely what the U.S. was intending to portray. U.S. identity, as discussed above, is interwoven with the idea that the U.S. has a special mission to help other countries and spread freedom and democracy wherever possible. While it is true that Kennedy was well-liked in these nations and these clips are real representations of how he was greeted, a viewer might watch this film and come away with an interpretation that Kennedy was some kind of savior. The invocation of Simon Bolivar underscores this idea by framing Kennedy as the person who finally picked up Bolivar's torch and set out to facilitate inter-American unity.

There is a form of white saviorism at work here. In this case, white American leaders are the only ones capable of allowing the suffering Venezuelans and Colombians to help themselves. As the president and first lady tour around these sites of Alliance for Progress projects and partake in symbolic ribbon cuttings or agreement signings, it seems as though they were responsible for the accomplishments thus far, and the Latin Americans who benefit from their generosity are simply overwhelmed with gratitude. Kennedy is neither overtly condescending nor does he explicitly articulate any sort of hierarchy between the U.S. and Latin America. He

does make an effort to emphasize that the Alliance of Progress must involve mutual cooperation and contribution in order to be effective and produce the changes that Latin Americans desire, but there is still an underlying message that these changes wouldn't be possible without the United States' kindness and its commitment to doing good deeds, helping the less developed nations achieve modernization.

Progress Through Freedom: The President's Trip to Mexico (1962):

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USG/USG-01-J/USG-01-J>

The film begins by immediately connecting Mexico and the United States as two nations born of revolution and dedicated to liberty. The narrator explains that Mexico shares its proud heritage of independence with its neighboring republic, the United States. After Kennedy is shown disembarking his plane in Mexico, he exchanges greetings with Mexican ambassadors and the Mexican president before making a speech to the crowd. In his speech, he further establishes the strength of the connection between the U.S. and Mexico by emphasizing that the two countries “share a border of two thousand miles, over three million of U.S. citizens are descendants of your citizens, and most of all, we are both children of revolutions” (02:18-02:30). The spirit of revolution in this case is tied to heroism in the pursuit of human rights, liberties, and peace.

The people of free, democratic Mexico are shown celebrating the arrival of their democratic neighbor, John F. Kennedy, in an extravagant parade with confetti flying everywhere, screaming cheers, and large crowds in Mexico City. Then, the film makes an effort to bind the cultural heritage of Mexico to that of the United States, while stressing that “Mexico can look back with pride at the beauty, rigor, and imagination of the achievements of her past” (06:22-06:27). In order to emphasize that these traditions have not been forgotten, there are a variety of

clips showing cultural artifacts as the Kennedys visit ruins, as well as more general clips of vendors carrying different products and artists making ceramics. The First Lady also speaks in Spanish at a conference about Mexican art and literature and makes another point of complimenting the cultural richness of the region.

The warmth and enthusiasm for the Kennedys presence in Mexico is consistently a point of discussion, similar to the *Forging the Alliance* film. This is a new era of understanding and friendship between the neighbors, according to the narrator. Two nations dedicated to freedom, the U.S. and Mexico share common goals: equality, bread, land, education, jobs, and a roof over one's head. President Kennedy's speech at the end of the film underscores that they are united by the same hopes for their shared hemisphere. Kennedy recognizes that the U.S. is not perfect, admitting that "no nation can seek social justice abroad that does not practice it at home" (14:21-14:27). Though he does not get into details about social justice within the U.S. itself, he continues to uphold the strength of the U.S. model, despite its flaws, by saying that "we in the United States have much to learn, as well as something to teach" (15:10-15:14).

Framing the relationship between Mexico and the U.S. as two continuing revolutions paints a broad brushstroke over the historical and current power dynamics. Their two revolutions are very distinct, perhaps sharing an interest in the same abstract concepts, but fighting against different circumstances and types of barriers. The shared dream of freedom and opportunity is supposedly what binds them together, but instead of collaborating to define the best way to enact these dreams, there is an assumption that the U.S. already has the proper model and is instead bringing in Mexico to this existing effort that has been working for the U.S. The film seems to show an appreciation for the distinctiveness of Mexican culture from an artistic and architectural standpoint, but in terms of sociopolitical structures, it makes an effort to encourage coming together under U.S. ideas in favor of one great continent. There is an elitism in the notion that while Mexicans may have a rich culture, the

U.S. has the right model to follow when it comes to how to structure governments and create the best standard of living.

United in Progress (1963): <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USG/USG-01-04/USG-01-04>

Like the previous two films, this film follows one of President Kennedy's trips – this time to Costa Rica in 1963. However, compared to *Progress Through Freedom* and *Forging the Alliance*, *United in Progress* focuses much less on glorifying Kennedy himself. For example, the film opens with shots of the marketplace, showing people carrying food and products, often on their heads and backs, and setting up booths for selling their items. The marketplace is used as a metaphor for common ground: “the marketplace is open to anyone with something to sell,” the narrator says (01:13-01:16). In 1958, he explains, the people of Central America began to build a common market of nations, opening their borders for trade. At the time of the film, the presidents of Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Panama are meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica at the Presidents' Conference to measure their progress. President Kennedy is also invited to the event to witness, according to the narrator, “what might well be their most important step forward since their independence from Spain” (03:10-03:15).

Similar to the two films discussed above, Kennedy is greeted by cheering crowds in Costa Rica, and his entrance to the conference produces much applause and waving American flags. There is a street parade for his motorcade and confetti thrown by people in the crowd. At the conference, the common history of the Americas is again emphasized. To meet new challenges, Kennedy cites the Alliance for Progress as an inter-American mechanism to mobilize “their resources and energies to secure land for the landless, education for those without schools, and a faster rate of economic growth within a society where all can share in the fruits of progress” (08:25-08:42). He speaks to the great strides that have already been made,

congratulates their accomplishments thus far, and pledges continued assistance from the United States.

As the narrator starts to describe what life was like before a common market took form in 1958, the film shows clips of pasturelands and fields. At the focal point of these scenes is a train taking exports of coffee, cotton, sugar, and bananas to be shipped off to the North; this is the visual background as the narrator explains that the people of Central America previously had to import their industrial needs from the North since they could not manufacture their own products or maximize the potential of their own natural resources. The common market of Central America in 1958, however, “opened their frontiers to one another” (12:22-12:24), and the “borders awakened to the sound of modern commerce” (12:31-12:34). Here, the symbolism of the frontier is once again incorporated to make a distinction between the civilized and the uncivilized. Specifically, the common market and the principles of free trade and liberalism allowed Central America to take steps toward modernization, so that they would no longer be stuck in the primitive cycle of toiling away in the fields and lacking self-sufficiency.

The common market brought Central America a joint technical center, a regional economic planning agency, new cooperation with universities, and a Central American bank for development. According to the narrator, this bank proves the power of unity, which is measured in factory growth and job opportunities primarily for men. These collaborative efforts also brought free school books to students, for whom “a new world is not so far away” (16:52-16:55). At this point in the film, children are shown running through fields, some barefoot, on their way to school carrying their books in their arms. “The future is now theirs,” says the narrator (18:21-18:23), speaking to the focus on the future and progress within modernization theories. This theme is further highlighted when the students’ parents are shown working together on the

construction of a schoolhouse, working to build a life for their children that they never had. The new generation seems to consistently represent the chance for something better, or more modern.

The film then moves on to show the most “remote” parts of Panama and Central America, where the white doctors affiliated with the Alliance for Progress luckily found their way, arriving by boat. The children rush down to meet the doctors at the dock, so they can be administered medicines and vaccinations. These changes and health protections give them something to live for, the narrator says. The white doctor in this scenario, though unnamed and unidentified, is the savior figure, helping assure a future for these children and acting as a vehicle for modern medicine. Without him and others like him, the implication is that there would be no hope, and modern medicine would not make it to these rural parts.

United in Progress concludes with Kennedy’s remarks at the El Bosque Housing Project near San Jose. Among an enthusiastic crowd, he exclaims that they are celebrating a victory, for “these houses, these medical units, these books are today freeing men and women from centuries of bondage and poverty, which has imprisoned their capacity, their happiness, and their future” (23:30-23:47). Invoking language of slavery here is a curious choice, especially as it frames the United States as the facilitator of freedom, when in reality it was responsible for subjecting people of color to lifetimes of bondage. This is another example in which the U.S. is trying to shed its role as the oppressor and promote an exceptionalist, do-gooder narrative. Helping others achieve freedom is a key part of the U.S. identity that Kennedy hopes to remind everyone about in this speech. He concludes his remarks by linking the Americas as one common entity and proclaiming that “we will stand and work shoulder to shoulder in making this hemisphere an example of what democracy can mean” (25:05-25:12). In this view, the spread of democracy and

modernization are essential components to success and progress for the hemisphere as a whole; the United States is leading the rest of the hemisphere to more success.

These next three films all share an emphasis on the former backwardness of Latin American societies, Colombian villages in this case, and the potential of what they can accomplish when they put in the proper work to modernize and move beyond issues related to mistrusting outsiders. These films seem to sell the Alliance for Progress as more of an ideology or spirit, rather than a specific framework, with the goal of helping Latin Americans to help themselves. The perks of modern medicine, education, and farm practices are examples of some of the benefits that can come from accepting U.S. assistance. Revealing an understanding of the roots of tension and distrust like the internal documents above, the films aim to encourage audiences to trust the white savior figures who show up offering to help. Unlike previous outsiders who haven't had the best intentions, these white saviors will direct Latin America into a more modern future and provide the tools for making their dreams a reality.

Evil Wind Out (1962): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGlkdaJ85BQ>

Evil Wind Out was written, directed and narrated by James Blue in 1962 with the goal of promoting the Alliance for Progress. It is a black-and-white film that begins with a group of village people trying to get water from their local well while eerie music plays in the background. Mothers wait for the water to filter out by the well, holding their crying babies. Blue explains that four months before this film was made in this unnamed small Colombian village, seven children were dying every week from diseases that were easily curable because they didn't have access to medical care. "Doctors were too far away and people mistrusted them, they were unaware of proper hygiene," he went on, "their life was a grim and quiet one" (01:42-02:00).

Before the films were made, the people would go to a spiritual man who was known in the village as a helpful resource for herbs and advice during these dire circumstances.

The film focuses on a young boy who seems to be in pain and can't stop blinking. The spiritual man grabs the boy's face and says that an evil wind has struck him, entering his eyes. The man suggests placing a piece of white paper on the boy's nose so that he can look at it daily and drive out the evil wind. The man then brings a candle in front of the boy's face, which makes him cry and fall down, covering his eyes. In stark contrast to this spiritual guide, a white doctor from the Public Health Service shows up at the door of the church in the next scene. "He had been given the mission to awaken in the community the desire for better help, the doctor asked the people if they would be willing to cooperate," Blue says (03:29-3:41). Very similar to the white doctor who arrived in the remote Central American villages in *United for Progress* and single handedly brought hope to those communities through medicine, this doctor is also clearly meant to embody as a white savior figure who has been charged with the task of saving these villagers from their own backwardness, bringing them modern medicine to replace their spiritual methods.

When the doctor came back to begin work, none of the villagers showed up. This is another example of the U.S. perception of Latin American stubbornness and seems to point out the absurdity of not taking the doctor up on his offer to help the community, especially in a place where death is so commonplace. Blue does recognize historical tensions in the U.S.-Latin American relationship and Latin America's history with imperialism in general by noting that "for generations, people had lived here mistrusting anything from outside and so they stayed away" (04:53-05:00). However, the tone suggests that the time for that mistrust has passed, and they would be mistaken to let that interfere with their access to help from the U.S.

In order to prove his qualifications and gain trust in the community, the doctor meets with the little boy who had evil wind in his eyes and easily cures him. The doctor immediately identifies that the boy's only problem was a deficiency in his diet such that his eyes were unable to resist the light. The doctor gives the boy a simple injection to produce a quick improvement in his condition but "wondered if he could ever eliminate the real causes – improper diet, improper hygiene" (06:23-06:29). This village's lack of civilization and modernization is related to its people's inability to understand basic health science, which is framed as a result of both their stubbornness, lasting mistrust, and their inferior intellect. Once the whole village finds out that the doctor had driven out the evil wind from the boy, they gather around him excitedly. The following clips show the village's people working hard, enjoying themselves, partaking in health classes, and building a new health center; they can thrive now that they had been saved by the white doctor and embraced his instructions for modernization.

Overall, the importance of scientific rationality and the separation of the religious and the secular, two key elements of modernity, are demonstrated throughout this film, but particularly in the dichotomy between the white doctor's effectiveness in curing disease and the spiritual leader's effectiveness. The film suggests that these Latin American societies have to let go of their backward, mystical methods and accept that U.S. medicine has much to offer them. "Four months ago, there were seven children who died every week from diseases that could have easily been cured... now there were none," Blue states (08:59-09:07), and this reality was achieved through the public health programs implemented throughout Colombia, a part of the Alliance for Progress "designed to help Latin American countries to help their people and to help those people to help themselves to a better life" (09:14-09:21). There is no confusion in this final message – U.S. kindness and support brought a new sense of hope and infrastructure to this

Colombian village, and involvement in the Alliance for Progress will continue to facilitate even more improvements of this nature.

The School at Rincon Santo (1962): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ws-zZPhZ0PM>

The School at Rincon Santo is another 1962 black-and-white film that was written, directed, and narrated by James Blue. The film begins showing a large crowd gathered in Rincon Santo in Colombia for a ceremony celebrating the new one-room schoolhouse. There are speakers, children exploring, and people cooking, eating, and drinking. Blue explains that this village had struggled to build this school for over a year, and now it was finished. They had talked about the school for thirty years, but Blue says that “for a hundred years, people had lived in Rincon Santo without much change, roads had not come to Rincon Santo, a source that was near for water had not come, electricity had not come to Rincon Santo, most of the people did not own land” (01:54-02:12). He goes on to draw attention to the village’s large family sizes and high illiteracy rates, adding “people in Rincon Santo had learned to live without asking, but they had always wanted a school” (02:23-02:28). In short, Rincon Santo was very far from modern, lacking most of the basic components of a technical, industrialized society.

The film interviews a mother as well as a seven-year-old boy who both talk about their desire for the village to have access to a school in order for the children to learn more and be able to achieve their dreams. One night, their dreams became possible when a man from the government’s office for community action came to a village meeting and informed them that they could have a school. The village would have to put in the work, such as providing water, a road, and a lot, in addition to actually building the school, but the government would provide supply materials. “Nothing would be given to them without their own work,” Blue says (05:03-05:07). This caveat is representative of the self-help ideology of the Alliance for Progress and

does give a level of agency to the village people. The following scenes show all the hard work that the village put into building the school and paints them as deserving of this exciting gift.

Finally, when the schoolhouse was completed, all the children ran inside and got to sit at their desks. Their parents and adults watched proudly from the doorway with beaming smiles. The teacher guides the students through the alphabet, and James Blue claims that “this is a part of the spirit of the Alliance for Progress, people helping themselves, and the success of the Alliance for Progress is to be found in just such simple things as the new school as Rincon Santo” (09:39-09:55). This final message is the same as *Evil Wind Out's*, and viewers can conclude that following the U.S. model through the Alliance for Progress will continue to bring this great success, so long as Latin Americans put in the adequate work to modernize.

A Letter from Colombia (1962): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKeaJk_t1s0

Another black-and-white film from James Blue in 1962, *A Letter from Colombia* begins with scenes of small homes sitting along a hillside, little kids running around, and a woman tending to the soil in a Colombian village. “I’m writing a letter from a land not far away, a land that is rich and full of promise,” says Blue (00:09-00:14). He goes on to celebrate the natural resources found in Colombia, such as corn, cotton, tobacco, sugar cane, coffee, and emeralds that make it “a land of potential abundance” (00:41-00:42). Blue does not hide the intention of this film – “I have come here to make one of those new films about progress that you see from time to time, new housing, industry, machinery, progress with a big P that you can measure in tons of brick and miles of road” (00:50-01:01). Though not explicitly stated, these are the markers of progress for modernization, serving as the infrastructure for a technical, middle class revolution.

However, Blue seeks to highlight more than just these industrial measures. He wants to uncover the “real” nature of Colombia’s progress, as opposed to what President Valencia and

other diplomats would include in their speeches. In an abrupt turn of events, the next scene takes place in a room of children's coffins. There is much left to be done in terms of progress, Blue explains, "in this land where death was accepted as a part of daily life" (01:14-01:17).

Considering these challenges, Blue is inspired by the Colombians' attitudes and sense of commitment to the future. He follows a family working hard to build their own home through a government loan program and is surprised by the mother's ability to maintain a beaming smile despite the stress of helping her eight children during these circumstances as well as other obstacles of disease and lack of medical care. Blue attempts to praise this example of authenticity, broadening the audiences' frame of reference and arguing that progress isn't just about material change.

Colombia is a part of the Alliance for Progress, but they have long been committed to putting in the work to become a modern nation. The Colombian plan started with the land, Blue stated. Colombia was home to rich farmland, which was badly farmed and irrigated, so they took the steps necessary to develop the valley and maximize its potential, "better utilizing the strength of the nation" (03:34-03:37). Simultaneously, Colombians are going to school to learn more about the land from teachers of agriculture. This is an example of the dual nature of modernization – technical and ideological – as these Colombians are making important improvements through education as well as their land reclamation efforts.

Agricultural education seems to be painted as a way to uplift the campesino class, who can strive for middle class status and work for social mobility through learning in order to properly engage in the modern economy. This kind of progress, in which the community is showing interest in helping themselves, seems to be the true nature of progress that Blue is seeking. The film shows a group of excited villagers in a chicken coop, learning about new farm

practices, and Blue claims that this moment embodies progress, “a sign of a step ahead, not machines, no factories, no steam-driven turbines, but a spark of interest in an old man’s eyes” (04:55-05:03).

The authentic progress that Blue finds in Colombia stands out to him because these people do not wait to be helped. They take the initiative, and they have the motivation; this mindset is clearly in line with the way that modernization theories and the notions of individualism and worthiness are marketed. The housing project he spotlights shows how the land has given these Colombians not only hope for the future but a sense of belonging in their community. Collective action has helped them build what they need, and that sense of trust and purpose is what lies at the foundation of material progress as well, according to Blue.

The knowledge that they belong to a community reminds them that they have a duty to contribute, which may mean spending the weekends working on their homes or staying up late to help build a new school or health center. “These were the landless who lived in huts of bamboo mud and recuperated wood clinging to a city’s flanks,” Blue reflects, “now through private or government programs in the spirit of the Alliance for Progress, these people who have never before owned land received their plot of ground by which they enter for the first time into the community” (08:38-08:59). Their ideological shift, honorable intent to work, and formation of a larger community that is accountable to one another have allowed Colombians to reject and reform the backwardness of their past, entering the modern world.

The last four films all emphasize that the federal government and the laws of the United States are on the side of racial equality. While there may still be forces of racism and racial tension, the films would have you believing that they largely rest with extremists and that the majority of the U.S. population is supportive of the rights of people of color. These films are

clearly representative of the USIA's objective to portray the United States as a "nearly classless society" with vastly different and improved racial relations from the environments of the nineteenth century or early twentieth century.²¹⁸ Films like these were critical to U.S. public diplomacy during the 1960s, as foreign populations were receiving a variety of messages about U.S. race relations from other countries, especially the Soviet Union and their allies, so the USIA was tasked with reorienting their attention and responding to these issues.

The main narrative throughout all four films is that the difficult recent events of racial unrest have ultimately helped the U.S. become a better nation and have shown that all the tools exist for assuring equal rights within the confines of historical institutions – it's just a matter of putting in the work to make those changes, and the U.S. is already on track for making racial progress. Freedom, which, in the view of the USIA, is synonymous with what the United States offers to its citizens, can solve these obstacles related to race, so there will always be hope moving forward, so long as the U.S. works to bring freedom to as many people as possible. The USIA aims to convey to foreign audiences watching these films that they should not doubt the power of the U.S. or assume its mission is faltering in the face of racial unrest because the U.S. is, in fact, stronger than ever.

Nine From Little Rock (1964): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPVOO5sugMY>

Though the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas took place in 1957, this USIA film was produced in 1964 and came out in 1965. *Nine From Little Rock* is narrated by Jefferson Thomas, one of the nine Black students who chose to attend Central High. As the film begins, Jefferson Thomas, wearing a suit, is back on his high school campus, looking

²¹⁸ Hewson A. Ryan, "IAL Guidelines for Agency Programming to Latin America." June 2, 1964. From JFK Library, United States Information Agency Records, Textual Records, 1961-1965. Memoranda, 1961-1964 (3 of 3 folders): 54. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/USIA/002/USIA-002-002>

out at the outdoor track and reflecting on all that has changed since 1957. “Where do you begin? Where do you look?” he says, “Like an ancient battlefield the ground is silent. Now on this field, Negro and white run together, remembering not how it was in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1957” (00:45-01:03). He recognizes that it might be easier to focus on the future instead of dwelling on the past but explains that “when you’re a dark man in a country where the Negro is demanding more and more an equal chance, you have a right to look back to discover if you are really moving forward or if the world is just moving beneath your feet” (01:18-01:30).

Thomas spoke to the importance of laws, describing the U.S. as a nation under law. “The law said segregation was wrong,” he added, “Now we waited to see if our laws had meaning or were just words in a book or idle talk in a classroom” (03:05-03:16). He referenced the Supreme Court ruling that permitted the use of military strength to enforce the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and stressed that his rights, along with Terrence Roberts, Thelma Mothershed, Elizabeth Eckford, Ernest Green, Carlotta Walls, Melba Pattillo, Minnijean Brown, and Gloria Ray’s rights, were included in that effort. Thomas seems to indicate that the law was on his side, in addition to the support he had from millions of others who may not have been physically there with him on that day in September but understood and agreed with what the Little Rock Nine were doing: “obviously in this town of a hundred thousand, there were many who didn’t like what was happening. But as we looked at the soldiers, we knew there must be millions of others who thought we represented something important” (04:27-04:39). This positive framing of the attitudes toward racial integration sends the message that those protesting and threatening the Little Rock Nine that day might have only represented the extreme racists, rather than the norm for most people’s views in the United States.

The film then follows some of the other eight students and provides an update on what they have done in the seven years since they started at Central High. First up was Minnijean Brown, who went to Southern Illinois University after graduating from Central High. At that point in 1964, she was studying journalism and writing while working on the university's student newspaper. She aspires to write a book about what happened at Little Rock but wants to finish out her schooling and work at a newspaper after graduation. She describes how much her perspective has grown and changed over the past seven years; "For the first time in my life," she says, "I have begun to understand why some Americans act the way they do. I know now some Americans have a fear of the Negro, a fear of wanting a way of life that has been dead in this country since the end of slavery. That's what the mob in Little Rock was afraid of: the Negro, who had done so much with no chance, might do so much more with an equal one" (07:17-07:43). In this sense, her time at Little Rock and Southern Illinois University led to learning experiences for Brown, increasing her empathy and understanding.

Though eight of the nine students continued at predominantly white institutions, Elizabeth Eckford chose to study at Central State college, which was founded as a historically Black college. She hasn't decided what career path she wants to pursue yet, but like Brown, her experience with the mob on that morning in September taught her important lessons. "I was frightened that morning, but I learned a great deal about people," she said, "Not only about the people who were there but the people who were not there. Like the politician who encouraged the mob. Like the thousands who suffered with me and wrote to me to tell me so" (09:10-09:30). Central State, she notes, had opened its doors to whites, and while some Black students were opposed to allowing white students to attend their school, Eckford describes them as "the few, the uninformed" who should "not be confused with the rest of us" (10:47-10:51). A persistent

theme throughout the film is the powers and benefits of racial integration, which is displayed through the long term success stories of students like the Little Rock Nine who benefited from their educational environments.

In terms of the other students, the film goes on to introduce Walls, Ray, Roberts, Pattillo, Mothershed, and Green. Most of them went on to higher education institutions, except Pattillo who dropped out after a year of college and married early. Walls studied at Denver University. Ray studied chemistry at the Illinois Institute of Technology. Roberts studied business administration at the City College of Los Angeles, while Thomas, the narrator, worked for his certification to become a public accountant. Mothershed went on to Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and aims to become a teacher. Her teachers at Central High inspired her, and she hopes to one day return to work there. Due to the technology and resources he had access to at Central High, Green had considered going into engineering but ultimately decided to pursue political organizing after graduating from Michigan State University. Green ends up receiving a Bachelors in sociology and plans to work for his Masters as well.

Green explains that there is a “tide rising against” racial discrimination, and he wants to be a part of it (13:58-14:00). He has hope for change, saying, “I’m convinced that a white American can never fully understand what motivates the Negro’s desire for equality, but the white American is becoming more concerned, especially my generation, and that makes tomorrow worth dreaming about” (14:42-14:55). Adding onto these motivational sentiments, Green argues that there is a quiet revolution taking place in the U.S., one “that says man – no matter how humble his birth, what color his skin, must be permitted to go as far as his mind and aspirations will take him” (16:05-16:14). This argument speaks to the American emphasis on

individualism and self-motivation; one must have aspirations and in order to achieve them, one must put in the work. This independence is a requirement of modernization.

The film's focus on the tangible success of the students who withstood dangerous backlash to pursue education in an integrated environment has parallels to the ethnicity paradigm that Omi and Winant propose, acting in resistance to the rearticulation efforts for racial identity unfolding during this time in the 1960s. The USIA was likely not in favor of the full scale national campaign against racism and the new emerging racial ideologies based on class and nationality; instead, they chose to bring back the story of Little Rock that could be framed to showcase the good that can come from existing racial ideologies and systems. As more and more demands were being made for political change, the different lived experiences of racial groups were being emphasized to a greater degree, and race itself was undergoing a potentially threatening process of re-negotiation; *Little Rock Nine* could be interpreted as an attempt to show that inequality is not embedded so deeply in the U.S. model that it cannot be adjusted. Seeing how everything ended up working out for the Little Rock Nine, viewers might assume that perhaps, the racial gap is not actually all that big and the U.S. model must still work.

Nine from Little Rock's framing of the unrest and violence involved in integrating schools as a type of life lesson that helped students reach larger goals is evidence of the message that the U.S. was hoping to portray abroad – that they can work together to turn their problems into opportunities. Yes, racial discrimination exists, but it's on its way out and the U.S. learning how to be better, the film wants viewers to believe. This notion is perhaps best encapsulated in the moment when Thomas is talking about how four years ago, “some of the hate from outside had come in” (11:06-11:07) and he used to have to cling to the railing while walking upstairs, but now, instead of encountering hostility from white students, they offer to help him with directions

as he walks up the stairs. *Nine from Little Rock* concludes with a reminder that the American model has not failed, but rather, it has shown its unique capacity to improve and has overcome obstacles of intolerance and ignorance, building a bridge that is not yet finished. “Before it’s finished,” Thomas says, “we’re going to have our problems, but if Little Rock taught nothing more, it taught all Americans that problems can make us better – much better” (17:57-18:08).

The Five Cities of June (1963): <https://www.c-span.org/video/?326721-1/reel-america-the-cities-june-1963>

Narrated by actor Charlton Heston, *The Five Cities of June* summarizes some of the key events that took place in June of 1963 in five cities around the globe. The events include the election and coronation of Pope Paul VI, the launch of a Soviet rocket, the war in South Vietnam, the integration of the University of Alabama, and President Kennedy’s trip to Berlin. For the purposes of this project, I will only focus on the section about racial integration in Tuscaloosa, Alabama and the way that domestic race relations are portrayed by the USIA. This part of the film begins with clips of Black women getting on the bus and exiting shops in the city. The story, according to the narrator, is a familiar one. He says, “it started before the war between the states one hundred years ago, which was fought and won for Negro equality. Negroes were taken out of slavery and freedom was guaranteed, but barriers were put in front of them, especially in states that have lost that civil war, the states of the Southeast” (15:25-15:43).

The narrator frames the controversy over integration as a constitutional debate. It was a question of whether or not the Constitution permitted racial barriers, and in 1954, the Supreme Court proved that the Constitution guarantees freedom for all. Once again, the idea that the law is on the side of equality is a point of emphasis. The resistance and violence that accompanied racial integration efforts in the South are again described as seemingly uncommon examples of

citizens pushing back on what the law intended. To this end, the narrator explains, “though the vast majority of the United States was in sympathy with the Negro, some citizens were not. Though the U.S. government supported the Negro, some of the separate state governments did not” (16:19-16:33). The United States as a whole, through this lens, is supportive of Black students and believes in the importance of equal rights, but a small minority has expressed issues with these steps toward progress and remains stuck in the past.

On June 11, 1963, two Black students, Vivian Malone and James Hood, voiced their interest in enrolling in the University of Alabama. Alabama was the last state of the deep South to resist the integration of schools, and this effort was “a great test” (16:03) of the nation’s capabilities to enforce its civil rights laws. Their arrival at the school that day was an act of defiance in the face of “the weak morals of the past” (17:13-17:14), according to the narrator, and thanks to the protection offered by federal marshals, the students were able to safely enter the university. The governor, who initially refused to allow Black students to enroll in white universities, conceded, and the law reigned victorious in its ability to offer freedom to the citizens in the United States. The U.S. maintains its moral superiority and its reputation of generosity in providing freedom of choice, and the federal government could be seen as the leading vehicle for defending this uniquely American privilege.

To conclude this section and instill lasting hope for what is possible through the U.S. model, the narrator again reminds viewers that the U.S. government and the majority of the population recognize racial equality. “This was not the end of race problems in the South,” he says, “but the government and the people made clear that the Negro is an equal citizen - that is entitled to and shall get freedom of choice” (18:11-18:22). Freedom of choice is a staple of modernity, as “wherever free men live, their most sacred request, their most sacred right is for

freedom of choice” (18:24-18:31). This film works to disentangle racism from modernization and allows the U.S. to assume the role of a gift giver, granting the most sacred gift of freedom of choice to Black citizens, even amidst the more closed-minded and resistant forces like the extremists in Alabama’s state government. After watching *The Five Cities of June*, viewers might be left believing that the worst of the “race problems” in the United States is in the past and that the American model has withstood yet another challenge.

The March (1964): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQYzHIIQ1O4>

The March is a 1964 documentary short film, directed by James Blue, about the 1963 March on Washington for Freedom and Jobs. Newly appointed director of the USIA Carl T. Rowan introduces the film as an example of “man’s continuing search for dignity” (00:19-00:22). Specifically, he says, the March On Washington encapsulates “one of the most cherished rights in a free society, the right of peaceful protest” (00:29-00:35). He clarifies that the event was attended by both whites and Blacks and had the full support of the federal government, both President Johnson and late President Kennedy. Due to the freedoms that exist in the U.S. and the governmental support for the exploration of such freedoms, Americans can “deepen the meaning of personal liberty” (00:55-00:57) through mechanisms like protest.

The film then moves on from Rowan at his desk and shifts to clips of civil rights leaders preparing groups to go to Washington for the march in August of 1963. There are several clips of Black people in crowds singing songs about holding on and fighting for equal rights. The narrator sets the stage for the march, explaining that “by the end of August 1963, in some places of the United States, a Negro could not go to school where he chose, eat where he wished, build his home where it pleased him or find jobs for which he was qualified. He had been insulted, beaten, jailed, drenched with water, chased by dogs, but he was coming to Washington,” he said,

“to swallow up hatred in love, to overcome violence by peaceful protest” (03:42-04:08). The constitutional right to do so is once again emphasized and championed.

The film does contextualize the United States’ long history of racism, if only briefly, saying, “three hundred and fifty years ago, the white man came to America, and three hundred and fifty years ago, the Negro came to America. The one came as master, the other as slave” (04:51-05:02). The Emancipation Proclamation is mentioned, but the narrator recognizes that the Black Americans are still not completely free. In this view, it is the duty of other Americans to help Blacks achieve their rights, so the film shows a variety of clips of people from different racial groups coming together to make sandwiches and posters, working for the greater cause of freedom. The relationships between everyone volunteering and attending the march are depicted as harmonious, even joyous. They sing together often, chanting “we shall overcome.” There is a sense of hope in the effectiveness of their racial collaboration.

The narrator mentions that people predicted violence and that some groups did prepare for it. Volunteers keeping watch for violence would use code names like freedom, equality, justice, and jobs, he added. The only other indication of the threat of violence was from the bus driver. “If you have any questions or anything that’s bothering you, be sure to contact your captains for anything and they will take it from there. Do not try to do anything on your own because the minute you do, you will be upsetting the purpose of this march. The whole thing is an orderly conducted march,” he told his passengers. He calls attention to the importance of maintaining composure and nonviolence, as the image of orderliness is essential to how this march has been defined and ultimately, its success. The implication, though unspoken, is that if the sense of orderliness were to have been broken, violence might have broken out and anarchy would have undermined the goals of the march.

The remainder of the film includes the footage of Marian Anderson's rendition of "He's Got the Whole Wide World in His Hands" and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech at the march, though his audio was redacted for copyright purposes. Chants of "we shall overcome" and images of crowds walking around the Washington Monument together wrap up the end of the film. As the marchers are shown seated on the buses to go back home, the narrator says, "in the long history of man's cruelty to man, this was a day of hope" (32:32-32:38). Hope, once again, is the message that the USIA wants viewers to walk away with; inherent to freedom is hope, and therefore, if freedom is inherent to the United States, so is hope. As with the previous films, the main takeaway is that racial discrimination is on its way out because the democratic institutions of the U.S. allowed citizens to partake in protest and expand their access to the freedoms that their U.S. identity and modernized society entitle them to.

The Hollywood Roundtable (1963): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1u27coFIGXg>

The Hollywood Roundtable brings together a small group of well-known figures in Hollywood who have been involved in the Civil Rights Movement in varying capacities. The roundtable discussion was filmed in a television studio in Washington D.C. on August 28, 1963, following the March On Washington. Seated at the table are James Baldwin, Harry Belafonte, Marlon Brando, Charlton Heston, Joseph Mankiewicz and Sydney Poitier with David Schoenbrun as their moderator. The seven men are entertainers and artists who came to the march to fight for freedom and jobs, though some of them – the men of color – have been involved in civil rights activism long before 1963.

Schoenbrun starts the discussion by asking each of the men what brought them to Washington. There was a clear contrast in the sense of urgency that the three Black men at the table felt about joining the movement in relation to the more recent revelations that brought the

white men to the table. To begin, novelist James Baldwin shares, “I could say the fact that I was born a Negro in this country. More concretely, I felt there was no way for me not to be involved with what impresses me as being the most significant, most important, most loaded demonstration to free Americans that has ever happened in this country” (01:56-02:17). Similarly, Poitier “became interested in the civil rights struggle out of necessity to survive” (04:22-04:25), and Belafonte “inherited the struggle for civil rights from my mother and father, and they got it from their mothers and fathers” (06:06-06:14). Belafonte went on to say that the March On Washington was the result of generations of Black organizing and the work “of Black Americans who have been trying to appeal to the conscience of white supremacy and a superior force that has denied and disenfranchised the Negro for so long” (06:23-06:36). Despite these difficulties, Belafonte still claims to believe in the potential of the United States, though clarifying that it has not yet realized its potential.

About halfway through the film, Schoenbrun brings up what is perhaps the key point of the film – that demonstrations like the March On Washington are only possible in the Western World. “You mention a number of countries in which there has been oppression and repression and in which man has been hateful to his brother,” Schoenbrun begins, “and in which this anger expresses itself in a demonstration of one kind or the other. What strikes me is that almost all of the countries you mentioned are countries in the Western World” (10:23-10:41). Though he frames his thoughts as a question, he is making the concrete suggestion that demonstrations for freedom could not be held in other parts of the world – less modernized parts of the world. Mankiewicz agrees with this point of view and takes it one step further, arguing that the U.S. might be the *only* country, other than England, in which a demonstration of the scope of the March On Washington could happen. Heston underscored that the event gave him hope about the

future because it was a “reinstatement of the principles on which this country was founded” (13:37-13:39). These special principles, unique to the United States, would continue to guide them toward prominence and exceptional success moving forward, as they have since the nation’s founding.

The white men seem to be in agreement that American structures and the backbones of the U.S. government remain strong, and instead of critiquing or dismantling those systems, they instead hope to extend the access and privileges of them to more people. Meanwhile, Belafonte and Baldwin describe some of the shortcomings of the existing structures and attempt to push the boundaries of what current American principles can produce. “This country has to go to work to change itself... and if we don’t achieve this dream, we will have no future at all,” Baldwin says (19:25-19:38). Belafonte also emphasizes the large role that the white community must play and reiterates that Black Americans have long been fighting peacefully for racial equality to little avail.

To Schoenbrun’s point about the special opportunities for freedom in the Western World, Belafonte tried to respond by saying, “When you speak of other centers in the world where demonstrations like today could not take place, yes I accept that. But I also say that it is long since passed the time where we can measure our own conscience and our own sense of morality based on what some decayed society refuses to give its own” (21:26-21:44). In essence, he was arguing for new measurements of modernization, or an update to the ideals that are deemed “backward” in order to uplift American structures. Schoenbrun dismisses this point by saying that the world doesn’t have a good measuring stick, implying that the American model is the best option, and told him to remember that the entire world is watching this roundtable. Belafonte tries to follow up, but Mankiewicz interrupts him to restate the significance of the Declaration of

Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation. Like the conclusion of *Nine From Little Rock*, *The Hollywood Roundtable* seems to indicate that while racial discrimination represents an obstacle, the American systems can withstand it and grow from it with the proper adjustments. Overall, the ten USIA films I analyzed all seem to share this goal of stamping out any doubt in the model of American democracy and the feasibility of the American Dream; there is hard work ahead to repair racial tensions, for example, but no reason to give up hope or consider a different model for modernization.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this thesis will contribute to the relatively limited scholarship on the role of race in public diplomacy, helping draw attention to the racial biases and underlying identity-based perspectives that inform U.S. foreign policy choices consciously and subconsciously. When I set out to write this thesis, I had initially expected to find many more explicit examples of how U.S. racial thinking influenced public diplomacy. Based on what I had previously known about U.S. history and its relationship with Latin America, I assumed that the archival sources would be rife with racialized rhetoric, specifically in terms of the stereotypes about Latin Americans as lazy, ignorant, and stubborn. However, as I searched through the archives and read a wide variety of the documents, it became clear to me that overt racism and ideas about white supremacy had been largely eliminated from not only the USIA materials meant for external use but also the internal correspondences throughout the Kennedy administration by this point.

Although I recognized that this pattern certainly did not mean that racism and racial hierarchy had also been eliminated from U.S. institutions or the dominant understandings of national identity, I was still surprised that these ideas had taken a more subtle form at this level

of foreign policymaking. In evaluating memorandums from within the Kennedy administration and Department of State, policy and research documents from the USIA, and ten USIA films from the early 1960s, I found that U.S. public diplomacy efforts in Latin America during this period were defined by an emphasis on modernization and a goal of spreading the success of the U.S. model to other regions, specifically through Kennedy's Alliance for Progress program. In analyzing the rhetoric surrounding modernization, I realized that modernization had become a vehicle for reframing the tenets of U.S. exceptionalism, its unique mission to civilize other countries, and its position on the global hierarchy without necessarily mentioning the role of race.

The political and social context of the 1960s was extremely relevant to interpreting my findings for this thesis. During this era, racial identities were being rearticulated and renegotiated in the U.S. during the Civil Rights Movement as well as abroad through the incorporation of the Third World and its implications of mapping out a new global hierarchy. I argue that the rhetoric of modernization acted as a quieter backlash to growing progressivism and the more expansive understandings of racial identity coming out of social movements without appearing to outwardly oppose these ideas. The USIA films, in particular, sought to convey an image of the U.S. as a champion of racial equality and underscore the strength of its laws and institutions for responding to discrimination. However, amidst these efforts, U.S. policymakers were also trying to secure the dominance of its model for development throughout the rest of the world and assure that the narrative of modernization would still give the U.S. a reason for foreign intervention and help justify its global superiority.

Overall, the dynamics revealed in this thesis indicate that the core elements of the United States' self-perception and vision of its role globally will continue to appear in dominant

institutions involved in foreign policymaking, regardless of changing cultural and social norms. These findings also support the constructivist view of the way that social context motivates institutional behavior. This is a clear example of how domestic and international politics influence institutionalized ideas about national identity, showing how these ideas are not stagnant but instead evolve with the normative circumstances created by the actors involved.

A key takeaway from this work can be that as new social and cultural movements take form, we should expect to see modifications and adjustments to the way the United States approaches foreign policy, but we should not necessarily assume that those shifts represent a dismantling of national identity or new guiding motivations from policymakers. Citizens play an important role in constituting national identity, and their power in this realm is part of the reason why public diplomacy emerged as such a prominent feature of U.S. foreign policy. The more that citizens, both at home and abroad, can disrupt the dominant narratives about U.S. exceptionalism, its “moral” code for intervening in other countries, and its definitions of modernity and civilization, the more that U.S. institutions will be forced to respond by altering the parameters for their policies and the way they present themselves.

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