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*Introduction by Kyle Longley, Arizona State University*

**Bradley Lynn Coleman. *Colombia and the United States: The Making of an Inter-American Alliance, 1939-1960*.** Kent: Kent State University Press, 2008. 303 pp. ISBN: 978-0-87338-926-6 (\$45.95, cloth).

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Introduction by Kyle Longley, Arizona State University

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For more than a decade, prominent historians of American foreign relations have called for the internationalization of the field. However, for more than forty years, people such as Lester Langley, Linda Hall, Thomas Schoonover, and Mark Gilderhus have already created wonderful international research models while studying U.S.-Latin American relations. They have employed multinational research, actively incorporated cultural factors, both American and Latin American, into their narratives, and highlighted the agency of the Latin American nations. The models have been replicated by a new generation of historians of U.S.-Latin American relations including Jim Siekmeier, Darlene Rivas, and Eric Roorda as well as many others such as Brad Coleman in this work under review.

The reviewers of Brad Coleman's *Colombia and the United States* universally agree that the book is significant. In particular, they stress the quality of the research that includes extensive work in archives in the United States and Colombia. Robert Karl characterizes the book as an "ambitious attempt to present a history that is at once 'bilateral' and 'multilateral' [and] illuminates elements of both countries' experiences from World War II to the escalation of Latin America's Cold War in 1959." He underscores the contribution to the historiography of U.S.-Colombian relations, a terribly understudied bi-national relationship, as well as that of the foreign policies of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations.

James Siekmeier adds that the book is "an excellent, path-breaking book on the recent history of inter-American relations . . . it masterfully succeeds in de-centering inter-American relations away from the older, Washington, D.C.-centric histories of previous era, by focusing on the agency of the Latin American nation in its relationship with the United States." He continues, "no previous author of the history of United States-Colombian military and diplomatic relations has explored the intersection of [this relationship] with the assiduous research, keen analysis, and level of detail as has Coleman."

Robert Robinson builds on an earlier review for H-Diplo (September 2009)<sup>1</sup> and acknowledges, "Coleman's analysis fits nicely within a literature which demonstrates how using military or economic aid to accomplish political purposes was a difficult proposition at best." Robinson concentrates primarily on developing the "two areas where I think Coleman makes a particularly notable contribution. These areas are the tension between the Departments of State and Defense over the control of foreign policy and the inherent difficulties of using military or economic aid as a tool of influence." He emphasizes that World War II and the Colombia's combat contribution in Korea strengthened a relationship already being drawn together by common "western" ideas at a time when domestic violence in Colombia intensified. The United States ultimately backed the Colombian government, according to Coleman, "even as Colombia drifted further from its democratic heritage." (98) Professor Robinson acknowledges that Coleman also clearly "demonstrates

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<sup>1</sup> For the review, see <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=24298>

how using military or economic aid to accomplish political purposes was a difficult proposition at best.” Unlike his earlier review where he highlighted his problems with “a few tantalizing pages regarding religiously motivated violence and persecution of U.S. Protestants in Colombia,” as well as issues regarding social and cultural contacts between Americans and Colombians in Korea, Robinson offers no substantial critiques in this review.

While Jim Siekmeier generally praises the work, he acknowledges, “there is one issue in which, I think, Coleman could have delved into more thoroughly—the issues of Colombian nationalism.” Professor Siekmeier believes that at several junctures, particularly related to authoritarian nationalism as represented by those like General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (1953-1957), the story could have been developed to better explain the convergence of U.S.-Colombian interests. While noting that the issue is not central, “the perception of such nationalism by top Washington policymakers proves important in understanding United States-Colombian relations in the 1950s, and beyond.” Still, Siekmeier concludes, “such questions aside, Coleman’s book is a well-written, path-breaking, and all-around excellent study of an important inter-American relationship.”

Robert Karl provides the most substantive critiques, building off his own dissertation work on Colombia. He asks for development in several areas. First, he wants more on the ideas that Professor Coleman emphasizes underlay the relationship such as anticommunism, democracy, Christianity and collective security. He talks about how Professor Coleman populates the story with snapshots of the men who interact at various points, but “these descriptions never transcend the level of vignettes. Readers are left with a rather fragmented picture of the men who most embodied the ideals of the U.S.-Colombian relationship.” Karl also observes “Coleman’s striking failure to interrogate his key concepts.” These include why he defines the important period of *La Violencia* as spanning 1946-1958. Karl also laments that Coleman “offers little insight into other ways that Colombians may have conceptualized the struggle (the Cold War).” Finally, Karl emphasizes that Coleman “uncritically accepts the version of Colombian history presented by military leaders and Conservative politicians.” Karl adds, “he is moreover largely silent on the issue of human rights” including massacres, mass internment camps, and population control measures during the mid-1950s. “He thus misses,” Karl concludes, “an opportunity to shed light on possible continuities and discontinuities in the topic of human rights since the early days of the U.S.-Colombian alliance.”

Despite the questions raised by the reviewers, each agrees that Professor Coleman has made a significant contribution to the historiography of the United States and Latin America. He provides readers an insightful look into the military/diplomatic relations between the United States and Colombia, one that laid the groundwork for the relationship such as the controversial, albeit apparently successful, Plan Colombia. As is often the case, Latin American examples supply noteworthy understanding of the U.S. interaction with the Third World, a precedent established over centuries. This case study from World War II and the early Cold War provides a good point of comparison to what evolved in Southeast Asia, Africa, the Near East, and Middle East regarding military-diplomatic relations. It also

serves as a wonderful model of research for people in all the subfields of U.S. foreign relations and deserves the attention of anyone interested in the field.

**Participants:**

**Bradley Lynn Coleman** is the Command Historian, U.S. Southern Command, Miami, Florida. He graduated from the Virginia Military Institute (B.A., 1995), Temple University (M.A., 1997), and University of Georgia (Ph.D., 2001). In addition to his duties at U.S. Southern Command, Dr. Coleman serves as a U.S. delegate to the Pan American Institute for Geography and History, Organization of American States. He is currently working on a history of the U.S. Caribbean Defense Command, 1941-1948.

**Robert Karl** is Assistant Professor of Latin American history at Princeton University. He holds an A.B. from Dartmouth College and a Ph.D. from Harvard University. His current project, "Democracy, Violence, and Cold War in Colombia, 1957-1966," examines the international politics of violence and development in Colombia, including the rise of the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), during the 1960s. He has received fellowships from Harvard, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, Fulbright Colombia, and the Eisenhower and Johnson presidential libraries.

**Kyle Longley** is the Snell Family Dean's Distinguished Professor of History and Political Science at Arizona State University. He received his doctorate from the University of Kentucky in 1994 where he studied under the guidance of George Herring. He is the author of *The Sparrow and the Hawk: Costa Rica and the United States During the Rise of José Figueres* (1997, winner of the A.B. Thomas Prize for outstanding book from the South Eastern Council on Latin American Studies), *In the Eagle's Shadow: The United States and Latin America* (2002, second edition 2009); *Senator Albert Gore, Sr.: Tennessee Maverick* (2004); editor and contributor to *Deconstructing Reagan: Conservative Mythology and America's Fortieth President* (2006), and *Grunts: The American Combat Soldier in Vietnam* (2008). Currently, he is putting the finishing touches on *The Houses of the Purple Hearts: The Morenci Nine and Small Town America During the Vietnam War* and collaborating on a book on American foreign policy in the 21st Century with Admiral Jim Stavridis, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe.

**Robert S. Robinson** is currently a visiting assistant professor of history at Ohio University. He received his Ph.D. in 2007 from Ohio State University. His research, including a forthcoming article in *Agricultural History*, centers on the political, cultural, and security challenges posed by Mexican migration to the United States. He has presented his research at a number of venues including the SHAFR Annual Meeting; the Ohio Latin Americanist Conference, and thematic conferences in his area of expertise hosted by the Center for International History at Columbia University; the Triangle Institute for Security Studies (Duke, North Carolina State University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), and the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History.

**James F. Siekmeier** received Ph.D. in 1993 from Cornell and is now an assistant professor at West Virginia University. He has taught courses on U.S. and Latin American history at colleges and universities in Washington, D.C., New York, Iowa, Texas, and in Bolivia on two Fulbright Fellowships, and has worked in the Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State. He published *Aid, Nationalism, and Inter-American Relations: Guatemala, Bolivia, and the United States, 1944-1961*, in 1999. He is presently working on a manuscript, under review, entitled *From Ike to Che: Bolivia and the United States, 1945-present*.

Review by Robert Karl, Princeton University

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Colombia's early Cold War story is a strange one. In 1948, the inter-American conference that established the Organization of American States brought to Bogotá such disparate figures as U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall and young Cuban law student Fidel Castro. Both thus witnessed the worst urban riot in Latin American history, which erupted during the conference, following the unrelated assassination of a popular Colombian politician.

Two years later, Colombian President Laureano Gómez, who had once opposed Colombia's World War II alliance with the United States, dispatched a Colombian detachment to the U.S.-led war in Korea. Colombian troops would also later serve in the United Nations force in the Suez. The Colombian armed forces, among the smallest in the hemisphere, thus found themselves in the curious position of having the most experience in overseas operations (combat and peacekeeping) of any Latin American military of the decade. The Colombian military moreover had the greatest familiarity (which is not to say expertise) with irregular warfare, a product of Colombia's cataclysmic mid-century internal conflict, *La Violencia*.

This is the story told by Bradley Lynn Coleman's narrowly conceived *Colombia and the United States: The Making of an Inter-American Alliance, 1939-1960*. The book's ambitious attempt to present a history that is at once "bilateral" and "multilateral" illuminates elements of both countries' experiences from World War II to the escalation of Latin America's Cold War in 1959. On the U.S. side, Coleman explains how the United States dealt with smaller states, and with Colombia in particular, during periods of global conflict. On the Colombian side, Coleman highlights the material and ideological incentives that led Colombia to seek a closer relationship with the United States and in some cases deploy its forces to far-off lands.

Coleman moves thematically through chronologically-ordered chapters, from WWII to the dawn of the Cold War and Korea, and then on to the remaking of the Colombian military into "a state-building instrument" (138) and internal security force under successive military and civilian regimes in the 1950s. In the earlier chapters in particular, when the emphasis on the multilateral is greater, Coleman employs "comparative vignettes" (xiv) that explain how other Third World countries, from Latin America and beyond, negotiated military cooperation with the United States. These vignettes are a useful means of contextualizing Colombia's role in hemispheric and global military affairs.

By terminating his study with the Eisenhower administration, Coleman indirectly furnishes an answer to the debate on whether Eisenhower or Kennedy introduced more innovations to U.S. policy toward Latin America. For Coleman, already "[b]y 1960 the two countries had formed the basis of the modern internal security partnership" (xiii). Here Coleman sides with historians such as Stephen G. Rabe, who has emphasized Eisenhower's role over

Kennedy's in the remaking of hemispheric policy.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Coleman's inclusion of the United States' Latin American partner also challenges – again subtly – the usual terms of this debate. Shifts in the U.S.-Colombian relationship may have depended to a large degree on Eisenhower, but they depended even more on Colombian President Alberto Lleras Camargo and the National Front government.

This emphasis on Colombia is one of the book's defining characteristics. As Colombian archival sources are only beginning to be worked on by Colombian and U.S. historians, Coleman's book is something of a breakthrough in both national historiographies. This contribution is bolstered by Coleman's helpful "Essay on Archival Research," which should be required reading for historians interested in Colombian-U.S. relations, if not all scholars embarking on research into U.S. diplomatic history at NARA's Archives II. In addition to providing practical notes on the organization and content of collections that he examined in Bogotá, Coleman offers thoughts on Colombian sources from subsequent periods. He is right to highlight the simultaneous possibilities and limitations of doing research in Colombia's exciting new archival landscape. Research into the 1960s should prove even more fruitful than what Coleman achieves here.<sup>2</sup>

Coleman's research approach raises methodological issues for U.S.-Latin American relations and international history more broadly. Recent trends in the historiography have emphasized the use of archives in the Global South, very often to construct bottom-up narratives.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, Coleman's book shows that these two approaches are not automatically coupled. In spite of his use of new Colombian sources, Coleman's account sticks to a top-down military and diplomatic history. It represents, in a sense, a dash of new wine in old bottles, a hybrid form somewhere between the older U.S. foreign relations literature and more recent international/transnational histories.

The former tendency generally wins out. As the book's title and introduction indicate, one of Coleman's aims is to internationalize the bilateral U.S.-Colombian relationship. His most notable success on this comes in his description of Colombian activities in the nascent United Nations (45-46), which included attempts in 1946 to broker a U.S.-Soviet agreement on a standing U.N. army. Even more than Colombian military involvement in Korea and Suez, Colombian leadership in international and inter-American diplomatic forums exemplified the country's commitment to multilateralism.

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

<sup>2</sup> Using the Archivo General de la Nación's own administrative records, the Colombian historian Marco Palacios has recently offered a more detailed explanation of the fate of Colombian government records from the 1950s. Marco Palacios, "Seguridad modelo 1950," 8 June 2009. [http://www.razonpublica.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=149&Itemid=197](http://www.razonpublica.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=149&Itemid=197)

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In From the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008).

However, such examples disappear from Coleman's narrative after 1946. For instance, it is only in retrospect that readers later learn of Alberto Lleras Camargo's work as the director general of the Pan American Union and the first secretary general of the OAS in 1947-1948 (178). Overall, the bilateral-military dynamic receives greater emphasis than the international-diplomatic. The experience of Colombian soldiers and sailors in East Asia, rather than the activities of Colombian diplomats in inter-American arenas, stands as the central stuff on which Coleman's inter-American alliance is built.

Moreover, the "ideas" that Coleman sees as underlying Colombia's partnership with the U.S. – "democracy, liberty, Christianity, anticommunism, multilateralism, inter-American solidarity, and collective security" (xvi) – are the central figures in the narrative. Coleman populates his account with wonderful snapshots (written and visual) of the men behind the U.S.-Colombian partnership: Medellín vice-consul and future historian Vernon Lee Fluharty hunting Nazis during WWII, pistol on his hip (33); George Marshall calmly reading a book on a window ledge as Bogotá burned beneath him in April 1948 (56); and future dictator Gustavo Rojas Pinilla as the U.S. knew him as a junior officer in the 1940s (23, 149). But these descriptions never transcend the level of vignettes. Readers are left with a rather fragmented picture of the men who most embodied the ideals of the U.S.-Colombian relationship. A closer examination of the careers of several of these figures, Lleras Camargo among them, might have made for a more compelling axis around which the book could have been organized.

A shortcoming that even more haunts *Colombia and the United States* is Coleman's striking failure to interrogate his key concepts. There is no explanation of why Coleman chooses to define *La Violencia* as lasting from 1946 to 1958, when determining the chronological span of the conflict is a much contested point in the Colombian historiography. Furthermore, we do not gain a sense of how U.S. or Colombian observers described the country's descent toward terrible partisan violence. *La Violencia* enters the story fully formed. On this and other points, a more nuanced perspective would have enriched the book, by showing how changing understandings of common challenges shaped the U.S.-Colombian relationship.

In another example, Coleman is vague on what he means by "the cold war," other than calling it "the cold war against communism" (69, 137, 174). He shows how Colombian leaders mobilized the idea of the Cold War to get closer to the United States, but offers little insight into other ways that Colombians may have conceptualized the struggle. Furthermore, Coleman pledges to "de-center...the great-power competition for Europe, Asia, and the Middle East" to "expose...the North-South implications" of World War II and the Cold War (xv). Yet Colombian participation in the Korean War was an outlier in the Latin American encounter with the Cold War. If anything, it represented one of the few instances, particularly in the early Cold War, where a Southern country became directly involved in the great-power competition for the rest of the world. Here Coleman could have complicated recent works, like Odd Arne Westad's, that stress the political struggles

of the North-South Cold War, particularly as they related to issues of development and social mobilization.<sup>4</sup>

Coleman's portrayals of "the cold war against communism" within Colombia itself are also ill-defined. He grants far too much weight to anti-Communism as a driving force behind *La Violencia*, seemingly lumping the persecuted majority Liberal Party together with the tiny Communist Party under the banner of "Colombian liberalism" (52). Given this fixation with Communism, it is surprising that Coleman does not make more of the Colombian Army's 1955 Villarrica/Sumapaz campaign (152, 154). In addition to being the largest domestic combat operation that the Army had up to then undertaken during *La Violencia*, Villarrica was also the most significant and direct clash between the country's military and Communists during the 1940s and 1950s.

It is also surprising that Coleman does not connect the Villarrica campaign to the subsequent emergence of Colombia's most famous *guerrilla*, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Communist columns that fled Villarrica in 1955 helped to establish so-called "independent republics," which were eventually targeted in the Colombian military's massive, U.S.-backed counter-insurgency campaign of 1964-1965. Coleman briefly discusses this *Plan Lazo* in the Epilogue, concluding that the plan "reduced domestic violence to an acceptable level for the first time since the mid-1940s" (199). Left unmentioned is the fact that the destruction of the "independent republics" led directly to the dispersal of the armed Communists and their consequent reformation as the FARC in 1966. The fulfillment of short-term objectives thus bred long-term complications. *Lazo* is certainly then one instance where the Colombian-U.S. alliance did not prove "mutually beneficial" for both militaries, to use a favorite phrase of Coleman's (20, 98).

Indeed, dissenting voices are absent from *Colombia and the United States*. As one other reviewer has noted,<sup>5</sup> Coleman uncritically accepts the version of Colombian history presented by military leaders and Conservative politicians. Perhaps because of this, Coleman ignores the collusion between paramilitary groups and state agents in both the 1940s-1950s (52) and 1990s (200). Here he overlooks important regional studies of Colombia's violence.<sup>6</sup> He is moreover largely silent on the issue of human rights. The massacre of eighty (suspected) insurgent supporters by the Army in April 1956 is described as symptomatic of an uncommon pattern (153-154). Unmentioned are the use of mass internment camps and other strict population control measures during the Villarrica campaign. Nor does Coleman point out in the book's notes (233-234e81) the controversy surrounding the School of the Americas, derided within progressive and left-wing circles in the United States and Latin America for its role in the training of future Latin American

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<sup>4</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> See the review by Michael J. LaRosa, *The Journal of Military History* 73.1 (January 2009): 303-306.

<sup>6</sup> See especially Carlos Miguel Ortiz Sarmiento, *Estado y subversión en Colombia: La Violencia en el Quindío años 50* (Bogotá: Fondo Editorial CEREC, 1985), Chapter 2; and Mary Roldán, *Blood and Fire: La Violencia in Antioquia, Colombia, 1946-1953* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002).

torturers and dictators. He thus misses an opportunity to shed light on possible continuities and discontinuities in the topic of human rights since the early days of the U.S.-Colombian alliance.

*Colombia and the United States* is a positive contribution toward our understanding of Colombia, still the least studied major country in Latin America. With its generally clear and accessible prose, and chapters on the Korean War that stand well on their own, Coleman's book lends itself to undergraduate courses in military and diplomatic history.

Coleman concludes that "the U.S.-Colombian experience confirmed the importance of globalization, ideology, self-interest, domestic variables, agency, and geography in U.S.-Latin American relations" (201). While little fault can be found with this assertion, the U.S.-Colombian relationship was more contested, and more human, than Coleman's optimistic portrayal indicates. However, even silences can be instructive. *Colombia and the United States* should prompt historiographical and methodological discussions, and serve as an archival guide, in graduate or upper-level undergraduate seminars in U.S. foreign relations, international history, and Latin American history. Coleman's work suggests something about where these fields have been, where they might be going, and how historians might get to that future.

*The Limitations of Military Aid*

I recently wrote a full review of Bradley Lynn Coleman's *Colombia and the United States: The Making of an Inter-American Alliance, 1939-1960* for H-Diplo, so I will not attempt to simply repeat that here.<sup>1</sup> What I will strive to do instead is highlight two areas where I think Coleman makes a particularly notable contribution. These areas are the tension between the Departments of State and Defense over the control of foreign policy and the inherent difficulties in using military or economic aid as a tool of influence. Both of these issues have been written about extensively, but Coleman's expertise in military matters and the tightly focused nature of this case study highlight these issues in an especially interesting way.

After the Second World War, the United States set about arming many of its allies around the world. This armament program was institutionalized in the form of the Military Assistance Program (MAP). Although by the late 1960s this program would be as much a way to raise revenue as it was a foreign policy tool, in the first decades after World War II it was primarily a tool of influence. First, it allowed the United States to standardize military equipment and practices among its allies, tying their militaries to that of the United States and creating an ongoing relationship for training and maintenance. Second, and more abstractly, it was an effort to procure friendly relations and support for the U.S. position in the Cold War.

As Chester Pach noted in *Arming the Free World: The Origins of the United States Military Assistance Program, 1945-1950* (1991), this aid initiative created tension between the Departments of State and Defense from its inception. The implementation of MAP in Latin America is a good example. The Department of State argued that the Ambassador needed to be the final authority over the dispersal of MAP aid based on the statutory role of that Department in conducting foreign affairs. The military liaisons in charge of distributing the aid, on the other hand, sometimes found ambassadors ill informed on the technical aspects of assistance and unmotivated to cooperate. Another point of contention, of crucial importance to Coleman's work in Colombia, was the State Department's fears that the vast program of MAP aid envisioned by military leaders would serve to prop up dictators by outfitting them to crush domestic opposition. The general trend that emerged was of military officials enthusiastically supporting aid and concerned State Department officials working to stem the tide as best they could. Latin American leaders quite naturally favored the military view, which would largely give them access to military supplies in quantities and at times of their choosing. The result, as can be seen in Eric Paul Roorda's *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (1998), is that in many Latin American states military leaders gained in prestige and access relative to their State Department colleagues. In the Dominican case this meant

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<sup>1</sup> Robert S. Robinson. Review of Bradley Lynn Coleman, *Colombia and the United States: The Making of an Inter-American Alliance, 1939-1960*. H-Diplo, H-Net Reviews. September 2009. <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=24298>

more face-time with Rafael Trujillo, better facilities and connections, and places of honor at public events.

Coleman's work shows a similar process at work in Colombia. From 1939 to 1960 a series of crises, the most important of which were World War II, the Cold War, the Korean War, and *la Violencia* within Colombia itself, created a steadily expanding military cooperation between the United States and Colombia.

World War II made U.S. leaders think seriously about a security partnership with Colombia for the first time. As Max Paul Friedman has demonstrated in *Nazis and Good Neighbors* (2003), U.S. leaders up to and including FDR were frightened that Nazi agents would use Colombia as base from which to menace U.S. interests in Latin America, most particularly the Panama Canal. What Coleman adds to this story is a look at how those fears spurred the creation of a bilateral military relationship and the first significant improvement in Colombian-U.S. Relations since Panamanian independence. The cooperation was halting at first, plagued by problems such as U.S. military advisors who did not speak Spanish (23). Ultimately, though, the World War II cooperation laid the foundation for decades of military connections, and the Colombians strengthened their armed forces with about eight million dollars in Lend-Lease aid (29).

The end of World War II ushered in a period in which many Latin American nations grew wary of further cooperation with the United States. The War had enhanced their economic dependence on the United States by weakening or isolating potential alternatives, and raised desires for development aid that were not fulfilled as the United States concentrated on European reconstruction in the late 1940s. Many nations responded coolly to U.S. requests for Cold War cooperation. Colombians, on the other hand, saw utility in positioning their nation as the most willing of U.S. allies in the region. The highpoint of this strategy was the decision by Colombian leaders to contribute combat troops to the Korean War effort, making it the only Latin American nation to do so. Colombia initially contributed one infantry battalion and one warship and received a great deal in exchange. The United States outfitted, supplied, and provided additional training for these troops at low cost, in fact much of the equipment was simply given to the Colombians after the war (158). In addition to valuable combat experience, Colombian forces also forged crucial relationships with U.S. officers, relationships which would continue to pay dividends over the next decade as the Colombian army sought support for its internal security problems, namely a period of internal political violence lasting roughly from 1946-1958 known as *la Violencia*.

As the military relationship developed, the State Department's control over policy waned. The military had the technology and expertise Colombians needed, and the willingness to provide it. Coleman writes that military leaders were content to allow Latin American nations to define the size of their own militaries, and indeed, felt that if the United States declined to take advantage of the opportunity to sell arms then other nations would simply sell to Latin America in their place. U.S. supplied arms would also lead to standardization and an ongoing relationship for parts and repair that would maintain a U.S. role into the future.

The decision to supply aid to a nation riven with internal strife was a moral and ideological dilemma. U.S. leaders had to decide whether internal violence required a U.S. response, and if so, how to pick sides. U.S. administrations had further to decide whether they were more interested in democracy or stability in Colombia. Their ultimate decision in favor of supporting a military regime and stability will surprise no one, but what Coleman does very nicely in this case study is provide the context that helps make that Machiavellian trade-off comprehensible. U.S. leaders, particularly on the military side, saw no realistic democratic alternative, and came to see a military interregnum as the most likely path toward a democratic future. Democracy seemed increasingly unlikely to result from the paroxysms of violence on the ground in Colombia.

In analyzing this dilemma, the State Department came down on the side of caution and not interfering with domestic struggles. It worried about “the possibility that Latin American governments might use U.S. equipment to rob citizens” of liberties (61). Because of these concerns, at first the United States worked to provide only aid that could be used for external defense, but by the late 1950s these restrictions were increasingly set aside.

One of the primary reasons for this change was Colombia's decision to send forces to Korea. Colombia's contribution to that fight paid off in a reservoir of good will and a network of relationships with U.S. military officers that served gradually to override State Department concerns. Colombia's President Laureano Gómez, no favorite of the State Department because of the authoritarian nature of his rule, deftly used Colombia's contributions to the Korean War to resurrect the image of his regime in the United States. Coleman perceptively points out that the war served to maintain the two nation's relationship “even as Colombia drifted further from its democratic heritage” (98).

Although participation in Korea did yield real benefits in military aid contributions throughout the 1950s, Colombians occasionally overplayed their hand, as when they put in a request for \$150,000,000 of MAP aid in 1955. When it became clear that this vast sum was beyond the realm of possibility, President Gustavo Rojas Pinilla distanced himself from the failed scheme by denouncing it as having been “drawn up by a lot of idiots” (159). Overall, however, the success of Colombia's gambit nicely displays the sometimes hidden agency exercised by aid recipients, and the ways in which U.S. Cold War aid could be repurposed in ways that served the interests of the recipient regime rather than the United States.

Coleman's analysis fits nicely within a literature which demonstrates how using military or economic aid to accomplish political purposes was a difficult proposition at best. It is reminiscent of Robert McMahon's *The Cold War on the Periphery* (1996), which showed a similar process at work in South Asia. McMahon demonstrates how military aid was an often ineffective tool for securing political loyalty or favorable action on behalf of U.S. goals. Coleman's work is also a nice chronological precursor to Jeffrey Taffet's *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Latin America* (2007), another work which highlights the complex and often unwieldy nature of foreign aid.

Structural tension over the control of foreign policy is not new, and studies like this one are a welcome addition to our efforts to understand how that tension has influenced U.S. policy over time. Also, foreign aid programs remain a key policy tool for U.S. leaders. Those programs are often fraught with difficulty however, particularly when U.S. officials place too much confidence in the ability of aid to change minds and shape the trajectory of nations. Just as there are limits to the transformational properties of American force, there are similar limits on the effectiveness of cash or commodities. Coleman's work should serve as a cautionary tale. The Military Assistance Program did create a long term relationship between the U.S. and Colombia, but it is worth wondering which key U.S. objectives were served by the provision of so much military equipment.

This is an excellent, path-breaking book on the recent history of inter-American relations. Along with Kyle Longley's *The Sparrow and the Hawk*, and Eric Roorda's *The Dictator Next Door*, and other recent studies, it masterfully succeeds in de-centering inter-American relations away from the older, Washington, D.C.-centric histories of previous eras, by focusing on the agency of the Latin American nation in its relationship with the United States.

As such, Coleman's book importantly fills a critically-important gap in the historiography of both United States-South American relations and United States-Colombian relations. No previous author of the history of United States-Colombian relations has explored the intersection of U.S.-Colombian military and diplomatic relations with the assiduous research, keen analysis, and level of detail as has Coleman. Moreover, Coleman's book is clearly organized and expertly written. In the introduction, Coleman discusses five themes that he pursues in his study. First, the Colombian-American alliance developed in a truly international setting. Second, compatible values allowed the two countries to capitalize on shared opportunities—and the most important of those values were democracy, liberty, Christianity, anticommunism, multilateralism, inter-American solidarity, and collective security. Third, beyond ideology, material incentives and self-interest helped solidify Colombian-American cooperation. Fourth, internal affairs shaped diplomatic relations in important ways. Fifth, Colombians, not Americans, most often determined the conditions and pace of bilateral cooperation. It is a testimony to Coleman's ability as an author that he skillfully and succinctly weaves together and develops all of the above themes in a very readable book.

More important, methodologically the book is innovative on a number of levels. First of all, as noted above, this inter-American history is one of the few truly international histories of the twentieth century Western Hemisphere. Coleman, showing considerable, well-honed skills in both military and diplomatic history, clearly and gracefully articulates how the Colombian experience in the Korean War transformed not only Colombia's relationship with the United States, but had a significant impact on recent Colombian history as well. Second, also as noted above, he thoroughly investigates how Colombia was able to have influence over its relationship with the United States. Far from being a passive recipient of U.S. directives from Washington, D.C., Colombian leaders skillfully (and usually behind the scenes) addressed issues, and framed the United States-Colombian relationship, in a way that would benefit their nation. In addition, Coleman examines many sources beyond the traditional sources used by military and diplomatic historians in the U.S. National Archives system, including important sources in Colombia.

Colombia proves to be a trailblazer when it comes to United States-Latin American relations, and Coleman's book does an excellent job in discussing this very important intra-hemispheric relationship—an understudied relationship (most certainly with regard to literature on the history of U.S. foreign policy). Colombia was the first nation to sign a military assistance agreement with the United States as war clouds darkened the skies in

Asia and Europe. The inter-American military alliances proved not only important during World War II, but laid the groundwork for the postwar anti-communist military agreements that still (in somewhat altered form) exist today. It was the only Latin American nation to contribute troops to the Korean War—and Coleman’s excellent analysis of the Colombian-United States “fighting alliance” during the early 1950s is the heart of his argument. And finally, Colombia was the first nation to receive counter-insurgency grant military assistance—and thus proves a model for future U.S. counterinsurgency efforts in Latin America and around the globe. Because of shared, significant mutual interests between the two nations, and, importantly, Colombian officials’ ability at converting such mutual interests into a close working partnership, the Colombian-American case study proved a model of how two nations with diverse historical and cultural backgrounds could build a close, inter-American partnership with the United States.

Although he covers the major issues of the Colombian-American relationship well, there is one issue in which, I think, Coleman could have delved into more thoroughly—the issue of Colombian nationalism. I think a discussion of the different variants of Colombian nationalism might have been a way to neatly tie together many (if not all) of the above-stated themes he successfully pursues in the book—and would help the reader better understand the important changes the United States-Colombian relations went through in the 1940s and 1950s. How different, or similar, were the democratic strains of Colombian nationalism before and after the regime headed up by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, from 1953-1957? Did Rojas Pinilla draw upon a (latent) authoritarian strain of Colombian nationalism in order to justify ruling Colombia autocratically, the only time in the twentieth century that Colombia was ruled by a military government?

In addition, Coleman’s chapter 6, “The Partnership Transformed, 1958-1960,” in which the United States by 1960 gives direct grant military assistance to Colombia to allow it to develop counterinsurgency capability, could have been enhanced by an analysis of Colombian nationalism. If Coleman were to have examined the late-1950s period by looking at Colombian nationalism, a number of interesting questions arise. For example, was the anti-Americanism apparent in Vice-President Richard M. Nixon’s 1958 visit to Colombia, in which he was greeted by a small group of hecklers (172-174), an outgrowth of Colombian nationalism? If not, what was the source of the *fuera Nixon* sentiment?

It is possible that when a high-profile visitor from the United States such as Nixon, came to visit, some Colombians might have wanted to express their anger at the United States for giving economic and military assistance to the Rojas Pinilla regime, which had squelched political dissenters in Colombia. It seems likely that staunch U.S. support of this authoritarian regime might have engendered anti-United States sentiment in Colombia, as was the case in neighboring Venezuela, where the anti-Americanism proved much more intense. Such anti-United States feeling could have fed Colombian nationalism. In any event, an investigation of Colombian nationalism, and its varying manifestations, would have helped the reader better understand the changing nature of the United States-Colombian relationship.

In addition, it is interesting to note that U.S. officials were becoming more and more concerned with rising levels of nationalism in Latin America in the late 1950s. So, even if Colombian nationalism is not central to understanding recent Colombian history, the *perception* of such nationalism by top Washington policymakers proves important in understanding United States-Colombian relations in the 1950s, and beyond. For example, in 1958 the National Security Council feared the increasing power of nationalist movements in Latin America. In addition, a National Intelligence Estimate that same year concluded “statism and nationalism” were on the rise in the region, which threatened U.S. interests. Therefore, this U.S. fear of Latin American nationalism begs the question: did the U.S. government fear that rising nationalism in Colombia might have derailed the close United States-Colombian relationship that both sides had carefully nurtured since the late 1930s? And is this fear of nationalism one of the reasons why the Eisenhower Administration decided to offer military assistance to the Alberto Lleras Carmago regime in 1960? After all, if Washington leaders feared rising nationalism in Latin America, giving assistance could be a way to *channel* such nationalism in a pro-United States direction. Confronting these questions would have enriched Coleman’s analysis of United States-Colombian relations.

Such questions aside, Coleman’s book is a well-written, path-breaking, and all-around excellent study of an important inter-American relationship. This book, which would be appropriate to assign for both undergraduate and graduate classes, would also be very useful reading for the segment of the reading public that wants to be informed with regard to recent issues in inter-American relations. Coleman’s book is a model of scholarship that hopefully others will emulate. It should be on the shelves of anyone interested in the history of United States-Latin American relations.

Author's Response by Bradley Lynn Coleman, Command Historian, U.S. Southern Command, Miami, Florida

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**C**olombia and the United States began as a graduate school project on small-country United Nations (UN) military units in Korea. Colombian ground and naval forces served with the U.S.-led UN Command. Over time, the research effort evolved to describe and analyze U.S.-Colombian security relations. In its final form, the book covers two critical decades (1939-1960) in U.S.-Colombian relations—the making of the modern Colombian-American alliance. As the reviewers note, there is no comparable study on U.S.-Colombian military affairs.

In his comments, Robert Robinson focuses on the relationship between U.S. diplomats and military officers in the making of U.S. foreign policy. He rightly observes that U.S. military influence over American policy increased during World War II and the early cold war. James Seikmeier concentrates on nationalism in U.S.-Latin American affairs. A consideration of Colombian nationalism, he observes, enriches our understanding of the making of the U.S.-Colombian alliance. Finally, Robert Karl focuses on historiography, methodology, and Colombian history. For students of the Colombian experience, his dissertation-in-progress promises to deliver new information and insight on *la Violencia*. Taken together, the three historians address critical issues associated with the past, present, and future of U.S.-Latin American military relations.

Thus far, *Colombia and the United States* has been the subject of roughly a dozen published book reviews. Interestingly, the authors of the H-Diplo reviews provide contradictory assessments. Robinson and Karl, for example, comment on my coverage of morality and human rights in American foreign policy. Yet they reach very different conclusions. Robinson compliments the book for explaining how U.S. officials, sensitive to human rights issues, developed military aid packages for Colombia during *la Violencia*. The U.S. government “decision in favor of supporting a military regime [in Colombia] and stability will surprise no one,” Robinson writes, “but what Coleman does very nicely in this case study is provide context that helps make the Machiavellian trade-off comprehensible.” In opposition, Karl finds my treatment of human rights lacking. “Coleman uncritically accepts,” he adds, “the version of Colombian history presented by [Colombian] military leaders and Conservative politicians.” Writing this book, I wanted to contribute historical perspective to the debate surrounding contemporary U.S.-Colombian security cooperation. At this point, we cannot know if I achieved that objective. It is apparent, nevertheless, that a reader’s position on current events—evidenced in this roundtable—will influence their reaction to *Colombia and the United States*.

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