

**Forum:** General Assembly 6

**Issue:** Examining the Implications of United States Involvement in Latin America

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## **Introduction:**

The relationship between the United States and Latin America is very important. It has a lot of history. The United States has been involved with Latin America for some time. This started with the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. The United States said that Latin America was its area to take care of. For over two hundred years, the United States has been involved in Latin America. This has included diplomacy, economics, and military action. These things have shaped the governments and human rights in Latin America.

This report will look at the history of the United States and Latin America. It will look at how the Cold War and economic interests have affected the United States policy towards Latin America. The United States policy towards Latin America has also been influenced by counterterrorism and other things. This guide will look at how these things have changed over time. It will also look at how the United States has used its power to influence Latin America.

The guide will focus on the ideas that have guided the United States policy towards Latin America. It will look at events and actions. It will also look at how the idea of sovereignty has changed in the Century. To understand this issue, we need to look at two points of view. One point of view is from the United States policy makers. They say that their actions in Latin America are necessary for stability and democracy. The other point of view is from governments and organizations that say the United States is violating the sovereignty of American countries. Both points of view are important to find solutions.

We need to consider the United States and Latin America relationship. The United States and Latin America have a history. We need to understand this history to move forward. The United States policy towards Latin America has been influenced by things. We need to look at all of these things to find a way forward. The relationship between the United States and Latin America is important. We need to work to find solutions.

## Definition of key terms:

**Sovereignty:** The right of a state to govern itself without external interference. Many debates around U.S. involvement question whether American actions have violated the sovereignty of Latin American nations or whether they were justified under international law.

**Regime Change:** The removal or replacement of a government – often through external influence. Historically, the U.S. has supported or facilitated regime changes in Latin America (e.g., Guatemala 1954, Chile 1973). Delegates may debate the legality and long-term consequences of such actions.

**Covert Operations:** Secret activities conducted by intelligence agencies (such as the CIA) to influence political outcomes abroad. These may include funding opposition groups, propaganda campaigns, or clandestine military support. Their legality under international law is a major point of contention.

**Latin America:** A region that includes Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. These countries share historical ties to Spanish and Portuguese colonization, but they differ widely in culture, politics, and economic development.

**Monroe Doctrine:** A U.S. policy from 1823 stating that European powers should not interfere in the Western Hemisphere. Over time, it was used to justify U.S. dominance in Latin America.

**Hegemon:** A supreme leader.

## Background:

### 1. Framing the issue

U.S. Intervention in Latin America is defined by the political, economic, military, and cultural impact the United States has had on various Latin American states from the early 19th century to the present day. Various doctrines, economic imperatives, anti-communism policy, and concerns over regional security have been cited at different points as justification for these interventions; however, the implications have not been without their controversial aspects, which span the sovereignty of nations, political stability and democracy, economic dependency, and human rights issues.

This debate is best examined by assessing the historical context of the issue, the main phases of intervention, and the various motivations behind them, and finally, the broader implications.

## **2. The Monroe Doctrine and 19th-century expansionism**

### **2.1 The Monroe Doctrine (1823)**

The foundational issue underlying US intervention in Latin America is the Monroe Doctrine. Declared in 1823, it stated that any attempt by any European power to colonize the American continents would be interpreted as an act of aggression toward the US. Whilst this was initially seen as a protective stance on new states in Latin America, the doctrine implicitly positioned the Americas as a sphere of influence to be dominated by the US and has evolved over time into a justification of US political and military intervention in the region.

### **2.2 Early expansionism and economic factors**

Early 19th-century US intervention was also driven by expansionist and economic desires, the philosophy of Manifest Destiny, and the pursuit of trade routes in Latin America, which contributed to involvement with neighboring territories, including Mexico and the Caribbean. The US Invasion of Mexico between 1846 and 1848 led to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ceding a vast portion of Mexican territory to the US. This event is seen as an early stage in the expansion of US power into Latin America.

## **3. Early 20th-century interventionism**

### **3.1 The Roosevelt Corollary**

The Roosevelt Corollary of 1904 modified the Monroe Doctrine, stating that if any Latin American nation became destabilized and could not protect its citizens or pay off its debts, the US reserved the right to intervene, militarily or economically, to 'correct' such conditions.

### **3.2 Military intervention and the 'Banana Wars'**

Between 1900 and the mid 1930s, the US employed various military interventions and regime change efforts, many to secure the interests of US corporations and American private investment in the region, including Nicaragua, Haiti, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. These

interventions became known as the 'Banana Wars' in Latin America and epitomize an 'informal empire' where foreign powers exerted control over countries through economic and political coercion instead of direct territorial control.

#### **4. The Cold War: Ideology and Interventionism (1945–1991)**

##### **4.1 Opposition to communism and its spread**

US Involvement intensified after World War II during the Cold War, when fighting communism and Soviet influence became a top foreign policy priority. The ideological competition between the USA and USSR saw Latin America emerge as a battleground, particularly following the communist revolution in Cuba in 1959 and the country's subsequent alliance with the USSR.

##### **4.2 Covert operations and regime change**

Intelligence agencies, supported by US Funding and guidance, orchestrated several interventions and regime change operations, including;

- The 1954 overthrow of the democratically elected government in Guatemala
- The CIA's involvement in the 1970 election in Chile, which brought Salvador Allende to power (later overthrown by a US-backed military coup in 1973)
- Support for various anti-communist dictatorships in South America

The political and human rights consequences of these interventions include years of political instability and human rights abuses under dictatorships.

##### **4.3 Military assistance to pro-US regimes**

In its struggle against communism, the US supported various pro-US regimes throughout Latin America with military and financial aid, even those known for their poor human rights records. This has been seen as hypocrisy by opponents of US Foreign policy.

## **5. Post-Cold War era: economic integration and new approaches**

### **5.1 Promotion of free market policies**

After the Cold War, the US Focus switched from ideological conflict to economic integration. Under the guidance of institutions like the International Monetary Fund, a large proportion of Latin America was subject to neo-liberal economic policies, which led to deregulation, privatization, and trade liberalization. It is argued that such integration led to increased disparity in income levels in some countries as traditional economic practices were abandoned in favor of integration with the North American economy.

### **5.2 Drug policy and security co-operation**

More recently, anti-narcotics policy became the central element of U.S. Intervention. As part of the global 'War on Drugs,' the US funneled military aid and intelligence to countries such as Colombia and Mexico. These policies have been criticized for fostering militarization of Latin American governments and for increasing human rights violations.

## **6. Contemporary context: migration, trade, and geopolitics**

### **6.1 Migration and border issues**

From the beginning of the 21st century, migration became a defining feature of US-Latin America relations. The United States' focus of policy is now directed towards attempting to address the causes of such migration, including poverty, political unrest, and violence within the region.

### **6.2 Economic dependency and investment**

The US is the leading trade and investment partner for most of the countries in Latin America, and while this has led to considerable growth and economic advancement in the region, it has also led to dependence in some countries.

### **6.3 Renewed geopolitical competition**

The rise of China as a dominant economic power in Latin America in recent years has also seen the US Attempt to reaffirm its dominance and engagement in the region.

### **7. Key implications of US intervention**

The interventions carried out by the U.S. have had many implications for the region:

- Political: the promotion of democracy in certain countries at certain times, but also support for authoritarian dictatorships at other times.
- Economic: increases in trade and investment, but also significant dependence on the US economy
- Security: co-operation against drug trafficking, but also significant instability caused by the militarization of security forces.
- Social: continued migration pressures and cultural influence.

### **8. The relevance of the issue to debate**

This issue is highly relevant today as it raises fundamental questions about:

- Sovereignty and non-interference in international politics
- The role of great powers in smaller nation-states' domestic policies
- Balancing security interests with a commitment to democracy and human rights
- The impact of such actions on long-term development

It is a complex subject which has fostered significant political and ideological debate about the responsibilities of international powers.

## Timeline of Key Events

Year / Period	Event & Significance
1898	<p>The Spanish-American War initiated American entry onto the stage as an imperial power when the United States vanquished Spain and acquired the former Spanish colonies of Puerto Rico and predominance over Cuba. This development led to greater US Interventionism in Latin America.</p>
1904-1914	<p>The construction of the Panama Canal in the US illustrated American ambitions and interests (both economically and politically) in Latin America, as the U.S. backed up the secession of Panama from Colombia in order to gain control of the Panama Canal zone. The building of the Panama Canal continued a policy of US intervention and dominance within the region.</p>
1915-1934	<p>US occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) was typical of military interventionist policy designed to secure regional stability while ensuring US financial and strategic interests. In this process, the influence of the US on Caribbean politics and economy increased at the expense of Haitian sovereignty.</p>
1954	<p>The CIA-orchestrated operation PBSUCCESS, aimed at removing Jacobo Árbenz, democratically elected president the of Guatemala, to serve US economic interests and perceived threats of communist infiltration. PBSUCCESS was an embodiment of the era of Cold War interventionism in Latin America that would strengthen the role of the US as a hegemon.</p>
1953-1959	<p>During the Cuban Revolution, US backed regime was replaced with a socialist government under the leadership of Fidel Castro, and met fierce opposition from the United States, which enacted policies such as the containment strategy including the Bay of Pigs Invasion and trade embargoes that heightened Cold War tension and defined its Latin America policy.</p>

1961-1989	The Alliance for Progress, led by John F. Kennedy, tried to encourage economic growth and eliminate inequality in Latin America in order to reduce communism's attractiveness, however this policy had varied success. Meanwhile, the School of the Americas trained regional military leaders who sometimes perpetuated American domination of the area or provided support to anti-communist governments potentially implicated in abuses.
1964	Brazil – the US supported the military coup that deposed President Joo Goulart, whose agenda included agrarian reform and nationalization of industries. The declassified 'Brother Sam' operation indicated that the US sent a carrier task force to waters off the coast of Brazil in support of the coup. The military regime which follows stays in power until 1985 during which time opponents are tortured, 'disappeared' and are killed.
1973	US intervention in Chile peaked with the 1973 overthrow of President Salvador Allende under the Nixon administration with economic destabilization orchestrated by the CIA, followed by the takeover of power by General Augusto Pinochet who implemented mass arrest, torture and killings, and exiles throughout the country. The United States supported Operation Condor, a coordination of South American dictatorships for the repression of political opposition in the region.
1979-1990	Following the Sandinista revolution, the Reagan Administration provided the anti-Sandinista Contra rebels with funds, training, and weapons to overthrow dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle, who had been installed by the US. The US Mining of Nicaraguan harbors was deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice in Nicaragua v. United States (1986) and the Iran-Contra Affair later revealed clandestine support which circumvented previous Congressional embargoes.
1980-1992	During El Salvador's Civil War, the US provided a large amount of military and economic aid to the right-wing government, which it used to fund an anti-communist effort, even though there were a lot of human rights

	violations. While hundreds of civilians were murdered in the 1981 El Mozote massacre by the US-trained Atlacatl Battalion, UN investigations later blamed state forces and their allied death squads for the majority of atrocities.
1989	Manuel Noriega was sought by the United States to be charged with drug trafficking, in spite of being former CIA asset. As a result, hundreds to thousands of civilian deaths were recorded during Operation Just Cause and was regarded by the UN as a breach of international law. He was subsequently extradited to the United States to be charged and tried.
1990s	After Aristide's overthrow by a coup d'état in 1991 the US first issued sanctions then brought about his return with operation uphold democracy. Continued US pressure (economic reforms undermined institutions etc.) later led to accusations of the US Assisting in Aristide's controversial removal in 2004.

**Major parties involved:**

**United States Government:** Their interest and motivation lie in protecting national security and geopolitical influence in the West, securing economic stability (i.e., trade routes, resources, investment stability), containing ideological threats, and combating transnational crime. The US government has high military capacity, economic leverage, and diplomatic influence in OAS and in the UN Security Council. They have been involved in military interventions, aid programs, and economic sanctions.

**Latin American States (Chile, Nicaragua, Cuba, Venezuela, Haiti, and Guatemala):**

Interested in the preservation of sovereignty and political independence, domestic stability and regime survival (varies by government type), and economic development plus reduced external dependency. It's capacity is limited relative to major powers and depends more on regional alliances (CELAC, ALBA, MERCOSUR) and faces diplomatic resistance in the UN General Assembly.

**Organization of American States (OAS):** Its main motivation is to promote democracy, regional stability, and conflict resolution. As well as preventing interstate conflict in the

Americas. It can apply political pressure but has limited enforcement capability and has collective action frameworks among member states. Its involvement includes but is not limited to the following: electoral observation missions in Haiti, Nicaragua, and others, mediation in regional political crises, and suspension/diplomatic pressure on member states in coups or democratic breakdowns.

**Central Intelligence Agency (CIA):** Focuses on advancing US foreign policy objectives, countering perceived hostile governments or ideologies and the gathering of intelligence on covert influence operations. It participates in and organizes covert operations, intelligence networks/proxy relationships, and faces limited public accountability due to classification. It has partaken in the 1954 Guatemalan coup support and Nicaraguan Contra support, and other operations.

**International Court of Justice:** It focuses on the adjudication of disputes between states and the enforcement of international law norms. It is capable of binding rulings for consenting states and the legal interpretation of sovereignty and non-intervention. It ruled on *Nicaragua v. United States* (1986): ruled that US mining of harbors and Contra support violated international law, but has limited enforcement due to non-compliance by powerful states.

**Latin American Regional Organizations (i.e., CELAC, MERCOSUR, ALBA):** Their interest lies in regional autonomy from external powers, economic integration tools, and the reduction of dependency on US policy influence. They have influence in diplomatic coordination and collective political statements. They have taken action through the collective criticism of sanctions and interventions, promotion of regional sovereignty frameworks, and alternative economic cooperation.

### **Relevant UN treaties, resolutions, and reports:**

**UN Charter (1945):** Its foundational concept of state sovereignty (Article 2(4)) prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, and is therefore the legal baseline upon which all claims of external intervention are argued.

**UN General Assembly Resolution 2131 (XX):** Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States (21 December 1965) - 'No State has the right to intervene,

directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other State.'

**UN General Assembly Resolution 2625 (XXV):** Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations (24 October 1970) - Reiterates the norms of non-intervention, self-determination, and sovereign equality, and is used frequently to criticize covert or military intervention.

**UN General Assembly Resolution 36/103:** Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States (9 December 1981) - Strengthened earlier declarations by condemnation of all forms of coercion, political, economic, or military, in violation of international law and sovereignty.

**United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988):** Underlines the importance of international cooperation on drug trafficking and is directly relevant to US drug-related interventions in Latin America (the so-called 'War on Drugs').

**Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (12 July 1993, World Conference on Human Rights):** Reiterated sovereignty and a commitment to the realization of human rights and prevention of external actions that undermined the political self-determination of sovereign states.

**UN General Assembly Resolution 68/262:** Territorial Integrity of Ukraine (27 March 2014) - Although geographically it did not directly impact Latin America, this is a key case study reinforcing the modern interpretation of UN intervention principles.

### **Previous attempts to solve the issue:**

**Regional Multilateral Efforts:** Included the promotion of democratic norms (OAS Democratic Charter, 2001), mediating political crises, providing electoral observation missions, and creating regional dialogue forums independent of US dominance (CELAC). It took place across the Western Hemisphere, particularly in crises such as Venezuela, Bolivia, and Honduras.

**The Merida Initiative:** A bilateral agreement between the United States and Mexico, initiated under President George W. Bush and continued under subsequent administrations. It consisted

of a security cooperation framework aimed at combating organized crime and drug trafficking through: US funding for Mexican security forces, training and equipment support, judicial reform assistance, and intelligence sharing.

## **Possible solutions:**

**Strengthening Regional Institutions and Multilateral Autonomy:** A persistent failing of prior initiatives has been the existence of frail and/or externally directed regional governance bodies. These initiatives must work toward the following:

- Strengthening the capacity and autonomy of regional organizations like the OAS and CELAC.
- Defining explicit and enforceable (and non-selective) democratic norms.
- Improving crisis-mediation processes to mitigate unilateral external interference.
- Expanding intra-Latin American regional conflict-resolution initiatives.

**Moving Beyond Militarized Solutions Toward Structural Development:** There has been too great a reliance on the use of security-based solutions, notably regarding drug control and political stabilization, in past policy measures. The adoption of more sustainable practices should address issues including:

- Funding education, health, and infrastructure to address sources of instability.
- Strengthening rural development programs to alleviate economic imbalances.
- Support for diverse local economies to lessen the need to engage in illicit market activities.
- Emphasizing development over military aid in cooperative agreements.

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