Alan McPherson
Temple University, Estados Unidos
alan.mcpherson@temple.edu
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6388-7399

Hugo Harvey-Valdés
Universidad de Las Américas, Chile
hharvey@udla.cl
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7184-1670

Recibido: 16/12/2024 - Aceptado: 13/02/2025

Para citar este artículo / To reference this article / Para citar este artigo
McPherson, Alan. "Reflections on Imperialism, Anti-Americanism, and New Diplomatic Histories: A Dialogue with Alan McPherson on the Dominican Crisis of 1965". Entrevista por Hugo Harvey-Valdés. *Humanidades: revista de la Universidad de Montevideo*, nº 17, (2025): e173. https://doi.org/10.25185/17.3

ISSN: 1510-5024 (papel) - 2301-1629 (en línea)

Humanidades: revista de la Universidad de Montevideo, Nº 17, Junio 2025, pp. 1-20

Reflections on Imperialism, Anti-Americanism, and New Diplomatic Histories: A Dialogue with Alan McPherson on the Dominican Crisis of 1965

Alan McPherson is invited to contribute in this issue of *Humanidades: Revista de la Universidad de Montevideo* with a detailed reflection on the Dominican Crisis of 1965, six decades after this critical event in inter-American history. Given his academic trajectory and expertise in U.S.–Latin American relations, we sought his reflections on the Dominican Crisis of 1965 and its broader implications. McPherson, a historian and professor at Temple University, is renowned for his extensive work on anti-Americanism and U.S. interventions, including *The Invaded* (2014) and *Yankee No!* (2003). His contributions have significantly shaped diplomatic history and U.S.–Latin American studies. This dialogue sheds light on critical aspects of the Dominican intervention, the role of the OAS, and the evolving approaches of new diplomatic history.

Hugo Harvey (H. H.): We know that you have recently been interested in the actions of the Pinochet regime and its actions in the United States, specifically in the assassination of Salvador Allende's former Foreign Minister, Orlando Letelier. And your book "Ghosts of Sheridan Circle" has even been translated into Spanish.[1] However, on this occasion we would like to begin by referring to your experience and research on the relations between Latin America and the Caribbean and the United States from a historical and panoramic approach.[2] Therefore, from a broad perspective, how would you describe these interactions or how would you classify them into periods?

Alan McPherson (A. Mc.): There is a sort of a first generation, where the founding fathers dealt with the South American leaders of the independence struggles. And generally speaking, there is distant relationship, where the Americans wish well upon the independence of Latin America, but they really don't help it in any way. And this causes some resentment among people like Bolívar, who said, well, the Americans have nice words, but they are not sending us guns or men, and very little trade, there is only a little bit of piracy.

Then most of the 19th century represents a different period, because it is characterized by land hunger. It is the period when private Americans, often backed by the U.S. government, take a lot of land that essentially belongs to Latin America. Often it belongs to Spain, sometimes it belongs to territories that Spain has already lost, but we are talking about Florida, the Florida panhandle, and essentially everything that Mexico loses in the US-Mexican-American War in the 1840s. And so from that comes this real resentment, especially over Mexico. And there is also a real experience on the Mexican border, where Americans are encountering Latin Americans in large numbers for the first time, and sometimes a lot of their perceptions, whether racial, cultural, linguistic, or religious, are forged in that experience of war with Mexicans. So, Americans have a very negative view of Latin Americans, because they see them all as Mexicans--essentially poor, farmers, dark skinned--and they don't really think of Latin Americans as people from Chile or people from Argentina.

1 Alan McPherson, *Matar a Letelier: El crimen que puso en el banquillo al régimen de Pinochet* (Santiago: Editorial Catalonia, 2022).

2 Professor McPherson's most important books on these relations are: Alan McPherson, *A Short History of U.S. Interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016); *Anti-Americanism in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006); *Encyclopedia of U.S. Military Interventions in Latin America* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2013); *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles: The United States and Latin America Since 1945* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006); *The Invaded: How Latin Americans and Their Allies Fought and Ended U.S. Occupations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); *Yankee No!: Anti-Americanism in U.S.–Latin American Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

Subsequently, there is the period where the United States stops taking land permanently, but certainly intervenes, so that is probably the most openly imperialistic period, which is from 1898 to World War II, establishing the height of American imperialism. The United States is taking over countries, or at least aligning with locals controlling countries. And much of the rationale for this is the Monroe Doctrine, based on the perceived continuing threat that Europe poses to Latin America, whether the Germans, or the French, or the British. And obviously you can imagine that it creates a lot of resentment among Latin Americans, because they were often perceiving that the threat from Europe was not really the reason why the United States is intervening. For them Americans are intervening to take over land and dominate politics.

And then there is the Good Neighbor Policy and the Cold War Policy as a single period of the United States trying to fight off foreign ideologies, first fascism, then communism, assuming that Latin Americans are not able to fight those off, and therefore intervening sometimes not as openly or as imperialistically, often with less racism as well, but clearly abandoning the Good Neighbor Policy pledge of non-intervention in Guatemala in 1954, in 1965 in the Dominican Republic, and so on.[3]

H. H.: Now, in general terms, could it be considered as a relationship between invaders and invaded, oppressors and oppressed? I know that there is nothing black or white, but is there a grey zone or something in between? Have Latin American countries probably overreacted or overexploited this condition of being oppressed or invaded?

A. Mc.: Well, that's a good question. We cannot forget that there is an enormous power differential between the United States and its military, its government and its economic resources, and then what Latin Americans can do to oppose those forces. Now, that does not mean that all Americans are in favor of invasions, all Latin Americans are opposed to invasions. I think it is too easy to think in these black and white terms. I was at a conference about the Dominican occupation of 1916 and the resistance to it, and it demonstrated why that resistance was significant. But there are also, in all U.S. invasions, some people on the ground, some Latin Americans who sometimes explicitly invite it. They are calling the United States or writing that they want an invasion, to either throw out the communists or to stop the fighting that

3 For an in-depth discussion on these periods, refer to: Alan McPherson, "U.S. American Foreign Policy and American Democracy in Historical Perspective," July 25, 2023, accessed December 16, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVT2rLyJCaU&t=4219s.

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is happening. That occurs in 1965. There are people from the Dominican military specifically calling the United States and saying "we want an invasion." Of course, they have been asked by the United States to ask for the invasion, but they also wanted it. Therefore, there are some Latin Americans simply seeking power, they seek to destroy their enemies by having the United States side with them. And then, once the Americans land, there are some who oppose the invasion, but not necessarily for nationalistic reasons and not necessarily for altruistic reasons. Often it's because they want to be in power themselves, or they want to get government jobs for them and their friends and their political party, and so on. And so, they want Americans to leave so they can steal from the government. And often this frustrates Americans, American administrators, because they see this and they say, "well, then we have to stay. We have to stand by to stop this corruption and teach them not to be corrupt." But it doesn't work. People still want their own piece of pie in government, and they will eventually force the Americans to leave. And so, it takes a while for the Americans to realize that there is very little that can change on the ground.[4]

H. H.: Can you ponder on how your interest in these historical aspects, especially Dominican history, arose? Because you worked during your first years in the Dominican Republic. What came before and what came after? The Latin American or Dominican relationship? Was it from the top down or from the bottom up?

A. Mc.: I think it was top down. I was interested in Latin America since I was a teenager in the 1980s. It was during the wars in Central America and you could clearly see the massive power differentials between the United States and the small countries in Latin America, like Nicaragua or El Salvador. At that time, I wasn't focused on the Dominican Republic, I'm not sure I even knew that it existed. But when I became a graduate student in the 1990s, I became interested in this phenomenon of anti-Americanism.

And so, I started to ask myself, it's easy enough to look at writers and poets and politicians and analyze their anti-Americanism, but when does it become a problem for the highest American foreign policy makers? When does the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense and the President have to ask themselves "why do they hate us, what is going on here and how do we respond to this?" Because often it can happen at this lower level, maybe an

4 For further details on this topic, refer to: Alan McPherson, *The Invaded: How Latin Americans and Their Allies Fought and Ended U.S. Occupations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

embassy gets attacked and maybe the ambassador has to deal with it. But I thought, what about a real crisis? And then how does the United States actually respond to this? Do they see it as a big phenomenon? Are they able to understand national differences and even differences between nations? So that led me to the Dominican Republic, because I was studying that era around the Cuban Revolution and clearly it was an episode of anti-Americanism. And then there was Panama in 1964, when the students rioted.[5] And then 1965, Dominican Republic, when you have an actual invasion of US soldiers, right? The president had to talk to people on the ground, talk to the ambassadors and the people at embassies and say, "what's the situation on the ground? Do we understand this correctly? Is it just the Communist Party or is it something larger? Do we need to understand the culture, the social thing around this? Do we need to understand these societies? So that was my dissertation, which became my first book. The Dominican Republic was a third of it. I went to the Dominican Republic twice, I spent at least half a year there and it became a country that I knew particularly well. So when I did my second big book, which was again kind of about anti-Americanism, but a generation earlier, when you had actual military invasions, it seemed logical that the Dominican Republic was going to be another case study, this time along with Nicaragua and Haiti. But it turns out that the Dominican Republic was a case study twice in my first two early big books.[6]

H. H.: Now, focusing on the 1965 intervention, what is your impression of the crisis management team, because Kennedy's team probably had the same members as Johnson's. There is not much difference. So, what could have gone wrong? Because the 1962 missile crisis is a case of efficient crisis management, unlike what happened in the Dominican Republic.

A. Mc.: Well, I'm not sure that Americans think that the Dominican Republic case is one of bad crisis management. The Johnson administration thought it was a success. Because, if you think about it, their goal was to stop the government from becoming communist. And they certainly did that, paying no attention to the fact that there were practically no communists in the Dominican Republic to begin with. All that mattered to Washington was that there was no communist government afterwards. The operation was also relatively peaceful. The U.S. forces preserved peace, which was also a goal.

5 Alan McPherson, "From 'Punks' to Geopoliticians: U.S. and Panamanian Teenagers and the 1964 Canal Zone Riots," *The Americas* 58, no. 3 (2002): 395–418, https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2002.0012.

6 Alan McPherson, *Yankee No!: Anti-Americanism in U.S.–Latin American Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

They kept two sides from killing each other and so kept the civil war from getting worse. And if in the process they strangled Dominican democracy, that was really secondary. It showed that during the cold war protecting democracy or promoting democracy was always secondary to preventing communism. If they needed to have an authoritarian government to replace a potential communist government, that was fine. Americans were always going to accept that. Now, there isn't a lot of difference between Kennedy and Johnson, but in the Latin American advisors there certainly is a change, and I think you can see that in how they manage these crises. Kennedy had people who knew Latin America well, like Teodoro Moscoso, like Arthur Schlesinger.

H. H.: Ralph Dungan, probably? Who was Kennedy's advisor and later ambassador to Chile, in contrast to Johnson's advisor, Thomas Mann?[7]

A. Mc.: Exactly. Thomas Mann is really sidelined during the Kennedy administration. I think he's ambassador to Mexico or something like that. He is not making Latin American policy. Then Johnson did not like these intellectuals, the Arthur Schlesinger types. He doesn't like them, so as soon as he becomes President, Schlesinger is out. Most of the Puerto Ricans who are advising Kennedy leave. The whole Alliance for Progress rhetorically is still there, money is still flowing, but Johnson is not interested. So he wants to make it a lot clearer that the American government is going to accept militaries in power and any kind of anti-communist government. Sure, democracy is important, capitalism is important, but he's going to be much less patient, if you like, with anti-Americanism. So Panama happens almost as soon as he takes power, and he uses that to show this is how now it's going to be. If they want to cut off relations, Johnson says about Panama, that's fine, they're the ones who are going to suffer more than us. They need us more than we need them. So he certainly sees Panama as a success also, because essentially, even if the United States eventually gives the canal to Panama, that happens much later. In '64-'65, Panama is actually really panicking because they might lose the canal completely. The United States is currently threatening to build a completely different canal, maybe in Panama, but maybe not in Panama. So Panama now has to say, "okay, we thought we had control over this canal, but if there's going to be a whole other one, this one is worth a lot less. So now we have to try to cancel that second canal and keep the Americans in Panama." So they realized how very dependent they were on the United States.

7 For further details on the role of Thomas Mann as Latin American Foreign Policy adviser, refer to: Thomas Tunstall Allcock, *Thomas C. Mann: President Johnson, the Cold War, and the Restructuring of Latin American Foreign Policy* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2018).

H. H.: So that was the first sign that things were going to change in relations with Latin America, I mean Johnson's attitude towards events in Panama in 1964, right?

A. Mc.: Yeah, and Nixon doesn't change much once he comes to power, he basically continues Johnson's attitude towards Latin America. He's not interested at all in the Alliance for Progress at that point, he sees it as a Democratic project. But I think there's a bigger difference between Kennedy and Johnson than there is between Johnson and Nixon.

H. H.: Well, ten years ago you wrote a comprehensive analysis of the Dominican intervention in 1965 in Passport magazine, and I would like to focus on a few aspects of that article.[8] First, you mentioned that these events, those related to the invasion of the Dominican Republic, had received scant attention compared to what historiography or analysts had given to the coup against Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954, and I would add the operations in Chile between 1963 and 1973. What are your thoughts or opinions about the fact that this gap or disciplinary vacuum has not changed significantly ten years later?

A. Mc.: I think it's true. I don't think there's been much written about the 1965 intervention in those ten years. There will be a piece out in Diplomatic History about the Soviet Union at the United Nations.[9] But, why do Guatemala and Chile get more attention than the DR? My argument is that the DR should get more attention, simply because it's bigger. There are more troops involved, it lasts a long time, it's a very direct intervention, there are no troops sent to Guatemala, there are no U.S. troops sent to Chile. But I think that's part of the reason why those other interventions, if you want to call them that, are more popular, because there's more mystery to them. There is more of this mystery of what exactly was the US relationship with the Guatemalan right-wingers, with Pinochet? What role did the CIA play? There is more of a sense that there are still some secrets there. Now, in the Guatemalan case, there were actually secrets, and the CIA in the 1980s said that they had declassified all their documents and it was ridiculous that they hadn't. The government released a whole volume of documents and they didn't even acknowledge that the US had fomented this coup. So it took another 10, almost 20 years for scholars to put enough pressure on the CIA and the State Department

8 Alan McPherson, "The Dominican Intervention, 50 Years On," *Passport* 46, no. 1 (2015): 31–34.

9 Michelle Paranzino, "The USSR, Cuba, and the UN in the 1965 Dominican Crisis," *Diplomatic History*, November 14, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhae074.

to say: "you have to release the actual history here, you don't have to release every document, every fact, but you have to admit the basic fact, which is that this was an American operation." So in the Dominican Republic, in contrast, because it was an open intervention, there was no secret about it, there has been much less in terms of releasing new documents. Also, even though it was a direct intervention, it was less violent. It's not like you have hundreds or thousands of Dominicans who died or disappeared and the families seeking justice for decades afterwards. That's the paradox of the intervention. Because it was so overt and so military, it actually minimized the violence that came out of it. Because of so much force, there was less violence. So it is less controversial.

H. H.: There is probably another fact that reinforces this historiographical gap. The United States was responsible for this invasion for about a week and then passed the responsibility on to the OAS, to the Inter-American Peace Force. So it is more complex to write a critical point of view about the organization or each country that supported the Inter-American Peace Force. If there was the intention, it would probably take more time. What is your opinion on this? Because Jerome Slater is the only writer who has criticized the OAS from the beginning.[10]

A. Mc.: What you are saying is true, but in a formal sense. Formally, the OAS is in charge, but really the US is in charge during the summer of 1965. They are the ones who negotiate with the constitutionalists, they are the ones who sign the summer agreement for the troops to leave, and then they don't leave for a while. But there is still a lot that can be done with the occupation. The OAS files themselves, I'm not sure of their status, but I've looked at some of them, maybe 20 years ago, and there was a lot more that could have been done there, and I think the OAS has essentially closed its archives. Perhaps for monetary reasons, but I think it probably has a lot of documents somewhere, maybe some scholar has them, maybe they will be reopened one day, but the role of the OAS in this is really minimized.

There are a couple of books that essentially reproduce some documents, but very few people have been interviewed who were at the OAS. I think you could really do an inter-American book, as an inter-American history of the Dominican intervention, and I think that's something that scholars are looking

10 Jerome Slater, *The OAS and United States Foreign Policy* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1967); "The Organization of American States and the Dominican Crisis," *International Organization* 23, no. 1 (1969): 48–72, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818300025522.

to do now. Tania Harmer did an inter-American history of Chile, Renata Keller is doing an inter-American history of the Cuban missile crisis, and so you could easily do one on how Latin Americans did or did not participate in the Dominican intervention.

H. H.: In your publications you point out that there was an exaggerated reaction by the Johnson administration to carry out this large-scale operation, Operation Power Pack, and that it was revealed that the collection and distribution of intelligence did not work well. In addition, General McMaster in his book "Dereliction of Duty" points out that Johnson exaggerated the real communist threat in the Dominican Republic in order to have more resources to sustain operations in Vietnam.[11] Now, considering that the American ambassador to the OAS, Ellsworth Bunker, and General Bruce Palmer, Commander of the troops, went to work together in Vietnam, was it an exaggerated reaction, or was it rather a rehearsal of joint operations? Since the last joint operation was in Korea, so it was necessary to practice, that is, how a politician in charge delivers guidelines and how a general manages to translate political directions into operational terms.[12]

A. Mc.: Yeah, I don't know, it's a complicated question. I haven't read McMaster's book, so I don't know the links between the DR and Vietnam. From what I recall of my research, Vietnam never came up in the discussions of the Dominican Republic, that I've seen. If you listen to all of Johnson's phone conversations, all of the meetings they have about it, all that Johnson is basically saying is that all of these things are related, the communists are behind all of this, they're behind Vietnam and therefore they're behind the Dominican Republic and so on. I think they could be operationally or budget wise connected, but I think larger than that, this is really typical of Johnson's ways of responding to crises. He overreacts. He has this persecution complex. He constantly thinks that everybody is out to get him, including the communists, but also including all the liberals in the foreign policy establishment of the United States, which means the Kennedy people, but also means the journalists at The New York Times, The Washington Post, all those who criticize him. They are the ones who exaggerate. So he feels the need to react very strongly to make sure that they get pushed down.

11 H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998).

12 To delve deeper into General Bruce Palmer's experiences as Commander of Operation Power Pack and the operational level of war, refer to: Bruce Palmer, *Intervention in the Caribbean: The Dominican Crisis of 1965*, 1st ed. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1989).

If he sees evidence that there are a few communists from the Dominican Republic who have trained in Cuba, he makes these big steps. He says that if there are a few, there must be hundreds. And if there are hundreds who have trained in Cuba, they must be directed by Cuba. It must be a Cuban operation. And if it is a Cuban operation, it is also a Soviet operation. But he has no evidence for any of these things. All he knows is that they are trained. And of course, they want to take over, but they are just a couple of men. And Johnson doesn't care about that, because if he goes in little by little, he feels he will be criticized even more by the Republicans for losing the Dominican Republic, or for not stopping the chaos. So I think it's his personality.[13]

If you listen to his telephone conversations, it's very interesting because Johnson has these phone calls with advisers or people in Congress, and he asks them what they think about something. But it's very clear that he already knows what he is going to do. And he's trying to convince his advisers of what he's already decided. But he doesn't say it. He doesn't say, "I've decided this, what do you think?" He basically says, "this is our problem, what do you think?" And everything he says is basically against their opinion and bringing them to his side. He's not the kind of man who looks for consensus, or looks for group decisions. He is the kind of man who wants to impose his will. And that is how he is going to operate in the DR and in Vietnam. And he really doesn't care about the details on the ground.

But, anyway I have a graduate student who works in the American Army in the DR in '65 and there is a sort of memory of it, an institutional memory. And what he is realizing is that even though the Army saw their mission as a victory, they saw it as a tactical or strategic victory over communism, they don't like to remember it. Whereas Vietnam is the opposite, they understand that it was a defeat, but they remember a lot, not necessarily positively, but they put a lot of time and resources into Vietnam memory. And the difference is that in Vietnam there was a lot of fighting. There was a lot of violence, a lot of action. In the Dominican Republic, it was peacekeeping. U.S. troops landed, they stopped people from fighting, successfully, and then they left maybe after months or years. The Army doesn't want to be remembered as people who don't fight. One, probably because of machismo, but two, because you need less money if you don't fight. But if you fight, you need a lot of money for training, for planes and tanks and things like that. So that's what we're kind

13 For a deeper understanding of the psychological aspects of President Lyndon B. Johnson and their influence during the Dominican crisis decision making process, see: Randall Woods, "Conflicted Hegemon: LBJ and the Dominican Republic," *Diplomatic History* 32, no. 5 (2008): 749–66, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2008.00727.x.

ISSN: 1510-5024 (papel) - 2301-1629 (en línea)
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of discovering. So that's why in Vietnam, the big orders to send hundreds of thousands of troops really starts in the summer of 1965. And so, that reality that many young American men are going to fight and possibly die in this faraway conflict eclipses what's happening in the Dominican Republic, which is a relatively peaceful thing. If you're a mother and your son goes to the Dominican Republic, you're relieved, because you know he's not going to get killed. But in Vietnam, you have no idea. And so, it takes up a lot more space in the American media and American fears about the Cold War.

H. H.: Well, when I attended the captain's career course at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and when I was an instructor at WHINSEC, I found that no one remembered Operation Power Pack in the DR. They probably wanted, as you say, to forget it. Perhaps because the United States was not the "good neighbor" that it should have been. So we have another factor contributing to this historiographic gap. Now, I have traveled several times to the DR, to verify how the operations were developed on the ground. I went to the Copello building where the Constitutionalist General Headquarters was established and I interviewed Caamaño's Chief of Staff, Bonaparte Gautreaux, who was supposed to control and plan all the logistics, intelligence gathering and communications, but I found that he was far from that. Then I went to different spots where the "comandos" were located and I understood that it was impossible to have exercised any control over them. In fact, I interviewed many constitutionalist fighters such as Lipe Collado, who wrote "Soldaditos de Azúcar," a book about his experience handling an anti-aircraft machine gun alone at age ten.[14] With this evidence I confirmed that Caamaño did not control his troops and therefore was not capable of blocking any communist takeover. Do you think it was feasible then, considering that it was Johnson's supposed reason for increasing US troops on May 2?

A. Mc.: It's hard to say. There is not a lot of details about what happened on the left, between the hardcore communists and the Bosch supporters. Bosch wasn't there, and that's an important fact. There was no need there, nor was somebody who could really rally Bosch's folks. But almost everyone is to the side of Bosch versus communism, and he does not want communism. And Caamaño was not a communist at all.

14 Lipe Collado, *Soldaditos de Azúcar* (Santo Domingo: Editora Collado, 2005).

H. H.: During the last years of the Trujillo Era, Caamaño commanded the White Helmeted Corps of the National Police.

A. Mc.: Exactly. Well, he gets radicalized in the intervention, but it is not at all. I mean, I count 5 to 10 hardcore communists, you would've had to have a complete breakdown of the constitutionalist forces on the streets for these 5 to 10 to take power. This sort of young men carrying weapons, putting roadblocks, someone in the Bosch party, the PRD, would've had to tell them "these are the guys they are listening to, these communists, because they know what they are doing". And I think the communists simply they didn't have the social relationships, the political relationships. They probably didn't even have the military tactical training to do much, they were idealistic communists. I find it very difficult to believe that, assuming there were no American landing and Johnson said "you figure it out", maybe if the PRD would have beaten the military, like the loyalists, that a communist takeover could have happened.

H. H.: Yes, I agree with that. Because the American invasion emboldened the constitutionalists and they united even more, consolidating the movement. And as a result of the invasion, the undecided, those who were in the middle, those who did not know which way to go, joined Caamaño out of a national sentiment.

A. Mc.: We must also remember where the Dominican Republic is in 1965. It is basically a place where there has been almost no political experience from any party. You had opponents of Trujillo, but they had not been in power. Trujillo was in power until 1961, four years earlier. So nobody has been trained to run a government or a political party. Bosch was in power and he was a terrible president. As an administrator, as someone who has to make decisions, he was very bad at running a government. And he was in power, I think, seven months. And then you have the Triumvirate. And so the Dominicans really didn't benefit from responsible political parties, a responsible press that had a sense of how to run a pluralistic democratic system. It's a place where it's hard to imagine that, politically, people are particularly sophisticated. Most people follow what the leader tells them. Plus, there is this issue that everything is happening in one city, and in one neighborhood of a one city—the colonial section of Santo Domingo. That is where everything happens, all the political and the military action. The rest of the Dominican Repubilc doesn't care; the rest of the country doesn't care what is happening. It's a very politically conservative country. It's still

ISSN: 1510-5024 (papel) - 2301-1629 (en línea)
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a very much a "Trujillista" country, where people just want to be left alone, they want tend to their farms, they don't want to deal with politics. They are very conservative socially, in terms of religion, in terms of gender, in terms of race. There is really no appetite for following a communist insurgency. Perhaps that was the case in Cuba in 1959, but the Dominican Republic in 1965 is not Cuba.

H. H.: You have probably already answered part of this question. Howard B. Schaffer's biography of Ellsworth Bunker considers his performance in the Dominican Republic as one of his brightest moments.[15] But looking at the OAS archives and the documents of the Chilean Representative to the OAS, Alejandro Magnet, it is possible to identify that Bunker's brightest moment was in the first week of the crisis in the organization. The U.S. Representative managed to obtain the support of almost all member countries. Because according to the Chilean archives, opposition to the invasion and the Inter-American Peace Force was a widespread sentiment. But then, one by one, speaking to the Representatives, during coffee breaks, very late at night or early in the morning, those votes changed. Do you think it is necessary to continue exploring these dynamics within the OAS?

A. Mc.: Yes, I would like to know more about that. I don't know much about that. I know the votes were changed, but it's not clear why they were changed. Is Bunker just persuading them with arguments? Or is he giving away certain things? Is he sort of giving away carrots? Or is he using a stick? Or is he saying, we're going to support you on this if you support us on that? It's called diplomatic arm twisting. The same thing happened in Venezuela in 1954 with the Caracas Conference, where John Foster Dulles wanted to condemn Guatemala and did a lot of arm twisting at the OAS with the foreign ministers. I'll be interested in knowing what deals were made, what promises and threats were made. If you can find that, I think it is a very interesting article.

H. H.: From a more political point of view, you have already said that there is much to be written about the role of the OAS, but should we also analyze the behavior of each State in supporting or not supporting the intervention by approving the Inter-American Peace Force?

A. Mc.: Yes, exactly. And you need to do what you are doing, which is to go to the archives of the states. Because I've looked at the archives of the

15 Howard B. Schaffer, *Ellsworth Bunker: Global Troubleshooter, Vietnam Hawk* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

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State Department and I'm not sure there's a lot of details there about what Bunker was doing. Maybe I was looking in the wrong places, maybe you have to look at the relations between those two countries, rather than the files on the Dominican intervention. So yes, I think there is more archival work that can be done, certainly in Latin America and hopefully also in Washington in the State Department archives.

H. H.: Yes, because I would like to know your assessment of Brazil's role during the crisis and as the second force of the Inter-American Peace Force. Because the Chilean *chargé d'affaires* in Santo Domingo reported that: first, the embassy remained outside the neutral zone; second, it was hit by two or three mortar bombs; third, it was raided by Brazilian troops; and one day they did not allow him to enter the facilities. Was Brazil playing another game, another war?

A. Mc.: You know more about this than I do, but my sense is that Johnson was reaping the rewards of his support for the 1964 coup in Brazil. He supports that coup, he doesn't need to do much, and he sees it as a total victory against the rising threat of communism in Brazil. And the following year, the Americans basically tell the Brazilians that we need some diplomatic cover in the Dominican Republic. It is clearly our intervention, we are in charge, but we need to make it look like the whole hemisphere is protecting the Dominican Republic from communism and we need a strong leader at the head of this Inter-American Peace Force, so they put a Brazilian there. But you know better the details of what happens when Brazilians actually get there.

H. H.: But politically speaking, probably Brazil, considering that the main American effort was in Vietnam, was trying to get in charge of the whole region or trying to become the second in command and perhaps replace the American leadership, obviously with the support or authorization of American decision makers.

A. Mc.: Yes, I can imagine that, especially the Brazilian military. Brazil is a kind of schizophrenic presence in Latin America where some Brazilians don't even consider themselves Latin American. They are Brazilians, they have nothing to do with Latin America. Others want to take a leadership role in Latin America. They might understand that there are differences between them and Spanish speakers, but they always wanted a leadership role for the country. And I think if you're in the military, you probably feel that leadership role more than anything, especially if you're a right-wing military. You feel

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that there is some sort of Pan-Latin American threat from the communists, and so you want to be at the forefront of the counter-revolution. I assume Brazil had one of the largest militaries in South America, so you want to be at the forefront of resisting communism, and so playing that very public role as head of the Inter-American Peace Force and then probably impact all of your military-to-military relations with other Latin American militaries, not to mention, of course, the United States. Because once you do that, if you say we want to send trainers to Fort Sill, for example, or to the School of the Americas, they will probably say yes, of course, you helped us a lot in the Dominican Republic, we're going to take several dozens of your officers and train them. And so you create these military-to-military relationships. And once Pinochet is in power and the Argentine military is in power, Brazil is already there. It has already been the leader. So it is clearly going to be part of Operation Condor and all these right-wing military dictatorships.

H. H.: There is an article that scrutinizes the tensions, emotions and experiences of the Representative of Chile to the OAS during the Dominican crisis and how his international political thought was altered. He was a conservative Christian Democrat, and eventually turned to support the Constitutionalists. He was caught between the pressures from Santiago -because the American ambassador, Ralph Duggan, always intervened and misinformed the entire decision-making process between Foreign Minister Valdés and President Eduardo Frei- and the persuasions of Ellsworth Bunker in the OAS. This study approaches diplomatic history from a new perspective.[16] So, from an epistemological viewpoint, is there a new diplomatic history? What is your perspective about these approaches or the state of the discipline in Latin America? I mean to delve into diplomats from their complexities as human beings. Is there a debt owed to them? Is there something more that historians should do?

A. Mc.: I think that's a very good question. I can tell you what's happening from the American side over the last 50 years or so. I've been at it for 30 years. The new diplomatic history is, first of all, very international. That means that it is now very hard to do a book or a project on American diplomacy without also researching another country. And the idea is to create a full history by countering two points of view. You realize that when you are in the American archives you start adopting the point of view of the Americans. And then

16 Hugo Harvey-Valdés and Álvaro Sierra-Rivas, "El Pensamiento Político Internacional del Embajador Alejandro Magnet y la Crisis Dominicana de 1965: Una Nueva Historia Diplomática desde Chile," *Izquierdas* 53 (2024): 1–29, https://doi.org/10.4067/s0718-50492024000100202.

you go to a Latin American archive and you adopt their point of view. For example, you were telling us that the American ambassador is giving them misinformation. I'm sure from his point of view it's not disinformation. It's correct information. It's just a different perspective.

If you do an international history like that, to me it is the new diplomatic history. You can make a judgment about who's right or who's wrong, but it's important to counterpose these two things. The second one is a sort of softer acknowledgement that culture is very important in shaping the perspectives of these diplomats. Not just the national culture, let's say, of Chileans or the national culture of Americans, but all kinds of other issues. There's individual psychology, there's domestic party politics, there's Cold War ideologies. And I think that Latin Americans have a lot of room to do a lot more about this. When you look at these diplomats, as you say, they are complex human beings. They have a past, they have a social circle, they have a political universe in which they exist, a diplomatic one. I think one thing we have to abandon is the idea that these are rational actors who take only the national interest in mind. Whether rightwing or leftwing, they have more than the national interest in mind. I mean, American historians are thinking more and more about domestic politics. One thing I wrote about Johnson in 1965 is that he was so afraid, more than his advisers, he was scared of losing the election over this intervention. He thought he was going to lose and this was going to happen in 1968, three years down the road, and still he really thought "the Republicans were going to kill me if I don't completely end the possibility of another Cuba in the hemisphere. Even the liberal Democrats are going to criticize me if I go the other way." He's constantly thinking about these politics and it really shapes the way he lies about his decisions.

H. H.: Now, in relation to your article "Misled by himself" in which you analyze the recordings of conversations between Johnson and his advisers.[17] What value do these tapes still have as a historical source? Because, did the authorities know that they were being recorded? And if they did, did they lose awareness of being recorded? What else can we discover from these tapes? How difficult was it for you to decipher the meanings of the codes or acronyms that they used to refer to the different people involved in the crisis?

A. Mc.: By the time those tapes became available to the public, I think it was in the summer of 2001, maybe a little earlier, but I had already written

17 Alan McPherson, "Misled by Himself: What the Johnson Tapes Reveal About the Dominican Intervention of 1965," *Latin American Research Review* 38, no. 2 (2003): 127–46, https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2003.0020.

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my dissertation. So I knew this case very well. I knew everyone involved. I knew everyone on the American side, on the Dominican side. I had read all the documents. And the tapes came out. And then I thought, well, I have to go to Texas to hear them. And hearing the tapes is very interesting. But as a source, it is of limited value. Because you also asked who knew they were being taped. Let me answer that first. It's not clear. I remember asking the archivists if Johnson knew he was being recorded or if the recording machine simply started every time he picked up the telephone. He surely knew there was a recording system. He knew it, he wanted it there. John Kennedy had done the same thing. I think there were several recording systems while Johnson was President. Sometimes it would just start immediately when you pick up the phone, just like bugging or putting a microphone in there and starting a recording. Sometimes Johnson would have a secretary and he would do a sign to say "roll the tape, because I want this recorded." That means that he could also choose not to record. So we don't know the conversations that were not recorded. But clearly there are so many recorded conversations that he wanted most of them recorded. Probably so that he could have the power and be able to tell people "you promised me this". And we don't know how many people knew they were being recorded, we just don't know that. There are probably some people who admitted it, but I think a lot of people didn't know, especially if they weren't close advisors.

Maybe someone comes from Congress and has a conversation a couple of times a year with the president, they might not know they're being recorded. But I think people are fairly open with the president. They don't think this is going to go out to the media. They really think that if they're being recorded, it's going to remain a personal conversation with the president.

What's the value of this? For me the value was getting the president's take on this. These are all the conversations that featured the president of the United States, and Johnson did not write much. He spent most of his day on the telephone or in meetings. This was a really invaluable perspective. Obviously it doesn't mean that everything they are saying is accurate, that everything they say is going to become policies. Sometimes they are just thinking out loud. But they give you a pretty intimate portrait of important decision making and especially the motivations of Lyndon Johnson. Even after working on it for years and looking at everything the US government has produced on paper, in 2001 I still had very little sense of the president's role on the Dominican intervention, how he was thinking through this crisis. So listening to those tapes was eye-opening. And I reached these broad

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conclusions: One was that he knew he didn't have the information when he made the determination to intervene. Two, he took responsibility for that. And the third thing I realized is, as I said, the domestic political reasons.

H. H.: Finally, one last question as a reflection: Do you think the OAS should take some kind of reparation for what happened in 1965? This because the regular session of the organization was held in Santo Domingo in June 2016. In his opening speech, Dominican President Danilo Medina urged the 34 delegations to "look back with a reflective and self-critical attitude toward the past of the OAS itself" and proposed a "resolution of reparation" by the OAS for its role in the April 1965 revolution, but the text approved at the end of the meeting completely deviated from this claim.[18]

A. Mc.: It could happen. I'm not holding my breath. I don't think the OAS does a lot of this. You have to understand that it's an organization of nations, which means that the majority of nation states would have to agree on this expression of regret. Probably one of the things that worries them about, even if you want to express regret, is what comes after that. Is it just a statement and that's it? Or do the Dominicans ask for reparations? And then it becomes a financial thing. The OAS doesn't have any money. We all know this. But it would be interesting, even if they just sort of encourage more scholarship on this, on the OAS during the Cold War. To what extent was it an American tool? To what extent was it independent? In some ways it could be independent, but in so many instances, Panama, Cuba, Dominican Republic, it essentially did what the United States wanted to do.

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18 Hugo Harvey, "Revisitando el punto de inflexión interamericano en la Guerra Fría: la crisis dominicana de 1965, la intervención de Estados Unidos y la Fuerza Interamericana de la Paz," *Humanidades: revista de la Universidad de Montevideo*, no. 7 (2020): 25–63, https://doi.org/10.25185/7.2.

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