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International Diplomacy, Intellectual Networks, and Memory in Latin America: Sixty Years Since the United States' Intervention in the Dominican Republic

Diplomacia internacional, redes intelectuales y memoria en América Latina. A 60 años de la intervención de Estados Unidos en República Dominicana

Diplomacia Internacional, Redes Intelectuais e Memória na América Latina: Sessenta Anos da Intervenção dos Estados Unidos na República Dominicana

Introduction

Sixty years after the United States' invasion of the Dominican Republic, this dossier proposes a critical revisit of this turning point in contemporary inter-American history, specifically considering that the political density and diplomatic repercussions of these facts have been notably underestimated by Latin American historiography[1]. The two original articles and one academic interview gathered here are articulated from a Latin American perspective which, although nourished by Chilean contributions in this edition, seeks to transcend national frameworks to contribute to the understanding of a regional issue. Therefore, the central objective of this dossier is to position the Dominican crisis as a preeminent topic in studies on imperialism, Latin American foreign policies, and the political memories of the 20th century.

Despite the limited number of contributions, the dossier offers a substantive contribution aiming to update studies on the Cold War in Latin America, proposing approaches that dialogue with political history, the New Diplomatic History (NDH), the History of International Relations (HIR), and the history of emotions. Hence, this is a transnational interpretation conducted from the Latin American region and fully aware of inter-American ties, which recovers the value of state and non-state actors, political and cultural discourses, and the ways in which memory was constructed around this episode.

This prologue is structured into five sections. First, it presents the historiographic context that motivated the dossier's call, highlighting the disciplinary gaps addressed. Secondly, it examines the relevance of this set of studies in the Latin American rereading of inter-American processes, beyond national sources. Thirdly, it presents a critical analysis of each contribution, establishing their main findings, methodologies, and sources. Afterwards, it articulates the connections and tensions between the texts, exploring analytical convergences, interpretative divergences, and intertextual dialogues. Finally, it reflects on the dossier's global contributions to regional historiography and current debates on diplomacy, imperialism, and memory.

1 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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Inter-American historiography and the Dominican void: a persistent omission

Despite the magnitude and consequences of the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965, its historiographic treatment has been uneven. The interventions in Guatemala in 1954 or the events in Chile between 1963 and 1973 have generated a vast specialized literature, with approaches from political history, covert action, psychological warfare, and transnational networks[2]. However, the Dominican case has remained in a kind of academic opacity, particularly in Latin American production. This omission is even more striking considering that the "Power Pack" operation involved the landing of more than twenty thousand U.S. soldiers, the establishment of a provisional government, the direct participation of the Organization of American States (OAS) in the creation of an Inter-American Peace Force, and a broad debate in multiple multilateral arenas. In fact, the world witnessed one of the most visible and forceful actions of the U.S. hemispheric policy of anticommunist containment undertaken after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution.

The U.S. historian Alan McPherson, interviewed in this dossier, has been one of the most persistent voices in denouncing this imbalance. As he expresses in the interview held for this edition, the Dominican case brings together characteristics that make it a central episode of the hemispheric Cold War: direct presence of U.S. troops, invocation of the continental security doctrine, instrumentalization of the OAS, polarization of local political actors, and a complex reaction from Latin American foreign affairs' ministries[3]. Nevertheless, studies have focused on the U.S. diplomatic dimension, privileging sources from U.S. foreign policy and national security archives. The Latin American perspective has been infrequent, prioritizing the official actions of governments without problematizing internal responses, ideological cleavages, or the agency of non-state actors[4]. Likewise, little attention has been

2 Nick Cullather, *Secret History. The CIA´s classified account of its Operations in Guatemala (1952 - 1954)* (California: Standford University Press, 1999); U.S. Senate Select Committee, *Covert Action in Chile 1963-73. Study governmental operations with respect to intelligence activities* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975); Kristian Gustafson, *Hostile Intent: U.S. Covert Operations in Chile, 1964-1974* (Dulles: Potomac Books, 2007); Sebastián Hurtado-Torres, "Chile y Estados Unidos, 1964-1973", *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* 16 (2016); Sebastián Hurtado-Torres, *The Gathering Storm: Eduardo Frei's Revolution in Liberty and Chile's Cold War* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2020).

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

4 Hugo Harvey, *"Pueden ganar una isla, pero perderán un continente". El Gobierno de Eduardo Frei Montalva ante la intervención de Estados Unidos en República Dominicana en 1965* (Santiago de Chile: Ariadna, 2025).

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paid to inter-American ties in terms of intellectual networks, parliamentary debates, cultural productions, or popular reactions.

In recent years, the progress of NDH has allowed for more complex interpretations. The incorporation of analytical tools from memory studies, the history of emotions, and discourse analysis has made it possible to shift the focus from decision-making centers to intermediate actors, peripheral agencies, and symbolic mediations. From this perspective, the U.S. intervention in Santo Domingo is not only a high politics event, but also an episode laden with representations, affections, and narrative constructions, which mobilized solidarities, generated political reactions, and contributed to shaping discourses on imperialism and sovereignty throughout the continent.

From this viewpoint, the 1965 intervention should be read beyond a military operation in the Caribbean or a diplomatic conflict, and also as a catalytic event for processes that shaped Latin American understandings of U.S. power, regional autonomy, and the role of multilateral organizations like the OAS. The hemispheric character of the event, with reactions in multiple Latin American countries, requires a historiography that recognizes this plurality of actors, voices, and memories. This dossier responds to that historiographic urgency, deliberately proposing an intersection between HIR and cultural studies, diplomatic history and foreign policy, official discourses and social memories.

Latin American rereadings and regional agency

One of the fundamental objectives of this dossier is to broaden perspectives and frame the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965 as a phenomenon that exceed the bilateral limits between Washington and Santo Domingo. Through this episode, covert operations give way to direct actions. Hemispheric tensions increase amidst the active participation of multiple governments, political parties, social actors, and media outlets in Latin America. This effort to recover an inter-American viewpoint from Latin America requires emphasizing the relational nature of the conflict and its impact in political, ideological, and symbolic spaces beyond the insular Caribbean.

The diplomatic documentation of the time, debates in the United Nations and the Organization of American States, and public reactions in different countries of the continent and their assimilation into domestic

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political scenarios reveal the impact of the U.S. invasion. In several Latin American countries, including Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina, Uruguay, Peru, and Chile, there were student mobilizations, parliamentary condemnations, critical press editorials, and statements from the cultural and intellectual fields. Consequently, these events mobilized a dense network of hemispheric solidarities, forcing a redefinition of discourses on Pan-Americanism, self-determination, the legitimacy of the inter-American system, and the limits of sovereignty in the Cold War context.

The dialogue with Alan McPherson included in this dossier allows for a deeper understanding of the ambivalence of these reactions and the variety of interpretations the intervention occasioned. From his experience as a researcher and his knowledge of U.S. interventions in Latin America, McPherson highlights how the Dominican occupation crystallized a new stage of open interventionism, following the failure of good neighbor policies. He also points out the need to overcome dichotomous views that mechanically oppose "imperialists" and "anti-imperialists," suggesting the exploration of the gray area in which governments in the region negotiated their responses to the U.S. military incursion.

Thus, it becomes evident that the intervention was received in different ways. Some countries' foreign ministries opted for an explicit condemnation, others legitimized U.S. actions under the narrative of anti-communism, and others tried to mediate or adopt neutral positions, according to their internal contexts. This plurality of responses challenges any univocal reading and demands an exploration of national specificities without losing sight of the transnational circulation of discourses, affections, and representations.

Taking these aspects into consideration, the articles gathered in this dossier offer case studies that allow access to inter-American logics without intending to become regional syntheses. In his article, Dr. Milton Cortés not just describes the stances of the Chilean left, center, and right regarding the intervention. Beyond its empirical grounding, the text contributes to a reflection on how hemispheric crises are used by local political actors to construct legitimacy, project ideological identities, and dispute the meaning of democratic values. In this way, the Dominican crisis became a resonance chamber for the confrontation of political projects within Latin American states, instead of an externally imposed event.

Similarly, Dr. Gonzalo Serrano del Pozo's analysis of the intervention's representation in the satirical magazine *Topaze* exposes a discursive field

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rarely addressed by HIR: that of political caricature, humorous press, and the visual construction of imperialism. The use of graphic humor as a tool of political criticism reveals how debates about anti-Americanism, sovereignty, and authoritarianism were processed and disseminated in popular formats, circulating through registers that combined ideological denunciation with mass culture. This work line suggests the reconsideration of the role of cultural productions in shaping public opinion climates on foreign policy and hemispheric relations.

Both articles, along with the interview with McPherson, contribute to a Latin American rereading of the 1965 intervention, not because they reconstruct a homogeneous regional perspective, but because they show the ways in which the region processed, reinterpreted, and resignified the event. Through their sources and methodologies, these contributions demonstrate that it is possible—and necessary—to move toward an inter-American history of the U.S. intervention in Santo Domingo in 1965 that incorporates southern voices, local debates, intellectual networks, and cultural responses.

Analysis of the contributions: sources, hypotheses, and findings

The three contributions gathered in this dossier are rigorous and complementary exercises of historical analysis, which stand out for both the diversity of sources consulted and the originality of their research questions. Together, they allow for a multidimensional reconstruction of the reactions to the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965, from political, cultural, and historiographic standpoints, opening interpretative lines that contribute substantially to a critical inter-American history.

Milton Cortés's article, "*El debate en Chile sobre la intervención estadounidense en República Dominicana, 1965*" ["*The debate in Chile on the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic, 1965*,"] is situated at the intersection of the history of political ideas and HIR. Its main hypothesis is that the Dominican episode was actively resignified by Chilean political forces to affirm their respective ideological narratives. Based on a documentary corpus that includes parliamentary speeches, press editorials, diplomatic archives, and party statements, the author shows that the intervention was the subject of an intense discursive struggle that reflected the internal polarization process

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in mid-1960s Chile. The left denounced the event as an expression of systematic imperialism, while the right justified it in the name of order and the fight against communism. For its part, Christian Democracy maintained an intermediate position aligned with its reformist project and its desire to preserve strategic ties with Washington. This research stands out for its critical reading of the political uses of anti-imperialism, as well as for the articulation between primary sources and interpretative frameworks from political theory.

For his part, Gonzalo Serrano del Pozo's second article, *"La intervención de Estados Unidos en República Dominicana en la revista satírica chilena Topaze (1965)"* ["*The U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic in the Topaze Chilean satirical magazine (1965)*,"] offers an innovative contribution by incorporating the iconographic and semiotic analysis of political cartoons as a source for HIR. Using as a corpus a series of cartoons published in the iconic *Topaze* magazine during the months of the intervention, the author reconstructs the dynamics of graphic humor as a device of criticism against U.S. power, a mechanism for symbolic construction of anti-imperialism in the public sphere, and support for the Frei Montalva government. The text shows that satire not only reflected the tensions of the moment, but also contributed to shaping subjectivity that represented United States as an omnipresent threat, caricatured through icons such as "Uncle Sam" or representations of President Johnson as an agent of continental destabilization. Serrano del Pozo argues that, far from being anecdotal, these representations were part of a broader discursive ecosystem, in which humor press interacted with official discourses and the political emotions of citizens. In this sense, the article analyzes the cultural history of diplomacy and its popular impact, by exploring a kind of source generally underestimated by traditional historiography.

Finally, the dialogue between Alan McPherson and Hugo Harvey-Valdés, *"Reflexiones sobre el imperialismo, el antiamericanismo y las nuevas historias diplomáticas"* ["*Reflections on imperialism, anti-Americanism, and the new diplomatic histories*,"] fulfills a dual purpose. On the one hand, it offers a historiographic balance of studies on the 1965 intervention from the perspective of one of the leading specialists on the topic. On the other, it allows for the exploration of the theoretical and methodological possibilities of NDH in an inter-American key. McPherson analyzes the evolution of U.S. foreign policy in the Caribbean, the instrumentalization of the OAS, the tensions between simplistic visions of anti-Americanism, and the need to study gray zones, where ambivalences, opportunisms, and nuanced resistances of Latin American actors are inscribed. The dialogue moves from a panoramic view of hemispheric relations to a

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detailed evaluation of the Dominican case, highlighting the reasons why this episode, despite its relevance, has been underestimated in comparison to Guatemala (1954) or Chile (1973). The interview thus constitutes a valuable input for both specialists and early-career researchers, as it combines analytical depth with discursive clarity and articulates historiographic, theoretical, and ethical dimensions of the historian's craft.

Even though they unfold different approaches, the three contributions share a common will: to rethink the place of Latin America in the conflicts of the Cold War from critical perspectives, grounded in documentation and sensitive to the complexities of the period. By broadening the spectrum of sources, challenging interpretive frameworks, and incorporating tangentially explored registers, these works constitute a step forward toward a more plural, interconnected, and representative history of Latin American experiences in the face of U.S. power.

Convergences, dialogues, and tensions among the contributions

One of the main merits of this dossier is the ability to establish communication lines between texts that are based on different objects, methodologies, and sources. The result is that, when read together, they enable a more extensive and complex understanding of the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965 as a hemispheric phenomenon. Unlike other thematic collections where the juxtaposition of isolated works corresponds to mere thematic accumulation, these contributions intertwine through a historiographic dialogue that reflects shared concerns while stimulating analytical confrontation.

A first significant convergence lies in the shared effort to shift the focus from centers of decision-making to spaces of reception, interpretation, and regional reconfiguration. While all the texts recognize the central role of U.S. power in designing and executing the military operation, they focus less in the mechanics of the intervention than in the ways it was read, contested, or assimilated in Latin America. This shared orientation toward analyzing local reactions, symbolic mediations, and regional agency constitutes a highly valuable methodological contribution, which helps decentralize Cold War studies and incorporate the nuances of the Latin American experience.

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A second convergence area can be observed in the treatment of anti-imperialism as discourse and practice. Both Cortés's and Serrano del Pozo's articles address this topic from different yet complementary perspectives: the former through the confrontation of partisan and ideological discourses, and the latter through visual representation and the humorous construction of power. Both emphasize that anti-imperialism should not be understood as a homogeneous or monolithic stance, but as a field of contested meanings, susceptible to being appropriated, instrumentalized, or reinterpreted by different actors depending on their political and cultural positions. Similarly, McPherson warns of the risk of reading opposition to U.S. interventionism as a univocal moral category. Instead, explores the mechanisms through which loyalties are negotiated, ambivalences constructed, and resistance discourses mobilized, in a process that is not always conducted by coherence and logic.

Alongside the convergences, the dossier also offers productive interpretative divergences that enrich the field of study. One of them is related to the choice and prioritization of sources. While Cortés privileges political documents, parliamentary debate, and traditional print press, Serrano opts for iconographic and satirical sources, less frequented by historiography. This difference is not only methodological but also epistemological: it points to the need to expand the documentary canon of diplomatic history by incorporating voices and registers that allow for the capture of affective, emotional, and symbolic dimensions of international processes. The dialogue with McPherson reinforces this line, indicating that the study of perceptions, subjectivities, and narratives constructed around events can be as revealing as the analysis of official documents.

Another tension emerges from the analysis: while the articles address national cases—such as Chile—and their internal reactions, McPherson's interview proposes a panoramic view that connects the 1965 intervention with other milestones of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. Far from operating as a weakness, this apparent asymmetry becomes an invitation to articulate different scales of observation, exploring how local and national processes are inserted into hemispheric logics and how decisions made in power centers like Washington impact differently on the peripheries.

Finally, it is worth noting that, despite their differences, all three contributions share a historiographic commitment to critiquing the paradigm of U.S. exceptionalism. Through diverse registers, they propose decentered readings that question official versions, illuminate opaque areas of traditional

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narratives, and vindicate Latin America's analytical capacity to position itself within international history. In short, these works add a Latin-American vernacular complexity to the histories of U.S. interventionism, including both state and public perspectives, attentive to dissonances and committed to the resignification of concepts such as imperialism, sovereignty, and memory.

Historiographic contributions and analytical projections of the dossier

The dossier presented here offers a contribution to studies on the Cold War in Latin America, by situating the Dominican crisis of 1965 and the U.S. intervention as objects of analysis from a transdisciplinary, inter-American, plural, and critical perspective. In contrast to historiography that has privileged other milestones—such as Guatemala in 1954, Cuba in 1959, or Chile in 1973—as emblematic moments of U.S. interventionism, this set of works proposes to restore the analytical centrality of an episode that, despite its magnitude and consequences, has been superficially addressed by History and International Relations.

One of the main contributions of the dossier is the intent to question the place of Latin America during the Cold War, challenging traditional narratives from the region's own experiences, perceptions, and memories. The three contributions presented emphasize a situated epistemology, capable of developing regional knowledge without neglecting theoretical contributions from the international field. This dual national-regional articulation and a vocation for global dialogue is methodologically consistent with the most recent developments in NDH.

In this regard, the dossier collects and amplifies a series of transformations that have redefined the field of foreign policy and international history studies in the last two decades. Among them are: (i) the incorporation of non-state actors into the analysis of international relations; (ii) the recognition of the symbolic, emotional, and cultural dimension of diplomatic processes; (iii) the appreciation of non-traditional sources (such as cartoons, press stories, parliamentary speeches, or oral memories); and (iv) the concern with articulating local, national, and transnational scales in the reconstruction of historical events. All these dimensions are included, whether it be explicitly or implicitly, in the texts within this thematic issue.

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Likewise, the dossier adds complexity to the notion of imperialism in 20th-century Latin America. Far from assuming a dominator-dominated binary logic, the authors analyze the 1965 intervention as a constellation of unequal relationships, where power asymmetries coexist with margins of agency, symbolic negotiations, and diverse reactions from local actors. This nuanced analysis does not deny the violent and unilateral nature of the U.S. action but allows us to understand how it was incorporated, resignified, or contested in different national and regional arenas. In doing so, it avoids both passive victimization and romantic idealization of resistances, opting for a finer understanding of inter-American processes.

The dossier also builds bridges between studies from History, International Relations, and memory. Although all three contributions embrace a rigorous analytical logic, they all highlight the persistence of the 1965 episode in political culture, identity narratives, and intellectual discourses in the continent. In particular, the interview with Alan McPherson approaches the mechanisms of invisibilization and historiographic hierarchy that have relegated this event to a marginal place. Recovering this memory, from a critical and documented perspective, represents a political and historiographic gesture that challenges not only the past but also the present of hemispheric relations.

Finally, this dossier opens new lines of research for the future. First, by instigating the exploration of other foreign policy responses to the intervention, extending the empirical field to cases such as Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina, Peru, or Uruguay. Second, it suggests the need to reconstruct the intellectual, diplomatic, and social networks that shaped positions toward the event, both in the inter-American realm and in multilateral spaces. Third, it calls for progress toward an inter-American history of the U.S. intervention, capable of engaging with existing contributions and subsequently identifying patterns, differences, and continuities with other similar cases. Finally, it opens the possibility of deepening the links between diplomacy, visual culture, and political emotionalities as fruitful paths to renew the historiographic agenda of international relations.

In short, this dossier represents a coordinated effort to enrich studies on the Cold War in Latin America from a critical, situated, and inter-American perspective. By restoring centrality to a marginalized episode and proposing innovative reading keys, these pages offer a fertile platform for future research while reaffirming the commitment of Latin American historiography to the deep and rigorous understanding of its ties with global power.

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