

2008

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Steven Gilbert

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# The U.S. policy of democracy promotion in Latin America

## Abstract

The U.S. policy of democracy promotion in Latin America has consisted of promoting governments that are favorable to U.S. political and economic interests rather than democracy itself. While the U.S. claims to have a tradition of “promoting democracy” in Latin America, justification for U.S. intervention has been questionable and inconsistent. U.S. support for Latin American regimes has coincided with favorable economic policies rather than with the strength of democracy within a country. Historically, the protection of resources for extraction has been one of the main goals of U.S. policy in Latin America. U.S. A historical overview of U.S. relations in Latin America shows that the promotion of democracy is secondary to economic and social factors. Relations between the U.S. and Latin America show that the U.S. has used democracy promotion as cover for U.S. imperialism in Latin America. During the Cold War, the U.S. supported anti-communist regimes that were often undemocratic because they were capable of protecting U.S. interests. Since the mid-1980s, we have seen a wave of democratization in Latin America and an embrace of market democracy. U.S. relations in Latin America since the end of the Cold War reveal that the U.S. is merely changing its means of establishing U.S. friendly governments by promoting low-intensity democracy. This low-intensity democracy is characteristic polyarchy, in which elites who adhere to the neoliberal model control the government. When democratic governments within Latin America have veered too far from this outline for democracy and have threatened U.S. interests, the U.S. has intervened to undermine and attempt to overthrow these governments.

## Degree Type

Open Access Senior Honors Thesis

## Department

Political Science

## First Advisor

Richard Stahler-Sholk

## Second Advisor

Edward Sidlow)

## Keywords

Democratization Latin America, United States Relations Latin America

## Subject Categories

American Politics | Political Science | Social and Behavioral Sciences

The U.S. Policy of Democracy Promotion in Latin America

By

Steven Gilbert

A Senior Thesis Submitted to the

Eastern Michigan University

Honors College

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation

with Honors in Political Science

Approved at Ypsilanti, Michigan, on this date April 28, 2008

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervising Instructor (Richard Stahler-Sholk)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Honors Advisor (Edward Sidlow)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Head (Claudia Petrescu)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Honors Director (James A. Knapp)

The U.S. policy of democracy promotion in Latin America has consisted of promoting governments that are favorable to U.S. political and economic interests rather than democracy itself. While the U.S. claims to have a tradition of “promoting democracy” in Latin America, justification for U.S. intervention has been questionable and inconsistent. U.S. support for Latin American regimes has coincided with favorable economic policies rather than with the strength of democracy within a country. Historically, the protection of resources for extraction has been one of the main goals of U.S. policy in Latin America. U.S. A historical overview of U.S. relations in Latin America shows that the promotion of democracy is secondary to economic and social factors. Relations between the U.S. and Latin America show that the U.S. has used democracy promotion as cover for U.S. imperialism in Latin America. During the Cold War, the U.S. supported anti-communist regimes that were often undemocratic because they were capable of protecting U.S. interests. Since the mid-1980s, we have seen a wave of democratization in Latin America and an embrace of market democracy. U.S. relations in Latin America since the end of the Cold War reveal that the U.S. is merely changing its means of establishing U.S. friendly governments by promoting low-intensity democracy. This low-intensity democracy is characteristic polyarchy, in which elites who adhere to the neoliberal model control the government. When democratic governments within Latin America have veered too far from this outline for democracy and have threatened U.S. interests, the U.S. has intervened to undermine and attempt to overthrow these governments.

The policy of promoting democracy is not a new policy but only in recent years have concerns been raised regarding the nature of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America.

Carolyn M. Shaw suggests in her article, *The United States: Reality and Rhetoric*, that the promotion of democracy provided a “useful, sometimes crucial, rationalization for the application of American power” (Legler, Lean, and Boniface 69). The policy of democracy promotion was used to legitimize U.S. intervention abroad. Examining this history of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America, we see justification for this hypothesis.

In early relations between the U.S. and Latin America, promoting democracy was not a principal concern. In general the U.S. focused on economic and security issues. The period from 1820 to 1889 was characterized by U.S. isolationism. The U.S. avoided participation in agreements or interactions in Latin America.

In the late 1800s U.S. interaction with Latin America increased due to a greater emphasis on economic issues. The U.S. dominated Latin American relations and took the lead in bringing Latin American States together to avoid conflict and promote trade. The Roosevelt Corollary, an addition to the Monroe Doctrine, would give the U.S. the mandate to intervene in Latin America in cases of instability. The U.S. utilized this document to justify an exclusive right to control the area of Latin America. Taft, president from 1909 to 1913, employed the Roosevelt Corollary by intervening in Nicaragua and Honduras to restore order and stability after coups.

The establishment and protection of constitutional democracies in Latin America was supposed to be a chief concern of the U.S. during the Wilson administration. In reality, this policy was used to disguise its true intentions, enhancing security and expanding markets (Legler, Lean, and Boniface 68). In 1915, President Sam’s government collapsed in Haiti. The U.S. sent in troops and put in place policies to promote stability. The U.S. forced the new president, Philippe Dartiguenave to sign a

treaty prohibiting Haiti from increasing public debt without U.S. approval. An amendment to the treaty in 1918 required U.S. approval of all legislation. Haitians resented these policies however for encroaching upon national sovereignty. The U.S. also maintained a military presence in Cuba between 1917 and 1923. U.S. commanders intervened by managing Cuban national finances. After the assassination of President Cáceres in 1911, the U.S. occupied the Dominican Republic to subdue unrest. Dominicans viewed the intervention with hostility and engaged in guerrilla attacks against U.S. forces. The U.S. justified intervention in countries facing political instability, by promising to restore order. Ironically, enduring dictatorships including Somoza in Nicaragua, Duvalier in Haiti, Batista in Cuba, and Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, emerged in countries where the U.S. actively intervened. In places where the U.S. asserted little influence such as Costa Rica, Chile, and Venezuela, democracies flourished (Legler, Lean, and Boniface 69).

Between 1923 and 1933, U.S. policy towards Latin America experienced a transition. Hoover rejected the Roosevelt Corollary, going so far as to say “true democracy is not and cannot be imperialistic.” (Legler, Lean, and Boniface 69) Despite this declaration, relations remained tense due to refusal of the U.S. to accept the principle of nonintervention. The period from 1933 to 1948 was characterized by the Good Neighbor Policy. While this policy led to an improvement in relations, democracy promotion was ineffective. Although the Good Neighbor Policy broke from the blatant interventionist policies of previous administrations, it also signified that the U.S. would refrain from taking action against dictatorships in Latin America.

Rafael Trujillo, the dictator of the Dominican Republic, was able to avoid intervention due to his strong contacts in the military and the U.S. Good Neighbor Policy of nonintervention (Hartlyn 45). Trujillo had used brutal repression to assert control over all Dominican territory and prevent and potential threat to his regime. The most brutal use of repressive force by Trujillo was the massacre of between 5,000 and 12,000 Haitians in October 1937 (Hartlyn 48).

The U.S. made an attempt to consolidate democracy in Nicaragua with elections in March of 1947. Ultimately, the Somoza family succeeded in maintaining their grasp on power and Anastasio Somoza overthrew the elected government returning Nicaragua to dictatorship. This failure in Nicaragua hindered further promotion of democracy in the region as U.S. foreign policy officials thought that Latin American culture was too immature to embrace democracy (Legler, Lean, and Boniface 69). John Johnson in his book *Latin America in Caricature*, demonstrates that throughout history, Latin American republics have been depicted as wild, backward, lazy and troublesome among other negative characteristics (Johnson 1-330).

After World War II, The spread of communism emerged as a threat to U.S. economic interests. Throughout Latin America, a growing tide of nationalism emerged. Latin American leaders and intellectuals saw neocolonial policies as the cause of underdevelopment and sought control of natural resources and self-determination (McSherry 2). Meanwhile, The U.S. sought to promote a world economic system based on free trade and investment that would benefit U.S. corporations. Noam Chomsky argues that communism represented a threat to the exploitation of valuable resources from the third world required to foster the development of the U.S. economy (Chomsky

31). The situation is more complex considering the U.S. has intervened in countries with few valuable resources. In a global power struggle with the Soviet Union, the U.S. sought to contain Soviet domination by intervening to neutralize communist movements. At this time, the promotion of democracy became a secondary objective to containing communism. President Kennedy remarked that while the U.S. preferred democratic regimes, given the choice between a Trujillo and a Castro, the U.S. would choose the Trujillo (Chomsky 45). The U.S. took whatever measures necessary to fight social change and economic nationalism, including support for tyrants and dictators. The U.S. did more than tolerate these rightist military regimes, it provided them with military aid and training to suppress social unrest (Legler, Lean, and Boniface 74). George Kennan, U.S. diplomat and author of the policy of containment, argued that harsh government repression should not worry the U.S. so long as policies were favorable to U.S. interests. A strong regime in power was more favorable to U.S. interests than a liberal government that sympathized with Communists (Chomsky 49). Nationalistic regimes that sought to improve the low living standards of the masses and diversify their economies threatened U.S. interests.

During the Cold War, Rafael Trujillo benefited from the increasing fears of communism and became a close anticommunist ally of the U.S. After World War II, he had faced democratic pressures from the U.S. due to greater labor activism. In 1947 he declared the Communist Party illegal and increased repression destroying both communists and independent labor movements. The U.S. was willing to overlook these repressive measures due to his strong anticommunist policy. Understanding the Dominican Republic's dependence on the U.S. Trujillo recognized the importance of

strengthening relations with the U.S. He employed public relations firms and developed contacts with the military to enhance his reputation and maintain U.S. support. U.S. military personnel explicitly praised his rule while he manipulated U.S. diplomats into supporting his regime (Hartlyn 51).

In 1950, a threat to U.S. interests emerged in Guatemala. Jacobo Arbenz, a nationalist was elected president of Guatemala. As president, Arbenz granted new rights to workers and indigenous people and enacted an agrarian reform. His administration purchased unused lands and redistributed it to landless peasants, a policy that threatened U.S. interests. His agrarian reform affected the United Fruit Company, a U.S. based company that was the largest landowner in Guatemala. In 1954, with the authorization of President Eisenhower, the CIA organized the overthrow of Arbenz. His overthrow demonstrated that the U.S. would intervene against social change that was opposed to U.S. interests even if they were democratic in nature (McSherry 2).

The Cuban Revolution in 1959, removing U.S. ally Fulgencio Batista, incited new social movements across Latin America. The U.S. wanted to prevent another Cuba from emerging in Latin America and feared the election of leftist or nationalist leaders in other Latin American states. Throughout the 1960s, '70s, and early '80s, the U.S. bolstered the armed forces throughout Latin America to eliminate leftist ideas and forces. These militaries sought to demobilize politically active groups and movements that exerted democratic pressure from the bottom (McSherry 3-4).

In Colombia, the U.S. funded military efforts by the Colombian government to repress leftist guerrilla organizations that opposed neoliberal policies. As in other Latin American nations, in which the U.S. provided military and economic aid to what was

essentially an authoritarian regime in the name of fighting communism. The National Front emerged in 1958 as power sharing arrangement between the two major political parties in Colombia. This arrangement created a stable environment favorable to transnational investment and facilitated the development of the country according the desires of the political and economic elite. Peasants, independent unions, and other leftist political forces were left with no say in the government (Aviles 34). As a result of such exclusion and the effects of neoliberal economic policies, several guerrilla organizations, principally the FARC and the ELN emerged in the 1960s in opposition to this power sharing arrangement. The state continued to exclude them from the government and used military repression (Aviles 37). The guerrillas were seen as a threat to elite rule that favored U.S. economic interests. The U.S. saw the struggle against the guerrillas as an opportunity to split Colombia into two camps, the “communists” and the armed forces which fought for “democracy” (Aviles 37). The U.S. trained the Colombian military in the same counterinsurgency strategies that would later be used in Operation Condor. In 1959, a U.S. military advisory team traveled to Colombia to develop a new internal security infrastructure. They assisted the Colombian military to initiate offensive counterinsurgency tactics and psychological warfare operations. The U.S. helped develop and organize Ranger commandos similar to Special Forces units, a new structure for domestic intelligence, and new PSYWAR and civil action units to aid Colombia in counterinsurgency efforts. U.S. Special Operations Forces and intelligence officers, helped create Hunter-Killer teams to chase political opponents (McSherry 19).

In the 1970s, the U.S. supported Operation Condor, a system that linked secret units within the military regimes of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and

Brazil together into one transnational organization against leftists and progressive forces. The militaries used a complex system of command, control and intelligence. The U.S. sponsored the program, providing organization, intelligence, financial, and technological assistance (McSherry 4). Condor militaries used U.S. counterinsurgency strategies, including the use of paramilitary forces, which are distinct from the armed forces and provide the government with deniability. These cover paramilitary actions allowed the counterinsurgents to prevent the overthrow of the ruling government. The U.S. developed these counterinsurgency programs throughout the developing world during the 1960s as a method to secure social control and maintain stability (McSherry 16-17). The U.S. national security doctrine encouraged unconventional warfare that was subject to no rules or ethics to be employed against popular movements, demonstrations, and public gatherings with possible communist roots. Training manuals released to the public during the 1990s revealed that U.S. army and CIA instructors taught torture methods to these foreign militaries (McSherry 17). Special elite units were formed with the assistance of U.S. personnel. They conducted aggressive, covert, offensive operations against domestic opponents and used PSYWAR programs designed by the CIA (McSherry 18). The CIA provided powerful computers to the Condor system and helped set up computerized links between intelligence and operations units of the six Condor members. The communication system used by Operation Condor, Condortel, was linked to the U.S. military intelligence complex in Panama. It allowed member countries to communicate with one another and with U.S. intelligence (McSherry 9).

President Lyndon Johnson's foreign policy in Latin America is typical of U.S. policy towards Latin America during the Cold War. From 1963 to 1969, he provided

military assistance to anticommunist dictators such as Stroessner in Paraguay and Somoza in Nicaragua (Legler, Lean, and Boniface 73). Under Johnson, the U.S. interfered in the politics of the Dominican Republic. In 1963, John Bosch was elected president, but was removed shortly thereafter by a military coup. Washington proclaimed that Bosch was a “lifelong Marxist”, but in reality, his policies were similar to Kennedy Democrats. The U.S. worked to undermine his government by quickly endorsing the new military regime. A countercoup in 1965, sought to restore him to power, resulting in a U.S. military intervention of 23,000 troops (Chomsky 72). The U.S. justified this action as a peacekeeping operation, but in reality it was protecting its investors abroad from the spread of communism rather than seeking to restore or promote democracy. The 1966 elections were used as to provide legitimacy for the U.S. intervention and the foundation for the withdrawal of U.S. forces. The U.S. had not helped remove a hated dictator as it had in 1961 but instead, prevented a constitutionally elected president from returning to power. While Bosch was allowed to run in the elections of 1966, the continuing military presence of the U.S. cast weakened his candidacy. In 1966, a growing sense of fear allowed Joaquin Balaguer, the U.S. backed candidate, to win the election (Legler, Lean, and Boniface 75).

During the Cold War, the U.S. intervened in Chilean politics, even undermining democracy, to prevent social change and economic nationalism. First, the U.S. played a pivotal role in preventing the election of socialist, Salvador Allende in 1964. While much of the information is still classified, it is clear that the U.S. played an active role in the election of 1964. The election of 1959 had been a very close contest and Allende had nearly been elected. The U.S. wanted to assure that this would not happen in 1964 and

provided approximately \$4 million to help get Eduardo Frei of the Christian Democrat Party elected. Perhaps most glaring is that the U.S. spent \$3 million on an enormous anti-Allende propaganda campaign. The U.S. sought to draw upon the fears of Chileans as it had in the Dominican Republic, conducting a scare campaign associating Allende with communism and Soviet Russia. To direct Chilean voters away from Allende and toward Frei, one CIA propaganda group distributed 3,000 anticommunist political posters produced twenty-four radio news spots a day and created twenty-six weekly news commentaries. Because of such operations, Frei was elected with an overwhelming majority of 57 percent of the population (Kornbluh 4).

The following election, in 1970, would be hinged on the success of the Frei administration. The U.S. initiated an extensive program of economic, military, and political covert assistance to the Frei administration, making Chile the leading recipient of U.S. aid between 1962 and 1970. The purpose was to create social and economic development that would steer voters away from Allende and towards Frei (Kornbluh 4-5). The CIA continued covert operations to strengthen the Social Democrats and undermine Allende, spending \$2 million between 1965 and 1970.

On September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1970, Allende became the first socialist to be elected president in the Western Hemisphere. The U.S. was far from done with undermining Allende. President Nixon immediately issued explicit instructions to foment a coup that would prevent his inauguration on November 4<sup>th</sup>. The CIA was instructed to prevent Allende from coming to power or to unseat him, thus project FUBELT was created. The U.S. sought to incite a military coup led by retired General Viaux, who had tried to topple the Frei administration in 1969. Nixon adopted a strategy of internal destabilization to topple

Allende. Nixon wanted to create the environment for a coup by making the economy “scream.” The goal was to create a situation of extreme poverty and deprivation that would encourage the military to act (Kornbluh 17). The CIA collaborated with the International Telephone and Telegraph, the third largest U.S. conglomerate in Chile, to undermine Allende. They denied multilateral loans to Chile via international financial institutions. As part of the plan to create a coup environment, the CIA worked with coup plotters to plan the assassination of General Schneider who had created a doctrine of nonintervention in Chilean politics. Rather than creating an environment of destabilization in which the military would act, it had the opposite effect, stimulating a public and political condemnation of violence and a reaffirmation of Chilean democracy. The Chilean congress overwhelmingly affirmed Allende, Project FUBELT had failed.

Nixon still did not relinquish efforts to overthrow the Allende government after his inauguration. The U.S. government merely adopted a long term approach to destabilize the Chilean government. Nixon called for low-profile pressures on the Allende government to isolate, weaken, and destabilize Chile, in order to create a political atmosphere favorable for a military coup. One strategy in creating this environment was attacking the Chilean economy. The U.S. cut off bilateral and multilateral economic support to Chile, which was highly dependent on financial, industrial, and commercial relations with the U.S. Flexing its influence in the World Bank and other international financial institutions, the U.S. also delayed action on pending Chilean loans and disqualified Chile from future loans. Kissinger also ordered the director of the Export-Import Bank to lower Chile’s credit rating from a “B” to a “D”. This change in status scared private U.S. investors hindering Chile’s ability to attract and

maintain incoming capital through private foreign investment. The extent to which these measures affected aid to Chile is clear. Prior to Allende's election in 1970, International Development Bank loans totaling \$46 million had been approved but only \$2 million were approved during the entirety of his presidency. The World Bank had approved \$31 million in loans during the Frei government between 1969 and 1970 but not a dime was lent between 1971 and 1973. Bilateral U.S. assistance from AID dropped from \$110 million between 1968 and 1970 to \$3 million between 1971 and 1973. The U.S. Export-Import Bank went from lending almost \$280 million between 1967 and 1970 to nothing in 1971 (Kornbluh 85). The only sector in which U.S. assistance increased was U.S. military sales and assistance. In addition, Allende had inherited a huge national debt from the Christian Democrats. While Europe was willing to renegotiate Chile's debt, the U.S. stood firm and refused to reschedule Chilean payments of over \$1 billion in debt. (Kornbluh 86)

As the U.S. strangled the Chilean economy, the CIA engaged in covert operations to divide and weaken the Allende government. The CIA sought to strengthen opposition political parties. It invested heavily in the Christian Democrat Party (PDC) to develop an opposition in favor of a coup. Specifically, it sought to strengthen the centrist faction of the PDC that was potentially a strong source of organized opposition to the Allende Government. The CIA hoped to outweigh the pressure from the leftist faction of the party to accommodate and cooperate with Allende. (Kornbluh 89) Not only did the CIA provide financial support to the PDC, but it also provided support to the National Party and the Democratic Radical Party. In 1972 a total of \$1,602,666 was appropriated to the CIA to covertly finance opposition campaigns. In August 1973 another \$1,000,000 was

provided to continue covert efforts to strengthen opposition political parties and private sector organizations opposed to Allende. (Kornbluh 90) The operations of private-sector organizations dedicated to undermining Allende's government were funded by hundreds of thousands of dollars from these appropriations. Truck owners and strikers financed by the CIA caused social and economic upheaval that paralyzed Chile in 1973.

The U.S. initiated a massive propaganda campaign against Allende, providing funding to *El Mercurio*, a staunch right wing newspaper. The propaganda of *El Mercurio* played an important role in setting the stage for the military coup. The paper ran continuous articles to invigorate the opposition against the Allende government, accusing his administration of attempting to nationalize banks, violating freedom of the press, and land seizures. *El Mercurio* exposed every possible tension between the government and the democratic opposition and emphasized the problems and conflicts developing between the government and the armed forces. When *El Mercurio* faced bankruptcy in 1971, Washington even came to its aid. An initial \$1 million was provided by the CIA to keep the press running and another \$965,000 was provided seven months later to repay a loan and to cover monthly operating deficits (Kornbluh 94).

Recognizing that ultimately a coup would need the support of the military, the CIA initiated operations targeting the armed forces. New agents were recruited inside the military to infiltrate leading officer groups in order to develop communication with real and potential coup leaders. Chilean generals were deceived into believing that Allende was secretly plotting with Castro to undermine the army high command. In addition, an anti-Allende newsletter targeting the armed forces was subsidized by the CIA. In August 1971, the CIA sent a detailed list of officers that "strongly opposed the present regime" to

Washington. Intelligence reports gathered on these pro-coup officers led to an agreement that General Augusto Pinochet would lead the coup. During a meeting in Panama with Pinochet to negotiate the transfer of U.S. tanks to the Chilean army, Pinochet was given the message that the U.S. would support a coup against Allende, with whatever means necessary (Kornbluh 94). Ultimately the U.S. would not provide direct support for the coup, but it was unnecessary to achieve success.

Despite all these measures, the CIA did not believe that a coup was realistic because one obstacle remained; Commander in Chief of the Chilean army, Carlos Prats opposed a coup. By late August 1973 however, an intense smear campaign coordinated with *El Mercurio* and the Chilean right wing convinced him to resign. Prats would later be assassinated in a car bombing in Argentina. The military, with the support of the CIA, coordinated its takeover with the Truckers Owners Federation. The strike froze the economy during August creating the climate for the coup (Kornbluh 111). On September 11<sup>th</sup> 1973, the CIA completed its mission to overthrow the Allende government, ending a long democratic history in Chile and installing a military dictatorship in Pinochet.

While the U.S. had been extremely hostile towards the democratic regime of Allende, it fully endorsed the bloody coup. General Pinochet would come to be a close anti-communist ally of the U.S. After the coup, the Nixon administration quickly provided overt assistance to help consolidate the dictatorship. Bilateral and multilateral economic assistance to Chile was subsequently restored. The U.S. provided Chile with commodity credits and grants that had been previously denied to the Allende government. Loans from the World Bank and International Development Banks rapidly returned to levels prior to the Allende administration (Kornbluh 212-213). The CIA also

was involved in a covert propaganda campaign to improve national and international support for the Pinochet regime. In October 1973, the CIA secretly funded an international tour of party leaders of the Christian Democrats to justify the military takeover. Washington soon realized that it could no longer support the Christian Democratic Party without threatening the military junta. The Pinochet dictatorship was accused of committing many human rights violations but Washington did not allow this concern to affect aid to Chile. Congress attempted to put restrictions on aid to Chile but the White House worked to circumvent these restrictions. In regards to human rights that the U.S. would make its preferences known and encourage the military to end abuses but it rejected “direct pressure tactics.” The U.S. was unwilling to intervene against an anti-communist ally even though he was terrorizing his own countrymen (Kornbluh 212-213). U.S. support for Pinochet reflects the policy of the U.S. during the Cold War, while democracy was preferable, the U.S supported dictatorships if they ensured that economic nationalization and social change would not occur.

It appeared that U.S. policy towards Latin America would change under the Reagan administration but instead it remained largely the same. The Reagan Doctrine proposed giving legitimacy to governments not solely on their effectiveness but also on their conformity with democratic practices. In reality, this doctrine legitimized a right of intervention against “illegitimate governments” (Chomsky 109). In 1983, Reagan took military action in Grenada to overthrow the government when an orthodox socialist faction took power. Reagan also defied democracy through the support of the right wing government in El Salvador, providing \$700 million in military and economic aid (Legler, Lean, and Boniface 75).

During the Cold War, only the Carter Administration made significant efforts to promote democracy criticizing the support of previous administrations for authoritarian regimes and linking U.S. assistance to the protection of human rights (Legler, Lean, and Boniface 76). In the 1980s, U.S. strategists realized that the old forms of rule were no longer viable in the maintaining global order and recognized that it would be necessary to intervene before ruling elites were overthrown by democratization movements (Robinson “Democracy or Polyarchy?” 32-35). U.S. policy shifted from outright promotion of dictatorship towards a U.S. friendly model of democracy. This shift is best exemplified by a dramatic increase in democracy related foreign aid from \$20 million in 1980 to \$2 billion in 2006 (Robinson “Promoting Polyarchy”). The U.S. saw a need to preempt fundamental social change by promoting low-intensity democracy which is limited in many aspects. One measurement of democracy is the degree to which citizens play a significant role in public affairs. In this respect, the U.S. has adopted a strategy that undermines democracy by attempting to shape the opinions of Latin Americans and limit their electoral options. These means of thought control make sure that only those in power and those they serve play a meaningful role in society (Chomsky 6). These low-intensity democracies, while realizing important political gains in reducing the military’s power as a separate institution and providing greater individual freedoms, fail to address the extreme social inequalities within Latin American societies (Aviles 18). The extent to which the U.S. recognizes democracy is limited to only correct elections and a constitutional order. Important aspects of democracy such as government accountability and protections for rights and freedoms are unnecessary. The U.S. is willing to impede efforts to establish true democracy by refusing to cooperate with Truth Commissions and

declassifying documents. The transition to democracy in Latin American countries represents a conversion to an alternative form of elite rule, characterized by a strong executive body, more than a consolidation of democratic practices (Aviles 20).

William I. Robinson, professor at the University of California, describes this version of elite rule promoted by the U.S. as a polyarchy. A polyarchy is a system in which a small group controls power, the elites select the leaders and the masses participate merely by choosing among them. An enlightened class of elites rules on behalf of the ignorant and unpredictable masses (Robinson "Democracy or Polyarchy?" 32-35). This form of democracy promoted by the U.S. does not stress rule by the people but rather competition among elites for the people's vote. This system of elite rule is effective in containing and defusing pressure for popular social change by creating a sense of legitimacy. It is thus a stable form of domination that provides a political environment suitable for globalization (Robinson "Democracy or Polyarchy?" 32-35).

Under this model of democracy, economic policies are made by technocrats that have endorsed the policies of neoliberalism or have connections to the international financial institutions that represent the interests of transnational corporations (Aviles 20). These transnationally oriented elites use their power over local states to integrate their countries into the global economy. One goal of the promotion of this form of government is to ensure a secure environment for transnational investment. The promotion of democracy is complementary to the promotion of neoliberalism and thus in order to be democratic one must identify with global capitalism (Robinson "Democracy or Polyarchy?" 32-35). This includes protecting investment from nationalization

initiatives by a military state, populist-corporatist regimes, and corruption that emerges as a result of power being centralized in the hands of one person.

These low-intensity democracies or polyarchies also serves U.S. interests by fostering a situation in which there is enough legitimacy to manage social protest and resistance to neoliberal policies (Aviles 19). It proves effective in co-opting any social opposition that arises as a result of neoliberal policies as well as co-opts popular movements that threaten U.S. interests with radical change. The U.S. recognized that it could secure social control and limit drastic change by penetrating civil society itself. U.S. intervention has taken the form of strengthening forces in civil society allied with the U.S. and that identify with neoliberal policy.

U.S. democracy promotion has two main goals. First, it supports groups aligned with U.S. foreign policy and global capitalism. Secondly, it seeks to suppress popular groups that advocate more thorough democratic transition or change in the economic system. The promotion of low-intensity democracy functions through three levels. The first level consists of the highest levels of U.S. government such as the White House, the State Department, the Pentagon and the CIA. This level identifies whether political intervention is necessary in a particular country. Billions of dollars in funds are then allocated to a second layer of U.S. organizations and agencies such as USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) along with related groups. These organizations provide support to organizations or groups within the intervened country by providing funding, guidance, and political sponsorship. These groups include anything from political parties to media outlets to student groups. While the U.S. claims these organizations are independent and nonpartisan, they play a vital part in the intervention.

The U.S. effectively provides support to selective groups that are in agreement with U.S. interests and global capitalism (Robinson “Democracy or Polyarchy” 32-35). The hope is that these groups will compete with more progressive and radical groups that have different agendas for their countries.

The creation of the NED in 1983 by President Reagan was a catalyst for this transition. Its stated goal was to strengthen democratic institutions around the world through nongovernmental efforts. (The National Endowment for Democracy) While the NED was supposed to operate as an “independent” and “private” organization, it operates structurally and functionally as a specialized branch of the U.S. government. (Robinson 17) The real objectives of the NED are more suspect. The NED is supposed to act overtly, providing assistance to group and individuals promoting democracy in other countries. The NED allows political intervention by the U.S. to be portrayed in a better light. Instead of being described as “CIA bribes,” “covert payoffs,” or “secret intervention,” political intervention of the same form is referred to as “democratic, nonpartisan assistance” (Robinson “A Faustian Bargain” 18). In reality, NED operations are often covert. It is difficult to trace funding through the NED due to its complex ties to many other groups that often appropriate funds. Most NED funding is channeled through other U.S. organizations and then funneled to foreign organizations. The NED engages the important sectors of society such as labor, business, and political parties and organizations within a target country to create a society that is dependent on and responsive to U.S. interests. The promotion of democracy is insincere, in reality the NED is a tool for infiltrating civil society in other countries (Robinson “A Faustian Bargain” 18).

In Nicaragua, Reagan applied a strategy known as low-intensity conflict to try to cripple the Sandinista government that had overthrown the Somoza dictatorship. Colonel John Waghelstein describes low-intensity conflict, stating that “It is a total war at the grassroots level- one that uses all of the weapons of total war, including political, economic, and psychological warfare, the military aspect being a distant fourth in many cases” (Robinson “A Faustian Bargain” 11). The U.S. strategy in Nicaragua was that of attrition, gradually wearing down the revolution with well-synchronized military, economic, political, diplomatic, psychological, and ideological pressures. Reagan provided funding to the Contras against leftist guerrilla Sandinista government in Nicaragua. They roamed the Nicaraguan countryside, destroying the economic and social infrastructure and terrorizing the rural population. The U.S. crippled the Nicaraguan economy by denying access to established U.S. markets and by cutting off normal sources of financing by using its influence in international lending agencies. When Congress cut off funding to the contras, Reagan tried to cripple the economy by ending all U.S. trade relations with Nicaragua. U.S. influence on Latin American nations and its European allies hindered Nicaragua’s ability to diversify its markets and sources of credit. Nicaragua was also forced to maintain high levels of defense mobilization that proved costly due to the constant threat of U.S. invasion. It also imposed a war of psychosis on the population as they feared U.S. intervention. (Robinson “A Faustian Bargain” 12)

During the late 1980s that U.S. policy shifted from destabilization to “promoting democracy” in Nicaragua. The U.S. claimed to be contributing impartially in the 1990s Nicaraguan elections by helping Nicaraguans exercise their right to vote and choose their

political future. The U.S. role however was clearly interventionist (Robinson “A Faustian Bargain” 8-9). The goal was to change the view of the public to see the revolution as an unviable option by isolating Nicaragua from its neighbors and suffocating it to the point of losing its legitimacy. The U.S. instructed anti-Sandinista forces to exploit the needs and frustration of the poor through the expression of antigovernment hostility. U.S. strategists sought to turn the revolution against itself by deceiving the population into viewing the Sandinistas as “the cause of their frustration” (Robinson “A Faustian Bargain” 13). It sought to undermine the social base of the Sandinistas and generate a social base for anti-Sandinista forces. The White House announced that only a victory by a U.S. candidate would bring an end to U.S. economic sanctions and permit a restoration of U.S. aid (Chomsky 141). The 1990 election in Nicaragua was similar to the election of 1966 in the Dominican Republic in which fears of further U.S. intervention led voters to elect Joaquin Balaguer, the U.S. backed candidate, over John Bosch. Ultimately U.S. efforts were successful as Violeta Chamorro won the election of 1990.

The U.S. reaction to elections that occurred simultaneously in Honduras was vastly different. The elections in Honduras were essentially restricted to two traditional parties. Both candidates fit the mold of a U.S. friendly leader coming from elite backgrounds. One candidate was from a family of large landowners while the other was from a family of wealthy industrialists both of which are heavily dependent on the U.S. Participation of the masses was limited to voting and opposition parties made accusations of massive electoral fraud. Human rights violations by security forces were rampant prior to the election with attacks against independent political figures, journalists, and union

leaders. The armed forces assassinated union leaders and left tortured or mutilated bodies by roadsides. Despite the killing of seventy eight people by security forces and a tripling in cases of torture and beatings, state terror remained at low enough levels not to disturb U.S. elite opinion. After the election of President Callejas, President Bush praised the Honduran government as “an inspiring example of the democratic promise that today is spreading through the Americas” (Chomsky 141-2).

Chile was another U.S. experiment in promoting low-intensity democracy in Latin America. The U.S. had provided consistent support to the Pinochet regime after helping to overthrow President Allende. Reagan realized in 1985 that it was time to bring an end to the regime. The dictatorship of Pinochet was no longer capable of defending U.S. interests and that it created a situation in which mass opposition would form outside the control of the U.S. Between 1985 and 1988, the U.S. shifted support from the dictatorship to the elite opposition. The U.S. helped form and construct the coalition that ran against Pinochet in the 1988 elections. Almost \$3 million in funds were allocated from the USAID and the NED to U.S. advisors to implement U.S. campaign techniques. They were the architects of the coalition’s campaign and its media advertisements using new communications technology and the television. As a result of U.S. intervention, the moderate opposition was strengthened and the leftist opposition, which had led the opposition movement until then, was marginalized. A successful tactic to unify the opposition was making unification a condition for U.S. aid. (Robinson “A Faustian Bargain” 23-24)

Panama was another case in which the U.S. promoted low-intensity democracy. After the death of Torrijos in 1981, Manuel Noriega, a close U.S. ally and an asset to the

CIA came to power. At first, the U.S. continued to support the Noriega regime regardless of the practice of electoral fraud and mass repression. Noriega became a victim of the shift in U.S. policy. Washington combined economic sanctions, coercive diplomacy, psychological operations, and finally military invasion to destabilize his regime. Part of the agenda of the U.S. was to create a democratic opposition and bring together modernizing groups from within the economic elites. This was achieved through a multimillion dollar political intervention program. This elite sector was placed in power after the invasion (Robinson "Promoting Polyarchy").

In the Post Cold-War era, the U.S. has three main policy interests: to uphold U.S. hegemony resulting from the end of the cold war, to ensure its technological lead and military supremacy, and to create an economic environment favorable to American business. After the Cold War, the means of promoting U.S. economic goals changed. The collapse of the Soviet Union eliminated the only alternative to capitalism, bringing about the universal acceptance of market democracy throughout Latin America. As a result of this embrace of U.S. friendly democracy, intervention was unnecessary but the U.S. continued to promote its economic interests in the region. U.S. strength and security depended on unimpeded access to crucial resources for manufacturing and free access to Latin American markets for U.S. products. Throughout the world, the U.S. has promoted neoliberal policies via free trade agreements and its role in international financial institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the World Trade Organization. U.S. has supported low-intensity democracy in Latin America to protect its interests (Aviles 18).

The U.S. infiltrated Colombian society to create a U.S. friendly ally. In 1989, President Bush Sr. declared a war on drugs claiming that drug use had greatly increased. In reality, drug use had declined by 37 percent between 1985 and 1988. During the 1980s and 1990s the U.S. required the Colombian government to strengthen its police and military forces to fight the war on narcotics. (Chomsky 115). The Bush Sr. administration claimed that military aid to the Andean region was consistent with promoting democracy because it was needed to “defend democracy from the new slayers of the democratic dream—the narcotraffickers and drug cartels that poison our children” (Avilés 130). If narcotics were truly a threat to democracy, the United States could have employed several other approaches would have been more effective. An efficient strategy at addressing the problem would have been to target the large financial corporations that handle the drug money. Estimates from the Congressional Research Service stated that more than 90 percent of the chemicals used to produce cocaine came from the U.S. The Bush administration did nothing to address these sectors of cocaine production (Chomsky 116-117).

Plan Colombia, originally proposed in 1998 as a \$7.5 billion development project, has been molded to support U.S. interests. The U.S. has provided Colombia a mostly military aid package with the stipulation that the Colombian government support the U.S. war on drugs by trying to eliminate cocaine production. As a result Plan Colombia has shifted its focus away from social redistribution and government aid to areas that had suffered decades of neglect. Instead, Plan Colombia would emphasize the use of military assaults on coca growing regions, generate incentives to encourage foreign investment,

and bolster the armed forces. An estimated \$1 billion of the \$1.6 billion in U.S. aid has been dedicated to strengthening the armed forces (Avilés 130).

The true objective of U.S. military aid to Colombia has not been to eliminate the drug trade but rather to defeat the guerrilla movement. The U.S. has provided not only aid but also technical assistance to the Colombian air force to foster an effective anti-guerrilla bombing campaign (Mondragón 42-44). Since coming to office in 2002 Uribe has taken a tougher stance than his predecessors against the guerrillas. Uribe has not only tolerated paramilitary organizations that fight these guerrillas but has even criticized human rights organizations that chastise the government for its support of these paramilitary organizations (Avilés 134). The government of Uribe is closely linked to paramilitary groups that finance their operations through the drug trade. Drug traffickers however have become more powerful than ever before in Colombia. They have infiltrated the stock market, money from the drug trade is laundered through treasury bonds and they have become active in the electoral process. In 2004 \$3 billion flowed through Colombia without any trace of how it entered the country (Mondragón 42-44).

Since 9/11, military aid from the U.S. to Colombia has increased via Plan Colombia. Between 2002 and 2003 U.S. training of Colombian military officers doubled (Avilés 134). Peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC have broken down. The U.S. war on terror has given the Colombia government greater justification for its counterinsurgency operations. The goal of Plan Colombia is no longer simply to wipe out the drug trade but rather to eliminate any threat to the security of the Colombian state which has included the guerrilla movement (Mondragón 42-44). The U.S. has been supportive of this effort, recognizing the FARC as the most dangerous

terrorist group in the western hemisphere. This was part of the U.S. strategy to secure a safe environment for transnational investments in Colombia especially oil production. Rather than supporting development with this aid the U.S. was trying to protect its economic interests, especially the oil industry in Colombia which has come under attack by guerillas. In addition, many of the areas that remained unexplored as far as oil is considered were under the control of Colombian guerrillas (Aviles 131). Colombian insurgents represented a threat to the estimated \$4.3 billion in U.S. direct investment in Colombia in 2002 (Avilés 132). One such investor, Coca Cola which has been accused of anti-union violence argues that these killings “were byproducts of Colombia's four-decade-long civil war among leftist guerrillas” (“Killer Coke” or Innocent Abroad?) Funding to the Colombian military reinforces the military industrial complex, in which Colombia uses this funding to purchase equipment from U.S. military suppliers. Essentially the U.S. has funded the Colombian military efforts to protect U.S. economic interests and ensure that Colombia maintains a low-intensity democracy.

The Uribe administration has been a model of the low-intensity democracy that the U.S. has promoted in Latin America. President Uribe comes from an elite background as part of the Colombian upper class and studied at Harvard University. Technocrats and members of the Colombian elite hold all the power in the Colombian government. Uribe has maintained the neoliberal policies of his predecessors despite a 33% increase in military spending between 2001 and 2004 (Avilés 134). He has been an ardent supporter of Free Trade, supporting the Free Trade of the Americas and working towards a bilateral free trade agreement with the U.S. Uribe, has accelerated privatization and austerity measures have been implemented to release more money for counterinsurgency

operations (Avila 124). Uribe represents a key geopolitical ally in a region that is shifting to the left. With leftist governments in neighboring Ecuador and Venezuela, Colombia is a key ally in promoting neoliberal policy in Latin America.

The U.S. has been successful in promoting this low-intensity democracy in Mexico as well. The 1988 election in Mexico was a close race between a leftist, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Carlos Salinas, a U.S. friendly candidate running under the ruling party of the PRI. The PRI had a history of using fraud to maintain power. The election results were supposed to be posted almost immediately but according to election officials there had been a glitch. When the computers came back on-line Salinas had won. Election officials who were also members of the PRI dumped ballot boxes and stuffed new boxes to bring local counts in favor with the national results (Labotz 99). Nevertheless Salinas became a key U.S. ally.

The Salinas administration fit the mold of a low-intensity democracy. Salinas was part of the technocratic elite in Mexico. He came from an elite background in which his father served as Minister of Industry and Commerce and his mother was a founder of the Mexican Association of Women Economists. He had studied at the National University and became a favorable student to future president Miguel de la Madrid who embraced capitalism. Salinas studied at Harvard earning two master's degrees, one in economics and administration. Using family connections Salinas had risen up the ranks of government (La Botz 104). The Salinas government was very favorable to U.S. economic interests. In accordance with the economics program he had studied at Harvard he implemented capitalist policies. He sought to privatize state-owned industry, encourage foreign investment, and create an economic platform around exportation. He promoted

these policies by signing of NAFTA with the U.S. and Canada. As a result, the Mexican economy became integrated with the U.S. through maquiladoras, foreign investment and loans (La Botz 119).

The governments of Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón have also fit this model of low-intensity democracy. Vicente Fox was from the National Action Party (PAN), a conservative party in Mexico. He was supportive of U.S. business having studied Upper Management at the Harvard Business School and becoming president of Coca Cola Mexico (Waller). He sought to increase foreign investment and was a proponent of free trade. Felipe Calderón also comes from an elite background. He is the son of the late Luis Calderon Vega, founder, leader and historian of the PAN. Calderon also received a master's in public administration from the John F. Kennedy School at Harvard University (Tapia). Calderón has continued the economic policies of Fox and increased efforts to eliminate drug trafficking in Mexico. Calderón has agreed to the Méridia Initiative otherwise known as Plan Mexico, a \$1.4 billion aid package that has many similarities to Plan Colombia. To help fight the war on drugs, it contains “direct donations of military and intelligence equipment, and training programs for Mexican law enforcement officials” (Plan Mexico). Disguised as efforts to fight the “war on drugs”, it is actually part of efforts by the Bush administration to implement a North American security strategy that seeks to bolster one of only two far-right governments (the other being Colombia), among the major countries in the hemisphere. Stephen Johnson, deputy assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere affairs in the Defense Department recognizes the role of Plan Mexico in increasing U.S. influence in Latin America:

“While a groundswell seems to exist for greater engagement with the United States, there are challenge states such as Venezuela, Cuba, and to some extent Bolivia and Ecuador. For now, Venezuela and Cuba are clearly hostile to the United States, western-style democracy, markets, and are actively trying to counter our influence. Our challenge is not to confront them directly, but instead do a better job working with our democratic allies and friendly neighbors. (Plan Mexico)”

The similarities between these Mexican administrations and the Uribe administration are numerous. All of these presidents come from elite backgrounds, even studying at American universities. They are strong proponents of neoliberal policy and free trade. Mexico, like Colombia, is a conservative geopolitical ally against the current shift toward the political left and has vast oil reserves.

U.S. interests in Latin America in the post Cold-War era consist of promoting neoliberal economic policies to help U.S. corporations, strengthening security to fight terrorism, and quelling social movements that threaten elite rule. If a democratic government is not favorable to these interests, the U.S. intervenes to try to undermine or overthrow them. U.S. intervention against the Chávez administration in Venezuela displays this willingness to undermine true democracy. This intervention included the funding of political parties looking to overthrow him or working against legislation implemented by his administration.

The NED played an increased role in Venezuela. From 2000 to 2001 the NED's budget in Venezuela quadrupled to more than \$877,000 (Golinger 51). Funding was distributed to any organization with a public aversion to Chávez. A grant of \$55,000 was

given to the Asamblea de Educación that worked on opposing all Chávez promoted legislation to reform education. Another \$57,820 was granted to the Asociación Civil Comprensión de Venezuela to sway dissident military officers to the opposition (Golinger 52). A report titled “US policy Toward Venezuela: November 2001- April 2002” divulged that during this six month period, “NED, the State Department, and DOD provided training, institution building, and other support programs totaling \$3.3 million to Venezuelan organizations and individuals, some of whom are understood to have been involved in the events of April 12-14” (Golinger 54). It also showed that during this six-month period NED funding for programs in Venezuela had totaled over \$2 million. Those that were receiving the money were part of the opposition movement against the democratically elected government of Chávez (Golinger 54).

The NED helped fund the International Republican Institute, the international branch of the Republican Party. In 2001, a \$340,000 grant for “Strengthening Political Parties” was given to the IRI, an increase of \$290,000 over the funding of the previous year (Golinger 37). This funding went primarily to a new political party, Primero Justicia, a conservative youth party that was in tune with Washington politics (Golinger 39). Due to hundreds of thousands of dollars provided to Primero Justicia, the IRI has been able to shape policies and mold leaders within the party. It has emerged as the leading opposition party in Venezuela. The IRI also began intensive training programs for the failing opposition parties, hoping to rebuild the traditional parties bring them back into the political sphere. The IRI worked to promote dialogue and compromise between the opposition parties to create a united opposition (Golinger 42). On April 12, 2002, during the coup, IRI president Folsom issued a press release entitled “IRI president Folsom

Praises Venezuelan Civil Society's Defense of Democracy" recognizing IRI interference in Venezuelan internal affairs. In spite of this the NED increased funding to the IRI after the coup (Golinger 45). In December 2001, two traditional opponents Fedecámaras and Confederación de Trabajadores Venezolanos (CTV) joined forces in opposition of Chávez. Suspiciously, the NED tripled its grant to the American Center for International Labor Solidarity which had a relationship with CTV since the early 1990s (Golinger 49).

There is significant evidence that high ranking U.S. officials had prior knowledge of the coup and supported it. In order to sway the opinions of members of congress, a bogus intelligence report was distributed, describing connections between Chávez and Colombian terrorist organizations the FARC and the ELN. This report was used as justification for increasing U.S. government efforts to support the illegal ouster of President Chávez (Golinger 60-61). The most startling evidence of the U.S. having prior knowledge of the coup attempt comes from several Senior Executive Intelligence Briefs (SEIBs). A SEIB from March 5, 2002 from CIA operatives in Venezuela to around 200 top-level representatives detailed the growing opposition to President Chávez. It notes that calls had been made for his resignation by public officials and that opposition leaders were not unified making a successful coup attempt difficult to mount (Golinger 61). This demonstrates that the CIA had knowledge of the mounting opposition and recognized its downfalls, thus the need for more than \$1 million in NED funding to "strengthen political parties." At this time an additional \$116,001 was given to CTV. These were the same political parties mentioned in the brief as "not unified" and "lacking a singular strategy for replacing Chávez" (Golinger 61). On March 5<sup>th</sup>, a cable was also sent by the U.S. embassy in Caracas to Washington describing a meeting between CTV, Fedecámaras,

and the Catholic Church to present an accord for a transitional government. Perhaps most revealing about this cable was a comment in the cable that revealed U.S. satisfaction with the accord. In the cable, Embassy Official Cook wrote “Another piece falls into place,” “This accord... may well form the frame of reference and code of conduct for a transitional government” (Golinger 63). Another brief on March 11, 2002 warned specifically that Venezuelan business leaders and military officers may move to overthrow him. Despite all this evidence and the fact that coups against democratic governments are illegal the U.S. did nothing to discourage the plotters. A top secret SEIB from April 6<sup>th</sup> demonstrates that the U.S. government even had the knowledge of how the coup was going to play out five days prior to its occurrence (Golinger 64-65).

If this wasn't evidence enough of the U.S. support for the coup, on the morning of April 12<sup>th</sup>, President Bush's spokesman Ari Fleischer publicly announced the support of the U.S. government for the Carmona administration. U.S. offices including the White House, the State Department, and the embassy in Caracas made statements blaming Chávez for the violence, thus justifying the coup. The U.S. was one of the only countries to rush judgement and recognize Carmona as the legitimate president (Golinger 73-74).

The U.S. even met frequently with coup plotters before it occurred. Otto Reich, a key player in the intervention in Nicaragua in the 80s and special advisor to President Bush on Latin American affairs, met frequently with opposition leaders in early 2002. In his meetings with opposition leaders, including Pedro Carmona, he expressed a U.S. desire for regime change. An embassy cable in September 2001 recognized Carmona as an ally of the U.S. and strongly recommended that the Department of State arrange meetings with several government departments. A cable from November 2001 from the

U.S. embassy in Caracas reported the decision by Fedecámaras to declare a national strike. This cable also showed that the U.S. shared the views of opposition in calling the strike (Golinger 47). Another cable from the U.S. embassy describe Pedro Carmona as “statesman-like” and “the right man for the right time in Venezuela.” Carmona and other union leaders would travel to Washington several times during the following months (Golinger 48-49).

Even after the failure of the 2002 coup attempt, the U.S. continues to intervene to undermine democracy in Venezuela. In 2004, the opposition to Chávez initiated a recall referendum to try to remove Chávez from power. The referendum was defeated with 58% voting for Chávez, but the U.S. supported opposition claims of fraud even though the vote was recognized by international observers as free and fair (Janicke). This reaction is typical of U.S. democracy promotion policy throughout the world; the U.S. would only recognize the results as legitimate if the U.S. backed candidate won. A similar reaction of was given by the U.S. when the Sandinistas were elected in Nicaragua and the U.S. refused to recognize their administration. On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007 Venezuelans voted against a constitutional referendum. A key provision of the reforms sought to strengthen democracy by giving local neighborhood and community councils control of public spending and decision making. Another amendment lowered the voting age from 18 to 16. Although these amendments would have strengthened direct democratic participation, the U.S. criticized the constitutional reforms as dictatorial because they provided Chávez with the opportunity to run indefinitely for president. The practice of unlimited term elections is actually in line with the practices of many parliamentary systems (Petras 2-4B). The difference is that the prospect of Chávez extending his presidency beyond the

current term was seen as a threat by the United States. Consequently, The U.S. sought to influence the referendum and undermine the democratic process. On November 26, 2007 a confidential memo from the U.S. embassy to the CIA was intercepted by the Venezuelan government revealing Operation Pincer, a two-pronged strategy of impeding the referendum by rejecting the outcome and calling for a no vote. It also detailed the activity of a CIA unit 'HUMINT' which covertly sought to destabilize the referendum and coordinate a civil military overthrow of Chávez. The memo depicts the success in mobilizing private university students to attack key government buildings. The U.S. embassy also provided the opposition with \$8 million for propaganda against the referendum (Petras, "Venezuela: Between Ballots and Bullets"). Not surprisingly, President Bush cheered the outcome stating that the Venezuelan people had "rejected one man rule... they voted for democracy" (Janicke). Two days prior to the election the United States expressed doubts regarding the validity of the referendum and the electoral system in Venezuela but after the defeat of the referendum Washington willingly accepted the results. The Bush administration only recognizes the validity of election results when they are in agreement with U.S. policies (Janicke).

The U.S. has sought to undermine his presidency and even remove him from power not because he is undemocratic but because many policies of his administration oppose U.S. economic and political interests. The greatest alarm posed by Chávez to U.S. interests is his oil policy. The U.S. has traditionally had an important role in oil development in Venezuela. It is the fourth largest supplier of oil to the United States (Kozloff 9). Hugo Chávez has reversed the oil policies of previous administrations. Despite an enormous income of \$300 billion from 1958 to 1998 due to its oil wealth, the

wealth was distributed very unequally in Venezuela (Kozloff 18). Under the leadership of Luis Giusti, PdVSA's president from 1994 to 2000, the government's share of oil revenue decreased from 66 cents to 33 cents on the dollar, due to policies that were very U.S. friendly. Venezuela exceeded its OPEC production quota and flooded the market with oil. While PdVSA staff became awash in oil wealth, two-thirds of the population lived in poverty (Kozloff 10-11). Chavez has administered policies to increase the price of oil and decrease Venezuela's dependence on oil exportation to the United States. He has also used oil revenue to fund social programs to help the poor. Chávez decreased oil production and called for greater unity between the 11 members of OPEC, angering the U.S. which had been enjoying rock bottom oil prices. In 2001, he also enacted the Hydrocarbons Law, forbidding the privatization of PdVSA and increasing the royalties paid by private corporations from 16.6% to 30% (Kozloff 25). Chávez has used oil as a tool of diplomacy in Latin America, trading it for Argentine beef, agricultural products from Bolivia, and meat and milk from Uruguay (Kozloff 122). He has strengthened greater ties with Cuba, agreeing to sell 53,000 barrels of oil a day to Cuba at discounted rates in exchange for the services of Cuban doctors (Kozloff 25). Chávez has also sought to create an oil bloc within Latin America, seeking partnership with Brazil, Ecuador, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina. These trade relationships and partnerships represent a threat to U.S. dominance in the region.

After the failed coup attempt in 2002, his opposition to neoliberal policies only strengthened. Chávez declared that the FTAA was the "path to hell" During the fourth Summit of the Americas, Chávez officially killed the prospects of a FTAA and provided his own alternative, the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). This agreement

“advocates a socially-oriented trade block rather than on strictly based on the logic of deregulated profit maximization” (Kozloff 73). In 2005, Chávez announced his support for democratic socialism and presented the people with a choice “Either capitalism, which is the road to hell, or socialism, for those who want to build the Kingdom of God here on Earth.” According to the new constitution, private property must serve the public good and general interest and if it does not, the government may expropriate (Kozloff 73). Chávez has created the Bank of the South to counter the influence of the U.S. controlled international financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF. Unlike these institutions, each member state has an equal role in the lending process, independent of any financial contribution. The bank will provide an impetus for development based on sovereignty of the peoples and integration that is not founded on free market (Zibechi).

Chávez has also publicly denounced the war on drugs, a threatening position considering U.S. spending throughout Latin America to eliminate drug production. He has criticized aerial fumigations of coca in Colombia and the growing militarization of the region near the Venezuelan border as a part of Plan Colombia (Kozloff 149). Chávez even allied himself with Evo Morales, the indigenous president of Bolivia who promises to legalize coca. In his show *Aló, Presidente*, Chávez sympathized with the plight of the indigenous peoples of Bolivia and their right to grow coca. He stated that Bolivian farmers “used to survive from coca, but they can’t produce it now; the campesinos are not guilty of the fact that chemicals have been made to convert coca into cocaine” (Kozloff 169). All of these reasons have combined to create pressure in the U.S. for regime change.

In Bolivia, as in Venezuela, The U.S. has sought to promote low-intensity democracy. In the election of 2002, Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, a former president who embraced capitalism, won the election. Goni, as he is popularly known, had hired a political consulting firm from the U.S., Greenberg Carville Shrum to run his campaign. Greenberg Carville and Shrum were essentially seeking to export the U.S. brand of democracy to Bolivia. Goni sought to implement policies that would be unpopular with the poor majority but this wasn't important. He was able to be elected through a strong negative campaign divided the opposition and undermined the other candidates (Our Brand is Crisis). Prior to the election, the U.S. ambassador to Bolivia, Manuel Rocha, made a statement calling Evo Morales, a candidate for the MAS party, a terrorist and telling the people of Bolivia not to vote for him. His statement actually backfired and support for Morales dramatically increased. Morales believes the election was actually stolen from him (Morales). Once in power Goni was extremely unpopular. Particularly tax increases and his attempt to export natural gas to Chile drew violent opposition (Our Brand is Crisis). In their efforts to export American democracy, these policy workers, failed to recognize the historic roots of nationalism in Bolivia. In October 2003, Goni fled the country due to fierce protests. Morales has charged that Goni is responsible for the deaths of over a hundred people due to gunfire during the protests (Morales).

Since his overthrow, the U.S. has provided millions of dollars in funding to democracy promotion programs. The goals of democracy promotion in Bolivia have been to strengthen traditional parties that have been discredited, support indigenous leaders that have platforms more moderate than Morales, and create public organizations controlled by elites to compete with rising militant social movements. According to a

U.S. embassy cable from La Paz, the U.S. sought to “help build moderate, pro-democratic political parties that can serve as a counterweight to the radical MAS or its successors” (Robinson, “Promoting Polyarchy”). The U.S. sought to decrease attention to key issues such as the exportation of natural gas and the nationalization of natural resources. Approximately \$11.8 million was spent by USAID between 2004 and 2005 to depoliticize the issue of natural gas and reduce popular demands for nationalization (Robinson, “Promoting Polyarchy”).

Despite these efforts, in 2005 Evo Morales became the president of Bolivia. The U.S. feels threatened by the policies of his administration. He has nationalized the oil and natural gas industries and has advocated for the legalization of the coca leaf. While Washington sees the coca leaf as a drug, the chewing of coca leaves is part of Bolivian culture. Morales cites the World Health Organization in arguing that the coca leaf does no harm to people (Morales). Morales believes that the U.S. continues to fund opposition groups in Bolivia. Although he has no hard evidence, Morales argued that “the head of USAID for Latin America stated that they were going to finance a political counterbalance opposition” (Morales). Journalist Benjamin Dangl seems to have confirmed these suspicions. Dangl stated in an interview with Amy Goodman that, “the primary programs that the US government is using to undermine Bolivia are—it’s happening through USAID, US Agency for International Development” (Dangl). USAID has initiated a party reform initiative to strengthen moderate, pro-democracy political parties that can provide a counterbalance to Morales’s MAS party by implementing an existing Bolivian Law. After the 2005 election, USAID shifted to four governors that had been the central part of the rightwing opposition movement. In response in October 2007,

Morales banned ideological-based funding and political funding, from groups like USAID. The role of the NED in promoting democracy in Bolivia is virtually identical to its role in Venezuela. It continues to be active in Bolivia working against Morales and popular movements for state control of gas and advocating for privatization of natural resources (Dangl). As in Venezuela, the Bush administration is funding operations to undermine the Morales government and the country's dynamic social movements.

The democratic regime of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Haiti has frequently been the target of U.S. democracy promotion. Between 1986 and 1990, Haiti's poor majority rose up against the dictatorship of Duvalier and the elites that tried to maintain power after his overthrow. The U.S. commenced an enormous democracy promotion campaign to organize an elite class and place it in power in the elections of 1990. Aristide, a liberation theologian, won the election but was overthrown just a year later in a military coup supported by the U.S. Aristide would actually return to power in 1994 after a U.S. invasion, by agreeing to implement neoliberal policies. The U.S. continued to support elite opposition from 1994 to 2004 through NED and USAID to elite civic and political organizations in opposition to Aristide's Lavalas Party (Robinson "Promoting Polyarchy"). Aristide would be forced to leave Haiti on February 29<sup>th</sup> 2004. Aristide and his wife were kidnapped by American soldiers, stopping in Antigua before being dropped off in the Central African Republic. There is significant evidence that implicates the U.S. in removing Aristide from power. It is clear that the Bush administration opposed the presidency of Aristide and sought to remove him. Robinson suggests that the Bush Administration saw Aristide as a populist, and distrust towards Aristide grew as he implemented social programs despite a U.S. embargo that had stagnated Haiti's economy.

Aristide had annoyed Haiti's white and light-skinned upper class by raising the minimum wage and instituting land reform (Robinson "An Unbroken Agony" 233-235).

It is clear that U.S. conservatives allied with the Bush administration opposed Aristide's government. The International Republican Institute (IRI), a nonprofit funded by the American government with conservative policies, refused to negotiate with Aristide's democratically elected government. Stanley Lucas, president of the IRI branch urged fellow IRI members to "Hang Tough. Don't Compromise. In the end, we'll get rid of Aristide." (Robinson "An Unbroken Agony" 155) Lucas even flew hundred of opposition members to a hotel in the Dominican Republic in late 2002 for political training. (Robinson "An Unbroken Agony" 154)

The Bush administration employed several strategies to remove Aristide before the eventual kidnapping. Just as it had in Chile in the 1970s and Nicaragua in the 1980s, the U.S. sought to create economic devastation that would be blamed on the leftist government of Aristide. The U.S. tried to cripple the Haitian government by cutting off aid to Haiti from 2000 to 2004. The Bush administration blocked four loans of a total of \$146 million that had already been fully approved by the Inter-American Development Bank. These loans would have addressed critical areas such as clean drinking water, health, education, and infrastructure. Haiti had even been forced to pay \$5 million in interest on this loan money that it never received.

The U.S. has also been implicated in arming Duvalierist insurgents opposed to Aristide. A small group of rebels continually acted against the Haitian government under Aristide. In July 2002, Haitian rebels attacked the police academy killing five sleeping police officers. The rebels used American arms, ammunition, and equipment that had

been supplied by the government of the Dominican Republic (Robinson “An Unbroken Agony” 36). On December 17<sup>th</sup> 2002, another attack occurred on the National Palace. A line of heavy-duty trucks armed with M50s stormed through the gates and fired rounds at the palace walls. Angry residents however came out to support the president and the coup attempt ended. Although it was just one of a series of failed coup attempts, it was part of a larger picture of growing instability. On the ground a U.S. Army ammunition box was found (Robinson “An Unbroken Agony” 43-46). The Investigation Commission on Haiti confirmed that Dominican territory had been used for training and arming Haitian rebels. Over 200 soldiers of the U.S. Special Forces had arrived in the Dominican Republic with authorization to train Haitian rebels (Robinson “An Unbroken Agony” 101).

Four days before the abduction of Aristide, members of the Congressional Black Caucus demanded a meeting with President Bush about the crisis in Haiti. The members left with delusions that they had been triumphant, declining to go on record to the press and the world about the crisis. They had been tricked because the president did not order the rebels to stand down (Robinson “An Unbroken Agony” 73-74).

William Robinson tried to contact President Aristide the night before his abduction and an American voice answered. The voice stated that President Aristide was not there and could not provide a time when he would be back (Robinson “An Unbroken Agony” 75). That day thugs had roamed the countryside emptied jails and burned police stations. Haitian citizens created barricades so that the rebels could not reach the National Palace. U.S. officials requested that Aristide remove the barricades, promising to make the rebels negotiate with government. When Aristide complied, the rebels refused to discuss anything but the removal of the president from office. The city was thus left open

and undefended (Robinson 80-81). Barbara Lee a California Democrat offered to find Aristide and his wife a safe exit. Mrs. Aristide declined because she had been assured by Colin Powell that the U.S. wouldn't allow a "group of thugs" to overthrow the democratically elected government of Haiti. In reality Colin Powell had fallen out of favor with the Bush administration, making this promise null and void. James Foley, U.S. ambassador to Haiti also stated that the U.S. would not recognize any government that takes power through a coup in Haiti (Robinson "An Unbroken Agony" 84-85).

Finally, despite claims by Aristide that he had been kidnapped; the U.S. argued that Aristide's departure was voluntary. American television networks showed old footage of President Aristide and his wife boarding an aircraft. The film was shot in natural light which did not correspond with information stating that he had departed the country in the early hours of the morning. The plane in the film also had commercial markings which contrasted with information from witness at the airport in Antigua that stated that the president and his wife were on a large white aircraft. In actuality, there had been no cameras at the airport to record the president's departure. If his departure had been voluntary, one would expect footage from some television network (Robinson "An Unbroken Agony" 173). On March 1<sup>st</sup>, President Aristide made a call from the Central African Republic; he told Robinson that it had been a coup (Robinson "An Unbroken Agony" 177).

Historically the promotion of democracy has not been a key policy concern of the U.S. During the Cold War, the U.S. was willing to overthrow democracies and support authoritarian regimes. The containment of communism was used as justification for supporting and funding brutal dictatorships that committed widespread human rights

violations. U.S. support for Operation Condor and funding to Colombia, show that the U.S. bolstered Latin American militaries in order to prevent social change and economic nationalism. Even though Latin America has experienced democratization since the 1980s, the U.S. has only been interested in promoting a low-intensity form of democracy. It seeks to promote rule by technocratic elites. These regimes are effective in containing and defusing pressure for popular social change by creating a sense of legitimacy. They offer a stable form of domination that provides a political environment suitable for globalization. The administrations of Calderón and Uribe are models for this U.S. brand of democracy. In the Post Cold-War era, the U.S. has three main policy interests: to maintain its supremacy, to ensure its technological lead and military superiority, and to create an economic environment favorable to American business. The cases of Venezuela and Haiti show that when Latin American democracies threaten U.S. interests, the U.S. will intervene to undermine or overthrow them. The U.S. creates a situation of internal destabilization by strangling the economy and strengthening opposition groups or parties. In reality, the U.S. policy of democracy promotion is used as justification for the promotion of U.S. economic and political interests that maintain U.S. dominance in the region.

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