

ARTICLES

Confronting a “crisis in historical perspective”: Walter LaFeber, Gabriel Kolko and the Functions of Revisionist Historiography during the Reagan Era*Nick Witham - University of Nottingham*

The nearly century-old system was collapsing, pushed by contradictions in Washington’s policy and victimised by historical North American views of property relationships and revolutions. As large parts of Central America flashed into class conflict, the United States easily blamed the crises on Communists and other outside influences. That explanation ignored more than a century of history.

—Walter LaFeber, 1984¹

Employing a logic that is ahistorical and irrational, the United States still holds the Soviet Union responsible for dynamics of change and revolt in the Third World, refusing to see Communist and radical movements - the USSR included - as the effects rather than the causes of the sustained process of war and social transformation that has so profoundly defined the world’s historical experience in this century.

—Gabriel Kolko, 1988²

In her recent and popular book *The Shock Doctrine* (2007), Naomi Klein argues that much of US overseas intervention operates through a form of “disaster capitalism”, thriving on the exploitation of natural and political disasters in the Third World by using them to impose stringent neoliberal regimes in the areas affected. Klein situates the intellectual genesis of the “shock treatment” this form of capitalism brings about in the counsel given by a group of University of Chicago economists (most notably Milton Friedman) to Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in the aftermath of his 1973 coup against the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende. After the Chilean coup, she argues, “many in Latin America began to see a direct connection between the economic shocks that impoverished millions and the epidemic of torture that punished hundreds of thousands of people who believed in a different kind of society.”³

Writing in 2007, Klein was by no means the first North American leftist to highlight the links between American foreign policy and the subjugation of Latin America’s worker and peasant classes. These issues have informed international discussions on the Left since the Cuban Revolution of 1959.⁴ However, a systematic critique of the history of American involvement in Latin America became especially vociferous during the Reagan era. It was during the 1980s that the geographical focus of American power projection shifted towards a spe-

cific engagement with tactics of counterinsurgency in the Western hemisphere. Engagement with issues surrounding U.S. intervention on behalf of counterrevolutionary and repressive forces in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras both sustained and significantly altered the nature of the oppositional theory and practice developed by the New Left during the 1960s. This led to the growth of the Central American solidarity movement, a loose coalition of leftist, religious and peace groups united around a commonly held opposition to American policy in the region.

While several social scientific studies of the movement have been conducted, the intellectual and cultural manifestations of the Left's opposition to U.S. policy in Central America have yet to garner the scholarly attention they deserve.⁵ In response to this lacuna, the current paper examines the work of Walter LaFeber and Gabriel Kolko, two influential foreign policy historians and significant figures within the tradition of historical revisionism. First, it demonstrates a turn in their work during the 1970s and 1980s towards a concern with U.S. intervention in Central and South America. Both historians wanted to use their historical scholarship to educate the American body politic and impress upon those that were willing to listen the strengths of an anti-interventionist approach to foreign policy. Second, the paper uses LaFeber and Kolko to map the intellectual coordinates of Reagan-era opposition to American intervention in Central America. While their ideas often converged, there were also key historiographical points on which they disagreed. These often related directly to questions regarding the functions of historical revisionism and its relationship to political activism.

I.

Gabriel Kolko was born in 1932 and Walter LaFeber in 1933. LaFeber was educated at Hanover College and Stanford University before earning his PhD in History from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1959. Kolko received his Harvard doctorate, also in History, three years later. After receiving their graduate degrees, both became associated with a loose grouping of American historians often referred to as the "revisionist school", which, in turn, developed links to the emerging New Left in America. The revisionists, strongly influenced by the work of Progressive historians such as Frederick Jackson Turner and Charles Beard, sought to resist liberal, consensus trends in American historiography.⁶ Writing in 1962 in the *American Historical Review*, for example, John Higham voiced a commonly held objection to the work of historians such as Daniel Boorstin, Louis Hartz and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. In searching for "uniformity", "stability" and an all-encompassing "national character" in American history, he argued, they demonstrated an inherently "conservative trend of historical interpretation", one wedded to the goals of Cold War ideology.⁷ The revisionists

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wanted to counter this trend by renouncing “an unobtainable objectivity” and using their scholarship to identify certain individuals and movements that had provided resistance to “powerful institutions and dominant social groupings.”⁸ This was the type of scholarship that Warren Susman, a history professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who had a significant influence on the outlooks of many revisionists, called “frame of reference” history: that which “undertakes to rewrite history in view of a particular definition of the contemporary crisis.”⁹ In this conceptualisation the revisionists would seek to write about a fundamentally *usable* past that informed a struggle in the present against the unaccountable elites that dominated American domestic and foreign policy-making.

This desire led the revisionists to attempt to name and describe these elites that dominated American domestic and foreign policy. In order to do so, they sought to develop the “corporate liberalism” thesis. The concept originated in the work of William Appleman Williams, another University of Wisconsin-Madison historian who was perhaps the foremost influence on the young generation of revisionists. In *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1957) and *Contours of American History* (1961), his two that reached the widest audiences, Williams cogently fused political, economic and intellectual history to argue that US foreign and domestic policy had followed an expansionist logic from the days of the nation's inception, and that the Cold War was yet another example of how liberal politicians faced down forces adversarial to American empire.¹⁰ Narrowing Williams's temporal focus, but losing none of his political emphasis, Kolko's early work, as well as that of Martin J. Sklar and James Weinstein, focussed primarily on the Progressive Era in order to further establish the notion that American liberalism was explicitly tied to expansionist corporate interests.¹¹ These historians pursued in-depth analyses of governmental policy-making in the early years of the twentieth century, concluding that politicians such as Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson consciously worked together with capitalists and financiers to establish the large corporation as the dominant mode of business enterprise in the U.S. In so doing, Kolko and his contemporaries challenged the extant historiographical understanding of the Progressive Era as the period in which America was “saved” from the corruption of the Gilded Age. Instead, they suggested that the policies of Roosevelt and Wilson essentially maintained the hegemony of a liberal politics that, in Sklar's phrase, converged “upon large-scale corporate capitalism at home and economic expansion abroad.” An undue amount of power was therefore seen to rest in the hands of a “new corporate oligarchy” which actively *expected* the American government to defend business activity abroad and subdue labour activism at home.¹²

This approach to American history was turned into an explicit political critique when voiced by the New Left as it emerged in the early 1960s around radical groups such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Activists in the

movement used ideas contained in the work of the revisionists to attack American diplomacy and Cold War ideology from a number of perspectives. First, they sought to highlight the corruption of American anti-communism. Beginning in the late 1950s as a response to American policy towards Cuba, and continuing through the anti-Vietnam War campaign, the New Left described the anti-communism that drove American foreign policy-making as both counter-productive and baseless.¹³ Second, the movement's intellectuals sought to explain the problems they identified with American diplomacy in reference to the thesis of corporate liberalism. They argued that the corporate state and the liberals who ran it were central to American involvement in the Vietnam War.¹⁴ Third, the struggle against American diplomacy prompted attempts to forge solidarity with certain Third World independence struggles. As a result, a "Third World Left", dedicated to the politics of global decolonisation, developed as part of the broad New Left formation, highlighting the global-systemic nature of the movement's critique of American diplomacy.¹⁵ Finally, the New Left adapted the work of the revisionists to argue that foreign policy-making in the United States was fundamentally undemocratic, suggesting that the only way to hold American diplomacy accountable was to subject its processes to the scrutiny of participatory democracy.¹⁶

In these various ways the scholarship of the revisionist historians joined with the politics of the New Left to produce a political sensibility starkly opposed to American foreign policy. LaFeber and Kolko were contributors to this intellectual-political symbiosis,¹⁷ but it would be too simplistic to characterise them as "New Left" historians; there were simply too many significant divergences between their approaches and those of student activists and others involved with the New Left. As we shall see later in this paper, LaFeber had an uneasy relationship with student radicalism at Cornell during the late 1960s, and during a similar period certain sections of the student movement at Wisconsin upbraided Williams.¹⁸ Even Kolko, who became directly involved in antiwar activism at the University of Pennsylvania, distanced himself from more populist figures within the New Left. His adherence to the notion that corporate elites dominated American history left little room for the traditions of grassroots and labour protest that were so central to the world-views of figures such as Staughton Lynd and Howard Zinn.¹⁹ Instead of simply "lumping" the revisionists and the New Left together, what this brief survey of the intersections between historical scholarship and political activism during the 1960s shows is that a complex relationship developed between the two. This interaction married political ideals and academic practices to produce rigorous scholarship written with contemporaneous political purpose: This was "frame of reference" history at its best.

As the 1960s drew to a close however, the revisionist approach to American foreign policy came under sustained attack from a putatively "post-

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revisionist” school of thought. One of the clearest expositions of post-revisionism came in 1983, with the publication of an essay in *Diplomatic History* by John Lewis Gaddis, entitled “The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis on the Origins of the Cold War”. As his title suggested, Gaddis contended that the field of Cold War history was moving beyond arguments between “orthodox” (read consensus) and “revisionist” scholars, towards a synthesis of the two viewpoints. However, this modest academic proposition provided cover for what was essentially an attack on the work of historians such as Williams, LaFeber and Kolko. Their scholarship was too economistic, Gaddis suggested, rooted as it was in a “Leninist” model of historical development.²⁰ He also claimed that revisionism based its claims about the nature of American imperialism on erroneous assumptions regarding the benevolence of Russian intentions during the early years of the Cold War, as well as the undemocratic nature of American foreign policy-making. These were suppositions which, he argued, did not stand up to empirical scrutiny.²¹ In 1997 Gaddis recycled these arguments by suggesting that, during the intervening years, a “new” approach to Cold War history had developed amongst a group of scholars fundamentally detached from political bias. “The ‘old’ Cold War history is out of date;” Gaddis argued, “it was *an abnormal way of writing history itself*...Like the post-Cold War world in which it exists, the ‘new’ Cold War history is only getting us back to normal.”²² While he did not make any express reference to revisionism, it was clear that this was the type of apparently “abnormal” and overly politicised historical thinking that Gaddis had in mind.

The blind spots and inadequacies of these characterisations of revisionism have been pointed out on several occasions.²³ However, the importance of Gaddis’s articulation of a post-revisionist (or as Bruce Cumings has shown, “anti-revisionist”²⁴) approach to American foreign policy within the context of this paper stems from the manner in which it highlights the active contestation of revisionist assumptions during the Reagan era. Indeed, in demonstrating the variances between LaFeber and Kolko’s engagement with the issues surrounding American involvement in Central America, I intend not only to highlight the *diversity* of the revisionist tradition (contra Gaddis’s claims for its homogeneity), but also to suggest its ongoing *utility* as a means of fusing political activism and historical scholarship (contra Gaddis’s claims for its intellectual obsolescence).

These arguments are closely informed by the work of Van Gosse, who has consistently challenged the “myth of declension” that surrounds the history of post-1960s American radicalism. The radical politics of the New Left did not disappear at the end of the 1960s, Gosse has argued, and because of this, more historical research is needed to determine the social and cultural legacies of the movement.²⁵ To understand the nature of anti-interventionist activism during the Reagan era then, I argue that it is necessary to interrogate not only the beliefs and actions of individuals who were actively engaged within the rank-

and-file of the movement as the extant historiography has done, but also of those intellectuals whose work was closely aligned with the cause of opposing U.S. intervention in Central America. Notable examples would include Noam Chomsky, Alexander Cockburn and Raymond Bonner, all of whose work circulated widely within the Reagan-era public sphere and helped to shape the guiding principles of the anti-intervention movement.²⁶ However, the present paper shifts attention from these well-known figures by examining the work of LaFeber and Kolko. In so doing, it aims not only to highlight their significant contributions to public discourse, but also to demonstrate the functions of historical revisionism for political activism during a period in which its very legitimacy was coming under sustained attack.²⁷

II.

In 1978, LaFeber published *The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective*. Ostensibly, the “crisis” of the book’s subtitle referred to the difficulties encountered by the Carter administration in reaching an agreement with the Panamanian government over America’s continuing role in the Canal Zone after 1977. However, I want to argue that LaFeber also sought to use his scholarship to highlight and work towards remedying a more far-reaching “crisis in historical perspective” formed out of what he described as the “vast ignorance” of the American public and press in relation to the history of American diplomacy in Central America.²⁸ *The Panama Canal* was followed in 1984 by a much broader, more ambitious work: *Inevitable Revolutions*. Covering the history of U.S. relations with the five Central American states not included in the 1978 text (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica), the book was again intended to combat the “combustible mixture” of Reagan’s interventionist administration, an unstable Third World region, and North American ignorance regarding the history of that region.²⁹ Violent anti-American revolutions had broken out in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua since LaFeber had published *The Panama Canal*, and the American public, he believed, knew very little about why Central America in the 1980s was the site of such economic and political turmoil. A history lesson explaining the central role of American imperialism in creating and then reinforcing the basic conditions that made such revolutions “inevitable” was essential, and LaFeber intended to use his scholarship to impart it.

Gabriel Kolko’s key works during the period ranged more widely in scope and geographical focus. However, the motivation behind his central concern with articulating the structural dynamics of the “modern historical experience” was remarkably similar to LaFeber’s. Kolko first used the phrase in the 1984 epilogue to *Main Currents in Modern American History* (originally published in 1976),³⁰ and then again in the subtitle of *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience* (1985). The term implied an irresistible

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trend towards the decline of American hegemony and the rise of nationalist liberation movements as the agents of “profound social change”.³¹ A proper understanding of the “modern historical experience” as *process*, Kolko argued, could be gained from pursuing a detailed “anatomy” of the causes and implications of American involvement in Vietnam between 1945 and 1975. Indeed, he explicitly stated in conclusion to the text that he believed the Vietnam War to have been “a monumental event which transcends one nation or time and reflects, in the most acute form, the basic dynamics and trends in the historical experience since 1946.”³² Kolko’s research agenda also spoke to a contemporary political concern, as he made clear when he argued that his was a “radical scholarship” that would combat “disenchantment and cynicism” by making every effort to “explain reality in its totality.”³³ Historians could therefore involve themselves in the struggle to restrain American intervention in areas such as Central America, he argued, and play a part in allowing “the people of the world to develop their own future.”³⁴

This approach culminated in the publication of Kolko’s most ambitious text of the period, and the one that will be focussed on in detail here. Again, Kolko justified *Confronting the Third World* (1988) — an examination of American policy towards the Third World between 1945 and 1980 — in markedly presentist terms, arguing, “Because there has been relatively little effort made ... to blend discrete events and facts into coherent patterns, most outsiders lack an intelligible scale against which to understand the significance of what occurs daily throughout much of the Third World.”³⁵ While the book’s focus was the entire Third World (defined by its author as the whole of Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East³⁶), his chronological approach to the subject matter meant that the final chapters dealt exclusively with the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the “the Central American maelstrom” of the late 1970s and early 1980s.³⁷ In the immediate aftermath of the Iran-Contra scandal, these events structured the contemporary relevance of the text in the mind of its readers, to the extent that it represented an attempt to historicise these two key moments of anti-systemic revolt.³⁸ Much like LaFeber’s then, Kolko’s work was in significant part concerned with confronting the “crisis in historical perspective” revealed by public ignorance of the history of American diplomacy, and aimed to function as a corrective to the political naiveté such ignorance fostered.

How did the two historians go about confronting this “crisis”? Their most significant convergence was the way they criticised American policy-makers’ use of anti-communist rhetoric to justify an imperial approach to world politics. This “anti-anticommunism” was not original. As noted above, the revisionist historians and the New Left had consistently taken such a line during the 1960s. However, in applying a rigorous critique of anti-communism to American diplomacy in Central America, LaFeber and Kolko used their scholarship to undermine one of the key tenets of Reaganite foreign policy-making,

thus rendering their approach uniquely relevant to the period in which it was written. For example, both historians attempted to present a dynamic of conflict between the U.S. and counter-hegemonic forces in Central America that problematised the simplistic binaries of Cold War ideology. During the opening chapters of *Confronting the Third World*, Kolko was keen to stress that the major challenge to American power throughout Latin America before 1960 was not the “alleged menace of Russia and communism but rather the emergence of conservative forces of nationalism.”³⁹ Similarly, in his analysis of the emergence of Panamanian nationalism, LaFeber highlighted what he saw as the desire of certain Latin American states to emerge as a “third force” between the United States and Russia, a bloc unwilling to choose sides in the Cold War until it had achieved a certain degree of economic prosperity and political stability.⁴⁰ For both historians, then, American policy-makers were wrong. The struggle between Western capitalism and Soviet communism was *not* the overriding issue in Central American international relations.

The American intervention in Guatemala in 1954 was a key episode that both LaFeber and Kolko used to defend this thesis. In 1951, Colonel Jacobo Arbenz won the Guatemalan Presidency in the state’s second-ever democratic election. After taking power, Arbenz implemented significant land reform policies, and in 1953 the Agrarian Reform Law was used to seize 234,000 acres of land owned, but left unused, by the American-controlled United Fruit Company. In describing these events, LaFeber noted that Arbenz’s policies caused him to fail American diplomacy’s “duck test”. Even though the president had nothing more than minor links to the Soviet Union, and had no socialist, let alone Marxist, political pedigree, his anti-Yankee, anti-imperialist policies allowed American diplomats to conclude that he not only looked and walked like a communist, but that he talked like one as well.⁴¹ This conclusion led the Eisenhower administration to launch what Kolko described as a “vast public relations campaign to convince the American public and the rest of the world that Guatemala had been taken over by Communists”, an exercise that paved the way for a successful CIA-sponsored coup against the Arbenz government in June 1954.⁴²

The new regime led by Castillo Armas proceeded to ban trades unions, suspend political opposition, and arrest, torture and kill thousands of Guatemalan civilians, at the same time as over-turning much of Arbenz’s land reform policies. LaFeber and Kolko argued that in ousting Arbenz, Eisenhower had temporarily managed to save the system favoured by American corporate interests, but at a tremendous cost.⁴³ For both, the sponsorship of regimes such as that led by Armas was the inevitable result of a misguided anti-communism that forced America to become obsessed with the regional status quo, and to thereby view any attempt at economic or social reform as Soviet-inspired intervention in its sphere of influence. Building on emerging scholarly work that

elevated the profile of the coup during the 1980s then, LaFeber and Kolko used the Guatemalan episode to argue that the credo of anti-communism was not only ahistorical window dressing for imperialist policy-making in Central America, but that it also forced the U.S. to collude with repressive, anti-democratic regimes in order to protect the interests of American capitalism.⁴⁴

This was a lesson imbued with intense contemporary relevance for both historians. In *Main Currents in Modern American History*, Kolko had called attention to the Reagan administration’s reliance on a policy of “horizontal escalation”. This suggested that if the U.S.S.R. attacked a nation the United States deemed vital to its interests, American forces would be used to launch counter-offensives elsewhere in areas where Soviet interests were vulnerable. This policy, Kolko suggested, rested on a vision of “diabolical Russian power” that did not allow for the existence of “autonomous revolutionary forces” anywhere in the world.⁴⁵ It seems sensible to conclude that it was this type of policy that he had in mind when, in the preface to *Confronting the Third World*, he argued that detailed historical information would allow the reader “to transcend those mystifying Cold War shibboleths that describe America’s difficulties merely as part of a struggle with Communism.”⁴⁶ LaFeber also linked his work to contemporary political developments, noting the links between Reagan’s anti-communist rhetoric and the “paranoid style” identified by Richard Hofstadter in a classic 1963 essay.⁴⁷ In so doing, LaFeber predated by three years the arguments of another left historian, Michael Rogin, who in 1987 built on Hofstadter’s notion to point out the continuities between Reagan’s political rhetoric and a long-standing “counter-subversive tradition” in American politics.⁴⁸

Anti-anti-communism was therefore a trait that LaFeber and Kolko shared; a politicised discourse that they both felt could make their historical scholarship relevant to the period in which it was written. In their work, the writing of American foreign policy history was *not* an abstract professional pursuit. Instead, it served as a method of engaging in a public-political discourse that they believed could function to educate the American body politic. This observation provides an opportunity to consider the two historians as, in Michael Walzer’s phrase, “connected critics”, deliberately attempting to articulate their concerns accessibly so as to project their voices beyond the academy.⁴⁹

III.

In arguing so clearly and precisely against American use of anti-communist rhetoric to justify intervention in Central America, LaFeber and Kolko both set their work in the revisionist mould of the 1960s, subtly developing its relevance for a later period. But closer inspection reveals that there also existed a number of *distinctions* between their writings, which speak to the variegated development of historical revisionism during the Reagan era. While both historians were part of

the generation that came to political consciousness during the late 1950s and 1960s, their most significant scholarship would be written and published during the 1970s and 1980s. This section traces LaFeber's development towards a liberal, democratic opposition to American foreign policy in the period, and contrasts it with Kolko's pursuit of a more radical approach to America's role in world politics. In exploring this difference, it highlights the markedly divergent legacies of the revisionist approach to U.S. diplomatic history, and, perhaps most importantly, begins to plot the intellectual-political coordinates of the generational anti-interventionist sensibility that marked the American left of the Reagan era.

It is first necessary to examine the two historians' diverging experiences of 1960s student radicalism in order to provide a context within which to discuss their attitudes towards political change during the Reagan era. After earning their doctorates, both Kolko and LaFeber took up positions teaching history at Ivy League institutions, the University of Pennsylvania and Cornell University respectively. Kolko soon found himself at the centre of controversial anti-Vietnam war activism at Penn, and was involved in the 1965-1967 campaign against operations Summit and Spicrack, two chemical and biological weapons research projects conducted at the university with the express intention of aiding counterinsurgency measures in Southeast Asia. Kolko was the leader of what came to be seen as the "radical" faculty caucus, which engaged closely with student groups such as SDS and the Trotskyist Young Socialist Alliance, and aimed to bring about the permanent divestiture of all chemical and biological weapons research on campus. He used his position to help distribute material arguing against such research within the mainstream media, and the campaign succeeded in ending Penn's involvement with Summit and Spicrack in the summer of 1967.⁵⁰ In an article in *The Nation* that autumn, Kolko displayed his belief in the role of activism within the university suggesting that

in taking such stands, the American university community may rediscover its own essential purpose and prepare the way for its own renaissance. It may also serve as the last important institutional refuge for the preservation of civilized values and conduct in America today.⁵¹

This specific example of Kolko's involvement in anti-war protest demonstrates his belief in the importance of direct engagement between scholarly and activist communities.

LaFeber's experiences of student radicalism at Cornell led him towards an alternative conception of the relationship between academics and activists. During the late 1960s, and culminating in 1969, the Cornell campus was wracked by militant student protest centred on the issue of racial justice. The university's Afro-American Society, strongly influenced by the Black Power movement, called for the establishment of a Black Studies program as well as for the censure of certain academics it deemed racially biased, leading to a number of stand-offs with the administration and the controversial brandishing of guns during campus

demonstrations. The administration, seeking rapprochement with the radicals, did not clamp down on militant activity, a course of action that led a number of faculty members to argue that the principle of academic freedom was being forsaken. LaFeber, in spite of his popularity amongst the student body, stood as a forceful critic of both the activists and the administration, arguing that the university should privilege the promotion of free, rational discourse above all other concerns. Indeed, he was deeply affected by the controversy, recoiling from the “lack of composure and reason” displayed by student radicals and stepped down as head of the History Department in protest of the administration’s handling of the crisis.⁵² Dramatically different to Kolko’s engagement with 1960s student radicalism, then, these experiences did not diminish LaFeber’s belief that the role of the academic was to “think otherwise” and to challenge the norms of society, but did emphasise the necessity for academics to remain fundamentally independent from radical activism.⁵³ These diverging experiences form an important contextual backdrop against which an understanding of LaFeber and Kolko’s Reagan era contributions to revisionist historiography needs to be considered.

Both historians sought to analyse American involvement in Central America during the 1980s in markedly structural terms, but the ensuing imperial systems that they mapped were very different. In his work on the region, LaFeber was clearly informed by dependency theory.⁵⁴ Rather than seeking to ratify its social scientific models, he sought to use the Central American example to complicate dependency theory’s reliance on economics as the most important explanatory factor in the development of American foreign policy. The genesis of this effort came in *The Panama Canal*. In an extended footnote, LaFeber argued that in the case of Panama,

‘informal colonialism’ seems to be a more accurate description of US-Panamanian relations...than ‘dependency’...because dependency revolves around economic factors, but Washington’s power in Panama allowed the use of direct political and military intervention. That power, moreover, was legitimized by a treaty and did not depend on free trade imperialism, as does the dependency relationship.⁵⁵

Dependency theory was useful in understanding American relations with Panama then, but its explanatory power was lacking when compared with the more historically complex notion of “informal colonialism”.

The dependency theory that LaFeber referred to was that of Brazilian economist Theotonio Dos Santos. In the same footnote he cited Dos Santos’s essay, “The Structure of Dependence” (1970),⁵⁶ in which the economist argued that a relationship of dependence was characterised by “a situation in which the economy of a certain country is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected.”⁵⁷ The relationships of dependence between First and Third World economies had moved through vari-

ous stages, he suggested, but all restricted the dependent nation from “reaching a nationally and internationally advantageous situation”, and consequently led to widespread underdevelopment in the Third World.⁵⁸ This method attempted to nuance traditional Marxism, but still aimed to highlight the deep inequalities created by capitalism and imperialism. It is undoubtedly clear that for Dos Santos the systemic nature of global capitalism was *the* most important object of analysis in the study of world politics, even if the characterisation in *The Panama Canal* of his approach as overly economic was itself somewhat unsophisticated.

LaFeber provided a fuller and more nuanced criticism of the implications of dependency theory in *Inevitable Revolutions*. Referring this time to the Central American “system” as a whole, he again suggested that the “economic aspects of dependency theory are not sufficient to explain how the United States gained...control over the region. Other forms of power, including political and military, accompanied the economic.”⁵⁹ The system was therefore one of “neodependency”, which combined American “confidence in capitalism” with “a willingness to use military force, a fear of foreign influence, and a dread of revolutionary instability.”⁶⁰ The “informal colonialism” of *The Panama Canal* had been replaced by the “neodependency” of *Inevitable Revolutions*, but the implications were the same: Economics could not explain everything.

Kolko took a very different approach, arguing in the preface to *Confronting the Third World* that the exportation of raw materials was *the* defining factor in the structural relationship between the United States and the Third World.⁶¹ This was especially the case in Central and South America, where American diplomacy’s focus on “hegemony rather than cooperation” meant “power and gain...in economic terms from the inception was the foundation of both (American) policies and actions”.⁶² This situation continued through the Cold War, because the “reciprocal material linkages” between the United States and its informal empire were “so comprehensive and important.”⁶³ Overall, Kolko argued, American diplomats and economists saw the region as “a giant arena for the application of economic theories”, a vision that set in motion numerous counterrevolutionary interventions.⁶⁴ In the book’s conclusion, Kolko sought to answer the obvious criticism that could be aimed at these claims: that of excessive economic determinism. He argued that he wanted to avoid “simple monocausal explanations”, but that it was essential “not to confuse the military and political effects of a policy with its basic causes”. Indeed, the scholarly process of highlighting such distinctions was “the crux to attaining an overall perception of the United States’ role in the major Third World regions”, and Latin America in particular.⁶⁵ In stating this point so forthrightly, Kolko highlighted the fact that a key distinction between his work and that of LaFeber lay in the precise role of economic imperialism as an explanatory factor for American involvement in the Western hemisphere.

The implications of this distinction were not only historiographical, but

also political; in distancing his work from the economic focus of dependency theory, LaFeber was also distancing himself from some of its radical political implications. In the article cited in *The Panama Canal*, Dos Santos argued that the only progressive political option that could move Latin American economies away from dependence on First World capitalism was a revolutionary one.⁶⁶ Indeed, the collection from which LaFeber cited Dos Santos’s essay positioned the piece alongside the writings of popular revolutionary figures such as Fidel Castro and Ernesto “Che” Guevara as well as established Marxist economists Paul Baran, Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff.⁶⁷ This was a tradition of thought that had a distinctly revolutionary tenor, one that LaFeber opposed. The political implications of “neo-dependency” therefore allowed him to remain staunchly opposed to American policy without relinquishing ground to those he disparagingly described as “romantic revolutionaries”.⁶⁸

In contrast, the political implications of Kolko’s approach positioned his work closer to the dependency tradition. *Confronting the Third World* is scantily referenced, which makes tracing the intellectual groundwork Kolko pursued during his research difficult. However, his conclusions regarding the primarily economic basis of American imperialism were strikingly similar to those of dependency theorists such as Dos Santos, as was his commitment to the idea that national liberation movements were the inevitable and beneficial results of the “modern historical experience”. It would therefore seem unreasonable not to recognise the implicit importance of economic concepts such as dependence in his intellectual development, especially given the status of his wife and sometimes co-author as a professional economic historian.⁶⁹ LaFeber’s concept of “neo-dependency” allowed for equivalence between economic, political and military factors in an explanation of the workings of American imperialism, with the implication that an anti-interventionist political stance could realistically consider options that stopped short of complete systemic overhaul in the regions affected; Kolko’s work permitted no such room for manoeuvre.

A similar political divergence played out in the historical role the pair assigned to individual American policy-makers. In line with his arguments about the totalising economic structure of American imperialism, Kolko credited politicians with negligent amounts of agency in crafting the outcomes of foreign policy. “I have yet to see convincing evidence that bureaucratic politics among various tendencies in government ... really alters the substance of basic national policies,” he argued in *Confronting the Third World*, continuing, “styles may change, but the parameters of possible choices within which ambitious or vain men function do not – and this explains the uniformity of policy during the Cold War.”⁷⁰ He reinforced this point in his discussion of John F. Kennedy’s use of prominent academics such as McGeorge Bundy and Walt Rostow as foreign policy advisors. Kennedy and his aides believed their “Alliance for Progress”, which aimed to establish economic cooperation between the United States and Latin

America, was a significant departure from the policies of President Eisenhower. Kolko suggested otherwise, arguing that the prominence the Alliance gave to funding police training schools proved that its objectives were never less than “aggressively hegemonic”.⁷¹ This approach, which was premised on the advice of Rostow, Bundy and others, meant that the “era of the generals”, as Kolko put it, was simply justified in theory after it had been put into practice by the previous administration.⁷² He therefore mockingly described these foreign policy advisors as “action academics”, and in so doing displayed his scepticism towards their importance in the policy-making process as anything other than highly qualified agents of ideological legitimization.⁷³

In *Main Currents in Modern American History*, Kolko brought these arguments up to date to signal the lack of real change in American foreign policy-making he believed had been instituted in the transition between the Carter and Reagan administrations. Although the two Presidents had clear differences in “tone, image and proclaimed intentions,” he suggested, “they ultimately groped with the same dilemmas” in the arena of foreign policy. This situation came about because both administrations refused to pare down America’s global objectives, and were therefore forced into “increasingly futile and dangerous attempts to transcend the limits of [American] power.”⁷⁴ These arguments indicate that Kolko’s vision of American imperialism did not recognise the ability of American policy-makers to fundamentally change their nation’s interaction with the Third World. As a consequence, his work resisted categorisation as “diplomatic history”, precisely because diplomats and politicians were not credited with any real agency in the formation of foreign policy. In taking such a historiographical approach Kolko suggested that the diplomatic system was fundamentally unaccountable to the body politic, and that nothing more than profound, systemic political upheaval would rupture the ongoing dynamic between the United States and its empire.

LaFeber demonstrated a more optimistic view of the issue, regularly structuring elements of his scholarship around individual political actors. This is most notable in *The Panama Canal*, the six chapters of which were named after three Americans and/or Panamanians who were central to their narratives (“Wilson, Arias and Roosevelt”, for example, or “Torrijos, Kissinger and Carter”), the implication being that influential individuals *did* have agency in the historical process. This was taken further in the conclusion to the text, which posed five questions about the contemporary situation in Panama that LaFeber felt the reader should know how to answer (question three, for example, was “does the Panama Canal remain a vital interest to the United States?”⁷⁵). LaFeber obviously believed that his history of U.S.-Panamanian relations between 1903 and 1977 could serve an educational purpose. More importantly however, the *form* that this conclusion took also suggested that he believed a well-informed citizenry would be able to hold the American foreign policy-mak-

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ing elite to account. This sanguinity was toned down in *Inevitable Revolutions*, with LaFeber stating that the cycle of violence and repression in the Central American political system seemed “never-ending”,⁷⁶ but the avowedly *educational* nature of the text still demonstrates a cautious optimism that when given a mandate by an enlightened electorate, certain politicians could change the nature of U.S.-Central American relations.⁷⁷ LaFeber’s more traditional scholarship, which certainly *could* have been categorised as “diplomatic history”, therefore demonstrated a liberal, democratic approach to the role of individual policy-makers that contrasted with Kolko’s deterministic pessimism, with markedly *political* implications.

However, the political differences between the two historians were clearest in their respective attitudes towards the revolutions that erupted in Central America during the late 1970s and early 1980s. As the title of his key text on the region suggested, LaFeber believed that such revolutions were “inevitable”, but this belief in the certainty of political upheaval did not form an optimistic conviction that all such events were constructive examples of the forward march of History. Rather, the key aim of LaFeber’s concept of inevitability was to position the contemporary conjuncture within a long history of American imperialism, stretching back as far as the 1803 Louisiana Purchase.⁷⁸ He argued that the United States had itself created the various Central American revolutions of the twentieth century through its exploitation of the region’s economies and its poorly executed foreign policy-making. The central question for LaFeber, one that he repeated throughout the book, was the same one posed by Henry Cabot Lodge in a cabinet meeting in 1959: “The U.S. can win wars, but the question is can we win revolutions?”⁷⁹

Revolutions would be “won” if the U.S. proved itself capable of “working with...revolutionaries to achieve a more orderly and equitable society”, instead of trying to “cap upheavals until the pressure builds again to blow the societies apart with even greater force.”⁸⁰ LaFeber’s text argued that American diplomats had failed miserably in this regard throughout the twentieth century. Jimmy Carter’s human rights-based response to the revolution in Nicaragua, for instance, “naively sought to change the status quo without upsetting it, without revolution”, and therefore failed to “win” the Sandinista revolution for the United States.⁸¹ This argument ignored the fact that an insurgency such as that launched by the Sandinistas during the 1970s was so fundamentally anti-Yankee that its agents would have struggled to work closely with an American presidential administration, no matter how benevolent. But the very fact that LaFeber was making it at all suggested that he believed in the existence of revolutionary possibilities in Central America that were centrist and democratic enough to turn away from the objective of completely overturning American hegemony.

Kolko’s attitude towards revolution in the Third World stood in stark contrast to this position. He had argued in *Anatomy of a War* that the United

States had not lost the Vietnam War, but that the Vietnamese Communists had won it, thereby revealing the frailty of Cold War ideology and the imperial policies it was used to justify.⁸² This was a position he developed further in *Confronting the Third World*, similarly suggesting that the Nicaraguan Revolution was a fundamental “victory” for the Left that proved the structural weakness of American hegemony in the Western hemisphere, in spite of certain examples of “ineptness or confusion” in the Sandinistas’ actions.⁸³ “Whether the process would be a short or a long one,” he argued,

Nicaragua confirmed that the Cuban revolution was not an isolated and accidental event but part of an ongoing process – one growing out of irreversible and cumulative structural changes that would increasingly confront the United States with the spectre of revolution in the hemisphere.

The distinctions between this position and LaFeber’s were twofold. First, Kolko implied that revolutions such as the one in Nicaragua could never tend towards the moderate centrism that LaFeber believed the United States should work to foster in order to “win” revolutions.⁸⁴ Second, his formulation of the revolutionary situation suggested that historical agency rested not with American politicians and diplomats but with the revolutionaries themselves. Only *they* had the power to determine their own futures. If LaFeber’s liberal, democratic opposition to American policy rendered him fundamentally *wary* of revolutions in Central America, then, Kolko’s radicalism was more *celebratory*, fêting the revolutionary upheaval the continent was experiencing as a necessary, if traumatic, stage in the transition to a world-system that was no longer dominated by the forces of American imperialism. Such a discrepancy, it seems sensible to conclude, was rooted not only in the two historians’ differing interpretations of Cold War history, but also their markedly divergent experiences of student radicalism during the 1960s, and the consequent impact of these experiences on their individual conceptions of the relationship between historical scholarship and political activism.

IV.

To return to this paper’s epigraphs is to demonstrate both the similarities and differences between the two historians’ approaches to historical writing during the Reagan era. In them, LaFeber and Kolko each allude to the anti-communism used to buttress Cold War ideology, and describe it respectively as having “ignored more than a century of history”, and as “ahistorical and irrational”. In so doing, they demonstrate the continued power during the Reagan era of the historical revisionism that was so important to the American New Left in formulating its opposition to American foreign policy. At the same time, LaFeber and Kolko’s shared belief that these ideas could be of use in the struggle against the

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latest manifestation of American imperialism, as well as the consciously didactic form of the texts each author used to deploy them, indicate an attempt at a direct engagement with the American body politic that aimed to confront a broad-ranging “crisis in historical perspective”. Far from being an outdated mode of historical writing, the two historians’ revisionism proved its vitality through engagement with the Reagan-era public sphere, exemplifying “frame of reference history” at its best by engaging in the controversy surrounding U.S. intervention in Central America.

But the epigraphs are also useful because they highlight some of the theoretical and political disagreements that existed between the two historians. LaFeber conceptualised the “collapse” of the Central American system as a consequence of sustained American mismanagement of the region. In so doing, he implied that it would be possible to solve the problem through a democratic change within the domestic political system that would pressure American policy-makers to work with and tame the region’s revolutionary politics. Kolko, on the other hand, saw these revolutions as the effects of *autonomous* “dynamics of change” that were not directly connected to the actions of American policy-makers. In his formulation, the “historical experience” of the twentieth century tended towards a decline in American global hegemony, as well as the growth of anti-capitalist forces throughout the Third World. Kolko argued that this was a fact that should be recognised and celebrated by the Left, rather than warned against. Taken together, then, Walter LaFeber and Gabriel Kolko’s divergent approaches to historical scholarship underscore the intellectual heterogeneity of the revisionist tradition during the Reagan era, and, at the same time, begin to highlight its ongoing utility for scholars and activists seeking to question the foundational assumptions of contemporary American foreign policy.

NOTES

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¹ Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 270.

² Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World: United States Foreign Policy 1945-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 296.

³ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2007), 6-7.

⁴ In the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, both C. Wright Mills and William Appleman Williams (intellectuals who would soon be identified with the rapidly emerging New Left) sought to engage in a critique of American diplomacy in Cuba. See William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of*

American Diplomacy (New York: Norton, 1959) and C. Wright Mills, *Listen Yankee: The Revolution in Cuba* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1960). On the international implications of these texts, Mills' in particular, see Daniel Geary, *Radical Ambition: C. Wright Mills, the Left, and American Social Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 179-215.

⁵ Several book-length studies of the movement exist, dealing with various aspects of its development using the methodologies of "social movement studies". See, for example, Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The US Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), Sharon Erickson Nepstad, *Convictions of the Soul: Religion, Culture and Agency in the Central America Solidarity Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and Clare Weber, *Visions of Solidarity: US Peace Activists in Nicaragua from War to Women's Activism and Globalization* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006). Significant book chapters and articles covering the movement include Van Gosse, Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas, eds, "El Salvador is Spanish for Vietnam: A New Immigrant Left and the Politics of Solidarity," in *The Immigrant Left in the United States* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Roger Peace, "The Anti-Contra-War Campaign: Organizational Dynamics of a Decentralized Movement," *International Journal of Peace Studies* 13:1 (Spring/Summer 2008): 63-83; Héctor Perla Jr., "Si Nicaragua Venció, El Salvador Vencerá: Central American Agency in the Creation of the US-Central American Peace and Solidarity Movement," *Latin American Research Review* 43:2 (2008): 136-158 and Roger Peace, "Winning Hearts and Minds: The Debate over US Intervention in Nicaragua in the 1980s," *Peace and Change* 35:1 (January 2010): 1-38.

⁶ A. A. M. van der Linden, *A Revolt Against Liberalism: American Radical Historians, 1959-1976* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 4.

⁷ John Higham, "Beyond Consensus: The Historian as Moral Critic," *American Historical Review* 67:3 (April 1962): 613.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 614.

⁹ Warren Susman, "The Historian's Task," in *History and the New Left: Madison, Wisconsin, 1950-1970*, ed. Paul Bulhe (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1990), 279.

¹⁰ See Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* and William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961). For an excellent account of Williams's life and career, see Paul Buhle and Edward Rice-Maximin, *Williams Appleman Williams: The Tragedy of American Empire* (New York: Routledge, 1995), and for an ambitious attempt to place Williams within a Midwestern tradition of historical writing that stretches from Fredrick Jackson Turner through Charles Beard to Christopher Lasch, see David S. Brown, *Beyond the Frontier: The Midwestern Voice in American Historical Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 127-148.

¹¹ Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1916* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967); Martin J. Sklar, "Woodrow Wilson and the Political Economy of Modern United States Liberalism," in *For a New America: Essays in History and Politics from Studies on the Left, 1959-1967*, ed. James Weinstein and David W. Eakins (New York: Random House, 1970); James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State, 1900-1918* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968). On the development of the corporate liberalism thesis, see Jonathan M. Wiener, "Radical Historians and the Crisis in American History, 1959-1980," *Journal of American History* 76:2 (September 1989): 408-9.

¹² Sklar, "Woodrow Wilson and the Political Economy of Modern United States Liberalism", 92.

¹³ See, for instance, "The Cuban Revolution: The New Crisis in Cold War Ideology," *Studies on the Left* 1:3 (Spring 1960): 2.

¹⁴ Then SDS leader Carl Oglesby expressed this point in a speech made in 1965. See Carl Oglesby, "Liberalism and the Corporate State" in *The New Radicals: A Report with Documents*, ed. Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau (London: Penguin, 1967), 258.

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¹⁵ Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a US Third World Left* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 3.

¹⁶ A view that is obvious in a speech made by historian-activist Staughton Lynd during the Vietnam Day Protests in 1965, and printed in *We Accuse: A Powerful Statement of the New Political Anger in America*, Vietnam Day Committee eds (Berkeley: Diablo Press, 1965), 154.

¹⁷ Both revised and published their PhD theses in the early 1960s to critical acclaim in the academy, with LaFeber winning the 1962 Albert J. Beveridge Award. See Gabriel Kolko, *Railroads and Regulation, 1877-1916* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965) and Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963).

¹⁸ Williams's tempestuous relationship with the Madison student body during the late 1960s is detailed in Buhle and Rice-Maximin, *Williams Appleman Williams*, 145-178.

¹⁹ On this point, compare Gabriel Kolko, *Main Currents in Modern American History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) with Staughton Lynd, *The Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968) and Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (London: Longman, 1980).

²⁰ John Lewis Gaddis, “The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis on the Origins of the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 7:3 (July 1983): 175.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 176-180.

²² John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 283.

²³ See, for example, Lloyd C. Gardner's response to Gaddis's essay in *Diplomatic History* 7:3 (July 1983): 191-193, as well as Bruce Cumings, “Revising Postrevisionism, or, The Poverty of Theory in Diplomatic History,” *Diplomatic History* 17:4 (Fall, 1993): 539-570.

²⁴ Cumings, “Revising Postrevisionism”, 556.

²⁵ Van Gosse, “Postmodern America: A New Democratic Order in the Second Gilded Age,” in *The World the Sixties Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America*, ed. Van Gosse and Richard Moser (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 3-7.

²⁶ See Noam Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War: Essays on the Current Crisis and How We Got There* (New York: Pantheon, 1982) and *Turning the Tide: US Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace* (Boston: South End Press, 1986); Alexander Cockburn, *Corruptions of Empire: Life Studies and the Reagan Era* (London: Verso, 1988), which collected many of Cockburn's widely syndicated and influential “Beat the Devil” columns from the New York left-liberal weekly, *The Nation*; Raymond Bonner, *Weakness and Deceit: US Policy and El Salvador* (New York: Times Books, 1984).

²⁷ There are of course a number of other notable revisionist historians of American foreign policy: Examples include Gar Alperowitz, Lloyd Gardner, Thomas McCormick and Marilyn Young. But in a 1972 survey asking members of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations which authors exerted the most impact on their teaching and scholarship, the only scholar to outrank LaFeber and Kolko was William Appleman Williams, the godfather of revisionism, and, by that point in his career, a significant public figure. Both historians also succeeded in ranking above figures such as George Kennan, Samuel F. Bemis and Hans Morgenthau. While this single survey, conducted at least a decade before most of the work examined in this paper was published, is hardly incontrovertible proof of the influence of LaFeber and Kolko, it should go some way to highlighting their significance within the field. See Sandra C. Thomson and Clayton A. Coppin, Jr., “Texts and Teaching: A Profile of Historians of American Foreign Relations in 1972,” *West Georgia College Studies in the Social Sciences* 13 (June 1974): 71-72, cited in John Braeman, “The New Left and American Foreign Policy

- during the Age of Normalcy: A Re-Examination," *The Business History Review* 57:1 (Spring, 1983): 74.
- ²⁸ Walter LaFeber, *The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), viii.
- ²⁹ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 12.
- ³⁰ Kolko, *Main Currents in Modern American History*, 424.
- ³¹ Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States and the Modern Historical Experience* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 558.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 557.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, xiv.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 558.
- ³⁵ Kolko, *Confronting the Third World*, ix.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, x.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 277.
- ³⁸ Contemporary scholarly reviews of the text back this point up. In his review in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, for example, Ghulam M. Haniff positioned Kolko's text in relation to the recent rise of "American globalist activism", especially in Central America. Furthermore, in *Middle East Report* Irene Gendzier suggested that the controversy surrounding the Iran-Contra affair must have been a significant motivation for Kolko to write the book. See Ghulam M. Haniff, "Untitled Review," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 506 (November 1989): 168-169; Irene Gendzier, "Containment, Counterrevolution and Credibility," *Middle East Report* 160 (September-October 1989): 41-43.
- ³⁹ Kolko, *Confronting the Third World*, 35.
- ⁴⁰ LaFeber, *The Panama Canal*, 105.
- ⁴¹ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 114-119.
- ⁴² Kolko, *Confronting the Third World*, 103.
- ⁴³ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 126; Kolko, *Confronting the Third World*, 289.
- ⁴⁴ Examples of this emerging scholarship include Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (New York: Doubleday, 1982) and Richard H. Immerman, *The C.I.A. in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982).
- ⁴⁵ Kolko, *Main Currents in Modern American History*, 415.
- ⁴⁶ Kolko, *Confronting the Third World*, xi.
- ⁴⁷ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 276. For Hofstadter's essay, see "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," in *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), 3-39.
- ⁴⁸ See Michael Rogin, *Ronald Reagan The Movie, and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), xii-xv.
- ⁴⁹ Michael Walzer, *The Company of Critics: Social Criticism and Political Commitment in the Twentieth Century* (London: Peter Halban, 1989), 4.
- ⁵⁰ For a detailed account of the Summit/Spicerack controversy, from which this paper's description is drawn, see Jonathan Goldstein, "Vietnam Research on Campus: The Summit/Spicerack Controversy at the University of Pennsylvania, 1965-67," *Peace and Change* xi:2 (1986): 27-49.
- ⁵¹ Gabriel Kolko, "Universities and the Pentagon," *The Nation* (9 October, 1967): 332.
- ⁵² See Donald Alexander Downs, *Cornell '69: Liberalism and the Crisis of the American University* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 236.

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⁵³ LaFeber’s articulation of what it meant to “think otherwise”, a tradition he traces back to Fred Harvey Harrington, his doctoral advisor at Wisconsin, can be found in Walter LaFeber, “Fred Harvey Harrington,” *Diplomatic History* 9 (Fall 1985): 313.

⁵⁴ This is a point made very briefly in Lloyd C. Gardner and Thomas J. McCormick, “Walter LaFeber: The Making of a Wisconsin School Revisionist,” *Diplomatic History* 28:5 (November 2004): 623.

⁵⁵ LaFeber, *The Panama Canal*, 67 (n).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 67 (n). The essay was originally published in English in *American Economic Review* 60 (May 1970): 235-246. The version referred to here is Theotonio Dos Santos, “The Structure of Dependence,” in *Readings in US Imperialism*, ed. K.T. Fann and Donald C. Hodges (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1971), 225-236.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁵⁹ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 17.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶¹ Kolko, *Confronting the Third World*, x.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 35.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 291-292.

⁶⁶ Dos Santos, “The Structure of Dependence,” 236.

⁶⁷ Fann and Hodges (eds.), *Readings in US Imperialism*.

⁶⁸ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 192.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Joyce Kolko, *America and the Crisis of World Capitalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974); Joyce Kolko, *Restructuring the World Economy* (New York: Pantheon, 1988); Joyce Kolko and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

⁷⁰ Kolko, *Confronting the Third World*, xii.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 133.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁷⁴ Kolko, *Main Currents in Modern American History*, 400-401.

⁷⁵ LaFeber, *The Panama Canal*, 221.

⁷⁶ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 316.

⁷⁷ In the final pages of *The Panama Canal*, for example, LaFeber sounded a somewhat pro-Carter timbre in arguing that the 1977 treaty signed by the President was “a long step forward in making relationships between the two nations more equitable.” See LaFeber, *The Panama Canal*, 227.

⁷⁸ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 19. The long history of American imperialism was a topic that had been of interest to LaFeber since the beginning of his scholarly career. *The New Empire*, for example, had aimed to prove that the development of an American overseas empire in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War was not a “break” in American history but “a natural culmination” that had been actively sought by expansionist politicians and businessmen. See LaFeber, *The New Empire*, vii-viii.

⁷⁹ Quoted in LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 14-15.

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⁸⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁸¹ Ibid., 212.

⁸² Kolko, *Anatomy of a War*, 548.

⁸³ Kolko, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 289.

⁸⁴ Indeed, he argued that “the problem of the United States is one of the most crucial obstacles confronting proponents of change in the Third World.” Ibid., 295-296.