

Chapter 2

Culture and National Interest in the United States: Conservative Perceptions of Latin America

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The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the reunification of Germany, and the disappearance of the Soviet Union stated in a uniquely clear way the victory of the United States in the bipolar dispute, which characterized the structure of the international relations during Cold War. However, the defeat of this great empire was not seen, even by the most optimistic, as a perpetual guarantee of peace. The globalization of economic competition, which promotes levels of social exclusion that cross national borders and the concentration of development in well-fixed boundaries, may generate new sources of conflict among the losers of the new world order in formation.

The potential reaction of the "losers" cannot be compared to the previous powerful Soviet threat, but it is more localized and relatively foreseeable. The spectacle of poverty, although differentiated in its gravity, has no exclusive territory. For workers of rich countries, the ghost of unemployment endangers their hopes of security within advanced capitalism.

For representative sectors of trends of opinion, think tanks and private organizations endowed with sufficient influence to interact with the decision-making system of U.S. foreign policy, the perception of threat concentrates on the potential conflicts generated by the resentment in social sectors, countries, and regions that consider themselves victims of the new order, which can stimulate fundamentalist ideas and behaviors tending to

question the principal cultural base of historic supremacy of liberal capitalism and Western civilization.

For some authors, the strategic aspects that derive from the affirmation of cultural identity assume each time a bigger role in the characterization of the new sources of conflict. Values and attitudes related with "advanced" or "regressive" cultures loom as the principal explanatory issues for the uneven levels of development, both among countries and in ethnic groups within national frames. Samuel Huntington,¹ one of the representative authors of this approach, considers that

the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. (1993:22)

For Huntington, the challenges to Western political and economic supremacy and the values that characterize its cultural identity define a new international situation in which the conflict between "the West and the rest" assumes the leading role. Seven civilizations integrate "the rest": Japanese, Chinese, Islamic, Latin American, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, and African.

In a globalized world, the consolidation of Western hegemony is not exclusively a foreign policy task, the challenges are present within domestic affairs. The victory of a way of life is never permanent and the analogy with the decadence of the Roman Empire, after defeating its great enemies, is one of the ghosts that maintains this state of concern. According to Huntington,

Given the domestic forces pushing toward heterogeneity, diversity, multiculturalism, and ethnic and racial division, however the United States, perhaps more than most countries, may need an opposing other to maintain its unity. Two millennia ago in 84 B.C., after the Romans had completed their conquest of the known world by defeating the armies of Mithradates, Sulla posed the question: "Now the universe offers us no more enemies, what may be the fate of the Republic?" The answer came quickly; the republic collapsed a few years later. (1997:32)

On commemorating its fiftieth anniversary, *Commentary*, the principal neoconservative organ, surveyed intellectuals of different theoretical and political affiliations as to their position on the following statement:

In the eyes of many observers, the United States, which in 1945 entered upon the postwar era confident in its democratic purposes and serene in the possession of a common culture, is now, fifty years later, moving toward balkanization or even breakdown. Pointing to different sorts of evidence—multiculturalism and/or racial polarization; the effects of unchecked immigration; increased economic and social stratification; distrust of authority; the dissolution of shared moral and religious values—such observers conclude in their various ways that our national project is unraveling. (*Commentary*, 1995:23)

Among the exponents of the conservative² perspective who answered this survey, we note three analyses that represent the concern with the future of the West and a diagnosis that attributes the problems to predominant national factors, blaming "elite" sectors for those problems. For Elliot Abrams, assistant secretary of state during Ronald Reagan's presidency,

Those elites are principally a mixture of liberal/Left politicians, members of the media and the academy, with reinforcements from the liberal churches, black leaders, the American Jewish establishment, and (intermittently) the judiciary. In their long march toward victory in remaking American culture, their successes have been great. The amazing proliferation of systems in employment and education, the advent of multiculturalism, and the terrible coarsening of social life in only thirty years all give testimony to what they have wrought. (*Commentary*, 1995:24)

For Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security adviser during Jimmy Carter's presidency, the loss of hegemony of the white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant (WASP) elite is one of the main causes of this state of disorder:

In recent years, the collapse of the WASP elite and the replacement of the traditional instruments for inoculating values by the TV-Hollywood-Mass-Media cartel has produced in America a new dominant and style-setting culture. It can be called a Mediterranean Sea culture in order to underline its contrast to the North Sea ethic. It stressed self-enjoyment, entertainment, sexual promiscuity, and the almost explicit repudiation of any social norms. Controlled by a cartel that is driven exclusively by material self-interest, TV has replaced the schools, churches, and even the family as the principal mechanism for the transmission of values. (*Commentary*, 1995:38)

Francis Fukuyama, former adviser to the U.S. State Department, attributes the main responsibility to the decline of social capital:

One of the most insidious changes that has taken place in American life over the past couple of generations is the secular decline in what Tocqueville labeled the American art of association—that is, the ability of Americans to organize their own society in voluntary groups and associations. This falling-off can be measured in a variety of ways: in declining memberships in traditional service organizations like the Red Cross, Elks, or Rotarians; in the decrease between the 1960s and the present in the numbers of Americans who, when polled, say they trust “most people” (from two-thirds to one-third); and in the symptoms of fraying community like rising litigation and violent crime. (*Commentary*, 1995:56)

The arguments issued by these authors represent some of the principal conservative worries concerning the new challenges of post-Cold War reality. In a wider scope of the national political and ideological debate, the defenders of the Western roots of North American identity are concerned that the growing cultural pluralism of the United States threatens to undermine the hold of Western civilization, a process that they call de-Westernization. Within this worry, the ghost of the developing world looms up.

James Kurth,³ using the Huntington approach as reference, considers that the real clash of civilization is “a clash between Western civilization and a different grand alliance, one composed of the multicultural and the feminist movements. It is, in short, a clash between Western and post-Western civilizations” (1995:19). For Kurth, the feminist movement plays a central role as promoter of multiculturalism: “It provides the numbers, having reached a central mass first in academia and now in the media and the law. It promotes the theories, such as deconstructionism and post-modernism. And it provides much of the energy, the leadership, and the political clout” (1995:26). Closing the essay, he synthesizes the nature of his anguish: “Who, in the United States of the future, will still believe in Western civilization. Most practically, who will believe in it enough to fight, kill and die for it in a clash of civilizations?” (1995:27).

For Irving Kristol, historical leader of neoconservatism,⁴ the developing-world component of multiculturalism forms part of an anti-American and anti-Western political and ideological strategy:

It is no exaggeration to say that these campus radicals (professors as well as students) having given up on the “class struggle”—the American workers all being conscientious objectors—have now moved to an agenda of ethnic-racial conflict. The agenda, in its educational dimension, has as its explicit purpose to induce in the minds and sensibilities of minority students a “Third World consciousness”—that is the very phrase they use. What these

radicals blandly call multiculturalism is as much a “war against the West” as Nazism and Stalinism ever were. (1995:52)

For Kristol, the racial component associated with the black movement represents the principal political strength of this movement and gives it a differentiated profile in relation to immigration of Latin American origin, further inclined to assimilation: “Multiculturalism is a desperate—and surely self-defeating—strategy for coping with the educational deficiencies, and associated social pathologies, of young blacks. There is no evidence that a substantial number of Hispanic parents would like their children to know more about Simón Bolívar and less about George Washington” (1995:50).

In the report of the 1993 meeting of the Trilateral Commission held in Washington, the concern on American society “thirdworldizing” and the perception of a latent civil war atmosphere also shows up in sessions dedicated to the domestic situation in the United States. According to Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children’s Defense Fund:

Ironically, as Communism has been collapsing all around the world, the American Dream has been collapsing all around America—for millions of families, youths and children, of all races and classes.

We’re in danger of becoming two nations—one of the First World privilege and another of Third World deprivation—struggling against increasing odds to peacefully co-exist, as a beleaguered middle class barely holds on. (*Dialogue*, 1993:15)

Culture and National Interest in the United States

In the U.S. Department of State perspective, the international moment is favorable to place the country’s foreign policies at the service of promoting “universal” values of human coexistence. Madeleine Albright, secretary of state under President Clinton, explained in her speech before the U.S. Chamber of Commerce the importance of approving the “fast track” for the negotiation of commercial agreements, the intimate relationship between defending those values and the projection of the country’s national interests:

Since taking office, I have stressed my belief that the United States has a historic opportunity to help bring the world closer together around basic principles of democracy, open markets, law, and a commitment to peace. If we seize this opportunity, we can ensure that our economy will continue to

grow, our workers will have access to better jobs, and our leadership will be felt wherever U.S. interests are engaged. We will also fuel an expanding global economy and give more countries a stake in the international system, thereby denying nourishment to the forces of extremist violence that feed on depravation across our planet.

The best course for our nation is not to curse globalization but to shape it. Because we have the world's most competitive economy and its most productive work force, we're better positioned than any other nation to do so. (1997:6)

The emphasis on defending principles does not represent an option to an idealist approach to international relations. For Clinton's government, the first to be elected in post-Cold War context, the combined defense of democracy and market freedom as guarantees of world peace, expressed hegemonic national objectives. At the same time that it legitimated the Cold War banners, it placed the ideal and real frontiers of coexistence in the world within liberal capitalism, with the United States in the center of this system.

Outside of official discourse, divergence exists among foreign politics analysts on the role to be assumed by the United States. Internationalists and isolationists divide themselves into opposite camps between keeping international relations active or retracting to the domestic arena, concentrating efforts on the political, economic, and cultural strengthening of the nation. On this last position, Huntington's approach stands as one that looks to cultural identity for invaluable support, capable of solidifying domestic and international political alliances that will ensure the survival of the Western way of life. This position questions the validity of strategies guided by "big destinies":

The national interest is national restraint, and that appears to be the only national interest the American people are willing to support at this time in their history. Hence, instead of formulating unrealistic schemes for grand endeavors abroad, foreign policy elites might well devote their energies to designing plans for lowering American involvement in the world in ways that will safeguard possible future national interests. (1997:49)

Huntington defends limits on immigration and the creation of domestic "Americanization" programs designed to the assimilation of immigrants and solidification of loyalties with national identity: "Reviving a stronger sense of national identity would also require countering the cults of diversity and multiculturalism within the United States. It would probably in-

volve limiting immigration . . . and developing new public and private Americanization programs to counter the factors enhancing diaspora loyalties and to promote the assimilation of immigrants" (1997:48).

The need for an effective strategy adapted to the new challenges, is defended by the critics of isolationism. Zalmay Khalilzad, from the RAND Corporation, considers the global leadership of the United States as the best alternative to hold back eventual hostile powers and avoid the return to the multipolar system previous to World War I. For him, the best of worlds is that in which U.S. hegemony has no rivals:

First, the global environment will be more open and more receptive to American values: democracy, free markets, and the rule of law. Second, such a world has a better chance of dealing cooperatively with its major problems, such as nuclear proliferation, threat of regional hegemony by renegade states, and low-level conflicts. Finally, U.S. leadership will help preclude the rise of another hostile global rival, enabling the United States and the world to avoid another global cold or hot war and all its dangers, including a global nuclear exchange. It is therefore more conducive to global stability than a bipolar or a multipolar balance-of-power system. (1995:21)

James Kurth, one of the most radical supporters of the thesis of "clash of civilizations," promotes from the same premises as Huntington an opposite position on U.S. international behavior. "America is an artificial nation, not a natural one, a nation that has been 'socially constructed,' not organically grown. America must also be socially reconstructed periodically. Otherwise, it will cease to be a nation" (1996:19). Historically, external and domestic threats to "American Doctrine" represented motivating elements of national cohesion. In the new global order, "the task of the United States is to be the motor and monitor for the international order and the model and mentor for the regional spheres of influence. In short, it is to be the global hegemon of the regional hegemons, the boss of all the bosses" (1996:19). Within a domestic frame, Kurth agrees with Huntington in recognizing threats to the strengthening of national identity:

Economically, national consolidation is being undermined by an unbalanced pursuit of the global economy, putting at risk "the promise of American life" for a majority of Americans. Culturally, it is being undermined by uncontrolled immigration (especially from neighbors in the original regional sphere) and by the ideology of multiculturalism. . . . These divisions will have to be healed with a new New Deal and an Americanization project, ones suited to the specific conditions of our time. Otherwise we may

degenerate into a new civil war, this time not a "War between the States" but more a war of all against all. (1996:19)

The different positions presented on the new role of the United States in the world reflects certain uneasiness with the realities generated by the realization of the two great aims stated at the end of World War II: (1) an open world economy; and (2) the defeat of the Soviet Union. It is hard to visualize the threats to economic prosperity, social and cultural cohesion, and Western territorial safety presented in those analyses, mainly in a context in which (1) political organizations that defend anticapitalist programs have no backing from nuclear powers with ambitions for international hegemony; (2) in social movements, agendas centered on the banner of citizenship predominate, and they aim at constructive restorations: democratization of economic prosperity benefits, respect for political and cultural plurality; and (3) the majority of countries deregulate their markets and open their doors to global capitalism.

More than an order to be created, the presented analyses are fundamentally worried about the order to be kept. On this field, important coincidences exist in defining the main threats to the "Western way of life": (1) power politics of hostile countries (Arab world and China are mostly mentioned), capable of unleashing armament races, disputes on natural resources, wars; (2) regional instability generated by collapsed states as a consequence of politicization of ethnic differences; (3) mass emigration caused by those same conflicts, by poverty or natural catastrophes; (4) global insecurity generated by imbalances in the stock market, environmental degradation, illness spread, drug traffic, terrorism, or uncontrolled demographic growth. The challenges are localized on the mobile borders with the developing world, threatened by a group of "civilizations" with a common trajectory of difficulties in creating prosperous, democratic, and peaceful nations.

The Ghost of the Third World and Latin America

Although not considered a hostile agent, Latin America looms up, in the ghost of the developing world, as explicit reference to what may represent for the United States the road to decadence. Lawrence Harrison, with an extensive career as director of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) missions in Latin America, emphasizes the effects of the cultural changes in the development of nations, comparing Spanish and U.S. trajectories in the last decades:

Culture changes, for good and for bad. In the span of three decades, Spain has turned away from its traditional, authoritarian, hierarchical value system, which was at the root of both Spain's and Hispanic America's backwardness, and has immersed itself in the progressive Western European mainstream. During the same period, a racial revolution has occurred in America. . . . Yet, in the same three decades, the United States as a nation has experienced economic and political decline, principally, I believe, because of the erosion of the traditional American values—work, frugality, education, excellence, community—that had contributed so much to our earlier success. (1992:1)

Contrasting with Spain, Latin America continues to be dragged down by Iberian cultural heritage: "Traditional Iberian values and attitudes impede progress toward political pluralism, social justice, and economic dynamism" (1992:2). In Harrison's perspective, the regressive Latin American culture does not only represent the mirror that reflects the image of decadence that threatens the United States, but it is one of the responsible factors for the erosion of its traditional values: "The Chinese, the Japanese, and the Koreans who have migrated to the United States have injected a dose of the work ethic, excellence, and merit at a time when those values appear particularly beleaguered in the broader society. In contrast, the Mexicans who migrate to the United States bring with them a regressive culture that is disconcertingly persistent" (1992:223).

In the cultural approaches of Latin American underdevelopment, conceptions and political practices predominant up to the present come up as the chief responsible factors for the unsuccessful trajectory of the region. In the center of its diagnosis, they emphasize the ideas and experiences that marked the criticism of imperialism and dependency during the period of Cold War, which attributed underdevelopment to the exploitation of advanced capitalist countries, especially the United States. This line of argument stands out in David Landes', *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*: "The failure of Latin American development, all the worse by contrast with North America, has been attributed by local scholars and outside sympathizers to the misdeeds of stronger, richer nations. This vulnerability has been labeled 'dependency,' implying a state of inferiority where one does not control one's fate; one does as others dictate" (1998:327).

In spite of being more precisely addressed to the academic audience, Landes' analysis doesn't lack ideology: "Cynics might even say that dependency doctrines have been Latin America's most successful export. Meanwhile they are bad for effort and morale. By fostering a morbid propensity

to find fault with everyone but oneself, they promote economic impotence. *Even if they were true, it would be better to stow them*" (1998:328).

For this approach, the differences between wealth and poverty are not originated in the international division of work or the imperial politics of great powers but from the options and practices adopted by societies. "If we learn anything from the history of economic development, it is that culture makes all the difference. . . . Yet culture, in the sense of the inner values and attitudes that guide a population, frightens scholars" (1998:516). From this perspective, external factors cannot be considered structural determinants of poverty or wealth. "History tells us that the most successful cures for poverty come from within. Foreign aid can help, but windfall wealth, can also hurt. It can discourage effort and plant a crippling sense of incapacity" (1998:523).

Some diagnoses on the endemic character of underdevelopment help to build a picture of uncertainties related to the perception of potential in-variability of the developing world. In a recent version of the "pivotal states" concept, on the borders that separate the advanced capitalism from the "developing" world, Latin America appears with two representatives, Brazil and Mexico.

A pivotal state is so important regionally that its collapse would spell trans-boundary mayhem: migration, communal violence, pollution, disease, and so on. A pivotal state's steady economic progress and stability, on the other hand, would bolster its region's economic vitality and political soundness and benefit American trade and investment.

For the present, the following should be considered pivotal states: Mexico and Brazil; Algeria, Egypt, and South Africa; Turkey; India and Pakistan; and Indonesia. These states' prospects vary widely. India's potential for success, for example, is considerably greater than Algeria's; Egypt's potential for chaos is greater than Brazil's. But all face a precarious future, and their success or failure will powerfully influence the future of the surrounding areas and affect American interests. (Chase et al. 1995:37)⁵

A Territory Without Utopia

In the analysis presented here, we lay stress on two important dimensions of the debate on the strategic relevance of Latin America for the United States: the impacts on the country of the economic, political, and social evolution of the region and whether state assistance politics are needed or not. The parallel process of political and economic liberalization, which has

consolidated in the region since the 1980s, strengthened the hegemony of political forces tuned to the market and private initiative. This forms a breach in the predominant path since World War II. Within this context, the relationships with the United States reach a degree of convergence with few historical antecedents (Ayerbe, 1998).

While praising this situation, Lawrence Harrison criticizes its tardiness, which he attributes to cultural factors:

That Latin America has not made its peace with democratic capitalism—and the United States—until the last years of the twentieth century is principally the consequence of the incompatibility of traditional Iberian culture with political pluralism and the free market, on the one hand, and the inevitable resentment of the successful by the unsuccessful, on the other. (1997:69)

In spite of the consensus to stand out as positive aspects political democratization, economic liberalization and the good relations with the United States, some fears based on analogies with the recent past prevail. This is what most analysis, explicitly or implicitly, reveal. According to Madeleine Albright:

For today, with one lonely exception, every government in the hemisphere is freely elected. Every major economy has liberalized its system for investment and trade. With war in Guatemala ended, Central America is without conflict for the first time in decades. As recent progress toward settling the Equador-Peru border dispute reflects, nations are determined to live in security and peace from pole to pole. . . . Despite the many areas of progress, the region still faces serious challenges. Growing population make it harder to translate macroeconomic growth into higher standards of living. For many, the dividends of economic reform are not yet visible, while the costs of the accompanying austerity measures are. The building of democracy remains in all countries a work in progress, with stronger, more independent legal systems an urgent need in most. (1998:18–19)

For Elliot Abrams, the idea of the Western hemisphere must be regained and updated. Latin America will continue being a growing market for U.S. products and remain as a source of energetic resources. The demographic growth, effecting illegal immigration and drug traffic, are aspects of concern that justify keeping on the alert. "For the first time in U.S. history, there is no threat of foreign intervention in this region. The key remaining issue is whether the United States will recognize that with complete economic, military, and political domination comes the responsibility to

help maintain stability in the region through preventive, rather than curative, actions" (1993:55). Thomas Hirschfeld and Benjamin Schwarz, from the RAND Corporation, present a pessimistic vision of the future of the region. According to Hirschfeld, in a report prepared for the Army:

Today, after billions in loans, endless hours of advice, thousands of plans, and a population of skilled and knowledgeable Western university graduates in virtually every Latin government, we better understand the problems, but we do not have solutions. (1993:45)

The primary threats to U.S. interests in Latin America are derived from continued economic stagnation as populations rise. That combination leads to civil strife, authoritarian rule, ecological disaster, increased emigration, and disinclination to forgo easy earnings from drugs and arms. (1993:52)

For Schwarz, the arguments that combine endemic instability and the existence of strategic interests to justify military and economic assistance to the developing world lose basis with the end of the Cold War.

America's economic interests in the Third World are, in fact, small and shrinking. These countries simply do not produce enough to supply the lifeblood of the U.S. economy. The entire Third World, over 100 countries including the OPEC member's nations, accounts for less than 20 percent of the gross world product. Africa has a Gross National Product less than of Great Britain; all of Latin America has a combined GNP smaller than that of former West Germany. . . . The Third World, now and for the foreseeable future, is not the great untapped market and potential salvation of U.S. industry that proponents of peacetime engagement believe. (1994:269)

The economic interests of the United States in those countries become the responsibility of the private sector, which must assume the risks of its own investments. This dissociates those enterprises from the action of the armed forces, mainly bearing in mind that the access to those markets and their mineral resources is protected, notwithstanding eventual internal political changes. "With few opportunities to earn foreign exchange and attract investment, any radical or otherwise unfriendly regimes that might come to power in the underdeveloped world cannot afford the luxury of being perverse by denying American business and banks access to markets and investments" (Schwarz 1994:271).

This questioning of the idea that instability factors associated with underdevelopment demand a coordinated aid action brings forth the example of the Alliance for Progress, issued by the Kennedy Administration in 1961, which brought slight compensation in relation to the amount of ap-

plied resources. "Twenty years later . . . many of the countries that were to have benefits from the Alliance are good candidates for nation assistance" (1994:276). Schwarz associates with cultural factors the inefficiency of the aid: "The most important barriers to development . . . are profoundly and stubbornly rooted in the cultural and political heritage of the underdevelopment countries" (1994:277).

Like Schwarz, Harrison remarks on the insignificant economic relevance of Latin America for the United States:

Of the number NAFTA total (population) of 363 million, 86 million, or almost a quarter, are Mexicans, with per capita purchasing power one-tenth or less of that of a Canadian or American. In terms of an effective market for U.S. exports, then, 86 million Mexican convert into perhaps 8 million, about the population of Sweden. Similarly, 433 million, or 61 percent, of the FTAA total of 710 million are from Latin America and the Caribbean. Given the fact that Mexico's per capita income is above the Latin American average, those 433 million might convert into an effective market of 35 million, less than the population of Spain.

Thus, the *effective* population of NAFTA in 1990 would be 285 million, of FTAA 312 million, both substantially below the European Community (now "Union") total. (1997:205)

In spite of these facts, which show a part of reality, the analysis of the evolution of trade relations between the United States and Latin America shows a picture closer to Abrams's perspective. Since the first Bush Administration, expansion of trade becomes the principal issue of the Inter-american agenda. The Initiative for the Americas, issued in 1990 proposing the creation of a sole regional market, finds continuity with Clinton. At Miami's summit in December 1994, he proposed creating a Free Trade Area of the Americas for the year 2005.

As the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC/CEPAL) shows, notwithstanding the differences marked by Harrison between the "nominal population" and the "real population" of Latin America and the Caribbean compared with other regions, what is verified is a high expansive capacity of U.S. exports in the "effective Latin American market," which doesn't happen to Europe, that manages to keep the protection of those sectors that it considers strategic. Concretely, between 1990 and 1994, the U.S. exports to Latin America grew 79 percent, while imports barely grew 38 percent during the same time (CEPAL 1996:3). In this period, the region absorbs 15 percent of U.S. exports, with Brazil importing more than Scandinavian countries, Mexico more than Germany,

France, and Italy together, the Dominican Republic more than India and Indonesia, Chile more than Russia, and Costa Rica more than the whole of Eastern Europe (CEPAL).⁶

The analyses presented, which suggest different positions in U.S. foreign policy for Latin America, share the same vision regarding the precarious balance in which the region stands. The divergence is originated when assessing the effects in the United States of eventual economic and/or political unbalances, in a context where no external powers militarily threaten the region. The definition of the new assistance politics depends on the assessment of variables whose real impact remains within a hypothetical field.

Confronting the absence of systemic threats, the characterization of the American role in keeping regional stability offers two different conceptions: (1) a renewed Western hemisphere, with the United States leading the process of economic and cultural homogenization of the continent (Department of State, Abrams); (2) a neighbor with no "assistance" duties, leaving the private sector and multilateral organisms to make the decisions on politics of development aid (Hirschfeld, Schwartz, Harrison).

In reference to its identity, Latin America is considered a culturally hybrid region. Quoting Huntington:

Latin America could be considered either a subcivilization within Western civilization or a separate civilization closely affiliated with the West and divided as to whether it belongs in the West. For an analysis focused on the international political implications of civilizations, including the relations between Latin America, on the one hand, and North America and Europe, on the other, the latter is the more appropriate and useful designation. (1996:46)

For Huntington, the politics started by Salinas de Gortari in Mexico represents a positive example of alignment with the West in the "clash of civilizations":

Salinas dramatically reduced inflation, privatized large numbers of public enterprises, promoted foreign investment, reduced tariffs and subsidies, restructured the foreign debt, challenged the power of labor unions, increased productivity, and brought Mexico into the North American Free Trade Agreement with the United States and Canada. Salinas's reforms were designed to change Mexico from a Latin American country into a North American country. (1996:150)

Latin America and the "New World Order": End of History?

In the different approaches presented in this chapter, the potential contributions of Latin America to the "world disorder" are not originated in political, ideological, or cultural activism; the region represents no threat to Western hegemony. The eventual problems might originate in passive elements, as a result of a systemic collapse, product of an "endemic" incompetence. From the North's territorial vision, the perception of Latin America is clear and explicit: It is slightly relevant as an actor of any world order, prone to be assimilated by the West but with some restraint, not being capable of taking care of itself. Although not considered the West, being part of it represents the only possible utopia of the hegemonic project: political and economic liberalization, entering FTAA, an amplified version of NAFTA. Nevertheless, whatever praise given to the adoption of strategies that view as an inspirational model the capitalist democracies and to the excellent relationship with the United States, Latin America continues unique and lonely: unique in its peculiar culture impervious to progress, lonely in the extreme south of the West, separated by a frontier where the urgent priority is to build contention barriers.

Different from the perception of Latin America, when the glance is directed at the reality of the United States, the idea of nation becomes prominent. The strength of territorial frame as the place of production, circulation, and consumption of goods and services appears as permanent worry. The political projection of the country in the international scene represents a natural unfolding. The cultural values, which are references of the ideological discourse, give shape to the conscience of nationality.

Although fidelity to the principles of liberal capitalism is outside any controversy for the mentioned authors, we perceive a pragmatic concern with the local disintegrating effects of global reality. Intellectuals and representatives of the conservative establishment call on the need of new welfare policies together with clear actions to redeem national culture. By contrast, the government presses the other countries to deregulate their markets and adopt "the Western way of life." This is clearly a realist approach of national interest: within a domestic frame, protection of the economic and cultural space; within an international frame, the globalization discourse. While in the United States the hegemonic groups intensify the debate on the new meanings of national interest, Latin American neoliberals ridicule the "anachronism" to think about the nation, considered a typical behavior of our "perfect idiot." Opposed to this ideological posture, to recuperate the idea of Latin America as a center in which we enrich and

protect ourselves from the world continues to be a strategic challenge. With no hegemonic pretensions, there must be a twenty-first century where what will prevail will be dialogue and not conflict between civilizations. To build each one's own way, although an enormous challenge, is a reality that this author considers feasible. In this chapter, we pretend a less ambitious contribution: to present an external glance to stimulate one of the important components in the search for identity—the sentiment of loneliness.

Notes

1. Huntington coordinated the project "The Changing Security Environment and American National Interests," at the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University. Studies on "Clash of Civilizations" are part of that project.
2. We use the term "conservative" as a reference to those analyses that emphasize, when approaching national interest, recovering and strengthening cultural Western roots of the United States.
3. James Kurth, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Elliot Abrams took part in the security colloquium of the project, coordinated by Huntington.
4. Kristol is the founder of *The Public Interest* and *The National Interest* reviews.
5. Paul Kennedy, one of the authors of this chapter, took part in the security colloquium of the project coordinated by Huntington.
6. Between 1989 and 1994 Latin American trade with the United States moved from a surplus of nearly 3 billion dollars to a deficit of 1.8 billion (CEPAL, 1994). The commercial balance of the United States with the rest of the world in 1997 registered the following results: North America, deficit of 32.4 million dollars; Central and South America: surplus of 9.4 billion dollars; Western Europe, deficit of 17.5 billion; Eastern Europe deficit of 727 million; former USSR, deficit of 284 million; Pacific Basin, deficit of 12.1 billion. (Economic perspectives. USIS, vol. 3, no. 2, March 1998. Information obtained from the Commerce Department of the United States).

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