

## U.S.-Latin American Relations

As you can see from the timeline linked in sub-subunit 4.1.1, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the U.S. focused on trying to limit the power of the European powers (Spain, Britain, and France) in the hemisphere. The most important milestones include the Monroe Doctrine, Manifest Destiny, the Mexican-American War, and the resulting Treaty of Guadalupe that ceded half of Mexican territory to the United States (this is part of history where the famous Battle of the Alamo took place).

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most of Latin America was independent of its former European colonizers and the U.S. was a rising power, increasingly intervening economically, politically, and militarily. Throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a common theme to U.S.-Latin American relations: the U.S. believed it was the rightful power throughout the entire region and would use all of its powers to exercise control (political, economic, and military). The U.S. was largely successful in achieving its goals during this half century of intervention.

You should be familiar with the following milestones during this period: Platt Amendment (Cuba); Roosevelt Corollary; opening of Panama Canal; numerous interventions by the U.S. military in Central America and the Caribbean under Roosevelt's "Big Stick" policy (Mexico, Honduras, Nicaragua, Haiti, Dominican Republic); and Dollar Diplomacy, which was Taft's policy to justify using the growing American economic power to control our southern neighbors. Under Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy," U.S. intervention in Latin America shifted from military means to more diplomatic means. But military interventions did not cease, and by the late 1950s and early 1960s, the U.S. was heavily involved in numerous overt and covert military operations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, mostly fueled by fears of communist-inspired revolutions and growing Soviet influence in the region.

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century marked a turning point in U.S. relations with Latin America; for the first time, it had a major challenger to its power and influence in the form of the Soviet Union and its support for Marxist-Leninist (communist) regimes. The Cuban Missile crisis signaled the beginning of what would become a 40 year ideological and political rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union with Latin America as a major battleground. The main goal of U.S. policy during this time was to stop Soviet expansionism, and it used a variety of means to thwart Soviet influence. You should be familiar with not only the Cuban Missile Crisis, but also the (failed) Bay of Pigs Invasion (covertly sponsored by the U.S. government). President Kennedy announced an ambitious Alliance for Progress designed to win the hearts and minds of Latin Americans, but later administrations continued to use a combination of economic carrots and military sticks to maintain governments friendly to U.S. interests. Communist revolutionary movements in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador exacted a high cost to the U.S. in terms of military, economic, and political aid. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and the ensuing turn toward democracy throughout Latin America, U.S. relations entered another phase.

By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and continuing until the present, the major pre-occupation of U.S.-Latin American relations shifted to economics and trade. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was a major milestone that integrated trade relations among the three North American countries of Mexico, Canada, and the U.S. This spurred further trade integration efforts, with varying degrees of success (Unit 5, subunit 5.1 will focus on these efforts in more detail). Other issues have also been high on the agenda, including immigration and the trade in illegal drugs.