

Spring 2022

Session 3
The Good Neighbor Policy

1. The effects of US dollar diplomacy and gunboat diplomacy on LA
 - Annexing Puerto Rico, controlling Cuba, occupying Haiti, invading Nicaragua (Schoultz)
 - Applying the Monroe Doctrine, the Roosevelt Corollary + the Platt Amendment pushed matters to the limit, creating much ill will in LA
2. Resetting policy in the Western Hemisphere
 - Originally an initiative of President Herbert Hoover (1929-1933)
 - Upon taking office, Hoover went on a two-month tour of the region
 - A former Sec. of Commerce + shrewd businessman, he realized that military occupation was not a way to create friends
 - He rejected notion of military intervention to protect US companies
 - Yet, that was not sufficient, as under the Roosevelt Corollary the US had assigned itself the right of intervention to forestall European interventions to enforce the claims of their companies
3. Repudiating the Roosevelt Corollary (RC) in 1928
 - To gain Senate approval of the Briand-Kellogg Pact outlawing war
 - Quite a bit of to and fro, but a long document, "the Clark memorandum" was published in 1930, dissociating US policy from RC
 - Hoover was apologetic about the occupation of Haiti and Nicaragua
4. Yet, his efforts to withdraw US troops from Haiti met much opposition from the State Department and the Navy (one gem : "Haitian mentality only recognizes force, and appeal to reason and logic is unthinkable")
 - As a US diplomat in in Port-au-Prince put it : "the action of the Haitian, in common with the Latin in general, is in the main directed by emotion rather than by reason, which in the main directs the action of the Anglo-Saxon"
 - US condition for withdrawing (in 1934, under FDR) was that the country continued under a customs receivership under the US.
 - Hoover's efforts were ultimately undone by the Great Depression
5. FDR's new broom and LA policy
 - A key point was the avoidance of military intervention in the region
 - This was immediately put to the test in Cuba, rocked by instability
 - US Ambassador to Cuba S. Welles repeatedly asked for the Marines
 - Yet, FDR held back : there would have been quite a bit of blowback in the Americas
 - And for 30 years (the D.R. in 1965) there would not be another US military intervention in Latin America

6. Seventh International Conference American States, Montevideo, 1933
 - Almost unanimous support for an anti-intervention resolution
 - US had to finally go along with it, albeit with a reservation
 - And afterwards, FDR committed to no military interventions in LAC
7. In 1934 the US Congress passed the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act
 - Trade agreements to lower tariffs with several LA countries followed
 - US- LAC trade tripled in value from 1934-1941
 - US also abrogated the Platt Amendment in Cuba
 - Also, measures to make treaties with Panama and Mexico + palatable
8. Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas oil nationalization in 1938
 - Strong pushback from US companies, but World War II was looming
 - Need to avoid providing an opening to the Axis powers
 - Realizing the need for a broader Western Hemisphere strategy to do so
9. The role of Nelson Rockefeller in it all
 - Grandson of John D. Rockefeller, who made his millions in oil
 - Mexican muralist Diego Rivera's mural at the Rockefeller Center
 - The Office for the Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American Republics (1940) with young Nelson in charge
10. First case made for US aid in LAC in any systematic fashion
 - US foreign aid triggered by national security considerations
 - The need to counter the German presence in the Americas
 - A staff of 1500, and an ample budget to do so
11. Fostering links with the Latin American militaries
 - Efforts to come up with a single response to WWII did not prosper
 - Getting rid of President Arnulfo Arias in Panama
 - The infamous US "Proclaimed List" of 1800 Latin Americans supposedly beholden to the Axis powers , which triggered criticism
12. After Pearl Harbor : aligning the American republics
 - A bit like herding cats : strong Argentine opposition at Rio Conference
 - Resolution ended up being much weaker than expected
 - Yet, both Brazil and Mexico pitched in strongly in the US war effort
 - Keeping the prices of commodities low also helped in the latter
13. The Good Neighbor Policy played a role in all this, but + was needed in the post-war world order :
 - Yes, no Marines landing in the Caribbean, but also
 - Frequent high-level meetings
 - Presidential visits abroad
 - New bureaucracies to institutionalize Inter-American relations, all of which were to emerge post-1945