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**Jeffrey F. Taffet. *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Latin America.***

New York: Routledge, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-415-97771-5 (\$28.95, paperback).

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Introduction by Dustin Walcher, Southern Oregon University

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On 13 March 1961, Latin American diplomats, U.S. officials, and other dignitaries gathered in the East Room of the White House to hear President John F. Kennedy outline a new vision for inter-American partnership. He promised to change the nation's policy toward Latin America by emphasizing the use of U.S. power to facilitate regional modernization and economic development. The resulting Alliance for Progress was among the most heralded foreign policy programs launched during the 1960s. Its backers promised that it would promote positive social, political, and economic change in Latin America from within a liberal framework. It would, therefore, offer a non-communist alternative to Fidel Castro's ascendant revolutionary model. Yet despite the Alliance's dramatic beginning, and status as one of the Kennedy administration's signature programs, by the end of the decade it was almost universally regarded as a failure.

Historians have been slow to provide the Alliance for Progress with the kind of deep and sustained analysis that only a scholarly monograph can offer. Indeed, in light of the program's significance in the early 1960s, it is remarkable that Jeffrey Taffet has become the first historian to produce such a study. To be sure, others have examined the Alliance. Stephen Rabe dedicated the last chapter of his analysis of the Kennedy administration's approach toward Latin America to the program. In his examination of modernization theory, Michael Latham also devoted a chapter to the Alliance. Contemporaries provided somewhat more focused attention to the topic, the most notable example of which is the work of Jerome Levinson and Juan de Onis.<sup>1</sup>

Taffet analyzes the Alliance from two distinct but related angles. The first three substantive chapters explore the program's origins, implementation, and evolution from Washington's point of view. The next four chapters examine the Alliance's effects in the four countries that received the greatest amount of U.S. assistance (the countries include Chile, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia). Before concluding, Taffet returns to a broad view in a chapter on the Alliance's "slow fade to irrelevance." Among the reviewers, Andrew Kirkendall, David Sheinin, and Michael Wise are particularly enthusiastic about this approach, although they do not agree with all of Taffet's country-level interpretations.

Indeed, the five reviewers find much to praise in Taffet's work. On the question of causation, Taffet argues that "a purely economic analysis misses the point. The Alliance for Progress was not an economic program; it was a political program designed to create certain types of political outcomes" (p. 10). The reviewers agree. "Political aims took precedence over sensible development efforts," writes Max Paul Friedman, "part of what Taffet convincingly shows to be a continuation of a historic U.S. approach in Latin America, despite Kennedy's hope that the Alliance would represent a break from the past." Michael

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, 1999), 148-172; Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill, 2000); Jerome Levinson and Juan de Onis, *The Alliance that Lost its Way: A Critical Report on the Alliance for Progress* (Chicago, 1970).

Gobat agrees that political considerations drove the Alliance, and finds that the program was “undermined from within.” Like Taffet, he observes that the rhetoric of cooperation inherent within the Alliance’s framework masked Washington’s unilateralism. Moreover, the reviewers agree that by using aid to achieve political ends, U.S. officials undermined the larger development project.

Although largely laudatory, the reviewers harbor some crucial reservations. Kirkendall does not believe “that Taffet adequately captures the spirit of the Alliance,” in large part because “he does not emphasize strongly enough the region’s own interest in development.” Sheinin goes further, suggesting that as historians examine the lives of those who benefitted from Alliance programs they will increasingly question the conclusion that it was an unambiguous failure. “Taffet’s assessment suggests,” writes Sheinin, “that if one were to begin with a larger set of research hypotheses on the Alliance in a context of imperial expansion as well as the historical moment in distinct Latin American national histories, then our understanding of success and failure might hinge on a set of factors beyond the contradictions built into policy.” Along similar lines, Gobat contends that because Taffet’s “analysis rarely strays beyond the realm of policymakers, important questions about the program’s local impact remain unanswered.”

Taken together, these critiques point to the scope of Taffet’s work. *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy* embodies a traditional approach to the study of the history of U.S. foreign relations. It emphasizes the agency of policymakers in Washington and Latin American capitals. It is primarily concerned with the causes and consequences of official U.S. decision-making. It situates the state at the center of analysis. That there is so much the reviewers find to praise speaks to the ongoing importance of considered and well-researched scholarship engaging traditional questions. Indeed, the adjective traditional must not be read as an indictment. At the same time, the reviewers agree that Taffet’s approach leaves work to be done by subsequent historians – especially on the local effects of Alliance programs.

Even operating within the study’s existing framework, some of the reviewers suggest that Taffet could have gone further in his analysis. Friedman argues that “the fundamental problem with the Alliance lies deeper than Taffet recognizes.” The Alliance did not fail merely because it lost sight of its original developmentalist objectives, but rather because from the start it privileged rightist allies over Latin American reformers who would have been natural allies in the pursuit of its stated objectives. He concludes that “Kennedy and his successors had built an Alliance against Progress, and unlike its halting competitor, it proved fairly effective.” Weis makes the same fundamental point, writing that the Alliance “failed as a development program, although it was at least a moderate success as an anticommunist tool.” In the context of this roundtable, Friedman and Weis can be read in dialogue with Sheinin. He points to Antonio López (not his real name), a reasonably successful Colombian who benefitted from Alliance programs and is today sympathetic to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez – a U.S. adversary. Sheinin then asks whether López’s support of Chavez “marks an Alliance failure”? If success is defined by the political objectives of the program’s architects, Friedman and Weis appear to answer that López indeed represents an Alliance failure. In turn, Sheinin offers that historians should not

allow the objectives of U.S. policymakers in the 1960s to provide the only criteria by which they measure success and failure.

At its heart, *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy* evaluates the utility of economic assistance as a means of achieving political objectives, and finds it lacking. As the Alliance waned during the 1960s, Washington increasingly aligned with right-wing dictatorships. Friedman disagrees with Taffet's assertion that those authoritarian governments constituted "cheap and effective" vehicles for containing communism. Certainly dictatorships were not cheap from the standpoint of their many victims. But they did inhibit the rise of new communist governments. The Machiavellian U.S. partnership with military regimes that ultimately prosecuted dirty wars against their own populations would have been tragic under any circumstances, but was doubly so coming on the heels of the Alliance's unrealized promises of democracy, economic modernization, and social stability.

Despite the questions the reviewers raise, they agree that Taffet's book makes a significant contribution to the literature. The Alliance for Progress finally has a thoughtful monograph that will long be of use to specialists in the field. It will be required reading for those interested in the history of U.S.-Latin American relations and the politics of economic development.

#### **Participants:**

**Jeffrey F. Taffet** is an Associate Professor of History in the Department of Humanities at the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, NY. He earned his B.A. from Franklin and Marshall College and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Georgetown University. He is currently working on a project that examines the ways municipal leaders in New York City inserted themselves into international political questions in the Cold War era.

**Max Paul Friedman** is Associate Professor of History at American University. After receiving his PhD from U.C. Berkeley, he was a Woodrow Wilson Postdoctoral Fellow and taught at Boulder, Tallahassee, and Cologne. His book, *Nazis and Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War II* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), won the Herbert Hoover Prize in U.S. History and the A.B. Thomas Prize in Latin American Studies. He is working on a study of anti-Americanism and U.S. foreign relations.

**Michel Gobat** is an associate professor of history at the University of Iowa. He is the author of *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Duke, 2005). His current research focuses on Central America's encounter with U.S. expansionism in the age of Manifest Destiny.

**Andrew J. Kirkendall** is an associate professor of history at Texas A&M University. He received his PhD in Latin American history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His book *Paulo Freire and the Cold War Politics of Literacy* will be published later this year. His article "Kennedy Men and the Fate of the Alliance for Progress in LBJ Era Brazil and Chile" appeared in the December 2007 issue of *Diplomacy & Statecraft*.

**David Sheinin** is Professor of History at Trent University (Canada) and Académico Correspondiente (Canadá) of the Academia Nacional de la Historia de la República Argentina. He has published seven books as author or editor including *Argentina and the United States: An Alliance Contained* (University of Georgia Press, 2006). His current projects include the histories of boxing and society in Latin America after 1950 and a history of the foreign policies of the last Argentine dictatorship.

**Dustin Walcher** is Assistant Professor of History at Southern Oregon University and a review editor for H-Diplo. He received his Ph.D. in 2007 from the Ohio State University. A specialist in the history of U.S. foreign relations, his current project examines the failure of U.S.-led development initiatives and the rise of political violence in Argentina during the late 1950s and 1960s.

**W. Michael Weis** received his Ph.D. from The Ohio State University in 1988. He is currently Professor of History at Illinois Wesleyan University. He is the author of *Cold Warriors and Coups d'Etat: Brazilian-American Relations, 1945-1964* (University of New Mexico Press, 1993) and a dozen articles/book chapters dealing with United States-Latin American relations. He is currently working on a book, entitled *The Beatles and Our World*.

*The Alliance against Progress*

When John F. Kennedy announced “the *Alianza para Progreso*” to a roomful of Latin American diplomats in March 1961, one or another must have suppressed a smile. Kennedy had tasked speechwriter Richard Goodwin with preparing his remarks, and Goodwin did not know enough Spanish to realize that leaving the definite article out of the phrase “*para el progreso*” would make the President sound benighted. Many of Kennedy’s advisers on Latin America had as little Latin American experience as Goodwin, including Assistant Secretary of State Edward Martin, and Special Assistant Arthur Schlesinger, who believed that “Latinos resent the idea that money solves everything,” and offered his own recommendation: “It will be necessary to go in for a certain amount of high-flown corn.”<sup>1</sup>

This cultural gap was one reason smiles soon turned to frowns. Peru’s leftist reformer Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre wrote that the phrase “‘Alliance for Progress’ is not enough. It is a motto without force, without attraction, without resonance in the Spanish and Portuguese tongues, and it has no attractive social content.”<sup>2</sup> The Alliance’s many other deficiencies, so ably documented by Jeffrey Taffet, were even more important: Economic aid came with strings attached, requiring Latin American countries to pursue unpopular austerity measures, or to divert some of their resources from investing in development into buying overpriced U.S. goods. When they complied, as Taffet shows in chapters on the Dominican Republic and Colombia, they were rewarded with more funds, more loans, and more conditions. When they objected, they got little sympathy from a policy-making establishment that, for all its talk about partnership and progress, could not shed some of the classic stereotypes of Latin inferiority. Goodwin thought Brazilian complaints about U.S. economic heavyhandedness were “completely irrational, highly emotional.”<sup>3</sup> Skilled diplomats recognized what was going wrong. Undersecretary of State George Ball in 1962 had to explain that a “buy American” requirement, if applied to construction projects in Argentina, would mean shipping lumber from the United States to build houses at the other end of the world, an “astronomical” use of limited funds that would turn a development program into a costly boondoggle.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alan L. McPherson, *Yankee No! Anti-Americanism in U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 73. See also Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Haya de la Torre to Sacha Volman, 5 Jul 1961, Box 8, Latin American Policy, Goodwin Papers, John F. Kennedy Library (JFKL), Boston.

<sup>3</sup> “Brazil, Peru, Common Market, Berlin, and Canada,” 30 Jul 1962, Presidential Recordings, Tape 1, President’s Office Files, JFKL.

<sup>4</sup> “Feldman-Ball Telcon,” 23 Jul 1962, Box 1, Alliance for Progress, Ball Papers, JFKL.

Political aims took precedence over sensible development efforts, part of what Taffet convincingly shows to be a continuation of a historic U.S. approach in Latin America, despite Kennedy's hope that the Alliance would represent a break with the past. Taffet demonstrates that in the case of the Dominican Republic, once the Johnson administration decided to intervene to prevent the return of reformist former president Juan Bosch to power, all forms of aid aimed at strengthening the position of anti-Bosch military and business elites before and after the Marine invasion of 1965 were simply dubbed "Alliance for Progress" funds. That kind of cynical ploy did not increase the program's credibility.

The treatment of Chile is quite effective in showing how large amounts of aid with very clear political aims failed either to nurture good relations with President Eduardo Frei, or to prevent Salvador Allende from coming to power. Taffet also shows, sometimes inadvertently, how muddle-headed were key aspects of the Alliance program. He notes that U.S. officials wanted to make certain that Chileans knew where their aid was coming from, so they named rural communities that had received housing assistance after U.S. states like Vermont and Kentucky. This goes unmentioned, as does a photograph of U.S. officials at another such project walking under a welcoming banner that reads "Bienvenidos a Maine." Planners who came up with this scheme had to be pretty tone-deaf; somehow they thought any negative reaction from treading on Chilean nationalist sentiment would be outweighed by getting Chileans to remember the "Maine."

Some passages will not convince all readers. Right-wing dictatorship was not "cheap and effective" by many measures. (9) If Communism was still "a big problem" in the early 1970s, that did not prevent the Nixon administration from merrily signing agreements with the two Communist superpowers, and suggests this was not quite the compelling, if morally repugnant, rationale for supporting dictatorship in Latin America that Taffet claims. Taffet states that foreign aid programs are "a window into the national political soul" because they "express a set of Judeo-Christian ideas held by most Americans about the moral responsibilities the rich have to the poor." (3-4) Set aside the fact that other world religions place an equally strong emphasis on charity, and that such phrasing inevitably rings hollow in an era of callous Wall Street bankers awarding themselves multi-million dollar bonuses "earned" by the transfer of tax revenue to their profit and loss statements. More relevant in this context would be the reality that foreign aid programs are terribly unpopular with most Americans. In most years, about 60% think we spend too much on foreign aid, compared to only 6 or 7 percent who think we spend too little. Americans regularly tell pollsters that foreign aid is a large proportion of the total federal budget, guessing that it is as much as 30 percent of total spending, when it is usually less than one percent—a figure that places the United States twenty-first out of twenty-one industrialized donor countries in proportional terms.<sup>5</sup> That public opinion is the very opposite of how Taffet characterizes it helps explain a structural impediment to Alliance

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Ian Smillie, "Optical and Other Illusions: Trends and Issues in Public Thinking about Development Co-operation," 22-3, in idem and Henny Helmich, eds., *Public Attitudes and International Development Co-operation* (Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998).

success: members of the public and business sectors put pressure on their members of Congress, who insist that foreign aid dollars sent abroad be sluiced back home to be spent in the United States. The constricted impact of such “foreign aid” upon local development in the target areas is predictable.

But the fundamental problem with the Alliance lies deeper than Taffet recognizes. It is to be found not in the loss of the original “reformist goals and moral compass,” (8) but in the fulfillment of other, more compelling original goals guided by a moral compass that placed a sweeping anti-communism above all other considerations. Kennedy declared in 1962 that “Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.”<sup>6</sup> But he and his successors then worked doggedly to deprive of power the very sectors of Latin American societies most interested in carrying out the kind of “peaceful revolution” necessary for reducing poverty and inequality—land reform, workers’ rights, progressive taxation, rural development, public spending on health and education, and democratization of political power. When leaders arose who might carry out peaceful revolution of this sort, such as João Goulart in Brazil or Salvador Allende in Chile, the full power of the United States was brought to bear against them. While proclaiming a partnership for economic development and cultivating leftist social democrats as long as they did not carry out leftist programs, U.S. administrations funneled aid, arms, and ideological training toward internal security programs that engaged in the systematic repression of leftist and popular movements throughout the region—movements that were the natural constituencies for high-flown Alliance aims. Kennedy and his successors had built an Alliance against Progress, and unlike its halting competitor, it proved fairly effective.

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<sup>6</sup> Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1993), 156.

Review by Michel Gobat, University of Iowa

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[This revised review, which originally appeared in the *American Historical Review*, June 2008, 113:3, 872–873 is reprinted with permission. © 2008 by the American Historical Association.]

Contemporary U.S. “nation-building” efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan have frequently elicited comparisons with the Marshall Plan. But perhaps the better comparison is the 1960s Alliance for Progress, which the Kennedy administration couched as a Marshall Plan for Latin America. Under this aid program, the United States sought to promote democracy in a region with a long history of authoritarianism by modernizing its “traditional” social and economic structures. Ultimately, the Alliance for Progress failed to achieve its main social and economic goals, while its democratizing project ended with much of Latin America under brutal military rule.

Few historians have examined this failure. The main historical study has hitherto been Stephen Rabe’s *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (1999), which explores the program’s origins and initial implementation under the Kennedy administration. Jeffrey Taffet’s book, by contrast, not only traces the Alliance for Progress’ course through the Kennedy and Johnson administrations but also illuminates in unprecedented ways the role that Latin American governments played in its rise and fall. Based largely on newly released U.S. government sources, Taffet’s clearly written study is a valuable—and timely—contribution that sheds new light on the most ambitious U.S. effort to reshape Latin America in its own image.

Taffet’s main goal is to illuminate the limits of economic aid as a tool of U.S. foreign policy. He first examines how the Cuban revolution’s embrace of communism pushed the Kennedy administration to design the Alliance for Progress. If U.S. officials had previously feared that external forces would spread communism to Latin America, the triumph of the Cuban revolution led them to focus on communism’s internal sources, especially poverty, social inequality, and the absence of democracy. To curb communism’s appeal in Latin America, U.S. policymakers drew on the insights of U.S. modernization theorists to develop a massive aid and reform program designed to promote economic development, social justice (largely via land reform), and democracy throughout the region. In defending the Alliance for Progress, President Kennedy famously warned that “those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.”

The bulk of Taffet’s study examines how Kennedy’s “peaceful revolution” was undermined from within. From the start, many U.S. congressmen opposed financing a 10-year, \$20 billion undertaking that appeared to threaten U.S. business interests. The Alliance for Progress also suffered from a weak bureaucracy and resistance by Latin America’s conservative elites. The program subsequently experienced crippling cuts as the Johnson administration struggled with the soaring costs of the Vietnam War and Great Society programs. When President Nixon essentially ended the Alliance for Progress in 1969, it had already, as Chile’s President Eduardo Frei noted, “lost its way.”

Ultimately, however, Taffet argues that the program's failure stemmed mainly from U.S. officials' unwillingness to engage their most natural Latin American allies as real partners. He develops this argument by examining (in separate chapters) the Alliance for Progress' impact on the four countries that received most of its funds. In Brazil and the Dominican Republic, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations used the program to pressure the left-leaning governments of João Goulart and Juan Bosch, which backed the Alliance's reforms, to drop their support for revolutionary Cuba and proscribe local Communists. Unable to sway Goulart and Bosch, U.S. officials deployed the program's funds to first destabilize their governments and then prop up their unconstitutional, anti-reformist successors. In Chile and Colombia, by contrast, the U.S. government granted aid to reformist yet reliably anti-communist governments throughout the 1960s. But even here the Alliance for Progress' successes were limited, largely because U.S. officials forced their Chilean and Colombian counterparts to forsake development projects in favor of economic stabilization programs.

Taffet breaks new ground by revealing how the Alliance for Progress antagonized its staunchest Latin American supporters. But since his analysis rarely strays beyond the realm of policymakers, important questions about the program's local impact remain unanswered. Did its social reforms, as some studies of Chile imply, further polarize local societies and thus inadvertently contribute to the region's eventual turn toward military rule? Taffet also reveals little about the program's effects for civil-military relations, even though U.S. officials encouraged Latin American militaries to implement their reforms in the countryside via "civic action projects." Designed to strengthen the military's respect for democracy did these projects instead help militarize rural society and thus undermine democratic rule?

In sum, Taffet greatly advances our understanding of the role that U.S. officials played in one of the most tragic U.S. policy failures in Latin America. Contrary to conventional wisdom, he shows that the failure of the Alliance for Progress stemmed not only from U.S. officials' anti-communist paranoia but above all from their stubborn belief in U.S. superiority. As Taffet concludes, U.S. officials ran the Alliance for Progress as if it were anything but a real alliance.

This is a book we have long needed. Historians of U. S. foreign relations have tended to ignore the “other” major foreign policy failure of the 1960s, the Alliance for Progress, perhaps because of a fear of death by immersion in dry bureaucratic reports. It is certainly the best book on the subject in English since Jerome Levinson and Juan de Onís, *The Alliance that Lost its Way: A Critical Report on the Alliance for Progress* (1970). Taffet is a man of fine judgements, who is particularly good on economic issues. It is also one of those rare first books which is not merely a revised version of a doctoral dissertation (his Georgetown dissertation focused on Chile alone).

He provides an overview of the program and then focuses on four case studies. Certainly, some readers might be surprised by his choice of countries. Thomas Field, a doctoral candidate at the London School of Economics, suggested at the 2009 Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations conference that based on his own research, Bolivia was central to the Alliance for Progress in the early years. And certainly many will be surprised to learn that after Brazil, Chile, and Colombia, the Dominican Republic was the fourth largest recipient of Alliance money. Nevertheless, Taffet convinces me that he made the right choices even if the U. S. may have made the wrong ones.

I don't think, however, that Taffet adequately captures the spirit of the Alliance. From a Latin Americanist's (and particularly from a Brazilianist's) perspective, I would say that he does not emphasize strongly enough the region's own interest in development. And certainly the book would have been a different one if he had done more to engage the burgeoning historical literature on modernization and development. Although it was a reaction to the rise of Fidel Castro, the Alliance for Progress still represented an attempt to fight the Cold War in a way which was preemptive, positive, and responsive to the region's needs. Surely, Taffet is right in arguing that idealism was usually sacrificed to political expediency. Two of Kennedy's key advisers on Latin American matters, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and Ralph Dungan, challenged the president to be more creative and less orthodox in terms of economic policy, but both men, in the end, found their advice being ignored. (Schlesinger's “revenge,” if one wants to call it that, was to write a biography of JFK in which he could paint him in a more Schlesingerian light.)

I must admit that I see Chilean president Eduardo Frei quite differently than Taffet does. Frei was not so independent or critical of the U. S. (and certainly never “anti-American”), but he was also ambitious and had a larger vision of the changes he wanted to see take place. Despite the setbacks in his agrarian reform plans, his encouragement of rural unionization in particular did a good deal to make the country even more democratic. Taffet might usefully have engaged with Heidi Tinsman's work in this regard.<sup>1</sup> And as an article I wrote

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<sup>1</sup> Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950-1973* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

suggests (it appeared too late for Taffet to consult it), I certainly think that U. S. ambassador Dungan was much more sympathetic to Frei than is indicated here.<sup>2</sup>

It was not easy for the United States to find Latin American leaders who were both pro-U.S. and interested in reform. U.S. policymakers, for their part, reflecting the immaturity of a young superpower, seemed to always want to hear praise. They could not imagine that a leader could be skeptical of U. S. aims but not anti-democratic. Latin American presidents who sought an “independent” foreign policy seemed too much like the neutralists or non-aligned forces U.S. officials feared elsewhere, and independence in one’s own backyard was not acceptable. There was so much that needed to be done in Latin America, but so few whom the U. S. was willing to trust to do it.

Brazilian President João Goulart’s interest in reform was somewhat poorly defined at times; even fuzzier, as U.S. Ambassador Lincoln Gordon complained, was his grasp of economics. When the Gordon papers became available at the John F. Kennedy Library, our understanding of U.S. -Brazilian relations during the Alliance years will undoubtedly become more complicated, yet the materials which have come to light more recently suggest that the Kennedy administration was not of one mind regarding “Jango.” But Taffet is right to stress how the administration used development aid to try and influence the 1962 by-elections. His overall picture of U.S. policy in Brazil is on the money.

If Taffet does not take the “alliance” part of the equation seriously, he also makes a convincing case that few U.S. policymakers did either. Latin American countries were supposed to more than match the \$20 billion the United States would provide with \$80 billion of their own. Yet many Latin American countries seem to have missed that in the fine print as well.

In any case, Taffet proves what he set out to prove, that the Alliance for Progress was “a political program designed to create certain kinds of political outcomes” (p. 10). This entailed supporting in the early 1960s a conservative like Chilean president Jorge Alessandri whom Washington generally found quite frustrating. The U.S. convinced him to support just enough reform to make voting for Salvador Allende seem less of an option to many in 1964. In Brazil, having supported the overthrow of Goulart, the U.S. then plowed money into a military dictatorship which no one seems to have anticipated, and yet they did it while invoking the Alliance. In the Dominican Republic, the U.S. chose not to support reformist president Juan Bosch, who, like Goulart, didn’t sufficiently prove his anti-communist credentials (though in neither country were Communists a serious threat). Instead, in the long run and after the 1965 invasion, it meant supporting Trujillo lite, Joaquin Balaguer, and promoting longstanding U.S. interests at any cost over reform. Only in Colombia (though I would also add in Chile under Frei) did it mean supporting governments which, privately, U.S. officials could feel proud in supporting. And if U. S. aid

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew Kirekendall, “Kennedy Men and the Fate of the Alliance for Progress in LBJ Era Brazil and Chile,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 18:4 (December 2007): 745-772.

could make a difference there, it was in part because Colombia did not need U.S. aid quite so desperately.

The program's structural and administrative deficiencies have long been well-known. Furthermore, the lack of congressional support for foreign aid was a given throughout the Cold War. And if Latin America's economic development hopes were undermined by a population explosion in the 1960s, they were also subject to the vagaries of commodity prices (like Colombian coffee and Chilean copper). If Latin American countries had been more politically stable, the Alliance might have achieved more, but there would have been no perceived need for it.

In the end, the Alliance for Progress was neither.

**A**t age forty-five, Antonio López (not his real name) has a life he could never have imagined as a child. And in many regards, Jeffrey F. Taffet's wonderful book tells the precursor narrative to López's story. An accountant for a large corporation in Cartagena, Colombia, López is a child of the Alliance for Progress and he knows it. Born into poverty, he lived in a neighborhood where, when it rained heavily, the water would often rise a foot or three in the streets and in peoples' homes. His father worked at an industrialized dairy and became a local union organizer at a propitious moment; as López recalls, there was Alliance for Progress funding available not only to help his father sharpen his leadership skills, but to retrain and to improve his work situation. Having capitalized on those opportunities, López's father was able to move the family to a nicer (drier) neighborhood and could send his son to a small private school with a technical orientation (also funded by the Alliance, according to López). From there, López jumped to post-secondary education, good jobs, and a middle class lifestyle. While he does not have enough money to travel outside Colombia, he does have plenty of time to enjoy life in Cartagena which now includes Saturday afternoon soccer games on a company team and a *pro bono* position managing the accounts of a state amateur athletics federation (in essence, making certain that funding for athletes reaches those same athletes).

That López credits the Alliance as one of many factors in his success underlines two key ironies. While many scholars, like Taffet, have shown tragic policy contradictions and failings embedded from the outset in Alliance plans and projects, and while "national" histories like that of Colombia after 1970 do not reflect the lofty John F. Kennedy administration visions for growth and prosperity that were refracted through the Alliance, López's life – times several million -- is precisely what United States policy makers in the 1960s might have hoped for decades down the road. Moreover, López's trajectory – even if only a single case -- marks a second notable Alliance success (though perhaps not one envisioned as such by policymakers). Whatever the Alliance created in López, it did not produce either a "pro-" or "anti-American" in any sort of Cold War context. A reasoned opponent of his president, Álvaro Uribe (the staunchest ally of the United States in the hemisphere), López is a thoughtful anti-authoritarian who supports Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez's redistributive politics. Ironically, as it turns out, and were one to risk morphing Colombian onto American politics, one might find this child of the Alliance more Michael Harrington than Irving Kristol.

López may be one of many who best represent the happy outcome of what Jeffrey Taffet argues was the Alliance as "great hope" (p.195) for U.S. policymakers in their Cold War struggle against communism in the Americas. In a monograph that is extremely well-written, that moves with alacrity, that draws on a masterful review of the secondary literatures, and that is based on original primary research in recently opened U.S. government documents, Taffet has produced a tight, scholarly, but at the same time accessible synthesis of that hope and what it became. Despite continuities the author skillfully explores, Taffet ably shows that the Alliance marked key departures from pre-

1960 American approaches to Latin America, highlighting Washington's commitment to long-term economic growth and political stability in the Americas.

The Alliance did not achieve its goals. Problems included bureaucratic entanglements, a lack of sustained congressional support (financial and political) for the project, Alliance director Teodoro Moscoso's weak position within the Kennedy administration's hierarchy, a failure to consult adequately with Latin American partners, a punitive quality to U.S. policy toward Latin American governments, as well as the imposition of "unwieldy, impractical, inefficient, and ignored" (p.195) mechanisms for achieving development. Taffet is at his best, in fact, showing how Alliance ideals came undone.

There is an effective balance (one that will be useful to Alliance neophytes) between chapters on how policy and action unfolded in Washington, and chapters on how the Alliance was applied in four nations -- Chile, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia. These latter chapters highlight Alliance failures, ranging from the speed with which American policymakers gave up on reform in Chile, the undermining of democratic rule in Brazil before 1964, the ominous inclusion of military assistance under the Alliance umbrella in the Dominican Republic, and the ironies of relative Alliance successes in Colombia in the context of that country's long descent toward endemic violence.

One key conclusion that Taffet reaches in the case of Colombia is that it is impossible to assess the exact impact of U.S. aid "on overall economic change in Colombia during the 1960s or beyond" (p. 173). Taffet is not throwing up his hands here. He has plenty to say about the nature of Alliance aid to Colombia and how Americans did and did not work effectively with their Colombian counterparts. But Taffet's argument identifies three key points of departure for future research. Most important (and as the case of Antonio López reflects), as Taffet writes of Colombia, we have little idea beyond the macroeconomic and past a narrow assessment of "ideals" in broadly political terms, of how successful the Alliance was. López's case shows, first, and perhaps not surprisingly in terms of how funding was distributed in hundreds of programs across the Americas, that accomplishments were likely piecemeal but not unimportant. This study suggests the need for more research in national and regional sources in Latin American countries where the Alliance was effected. Moreover by signaling the importance of the Alliance as a cultural initiative (in the production of comic books for Latin Americans, for example) Taffet suggests that much more work might be undertaken in Latin America to uncover the cultural component of American development and aid policy.

A second area for further work is in the assessment of the Alliance outside the parameters of its conception. Taffet expertly follows and takes in new directions a long tradition in the literature that has assessed success and failure largely as a function of the ideals, politics, and economic policy that explicitly underlay Alliance development and execution – success, then, as measured by the terms the Alliance itself established. But Taffet's assessment suggests that if one were to begin with a larger set of research hypotheses on the Alliance in a context of imperial expansion as well as the historical moment in distinct Latin American national histories, then our understanding of success and failure might hinge on a set of factors beyond the contradictions built into policy -- bureaucratic weaknesses in

the Alliance, for example, and President Kennedy's related need to micromanage the program.

A third area for future research and analysis might begin by combining an oddity in Alliance expectations with policy contradictions that transcend foreign policies. There is an absurdity in the United States trying to sell democracy to Latin America in the early 1960s (one recognized by Latin Americans) while the Kennedy Administration failed or was not strong enough to end segregation in the South. At the same time, there are hard questions that should be asked about why Salvador Allende's election in Chile must necessarily be viewed as an Alliance "failure." Would this mean that Antonio López's support of Hugo Chávez marks an Alliance failure as well? There is more work to be done on how the Alliance fit into larger domestic and foreign policy problems during the Cold War. Taffet does excellent work, for example, in showing how Congress pulled the rug out from under the Alliance by not providing necessary financial support. But he does so in a section that is set apart from other parts of the story. Scholars might reasonably ask a range of questions that would more closely integrate the Alliance with an analysis of congressional and other national political developments around urban growth, social welfare spending, poverty, and questions of race, among a range of important problems.

In *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy*, Jeffrey Taffet asks readers to step back from the largely economic assessments of the past in viewing the Alliance as more than a simple equation of money and progress according to specific sets of numbers. He has done a formidable job of showing that the problem is messier than that -- and has opened our eyes to new possibilities.

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There is still not a definitive history of the Alliance for Progress, which is ironic really, because few initiatives dealing with United States-Latin American relations began with so much fanfare and few caught the imagination of people when it was announced.<sup>1</sup> Although this is not is not the definitive history of the Alliance either, Jeffrey Taffet has written an outstanding book on an important topic. The Alliance for Progress represents one of the few moments in the post World War II period that Latin America received any real attention from United States policy makers. The Alliance captures the essence of the 1960s: it was idealistic and compassionate, beautifully articulated, based on solid but contradictory social science theory, and abandoned before it had the chance to achieve its ambitious goals. To paraphrase Todd Gitlin, who wrote about the various protest movements in the decade, “what was happening was not what we thought was happening.” The Alliance was not what everyone thought it was. Increasingly I believe that the Alliance for Progress was merely a slogan that meant something different to everyone who uttered it.

Jeffrey Taffet has done a lot to help us understand just what happened and why. This work is not an exhaustive history of the program, but rather a series of case studies that highlight the purposes and pitfalls of using aid to achieve foreign policy goals. He shows that the Alliance failed for three basic reasons. First, there was an inherent conflict between the lofty humanitarian goals and a desire to fight the cold war. Also, political considerations proved more important in developing aid priorities than development or humanitarian considerations. Finally, as an anticommunist tool the Alliance supported the very people who opposed its political and economic goals. Perhaps more than anything, the Alliance for Progress devolved into another foreign aid program that rewarded friends, hurt enemies, and promoted American economic interests and ideology.

Few programs have started as auspiciously as the Alliance. Brazilian president Juscelino Kubitschek had conceived the Alliance in his “Operation Pan America” in the aftermath of Richard Nixon’s infamous “goodwill” tour of 1958. Although the Eisenhower administration did alter its Latin American policies by creating an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and Social Progress Fund, among others, it was US President John F. Kennedy who came up with the Alliance moniker and promised to win the “race between revolution and evolution.” At its heart the Alliance was designed to prevent another Cuban Revolution and if was Kennedy’s child it was also Fidel’s.

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<sup>1</sup> One of the few histories still useable is Jerome Levinson & Juan de Onis, *The Alliance that Lost its Way: A Critical Report on the Alliance for Progress* (Chicago, 1970). The standard history of hemispheric relations during the 1960s does not focus on the Alliance, although covers it. See: Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, 1999).

Taffet presents four case studies (Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia) that comprise the heart of the book and are excellent. Colombia received more Alliance than any other country and yet by the end of the decade was perhaps the most unstable place in the hemisphere. This should not be surprising in that the nations that received the most aid in the 1950s, Guatemala and Bolivia, were the most unstable areas in that decade.<sup>2</sup> Each of the case studies shows that aid was not a very effective tool at achieving United States economic development goals.

Brazil has received more scholarly attention than most Latin American nations and it was in Brazil that the Alliance's failure was perhaps most cruel and ironic.<sup>3</sup> As the mediator between the United States and Latin America, Brazil seemed the obvious choice to become the Alliance's centerpiece. But Kubitschek's successors, Janio Quadros and Joao Goulart, loathed the program (much as Nixon did when he became president) and Brazilian-American relations quickly deteriorated. Although Goulart advocated the "basic reforms" articulated in the Punta del Este charter, the Kennedy administration distrusted his demagoguery. By 1963 Alliance funds were used to encourage conservatives to overthrow democracy, leading to the 1964 military coup.

Similarly, American efforts to make Chile's Eduardo Frei the champion of the "democratic left" failed to stop the radicalization of Chilean politics and the victory of Salvador Allende in the 1970 election. Only in the Dominican Republic did the aid have a desired effect on political changes, but these occurred after the massive 1965 military intervention and thus the United States would have provided the necessary assistance without an Alliance.

It is hard to say what would have happened to the Alliance had John Kennedy lived. Clearly he seemed to be backtracking on his initial ambitious pronouncements, evidenced by Assistant Secretary of State Edwin Martin's cautious acceptance of certain military coups in 1963. It is also true that nation-building in Latin America lost its importance once the bullets started flying in Southeast Asia. Whatever its likely fate with JFK, once Lyndon Johnson assumed the presidency the Alliance lost its cachet and relations with Latin America returned to inattention.

Ultimately, the Alliance for Progress failed as a development program, although it was at least a moderate success as an anticommunist tool. As Taffet indicates, the rhetoric of the Alliance made it seem different, but its application proved it to be just another aid program. This work is destined to be the standard reference work on the topic. It is

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<sup>2</sup> James Siekmeier, "Latin America Economic Nationalism and United States-Latin American Relations, 1945-1961." *The Latin Americanist* 52:3 (October, 2008), 59-76.

<sup>3</sup> W. Michael Weis, *Cold Warriors and Coups d'Etat: Brazilian-American relations, 1945-1964* (Albuquerque, 1993); Ruth Leacock, *Requiem for Revolution: The United States and Brazil, 1961-1969* (Kent, OH, 1990); Phyllis R. Parker, *Brazil and the Quiet Intervention, 1964* (Austin, 1979); Jan Knippers Black, *United States Penetration of Brazil* (Philadelphia, 1977).

well-researched and well-written and provides a compelling story of a failure that was not as noble as it seemed.

**Author's Response by Jeffrey F. Taffet, United States Merchant Marine Academy (NY)**

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It is a great pleasure and honor to participate in this roundtable with such a distinguished group of scholars. I would like to thank Tom Maddux for his organizing efforts, Dustin Walcher for his thoughtful introduction, and the reviewers, Max Paul Friedman, Michel Gobat, Andrew J. Kirkendall, David M. K. Sheinin, and W. Michael Weis, for their careful reading of my work and their perceptive comments.

My first inclination was to write only a few sentences because the reviewers have done such an outstanding job of highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of my book. I probably should follow my first instincts, but somehow, even after spending so much time on the book, it is hard to resist the temptation to write just a little more about the Alliance for Progress. The reviewers had such insightful questions, and I wanted to make the most of this opportunity to engage them. That said, I don't think it makes sense to reply to each point they made, and I will be (somewhat) brief.

In writing the book, I hoped to produce something that my undergraduates would find accessible as an introduction to the relationship between aid and international power, and that knowledgeable scholars would find useful in advancing their understanding of the Alliance for Progress. The issue I still find most interesting, and that hopefully engages both sets of readers, is the complexity of the United States' effort. Thus, I was quite pleased to see Weis' comment that he has come to believe that "the Alliance for Progress was merely a slogan that meant something different to everyone who uttered it." This idea is echoed in David Sheinin's review, most pointedly in his concluding remark, that my book shows the messiness of the Alliance for Progress. While it was not the initial reason I opted to do a set of case studies, as I got deeper into the research I was struck by how distinctive the program became in each country and how it evolved over time. The Alliance for Progress in Chile was not the Alliance for Progress in Colombia, and the Alliance for Progress in Brazil in 1962 was not the Alliance for Progress in Brazil of 1964 or 1966.

Sheinin opens his review with a great story about a gentleman whose success in life can be attributed directly to the Alliance for Progress. On the other hand, Friedman posits that the Kennedy and Johnson administrations constructed an "Alliance against Progress." I think it is intriguing to be able to say that both are right: the Alliance for Progress simultaneously created and undermined development processes. I do not believe that this is a wishy-washy answer; it is an answer that reflects the historical complexity of the situation and the many ways of defining success and failure.

Kirkendall and Gobat both note that the Alliance for Progress is even more complex than I argued. Kirkendall writes, accurately, that the program might look different had I considered more intently the Latin American interest in development theory and practice. Gobat is correct in saying that my focus on the realm of policymakers means that I do not really answer questions about aid leading to polarization of Latin American societies, nor do I address how the Alliance for Progress altered civil-military relations. Weis suggests simply that the book is not a comprehensive study, which is true. By way of explanation, I

can only say that rather than to try to be comprehensive about the Alliance for Progress, I decided to advance a set of arguments that might help recast ideas about the constantly shifting relationship between aid and geopolitics. I thought this was a more important goal, and an approach that might appeal to readers who had little interest in Latin America during the 1960s. I would like to think that the five reviews, each in their own way, reflect something of the wisdom of my decision. I am extraordinarily pleased that reviewers believe I was successful at what I tried to accomplish.

I enjoyed reading the set of ideas Sheinin lays out about the ways my book allows for reconceptualizing the relationship between aid and inter-American relations and the work still to be done in this area. I was especially struck by his comment that thinking about the Alliance for Progress in the larger context of imperial expansion could help in developing a greater appreciation of the program's impact and importance, especially in the long run. His point is excellent. By thinking about the Alliance for Progress as an imperial project, not an anti-communist one, its meaning certainly does become clearer. I think it was only as I was finishing the manuscript that I could fully appreciate this insight and its implications, and while I do say something very brief about this right at the end of my conclusion, it needs more attention. I have long believed that the interplay between traditional ideologies about regional domination and the embrace of Cold War paranoia is what makes the study of U.S.-Latin American relations in this period so fascinating. I am hopeful that other readers will, like Sheinin, be able to make the connection between the two and see how exploring the Alliance for Progress experience can raise important questions about its place in the context of U.S. empire.

In his comment that the fundamental problem of the Alliance for Progress lies deeper than I recognize, I believe Friedman is coming to this question from other side, seeing anti-communism and not empire as the key problem. He writes that the United States "worked doggedly to deprive of power the very sectors of Latin American societies most interested in carrying out the kind of 'peaceful revolution' necessary for reducing poverty and inequality..." He adds that, "When leaders arose who might carry out peaceful revolution of this sort... the full power of the United States was brought to bear against them." I thought I said that. As Gobat observed, I do contend that, "Ultimately... the program's failure stemmed mainly from U.S. officials' unwillingness to engage their most natural Latin American allies as real partners." Friedman, I think, seems to have wanted to see even more criticism about not engaging the Latin American left. I certainly agree that the United States should have done a better job of giving Goulart, Juan Bosch, and even Eduardo Frei a greater say in the management of aid programs. Salvador Allende is another matter. To imagine, as Friedman does, that the United States government might have really embraced the Chilean Marxist leader is simply not realistic. The Alliance for Progress was a political program, and the political goal was keeping people like Allende out of power. On the other side of the ideological spectrum, if I read him correctly, Friedman seems to be worried that I am not sufficiently critical of the embrace of militarist and anti-democratic regimes. As he notes, while I do say that these kinds of governments were "cheap and effective," I did not do so to compliment the wisdom of embracing them, only to explain the awful logic behind U.S. policy.

Perhaps I should have tried to step back a bit further to weave a larger narrative. However, I believe that one of the interesting things about the Alliance for Progress and its failures is that the many principals made rational decisions at each moment given their broader comprehension of the world and the situations they each faced. I tried to argue that, to understand what evolved, it is necessary to examine the day-to-day decision making, and that only from this perspective can larger analytical arguments flow. For this reason, I believe that studying the Alliance for Progress can help in appreciating more than just U.S. aid programs; it can serve as a model for seeing the lack of consistency and clarity in any foreign policy managed by many people over an extended period of time.

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