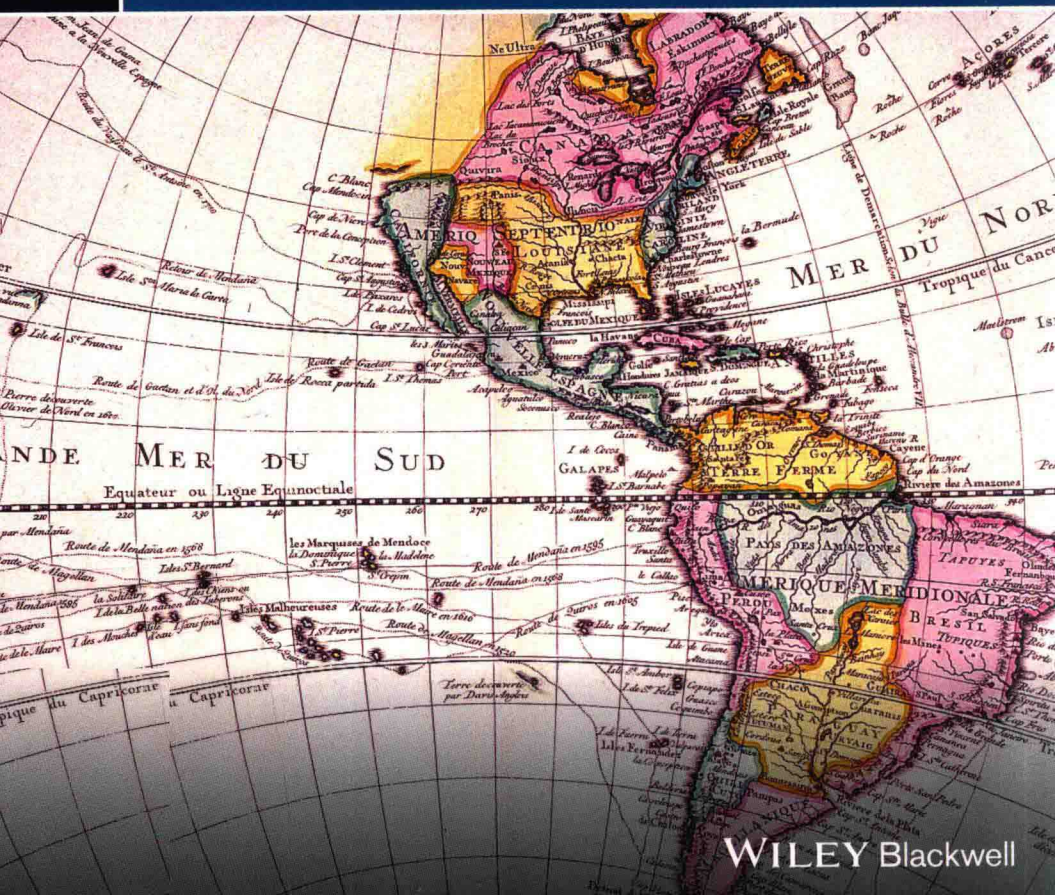


SECOND EDITION

U.S. and Latin American Relations

Gregory B. Weeks



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Second Edition

Gregory B. Weeks

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Preface

Between fiscal years 2013 and 2014, United States Customs and Border Protection reported that the number of unaccompanied children apprehended at the border had risen 88 percent, from 35,209 to 66,127.¹ The number from Central America alone had spiked even more dramatically and by early 2014 it had sparked a media storm. But who or what was to blame? Several members of the United States Congress pointed their fingers directly southward. As one colorfully and angrily put it:

We need to whack them, our neighbors, to understand that they are just not going to keep taking our money and we are just going to be sitting here like this—we're not the ATM machine.²

This sentiment was widely shared by U.S. policy makers. It held that the problem was primarily due to mismanagement in the sending countries, the leaders of which needed prodding—or “whacking”—from the United States to correct the error of their ways.

Not surprisingly, the view in Latin America was quite different. As Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernández put it:

Your country has enormous responsibility for this... The problem of narco-trafficking generates violence, reduces opportunities, generates migration because this [the United States] is where there's the largest consumption of drugs. That's leaving us with such an enormous loss of life.³

Other Central American presidents agreed. Guatemalan President Otto Pérez Molina added that Central America had suffered for years because of U.S. Cold War policy, and so should provide more resources to combat this particular problem.⁴ From that perspective, by virtue of its considerable power the United States had helped create many of the very issues that it faced.

This disconnect has spanned many decades and tells us something important. There are often gaps between the expectations of U.S. policy makers, the responses and actions of their Latin American counterparts, and the reaction

from the Latin American (and in some cases the U.S.) public to policy initiatives. Why do such gaps exist? What kinds of similar historical continuities still exist? Where and when do we see different kinds of policies emerging from Latin America? As this book went into production in December 2014, President Barack Obama announced historic changes in U.S. policy toward Cuba, which had been problematic since the administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower. This book will help students to understand why policies are put in place and why they might persist for many years.

U.S. and Latin American Relations argues that greater understanding requires a focus on power and, more precisely, the imbalance of power. For this reason, I employ realist theory from the scholarly literature on international relations, though I also explain how two other major theories—dependency theory and liberal institutional theory—can shed light on the relations between the United States and Latin American countries. I pay particular attention to the strengths and weaknesses of each theoretical approach. Students can therefore link political history and current events to theories that serve as guides to explain the motivations of policy makers in different states, how political and economic power are used in the international system, and probable outcomes when interstate disputes arise.

Many books have been written on this topic, to the degree that reading all of them would be impossible, especially since plenty of previously forgotten tomes are now being revived digitally, so more and more are becoming available. What sets this particular book apart is its integration of theory, scholarship, history, and pedagogy. It serves not only as a theoretically and historically oriented analysis, but also as a springboard for further learning and research.

Features

The introductory chapter establishes a theoretical context for studying relations between the United States and Latin America; the remainder of the book is split into two parts, one on historical background and one on current issues. Chapters 2 through 7 in Part I cover the period from Latin American independence in the early nineteenth century to the Cold War, highlighting the development of U.S. hegemony and shifts in relations that took place, in terms of both U.S. policy and the actions and perceptions of Latin American political leaders. It includes a case study of the Cuban revolution, which had a dramatic impact on policies in Latin American countries and in the United States. Chapters 8 through 12 in Part II detail critical contemporary issues: the politics of debt and trade, the challenges to U.S. hegemony, immigration, human rights and democracy, and drugs and terrorism. They go beyond the headlines to analyze how these issues have been addressed, the conflict and cooperation, and how U.S. power has been wielded and resisted. This book

goes beyond mere discussion and analysis. Each chapter includes a number of additional features that will help students dig deeper into the points being covered:

- A timeline of key events
- Excerpts from primary source documents
- An annotated selection of additional readings
- An annotated selection of websites
- Suggested topics for student research papers

The book also incorporates:

- A glossary for key concepts
- An extensive bibliography

Notes

- 1 <http://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-border-unaccompanied-children> (accessed February 1, 2015).
- 2 Zengerle 2014.
- 3 Nakamura and O’Keefe 2014.
- 4 O’Keefe and Correa 2014.

Acknowledgments

I really enjoyed writing and revising this book and I want to thank Peter Coveney at Wiley for giving me the opportunity to do a second edition.

Thanks to all the readers and commenters on my blog Two Weeks Notice, where I write regularly on Latin American politics and U.S.–Latin American relations. I've had many ideas stem from blog posts and the comments they receive.

For comments and sometimes corrections, I appreciate the help of Russell Bither-Terry, Alan McPherson (who pointed out some errors in a review of the first edition), and Benjamin Goldfrank. Special thanks go to the three anonymous reviewers, all of whom provided thorough and constructive suggestions. The book is better as a result.

As always, my family was a source of great encouragement. My wife Amy was always there for me, while my children Benjamin, Julia, and Elizabeth helped me recharge after hours of work. Finally, my parents John and Deanna Weeks could easily commiserate with the process of revision, having worked on a textbook with many editions. As with the first edition, I dedicate this book to them.

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The Theoretical Context of U.S.–Latin American Relations

The U.S.–Latin America relationship has always had a rocky side. A combination of wars, invasions, occupations, mutual suspicion (and occasionally open dislike), dictatorships, and/or differences in ideology represents a consistent obstacle to strong national friendships. However, relations have not always been negative. Periodically, Latin American political leaders have worked closely with the U.S. government in a spirit of partnership, and the United States has also periodically offered new initiatives and said nice words intended to show a willingness to establish a positive and friendly relationship.

Yet, all too often, U.S. policy makers and the general public do not understand why Latin Americans routinely demonstrate indifferent or even hostile reactions to U.S. actions, and Latin Americans themselves often see ulterior motives in those actions.

The relationship has had it all. Militarily, just in the past several decades the United States has been deeply involved in Central American civil wars, as well as invasion (most notably Panama) and support for coups (in Venezuela and Honduras). Economically, successive U.S. governments have sought to use economic pressure to oust Fidel Castro in Cuba, while engaging in negotiations over economic agreements with a host of other countries. This U.S. military and economic behavior has been accompanied by a tremendous movement of people, looking for opportunity and self-improvement. At the same time, left-leaning political leaders have endeavored to forge new political and economic links in Latin America to create a sense of unity and to find ways around U.S. influence. The pervasive political violence that characterized the Cold War period is now gone, but new types of violence—especially the results of the drug trade—have emerged. How, then, can we make sense of it all? This book has three intertwined purposes, focusing on theory, political history, and research.

The first is to articulate a theoretical framework, a guide to understand why governments behave in certain ways. The theoretical perspective of the book comes from the “realist” school of international relations, which focuses on the state as a central actor in international relations and on the use of power, especially military and economic power, to achieve security in an anarchic system (i.e., there is no world government). In an anarchic world, states must either sink or swim because no other state or organization will step in with assistance. Every state must depend entirely on itself to advance its interests, and all states are doing so all the time.

In his classic study of realism, Kenneth Waltz argues that an actor is powerful to the extent that he or she affects others more than they affect him or her.¹

Power, therefore, can easily be observed and is constantly present in the minds of policy makers. The history of U.S.–Latin American relations has always been characterized and shaped by significant differences in military and economic capabilities and the absence of effective international institutions to constrain the actions of the United States.

This book will address the nature of Latin America’s economic dependency and consider the merits of dependency theory, which is another prominent approach in the literature on U.S.–Latin American relations. Dependency theory posits that Latin American underdevelopment is a result of domination by more advanced economies, primarily the United States. The result is that Latin America suffers from constraints and barriers that prevent it from achieving its economic potential.

In this view, the global economy has fostered structural patterns that cannot be ignored. For example, U.S. companies have extracted natural resources—such as fruit, oil, or copper—in Latin America, then sold those products abroad, reaping tremendous profit but leaving little gain locally. Meanwhile, a small group of elites (both foreign and domestic) have garnered the lion’s share of national wealth and created a massive divide between rich and poor.

In its deterministic nature, however, this theory does not leave much room for discussion of Latin American resistance to U.S. hegemony. In one of the most important works on dependency, Andre Gunder Frank concludes by arguing that only by destroying capitalism, breaking away from world imperialism, and embracing socialism can countries successfully counteract dependency.² Cardoso and Faletto offered a modified version (interestingly, Fernando Henrique Cardoso would later become a pro-market president of Brazil) that acknowledged the possibility of developing (at least to some degree) despite dependency, but autonomy would not be a realistic goal.³ The bottom line of the theory is that true progress can never take place while contacts with the more powerful northern neighbor continue. In another seminal book on dependency, Evans posits that “dependent development” does take place, as foreign capital penetrates and creates diversified industrial sectors.⁴ So this is development but it is conditional. The end result, while admittedly industrial, remains seriously detrimental to the country as a whole because it continues

to depend on foreign interests. Latin American leaders, particularly those on the left, invoke dependency's basic message on a regular basis.

The dependency school has provided rich analyses of the challenges faced by less developed countries in Latin America, but is less well equipped to explain autonomous actions initiated within the region vis-à-vis the United States. In other words, Latin American political leaders have often worked successfully and independently within the context of a great power imbalance.

This is not to say that realism offers a perfect view of the relationship. The focus on *realpolitik* and the use of realist theory to understand U.S.-Latin American relations has many critics. As one has posited, "Even when done well, the realist argument has difficulty being precise in predictions about U.S. actions."⁵ Similarly, another notes that the realist view fails to pinpoint precisely why the United States considers specific "Third World" regions such as Latin America to be important.⁶ Nonetheless, in this book I argue that the factors of power and security should remain front and center, even while certain aspects of realist theory should be reexamined.

The third major theoretical approach in international relations—liberal institutionalism—denies realism's assumptions about how power leads to conflict. Instead, its adherents focus on harmony of interests and how countries can successfully get along. Thus, according to Rosecrance, as nations interact with each other, they develop a stake in each other's success.⁷ International institutions can serve as vehicles for reducing the problems associated with an anarchic world, thereby mitigating some of the worst elements of power politics.

The theory envisions those institutions as taking on a life of their own. Even if they are created by powerful countries like the United States, they can become independently influential. Acceptance of their rules and norms spreads globally and disregarding them raises more protest. As a result, political leaders will be more likely to accept them, thus limiting their range of policy options.

There is also a large body of scholarly literature arguing that democracies are more likely to promote peace and avoid war.⁸ Although the chapters that follow will indeed discuss how some institutions have reduced conflict, the liberal institutional tradition tends not to adequately address the ways in which power politics has so often held sway in U.S.-Latin American relations.

For U.S. policy makers, Latin America has frequently represented both economic opportunity and a potential threat to U.S. national security. Viewed through the realist lens, U.S. policy at any given time often reflects a coherent internal logic. Latin Americans, whether politicians, rebels, or business elites, have had a keen appreciation for the power imbalance here, and they have either accepted it, attempting to use it to their advantage (many dictators retained power in this manner), or worked to counteract and/or condemn it. The dynamics of power politics and the reactions to those dynamics constitute this book's framework.

Box 1.1 Different Theoretical Perspectives: The National Security Agency Scandal

In June 2013 a former National Security Agency (N.S.A.) contractor named Edward Snowden made a dramatic announcement. The N.S.A. was conducting widespread surveillance across the world, obtaining massive amounts of information from emails, cell phones, and internet activity. He leaked classified documents to prove it. He revealed that the N.S.A. was snooping on Latin American presidents, most notably Brazil's Dilma Rousseff and Mexico's Enrique Peña Nieto.

President Rousseff and others lashed out. She canceled a long-awaited state visit to the United States and gave a blistering speech at the United Nations (U.N.), saying: "Friendly governments and societies that seek to build a true strategic partnership, as in our case, cannot allow recurring illegal actions to take place as if they were normal. They are unacceptable."⁹

The saga played out in other ways as well. Snowden went public in Hong Kong—before long he would go to Russia—and began inquiring about asylum elsewhere. Rumors immediately spread about him fleeing to Latin America. Bolivian President Evo Morales, who had already offered Snowden asylum, happened to be in Europe in July 2013. He had his plane temporarily grounded in Vienna because, at the request of the U.S. government, other European countries did not give him permission to enter their airspace. The administration of Barack Obama believed that Snowden might be on the plane. That led to more uproar, with Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner remarking that this was "vestiges of a colonialism that we thought was completely overcome."¹⁰

Realist theory would view the issue here in straightforward power terms. The United States is extremely powerful, to the point that it can easily ignore international law by spying extensively (including on the United Nations itself) and use influence in an effort to find those—like Edward Snowden—who defy it. Institutions like the U.N. might complain, and leaders of weaker countries might give speeches, but ultimately countries with the most military and economic power can dictate terms to a significant degree.

Liberal institutional theory would acknowledge the importance of power, but point to the ways in which international law is invoked and how institutions such as the United Nations matter. In December 2013 the U.N. unanimously passed a resolution calling for the respect of privacy, including digital communications. The United States voted in favor of the measure, though only after language referring to digital

privacy as a human right was removed. International institutions and norms develop gradually, but they become important in their own right. Even if the U.S. might violate international law, it cannot get away with doing whatever it wants in the same manner as in the past.

Dependency theory would consider the hegemonic position of the United States, which allows it to control technology and obtain instant access to private information globally in a way that other countries cannot. Breaking free from that control would therefore be a likely policy prescription as the only way to establish greater independence. Indeed, the Brazilian government quickly announced plans to have the country's digital information stored locally, away from the prying eyes of the U.S. government.

A consistent theme in the book is the nature of "security." A subjective term, it revolves around policy makers' belief that their state is free from harm. That goal of complete safety cannot ever be realized and so those policy makers seek rather to be as safe as possible. Realism posits that states seek to protect their interests, but the manner in which they do so depends on how policy makers define threats to national security. There are countless variations, but all come back to power and self-interest. Governments in the United States and Latin America often have differing perspectives on security, which in turn affect the dynamics of the U.S.-Latin America relationship, especially when those definitions are at odds.

Many variants of realist theory treat the state as a unitary actor; that is, regardless of the leadership a state will do what is necessary to protect its vital interests. The state itself is acting. This takes the role of individuals out of the equation and assumes that there would not be much difference regardless of who was in charge of policy making. Realism "provides no framework for understanding the specific content of state policies and the ways in which these change over time."¹¹ There has been considerable debate over this point; as Keohane and Martin argue, international relations theory must "explain variations in state preferences" by developing "theories that begin with individuals and groups."¹²

This book joins the critics in asserting that the state should not be considered a unitary entity, but rather simply a sovereign one, where changing leadership affects how the key goals of political security and economic development are understood and articulated. People do matter, and they have an independent impact on what policies ultimately are implemented. The analysis of state preferences and power, which is based on the perceptions of relevant policy makers, should be entirely consistent with realist theory.

Hegemony—meaning dominance of one country over others—and the application of U.S. interests should not be construed as so overwhelming

that Latin America becomes only a passive actor following U.S. demands. There have been many instances when the sources of policies that Latin American governments followed originated from domestic concerns and therefore were not strictly reactions to U.S. policy. Efforts at state building, internal security, economic growth, and political stability, to name just a few, have often originated within Latin American countries themselves. At the same time, the United States has clearly been impossible to ignore. In this book, it will become clear that leaders of Latin American countries, and groups within countries, developed a wide range of reactions to U.S. policy. Being a hegemonic power does not mean total control. Latin Americans have often struggled against U.S. dominance and at times have been successful in that effort. These efforts have taken many forms, including interpretations of international law, the creation of regional organizations, the formation and fomenting of rebellions and revolutions, the creation of nationalist policies, and even the production of a rich collection of literary works.

International factors also affect U.S. politics. This interplay has been labeled "intermestic" in the international relations literature. Intermestic policy arises when domestic concerns strongly influence (or even determine) foreign policy decisions. The domestic audience, which itself is a complex web of voters, political parties, economic interests, lobbyists, and other actors, has been powerful in the formulation of U.S. policy toward Latin America. It is critical to understand not only why certain policies were followed, but also who makes the decisions. Not only have there been heated battles between the U.S. executive and legislative branches for control over foreign policy, but also at times other political actors have wielded tremendous influence.

This is also true in Latin America, where different political, economic, and social actors have viewed relations with the United States in very different ways. For example, democratically elected presidents and legislatures, military governments, guerrillas, human rights activists, reformers, business elites, workers, peasants, and the urban poor view the U.S.-Latin American relationship in diverse ways and try to shape it accordingly. The region has traditionally been strongly presidential and highly centralized. As democracy spreads and new groups find voice, however, the policy context is becoming more multifaceted.

Realism tends to view international institutions as the product of states seeking to advance their core interests. These institutions reflect the aims of stronger states as a result. There is an extended debate about their importance, framed by "institutionalist" theory.¹³ This book considers institutions as the outcome when individual states come together to solve common problems, often related to security and/or economic development. However, institutions can take on lives of their own not anticipated by their creators and address areas that were not part of their original charter. The degree to which they do so is an important theme for the latter part of the book, especially with regard to human rights.

Table 1.1 Theoretical Perspectives

	<i>Realism</i>	<i>Liberal Institutionalism</i>	<i>Dependency</i>
Core Beliefs	States act in a self-interested manner to achieve security	International institutions can constrain state behavior and promote cooperation	Less developed countries are exploited by the developed world
Key Actors	Individual states, regardless of what type of government	International institutions	Developed countries and corporations
Main Instruments	Military and economic power	The rules and norms of international institutions	Economic power
Theoretical Benefits	Explains the effects of power imbalance	Explains how states change behavior because of institutions	Explains the economic obstacles to autonomy in Latin America
Theoretical Shortcomings	Does not always adequately explain Latin American responses to hegemony and complexities of policy making	Tends to overemphasize the power of international institutions	Does not adequately explain examples of Latin American autonomy

In short, there is no perfect theory, and several chapters (especially on human rights) will analyze some of realism's shortcomings. I strongly encourage students to engage different theories of international relations in the light of empirical evidence.

The second purpose of this book is to explain the historical and contemporary shifts in attitude and policy approaches that have affected the formation and implementation of policies, in both the United States and Latin America. There is much continuity to U.S. policy, to the point where at times the cliché "the more things change, the more they stay the same" seems to ring true, but at the same time important shifts have taken place over time. Latin American leaders, meanwhile, have not viewed the relationship in static terms, because their own interests have changed. Although it is a truism to say that international relations contain elements of both continuity and change, to understand U.S.-Latin American relations it is essential to tease out the interplay between the two. There is more and more discussion in the media and elsewhere about a new relationship and we will explore that idea.

Often, shifts in policy correspond to the U.S. perception of the international system and the threats perceived to be emanating from it. Just as the

U.S. response to Latin American independence was crafted with an eye to the reactions of Spain, France, and Great Britain, Cold War and post-September 11 policies were aimed at dealing with enemies with origins outside the region, whether from Western Europe, the Soviet Union, or—increasingly—the Middle East. On many occasions, Latin Americans do not agree with U.S. assertions of imminent threat, and the debate over threats has continued unabated since the early nineteenth century.

Analysis of the Cold War period will highlight the persistent continuities, most notably the keen awareness of U.S. hegemony on the part of both U.S. policy makers and Latin Americans (whether presidents, diplomats, guerrillas, workers, or peasants). The rapid collapse of the Soviet Union drastically changed U.S. perceptions in the region, but political and economic dominance remained. Barely more than a decade later, the U.S. response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 would therefore represent far more continuity than change. Although the specific policy priorities would not be identical, U.S. strategies would remain largely constant. The post-September 11 period echoes not only the Cold War but also U.S. responses to the wars of Latin American independence and the security issues arising during World War II.

Theory and political history provide a structure for understanding, but the third purpose of this book is to provide a guide for investigating topics in more detail and even for writing research papers. Given the mass of data and dates, names and nations, it can be difficult to narrow down ideas and focus on specific issues and countries, much less to gather sources from the truly vast quantity of available books, government documents, articles, and websites. In addition to the general bibliography at the end of the book, the end of each chapter has a research section to serve as that guide.

Each research section has an annotated selection of books, with an emphasis on those containing useful overviews of the chapter's period or topic. Although these books are most often recent so that they incorporate as much updated scholarship as possible, the section also includes older reference works that have stood the test of academic time and therefore remain relevant. There are also specific government document collections that are well indexed and readily available (in some cases online) for students. The suggested readings are accompanied by possible research questions for students to explore as a way to develop term papers and research ideas. The subject matter of these questions comes from the chapter itself, but addressing the questions will require further study, with the bibliography as an initial guide. Each chapter also includes excerpts from prominent government documents, speeches, treaties, and agreements. Combined with the narrative, these documents offer a view into the world of diplomacy, negotiation, and international law.

Finally, the number of useful websites has skyrocketed, although it pales in comparison to the total number of websites on the topic. Therefore, the selected websites include those that have proved durable, credible, and/or

useful for researchers. Most are in English, but a number of Spanish-only sites are also listed.

The book should help the reader understand the distinct nature of U.S. policy toward Latin America. But what is Latin America? The answer is both simple and unsatisfactory. In general, for U.S. policy makers and scholars alike, Latin America refers to the places in the Western Hemisphere that were colonized by the Spanish and Portuguese. More specifically, that means Mexico, most of Central and South America, and parts of the Caribbean. Although the Dominican Republic and Haiti share the island now called Hispaniola (a variation of Española, or “Little Spain,” so called by Columbus because of its physical resemblance to Spain), the latter was a French colony but is also often included. Aside from sharing the same colonial roots, a number of economic, political, and cultural similarities bind Latin American countries together. Yet we have to be aware at all times that the people who live within this vast region do not consider themselves part of a single bloc. Even the similarities—such as language—find very different expression, depending not



Figure 1.1 Map of Latin America