CHAPTER 13

Epilogue: The United States and Britain in Latin America after the Cold War

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INTRODUCTION

Many of the features identified by the preceding chapters as broadly characteristic of the tripartite relationship between the United States, Britain, and Latin America in the twentieth century continued to prevail over the 30 years that followed the ending of the Cold War in 1989–90. US predominance initially took the form of a ‘unipolar moment’ on a world-wide scale, reinforcing the notion of the rest of the Western Hemisphere as constituting merely part of its ‘backyard’. However, this acute asymmetry of international power was quite quickly eroded by what some might argue was a latent tendency to geopolitical ‘overreach’, in addition to economic crises in the global South, where the now well-established orthodox prescriptions of the Washington Consensus yielded most uneven
results, with very high social costs being paid for the containment of inflation.¹

In Britain during the 1990s, the Conservative administration of John Major (1990–97) and then the Labour government of Tony Blair after 1997 were not primarily concerned with policy over Latin America. The former had to negotiate crises over European unification from a position of domestic weakness, whilst the latter was much more interventionist on an international scale, but largely consumed with the conflicts emerging from ex-Yugoslavia. After 9/11 British policy swung strongly behind that of the United States in the Middle East, at appreciable cost to its reputation in Latin America and with some slowing of its inclusion in an emerging European Union (EU) foreign policy. London made use of that phenomenon to reduce the United Kingdom’s diplomatic presence in smaller states in the region, such as in Central America.²

**Elements of Continuity from the Cold War**

For Latin America the ending of the Cold War did not take the form of a consolidated political ‘moment’, and neither did it result in unvaried—still less uniform—relations with both the United States and the United Kingdom. At one extreme, of course, Cuba remained a one-party state, surviving the ‘Special Period’ immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the loss of all the economic and geopolitical support that had prevailed until 1990.³ At the other, the dictatorship that had prevailed in Chile under General Pinochet since 1973 presided over a

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¹ Originally a term employed by a British economist, John Williamson, to characterise a set of policies advocated by international financial institutions and the US Treasury towards countries facing financial crises in the 1980s, the ‘Washington Consensus’ was subsequently used widely, often in a pejorative sense, to refer to a broader ‘neoliberal’ approach to macro-economic policy. Williamson reviews the debate over the term and its policy implications in John Williamson, ‘The Strange History of the Washington Consensus’, *Journal of Post-Keynesian Economics*, 27: 2 (2004), 195–206. For a judicious reappraisal of the *longue durée* of Latin America in the international context, see Tom Long, ‘Latin America and the Liberal International Order: An Agenda for Research’, *International Affairs*, 94: 6 (2018), 1371–90.

² Michael Kandiah and Thomas C. Mills (eds.), *British Diplomacy in Latin America at the Turn of the 21st Century: Witness Seminar*. London: Institute of Contemporary British History, 2015, 18–20.

³ Mervyn J. Bain, ‘The Glasnost Effect on Soviet/Cuban Relations’, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 2: 2 (2004), 125–42.
firmly graduated transition to civilian rule, with electoral freedoms circumscribed by an authoritarian constitutional apparatus that remained only partially reformed nearly three decades after its introduction.\(^4\) It is perhaps telling that London maintained warm and active diplomatic relations with both states throughout this period, whereas Washington upheld its comprehensive embargo on relations with Havana under both Republican and Democrat administrations up until the Obama presidency, and even then retained many of the economic restrictions imposed by Congress in the early 1960s.

There was a much less expected evolution of relations with respect to Chile, however, when, in October 1998, Pinochet was arrested in London on charges of violating human rights. The relatively new Labour government was composed of a generation that harboured profound dislike of the erstwhile dictator. The Pinochet case had international ramifications, as well as reopening old divides in Britain when Margaret Thatcher came out strongly in support of her friend’s release. Further unexpected elements emerged in the role of the EU, notably Spain, in the initial issue of an extra-territorial warrant, and the fact that the British House of Lords developed jurisprudence that significantly expanded the remit of international law, a matter of appreciable consequence for Latin America, where the legal consequences of political transitions from dictatorial regimes with widely publicised records of violence against civilians had become a matter of intense controversy.\(^5\)

Over the years following the Pinochet case, the spirit of impunity was eroded by the findings of brave judges as well as the work of human rights bodies on national and international levels: those within the structure of the OAS (the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights) retained greater support and respect than their parent body (Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch also deserve more attention from students of international relations). In July 2019, for example, the Supreme Court of El Salvador ruled that crimes against humanity could not be amnestied, as had almost invariably happened over the years since the ending of that

\(^4\) The popular protests in Chile in October-November 2019 resulted in an agreement by the Piñera administration to hold a referendum on rewriting the constitution. At the time of writing, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a postponement of this referendum.

\(^5\) The case aroused considerable interest in international law journals at the time. For its effect on Chile, see David Pion-Berlin, ‘The Pinochet Case and Human Rights Progress in Chile: Was Europe a Catalyst, Cause or Inconsequential?’ *Journal of Latin American Studies, 36*: 3 (2004), 479–505.
country’s long and bloody civil war. In the case of Argentina, where the ‘Dirty War’ was largely conducted by the dictatorship through the method of ‘disappearing’ its opponents, several amnesties and interruptions of due process had been passed since the transition to civilian rule in 1983. However, the principal leaders of the military regime remained either behind bars or under house arrest, not least because, as a consequence of the Pinochet case, international warrants were being used much more commonly. In a clear acceptance of the international reach of jurisprudence, the Argentine courts began proceedings in 2013 against 25 defendants, including Generals Videla and Bignone, over ‘Operación Cóndor’, under which the Southern Cone regimes had killed 166 citizens of other states. Equally, Spanish citizens, exasperated by their country’s 1977 ‘Pact of Forgiveness’ were increasingly seeking justice from Argentine courts over crimes committed in Spain under the Franco regime.

It is worth recalling that divergences of approach between the United States and the United Kingdom towards Latin America did, to some degree, emanate from the division of powers in the former (the legislature blocking many of the socio-economic consequences of Obama’s political opening to Cuba), as well as in Britain (where the executive eventually, and controversially, interrupted the judicial process by releasing Pinochet on grounds of ill-health). This does not, however, greatly alter the fact that British policies towards Latin America tended to reflect whichever of the two main parties held office, with the Labour governments of 1974–79 providing sympathy and backing for the Chile Solidarity Campaign, whereas after 1979 Thatcher was supportive of the Pinochet regime.

It is equally worthy of note that over the final decade of the Cold War, when the Reagan and Thatcher governments were in tight ideological harmony, they did experience some sharp challenges over diplomatic relations in the Western Hemisphere. In the case of the war in the Malvinas/ Falkland Islands, factions in the Reagan administration were deeply divided over how to respond to the Argentine invasion of 1982. Over a longer-term perspective these differences might be depicted as a clash between the ethos and interests of the hemispherist Monroe Doctrine of the early nineteenth century and those of the Anglosphere and NATO of the twentieth century. Eventually, of course, they were resolved by a

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6 See Francesca Lessa, ‘Operation Condor on Trial: Justice for Transnational Human Rights Crimes in South America’, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 51: 2 (2019), 409–39.
7 Andrea Chaimpan, ‘Running with the Hare, Hunting with the Hounds: The Special Relationship, Reagan’s Cold War and the Falklands Conflict’, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 24:
combination of domestic in-fighting, multilateral diplomacy, in which Latin America had long played a prominent role (in this case most notably Peru), and the need not to undermine bilateral alliances. It is nonetheless notable that 30 years after the war, the State Department’s position remained that ‘We recognize de facto United Kingdom administration of the islands but take no position regarding sovereignty’.

A more rapid but little less taxing clash of interests occurred over the US invasion of Grenada in October 1983, an intervention not cleared with London beforehand but justified formally by a request from a fellow Commonwealth state, Dominica. This was initially taken by Thatcher as a rude triumph of abstract diplomatic form over enduring alliance of interest, but quite soon the purely transactional format of what was a fairly typical Cold War intervention by Washington was assuaged by the shift in Reagan’s second term to a much more détente-led approach to the Soviet Union, albeit one that initially alarmed Thatcher and that certainly did not encompass Cuba.

Alongside Cuba, US concern over the international drug trade was a strategic preoccupation that endured well beyond the Cold War. This is normally associated with President Nixon’s much proclaimed ‘War on Drugs’ enshrined in the Comprehensive Drug Abuse, Prevention and Control Act of 1970, but both its ethical and legislative lineage can be traced back to Woodrow Wilson’s Narcotics Tax of 1914 and the subsequent years of Prohibition (which did so much to promote lawlessness within the United States). In 1981 Reagan revived Nixon’s campaign by ‘running up the battle flag’, his successor, George Bush Sr., ordering the invasion of Panama in 1989 to detain the drug-running through erstwhile Cold War ally, Manuel Noriega. The general British response was that militarising the suppression of an illegal activity was understandable, but misguided, in that it prejudiced relations with Latin America in its unilateralism, by over-emphasising the ‘supply-side’ of the market and, through the format of congressional conditionality over Latin American compliance in return for aid, by introducing an unnecessary element of condescension into an already uneven relationship.

4 (2013), 640–60. See also the chapters by Thomas Mills and Olivia Saunders in this volume for earlier examples of how divisions within Washington affected Anglo-American relations with regard to Latin America.

8 US State Department statement, 20 January 2012, https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/01/182294.htm.
In 2004 Barack Obama declared that ‘The War on Drugs has been an utter failure’. For a while it seemed as if his new administration would coalesce with those in Latin America who argued for a much more consensual and health-oriented international campaign, not least because the number of inmates in US prisons with convictions for drug offences had risen from 40,000 when Reagan came to office to 500,000 when Obama began his second term. The expectations that a black, multilateralist president might respond both to the fact that a disproportionate number of those prisoners were African Americans and that many of the drugs being trafficked originated in the Andes and Central America were not borne out in any significant translation of policy rhetoric into implementation. Congressional hearings over conditionality for economic aid had ceased, but Obama’s government continued ‘Plan Colombia’, an anti-drug-focused military alliance that caused appreciable disquiet even amongst longstanding allies. According to Vice-President Joe Biden in 2012, ‘There are more problems with legalization than nonlegalization’, although we should again note a variety of responses within the United States beneath the federal level. Equally, this approach was, in essence, supported by Britain and the EU, both of which, nevertheless, continued to maintain diplomatic relations with the Bolivian administration of Evo Morales, which had broken ties with the United States as much for issues to do with controlling narcotráfico as with the more ideological consequences of being part of the regional anti-US ‘Pink Tide’.

The third policy area that cut across the Cold War timeframe in US—Latin American relations, besides Cuba and the drugs trade, was migration, over which British interests were less directly affected, although after the accession of new states from the east to the EU in 2004 London acquired a much more sensitive appreciation of the consequences of the phenomenon, even when it was not illegal. As in the twentieth century, Hispanic (and predominantly Mexican) immigration into the United States had responded not just to business cycles but also, as with the mid-century official Bracero program, the needs of the US labour market in times of international conflict. By the time of Donald Trump’s

9 *The Observer*, London, 9 April 2012.
10 Michael Reid, ‘Obama and Latin America’, *Foreign Affairs*, 94: 5 (2015), 45–53.
11 For Biden’s comment, see *New York Times*, 5 March 2012.
12 *Washington Post*, 10 April 2012; *Latin American Perspectives*, 46: 1 (2019), is a special issue on Pink-Tide governments.
inauguration—with the utterly unrestrained language of his speech—the Latino population of the United States stood just short of 60 million. However, as is often the case with such ‘headline issues’ linked to human behaviour, a level of migration rising sharply since 2000 had in fact been falling since 2014. Moreover, the subsequent movement of hundreds of thousands of Central American migrants through Mexico into the United States owed just as much to the local collapse of citizen security associated with *narcotráfico* mafias as to the opportunities for work further north. Trump’s fierce rhetoric and unilateral policy impositions effectively ‘weaponised’ this phenomenon from 2017 onwards. Perhaps not coincidentally, this chimed with the less wild but still muscular language of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) in Great Britain, feeding into both the 2016 referendum decision to leave the EU and the subsequent movement of the Conservative Party in the same right-wing direction as had previously been taken in the United States first by the ‘Tea Party’ and later by mainstream Republicanism. If migration issues proved directly inimical to multilateralism in the Western Hemisphere, the wedge that they forced between Britain and the EU meant that following its departure, London would henceforth have to develop an entirely independent foreign policy towards Latin America as well as the rest of the world.

**New Challenges to US Hegemony and British Interests**

Amongst those phenomena that had been less enduring and exhibited a degree of novelty in the post-1990 period in Latin America we should, of course, note the widespread extension of civilian, constitutional government with high degrees of popular support for democracy. For some places, such as Costa Rica, this was not an innovation, allowing that country to play a prominent role in developing a regional peace plan for Central America in the 1980s and 1990s, at first against US executive pressure, then in collaboration with the US congress, and throughout with EU and British support. Elsewhere, we may broadly align the retreat of authoritarianism throughout the 1980s both with the ebbing of the Cold War conflicts that had promoted it in the 1960s and 1970s and with a newly buoyant sense of regionalism. This ranged from the introduction of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), signed by George Bush Sr., ratified by Clinton, and not seriously challenged in its essentials
until Trump, through to the Ibero-American summits. From 1991 onwards these meetings reflected the newfound confidence of Spain and Portugal following accession to the EU in 1986. Other international forums with their roots in Latin America included Mercosur (a trade bloc of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay), ALBA (Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América), and CELAC (Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños), all designed in part to circumvent the kind of US dominion long associated with the post-Bretton Woods organisations such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and the Organization of American States (OAS).

Perhaps the most controversial of the new bodies was the Venezuelan-led ALBA, which for a decade after 2001 was able to transfer that country’s oil wealth into a series of radically inspired socio-economic agreements, not the least of which was the sustenance of the fragile Cuban economy in the early years of the new century through the ‘export’ of its medical personnel. The inclusion of certain Commonwealth countries—Dominica, Antigua, and Saint Vincent—in ALBA embarrassed both them and London when that body came out firmly in favour of Argentina’s claim on the Malvinas/Falklands in 2011, on the eve of the thirtieth anniversary of the war, but a place-sensitive and pragmatic solution was found on both sides.

A less happy result seemed likely for the negotiations over free trade between the EU and Mercosur when in 2019, after 20 years of talks, the new Bolsonaro government in Brazil permitted widespread deforestation through fire in the Amazon rainforest, brusquely impugning the international climate agreements effectively begun in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. An impasse of this nature would have been very hard indeed to imagine when the UK first joined the EU in 1973.

Judging by the British economic record in Latin America during the twentieth century, as assessed by several chapters in this book, future prospects for trade and investment looked distinctly modest on the eve of ‘Brexit’ in late 2019, whatever the eventual terms agreed for the United Kingdom’s relationship with the EU. However, as has been shown, economic cycles are not closely predictable in time or form. The Washington Consensus of the 1980s had been predicated upon flows of power and resource very different to those prevailing after the economic crisis of 2008, when Latin America was still enjoying a phase of strong export-led growth whereas the global North was beset by the deep fissures of an ever more complex financial system. Eventually, in 2011 world prices for
copper and most other minerals, and in 2014 those for oil and gas, fell sharply, bringing nearly a decade of regional growth to a virtual halt and stalling the political impetus of the ‘Pink Tide’ effectively opened by the 1998 election of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela.

By the time of Chávez’s death in 2013, Venezuela’s budgetary deficits and international debts were of an order reminiscent of the 1980s. However, the fact that the state oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA), had a majority private ownership of CITGO, a US-registered refining, wholesale, and retail enterprise with control of a sixth of the national market, made any macro-economic policy response on the part of the United States far more complicated than those adopted decades earlier on a simple state-to-state basis. The terms for the restructuring of half of Venezuela’s approximately $150 billion foreign debt in 2017 were effectively in the hands of private and institutional bondholders, with perhaps a tenth of the debt held by Russia and China. Equally, the interests of those who wished to cripple the anti-American administration of Nicolás Maduro were obstructed by those who wished to sustain PDVSA-related operations in the United States and elsewhere, especially since the PDVSA bonds lacked ‘collective action’ clauses, such as those which had been activated earlier over Argentine sovereign debt and partially decided by a judge in Manhattan.

The waves of economic deregulation in the 1980s which had taken place in Latin America (and the developed world) were now throwing up unprecedented conflicts of interest and uncertain paths of development that, by virtue of the hugely expanded cross-border flows of finance, affected the United Kingdom, particularly the City of London, Latin America, and the United States more profoundly than suggested by traditional national accounting procedures. In an associated expression of ‘uneven and combined development’, it was estimated by 2011 that 46 per cent of the adult Latin American population had logged onto the internet through a phone, higher than the European figure of 37 per cent and in keeping with a twelve-fold increase in internet users in the BRICS countries in the decade leading up to 2011, 70 million of them being in Brazil.

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13 Financial Times, 3 November and 21 November 2017; The Economist, 11 Nov. 2017.
14 Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA), Washington, 23 November 2011; Financial Times, 10 June 2011. According to Vanity Fair, 18 April 2012, Bogotá had more Facebook accounts than New York City. BRICS refers to a group of large developing economies identi-
A comparable scenario could be found in the realm of globalised manufacturing, where economies of scale, regional expansion of skills through international education and training, and comparative advantage could be exploited in systems organised as much along the logic of value chains as of those determined by national borders. For example, in 2014 the Canadian-owned Bombardier company was assembling its new Learjet 85 in Wichita, Kansas, using engines made in Canada, wings made by Short Brothers in Northern Ireland, and fuselages constructed in Querétaro, Mexico. When, late in 2019, the poor market for this aircraft resulted in massive losses and the halting of its production, the effects were comparably global: Shorts, established in 1908 and in danger of collapse despite also making wings for the Airbus A220, was sold to US-based Spirit Aerosystems, saving 3500 highly skilled jobs, whilst the Bombardier Querétaro factory had to rely on building trains for the Mexican market.15

When, in 1993, US Vice-President Al Gore described NAFTA as on a par with the Louisiana Purchase, he was surely exaggerating, but 20 years later Mexico was the fourth largest exporter of cars in the world (after Germany, South Korea, and Japan), with over a third of its exports containing parts manufactured in the United States. The notion of a transnational North American economy was no longer exotic.

Of course, the element of change in the economy of the twenty-first century can be exaggerated. One central reason for the appreciable growth of the Latin American economy in its opening years was the presence of a hungry traditional national market in China, where the demand for regional staples such as soya, copper, and oil—China’s oil reserves stood at a fifth of the world average—readily compensated for the reduction of markets for these products caused by the recession in the United States and Western Europe. Between 2001 and 2008 Chinese imports from Latin America grew nearly tenfold to $63 billion, but from a very low base and concentrated principally on Brazil, Peru, and Chile, whilst Chinese FDI was tightly focused on mining and oil.16 Yet in 2006, for the first time ever, a US assistant secretary of state for the Western Hemisphere, Tom

15 The Economist, 4 January 2014; 31 Oct. 2019; The Guardian, 31 October 2019.
16 The Financial Times, 15 June 2018; The Economist, 13 July 2019.
Shannon, visited Beijing specifically to discuss Latin American affairs. A decade later China was Mercosur’s leading partner in trade, and second in importance for Latin America as a whole, although it trailed behind the EU as an investor.

This new vector of bilateral interest grew more acute with rising Chinese financial support for the ailing Venezuelan regime. Once again, London, which in 2002 stood back, albeit after some dithering, from the US-inspired coup attempt against Chávez, sought to occupy a mediating role as Venezuela became the site of a rare and barely concealed US—Russia standoff in the region. Britain maintained diplomatic relations with Venezuela whilst those western sanctions that could be imposed were helping to cripple the economy, presaging a massive emigration to neighbouring countries but no collapse of a regime that retained the support of its own army and the Cuban security forces. It is not inconceivable that the British government, having had closer knowledge of the political and cultural consequences of the Greek economic crisis of 2009 and far less official involvement in the IMF Latin American programmes of the 1970s and 1980s, substantively preferred a more modulated approach as well as upholding its customary ‘soft cop’ role.

Britain’s own past record in Iran, particularly in the 1950s when the United Kingdom and United States intelligence services had cooperated to overthrow the radical Mohammed Mossadegh, meant that it was not well positioned to help resist a discernible political and diplomatic overture to Latin America by Tehran in the early years of the century. In 2012 a radical Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, visited Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Venezuela, which were more natural allies, whilst opening new embassies in Chile, Colombia, and Uruguay, states that maintained warm relations with both the United States and the United Kingdom. As one of the ‘EU3’, Britain was a party, alongside the United States, to the 2015 multilateral agreement limiting the development of Iran’s nuclear capacities, which had been unreservedly supported by Cuba, Venezuela, and Syria alone for the previous decade. Yet when the Trump administration sought to withdraw from that agreement, after the Brexit vote in Britain, London continued to operate alongside France and Germany. Of course, the Cameron government (2010–16) had been recently wounded by its partial involvement in the conflicts in Libya and Syria, where Iran and Russia were now both deeply engaged. Theresa May’s administration (2016–19), like Obama’s, actively sought to avoid any ‘mission-creep’ associated with a substantial deployment of ground troops, such as those
in Afghanistan and Iraq, and this required tight coordination with the EU. However, there had been strong circumstantial evidence linking the Tehran regime with the bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992 and the city’s principal Jewish cultural centre two years later, with 114 killed and over 500 injured, and bilateral relations between the United Kingdom and Iran had become very poor during Boris Johnson’s period as foreign secretary (2016–18). There was no reason to presume that an innocent South-South agenda was being played out.

As we have seen, US—Cuban relations were set apart from what Abraham Lowenthal called the ‘neglect-panic cycle’ that had characterised US—Latin American relations in general.17 The State Department had placed Cuba on its list of terrorist states in 1982 and ensured that it remained excluded from the OAS, obliging the bulk of the members to find another forum for engagement, especially when, in 2001, with the restored climate of democratic values, upholding these was made a pre-condition for OAS membership, whatever the nature of state-to-state relations. The EU was itself somewhat divided, with Spain and Portugal urging greater political engagement, Britain promoting correct bilateral relations supported by scientific and cultural exchange, and other members more divided over the lack of investment rights and individual human rights. It is perhaps indicative of the narrowly authoritarian nature of the regime that greater international convergence can be traced to the illness of Fidel Castro in July 2006 when visiting Córdoba, Argentina, where Mercosur was holding a summit. Castro was diagnosed as suffering from diverticulitis, and so not a very good advertisement for the much vaunted resources of Cuban public medicine. Yet his illness, eventually followed by replacement in office by his brother Raúl, did lessen the intransigent tone of state rhetoric, with the institution of minor reforms regarding private property. Fidel would die, at the age of 90, a decade later in 2016, well after Cuba had started attending meetings of CELAC, including joint summits with the EU. In the United States, commercial as well as diplomatic interests urged the cause of rapprochement to Obama, who, fully aware of the de facto Cuban collaboration over the highly controversial prison camp at Guantánamo, saw the reopening of diplomatic relations as a positive opportunity, albeit as much for display as for substance.

17 Partners in Conflict: The United States and Latin America, Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, cited in Julia Buxton, ‘Forward into History. Understanding Obama’s Latin American Policy’, Latin American Perspectives, 38: 4 (2011), 30.
**FUTURE UNCERTAINTIES**

The election of Donald Trump was based on the explicit repudiation of a raft of Obama’s policies, and so must be taken as a serious index of popular attitudes towards Latin America and its people within the United States. Trump campaigned openly and aggressively on pledges to deport millions of undocumented immigrants, including unaccompanied minors; to build a wall along the entire length of the Mexican border, to be paid for by a tax on remittances to that country; for the reversal of all ‘normalisation’ of relations with Cuba, especially Obama’s plans to close Guantánamo; and the renegotiation, if not the outright repudiation, of NAFTA. Of course, not all of these promises have been realised, but they marked the temper of the times. Latin America was, in a sense, to be relegated even from the status of ‘backyard’.

The replacement of Obama by Trump effectively required the United Kingdom to reanimate those ‘good cop’ qualities that had for the better part of a decade not been strongly required. In that period, at the initiative of the foreign secretary, William Hague (2010–14), London slowed the process of increasing delegation of regional policy to the EU. Under the ‘Canning Agenda’ of 2010 a clutch of British embassies were restored, the notion of Latin America being a purely ‘equidistant’ part of the world was repudiated, and a spirit of re-engagement with the region was expressed with rare vigour.18 Even before Trump, the results of this overture were modest and uneven, again in keeping with the findings of many of the chapters here, although political relations perhaps improved rather more than economic ties. Of course, it is in the very nature of diplomacy that it be, so to speak, subcutaneous, but even then British envoys reported continuing challenges not just with their host countries, US predominance, or parsimonious funding; they often found British-based firms to be risk-averse or operationally clumsy with regard even to entering, let alone exploiting, the regional market.19 Given the record of the previous century, it seemed unlikely that the ‘Global Britain’ promised on the morrow of Brexit would flourish through any liberated commerce with Latin

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18 Thomas C. Mills, ‘British Foreign Policy towards Latin America in the Twenty-First Century: Assessing the “Canning Agenda”’, *International Affairs*, 94: 6 (2018), 1391–1408. For William Hague’s 2010 Canning Lecture, which announced the shift in British policy, see https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/britain-and-latin-america-historic-friends-future-partners.

19 Kandiah and Mills (eds.), *British Diplomacy in Latin America*. 
America. Whilst Latin American diplomats in London appreciated the continuing local appetite for their nations’ cultures, they continued to ask—rather in the vein of 2003, when Blair backed Bush’s war in Iraq—how and why this huge shift in foreign policy could possibly have come about and what it augured.