Reflecting their traditional preoccupation with Europe and its problems, most American political elites accept as common knowledge that “the Cold War is over.” What they really mean is that the Cold War in Europe seemed to end with the breaching of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. From this perspective, there could be no doubt that the U.S. “won” the Cold War and that it is the sole remaining “superpower.” These elites tend to ignore or be ignorant of the Cold Wars in East Asia and Latin America and do not appreciate that their own country is the prime reason why both continue at the present time.

The few Americans interested in questions of foreign policy also do not seem to ponder why the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is still needed nor are they concerned that the major continental European countries, Germany and France, openly resent American triumphalist pretensions. Americans accept the idea that the offensive use of NATO in the Balkans during 1999 was a “humanitarian intervention,” an attempt to help innocent civilians against a repressive regime. They do not see it as a manifestation of American imperialism, even though many people around the world do so and are alarmed by it.

Such Americans also do not acknowledge that the Cold War in East Asia only began to end in June 2000, when the leaders of North and South Korea met in the North Korean capital and started a process looking toward the reunification of the Korean peninsula. Regardless of how long that takes, the meeting allowed President Kim Dae Jung of South Korea to proclaim, “The North will no longer attempt unification by force and, at the same time, we will not do any harm to the North. The most important outcome of the summit is that there is no longer going to be any war.” This is a development that runs directly counter to the interests of the American military establishment, the American arms industry, and America’s position as hegemon of East Asia and has spread panic among American strategists and intelligence operatives. Similarly, the Cold War in Latin America is not only not over but in July 2000, entered a new, more virulent stage in Colombia with the escalation of U.S. military intervention under cover of fighting the “drug war.” Following directly on the U.S.’s Vietnam-like operations in Central America throughout the 1980s, this new phase in South America includes clandestine operations, environmental degradation, right-wing death squads, and mammoth arms sales.
Actually, the Cold War never formally “ended” in Europe. Instead the Soviet Union disintegrated because it was unable to maintain its empire in Eastern Europe or to reform itself internally. This development produced a crisis of credibility for the United States. For the first forty years after World War II, the menace of the Soviet Union was the U. S.’s prime justification for its worldwide and multifaceted operations against “communism.” When this menace (and it was a genuine menace) disappeared, it was revealed that during the Cold War the United States had maintained some not-publicly-acknowledged objectives other than just balancing and containing the Soviet Union. The United States had become accustomed to its hegemony over the parts the world not dominated by the Soviet Union. When the Cold War seemed to “end,” the U.S. did not demobilize but instead continued its system of alliances and bases around the world and launched extensive strategic and intellectual efforts to find new threats and situations that demanded its imperial attention. These included an alleged need for a “humanitarian war” in Kosovo, renewed intervention in the Chinese civil war on behalf of Taiwan and in order to maintain “stability” throughout the Asia-Pacific region, and the opening of a new front against leftwing social reform movements in Colombia while continuing to train and equip virtually all the armies of Latin America.

**Cold War I: Europe**

Until his death in 1983, Raymond Aron was an independent French intellectual who passionately defended U.S. foreign policy in postwar Europe against the views of most other French observers. His views express clearly the conventional wisdom on the Cold War in Europe: “It was evident to anyone viewing inter-state relations in accordance with the traditional, if not eternal, categories that the aim [of the United States] in 1946 and 1947 was to prevent the Soviet Union from filling the vacuum created by the disappearance of the Third Reich and the exhaustion of the theoretically victorious older nations. . . . If a United States military ‘protectorate’ still exists in Europe twenty years later, it is because the Europeans themselves expressed an urgent wish for it. . . . Success in Europe required neither limited war, counterrevolution, nor the CIA.”² It should be noted that at the time Aron wrote, he was fully informed about numerous CIA operations in Europe that were in some cases similar to the totalitarian practices of the Soviet Union that he criticized. Nonetheless, his views, as far as they go, are accurate enough.³ The United States succeeded in Europe by default-- as the French say, faute de mieux, for want of something better. The truth of the matter is that the U.S. did not so much win the European Cold War as the Soviet Union unquestionably lost it.

Stalin created the USSR’s postwar empire in Eastern Europe by force, just as the United States created its empire in East Asia. Neither empire could or would have come into being in any other way. By the “Soviet Union’s empire,” I mean the seven “people’s democracies” in Eastern Europe that formed the heart of the Communist camp until its collapse in 1989-- namely, East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Albania, and Bulgaria. Its American equivalent was the system of satellites the U.S. created in East Asia, including at one time regimes in Thailand, South Vietnam, the Philippines, and Taiwan but with only Japan and South Korea still remaining in their Cold War status today. Both superpowers also resorted to force against popular movements in
order to hold their respective empires together--the Soviet Union in 1956 in Budapest and in 1968 in Prague; the United States from 1950 to 1953 in Korea and from 1954 to 1975 in Vietnam.\(^4\)

On November 9, 1989, the people of East Berlin tore down the wall that had divided their city since 1961, and on October 3, 1990, Germany was formally reunited. At the Soviet-American summit meeting in Malta in December 1989 President Bush declared the Cold War to be over. If this is true, why ten years later does the United States still operate military bases in almost forty countries and station more than 260,000 military personnel permanently outside its borders? According to a report of the Department of Defense in 1995, of the sixty-nine most important American bases around the world, the most, some thirteen, are in Japan (actually, Okinawa) but Germany is the second-ranking location with ten such bases.\(^5\)

The Americans succeeded in the Cold War in Europe because they were, with some qualifications, on the side of democracy. The Soviets lost the Cold War in Europe and subsequently disintegrated because of their reliance on totalitarianism. Nonetheless, the alliance based on a common commitment to democracy by the United States and the leading nations of Europe became seriously frayed during the first post-Cold War decade. Because of its commitment to its covert imperial project, the United States squandered the goodwill it had accumulated since the Marshall Plan. European nations became alarmed by the United States’ behavior and increasingly voted with coalitions of nations intended to balance American power.

For example, in November 1999, the U.N. by a vote of 54 to 4 with 73 abstentions adopted a resolution sponsored by Russia, China, and Belarus calling on the parties to the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 “to refrain from the deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems for a defense of the territory of its country and not to provide a base for such a defense.” The U.S., Israel, Latvia, and Micronesia voted against the resolution. Thirteen of the fifteen members of the European Union abstained, while the other two, France and Ireland, voted for the resolution. Before the resolution was adopted, France proposed an amendment calling for efforts to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. It was approved by twenty-two votes to one, with ninety-five abstentions. The United States cast the only negative vote.\(^6\)

Similarly, only two countries, the U.S. and Somalia, are still refusing to sign the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, which calls on nations not to recruit into their militaries individuals under the age of eighteen (the U.S. military occasionally takes a seventeen-year-old).\(^7\) The U.S. has also steadfastly opposed creating an International Criminal Court to try leaders charged with genocide and has refused to sign the international treaty against the use of landmines, even though both sides in Korea, where the U.S. claims they are indispensable, have started to remove the mines in order to reopen rail service between the two halves of the country.

American unilateralism is destroying the democratic coalition of the European Cold War. The most important instance of this, as already mentioned, is the United States’ program to
build a comprehensive anti-ballistic missile system. If actually deployed, such a system threatens to undermine the treaties that have existed for thirty years for the prevention of nuclear war and to launch a new nuclear arms race. When combined with the failure of the U.S. Congress in October 1999 to ratify the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty and the Pentagon’s continued maintenance of a stockpile of nuclear warheads at Cold War levels, the American “national missile defense” (NMD) appears to Europeans as a determination to go it alone regardless of the views of the rest of the world.

Even if the technological difficulties of a national missile defense were to be overcome, such a defense would make sense only if the United States first reduced its stockpile of warheads from the current level of around 7,000 to around 1,500. That is the only way even to begin to convince Russia, China, and the other major powers of the world that the U.S. is not trying to achieve a nuclear advantage over them. The U.S. could then contemplate deploying a limited NMD consisting of around 100 to 200 interceptors aimed at possible attackers who might become indifferent to the consequences of nuclear retaliation and accidental launches. But the United States has not even made gestures in that direction. Its indifference to the issue has already led to serious nuclear proliferation in India and Pakistan. That is why the Europeans are unable to trust American claims that its missile program is purely defensive. It should also be noted that without European cooperation, no missile defense of any sort can ever be effective since at least some of the radars on which it depends would have to be based in Greenland, which is Danish territory and is at present unavailable for American use.

These are not mere differences in capabilities or perspectives between the U.S. and its European allies. Perhaps the most experienced of all American Cold War strategists, Paul H. Nitze, recently wrote, “I can think of no circumstances under which it would be wise for the United States to use nuclear weapons, even in retaliation for their prior use against us. . . . It is the presence of nuclear weapons that threatens our existence. . . . It would be safe now to dispose, unilaterally, of our nuclear arsenal.” Nitze argues that the development of precision-guided conventional munitions have rendered nuclear weapons obsolete. An equally qualified strategist, General George Lee Butler, a thirty-three-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force and in 1991 commander of the Strategic Air Command, asks, “How [can one] fathom a historical view that can witness the collapse of communism but fail to imagine a world rid of nuclear weapons?” General Butler advocates abolishing the command he used to head. “Surely,” he writes, “we still comprehend that to threaten the deaths of tens or hundreds of millions of people presages an atrocity beyond anything in the record of mankind.” That such comprehension does not yet exist is suggested by the hysteria in the United States during 1999 and 2000 over whether China had “stolen” American nuclear secrets and the search for a Chinese spy that seemed to reenact the Dreyfus case of a century ago.

During the Cold War the United States regarded Western Europe as the ultimate domino, the area of the world that could not under any circumstances be lost to the Soviet Union. The U.S. therefore built there its strongest alliances and even went along with the futile efforts of Britain, France, and the Netherlands to reestablish their colonial empires in East Asia. But America’s imperial pretensions are now unraveling these trans-Atlantic ties.
There are many issues other than nuclear weaponry. So far from admiring America’s values, many Europeans see the frequent use of the death penalty in the United States as openly racist. Similarly, the early release from a six-months’ prison sentence of Marine Capt. Richard Ashby, who piloted the jet that in February 1998 cut a skiers’ gondola cable in northern Italy and plunged twenty vacationers to their deaths, seems to reflect America’s imperial arrogance. Equally irritating to Europeans is America’s illicit reading of every fax, telex, e-mail, phone call, and computer data message transmitted by satellite around the world and, since 1971, its attaching tapping pods to most underwater cables-- the so-called Echelon program-- particularly since Echelon’s “collection requirements” include the private economic activities of America’s leading allies.12

Even NATO’s one and only war, the bombing of Serbia and Kosovo during the spring of 1999, seriously divided the members of NATO. What looked like a belated intervention by the democracies against Serbia’s “ethnic cleansing” turned out to be a demonstration of America’s military technology and led to charges of war crimes. China claimed that the war in Kosovo was merely a test of America’s advanced weaponry, and this is why NATO intervened without U.N. or other legal sanction and why more Chinese died in the war (as a result of the American bombing of China’s embassy in Belgrade) than Americans, who suffered no casualties at all.13 Amnesty International concluded that the bombing of Radio Television Serbia on April 23, 1999, “was a deliberate attack on a civilian object and as such constitutes a war crime,” and Human Rights Watch found that of the approximately 500 Yugoslav civilians killed, “half died because of NATO violations of laws and practices on protecting civilians.”14 The Cold War in Europe is over but that development has not ushered in a period of stable peace-- largely because the United States government had and still has other objectives.

**Cold War II: East Asia**

The greatest single disaster in recent American foreign policy was the failure of the U.S. to understand and adjust to the Chinese revolution. This failure started during World War II and persist to the present day. Ever since it became clear, shortly after Japan’s surrender in the summer of 1945, that China would be convulsed by civil war and that the likely victor would be the Chinese Communist Party, the United States has been obsessed by China’s growing power and by the potential challenge a renascent China might offer to American hegemony in East Asia and ultimately to its covert Cold War project to create a global capitalist order led by the United States. Except for the two decades after Nixon’s 1971 opening of a dialogue with China and his aligning the U.S. with China against the Soviet Union, American Cold War policy in East Asia has been hostile to China. Today, with China’s own redirection of its efforts to catch up economically with the rest of East Asia, American policy still vacillates-- on the one hand it seeks to profit from and tries to influence China’s economic development while on the other it maintains massive military forces directed against China and contends that the only thing maintaining stability in East Asia is the presence of these American military forces.

All the major elements of postwar American imperialism in East Asia follow from this American obsession with China. They include: (1) the decision to end the immediate
postwar efforts to democratize Japan and instead to make it into the primary American 
base for military operations in East Asia. A corollary of this policy was to isolate Japan 
economically from its traditional markets in China. As a consequence, in order for Japan to 
regain any form of economic viability, the U.S. had to open its own market to Japan on 
uniquely favorable terms. As the American Embassy in Tokyo reported to the Department 
of State in 1960, “Our economic policy accorded Japan a fair and reasonable share of our 
market as premise and precondition for U.S.-Japan relationships in political and security 
fields and has led to substantial expansion of Japanese exports, making possible Japan’s 
present economic prosperity.”15 This policy is still in effect today-- in return for basing 
100,000 American troops in Japan and South Korea, Japan still takes as its due privileged 
access to the American economy and protectionist barriers against American sales and 
investment in the Japanese market. The result is huge excess capacity in Japan, the 
hollowing out of American manufacturing industries, and the largest trade imbalances ever 
recorded between two economies.

(2) At the time of the proclamation of the Chinese People’s Republic in October 1949, the 
United States could not decide what to do. Should it follow normal international practice 
and recognize the new regime or respond to the gathering forces of reaction and 
McCarthyism within the United States and pretend that Chiang Kai-shek’s regime in exile 
in Taiwan still represented China? As James L. Peck has shown, the outbreak of war in 
Korea on June 25, 1950, provided a way out of this dilemma.16 Even though the U. S. 
entered the Korean War with U.N. sanction, its simultaneous action to prevent the Chinese 
Communists from taking over Taiwan was purely unilateral and created what is today the 
single most volatile issue in international relations in the Pacific. For the next two decades, 
the United States recognized the regime in Taiwan as the legitimate government of China, 
supported Taiwan as the occupant of China’s permanent seat in the U.N., maintained a 
total economic embargo against the mainland, and, despite massive evidence to the 
contrary, tried to characterize the Chinese revolution as a manifestation of Soviet 
imperialism. Chiang Kai-shek became the model for a long list of military dictators whom 
the United States installed, sponsored, or protected in Taiwan, South Korea, South 
Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia because they were anti-communist. Like 
Chiang and like many leaders of the Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe, most of these 
dictators were corrupt, brutal, and incompetent. Nowhere in East Asia did the United States 
promote democracy; its belated appearance in South Korea and Taiwan came about as a 
result of domestic protest movements against what had become increasingly unpopular 
American-supported regimes.

(3) The United States fought savage wars with China-- literally in Korea and figuratively in 
Vietnam where it sought to discredit Mao’s theory of “people’s war.” The latter provoked 
serious divisions within the American electorate and contributed to the United States’ 
growing reputation as an imperialist bully. More than anything else, however, these wars 
gave the conduct of American foreign relations outside of Europe its special 
characteristics-- a reliance on abstract formulae (such as a “global communist conspiracy,” 
“counterinsurgency,” “foreign internal defense,” the “free world,” and “captive nations”) 
rather than relying on serious efforts to understand local conditions; excessive use of the 
American military and employment of undue violence; and clandestine operations to
unseat inconvenient governments or to prop up unpopular but pro-American ones (in Iran, Guatemala, Japan, the Bay of Pigs, the Congo, South Korea, South Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Indonesia, Chile, Angola, Nicaragua, Somalia, and Haiti to name only the best-known cases). By the time the Soviet Union had disappeared, reliance on these methods had almost totally replaced America’s traditional use of diplomacy, foreign aid, and efforts to project the United States as a model for other nations.

(4) The fundamental basis of the Cold War in Europe was a struggle between totalitarianism and democracy; the USSR was on the wrong side of this confrontation. The fundamental basis of the Cold War in East Asia was a struggle for liberation from prewar European, American, and Japanese colonialism; the United States was on the wrong side of this struggle. Despite knowing that most of the revolts in East Asia were driven by popular domestic nationalism, the U.S. persisted in characterizing these movements as led by communists taking orders from Moscow. This myopia also propelled the United States into the fatal blunder of supporting the attempts by the European powers to reclaim their East Asian colonies after they had been driven from them by Japanese armies during World War II. Even in South Korea, to emphasize the inequitable economic relations between the two countries rather than the strengthening of American military bases. In 1993, the American-created single-party-regime in Japan collapsed due to the irrelevance of its sole qualification for holding power--By-ar, and the U.S. did nothing to save it. Nonetheless, almost instantly after the disappearance of the Soviet Union, American strategists, aided by China’s repression of protesters at Tiananmen in 1989, began to vilify China and to make a domestic case that China was the successor to the USSR and the justification for America’s globalist acumen. The Pentagon’s Nye Report of 1995 authorized the permanent basing of 100,000 U.S. troops in Japan and South Korea, and a new “Visiting Forces Agreement” was signed with the Philippines by which U.S. troops were reintroduced there.17 Meanwhile, the Liberal Democratic Party returned to power in Japan and resumed its unprecedented trade surpluses with the U.S. despite (or because of) its own faltering economy. The 1997 Asian economic meltdown that began in Thailand, South Korea, and Indonesia revealed the dangers of their having followed American economic advice and pressure. It also had the effect of discrediting the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and its Asian Regional Forum as nascent multilateral organizations capable of dealing with East Asian problems without outside interference. The United States was back, fully committed to maintaining its empire in the Asia-Pacific region even though it was still engaged in an internal argument over whether it should “engage” China or try to “contain” it. Gon’s Nye Report of 1995 authorized the permanent basing of 100,000 U.S. troops in Japan and South Korea, and a new “Visiting Forces Agreement” was signed with the Philippines by which U.S. troops were reintroduced there.17 Meanwhile, the Liberal Democratic Party returned to power in Japan and resumed its unprecedented trade surpluses with the U.S. despite (or because of) its own faltering economy. The 1997 Asian economic meltdown that began in Thailand, South Korea, and Indonesia revealed the dangers of their having followed American economic advice and pressure. It also had the effect of discrediting the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and its Asian Regional Forum as nascent multilateral organizations capable of dealing with East Asian problems without outside
interference. The United States was back, fully committed to maintaining its empire in the Asia-Pacific region even though it was still engaged in an internal argument over whether it should “engage” China or try to “contain” it.

One key element of post-Cold War American imperialism in the area has been a persistent exaggeration of alleged threats posed by two of the remaining, formally communist countries of the area-- China and North Korea. In May 1999, for example, the U.S. Congress issued its so-called Cox Report, named after Christopher Cox, a Republican representative from Newport Beach, California. Cox claimed that China had pilfered secret data on seven of the U.S.’s most advanced “thermonuclear” weapons. He also said that the stolen information included computer codes, allegedly essential to the design of nuclear warheads, which most likely came from secret computers at America’s nuclear weapons laboratories. Led by the New York Times, the mass media sensationalized this report and set off a hunt for a spy at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. A New York Times editorial contended, “The Cox Committee has performed an invaluable service with its unsparing investigation.”

Needless to say, the “spy” was soon found in the person of an American scientist of Chinese ancestry (from Taiwan, not China), Wen-ho Lee. Federal authorities threatened Lee with death (like the Rosenbergs), tried to extract a confession from him, and then confined him in a jail in New Mexico under conditions similar to those the French imposed on Dreyfus when they sentenced him to Devil’s Island. The whole case ultimately fell apart for lack of evidence, and it also seemed likely that the Department of Energy and the Federal Bureau of Investigation had singled out Lee (as the French did Dreyfus) because of his race. When an FBI agent admitted to a Federal judge that he had lied in his testimony against Lee, the government sought a plea-bargain arrangement that freed Lee.

Early in the case, journalist Robert Scheer of the Los Angeles Times-- the Emile Zola of this affair-- wrote, “The China threat exists only in the minds of politicians who are playing fast with national security concerns and the New York Times, which was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for publicizing their most stark warnings.” Over a year later, even the New York Times sought to excuse its behavior. It said it had been misled by “government officials who previously insisted that the downloaded data contained the ‘crown jewels’ of America’s nuclear arsenal that could change the global balance of power if transferred to a hostile power.” China, it seems, still inspires McCarthyism in the United States.

The other great focus of America’s exaggeration of supposed military “threats” from East Asia has been North Korea. The Pentagon has based virtually its entire case for a national missile defense on North Korea’s alleged development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. But the evidence for these capabilities has repeatedly failed to stand up. For example, during 1998 and 1999, Lt. Gen. Patrick Hughes, then head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, circulated to members of Congress “intelligence” that he said showed North Korea was secretly building an underground nuclear reactor. When the Americans exerted pressure on North Korea to inspect the place Hughes had identified as the site of the hidden plant, it was found not only to contain no machinery of any kind but to be too
small to have contained a reactor. When the Americans returned in May 2000 for a further inspection, it was still empty.22

Even more embarrassing, in November 1999, the Space Imaging company of Thornton, Colorado, used its own private spy satellite, the Ikonos, to photograph the alleged North Korean missile-launch site. The Ikonos has a resolving power down to one meter, which is comparable to military surveillance satellites. Looking at the Ikonos pictures, the Federation of American Scientists declared, “It is quite evident that this facility was not intended to support, and in many respects is incapable of supporting, the extensive test program that would be needed to fully develop a reliable missile system.” It called the North Korean base, completed in 1988, “barely worthy of note, consisting of the most minimal imaginable test infrastructure.” The Ikonos pictures also called into doubt the steady stream of intelligence on North Korea then coming from South Korean sources: one of Seoul’s alleged North Korean defectors had said that all agricultural villages had been removed from the vicinity of the test site but there they still were in the new pictures.23

Despite many such cases, members of the U.S. Congress refuse to accept that the Cold War in East Asia may be ending. On July 27, 2000, well after the Koreans had already launched their own peace initiatives, the House of Representatives Policy Committee, whose chairman is the hyperbolic Christopher Cox, released a report on the situation there. Its opening lines are: “North Korea is not merely a dictatorship: it is a uniquely monstrous tyranny that has tormented the Korean people for half a century, creating the most completely totalitarian and militarized state in human history. Today, even while North Korea is faltering on the edge of economic collapse, it poses one of the greatest threats to American and allied interests anywhere around the globe.”24

More ominous in its long-term implications than such propaganda, the Pentagon has on numerous occasions asserted that even if the two halves of Korea were reunited, it intends to keep a military force based there.25 Since South Korea vastly exceeds North Korea in expenditures on weapons,26 and since South Korea is twice as populous and at least twenty-five times richer than its northern counterpart, the American military is clearly not needed for its defense. The American military presence there is, in fact, a warning to China that the United States intends to preserve its imperial enclaves in the East Asian area. Much more dangerously, the United States has also started to up-grade its extensive military relationship with Taiwan. Since the mainland-Taiwan military confrontation of 1996 (which occurred on the eve of Taiwanese elections and was intended to prevent a unilateral Taiwanese declaration of independence), the Clinton administration has authorized the Pentagon, in the words of the veteran China correspondent, Jim Mann, “to conduct the kind of strategic dialogue with Taiwan’s armed forces that had not been permitted by any administration since 1979.”27

Taiwan is one of the United States’ wealthiest customers for weapons, and it already possesses a retaliatory capacity against mainland China that effectively neutralizes the threat of genuine combat in the Taiwan Strait. The real danger is that war could result because of political miscalculations. China has repeatedly indicated that it does not want to incorporate Taiwan through the use of military force. At the same time, it cannot tolerate a
unilateral secession of what by every principle and precedent of international law is its
territory. Given the blunders of the United States fifty years ago, there is no “solution” to
the Taiwan problem. Only the maintenance of the status quo and a further passage of time
can offer any resolution. Unfortunately, United States imperialist pretensions stand in the
way of such prudence.

**Cold War III: Latin America**

It is said that dead men tell no tales, but in Latin America they are speaking with
exceptional clarity-- revealing the sordid details of U.S. Cold War foreign policy toward
the area. In 1992, in Asunción, Paraguay, a survivor of the regime of former dictator Gen.
Alfredo Stroessner stumbled on five tons of reports and photographs left over from
Operation Condor. This was the cooperative effort from 1975 on among military and
police officials of Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Bolivia to identify,
torture, and kill as many representatives of workers and advocates of democracy as they
could find. Such records also exist in other Latin American countries, but in the words of
Juan García, the Spanish lawyer who brought the 1998 suit against Gen. Augusto Pinochet
of Chile on charges of genocide, “in Paraguay they didn’t manage to hide it all.” Baltazar
Garzón, the Spanish judge who sought the extradition of Pinochet from England after his
arrest there on October 16, 1998, collected more than 1,500 pages of evidence from the
archives before American officials moved in to “sanitize” them.

Elsewhere in Latin America, incriminating “archives of terror” are also coming to light. In
June 2000, an Argentine judge asked Brazil for information about three Argentine citizens
who disappeared in Brazil when both countries were under military rule. To the surprise of
virtually all observers, Brazil’s highest court ordered that all documents relating to
Operation Condor be turned over to Argentine authorities.29

At El Aguacate, eighty miles east of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, at the abandoned military
base the U.S. built in 1983 to wage what the Associated Press calls its “Cold War fight
against communism,” jail cells and the bodies of torture victims have been uncovered. El
Aguacate is just one of several sites in Honduras being investigated on the basis of
witnesses’ testimony and records. During the 1980s, Honduras was the CIA’s largest
station on earth; it was used to train some 14,000 Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries
(“Contras”) for operations across the border.30

On August 24, 2000, acting on a warrant for extradition signed by Judge Garzón of Spain,
Mexican authorities arrested Ricardo Miguel Cavallo at Cancún while he was trying to flee
the country back to Argentina. Many victims of the Argentine junta, 1976-1983, have
identified Cavallo as “Serpico,” the head torturer at the Escuela Mecanica located inside
Naval headquarters at Buenos Aires. The arrest was unprecedented since Mexico usually
resists all efforts to extradite fugitives within its borders. As the New York Times put it,
“[Mexico] became a kind of haven for Latin American military officers suspected of cold-
war crimes, just as Argentina once was a refuge for Nazis.” During the reign of the
Argentine junta, military officers killed at least 30,000 people and another 5,000
“disappeared.” Between 1991 and 1998, a small unit in the Argentine Ministry of Health
treated some 31,102 torture victims. To this day no torturer has been investigated or tried, and no compensation has been paid.32

The breakthrough in producing these and other revelations about the Cold War in Latin America was the arrest of Pinochet in England. Until that time the United States remained absolutely tight-lipped about the CIA’s knowledge of and participation in the Chilean military’s overthrow of Salvador Allende in 1973 and about the roles of graduates of the U.S. Army’s School of the Americas in Operation Condor. But Spain’s request for Pinochet’s extradition caused many of his victims in Latin America and Europe to speak out and this forced the United States at least to pretend to cooperate in an international effort to reveal the truth about crimes against humanity in which it had been implicated.

There are also two high-profile cases involving the United States directly that had never been resolved—the 1973 murders in Santiago by Pinochet’s secret police unit, DINA (Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional), of two U.S. citizens, Charles Horman, age 31, a film maker and writer, and his colleague Frank Teruggi, age 24; and DINA’s assassination on September 26, 1976, in Washington DC of the former Chilean ambassador to the United States, Orlando Letelier, and his 25-year-old American companion, Ronni Karpen Moffitt.

In January 2000, the British Home Secretary Jack Hall tried to spare the U.S. embarrassment by denying Spain’s warrant for extradition and allowing Pinochet to return to Chile. However, the preferential treatment of Pinochet has kept the issue of his crimes alive, and President Clinton ordered the CIA to make public its files on the Pinochet regime. It has yet to do so completely and, in August 2000, CIA director George Tenet defied the president and refused to declassify records that he said “would reveal too much about CIA sources and methods.”33 But it was too late. Enough has already been released under Clinton’s order to make clear the United States’ role in both cases and to begin to describe the activities of the United States in Latin America under cover of the Cold War.

The “methods” that the CIA contends are too delicate to reveal to the American public are its routine practice of turning over the names of people it wants executed to military and police authorities that it has trained and helped put in power. It can then pretend that it had nothing to do with their subsequent deaths, even expressing shock and disappointment at the excesses of its former pupils. This was the pattern of American operations in Indonesia from Gen. Suharto’s rise to power in 1965 to the American refusal in the autumn of 1999 to get involved in rescuing the victims of Indonesian army terror in East Timor.34 The CIA employed these same methods in bringing Pinochet to power and in its relations with Operation Condor.

In 1982, the French film director Constantin Costa-Gavras released Missing, his motion picture about the deaths of Horman and Teruggi. Eighteen years after it was first shown, virtually all of the details in the film have now been confirmed, including the execution of the two young men on September 19, 1973, in the Santiago sports arena because they knew too much about American involvement in the military coup that had just taken place on September 11. The film’s scenes of Horman’s wife’s repeatedly asking State Department officers “Can they order an American to disappear without consulting the Americans

11
"first?" and the American military and naval attaches prodding the wife to give them the names of all of her husband’s Chilean friends have been substantiated by newly released documents. When the American ambassador is portrayed as saying to Horman’s father that his son was probably kidnapped by leftists in order to embarrass the new government, we now know this was typical of the U.S. Embassy’s activities at the time of Allende’s overthrow.

The documents the State Department released in February 2000 had been divulged in 1980 but now previously blacked-out sections were restored. These new sections make clear that the State Department knew from virtually the day of their disappearance that the two Americans had been killed by Pinochet. Embassy officials further speculated that “the Chileans would not have done so without a green light from U.S. intelligence.”35 The New York Times has also noted that “American intelligence and military officials may have encouraged Gen. Augusto Pinochet’s security forces to round them up even though it was clear that the two men, like thousands of Chileans arrested during the same period, were likely to be mistreated, if not killed.”36

The assassination of Letelier is even more damning. After having served as foreign minister in the Allende government, he came to Washington in 1975 as an associate fellow of the Institute of Policy Studies and professor of international relations at the American University. He was killed in a car bomb explosion on the orders of Gen. Manuel Contreras, the director of DINA. All of this has long been known. What is new is that on September 18, 2000, the CIA released a document revealing for the first time that in 1975 Gen. Contreras was “a paid CIA asset” and that contacts with him continued long after he had dispatched his agents to Washington to kill Letelier.37

This revelation about Contreras is just one important instance within a general pattern. The Asunciñn archives showed that “United States officials backed Condor nations not only with military aid but also with information” and that U.S. Army Col. Robert Thierry helped Gen. Stroessner set up his police state apparatus and train his police officers. They also showed that FBI operatives had supplied the Pinochet regime with the names of Chileans in their files. “The F.B.I. [has ] defended the sharing of information with Chile as standard practice among law enforcement agencies of governments friendly to Washington.”38 In the July 2000 release of documents on Chile that President Clinton ordered, the FBI disclosed for the first time that it had collected information on the activities in Chile of Frank R. Teruggi, whose bullet ridden body was found in the Santiago morgue ten days after he disappeared.39 The Brazil files disclosed that “The first known mention of Operation Condor came in a 1976 cable from the American Embassy in Buenos Aires, and American agents worked closely with security officials in the region, many of whom had studied at the United States-run School of the Americas.”40

The Cold War in Latin America is utterly different from those in Europe or East Asia. Long before the issue of communism appeared in the Americas, the United States had been intervening economically and militarily to support American corporations in Latin America and to prevent the development there of governments backed by strong populist movements. As early as 1953, well before the arrival of Fidel Castro on the scene and...
looking forward to the CIA’s overthrow the following year of Guatemala’s democratic government, the National Security Council wrote in a highly classified statement of American policy toward the area: “There is a trend in Latin America toward nationalistic regimes maintained in large part by appeals to the masses of the population. . . . It is essential to arrest the drift in the area toward radical and nationalistic regimes.”

The 1959 Cuban revolution turned out to be an ideological godsend for the United States. The U.S. had long sought some way to redirect popular resentment in Latin America away from the exploitative activities of American multinational corporations-- from the United Fruit Company in Central America to the copper mining companies in Chile. Positing a “communist threat” to the area was the best U.S. strategy it had ever found. Fidel and Che lent great credibility to the U.S.’s old fears about “outside forces” threatening the “independence” of its Latin American neighbors. Recognizing that there was no way it could rely on popular forces in Latin America, since they all knew too well which foreign country was actually threatening their independence, the United States therefore turned to the armies of Latin America for its allies and preferred political leaders. It began to implement this strategy well before any of the other Cold Wars had begun.

One of the most important institutions of American foreign policy is the U.S. Army’s School of the Americas, founded in Panama in 1946 and moved to Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1984 after Panamanian President Jorge Illueca called it “the biggest base for destabilization in Latin America” and evicted it. Its curriculum includes counterinsurgency, military intelligence, interrogation techniques, sniper fire, infantry and commando tactics, psychological warfare, and jungle operations. Although members of Congress have long tried to shut it down, the Pentagon and the White House have always found ways to keep it in the budget. In May 2000, the Clinton administration sought to provide new camouflage for the school by changing its name to the “Defense Institute for Hemispheric Security Cooperation” and transferring authority over it from the Department of the Army to the Department of Defense. Congressman Joseph Moakley (Democrat of Massachusetts) referred to this reform as “putting perfume on a toxic dump” and continued, “The School of the Americas has trained some of the most brutal assassins, some of the cruelest dictators, and some of the worst abusers of human rights the western hemisphere has ever seen. If we don’t stand for human rights down in Georgia, how can we possibly expect to promote them anywhere else in the world?”

The School of the Americas (SOA, also known in Latin America as the School of Assassins) has trained over 60,000 military and police officers from Latin American and Caribbean countries. Among SOA’s most illustrious graduates are the dictators Manuel Noriega (who is serving a forty-year sentence in an American jail for drug trafficking) and Omar Torrijos of Panama; Guillermo Rodrigues of Ecuador; Juan Velasco Alvarado of Peru; Leopoldo Galtieri, former head of Argentina’s junta; and Hugo Banzer Suarez of Bolivia. Other alumni include the former military officer and leader of the Salvadoran death-squads, Roberto D’Aubuisson, who according to the U.N. Truth Commission for El Salvador, orchestrated the assassination on March 24, 1980, of the Archbishop of El Salvador, Óscar Romero, and helped plan the assault by the U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion against El Mozote village on December 11, 1981, that killed some 767 unarmed men,
women, and children. The U.N. Commission recovered as many shell casings as it could find at El Mozote. All were stamped as having been manufactured for the U.S. government at Lake City, Missouri.

An equally prominent participant in Operation Condor and a graduate of the SOA is Col. Pablo Belmar of the Chilean DINA. He was one of thirty officers named in the 1998 Spanish human rights case against Gen. Pinochet. Col. Belmar was charged with being a participant in the torture and murder in 1976 in Santiago of Carmelo Soria, a U.N. official and Spanish citizen. Soria’s car and body were dumped in a Santiago canal in order to make his death appear accidental. Col. Belmar graduated from SOA’s “Basic Arms Orientation Course” in 1968 and was invited back to Fort Benning in 1987 as a guest instructor of human rights.

According to the human rights organization “School of the Americas Watch,” one out of every seven commanders of DINA was a graduate of SOA. A typical graduate, First Lieutenant Armando Fernandez Larios, class of 1970, was one of two DINA agents who in 1974 killed General Carlos Prats González, Allende’s defense minister, and his wife in Buenos Aires. He was also indicted by a U.S. grand jury in 1979 for his involvement in the assassination of Letelier in Washington DC. Both Gen. Prats and Letelier were murdered with car bombs. Augusto Pinochet himself did not study at the SOA, but he gave the school a ceremonial sword which in 1991 was on prominent display in the office of the American commandant.

The end of Operation Condor did not bring an end to the tortures, murders, and disappearances of advocates of democracy in Latin America. The name of Vladimiro Montesinos, SOA class of 1965, was prominently in the news in 2000 when as head of Peruvian military intelligence and President Alberto Fujimori’s closest adviser, he was caught bribing an opposition politician. The United States helped him escape into exile in Panama. The Americas Watch Report on human rights in Peru claims that Montesinos was responsible for the disappearances of nine university students and a professor on July 18, 1992. Four officers have testified that Montesinos took an active part in torturing them. Not incidentally, Montesinos has also been implicated in deals to sell 10,000 AK-47 assault rifles to the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia), Colombia’s largest guerrilla group.

Colombia has sent over 10,000 soldiers to train at the SOA, more than any other country. Both Human Rights Watch and the U.S. Department of State in their annual reports on Colombia link SOA graduates to the Colombian military and paramilitary death-squads and to murders, kidnappings, and thefts that occurred in 1999. The presence of so many SOA graduates in Colombia is probably one element behind the United States’ decision during July 2000 to open full military operations there. According to U.S. estimates, forty percent of Colombian territory is held by either two Colombian rebel groups or by right-wing paramilitaries allied with the Colombian Army. Although Colombia was already the third largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid in the world, the amount it will receive is about to rise spectacularly. The American Seventh Special Forces Group from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, is already training Colombian troops at a secret base near the confluence of the
Caquetá and Orteguaza rivers. The American Embassy in Bogota has declared the area off-limits to all foreign and domestic journalists.\textsuperscript{48}

Even though the Colombian civil war is at least 36 years old, the United States has become alarmed about the growing production of cocaine in rebel-held territory. It has therefore formulated a $7.5 billion strategy, called “Plan Colombia,” to train three “anti-narcotic” battalions, composed of 3,000 Colombian soldiers, who will be flown into combat aboard sixty Huey-2 and Black Hawk helicopters that the U.S. will supply. FARC’s coco laboratories are actually located in the Peruvian jungles, and cocaine is transported down the Amazon River to the U.S. and Europe, just as the river is used to import munitions. FARC has also threatened to invade Ecuador if the U.S. uses it as a base for aerial operations. The probability is therefore high that all the countries that border on Colombia will become embroiled in a general insurgency. The United States also plans a campaign of aerial defoliation against Colombian fields using a new, not-fully-tested biological fungicide. Brazil fears that run-off from these operations will poison the region’s waters and that direct military operations will push thousands of Colombian refugees into the Brazilian state of Amazonas. According to the veteran journalist Tad Szulc, Plan Colombia, like U.S. operations in Vietnam, was “developed by men and women who know little of Colombia’s history, culture, and politics.”\textsuperscript{49} Plan Colombia is only the latest manifestation of the third and oldest Cold War, that in Latin America.

The attitudes and policies that underlie American imperialism are at least fifty years old and are not easily changed. They go back to the tense postwar situation in Europe, the U.S. obsession with China following the communist victory there, and the discovery that anti-communism could advance traditional American interests in Latin America. The imperialism that these ideological positions bolster was always there but it came into the open only with the end of the European Cold War and the United States’ trumpeting its the status as the “last remaining superpower.” It seems unlikely that the U.S. will soon abandon or moderate its international agenda. Therefore, the unavoidable conclusion is that the American empire, like that of the former Soviet Union, can only succumb to imperial overstretch in the not too distant future.

NOTES


41. NSC 144, March 4, 1953; quoted in Peck, op. cit., p. 73.


44. See http://www.soaw.org/, s. v. School of the Americas Graduates.


