From Development to Dictatorship: Bolivia and the Alliance for Progress in the Kennedy Era. Thomas Field, Jr. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014. ISBN: 9780801452604

History does not repeat itself but it sure rhymes, as the old adage says. Indeed, old strategies are resurfacing in the wake of modern threats from global terrorism. The U.S. government's current anti-terrorism policies rely on comprehensive solutions aimed at reforming the political and social conditions within a vulnerable society. Prevailing wisdom says terrorism deserves development and modernization to challenge its appeal. Those same ideas also defined the U.S. government's failed anticommunist strategies in Latin America during the Cold War.

The U.S. government's policies against communism and its twenty-first century response to international terrorism address the problem in similar ways. As did those anticommunist tacticians before them, experts today point to issues like economic disenfranchisement, ideology, and social alienation as motivating factors behind the growth of terrorism. The corresponding solutions are then financial assistance, democratization, and aid for those most vulnerable societies. Modernity and alignment reappear under new names like capacity-building and stakeholder cooperation. These modern developments make Thomas Field Jr.'s work so very timely. *From Development to Dictatorship: Bolivia and the Alliance for Progress in the Kennedy Era* represents a significant contribution to Cold War literature in its own right. But Field's treatise also provides a window into failed development programs of the past, demonstrating that continuities persist in our present political discourse.

Field's lucid and easily digestible account of the Alliance of Progress serves as the first substantive examination dedicated to U.S. Cold War policy towards Bolivia during the 1960s. This important but often overlooked country was the highest per capita recipient of U.S. foreign aid in Latin America during that period. In fact, as Field explains, Alliance for Progress funds

actually accounted for roughly 20 percent of the country's gross domestic product. For these reasons, Field argues, Bolivia represents a useful case study in resolving a frustrating paradox that few scholars have been unable to unravel: "How did the decade of development [in Latin America]…so quickly descend into the decade of the military coup d'état?" (3)

The answer is both intricate and dense; likely why few before him have successfully tackled such a question. But Field's accomplishes quite a feat by providing a clear and understandable thesis that sacrifices neither content nor complexity.

By connecting what Field calls the "high politics of modernization theory" and the "bottom-up effects of development ideology," he demonstrates that the development ideology of the day had a "tendency to justify authoritarianism and encouraged the rise of Third World armed forces." (4) These circumstances were not purely of "foreign import," though. (4) Preexisting ideologies laid the groundwork for heavy-handed development programs. Field contends that U.S. liberal strategists capitalized on Bolivian nationalist revolutionaries who were ready to organize and modernize their society, and those strategists "resolved to help guide the country's modernization along a path that was tolerable to Washington's broader anticommunist agenda." (4) Field succulently explains that the ideologies of "authoritarian modernization meld[ed] technocratic, economic language with hard-nosed political interventionism." (66) The turmoil and repressive governance these ideas bred became the all-too-common theme of U.S. Cold War policy in Latin America during the period.

Field organizes the story in chronological fashion. Chapter one is more than a dry rehashing of background information. Instead, Field moves quickly into the narrative, arguing that competing Soviet economic offers and Kennedy's own admiration for President Paz helped launch the Alliance for Progress in Bolivia. Liberal strategists soon pinpointed the obstacles to

development in the "Indian peasant countryside and the highland mining camps," and targeted the groups for reform.

In Chapter Two, Field introduces readers to the initial application of the Alliance for Progress in Bolivia, revealing that authoritarianism intensified within two short years of implementing economic development programs. Field uses the opportunity to acquaint readers with arguably the most problematic aspect of the program: manipulation. And both sides participated. Field recounts how the United States attempted to sell off its reserve of tin – a major export for Bolivia – forcing international prices to drop. The move resulted in President Paz threatening to take his country down the path of "Soviet-leading international neutrality." (8) The escalation in U.S. intervention intensified by this gamesmanship truly shaped the legacy of the Alliance for Progress. Field would later recall historian Laurence Whitehead's summation that the "crucial form of American intervention…was not this kind of sinister conspiracy…but the increasingly political trend of American pressures over the previous three or four years—pressures which helped create the conditions for a coup, whether it consciously intended or not." (193)

Chapter Three retraces how reconciliation set the stage for increased coordination between Paz and the U.S. government, culminating in a bloody battle between pro-development forces and left wing miners resistant to the labor monopolization the Bolivian government sought to achieve. The conflict in Irupata exemplified the brutality that followed the militarization of development programs and served as of indictment of U.S. modernization strategies.

Chapter Four and Five recall the aftermath of the confrontation with hostile miners, and the broader repercussions for U.S. strategy and President Paz's power. The prolonged struggle between competing sides almost sparked nationwide conflict. In essence, liberal development

strategies had forced Bolivia to the brink. Paz was able to win reelection in this fragile atmosphere but mostly through, what Field calls, "an election marred with mass abstention." (9)

Chapter Six brings the story to its conclusion by retracing the coup that removed President Paz from office. The relatively peaceful transfer of power saw Paz leave the country and Armed Forces Commanding General Alfredo Ovando take the reins. A military officer at the helm in Bolivia served as a fitting end to the militarization of the Alliance for Progress. American officials "were forced to deal directly with the development-oriented military they helped create." (9)

The only drawback to Field's work involves the lack of context that might illuminate the actual extent of communist impact. Field suggests that tangible influence existed in chapter three by retracing exciting stories of Cuban infiltration in and around the Bolivian countryside. But the remaining narrative gives the impression that significant foreign communist influence was more imaginative than real. Careful not to criticize Field for the book he did not intend to write, a brief context would have nevertheless rounded out an otherwise complete story.

In all, Field sets himself apart from other scholars on twentieth-century Latin America. He not only painstakingly explores the underappreciated history of Bolivia, but from it extracts an answer to arguably the most cumbersome question in the story of modern Latin America. He also gives time to the historical nuances, which themselves demonstrate that the trend towards violence and repressive regimes was not purely of U.S. making. This is an important contribution since one-sided, ethnocentric arguments that favor U.S. influence over Latin American agency remain a common theme in Cold War scholarship. The development theories of liberal strategies bears enormous responsibility, to be sure. But the myopic focus on U.S. policy fails to appreciate that stories often have other prevailing concerns and priorities. Scholar

Jeremy Friedman reminds historians in *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* to consider that the United States might "itself be secondary" to other forces in a given narrative. (223) Indeed, Bolivians exercised incredible self-determination and employed their own strategies during this period. And Field expertly portrays this reality.

"It is tempting to search, but an easy villain…does not exist." Field was referring to the November 1964 coup that overthrew President Paz, but the line provides a useful synopsis of the period as a whole. Indeed, not since Steven Rabe's 1999 work *Most Dangerous Area in the World* has a book so effectively captured the complexities and consequences of U.S. development ideology and anticommunist strategies in Latin America. General readers, students of public policy and officials alike would be wise to consider that much of Latin America's political and civic discourse stems from its experience with U.S. Cold War policy. This serves as a cautionary tale for those that would adopt old practices with modern names.

David Grantham, National Center for Policy Analysis