



# **Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America**

*Lars Schoultz*

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# Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America

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## **Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America** Lars Schoultz

In this sweeping history of United States policy toward Latin America, Lars Schoultz shows that the United States has always perceived Latin America as a fundamentally inferior neighbor, unable to manage its affairs and stubbornly underdeveloped.

This perception of inferiority was apparent from the beginning. John Quincy Adams, who first established diplomatic relations with Latin America, believed that Hispanics were "lazy, dirty, nasty...a parcel of hogs." In the early nineteenth century, ex-President John Adams declared that any effort to implant democracy in Latin America was "as absurd as similar plans would be to establish democracies among the birds, beasts, and fishes."

Drawing on extraordinarily rich archival sources, Schoultz, one of the country's foremost Latin America scholars, shows how these core beliefs have not changed for two centuries. We have combined self-interest with a "civilizing mission"--a self-abnegating effort by a superior people to help a substandard civilization overcome its defects. William Howard Taft felt the way to accomplish this task was "to knock their heads together until they should maintain peace," while in 1959 CIA Director Allen Dulles warned that "the new Cuban officials had to be treated more or less like children." Schoultz shows that the policies pursued reflected these deeply held convictions.

While political correctness censors the expression of such sentiments today, the actions of the United States continue to assume the political and cultural inferiority of Latin America. Schoultz demonstrates that not until the United States perceives its southern neighbors as equals can it anticipate a constructive hemispheric alliance.

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