



# Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism (American Empire Project)

By Greg Grandin

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**An eye-opening examination of Latin America's role as proving ground for U.S. imperial strategies and tactics**

In recent years, one book after another has sought to take the measure of the Bush administration's aggressive foreign policy. In their search for precedents, they invoke the Roman and British empires as well as postwar reconstructions of Germany and Japan. Yet they consistently ignore the one place where the United States had its most formative imperial experience: Latin America.

A brilliant excavation of a long-obsured history, *Empire's Workshop* is the first book to show how Latin America has functioned as a laboratory for American extraterritorial rule. Historian Greg Grandin follows the United States' imperial operations, from Thomas Jefferson's aspirations for an "empire of liberty" in Cuba and Spanish Florida, to Ronald Reagan's support for brutally oppressive but U.S.-friendly regimes in Central America. He traces the origins of Bush's policies to Latin America, where many of the administration's leading lights—John Negroponte, Elliott Abrams, Otto Reich—first embraced the deployment of military power to advance free-market economics and first enlisted the evangelical movement in support of their ventures.

With much of Latin America now in open rebellion against U.S. domination, Grandin concludes with a vital question: If Washington has failed to bring prosperity and democracy to Latin America—its own backyard "workshop"—what are the chances it will do so for the world?

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

America's post-9/11 policy of idealistic military adventurism has a long history, argues this incisive study. NYU historian Grandin (*The Blood of Guatemala*) sketches the vexed course of U.S. relations with Latin America, but focuses on the Reagan administration's involvement in Central America during the 1980s, when it backed the Salvadoran government in a brutal civil war against left-wing insurgents and the Nicaraguan Contras against the Sandinista regime. Then as now, Grandin contends, Washington justified a militarist stance by citing a threat to America (Communists advancing on the Rio Grande) and championing democracy and human rights. America did not send troops but did sponsor native death squads in El Salvador, and the author notes recent press reports that the U.S. military is sponsoring similar death squads in Iraq. Grandin's conception of American imperialism—covering everything from outright invasion to corporate investment and Fed interest-rate hikes—is too broad, and he overstates the importance of Central America in the making of the American New Right. But this timely book offers an analysis of the ideological foundations of today's foreign policy consensus and a cautionary tale about its dark legacy. (May 8)

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#### From Booklist

Most Americans pay little attention to our southern neighbors; however, according to NYU Latin American history professor Grandin, the U.S. government has indeed been paying attention to the region. Grandin contends that Latin America has been a testing ground--a laboratory, if you will--for the U.S. government to exercise its imperialistic tendencies. Grandin argues that U.S.-Latin American relations, from the administration of Thomas Jefferson up to the present Bush presidency, should be seen as sure indication the U.S. has always harbored imperial intentions. Our interventions in Latin America, both military and economic, have gone on repeatedly over the decades and reveal that the current administration's foreign policy, built on the concept of using military action to spread and establish our "ideals," is nothing new; it's been practiced in Latin America again and again. Contentious, certainly, but well presented. *Brad Hooper*

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#### Review

"The Americans who engineered countless military coups, death squads and massacres in Latin America never paid for their crimes -- instead they got promoted and they're now running the 'War on Terror.' Grandin had always been a brilliant historian, now he uses those detective skills in a book that is absolutely crucial to understanding our present."

--Naomi Klein, author of *No Logo*

"Greg Grandin knows the history of modern Guatemala better than anybody else in the world outside of that country--and therefore understands the nature of U.S. attitudes and action toward Latin America at their most disturbing. This grants him keen insight into the manic ferocity behind U.S. imperialism across the globe today, which he describes in fine, rich, vivid, bitter detail. Grandin also shrewdly observes that the outrages possible in little U.S. neo-colonies are not so easy to accomplish on a grand scale. His admirable book deserves many, many serious readers."

--John Womack, Robert Woods Bliss Professor of Latin American History and Economics, Harvard University and author of *Zapata*

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#### **Carolyn Alcantara:**

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