

Book Review/Reseña

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***The Fate of the Americas: The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Hemispheric Cold War.* By Renata Keller. University of North Carolina Press, 2025. Pp. 332. Hardback, US\$99.00; paperback, US\$29.95; eBook:EPUB & eBook:Web PDF US\$23.99.**

For decades, the Cuban Missile Crisis has been described mainly as a confrontation between Washington and Moscow, with Cuba cast in a dramatic yet ultimately secondary role, and the rest of Latin America treated as little more than a backdrop. Renata Keller's *The Fate of the Americas* overturns that interpretation with impressive archival depth and ambitious analysis. In doing so, she offers what is arguably the most comprehensive hemispheric account of the crisis to date, one that presents Latin America not as a passive stage for superpower rivalry but as an active arena of political agency, popular mobilization, and diplomatic consequence.

Keller's central argument is straightforward but revisionary: Latin America was not merely affected by the missile crisis; it was constitutive of it. The Soviet missiles placed in Cuba threatened not only the continental United States but virtually every country in the Western Hemisphere, a fact that the extensive English language historiography has consistently underappreciated. By centering this broader geography of risk, Keller invites readers to reconsider the very meaning of the crisis, its causes, its dynamics, and its long term consequences for inter-American relations.

The book's chronological architecture is one of its greatest strengths. Rather than beginning in October 1962, Keller traces the roots of the crisis back to the Cuban Revolution of 1959, rightly arguing that the missile standoff cannot be understood in isolation from the political tremors the revolution sent throughout the hemisphere. For Keller, the crisis was "at the heart" of Latin American history "from the outset" and represented "a turning point in inter-American relations" (2–3). This extended time frame allows her to map the divergent reactions of Latin American governments and publics to the Castro regime well before Soviet missiles became the focal point of

international attention. Some governments feared Cuban-style revolutionary contagion; others saw in the revolution a legitimate expression of anti-imperial sovereignty. These prior dispositions, Keller shows, directly shaped the responses that would emerge in October 1962.

The archival basis of this argument is impressive. Drawing on collections from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and the United States as well as an array of regional newspapers, pamphlets, and memoirs, Keller moves fluidly between high diplomacy and popular opinion in ways that most Cold War historians have not attempted. The result is a portrait of the crisis that is both politically sophisticated and socially textured. Readers encounter not only the calculations of foreign ministers and heads of state but also the street level turmoil that the crisis provoked, including the deadly riots in the Bolivian capital, the urban unrest in Buenos Aires, and the sabotage attacks on Venezuelan oil installations. Keller's observation that more Bolivians than Cubans died in the upheaval surrounding the missile crisis is one of the book's most arresting and most telling moments.

On the diplomatic front, the book offers nuanced readings of the varied positions taken by Latin American states. The near unanimous vote in the Organization of American States (OAS) to support the United States-led naval quarantine around Cuba might suggest a moment of unambiguous hemispheric solidarity, but Keller complicates that reading considerably. Countries that had abstained on Cuba's earlier expulsion from the organization rallied behind Washington when the security stakes were most acute, only to distance themselves again once the immediate danger passed. The book is particularly strong in its treatment of Brazil, whose equivocal posture during the crisis contributed to Washington's growing distrust of President João Goulart's government, a distrust that would have fateful consequences in the lead-up to the 1964 coup.

Equally valuable is the book's attention to Cuba's own fraught relationship with the Soviet Union. The assumption that Havana and Moscow were unified actors in a coherent revolutionary project is substantially undermined here. The crisis, Keller argues, effectively killed the idea that Cuba and the USSR were genuine partners in leading global communism. This is a welcome correction to accounts that treat the Soviet-Cuban alliance as more durable and symmetrical than it actually was. During the missile crisis, Castro's exclusion from the negotiations that resolved the standoff exposed the limits of Soviet solidarity and planted the seeds of Cuban disillusionment that would bear fruit in the years that followed.

Keller also extends her analysis beyond the crisis itself, tracing its consequences through the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco, the agreement that established Latin America as the world's first nuclear-weapons-free zone, providing a satisfying sense of historical consequence. Keller links the shock of the missile crisis to the regional political will that made Tlatelolco

possible, offering a rare example of Cold War trauma channeled into meaningful multilateral institution building.

Despite these considerable achievements, *The Fate of the Americas* leaves some analytical terrain underexplored. The three organizing concepts around which Keller structures her account, sovereignty, security, and solidarity, are invoked with considerable frequency but are rarely subjected to sustained theoretical scrutiny. This is a missed opportunity. Each of these terms carried distinct and often contested meanings across the region. As Keller herself acknowledges, “hemispheric solidarity lasted only as long as the missiles remained in Cuba” (195), a concession that invites more scrutiny than the book ultimately provides. The United States mobilized the language of hemispheric solidarity to underwrite foreign policies that were frequently antidemocratic in character; the sovereignty principle was simultaneously a shield for progressive governments resisting United States intervention and a tool for authoritarian regimes seeking immunity from international pressure. A more rigorous conceptual engagement with these tensions would have enriched the book’s analytical framework and opened productive conversations with the broader international relations literature on norms, legitimacy, and collective action.

These reservations aside, *The Fate of the Americas* is a milestone contribution to the historiography of the Cold War in Latin America. It is, above all, a book that asks its readers to think hemispherically, to recognize that the thirteen days of October 1962 were experienced not only in the White House and the Kremlin but in the streets of La Paz, the squares of Buenos Aires, and the halls of the OAS. In recovering those experiences with archival rigor and narrative clarity, Keller has written a book that will be indispensable for scholars of United States Latin American relations, Cold War history, and inter-American diplomacy for years to come.

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