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Conclusion



The U.S. hemispheric empire has been shaped by many hands and by many imaginations. Throughout the twentieth century, the empire's life has played out every day in some of its most crowded public spaces: parks, beaches, museums, cathedrals, airports and railroad stations, and hotel lobbies and restaurants. In these arenas, travelers and hosts have encountered, observed, insulted, admired, and reimagined one another. Together, they have enriched the empire's increasingly complex everyday life and helped to construct the transnational cultural context in which political economy and diplomacy took place.

Comparative analysis brings into focus the various ways in which the process has worked. U.S. visitors and their southern hosts first met one another on a mass scale in postrevolutionary Mexico. Bartenders and would-be cowboys, prostitutes and clients, casino owners and local labor unions, Lone Eagles and poets, border officials and railroad managers, archeologists and history buffs, collectively wielding a veritable arsenal of soft powers, entered into two decades of skirmishing and negotiation. They did not calculate national debt payments, transfer arms, or delineate geographic borders. They left such matters to government aides. Instead, their summit meetings established patterns of production and consumption; leisure and employment; race, class, and gender relations; and national identities.

International scholars are accustomed to probing identities during times of war and political crisis, when patriotism and fear often lead combatant societies to exaggerate their uniqueness and idealize their national character. An examination of peoples immersed in the rituals of modern leisure yields a more complex and arguably more well-rounded understanding of modern imagined communities. Let loose in cultural contact zones, tourists often experience pangs of insecurity and fits of chauvinism. At the same time, many unwind, peel off layers of stress, pursue educational opportunities and

self-improvement, and relax traditional social and cultural taboos. In so doing, they often discover and attempt to interpret at least the most salient elements of the host's way of life. Hosts often approach more powerful visitors with caution, simultaneously ingratiate and assert themselves, educate the foreign intruder, but also open their own minds to newly imported cultural attitudes and values. U.S. tourists have indeed helped to Americanize the rest of the world, but they and those who have hosted them have also internationalized America.

In interwar Mexico, visitors and hosts alike evidenced growing awareness of the international moment. The emerging aviation revolution, railroad and automobile links, global depression, and world war certainly brought the distant neighbors into closer alignment, as did domestic enthusiasms for reform and social engineering. Tourist relations allowed Mexican hosts to negotiate a subtle redistribution of power without disrupting the essential structures of empire. When the casinos, saloons, and brothels along the border shut down, U.S. tourists did not lose interest in things Mexican but instead delved further south, reaching to Mexico City and points beyond to indulge in less unilateral and more equitable encounters of empire. Governments in Mexico City and Washington soon sanctioned and replicated the rapprochement through the diplomacy of the Good Neighbor.

Tourist power, however, has not always played out benevolently. An army of individuals and interest groups grounded U.S.-Cuban tourist relations fully in the system of inequality and tyranny that had already emerged out of the Platt Amendment, the U.S. naval presence, and North American domination of the island's sugar industry. North American office workers and churchgoers, employees of the U.S. Navy, airline companies, hotel chains, and mobsters built a tourist environment that catered to pleasure seekers. More authoritarian than Mexico's one-party electoral system, the Batista regime denied agency to exactly those Cubans who might have contained tourist excesses. There was no substantive Good Neighbor policy toward Cuba. Instead, the traditional bonds of empire tightened, hegemonic habits dictated that the people of Cuba be denied their civil rights so that northern visitors might enjoy unfettered freedom. The monstrous disconnect between Cuban aspirations for sovereign identity and the reality of oppression ultimately fired the revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power, led to the U.S.-Cuban diplomatic standoff, and subverted the Castro government's efforts to reconfigure the visitor-host arrangement.

Hosts at times asserted themselves through confrontation, as in postrevolutionary Mexico and revolutionary Cuba. In other cases, an amalgam of

finesse, deception, and theatrics empowered the host society. Puerto Rico's commonwealth status can be best understood as a mythical decolonization that fell far short of sovereignty. Commonwealth officials understood the fiction but used their limited autonomy to diversify the island's economy and establish a carefully planned and contained tourism industry. Tourism represented much more than a source of income; it offered a stage on which to proclaim Puerto Rico's identity, independent of what had been imposed by Spanish and U.S. overlords. The performance proved convincing enough to make U.S. leaders and the press showcase the island's development as an accomplishment to be replicated across the empire. At the same time, along Puerto Rico's beaches, in charming Old San Juan, and in hotels and restaurants, visitors and hosts entered a more honest process of culture clash and negotiation. Local hotel workers, union organizers, beachgoers, waiters, journalists, and others asserted themselves in countless ways and kept up the pressure on government officials to do likewise.

Skeptics might question the reality of both tourist and host agency. Once put into place, the travel industry and the transnational interests that feed it certainly develop their own perpetual motion. Like the world economy itself, the tourist system is propelled forward by technology, capital, and consumerism. Like the fashion industry, it feeds on mass culture, advertising, and fads. The three studies presented here show that if allowed to operate freely, these forces may careen recklessly, disrupt cultures, and dehumanize societies. However, the Mexican and Puerto Rican examples demonstrate that when supervised by a community-based or at least community-responsive authority, these forces can promote economic betterment, national confidence, and even a modicum of international understanding.

Skeptics might also consider the confluence of tourism, identity, and foreign policy to have been coincidental rather than determinative. Analysts of culture, after all, cannot demonstrate cause-and-effect relationships with scientific rigor. To demonstrate tourism's significance, I have documented the repetitive overlap of tourist and policymaker language deployed to represent self and other; illuminated the simultaneous timing of major trends and changes in transportation and communications technology, tourism, and international politics; exposed the presence of state officials amid the traveling public; analyzed visitor and host government efforts to both promote and contain the travel industry; examined the host's manipulation of cultural symbols during periods of revolutionary change; and plotted the many ways in which subsequent travel discourses cross-fertilized with domestic culture

to contextualize U.S. foreign relations. If the linkages between the political and cultural lives of the empire—the empire’s political and economic structures and its everyday life—appeared in only one or even two of three cases, the evidence might be less compelling. But in all three case studies, visitor-host relations contributed to, echoed, or illuminated signature features of inter-American political and economic relations. Whether the subject is world war, Cold War, decolonization, revolution, nation building, development, terms of trade, property disputes, military assistance, military bases, or any other number of topics identified with the history of U.S. foreign relations, tourism injects itself into the discussion.

Some diplomatic historians have expressed dissatisfaction with the recent “cultural turn” in the field on the grounds that it deemphasizes the central importance of power.¹ This critique, however, is based on a narrow conception of power as a coercive force wielded primarily by governments. Power hierarchies in fact lie at the center of cultural analysis. Studies of discourse explore the power that U.S. society has bestowed on men over women, whites over people of color, adults over children, Hollywood stars over moviegoers, travel writers over tourists, presidential spokespersons over the press, and tourists over hosts. They deconstruct relationships that are all too often taken for granted in everyday life, both at home in the United States and across the empire, and submit them to rigorous intellectual analysis to explain their origins and lay bare the power inequalities that underpin them.

The cultural approach particularly lends itself to an analysis of soft power, a subject that political scientists have mined to great benefit but historians have only recently begun to ponder. Soft power is manifested in numerous ways and carries multiple ramifications. While state-sponsored economic aid and cultural diplomacy are the varieties of soft power most familiar to international-relations scholars, soft power seeps into nearly all aspects of everyday life in a rapidly globalizing world. U.S. consumerism hardly made the hemispheric empire irresistible for Latin Americans but could make it survivable. By extension, the empire stood a better chance of enduring the weight of the oppression it often produced. In a political and economic context that featured death squads, dictatorships, U.S. military intervention, demeaning labor conditions, human rights nightmares, and Central Intelligence Agency-backed coups, the tourist-host relationship allowed for at least marginal economic betterment, expressions of nationalism and cultural pride, and exposure to a U.S. presence other than that associated with militarism and corporate domination.

Tourism never represented a panacea. In interwar Mexico and Cold War Puerto Rico, where it contributed to improved inter-American relations, the travel industry remained subject to regulation and containment. In Batista's Cuba, where hosting officials lauded tourism's redemptive qualities, the everyday life of empire proved as corrosive of development and self-determination as some of the harshest manifestations of hard power. In short, tourist soft power provided Latin American hosts with negotiating space that might be exploited or squandered.

The history of tourism provides scholars of international relations an opportunity to place international political history in a larger context. The everyday life of empire is less susceptible to fits and starts than its diplomatic and military life. As globalization shrinks geographic distances and the pace of modern life compresses time, it is tempting to view each dramatic geopolitical moment as the opening of a new chapter in history. It has become fashionable in recent years to reference the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 as such a turning point. But the post-9/11 world, in which the word "empire" seems to have come back into vogue among U.S. neoconservatives, remains firmly linked to the history that produced the modern Middle East and the United States rise to global leadership. In twentieth-century inter-American relations, FDR's proclamation of the Good Neighbor, Cuba's drift to the left under Fidel Castro, and President John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress all came under the glare of the media spotlight and certainly merit the scholarly analysis they have generated. But they also merit a place in the larger scheme of imperial history.

An examination of twentieth-century U.S. tourism in Latin America illuminates the underlying contours of empire—not only the ongoing systems of political and economic domination but also the ways in which cultural constructions of the Latin American "other" persisted from the age of Manifest Destiny to the era of dollar diplomacy and on through the development decade. At the same time, subtle shifts in power and perception become more visible. While U.S. domination began in the early and mid-nineteenth century predominantly as a military and territorial presence, the late 1800s introduced U.S. productive power to the mix, mainly in the form of an extractive industrial presence in mining, agriculture, rail, and shipping. The twentieth century added U.S. consumer power to the blend, including the ever-growing tourist presence. As the everyday life of the empire extended beyond military bases and corporate enclaves, inter-American cultural discourse added layers of complexity. Old stereotypes based on popular constructions of class, race,

and gender by no means disappeared, and encounters within the contact zones did not always end on friendly terms, but hosts often gained the ability to manipulate and direct the visitor's gaze, to dispute tourist preconceptions, to appropriate and exploit tourist expectations, and even to invent identities.

The negotiating process continued as the twentieth century came to a close. In fact, the size of the traveling public grew exponentially after 1970, and tourist-host diplomacy increasingly became a multilateral phenomenon, in some cases placing new constraints on U.S. tourist power. North Americans on holiday at Latin American beaches, hotels, historic sites, and elsewhere discovered that the region's allure drew a growing influx of vacationers from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, and the Nordic countries as well as a huge inundation of local South and Central American travelers. The hospitality industry spawned an array of European-, Canadian-, and South American-based firms that competed with U.S. companies. Tourism ranked with media, popular entertainment, sports, the women's rights movement, the peace movement, human rights advocacy, Doctors without Borders, migratory labor, and multinational business as a major force for the meeting of peoples and pocketbooks, the blurring of borders, and the collision and hybridization of cultural practices.

By the mid-1990s, the \$3.4 trillion international travel industry had spun multiple innovations. Global environmental movements of the 1970s helped inspire ecotourism that meshed travel and environmental protection. The creation of national parks and land reserves lured adventurers to the wilds of the Amazon, the rainforests of Costa Rica, and the savannahs of Africa. Travelers of course expended thousands of gallons of jet fuel to reach their green destinations, small property owners often bore the brunt of their government's well-intentioned land grabs, and the commodification of nature at times placed unsustainable pressure on the land. The trend nonetheless promised revenue and at least some containment power to many host communities.² The variations in consumer demand and marketing schemes were endless: cooking classes in France or Italy and weight-reduction programs aboard cruise ships, hedonism resorts in Jamaica and Bible study in the Holy Land, youth hostels and elder hostels, snow skiing in Calgary and surfing in Australia, and the list goes on.³

Latin America experienced a number of industry breakthroughs. Beginning in the 1970s, the cruise vacation came roaring back into vogue, not only along the docks of Old San Juan but across much of the world. From a mere half million passengers a year in 1970, this segment of the travel industry grew to more than five million consumers by 1995. Offering ease of luggage trans-

port, onboard entertainment, expanded menus and bar service, and swimming pools, modern cruise lines made the ship a destination in and of itself. If ecotourism arose from some of the same impulses that inspired the invention of Earth Day in 1970, the green consciousness inherent to the purchase of a cruise vacation might be compared to the purchase of a 1970 Cadillac. The Carnival fleet introduced enlarged cabins, and ship tonnage gradually grew throughout the 1980s and 1990s, featuring not only spacious accommodations but more storage space for food and drink, recreational facilities, exercise rooms, and by the 1990s even movie complexes. Freedom of the seas also allowed internationally owned cruise ships large and small, with their multinational crews, to evade many governmental attempts to regulate wages, hours, and working conditions.⁴

Vacation aboard an ocean liner promised a nostalgic return to the leisurely travel cultures of the early twentieth century, updated with the modern amenities for the age of globalized markets. Meanwhile, Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, home of the ancient Mayans, offered what was rumored to be the region's first computer-generated tourist resort at Cancún. In fact, tourist studies specialist Evan R. Ward has explained that Cancún first arose in the imagination of bankers at the Banco de Mexico who began scouting the country's extensive coasts in the 1960s in search of the perfect tourism cash cow. They settled on Cancún, a beautiful Caribbean island within easy reach by air from numerous major U.S. cities. Computer-assisted design software helped developers imagine the filling-in of uninviting mangrove swamps and brush on the western portion of the island. Like Miami Beach in the 1920s, bulldozers uprooted the mangrove, and architects and construction workers extended the area's sandy beaches and built a pyramid-dotted skyline of five-star hotels, complete with resort amenities and restaurants. Officials at the Mexican government's Consejo Nacional de Turismo envisioned Cancún as a point of entry for a tourist corridor that would extend south to another planned resort at Playa del Carmen, continue on to the ancient seaside ruin of Tulum, and penetrate inland to the already heavily visited site of Chichén Itzá and the colonial city of Mérida, an arc of surf and antiquity that would become known as the Mayan Riviera.⁵

By the turn of the twenty-first century, Cancún had become Mexico's most heavily visited tourist destination, attracting more than three million visitors annually.⁶ The megaresort did not imbibe the neoliberal market strategy of the era. Due to a dearth of risk takers, the Mexican government built and owned the first several resort hotels, with assistance from an Inter-American Development Bank loan. Private capital followed, but Mexican and foreign

investment approximated a fifty-fifty split, with European-owned establishments outnumbering North American. A large U.S. expatriate population, along with tourists from a wide array of North American, South American, European, Asian, and Mexican locations, turned Cancún into a truly transnational community in spite of the presence of U.S. retail outlets such as Wal-Mart and Starbucks. The labor force, however, was solidly Mexican and filled in adjoining areas, especially mainland Cancún City, whose population swelled from 117 in 1970 to 40,000 by 1979. Workers migrated from across the country to take up manual positions in hotels and restaurants, join construction crews, land public service jobs, and fill administrative positions in the travel industry.⁷

At first blush, Cancún culture seems to revolve around little more than indulgence in sun, surf, and lime-twisted Coronas. Yet as government planners envisioned at the project's onset, hundreds of thousands who visit the glitzy resort each year take time out to drive about an hour south to Tulum and indulge in at least a brief ancient history lesson. And three hours inland by car or bus lies Chichén Itzá. Designated in the 1980s a World Heritage Site and administered by the government's Instituto Nacional de Antropología, the complex evokes as much awe today as it did in Carnegie archeologist Sylvanus G. Morley's day and draws approximately 1.7 million visitors annually.⁸

Contemporary Tijuana is another story. Tijuana regained its former glory as a party town during the Second World War with an influx of U.S. sailors as well as casual day traffic from southern California. By 2005, the city attracted approximately 4.5 million visitors annually. Some of the traffic stayed loyal to the city's tourism heritage and sought out strip joints, cheap lap dances, illicit drugs, and underage drinking dens. But the city's travel industry had diversified, and the central business district also showcased upscale venues for the sale of Taxco silver, art, and Cuban cigars, along with a number of high-end restaurants. Much has changed recently as the Mexican government has tried to clamp down on organized crime and authorities have engaged in pitched battles with modern-day gangsters. The crime syndicates, often armed with U.S.-purchased weapons that flow easily across the border, engage in numerous rackets, including drug trafficking, migrant smuggling, prostitution, and kidnapping. Although the violence has not been aimed at tourists, its impact has spilled over into the travel world. In March 2008, the fashionable restaurant Hacienda Cien Años, which once drew tourists, was identified by U.S. authorities as a money-laundering front. Military troops presently patrol the city's streets, circumventing the narco-infiltrated local police force.

The fear of violence and stricter post-9/11 requirements for reentering the United States nonetheless inspired a 50 percent drop in tourism in 2007 and the likelihood of further decline in 2008.⁹

The violence, in fact, spread across most of the Mexico-U.S. border during 2008 and 2009 as Mexico's drug cartels countered the government's war on drugs with a terror campaign. Booming consumer demand for narcotics in both Mexico and the United States provided the backdrop. Highly publicized and grisly murders, carried out in some cases by hit men formerly employed in U.S.-trained antidrug squads, became a part of everyday life for border residents. At the end of 2008, Mexican authorities attributed an estimated thirty-five hundred murders to the drug wars, and evidence mounted that state and federal government offices had been thoroughly infiltrated by the cartels and their political allies. In October 2008, the government of Felipe Calderón softened its military-minded approach by proposing the legalization of possession of small amounts of marijuana, cocaine, and methamphetamines. The initiative, however, drew scorn from the George W. Bush administration in Washington, D.C., which had provided funding for the crackdown in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America.¹⁰

With more than six hundred murders in 2008, Tijuana suffers one of the country's highest murder rates. Numerous tourist towns have recovered from past crime waves. Miami Beach was awash in cocaine and guns in the 1980s, only to bounce back to art deco chic by the end of the 1990s. Tijuana may face similar prospects. A number of citizens' groups, including the city's artists, have begun to deploy their own soft power and mobilize rallies for peace. Although soft power alone may not be enough to reduce the bloodshed, the Calderón administration's proposed decriminalization indicates that Mexico City is considering innovative new policies. Elected in 2008, President Barack Obama made his first official visit to Mexico in April 2009 when he publicly acknowledged that the United States shared responsibility for the crisis. To contribute to a serious solution, Washington will need to reconsider its policies on drugs and sentencing, mental health care, drug rehabilitation, and gun control.¹¹

In the small city of Jalpa, in Zacatecas, northwest of Mexico City, another manifestation of the ever-changing borderlands tourist system is emerging. Local officials and businesses in Jalpa have successfully targeted former residents, transplants to U.S. cities such as Los Angeles and Chicago, as prime tourism customers. Each December, the children and grandchildren of emigrants from the city return for the holidays and a fourteen-day-long festival

that features prayer, rodeo, wrestling matches, and the crowning of a festival queen. City leaders welcome the influx not only to rake in holiday revenues but more importantly because the prodigal children remit thousands of dollars each year to the local economy. Emigrant remittances have helped to build roads, extend the electrical grid, and establish schools and scholarship programs. A local branch of the Zacatecas Autonomous University recently opened, for example, after local, state, and the federal governments combined to match remitted dollar contributions to fund its construction. Evoking the gringo wanderlust of the 1920s, many of the returning Jalpanese savor the rural pace of life: the sweet guava fruit, the coconut milk spiked with gin, and the picturesque central plaza. But more than visiting a premodern oasis, Mexican Americans also reaffirm their sense of national identity. During their two-week sojourn, young tourists are likely to visit extended family members, listen to old-timers reminisce about the time the town played host to Pancho Villa and his revolutionary army, or strike up romances with locals.¹² The U.S. labor force may be globalized, but with the border nearby and the always thickening knot of modern communications, individual workers maintain strong ancestral cultural bonds. Their thirst for attachment to Mexico further complicates the everyday life of the empire and illustrates once again the blurring of boundaries that is central to the tourist system of interaction.

To the east, there are signs that the lure of travel may eventually outlive revolutionary passion in Cuba. Much to the chagrin of the current U.S. government, Havana grabbed the tourist spotlight in the 1990s with a potent blend of state controls and private investment. In the mid-1980s, even before the end of the Cold War and the evaporation of the Soviet dole, Fidel Castro eyed tourism as a potential source of scarce foreign exchange. The Castro regime accordingly implemented economic reforms that permitted government joint enterprises with private foreign investors, subject to a tax rate of 30 percent on earnings. In 1995, further liberalization permitted direct foreign investment minus government partnership, and Canadian, European, and South American capital almost immediately poured into a revitalized Cuban travel industry. The ongoing U.S. economic embargo, beefed up in 1996 by the Helms-Burton Act, which opened channels for U.S. investors to take legal action against foreign companies that utilized confiscated American property in Cuba, failed to curb the growth. By the late 1990s, one million Canadians, Spaniards, French, Italians, British, and South Americans visited Washington's hemispheric nemesis annually. In addition, thousands of U.S. citizens evaded Washington's travel restrictions each year, typically flying

from Canada or Cancún to Havana, where welcoming Cuban officials make it their business not to stamp U.S. passports.¹³

As tourist revenues approached one billion dollars annually, tourism replaced sugar as the island's largest source of foreign exchange. Many of the premier establishments of the 1950s, including the Hotel Nacional, Meyer Lansky's Riviera, and the Hotel Habana Libre (formerly the Havana Hilton), wound up on the auction block and underwent renovation to accommodate the global clientele. New hotels arose as well, most notably Havana's sumptuous 462-room Melía Cohiba in 1998, declared by Frommer's guide the capital's most modern hostelry, complete with pool, Jacuzzis, and cigar-tasting bar.¹⁴ Varadero Beach sprang back to life and became by the turn of the twenty-first century the largest resort in the Caribbean, outfitted with its own international airport.¹⁵


Cuban officials have not considered the boom an unqualified success. Fidel Castro likes capital more than he likes capitalism. A string of government corporations, mostly under the thumb of the Cuban military, still own the majority of the island's hotels and maintain considerable holdings in restaurants, car rental agencies, marinas, and bus companies. The influx of dollar-rich tourists has led to a spike in purse snatching and other petty crimes, and to the government's lament, tourist-related prostitution appears to be flourishing, albeit not on the scale of the Batista era. Speculation regarding Cuba's future has become a cottage industry in recent years, especially following Fidel Castro's surgery in 2006 at the age of seventy-nine and the abrupt transfer of power to his brother Raúl. Although the new regime did not radically alter state policies, the incoming Obama administration extended a hand to Cuba in early 2009 when it lifted restrictions on Cuban-American family travel and dollar remittances to the island. Raúl Castro in turn signaled a willingness to engage Washington on a range of issues. Many Latin American leaders sensed a historic shift when Obama announced at a hemispheric gathering at Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in April 2009 that the United States sought "a new beginning with Cuba." U.S.-Cuban relations remain deeply unsettled, but should these tentative steps expand into a full-fledged dialogue, tourism is likely to prove a powerful facilitator. The tourist-host relationship was among the last elements of the intimate U.S.-Cuban relationship to reach closure in the 1960s. In the early twenty-first century, it may stand among the first linkages to become fully reestablished.¹⁶

The end of the Cold War also produced ripple effects in Puerto Rico's tourist industry. From 1970 to the dawn of the new century, the island's annual tourist count ticked upward only modestly, from 1 million to 1.2

million, not counting short-term visits by cruise passengers. Other Caribbean powerhouses, most notably Cancún and low-wage Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, experienced the most robust growth. The combination of slow growth and planning kept tourism's share of Puerto Rico's gross national product at 5.5 percent.¹⁷ The Condado experienced a decrease in congestion as the tourist district spread east toward San Juan's airport in Isla Verde. Old San Juan featured locally owned condominiums and bars and restaurants that catered to natives as much as tourists. Adjacent San Juan Harbor and the opening of factory outlet stores and trinket shops, along with the nearby Bacardi rum distillery, made the old walled city one of the most popular ports of call on the cruise line circuit.¹⁸

Off Puerto Rico's east coast, the empire made a U-turn. Although the Muñoz administration fended off the U.S. military's plan to expropriate Vieques and relocate its population in the early 1960s, the U.S. Navy considered most of the tropical island its dominion. Annual military exercises, with live ammunition and ordnance, continued until 1999, when a civilian security guard was accidentally killed during bombing tests. Both procommonwealth and prostatehood governments pressed Washington to desist from war games, and civilian protests rankled U.S.-commonwealth relations until 2001, when the U.S. government finally yielded and abandoned the site. The last military practices took place on 1 May 2003, but more than sixty years of military use had left behind a legacy of unemployment, environmental damage, and high rates of cancer among the island's inhabitants.¹⁹

When the U.S. Navy dismantled its Vieques base, Puerto Rico inherited a relatively undeveloped tourist oasis most remarkable for its wild horses, two bioluminescent bays, lush tropical forests, and pristine beaches. Community activists viewed tourism as a means by which to provide jobs for the impoverished ten thousand or so local inhabitants but hoped to prevent an inundation of U.S. and multinational megaresorts.²⁰ Development thus far has been modest, with most of the new tourist accommodations consisting of modestly sized inns and guesthouses. The island's two small towns, Isabel Segunda and Esperanza, have witnessed a proliferation of guesthouses, T-shirt shops, and restaurants, but Best Western, Hilton, Marriott, Nikko, Novotel, Oberoi, Sheraton, Sofitel, and other big brands have stayed away.²¹

 Tourism is in many ways theater, a dramatic and comedic play in which hosts and guests display their self-importance. Tourism has both reinforced and undermined identities over the past century or so. It helped globalize culture, blurred the lines between the empire's center and its dependencies,

and demonstrated the fragility of national identity in a mobile world. Given the elaborate playacting, it is not surprising that some social commentators have misread tourism's impact. At one level, host societies have often appeared blindly to accept North American prescriptions for political status, economic development, and tourism promotion. Uncle Sam's traveling public perceived Mexico's bars and dance halls, Cuba's casinos and brothels, and Puerto Rico's five-star elegance as suggesting subservience. Yet on close examination, the terms of dominance often become murky. Host policies toward foreign investment, workers' wages, urban planning, environmental protection, heritage preservation, and grassroots negotiations regarding constructions of class, race, gender, manners, language, and national identity more often than not produced a prolonged tug-of-war between visitors and hosts.

Tourism studies in one sense confirm the cliché that we live in a small world. International leisure travel became possible on a mass scale only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the advent of modern transportation systems, the extension of global communications, and the integration of the world capitalist system. All of these developments shrank the planet, linked humanity together as never before, and unhinged familiar societal patterns around the globe. Globalization at times seems to promise to make the world one bland place. Yet the world remains large and expansive, and cultural and national differences survive and are even reinvented as they collide, clash, and mesh. At bottom, ordinary men and women, visitors and hosts alike, join with governments, businesses, and labor in extending hegemony, blurring national boundaries, initiating new international connections and deepening those that already exist, and most of all negotiating identities.

Events at the beginning of the twenty-first century have shown that the outcome of those negotiations carries enormous consequences. Although some commentators propose that a stark line exists between the globalizing trends of the present and future and nationalisms frozen in the past, the two trends—localism and globalism—evolved symbiotically throughout the twentieth century. The Second World War, the Cold War, and the ethnic conflicts of the post-Cold War era arose from an array of geopolitical and economic issues, but the associated deaths and atrocities also demonstrated the power of identity politics. Indeed, today's proliferation of local, regional, and global terrorist networks—in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Palestine, to name just a few—arose from the anguish of the powerless, whose lives have been rubbed raw by the erosion of cultural identities. Sovereignty and power in the modern world imply the ability to define and characterize oneself as well as to enjoy political self-determination and economic justice.

On 11 September 2001, agents of al-Qaeda set out to rectify what they viewed as eighty years of imperialism, an imposition of power that not only transferred Ottoman colonies to the British and French, sent Arab oil west, and established Israel in the heart of Palestine but also undermined centuries of culture based on the teachings of Muhammad and a hierarchy of tribes and clans. In the Middle East, international tourism has not been the main culprit, but the diminution of identity that helped motivate al-Qaeda's aggression in many ways resembled the cultural angst that shook heavily touristed Cuba in the late 1950s. Cubans had been thought to be permanently wed to the cultural norms of North America, but as the insults and inequalities inherent in empire took their toll, many Cubans set off with Fidel Castro to rediscover their Cubanness. In our time, the world was thought to have been inexorably marching in the direction of free-market institutions and a homogenous secular materialism—what Benjamin Barber has labeled “McWorld”—when the terrorists not only reaffirmed their affiliation to tribe and religion but carried their hatred and bloodthirstiness to the citadel of world capitalism.²²

Historian Greg Grandin has argued that the George W. Bush administration's recent embrace of empire is hardly a novelty but rather is the latest chapter in a long history of U.S. unilateralism, military preemption, and economic expansionism practiced on Latin America for nearly two centuries. In that sense, the lower Western Hemisphere has provided a workshop or laboratory for the current militarization of the clash between McWorld and jihad.²³ Grandin's approach yields great insight for understanding today's global violence. This study, however, illustrates that Latin America has also provided the United States with a testing ground for soft power, serving as a stage on which modern U.S. consumer and cultural power engaged a cultural and racial “other.” Tourism and other manifestations of soft power did not make empire either instantly humane or irresistible for Latin Americans. It did not eliminate inequalities, human suffering, or cultural antagonisms. But more than military confrontation, tourism provided modest choices. U.S. citizens might behave as cultural unilateralists hell-bent on possessing and dominating the Latin other or as cultural multilateralists, willing to respect, negotiate, and exchange cultural differences. Latin Americans, elite and commoners, might indiscriminately accept North American norms and bow to North American demands. Or they might resist, negotiate, and contain U.S. influences while simultaneously forging and expressing their own cultural identities.

Tourism is not the only or even the most important determinant of cul-

tural integrity or degradation. It is only one component of a complex and constantly mutating process that bequeaths physical makeup and personality to each and every imagined community around the world, including the larger imagined global community. Although globalization is a fact of modern life, the history of international tourism teaches that globalization can be imagined in more than one way. It has most certainly been conceptualized as a means by which the wealthy impose demands on the poor and conditions that livelihoods and nations be organized in accordance with free-market ideology and military muscle. It has also been associated with a cultural process that pressures local communities to surrender their independent identities, spins stereotypes, and assigns civilizational sophistication to favored groups at others' expense. But it can also be imagined as a means to both global and local self-realization, a system of dense interconnectedness and collapsing geographical distances that still encourages cultural diversity and hybridization and community-based social and economic planning. It can be a world torn apart by the demands of McWorldists and jihadists alike or a world that is open to us all.

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