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## GLOBAL SIXTIES

*The Last Good Neighbor: Mexico in the Global Sixties.* By Eric Zolov. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020. Pp. 424. Illustrations. \$114.95 cloth; \$30.95 paper.  
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In his new work, Eric Zolov contributes to the growing literature around the “long 1960s” and the “global Cold War” as these concepts relate to Mexico’s geopolitical position vis-à-vis the United States, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and other powers. He reconsiders Mexican foreign policy and political priorities, drawing primarily on the presidential administration (*sexenio*) of Adolfo López Mateos (1958-64) to argue that the country aspired to develop a robust diplomatic presence that navigated a distinct path among conservative and leftist interests in the region. *The Last Good Neighbor* is a thoroughly researched book with a clear scholarly voice that deepens our understanding of this period while also provoking historical reassessments of major actors, especially Lázaro Cárdenas.

Zolov focuses on the years 1958 to 1973 to contextualize the political movements and geopolitical trends that persisted through the 1960s and their immediate impact. Whereas much of the rest of Latin America had become disillusioned with and abandoned the notion of the “good neighbor policy,” which sought to position the United States as a positive hemispheric actor, the concept persisted in Mexico. Zolov cites the popular reception that President Miguel Alemán (1946-52) received when he visited New York City in 1947 (9). Mexican leaders relied on this “good neighbor” relationship to create a third-way diplomacy that engaged Western and communist bloc counterparts effectively. President López Mateos represented the apex of this aspiration as he reached out to Cuba and the Soviet Union, while also maintaining good relations with member states of the Non-Aligned Movement (although not committing Mexico to deeper alliances with the group). In doing so, López Mateos frustrated members of the US foreign policy establishment but never suffered serious breaches with Washington, which positioned Mexico as an important diplomatic conduit in the region and also signaled its persistent ties to the United States (239).

This book is most interesting in Zolov’s assessment of the role that Lázaro Cárdenas played in the long 1960s. Cárdenas returned to the national political forefront in the 1950s, bridging supporters who represented factions of the Old and New Left in Mexico. He maintained close ties with the young revolutionaries taking control of Cuba and had toured the Soviet Union, as well as receiving the Stalin Peace Prize in 1954. These factors reinforced Cárdenas’s left-wing bona fides, but he did not use this

influence to undermine the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), but rather to reshape it from within. Zolov argues that this position allowed Cárdenas to serve as a preeminent representative of the Mexican left for the national government as well as foreign actors. He deferred to President López Mateos, while absorbing criticism from conservatives in the Mexican press; thus, the relationship Cárdenas maintained with López Mateos shielded the latter from leftist opprobrium. Zolov writes: “The act was no doubt calculated as a signal to the Left that, in the wake of the visit by President Kennedy, the *cardenista* position had not been sacrificed by López Mateos in some ‘deal’ with the United States (as some accused)” (186).

Following the US invasion of the Dominican Republic (1965) and escalating hostilities in the Vietnam War, Zolov argues, Mexico became Washington’s “last good neighbor” in the hemisphere. These historical changes came as the Mexican government retreated from its activist foreign policy with the arrival of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-70) to the presidency. During these years, the country returned to a more inward domestic security focus as the dirty war increased against leftists and other activists, presided over by an authoritarian president whose sexenio was marked by the massacre of students at Tlatelolco in 1968. Here Zolov coincides with Roderic Camp’s point that without at least some support from national intellectuals to justify its power, the Mexican government under the PRI “will increasingly resort to the use of force” (6). Considering the Díaz Ordaz years, Zolov also argues against the view that the period represented a permanent turning away from regional diplomacy, but rather was solely an interregnum. In 1970, President Luis Echeverría (1970-76) embraced and transformed López Mateos’s activist geopolitical legacy, looking to reassert Mexico as a prominent regional actor. Later leaders Miguel de la Madrid (1982-88) and Carlos Salinas (1988-94) pivoted the country toward a global, neoliberal stance that led to the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement and membership in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

In building this perspective, rooted in the history of the “long 1960s,” Zolov writes convincingly of Mexico’s role as a regional geopolitical actor in the Americas. Far from being a passive witness to the power politics of the hemisphere, the country’s leadership sought to maintain an active role, drawing on its relationship to the United States and other great powers to chart its own path. In this context, Díaz Ordaz’s sexenio appears much more as a temporary rupture of a broader postwar trajectory that pitted conservatives and leftists over the future geopolitical direction of the country. Although Zolov acknowledges that the country took a decidedly neoliberal turn in the last decades of the twentieth century, the “long 1960s” remained deeply influential.

This book is recommended reading for scholars of modern Mexican history, cultural studies, and international politics and will make for lively discussion in graduate seminars and honors courses.

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## COLD WAR AND HEALTHCARE

*Peripheral Nerve: Health and Medicine in Cold War Latin America.* Edited by Anne-Emanuelle Birn and Raúl Necochea López. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020. Pp. 376. \$29.95 paper.  
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Anne-Emanuelle Birn and Raúl Necochea López have produced a well thought out book of essays that argues for a reevaluation of how Latin American medical and health professionals navigated the Cold War. As Gilbert Joseph notes in the book's preface, social and political historians have been reworking the old idea of the Cold War as a conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, commencing after World War II, in which the rest of the world were mere passive observers. There is now consensus that the ideological conflicts that we associate with the Cold War have their genesis in the early twentieth century and that Latin American actors operated within a web of local, national, and international contestations. Scholars also question whether the term "Cold War" is apt, given that in much of the world it was neither "cold" nor so much a war as a campaign of extermination. The Cold War tensions and conflicts spilled over into many realms of life, including the scientific and medical.

Latin American health and medicine professionals navigated complex and multifaceted positions that defied bipolar visions and pressures. Reminiscent of their nineteenth-century forbearers, these professionals were open to diverse ideas, systems, and techniques, and they did not necessarily worry about the geopolitical implications. The contributors argue that medical and health professionals in the postwar period did not simply replace European with US North American influences. Rather, they studied and learned from a global community of medicine and health models. In many cases, the interest derived from a belief that regions outside of western Europe and North America had histories and conditions more analogous to their own national challenges—thus, for example, Mexican interest in the Soviet model. The edited collection also makes an important intervention into periodization by demarcating three distinct sub-periods within the Cold War.

The book is divided into three sections. The first section, "Leftist Affinities and US Suspicions," includes three cases studies from Mexico and Bolivia where national health policy came to loggerheads with US actions that sought to block Soviet influence, both real and perceived. The second section, "Health Experts/Expertise and Contested Ideologies," traces how health professionals in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Brazil navigated and negotiated with the capitalist and communist countries. As the cases of Cuban