

McPherson, Alan, ed. (2006) *Anti-Americanism in Latin America and the Caribbean* Berghahn (New York and Oxford) x + 301 pp.

Two decades after winning the Cold War, US leaders encounter a dissenting mood around the globe. Anti-Americanism flourishes across the board in a variety of forms. The basic dynamic is easy to pin down: absent an immediate challenger, the US is in a position to reassert primacy in world politics, but its activist policies engender bitterness and resentment.

The current volume draws our attention to the phenomenon of anti-Americanism in the one part of the world where the United States first flexed its imperial muscle. By focusing on Latin America, the book gives the reader pause to ponder about anti-Americanism in its historical and regional contexts, a useful addition to a field that has become stubbornly fixated with the present and disproportionately focused on the Middle East.

Anti-Americanism in Latin America and the Caribbean is a survey of opposition to the policies, values and representatives of the United States in the Western hemisphere. The contributors tackle different aspects of the anti-American phenomenon, drawing on examples from Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Chile, Brazil and Colombia. Also, three chapters deal with the issue from a trans-national perspective: the role of US-based diasporas in the emancipation of the West Indies, patterns of US dependence in Panama and Cuba, and Liberation Theology as a form of resistance against the American empire.

Taken individually, the chapters offer rich anecdotes and illustrations. The reader will find plenty of protesters, mobs, teargas and blood, along with vivid accounts of figures such as Nelson Rockefeller, Spruille Braden, Richard Nixon, Elián Gonzáles and George W. Bush.

Viewed as a whole, however, the volume does not advance new historical evidence or analytical frameworks. The authors' conscious choice not to stick to any particular definition of anti-Americanism subtracts from the concept's purchase. It also leaves the reader without an idea of what informed scholarly debate about the subject might look like. In this regard, searching for a single book to assign to a course on the subject one will be better served by turning to the editor's single-author volume, *Yankee No! Anti-Americanism in US-Latin America Relations* (2003).

To be more specific, the assembled essays leave two fundamental questions begging: How might we characterise anti-Americanism in Latin America and the Caribbean as opposed to its expression elsewhere? And how has anti-Americanism impacted upon hemispheric politics precisely? Let me briefly elaborate on each one of these.

In Latin America anti-American sentiment has a long pedigree, with its first manifestations dating back to the days of the Monroe Doctrine (1823), when several Latin American countries were engaged in severing political ties with their European

masters. So it might be useful to enquire whether and how anti-Americanism and anti-colonialism were intertwined at the birth of the postcolonial world. Such question might assist in the difficult task of delineating what – if anything – is distinctive about anti-Americanism as it has occurred in the Americas.

What impact has anti-Americanism had in hemispheric politics? There is a strong sense across the chapters that Latin American countries have been relatively impotent in the face of overwhelming US power, and have therefore had to turn to forms of passive resistance such as civil disobedience, guerrilla warfare and spontaneous rioting (p. 3). This view, however, is misplaced. Consider that some countries in Latin America have been expedient in manipulating the political system of the United States to their own advantage. Mexico, Brazil and Venezuela have exerted significant degrees of autonomy over time, while very weak countries like Trujillo's Dominican Republic or post-Soviet Cuba have shown much diplomatic prowess. Furthermore, US hegemonic power in the Americas has to a large degree relied on consent, not simply force. Think of the plethora of regional norms, practices and organisations that both support US influence *and* bind it. For all the use of force or threat of the use of force in inter-American affairs, the background of hemispheric politics has been fairly institutionalised.

In the end the reader is compelled to ask whether anti-Americanism in the Americas matter that much. We should not take for granted that it does. It is not clear that it represents a threat or impediment to the exercise of US primacy in the region nor that it has fundamentally shaped the regional environment as it is today. Perhaps more important, with a few notable exceptions in the Caribbean Basin, it would be difficult to argue that anti-Americanism ranks very high in the list of competing forces shaping domestic political orders across the region.

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