REVIEW ESSAYS

RECENT WORKS ON U.S.–LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS

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Borders and Bridges: A History of U.S.–Latin American Relations. By Stewart Brewer. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006. Pp. 197. $49.95 cloth.

Neighborly Adversaries: Readings in U.S.–Latin American Relations, 2nd ed. Edited by Michael LaRosa and Frank O. Mora. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007. Pp. 371. $29.95 paper.

Addicted to Failure: U.S. Security Policy in Latin America and the Andean Region. Edited by Brian Loveman. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006. Pp. 367. $27.95 paper.

Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles: The United States and Latin America since 1945. By Alan McPherson. Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2006. Pp. 208. $45.00 cloth.

Anti-Americanism in Latin America and the Caribbean. Edited by Alan McPherson. New York: Berghahn Books, 2006. Pp. 301. $85.00 cloth.

Making the Americas: The United States and Latin America from the Age of Revolutions to the Era of Globalization. By Thomas F. O'Brien. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007. Pp. 390. $24.95 paper.

U.S. Relations with Latin America during the Clinton Years: Opportunities Lost or Opportunities Squandered? By David Scott Palmer. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. Pp. 125. $24.95 paper.

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Imágenes de un imperio: Estados Unidos y las formas de representación de América Latina. By Ricardo D. Salvatore. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2006. Pp. 191.

There have, of course, been countless books on different aspects of U.S.–Latin American relations, especially after the Cuban Revolution increased U.S. governmental and scholarly attention to the region. Long gone are the days when the subject was dominated by U.S.-centric diplomatic historians like Samuel Flagg Bemis, whose influential text *The Latin American Policy of the United States* (excerpted in LaRosa and Mora) is almost painful to read for its paternalistic bent, particularly in its positive view of U.S. imperialism.[1] Instead, the books under review here demonstrate how the study of U.S.–Latin American relations in the post–Cold War era has grown very diverse. It is, therefore, no easy task to tie together all the many threads of the topic, given the number of disciplinary and historical perspectives, the various audiences, and the aspirations of different analyses.

Nevertheless, some things do not change much. In a book review essay published in *Latin American Research Review* in 1992, immediately after the end of the Cold War, Alyson Brysk wrote that the books that she examined "do not address each other directly and to a certain extent are aimed at different audiences."[2] This is also the case with the publications now under review. We can, however, identify four distinct but intertwined goals set out in these books. First, there is the effort to characterize and summarize U.S. policy and its impact on, and response from, Latin America. Second, the authors seek to judge U.S. policy, especially in relation to its stated goals. Third, most of the authors analyze Latin America's reaction to U.S. policy. Fourth, a number of the books have an explicit pedagogical angle, while others could also easily be incorporated as class readings. For this, I will conclude by discussing how these publications could contribute collectively to theory building.

The topic of U.S.–Latin American relations as a whole is unique because it has a wider undergraduate audience than many others; many universities and colleges teach it along with a general course on Latin American politics. Therefore, in addition to (or in conjunction with) theoretical and conceptual treatments, there is a steady stream of books aimed at the nonexpert. Given the national debate in the United States on immigration, the rhetoric aimed at the Cuban and Venezuelan governments (including whether to talk to them at all), the continued flow of drugs and the associ-

1. Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Latin American Policy of the United States: An Historical Interpretation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943).

2. Alyson Brysk, "Beyond Hegemony: U.S.–Latin American Relations in a 'New World Order'?" *Latin American Research Review* 27, no. 3 (1992): 166.

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ated violence, and the discourse on free-trade agreements, just to name a few of the most prominent issues, there is a need for books intended for students at both the graduate level and the undergraduate level. One encouraging point is that the quality of writing in many of these books is quite good.

CHARACTERIZING U.S.–LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS

The monographs by Alan McPherson, Thomas O'Brien, and Stuart Brewer are general surveys written by historians for a broad audience. Each is guided by a central theme that sums up the foundations of the relationship between the United States and Latin America. O'Brien's *Making the Americas* centers on the notion that the United States has always pursued a "global mission of reform" that touches all aspects of U.S.–Latin American relations. Of particular interest are the many examples of U.S. companies creating consumer demand in Latin America by equating consumerism with modernization. As O'Brien points out, businesses have employed a conscious strategy of "awakening desires" (113). Coca-Cola went so far as to pay for a Brazilian soap opera character to drink nothing but Coke. The deft melding of consumer goods with national symbols can even create the sense that the product in question is not in fact an import at all.

Regardless of who proclaims it, the mission of reform has as its core the notion that Latin America is fundamentally broken and that the United States is in an excellent position to fix it. This is, of course, an argument that a number of authors have made in various ways. As Lars Schoultz wrote in 1998 in his study of the views of U.S. policy makers: "Perhaps today's Latin Americans have reconsidered their traditional unwillingness to reconstruct their societies with Washington's blueprints, but history suggests otherwise."[3] From the Latin American perspective, all too often the solution has been worse than the "problem."

From a pedagogical standpoint, the main theme of reform runs continuously throughout O'Brien's book, which allows students to consider how the missionary mind-set has persisted despite changing times. An intriguing secondary theme is that of masculinity. O'Brien traces this back to the nineteenth century, when Latin America was portrayed (even visually in political cartoons) as feminine and in need of assistance. Thus, John F. Kennedy and McGeorge Bundy (and certainly many others) were "spiritual heirs" of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Stimson; each was imbued with a heroic self-image based on courage and decisive action (O'Brien 211). This portrayal has recurred again and again in U.S. inter-

3. Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 386.

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ventions to prove to a domestic audience that the president is not soft on perceived enemies.

Although not necessarily intended for an undergraduate audience (and, as it is written in Spanish, it would require a specialized course), Ricardo Salvatore's *Imágenes de un imperio* has a similar thematic structure, but refers not to a mission, but to an informal empire. Especially by the late nineteenth century, U.S. citizens poured into Latin America, everywhere identifying what needed to be fixed, modified, or otherwise reshaped to meet the higher cultural standards of the developed, civilized world. In doing so, these citizens (sometimes unwittingly) helped spread U.S. influence.

As both O'Brien and Salvatore attest, this mission was not restricted to profit but spread to virtually all facets of culture exchange. Anthropologists and archeologists sought artifacts that they could return to museums in the United States, with the implicit (or explicit) assumption that the "natives" were unable to protect them. Scientists and even librarians blurred the line between knowledge and commerce, viewing the region as a source of exploration, but—as with oil—this also entailed vast opportunities for U.S. companies. Even the social reformers who criticized the deep injustices that they found still sought to fit Latin American realities into a broader narrative of progress and modernity. Salvatore is most absorbing when he dissects seemingly innocuous events such as the Pan-American expositions and international fairs, which, as the photographs he includes in the book document, froze stereotypes of indigenous cultures and portrayed Latin America as permanently lagging behind the more civilized world. These expositions became a place to gawk at the exotic and were thus part of a machinery of representation that created a set of discourses about civilization and backwardness.

Stuart Brewer uses the dual theme of borders and bridges to survey the conflictive history of U.S.–Latin American relations, ending with the hope that "we will have the courage, capacity, and perspective to rebuild stronger and better bridges that will lead us in the paths of hemispheric unity and peace" (161). Although Brewer gives less detailed treatment to more recent events, one benefit of his book is its lengthy discussion of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially the 1846–1848 war with Mexico and William Walker's filibustering exploits, which provide vivid reminders of the ways in which the United States has violated borders. In terms of pedagogy, the book would have profited from greater attention to the overall theme throughout its various chapters, whose conclusions do not always mention bridges or borders. When and why exactly are bridges erected, and when are borders ignored?

Alan McPherson's highly readable *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles* takes "unequal interdependence" as its main theme, focusing on the ways in which the United States and Latin America have interacted even more

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with each other after World War II than in any other period. It is divided chronologically into five chapters, each covering approximately ten to fifteen years since 1945 and analyzing the many integrative forces at work, as well as the responses that these forces created. An appendix of some thirty pages contains twenty-three primary documents; in some cases, Internet addresses are included so that students can examine the full texts. Although concise, the volume covers a broad range of issues to help students understand the complexities of unequal interdependence.

Even more than O'Brien, McPherson uses consumption to illustrate certain aspects of the relationship. His conclusion is thus entitled "Food for Thought." This interesting angle deserves greater attention, given how economies in the hemisphere have opened tremendously in the past several decades. Consumption can reflect imperialism as U.S. products and business strategies become dominant, for example, when supermarkets replace smaller local shops. At the same time, consumption can also reveal Latin America's influence on the United States, as products from the region become popular and reach the mainstream. Many people in the United States are only vaguely aware that the food they are eating either was grown in Latin America or originated in Latin American culture. Either way, cultural exchange is taking place daily.

Michael LaRosa and Frank Mora's *Neighborly Adversaries,* in its second edition, could be a useful classroom supplement to any of the general surveys. Its excerpts from both primary and secondary sources reflect different disciplines and include texts by Latin American authors. LaRosa and Mora introduce and contextualize these excerpts to orient the reader. The book also includes an excellent bibliography for students looking to research and write about U.S.–Latin American relations. The book is organized chronologically into six sections, starting with early interpretations of the United States' role in the region and ending with the post–Cold War period. The latter comprises the final seven of twenty-nine chapters. Taken together, these sections cover the scope of the U.S.–Latin America relationship.

Immigration is a central focus of all three surveys by McPherson, O'Brien, and Brewer, as well as the volume edited by LaRosa and Mora. Nevertheless, the detailed analysis by LaRosa and Lance R. Ingwersen in the latter collection merits special mention. Given the importance that remittances by U.S. immigrants have for Mexico, Central America, and much of the Caribbean, and the complex public policy reaction in the United States, particularly after 2001, when more restrictive laws were passed at the federal, state, and local levels, general works on U.S.–Latin American relations should pay even greater attention to the causes and effects of immigration. Not only is immigration a political challenge for the United States but also Latin American governments increasingly view it as critical in both economic and humanitarian terms. The Latin American

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side of immigration is understudied, yet central to understanding why people emigrate, how they view citizenship, how they continue to interact with their home countries after moving, and how governments enact migration-related policies.

In addition, immigration should not be viewed in isolation from other issues. Presidential candidates from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America in particular court voters in the United States. Once elected, they travel frequently to demonstrate their commitment to expatriate communities; they open new consulates, create Web site portals, and, importantly, lobby the U.S. Congress. McPherson notes how the deportation of criminals from the United States has created new problems in the Dominican Republic. The same issue is even more pressing in El Salvador, given the circular movement of gang members. For many countries, then, immigration is at or near the top of the list of policy priorities.

JUDGING U.S. POLICY

Both Brian Loveman and David Scott Palmer present contemporary policy analyses, and both criticize U.S. policy, albeit for different reasons. As the title suggests, Loveman's *Addicted to Failure* is a scathing and devastating indictment of the ways in which security policy has failed in almost every way imaginable. Its introductory chapter dives deep into the divide between official rhetoric and policy outcomes (perhaps fitting the aphorism attributed to Albert Einstein: "The definition of stupidity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results"). From an analytical but also, importantly, pedagogical point of view, one of the strengths of *Addicted to Failure* is its emphasis on primary documents. The chapters are well bound together, not only thematically but also methodologically, bringing official policy statements and postures to the fore. In fact, a large number of these documents are organized and available in PDF format online for easy viewing (http://usregsec.sdsu.edu/addicted.htm).

The book's chapters, however, are not simply polemical but offer considerable nuance. As Eduardo Pizarro and Pilar Gaitán argue in their discussion of Plan Colombia, the question is not whether military force should be part of an overall solution to political violence in Colombia but whether it should be viewed as the primary solution. As I write this, the group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) is reeling after the deaths of leaders Raúl Reyes (killed in Colombia's attack across Ecuador's border) and Manuel Marulanda, also known as "Tirofijo" (who died of a heart attack). For many analysts and policy makers, this raises the question of whether the United States and Colombia are "winning" the war against the FARC. However, the chapters of *Addicted to Failure* demonstrate that such a proclamation is premature and highlight how

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the continuation of the effort to combat the drug trade will result in many unanticipated and unintended negative consequences.

Aside from Colombia, *Addicted to Failure* contrasts U.S. policy goals and the empirical results of these policies around the region. Kenneth Lehman's chapter on Bolivia describes how the country, once a model for successful neoliberal restructuring, very rapidly became instead a model for how to invigorate a strong, cohesive, and large-scale opposition, which then pursues policies disapproved of by the U.S. government. By no means was Evo Morales a creation of U.S. policy, but the United States did help pave his way to the presidency. Of course, Venezuela was similarly considered a model for democracy and market reforms, but for the past decade the United States has been unable, as Orlando Pérez puts it, "to understand and accept the fact that other nations may pursue different foreign policy goals" (101).

However, collectively the chapters also demonstrate how, as the United States identifies threats in the region and acts to counter them, it then becomes a threat to Latin America. As Juan Gabriel Tokatlian writes, "The United States itself is becoming a source of problems that affect Latin American interests and values" (257). This must always be taken into account, because it highlights the dilemma of misidentifying policy causes and effects. What appear to be causes of instability (e.g., elections that bring to power leaders who are antagonistic or at least very wary of the U.S. government) should in fact be viewed in part as a consequence of past policy decisions, particularly economic ones. Yet, even in countries often labeled "friendly," such as Peru, U.S. policy is so focused on drugs that other problems receive far less attention. Enrique Obando points out in his chapter that even cooperative Peruvian governments can find it difficult to maintain good relations when policy makers in the United States make inconsistent and contradictory demands.

Palmer's *U.S. Relations with Latin America during the Clinton Years* similarly seeks to assess U.S. policy in light of the government's stated goals, but the scope is restricted to the Clinton administration. Analyzing a number of different policy areas, it concludes that "President Clinton and his foreign policy colleagues missed a historic opportunity" (5). President Clinton succeeded in some cases, such as lobbying to ratify the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), albeit weakened in this instance by expending significant political capital, but Clinton's inability to lead Congress and the foreign-policy bureaucracies characterized many other cases, such as passage of the Helms-Burton Act or simply securing Robert Pastor's confirmation as ambassador to Panama. At the same time, it is not clear whether any post–Cold War (not to mention post-9/11) president is likely to maintain "the coherence of an overarching vision of policy goals and objectives amid the need to forge specific responses to specific problems in the region" (44). From a theoretical standpoint, it would be

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useful to examine the persistent obstacles to formulating and implementing coherent policies.

Palmer's book is both accessible and brief, and so could easily be used as a supplemental reading in a course on U.S.–Latin American relations. It also includes many interviews with key players who produce memorable quotes; for example, a senior State Department official asserts that the former secretary of state Warren Christopher viewed Latin America as "a carbuncle that he wished could be lanced so that it would go away" (23). In general, it provides useful insights into the ways in which U.S. policy is debated and put into practice.

LATIN AMERICAN REACTIONS TO U.S. POLICY

Although all of the books reviewed here incorporate Latin American reactions to some degree, McPherson's edited volume, *Anti-Americanism in Latin America and the Caribbean,* explicitly addresses this aspect, which, as McPherson asserts convincingly in his introduction, though often mentioned, has not received adequate scholarly attention. The book thus represents a positive step toward greater understanding of how ill will is generated and what political repercussions emerge from it. McPherson argues, along similar lines to Salvatore, that the cultural presence—or informal imperialism—of the United States was pervasive in Latin America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Military and economic power were the most obvious manifestations of U.S. power, but the United States' cultural influence was also central, albeit less analyzed. Historians largely are making these arguments, but they deserve greater scrutiny from political scientists.

Perhaps the greatest scholarly challenge addressed in the volume is simply defining the term *anti-Americanism.* McPherson's authors eschew a formal definition but operate "from the assumption that anti-Americanism should be treated as an ideology in the cultural sense of the word, a protean set of images, ideas and practices that both explain why the world is how it is and set forth a justification for future action" (1). What the chapters show, however, is that different aspects of anti-Americanism produce different effects. In some cases, opposition is aimed at specific administrations; in others, it may be ideological, as in the Washington Consensus of capitalist reform. It may also be mostly at the elite level. Kirk Bowman argues, for example, that the end of the Cold War also ended incentives for Brazilian elites to cooperate with U.S. policy. This thesis echoes Monica Herz's chapter in Loveman's volume, as she argues that U.S. policy undermines prospects for greater Brazilian involvement, thereby establishing a model for regional cooperation that is not acceptable to the Brazilian ruling elite.

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Similarly, John Britton's analysis of Mexico distinguishes between the elite and the popular levels. David Ryan further notes that liberation theologians were more anti-Americanization than anti-American. It is also important to consider that in none of the cases discussed is the term *anti-American* literal. In other words, resentment is not aimed at U.S. citizens but rather at U.S. policies. McPherson argues that José Martí differentiated between "good people" and "bad governments" in the United States (193). This is an important distinction, because in the United States politicians and the media loosely use the term *anti-American* to suggest that certain Latin American governments—Venezuela immediately comes to mind—are hostile to the United States as a whole, or to U.S. values, as opposed to a particular administration or set of policies. In short, *Anti-Americanism in Latin America and the Caribbean* is a valuable collection, but it also points to more avenues for research.

THEORY BUILDING

As anyone who has ever received an evaluation of his or her article, manuscript, or book can attest, there is nothing quite so annoying as a reviewer who takes a work to task for failing to do what the reviewer wanted rather than what the author set out to accomplish. This is especially true for reviewers in different disciplines. Therefore, I would hasten to point out that building or testing theories is not the primary purpose for any of the books, and that my own discipline is political science. I would argue, however, that students and researchers alike would be well served by advancing generalizable hypotheses and specifying the causal relationships that characterize U.S.–Latin American relations, especially in the post–Cold War, post-9/11 era.

O'Brien writes that, for years, scholars "seemed trapped by theoretical sterility and mired in circular debate" (1). In particular, diplomatic historians and theorists of international relations looked askance at one another. The works under review here yield some hope that at least some of that antagonism has been overcome, as the authors do not explicitly reject other approaches. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to consider how the empirical richness of these books might fruitfully become part of new theoretical approaches, even at the level of middle-range theory as opposed to grand theories such as realism and dependency theory.

For example, LaRosa and Mora do not include secondary readings focusing on theory. McPherson's *Intimate Ties* analyzes diffusion in opposition to dependency and includes a useful table outlining the differences—which is essentially the debate between theorists of modernization and theorists of dependency regarding the prospects for economic and political development—but the book mentions realist theory mostly in passing.

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Conversely, Loveman's volume centers squarely on U.S. power and its extreme misuses, but the case studies do not address the possible theoretical implications. Palmer analyzes the domestic institutional constraints on U.S. policy making, though this does not become part of an overall theoretical treatment. These issues deserve more theoretical exploration.

In addition, attention is paid to Latin American responses to U.S. policy in most of the books, and most prominently in McPherson's collection. Fortunately, scholars in the United States have become more attuned over time to the idea that the study of U.S.–Latin American relations is not synonymous with U.S. policy. Certainly, it is important to differentiate between responses per se and political phenomena that occur independently of U.S. policy.

Furthermore, as the authors of yet another collection on Latin American and Caribbean foreign policy point out, "Models designed to explain U.S. decision making often do not apply to Latin American and Caribbean states."[4] In fact, only now are scholars beginning to reassess the Cold War by going beyond analyses of the state to consider the importance of grassroots analysis.[5] An important point of departure for future research, then, would be the construction of theories that better incorporate Latin American political and economic realities.

We are still trying to come to grips with the ways in which the relationship between the United States and Latin America has changed since the end of the Cold War eliminated the bipolar world and since the attacks of September 11, 2001, once again compelled policy makers in the United States to make security—however vaguely defined—a central concern. The essays by Jorge Castañeda, Michael Shifter, and Arturo Valenzuela in the last section of *Neighborly Adversaries* demonstrate how mutual trust and cooperation, always fragile, have been badly damaged. Future analyses should focus on causal mechanisms as a way to understand the many challenges to U.S.–Latin American relations, with the ultimate goal of not repeating the myriad mistakes of the past.

4. Jeanne A. K. Hey and Frank O. Mora. "Introduction: Theoretical Challenge to Latin American and Caribbean Foreign Policy Studies," in Frank O. Mora and Jeanne A. K. Hey, eds., *Latin American and Caribbean Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 2.

5. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

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