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## Book Review

### Comparative/World

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Alan McPherson. *Yankee No! Anti-Americanism in U.S.-Latin American Relations*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2003. Pp. 257. \$39.95.

In this insightful study, Alan McPherson seeks to answer the question posed by George W. 1  
Bush on September 20, 2002: "Why do they hate us?" Focusing on Latin America in the  
period 1958–1966, McPherson examines four case studies, beginning with the physical  
attacks in Venezuela against Vice President Richard M. Nixon in 1958 and continuing with  
the rise of Fidel Castro in Cuba, the 1964 Panamanian flag battle, and, finally, the U.S.  
intervention in the Dominican Republic. He argues persuasively that "each is a milestone in  
the history of anti-Americanism" (p. 3).

McPherson starts by defining anti-Americanism as "the expression of a disposition 2  
against U.S. influence abroad" (p. 5). Looking at the many facets of anti-Americanism,  
especially the understudied experiences of "ordinary" people, the author posits three major  
features and then persuasively proves his points in the case studies. The first is variability.  
The author shows how different forms of anti-Americanism developed in each country. In  
Cuba, it was revolutionary, while conservative in Panama and episodic in the Dominican  
Republic. Using his knowledge of the different political cultures, McPherson shows that  
applying a one-size-fits-all approach to understanding the tensions is overly simplistic.  
There are many reasons, he argues, to explain why some people are anti-American, and  
they often differ not only by country but by class and ethnicity.

The second feature of anti-Americanism that McPherson underscores is ambivalence, 3  
"the relatively clear-headed espousal of contradictory feelings or beliefs" (p. 7). The author  
shows how often competing strains of anti-Americanism created strange alliances against  
Washington that typically collapsed after the crisis. There was also a tendency, even among  
the most radical nationalists, to differentiate between the U.S. government and  
multinational corporations and ordinary Americans, whom they typically viewed more  
sympathetically. Semantic differences highlighted the issue as Latin Americans used the  
terms *gringos* and *yanquis* to express negative feelings while they employed *americano* for  
either neutral or positive terms. The result was a tension in the responses that created

ambivalence not only in their actions but also in the ability of U.S. policy makers to understand the conflicts themselves.

The final feature of anti-Americanism is the resilience of the U.S. response. McPherson 4 acknowledges that the United States did not always rely on power to deal with the challenges, as evidenced by changes such as the Alliance for Progress. The overall tendency on other occasions was a dismissal of U.S. responsibility by American policy makers, who focused on exploitation of the masses by people, mostly the Communists, for political gains. McPherson concludes that "U.S. responses to anti-Americanism often appeared naïve, but in reality they concealed a great reservoir of self-confidence that helped U.S. decision-makers bounce back and even get further involved in world affairs" (p. 8). Still, the author argues that "Anti-U.S. sentiment, then as now, grabbed the headlines, but anti-U.S. strategy rarely followed through" (p. 8). Likewise, the failure of American leaders to correctly appraise the source of the anti-Americanism led to the tendency to dismiss the "hostility as the 'price' to be paid for world power" and to place the blame on "unchanging cultural differences" (p. 168).

The strength of the book lies in the chapters on Panama and the Dominican Republic. 5 Here the author employs an impressive multinational research paradigm, one outlined and promoted extensively by his mentor, Michael Hunt. While the sections are good on Venezuela in 1958 and Cuba during the Castro revolution, the information is not particularly new, as scholars have covered those two areas in detail, especially the latter. With Panama and the Dominican Republic, however, McPherson provides new insights through extensive archival research as well as extensive oral interviews. The results amount to a significant contribution to our understanding of the two crises, especially from the viewpoint of the Dominicans and the Panamanians.

In conclusion, this is a book that should be read by everyone interested in foreign 6 relations, not merely historians specializing in the field but others in the academy and general public. Latin America has always been the testing ground for the development of U.S. foreign policies, and McPherson admirably takes these case studies and demonstrates the nature of anti-Americanism, one that bears a striking resemblance to the current global phenomenon. More understanding of this important trend would greatly assist Americans in dealing with contemporary challenges. This book is clearly a good move in that direction.

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