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# CONCLUSION

## Common Findings and New Directions

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Surely, Latin America is in itself a distinct, significant, and interesting field of study, but its problems and its fantasies are common to other continents as well. Its resentments and fear of the United States are an exacerbated version of passions that Europe shares.

J.-F. Revel, "Foreword," *The Latin Americans: Their Love-Hate Relationship with the United States*

Jean-François Revel's observation<sup>1</sup> makes a point worth exploring—namely, that Latin America and the Caribbean may have much to teach the rest of the world about anti-Americanism. It is beyond the expertise of this volume's contributors to debate whether anti-US sentiment in the Western Hemisphere may be an "exaggerated version" of anti-Americanism in Europe or anywhere else. Yet this conclusion proposes general lessons to be drawn from the volume's findings and suggests future research paths to explore how students of international history can draw upon this volume to inform scholarship on anti-Americanism.

To be sure, the contributors of this volume did not arrive to any of the following conclusions as a group. But it is useful to suggest seven broad findings that return in more than one chapter.<sup>2</sup> The first of these findings is that anti-Americanism has almost always been, and often primarily was, not an a priori ideology but a response to US policy. The more US policy offended, the more widespread, deep, and visceral anti-US sentiment became. As far as the contributors have uncovered, there was no consistent, steady rise in anti-Americanism from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries, but rather several

spurts corresponding to changes in actual US practices. This is not to say that Latin Americans were perfectly rational and measured in their responses. Common to most of them was an exacerbation of tensions rooted in the perception that US practices increasingly betrayed common goals for the hemisphere. In other words, anti-Americanism was so reactive against abusive policies because those policies were so contrary to US ideals. From Darlene Rivas's Venezuelans to Jeffrey Taffet's Chileans, Latin Americans rich and poor turned most anti-US when policies supporting dictatorship and repression contradicted Washington's promises of democracy and freedom. The additional perception that the United States was indifferent to these criticisms caused further disenchantment.

A second common finding is that the most compelling anti-Americanism, past and present, has had economic causes. In the eyes of Latin Americans, economic power has always been more obvious—and more obviously malignant—than any other US power. Few knew what happened in the US embassy or what CIA agents were really up to. But thousands in almost every country of the hemisphere were in contact with US plantation overseers or mine managers, or they read about them in novels. The exploitation they witnessed only reinforced the belief that US economic self-interest was the primary reason for any US presence in Latin America. The growing gap in wealth between north and south in the Americas only reinforced that belief. As David Ryan, John Britton, and Glenn Dorn, among others, showed, the arguments that most compelled masses to mobilize were arguments against the excesses of US-led global capitalism.

Third, anti-Americanism was most potent when it overlapped with other ideological constructs. In other words, just as anti-Americanism was not a priori, neither was it sui generis. Most prominent among the ideologies with which anti-Americanism overlapped was nationalism. Almost every contributor to this volume located anti-US politics within a greater effort by patriots—self-described or otherwise—to erect a more robust national identity to resist US power. Running close behind nationalism were Arielism, Hispanism, indigenism, socialism, communism, populism, and so on. My own chapter illustrated the different anti-Americanisms that can manifest in Cuba and Panama.

Fourth among our findings was the prominence of ambivalence. Inhabitants of Latin America and the Caribbean learned to compartmentalize their criticisms and to appreciate the benefits and drawbacks of the United States. Ambivalence generally meant appreciating US people as “good” while berating their government's actions as “bad”—*norteamericanos* fooled by *yanqui* imperialism. Darlene Rivas showed the difficulties in maintaining such a dichotomy: even though

the culturally sensitive Nelson Rockefeller charmed Venezuelans, was he not the epitome of capitalist exploitation? Was it fair to attempt to take Richard Nixon's life because of the actions of his government? And Jason Parker argued that West Indians, too, had "mixed feelings": they regretted the Jim Crow racism of the United States but appreciated the jobs created by World War II.

Fifth, anti-Americanism often did bring out the darker side of Latin American and Caribbean politics: the faulty arguments, the manipulation, the opportunism. By its very nature, anti-Americanism was a negative ideology that could be used negatively: to place the United States in a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't dilemma, to confuse voters, to distract from domestic worries, to tap into stereotypes, to dominate other countries. Kirk Bowman showed, for instance, how Brazilian public opinion came to be in a state of near-frenzy against "a nation of idiots" as it elected Lula.

Though anti-Americanism manipulates—sometimes *because* it manipulates—it does not always work. This sixth finding observes that what often seemed to unite Latin Americans during an election rarely sustained them through a serious challenge against US power. Dorn's study of Perón, for instance, charts a largely losing foreign policy as the United States, soon after Perón's successful defeat of Spruille Braden in 1946, outspent and outpersuaded the Peronists in the rest of South America and that much of Perón's own rhetoric remained on the surface.

A final insight of these studies of anti-Americanism, shared by almost all of them and discussed also in the introduction, is that anti-Americanism is strongest when the nation-state is behind it. It is fitting that John Britton's chapter focuses on national Mexican leaders because in the end it was they—and not union bosses or peasant leaders—who curtailed the power of US banks and oil corporations. William Walker's essay is the exception that proves the same rule: anti-Americanism was "quiet" in Colombia because the nation-state was ravaged by the drug trade.

Given these findings, in which direction should anti-Americanism studies head now? To be more accurate, we should speak of directions in the plural, recognizing the many questions still unanswered, avenues of inquiry to pursue further, and methodological challenges that may not even have arisen yet. Not only must scholars question the specific topics of this volume with additional sources and perspectives, but they should open up new and more creative avenues with bolder theoretical underpinnings and more diverse documents. The following are six possible directions—in no order of importance—that scholars would find fruitful in researching *antiyanquismo*

whether in Latin America and the Caribbean or anywhere else in the world.

First is the intellectual construction of anti-Americanism. While scholars have focused on this topic since the 1920s, few have done it justice. Still missing are studies of the contexts, shifts, and political implications of intellectual anti-Americanism. What political, cultural, or material conditions created communities of journalists, novelists, and poets to turn their art into criticisms of the United States? How did these intellectuals interact with those in power? Who changed their minds, and why? The literature could use histories of specific anti-US ideas, “life and times” biographies, and prosopographies.

A second possible new direction is related to the first: the history of institutions. Since the nation-state was so important, how have ministries, central banks, planning directorates, propaganda organizations, juntas, universities, philanthropic organizations, and other bureaucracies constructed challenges to US power? If intellectuals are so central, what institutions organized their opposition? Were these institutions European universities or homegrown ones, and how did their structure and curricula evolve to incorporate the continent’s growing resistance to US power? The Catholic church’s role in spreading anti-Protestant propaganda and countering Protestant missionaries must also be further examined. What about media managers such as magazine and newspaper editors, publishing houses, and television producers? And finally, what about political parties? Very few were principally anti-US. Why not?

Third, what about generational studies? How did Fidel Castro’s generation, so young when Castro took power in 1959, come to define itself so early on and so clearly against US power? Why did the generation of Simón Bolívar *not* do so, leaving Bolívar practically alone in opposing the Monroe Doctrine?

Fourth, how do we blend the histories of social movements and of anti-Americanism? Recent scholarship on civil society in Latin America and elsewhere should lead historians to ask if anti-Americanism was an early arena for the development of social movements. After all, criticizing the United States was often one of the only forms of political speech allowed in public, especially under dictatorships, since leaders had little to lose by letting it heat up. How did student movements, guerrillas, economic nationalists, women’s groups, and indigenous movements emerge from (or into) anti-US moments?

A fifth area is the psychological component of anti-Americanism. Many have commented on the emotion inherent in an anti-US stance—as Revel’s quotation suggests, its “fantasies” and “passions.” Many of these comments aim to dismiss the phenomenon by inferring that,

since emotions are irrational, ephemeral, and effeminate, therefore anti-Americanism is unworthy of serious consideration. In response, George Yúdice has written that “it is important . . . to acknowledge the intensity of Latin American emotion on the topic of anti-Americanism.” What if we not only acknowledge emotion but take the analysis several steps further? Several historians have made great strides in exploring moments or institutions in history that promoted joy, anger, fear, or other emotions.<sup>3</sup> Anti-Americanism, if it has been as emotional as its detractors pretend, should therefore be fertile ground for a psychological dig. Shame, humiliation, envy, hatred, pessimism, resentment—all might reemerge as a consistent cluster of anti-US emotions with common cultural roots and identifiable political consequences.<sup>4</sup>

The sixth and perhaps boldest new direction for anti-Americanism is to uncover the anti-Americanism of the poor. This direction challenges scholars to ask a series of questions about groups for whose political opinions we have barely any evidence. Yet the implications are fascinating. When a US plantation manager in Honduras made racist remarks to his mixed-race workers, how did locals react? If a US corporation offered to buy a small farmer’s land, what recourse did a family have? When local thugs fought US sailors in a bar, what motivated them? Paul Foos suggested the rich vein that historians could tap into by noting that Mexican historiography had done little on popular resistance to the US invasion of 1846 despite their being evidence of such resistance.<sup>5</sup> The history that this direction suggests would benefit most from research in memoirs, interviews, local archives, court records, and the letters and records that Latin Americans have kept in their homes.

Scholars have yet to develop fully the study of anti-Americanism in Latin America and the Caribbean—perhaps in any part of the world. Anti-Yankee sentiment is still largely taken for granted by scholars, as an intuitive, I-know-it-when-I-see-it phenomenon that requires little study. This volume has attempted to delve deeper into anti-Americanism in one area of the globe, whether it be cultural or more material in nature. May it inspire other scholars to nurture a scholarship still in its infancy.

## Notes

1. J.-F. Revel, “Foreword,” in C. Rangel, *The Latin Americans: Their Love-Hate Relationship with the United States* (New Brunswick, [1977] 1987), xiii–xiv.
2. This conclusion elaborates on the three basic themes I expressed in *Yankee No! Anti-Americanism in US-Latin American Relations* (Cambridge, 2003), 6–8.

3. G. Yúdice, "US *Prepotencia*: Latin Americans Respond," 69–84, in *Anti-Americanism*, ed. A. Ross and K. Ross (New York, 2004): 80. On emotions, see P. N. Stearns with C. Z. Stearns, "Emotionology," *American Historical Review* 90 (October 1985): 813–36; J. Pfister and N. Schnog, eds., *Inventing the Psychological* (New Haven, 1997); P. N. Stearns and J. Lewis, eds., *An Emotional History of the United States* (New York, 1998); and B. H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107 (June 2002): 821–45.
4. R. Ardila, "Political Psychology: The Latin American Perspective," *Political Psychology* 17 (1996): 339–51; M. Montero, *Psicología política latinoamericana* (Caracas, 1987).
5. P. Foos, *A Short, Offhand, Killing Affair: Soldiers and Social Conflict during the Mexican-American War* (Chapel Hill, 2002), chapter 6.