

**Juan Pablo Scarfi and Andrew R. Tillman (eds.) (2016).
*Cooperation and Hegemony in US-Latin American Relations:
 Revisiting the Western Hemisphere Idea.* Basingstoke,
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Recensiones

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This edited volume is one of several recent publications that demonstrate a renewed interest in the relationship between the US and Latin American states, including Alan McPherson's, Tom Long's and the contributors' own work, to name but some of them. The book revives Arthur Whitaker's Western Hemisphere idea as a conceptual lens for the study of inter-American relations to uncover the traits of America's common history. In 1954, Whitaker published the first extensive account of the Hemisphere idea which he described as the idea that "the peoples of this [the Western] Hemisphere stand in a special relationship to one another which sets them apart from the rest of the world" (1).

This perspective allows challenging the traditional fallacies of American historiography, both in the US and, arguably, in Latin America. The editors identify two problems in the writings on inter-American relations in particular: the clash of civilization thesis and the belief in (U.S.) American exceptionalism coupled with Latin American backwardness (2). In consequence, and as it is well known, past scholarship tended to overemphasise the role played by the US while casting a blind eye on the agency of Latin American states. What is more, previous studies evoked a "Latin American" aggrupation of states which might be just as similar or different amongst each other as they are to the United States (Darnton, 2014; McPherson, 2014). Hence, the point the Introduction of the volume seeks to carry home: If we distinguish a northern and a southern history of the Americas, we might as well tell other, sub-continental histories (a Central American history, for example). The editors are careful in stressing that the Hemisphere is internally heterogeneous, flexible in scope and inherently related to global history. Yet, the various authors argue, it is worth recovering the continental dimensions of the Americas. The volume makes an original contribution in demonstrating that this undertaking is worthwhile, although it is less successful in showing how studying the Hemisphere not only adds to, but also changes our understanding of inter-American politics.

The chapters in *Cooperation and Hegemony* seek "to grasp the broader picture of inter-American relations" (12) and do so by de-emphasising the distancing factors associated with the power differential between the US and its neighbours to the south while simultaneously diversifying the perspective on "Latin America". The volume provides a comprehensive guide to the intellectual history of the Hemisphere and makes a convincing case for future research to follow in its footsteps. Nevertheless, the framing of the book as promised by its title appears misguided.

The book is divided into three parts, each consisting of two chapters. Part I lays out the different methodologies of American historiography, Part II examines the Pan-Americanist movement in relation to the Western Hemisphere idea, and Part III deals with the continental dimensions of international law. All but one chapter integrate notably well together to the point where some of the information becomes repetitive for the reader of the entire volume.

The Introduction provides an overview of the Western Hemisphere idea and discusses the validity of the concept. Scarfi and Tillman situate the book in line with Felipe Fernández-Armesto and James Dunkerley, who adopted a continental view on inter-American relations. In contrast to the present volume, however, these scholars did not rely on the Western Hemisphere as a concept. Except for the reference to “a more recent and renewed debate on common histories and the construction of a unified global history” (8), Scarfi and Tillman do not share their views on why it is only now, more than sixty years after Whitaker’s publication, that the Western Hemisphere idea was “revived”. It is interesting to note, however, that the majority of those appearing to see merit in the Hemisphere idea were trained in the UK and thus outside of what they envision as a common space.¹

In his chapter Charles Jones argues that the Hemisphere is not a particular case but a “laboratory” that reflects global political phenomena often overlooked in US-centric IR (35). Jones’ chapter is a useful compendium of his *American Civilization* arguing that the social, political and cultural historical trajectories of the US put it squarely within an American civilization, rendering the dominant imaginary of a Western civilization delineated by a north-south divide questionable. The next chapter by Tanya Harmer probes the themes of “commonality, specificity, and difference” within the Americas further from the view of American historiography. Harmer exemplifies best where the strength of the volume lays when she calls for the “thickening” of history writing in the Americas (76-77): The book’s is less a claim to revise history but a foundation providing the conceptual space for new research and insights, which may well have the potential to revisit established knowledge. Thus, Harmer calls for future study of Latin American archival records that have recently become accessible and which scholars –including herself– have effectively begun to use in the past ten to fifteen years (Brands, 2010; Dinges, 2004; Grandin, 2011).

Mark Petersen’s chapter in Part II stands out as an empirically rich and analytically compelling case study of Chile’s turn to supporting the Pan-American movement. Yet, the reader is left wondering whether Chile stands apart or is exemplary for a wider trend, as the author claims (116). Put differently, Petersen’s study exposes the limits of writing a continental history that is sensible to Harmer’s criteria of examining specificities and highlighting differences. Next, Ricardo Salvatore examines how ideas of the Hemisphere, the Region (the continent’s sub-regions) and the Nation (the individual countries) were

¹ I thank Carsten Schulz for pointing this out.

used as spatial categories to write a history of Hispanic America that justified US-driven Pan-Americanism.

Part III deals with the legal dimension in the international history of the Americas. Scarfi's study provides details on the short-lived American Institute of International Law and the organization's role and influence in the Pan-American movement. This is complemented by Par Engstrom's chapter on the Inter-American Human Rights System, which, while informative and well presented, does not employ the conceptual vocabulary of the book. The chapter fails to show how using the volume's framework makes this contribution different from others dealing with the American human rights regime and ultimately, the reader may ponder whether the chapter does justice to the book's goal of challenging the established dichotomy in conceiving inter-American relations as a –mostly conflictive– relationship between the US and "Latin America".

I noted above that the framing proposed by the title of the volume appears unfortunate, at least from an International Relations perspective. On this view, cooperation and hegemony are no antipodes, and the two are conceptually undistinguishable when Scarfi and Tillman define hegemony as:

The existence of a long-standing relationship of power politics between the United States and Latin America [which] allowed the United States not only to coerce and intervene militarily and politically in the Americas on a regular basis [...] but also to push Latin American nations and peoples to pursue certain policy agendas through "soft strategies" of persuasion and consent (3).

Cooperation, on the other hand, is defined as engagement in different policy fields (*ibid.*). IR scholarship, including the rationalist school that the editors likely have in mind when criticizing "realism and interventionism" (3), looks at hegemonic relations not necessarily as conflictive since cooperation is precisely the instrument through which persuasion and consent are achieved. The apparent "contradictions" found in the relation between the northern part of the Hemisphere and the south (2) are in fact little surprising taking into consideration the dependent relationship upon which hegemony is founded. It is perfectly in the interest of secondary powers to bind, bond or bandwagon with the hegemon instead of opposing her. Studies such as Brands, for example, have shown how Latin American elites could manipulate Washington's agenda for their own purposes. Dominant states, on the other hand, are better served when their position is maintained through consent rather than costly coercion and are thus willing to pay a price to achieve the acquiescence of other states. Any form of durable hegemony relies ultimately on some form of legitimate leadership, and the US in Latin America is no exception. In fact, Salvatore's chapter in the book is an insightful illustration of how a hegemonic view towards Latin America co-existed with Washington's Pan-American project stressing the strategic importance of the Hemisphere.

While the editors acknowledge the "interconnections" between hegemony and cooperation (2), the contributions in the volume do not probe those theoretically relevant instances of contested legitimacy and compliant participation that reveal the extent to which power asymmetries within the Hemisphere mattered. The chapters by Petersen, Scarfi

and Engstrom are exemplary when it comes to showing how the same policies served the motives and interests of different national and transnational individuals, hence leading to cooperation in specific policy fields and still, as Harmer rightly points out, agency is not the same as power (85). In other words, rather than engaging with the cooperation-hegemony *problematique*, what the volume does accomplish in theoretical terms is speaking to questions of levels of analysis and, in this context, how to reconcile the effects on international politics of individual encounters and relationships over time (see also 83). These are questions equally relevant to historians and IR scholars.

In sum, the volume provides a comprehensive, critical and easily accessible review of the Hemisphere idea that will be of interest to students of American international history, intellectual history in the Americas and Latin American international relations. The book unravels the politics of the Western Hemisphere idea as it was used over a century ago and contributes to establishing the concept as a spatial and geographical category for future research. In this sense, a concluding, critical reflection by the editors on their own “historico-political project” of reviving the Western Hemisphere would have been welcomed (156).

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