

even the bibliography is thin; it lists no articles and only two pages of book titles without annotation to guide the uninitiated. It is neither history nor political analysis, but includes some of each. It is too disjointed to serve as a textbook and too cursory to satisfy the serious but nonexpert reader.

So what is it? It is a brief study, written generally in a light, breezy style, of some 200 pages—if we omit the four scenarios—that includes two chapters on migration, and one each on petroleum, the border, Mexican Americans, economic relations, and a series of other problems requiring attention. Brief historical narratives open each chapter and some political analysis/international politics are included in most. The scenarios make for some interesting fictional reading but are not very believable. On controversial issues, the authors are scrupulously evenhanded, perhaps excessively so. They argue the cases from every side on the treatment of migrants and Chicanos in the United States, economic nationalism of both countries, and the negotiations over Mexican natural gas, to name only a few. Oddly, though, in their chapter on Mexican Americans they have almost nothing to say about the political experiment of La Raza Unida and make no mention at all of José Angel Gutiérrez, a major political figure in Texas in the 1970s.

This is the first book (that is not an anthology) on Mexican–United States relations to appear since the discovery of the rich new petroleum deposits in Mexico. That factor demands a serious assessment of the changes and potential future trends in the relationships between the two countries. Unfortunately, the present study does not fulfill that need.

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Constraint of Empire: The United States and Caribbean Interventions.

By WHITNEY T. PERKINS. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xv, 282. Cloth. \$35.00.

Whitney Perkins has had the interesting idea of examining the Caribbean interventions of the United States through study of four selected countries (Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, the Dominican Republic), and analysis of them across four consecutive stages: the establishment of a United States commitment, the period of Yankee control, the ultimate disengagement, and subsequent United States relations, including reengagement in the Dominican Republic and aborted reengagement in Cuba. The common framework facilitates comparisons and suggests general trends without being overly repetitious.

This organizational structure is coupled with an interpretive one. United States imperialism, Perkins argues, was distinguished by the contradiction between its capacity to control and its avowed commitment to liberate. This contradiction did not reflect mere hypocrisy, but a genuine dilemma of North American policy, a theme that Perkins earlier explored in *Denial of Empire: The United States and Its Dependencies* (1962). Furthermore, it is an essentially *political* question, insists the author, who is a political science professor at Brown University: “Explanatory efforts which are content to expound the consequences of structure or economic interest neglect the realm of contingency and adaptation in which politics functions. To attribute that which is produced by political interaction to a systemic quality . . . is to impute cause to condition, with politics little more than an ephemeral fizz in a rigid conceptual container” (p. x).

It is no surprise, therefore, that most of the book consists of rather bare-bones political narratives. Overall, the author’s research is thorough and his grasp solid. His chapters are informative, though rarely path-breaking, and his prose clear and straightforward. One feels, however, the lack of local setting and background, as well as a sense of the larger political currents in the United States. To get full use of this workmanlike study, the reader must possess in advance a fair general knowledge of its subject. It is nevertheless well worth reading, if only for its occasional conclusions. Some examples: United States interventions were never meant to be permanent, and in fact tended to last longer than originally contemplated; their endings really need less explanation than their duration. Also, “contrary to current myth, there never was a time when the United States could blithely work its will in countries that it could dominate in military and economic terms. The politics of domination was always complex and frustrating” (p. xiv). Nor did Washington intend the rise of the ruthless dictatorships that so often followed on the heels of North American withdrawal; these constituted a failure of its policy, which resulted from attempting the unattainable, the transplant of orderly self-government by forcible imposition. If by no means new, these ideas draw fresh life from Perkins’s exposition.

Unfortunately, there is no general concluding chapter to draw parallels and sum up large themes, and the reader is left with a sense of incompleteness. Within its limits, however, *Constraint of Empire* is a stimulating study of foreign-policy formation, well grounded in scholarship and free of social-science jargon.

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