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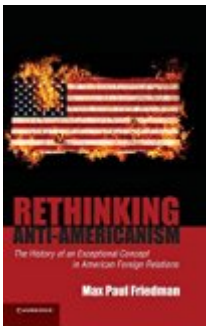
Max P. Friedman. *Rethinking Anti-Americanism: The History of an Exceptional Concept in American Foreign Relations.* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2012. $95.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-521-86491-6.



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On May 23, 2013, President Barack Obama delivered the most important foreign policy speech of his presidency. Speaking at the National Defense University in Washington DC, he argued that the United States had to redefine its military posture in more focused and limited terms, abandoning what he called the "boundless 'global war on terror'" begun by his predecessor.[1] President Obama admitted that the United States could not bear the costs of fighting numerous open-ended wars. He also explained that Washington's misguided military deployments, especially in Iraq, multiplied the threats to the nation.

Even as he deflated exaggerated fears of terrorism, Obama repeated the frequent argument that terrorists threaten the United States because of their own pathologies. He did not blame "anti-Americanism" explicitly, but he echoed the common claim that angry men and women seek to hurt the United States because they resent its wealth, freedom, and openness. The terrorists subscribe to what Obama described as a resentful, irrational, and violent worldview that defines itself at war with American society: "we have to recognize that these threats don't arise in a vacuum. Most, though not all, of the terrorism we faced is fueled by a common ideology--a belief by some extremists that Islam is in conflict with the United States and the West, and that violence against Western targets, including civilians, is justified in pursuit of a larger cause. Of course, this ideology is based on a lie, for the United States is not at war with Islam."[2]

Max Paul Friedman's sophisticated and deeply researched new book charts the long pedigree for these common contemporary judgments about the "anti-American" quality of those who oppose and sometimes attack the United States. Friedman writes that the "anti-American" label for critics "dates back at least to 1767." Drawing on the correspondence of Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and others, he argues that the "initial, neutral definition of being opposed to America or Americans, comparable to anti-French or anti-Russian sentiment, evolved to acquire a deeper, dual meaning: domestically, the

term carried the implication of disloyalty and betrayal, used to delegitimize opponents of war and expansion; internationally, it implied an irrational, often culturally based, hatred of democracy. These associations have clung to the word right up to our own time, giving it a special rhetorical power that enables the concept of anti-Americanism to cause two kinds of damage: stifling dissent at home while distorting Americans' perceptions of the motives and intentions of foreign critics" (p. 21).

Leading American policymakers and thinkers in the nineteenth century, according to Friedman, defined a binary world of American justice, democracy, and capitalism combating a world filled with degenerate, tyrannical, and militaristic regimes. This binary, enshrined as "an enduring--and misleading--analytical category," set a pattern for American politics during the twentieth century, in Friedman's account (p. 51). It encouraged widespread dismissal of European progressives, like George Bernard Shaw, and Latin American nationalists, like José Martí, who pursued a politics of freedom that departed consciously from the American model. These figures and others, Friedman shows, lacked credibility within many parts of the United States because their opponents ostracized them with the label of being "anti-American." American readers developed a caricatured view of what Shaw and Martí, later Jean-Paul Sartre and Fidel Castro, aimed to achieve. Friedman argues that this intellectual prejudice crippled American policymakers from understanding nationalism, social democracy, and other progressive ideas. Instead of learning to work with local activists who pursued goals compatible with American interests, the binary world of alleged allies and "anti-Americans" encouraged policymakers to side with the dictators who praised Washington, but failed to implement democratic programs.

Friedman is particularly strong in his application of this insight to early twentieth-century American policies in Mexico. He condemns Washington's support for authoritarians who undermined possibilities for more grassroots democracy and development: "The point is that anti-Americanism as a concept contributes nothing to understanding the relations between Mexico and the United States. On the contrary, it takes a universal phenomenon--hostility generated by friction between neighboring countries--and turns it into a particular phenomenon, a peculiarly Latin kind of irrationality given to outbursts that, it is implied, should be treated like children's tantrums. This ascribes a monopoly on reason to Americans, who claim the right to judge Mexican behavior as illegitimate, especially when that behavior involves Mexican objections to American actions" (p. 66).

This powerful analytical point connects chapters in ***Rethinking Anti-Americanism*** on the Cold War in Europe and Latin America. Friedman also includes a detailed chapter on U.S. relations with France under President Charles de Gaulle. He shows quite persuasively how De Gaulle jealously guarded French national interests by seeking more independence from the United States and new initiatives in North Africa, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia. De Gaulle also promoted aggressive rhetoric to instill pride and self-confidence in his citizens after decades of war and relative decline. Friedman argues that American citizens and policymakers failed to appreciate the rational and reasonable motives for De Gaulle's actions because of an obsession with his alleged anti-Americanism. His actions were somehow immoral because they insulted American claims to self-righteousness. More controversial, Friedman claims that the United States suffered in Vietnam and other regions of the world because of a stubborn dismissal of French advice, despite its relevance for American decision making.[3]

For the Cold War as a whole, Friedman criticizes American policymakers for reinforcing rather than breaking down assumptions about a bipolar world of pro- and anti-American hostility.

Containment, in this account, reinforced divisions and denied possibilities for geopolitical compromise. Friedman takes particular aim at President Dwight Eisenhower's Psychological Strategy Board and its successor, the Operations Coordinating Board, for spreading propaganda that overemphasized "anti-Americanism" and denied what the author sees as the reality of the Cold War: Soviet insecurity and conflict over geopolitical interests in Europe, Asia, and other regions.[4] For Friedman, Washington's obsession with anti-Americanism encouraged a global manifestation of what he condemns in early twentieth-century U.S.-Mexican relations: excessive intervention, misdirected support of pro-American authoritarians, and a dismissal of the real material issues (including insecurity and inequality) that caused conflict. In a thoughtful chapter on the domestic and international protests of the late Cold War, Friedman extends this argument to show how the "anti-American" label diminished the influence of patriotic and innovative critics--especially peace and ecological activists.

The epilogue of *Rethinking Anti-Americanism* brings us back full circle, applying Friedman's analysis to the "Global War on Terror" and its contemporary manifestations. Friedman is clear in his condemnation of terrorists who target civilians; he offers no apology for such immoral violence. He does, however, criticize Americans for failing to interrogate the roots of popular support for terrorism in the Middle East and other regions. Contrary to both Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, Friedman sees little cause in ideology or deep hatred of the United States. He argues that there are, in fact, strong reservoirs of respect and admiration for American society in various regions, including the Middle East. Instead, Friedman finds opposition to the United States rooted in interventionist military and economic policies emanating from Washington and targeted at oil-rich states. Citizens in the Middle East feel victimized, according to this account, and they oppose U.S. government policies because they believe that these policies reinforce inequality and injustice throughout the region.

The tragedy that Friedman uncovers is that the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, aimed at combating terrorism, only reinforced opposition to the United States. This was true in the Middle East and throughout most of the rest of the world, Friedman shows. American military activities and bombastic rhetoric reinforced the worst stereotypes of U.S. bullying. The war in Iraq also created a new generation of displaced citizens in the region, blaming the United States for their suffering condition. Friedman argues that there is no "clash of civilizations," but a rejection of misdirected American power: "even people who strongly disfavor the United States are objecting not to American society or values but to its actions as perceived abroad" (p. 233).

Rethinking Anti-Americanism closes with a plea for citizens and policymakers to abandon long-held assumptions about "anti-Americanism." Friedman wants the United States to pursue its national interests, but with a clear-eyed recognition of the rational interests that move people in other societies to oppose American actions. Instead of condemnation and dismissal, he calls for a serious grappling with non-American perspectives, and a substantive effort, through diplomacy, to find compromises that accept differences, rather than seek to eliminate them: "Finding solutions to common problems will remain difficult as long as a substantial portion of the American public continues to view critical discussion of basic issues in policy and social organization as anti-American" (p. 238).

Friedman's book builds on the important work of Alan McPherson (*Yankee No! Anti-Americanism in U.S.-Latin American Relations* [2003]) and Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane (edited collection *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* [2007]), among others. Unlike these scholars, however, Friedman focuses his lens on American misperceptions, misjudgments, and misdi-

rected policies. He gives Americans the primary agency in defining the meanings and implications of "anti-Americanism." Friedman offers rich details on the behavior of foreign societies, particularly in Western Europe and Latin America, but primarily to show that foreign activities do not explain assumptions about "anti-Americanism." He unveils the concept as a self-serving American myth, not an accurate or useful category for comprehending the world. Friedman defines "anti-Americanism" by looking in the American historical mirror, and he hopes to replace distorted reflections with a clearer, more "cosmopolitan" and "multilateralist" window on the world (p. 240).

Is this possible? Can Americans jettison their long-standing assumptions about the threats of degenerate "anti-Americanism" abroad and at home? Is that fully desirable? Would American policy really improve if citizens assumed all political differences were rational and subjected to compromise among divergent interests, rather than existential conflicts of identity? Are we really sure that those who seek to harm the United States are motivated by the material interests that Friedman emphasizes?

Friedman is very convincing about the historical and contemporary excesses of anti-Americanism as an analytical category. He shows persuasively that it has distorted American policies and contributed to consistent misjudgments about critics and supporters. The United States would have been better served to recognize that many Communist sympathizers in the Cold War were not inherently anti-American, and many pro-American dictators were destructive to our most deeply held values. When U.S. policymakers have escaped anti-American assumptions about figures like Mao Zedong, and pro-American assumptions attached to authoritarians like Hosni Mubarak, they have been most successful. These moments have been much too rare.

At the same time, anti-American attitudes appear to be rooted in deeper foreign cultural and historical soil than Friedman is willing to admit in this excellent book. The author is responding to the exaggerated use of the concept by Americans, but he goes too far in deconstructing the concept as "myth," "hyperbole," and "fairy tale" (pp. 3, 35, 18). Friedman contends that hatred of the United States "remains a marginal position" in explaining the motives and behavior of foreign actors (p. 17), but he does not contend with the abundant contrary evidence. Although the vast majority of foreign critics are not driven by a hatred of the United States, many dangerous groups are organized and focused on that end as a value--sometimes a mission--in itself. Many government leaders also exploit resentment of American wealth and power to mobilize citizens and distract them from domestic failings. One might argue that even these extreme attitudes are a response to past American behavior, but they are now so separated from the daily actions of the U.S. government--and they offer such a selective reading of those daily actions--that they stand alone. Many international scholars with research credentials comparable to Friedman have made this point. Their work deserves serious attention when discussing anti-Americanism as a historical phenomenon.[5]

Attacks on America as a symbol, a culture, and a country have a large network of institutions and groups behind them, especially in the Middle East. As "moderate" figures have frequently learned, it is very hard to undo these anti-American attitudes and the institutions built around them. Whether justified or not, anti-American violence has become valorized in numerous communities. American observers should not exaggerate this observation, but they cannot ignore it either. Anti-Americanism has become a central organizing ideology for many diverse groups, including Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and Hezbollah, as well as militant Jewish settler organizations, ultra-Orthodox sects, and some Christian missionaries. All of these groups define themselves as standing against the consumerism and pluralism of American influences. Opposing the United States gives

them a sense of identity by identifying a clear "other." It gives them a coherent reason for being. These groups and their sympathizers see the United States as a radical threat to their inherited way of life. They have proven deadly in their embrace of violence directed at American representatives and perceived supporters.[6]

Friedman advocates a change in American attitudes and policies. This is worthwhile and appropriate. It is also not sufficient, especially for those charged with making foreign policy. U.S. military withdrawal from the Middle East would not end Iranian and other regional attacks on American "heathens." U.S. military withdrawal from the Korean peninsula would not convince the North Korean leadership to end its denunciations and attacks on American interests. These societies and their supporters have too much invested in proclaiming their systems at war with the United States. This is a war over cultural assumptions about legitimacy and political forms of authority, as well as the material interests that Friedman emphasizes. Addressing the material conflicts alone will not eliminate the broader threats and dangers.

Culture, ideology, and identity are not determinative, but they matter enormously to politics and foreign policy. They influence and frequently distort American perceptions, as Friedman documents. They also do the same for foreign views of the United States. Friedman's book dismisses this crucial second part of the story. That neglect leaves the reader of his excellent book with a still distorted view of international relations. One cannot understand America's foreign conflicts by dissecting American prejudices and misperceptions alone. The misuses of anti-Americanism run at least two ways.

As he seeks to restrain the excesses of the "Global War on Terror," President Obama is grappling with precisely these issues. He is trying to educate American citizens about the need for skillful multilateral diplomacy that recognizes legitimate differences in interests and perceptions among societies. At the same time, he cannot neglect the evidence of small but significant groups of actors--state and non-state--who have adopted what the president correctly calls an "ideology" encouraging harm to American civilians. The president must formulate a foreign policy that neither exaggerates nor neglects the threats to the United States.

Scholars are not policymakers, but they should strive for the same balance in their work. During its history, the United States has contributed to perceptions of "anti-Americanism," but it has also exercised legitimate power to defend itself against those who have wished it harm. Friedman has done valuable scholarly work to address the first part of this story. The next task is to integrate his insights with the broader motivations of America's critics and friends abroad.

Notes

[1]. President Barack Obama (speech presented at the National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington DC, May 23, 2013), http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/23/remarks-president-national-defense-university.

[2]. Ibid.

[3]. The relationship between France and the United States in Vietnam, and the failure of American leaders to learn from the French experience, has received extensive treatment from historians. See, among others, Fredrik Logevall, ***Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam*** (New York: Random House, 2012); and Mark Atwood Lawrence, ***Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment to War in Vietnam*** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[4]. For the best account of Eisenhower's Psychological Strategy Board and the Operations Coordinating Board, see Kenneth Osgood, ***Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at***

Home and Abroad (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006).

[5]. There is a large scholarly literature on the cultural, religious, and political sources of anti-Americanism, and its separation from specific policies and reactions to those policies. These works, among others, treat anti-Americanism as a phenomenon that is not explained entirely, or even largely, in material terms: Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Andrei Lankov, *The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); McPherson, *Yankee No!*; and Katzenstein and Keohane, eds., *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics*.

[6]. Marc Lynch's excellent recent book covers many of these issues in a thoughtful and careful way: *The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East* (New York: Public Affairs, 2012).

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[5]. See, among others, Alan McPherson, *Yankee No! Anti-Americanism in U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); and Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

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