



Mark T. Berger. *Under Northern Eyes: Latin American Studies and U.S. Hegemony in the Americas, 1898-1990*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. xv + 570 pp. \$31.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-253-31172-6.

Reviewed by Peter G. Felten (Tulsa Junior College)  
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## The Historiography of Inter-American Relations

*Under Northern Eyes* is the type of work graduate students dream of as they prepare for exams. Its theoretical explanations are concise and clear. Indeed, its summary of dependency and world-system theories (pp. 106-121) alone will make the book worthwhile for many scholars. Its bibliography is encyclopedic, although limited—as its author intends—to U.S.-based Latin Americanists (pp. 376-562). And its footnotes are nearly as extensive as the text; the book's first paragraph includes nine long notes (pp. 1, 234-236), setting the tone for this rigorous and dense work.

In *Under Northern Eyes*, Mark T. Berger presents an extremely ambitious study of the relationship between United States hemispheric policy and the historiography of U.S.-based Latin Americanists. Even though Berger cannot deliver on all that he promises, he has written a provocative and useful book.

Berger's central contention is that Latin American studies in the United States "has facilitated the creation and maintenance of the institutions, organizations, inter-state relations, and politico-economic structures that reinforce and underpin the US hegemonic position in the Americas" (p. 2). He analyzes the interaction between U.S. hemispheric policy and North American historiography since 1898 to support his claim, focusing particularly on Central America in the 1970s and 1980s.

Berger bases his interpretation on a combination of the imperial state approach of Morris Morley and James Petras, international relations theory drawn from Antonio Gramsci, and post-structural analysis as developed by

Michel Foucault and Edward Said. Berger subtly avoids many of the theoretical potholes in his path. Most significantly, he does not create a deterministic conspiracy linking scholars and policy-makers. He insists that the connections have been "complementary and interconnected," not "causal" (p. 11). Even in the period before 1945, when Latin Americanists generally had close ties to the State Department, the academics did not write purely to serve the government's interests.

Yet the historical dominance of "liberal professional discourses on Latin America," according to Berger, has "made an important contribution to the diffuse character and resilience of US hegemony in the Americas" (p. 21). The key to Berger's definition of "liberal," and in many ways the key to his entire argument, is the belief that no major conflict exists between U.S. and Latin American interests. Berger asserts that because of their liberal faith, "most Latin American studies specialists are, like US policy-makers, estranged from Latin America" (p. 19).

Berger chronicles the rise and fall of both radical and conservative challenges to the dominant liberal discourses. Dependency theorists and New Left historians flourished briefly in the 1960s and early 1970s, radical due to their assertion of the conflict of interests between the United States and Latin America. Soon, however, liberal discourses began to employ certain radical insights, domesticating the critics for the North American academy. In the late 1970s, conservative theorists emerged, emphasizing the superiority of United States civilization and the primacy of the Cold War. By the mid-1980s, they too had been integrated into the dominant professional dis-

courses. Berger attributes the recent diversity of opinion in part to the crisis in Washington's hegemony after 1968, permitting "the dominant professional discourses on Latin America to achieve a position of greater autonomy from the policies and practices of the US imperial state" (p. 228).

Berger is provocative throughout, but his thesis could have been made more persuasive by occasionally dipping into primary source materials. The Project Camelot scandal of the early 1960s offers a fascinating window into secret connections between the U.S. government and Latin Americanists. Berger, however, mentions it only in passing (pp. 90-91). Similarly, Berger neglects the discourse of policy-makers who remained outside of formal academia. Influential officials like Thomas Mann, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs in both the Eisenhower and Johnson administrations, repeatedly parroted Samuel Flagg Bemis's defense of "protective imperialism" and "imperialism against imperialism" (p. 59). An exploration of professional diplomatic discourses would strengthen Berger's conclusions about the impact of Latin Americanists on U.S. policy.

*Under Northern Eyes* also suffers from its ambition. In order to fulfill his mission, Berger attempts both to provide a history of U.S. hemispheric policy since 1898 and to analyze the vast literature on inter-American relations. The historiography is solid, but the history at times is weak. For example, Berger's survey of 1945-1968 fails to mention the 1964 Panamanian crisis and the 1965-1966

United States armed intervention in the Dominican Republic (pp. 66-97). Although Berger concedes in his introduction that he concentrates on Central America, the book clearly aspires to much more than that, particularly in its analysis of the period before 1968.

Berger's theoretical underpinnings also will raise some hackles. He emphasizes economic factors in the shaping of U.S. policy, slighting political and strategic concerns. Berger also explains that his "genealogical approach attempts to disrupt the appearance of steady development" (p. 9). Ironically, his stress on the historical consistency of U.S. foreign policy and the evolution of Latin American studies both seem to undercut this claim. Finally, his theory-based assertions about the connections between Latin American studies and United States policy occasionally seem to be a complicated way of stating the obvious. Of course professional and intellectual links exist between these two groups.

Despite its flaws, *Under Northern Eyes* is a helpful and thoughtful addition to the literature on inter-American relations. Graduate students no doubt will consult Berger often for his significant historiographical insights. Latin Americanists in general would do well to ponder his claims about the connections between their own work and United States hegemony.

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