

Don H. Doyle. *American Civil Wars: The United States, Latin America, Europe and the Crisis of the 1860s.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. 272 pp. \$29.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-4696-3109-7.

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Published on H-Nationalism (November, 2020)

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Innovative scholars within well-established historiographical fields are pushing their fields to adapt to the growing interest in comparative, transnational, and global history. *American Civil Wars: The United States, Latin America, and the Crisis of the 1860s*, a collection of eleven essays edited by esteemed US Civil War historian Don Doyle, represents a bold effort to define the 1860s as a decade of international revolution rather than simply the temporal setting of the American Civil War. As is to be expected in collected editions, the quality of essays is at times a little uneven, but taken as a whole the book serves as an important reminder, especially to United States specialists, that much more happened during the 1860s than the Civil War.

The first three essays, by Jay Sexton, Howard Jones, and Patrick J. Kelly, internationalize the US Civil War. Sexton's essay argues that Northerners interpreted Union victory as the culmination of the American Revolution and that national consolidation accompanying the victory not only strengthened the US national government, but in so doing erased fears of European intervention in North America.[1] Even so, writes Sexton, US projection of power following the Civil War "proceeded in fits and starts," representing "one of the great riddles of nineteenth-century U.S. history" (p. 26). Sexton also locates Confederate defeat

largely in the failure of Confederate diplomacy rather than battlefield losses or home front subversion. Jones delves even deeper into US and Confederate diplomatic machinations, particularly efforts to influence British and French responses to the war. Jones concludes that slavery played very little role in the decision-making of European powers. The threat of an actual war with the United States, and not slavery, is "the key to understanding why London and Paris decided against intervention," concludes Jones (p. 51). Kelly addresses the failures of Confederate diplomacy among Latin American countries. Confederate inconsistency regarding questions of expansion and commitment to democracy, argues Kelly, weakened Confederate hemispheric standing. In the end, any "clout the South might enjoy, in fact, was contingent upon the strength and influence of the United States" (p. 77).

These essays are followed by three describing European reaction to the US Civil War. Richard Huzzey examines British responses. Like Jones, Huzzey concludes that Britain avoided intervention in the North American conflict out of a desire to avoid war with the Union. The US Civil War served to expose Britain's weakening hold on its remaining colonies in the Americas, especially Jamaica and Canada. The 1860s, argues Huzzey, "confirmed and accelerated the waning influence

of a monarchical, European empire and the rising power of the republican, American empire” (p. 100). Stève Sainlaude tackles French reaction to the American Civil War, arguing that intrigue between Napoleon III and his advisors hampered the French response to the American Civil War.[2] The Mexican intervention, intended to weaken both the Union and the Confederacy, backfired horribly, and “instead of creating a balance of power in North America, it left the United States more powerful than before” (p. 120). Christopher Schmidt-Nowara investigates how Spanish officials interpreted the US Civil War. Initially seen as an opportunity to reassert Spanish will in the Americas, Schmidt-Nowara concludes that, instead, the conflict served as “a dress rehearsal, a ‘broken image,’ for their empire’s own crisis of slavery and sovereignty” (p. 125). Not only did Spain fail to regain lost territory while the North and South fought one another, the war contributed to a growing abolitionist movement in Spain which served to undermine the authority of the Spanish crown in both Iberia and Cuba.

The final five essays focus on Latin America during the 1860s. Whereas the first six essays use the American Civil War as an organizational device, the essays on Latin America tend to focus more on specifically Latin American histories. Consequently, the US conflict plays a far more peripheral role than in the first six chapters. The authors of these essays importantly demonstrate that the US Civil War occurred during a contentious period within the entire Western Hemisphere, during which North American concerns, while important, were far from central.

In the first Latin American essay, Anne Eller explores how the beginning of the Civil War allowed Spain to recolonize the Dominican Republic, seemingly in opposition to contemporaries’ perceptions of the forward march of civilization.[3] Spanish re-annexation failed, but destabilized the Dominican Republic, leading to later annexation proposals involving the United States. Most im-

portantly, though, according to Eller, Puerto Rican and Cuban rebels drew inspiration from Dominican resistance to Spain, which led directly to independence movements on those islands. Erika Pani then explores the French intervention in Mexico, made possible by the US Civil War. Whereas Sainlaude looks at French motivations for intervention, Pani places French intervention in the context of the decades-long struggle between Mexican Conservatives and Liberals. Conservatives supported Maximilian, made emperor of Mexico by Napoleon III, because they had long been fighting for a centralized Mexican monarchy. Interestingly, Pani shows how liberal many of Maximilian’s policies were, including reformist economic and religious principles, and how, in the wake of the republican victory, “an ideology of combat became one of Mexico’s most enduring unifying political myths” (p. 181). Hilda Sabato describes the American Civil War as another example of the conflicts pitting central and local authorities against one another throughout the Western Hemisphere, especially in South America. Sabato argues that conflicts such as the American Civil War and the War of the Triple Alliance, during which Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay joined forces against Paraguay, helped consolidate the power of nation-states by producing well-armed and trained professional armies in places that had traditionally relied on militias and national guards. Despite mythologies surrounding citizen soldiers, the professional armies of the 1860s did much to consolidate a “strong national state that would monopolize the use of force, discipline the elites, and reshape the citizenry” (p. 198).

The last two essays of the book look more closely at Latin America’s two largest slave societies—Cuba and Brazil. Matt Childs argues that, although slavery survived the 1860s in Cuba, it was thrown into crisis by the US Civil War. The war brought about the Lyons-Seward Treaty of 1862, in which British and US forces joined together to put an end to American participation in the Cuban slave trade. In 1865, drawing inspiration from US

abolitionists, the Spanish Abolitionist Society formed and worked to abolish the transatlantic slave trade. These circumstances contributed to the start of the Ten Years' War in 1868, during which thousands of Cuban slaves took up arms for reasons of emancipation. "When the final abolition of Cuban slavery arrived in 1886," writes Childs, "the crisis of the 1860s born out of the U.S. Civil War most certainly began the process that resulted in the destruction of Cuban slavery" (p. 218). In the book's last essay, Rafael Marquese argues that prior to 1861, slavery in the US South protected slavery in Brazil. Although the full abolition of slavery in Brazil was not achieved until 1888, the end of slavery in the United States led directly to the passage of a free-womb law in Brazil in 1871. Also, claims Marquese, the world economy experienced significant reorganization after the American Civil War and significantly redefined the range of actions available to Brazilian elites. While abolition in Brazil was a Brazilian decision, Marquese concludes that without the US Civil War "it seems likely that the institution would have continued into the twentieth century—and perhaps beyond" (p. 240).

Readers looking for a book that places the US Civil War at the center of the international story of the 1860s will find themselves disappointed by *American Civil Wars*. This is not a critique, however. The book seeks to redefine the 1860s as a global revolutionary period; the Civil War was only one manifestation of what Don Doyle calls a "transnational complex of upheavals that included multiple civil wars, European invasions, separatist rebellions, independence and unification struggles, slave uprisings, and slave emancipations" (p. 1). If the impulse behind this project is correct, the 1860s might be better understood as one of the most revolutionary decades in history and should be included with discussions of similar periods, such as 1848. While a collection of essays such as this one cannot hope to make this point with a single forceful argument, the sheer number of examples does lend weight to the argument and

demands that scholars take up the work proposed by the volume.

Notes

[1]. Most recently, Gregory Downs provided an interpretation of the Civil War as a Second American Revolution rather than the culmination of the American Revolution, with significant Cuban ties in *The Second American Revolution: The Civil War-Era Struggle over Cuba and the Rebirth of the American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

[2]. Sainlaude delves much deeper into this topic in his recently translated book, *France and the American Civil War*, trans. Jessica Edwards (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

[3]. Andrew J. Torget sheds light on a similar phenomenon in Texas prior to US annexation in *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

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Citation: Michael A. Hill. Review of Doyle, Don H. *American Civil Wars: The United States, Latin America, Europe and the Crisis of the 1860s*. H-Nationalism, H-Net Reviews. November, 2020.

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