

THE ANTI-AMERICAN TRADITION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Brendon O'Connor
Associate Professor
b.oconnor@usyd.edu.au

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Brendon O'Connor, Associate Professor, US Studies Centre, University of Sydney.
b.oconnor@usy.edu.au

It is tempting to declare the term anti-Americanism, like the term un-American, a piece of pure political contrivance that defies any logical definition. After all, can anyone really be against a whole country? The fact of the matter, however, is that political language is not always rooted in logic, and the term has entered into widespread use not only in the media, but also within the academy. Given these facts, I would argue for a refining of the term, at least how it is used in academic debates. In general, anti-Americanism is best understood as a prejudice with a long history that has built on itself to create what I have called an “anti-American tradition” (O'Connor 2007 and 2006). The key period in the creation of this tradition was around the 1830s and 1840s, when a set of negative stereotypes and tropes were developed about Americans and America that have been recycled ever since. These stereotypes, outlined in the writings of European travellers like Frances Trollope, Charles Dickens and even de Tocqueville, mixed praise with harsh putdowns of American life, and were important because of their wide readership at a time when Europeans were developing strong and more lasting views about the New World.

As I have stated, not all of this commentary was anti-American. However, this raises the crucial question: how do you determine what merits the term “anti-Americanism” and what does not? To call all negative commentary about the US anti-Americanism is obviously an exaggeration. Often the term is merely used as a political tactic to besmirch one's opponents. This is not always that successful, as there are frequently counterclaims of Americanophilia. While it is widely agreed that the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center were unambiguous instances of violent anti-Americanism, whether much of the broader antipathy toward America is fairly labelled anti-Americanism is frequently contested, not least because what one person will call anti-Americanism will be defended by another as reasonable criticism. In fact, it is a rare person who openly acknowledges their anti-Americanism, and like most political debates, the tendency to caricature one's opponents is commonplace.

One side of this debate about anti-Americanism overuses and abuses the term as a blanket term to describe any criticism of the US.¹ Conversely those on the other side of the fence deny that their opinions are anti-American at all, despite the fact that similar comments made about almost any other people or nation would be quickly called racism or prejudice. This polarized debate, although disappointing, is not particularly surprising; however, what is curious is that scholars have done little to help clarify and elevate discussions on anti-Americanism – they should be playing an important role in negotiating a way through such politicized discourses.

It is difficult to determine whether the great rise in negative sentiment toward America during the Bush administration denotes true anti-Americanism; perhaps this is because rather blunt instruments are being used to measure it.

The Pew Global Attitudes Project survey is the most influential ongoing survey in the world concerning attitudes toward America, with the analysis of the Pew Center having a profound impact on anti-Americanism commentary. In the survey, respondents are asked their attitude toward America by choosing options from the following statement: "Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of the United States". Respondents are asked to judge an entire nation in the same manner they would an individual political leader or party, with the assumption being that the US is a monolithic entity. However, while this survey certainly provides solid evidence of America's unpopularity in nearly all the countries where it is conducted, to be truly useful to the ongoing study of anti-Americanism, such surveys need to be prefaced by a more precise definition of the term; at present the poll data is too often presumed to explain what is clearly a more complicated question.

To establish what should be fairly called anti-Americanism requires us to craft a definition that can be defended. Let us begin with the conjoined words themselves: to establish an opinion as "anti" – against – is relatively straightforward, although the extent of opposition required is much debated. What is connoted by being opposed to America is even more problematic. One can ask: Why the "ism" at the end? Can anti-Americanism really be seen as an ideology, or is the "ism" suggestive of a prejudiced view against a grouping of people, similar to racism or sexism? Given these dilemmas, the most challenging of which is summarising how people feel about the vast and varied nature of American activities and influences, one response has been to suggest that anti-Americanism is not so much a reaction to what America "does", but more a reaction to what America apparently "is" or what it symbolises (Markovits 2007; Ceaser 2004). While this approach has a certain neatness to it, and while it captures a particular anti-American mindset, it too readily overlooks the undeniable reality that antipathy towards America has grown sharply in recent years in response to the Bush administration's policies, and some of this antipathy is sensibly called anti-Americanism. Given the lack of uniformity of anti-American opinion and the multiple sources of dislike of America, some scholars prefer instead to talk in the plural of "anti-Americanisms" (Katzenstein and Keohane 2007; Singh, 2006). Then there are those who are willing to acknowledge that anti-Americanism does indeed exist, but feel unable to offer a clear definition, resorting instead to the line uttered by Justice Potter Stewart in his struggle to precisely define pornography: "I know it when I see it" (Markovits, 2007; Singh, 2006; Hitchens 2002).² Neither response, however, is satisfactory: the blatant subjectivity of the Potter Stewart position makes it open to abuse, while to talk of anti-Americanisms in the plural often casts the net too wide, and therefore fails to establish a difference between anti-Americanism and what would better be called criticism. Like Katzenstein and Keohane, I see anti-Americanism as more than just criticism of particular US government policies, and would agree with them that "bias is the most fundamental form of anti-Americanism, which can be seen as a form of prejudice" (Katzenstein and Keohane 2007, 12, 274). Without a clear definition, finger pointing and rhetoric will continue to dominate debates about anti-Americanism.

I have attempted to address this issue by crafting a more precise definition. From the broad and varied commentary on the topic, I have extracted five understandings of how the term is used. Simply stated, these competing conceptions can be characterized as anti-Americanism firstly as one side of a dichotomy, secondly as a tendency, thirdly as a pathology, fourthly as a prejudice and fifthly as an ideology. If in offering these definitions I can successfully convince readers that there are sensible ways in which anti-Americanism can be differentiated from criticism, I feel that I will have made an important advance in the rather circular debates on what constitutes anti-Americanism.

1. *Anti-Americanism as one half of a dichotomy*

As one half of a dichotomy, anti-Americanism is understood in a binary or oppositional fashion, where people, groups or nations are seen simply as either pro- or anti-American. Thus, anti-Americanism is defined simply as the views and actions of those deemed not to be pro-American. At its worst this is the “for us or against us” view of the Bush administration, and the “which side are you on?” demand of tribal politics. It also represents the worldview of tabloid journalism, where, for the sake of speed and simplicity, politics is constantly polarized. This approach overstates the degree of anti-Americanism, and simplistically labels any critic of America an anti-American, enabling an instrumental use of the term to discipline dissent.

2. *Anti-Americanism as a tendency*

A little less crude, but still straightforward, this term sees anti-Americanism as a tendency that slides across a pro- and anti-American scale depending on the issue, the time or the place. Opinion pollsters generally adopt this understanding with their questionnaires that aim to measure negative and positive perceptions of America. Seeing anti-Americanism as a tendency is often very imprecise. Nonetheless, because of the allure of polling data, this understanding is likely to be the predominant way of viewing anti-Americanism into the foreseeable future.

3. *Anti-Americanism as a pathology*

This understanding sees anti-Americanism as akin to an allergic reaction to all things American (Toinet 1990; Zeldin 1990). It is probably the most precise and literal way of defining anti-Americanism, but if adopted, the outcome would be such a limited application of the term that almost no one’s actions or thoughts (apart from bin Laden’s and other extremists) could correctly be labelled anti-Americanism. This definition thus takes the term too far from its common usage, and has limited utility.

4. *Anti-Americanism as a prejudice*

The fourth conception of anti-Americanism is as a prejudice. This understanding of anti-Americanism is underutilized because of a prevailing orthodoxy that sees prejudice as only associated with historically dispossessed or disadvantaged peoples. However, I believe that anti-Americanism is most usefully understood as a prejudice. Under this definition, anti-American opinion or action would have to prejudice, be clearly one-sided or biased, or be based on an undifferentiated view of America and Americans. Where this anti-Americanism goes beyond what

some have called mere prejudice, and is better described as ideological, is interesting, albeit extremely complicated to consider.

5 *Anti-Americanism as an ideology*

A fifth conception of anti-Americanism is as an ideology.³ This is a far more complex and speculative way of defining anti-Americanism, complicated not least by the contested and untidy nature of the term “ideology” itself. Freedman contends that to qualify as an ideology, a belief system needs to have discernable views on important political questions and concepts such as freedom, democracy and equality. Anti-Americanism would seem to generally fall short of this standard (Freedman 1996, 2003a, 2003b). Anti-Americanism does provide a public policy position, but it is a rather limited argument against what is seen to represent American culture, ideas and policies. Where anti-Americanism can be seen clearly as an ideology is in the hands of ideologues such as Fidel Castro, with a number of authors remarking that anti-Americanism has overtaken communism as Castro’s dominant guiding ideology (Falcoff 2004, 197). Anti-Americanism in Europe or Australia is far less coherent, and as a result far less ideological in character. Those who see America as symbolizing hyper-capitalism have criticisms that are ideological in nature, but these critiques are often more Marxist or anti-imperialist than anti-American. Much more research is required before we can reach a sound understanding of the ideological nature of anti-Americanism.

From these definitions, I have arrived at the conclusion that anti-Americanism is best understood as a prejudice. This prejudice is most instructively understood by seeing anti-Americanism as a tradition that began to take shape in the early nineteenth century when a set of stereotypes emerged that have been recycled and developed upon ever since. These negative opinions were principally focused on the alleged backwardness and dullness of both America’s culture and its people. In the early 1830s in Europe, a common view developed that America was, to use the phrase so well employed by Andrei Markovits in his book, an “uncouth nation” (Markovits 2007). This anti-American tradition has ebbed and flowed in its usage and prominence ever since, being more obvious and visible in some periods than in others. Like the foreign policy traditions, this tradition jostles with others (such as American exceptionalism) for public attention. Certainly presidents animate the anti-American tradition in a unique way: note the remarkable difference between how George W. Bush and Barack Obama are viewed by the European populaces. The American president is seen as symbolising his nation in a way equalled by few leaders in modern democracies. It is fascinating how so many peoples around the world are happy to dismiss their own politicians as unrepresentative chameleons, while insisting that the American president is truly representative of America and Americans. This view reflects the heavy emphasis on personal biography in American politics and the tendency of presidential candidates to link their personal narrative with national mythology. It also reflects the appeal of stereotypes when making sense of any country or group.

America has always been a source of significant European fantasy and projection. It has been claimed that Europeans did not discover America, rather that they

invented it. It is hard to deny that mythology has played an especially important role in American society and politics. The European myths regarding the first explorers and pilgrims were largely positive, with America portrayed as the Golden Land, the chosen land and even the New Jerusalem (Bradbury 1995). However, anti-American attitudes can be found in commentary on the early American colonies. In its earliest forms, the belittling of America (the continent as much as the British American colonies) often focused on the so-called degenerate New World environment and its supposedly inferior animals. The humid New World climate was often commented on as making people incapable of serious thought or human achievement. This ecological scaremongering about the US as a barren and deformed environment has been explored by Andrei Markovits (2007), Philippe Roger (2005), James Ceaser (1997), and most comprehensively Antonello Gerbi (1973). Ceaser's work highlights the prevalence of the degeneracy theory in Europe and how seriously Jefferson and other Americans attempted to rebuff it.

Once these early environmental dismissals of America waned, the United States of America was principally critiqued as a cultural wasteland (i.e. as Europe's cultural inferior). This denunciation has been the most central and lasting strand of the anti-American tradition, and has been illustrated by the most common responses to George W. Bush around the world. There is usually an underlying cultural element to negative responses to Bush, with a large percentage of the world's population seeing him as uncultured, uncouth and stupid; such mockery draws on this long anti-American tradition and its firm cultural foundations. This subject has been best explored in detail by Markovits who focuses on reactions to what America supposedly *is* as opposed to reactions to what America *does*. His research points to a common want or need to see America as inferior within Europe. For example he suggests that the American movie *Bowling for Columbine*, released in 2002, was enormously popular in Europe not because of any particular interest Europeans had in joining American gun control campaigns, but because the movie allowed them to look down their noses at Americans. Markovits substantiates his views with his survey of 1,500 articles selected from a range of European newspapers, covering the decade between 1992 and 2002. Deliberately avoiding the political pages, he analyzes largely cultural issues to expose the underbelly of anti-Americanism. What he finds are regularly gratuitous and snide remarks about America and Americans in articles that range from the world of accounting through to sports. Markovits shows the historical continuity of these anti-American tropes, drawing particularly on examples from German history to rightly conclude that "the themes and structures of anti-Americanism are anything but new" (Markovits 2007: 38).

Scholars such as David Kennedy (2007), Tony Judt (1992) and Henry Pelling (1957) all add a complexity to our understanding of the anti-American tradition. Pelling is particularly good at highlighting how the US swings from being seen as a progressive vision of the future to being seen as a malevolent force depending on the time and place visited, or the politics of the commentator. Apposite in this regard is Pelling's summary of Samuel Gompers' visit to Europe: "Hope and disillusion will long continue to colour the European view of America, as they did when Gompers crossed the Atlantic in 1909 to discover that people in Western

Europe looked at his country as if in one of two distorting mirrors, either convex or concave” (Pelling 1957: 161). Disappointment and even disillusionment with America has long been the flip side of high hopes and possibly unrealistic expectations about America. Tony Judt, with his characteristic skill and insight, takes us into the world of French anti-American attitudes in the 1920s and 1930s. He argues that, like earlier nineteenth-century criticism, anti-Americanism in the 1930s was largely conservative in its origins, with strong romantic overtones. American society was criticised for becoming something akin to Chaplin’s *Modern Times* writ large, with its materialism and industrialism seen as a real threat to the beauty and variety of Western culture (Judt 1992: 190-1). Furthermore, for most of these detractors, Europe was and always would be the soul of Western civilization; however, for some anti-Americans, the Orient was romanticised as the antidote to the American way. Important criticisms of American materialism, corporatization, and conformity that emerged in this period were pushed to the sidelines after 1945 with the discrediting of the European right and the rise of the communist threat. Furthermore, in the 1930s a particular strand of anti-Americanism had become an extension of anti-Semitism. In the minds of certain critics, Jews were associated with rootless modernity and capitalism, with the worst outcome of these forces being America. Summing up this tendency, Judt translates French right-wing columnist Robert Brasillach’s answer to the question of what separated France from America. “The answer is threefold: its hypocrisy (a frequent charge), its dollars, and international Jewry.” Judt goes on to note that “[a]s the last bastion of Jewish power in the world, the United States was the enemy of revolutionaries and reactionaries, anti-modernists and socialists alike” (Judt 1992: 194). This list of enemies points to the plasticity of America as a target for criticism, blame and grievance.

The explicit study of Cold War anti-Americanism is strangely underdone. It could be argued that the Cold War ushered in ideological anti-Americanism as the main variant of the tradition, underpinned by socialist and communist rhetoric about America as a ruthless, imperial nation. Whether this commentary is best thought of as anti-American or as criticism has never been explored in a scholarly manner. The most significant author who has given attention to writing on anti-Americanism during the Cold War period is Paul Hollander, whose book *Anti-Americanism* (1992/1995) is the most notable work on the subject. Hollander is a staunch anti-communist, who escaped from his native Hungary in 1956. However, he has surprisingly little to say about Soviet anti-American rhetoric – perhaps the antipathy between the nations was seen as so obvious that he did not regard it as necessary to study in the context of anti-Americanism. Instead, most of his writing deals with American anti-Americanism and the condemnation of the US by Third World and European intellectuals. Hollander (1995) combines these themes in his work that looked at Americans (and some Europeans) who travelled to Nicaragua during the 1980s to condemn US government policies. In this work it, Hollander deals with a group of “political pilgrims” who were possibly unfairly dubbed by Jean Kirkpatrick the “blame America first” crowd. Meanwhile, Richard Kuisel looks at the issue by analysing a leader’s point of view, examining whether de Gaulle is rightly seen as anti-American. In a thoughtful and revealing manner, Kuisel argues that de Gaulle did

not have a “visceral dislike” of Americans or their institutions; rather, his main gripe was with American hegemony and mass Americanization. De Gaulle seemed to share with many of his countrymen a stereotypical view that the United States was “soulless, materialist and ahistorical” (Kuisel 1992: 31), and his response to the American challenge was to strengthen French independence and self-reliance. It has been argued that the lesson France took from the 1956 Suez Crisis was never again to be dependent on the Americans, whereas the lesson that Britain took was never to be on the opposite side from the US in an international conflict. Given these attitudes, it is interesting that Kuisel concludes that “de Gaulle’s affirmation of nation pride served in the long run to dampen French combativeness towards the United States and subdue the country’s assertiveness in world affairs.” Further, this re-building of French pride and de Gaulle’s promotion of economic growth and technological advancement increased “domestic Americanisation” in France (as evidence by the rise in “American-style consumption” and the “proliferation” of American products) (Kuisel 1992: 31). Henry Fairlie suggests that: “It is the impact of Americanization that is at the core of anti-Americanism” (Fairlie 1975: 39). I would agree that this concern remains constant and ongoing, while concerns about American foreign policy actions rise and fall depending on the circumstances or the president of the day. Further, a fear of Americanization creates an underlying nervous anxiety that explains some of the emotionality, and at times highly personalised ridicule, in non-American responses to US politicians like George W. Bush or Ronald Reagan. Often underlying both the response to Bush and America is a particular dismay that success has been achieved by such a seemingly inferior nation, allegedly populated by an unsophisticated people.

This brings us back to Walter Russell Mead’s aim in *Special Providence*: to explain the “paradox that the foreign policy traditions, practices, and institutions of the world’s most successful country encounter a near-universal yet strangely incoherent contempt” (Mead 2002: 34). The success of this underrated “Mr Magoo” of a nation has long been the source of considerable displeasure and bemusement. The success of the “ugly American” is the theme of a novel better known for its title than the hero of the story. *The Ugly American*, co-authored by William Lederer and Eugene Burdick, ends with an interesting “factual epilogue”. Written at the end of the 1950s, it highlights the lack of foreign language proficiency in the American Foreign Service. They argue:

It would seem a simple fact of life that ambassadors to at least the major nations should speak those languages. Yet in France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, and Turkey, our ambassadors cannot speak the native tongue ... In the whole of the Arabic world – nine nations – only two ambassadors have language qualifications. In Japan, Korea, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and elsewhere, our ambassadors must speak and be spoken to through interpreters. In the entire Communist world, only our ambassadors to Moscow can speak the native language (Lederer and Burdick 1959: 274-275).⁴

As for the regular staff:

“fifty percent of the entire Foreign Service officer corps do not have a speaking knowledge of any foreign language. Seventy percent of the new men coming in the Foreign Service are in the same state” (Quoting Reston in Lederer and Burdick 1959: 275).

They go on to argue that political and financial connections are used too often in deciding ambassadorial posts, that the State Department is lamentably inept at attracting the best and the brightest, and that regular Foreign Service employees as well as ambassadors seriously lack foreign language skills. Many of these claims may sound familiar – in more recent times they have been made about the Foreign Service under the presidency of George W. Bush. Over 30 percent of Bush’s ambassadorial appointments were political appointees – a record in the modern diplomatic era. The knowledge of Arabic in the key government departments was woefully inadequate as books like the *Imperial life in the Emerald City* (2007) and *The New Rome* (2008) starkly point out. Cullen Murphy in *The New Rome* writes: “Three years before 9/11 a former CIA officer with extensive experience in the Middle East recalled that not one of the Iran desk chiefs who served during his eight years of working on Iran could speak or read Persian. Not one of the Near East division chiefs could read or speak Arabic, Persian, or Turkish” (Murphy 2008: 143). Possibly more worrying is the number of senior foreign policy decision-makers who do not understand the differences between the Sunni and Shia – a fact that was embarrassingly reported by the *New York Times* in 2006 (Stein 2006). John McCain, a self-proclaimed expert on foreign affairs, confused the distinction between the Shia and Sunni on a number of occasions during the 2008 presidential campaign (Thomas 2008).

This apparent ignorance is the source of considerable disdain towards the United States; it feeds into anti-American prejudices about the US as an arrogant and self-absorbed society. Further, America’s supposed ignorance is one of a number of concerns about the US that help to explain why the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 were not greeted with the universal condemnation that one might have expected if a similar event took place in another Western country. The response to 9/11 and the difference between how Americans see themselves and how the world views them is thoughtfully explored by Richard Crockatt in *America Embattled* where he explores the causes and consequences of anti-Americanism. Starting with the British response to 9/11, he writes: “Once the initial shock of the September 11 attacks had passed, wrote Mary Beard, a ‘more hard-headed reaction set in,’ which included the feeling that ‘however tactfully you dress it up, the United States had it coming’” (Crockatt 2003: 39). Not surprisingly, Beard’s words sparked considerable controversy and many angry letters to the *London Review of Books*, the original publisher of Beard’s remarks. Much debated was the link between a dislike of American foreign policies and

blaming the American people. Osama bin Laden has taken this to extremes by stating that American civilians are a legitimate target because they vote for their leaders, and because their taxes fund American forces (and help fund Israel's military forces, which are used to "massacre Palestinians") (Rubin and Rubin 2002: 261).⁵ It is fascinating how America's supposedly more democratic foreign policy can be seen as making Americans more responsible for the actions of their government than citizens in most other countries. Cordell Hull's observation that: "The Government of the United States is never far ahead of the American public; nor is it very far behind" is taken rather seriously by many foreigners. After 9/11, Salman Rushdie noted:

Muslim countries don't like America's power, its 'arrogance,' its success; but in the non-American West, the main objection seems to be to the American people. Night after night, I have found myself listening to Londoners' diatribes against the sheer weirdness of the American citizenry. The attacks on America are routinely discounted. ('Americans only care about their own dead.') American patriotism, obesity, emotionality, self-centeredness: these are the crucial issues (Rushdie 2002).

Given Crockatt's adroitness, it is not surprising that he also highlights a countertendency in discussions about anti-Americanism – the tendency to use the term itself to attempt to silence dissent or criticism (Crockatt 2003: 46; O'Connor and Delaney 2009).

Why is it America that attracts such heated responses? Josef Joffe (2006) bluntly attributes this phenomenon to America's power, but surely it is more than this. The word "influence" conjures up America's impact on the global imagination both today and well before it became a great power. Crockatt brings us back to the fear of Americanization expressed apocalyptically by Baudelaire's vision, where he "associated Americanization with the end of civilization. 'Mechanization' he wrote, will 'Americanize' us; progress will 'atrophy the spiritual side of our natures'" (Crockatt 2003: 55). Put in more familiar terms by a Venezuelan journalist in the 1970s:

Americans have a mania for uniformity ... Everywhere are the same gas stations, the same supermarkets, the same food, the same churches, the same press, the same people ... Little by little all the nations of the world ... are becoming more like one another in their Americanization (Quoted in Crockatt 2003: 56).

As Crockatt rightly contends, the general critique is that Americanization will threaten "to destroy the individuality of the world's many cultures and to impose a homogenized and spiritually vacuous Americanism over them all" (Crockatt 2003: 56). America becomes the whipping boy for the world's many anxieties about modernization, standardization and materialism, and through its pervasive movies and advertising, it shows most graphically the face of modernity. However, although America "embodies modernity most completely" (Crockatt 2003: 57), many other societies are not far behind, and in certain areas other nations are far more modern.

When examining the causes of anti-Americanism, Robert Singh argues persuasively that there are “anti-Americanisms”, rather than one coherent anti-American ideology. Singh distils these anti-Americanisms down to three principal strands: the first is Leftist critiques of America’s unjust and self-centred use of its wealth and power; the second is rival nationalisms and the universal pretensions of American nationalism; and the third encompasses cultural concerns about the Americanization of cultural products, norms, and public policies. It is Singh’s highlighting of the importance of nationalism in provoking anti-Americanism that makes his contribution particularly thought-provoking (Singh 2006). Josef Joffe takes a similar line to Singh. He argues that anti-Americanism “is not criticism of American policies, not even dislike of particular American leaders or features of American life, such as gas-guzzling SUVs or five hundred TV channels. It is the obsessive stereotypization, denigration, and demonization of the country and culture. The most vicious, sustained, and direct expressions of this state of mind are found in the Arab and Islamic world” (Joffe 2006: 77). To justify these assertions, Joffe turns to the world of newspaper cartoons, arguing that “because they trade in images and not words” they are “one of the best conduits into the unconscious” (Joffe 2006: 78). Along with noting that the most favoured image of America in the Arab and Islamic world is the bloodthirsty cannibal, Joffe also comments on the racist overtones of cartoons caricaturing Condoleezza Rice (Joffe 2006: 77-79). The excesses of these cartoons is a good example of how opportunistic anti-American prejudice can undermine important arguments, in this case about America’s role in the Middle East. The opportunistic (and at times contradictory) nature of anti-Americanism is a topic of focus for French academic Jean-Francois Revel (2003). For example, in some parts of the world America is condemned for being too sacrilegious (with its commercial culture and open displays of sexuality on MTV and the like), whereas in other parts of the world it is condemned for being too religious.

Meanwhile Nicol Rae and Jason Berggren’s (2007) piece in this anthology examine what one prominent book on America – *The Right Nation* (2004) – suggests is the most crucial cultural divide between America and Europe: contrasting levels of religiosity. In their comprehensive work on religion and anti-Americanism, Rae and Berggren document the regional nature of American religious exceptionalism. Certain regions of America, particularly the South, do have patterns of religious adherence and a style of religiosity that is quite different from most of Europe; but religiosity in Northeastern America is not that different to Europe as a whole. One of the most fascinating questions asked by the 2005 Pew Global Attitudes survey was whether people thought that America was “too religious or not religious enough”. Sizeable majorities in France and the Netherlands thought that America was too religious, whereas slim majorities in Canada, Spain and Russia thought that America was not religious enough. Moreover, sizeable majorities in Poland, Indonesia, Jordan and Pakistan thought that America was not religious enough (Pew 2005).

Some of what is called anti-Americanism in these studies of antipathy towards America in various regions and nations, is what I might call criticism, resistance

or dissent. However, the variety of ways the term anti-Americanism is used is suggestive of both how problematic this term is, and suggestive of how familiar it became during the George W. Bush era when most of these pieces were commissioned and written. If the nineteenth century story of the anti-American tradition is mainly a narrative constructed and most readily developed in Europe, the development of this tradition in the twentieth century has very significantly developed in Latin America. This is not surprising given the reach of the US (both real and imagined in the twentieth century) into Latin American politics, economics and society. The Latin American experience richly complicates any history of anti-Americanism, because the issues of injustice and abuse of power are often close at hand when debating the activities of the United States in Latin America. Alan McPherson (2007), who has established himself as the leading scholar (and the most prolific) on Latin American and Caribbean anti-Americanism, offers an excellent historical overview of the area. McPherson deals with the dilemma of whether certain actions against the US are best described as resistance rather than prejudice. Concluding that these actions are often both, he writes: "To be sure, in Latin America as elsewhere, anti-Americanism is a negative simplification of US realities. But that simplification must be understood with an eye to the historical sedimentation of frustrations and injustices." (McPherson 2007: 77). Cuba provides evidence for the claim that I have made elsewhere (O'Connor 2007: 17): that anti-Americanism is seldom coherent enough to be an ideology, but it gets closest to being so in Castro's Cuba. Lastly, in Latin America we are reminded that anti-Americanism is not just the prerogative of the left-wing, with Peron and the Peronists in general being some of the most willing and effective users of anti-Americanism (Dorn 2006). Interestingly, both Argentina and Greece, largely run by conservative governments in the twentieth century, are two of the most consistently anti-Americanism countries as measured by public opinion surveys and anti-Americanism can be instrumentally employed by populist politicians like Chávez, Castro or Peron.

Moving on to Canada, Kim Richard Nossal (2007) argues that, for most of Canada's history, economic anti-Americanism has been the dominant form of opposition to the US. However, this tradition lost its hold on mainstream Canadian politics with the signing of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement in 1988 and NAFTA in 1993. Nossal argues, however, that anti-Americanism has not disappeared, but has simply become more contingent on particular events, such as the US decision to go to war against Iraq in 2003. The European story is principally one of the continuity of certain themes; nonetheless, the rise of America as a great power complicates the narrative considerably. Significant political events play a much more obvious role in shaping perceptions in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The Cold War generally, and the Vietnam War and US meddling in Latin America specifically, have had a significant impact on European opinion and the intensity of antipathy towards the US. The story of anti-Americanism in the communist world – particularly in the USSR and China – has not been specifically studied to the degree one might have imagined, given the volume of anti-American activities and rhetoric that has emerged from these nations. There is a need for more scholarship on this topic, just as there is on the relationship between the Vietnam War and the rise of global anti-Americanism.

Scholars looking at anti-Americanism in Asia have looked at the impact of American military intervention, and also the impact that America's longstanding military presence in Japan and South Korea has had on attitudes (Johnson 2002; Bong 2004).

Turning to the Middle East and Iran in particular, "legacy anti-Americanism" – as coined by Peter Katzenstein and Robert Keohane (2007) – is a significant stream looked at in detail by Wilfried Buchta (2006). America's support and funding of the overthrow of the Mossadegh government in 1953, which led to the reign of the Shah, has long blighted America's (and Britain's) reputation in the Middle East (Louis 2006). This event and the decades of support for the Shah government have been significant sources of considerable antipathy towards the US and at times anti-Americanism (Kinzer 2003 and 2006). The other crucial source is America's support of Israel at the expense of the rest of the Middle East (and particularly at the expense of the Palestinian people and their claims for nationhood). In contrast to the views of Bernard Lewis and Barry and Judith Colp Rubin, who tend to portray anti-Americanism as a legitimating ideology of autocratic leaders in the Middle East, John Chiddick (2006) argues that shifts in anti-American sentiment in the Middle East closely correlate to perceptions of American support for Israel at the expense of the Palestinians.

These studies of regional and national anti-Americanism undoubtedly complicate the notion of an anti-American tradition. This is in part because reactions to American power become a more central theme in the story of anti-Americanism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Nonetheless, much of this antipathy is better understood as resistance and criticism, not as anti-Americanism, which takes aim at America more generally. Anti-Americanism is often set off by what America is perceived to have done, but the ensuing verbal attacks often take aim not just at policy, but at what America supposedly is. The responses to the 2003 Iraq War are good examples of the slipperiness of the term. Much of the anti-war criticism was not anti-American; however, certain commentary not only disparaged the policies of the US, but saw these policies as the product of a mentally deficient president and people. It was when exaggeration and caricature raised its head in the commentary that we moved from criticism to prejudice. The prejudicial tropes and stereotypes used to condemn America in 2003 were not that different from those used in the 1830s. These condemnations have differed in intensity in different parts of the world, often depending on the president of the day or current US policies. Nonetheless, despite its cyclical nature and the complexities brought on by various national responses to the US, an anti-Americanism tradition is discernable from the early nineteenth century through to today. It is a tradition that sees America as an unsophisticated, uncultured and uncouth nation.

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¹ For examples of the misuse of the term anti-Americanism in Australian politics see: Steve Lewis (2004), Michelle Grattan (2004), Greg Sheridan (2004), AAP (2004), and Janet Albrechtsen (2004).

² Potter Stewart was struggling to precisely define pornography (See: Justice Potter Stewart, concurring in *Jacobellis v. Ohio* (378 US 134, 1964)).

³ According to Tony Judt (1992), the emergence of resentment toward America being seen as an “ism” dates to 1920s France at the beginning of the so-called “Age of Ideologies”.

⁴ In contrast, Lederer and Burdick (1959: 276) claim that “an estimated nine out of ten Russians speak, read, and write the language before they arrive on station.” This claim was most probably Soviet propaganda, and if so it is an interesting case of the self-flagellation that American liberals seem all too willing to engage in (the belief that it must be done better outside of the US).

⁵ On other occasions, bin Laden claims that the American government lacks independence and is “controlled by Israel.” Osama bin Laden “Declaration of war,” (August 1996), (Quoted in Rubin and Rubin 2002: 140).

United States Studies Centre

John Woolley Building (A20)

The University of Sydney NSW 2006

T: +61 2 9351 7249 | F: +61 2 9351 6877 | E: info@ussc.usyd.edu.au

www.ussc.edu.au