

might be directed. But something important is surely lost in so exacting a definition of anti-Westernism, and it is surely a limitation of Aydin's particular brand of global intellectual history – populated by academics, politicians, bureaucrats, and poets, and with its leaning towards idealism and elitism – that it can make little room for such alternative antipathies, extemporized and acted out at a local level in relation not only to cultural and political ideals but also to the brute forces of global capitalist expansion.

Such points do not in the least detract from the fact that, taken on its own terms, this is an impressive work. Aydin can count himself one of a fairly select circle in his ability confidently to navigate the histories of his two chosen transnational political imaginaries with thoroughgoing reference to secondary and primary materials in Turkish and Japanese, and other languages besides. The comparative perspective that this affords him is quite unique, and important. Furthermore, neat chapter summaries and the author's lucid style help to ensure that a text that covers a great deal of ground remains digestible and easy to navigate.

### Die Souveränität der Schwachen: Lateinamerika und der Völkerbund, 1920–1936

By Thomas Fischer. *Beiträge zur Europäischen Überseegeschichte* 98. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012. Pp 459. 39 b/w illustrations, 2 tables. Paperback €68.00, ISBN 978-3-515-10077-9.

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Thomas Fischer's *Die Souveränität der Schwachen* is a long, well-researched book of international history that traces Latin America's role in the League of Nations from its foundation at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 to its dissolution during the Second World War. Fischer offers a new look at the arena of global politics of the interwar years, in which Latin America initially constituted one-third of the membership of the League, but had limited power in the European-dominated organization. He convincingly uses Latin America's intertwined history with the United States to illustrate why their membership in the League of Nations – whose proclaimed goal was to protect the sovereignty and independence of its members, and to solve future conflicts through

peaceful resolution – was so important. Within the context of the organization, some of the stronger Latin American nations, such as Argentina and later Brazil and Mexico, used their limited power to provoke the European-dominated League to adhere to its own ideals, while the weaker Latin American nations, such as Cuba and Nicaragua, used the forum to demand protection from continual direct threats from the United States. As the United States policy toward Latin America changed with the proclamation of the Good Neighbor Policy by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1933, many Latin American nations felt that their membership in the League of Nations had become obsolete.

While the book title seems to suggest a homogenous Latin America, Fischer never presents the region as a monolithic bloc. Instead, he carefully evaluates attitudes and reactions individually, based on evidence from primary sources from archives in Latin America, Europe, and the United States, and evaluates a broad range of secondary sources to present a more complex picture. He makes clear that Latin America was divided by distinct socioeconomic needs, cultural compositions, and political developments and characterized by conflicts, competition, and diversity in perceptions and attitudes. This heterogeneity impeded regional unity within the League of Nations and thus decreased Latin America's political leverage. Although many attempts were made to create a more unified regional perspective in Geneva and to strengthen the continent's position vis-à-vis the United States (for example, by invoking nineteenth-century ideals such as *bolivarianismo* and *hispanidad*), unification efforts only had limited success. The incapability of Latin American delegates to collaborate on overarching regional goals, paired with their lack of diplomatic experience, led to the result that many Latin American nations that had placed high hopes on the League stopped believing in its effectiveness and eventually left it or retreated from it. However, as Fischer points out, participation in the organization taught Latin American delegates many lessons that helped them to present themselves better in global fora thereafter and taught them effective techniques such as strategic voting to reach their political goals.

Fischer examines the development of the League of Nations and the relationship between delegates from the Old and New Worlds by including global politics as well as country-specific political, socio-economic and cultural factors into his analysis. Fischer mainly looks at official interactions of the delegates during meetings, but he also allows a glance

behind the scenes and investigates the delegates' private meetings during their stay in Geneva. In doing so, he draws attention to the main dichotomy that Latin American delegates faced within the organization: on the one hand, the strong European nations required the backing of the 'smaller' or 'weaker' nations as active participants to underline the organization's credibility; on the other hand, the same powerful European representatives possessed a colonial mindset that rendered them unable to accept the Latin American delegates as equals and perceive their needs as equivalent to those of more powerful nations. This meant that Latin American delegates kept encountering discrimination based on racial and national criteria from within the organization. As Fischer points out, nationality and race, rather than skills and knowledge, served as key factors for hiring individuals at the office in Geneva, which led to Latin America being significantly under-represented among the staff of the permanent administration.

As Fischer points out in detail, for the Latin American nations Article 21 of the Charter of the League of Nations was highly controversial. In it, the organization stated clearly that it would not interfere in regional understandings such as the Monroe Doctrine. While most Latin American delegates tried to change this article in some way, Europeans respected the hemispheric hegemony of the United States in the New World and were more focused on stabilizing politics within Europe than willing to support Latin American delegates in their request for help against the United States. While the League played an active role in solving two territorial conflicts in Latin America – the Leticia Dispute (1932) between Colombia and Peru (where the first peacekeeping soldiers were employed) and the Chaco War (1932–35) between Paraguay and Bolivia – its main concern lay in the creation of a stable and secure Europe, so that affairs on the periphery only played a secondary role.

While this book should be evaluated as a contribution to the fields of Latin American history, US–Latin American relations, and global political systems in the interwar years, it remains unclear why Fischer, who is fluent in several languages, chose to limit the book's exposure to those capable of reading German. A much broader audience would have been reached had the author published in English or Spanish. One can only hope that the scholarship that Fischer presents here will be disseminated more broadly soon, and that a translation into English or Spanish is envisioned that will ensure that his argument can be part of the broader discussions in the field.

## Central Asia in world history

By Peter B. Golden. *The New Oxford World History Series*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. x+178. 25 b/w illustrations. Hardback £45.00, ISBN 978-0-19-515-947-9; paperback £12.99, ISBN 978-0-19-533-819-5.

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This concise but comprehensive textbook outlines the transformation of Central Asia from prehistory to the collapse of the USSR, covering issues ranging from economic transformation, urbanization, and the formation of territorial units, to linguistic developments, the role of religions (such as Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, and Buddhism), and the movement of peoples. The scope is ambitious and, although this undoubtedly entails omissions, the book is chronologically, spatially, and thematically wide-ranging without sacrificing the level of detail in the narrative. It is published at a time of brimming public and scholarly interest in Central Asia, and the two main strengths of this book will ensure that it appeals to both of these audiences: the lucidity of its exposition and the range of recent scholarship that has been incorporated in its writing.

*Central Asia in world history* will help globally minded historians to continue to push back and complicate the rigorous study of globalization, because it foregrounds the importance of earlier and less-recognized civilizations to the creation of long-distance interactions. The Kushans (discussed in Chapter 2) are one such example: descendants of the Yuezhi (who moved out of western China into Central Asia and formed an empire encompassing much of southern Central Asia and northern India), they facilitated land- and sea-based Silk Road trade, extended agriculture through irrigation projects, and also had an artistic heritage passed down from earlier Graeco-Roman colonists. The Central Asian role in historical globalization has, however, largely been studied in conjunction with empire (and usually those of the Mongols and Timurids (discussed, respectively, in Chapters 6 and 7) rather than the Kushans) and only to a lesser extent in relation to technology or diasporas (for example), something that this book can also help to augment. Golden brilliantly demonstrates (throughout Chapters 1–4) that the ancient Sogdians had trading colonies and exerted much political