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Edward Shawcross, *France, Mexico and Informal Empire in Latin America, 1820-1867: Equilibrium in the New World*. Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series. Cham, Switz.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. x + 294 pp. Bibliography, and index. $109.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-3-319-70463-0; $84.99 U.S. (eb). ISBN 978-3-319-70464-7.

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In this well-researched and ambitious book, which builds on a recently completed Ph.D. at University College London, Edward Shawcross sets out to "imperialise" and "Mexicanise" the French intervention in Mexico (1862-67), that is, to place the intervention and the regime that resulted from it in the broader and longer-term contexts of French imperialism and Mexican history from 1820 onwards. The author's overriding purpose is to show that the intervention was not a singular and deluded "adventure", concocted with little regard to reality in Mexico, as the literature sometimes portrays it, but a viable project that spoke to long-standing interests in both countries. The author oversimplifies the scholarship--much of it explores long-term contexts and transatlantic connections that help make sense of the intervention--and overstates the case for the project's feasibility.[1] However, by attending closely to both the Mexican and French sides, as well as to their connections, Shawcross offers a compelling and original framework for understanding the intervention and its origins. The book blends international, political, and intellectual history, and draws extensively and effectively from diplomatic archives in Paris, Mexico City, London and Austin, and Mexican and French newspapers and periodicals, among other sources.

Shawcross is not the first historian to draw connections between the intervention in Mexico and other French conquests of the era, including Algeria. But he is the first to make a sustained argument that the Mexican expedition was "imperialism" in a literal sense, while also being careful to point out that France never aspired to rule over Mexico, but only to "establish a state closely tied to French interests" (p. 2). (The pretext for the intervention, which was initially undertaken with Britain and Spain, was Mexico's suspension of payments on its foreign debt.) To "imperialise" the intervention, Shawcross follows the lead of David Todd who rightly encourages historians of French empire to look beyond territorial annexations to informal empire, or efforts to expand power and influence that relied on commerce, culture, local collaborators, and gunboats rather than outright conquest and dominion. Such indirect modes of expansion, which were presumably more humane than the old colonial empire and less costly than territorial rule, held much appeal in France after 1815; the conquest of Algeria was the costly exception to be avoided.[2]

Shawcross explains that Latin America[3] was a particularly promising area of the world in which to exercise informal empire because of France's long-standing interest in trade with the region, its purported wealth and semi-civilized status (it needed a tutor), and the presence of local elites willing to work with France. He aptly distinguishes an aggressive French informal empire in Latin America from a more restrained British one. Cognizant of Britain's commercial lead in the region, French officials turned to whatever cultural advantages they might have in their bid to gain influence. They also contemplated and engaged in strategies involving naval bombardment, collaboration with local allies,

and regime change. The pattern reached a climax in the 1860s with what the author points out was "the greatest challenge to the Monroe Doctrine until the Cuban Missile Crisis" (p. 12). In fact, Shawcross's working definition of informal empire seems to be limited to patently obvious incursions into another country's sovereignty. This is an interesting and sensible strategy--no one will disagree that armed intervention rises to the level of imperialism. However we are left to wonder to what extent the substantial flows of French goods, people, capital and ideas to the region by themselves constituted informal empire. It also leads the author to the conclusion that "French imperialism in Mexico and Latin America was ultimately unsuccessful" (p. 19).[4]

To "Mexicanise" the intervention, the author builds on the pioneering work (and terminology) of Erika Pani, whose 2001 book argues that Maximilian's empire was not simply a foreign imposition but a Mexican regime responding to Mexican problems, and that the political elite who rallied to the regime were above all desperate to find solutions to Mexico's endemic instability.[5] Like Pani and others, Shawcross is interested in revising older and inadequate scholarship by placing Mexican thinkers in the mainstream of nineteenth-century European constitutional thought. More moderate than reactionary, many Mexican conservatives looked to the July Monarchy and the Second Empire as models. Fluent in the robust literature on Mexican conservatism, Shawcross adds to it by highlighting its international context, especially its connections with French thought and French actors.

Chapter one serves as the introduction; the discussion of the historiography is useful when it comes to Mexican conservatism, French imperialism, informal empire, and pan-Latinism, but misleading with regard to the intervention of the 1860s.

In chapter two, "French Policy towards Latin America, 1820-60," Shawcross explores "the readiness of French regimes... to intervene militarily in Latin America" (p. 37). After discussing new ideas of empire that were prompted by the Latin American insurgencies and British commercial strength, he revisits Chateaubriand's 1823 proposal to Spain (then under French occupation) whereby Ferdinand would grant the colonies independence, but with Spanish princes at the helm and French loans and military forces in support. Shawcross argues that this plan to secure a measure of French (and Spanish) hegemony was "an early model of informal empire" and that "all French regimes from the July Monarchy to the Second Empire would employ variations of this policy in Latin America" (p. 47). The July Monarchy, frustrated over ongoing disputes with the republics over trade and the claims of its foreign nationals, embarked on a number of armed interventions. Shawcross focuses on the naval blockades of Mexico and Argentina that began in 1838. Officials justified these interventions using "a discourse of civilisation" (p. 53) that portrayed the Latin American states as chronically unstable and irresponsible. The French strategy also relied on local collaborators who believed in European "progress", at least in the case of Argentina. While Britain warned France not to intervene in the 1820s, it approved of these interventions, as well as (unofficially) the 1862 enterprise. The 1838 actions failed to accomplish their goals; critics like Thiers and Louis-Napoleon argued that the government had not committed enough resources to them. Unfortunately, the author overlooks the very comparable work of Iwan Morgan and Christian Hermann.[6]

In chapter three ("Monarchy and the Search for Order in Mexico") Shawcross examines the limited but persistent support for monarchy among Mexico's elite. Although monarchy was widely discredited after the fall of Emperor Iturbide in 1823, some intellectuals like Lucas Alamán would continue to view it as the best solution to the republic's chronic instability. These conservatives also grew suspicious of the United States because it promoted a model (federal republicanism) that they thought was inappropriate for Mexico. While conservatives were able to pass the Seven Laws in 1836, which established a more centralized republic, instability continued to prevail. When José María Gutiérrez de Estrada published his pro-monarchy pamphlet in 1840 (taking the July Monarchy as his model), the reaction was so hostile that he was forced to flee Mexico. French observers, on the other hand, routinely believed that Mexico needed a monarch. I thought that Shawcross could have done more to distinguish Chateaubriand's ideologically-inspired monarchism from the more pragmatic views of the 1830s onwards. For the latter,

the author shows that Paris officials listened closely to Alamán and Gutiérrez, while French diplomats in Mexico spent most of their time among conservatives. At the same time, the enduring presence of pro-monarchy opinion in Europe "ensured that in Mexico monarchy remained a viable alternative to republicanism" (p. 102). In this way, Shawcross shows that "monarchism in Mexico had evolved as a shared and mutually constituted transnational discourse...." (p. 83). However, I wished that he had commented more on the fact that monarchy played no role in France's 1838 interventions.

It is well known that Napoleon III, and his advisor Michel Chevalier, justified the intervention of 1862 partly on the need to defend "Latin" civilization from further incursions by the "Anglo-Saxon" United States, and that the era's pan-Latin discourse gave rise to the invention of "Latin America" as a label for the region. In chapter four ("Towards Pan-Latinism"), Shawcross shows that elements of this discourse were operative since the 1820s. He gives a wealth of archival and printed evidence showing that French officials in the 1820s and 1830s believed that France had an edge over its rivals when it came to cultivating ties with Latin America because of purported similarities in culture and language. He also shows that French officials often viewed the revolt in Texas in the 1830s as a racial conflict. The *Journal des débats*, to which Chevalier frequently contributed, wrote that the Texas revolt "compromises the equilibrium of the world because it assures the Anglo-American domination of the entire new hemisphere" (p. 127). In 1845-46, Guizot tried to prevent the United States from annexing Texas in the belief that its independence might "prevent… a conflict of two races, Spanish and Anglo-American, and the absorption of one by the other" (p. 128). Shawcross concludes: "Guizot, then, as much as Louis-Napoléon or Chevalier, argued for an equilibrium in the New World" (p. 128). He goes on to review conservative Mexican responses to the threat of U.S. expansion (which incidentally appear to be less racialized than the French views). After the U.S. war with Mexico (1846-48), conservative Mexicans increasingly turned to France in their bid for European protection. Meanwhile, pan-Latin ideas appeared more widely in the conservative Mexican press.[7] Although "pan-Latinism" itself could have received greater definition and nuance from Shawcross, this chapter brings to light interesting new material.

In chapter five, Shawcross shows that Mexican conservatives in the 1850s closely emulated their counterparts in Europe. When Alamán founded the Conservative Party in 1849, he and his colleagues saw themselves as participating in a successful "international reaction" (p. 158) against the revolutions of 1848. Following Louis-Napoleon's election, Alamán embraced "direct, popular elections" for the first time (p. 160); following the coups d'état in 1851 and 1852, conservatives backed the return of Santa Anna, now seen as "a saviour" (p. 166) and given dictatorial powers. As Alamán said to the French minister in Mexico, "It is upon your country, it is upon your sovereign, that we base all our hopes for the future, we want to model our political institutions on those of France" (p. 166).[8] More generally, they were intent on reforming Mexico's institutions and forging "a conservative path to modernity" (p. 159). Mexican conservatives now looked in earnest to France for protection against further U.S. expansion. They made sure to appeal to the long-standing French desire for equilibrium in and access to the New World, and likened their predicament to that of the Ottoman Empire (hence this chapter's title, "The Western Question"). Conservative appeals for European assistance multiplied after anti-clerical Liberals came to power in 1856 and the country descended into civil war two years later. French diplomats in Mexico made similar appeals to their government for intervention throughout the 1850s. In 1860, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded that the United States, by supporting Juárez in the civil war, intended to exercise hegemony over Mexico to the exclusion of European interests, a view with which the British government agreed. The U.S. Civil War then provided Napoleon III with an opportunity to realize France's "long-term objective of checking US power in the Americas while developing French influence in the region...." (p. 185).

In chapter six, "The Limits of Informal Empire," Shawcross examines conservative support for the intervention during the Regency (1863) and the first year of the Empire (1864). For these conservatives, as well as the moderates who rallied to the Empire, "a strong government aided by European expertise would be able to fulfil the long-held desire for economic and administrative reform, a conservative path

to modernity" (p. 203). However, a much different story unfolded for more traditional conservatives. When the French army (and then Maximilian) recognized the forced sale of Church property that had taken place under the Liberal Reform starting in 1856, clerically-minded conservatives felt betrayed. Shawcross explains that in order to win over moderates, Napoleon III directed his generals and Maximilian to establish a liberal regime that adhered to the principles of 1789, including freedom of religion. (Shawcross's explanation of Napoleon III's liberal turn in Mexico is adequate; it comes partly here and partly in the conclusion. But to me the emperor's apparent pivot goes somewhat underaccounted for, given the messages about monarchy delivered in chapter three.) The author goes on to discuss the disillusion that set in between the French and Mexicans more generally; but he suggests that such political problems by themselves were not fatal to the regime. Rather, this experiment in empire came to an end because of Napoleon's refusal "to take on the costs of direct rule" (p. 222). Napoleon III informed Maximilian in January 1866 that he was withdrawing French troops because of Mexico's failure to meet the terms of the Treaty of Miramar, which obligated it to pay for the cost of the intervention. Not surprisingly, Maximilian was in no position to be able to meet those obligations and also run a nation. Shawcross acknowledges that the United States, whose hands were no longer tied by civil war, "forced the pace of the withdrawal" (p. 223). However, he argues that the decision to withdraw (and hence the intervention's "failure") was determined by "the model of imperialism France adopted" (p. 220).

This book would have benefited from a more serious engagement with the substantial literature on the intervention. Surely there is something to be said for the approaches taken by Lecaillon and Dugast who liken French thinking on Mexico to myth and obsession.[9] There are a few errors. In chapter two, Shawcross misconstrues Jennifer Pitts as claiming that French liberals expressed "a hostility towards empire, or at least a lack of interest in it, until the development of pro-colonial arguments which gained prominence under the Third Republic" (p. 39), and that Condorcet opposed empire in all of its forms (p. 40).[10] There are a few inconsistencies in fact (Abbé de Pradt is a liberal in chapter two, and a royalist in chapter three) and some inconsistencies in argumentation. A few points receive no explanation (why did Iturbide fall from power?). At times the writing lacks nuance or precision, and the conclusion feels repetitive rather than clarifying. Finally, the surprisingly large number of typographical and grammatical errors are distracting and disconcerting.

Despite its uneven execution, a not entirely convincing premise, and the somewhat deterministic reading of the intervention's ending, this is a well-conceived book, full of rich detail, insightful analysis, and good narrative. It brings to light more fully than previous works the discourse of racial and cultural confraternity (pan-Latinism) that so often accompanied French ambitions in Latin America. It shows that the intervention responded to long-standing desires: power and influence for France, in a region it claimed as part of its natural domain; stable and effective government for Mexico, which faced aggressive U.S. expansionism. And it shows that these converging interests developed to some extent out of a transnational dialogue. Shawcross's book is a significant addition to the scholarship on the French intervention in Mexico, French relations with Latin America, and nineteenth-century Mexico.

NOTES

[1] Two works in particular that Shawcross takes to task, but which in fact are deeply concerned with long-term explanations are Nancy Nichols Barker, *The French Experience in Mexico, 1821-1861: A History of Constant Misunderstanding* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), and Guy-Alain Dugast, *La tentation mexicaine en France au XIXe siècle. L'image du Mexique et l'Intervention française (1821-1862)* 2 vols. (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008).

[2] David Todd, "Transnational Projects of Empire in France, c. 1815-c. 1870," *Modern Intellectual History* 12, no. 2 (2015): 265-293.

[3] I consider use of the term "Latin America" without quotation marks to be problematic in the present study, given the fact that it was first used in the 1850s; but to avoid confusion I will follow conventional usage and Shawcross's terminology in this review.

[4] To some extent both Shawcross and Todd, like Robinson and Gallagher, understand the informal/formal framework in a unidirectional fashion. The assumption is that the failure of informal empire by 1870 was logically followed by formal empire. But the nations of Latin America were never good candidates for formal empire once they gained their independence. See John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review*, n.s. 6, 1 (1953): 1-15.

[5] Erika Pani, *Para mexicanizar el Segundo Imperio: el imaginario político de los imperialistas* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2001).

[6] Iwan Morgan, "French Policy in Spanish America: 1830-48," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 10, 2 (1978): 309-328; Iwan Morgan, "French Ideas of a Civilizing Mission in South America, 1830-1848," *Canadian Journal of History* 16, 3 (1981): 379-403; Christian Hermann, *La politique de la France en Amérique latine 1826-1850: une rencontre manquée* (Bordeaux: Maison des Pays Ibériques, 1996).

[7] As Shawcross points out, his findings challenge Michel Gobat's recent claim that the first wave of Americans to use the discourse of "Latin America" were anti-conservative liberals. Michel Gobat, "The Invention of Latin America: A Transnational History of Anti-Imperialism, Democracy, and Race," *American Historical Review* 118, no. 5 (Dec. 2013): 1345-1375.

[8] Shawcross overlooks Lilia Díaz, "Los embajadores de Francia en el periodo de la Intervención," *Historia Mexicana* 38, 1 (1988): 5-42, which also discusses some of this material.

[9] Dugast, *La tentation mexicaine en France au XIXe siècle*; Jean-François Lecaillon, "Mythes et phantasmes au coeur de l'intervention française au Mexique (1862-1867)," *Cahiers des Amériques latines* 9 (1990): 69-79. While less egregious, the book also fails to engage much with the scholarship on French imperialism outside of Latin America during the period under study.

[10] Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

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