

What They Think of US: International Perceptions of the United States since 9/11

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When a great country makes a mistake, it has great consequences. A great country, however, also has the capacity to remedy its mistake.

—Nguyen Ba Chung

Do I contradict myself?

Very well then I contradict myself,

(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

—Walt Whitman *Leaves of Grass*, 1855

Given the current reputation of the United States in much of the world, I find it impossible to resist beginning my discussion with a paraphrase of the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning: “How do I hate thee, let me count the ways.” Of course, given the events of the last six years anti-Americanism is no laughing matter. From the perspective of a contemporary American, anti-Americanism appears to be practically a global lingua franca. Anecdotally, cosmopolitan Americans traveling abroad, while usually making clear that they were, personally, treated fine, report to one another that the reputation of the United States is in tatters or worse. Global surveys done by credible organizations such as the Pew Foundation give statistical certainty to those perceptions. While surveys show that the United States does still have some strong national constituencies—Nigeria, Japan, India, and Poland (now there’s an unexpected foursome) vie for the title of nation with the most favorable rating of the United States—these surveys overwhelmingly demonstrate a strong international antipathy for America.

Such glum reports are not completely new—anti-Americanism has a long and distinguished history. But since the 9/11 attacks, President Bush’s launch of a “War on Terror,” and the seemingly endless and horrifically bloody American intervention in Iraq, such reports of growing anti-Americanism have gained a greater sense of urgency—at least among many American intellectuals, a faction of American politicians, and a fraction of the American people. In addition, prominent experts argue that anti-Americanism has taken on a saliency and weight in many parts of the world that is unprecedented; e.g., Andrew Kohut, well-respected director of the Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project, writes that “Anti-Americanism runs deeper and is qualitatively different than in the past.”¹⁾

¹⁾ From the introduction to Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes, *America Against the World: How We Are Different and Why We Are Disliked* (New York: Holt, 2006).

<http://www.holtzbrinckpublishers.com/henryholt/Search/SearchBookDisplayExerpt.asp?BookKey=1864984>.

Within the United States, explaining this epidemic of anti-Americanism is a politically charged enterprise. Generally, conservative pundits and politicians assert that the anti-Americanists hate us for *who we are*—a freedom loving, democratic people. Liberals and leftists tend to assert that anti-Americanists hate us for *what we do*—most generally, act unilaterally on major global issues and, most specifically, mistreat the world’s Islamic people and favor Israel over Palestine. While both groups contain individuals who actually know something about actual anti-Americanists in actual places around the world, many of these commentators tend to gain rhetorical strength and certainty from their general lack of knowledge of the people and places in question.

I fear that I, too, can fall into this trap of easy and ill-informed punditry in which glib opinion replaces careful analysis. To do my best to avoid that trap, I shall rely a good deal on borrowed wisdom, much of it gained from the international colleagues with whom I worked over a period of several years on the aforementioned scholarly book project, *What They Think of US*, recently published by Princeton University Press.²⁾ One of the most important (and I would think most obvious, despite how commonly it is ignored) points my international colleagues made is that anti-Americanism is almost never caused by just one thing or just one problem or even just one set of concerns. Antipathy towards the United States is, instead, much more often specifically formulated and contested within a specific social or national or cultural setting.

To get back to poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning—to understand anti-Americanism around the world one must count the many different ways different theys hate or disrespect or are simply made uncomfortable by the United States. As a result, for those of us who see anti-Americanism as a problem to be solved, multiple answers or policies, directed at different actors must be ascertained and weighed and, hopefully, implemented. Along similar analytic lines, anti-anti Americanists must also be careful to weigh the saliency and temporality of the anti-Americanism embraced by specific societies or individuals. Some anti-Americanists, after all, may simply argue that, for example, America’s fast food habit is unhealthy and should not spread to their nation. It’s a difficult point to refute, and certainly, in the scheme of things, a relatively benign claim. Other anti-Americanists, however, may strap bombs around their chests to kill my nation’s often overweight fast food customers. Anti-Americanism, thus, is sometimes too abstract a word for the issue we are trying to examine. To be blunt: while few Americans are pleased by any form of anti-American sentiment, at this particular moment in history Americans are most worried about the hostility of the world’s Islamic population.

So, to proceed, I will begin to “count the ways” in which the United States is unloved, focusing largely on a select group of nations with large Islamic populations and on places where anti-Americanism is manifested in less well-discussed ways (thus, I will

²⁾ David Farber, ed., *What They Think of US* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

talk little about anti-Americanism in Europe, for example). And as I attempt to specify how anti-Americanism is, in fact, manifested around the world, I will analyze how those modes of anti-Americanism are understood and discussed within America's political culture.

I will begin by elaborating on the most general and overarching indictment of America, the one which is most often characterized by American conservatives (including President George Bush) as the major force of global anti-Americanism: the United States is hated for who we are. In November 2002, the American émigré intellectual Paul Hollander published, in the culturally conservative journal *New Criterion*, a typically erudite if empirically impoverished essay titled "Politics of Envy." In dispassionate tones, Hollander argued: "From the sociological and historical points of view, anti-Americanism may best be understood as a diffuse, ongoing protest against modernity—its major components and unintended consequences. These include secularization, industrialization, urbanization, bureaucratization, mobility (both social and spatial), and the decline of community and social-cultural cohesion." Hollander insists that his analysis is applicable all over the world but emphasizes that "the most obvious and clear link between anti-Americanism and modernization is encountered in Islamic countries and other traditional societies where modernization clashes head on with entrenched traditional beliefs, institutions, and patterns of behavior, and where it challenges the very meaning of life, social relations and religious verities."³⁾

In the difficult days shortly after the 9/11 attacks, President George Bush powerfully articulated a similar but more pointed indictment against the terrorists. In his televised address to a joint session of congress and the American people, President Bush described the attack as an unforeseeable unleashing of pure hatred by evildoers: "All of this was brought upon us," he explained, "in a single day—and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack." In what was probably the most effective speech of his presidency, he continued: "Americans are asking, why do they hate us? They hate what we see right here in this chamber—a democratically elected government . . . They hate our freedoms—our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other."⁴⁾ They hate us, in other words, not for our failures or our misdeeds but for that which Americans count as our greatest achievement: the enshrinement of the linked principles of freedom and democracy. They hate us for who we are.

As a general explanation of anti-Americanism (which is not the same as making a specific argument about the rabid anti-Americanism of bin Laden and his supporters) those who claim that "they" hate us for who we are—a freedom loving democratic

³⁾ Paul Hollander, "Politics of Envy," *New Criterion* (November 2002): 15-18.

⁴⁾ President George W. "Bush, Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People," September 20, 2001, The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

people—have a difficult argument to make. Surveys, at least, of various nations in which negative sentiments against the United States run high almost never indicate that the people of those nations hate the United States for its cherished values of democracy and freedom. Paul Hollander and other intellectuals, however, are making a quite different argument than President Bush did in his emotional speech. They argue that people around the world are anti-American because they dislike the kind of fiercely competitive and individualistic capitalist society the United States both is and represents. So we have two different, only partially overlapping arguments about “Them” hating “Us” because of what the United States is rather than what it does. Proponents of either version of this argument share a vital subjective premise: anyone who hates the United States for what it is—whether that means freedom and democracy or capitalist modernity—is, in essence, on the wrong side of historical inevitability and thus a pathetic loser or much worse.

Before examining the applicability of these two different but related arguments let me offer a bare-bones version of the other American approach to anti-Americanism: “They” hate the United States for what it does. Noam Chomsky, the internationally recognized champion of American self-criticism (who was recently praised by Osama bin Laden!), provides a neat, if extreme encapsulation of this understanding from within the United States. While he is widely perceived as a radical political figure by most Americans who recognize his name, his arguments attract at least some respectful attention on university campuses and in left-wing circles. Never one to be polite, Chomsky argued just a few weeks after the 9/11 attacks that the United States, in essence, got what it deserved—or, put another way, the chickens had come home to roost.

In this statement, he begins by addressing the specific motives of the 9/11 hijackers. By its end, he suggests that the motives he ascribes to the attackers have support throughout the world. Chomsky states: “They are very angry at the United States because of its support of authoritarian and brutal regimes; its intervention to block any move towards democracy; its intervention to stop economic development; its policies of devastating the civilian societies of Iraq while strengthening Saddam Hussein.” The United States, he adds, is also under justified fire for its “support for the Israeli military occupation which is harsh and brutal . . . And they know that and they don’t like it. Especially when that is paired with US policy towards Iraq, towards the Iraqi civilian society which is getting destroyed.” He concludes: “And when bin Laden gives those reasons, people recognize it and support it.”⁵⁾ Chomsky, who is a strong advocate of this policy-driven anti-Americanism analysis, argues—for the most part—in

⁵⁾ Noam Chomsky, “The New War Against Terror,” October 18, 2001, Z Net, <http://www.zmag.org/GlobalWatch/chomskymit.htm>. Transcribed from audio recorded at The Technology & Culture Forum at MIT.

diametric opposition to President Bush. The president, remember, claimed that the terrorists attacked the United States because they hate freedom and democracy. Chomsky argues that the terrorists and their supporters are actually attacking the United States because the United States, in its policies, supports authoritarian regimes, thus blocking democracy, and because it uses its military might to destroy civilian society in Iraq while giving military aid and political support to Israel, thus crushing freedom in Palestine. America is, in the eyes of Chomsky and his supporters, if not the Great Satan, then the Great Hypocrite.

Democratic Party presidential nominee aspirant Senator Barack Obama gave a much more subtle and nuanced version of this position—anti-Americanism is caused not by who we are but by what we do—in an April 2007 speech to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Obama stated the problem broadly and simply: “We all know that these are not the best of times for America’s reputation in the world. We know what the war in Iraq has cost us in lives and treasure, in influence and respect. We have seen the consequences of a foreign policy based on a flawed ideology, and a belief that tough talk can replace real strength and vision. Many around the world are disappointed with our actions . . . There is no doubt that the mistakes of the past six years have made our current task more difficult. World opinion has turned against us.”⁶⁾ In this speech and in his campaign appearances in general, Obama focuses narrowly on the damage the war in Iraq has inflicted on America’s global reputation and, specifically, on the United States’ ability to defeat the threat of anti-American terrorism. Otherwise, he tends only to talk in general, if inspirational, terms about the problem of global anti-Americanism and the need to find solutions to it. Other than the war in Iraq, Senator Obama is quite vague as to what Islamic people, in particular, hold against the United States. The question we face now is: how well do these kinds of concerns about America’s actions in the world, either the fiery charges of the radical if marginalized Chomsky or the much more careful descriptions of the far more influential Obama, describe actual anti-Americanism, especially, in the Islamic world?

What better place to start than Iraq? And as I stressed earlier, in discussing such a complicated place I rely not on my own inexpert analysis but on that of two colleagues, Ibrahim Al-Marashi, an Iraqi-American scholar of Iraqi politics who is currently a professor in Turkey and Abdul Hadi al-Khalili, an Iraqi neurosurgeon who is currently the cultural attaché at the Iraqi embassy in Washington, D.C.⁷⁾ First of all, as with any country but perhaps in Iraq more than any other, no singular form of anti-Americanism exists. Hardly surprising but worth underlining: many people in Iraq have many

⁶⁾ “Remarks of Senator Barack Obama to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs,” April 23, 2007, <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/strengtheningamerica/>.

⁷⁾ I am drawing on: Ibrahim Al-Marashi and Abdul Hadi al-Khalili, “Iraqis’ Bleak View of the United States,” in Farber, *What They Think of US*, 1–26.

reasons for not liking the United States. I don't think it is necessary or possible here to explore the entire calculus of anti-Americanism in Iraq. Borrowing from my colleagues' work I just want to make a couple of simple but relevant points often missed in the American public discourse about Iraq.

Bluntly stated: many Arab Iraqis see the United States as imperialist occupier and not selfless liberator. Iraqis are conditioned by the historical legacy of British imperialism to see any Western intervention in their land as a crude power play. Iraq's educational system and political culture hammered home this perspective. Saddam Hussein used all the tools available to him, during his many years in power but especially since the first Gulf War, to instruct the Iraqi people that the United States was the successor regime to the British. The privations the United States visited upon Iraq between 1991 and 2003 assured that many would see the United States as an imperialist bully. Ironically, perhaps, many elements in the newly free mass media of the post-Saddam era have continued describing the American presence in Iraq as that of an imperialist force.

Ayatollah al-Hakim, an anti-Saddam Shia leader from whom the United States might have expected welcoming words, stated bluntly—before he was assassinated by sectarian rivals August 29, 2003—that the Iraqi “people’s strong sense of nationalism” made it very unlikely that they would accept the presence of any occupying force in their country. He said it very clearly: “Iraqis perceive the United States as an occupying rather than a liberating force.”⁸⁾ American policymakers, seemingly misled by a faction of self-interested Iraqi émigrés and, at the least in the case of President Bush, their own faith in the transparent goodness of American motives in the world, appear not to have recognized the depth of this historically conditioned and continuously reinvigorated distrust of and anger with the United States among Arab Iraqis—both Sunni and Shia. In other words, “they” hate us not for who “we” believe we are but for who they think “we” are—not a freedom loving nation but an imperialist bully. Here, what the United States does and what it is are not easily disentangled. While we in the United States often assess who we are by considering our intentions and motive, the Iraqis (as well as others around the world) characterize who we are by looking at what we have done—launched a pre-emptive war that has resulted in catastrophic death and destruction.

Arab Iraqis build on this mistrust and anger over what they perceive as a bullying American imperialism by adding to it their fierce opposition to American policy in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Shia and Sunni are united in their revulsion toward what they perceive to be America's unalloyed support of Israel. Believing with reason that the United States acts in support of Israel in the Middle East, many argue that the American occupation of their nation is done in service to Israel's desires, not Iraq's

⁸⁾ Ibid., 12.

needs. Saddam had long used the relationship between the United States and Israel in his domestic propaganda campaigns. Thus, on September 12, 2001, Iraqi television championed the terror attacks: “The collapse of U.S. centers of power is a collapse of U.S. policy, which deviates from human values and stands by world Zionism at all international forums to continue the slaughter of the Palestinian Arab people.”⁹⁾ While Saddam is gone, anti-Israel sentiment is not. In Iraq and in most every Islamic community, the U.S.-Israel common front is cause for grave concern and deep suspicion about American actions in Iraq and, indeed, around the region.

For many Americans, at least during the first years of the Iraq war, Iraqis’ distrust of America’s motives for invading their country was hard to understand. Americans are conditioned to see their country as a force for good in the world. And while a sizeable fraction of the post-Vietnam American citizenry has learned to be skeptical and sometimes even cynical about the U.S. government’s international policies, such self-doubt—or even self-loathing—does run against the American grain. America’s 18th century Founding Generation, with reason, saw itself as offering the world a beacon of democratic hope. That notion still permeates American public oratory all along the mainstream political spectrum. American experiences in World War II and the Cold War proved to many Americans that military force was sometimes the only way to keep that beacon of democratic hope burning bright—both at home and in the world.

For a scholar like me, and for many others on the liberal side of the American political spectrum, such optimistic good cheer about America’s role in the world has to be tempered by experience. At the least, liberals would argue, old Cold War adventures that included CIA interventions in such countries as Guatemala and Iran demonstrate that the United States, like other powerful nations, sometimes acts narrowly in pursuit of self-interest. And, to say the obvious, sometimes the United States government—even with reasonable motives—can cause so much damage through its actions as to completely obliterate whatever good was ever intended by its policy—the Vietnam War could be so understood. With varying degrees of certainty, leading American liberal politicians cast the war in Iraq in this light—in this case, changing the passive voice construction (“mistakes were made”) to the direct accusation: President Bush and his administration deceived the American people and produced a wrongful and horrific war.

Such a position, however, is a polarizing one in the United States. To give a personal anecdote, I recently gave a talk at an Iraq war teach-in at a major state university in the United States. Many of the undergraduate students were shocked at my statement that the United States government, alas, sometimes acted in ways that sharply contrasted with our nation’s avowed principles and that sometimes even Americans’ good intentions in the world backfire and produce more evil than good—here I referenced the Vietnam War. Numerous students accused me of denying

⁹⁾ Al-Marashi and al-Khalili, 10.

America's noble intentions in Vietnam and not understanding that America would have won the war and saved the Vietnamese from communism if weak-willed and even cowardly elements within the United States had not forced the American military to cut and run. President Bush, has, of late, made just such an argument about Vietnam in his attempts to commit the United States to a continuous military presence in Iraq. Within the United States, in other words, many Americans—mostly those who self-identify as conservatives—hold fast to a faith in a transparent and timeless truth: America is a good nation and therefore its actions are essentially good, even when bad things happen to foreign people we are trying to help.

The website of every major candidate running for the Republican Party presidential nomination offers issue statements in tune with that claim—that American goodness is manifested in America's world leadership. American policy in Iraq, say the Republican contenders, exemplifies this goodness. Senator McCain, who may still yet surprise us all and win the nomination, exemplifies this position: "Iraq is truly the test of a generation, for America and for our role in the world. Faced with similar challenges, previous generations of Americans have passed such tests with honor. It is now our turn to demonstrate that our power, ennobled by our principles, is the greatest force for good on earth today. Iraq's transformation into a secure democracy and a force for freedom in the greater Middle East is the calling of our age."¹⁰ In such statements, Senator McCain and like-minded Americans are often talking past the Iraqi people, not so much disagreeing with them as not even sharing in the same conversation. Such miscommunication is unlikely to provide an antidote to the long-standing and vehement anti-Americanism of many Iraq citizens.

In Turkey and Indonesia, two other predominately Islamic nations—by which I mean their people are predominantly Islamic, not their form of government, which in each case is secular—anti-Americanism has generally increased since the war in Iraq began. Without question, American policy in the Israel-Palestine conflict fuels hostility toward the United States in both countries. But in each of these complex nations myriad other factors weigh in. The Indonesian Americanist, Melani Budianta, makes the simple but essential point that, in her diverse nation, people's attitudes toward the United States are conditioned not just by American policies but also by an internal political dynamic.¹¹ Most people in Indonesia, in other words, do not simply form opinions about the United States through a transparent process of assessing a wide range of readily available information but rather through various veils, if you will, manufactured by different Indonesian political actors.

Indonesia, obviously, has been going through a rapid series of political tests since

¹⁰ "Strategy for Victort in Iraq," John Mc Cais. com, <http://www.johnmccain.com/Informing/Issues/fdeb03a7-30b0-4ece-8e34-4c7ea83f11d8.htm> (accessed September 21, 2007).

¹¹ Melani Budianta, "Beyond the Stained Glass Window," in Farber, *What They Think of US*, 27-48.

the fall of the Soeharto dictatorship in 1998. The very form of the nation-state has been in play, contested by numerous factions. Among those factions are groups and influential individuals who want Indonesia to become more Islamic—some through cultural practice and some, as well, through theocratic mandate. In this struggle, such militant groups as the Forum for Defending Islam have used anti-Americanism as a symbolic rallying point for those seeking an Islamic state. Here the critique of anti-Americanism by Paul Hollander referenced earlier rings partially true. Hollander writes: “Wherever it appears, anti-Americanism is a response—however indirect—to the burdens and conflicts of choice and freedom and to living in a world that no longer provides the cushion of community and the web of taken-for-granted beliefs that protect against the specters of meaninglessness and spiritual void.”¹²⁾ While Hollander provides a particularly negative and mean-spirited spin on the anti-American views held by some Indonesian Islamic militants, his larger point is echoed, in more sympathetic tones, by Melani Budianta: “The fundamentalists offer Indonesians caught in the riptides of modernization and secularization a straightforward set of moral prescriptions and spiritual practices that a great many people, even young, well educated Indonesians, find life-saving.”¹³⁾ Budianta, while a firm and outspoken opponent of Islamic theocracy in Indonesia, warns the United States government that to the degree that it can be made to represent the enemy of Islam—even if only the enemy of “fundamentalist” Islam—militant, even violent Islamists in Indonesia are strengthened. Representations of America and practices of anti-Americanism, thus, are tools in Indonesians’ internal battles over their political future. Here, who America is and what it does are refracted through an Indonesian prism that often casts little light but much heat. All Budianta can offer concerned Americans is stark advice: the war in Iraq was a gift to Islamists in Indonesia and the sooner it ends the better. Even still, she warns, anti-Americanism is too useful a tool in internal Indonesian politics for it to be easily defeated.

Turkey, while a far different nation, shares something of Indonesia’s political predicament: how can it square its secular state with its predominately Islamic population, at least some of whom are drawn to Islamist theocratic ideals? Turkey, however, unlike Indonesia, has had a decades-long, strong—if occasionally and, most certainly, recently difficult—nation-to-nation alliance with the United States. That alliance is strongly felt and generally appreciated by Turkish elites. And secular popular culture, manifested in part by American movies and music, is widespread and, again, generally enjoyed throughout Turkey. In this generally benign context—arguably more akin to European-type concerns than those of Turkey’s Iraqi neighbor—a quite different form of anti-Americanism has arisen.

¹²⁾ Hollander, 18.

¹³⁾ Budianta, 33.

Turkish Americanist Nur Bilge Cris argues that many Turks, across class lines, increasingly doubt America's moral authority and thus its right to international leadership. Because of the war in Iraq, in general, and such well publicized incidents as the Abu Gharib scandal and the rendition and torture of suspected terrorists, in particular, a large percentage of Turks perceive the United States as an international bully that has attempted to force Turkey to act against its own interests in Iraq and that has increasingly lost its moral compass in its dealings with Islamic people and the world more generally. One highly visible result of this changing perception of the United States is the popularity in Turkish popular culture of images of brutal, duplicitous and immoral Americans. Turks lined up in 2006 to see a big budget movie, *The Valley of the Wolves—Iraq*, in which American soldiers are portrayed as monstrous traders in human organs who are heroically stopped by Turkish special forces troops. A 2004 best-selling novel titled *Metal Storm*—which drew the specific ire of at least one high-ranking U.S. Defense Department official—pictures an American military invasion of Turkey, aimed, rather bizarrely, at seizing Turkey's rich boracite mines; here Turkey is saved through an alliance with the EU and the Russian military. Such renderings of the United States are a far cry from Cold War era pop culture in Turkey. Then, Americans almost always were the good guys in white hats. This change in pop culture is mirrored in survey data which shows a precipitous drop in Turks' favorable ratings of the United States. Still, Professor Cris argues that Turks are not likely to fall prey to virulent anti-Americanism; Turkey's positive historical relationship with the United States and most Turks' commitment to a Western cultural and economic orientation strongly buffers anti-American sentiment in Turkey. However, she warns that Americans' "loss of moral authority" risks damaging Turkey's future relations with the United States.

A positive historical relationship can clearly help old friends through a difficult spell. The opposite also holds true; bad historical relationships can deepen frustrations between two nations. That is, in part, a contributing factor in the fierce anti-Americanism that a faction within Mexican society has expressed over the last few years. Mexican intellectuals, mass media pundits, and many leading politicians have been vituperative in their condemnation of recent American foreign policy. Fernando Escalante-Gonzalbo and Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, two leading Mexican scholars of the United States, argue that Mexican national opinion-makers begin their analysis of American policy and society from a deeply hostile position—so much so that most commentators right after the 9/11 attacks argued that "the United States had brought the terrorists attack upon itself." In Mexico, where a revolutionary heritage and an allegiance to a revolutionary spirit is de-rigueur among many in the political/intellectual class, distrust and disgust with the Colossus of the North is nearly automatic, say these scholars. It has developed, in part, because of centuries of American aggression against Mexico and, more specifically, because of the Mexican Left's decades-long antagonistic

encounters with the CIA. Mexican opinion-makers are also responding to a history of brutal and frequent American government interventions in Latin America. This sort of historically and ideologically conditioned anti-Americanism, it is important to note, is deeply tempered in Mexico by the direct economic relationship with the United States many Mexicans have through immigration or family remittances from *El Norte*. Family-scale free market economics and left-wing ideology make for a complicated political relationship, to say the least, between the United States and Mexico.

Escalante-Gonzalbo and Tenerio-Trillo, in their analysis of anti-Americanism in Mexico, add a significant point, particularly noteworthy given the occasion of our discussion today: in Mexico, opinion-makers and, more broadly, the educated class are remarkably ignorant about the United States. In Mexico, no research centers for the study of the United States exist nor do any university graduate or undergraduate programs. In Mexico, these two scholars argue, a curtain of ideological blinders and deep ignorance make it difficult to ascertain what the United States “really” is or what it “really” does. In this case, and perhaps in others, anti-Americanism is at least partially a prejudice that needs to be at least tested by understanding.

My overarching point has been that anti-Americanism is complex, multi-faceted, and specific. It is different in different places. Still, in concluding I cannot resist asking a simple question: what if it's all George Bush's fault? Will getting rid of Bush, at the least, deeply reduce anti-Americanism around the world? Let us just bracket the most extreme cases—Al Qaeda and the like-minded. Those groups are, I think, a different kind of trouble. But what about more moderate forms of anti-Americanism? And what about people in the Islamic world who are moving from modest anti-Americanism to more vehement anti-Americanism?

Well, it would seem that if Bush is replaced by another Republican, the policies he has crafted regarding the “war on terror, in general,” and the problem of anti-Americanism, in specific, are unlikely to change at all. As far as I can tell, not a single major candidate for the Republican nomination is even directly addressing the question of anti-Americanism. Current front-runner Rudy Giuliani mirrors the approach of President Bush, stating: “We're at war not because we want to be, but because the terrorists declared war on us—well before the attacks of September 11th . . . [F]reedom is going to win this war of ideas. America will win the war on terror.”¹⁴⁾ Governor Mitt Romney also never speaks directly to the issue of anti-Americanism. He, too, keeps the focus narrowly on the most extreme anti-Americanists and argues that the fight against terrorists and the war in Iraq are one and the same thing. In a speech earlier this year, he assured Americans that military solutions are the best answer to America's global problems: “Today, as we stare at the face of radical violent Jihad and at the prospect of

¹⁴⁾ This comment is from Giuliani's web page and is the only relevant remark I could find; Joinrudy 2008. com, <http://www.joinrudy2008.com/issues/>.

nuclear epidemic, our military might should not be subject to the whims of ever-changing political agendas. The best ally of peace is a strong America.”¹⁵⁾ Republican politicians, generally, believe that the issue of anti-Americanism is not a salient one for a majority of the American electorate. They choose to emphasize the need to make Americans safe by taking the battle to our enemies abroad.

All major Democratic Party politicians are gambling that the Republicans are wrong and that American voters understand that global anti-Americanism both endangers the United States and weakens Americans' ability to honor and deliver on our hopes for the world in which we all live. Senator Barack Obama has made this understanding a centerpiece in his campaign: “This election offers us the chance to turn the page and open a new chapter in American leadership. The disappointment that so many around the world feel toward America right now is only a testament to the high expectations they hold for us. We must meet those expectations again, not because being respected is an end in itself, but because the security of America and the wider world demands it.”¹⁶⁾ Senator Hilary Clinton, while more careful in her words—what a surprise—has also listed restoring America's reputation in the world as one of her top priorities: “The next president's most urgent task will be to restore America's standing in the world to promote our interests, ensure our security, and advance our values. America is stronger when we lead the world through alliances and build our foreign policy on a strong foundation of bipartisan consensus . . . America must remain a preeminent leader for peace and freedom, willing to work in concert with other nations and institutions to reach common goals.”¹⁷⁾ While no one knows if such campaign promises can be or will be transformed into concrete policies, the Democrats talk, at least, like they believe that anti-Americanism must be addressed and can be addressed through multilateralism, diplomatic initiatives, a fundamental change in Iraq policy, and numerous other initiatives. In 2008, Americans will be offered a clear choice and not an echo when they decide on their next president. The question of what, if anything, needs to be done to address anti-Americanism will be a central part of that monumental decision. The world, I am fairly certain, will be watching with grave interest.¹⁸⁾

¹⁵⁾ Governor Romney, “Remarks at Presidential Announcement,” Dearborn, MI, February 13, 2007, http://www.mittromney.com/News/Press-Releases/Presidential_Announcement_Remarks.

¹⁶⁾ Remarks of Senator Barack Obama.

¹⁷⁾ <http://www.hilaryclinton.com/feature/10reasons/?sc=8>.

¹⁸⁾ This article is based on a paper delivered at the September 2007 meeting of the research project on “Rethinking American Studies in Japan in a Global Age.” My special thanks to the project director Professor Jun Furuya.