

Editors Note

Welcome to a Special Edition of *49th Parallel* commemorating the ‘Engaging the “New” American Studies’ Conference held at the University of Birmingham in May 2006. The occasion brought together academics and leading postgraduates from Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Iran, Ireland, Japan, Lithuania, Romania, Spain, the UK and US, for a unique event rich in multi-disciplinary scholarship of the Americas.

This edition marks the foreign policy strand of the conference, under the probing title “US Hyper-Power?”, which conference co-organisers Scott Lucas and Richard Ellis explain further in their guest introduction, ‘Neither “with us or against us”’. Giles Scott-Smith discusses the vulnerabilities of US public diplomacy as brought on by the post-Cold War era and proposes the possibilities for ‘New’ American Studies as an independent movement separate from any public diplomacy agenda. With an eye on contemporary matters, Maria Ryan explores the dilemmas of strategy and ideology in the agenda of neoconservatives, while Adam Cooper and Lizzie Telfer discuss some of the misperceptions and impediments in the relationship between the US and Iran—a discussion that also draws from their own personal experiences during a period in Iran. Howard Fuller debates issues of ‘hyper-power’ and ‘hyper-freedom’ with particular focus on means and ends in US military policy and Ryan O’Kane discusses the role of Complexity Discourse in the ‘War on Terror’, suggesting that it may provide the missing strategic rationale behind the foreign policy agenda of the incumbent Bush Administration.

With a focus on Latin American matters, Christabelle Peters debates how the Cuban Missile Crisis was instrumental in the development of a Cuban international identity along self-consciously racial lines, despite it running counter to traditional myths of a colour-blind society. Mark Spokes looks at US hemispheric policy toward Latin America in the context of the means and ends associated with global strategy, while Bevan Sewell discusses the tensions inherent to the Eisenhower Administration’s pursuit of separate objectives on economic and national security grounds, with particular attention to Guatemala and Brazil.

We hope you enjoy this special edition, which offers but a sample of the immensely rewarding and engaging scholarly debate witnessed in Birmingham last May.

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