



**Europa y la guerra de Estados Unidos
contra México**

(Europe and the United States War against Mexico)

Walter Astié-Burgos

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Power and world hegemony have had significant weight in the origins of what we today call international relations. For more than 500 years, the construction and consolidation of Western predominance has to a great degree guided the edification of the international order.

Specifically, the century that just ended is testimony to the formation of a new world power that not only influenced the fundamental lines of the international order for 100 years, but has also managed to remain until now the

world's greatest power; I am referring, of course, to the United States. The question arises: What factors turned this eighteenth-century nation of protestant immigrants into a twentieth-century super-power? For Walter Astié-Burgos, the answer is partially to be found in a fundamental historical event in Mexico-U.S. relations: the War of 1847, in which Mexico lost more than half its territory and the United States extended its borders enormously through an expansionist policy based on a strategy of provocation and simulation.

The author's aim is to emphasize the importance of this historic event—little recognized by historians and internationalists—in the construction of U.S. hegemony. Astié-Burgos takes a new look at the War of 1847, considering it not just an isolated event pertinent only to the history of Mexico or the United States or of both, but rather a contribution to the creation of a new and vigorous power that would first establish hegemony over the Western Hemisphere and later over the world. Therefore, the implications of this event were transcendental for the development of contemporary international relations.

It should also be said that the author tries to explain this specific historic event in the light of the evolution of the international relations of the time. U.S. expansionism, he stresses, is a product of its European heritage, which is why he seeks to reconstruct the European legacy in North America and its repercussions on the regional and international level from the point of view of an internationalist and diplomat.

In the first part of the book, after a review of the economic and political formation of Europe from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries, the author points to the power the European nations acquired after the conquest and colonization of the Americas, making them the only world power from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. As a product of this Western supremacy, territorial expansionism was key in European domination and the main motivation behind the rivalries among the European nations themselves. Spain and England became not only the most important colonial powers, but also the source of two very differentiated historical legacies, which in the long run propitiated the creation of “two different social, political, economic and administrative structures in North America.”

With the English recognition of the newly constituted United States in 1783, the geopolitical space in North America was redrawn; a new relationship of forces was born. The

young republic would reinstate territorial expansionism as a fundamental principle of its political agenda, although, in contrast with European expansionist policy, it would actually buy territory after fabricating incidents that would prompt the sale. This is what it did in the cases of Louisiana and Florida, purchased from the French and the Spanish, respectively.

In the second part of the book, the author deals with the implications of this expansionism once Mexico became independent in 1821. After that, once again U.S. expectations changed with an increase in its territorial ambition given the difficulties the new Mexican nation was facing. European hegemony was soon replaced by that of the United States, and thus began a relationship with Mexico that, far from being friendly, was fraught with continual clashes between the two countries leading up to war.

Texan independence from Mexico in 1836 reactivated U.S. expansionist aspirations. In the aftermath of the U.S. annexation of Texas in 1845, pointing to greater expansionism, came one of the most serious and costly wars that Mexico ever fought, a war that would change the destiny of both countries, turning one into a victim of an outrage and the other into a burgeoning world power.

Undoubtedly an unjust war, as the author maintains, the conflict of 1847 was a contradictory initiative by a young republic that waved the banner of the values of democracy and progress, but acted under the impetus of an absolute monarchy. Thus, Astié-Burgos concludes that “while the war essentially stemmed from the situations that existed at the time in the United States, in Mexico and in their bilateral dealings, it also was part of a general trend that had begun elsewhere and in earlier times.” Certainly, the European expansionist legacy had taken on renewed strength in the United States. The annexation of California and New Mexico in 1848 would increase U.S. territory, making it reach from ocean to ocean, and was a turning point in the construction of U.S. hegemony.

Astíé-Burgos, then, in a book that does not pretend to be exhaustive, but does aspire to historic rigor, contributes as an internationalist to resituating the significance and implications that a specific historic event had for the development of international relations.

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