

Paolo Riguzzi, *¿Reciprocidad imposible? La política del comercio entre México y Estados Unidos, 1857-1938*, Zinacantepec, El Colegio Mexiquense/Instituto de Investigaciones Doctor José María Luis Mora, 2003, 444 p., cuadros y gráficas.

### *Historical perspectives on Mexico-US trade relations*

The implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) marked yet another revision of US policy towards its Latin American neighbors. Through the eras of “Gunboat Diplomacy” and “Dollar Diplomacy”, the “Good Neighbor Policy”, and later approaches to trade affairs, the US government has attempted a variety of approaches to guarantee its supremacy in commercial relationships with its neighbors. Most histories of US-Latin American trade have been written from the US perspective and with limited use of resources available in other countries. Even fewer have focused specifically on the often complicated commercial and political relationship between the United States and Mexico. This deficit is being remedied to a large degree through the significant contribution of Paolo Riguzzi in his recent work, *¿Reciprocidad imposible?* Through a careful examination of trade records, political agreements, and archival documents, Riguzzi provides a detailed narration of the trade relationship between the two nations. Supplemented by numerous charts and graphs, an extensive appendix, and a thorough bibliography, *¿Reciprocidad imposible?* will serve as a valuable reference for scholars in the field of US-Mexican relations, as well as being an interesting survey text for students and others interested in the topic.

Riguzzi has developed this study from a Mexican perspective, which as can be seen from his bibliography, is a unique approach to the question of commerce between the US and Mexico. He has relied heavily on sources and archives available in Mexico and supplemented these with records from US sources. The result is a well-balanced and comprehensive study of the issue. It should be noted,

however, that readers more familiar with this story from a US perspective may encounter some difficulty at first, as Riguzzi's emphasis is clearly on the Mexican perspective. Focusing on five themes throughout the book, Riguzzi explores chronologically the development of trade policy between the two nations. Among the most important themes are the role of internal politics in both countries and the influence of "transnational" financial institutions in the development of trade and trade policy (p. 23-24). Throughout the book, Riguzzi makes an important distinction between the economic relationship and the political relationship involved in international commerce. His emphasis in this study is more on the political relationship, which he defines as "any interaction between governments by which one seeks to modify the commercial relationship between the two" (p. 20, my translation). From that perspective, the US-Mexican trade relationship is full of examples in which the United States has attempted to influence trade through political means or to use trade to influence the political relationship. Similarly, the internal politics of both countries have contributed to the difficulty in developing a coherent policy. Riguzzi expertly describes many of the external and internal issues which affected trade relations, again relying on archival documents from both countries.

*¿Reciprocidad imposible?* features in-depth analysis of the internal strategies of both Mexican and US governments during the development of various trade agreements between the two countries. The author also carefully explores the results of each agreement on production and commerce. In general, Riguzzi focuses more on the impact within Mexico, although attention is also given to effects within the US economy. After carefully tracing the history of US-Mexico trade policy, he concludes that, with few exceptions, US interests have been the driving force behind efforts to create treaties (see chart 46, p. 278). It becomes quickly evident that successful negotiations would be difficult because of the significant disparity between the US and Mexican economies. Despite this disadvantage, however, Mexico was able to influence negotiations to its advantage and, in the end, a mutually beneficial and, in the author's words, "truly reciprocal" relationship was able to develop (p. 229).

Although in many instances, the narrative in *¿Reciprocidad imposible?* is quite dense, as is the subject matter itself, the numerous charts and graphics make understanding much easier —especially for the non-expert reader—. Special commendation should be made to the author and publisher for the inclusion of over eighty pages of appendices containing the actual text of the major US-Mexican treaties and other official documents from the time period under consideration. Similarly, the comprehensive bibliography provides many possible avenues for further study of the topic. Paolo Riguzzi's in-depth and well-written study of the development of US-Mexican trade policy is a major contribution to the scholarship on this topic. Historians, economists, and others interested in this field will be well served by reading this narrative and taking careful consideration of his conclusions. Hopefully, an English-language translation will be forthcoming, as well as a further study of the period post-1938.

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