

## NORTH AMERICA

**AMERICA RIGHT OR WRONG:  
an anatomy of American  
nationalism**  
by **Anatol Lieven**

London: HarperCollins, 2004. 274, £20.00,  
ISBN 000 716456 4

Reviewer: DANIELE CONVERSI  
(*University of Lincoln*)

No country is perfect. But, when a country's influence is matchlessly global, any small imperfection reverberates throughout the ecumene with dramatic after effects. From political correctness to crime and punishment, from the erosion of civil liberties to religious fundamentalism, the impact of American political culture on the rest of the world is hardly disputable. Anatol Lieven explores this dimension with unequalled precision, arguing that American nationalism lies at the core of both domestic and foreign policy.

Jacksonian nationalism, the creed of a closed community under perpetual siege from ethnic minorities, terrorists and criminals operates in tandem with a more exportable and optimistic creed, called 'patriotism'. Lieven demonstrates the affiliation between the two, questioning whether the more 'ethnic' variety is really the dominant one. He recognizes that the patriotic trend towards cultural and

ideological homogeneity is forced upon a highly plural society. Indeed, the attempt to superimpose homogeneous conformity onto such a rich and varied environment is a recipe for totalitarian thought and practice.

The argument recurring throughout the book, that we are facing an extremely aggressive and unprecedented form of hyperpower nationalism, is plausible. Perhaps cultural variables should have been stressed further: the missionary zeal through which the US consumerist ethos is pushed onto the rest of the world while keeping America 'uncontaminated' from foreign influences is central to US nationalism: no other media market can afford to be equally protectionist. References to the field of nationalism studies are too scant and occasional, particularly concerning the supposed distinction between nationalism and patriotism. One can question whether the final chapter on Israel does add much to the volume's scope. But these are minor quibbles in a book that puts forward in a very articulate and convincing manner a series of essential points for contemporary global politics. It is highly scholarly and cogently presented, with a broad public in mind beyond the political science community. This is the book that many of us have been expecting for a long time. But also, I fear, the most alarming one to appear in recent years.

study by armies of researchers. The main development was, of course, the replacement of conservative southern Democrats by conservative Republicans, largely in the south; and to a lesser extent, the replacement of northeastern Republican centrists by Democratic centrists. The former development, Polsby argues persuasively, was facilitated and encouraged by northern migration to the warmer climes of the south, which itself was encouraged by the dramatic growth in residential air-conditioning in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as southern white voters hostility to the 1965 *Civil Rights Act*. The electoral consequences were the partisan realignment of the south, which provided the essential electoral support that helped Reagan, Bush 1 and Bush 2 win the presidency and Gingrich the House of Representatives in 1994. The political consequences were the realignment of the parties into much more ideologically homogeneous and centralised organisations, and a highly partisanised Congress.

Polsby's story and explanation are persuasive. The book is a *tour de force* and an invaluable compilation of recent congressional history. Its central thesis will be influential; but, it also raises some important questions, which are not completely

answered: Political historians and economists may take up Polsby's challenge that air-conditioning was more important than southern economic development. Political scientists may query why it was seemingly impossible for the Democratic Party to adapt to these new conditions as effectively as the Republicans. After all, before the New Deal, the party was essentially a southern conservative party. One wonders, therefore, why it could not have reverted to type while also retaining the liberal and centrist elements that were the product of the New Deal, the Great Society, and the *Civil Rights Act*. Given America's political culture and history, was partisan polarisation based on sharp differences in policy and ideological preferences inevitable? Or could the catchall parties have continued in changed form and the Democrats retained their hegemony – with obvious consequences for congressional politics? There is also a tension in the explanation of institutional change between the identification of the drivers of change and the continuation of congressional inertia, limiting institutional change, which is not fully explained. Granted the translation of socio-political change into institutional change is 'not a simple or automatic process', this question should also become the subject of future theoretical inquiry.

**FROM 9/11 TO TERROR WAR: the dangers of the Bush legacy**  
by **Douglas Kellner**

Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003. 325, £16.95, ISBN 0 7425 2638 0

*Readership: Undergraduates, advanced undergraduates, postgraduates, academicresearch, professional*

Reviewer: AKINBOLA E. AKINWUMI  
(University of Ibadan, Nigeria)

Not surprisingly, after the 11 September attacks, books on terrorism swamped the scholarly book market. Disappointingly though, many of the analyses offered, good scholarship notwithstanding, tended to zero in on disjointed, peripheral factors. But this book shines out: firstly, it is refreshingly critical, observant, peppered throughout with convincing examples and characterized by a polemical quality that energizes a reading of its calibre; secondly, it unmasks courageously a matrix of pre- and post-9/11

events other explanatory platforms do not capture. A substantial asset of the book is its subtitle, which makes evident the author's deep, reflective-connective thinking. The bottom line of Kellner's thesis is that the US-led 'war against terrorism' was mishandled and that this was not unconnected with the fact that prior to the attacks in New York and Washington anti-terrorism planning was far from prioritised by the Bush administration. Rather, the government was 'hell-bent on pushing through its right-wing and pro-corporate agenda' at all costs (p. 10). Indeed, when action was taken it was more of a feeble, if not hypocritical, attempt at making up for sheer ineptitude, hence the vehement nature of the invasion of Afghanistan.

Perhaps most to be admired is Kellner's persuasive chronicling of the involvement of the administration's bigwigs in corporate scandals that became inseparable from these matters. Another interesting insight arises from the view that 'the complicity of the mainstream media, especially television, [gave] the Bush administration a free hand to pursue its own ... agenda, often at the expense of the people of the US and the world' (p. 46). In conclusion, Kellner stresses the cardinality of democratic – read not war-based – approaches in quashing terrorism and militarism. Overall, this is one book that deserves to be widely read; unfortunately though, it stops prematurely at the planning stage of the Iraq war.

**THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER**  
by **Mark Tushnet**

Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press,  
2003. 277, £19.95, ISBN 0 691 11299 1

*Readership: Postgraduates,  
academic/research, professional*

*Rating: \*\*\*\**

Reviewer: ZUHTU ARSLAN  
(National Police Academy,  
Turkey)

Tushnet's book begins with the assertion that President Bill Clinton's 1996 statement that '(t)he age of big government is over' marks the consolidation of the new constitutional order which began emerging with Ronald Reagan's presidency. He defines the 'constitutional order' as 'a reasonably stable set of institutions through which a nation's fundamental decisions are made over a sustained period and

the principles that guide those decisions' (p. 1). The new constitutional order is characterised by divided government, with sharp ideological distinctions between the two major political parties, and a severely chastened constitutional ambition. Throughout the book, Tushnet examines the basic political and legal institutions of the new constitutional order such as the President, Congress, state governments, and the Supreme Court and contrasts them with those of what he calls 'New Deal-Great Society constitutional order' which was in effect from 1930s to the 1980s. The book devotes space to the Supreme Court which has adopted 'a chastened rather than a revolutionary vision' in the new constitutional order due to its generalized suspicion of politics (p. 95). The political gridlock forces the jurisprudence of the Supreme Court, in powers and rights cases, to take 'this-far-and-no-further'