

The Spanish Empire: General Overview

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Between 1760 and 1830, revolutionary processes unfolded in the Spanish colonial empire that led to its dissolution. In the end, a new world of states emerged, which essentially still exists today. In close connection with the French Revolution, the ideas of freedom and equality had spread and the foundations of legitimate rule had been redefined. America was the continent of the first successful anticolonial freedom movements. These processes were very different from each other and also in themselves, and yet formed a unity.

In fact, the various revolutions in Spanish America were drastic events, for they drowned a colonial empire that had lasted 300 years, encompassed vast areas and was considered to be extraordinarily rich and promising in economic potential. In the Spanish American states themselves, independence quickly became the founding myth of the nation. National monuments in the central public places and independence days that celebrate the heroes of that epoch are still today decisive points of reference for national memory throughout the subcontinent and bear eloquent witness to the power of this narrative. History lessons at schools which derived the history of the fatherland, the *historia patria*, from the idealized events of independence in order to serve the integration of the nation have reinforced this perspective.¹

¹ Stefan H. Rinke, *Revolutionen in Lateinamerika: Wege in die Unabhängigkeit, 1760–1830* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2010), 11–19; Spanish translation: Stefan H. Rinke, *Las revoluciones en América Latina: Las vías a la independencia, 1760–1830* (Mexico City: Colegio de México Colegio Internacional de Graduados Entre Espacios, 2011), 15–25; see also Nikita Harwich Vallenilla, “La historia patria,” in Antonio Annino and François-Xavier Guerra, eds., *Inventando la nación: Iberoamérica siglo XIX* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003), 533–49; Rafael Valls, ed., *Los procesos independentistas Iberoamericanos en los manuales de Historia* (Madrid: Fundación Mapfre Tavera, 2005).

Interpretations

The hero myths have long stood in the way of a critical examination of this part of Spanish American history. Although there has been a change in the historical images over the past few decades, with a tendency toward demythification, even if it has varied from country to country, the hero myths have prevented a critical confrontation with this part of Hispanic American history. But even today this still triggers polemics. In Venezuela, the pendulum has even been reversed since Hugo Chávez's presidency, and a direct relationship is being constructed between daily politics and the national liberation struggle at the beginning of the nineteenth century.² In short, independence remains an emotionally charged issue of high political and ideological – i.e. national – significance.³

In historiography, too, a narrative remained dominant in large parts of Spanish America until the end of the 1950s that presented the history of independence as the birth of the nation, ignoring or downplaying the great social and ethnic heterogeneity and regional differences. The wars of independence were thus the substrate of a national history in which good, American-born, “creole” white heroes fought against evil Spanish royalists. The “people” assumed to be homogeneous played only a subordinate role in this interpretation. Only through the leadership of the creole liberators, the *libertadores*, could this people become a nation.⁴

Since the 1960s, the interpretation of independence by professional historians have changed considerably, depending on the political situation and with different national variants. Influenced by the revolutionary upheavals that shaped the subcontinent in this phase, a revisionist historiography has

² Andreas Boeckh and Patricia Graf, “El comandante en su laberinto: El ideario bolivariano de Hugo Chávez,” in Günter Maihold, ed., *Venezuela en retrospectiva: Los pasos hacia el régimen chavista* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2007), 151–79.

³ Manuel Chust Calero and José Antonio Serrano, “Un debate actual, una revisión necesaria,” in Manuel Chust and José Antonio Serrano, eds., *Debates sobre las Independencias Iberoamericanas* (Frankfurt am Main and Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2007), 9.

⁴ For more on this see the excellent overview by Chust Calero and Serrano, “Un debate actual,” 10–25. For a historiographical synthesis of each individual country see the same compilation. For Mexico see Antonio Annino, Rafael Rojas, and Francisco A. Eissa-Barroso, eds., *La Independencia: Los libros de la Patria* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008); as well as the essays in Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, ed., *Interpretaciones sobre la Independencia de México* (Mexico City: Ediciones Patria, 1997); for Brazil see István Jancsó, *Independência: História e Historiografia* (São Paulo: Hucitec, 2005), 53–206; Jurandir Malerba, “Introdução: Esboço crítico da recente historiografia sobre a Independência do Brasil (c. 1980–2002),” in Jurandir Malerba, ed., *A Independência Brasileira: Novas dimensões* (Rio de Janeiro: FGV, 2006), 19–52.

questioned the old certainties of people and nation. The formerly untouchable heroes, their goals and limits, came under scrutiny and were thus taken from their pedestals. In this historiography the individual leader stepped more and more into the background anyway, as social theories like Dependency Theory helped put the focus primarily on social groups and classes and their interests and struggles.⁵

Revisionist historiography highlighted regional diversity and the contrasts between the regions, which were often counterproductive and continued to have an effect in the new states. The idea of a unified national path to independence could no longer be maintained. Instead, the focus was on the heterogeneity of the process. This also applied to the participants and protagonists of the wars of independence and the state-building processes, which were characterized by great differences in motivation and goals. In addition to the independence fighters – the patriots and the royalists – those who strove for autonomy under the umbrella of the liberal Spanish Constitution of 1812 also came into view. Independence, it was now pointed out, was not the a priori fixed goal of the elites with European roots, but initially only of a small minority which, however, asserted itself in the medium term. The myth of the inevitability of independence was thus questioned.⁶ In addition to the creole ruling classes, the new historiography was devoted to other social and ethnic groups, Indigenous peoples, slaves, and other nonwhite population groups.⁷

Up until the 1980s, questions about the major structures were the guiding questions, but since the 1990s, the wave of democratization in the region has led to a renewed shift toward fresh themes. Since then, the great structuralist theories have been critically questioned, and small-scale negotiations have become the focus of historiographical interest. Political history, and in particular the question of the significance of elections, representation and citizenship have become the focus of attention. The different options for political action in the phase of independence could thus be clarified.⁸ In

⁵ Luis Navarro García, "La Independencia de Hispanoamérica," in Valentín Vázquez de Prada et al., eds., *Balance de la historiografía sobre Iberoamérica* (Pamplona: EUNSA Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1989), 395–440.

⁶ See a good synthesis of this discussion in Brian R. Hamnett, "Process and Pattern: A Re-examination of the Ibero-American Independence Movements, 1808–1826," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 29:2 (1997), 279–328.

⁷ George Reid Andrews, "Spanish American Independence: A Structural Analysis," *Latin American Perspectives* 1:44 (1985), 105–32.

⁸ For an overview of the innovations until the mid-1990s see Victor M. Uribe-Uran, "The Enigma of Latin American Independence: Analyses of the Last Ten Years," *Latin American Research Review* 32:1 (Spring 1997), 237–55.

addition, the preoccupation with the “others,” the nonprivileged, gained in importance, whose specific motivations and interests were revealed in recent historiography, thus adding an important dimension to the notion of the heterogeneity of the independence processes.⁹

For the contemporary actors and the early historiography, there was no question that a revolution had taken place and that it had brought positive results.¹⁰ In his posthumously published manifest of 1799 the Peruvian Juan Pablo Viscardo y Guzmán wrote: “Let us rediscover America for all our brothers all over the world . . . !”¹¹ About two decades later, in 1820, at the height of the wars of independence, the radical politician Bernardo de Monteagudo from Buenos Aires spoke of irreversible “general laws” that subjected the states of the world to revolution during his time. The emphasis on a new beginning was characteristic of the early interpretations of events. It was comprehensive and concerned human beings as such, who were now perceived as individuals detached from corporate constraints, the society in which they lived, and the rule to which they freely submitted.¹² From the point of view of this generation, the break that the independence fighters experienced had a worldwide claim to effectiveness and was regarded as a process determined and necessary, as it were, by Providence, with a clear orientation toward the foundation of the nation, which was about to enjoy an equally straightforward success.¹³

⁹ In particular, Eric Van Young has sparked a debate in this regard with his book *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810–1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); see also Luis Miguel Glave, “Las otras rebeliones: Cultura popular e independencias,” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* no. 62 (2005): 275–312. Recently, Cultural Studies have examined particularly women’s and gender-related issues in this perspective, see Barbara Potthast-Jutkeit, *Von Müttern und Machos: Eine Geschichte der Frauen Lateinamerikas* (Wuppertal: Hammer, 2003), 185–200; Catherine Davies, Claire Brewster, and Hilary Owen, eds., *South American Independence: Gender, Politics, Text* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006); Claire Brewster, “Women and the Spanish American Wars of Independence: An Overview,” *Feminist Review* no. 79 (2005): 20–35.

¹⁰ Graciela Soriano, “Tiempos y destiempos de la Revolución,” in Teresa Calderón and Clément Thibaud, eds., *Las revoluciones en el mundo atlántico: Una perspectiva comparada* (Bogotá: Taurus, 2006), 145–53.

¹¹ “Descubramos otra vez de nuevo la América para todos nuestros hermanos, los habitantes de este globo,” in Juan Pablo Viscardo y Guzmán, *Carta dirigida a los Españoles Americanos*, ed. David Anthony Brading (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005), 91.

¹² François-Xavier Guerra, *Modernidad e independencias: Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993), 12; Annick Lempérière, “Revolución y Estado en América Hispánica (1808–1825),” in Calderón and Thibaud, *Las revoluciones en el mundo atlántico*, 55.

¹³ Fabio Wasserman, “Revolución,” in Noemí Goldman, ed., *Lenguaje y revolución: Conceptos políticos clave en el Río de la Plata, 1780–1850* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2008), 159–74: 164.

The revisionist historiography, however, questioned the formerly central idea of a revolutionary new beginning. Instead, it pointed to the obvious social and economic continuities between colonies and republics, thus creating the notion of a development from colonialism to neocolonialism. According to this interpretation, apart from Haiti, no revolution had taken place at all in America in the early nineteenth century. Depending on political intentions, the conclusion could be drawn that this revolution was still to come. There were important reasons for abandoning the optimistic metaphor of revolution: the realization that the persevering forces of the old elites hardly permitted social change. From a political point of view, critics also denounced the lack of radicalism, which had distinguished the Directory from the first stages of the French Revolution. Spanish American independence fighters, on the other hand, had regarded the Jacobin phase in France as a deterrent example. In view of these facts, a question came to the fore that George Reid Andrews formulated in 1985:

How was it that violence of such duration and magnitude, provoking significant popular mobilization and taking place in societies riven by powerful internal conflicts and tensions, did not have a greater impact on the social and economic structures of the region? In short, why did the independence struggles, so often labeled “revolutions,” in fact fail to produce anything remotely approaching a genuine social revolution?¹⁴

If historians of Spanish America still spoke of revolution at all, they did so by using the compromise formula of the “unfinished revolution.”¹⁵

The latest historiography, on the other hand, has raised the question of what then is a “genuine social revolution” or a “complete revolution,” and asks which criteria must be fulfilled in order to deserve this designation. For example, it was objected at an early stage that references to the French Revolution as an idealized model are questionable, since deviations from it are quickly misunderstood as deficits.¹⁶ Besides, European movements that were in many respects “incomplete” are nevertheless called revolutions.¹⁷

¹⁴ Andrews, “Spanish American Independence,” 105.

¹⁵ Alejandro Poli Gonzalvo, *Mayo, la revolución inconclusa: Reinterpretando la historia argentina* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2008).

¹⁶ Manfred Kossok, “Alternativen gesellschaftlicher Transformationen in Lateinamerika: Die Unabhängigkeitsrevolutionen von 1790 bis 1830,” *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas*, 28 (1991), 223–49: 226.

¹⁷ François-Xavier Guerra, “De lo uno a lo múltiple: Dimensiones y lógicas de la Independencia,” in Anthony McFarlane and Eduardo Posada-Carbó, eds., *Independence and Revolution in Spanish America: Perspectives and Problems* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1999), 49.

Undoubtedly, independence in Spanish America meant a political new beginning, which raised new questions about the location and legitimation of power. The fundamental discontinuity was evident in the political system with the system change of new elites, the new arguments about legitimacy, and the failure of efforts to return to the status quo ante. The political ideas of freedom and equality, of human and civil rights, and the practices used by the independence fighters to achieve broad political participation were revolutionary. These elements make it possible to speak for Spanish America during this period of revolutions in the plural, because the heterogeneity of the processes is obvious. Forms of anticolonial resistance grew into revolutions because they sought a new order in the sense of a nation state. This was not predetermined, but the result of dynamic processes with setbacks and of varying duration.¹⁸

In the course of the latest historiographical discussions about global history approaches, the dimension of the entanglements of Latin American events with the revolutions in other parts of the world has returned into the focus of interest.¹⁹ This follows on from observations made by contemporaries such as Thomas Jefferson, who in 1797 referred to the events in Saint-Domingue as a “revolutionary storm” that swept across the globe.²⁰ Already in the older structuralist historiography the connections to Europe played an important role. Some historians interpreted Spanish American independence as a by-product of the rise of English industrial capitalism.²¹ This Atlantic dimension of the revolutions also interested historians early on for ideological reasons against the background of the Cold War.²² The focus,

¹⁸ For an excellent discussion of the concept of “revolution” from the perspective of Global History see Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2009), 736–47.

¹⁹ For this discussion in Global History, see Sebastian Conrad and Andreas Eckert, “Globalgeschichte, Globalisierung, multiple Modernen: Zur Geschichtsschreibung der modernen Welt,” in Sebastian Conrad, Andreas Eckert, and Ulrike Freitag, eds., *Globalgeschichte: Theorien, Ansätze, Themen* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2007), 7–52.

²⁰ Jefferson to St. George Tucker, 27 August 1797, quoted in Simon P. Newman, “American Political Culture and the French and Haitian Revolutions: Nathaniel Cutting and Jeffersonian Republicans,” in David Patrick Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 79.

²¹ Richard Graham, *Independence in Latin America: A Comparative Approach*, 2nd edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994); Emilia Viotti Costa, *The Brazilian Empire: Myths & Histories* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 1–23.

²² Jacques Godechot, *France and the Atlantic Revolution of the Eighteenth Century: 1770–1799*, trans. Herbert Harvey Rowen (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965). A focus on the North

however, was on the North Atlantic “community of destiny,” while the South Atlantic was only marginally mentioned.

Recent historiography has extended the Atlantic perspective more to the south. In this context, the idea of a “transcontinental liberation process” in America lasting about fifty years for the period from 1774 to 1826 gained currency.²³ Many studies in recent years have concentrated, for example, on the interactions of the American revolutions with the revolutionary upheavals in the mother countries. Especially the role of Spain with its liberal constitutions and the Cortes has been examined many times in recent years. A chain of revolutionary upheavals led from the detachment of Britain’s North American colonies to the French Revolution, the revolution in Saint-Domingue and Napoleonic expansion on the Iberian Peninsula to the independence revolutions in Spanish America and Brazil.²⁴

The independence of the United States challenged both the seemingly natural order of relations between Europe and America and of the monarchy as such. With the French Revolution, ideals of freedom and equality became even more central. The successful slave revolution in Haiti brought the entire economic and social system of slavery under attack. Finally, with the independence revolutions in the Iberian empires, two other pillars of colonial rule in America collapsed. In fact, a circle was closed that represented the “last common American experience,” for after that the Americas went their separate ways.²⁵ Of the once proud Iberian empires, only the Spanish colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico remained and France had lost its richest possession. However, the numerous possessions of different European powers in the Caribbean region continued to bear witness to the colonial past and to cause entanglements in the coming decades.

Atlantic is also central to Hobsbawm’s argument, although his analysis is quite different from that of Godechot and Palmer. See also Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789–1848*, 3rd edition (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1996); Robert R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, 6th edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969).

²³ Anthony McFarlane, “Issues in the History of Spanish American Independence,” in McFarlane and Posada, eds., *Independence and Revolution*, vol. 1; Anthony McFarlane, “Independências Americanas na era das revoluções: Conexões, contextos, comparações,” in Malerba, ed., *A Independência brasileira*, 387–417.

²⁴ Stefan Rinke and Klaus Stüwe, “Politische Systeme Amerikas: Ein Vergleich,” in Klaus Stüwe and Stefan Rinke, eds., *Die politischen Systeme in Nord- und Lateinamerika: Eine Einführung* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008), 9–58.

²⁵ Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *The Americas: A Hemispheric History* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 95.

In his monumental study on the world history of the nineteenth century, Jürgen Osterhammel has identified five levels of Atlantic integration in this period: administrative imperial integration, migration, trade (which gave rise to a common consumer culture), cultural transfers, and integration through an emerging transatlantic public sphere.²⁶ In fact, the Atlantic region consisted of large regions that were intertwined in many ways. Communication intensified and accelerated during this period, with the Caribbean in particular serving as a hub. Networks of enlightened thinkers emerged, moving back and forth between the American and European borders of the Atlantic. The Masonic lodges gave institutional support to these entanglements. The biographies of independence fighters such as Francisco de Miranda and Simón Bolívar are telling examples of these processes. Not only the revolutionary elites, but also common people, especially sailors and even slaves, were involved in these communication networks.

The United States and French revolutions were important as points of reference for Spanish American developments.²⁷ They showed that revolutionary upheaval was possible. The Spanish Americans also propagated the ideas of freedom and equality, of self-determination and of human and civil rights, which have had a global impact since 1776 and 1789.²⁸ These ideas contributed to the emergence of an – albeit limited – Atlantic space of experience from which the expectation of further revolutions could be derived.²⁹

Periodizations

Different approaches have come into play in the chronological classification of this process. In Spanish America, the founding of government juntas and the declaration of independence as such were the starting dates for the contemporaries and their early historiography. The end of the epoch was

²⁶ Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, 770–1.

²⁷ Eric Van Young, “‘To Throw Off a Tyrannical Government’: Atlantic Revolutionary Traditions and Popular Insurgency in Mexico, 1800–1821,” in Michael M. Morrison and Melinda S. Zook, eds., *Revolutionary Currents: Nation Building in the Transatlantic World* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 127–72: 131.

²⁸ Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, 761.

²⁹ For Brazil in this context see João Paulo G. Pimenta, *Brasil y las independencias de Hispanoamérica* (Castelló de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2007), 29; Jacques Godechot, “Independência do Brasil e a Revolução do Ocidente,” in Carlos Guilherme Mota, ed., 1822: *Dimensões* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1972), 27–37.

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Colonial Spanish America, c. 1800

Map 1.1 Spanish America in 1800. From Leslie Bethell, ed., *The Independence of Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4.

then the last victorious battle, so that in classical representations the years from 1810 to 1826 can be found as chronological markers.

After European historiography, following Reinhart Koselleck's concept of the *Sattelzeit* of modernity, defined 1750 to 1850 as the decisive transformative period, historians of the Spanish American independence revolutions adopted this idea.³⁰ Thus, both the late colonial roots of events in the second half of the eighteenth century and the problematic processes of state-building up to the integration into the world market around the middle of the nineteenth century come into view. Eric Van Young has criticized this type of periodization because of its inherent eurocentrism, as it implied a unilinear development from enlightened absolutism to the revolutions of the United States and France and finally to the European revolutions of 1848, which were connected with a quasi-universal, unstoppable nation-building process and with the rise of liberalism.³¹

Nevertheless, there is much to be said for looking at the phase between 1760 and 1830 in its entirety, because both the prehistory and the deeper roots of the independence revolutions, as well as the direct consequences in state formation, come into view. Within this framework, however, there are different processes of change, each following its own temporal logic. It is important to consider these variations and heterogeneities in order to represent the multitude of intertwined but also independent liberation movements with their different orientations.

The Crisis of the Empire

The crisis of the Spanish Empire did not start in the eighteenth century, but it intensified massively especially when the French Revolution broke out. In the late eighteenth century, as the threat of social unrest and foreign powers increased against the backdrop of the Atlantic revolution, while the Crown's ability to counteract diminished, the state of permanent setbacks and

³⁰ Important overviews are Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Reforma y disolución de los imperios ibéricos 1750–1850* (Madrid: Alianza, 1985); Kenneth J. Andrien and Lyman L. Johnson, eds., *The Political Economy of Spanish America in the Age of Revolution, 1750–1850* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); Víctor Manuel Uribe-Urán, ed., *State and Society in Spanish America during the Age of Revolution* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001). For individual countries see Alberto Flores Galindo, ed., *Independencia y revolución, 1780–1840*, 2 vols. (Lima: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 1987); Jaime E. Rodríguez O., ed., *Mexico in the Age of Democratic Revolutions, 1750–1850* (Boulder: Rienner, 1994).

³¹ Eric Van Young, "Conclusion: Was There an Age of Revolution in Spanish America?," in Uribe-Urán, ed., *State and Society*, 219–46.

insecurities was difficult to endure. The crisis was not least an expression of the problems of the Bourbon dynasty after the death of Carlos III in December 1788. His successor Carlos IV (1788–1808) was confronted with a difficult situation from the beginning, which he could not cope with. The state ministers Floridablanca and Aranda were unable to develop a constructive attitude toward the events in neighboring France.³² In 1792, the king appointed Manuel de Godoy, the queen's twenty-five-year-old favorite, as first minister. He was to determine the fate of the country until 1808. This measure caused much envy and rejection; Godoy was considered corrupt and incapable. In view of the increasing burdens and unresolved problems, the displeasure with Godoy grew in the following period, as did the implicit displeasure with the Crown.³³

The British American struggle for independence had different consequences for Spain, for it contributed significantly to the ruin of French public finances, which in turn was a major cause of the French Revolution. Spain and its colonies were soon drawn into the maelstrom of global conflicts from 1792 to 1815, although the Crown had wanted to stay out of the conflicts.³⁴ After the execution of Louis XVI, Carlos IV fought on the side of the European coalition against the neighboring country from 1793 to 1795, not least for fear of an invasion. After the Peace of Basel (1795), which was detrimental to Spain and brought, among other things, the loss of the eastern part of Hispaniola to France, the change of sides took place and in 1796, in the Second Treaty of San Ildefonso, they joined the French Directorate in the fight against England.³⁵ Until 1808, there was an almost constant state of war against England. A direct consequence was the growing dependence on France. Spain had clearly become a pawn in Napoleon's power politics in Europe.

This became very clear a short time later in America, when English troops threatened the Río de la Plata. After the Battle of Trafalgar (1805),

³² Christian Windler, "Spanien und die Französische Revolution," in Christian Simon, ed., *Basler Frieden 1795: Revolution und Krieg in Europa* (Basel: Merian, 1995), 140–50. See also the essays in Robert M. Maniquis, Oscar R. Martí, and Joseph Pérez, eds., *La revolución francesa y el mundo ibérico* (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centenario, 1989).

³³ Peer Schmidt, "Absolutismus und Aufklärung: Die Bourbonen im 18. Jh.," in Pedro A. Barceló and Peer Schmidt, eds., *Kleine Geschichte Spaniens* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002), 242–47.

³⁴ Stig Förster, "Der Weltkrieg 1792–1815: Bewaffnete Konflikte und Revolutionen in der Weltgesellschaft," in Jost Dülffer, ed., *Kriegsbereitschaft und Friedensordnung in Deutschland, 1800–1814* (Münster: Lit, 1995), 17–38.

³⁵ Jean-Joël Brégeon, *Napoléon et la guerre d'Espagne, 1808–1814* (Paris: Perrin, 2006), 55–67.

the English tried to undermine Spanish rule in the colonies. In June 1806, they occupied the rich port city of Buenos Aires.³⁶ Since the viceroy fled to the hinterland, the mayor, Martín de Alzaga, a merchant from Spain, and the French officer in Spanish service, Santiago Liniers, took over the defense. Liniers vowed “the defense of the homeland” as “one of the most sacred duties of man.”³⁷ The mobilization efforts were successful and the urban militias, which were clearly outnumbered and poorly equipped, defeated the English twice in 1806 and 1807. This success caused great patriotic enthusiasm among the creoles of America, for it proved to the world that the people of America, often regarded as inferior, were better able to defy the British superpower than the Spaniards themselves.³⁸ At the same time, the inability of the Spanish Crown and its representatives to satisfy elementary needs became apparent before all eyes. In particular, the element of insecurity, externally because of the threat posed by the major European powers but also internally because of social instability, for example, in areas of limited statehood shaped by escaped slaves or Indigenous groups, played an important role. The permanent compulsion to self-defense and the associated costs put the willingness to remain loyal to the king to the test.

The power situation changed abruptly in 1808 with the outbreak of the Spanish war against France, and Spain suddenly became an ally of England. The motherland, England and France were bound in Europe. Thus there was temporarily no Great Power present that could have intervened decisively in America. The resulting vacuum offered the creoles unprecedented opportunities.³⁹ In addition, the balance of power had also shifted significantly in favor of the American elites from an economic point of view. The almost permanent war undermined the Spanish economy. This was particularly true for trade with the colonies, since the English had been playing out their

³⁶ About the English policy see William W. Kaufmann, *British Policy and the Independence of Latin America, 1804–1828*, 2nd edition (London: Cass, 1967), 11–52; Ian Fletcher, *The Waters of Oblivion: The British Invasion of the Rio de la Plata, 1806–1807* (Tunbridge Wells: Spellmount, 1991).

³⁷ Proclamation by Santiago de Liniers, 9 September 1806, in Stefan Rinke, Georg Fischer, and Frederik Schulze, eds., *Geschichte Lateinamerikas vom 19. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert: Quellenband* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2009), 6–7.

³⁸ Klaus Gallo, *De la invasión al reconocimiento: Gran Bretaña y el Río de la Plata, 1806–1826* (Buenos Aires: A-Z, 1994), 47–122; José Luis Speroni, *La dimensión de una agresión: América del Sur ante la invasión inglesa de 1805–1807* (Buenos Aires: Edivern, 2004).

³⁹ Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 179–80.

supremacy at sea, blocking Spanish ports and thus paralyzing communication routes to America.⁴⁰ Approaches to remedy the situation by liberalizing colonial trade were carried out only half-heartedly and did not have the hoped for success.

The attempt to manage the financial crisis by selling Church property, the so-called *desamortización*, which had become necessary due to the high costs of warfare and the associated national debt, also caused irritation. Many creoles experienced the fiscal measures as a deep cut threatening their existence. The effect for Spain, however, was limited in view of the ongoing wars. In many places, the unpopular Godoy was blamed for the misguided developments and discontent increased.⁴¹

The Spanish crisis reached rock bottom when Napoleon finally annexed the Iberian Peninsula and eliminated the Spanish Bourbons by forcing King Carlos and his son Prince Fernando at a meeting in Bayonne to abdicate and cede their throne to his brother Joseph Bonaparte in June 1808.⁴² However, Napoleon had reckoned without the Spanish people, who from the outset had rejected the French Revolution with its anticlerical excesses and violence. Everywhere in the country, local committees of dignitaries, so-called *juntas*, were formed to take over the political decision-making power in the name of Fernando VII and to organize the armed resistance. The Napoleonic armies defeated the regular Spanish army supported by an English contingent. However, the conflict was not over, and it led to a guerrilla war to preserve the legitimate rule.⁴³ In September 1808, a newly formed central junta (Junta Suprema Central) claimed to exercise governmental power until Fernando's return.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ The old monopoly held by the port of Cádiz was particularly cut off from the overseas traffic. Antonio García-Baquero González, *Comercio colonial y guerras revolucionarias: La decadencia económica de Cádiz a raíz de la Emancipación americana* (Seville: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos de Sevilla, 1972), 114.

⁴¹ For the situation in Mexico see Gisela von Wobeser, "La consolidación de vales reales como factor determinante de la lucha de Independencia en México, 1804–1808," *Historia Mexicana* 56:2 (2006), 373–425; Brian R. Hamnett, *La política española en una época revolucionaria, 1790–1820* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985), 47–58.

⁴² Brégeon, *Napoléon et la guerre d'Espagne*, 82–94; Timothy E. Anna, *Spain and the Loss of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 9–28.

⁴³ José Manuel Cuenca Toribio, *La guerra de la Independencia: Un conflicto decisivo, 1808–1814* (Madrid: Encuentro, 2006); José Gregorio Cayuela Fernández, *La Guerra de la Independencia: Historia bélica, pueblo y nación en España, 1808–1814* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2008).

⁴⁴ For more about the competition between the *juntas* see José María Portillo Valdés, *Crisis Atlántica: Autonomía e Independencia en la crisis de la Monarquía hispana* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2006), 53–9.

Colonial Reactions

The events in Spain could not leave the American colonies untouched. The danger posed by the French invasion drove the central junta to involve the creoles more closely in order to increase their loyalty to the empire and their financial support for the war effort.⁴⁵ The announcements were intensively discussed in public and aroused high expectations. At the same time, there was uncertainty about who was to govern in the interim. Following the Spanish models, regionally influential creoles started to form their own juntas in the name of the king, claiming equal rights to representation as their peninsular counterparts.⁴⁶ In 1809, elections were staged in the colonies. But from the outset there had been criticism of an electoral system that divided the huge and populous colonies into only nine constituencies, each with one deputy, whereas Spain had thirty-six seats. Equal rights remained out of reach.⁴⁷ The *audiencias* of Quito and Upper Peru counted among the American regions that were not represented. In both cases the creole juntas radicalized their demands in the face of stubborn denial by the Spaniards and were eventually defeated militarily. The incidents revealed that the situation was very tense. The more the royal authorities and bureaucrats opposed the creoles' wishes for participation, the more they were willing to dare the uprising.

The radicalization of creole demands took place against the background of the increasing weakening of the central junta in Spain. In view of the state crisis, the members of this body had realized that they did not have the mandate to reorganize the political relations of Spain and the colonies. In return, the Spanish legal tradition provided for a general assembly, the Cortes. After long discussions, it was decided on 1 January 1810 to call

⁴⁵ Richard Hocquellet, "La publicidad de la Junta Central española, 1808–1810," in François-Xavier Guerra and Annick Lempérière, eds., *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica: Ambigüedades y problemas: Siglos XVIII–XIX* (Mexico City: Centro Francés de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos, 1998), 140–67.

⁴⁶ Eduardo Martiré, 1808: *Ensayo Histórico-Jurídico sobre la clave de la emancipación Hispanoamericana* (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Investigaciones de Historia del Derecho, 2001), 242–9.

⁴⁷ About the electoral procedures see also Víctor Peralta Ruiz, "Elecciones, constitucionalismo y revolución en El Cusco, 1809–1815," *Revista de Indias* 56: 206 (1996): 100–9; Nettie Lee Benson, "The Elections of 1809: Transforming Political Culture in New Spain," *Mexican Studies*, no. 20 (2004): 1–20; Jordana Dym, *From Sovereign Villages to National States: City, State, and Federation in Central America, 1759–1839* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 75–82; Valentín Paniagua Corazao, *Los orígenes del gobierno representativo en el Perú: Las elecciones, 1809–1826* (Lima: Fondo Editorial PUCP, 2003), 65–9.

elections to the Cortes in order to prevent the collapse of Spain. The assembly was to begin its work in September 1810. The elections, which now had to be held, took place under severe conditions, because in America autonomy movements gained momentum and civil wars broke out. This was also an expression of the creoles' dissatisfaction with the electoral process. Despite their significantly higher population, they were allowed far fewer representatives than the Spaniards.⁴⁸

The Spanish invitation to the Americans to send representatives, which came about under the pressure of the intensifying state emergency and was actually intended to weld the parts of the empire closer together, was ultimately to have a counterproductive effect. One reason for this was the discrepancy between the rhetoric of equality and the narrow-mindedness and paternalism that the Americans had to experience time and again in their dealings with the motherland and its officials. Another reason was the creole self-confidence that had grown since the end of the eighteenth century. Creoles were no longer satisfied with the more or less generous offers of participation and integration from Spain, but they were increasingly self-reliant and would quickly go beyond the demand for more autonomy. In the eyes of the creoles, the central junta, the Regency Council and, finally, the Cortes did not have the degree of legitimacy that seemed necessary to rule in the name of the king. Thus, the political crisis of the motherland caused by the international context in the Atlantic World led to an unprecedented politicization and radicalization of the colonies. If equality with Spain was not possible, it had to be achieved without Spain.

The year 1810 was to see creoles in many parts of America take a decisive step toward a more offensive pursuit of their own interests. The reasons for the creole pursuit of autonomy can be traced back to the multitude of internal and external crises of Spanish colonial rule at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For some time, the frustration of the creole elites had been accumulating, partly due to the imposition of Bourbon reforms. But an external shock was necessary to get the process going. The reason for the first phase of the independence movements in Spanish America was the Atlantic context, more precisely the reaction to the

⁴⁸ Portillo Valdés, *Crisis Atlántica*, 124–58; Roberto Breña, *El primer Liberalismo español y los procesos de Emancipación de América, 1808–1824: Una revisión historiográfica del Liberalismo hispánico* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2006), 131–40; Manuel Chust Calero, *La cuestión nacional americana en las Cortes de Cádiz* (Valencia: Biblioteca Historia Social, 1999), 36–41.

French invasion and the resulting collapse of the dynasty in Spain.⁴⁹ These events posed the problem of the legitimacy of rule and thus automatically the question of the modes of governance for public officials, whose authority was ultimately fed by the person of a king who was now absent. In fact, the very different movements in the American regions were linked by the common reference to the loss of legitimacy of the motherland by the forced resignation of Fernando VII and by the escalating crisis that began in 1808.

This argument was used by political leaders everywhere in America to defend their claims to autonomy and eventually even their declarations of independence. These were not hard revolutionary ruptures, but rather events in which the elites cautiously groped their way into unknown territory and gradually expanded their own ideas and demands. They were driven by the dynamics of the processes that they had triggered with their originally conservatively conceived actions. The developments remained integrated into a dense network of transatlantic interactions. The convening of the Spanish Cortes, the elections, and American participation brought about political upheavals that culminated in the liberal Constitution of Cádiz in 1812. The ideas of popular sovereignty and political representation formulated there were taken up by the creoles in America, and thus ultimately led to the demand for self-government. The Cortes policy toward America was an attempt to persuade the breakaway colonies to turn back peacefully.⁵⁰

There were great differences in the local processes, of course. It was not a uniform liberation movement, even if an older historiography or the view from outside often suggested this. On the other hand, the different processes that unfolded in the spaces already created in colonial times were also intertwined with each other and were to become increasingly entangled over the course of time. This applied, for example, to the northern Andean region or the Río de la Plata, where local juntas interlocked but also fought against each other.

The initiators belonged to the creole population whose political experience was limited. Within this stratum, the rich landowning oligarchy was generally more moderate in direction, while a more radical orientation could be found among younger, academically educated men from professions such as lawyers, pastors, and the military. They used city councils as a breeding

⁴⁹ John Lynch, "Spanish American Independence in Recent Historiography," in McFarlane and Posada, eds., *Independence and Revolution*, 17.

⁵⁰ See also Demetrio Ramos Pérez, *España en la independencia de América* (Madrid: Editorial MAPFRE, 1996), 325.

ground of local authority and used the tried and tested method of convening open city councils to emphasize their demands for regional autonomy and political change. Following, and with explicit reference to, the Spanish role models, they created governing juntas, which at first emphasized that they exercised governmental power in the name of the legitimate king. Only in the course of the following years did further steps emerge, when regional juntas finally declared independence.

The First Phase of Independence (1810–1814)

The early phase of independence was not completely unsuccessful despite the setbacks for the creole patriots caused by the reconquest of large portions by a Spanish expedition corps. Creoles invoked the old idea, generally shared among the Spanish kingdoms, that sovereignty should revert to the people in the absence of the monarch. The ideas of the Enlightenment, which until 1808 circulated only in secret, now gained importance as arguments in daily politics, which were carried out in new forms of publicity. On this basis the creole leaders succeeded – albeit often only temporarily – in pushing through the change of the system of government from the dynastic principle of divine grace and absolutism to the principle of popular sovereignty and the idea of citizenship.⁵¹ At the same time they tried to create identity by increasing reference to their own homeland region, the *patria*. The old motherland of Spain, on the other hand, became the stepmother, the other from whom one had to distinguish oneself. The creoles used different symbolic actions such as the construction of monuments and especially the reference to the Indigenous heritage. In this way they constructed a history of centuries of oppression and heroic resistance that could become foundational myths.

However, these constructions of identity did not carry far and so the independence movements were not able to assert themselves in this phase. It was therefore comparatively easy for the Spaniards to strike back in the motherland after the restoration and, with the exception of the Río de la Plata, to recapture all areas by 1816. One reason for this was Fernando's return and the repeal of the Constitution of 1812, as this seemed to clarify the question of legitimacy. The fact that the old viceroalties were strongholds of the royalists also contributed to Spanish military success. This applied in

⁵¹ For a critical study on the sovereignty of the people see Isabela Restrepo Mejía, "La soberanía del 'pueblo' durante la época de la Independencia, 1810–1815," *Historia Crítica*, no. 29 (2005): 101–23.

particular to Peru, and, after the suppression of the social revolutionary attempts under Hidalgo and Morelos, also to New Spain. For royal officers like the Peruvian viceroy Abascal even the regulations of Cádiz were excessive. They undermined them, true to the old motto “[o]ne obeys but does not execute,” to stop the dissolution of the Old Regime. Elsewhere the royalists were by no means defeated either and they were not only European Spaniards and their troops, but there was support from various social and ethnic camps.

Regionalism had an even more counterproductive effect. On the one hand, it resulted from different and sometimes contradictory interests of individual regions, for example in the question of free trade or inland navigation. In addition, personal animosities within the creole upper classes between rival caudillos and clan disputes torpedoed the common efforts in this phase. There was also a political element. The American patriots spoke of the sovereignty of the people, but did not yet mean the people of the state in the modern sense, but the corporate representation of individual communities.⁵² This meant that individual cities or provinces insisted on their independence and were prepared to fight for it. The smoldering contrast between the provinces and old centers of the colonial empire became tangible again.

This conflict was manifest in an increasing level of violence. What rose in many regions of Spanish America were not only anticolonial liberation movements, but also bloody civil wars for power. The militarization of society took on new dimensions through forced recruitment and war contributions that had to be paid by all social classes. The French ideal of the political soldier also played an important role. The new citizen (*ciudadano*) was the born soldier, and in many places joining the militia was a precondition for the right to vote. As a result, the deserter became a new enemy of the state, who was outside the order and had to be eradicated. The fact that the desertion figures nevertheless remained high in many places shows how little the mobilization efforts ultimately yielded.

This was not least due to the problematic treatment of the nonprivileged population by the creole upper classes. The use of the “Indios” as a symbol of oppression and the abolition of the Indigenous tributes did not mean that the precarious situation of the Indigenous population, which represented the majority in many places, had fundamentally changed. Indeed, in many cases

⁵² Riekenberg has developed this idea regarding the Río de la Plata in Michael Riekenberg, *Kleine Geschichte Argentinens* (Munich: Beck, 2009), 60–1.

their situation had been aggravated by the Crown's lax protection. Therefore, Indians also took up arms to defend the king as guarantor of the order. As a rule, however, they tried to stay out of the conflicts of the whites and secure the survival of their communities in uncertain times. In principle, this focus on one's own narrowly defined space resembled the attitude of most creoles, but there were also Indigenous groups engaged in wider political goals on either side.

It was undoubtedly the greatest weakness of the heterogeneous independence movements in this phase that large sections of the nonprivileged population remained excluded, and that leading patriots feared their participation after the events in France and Haiti. Francisco de Miranda had already summed this up in 1799, when he wrote to a friend: "We have two great examples in mind: the American Revolution and the French Revolution, let us carefully imitate the first; let us carefully avoid the fatal consequences of the second."⁵³ The sociorevolutionary potential of the uprisings was visible only exceptionally, as in the case of New Spain.

On the other hand, because of the growing importance of the public there was a willingness to appeal to the general population. In a flood of printed matter, sermons and political speeches, various interest groups turned to the lower classes and attempted to mobilize them for their purposes and instrumentalize them as power factors. Repeatedly, the urban masses intervened when juntas were to be founded and Spanish officials removed. However, the "broad masses" could not always be controlled in the desired sense, but pursued their own specific interests. Their protest developed a sometimes-threatening momentum of its own. This was due to the fact that equality was invoked in the appeals to the lower classes and the revolutionary rhetoric of freedom spread from the Atlantic context.

A certain political participation – even if only as *claqueurs* – was now actually possible for many for the first time. Men from the lower classes fought in the revolutionary armies to which they were lured with great promises. Later they were glorified and celebrated as heroes. This awakened expectations, which were usually not fulfilled, because the sociopolitical interests of most creoles were conservative. Hope, however, remained alive and could not simply be forgotten, even when the Spanish Crown set about turning back the wheel of history in 1814.

⁵³ Francisco de Miranda to Manuel Gual, London, 31 December 1799, quoted in Michael Zeuske, *Francisco de Miranda und die Entdeckung Europas: Eine Biographie* (Münster: Lit, 1995), 291.

The Road to Independence

The years 1814 and 1815 were dark years for the cause of the independence movements in America. The return of the king, according to the public statements of most local actors, should have meant the end of the uprising, because the juntas had claimed to rule in Fernando's name and were afraid of the radical measure of the final rupture for a long time. A peaceful return to the status quo ante did not and could not happen due to two factors. Firstly, the events in America and the idea of self-government had already taken on too much of a life of their own. For the new generation of liberators like Simón Bolívar or José de San Martín there could be no turning back. On the other hand, the harsh restoration policy of Fernando VII went far beyond what even the moderate creoles, which had been oriented toward the Constitution of Cádiz, were inclined to tolerate. Conflicts were therefore inevitable from May 1814 and they were to take place on two fronts, the inner-Spanish and the American.

Instead of reforms, Fernando VII had the Inquisition reintroduced and took back freedom of the press. He also sent the strongest military contingent in Spanish colonial history under the command of General Pablo Morillo to South America to reestablish the absolutist regime and silence the last trouble spots. This strategy was successful at first sight, as almost all areas except the Río de la Plata were reconquered by 1815. But those were pyrrhic victories. In 1815, not only Bolívar but most contemporary observers knew that the chance for a consensus was lost. Thus Fernando VII missed the opportunity to reunite the empire under his leadership, given the original willingness of the creoles to negotiate and the broad loyalty of the lower classes to the king.⁵⁴

Essential prerequisites for the comparative ease of the Spanish reconquest were the inner strife and regionalism of the independence movements. In addition, however, there was another central element, the existence of a royalist stronghold in the old Viceroyalty of Peru. From here, the troops that defeated the junta movement in Quito stopped the advancing army from Buenos Aires in High Peru and killed the *patria vieja* in Chile.⁵⁵ Peru was the royalist sting in the flesh of the republicans and the core to which the Spanish

⁵⁴ Michael P. Costeloe, *Response to Revolution: Imperial Spain and the Spanish American Revolutions, 1810–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 60–75.

⁵⁵ Julio M. Luqui-Lagleyze, "Por El Rey, La Fe y La Patria": *El Ejército Realista del Perú en la Independencia Sudamericana, 1810–1825* (Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa, Secretaría General Técnica, 2005), 322–9.

restoration could tie itself. In Peru, the upheavals that had rocked the neighboring regions since 1808 had passed almost without a trace. In view of the social structure of the viceroyalty, with its high Indigenous population and the experience of the great uprisings of the 1780s, the willingness to take revolutionary risks was particularly low in Peru.⁵⁶ Not even the Peruvian liberals, who had the *Mercurio Peruano* at their disposal at an early stage as a printing medium, dared to think beyond the boundaries of the colonial system.⁵⁷ A relatively large number of conservative aristocrats and European Spaniards wanted to secure the social status quo in these troubled times, anyway.⁵⁸ Accordingly, the reactions to the Spanish election calls in 1808–1809 in Peru were very moderate.

Lima, despite its control over the trade and credit system, was not to be equated with the entire viceroyalty, throughout which upheavals took place under the royalist surface. Even in the Capital in 1810 there had been individual conspiracies of liberal creoles, which had in vain suggested the founding of a junta. Larger revolts then took place mainly in the local provinces with the rebellion of Pumacahua in Cuzco in 1814–1815 as a climax.⁵⁹ Yet the royalists had the upper hand. The Viceroyalty of Peru remained a constant threat to the independence movements in neighboring regions.

Especially in the Río de la Plata, the danger emanating from the northern neighbor had already been felt painfully several times. The fight against the viceroy in Lima tied forces that were consequently lacking for the suppression of the resident inner provinces such as the opposing side of the river, the so-called “Banda Oriental” where the creoles rejected the claims to supremacy from the rival port city of Buenos Aires. Indeed, under governor – and later viceroy – Francisco Xavier Elío, Montevideo became a royalist stronghold, though causing the rise of a local resistance movement under José Gervasio Artigas. After all, the area including the United Provinces of South

⁵⁶ Flores Galindo, “Independencia y clases sociales,” in Flores Galindo, ed., *Independencia y revolución, 1780–1840*, vol. 1, 121–43.

⁵⁷ Carmen McEvoy, “‘Seríamos excelentes vasallos y nunca ciudadanos’: Prensa republicana y cambio social en Lima, 1791–1822,” in Iván Jaksic, ed., *The Political Power of the World: Press and Oratory in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2002), 34–63.

⁵⁸ Hamnett, “Process and Pattern,” 297–8.

⁵⁹ John R. Fisher, “The Royalist Regime in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1820–1824,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 32 (2000), 55–84; 59; Lizardo Seiner Lizárraga, “La rebelión de Tacna de 1811,” in Scarlett O’Phelan Godoy, ed., *La Independencia en el Perú: De los Borbones a Bolívar* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Instituto Riva-Agüero, 2001), 57–76.

America, and the Republic of Paraguay was a region in which the independence movements had been able to assert themselves. However, this was not so much due to their own strength, which was still small due to domestic instability, as to the isolation and lack of an energetic offensive on the part of the Spanish.⁶⁰

From Buenos Aires, under the command of General José de San Martín, the liberation of Chile and – at least indirectly – of the Banda Oriental could be prepared. This was not just a success story. The provincialist contrasts soon appeared in the Río de la Plata with undiminished severity. There were separatist tendencies that prevented the formation of a state for a long time. It was to take decades before the state of Argentina was united.⁶¹

The Spanish reconquest concentrated on the north of South America, especially New Granada and Venezuela. General Pablo Morillo recaptured large areas by the end of 1816 and subjected them to his ruthless regime. However, he provoked resistance. Bolívar returned to Venezuela as early as 1816 from exile in Haiti. Although he had to struggle with setbacks and rival caudillos, he was able to proclaim the Third Republic in the provincial city of Angostura in 1817. Bolívar was now prepared to take radical measures to assert himself. Thus he promised liberation to the slaves who were willing to fight for his cause. In addition, he allied himself with the leader of the cavalry of the *llaneros*, José Antonio Páez. After struggles that were by no means free of setbacks, in February 1819, at a congress in Angostura, he was able to announce his ideas for the drafting of the new state of Greater Colombia, which would include Venezuela, New Granada, and Quito. A little later, Bolívar led the victorious campaign in New Granada. The Battle of Boyacá (7 August 1819) tipped the balance in his favor.⁶²

The threat from the Spaniards remained despite the military success of Bolívar. They still controlled the important cities of Cartagena and Caracas and held strongholds in the old viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru. At the end of 1819 a new expeditionary corps was assembled in Cádiz, with whom

⁶⁰ Anna, *Spain and the Loss of America*, 158–88.

⁶¹ David Bushnell, *Reform and Reaction in the Platine Provinces, 1810–1852* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1983), 124–5; José Carlos Chiaramonte, “El federalismo argentino,” in Marcello Carmagnani, ed., *Estado y sociedad en América Latina, 1850–1930* (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1984), 94–5; Sergio Guerra Vilaboy, *El dilema de la Independencia: Las luchas sociales en la Emancipación Latinoamericana, 1790–1826*, 2nd edition (Bogotá: Fundación Universidad Central, 2000), 285–8.

⁶² Rebecca Earle, *Spain and the Independence of Colombia, 1810–1825* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 75–90; John Lynch, *Simón Bolívar: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 99–102.

General Morillo planned the reconquest. However, it could not run out because a liberal revolt in Spain gave the developments a decisive turn. There again a government junta was formed, which had the Constitution reinstated. The struggles against the independence movement were temporarily suspended and elections were scheduled. But the regions that had already achieved independence, such as the Río de la Plata, Chile, and “Gran Colombia,” were not prepared to participate in the elections. The lack of confidence in Spanish politics proved to be justified, as the “American question” quickly revealed the well-known discrepancies between the members of parliament from the colonies and the European Spaniards. From 1821, Spain sank into domestic chaos and many American delegates returned to their home regions before time. Now the step toward independence was not far off.⁶³

New Spain, which had been a royalist center in America since the suppression of the social revolution in 1815, regained a revolutionary dynamic. The participants, who were now primarily recruited from the creole ruling classes, deliberately proceeded cautiously in order to avoid the negative experiences of the early phase. In 1821, the officer Agustín de Iturbide opted for the compromise by which he was able to mobilize a majority in the so-called “Plan of Iguala.” According to this plan, New Spain was to become independent, but at the same time the Catholic religion was to be preserved as the state religion, a balance was to be struck between creoles and Spaniards, and the constitutional monarchy was to be introduced. This compromise formula, which united a wide range of interest groups from creole liberals to monarchists and even Spaniards, was unusual. As expected, Fernando VII rejected the crown offered to him by the Mexicans. Thereupon, Iturbide proclaimed himself emperor of a hereditary monarchy in May 1822. A year later the monarchical experiment came to an end. A republican constitution came into force in 1824.⁶⁴

The revolutionary events in Spain and Mexico also brought movement into the political landscape of Central America. The liberals, who advocated independence, and the conservatives, who were satisfied with reforms within the colonial system, confronted each other. In addition, there were pronounced local rivalries. Ultimately, the solution came from New Spain.

⁶³ Hans-Joachim König, *Auf dem Wege zur Nation: Nationalismus im Prozess der Staats- und Nationbildung Neu-Granadas 1750 bis 1856* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1988), 225–31.

⁶⁴ Breña, *El primer Liberalismo español*, 430–3; Timothy E. Anna, “Agustin de Iturbide and the Process of Consensus,” in Christon I. Archer, ed., *The Birth of Modern Mexico, 1780–1824* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003), 187–204.

The successful Iturbide militarily enforced Central America's annexation to Mexico at the beginning of 1822. With Iturbide's fall, however, this alliance also ended very quickly. The United Provinces of Central America dissolved and founded a federation comprising five more-or-less independent states.⁶⁵

In the north of the former colonial empire, independence was finally secured in 1821. Only in the Caribbean did the "always faithful island" of Cuba and Puerto Rico remain as the remains of the formerly proud empire. There, the creole upper classes had arranged themselves for the time being with the colonial system. These slaveholders profited from the sugar boom that the loss of production on neighboring islands such as Haiti promoted.

What remained was the still fiercely contested Andean region. The liberators Bolívar from the north and San Martín from the south forced independence here by means of a forceps-like attack. Militarily at eye level, the Venezuelan was the more successful politician. After a meeting of the two in Guayaquil in July 1822, San Martín, who had advocated a monarchical solution, voluntarily withdrew into European exile. Bolívar was unable to complete the military liberation of the Andean region until 1826. In Quito, Peru, and High Peru, the creole ruling classes greeted him with mixed feelings. In Quito, the invasion itself was already controversial, while in Lower and Upper Peru, Bolívar's troops were soon regarded more as occupiers than liberators.⁶⁶ The creoles of Peru feared social revolution and had therefore called a *protector* into the country in 1821. Although Upper Peru took the name Bolivia in honor of the "Liberator," here too opportunism led the elites in 1825 to join the cause of independence. The existing conditions for the establishment of the new republican order were therefore not necessarily good.⁶⁷

In fact, the independence movement quickly disintegrated after the end of the Spanish threat. The maintenance of the liberation army cost a lot of money and soon there were xenophobic riots in Peru and Bolivia. Bolívar's project of a large Andean confederation was doomed to failure. Frustrated, Bolívar's confidant, General Antonio José de Sucre, left Bolivia in 1828. The

⁶⁵ Carlos Meléndez Chaverri, *La Independencia de Centroamérica* (Madrid: Editorial Mapfre, 1993), 192–8.

⁶⁶ Timothy E. Anna, "The Peruvian Declaration of Independence: Freedom by Coercion," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 7 (1975), 221–69; Paniagua Corazao, *Los orígenes del gobierno representativo*, 274–8; Demetrio Ramos Pérez, *Entre el Plata y Bogotá: Cuatro claves de la Emancipación Ecuatoriana* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica del Centro Iberoamericano de Cooperación, 1978), 341–50.

⁶⁷ Jorge Siles Salinas, *La Independencia de Bolivia* (Madrid: Editorial MAPFRE, 1992), 325–30.



Map 1.2 The Spanish empire in 1824

“Liberator” himself had had to return to Greater Colombia two years earlier to halt the disintegration process that was looming there. By means of a dictatorship he wanted to stabilize the situation again. But this attempt failed just like the large-scale Pan-American Congress that Bolívar had convened in Panama in 1826. Disintegration ruled the day. Venezuela and Ecuador separated in 1830 from Greater Colombia, which now called itself New Granada again. The end of the Spanish threat had made the cohesion of the different regions superfluous. Now the old regionalisms clashed again with undiminished severity and led to nation-building wars.⁶⁸

In sum, in 1814, the relapse into reaction triggered resistance. Capital mistakes by a monarch and an anachronistic Spanish policy that stubbornly refused to face reality were decisive. The behavior of the Spanish military strengthened the fighting spirit even of those parts of the population that had fought for the king for a long time. It also deepened the ideological divide created by the unfulfilled promise of popular sovereignty and political representation. The royalist commanders did not fulfill the population’s longing for peace anywhere after their successes in the mid-1810s, and they unwittingly brought about a change of mind among many Spanish Americans through the burdens of recruitment and war contributions. From 1820 onwards, when the liberal revolution in Spain revived, chances

⁶⁸ Marta Irurozqui Victoriano, “De cómo el vecino hizo al ciudadano en Charcas y de cómo el ciudadano conservó al vecino en Bolivia, 1809–1830,” in Jaime E. Rodríguez O., ed., *Revolución, independencia y las nuevas naciones de América* (Madrid: Fundación Mapfre Tavera, 2005), 474–7.

of a compromise solution with autonomous kingdoms in America were frivolously squandered. This opened the door to the assertion of independence. The continuation of the fighting and the processes of disintegration immediately after the victory of the armies of independence showed, however, that the creole revolution leaders had not succeeded in taming the centrifugal forces within their own ranks.

Unfulfilled Promises

The independence revolutions in Spanish America had a common starting point in the French Revolution, the subsequent Napoleonic expansion, and the power vacuum on the Iberian Peninsula that followed. Everywhere the same question of the refoundation of legitimacy arose and ideas were exchanged in interregional and transatlantic transfer. The individual experiences of revolution, however, were very different when one compares, for example, Mexico with the other regions, or Chile with the central Andean region. Despite all the differences, there are clear interdependencies between the experiences, not only at the level of the political elites, but also at the level of the nonprivileged strata. Not only people, goods and ideas were exchanged during these revolutionary years, but also information about current developments.

The price of freedom was high, and the freedom gained in 1830 was limited in many ways. The political revolutions brought an end to colonial status, but independence began with new dependencies. The whole of Latin America was far from enjoying internal stability. After decades of war, the newly emerging states were too weak to establish a true republican order. The sovereign, the "people," remained a nebulous point of reference. The prerequisites and the political will of the elites were lacking for the implementation of a national state in the sense of a lasting community of values in these ethnically highly heterogeneous entities. The ethnic dimension in particular, which overlapped with the social problem, was a unique feature of the Spanish American revolutions of independence. It contributed to boosting the ideas of freedom, equality, and self-determination circulating worldwide, which the Spanish American elites also used, with a special revolutionary explosive force, because politicization had encompassed the entire social spectrum. Until 1830 and long after, this explosive force could not yet unfold. What remained, however, was the promise of the revolution, and that was not little.