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The Ideology of Creole Revolution

Today, Simón Bolívar is widely regarded as the greatest hero of Spanish America's struggle for independence, but his road to eternal fame and glory was rocky. The summer of 1815 found Bolívar struggling to overcome a serious reversal. Only two years after its founding, the Second Republic of Venezuela had followed the First into ruin, succumbing to simultaneous assaults by the regular forces of the Spanish Empire and an undisciplined, but effective loyalist insurgency spearheaded by *pardo* – or mixed-race – cattlemen from the colony's eastern plains. Bolívar retreated with what remained of his army from Caracas to the Caribbean port city of Cartagena before sailing into exile on the island of Jamaica. There, he published an account and defense of his efforts in pursuit of independence to date, emphasizing an important problem that he and his fellow patriots had encountered:

We are neither Indians nor Europeans, but a species midway between the legitimate owners of the land and the Spanish usurpers. Being Americans by birth and Europeans by right, we must both dispute the claims of natives and resist external invasion. Thus, we find ourselves in the most extraordinary and complicated situation.¹

Bolívar did not face this extraordinary and complicated situation alone. Here, he describes a dilemma that arose in each of the revolutions that freed the Americas, North and South, British and Spanish, from imperial rule. The Creoles – descendants of European settlers, born in the Americas – who led the American independence movements were, as Bolívar relates, caught between two worlds and torn by conflicting interests. They were deeply attached to the rights and privileges

they enjoyed as Europeans, but resentful of the political, economic, and social subordination that their American birth sometimes entailed. As a result, they were enthralled by the idea of exercising greater autonomy in the Americas, but also wary of the turmoil that severing ties with Europe might unleash. They knew that their colonial societies rested in delicate balance, always in danger of tipping over into tyranny or anarchy – toward, that is to say, more complete domination from across the Atlantic, or toward chaotic conflict with the African Americans, Native Americans, and mixed-race Americans that they lived amongst.

Ultimately, the task of defining and defending Creoles' distinctive interests fell to the political theorists of their revolutions, intellectuals and statesmen like Bolívar, who justified the Americas' independence movements before the court of global opinion, designed the Americas' first constitutions, and conducted the Americas' early foreign policies with an eye to sheltering Creoles' cherished rights from both foreign and domestic threats. As they grappled with the two-sided dilemma they faced in common, Creole revolutionaries across two continents developed a common ideology, marked by its contradictory embrace of both anti-imperialist and imperialist commitments. I analyze Bolívar's particular version of this ideology extensively in Chapter 5. In the following text, I describe the general form that Creole political thinking took throughout the hemisphere, showing how anti-imperial imperialism emerged from the extraordinary and complicated situation that the institutions of European imperialism imposed upon Creoles in every part of the Americas.

2.1 IDEOLOGY AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTRADICTION

It is worth beginning by clarifying exactly what is meant here by “ideology,” a term that is used quite diversely even in scholarly writing, not to mention political debate.² Contemporary political scientists use “ideology” to describe the usually unexpressed political beliefs or preferences that underlie individuals' political behavior, usually conceiving of ideologies as arranged along a spectrum defined by one or more axes, observable in patterns of roll-call voting (amongst elites) or survey responses (amongst masses).³ Meanwhile, contemporary political theorists and historians of political thought use the term, often with pejorative intent, to describe written or spoken political ideas that fail to achieve, or even to strive for, the standards of internal consistency and rational persuasiveness characteristic of political philosophy. Ideologies, in this definition, are ideas developed for merely instrumental purposes, in defense of particular

partisan interests, and not in pursuit of timeless truths.⁴ The second usage comes closer to the one I intend, though as in the first, here I shall treat ideologies as social phenomena susceptible to systematic explanation. To this end, I make a virtue out of ideology's defining vice, explaining the contradictions present in the ideas I examine by reference to the partisan interests they were developed to defend. This approach recalls an older, but still influential use of the term ideology, most closely associated with Karl Marx.⁵

In 1845, Marx argued that the idealist German philosophy of his day fundamentally misunderstood the relationship between material reality and human thinking, treating the world as if it were a product or artifact of our understanding when their true relationship was the reverse. "Life," as he put it, "is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life." Hegel and his followers fetishized ideas, ascribing to them an autonomous existence and historical evolution that severed the connection between thought and the context in which it occurred, covering over the conditions in which particular ideas arose and thus failing to grasp the specific functions that they served. Properly understood, Marx wrote, "Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness ... have no history, no development" of their own. Rather, "men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking."⁶ A history of ideologies, then, should begin with a history of ideologues, and of the societies in which they lived.

Marx provided an outline for such a history, describing progressive stages of social development, distinguished one from another by the "forms of ownership" that structured economic production and exchange. As these forms of ownership evolved along with advances in productive technologies, societies divided and redivided into classes: groups of individuals owning similar amounts of the raw materials, machines, and labor power that comprised their societies' "means of production." In all but the most primitive societies, Marx argued, disparities of ownership between classes permitted some classes to benefit at others' expense, generating an "antagonistic" system of opposed interests and an inherently unstable social dynamic, prone to disruptive conflict. Ideologies emerge out of this conflict.

In Marx's account, dominant classes, interested in the maintenance of advantageous forms of ownership, seek stability by building a "legal and political superstructure ... to which correspond definite forms

of social consciousness” upon the “real foundation” provided by the economic structure of society.⁷ In other words, political thinkers associated with dominant classes develop ideologies in order to contain the conflicts that class divisions cause, legitimizing or disguising the exploitation of dominated classes by misrepresenting contingent features of society as if they were natural and inevitable, or by suggesting that existing institutions satisfy universally valid ideals. Meanwhile, in moments of “social revolution,” political thinkers associated with insurgent classes employ the same strategies in order to attract support for the reform or abolition of the institutions that facilitate their exploitation:

Each new class which [would] put itself in the place of [the] one ruling before it is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, that is, ... it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones. The class making a revolution [presents itself] from the very start, ... not as a class but as the representative of the whole of society; it appears as the whole mass of society confronting the one ruling class.⁸

Thus, the political and philosophical debates that occupied the intellectuals of Marx’s day, “the struggle between democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, the struggle for the franchise, etc., etc.,” could be better understood as “the illusory forms in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought out among one another.”⁹ For the most part, Marx himself was interested in the strategic implications of this conclusion, but his concept of ideology offers scholarly direction as well. It suggests that in order to account for the emergence of a particular ideology at a particular time within a particular setting, one should reconstruct the economic structure of the society, noting its characteristic forms of ownership and class divisions, asking what institutions the ideology in question was meant to legitimize and which class’s interests those institutions would serve.

By describing the political ideas of the American independence movements as an “ideology,” then, I mean to suggest, following Marx, that they should be understood as products of a conflict between classes with opposed interests. The political theorists that helped define and defend these struggles developed their arguments in order to defend institutional arrangements that would “advance the interests of [their own] particular party or class,”¹⁰ as they thought, wrote, and spoke. However, in applying this concept of ideology to the American independence movements,

I make two important qualifications to Marx's original exposition of the term.

First, and most fundamentally, in order to develop an account of the class struggle that gave rise to the American independence movements, I replace the traditional Marxian schema of classes distinguished by their disparate ownership of economic assets, evolving in a prescribed series of historical stages, with a more flexible theory, which allows other forms of inequality, varying over space as well as in time, to structure class conflicts and the ideologies to which they give rise. Specifically, as noted in Chapter 1, I reject Marx's distinction between "illusory" conflicts over political institutions and the "real struggles" of economic classes, allowing political institutions themselves to create class distinctions and invest the members of different classes with opposed interests, causing conflicts amongst classes and influencing the political ideas of their participants.¹¹ The institutions that most proximately structured the American independence movements were the institutions of European imperialism in the Americas.

It is useful, heuristically, to consider the institutions of European imperialism in the Americas in terms of three "constitutions" – written and unwritten arrangements of authority that allotted unequal political power and privileges to groups of people: (1) within European, or metropolitan, societies; (2) within American, or colonial, societies; and (3) between European metropolises and their American colonies, or, said another way, within the empires as wholes.¹² Each of these three constitutions created classes with conflicting interests: Members of distinct social estates and orders contended within metropolitan societies; representatives of separate racial castes struggled within colonial societies; and the European- and American-born grappled within the empires as wholes. The three constitutions also overlapped, subjecting individuals and groups to institutions that sometimes reinforced and sometimes cut across lines of privilege characteristic of metropolitan, colonial, and imperial societies. The Creoles whose political thought forms the subject of this study occupied an institutional position structured by cross-cutting benefits and burdens, which invested them with interests different from those of fellow Europeans born in Europe, on the one hand, and from fellow Americans of African or Indigenous descent, on the other.

This leads to a second necessary qualification. In his programmatic statements, Marx depicted class relations in polarized, binary terms, with each stage of social development in his progressive history defined by conflict between two opposed classes. The *Communist Manifesto* famously

described the “history of all hitherto existing society” as “the history of class struggles” waged by “freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed.” The advent of capitalism only intensified this Manichean tendency, creating “two great classes directly facing each other, Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.”¹³ Applying this framework, modified according to the terms in the preceding text, to the American societies that form the subject of this study would yield a polarized binary – colonizer and colonized, perhaps – incapable of accommodating Creoles, who, as Benedict Anderson aptly observed, “constituted simultaneously a colonial community and an upper class.”¹⁴ To more precisely describe the unique institutional position of the American Creoles, we have to attend to the ways in which the empires’ three constitutions overlapped.

Over the more than three-hundred-year-long course of European imperial rule in the Americas, the specific institutions governing the internal socio-racial hierarchy of the colonies took on a range of forms, and important variations also existed both within and between the territories claimed by different imperial powers.¹⁵ In the early years of settlement, colonial constitutions in British and Spanish America tended to reproduce the institutional arrangements of their metropolises, recreating “societies of orders” across the Atlantic, in which corporate memberships and inherited properties defined political, economic, and social privileges. Eventually, though, in every part of the Americas claimed, colonized, and ruled by Europeans, “a concept of nobility based fundamentally on the notion of purity of blood arose in contrast to one which reserved the title and status of nobles to an inevitably small number of families whose members had in the economic system and in society very clearly defined functions.”¹⁶ The specific institutions that accomplished this separation between European settlers and American-born Creoles of European descent, on the one hand, and African, Indigenous, and mixed-race Americans, on the other, facilitated the latter groups’ simultaneous economic exploitation, political exclusion, and social marginalization.

For example, as African slaves replaced white indentured servants as laborers on plantations across southeastern North America in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, colonial assemblies adopted laws that prohibited even free men of African descent from voting in local elections, holding offices, or testifying in court. Other laws and city ordinances punished miscegenation and intermarriage, and discouraged the baptism of African and mixed-race children.¹⁷ At

the same time, land-grant policies, franchise laws, and naturalization procedures, lowered barriers to economic advancement, political participation, and social equality for poor whites, including those who had only very recently arrived from Europe. In this sense, as Rogers Smith has argued, “[British] Americans went beyond any explicit provisions in English law and gave legal expression to an increasingly racialized sense of their identity so powerful that the very humanity of these outsiders was denied.”¹⁸ Both formal and informal institutions shaped British America’s emerging racial hierarchy, with written laws and vigilante justice reinforcing a conflictual division of colonial identities and interests.

Similarly, the Spanish imperial practice of governing indigenous communities through separate *Repúblicas de Indios*, a form of indirect rule, and the *encomienda*, a tribute system, not only excluded Native Americans from the colonies’ political and civil society organizations, but also facilitated the extraction of their labor and their forced conversion to Catholicism, giving juridical effect to the elevation of *peninsulares* and *criollos* over *indios*, *negros*, and *castas*, or mixed-race Americans.¹⁹ Creoles fiercely defended these institutions against admittedly less than philanthropic metropolitan efforts to diminish the social and legal distinctions between the colonies’ racial castes and ameliorate exploitation and abuse, rioting against the abolition of the *encomienda*, and protesting late colonial-era policies that offered mixed-race Americans the opportunity to purchase certificates attesting to their racial purity.²⁰ Examples such as these could be multiplied, further illustrating the myriad ways in which the colonial constitutions of all the European empires in the Americas endowed Creoles with rights and privileges that were denied to indigenous, African, and mixed-race Americans, creating differently interested classes of colonial inhabitants.

But the American Creoles’ institutional position was defined not only by the constitutions of their colonies but also by the constitutions of their empires, which placed all Americans, Creoles included, in a subordinate position with respect to Europeans. The British and Spanish American empires were both, formally speaking, “composite monarchies”: assemblages of separate territories united by a common sovereign in the person of the king.²¹ This implied a fundamental legal equality between the empires’ subjects in the Old World and the New – between, for example, *Valencianos* and *Novohispanos*, or Bristolians and Bostonians. However, what this equality should mean in practice was a question subjected to near-continuous contestation in both the English and Spanish Americas virtually from the moment the empires were first established.

Much debate centered on a fraught distinction between the colonies' "internal" and "external" affairs, or between domestic matters on which colonists demanded a degree of autonomy, and matters relating to foreign policy and commerce, which colonists conceded were rightfully regulated by metropolitan governments.²² In instance after instance, colonists and metropolitan governments disagreed about exactly where the line between internal and external affairs should be drawn, and about what sacrifices it was reasonable to expect the colonies to make on behalf of the empires to which they belonged. All too often, colonists saw metropolitan preferences imposed by royal proclamation or parliamentary legislation, and lamented their lack of representation or the disadvantages distance imposed on their lobbyists. Worse yet, imperial policies were enforced by ecclesiastical, military, and administrative organs of imperial government within the colonies, whose empty posts were frequently filled by new arrivals from overseas rather than established settlers, leading colonists to conclude that their trans-Atlantic isolation produced more malign than benign neglect.²³

It is clear, then, that Marx's classic conception of conflict between binary sets of polarized classes cannot account for the social position of the American Creoles. At once dominant as Europeans within American colonies, and dominated as Americans within European empires, Creoles were neither colonizers nor colonized, but both. In this sense, their institutional position resembled what the sociologist Erik Olin Wright, in his attempt to account for the distinctive interests and ideologies of the "middle classes" of managers and professionals common in advanced capitalist societies, called a "contradictory class location." Individuals in this category, who work for a wage but also possess substantial endowments of financial or human capital, are neither bourgeois nor proletarian, in Marx's terms, but both. Their position is "contradictory," Wright argues, "precisely in the sense that [it] partakes of both sides of ... inherently contradictory interests."²⁴ In thought and deed, then, the middle class exhibits contradictions that cannot be captured by Marx's polarized binaries.

The overlapping constitutions of European imperialism placed Creoles in a position with analogous contradictions, offering simultaneous advantages and disadvantages, opportunities to exploit and to be exploited. As a result, Creoles developed interests in the maintenance, reform, or abolition of imperial institutions that sometimes pushed them into alliance with Europeans and sometimes pushed them into alliance with Indigenous or African Americans, but often pushed them into simultaneous conflict

with both. Creoles' contradictory institutional position, and the contrary allegiances and interests it inspired, would be reflected in ideological contradictions as institutional changes in their societies moved them gradually toward revolution and independence.

2.2 THE INSTITUTIONAL ORIGINS OF THE CREOLE REVOLUTIONS

Despite its contradictions, European rule of the Americas persisted and advanced for almost three centuries, aided and abetted by the expansion of Creole communities across two continents. Over the course of the eighteenth century, however, reforms to each of the European empires' three constitutions were perceived by Creoles as threats to their cherished institutional advantages, and portents of further despised institutional disadvantages, hastening their disenchantment with imperial rule and causing the conflicts that ultimately exploded into the American independence movements. The most fundamental revisions were occasioned by warfare between Europe's imperial powers, the costs of which caused metropolitan governments in both Spain and Britain to expand authority they wielded within their empires, and to curtail the autonomy of colonial assemblies, city councils, and other Creole-dominated political institutions.

The War of the Spanish Succession, fought between 1701 and 1714, ended Spain's long-standing Habsburg dynasty and installed a Bourbon successor, while also dramatically reducing the claims of the Spanish Crown within Europe, leaving the new monarch, Felipe V, with an empire consisting mainly of present-day Spain and Spanish America. Felipe V and his heirs, Fernando VI and Carlos III, sought to reverse Spain's relative decline amongst Europe's great powers by instituting a broad set of economic and administrative reforms, both within Spain itself and its overseas possessions.²⁵ In order to increase returns from the Americas to the royal treasury, some outdated restrictions on intercolonial trade were relaxed, but at the same time much more stringent oversight of colonial agriculture, industry, commerce, and tax collection was established by the creation of new territorial divisions and the installation of a new layer of bureaucracy – an intendency system modeled on the one Felipe V's grandfather, Louis XIV, had imposed on France.

As the historian Jaime Rodríguez writes, the Bourbons generally “rejected the Habsburg concept of *federated* kingdoms, insisting instead upon a united and centralized Spain ruling over its overseas

possessions.”²⁶ The Bourbon reforms were not implemented with even intensity over the entirety of Spanish America, and particular policies had disparate effects on different regions, depending on the nature of their economies and the effectiveness of enforcement.²⁷ Speaking broadly, though, the shift to Bourbon rule and its attendant reforms had negative implications for Spanish America’s Creoles, who found themselves completely excluded from posts they had previously occupied in the colonial *audiencias* – supreme judicial and administrative courts with broad territorial competence – and thus deprived of the autonomy they thought they deserved as equal subjects of Spain’s composite monarchy.²⁸

A few decades later, following their triumphant, but expensive, engagement with France and Spain in the Seven Years’ War – actually fought over a longer period, from 1754 to 1763 – the British were also seized by a reformist impulse. While the war inspired a new sense of loyalty amongst the Creoles in the colonies, who viewed its outcome as a result of their own military efforts and an important step toward their predestined expansion over the North American continent, metropolitan Britons emphasized, instead, the colonists’ “vexatious” habit of citing their “rights and privileges” in order to avoid fulfilling fiscal and material requisitions made for the war effort, and colonial merchants’ refusal to cease trade with neutral and enemy powers. At the same time, the war heightened the British government’s awareness of the importance of the colonies and colonial trade to Britain’s rise amongst the world’s ranks of great powers, and redoubled their commitment to stamping out any signs of colonial disposition to “independency” before it could spread.

Thus, as Jack P. Greene notes, “The experience of the Seven Years’ War ... sent the postwar expectations of men on opposite sides of the Atlantic veering off in opposite directions.”²⁹ Just as Creoles expected to be rewarded for their service with an augmented representation in London and greater autonomy in colonial affairs, an overseas ministry under George Grenville was doing its best to “restrict [the colonies’] scope for economic and political activity,” while reducing the costs of maintaining the empire and imposing a greater share of the remainder on the colonists themselves.³⁰ To this end, new taxes and customs controls were adopted, and old ones were more energetically enforced by new cadres of excise men, enlarged squadrons of Royal Navy ships, and the permanent stationing of some 7,500 professional soldiers in the colonies. As in Spanish America, these innovations aroused passionate resentment, and at times, determined resistance, amongst British American Creoles.³¹

Eighteenth-century modifications to imperial constitutions coincided with a series of pseudoscientific publications that cast Americans in a distinctly negative light. The French naturalist Georges-Louis Le Clerc, Comte de Buffon, claimed in a work published at mid-century that there were fewer animal species in the New World than the Old, and that American animals were smaller, weaker, and less sexually active than their European counterparts. He attributed these differences to the presence of “moist and poisonous vapors” and lower average temperatures in the Americas, providing a climatic explanation of American underdevelopment, which was well received by Europeans confident of their global superiority and recently impressed by Montesquieu’s observations on the connection between climate and political institutions. Buffon’s ideas were pursued further by Cornelius de Pauw, a Dutch naturalist, who advanced the field mainly by extending Buffon’s observations to the humans of the New World. De Pauw claimed that Americans were smaller, weaker, less hirsute, and less libidinous than Europeans.

While remaining focused on humidity and temperature as root causes of American inferiority, de Pauw described the New World as degenerate rather than underdeveloped, noting that even European species achieved a smaller size and adopted a more passive demeanor when transplanted across the Atlantic. This set the stage for the Abbé Raynal and his fellow *encylopédiste* Denis Diderot to draw out the political implications of Buffon and de Pauw’s climatic theories, bringing them back, in a way, to where they began with Montesquieu, by arguing that climate-driven degeneration could explain some of the famous crimes committed by European settlers in the New World, as well as the tendency of its peoples to be governed by despotic governments.³²

Of course, Europeans had long described Indigenous Americans as backward and uncivilized, employing these observations to justify the conquest, with its forced religious conversions, violent territorial acquisitions, slavery, and other forms of exclusion and domination.³³ Creoles also relied upon this image of the savage to justify their expropriation of Indian lands and labor. However, the pseudoscience of climate and geography that de Pauw, in particular, had used to reframe this familiar theme presented clear and problematic implications for Creoles: If the American climate, rather than race or culture, was responsible for Native Americans’ civilizational deficits – if, indeed, European species degenerated upon exposure to the New World’s temperature and vapors – then Creoles, too, could be described as inferior, and justifiably subjected to the treatment Europeans accorded their inferiors.

Predictably, the Creole response to the threat implied by the new naturalism was furious, their cause championed by luminaries including the New Spaniard Francisco Javier Clavigero, the Chilean Giovanni Ignazio Molina, the Quiteño Juan de Velasco, the Pennsylvanian Benjamin Franklin, and the Virginian Thomas Jefferson.³⁴ As they churned out reams of criticism of Buffon, de Pauw, and Raynal, these intellectuals contributed to the development of class consciousness amongst the Creoles within each empire,³⁵ heightening awareness of the imminent threats not only to the equality with European-born Britons and Spaniards enshrined in their imperial constitutions, but also to the superiority vis-à-vis non-white Americans enshrined in their colonial constitutions.

Creoles were particularly concerned with the ways in which reforms to imperial constitutions might change colonial constitutions as well – the prospect, in other words, that increased metropolitan oversight might impinge upon their own interactions with African, Indigenous, or mixed-race inhabitants of the colonies. They had grown accustomed to broad autonomy in this area, a consequence of the difficulty involved in enforcing policy across an ocean without the cooperation of local elites. The humanitarian “New Laws,” imposed by Emperor Charles V in 1542, forbade the granting of new *encomiendas*, or rights to the labor and tribute of indigenous communities, revoked the perpetuity of existing grants of *encomienda*, and imposed stricter new regulations on conditions under which Indigenous Americans could work. They were met by furious protest in the Americas. Rebellious *conquistadores* beheaded the Viceroy of Peru when he informed them of the empire’s new policies. His counterpart in New Spain escaped a similar fate only by declining to enforce the New Laws until their main provisions were repealed.³⁶

By the second half of the eighteenth century, much had changed. In 1763, George III issued a royal proclamation that dramatically revised the procedure by which British American colonists could acquire new land from Indigenous communities. Seeking to restrain the often fraudulent or forced purchases that land speculators had come to rely on as means of increasing profits, the Proclamation established a line running through the colonies of New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. All future settlement west of the line was forbidden, and existing settlers were directed to decamp immediately. East of the line, settlers were prohibited from bargaining or transacting personally or on their own behalf with members of Indian tribes; all future land purchases would be made in the name of the Crown, by Crown-appointed colonial governors.³⁷

To be sure, even with the fortified administrative apparatus installed in the colonies in the course of the Seven Years' War, the Proclamation of 1763 was not perfectly enforced, and the Crown's efforts to intercede on its Indigenous subjects' behalf had some perverse unintended consequences. Nonetheless, the law caused sufficient inconvenience for British American speculators, and represented a real enough threat to American Creoles' cherished privileges, that it was cited amongst the "long train of abuses" perpetrated by the king against his American subjects that the signers of the Declaration of Independence felt authorized their break with imperial rule.³⁸

Ultimately, however, and interestingly, for both British and Spanish American Creoles, the most proximate impetus to rebellion were not reforms that modified either imperial or colonial constitutions, but shifting balances of power in the metropolises. In British America, as is well known, the growing authority of Parliament, vis-à-vis the Crown, became central to the arguments that Creoles made against taxes and duties imposed upon their colonies by Parliament in the late 1760s and 1770s. In the years leading up to their revolution, colonists, who would soon call themselves patriots, appealed to King George III to assert his prerogative and veto acts affecting the colonies but originating in a legislature where colonists had no representation. Though this "patriot royalism" has often been dismissed as a rhetorical or legal contortion, recent scholarship has shown that in rejecting Parliament's assertion of authority, British North Americans were fighting "to preserve a constitutional structure that they had assumed to be permanent – or at least not alterable without their consent – and which now seemed under deadly assault."³⁹ Creoles viewed the king's prerogative as a critical bulwark of the formal legal equality they cherished, and which Parliamentary sovereignty threatened to overturn.

The parallels present in the lead-up to Spanish America's struggles for independence are likely less well known to English-language readers. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, Napoleon's conquests rearranged alliances amongst Europe's great powers, placing Spain in league with France against Britain and Portugal. In 1807, King Carlos IV gave French troops permission to cross Spanish territory on their way to Portugal, an important gap in Napoleon's "continental system." Soon after, a palace coup by the Spanish heir apparent, Fernando VII, provided Napoleon with a pretense for imprisoning both claimants and placing his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, on the Spanish throne. Spaniards rose in resistance to this imposition, with local notables in

urban areas meeting in provisional committees, or *Juntas*, to collect funds and empower officers.

In order to better organize the resistance nationwide, a *Junta Central Suprema* was formed in 1808 and calls were issued for deputies to be elected from all of Spain's provinces, including the American colonies. However, there was a problem: while the *Junta Central* asked each Spanish province to send two deputies, only one deputy each was allotted to the nine American kingdoms and captaincies-general. The result was thirty-six peninsular deputies versus nine from the Americas, which had a population equal to or even greater than Spain. Thus, while Spanish Americans responded to Napoleon's invasion with declarations of loyalty to Fernando VII, many refused to recognize the authority of the *Junta Central*.⁴⁰ In the Spanish Empire, as in the British Empire, then, colonial rebellion was preceded and inspired by a shift of authority within the metropole from a monarchical to a representative institution. The unequal basis on which metropolitan Spaniards proposed to represent their overseas countrymen in the *Junta Central*, like the complete exclusion of British Americans from Parliament, caused Spanish American Creoles to conclude that their metropole considered them second-class citizens, and prodded them into revolt.

Though retrospect tends to surround the events that most profoundly shape history in an aura of inevitability, it is important to recognize the counterintuitive and contingent qualities of the Creole revolutions. There were Americans with much more profound grievances to air, and much stronger interests to pursue than the Creole patriots that overthrew the empires of the New World, as the slaves of Saint Domingue would demonstrate. Only a complex conjuncture of institutional reforms, simultaneously affecting the imperial, colonial, and metropolitan constitutions of British and Spanish America, could have convinced Creoles throughout the hemisphere to desert the familiar inconveniences of imperial rule for the much more menacing uncertainties of independence. That the Americas were freed by the descendants of European colonists was not inevitable, but the fact that the American independence movements *were* Creole Revolutions explains much about the ideas and institutions they produced.

2.3 ANTI-IMPERIAL IMPERIALISM

If we adopt the foregoing analysis of the American Creoles' contradictory institutional position, and the modified Marxian understanding of the

relationship between institutional position and ideology developed in the preceding text, what expectations should we have regarding the ideologies that would emerge in the course of the Creole Revolutions? Perhaps obviously, we might expect that they will be *contradictory*, advancing mutually exclusive projects, and defending them by reference to opposed principles or ideals. We should also expect to observe convergences amongst Creole political thinkers on ideas and institutional arrangements that advanced their class's particular interests, reconciling the internal antagonism of colonizer and colonized. Here, I argue that as they grappled with the philosophical and political dilemmas imposed by their contradictory institutional position, Creole political theorists converged upon an ideology that was both anti-imperialist and imperialist at the same time.

Here again, some terminological reflection is in order. Michael Doyle's definition of empire – "relationships of political control imposed by some political societies over the effective sovereignty of other political societies" – is a common touch point, admirable for its ability to capture a wide range of cases without describing "all forms of international inequality" as *ipso facto* imperial.⁴¹ But Doyle's parsimonious concept does not convey some of the connotations that "empire" has carried in the history of political thought, and, by describing empire as a relationship between two or more "political societies," Doyle's discerning definition rules out patently imperial forms of territorial expansion that abolish borders and erase distinctions by eliminating or assimilating conquered communities.

As Anthony Pagden shows in his comparative history of imperial ideologies, the immense influence of Rome as an exemplar of *imperium* lent the term *empire* itself a sense not only of domination or control, but also of assimilation. An empire is a "kind of political, and cultural, unity created out of different states widely separated in space." The medium of imperial assimilation is "civilization." For its Roman ideologues, the "ethical purpose" of imperial expansion was the "exportation" of *civitas*: the forceful induction of outsiders into a set of customary practices and, crucially, a system of laws that enabled those subject to them to pursue uniquely human ways of living. Empire "had the power to transform all those who entered it. So long, that is, as you were outside it, a barbarian or a provincial, you were in some sense less than human. Once inside, you would in time become 'civilized.'"⁴²

Importantly, imperial expansion transformed not only Rome's provinces, but also its metropole, enabling the Roman emperors to rise on the ruins of the Republic. For subsequent theorists of empire, Rome demonstrated that a republic could be or become an empire, but also

illustrated what Hannah Arendt would describe as imperialism's "boomerang effect" – the tendency of territorial expansion abroad to promote political centralization at home.⁴³ Consequently, as Pagden notes, empire also came to mean consolidated and especially monarchical authority.

Doyle's definition of empire as an inter-national control and Pagden's Rome-centered intellectual history of imperialism must be supplemented, finally, with an account of the internal dynamics of imperial societies, aptly described by Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper as the "politics of difference." For all their assimilative effects, empires are "polities that maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate new people ... the concept of empire presumes that different people will be governed differently."⁴⁴ Not all empires are colonial, settling specially privileged metropolitan émigrés in conquered territories amongst indigenous or other populations. But social stratification and legal pluralism, either within conquered territories or between conquered territories and the metropole, is characteristic of imperial rule.⁴⁵

In all these senses of the term, the ideology of Creole Revolution was anti-imperial. The polities that Creole political theorists sought first to reform and then to destroy were empires, products of territorial conquests that united widely separated communities under a single, overarching authority. It was precisely the imperial features of those polities – the inequalities that they imposed upon peripheral populations – that formed the central object of Creoles' condemnation and eventual case for independence. Even after American Creoles won their independence, their political thinking remained anti-imperial, focused on crafting domestic political institutions and approaches to foreign policy that would insulate their societies against reconquest, and aid other Americans in their own efforts to overthrow European rule.

However, the ideology of Creole Revolution was also imperial. Creole political theorists aimed, from the outset, to preserve the privileges that, as the descendants of Europeans, they enjoyed at the expense of Indigenous and African Americans, often making the threat posed to these privileges by continued submission to Europe an important part of their calls to arms. They designed constitutions with an eye to containing the conflicts that they knew their still-stratified colonial societies might produce. To this end, they adopted modes of organizing authority over immense territories and dividing powers within central governments modeled on the constitutions of their imperial predecessors. And they defended efforts to expand their new states' territories beyond existing borders and to consolidate control over previously unincorporated populations as means

of spreading what they regarded as a uniquely enlightened way of living under political institutions animated by ideals they had discovered in the course of fighting for their freedom.

Thus, the ideology of Creole Revolution can be described as anti-imperial imperialism, and this contradiction can be understood as the product of the distinctive two-sided struggle that Creoles encountered as they fought to extricate themselves from European rule. Anti-imperial imperialism took on different forms as the Creole Revolutions progressed, appearing clearly in three ubiquitous problems of Creole political thought: (1) justifying rebellion against European rule in the Americas; (2) designing constitutions to govern independent American states; and (3) defining an approach to foreign relations both within the hemisphere and around the world.

2.4 CREOLE RIGHTS

Throughout the Americas, the years leading up to declarations of independence were characterized by profound reflection on basic questions in political theory: the origins and purposes of government, the reciprocal obligations of sovereign and subjects, and most importantly, the conditions under which individuals could legitimately dissolve the political entities to which they belonged. Much scholarship has centered on whether the rights that colonial patriots denounced their respective metropolises for violating and eventually fought to preserve were particular, grounded in Creoles' historical and legal understandings of their rights as Englishmen and Spaniards, or universal, emerging from early modern natural rights theories and Enlightenment rationalism, and claimed by Creoles simply as persons. Most scholars agree that, in the course of the American independence movements, particularist rights were found inadequate, offering too narrow a foundation for the broad autonomy Creoles wished to claim.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, as some studies have noted, universalist accounts were too broad, carrying implications for the internal reform of colonial societies that few Creoles would wish to endorse.⁴⁷

Though this dilemma has been described before, few works have highlighted the middle ground upon which many canny Creoles ultimately converged on in their attempts to justify American independence. Both British and Spanish Americans argued that rebellion against European rule was a legitimate means of preserving a set of privileges more expansive than the particular rights of Englishmen or Spaniards, but less inclusive than the universal rights of man – a set of rights that the ideologists of Creole

Revolution claimed specifically *as Creoles*, that is, as the descendants of the conquerors of the New World.

In 1774, the Virginian planter and polymath Thomas Jefferson drafted instructions for his colony's delegates to the first Continental Congress, directing them to propose that a petition be sent to King George III. The petition should request, Jefferson wrote, that "as chief magistrate of the British empire," George III intercede on the colonists' behalf, exercising his royal prerogative to negate the "many unwarrantable encroachments and usurpations, attempted to be made by the legislature of one part of the empire" – that is, Parliament – "upon those rights which God and the laws have given equally and independently to all." Jefferson's instructions, later published as *A Summary View of the Rights of British Americans*, took pains to remind the king that the colonists' "ancestors, before their emigration to America, were the free inhabitants of the British dominions in Europe," emphasizing that by choosing to cross the Atlantic, they did not divest themselves or their descendants of their rights as Britons, or consent to any "claim of superiority or dependence asserted over them by the mother country from which they had migrated." To the contrary, Jefferson argued, "America was conquered, and her settlements made ... at the expence of individuals, and not of the British public. [The settlers'] own blood was spilt in acquiring lands for their settlements, their own fortunes expended in making that settlement effectual."⁴⁸ Thus, in the process of settling the New World, settlers had acquired new rights for themselves and for their descendants: rights to the lands they conquered, rights to use or trade the products of their own and their dependents' labor as it suited their interests, and the right to consent to the laws that governed their societies, through representatives seated in colonial assemblies and legislatures.⁴⁹

Parliament's attempts to legislate for the colonies – to change the terms upon which British Americans acquired lands or contracted labor, paid taxes, or stood trial – abrogated these hard-won rights and introduced a profound threat to Creole's cherished liberties. For what reason, Jefferson asked, should "160,000 electors in the island of Great Britain give law to four millions in the states of America, every individual of whom is equal to every individual of them, in virtue, in understanding, and in bodily strength?" Here, Jefferson's insistence on Creoles' moral, mental, and physical equality to metropolitan Britons hearkens back to the debates on Buffon's theory of degeneration and foreshadows the grounds upon which he himself would later defend Indigenous expropriation and African slavery.

Indeed, Jefferson seems concerned that he and his fellow Creoles might share these unfortunate peoples' fate if Parliament's overreach was not stopped. "History has informed us," he wrote, "that bodies of men, as well as individuals, are susceptible of the spirit of tyranny." If the colonies failed to resist Parliament's assertion of authority, "instead of being a free people, as we have hitherto supposed, and mean to continue ourselves, we should suddenly be found the slaves not of one but of 160,000 tyrants." The *Summary View* closes by insisting that "it is neither our wish, nor our interest, to separate from" the British empire, asking only that the King "[n]o longer persevere in sacrificing the rights of one part of the empire to the inordinate desires of another; but deal out to all equal and impartial right."⁵⁰ Of course, Jefferson did not yet know that only two years later, he would cite a similar list of complaints before declaring independence on behalf of British America's Creoles.

In 1809, a lawyer from the kingdom of New Granada (present-day Colombia) named Camilo Torres penned one of the most famous Spanish American responses to institutional shifts occasioned by the Napoleonic Wars in Spain. Like Jefferson's *Summary View*, Torres's *Memorial de Agravios* was the draft of a petition to be sent by the Creole-dominated *Cabildo*, or city council, of Santa Fe de Bogotá to the recently established *Junta Central* in Sevilla. Torres opens the *Memorial* by describing the "joy" that he and other Americans had felt upon learning of the formation of the *Junta Central*, and being informed of its intention to invite representatives from overseas. This plan appeared to offer what Torres described as "true fraternal union between European and American Spaniards, upon the basis of justice and equality." He noted perceptively that, "If the government of England" had followed a similar plan, "maybe it would not today lament the loss of its colonies ... [whose residents] did not understand how, being vassals of the same sovereign," they could be subject to laws "not sanctioned with their approbation."⁵¹ Here, the example of a previous Creole Revolution affords Torres an insight into the range of possible conclusions the conflict in which he was involved might have, an insight that was unavailable to his British North American counterparts.

Nonetheless, Torres felt compelled to add that "in the midst of their just pleasure," *Novogranadinos* had "not been able to see without profound pain that, while the provinces of Spain, even the most inconsiderable, have sent two representatives to the *Junta Central*, the vast, rich, and populous dominions of America are only allowed one each." Torres could see no grounds upon which this inequality could be sustained. He hastened to remind the members of the *Junta Central* that "The Americas

are not composed of foreigners to the Spanish nation. We are sons, and descendants of those who spilled their blood to acquire these new dominions for the Spanish Crown." Spanish America's Creoles were "as Spanish as the descendants of Don Pelayo" – the eighth-century Spanish nobleman who initiated the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors – "and as deserving, for this reason, of the distinctions, privileges, and prerogatives of the rest of the nation, ... with this difference, if there is one, that our parents, as I have said, by means of indescribable labors, discovered, conquered, and populated this New World for Spain."⁵² Here, like Jefferson, Torres insisted that his ancestors trans-Atlantic voyage had, far from depriving them of old rights, actually invested them with new ones. And like Jefferson, Torres would shortly assert that Spain's violation of those rights justified the creation of an independent state, The United Provinces of New Granada, which he led as president until he was captured and executed by Spanish troops in 1816.

For both Jefferson and for Torres, as we've seen, America's absent or unequal representation in metropolitan legislatures was an affront to the rights they each claimed, in strikingly similar language, as Creoles: rights their Spanish and British ancestors brought with them across the Atlantic and won in the process of subjugating the New World. In both empires, Creoles originally sought not independence but the recognition and equality they felt was their due. Only after years of metropolitan intransigence would they take the risky step of wresting their societies out from under the protective shadow of European rule. In these influential writings, it is clear that the American independence movements did not originate in calls for national liberation or the end of monarchical government, as the alternative interpretations discussed in Chapter 1 would suggest, but rather in demands for the reform of imperial institutions that granted European Britons and Spaniards privileges that they denied their American-born counterparts.

Creoles' claims of injustice, then, though at times decorated by appeals to natural law or universal rights, were made on behalf of a colonial elite, and rested on rights derived from the conquest. As the historian Simon Collier observed, even as Creoles invoked "the language of the rights of man, of representative government, of popular sovereignty ... they did not – and could not – cease to be what they had been in the colonial period: aristocrats, landowners, the leaders of society."⁵³ Thus, anti-imperial imperialism appears first in Creole revolutionaries' attempts to justify revolt against Europe. Though the Creole Revolutions were directed against empires, they did not

attack the idea of empire itself, but only a form of imperialism that distinguished between Europeans born in Europe and those born in the Americas. Creole political theorists justified their own independence by citing rights that their forefathers had won by depriving other Americans of theirs.

2.5 CREOLE CONSTITUTIONALISM

As military victories brought independence within reach, the prospect of actually governing independent societies became central to Creole political thought. British and Spanish American patriots feared that, even if they managed to wrest freedom away from their respective metropolises, their new states would be exposed to the threat of reconquest by both the old imperial powers across the Atlantic and the new ones emerging within the Americas. At the same time, having mobilized large and diverse groups of people to confront their opponents, Creoles were forced to consider how they would reestablish social order and stable governance after victory. Thus, the two-sided dilemma inherent in the American independence movements persisted even after independence had been won.

To confront it, the ideologists of Creole Revolution turned to constitutional design. What Americans needed, Simón Bolívar wrote, were institutions capable of “withstanding the blows of two monstrous enemies ... who both attack at once: *tyranny and anarchy*.”⁵⁴ His colleagues throughout the hemisphere frequently invoked the same two specters,⁵⁵ as they converged around two institutional arrangements that seemed uniquely suited to resisting reconquest and reestablishing internal order within postcolonial American societies.

The first was the “union,” a multi-level system of nested territorial authorities, which united former colonies under common governments.⁵⁶ Only within such unions, Creole constitutional theorists would argue, could Americans hope to maintain the independence they had fought so hard to win, and only within such unions could Creoles hope to preserve the privileged position within the Americas that they had sought independence to protect. The second was presidentialism, a system of separated powers that granted significant authority to an executive that did not depend upon the legislature for either election to or tenure in office.⁵⁷ Like union, Creole constitutional theorists argued, presidentialism would make the American states more formidable in foreign affairs and less susceptible to the volatile contentions of their heterogeneous populations.

Here, the relative timing of the American Revolutions becomes important. Because British North America's independence movement occurred first, the ideas and institutions developed in its course were deeply influential for the later Spanish American independence movements, and nowhere was this truer than in the realm of constitutional design. The US Constitution of 1787 enjoyed great prestige amongst Spanish American patriots, not only as the first document of its kind, and not only as the end product of an analogous struggle for independence, but also because Spanish Americans believed that the institutional arrangements the Constitution created were the cause of the United States' rapidly growing prosperity and global prestige.⁵⁸

Nonetheless, its impact was not straightforward, particularly with respect to the idea of union. The US Constitution was most often invoked by Spanish American *federalistas*, proponents of decentralized systems in which component provinces or states were recognized as sovereign and a general government exercised only limited legislative authority, while being left entirely dependent upon the states for the execution of its policies. Ironically, then, the Spanish American champions of the US Constitution used its imprimatur to argue for a position similar to the one taken by Antifederalists in the United States, who opposed its ratification.

By contrast, factions that questioned the wisdom of imitating the US model, known variously as *unitarios*, *centralistas*, or, maddeningly, *anti-federalistas*, insisted that conditions in Spanish America were fundamentally different from those in North America, that even if "federalism" had produced good results there, it could not do the same in a new context. Thus, they recommended a system in which the general government exercised sovereign authority in foreign and interstate relations, while the states were limited to administering their own internal affairs – in other words, a system not unlike the one defended by the Federalist Party of the United States and embodied in the US Constitution.⁵⁹

Thus, British and Spanish American Creoles' convergence upon union as an institutional ideal cannot be explained as imitation, because the supposed imitators seem to have largely misunderstood the original.⁶⁰ Rather, union was attractive to Creole political theorists across the hemisphere because of the advantages it offered in the conduct of foreign and domestic affairs, advantages that were ideally suited to the dilemmas presented in the later stages and early aftermath of Creole Revolution.

As the New Yorker Alexander Hamilton argued, in a striking statement of postcolonial defiance, union would enable Americans to resist "the arrogant pretensions of the European, ... to vindicate the honor

of the human race, and teach that assuming brother moderation ... Disunion will add another victim to his triumphs.”⁶¹ His Virginian collaborator, James Madison, in elaborating a domestic counterpart to this defense of union, exposed the other edge of Creoles’ concern. Divided by differences of “faculties,” religions, and vast inequalities of wealth, the Americas’ heterogeneous societies would be torn apart by factional conflict unless institutional measures were taken. Amongst the “numerous advantages promised by a well constructed Union,” he emphasized the system’s capacity to “refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations.”⁶² Union, in other words, would place governments securely in the hands of the Creole Revolutions’ enlightened and virtuous leaders, limiting the influence of the multi-racial masses they led.

Without ever reading the *Federalist Papers*, Spanish American Creoles voiced similar arguments after independence. Simón Bolívar spoke of the union he hoped to forge out of Spain’s former colonies as a “shield for our new destiny ... a base upon which these governments might hope, if it is possible, to last eternally.”⁶³ As for Hamilton, for Bolívar the advantages of union were first and foremost related to foreign affairs: Under the auspices of a common government, the Spanish American republics could combine their military forces to complete the wars for independence, negotiate as a unit for recognition in Europe and beneficial terms of trade, and eliminate the prospect of inter-American conflicts, “establishing a perfect equilibrium within a new order.” And like Madison, Bolívar noted that union would lessen the danger posed by the “differences of origin and color” that divided American societies, and, in particular, allow Americans to “put aside their fears of the tremendous monster that has devoured the island of Santo Domingo” – that is, slave insurrection – and of “the masses of primitive inhabitants” on the peripheries of their new societies.⁶⁴ For Creoles throughout the hemisphere, then, union served a double purpose, fortifying American independence against external threats, while preserving the internal hierarchies the American states inherited from their imperial forebears.

The relatively late dates of the Spanish American independence movements facilitated constitutional influences not only from the north, but from across the Atlantic. The French Revolution and its global reverberations – the Haitian Revolution, the rise of Napoleon, and the liberal Spanish Constitution of 1812 – all figured prominently in early Spanish

American constitutional thought. But as with the United States, their effects were not straightforward. While many Creole patriots eagerly read French revolutionaries' writings and incorporated their slogans into their own work, they were, generally speaking, appalled by the execution of Louis XVI and the anarchy of the Terror. Creoles were uncertain of Napoleon's plans for the Americas, and deeply unsettled by the prospect of a slave revolt like the one that had arisen shortly after the French Revolution in Haiti.⁶⁵ Thus, they were skeptical of what was perceived to be the characteristic constitutional innovation of the French Revolution: simple popular government through a single supreme legislature – or what contemporary political scientists would call a parliamentary system. The Mexican statesman Lucas Alamán wrote in 1834 that

The constitution which the Constituent Assembly gave France, which was copied in a servile manner by the Cortes of Cádiz, not only did not distinguish properly between the powers, not only did not establish a well-balanced equilibrium amongst them, but in excessively debilitating the Executive, transferred all authority to the Legislature, creating in the place of the absolute power of the monarchy a power as absolute and entirely arbitrary, not even having to contain it the brakes that can in some manner impede the arbitrariness of monarchs. France and Spain, by means of similar constitutions, did nothing more than pass from the tyranny of one to the infinitely more unbearable tyranny of many.⁶⁶

Spanish Americans connected the untrammled authority of the legislature in the French Constitution with the social upheaval that followed the French Revolution, arguing that that their own societies should adopt constitutions modeled on the English system of separated and balanced branches of government, where the crown's executive authority served to check the more directly popular will of Parliament.

In this, of course, they converged neatly with their British North American counterparts. In 1787, John Adams addressed French criticisms of the systems of separated powers that had already made their way into the particular constitutions of several states, citing literally hundreds of historical examples wherein “mixing the authority of the one, the few, and the many, confusedly in one assembly” had produced “wide-spread miseries and final slavery of almost all mankind.” Adams emphasized, like many other Creoles, that the primary threat to social stability in the newly independent Americas was not an overzealous executive but an unchecked legislature. Because it more directly represents the opinions of the populace, “the legislative power is naturally and necessarily sovereign and supreme over the executive.” Thus, Adams argued, in order to avoid the anarchy that would inevitably result from popular rule, the executive

should be made “an essential branch of the [Legislative power], even with a negative,” that is, a power to veto the legislature’s decisions. Otherwise, “it will not be able to defend itself, but will be soon invaded, undermined, attacked, or in some way or other totally ruined and annihilated.”⁶⁷

Creole constitutional designers were often so concerned to constrain the latent potential for anarchy they associated with their most representative institutions, that, as I shall detail in subsequent chapters, they divided their legislatures into two or even three chambers, and carved out a role in the legislative process for third and even fourth branches of government alongside the legislature and the executive. Like union, then, presidentialism served in Creole constitutional theory as a means of limiting popular influence on government.

Of course, presidentialism served not only domestic purposes, contributing to the reestablishment of social order after independence by balancing the excessively democratic tendencies of legislatures, but also promised to bring efficiency and consistency to the conduct of foreign affairs. “Energy in the executive,” Alexander Hamilton argued, “is a leading character in the definition of good government ... essential to the protection of the community against foreign attacks.” Only a unitary executive, serving a substantial term in office, elected independently of the legislature could, in his analysis, muster the energy necessary to defend the United States from the ambitious European powers whose empires still encircled the new nation’s territory.⁶⁸ Though he had, in the Philadelphia Convention, suggested that the “English model” of executive authority – that is, hereditary monarchy – “was the only good one” and recommended that the president be elected for life, Hamilton later retreated from this position.⁶⁹

However, Hamilton’s Spanish American counterparts did not scruple to endorse quasi-monarchical solutions to the problem of their societies’ exposure to invasion, particularly from enemies closer to home. In 1840, as the US Congress considered whether to annex the Mexican province of Tejas, the Yucatecan diplomat and politician José María Gutiérrez Estrada addressed a public letter to the president of his republic, arguing that unless Mexicans invested their executive with monarchical authority, “perhaps not even twenty years will pass before we see the North Americans’ stars and stripes flying above our National Palace.”⁷⁰ With similar concerns in mind, Creoles throughout Spanish America incorporated strong, independent executives into their constitutions, though even these measures did not prevent Gutiérrez Estrada’s prophecy from being realized, less than ten years after he wrote.

Creole political theorists defended their constitutional designs in sweeping terms, often adopting a rhetorical posture of speaking to the ages and resolving problems that plagued all societies. If we allow ourselves to be taken in by this presumption, it is easy to lose sight of the very specific two-sided dilemma reflected in Creole constitutional thought. Both union and presidentialism were novel creations, representing Creoles' most important, and lasting, contributions to global constitutionalism. But both were adopted because they promised to solve particular problems: resisting reconquest and reestablishing internal order within heterogeneous American societies. Both addressed these problems by mixing earlier constitutional models. Union offered a midpoint between the total dependence imposed upon colonies under an empire, and the total independence of sovereign states within an international system.⁷¹ Presidentialism offered more Americans greater opportunities to govern themselves than they might have enjoyed as the subjects of a monarch, but placed greater limits on their actual influence than they would have encountered in a classical or parliamentary democracy. In this sense, both constitutional designs embody the anti-imperial imperialism characteristic of Creole political thinking in general.

2.6 CREOLE CONQUEST

As we saw in the preceding text, inter-imperial conflicts were important precipitants of the American independence movements, giving rise to the institutional reforms that eventually spurred the Creole Revolutions. The warfare associated with the Revolutions only deepened contention amongst Europe's great powers. Spain and France aided British North Americans in their war for independence, hoping that by weakening the United Kingdom they would assure or expand their own American holdings. Conversely, British ministers explored allegiances with Spanish American dissidents, hoping to forestall French and North American incursions on the continent and to secure new markets for their manufactures. Even as successively larger parts of the New World became independent, Britain, Spain, France, Portugal, and Russia continued their battles over western North America, South America's interior, and the Caribbean.⁷²

In the famous "Farewell Address" he published when he declined a third term as president of the United States, George Washington piously warned Americans against "interweaving [their] destiny with that of any part of Europe," insisting that nations so recently freed from imperial rule should not "entangle [their] peace and prosperity in the toils of European

ambition, rivalry, interest, humor or caprice.”⁷³ But the Creole founders of new American states did not hesitate to enter the fray. Rather, they announced their own imperial programs, defending territorial expansion and internal colonization as means of assuring their independence and spreading their ideals throughout the hemisphere and around the world.

From the beginning, the Creole Revolutions were expansionist affairs. Small groups of men gathered in conventions, congresses, and committees to declare independence on behalf of large populations with whom they consulted only in the most perfunctory fashion. On June 9, 1816, from the city of Tucumán, the self-declared “Representatives of the United Provinces of South America” took it upon themselves to enunciate the “unanimous and indubitable will” of people inhabiting a region stretching from the mouth of the Rio de la Plata across the continent into the highest Andean plateaus.⁷⁴ Their representative pretensions were based on a late-colonial-era administrative reform, which had placed nearly all of present-day Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Bolivia under the control of a new viceroyalty seated in Buenos Aires. Declaring themselves heirs to this authority, *porteño* patriots organized campaign after campaign against royalist holdouts throughout the former imperial subunit, forging an independent state one conquest – or “liberation” – at a time.⁷⁵

The United Provinces were not the first or last to follow this procedure, or to fail in the process. One of the Continental Army’s first outings was an unsuccessful attempt to liberate the oppressed peoples of Quebec, and to bring a fourteenth British colony forcibly into the fold that would become the United States.⁷⁶ The Creole elites that declared the independence of the “Empire of Mexico” in 1821 claimed the entirety of the former viceroyalty of New Spain, encompassing all of present-day Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and the western United States.⁷⁷ In its original form, the polity historians now refer to as “Gran Colombia” contained the former viceroyalty of New Granada, comprising present-day Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Panama.⁷⁸

Nor were Creole revolutionaries content to remain within territorial boundaries established under European imperialism. In the first year of his presidency, while his representative in Paris negotiated terms for the Louisiana Purchase, Thomas Jefferson had even grander ambitions in mind, noting in a letter to James Monroe, then the governor of Virginia, that “it is impossible not to look forward to distant times, when our rapid multiplication will expand itself beyond those limits, & cover the whole northern, if not the southern continent, with a people speaking

the same language, governed in similar forms, & by similar laws.”⁷⁹ The United States was not the only American nation gripped by such expansive zeal. As the secretary to the *Junta* of Buenos Aires notables who assumed provisional authority over the viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata in 1810, Mariano Moreno circulated a private *Plan de Operaciones* for the government of what he called the “United Provinces of the Río de la Plata,” specifying the measures that should be taken, “now that South America has proclaimed its independence, so that it can enjoy a just and complete liberty.” Moreno’s *Plan* contained detailed strategies, not only for the liberation and unification of the former viceroyalty, but also the “dismemberment of Brazil,” and the annexation of a substantial portion of the Portuguese colony to the United Provinces.⁸⁰

The arguments Creole political theorists made on behalf of these efforts to enlarge their new states mixed familiar themes. On the one hand, territorial expansion would serve defensive ends, helping to consolidate independence by depriving European and American competitors of a foothold that could be used to launch a reconquest. Before he took his army across the border of Gran Colombia and into the viceroyalty of Peru in 1823, Simón Bolívar insisted that he “should be permitted to advance on territories occupied by the Spanish in Peru, because the enemy will come here if I do not contain him there, and because enemy territory should not be considered foreign territory, but conquerable territory.”⁸¹ He would make similar arguments two years later on behalf of his plan to unite Peru and Upper Peru (present-day Bolivia) – which his armies had by then occupied – with Gran Colombia under a single central government.⁸² In the same year James Monroe, by now president of the United States, informed Europeans that that his administration would “consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.” This statement formed the basis for later administrations’ frequent interventions in Latin America and, indeed, informed a lasting, and distinctively American, approach to foreign policy that the historian William Appleman Williams described as “imperial anticolonialism,”⁸³ perfectly capturing the contradictions involved.

Creole revolutionaries’ interest in territorial expansion was not merely defensive. As I noted in the preceding text, Creoles responded aggressively to Enlightenment naturalists’ theories of climate-driven degeneration, insisting that the Americas’ flora and fauna were actually healthier and more abundant than their European counterparts, and that men born in the New World were possessed of stronger constitutions, quicker intellects,

and surer morals than those born in the Old, having avoided exposure to the latter's corrupting influence.⁸⁴ Successful revolution and the achievement of independence added new, more political dimensions to Americans' confidence in their own exceptionalism.

Before independence had even been declared, Thomas Paine's famous pamphlet *Common Sense* inspired British North Americans to believe that the opportunities available to them had not arisen "since the days of Noah." They "had the power to begin the world over again" – to tear down the crumbling edifices of European imperialism and refashion global institutions in the image of their own.⁸⁵ Half a world away and half a century later, the Chilean patriot Bernardo O'Higgins expressed similar sentiments:

It is evident that the Republics of the New World bear the vanguard of the freedom of the whole world, and that destiny is leading them on to break the chains of the human race; for in the example of America may be found the most encouraging hopes of the philosopher and the patriot. The centuries of oppression have passed; the human spirit yearns for its freedom; and now there shines the dawn of a complete re-ordering of civil society through the irresistible progress of opinion and enlightenment.⁸⁶

For the ideologists of Creole Revolution, the republican virtues displayed in their independence movements and the enlightened ideals embodied in their political institutions served as the premises for arguments that justified not only continued efforts to expel European empires from the New World, but also the progressive expropriation of the Americas' "uncivilized" Indigenous communities, and eventually, the conquest of territories claimed by other Creole revolutionaries. In this way, Creoles' convergence upon foreign policies marked by territorial expansion and internal colonization, the final form of anti-imperial imperialism, brought the Creole Revolutions into conflict with one another, and, as I argue in Chapter 6, ultimately brought the Creole Revolutions to an end, opening a new era of hemispheric divergence that would drive American and Latin American political thinking in two very different directions.

2.7 CONCLUSION

In the anti-imperial imperialism characteristic of the Creole Revolutions, we confront a contradictory ideology similar in many ways to the "liberal imperialism" that political theorists and intellectual historians have recently described in nineteenth-century European political thought.⁸⁷ In

both cases, we have political thinkers committed to a set of seemingly anti-imperial principles – independence and popular sovereignty in the case of the Creoles, equality and individual liberty in the case of the European liberals – employing them in defense of imperial policies of expansion, exclusion, and expropriation. Anti-imperial imperialism displays the same internal tension that Uday Mehta has described in liberal imperialism. The problem for interpreters of each case is to “account for how a set of ideas that professed, at a fundamental level, to include as its political referent a universal constituency nevertheless spawned practices that were either predicated on or directed at the political marginalization of various people.”⁸⁸

However, while many contributors to the large, and very valuable literature on liberal imperialism have sought to show that “the imperialistic urge is internal to liberalism, that inherent in the very structure of liberal rationalism and abstraction is a propensity for colonial domination,”⁸⁹ here I offer a different way of understanding how anti-imperial and imperial commitments could simultaneously occupy the center of the ideology of Creole Revolution. Rather than interrogating liberal ideas to see how they could end up providing a defense for illiberal practices, I show that, because of the contradictory position they occupied amongst the overlapping institutions of European imperialism in the Americas, the political theorists that defended the Creole Revolutions converged on a set of contradictory ideas, which were both anti-imperial and imperial. Here, contradictions are not a result of the ideas themselves, but of the interests that they were developed to defend, and of the institutions that structured those interests.

In the following chapters, I provide a more systematic demonstration of this theory, through the comparison of three ideologists of Creole Revolution. None of the three was a “liberal” in the sense intended in the preceding text, but all three evinced philosophical commitments, and engaged in concerted political activities, which were anti-imperial. Alexander Hamilton analyzed the perverse incentives of a legislature that represented only a specific, geographically constrained, portion of the population subject to its laws, attacking in this way the inequality between center and periphery that defines imperial rule. Simón Bolívar denounced the corruption that Spanish tyranny had induced in Spanish America, insisting that only independence would enable Spanish Americans to develop the virtues requisite for self-rule. And Lucas Alamán argued that the colony of New Spain had, through the gradual progress stimulated by Spain itself,

reached a point of maturity at which the continuation of Spanish rule could not but become stifling and counterproductive.

At the same time, Hamilton, Bolívar, and Alamán all defended independence without impugning the imperial hierarchies within their own societies, sought to constrain popular sovereignty in unionist and presidentialist constitutions, and defended territorial expansion and internal colonization after independence had been won. These latter positions, clearly at odds with the former, were not logical entailments of Hamilton's empiricism, of Bolívar's republicanism, or of Alamán's conservatism. Rather, these three political thinkers stitched together their paradoxical philosophies in response to the dilemmas presented by the extraordinary and complicated situation that, as Creole revolutionaries, they encountered in common.