

CREOLE REVOLUTION, INDEPENDENCE, AND MILITARIZATION

The Ideology of Creole Revolution: Imperialism and Independence in American and Latin American Political Thought. By Joshua Simon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. 276. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$29.99 paper
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Joshua Simon's book is a provocative study of the political thought of Alexander Hamilton, Simón Bolívar, and Lucas Alamán (the last-named was a lesser known historian and politician in nineteenth-century Mexico) and the ideology of what Simon calls "Creole revolution." Drawing on approaches developed in the fields of comparative political theory and the history of political thought, Simon bases his work on historical contextualizations and close readings of texts that are for the most part well known, though rarely studied together. The hemispheric perspective allows Simon to bring into sharp relief an ideological convergence between the revolutions in the North and the South that can get lost in the complexities of social history, differences in philosophical affiliation, and the misleading teleologies afforded by hindsight.

In six tightly argued chapters, Simon sets out to show that both the specific institutions Alexander Hamilton preferred (a lifetime executive and senate, a strongly consolidated central state) and the reasons he cited for his preference (stability, permanence, protection against foreign invasion, and insulation against the uncertainties of democratic governance) reappear in the political thought of Colombia and Mexico's revolutionary leaders (73). This reappearance is not due to Hamilton's direct influence—there is no evidence that Bolívar ever read the Federalist papers, and Alamán was a staunch Burkean—but to a structural similarity. Both revolutions were led by creoles, the descendants of European settlers born in the Americas.

Although the body of primary texts under consideration is relatively limited, the broader claims are not. "From the beginning, the creole revolutions were expansionist affairs," Simon argues (43). The constitutions these creoles designed were anti-imperialist in that they meant to keep European powers out of American territories, but they also adopted strategies straight out of the imperialist playbook. Small Euro-descended elites declared independence on behalf of vast territories and far-flung populations who had little if any say in the matter. The states they founded were presidentialist, focused on "union," and had as one of their main aims limiting popular influence on government, particularly that of Afro-descendants, and native and mixed-race people.

The book offers a spirited challenge to both the entrenched belief in US-American exceptionalism and the contrary belief according to which the United States is unexceptional in its adherence to republican traditions that date back to the Renaissance. The book also challenges current orthodoxies in the field of Spanish American history, albeit less explicitly so. The prevalent view holds that the Spanish

American independence revolutions are best understood not as the expression of anticolonial sentiment, or as part of the cycle of Atlantic revolutions, but as the story of the disintegration of the Spanish empire. Simon's creoles in the North and the South are anti-imperialist revolutionaries who set out to rebuild their republics as imperial states. The paradox is intended.

There is much to commend in this new work. It offers a persuasive corrective to the Eurocentric accounts of republican thought in the Americas. It shows that when we fail to take note of locale and local conditions, we blind ourselves to the fact that it was hierarchies of race and color that shaped republicanism in the Americas. As Simon says in his conclusion, reading Hamilton along with Bolívar should give pause to those "who would canonize the ideologists of Creole Revolution," keep us "enchained by the institutions they created," and prevent us from "dismantling the persistent inequalities of our American societies" (196).

It should not come as a surprise that a relatively short book with such enormous scope has blind spots. Some of them have to do with disciplinary practices; others are there by design. Simon notes, with regret, that the Haitian Revolution and popular movements like the Hidalgo uprising in Mexico in 1810 could not be taken into consideration, as neither was driven by descendants of European settlers (8). I wonder whether our understanding of republicanism and revolution in the Americas would not be a bit different if we accounted for subaltern and non-white agents, and whether the convergences between North and South might not run into their limit when we consider the place of Afro-descendants and native people after independence. One can only hope that Simon will continue to fill out the tantalizing picture he has started to draw.

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Who Should Rule? Men of Arms, the Republic of Letters, and the Fall of the Spanish Empire. By Mónica Ricketts. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 328. Notes. Index. \$74.00 cloth.
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In this deeply researched study, Mónica Ricketts chronicles the rise of men of letters and military officers in Spain and Peru from 1760 to 1830. This rise undermined the old Habsburg order, while wars destroyed what was left of civilian and traditional institutions. Confronted with constant opposition from deep-rooted elites and the lack of strong institutions, men of letters failed to create a new institutional order with a military subject to civilian rule. By the 1820s, the military had acquired a definite role