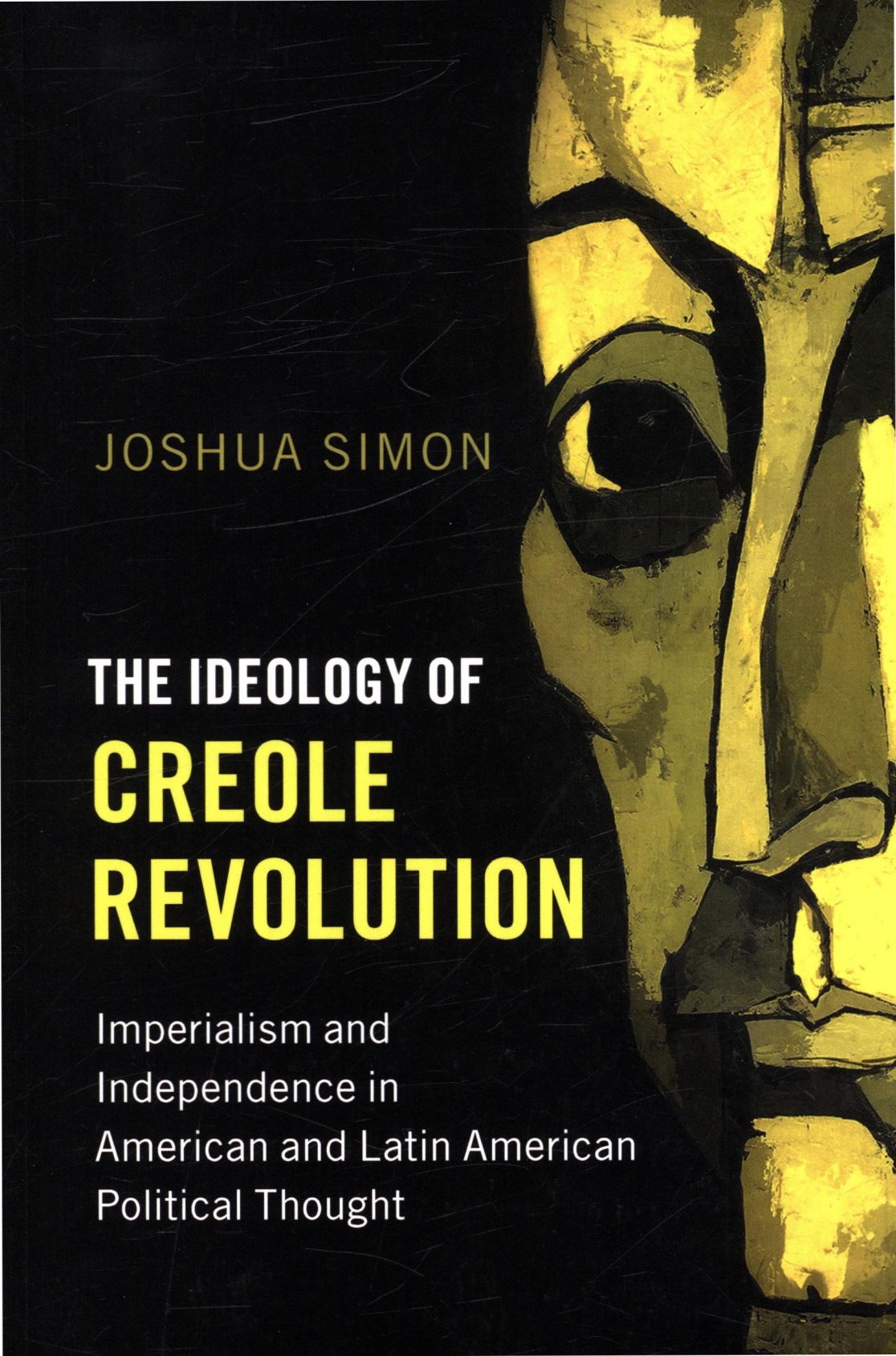

JOSHUA SIMON

THE IDEOLOGY OF CREOLE REVOLUTION

Imperialism and Independence in American and Latin American Political Thought

PROBLEMS OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

"This remarkable work breaks the artificial barriers dividing North and South American constitutional thought, and confronts the two centuries of dynamic conversation that crosses these frontiers to build a distinctive vision of legitimate government for the Americas. An outstanding achievement."

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CAMBRIDGE
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ISBN 978-1-316-61096-1

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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

4843/24, 2nd Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, Delhi – 110002, India

79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781316610961
DOI: 10.1017/9781316665633

First published 2017

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Simon, Joshua (Joshua David), author.
Title: The ideology of Creole revolution : imperialism and independence in American and Latin American political thought / Joshua Simon, Columbia University.
Description: Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2017. | Series: Problems of international politics | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2016059493| ISBN 9781107158474 (hard back) | ISBN 9781316610961 (paper back)
Subjects: LCSH: United States – History – Revolution, 1775–1783. | United States – Politics and government – 1775–1783. | Latin America – History – Autonomy and independence movements. | Latin America – Politics and government – 1806–1830. | Creoles – United States – History. | Creoles – Latin America – History. | Hamilton, Alexander, 1757–1804 – Political and social views. | Bolívar, Simón, 1783–1830 – Political and social views. | Alamáan, Lucas, 1792–1853 – Political and social views.
Classification: LCC E210 .S56 2017 | DDC 973.3–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2016059493

ISBN 978-1-107-15847-4 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-316-61096-1 Paperback

The Ideology of Creole Revolution

The American and Latin American independence movements emerged from distinctive settings and produced divergent results, but they were animated by similar ideas. Patriotic political theorists throughout the Americas offered analogous critiques of imperial rule, designed comparable constitutions, and expressed common ambitions for their new nations' future relations with one another and the rest of the world. This book adopts a hemispheric perspective on the revolutions that liberated the United States and Spanish America, offering a new interpretation of their most important political ideas. Joshua Simon argues that the many points of agreement among various revolutionary political theorists across the Americas can be attributed to the problems they encountered in common as Creoles – that is, as the descendants of European settlers born in the Americas. He illustrates this by comparing the political thought of three Creole revolutionaries: Alexander Hamilton of the United States, Simón Bolívar of Venezuela, and Lucas Alamán of Mexico.

Joshua Simon is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Columbia University, New York.

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Acknowledgments

The argument of this book, that the ideas of the American independence movements were more similar to one another than has usually been acknowledged, was not inspired by a document discovered in a dusty archive, or by an insight gleaned from a scholarly tome, but by a trip – a surf trip, to be specific, along the Americas' Pacific coastline. Traveling overland with a board under my arm, and riding waves from Pichilemu to Pacasmayo, San Juan del Sur to Puerto Escondido, and from Black's to Bolinas to Short Sands Beach, I caught sight of commonalities and connections underneath all of our Americas' differences and divisions. I decided to devote my studies to describing the shared origins, pervasive contradictions, and collective promise of the New World's distinctive political ideas. This book represents the first fruit of my efforts, so it seems fitting to begin by acknowledging my many hosts and fellow travelers, some of whose names I never knew, but whose *bienvenidas* have, more than anything, inspired my account of our hemisphere.

I have been the beneficiary of great intellectual generosity as well. In countless hours of conversation, going back to my time as a student at Reed College, Casiano Hacker-Cordón taught me to how to think about politics and political philosophy. Bruce Ackerman, Karuna Mantena, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Anthony Pagden advised the dissertation that became this book, which I wrote with the support of the Department of Political Science at Yale University. Seyla Benhabib, Tom Donahue, Adom Getachew, Philip Gorski, Stathis Kalyvas, Wim Klooster, Adria Lawrence, David Lebow, Andrew March, Jeff Miley, Aziz Rana, John Roemer, Andy Sabl, Stephen Skowronek, Susan Stokes, Brandon Terry, and Immanuel Wallerstein helped refine its arguments. A Fox fellowship

at the Colegio de México allowed me to spend a year learning from José Antonio Aguilar, Roberto Breña, Moisés González Navarro, Andrés Lira, Erika Pani, Faviola Rivera Castro, Corina Yturbe, and Josefina Zoraida Vázquez. My time in Mexico was greatly enriched by the company of my good friend Juan Rebolledo and the hospitality of his gracious family.

Since leaving Yale, I have had the pleasure of teaching at the New School for Social Research, King's College London, and Columbia University, where I have learned an immense amount from my students, and profited from the advice of colleagues including Uta Balbier, Banu Bargu, Clare Birchall, Robin Blackburn, Jean Cohen, Sandipto Dasgupta, Max Edling, Jon Elster, Nancy Fraser, Roberto Gargarella, Ayten Gündoğdu, Turku Isiksel, David Johnston, Andreas Kalyvas, Tony MacFarlane, Dan Matlin, Eduardo Posada-Carbo, Jay Sexton, Hillel Soifer, Rogers Smith, Nadia Urbinati, Diego von Vacano, and Eric Van Young. Ian Shapiro offered consistently wise counsel throughout this project, and also helped me find a publisher. Camila Vergara provided excellent research assistance. I am thankful to Lew Bateman at Cambridge University Press and to two anonymous reviewers, whose comments on my manuscript greatly improved this book.

Some passages in Chapter 4 appeared previously in "Simón Bolívar's Republican Imperialism: Another Ideology of American Revolution," *History of Political Thought*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (2012), 280–304. Some passages in Chapter 6 appeared previously in "The Americas' More Perfect Unions: New Institutional Insights from Comparative Political Theory," *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (December 2014), 808–828. I thank the editors of both publications for permission to reprint this material here.

Still more profound thanks are due to my father, Jack Simon, who encouraged my intellectual curiosity at our dinner table; to my brothers, Aaron and Stevie, who remind me of where I have come from and ask the best questions about what I am doing now; and to my daughters, Sylvia and Madeleine, who fill me with more joy and pride every day than I ever knew I could feel in a lifetime. My deepest gratitude, though, is to my wife, Dawn Teele, the "inspirer, and in part the author, of all that is best in my writings ... whose exalted sense of truth and right was my strongest incitement, and whose approbation and love are my chief rewards."[1]

I hope this work will honor the heroes of our American past and inspire the heroes of our American future, but I dedicate it to Spin and Pow, personal heroes whom I have lost since I began.

Contents

1

Introduction: The Ideas of American Independence in Comparative Perspective

In the fifty years surrounding the turn of the nineteenth century, dissident inhabitants of colonial cities from Boston to Buenos Aires condemned, fought, and finally overthrew the European empires that had ruled the New World for more than three centuries, creating new, sovereign states in their stead. These American independence movements emerged from distinctive settings and produced divergent results, but they were animated by strikingly similar ideas. Patriotic political theorists throughout the Americas offered analogous critiques of imperial rule in the years leading up to their rebellions, designed comparable constitutions immediately after independence had been won, and expressed common ambitions for their new nations' future relations with one another and the rest of the world. This book adopts a comparative perspective on the revolutions that liberated the United States and Spanish America, offering a unified interpretation of their most important political ideas. It argues that the many points of agreement it describes amongst revolutionary political theorists in different parts of the Americas can be attributed to the problems they encountered in common as *Creoles*, that is, as the descendants of European settlers born in the Americas.

The institutions of European imperialism in the Americas placed Creoles in a difficult position. As the European inhabitants of American colonies, Creoles enjoyed many privileges, benefitting in particular from the economic exploitation and political exclusion of the large Indigenous, African, and mixed-race populations that lived in or near their colonies. However, as the American subjects of European empires, Creoles were socially marginalized, denied equal representation in metropolitan councils and parliaments, and subjected to commercial policies designed to

advance imperial interests at the colonies' expense. Independence offered Creoles an escape from the vagaries of imperial domination, but posed a serious threat to the internal hierarchy of the colonies, so the political thinkers that organized and defended rebellions across the hemisphere were forced to confront a dilemma: How could they end European rule of the Americas without undermining Creole rule in the Americas? The ideology of Creole Revolution – the political ideas that I shall claim were common to all of the American independence movements – arose as patriotic Creole intellectuals sought to address this dilemma.

Scholars of North American and Latin American political thought have long sought, almost always in isolation from one another, to understand the contradictory qualities of the ideas they study. How can Americans invoke ideals of liberty and equality so passionately while passing over the oppression and exclusion that their societies impose on Indigenous, African, and other non-white populations? What ends are served by the odd mixtures of democratic and undemocratic institutions framed by the Americas' innovative and influential constitutions? Why are Americans so jealous of their own nations' autonomy, yet so eager to influence events elsewhere in the world? In the pages that follow, I argue that each of these contradictory ideological tendencies first emerged as revolutionary Creoles grappled with the problems posed by their independence movements. Seeking a way out from under imperial rule that would not require them to relinquish the privileges that imperialism had allowed, Creole political thinkers throughout the Americas embraced a contradictory ideology that incorporated both anti-imperialist and imperialist positions at the same time.

Anti-imperial imperialism took on distinct forms as the Creole Revolutions progressed, appearing first in defenses of revolution, then in constitutional designs, and finally in foreign policies. Creole patriots justified their rebellions by reference to arguments carefully tailored to impugn some, but not all of the inequalities that characterized their societies, claiming that their own right to rule themselves originated in their forefathers' conquest of the New World. Creole constitutional designers created political systems that conformed in some respects to revolutionary ideals of popular sovereignty, but also centralized authority and separated powers in order to limit the political influence that the Americas' heterogeneous populations could exert. Creole statesmen embarked on projects of external conquest and internal colonization, arguing that they could only assure the Americas' independence by expanding their new states' frontiers and consolidating their control over often resistant

populations. In the following text, by comparing the political ideas of three carefully chosen Creole revolutionaries, I demonstrate that the institutional context within which the American independence movements unfolded exerted a decisive influence on the ideologies that the movements' intellectual leaders expounded, producing convergence around anti-imperial imperialism in these three forms, even amongst Creole thinkers who were influenced by very different intellectual traditions.

By showing that the American independence movements were similar in their institutional origins and political ideas, this book challenges established accounts not only of North American and Latin American political thought, but also of the Americas' comparative political and economic development, and the history of inter-American relations. It reconstructs a critical period in the Americas' history: a period of institutional change and evolving hemispheric affairs in which it was not yet inevitable that the United States would become the world's largest economy and foremost military superpower, or that Latin America would experience persistent political instability and economic underdevelopment; a period in which all Americans were struggling to resolve similar problems. Recognizing and understanding the many points of ideological convergence across the Creole Revolutions prompts us to reconsider the causes of the United States and Latin America's subsequent political and economic divergence, raising a broad set of questions about the long-term legacies of the Americas' transition to independence.

1.1 COMPARING REVOLUTIONS

Despite their geographic and historical proximity, comparative studies of the American independence movements have not been common. Scholars have usually approached the revolutions that liberated the United States and Latin America using different interpretive frameworks, with the result being that when they are compared at all, the American independence movements have been compared to different sets of non-American rebellions and revolts, rather than to each other. The concept of the "Creole Revolution" that I develop here offers a new, unified interpretive framework capable of explaining features of the ideology of the American independence movements that more established alternatives have ignored or misunderstood.

A tendency to separate and distinguish the North American and Latin American independence movements emerged early. In a series of letters written after his retirement, the Massachusetts patriot, political theorist,

and US President John Adams reflected on the extraordinary period of global history that he had observed during his career in politics. Even as he was "plunged head and ears in the American revolution from 1761 to 1798 (for it had been all revolution during the whole period)," Adams wrote, he had been "eye-witness to two revolutions in Holland" and "ear-witness to some of the first whispers of a revolution in France." Taken together, he wrote, the "last twenty-five years of the last century, and the first fifteen years of this, may be called the age of revolutions."[1]

Adams pointedly declined to list the colonial rebellions that had already shaken off Spanish rule in the Southern Cone, which would soon demolish the entire mainland edifice of the Spanish American empire, as defining events of the age of revolutions. The problem, for Adams, was that the "people of South America are the most ignorant, the most bigoted, the most superstitious of all the Roman Catholics in Christendom." The idea that "a free government, and a confederation of free governments, should be introduced and established among such a people, over that vast continent, or any part of it" appeared to Adams "as absurd as similar plans would be to establish democracies among the birds, beasts, and fishes."[2] Adams's eminently English aversion to Catholicism made it impossible for him to conceive of Spanish Americans' struggle for independence as of a piece with the broader age of revolutions that he credited himself and his fellow British North Americans with initiating.

Though the prejudices underpinning it would evolve, Adams's "age of revolutions" proved to be a durable analytical apparatus. His European contemporaries, including figures like Edmund Burke and Alexis de Tocqueville, wrote about England's Glorious Revolution, the independence movement of the United States, and the French Revolution as passages, more or less tortured, to the modern world.[3] Later, scholars retained the same basic set of comparisons even as they refined the categories they used it to illustrate, describing the Glorious Revolution, the North American independence movement, and the French Revolution as paradigmatic "bourgeois" or "democratic" revolutions,[4] and tracing the intellectual lineage of "republican" political ideas from ancient Greece, through Renaissance Italy and seventeenth-century England, to the rebellious colonies of British North America.[5]

Even authors who have insisted on the United States' exceptionalism have done so almost exclusively with reference to Europe, arguing that the "absence of feudalism" in North American history made the constellation of political forces that arose in the independence movement and shaped the early republic's institutions utterly unlike any European