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PART I

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IMPERIAL AND
POSTCOLONIAL SETTINGS

I

Building Nation-Empires in the Eighteenth-Century Iberian Atlantic

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On 19 March 1812, after much deliberation, the Spanish parliament, the Cortes, promulgated Spain's first written constitution, the celebrated Constitution of Cádiz.¹ Seen in the context of the Age of Revolutions, a time when political revolutions in the Thirteen Colonies, France, and Haiti were accompanied by written constitutions, the 1812 Constitution of Cádiz was not exactly at the vanguard of the Atlantic world. Nonetheless, the importance and peculiarity of this constitution lay not in the content or nature of the document but in who was involved in its design. The constitution of the United States of America, the many French constitutions during the revolutionary period, and the various Haitian constitutions written beginning in 1801 were primarily a product of one hemisphere or the other, but not both. In contrast, Spain's Constitution of 1812 came about as a result of an imperial parliament with deputies representing the multiplicity of territories of Spain's oceanic empire.² Unlike any other previous or contemporaneous example, Spain's constitutional experiment was, therefore, a genuinely Atlantic experiment.³

The impetus behind this Atlantic experiment was an attempt to create what I call a nation-empire, a kind of polity that sought to incorporate and integrate Spain's extra-European territories into a project of political and economic modernization. Certainly, this was an unprecedented experiment,

¹ Roberto Breña (ed.), *Cádiz a debate: Actualidad, contexto y legado* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Internacionales, 2014); Scott Eastman and Natalia Sobrevilla Perea (eds.), *The Rise of Constitutional Government in the Iberian Atlantic World: The Impact of the Cádiz Constitution of 1812* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015).

² Jaime E. Rodríguez O., "'Equality! The Sacred Right of Equality': Representation under the Constitution of 1812," *Revista de Indias*, 68/242 (2008), 97–122.

³ For the most cogent discussion of this perspective, see José M. Portillo Valdés, *Crisis atlántica: Autonomía e independencia en la crisis de la monarquía hispana* (Madrid: Fundación Carolina; Centro de Estudios Hispánicos e Iberoamericanos; Marcial Pons Historia, 2006).

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not least because of its underlying assumptions, in particular the idea that Spanish American territories were “not properly colonies or factories, such as those of other nations, but an essential and integral part of the Spanish Monarchy.”⁴ While Spain’s experiment was, by all accounts, much more ambitious, the Portuguese Atlantic also witnessed a similar experiment, especially after 1807, when the Napoleonic invasion of the Iberian peninsula forced the Portuguese court to relocate to Rio de Janeiro.⁵ By 1815, King Dom João VI affirmed his commitment to rethinking the political foundations of the Portuguese Empire when he declared that Brazil was not a colony but a coequal kingdom of the Portuguese “united kingdom.”⁶ The Luso-Brazilian world, thus, also witnessed a kind of imperial reinvention, though in this case without a constitution, guided by the principle that the Portuguese monarchy was composed of subjects from both sides of the Atlantic, without distinguishing, at least nominally, between colonial and metropolitan subjects.

The fact that Spain and Portugal chose to resolve, at least in the first instance, their respective Atlantic crises in this particular manner begs the question of why it was the Iberian world, and not the Anglophone or the Francophone, that made a deliberate attempt to integrate its overseas territories, politically and economically, with the metropolises. As this chapter will show, the Iberian solution to the imperial crisis provoked by the Napoleonic invasion must be understood in the context of a particular brand of empire building that took place during the 1780s and 1790s. While this brand of empire building took center stage after the American Revolution taught Spanish imperial officials that overseas territories could secede from their mother countries if the relationship was no longer beneficial, the Iberian projects to create nation-empires had earlier origins among a group of Enlightenment officials and political economists who warned, as early as 1768 in the Spanish case, that the only viable way to integrate the American territories was not as “pure colon[ies]” but as “powerful provinces of the Spanish Empire.” To do so, it was necessary to govern with “gentleness,”

⁴ This statement was issued on 22 January 1809 by the temporary government of Spain, the Junta Suprema Central y Gubernativa del Reino, just a few months after the unprecedented crisis generated by the Napoleonic invasion of the Iberian peninsula in 1808. Cited in Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *The Independence of Spanish America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 60.

⁵ Kristen Schultz, *Tropical Versailles: Empire, Monarchy, and the Portuguese Royal Court in Rio de Janeiro, 1808–1821* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

⁶ Gabriel Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the Age of Atlantic Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 99–101.

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thus allowing all the territories of the monarchy to become united as “a single national body.”⁷ In Portugal, this realization would come much later, in the 1790s, but it arose, nonetheless, from a similar conviction: to retain its colonies, Portugal had to integrate, not alienate, its overseas possessions.

The idea that the Spanish and Portuguese empires sought to create a new kind of nation-empire during the last two decades of the eighteenth century is not a particularly new claim. In an insightful article, Manuel Lucena Giraldo has reconstructed how leading Spanish ministers sought to unite Spain's Atlantic territories more tightly by creating an imperial nation.⁸ In his book on the Portuguese Atlantic during the Age of Revolutions, Gabriel Paquette has also argued that Portugal made great efforts to integrate its empire without alienating colonial elites during the 1790s.⁹ More recently, Brian Hamnett has studied the Spanish and Portuguese empires in tandem, suggesting that both made deliberate attempts to bring the colonies and the metropolises into some form of union just before the Napoleonic invasion plunged them into unprecedented Atlantic crises. In fact, Hamnett has suggested that the disintegration of both empires must be explained not by the rise of anticolonial nationalist ideologies, but by a failure to solve internal disputes that were exacerbated by the Napoleonic invasion of 1808, a perspective that is shared by the earlier works of François-Xavier Guerra, Jaime E. Rodríguez, Jeremy Adelman, and José M. Portillo Valdés.¹⁰ In a wide-ranging book concerning the evolution of race and nation in the Spanish Empire, Antonio Feros proposed that, though the eighteenth century saw the rise of a particular brand of scientific racism that held whiteness to be the embodiment of civilization, during the crisis triggered by the Napoleonic invasion, Spaniards opted for a concept of nation that included all free subjects across the empire, with the

⁷ Cited in Fidel J. Tavárez, “Colonial Economic Improvement: How Spain Created New Consulados to Preserve and Develop Its American Empire, 1778–1795,” *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 98/4 (2018), 614–615.

⁸ Manuel Lucena Giraldo, “La nación imperial española: Crisis y recomposición en el mundo Atlántico,” *Cuadernos Dieciochistas: Salamanca, Universidad de Salamanca-Sociedad Española de Estudios del Siglo XVIII*, 12 (2011), 67–78.

⁹ Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the Age of Atlantic Revolutions*, 17–83.

¹⁰ Brian R. Hamnett, *The End of Iberian Rule on the American Continent, 1770–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); François-Xavier Guerra, *Modernidad e independencias: Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993); Rodríguez O., *The Independence of Spanish America*; Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Portillo Valdés, *Crisis atlántica*.

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exception of people of African descent, who were not automatically granted Spanish citizenship.¹¹

Throughout this chapter, I draw on this insightful historiography, but I also make a different claim. In contrast to the extant perspectives, this chapter argues that the brand of empire building that surfaced in the Iberian world during the 1780s and 1790s was not simply or mainly based on political or administrative centralization. Rather, the key to this project of unification was economic integration and the creation of reciprocal economic bonds between subjects across the Spanish and Portuguese empires, respectively. As I show in the first section of the chapter, while both Spain and Portugal made deliberate attempts to centralize their respective empires and increase authority in the colonies, they changed course during the 1780s and 1790s. The earlier centralizing experiments of the marquis of Pombal in Portugal (1750–1777) and a host of ministers in Spain, of whom José de Gálvez was perhaps the most important, came to an end during the last two decades of the century. This earlier strategy of centralization did improve royal authority and revenue extraction in the colonies, but it also posed some dangers, especially after the American Revolution showed that colonies could in fact choose to secede from their mother countries. As a result, a coterie of leading eighteenth-century Iberian ministers and political economists focused instead on economic integration, commercial liberalization, and the reduction of consumption taxes and customs duties across their respective empires.

In Spain, this form of economic nation-building was supported by ministers like Pedro Rodríguez de Campomanes and José Moñino (later count of Floridablanca), to mention two of the most important, and in Portugal by the likes of Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho. Rather than unify the empire by way of a heavy political authority, the goal was to unite the economic interests of subjects across both empires by softer, commercial means.¹² It is the existence of this project, I suggest, that explains why Spain and Portugal responded in similar ways to the Napoleonic invasion, namely by proclaiming the equality and integration of Spanish America and Brazil, respectively. To be fair, in the context of the French invasion of the Iberian peninsula starting in 1808, economic reform was no longer enough to prevent imperial dissolution, especially in Spain. This unprecedented crisis drove both empires to pursue

¹¹ Antonio Feros, *Speaking of Spain: The Evolution of Race and Nation in the Hispanic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

¹² On the notion of “doux commerce,” the idea that commerce softens human mores, see Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

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novel political experiments, including the transference of the entire Portuguese court to Rio de Janeiro or, as in the case of Spain, the creation of an imperial parliament with representatives from across the empire. Nevertheless, the impetus to integrate the colonies, I suggest, was already evident in the project of economic integration that is the subject of this chapter.

Imperial Centralization and Colonial Extraction

In spite of Spain's and Portugal's integrationist projects of imperial nation-building during the late eighteenth century, both Iberian empires began their reforming trajectories with more centralizing aims. Rather than the incorporation and integration of their colonial territories, the Iberian empires initially sought to gain greater control of the colonies' royal finances in order to defend the integrity of their respective empires. What is more, these Iberian centralizing efforts usually began as a response to a real and perceived threat of British incursions, through trade and military occupations, into Spain's and Portugal's colonies in the Americas. In Spain, the main triggers of reform were the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739–1748) and the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), which exposed just how vulnerable to occupation Spain's colonies were. In Portugal, the impetus did not stem from wars, as Portugal and Britain were faithful allies for most of the century, but from the arrival of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, marquis of Pombal, to the court in 1750, and especially after the Lisbon earthquake in 1755. Like his Spanish counterparts, Pombal made a deliberate and concerted effort to increase the metropole's control over commerce, politics, and religion across Portugal's overseas territories.¹³ Let us begin with Pombal's reforms in Portugal.

Pombal's program of reform stemmed in great part from his conviction that Britain had managed to emasculate Portugal and its empire. In fact, for Pombal, it seemed as though Portugal had become a British colony. It should, therefore, be no surprise that Pombal developed these incipient ideas during his time as an ambassador in London. He was in London from 1739 to 1743, a period that coincided with the War of Jenkins' Ear between Britain and Spain. During these years, Pombal was able to appreciate the extent of Britain's designs, which above all entailed maintaining and gaining access to Spain's colonial markets.¹⁴ In fact, Britain had launched the war primarily

¹³ For the most complete overview in English of Pombal's reforms, see Kenneth Maxwell, *Pombal: Paradox of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4–6.

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to maintain the commercial concessions it had gained from Spain after the War of Spanish Succession and the settlement of Utrecht (1713).¹⁵ In this context, Pombal became concerned that Britain would continue to make bold moves, including war and invasions, in order to gain greater access to both Spanish American and Brazilian markets. And even though Portugal and Britain were close allies, Pombal was convinced that Britain would not hesitate to do everything in its power to capture Brazilian markets.¹⁶

Pombal's concern was entirely well-placed. Britain, in fact, already enjoyed privileged access to Portuguese markets, particularly since the Methuen Treaty of 1703. While the aforementioned treaty cemented a military alliance between Britain and Portugal, it also established that British woolen textiles would be exempt from tariffs, a provision that allowed Britain to secure markets for its textiles across the Portuguese Empire. To be sure, the Methuen Treaty also enabled Portugal to sell its wine in Britain unencumbered by significant tariffs. In fact, the treaty established that Portuguese wine would receive preferential treatment over French wine, which was taxed more heavily in Britain. While some scholars have criticized the Methuen Treaty because it purportedly subordinated the Portuguese economy to British desires, others have suggested instead that the treaty actually benefited the Portuguese economy by allowing the Iberian monarchy to sell its wine in the British market.¹⁷ Whether the treaty benefited the Portuguese economy is not the subject of this chapter. Instead, what is important to recognize is that Pombal interpreted the treaty as a product of British machinations. His subsequent strategy primarily hinged on curtailing British access to Brazilian markets without altogether violating the Methuen Treaty.

Posterity has come to recognize Pombal for his involvement in the reconstruction of Lisbon after the devastating earthquake of 1755 and for his intransigent regalism (the assertion of the rights of the crown vis-à-vis the church), which culminated in the expulsion of the Jesuits from Portugal in 1759. But, as Kenneth Maxwell demonstrated some time ago in a seminal article, Pombal wished nothing more than the nationalization of the Luso-Brazilian

¹⁵ On the War of Jenkins' Ear, see Adrian Finucane, *The Temptations of Trade: Britain, Spain, and the Struggle for Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), ch. 4.

¹⁶ See Maxwell, *Pombal: Paradox of the Enlightenment*.

¹⁷ José Luís Cardoso, "The Anglo-Portuguese Methuen Treaty of 1703: Opportunities and Constraints of Economic Development," in Antonella Alimento and Koen Stapelbroek (eds.), *The Politics of Commercial Treaties in the Eighteenth Century: Balance of Power, Balance of Trade* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 105–124.

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economy, with a particular focus on maintaining a favorable balance of trade for the metropole. To this effect, in the early 1750s, Pombal, as Portugal's new secretary of state, turned his attention to Minas Gerais, Brazil's most important gold-producing region. He particularly focused on systematizing the collection of the royal fifth. Almost concurrently, he also focused on protecting Brazil's most important commodities, sugar and tobacco. To nationalize Portugal's trade and economy, Pombal then created the Company of Grão Pará in 1755, guaranteeing a monopoly of navigation and the slave trade for twenty years. In 1759, he also moved to create the Company of Pernambuco, which, in addition to trading in sugar and slaves, was charged with stimulating Pernambuco's sugar mills. For all his concern with Brazil, however, Pombal's project of economic nationalization primarily cared about securing a favorable balance of trade for the metropole, while increasing the king's royal revenue.¹⁸

As Spain's American empire was much larger, more diverse, and more complex than Portugal's, its extractive project was also much more wide-ranging and ambitious. While the pivotal moment began after the Seven Years' War, important debates and discussions began earlier, during and after the War of Jenkins' Ear.¹⁹ Above all, these wars exposed Spain's weaknesses and vulnerabilities vis-à-vis Britain. While Britain managed to launch significant, though ultimately unsuccessful, attacks against Portobello and Cartagena in 1739 and 1741, respectively, its efforts were much more threatening in 1762, during the successful British occupations of Havana and Manila. Although Spain regained control of Havana and Manila and acquired Louisiana from France at the conclusion of the war in 1763, it also lost Florida to Britain. In spite of Spain's ability to retain its territories almost intact, it became clear that things needed to change if the Iberian polity were to remain competitive against Britain. As a result of this realization, Spain launched a series of general visitations to determine how to raise more funds from the colonies to improve imperial defense in the event of future

¹⁸ Kenneth Maxwell, "Pombal and the Nationalization of the Luso-Brazilian Economy," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 48/4 (1968), 608–631.

¹⁹ For an account that emphasizes the period of the 1760s, see Barbara H. Stein and Stanley J. Stein, *Apogee of Empire: Spain and New Spain in the Age of Charles III, 1759–1789* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). For more recent accounts that emphasize the earlier period, see Francisco A. Eissa-Barroso and Ainara Vázquez Varela (eds.), *Early Bourbon Spanish America: Politics and Society in a Forgotten Era (1700–1759)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Kenneth Andrien and Allan Kuethe, *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century: War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713–1796* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Adrian J. Pearce, *The Origins of Bourbon Reform in Spanish South America, 1700–1763* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

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invasions. During the 1760s, the key stages of this extractive enterprise took place in Cuba and New Spain (roughly modern-day Mexico).

Soon after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, which brought the Seven Years' War to an end in 1763, the marquis of Esquilache, the Sicilian minister whom Charles III brought from Naples in 1759, appointed the count of Ricla as captain-general and governor of the island of Cuba. Ricla's main task, which he accomplished with Alejandro O'Reilly's help, was to determine whether it was possible to raise the *alcabala* (consumption tax) from 2 percent to 6 percent in order to improve the island's military defense. Cuban *hacendados* (elite landowners) protested almost immediately, claiming that such a radical increase far surpassed the island's economic abilities. In spite of their objections, they were not entirely unwilling to negotiate. In fact, Cuban *hacendados* agreed to a 4 percent *alcabala*, as long as the crown instituted a system of free trade between the island and peninsular Spain, which would allow the Cuban elite to sell their sugar more easily in the metropole. Spain partially acquiesced to the demands, as Esquilache ultimately raised the *alcabala* to 6 percent but also implemented *comercio libre* (free trade) between the Caribbean islands and Spain in 1765 to satisfy the Cuban elite.²⁰

While Esquilache succeeded in raising the *alcabala* in Cuba, he had more ambitious plans. In 1764, he appointed Francisco Armona as visitor-general of New Spain with the intention of extracting more revenue from Spain's largest, most populous, and wealthiest overseas territory. Armona died on his way to the Indies, but soon after, Esquilache appointed the later-to-be infamous José de Gálvez as visitor-general of New Spain.²¹ According to the instructions that he received from Esquilache in 1765, Gálvez's task was "to collect all legitimate duties as legally provided without altering established practice or dispensing voluntary favors, and to prevent abuses and all superfluous expenses not absolutely indispensable for the best administration of the revenues."²² Gálvez's efforts became even more ambitious than his instructions prescribed. While Esquilache fell from power in 1766, Gálvez continued until 1771 to serve as visitor-general in New Spain, where he

²⁰ Allan Kuethe and G. Douglas Inglis, "Absolutism and Enlightened Reform: Charles III, the Establishment of the Alcabala, and Commercial Reorganization in Cuba," *Past and Present*, 109 (1985), 118–143; Allan Kuethe, *Cuba, 1753–1815: Crown, Military, and Society* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986).

²¹ Jesús Varela Marcos, "Los prolegómenos de la visita de José de Gálvez a la Nueva España (1766): Don Francisco de Armona y la instrucción secreta del Marqués de Esquilache," *Revista de Indias*, 46/178 (1986), 178–195.

²² "Instructions to José de Gálvez," in Herbert Ingram Priestley, *José de Gálvez: Visitor-General of New Spain (1765–1771)* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1980 [1916]), 404.

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attempted to improve the state's extractive capacity by curtailing the misappropriation of royal funds, by removing allegedly corrupt officials, and by creating state monopolies for tobacco, brandy, playing cards, and gunpowder.²³ In 1768, he went even further, submitting to the court a plan to institute the intendency system as a replacement for the *corregimientos* (Castilian administrative subdivisions that were implemented in Spanish America after the conquest), an institution that he deemed prone to corruption because it was plagued by venal officials who colluded with monopolistic merchants.²⁴ In contrast to *corregidores*, the new intendants were to be salaried officials who were appointed on the basis of merit, talents, and service to the crown.²⁵ Gálvez was convinced that the intendency system would secure both the health of the royal treasury and the fairness and justice of Spanish imperial rule.

In spite of Gálvez's seemingly bureaucratic reasoning, he had other reasons for implementing the intendency system as well. More specifically, he had come to believe that, unless Spanish American subjects were governed with a stern hand, they would engage in corruption, particularly the misappropriation of royal funds, to the detriment of the metropole. Hence, Gálvez's commitment to increasing imperial authority stemmed not simply from his attempt to centralize the empire and improve the collection of taxes – though this was certainly an important component – but also from his assumptions regarding the “degenerate” nature of New World peoples.²⁶ These negative portrayals of New World peoples were commonplace among European philosophical historians of the eighteenth century, but Gálvez probably learned this perspective most directly from Antonio de Ulloa and Jorge Juan, scientists and naval officers who accompanied French academicians to Quito during the Geodesic Expedition starting in 1735.²⁷ Among many more observations, Ulloa and Juan noted that during their sojourn in

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Luis Navarro García, *Las reformas borbónicas en América: El plan de intendencias y su aplicación* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1995).

²⁵ On the notion of merit in the Spanish Empire, see Mónica Ricketts, “Merit and Its Subversive New Roles,” in *Who Should Rule? Men of Arms, the Republic of Letters, and the Fall of the Spanish Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 34–61.

²⁶ Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Antonello Gerbi, *The Dispute of the New World: The History of a Polemic, 1750–1900*, trans. Jeremy Moyle (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973).

²⁷ On the expedition, see Larrie D. Ferreiro, *Measure of the Earth: The Enlightenment Expedition That Reshaped Our World* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).