

## THE INNER INCOMPATIBILITY OF EMPIRE AND NATION: Popular Sovereignty and Decolonization

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper argues that metropolitan political theories and institutions grounded in popular sovereignty help to produce decolonization. Radical distinctions between metropolis and dependency only arise when communities, and not rulers, are the theoretical source of political authority. Metropolises organized around popular sovereignty tend to legitimate peripheral claims to autonomy, and to construct political institutions (most importantly colonial legislatures) that voice such claims. An analysis of Western empires shows that, where political models were based on popular sovereignty (Great Britain, the United States, and France), decolonization resulted from internal tensions between theory and practice. Where empire was organized around dynastic principles (Spain and Portugal), empires dissolved as a result of external pressures. Dominant global models have additional effects, blurring differences between empires when popular sovereignty is widely accepted.*

Along with imperialism, decolonization is one of the most common and basic processes in the Western state system. From Britain's thirteen continental colonies in 1783 to the Cocos Islands in 1984, most formal dependencies of Western states have become sovereign. Most current member states of the United Nations are past dependencies of fellow members. Yet, despite its centrality in the Western world system, decolonization has received little theoretical attention.

This inattention is largely due to the tendency to treat Western imperialism as primarily economic, and decolonization as an economically motivated transition from direct exploitation to more veiled dependency. An alternative view of decolonization as a political process is underscored in Strang's (1990) recent cross-national research. That study indicated that arguments drawn from a variety of theoretical perspectives help explain the timing of decolonization. How-

ever, arguments focusing on the political character of the world system seemed to offer the greatest explanatory power. In particular, decolonization appeared to be importantly linked to the emergence and diffusion of Western models of popular sovereignty.

The present study moves to a closer historical examination of the relationship between popular sovereignty and decolonization. While quantitative cross-national studies permit the simultaneous evaluation of a number of arguments, some of the most telling variation is lost in the standardization of measures. A more qualitative historical approach makes it possible to elaborate the argument more fully, and confront it with specific historical cases.

Historical analyses linking decolonization to Western political models are not new. Closest to the position taken here is Emerson's forceful analysis of post-World War II decolonization:

It was the turning of the weapons—the ideas, the instruments, the institutions—of the West against itself which swung the balance against imperialism. The Indian National Congress, the Convention People's Party of the Gold Coast, and similar nationalist movements of a modern type were the ones which won independence (1960:17).

This paper seeks to extend Emerson's insight in two directions. First, it emphasizes which Western ideologies and institutions can be turned against the metropolis, and which cannot. Second, the paper makes the case for decolonization both before and after 1945. It points out the parallels between independence movements in the Americas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and independence movements in Asia and Africa during the twentieth century.

Most broadly, the paper argues for a tension between colonization and popular sovereignty, described by Anderson as the "inner incompatibility of empire and nation" (1983:88–89). The ideology of popular sovereignty delegitimizes imperialism in both the colony and the metropolis, while legitimating the reconstruction of the colony as a sovereign nation-state. Attempts to construct imperial structures in ways compatible with theories of popular sovereignty typically hasten decolonization.

Several kinds of evidence are examined. First, the United Nations' definition of dependency is used to illustrate how contemporary understandings of colonial dependency are grounded in notions of popular sovereignty. The major section of the paper then considers the links between patterns of decolonization and metropolitan political models (the institutions and ideologies that define and organize political authority). Five Western colonial powers are discussed as exemplars of strikingly different political models. Spain and Portugal illustrate models of dynastic sovereignty, while Great Britain, France, and the United States illustrate models of popular sovereignty. The third section of the paper reviews the different patterns of imperial breakdown, with an eye to the impact of global shifts in political discourse over time.

### THE UNITED NATIONS DEFINES DEPENDENCY

General Assembly Resolution 1541(XV) of the United Nations illustrates the logic underlying contemporary understandings of political dependency. This resolution formulates principles determining whether a territory is "non-self-governing," a status that requires the administering state to submit information on the progress of the subordinate territory towards autonomy. The essential principles of the resolution are:

- (IV) Prima facie there is an obligation to transmit information in respect of a territory which is geographically separate and is distinct ethnically and/or culturally from the country administering it.
- (V) Once it has been established that such a prima facie case of geographical and ethnical or cultural distinctiveness of a territory exists, other elements may be brought into consideration. These additional elements may be, inter alia, of an administrative, political, juridical, economic, or historical nature. If they affect the relationship between the metropolitan State and the territory concerned in a manner that arbitrarily places the latter in a position or status of subordination, they support the presumption that there is an obligation to transmit information under Article 73(e) of the Charter. (United Nations 1953)

Principle IV invokes what has been described as the "blue-water fallacy," focusing attention on overseas colonial expansion and ignoring the kinds of ethnic domination that occur within peripheral states. Principle IV is conservative, as are most attempts to reconcile the potentially anarchical possibilities of national self-determination with the existing structure of sovereign states (Cobban 1969).

A variety of institutional considerations are implied in Principle V. The resolution goes on to specify:

[A] free and voluntary choice by the peoples of the territory concerned expressed through informed and democratic processes . . . [That] the peoples of both territories should have equal status and rights of citizenship and equal guarantees of fundamental rights and freedoms without any distinction or discrimination . . . [And that] both [territories] should have equal rights and opportunities for representation and effective participation.

These criteria presuppose popular sovereignty. The institutions described—plebiscites, universal citizenship rights, representative bodies—only make sense if individuals are assumed to be the fount of political authority. When authority and participation are highly restricted, sovereignty and dependency form two sides of the same coin. The few are sovereign to the degree that the many are dependent. Only notions of popular sovereignty permit territories and populations to be conceptually partitioned into metropolises and dependencies.

Radical distinctions between the status of dependencies and metropolises form

a first step towards decolonization. As dependency and metropolis come to form separate entities in political discourse, decolonization becomes conceivable as something other than secession. More than this, decolonization becomes highly legitimate. Within the terms of discourse grounded in popular sovereignty, the maintenance of populations in non-self-governing status is indefensible.

The General Assembly resolution on non-self-governing territories illustrates not only the manner in which contemporary understandings of political dependence are grounded in notions of popular sovereignty, but also that such understandings are global phenomena comprising a portion of the contemporary world polity. Such understandings were part of the institutions Emerson (1960) saw as weapons used by independence movements against colonial powers in the post-World War II era. Yet, the key element of popular sovereignty existed to varying degrees among metropolitan powers prior to World War II, and may help account for variation in the rate of decolonization in both the pre- and post-World War II era (Strang 1990).

### METROPOLITAN INSTITUTIONS AND DECOLONIZATION

The different political systems of the major Western empires allow cross-national research on the effects of popular sovereignty to be supplemented by historical analyses. Spain, Portugal, Great Britain, France, and the United States are examined as metropolitan powers with political systems representing two dramatically different models of political sovereignty. The political structure of each empire is examined, followed by a discussion of its pattern of decolonization.

#### Spain

The Spanish polity serves as a good example of dynastic sovereignty during the period of its continental American empire. Spain was formally a dynastic union, i.e., a set of kingdoms and principalities (Castile, Aragon, Catalonia, Leon, Grenada) connected by the fact that their kings were the same individual. While these kingdoms were formally equal, Castile formed the center of the Spanish Empire within present-day Spain. Spanish America was organized as the *Reinos*—or vice-royalties of New Spain, Peru, New Grenada, and Buenos Aires. The Spanish Empire could be referred to as *estos Reinos y esos Reinos*—these (peninsular) kingdoms and those (American) kingdoms, and Philip II as “King of Spain and the Indies” (Elliott 1984:287). The American kingdoms thus occupied positions parallel to the array of European kingdoms linked by conquest or marriage to the Castilian throne.

The administration of Spanish America echoed that of Castile, the most centrally and bureaucratically governed of the Spanish kingdoms. The chief governmental body was the *Real y Supremo Consejo de las Indias*, staffed by Castilians meeting in Madrid. The council sharply restricted American trade, so

that inter-American exchange was forbidden through most of the colonial period, and all European trade passed through Seville. It attempted to control the internal workings of the American *Reinos* through thousands of regulations and periodic inspections (the *Visita*). The Bourbon introduction of the intendency in 1700 bureaucratized the administrative structure, replaced Creole purchasers of offices with salaried officials, and expanded tax revenues (Lynch 1958).

Spanish notions of nationality and citizenship were undeveloped. The central distinction in the metropolis was framed by economic obligations rather than political rights: commoners paid taxes while nobles were exempt. In Spanish America no American *Cortes* were ever instituted, and municipal councils did not receive the autonomy they had traditionally possessed in Spain. On the other hand, only Indians paid tribute. Creoles were thus rich in economic privileges, but poor in formal political status.

These arrangements blocked the institutional growth of nationalism. Centralized Castilian structures left little room in the political arena for the formal definition and coordination of local interests. In practice, Spanish administrative structures were open to Creole influence or officeholding (Lockhart 1984), but they did not empower settlers as a corporate body. Spanish American revolutions were organized by spontaneously formed municipal *juntas* in the absence of existing colonial (as opposed to imperial) political institutions (Lang 1975:99).

The absence of institutional structures promoting nationalism contrasts with the growing strength of Spanish American society in other respects. The continent was rich and increasingly self-sufficient in basic commodities. The social development of nationalist feeling was acute. The settlers of *Nueva Espana* saw Mexico as a New Jerusalem and themselves as the heirs of the Aztecs (Lafaye 1976). Additionally, Spanish settlers had sufficient political power to prevent the state from interfering with their exploitation of the Indian population.

In a formal sense, Spain's overseas possessions thus fit easily with its internal structures. Administrative units were regarded as additional kingdoms, and the Spanish state defined both Creoles and Indians as simple subjects of the Crown (Parry 1940). A major comparative survey of European imperialism observes, "No more satisfactory constitutional basis for empire has ever been invented" (Fieldhouse 1966:16).

### Spanish Decolonization

Despite its severe restrictions on trade and intensifying revenue extraction, the Spanish state generated little autonomous effort at decolonization. The major uprising of the Spanish colonial period was the Indian rebellion of Tupac Amaru in 1780. While settlers were hardly model subjects, they lacked political theories of colonial rights or alternatives to empire. Their slogan was not the

rights of man, but "*viva el rey y muera al mal gobierno*" ("Long live the King and death to bad government). Attempted imitations of the American and French revolutions in 1797 and 1806 failed dramatically.

Spanish decolonization was instead prompted by an external event: the collapse of the metropolitan polity. Bonaparte's invasion of Spain and the accession of Louis Bonaparte to the Spanish throne (1808) set off legitimist revolts in the Americas. Spain's administrative ties to its colonies were cut by the British Navy during the Napoleonic period, allowing these revolts to flower into independence movements. By the time the metropolis was liberated, Creoles were not prepared to surrender the autonomy they had enjoyed for almost a decade. The first Latin American declaration of independence occurred in Buenos Aires in 1816, in reaction to the reestablishment of a legitimate Spanish monarch.

In its political theory, colonial rebellion was informed in part by contractual notions where sovereignty reverts to the political community when the monarchy collapses (Anna 1985:58). The political ideas of Spanish independence were also affected by the (North) American revolution, as the original constitutions of many Latin American states attest (Bushnell 1985). In its motives as well as its means and opportunity, Spanish decolonization was largely set in motion by external events.

### Portugal

Portugal was a unitary rather than a federal monarchy. Accordingly, Portuguese political theory viewed overseas expansion as extending the scope of a unitary Portuguese state. In one sense, this was the opposite of Spain's separate but equal kingdoms. But, like Spain, Portugal made no clear constitutional distinction between its European territory and its overseas acquisitions. As early as 1633 the Portuguese were referring to their conquests as "overseas provinces" (Nogueira 1963).

In the first era of European expansion, Portugal acquired a series of lucrative Asian and African trading posts. But it was in Brazil that the Portuguese constructed a complete colonial society. The economic relationship between Brazil and Portugal was much like that of Spanish America and Spain, in which a declining metropolis was increasingly dependent on the riches of its colonies. Like Spanish America, Brazil was administratively centralized, with no representative assemblies.

Brazil witnessed increasing administrative centralization and rationalization in the eighteenth century. The Marquis of Pombal integrated small administrative units and the remaining territories under private jurisdiction into a single Brazilian governor-generalship, diminished municipal autonomy, and encouraged exports while banning colonial manufactures (Silva 1984).

During much of the twentieth century, Portugal was ruled by Salazar's *estado novo*, an authoritarian regime that permitted little political participation, and accelerated the formal unity of Portugal and her colonies. In 1914, the political

status of the assimilated native, or *assimilado*, was first defined. Colonies were definitively described as "an integral part of the Portuguese state" in Article 135 of the 1951 Constitution.

Formal integration of colonies occurred in the absence of actual institutional change (Abshire and Samuels 1969). The centralized administrative structure was disconnected from most social activity. While the overseas provinces elected members of the Portuguese National Assembly, only the few native Portuguese and *assimilados* could vote. The majority of the African population remained outside Portuguese political and civil structures, and only partly within the capitalist economy.

### Portuguese Decolonization

Like the Spanish decolonization, Portuguese decolonization in the Americas was produced by the disintegration of the metropolitan state. The Portuguese court fled to Brazil during the Napoleonic occupation (1807). This transformed the former colony into the imperial center. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Brazil (richer and more populous than Portugal) was elevated to formal equality with Portugal itself, with the court remaining in Rio de Janeiro. Only rebellion in Portugal led the King to leave Brazil in 1821. Attempts to return Brazil to subordinate status led to the complete severance of the link. The King's son, who had remained in Brazil, declared its independence in 1822.

In the twentieth century, Portugal was the last European power to relinquish its empire. Nationalist revolts in Angola in 1961 were brutally repressed at a time when Britain, France, and Belgium were abandoning their non-settler colonies without a struggle. War in Africa came to cost Portugal a quarter of its national budget, and ended only when the *estado novo* was toppled by liberal factions within the military.

The roots of Portuguese imperialism in an era of decolonization lie in her political theory. In the United Nations, Portugal stoutly denied the existence of any "non-self-governing territories" for which she was obliged to transmit information. The authoritarian-corporatist *estado novo* promoted a rhetoric of Greater Portugal as "one State, one Race, one Faith, and one Civilization." Meager levels of political participation within Portugal made such claims more plausible.

Thus, the pattern of Portuguese and Spanish decolonization are similar. In the nineteenth century, external pressures suppressed the Portuguese metropolis and made Brazil the imperial center, a status that quickly turned into independence when Portugal sought to regain control. In the twentieth century, Portugal's colonies received ideological and material support from national independence elsewhere, rather than from Portugal's political ideas or colonial institutions. Decolonization occurred more than a decade after the bulk of African independence, in large part because of Portuguese commitment to her "overseas provinces."

### Great Britain

Britain's imperial relations exhibit a much more pronounced internal tension than do the Spanish or Portuguese empires. This can be traced to the way the British state combines notions of dynastic and popular sovereignty. Even in the period of her American colonies, parliament embodied notions of citizenship and popular sovereignty that clearly differentiate Britain from Spain and Portugal. In a different sense, parliament also differentiates British colonies from the metropolis. While both kinds of polities are subject to the Crown, only the United Kingdom is represented in parliament.

As in Spain and Portugal, the political organization of British American colonies mirrored that of the metropolis. Massachusetts, New York, and Barbados developed strong assemblies that controlled centrally-appointed governors through their power of the purse. Settler claims to internal self-government were grounded in Britain's history of constitutional limitations on absolutism (Greene 1986). Within this logic, colonists saw the British Parliament as an alien legislature whose jurisdiction in America was despotic. British authorities limited themselves to regulating international trade until the Stamp Act (1765).

The core concepts of the British polity thus did not serve to more closely connect Britain to its overseas territories, but instead helped establish them as separate political personalities. They provided a language for formulating and voicing claims to autonomy. While these claims were often disputed or ignored in the metropolis, they were within the domain of legitimate discourse. Imitation of British political institutions also led directly to the creation of peripheral structures of power. While Spanish and Portuguese Creoles had great informal influence as individuals, British Creoles were openly and corporately organized.

The rights and legal status of Englishmen were not as readily extended to Britain's colonies after the American Revolution. Colonial assemblies were established only in reaction to indigenous demands. Indian pressure for self-rule led to the creation of provincial and national assemblies with limited powers in the 1920s. In non-settler Africa, British colonies were administered under the banner of "Indirect Rule." Concrete political arrangements continued largely unchanged while native leaders acknowledged Britain's theoretical sovereignty. Colonial councils were staffed by officials and settlers and played advisory roles; elected legislatures were only created as last-minute preparations for independence.

### British Decolonization

Britain's American empire dissolved through an essentially internal process of conflict over the powers of colonial legislatures versus the English Parliament (Greene 1986). Certainly external events played a role; most important, the Seven Years War removed the immediate threat of French invasion (Beer 1933). But the proximate cause of decolonization was parliament's attempt to tax the



colonies. The American response—"No Taxation Without Representation"—sums up the contradiction in which the British polity was caught.

The debate over whether British colonies were under the jurisdiction of parliament was long-standing. In 1649, when the English House of Commons asserted authority over the King's dominions, the Barbadian assembly declared that to bind them "to the Government and Lordship of a Parliament in which we have no Representatives . . . would be a slavery far exceeding all that the English nation hath yet suffered" (quoted in Greene 1986:55).

Colonists were unconvinced by arguments that they had "virtual representation" in parliament, and conflict over the issue surfaced whenever parliament tried to actively interfere in the colonies. Such efforts inevitably attempted to limit the powers of colonial legislatures by developing additional sources of revenue and creating alternative bureaucratic structures.

A similar process of imperial "self-delegitimation" occurred in the twentieth century. The parliamentary model was already being used against the British by 1885, when the Indian National Congress was founded by Western-educated elites. It was difficult for the British to forcibly repress or ignore demands for independence formulated by elected representatives. Though much of Britain's international power and prestige hinged on India, imperial resistance fell far short of the violence in Indochina or Indonesia.

For British Africa, the argument that the metropolitan political model inspired decolonization is more difficult to maintain. African independence was in large part a product of the Asian example, the worldwide diffusion of the "nationalist" idea, and the diminishing global stature of Europe. But, as in India, the British responded to nationalist demands by widening the sphere of self-government. In 1946, constitutions increasing local authority were put into place in the Gold Coast and Nigeria. Britain accepted the inevitability of decolonization earlier than other European powers, and, in 1957, the Gold Coast became the first West African colony to become independent.

### France

France's American empire developed during the absolutist period of the French monarchy. Like Portugal and England, initial colonization was largely accomplished by private companies chartered by the Crown. By the mid-seventeenth century, the charters of these companies had been revoked, and France's American territories (New France on the North American continent and Caribbean island colonies such as Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Sainte-Domingue) were ruled directly.

French colonial rule was more absolutist than the English, but less so than the Spanish or Portuguese. Power was shared by the governor and the intendant, both appointed from Paris. There were no legislative assemblies where colonists were represented, consistent with the decline of the *etats* in France. But French colonists did have *conseils*, whose role was somewhere between those of law

courts and legislatures. During the eighteenth century colonists were consulted on the imposition of new taxes, though the metropolis had the authority to impose taxes unilaterally (Fieldhouse 1966:34-42).

The political theory of nineteenth century French imperialism was the revolutionary tradition of ultimate assimilation into *la plus grande France*. As in France itself, power was concentrated in the hands of centrally-appointed administrators. There were no colonial legislatures until after World War II, though settlers and the inhabitants of France's oldest colonies sent representatives to Paris. Indigenous peoples were *sujets*, not *citoyens*; they came under the jurisdiction of separate courts and had no voting rights. While individual assimilation was possible, only a small minority met its conditions.

In the early twentieth century, French imperial theory and institutions were thus more like those of Portugal than those of Great Britain or the United States. Integration, not self-government, was the ultimate aim and legitimation of empire. The concrete reality was centralized rule, not colonial legislatures growing in power and representativeness. Between the World Wars, the French-educated native elite took France at its word, and demanded concrete progress towards assimilation.

It became increasingly apparent, however, that the political costs of assimilation were too great for the French to bear. Under proportional representation the peoples of the colonies would outnumber those of France, and "France would become a colony of its former colonies" (Herriot, quoted in Albertini 1982:390). French colonial thinking thus moved from assimilation to association. Under the logic that unequal representation in Paris must be compensated by local autonomy, France expanded the political rights of its overseas subjects. In 1946, the Paris assembly made citizens of its overseas subjects (legislation proposed by Lamine-Gueye of Senegal). In 1956, suffrage was made universal and the political status of indigenous inhabitants and French colonials equalized.

Movement from assimilation to association was particularly difficult in Algeria. Algeria was the only French dependency where a substantial settler population faced an unassimilated indigenous majority. It was also formally integrated into metropolitan France. These two factors combined to stall attempts to give Algerians greater autonomy. In 1936 and 1947, French settlers had sufficient power to block government efforts to give more political power to the indigenous majority. And, while willing to consider federal alternatives and, ultimately, separatism in sub-Saharan Africa, the French state regarded Algerian independence as the dismemberment of the Republic.

### French Decolonization

In a formal sense, the first French Empire ended with the French Revolution. The Constitution of the Year III (1794), made the colonies "integral parts of the Republic and subject to the same constitutional law." This integration paralleled the unification of France proper, where domains of the Crown like Bearn and

Navarre were formally integrated into France for the first time (Kohn 1967). Most important for the French Caribbean, political integration meant that slavery was abolished because it was contrary to the "Rights of Man."

Political divisions among the forces of revolution and French settlers gave the newly-freed slaves the opportunity to revolt. By 1803, they controlled the island as the newly independent state of Haiti. In a sense, these events resemble Spanish American and Brazilian independence, where independence was chosen once autonomy had been tasted. An important difference is that Haiti's initial autonomy had much to do with the ideology of revolutionary France, while autonomy in Argentina and Brazil resulted from Napoleon's invasion of Spain and Portugal.

In French sub-Saharan Africa, twentieth-century decolonization was halting but peaceful. As in Great Britain, World War II accelerated the process of peripheral nationalism. The "French Union" of 1946 represented an unsuccessful attempt to assimilate without sharing real power (Marshall 1973). Suffrage within colonies was equalized and universalized in 1956. The French Community of 1958 gave the colonies greater autonomy within a federation headed by France; it was accepted in referendum by all except Guinea, which voted for immediate independence. In 1960, thirteen French African colonies followed suit, all by plebiscite.

Despite French opposition to self-government and separation, decolonization was marked by the rise of indigenous elites within the French system rather than by civil war. African leaders like Houphouët-Boigny and Senghor were politically active in Paris as well as their homelands. France proved unable to co-opt such leaders by integrating colonies into the French polity, and so assured their separatism. But their influence was exercised from within the structures of the French Empire.

In Algeria, decolonization was unsupported by organizational structures, and fiercely resisted by the *Piednoirs*. Settler interests and the territory's formal and sentimental integration into France blocked compromise. As an integral part of France, Algeria was unaffected by associationist legislation, while settlers prevented assimilation. The early willingness of Algerian elites to assimilate disappeared in the face of metropolitan intransigence. France fought to maintain its rule, but the effort brought down the Fourth Republic.

### The United States

The United States provides a second example of a twentieth-century metropolis explicitly organized around popular sovereignty. Like France and unlike Britain, there is no lingering tradition of monarchy that might offer an alternative basis for imperial arrangements. The United States differs from France in its federal structure: American states are semi-sovereign polities with their own legislatures, while French *Départements* are administrative units.

The inner incompatibility between nation (popular sovereignty) and empire

can be seen in the way the United States has preferred to have extraordinary influence over formally sovereign states, rather than organize them as dependencies. Among the best examples are the Indian nations of the southeastern United States. With American encouragement, these nations were organized as sovereign states with duplicate American constitutions and territorial boundaries (Champagne 1987). A more important informal American empire embraced Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Haiti. From the turn of the century to the 1930s, the United States possessed rights of interference over these states, including military occupation and budgetary control (Pratt 1950), but did not construct formal protectorates in the fashion of Britain, France, or Germany.

American overseas expansion largely followed a pattern laid down for unincorporated territories on the American continent. Upon acquisition, Congress appointed governors to each of the major overseas territories, but also provided for elected legislatures. Territorial assemblies initially served to voice public opinion, yet had few governmental responsibilities. But, within two decades of American annexation, the legislative, appointive, and fiscal powers of assemblies in Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines were expanded to make them partners in internal administration (Perkins 1962).

America's unincorporated territories thus quickly acquired local political institutions similar to those of American states. The distinction between the two lies in their relation to the federal government. Congress had direct authority over the policies and political structures of territories, while it possessed virtually no such authority over states. The symbol of this authority was federal appointment of the territorial governor. In addition, the federal government was not electorally accountable to the territories. In a political system whose guiding myth of popular sovereignty is made concrete by local autonomy and electoral representation, the subordinate status of territorial polities was clear-cut and anomalous.

### American Decolonization

The decolonization of America's major dependencies took several forms. In the Philippines, both native and metropolitan efforts to reshape the colonial relation are characteristic. The Philippine legislature's chief program was the expansion of its responsibilities and eventual independence. Americans were quick to understand, passing the Jones Act in 1916, which declared: "Whereas it is, as it always has been, the purpose of the United States to withdraw their sovereignty over the Philippine Islands and to recognize their independence as soon as a stable government can be established therein" (Perkins 1962:228).

In 1918, the territorial governor stated that the conditions for Philippine independence had been achieved. In 1924, a Republican administration proposed independence within 20 years, and in 1934 the Tydings-McDuffie Act provided for staged American withdrawal and independence in 12 years. In 1946, the

Philippines was the first non-settler Western dependency to become independent.

In Hawaii, there was much less pressure for independence. Hawaii was given a legislature elected on a broad suffrage, and Washington obliged itself to appoint residents of the islands as territorial governors. The statehood movement developed gradually as the population and wealth of the territory expanded. Metropolitan objections to the movement centered around partisan politics rather than fundamental constitutional concerns. In addition to population size and per capita income, criteria for statehood included a functioning representative government and popular support (Perkins 1962).

Puerto Rico was given less autonomy as an unincorporated territory, and developed early pressures for statehood or sovereignty. But its economic linkages to American markets made political independence a recipe for economic crisis. An American bill in 1937 coupling Puerto Rican sovereignty with an American tariff was opposed on the island. Local leaders then turned their efforts to achieving full internal sovereignty. In 1950, the island became fully autonomous in "association" with the United States. Subsequent opportunities to vote for full independence failed to attract a majority of Puerto Ricans.

The major overseas territories of the United States thus moved rapidly to some form of sovereignty. The Philippines, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico all provide evidence of the way the American political model does not articulate with empire. The path in each case was relatively smooth, marked by the increasing political autonomy of the territory and metropolitan discomfort with imperial structures.

## COMPARING PATHS TO DECOLONIZATION

### Settler Colonies: 1500–1825

One interpretation of the decolonization of the Spanish, Portuguese, and British American empires stresses a common source of colonial rebellion: attempts by the metropolis to tighten the machinery of imperial government, centralize power, and extract higher levels of revenue from the colony (Lang 1975). This argument links British attempts to weaken colonial legislatures and set taxes, Bourbon construction of intendancies and increasing revenues in Spanish America, and Pombaline reforms in Brazil.

A closer comparison of the three empires makes it clear that they were differentially responsive to metropolitan centralization. France provides the most direct link between popular sovereignty, rebellion, and decolonization. The French Revolution led directly to the transformation of overseas possessions into integral parts of the French nation. By according the "Rights of Man" to the slave population, revolutionary France undercut the political economy of the colonial sugar plantations and paved the way for the independence of Haiti.

The British case also illustrates the link between popular sovereignty, rebellion, and decolonization, although in a less radical fashion than republican

France. British colonists had contested metropolitan control from at least the mid-seventeenth century, citing their colonial charters and ancient rights as Englishmen. Their protests gained force as Parliament's role grew in the metropolis itself. Increasing metropolitan inroads into colonial autonomy quite directly precipitated the American revolution.

Spain and Portugal illustrate how less emphasis on popular sovereignty is linked to more modest pressures for decolonization. In both Spanish and Portuguese America, administrative centralization and increasing economic demands led to disaffection from the metropolis. But these conditions failed to spark major efforts at independence. In both cases, independence was only proclaimed when the metropolis attempted to reinstate controls that had lain dormant during the Napoleonic Wars. A simple account of Latin American decolonization stresses reluctance to surrender *de facto* sovereignty.

#### Colonies of Foreign Domination: 1870–1975

The twentieth-century relationship between popular sovereignty and decolonization is consistent, though less striking. It shows up particularly in the reactions of imperial powers to peripheral nationalism. Portugal, the state furthest in both ideology and institutions from popular sovereignty, was the most vigorous opponent of decolonization, and the last to leave Africa. At the other extreme, the United States constructed locally autonomous political institutions and facilitated peaceful movement towards decolonization during the heyday of Western imperialism. The British pattern lies between the two. Under nationalist pressures, the British ceded local self-government and accepted ultimate independence fairly rapidly.

The relationship between popular sovereignty and decolonization is less clear for France. Though more fully organized around popular sovereignty than Great Britain, France did not move toward decolonization more rapidly. France formally incorporated Algeria without assimilating its native population, and waged a war against independence. The parallels to Portuguese policy in Angola and Mozambique are obvious.

Differences between French and Anglo-American decolonization patterns appear to be related to differences between centralized and decentralized political structures. The federal structure of the American state and the traditional localism of the British state seemed well-poised to accommodate peripheral demands. Traditions of local autonomy legitimated and meshed with colonial self-government and ultimately independence. In France, on the other hand, centralist traditions and structures pressed colonial policy toward assimilation and a rejection of colonial independence. This is best seen in Algeria, where formal integration with metropolitan France turned Algerian patriots into secessionists.

While the centralized character of the French political system may have worked against decolonization, the ideology of popular sovereignty worked in the opposite direction, favoring decolonization. This pushed France closer to the

British and American pattern of decolonization, and further from the Portuguese pattern. French failure to follow through on assimilation meant popular sovereignty could only be obtained through independence. This helped frame and legitimate indigenous demands for independence. By contrast, Portugal argued that it really had integrated its colonies (Nogueira 1963), and thus more consistently forced peripheral nationalists outside "normal politics" as secessionist revolutionaries.

### Global Models and Decolonization

Thus far, the argument has focused on metropolitan political theories and institutions. However, empires are not hermetically sealed: they may be affected by institutions and ideologies at the global as well as the national level. Puchala and Hopkins (1982) use the concept of an international colonial regime to describe global institutions and ideologies relating to colonialism. They argue that there has been a shift from an international regime supporting colonialism at the turn of the century to one promoting decolonization in the post-World War II period.

More broadly, one can describe a shift in global political models across the two waves of decolonization. Until the mid-eighteenth century, dynastic sovereignty was a fundamental organizing principle of European states. The European family of nations mobilized to defeat the French Revolution, and the Holy Alliance sought to preserve the monarchical principle after 1815. Proposals were even floated to send minor European princes to South America to reign over the newly-independent states.

After 1918, the ideology and institutions of popular sovereignty generally supplanted the dynastic principle. As the above discussion of United Nations colonial policy suggests, the ideology and institutions of popular sovereignty were the basis for a global discourse challenging colonialism (Puchala and Hopkins 1982). Support for this discourse came from both the Soviet Union and the United States, which formed alternative models of popular sovereignty, and from the new nations themselves.

These differences in *global* political discourse help to explain differences in the effects of national political models across historical periods. As noted above, the impact of national ideologies and institutions is most apparent in the first wave of decolonization. It is most striking at the level of colonial action, where British, French, Spanish, and Portuguese colonials vary greatly in their ability to legitimate and organize for independence. Variations among peripheral actors are notable, because decolonization did not diffuse rapidly during this period. Spanish colonials did not successfully imitate the British, and non-Creole populations in Asia were entirely unaffected by settler independence in the Americas.

In the second wave of decolonization (1918–1975), metropolitan political models seem most important in affecting imperial responses to peripheral nationalism. It is more difficult to discern differences in rates of peripheral mobilization.

American and British colonials may have begun to organize for independence a little earlier than French or Portuguese colonials, but the differences are not that great. In 1961, Portuguese Africa was experiencing riots similar to those occurring in British Africa during the mid-1950s. The lack of substantial differences can be understood in terms of the rapid diffusion of nationalist sentiments and ideologies.

These differences seem importantly linked to change in global political discourse. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, decolonization ran counter to the internationally-accepted principle of dynastic sovereignty. Ideologies of decolonization thus failed to diffuse rapidly or extensively, making it easy to distinguish dependencies in which such ideologies were native (British colonies) from those in which they were foreign (Latin American colonies).

In the twentieth century, the movement for national independence made sense within the new parameters of global political discourse. This produced rapid diffusion of peripheral nationalism throughout the world, and reduced the effect of variation in metropolitan institutions and ideologies. Only metropolitan reactions, when grounded in idiosyncratic political traditions like that of the Portuguese, appear untouched by the growing international condemnation of imperialism.

#### CONCLUSION

Prior cross-national work points to a coincidence between decolonization and the times and places where notions of popular sovereignty organize political life. Decolonization occurs more rapidly where metropolitan states incorporate more people as voters, and where dependencies possess representative institutions (Strang 1990). This paper has sought to probe these empirical regularities more deeply by taking a close historical look at the concrete conditions of decolonization.

Overall, this inquiry suggests relationships congruent with those found in quantitative cross-national research. Metropolitan states organized around popular and dynastic sovereignty seem to face qualitatively different types of imperial breakdown. In the Spanish and Portuguese empires, dynastic principles produced an ideologically and organizationally confident imperialism, whose overthrow was largely the result of foreign ideas and armies. By contrast, the British, French, and American empires seemed locked in internal contradictions between the reality of colonial possessions and political institutions and ideologies emphasizing popular sovereignty. Caught within the "inner incompatibility of empire and nation," British, French, and American empires were pressed more rapidly towards decolonization.

Political models operate, increasingly, at a global level. While used here as documentary evidence for the logic of popular sovereignty, the United Nations resolution described above is also an excellent example of the attempt to construct a globally authoritative discourse. Notably, the point of declaring a terri-



tory to be "non-self-governing" is to require the metropolitan state to submit information to the United Nations concerning its progress towards autonomy. As a global discourse embracing popular sovereignty emerges, variations in the timing of decolonization become more difficult to discern, and the legitimacy of empire is undermined worldwide.

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