

1 Introduction

Spain and the American Revolution

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At the Palace of Aranjuez, outside of Madrid, in the summer of 1780, war was in the air. Spain, together with its ally France, had in the previous year launched a failed armada to invade Britain, which, had it achieved even its most modest aims, would have brought the war to an end. In the middle of this escalating conflict between Western European powers, a relatively minor—if extremely well-connected—playwright and man of letters, Richard Cumberland, arrived, with his burgeoning family, as an official emissary of the British government. Cumberland, whose inexperience, temperament and talent proved ill-suited for the delicate diplomacy with which he was entrusted,¹ had been forbidden to enter into negotiations with Count Floridablanca, Spain’s chief Minister, unless he received explicit word that Spain did not intend to broach the subject of cession or exchange of either Gibraltar or Minorca.² He had not received such an assurance, but engaged with the Spanish minister anyway.

Also in residence at Aranjuez that sweltering summer was an emissary from the rebellious 13 seaboard North American colonies, John Jay. Those rebels had entered into an alliance with France, Spain’s arch ally. One might expect Jay to have been warmly received and Cumberland treated coolly, but the reception was the inverse of this expectation. As Cumberland informs us in his *Memoirs*, the Prince of Asturias, the heir to the Spanish throne, entertained his family, and the King himself “gave orders for any pictures to be taken down [from his various Madrid and Escorial palace galleries] and placed at an easel, which I might wish to have a nearer view of; he also gave directions for a catalogue to be made at my request, which I have published and attached to my account of the Spanish painters.”³

Contrast this lavish hospitality and convivial, languorous summer interlude with Jay’s treatment. By any measure, Jay was by far the more impressive of the two men: he had served as President of the Continental Congress, and he would go on, following American independence, to hold the offices of Secretary of State, Governor of New York, and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Yet he was rarely (and, even then, furtively,) invited to dine and socialize with the Spanish aristocratic families

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who summered with the royal family in Aranjuez. He was the emissary of recalcitrant colonies Spain did not recognize, even if its chief ally, France, did. Jay's audiences with Floridablanca at this time were infrequent, informal, and unsatisfying. Jay was dejected, for the purpose of his mission was to convince Spain to enter the war formally on the American side, to provide material and monetary aid directly, and to begin the task of delineating the border demarcating what he was certain would soon be an independent polity, carved from the British empire, and the Spanish empire.

He had made, by the summer of 1780, little headway on any of these three fronts. Jay was perplexed by Spanish obduracy. As he wrote to John Adams, future President of the US and then emissary to the French Court, "Spain will be our Neighbor. We both have territory enough to prevent our coveting each others' and I should be happy to see that perfect amity and cordial affection established between us, which would ensure perpetual peace and harmony to both."⁴ To his chagrin, Spain did not view matters the same way. While engaged in his fruitless mission, Jay received messages of encouragement from two of the great figures of the American Revolution, imploring him to continue his courtship of Spain and not to despair when his entreaties were rebuffed or ignored altogether. Adams tried to revive Jay's spirits:

[Floridablanca] is agreed to be a man of abilities, but some how or other, there is something in the European understanding different from those we have been more used to. Men of the greatest abilities, and the most experience, are with great difficulty brought to see what appears to us as clear as day. It is habit, it is education, prejudice, what you will, but so it is.⁵

Adopting a somewhat different approach to shake Jay from his despondency, polymath patriot Benjamin Franklin reminded Jay that,

Spain owes us nothing therefore whatever friendship she shows us in lending money or furnishing cloathing & Ca., tho' not equal to our wants and wishes, is however *tant de gagné*; those who have begun to assist us are more likely to continue than to decline, and we are still so much obliged as their Aids amount to.⁶

This introductory chapter will assess what aid Spain provided to the American cause and what that aid amounted to in the outcome of the American Revolution.

The historiography of Spain's involvement in the American Revolution

On both sides of the Atlantic, the study of the role of the Spanish Monarchy in the War of American Independence has been heavily influenced by the



Map 1.1 The Americas c. 1775

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perceptions of Spain and the United States in each other's eyes. On the United States' side, interest in Spain and its history began during the first half of the nineteenth century with the works of Washington Irving (1828, 1829, 1831, 1832), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1863a, 1863b, 1863c, 1863d, 1843), George Ticknor (1823, 1849), and, especially, William Hickling Prescott (1838, 1843, 1847, 1858–1859). From this milieu emerged what Richard L. Kagan called Prescott's Paradigm, "created by a Protestant intellectual and social elite centered in Boston and New York" (Brown, 2002, ix), in which Spain was "everything that the United States was not" (Kagan, 2002b, 9, 2002c). The Spanish American War, which began in 1898, reinforced this disparaging depiction while adding strong negative undertones rooted in the anti-Catholic "Black Legend" of Spain's alleged nefarious conduct in the colonization of the Americas.⁷ It was not a coincidence that precisely in that year a re-edition of a seventeenth-century English book was published, this time with the telling title *Horrible Atrocities of Spaniards in Cuba. An Historical and True Account of the cruel massacre and slaughter of 20,000,000 of people in the West Indies by the Spaniards* (Powell 1971, 160; Hanke 1963).⁸

The twentieth century would witness a slow shift in Spain's image in America. An important factor contributing to the reappraisal was the undoubtedly romantic, positive vision of Archer Milton Huntington, who in 1904 founded New York's Hispanic Society and, in 1927, donated his massive collection to the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., the seed of this institution's prestigious Hispanic Division. Another crucial contributor in this period was historian Herbert Eugene Bolton (1920, 1930, 1933, 1939), whose work on borderlands would summon the attention of American historians to the Spanish imprint in the history of the United States. The 1930s witnessed a renewed interest in Spain, as a newly founded Spanish Republic strove toward the ideals of democracy and liberty that the United States considered as genuinely American. A new image of Spain emerged, tinged with romanticism as well, which, according to Gabriel Jackson (2001), crystallized into a new paradigm, shaped indelibly by Ernest Hemingway (Noya, Rodríguez and Ruiz 2008), from which emerged the works of Samuel Flagg Bemis (1926 [1960], 1931, 1957) and John Walton Caughey (1934 [1998]).

The Spanish Civil War of the 1930s would polarize the image of Spain in the US. While some would support the Spanish Republic, even with the blood of the volunteers of the Lincoln Brigade, others, especially the Catholic community, would support the Nationalist forces under General Francisco Franco (Tierney 2007). US President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration would declare the US's neutrality in the conflict in line with the policy of non-intervention adopted by the United Kingdom and France, which was followed by 27 European countries under the Non-Intervention Agreement. The close alignment of Franco with the Axis Powers during the Civil War and first years of the Second World War accounted for Spain's international isolation after 1945, which produced not only a lack of interest in Spain within academic circles and from the American public, but also denied impoverished Spain the beneficence of the Marshall Plan.

The Cold War, however, would provide Franco with the opportunity to polish his anti-communist credentials, allowing Spain to become a second-class ally through the three US–Spanish Agreements, signed in 1953, that granted several military bases on Spanish territory to the United States. It was during this decade that both governments tried to improve their respective images in the other. While the United States included Spain in the Fulbright Scholarships Program in 1959, Spain could do little more than sponsor some publications about the historical relations between the two countries (Morales Padrón 1952a, 1952b, 1955a, 1955b; Hayes 1952; Gil 1952a, 1952b; Sanz y Díaz 1953; Manfredi 1955). In the late 1970s, Spain’s transition towards a full democracy, its economic development, and the positive image projected by a young king contributed to the normalization of the image of Spain in the United States, in the sense of stripping it of most of its old romantic connotations. Bilateral relations became more balanced with Spain’s membership of NATO (1982) and the European Economic Community (1986), and the signature in 1998 of the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement and the Agreement on Defense Cooperation between Spain and the United States (revised by two protocols in 2012, and a third one in 2015).

The final factor to take into account when considering Spain’s image in the United States is its double status both as a European and a Latin American country. That Spain is a European country derives from a simple geographical fact, though it must not be forgotten that parts of Spain are also geographically in the eastern Atlantic and Africa (the Canary Islands, Ceuta, and Melilla). Spain’s Latin American dimension requires some explanation. When the US Census Office classifies US citizens and residents by country of origin, it includes the category of Hispanics, also known as Latinos, and in the list of countries included under this heading is Spain. Therefore, the descendants of Spaniards living in the US and Spanish immigrants who have become citizens or residents of the United States are officially members of the Hispanic community. This demographic classification has had implications beyond the realm of bureaucracy, extending to the perception of Spanish history in the United States.

In Spain, the study of the Spanish Monarchy’s role in the American War of Independence would emerge from a combination of political interests and the effects of a certain Spanish inferiority complex vis-à-vis the United States. In the 1920s, books by Valentín Urtasún (1920–1924), Manuel Conrotte (1920), and Juan F. Yela Utrilla (1925) shared the aim of nationalistic historical vindication. For some of these writers, Spain’s crucial role was insufficiently recognized by the Americans because they were either ungrateful or could not fathom the notion of owing anything to Spain.⁹ It would take more than three decades and the Cold War, when the Franco regime needed to portray itself as a viable partner of the United States, for the next, more conciliatory wave of histories to appear.¹⁰ In the late 1970s, the same motivation, but this time under the newly established Spanish constitutional monarchy that emerged after Franco, accounted for renewed interest in the subject. Taking advantage

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of the bicentenary of American Independence, a plethora of studies would appear, most of them published through official patronage. In particular, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, besides publishing a collection of historical studies by renowned Spanish historians, undertook the monumental task of collating and printing a *Collection of Documents Related to the Independence of North America in Spanish Archives*, which took more than a decade (1977 to 1986) to compile and ultimately filled 14 volumes.¹¹ A new generation of Spanish historians would build a new historiographical approach to the subject thanks to this documentary collection, as demonstrated by the annual bibliographies published by Sylvia L. Hilton between 1983 and 1996 (Hilton 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1994a, 1994b; Hilton and Labandeira 1990, 1991, 1993; Hilton and Paredes 1996).

Parallel to the evolution of Spain's and the US's respective images, the increasing attention given to the role of Spain in the American Revolutionary War is also a product of the evolution in historiography towards the study of subjects and geographical areas beyond the traditional Eurocentric approach. Before this evolution, much of the attention to the subject was only given by historians working on the international aspects and diplomatic history of the American Revolution such as Ramón E. Abarca (1970), Samuel Flagg Bemis (1926 [1960], 1931, 1957), Samuel Gwynn Coe (1928), Jonathan R. Dull (1975, 1985), Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (1981), Richard B. Morris (1965), and J. Horace Nunemaker (1943). When the study of Native American communities looked beyond their relations with the British, contacts with the French and Spanish empires in the region became an object of study. The groundbreaking working works by Richard White (1991) and Daniel H. Usner (1992) on the French–Indian relations have been complemented by the study of Spanish–Indian contacts by David J. Weber (1992, 2005) and Ramón Gutiérrez (1991), which have been followed by the important contributions of Steven W. Hackel (2005), Kathleen DuVal (2006, 2015), Juliana Barr (2007), and Pekka Hämäläinen (2008), among others. Something similar happened with the study of slavery with comparative analysis between the British and Spanish slavery, both slaves of African origin and indigenous slaves, from the classic and much-revised work of Frank Tannenbaum (1946) to the contributions of Jane Landers (1984, 1990, 1999, 2010), James F. Brooks (2002), and James H. Sweet (1997).¹² In the process of enlarging the geographical scope of Early American History, several previously ignored regions would be incorporated. The American West was opened by Bolton's studies of the Spanish Borderlands (1930, 1933, 1939), a concept that has been re-considered and updated by John Francis Bannon (1970) and other scholars. The Caribbean also has received increasing attention with the work of Andrew O'Shaughnessy (2000). A comprehensive continental approach to United States' early history has been advanced by historians as Silvio Zavala (1961), Paul W. Mapp (2009), Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron (Adelman and Aron 2009), and Daniel H. Usner Jr. (2006). Comparative history has also widened the scope of the study of imperial institutions and practices, as

exemplified by the works of John H. Elliott (2006, 2009) and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra (2001). Atlantic History, as practiced by Bernard Baylin (2005), Philip D. Morgan (2009), Jack P. Greene (Morgan and Greene 2009), David Armitage (2009), and Cécile Vidal (2012), offers an even broader vision of an interconnected space in which Atlantic empires interacted.

The notion of “Entangled History” has reinforced the importance of the interconnections between Atlantic empires, highlighting the asymmetry of the exchanges by turning upside-down the traditional mental map of the region. In this framework, Eliga H. Gould (2007) has proposed that the English-speaking Atlantic should be considered as a “Spanish Periphery.”¹³ Nor is this suggestion mere hyperbole. Whether assessed in terms of the size of territory and population, the number and complexity of its cities and its culture, the number and prestige of its universities, and the wealth of core vice-royalties, Spain’s massive empire was superior to that of Britain in the Americas. Havana, Lima, and Mexico City far outstripped Boston, New York and Philadelphia in terms of sheer size, per capita GDP, and other measures. Philadelphia, the largest city in the 13 seaborne colonies, had a population one-fifth the size of Mexico City. Average GDP per capita, admittedly an imperfect measure, in Latin America in 1700 was 128 percent that of the Anglo-North American level in 1700. Even in 1800, Cuba’s GDP was 112 percent of that of the US (Coatsworth 1998, 26). In 1700, there were 17 thriving universities in the Spanish Atlantic World compared to a mere three in British North America, for example. If not quite a backwater, the North American seaboard colonies that eventually rebelled were certainly far from the center of the action in the eighteenth-century Atlantic World.

Spanish global interests in the American Revolution

On the specific subject of the role of Spain in the American Revolutionary War, the few book-length treatments have been complemented by other studies on certain aspects, including those related to the history of Louisiana and Florida during the American Revolution, military campaigns, and the figure of general Bernardo de Gálvez, Spanish Louisiana’s Governor and supreme commander of the Spanish forces during the war.¹⁴ The war that is known as the American Revolutionary War or the War of American Independence was much more than what those names suggest, for North America was merely one theater in a global war. It was a world-spanning conflict among rival empires, one of the results of which was the independence of the US. Britain found itself at war with France, Spain, and the Dutch Republic in three continents. In the Americas, Britain fought France on land and sea; the Dutch lost their Caribbean posts of St. Eustatius, Saba, and Saint Martin to Britain; and Spain’s far-flung involvement saw engagement along the Mississippi, in Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida, but also in Central America and the Caribbean. In Europe, Spain laid a long, amphibious siege of British-held Gibraltar, conquered the island of Minorca, and even plotted with France to

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invade the British Isles. In Asia, the siege of Pondicherry, and the naval battle of Cuddalore, saw the French and British as adversaries, while the Dutch fought the British in the Bay of Bengal. America thus was merely one theater. In 1780, of the 100,000 troops under British command, only 30,000 were deployed in North America due to the geographical scope of the war (Colley 2002, 209).

The American Revolution therefore must be studied in global perspective. King George III's intransigence in the face of America's declaration of Independence, for example, is well known if often exaggerated to the verge of caricature. But the reasons for his refusal to countenance independence deserve attention. He feared that the loss of America would result in Britain's loss of prestige within Europe. Prosecution of the war was not about preservation of the North American colonies in the narrow sense, whether for economic advantage or national self-worth, but rather because the prospective forfeiture of international prestige was an outsized factor in his calculus. Were independence granted, George III informed Lord North in early 1780, "I shall despair of this country being ever preserved from a state of inferiority and, consequently, falling to a very low class among the European states; if we do not feel our own consequence other nations will not treat us above what we esteem ourselves."¹⁵ This position was consistently held, not fleeting despair, for a year later he told North that "we are contending for our whole consequence whether we are to rank among the Great Powers of Europe or be reduced to one of the least considerable."¹⁶ This aim (or aspiration) was a crucial dimension of the American Revolution, particularly in its latter phases. The American Revolution was lost neither in America nor in Britain itself, but rather in the breakdown of British diplomacy that preceded imperial dismemberment. As historian Brendan Simms noted, "No amount of domestic mobilization, moral purity, insular virtue and naval prowess could replace the continental system of alliances on which British security, prosperity and imperial expansion had rested" (Simms 2007, 678).

It is also relevant to recall that while the American Revolutionary War could be considered a result of the failure of the British imperial reform program of the 1760s, the Spanish empire also experienced a period of system-wide changes and reforms that reinforced connections between the Peninsula and Spanish America. The older view of the impact of the Bourbon reforms of the second half of the eighteenth century was that they precipitated the Spanish American independence movements of the early nineteenth century. The main argument behind this interpretation was that the reforms strengthened royal authority and metropolitan control over the American territories at the expense of the power and autonomy of the local American societies, especially the creole elites. However, recent contributions have undermined this interpretation.¹⁷ Now the Spanish monarchy of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is no longer viewed as an empire verging on collapse, but rather as an integrated ensemble with a high degree of administrative unity. The origins of Spanish American independence are found not in

the Bourbon imperial reforms, but in the French invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in 1808 (Guerra, 1992; Breña, 2006, 2015; Echeverri, 2016). The involvement of Spain in the American Revolution must be understood within the context of imperial reforms that prompted a reassessment of Spain's foreign policy (Abol-Brasón, 2009; Hernández Sánchez-Barba, 1991; Lynch, 2009; Rodríguez Casado, 1941). The chief precipitant of Spain's entry into the American Revolution was the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). Initially, Spain had clung to its neutrality. But its fateful alliance with France led Spain to enter the war belatedly, and without proper preparation, in 1762. Word of Spain's belligerent turn was leaked to Britain before Spain had informed its own colonists and readied its own defenses. Britain sacked and occupied Havana and Manila, in the Philippines, which suggests the global threat Britain posed to Spain's empire. Britain returned Havana and Manila to Spain in the Peace of Paris (1763), but still gained much from the resulting treaty, including a new colony, West Florida, with Pensacola as its capital, as well as the restitution of East Florida. Although it is doubtful that Britain had the intention or possessed the resources to make a broader assault on the Spanish empire in North America or the Caribbean, even in the aftermath of the effective siege and capture of Havana in 1762, British military planners were cognizant that permanent occupation was imperiled by the disease environment of the Caribbean.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the British presence in the Floridas threatened the maritime route followed by Spanish convoys carrying New World silver, which then represented 20 percent of the total revenues of the Spanish Treasury.

Facing potential cataclysm, Spain embarked on a major program of reform to fortify its empire, beginning with naval reconstruction and the modernization of defenses to be sure, but also efforts to reinvigorate the transatlantic economy. Steps in this direction included experimentation with new forms of “free” (deregulated) trade as well as administrative reorganization. By the early 1770s, the reforms were bearing fruit. Spain capitalized on almost 15 years of peace after 1763, realizing that the competition for empire in the Americas, as well as for primacy in Europe itself, made conflict with Britain inevitable. Many administrative changes had been undertaken by the mid-1770s. Mention should be made of the creation of the viceroyalty of Río de la Plata; a half dozen smaller provinces on northern coast of South America were consolidated into the Intendencia of Venezuela (1776), with Caracas as its capital; Chile was governed as a Capitanía General from 1778. The 1770s were also a decade of remarkable expansion northward: garrisons were established in San Diego and Monterey, in California, in the early 1770s; San Francisco's was established in 1776. Nor were the core viceroyalties—the vital mitochondria of empire—of New Spain (Mexico) and Peru neglected. As David Brading has written, by 1776, “a small army of official, clerks and guards, stationed in all of the chief towns of New Spain, administered taxes, new and old, with unparalleled vigor and efficiency” (Brading 1971, 29). On the other side of the Atlantic, a new generation of civil servants, mainly

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drawn from the middle classes and strongly committed to the enlightened reform project, the so-called “watchmakers of the Spanish Monarchy” (López-Cordón 1996), worked “like dogs.”¹⁹ According to Guillermo Céspedes del Castillo (1985, 324), those were intense years in which the Spanish reformers worked in concert, “creative, optimistic, and bold times, albeit tinged with a premature triumphalism.”

From a foreign policy chiefly built around the concept of military defense, a new approach based on a much broader notion of security would be adopted after 1763. And whereas defense was understood mostly in military terms, the new policy encompassed economic and strategic concerns (Hernández Sánchez-Barba 1977). The revision of Spain’s foreign policy included evaluating the usefulness of the military alliance with France built upon the three Family Compacts (*Pactos de familia*), which had made conflict with Britain the norm, at least until 1777, when José Moñino y Redondo, Count of Floridablanca, was appointed Secretary of State. He articulated a new vision of international relations based more on diplomacy and trade than on the projection of sheer military power. Ironically, precisely at this juncture, a gathering storm of circumstances was preparing the ground for war with Britain. Two years earlier, at the outbreak of the conflict between England and its colonies in North America, Carlos III had asked for the opinion of his ministers, who provided all manner of advice (Hilton 2007, 35). Several historians argue that Spain incorrectly assessed the new situation, in which its own national interests demanded a change of alliance—namely, leaving the French to support British efforts to suppress the revolt in its North American colonies (Becker 1906; Marfil García 1907, 130; Yela Utrilla 1925, v. 1, 484). José Luis Villacañas argued that Spain was not strong enough either to separate from France or to confront Britain (Villacañas Berlanga 2009, 12).

In any case, in the mid-1770s, the main policy objective was “to keep the peace at all costs in order to develop our trade and industry” (Rodríguez Casado 1944, 233), so that Spain would benefit from prolonging the war as much as possible in order to wear down both opponents, which would not only strengthen its relative power but hopefully resolve once and for all Spain’s grievances against Britain concerning Gibraltar, Minorca, the coast of Campeche (Mexico), and Honduras (Ruigómez 1978, 225; Hernández Franco 1984, 334). This delaying tactic was summed up by Floridablanca himself, who declared that Spain should “prepare for the war, as it is inevitable, but do everything to prevent it” (Batista González 1985, 81; Avilés Fernández 1982, 73). To achieve this aim, Spain offered to mediate between Britain and the Thirteen Colonies, an offer that was ambiguously received by the former, partially welcomed by the latter, and strongly opposed by the French, who at that time believed they would profit more from a military victory than from a diplomatic settlement (Voltes 1967). The American revolutionaries’ support for mediation was conditional on Spain’s recognition of their independence, a request that was impossible for the government

in Madrid to grant.²⁰ Furthermore, Floridablanca's mediation proposal included an armistice that would have permitted Britain to maintain possession of the American territories then held by its armies while peace talks occurred. There was no guarantee that the United States' independence could be secured by such an arrangement.

The first phase of Spanish involvement: weakening the British by supporting the American rebels

During the three years between the start of the Revolutionary War and Spain's declaration of war on Britain, Spain would officially proclaim its neutrality while doing everything it could to help the rebels' cause (Alonso Baquer 1970, 82), a support that was mainly aimed at weakening the British more than strengthening the Americans. In order to prolong the war for as long as possible, the Thirteen Colonies could not be crushed by the might of the British empire. The first aid offered by Spain was one million French *livres* sent to the rebels in late 1775, which was followed by shipments of arms and materiel through Spanish Louisiana, a territory that had been ceded by the French in 1763, assistance that was recognized by the US Congress on several occasions.²¹

As important as the aid channeled through Louisiana was, it was only part of the total Spanish contribution, both in cash and supplies, to the American Revolution. Between 1776 and 1778, Spain supplied the American revolutionaries with between 5 and 8 million *reales de vellón*.²² To these figures, one must add the contributions made after the official declaration of war. Taking all calculations into account, the total Spanish economic aid to the American revolutionaries would be closer to 13 million *reales de vellón*—to be exact, 12,906,560 *reales de vellón*, including 4,961,960 *reales de vellón* in loans and 7,944,600 in non-repayable grants (Bemis 1926 [1960], 334; Armillas Vicente 1978; Ribes-Iborra 2008, 165). According to American sources, the total was even slightly higher, but this discrepancy can be attributed to the difficulty of converting Spanish *reales de vellón* to French *livres tournoises*.²³ French financial aid to the Americans would be about 46 million *livres tournoises* (34 million *livres tournoises* in loans and 12 million in non-repayable grants), equivalent to nearly 167 million *reales de vellón* (Aulard 1925, 331–332).²⁴

According to these figures, the total Spanish financial contribution to the American Revolution was less than 10 percent of France's outlay. But other non-financial contributions by Spain must also be taken into account, such as the vital opening of Spanish Caribbean ports to US trade, which was essential to sustain its military effort (Armillas Vicente 2008, 188–192). This access was also important for the small US Navy, which benefited from safe docking places where crews could rest and ships could be repaired and provisioned—sometimes even at the expense of the Spanish Royal Treasury.²⁵

An important instrument in the Spanish support to the American rebels was the Spanish commercial firm Gardoqui & Sons, based in Bilbao, which since the 1760s

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had been a fixture of the cod industry in Boston and Salem. Gardoqui & Sons would become a sort of American agent, selling their cod in Spain and France, and buying supplies, and also transporting in their ships arms, ammunition, cloth for uniforms, and other military equipment that was secretly paid by the Spanish Royal Treasury (Calderón Cuadrado 2008, 214). Most of the shipments went from the Iberian Peninsula to Havana and then to New Orleans. In January 1777, a courier ship from Havana arrived in the port of New Orleans with uniforms, medicine, and 300 muskets, in theory destined for the Spanish Louisiana Fixed Infantry Regiment. British spies in the city sent notice to the British Governor of Pensacola, who officially complained to the Spanish authorities about its real final destination. Bernardo de Gálvez, Louisiana's Governor, staged a public auction of the textiles and medicine, while the muskets and ammunition were conveniently misplaced while in the Royal Treasury's warehouse. From there they eventually ended up in the hands of Oliver Pollock, the United States' unofficial representative in New Orleans, who successfully smuggled them into American-controlled territory (Armillas Vicente 2008, 185). Not only supplies but also funds were transmitted from Louisiana through Pollock, who procured a Spanish loan to finance George Rogers Clark's campaign into the Illinois country in June 1778 (James 1937, 174–176; McDermott 1974, 329–331). Between 1776 and 1777, more than 1.5 million *reales de vellón* were transferred to support the American cause, chiefly via New Orleans and Havana.²⁶

Spain was underwriting the American Revolution with cash and supplies while remaining legally neutral in the conflict between the Thirteen Colonies and Britain. A neutrality that, as Bernardo de Gálvez stated in March 1778, “would not compromise [Spanish] hospitality” to the Americans.²⁷ Through this hospitality policy, Spain would grant asylum to those who fled to its territories from the war in the Thirteen Colonies,²⁸ but also used it to carry out all sorts of covert actions in support of the rebels. Besides the direct aid provided to the American revolutionaries, Spain also funded an important part of costs incurred by its French allies. For example, French vessels were repaired and supplied at no cost in the port of Havana and, during the second half of 1781 only, the French forces deployed in the Caribbean received 3–3.5 million *pesos* from the Spanish Treasury.²⁹

The aid in cash and materiel supplied to the American revolutionaries was only part of Spain's total financial contribution to the American Revolution. To complete the picture, the cost of the war itself must be considered. Since there is no separate record of the amounts effectively spent by Spain on its war with Britain, we have taken an indirect approach, comparing the amounts spent in the defense of Spanish possessions before and after the war with the outlay during the war. The difference between these can provide a rough estimate of the cost of the war itself. Although an important portion of expenses before the war should also be considered as part of the total cost of the war, as they include preparations for what followed, we have been unable to include this since the available data does not provide enough detail to do so. With all these caveats in mind, the estimate of the total cost for Spain of its war with Britain was approximately 431 million *reales de*

Table 1.1 Cost of the war with Britain (1779–1783)³¹

<i>Year</i>	<i>Amount</i> ³²	<i>Average defense expenditures during peace time</i> ³³	<i>Difference in expenditures during the war over average during peace time</i>
1775	323,031,000	336,425,400	
1776	351,082,000		
1777	325,280,000		
1778	337,515,000		
1779	336,489,000		63,600
1780	462,678,000		126,252,600
1781	410,506,000		74,080,600
1782	502,240,000		165,814,600
1783	401,496,000		65,070,600
1784	345,219,000	336,425,400	
Total expenditures during war over the average during peace time			431,282,000

vellón,³⁰ a significant sum, since it is equivalent to the total annual revenue of the Spanish Royal Treasury during this period.

From June 1779, the *Junta de Medios* (Treasury Council) started to put in place several mechanisms for raising the funds to cover the cost of the war. Due to the varied fiscal structure throughout the Spanish empire, different measures were applied to each of its territories. Taxes were raised; in Castile and in the Crown of Aragon, some tax rates increased up to a third and the tax on salt was raised to four *reales* per bushel.³⁴ In the Americas, viceroys were authorized to “establish the contributions they deemed necessary according to the local circumstances.”³⁵

Other sources of revenue were the *donativos*, donations from private individuals and institutions that either could be voluntary or compulsory, depending on the circumstances. During the first stages of the war, a great number of loyal subjects from both sides of the Atlantic volunteered cash and other resources, as the many and long lists of donors published in the *Gazeta de Madrid* testify. Although much research has been done on the *donativos* raised in the Americas (Marichal 1990; Valle Pavón 2012; Guillén 2018; Kraselsky 2018), Rafael Torres Sánchez has argued that “it does not make sense to separate those from the others coming from other parts of the Spanish empire since the intended use of all these resources was the Spanish armed forces that operated at an imperial scale” (Torres Sánchez 2013, 97). When voluntary contributions decreased, compulsory donations were decreed, such as the contributions of one *peso* from “all freemen and indians,” and two *pesos* from every “Spaniard and nobleman,” established by

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the royal decree of August 17, 1780.³⁶ In addition, cash held by local councils and the Church was seized with the promise of the payment of a 4 percent annual interest through the rents of the tobacco monopoly.³⁷ In addition, the Church was “asked” for a donation and a loan totaling 16.5 million *pesos*.³⁸ Among other measures specifically designed for Spanish America were lotteries in the main cities and the sale of titles of nobility and posts in the colonial administration to American-born Spaniards.³⁹

Soon it became evident that, in a war in which the two main operational theaters were as far apart as America and the Mediterranean, ordinary fiscal mechanisms were inadequate and new ones had to be found. In the meetings of the *Junta de Medios* of June 29, 1779 and July 22, 1781, it was agreed that the Royal Treasury would issue *vales reales*, a form of government bond. These *vales reales* were the first banknotes in the history of Spain (Teijeiro de la Rosa 2007, 102). Even though it was not the first time that the Royal Treasury resorted to debt financing, on this occasion it was decided that to make the *vales reales* more attractive to investors they would yield 4 percent interest rather than the traditional 3 percent, and that the notes must be accepted at their face value in certain transactions, such as the payment of taxes (Tedde de Lorca 2008, 228). During the war with Britain, there were three issues of public debt certificates: August 1780, for 149 million *reales de vellón*; March 1781, for 79 million; and May 1782, for almost 222 million, a total of 450 million *reales de vellón* (Tedde de Lorca 2008, 228–233). Not counting the banker’s fee (10 percent in the first issue and 6 percent in the other two), a total of 417 million *reales de vellón* was raised for the Royal Treasury—a figure very close to the 431 million *reales de vellón* that we have previously estimated as the total cost of the war.⁴⁰

Spain joins the war against Britain

Despite Spain’s reluctance to enter into another war against Britain, a confluence of circumstances eventually instigated conflict. The American victories in the battles of Saratoga (September 19 and October 7, 1777) proved both the resolution and the capacity of the rebels to wage war to gain independence. The signature of the Treaty of Alliance between the United States and France on February 6, 1778, followed by the British declaration of war against France a month later signaled the final countdown for the full involvement of Spain in the war. On April 12, 1779, France and Spain signed the Treaty of Aranjuez, which sealed its alliance against Britain and, on June 21, 1779, Spain officially declared war on Britain. Spain’s objectives in the war were clearly stated in Article 7 of the Treaty of Aranjuez,

The Catholic king has the intention to acquire by war and the future peace treaty the following advantages: 1st, the restitution of Gibraltar; 2nd, the possession of the river and the fort on Mobile; 3rd, the restitution of Pensacola with all the coast of Florida near the Bahama Channel, expelling from it all foreign domination; 4th, the expulsion of the British from the Bay of

Honduras and the fulfillment by them of the prohibition stated in the 1763 Treaty of Paris to establish neither there nor in any other Spanish territory any kind of settlement; 5th, the revocation of the privilege granted to the British of cutting logwood [*palo de tinte*] on the coast of Campeche; and 6th, the restitution of the island of Minorca.⁴¹

Distilled to its essence, by the Treaty of Aranjuez, France pledged not to make peace without Spain's consent and to continue the war until Gibraltar and Minorca (and sundry other territories) were recaptured and restored to Spain. As historian Richard Morris observed, "France had in effect modified her alliance with America, and changed and enlarged the purposes of the war without America's consent and even without her knowledge" (Morris 1965, 15–16). The Treaty of Aranjuez was the closest Spain came to an alliance with the US itself, Jay's indefatigable efforts notwithstanding. In effect, Spain committed itself to a treaty with France in support of its alliance with the US rebels against England, but not to an alliance with the rebels themselves.

The official entry of Spain into the war not only tipped the balance of the conflict, giving France and Spain numerical superiority both at land and sea, but also profoundly changed the general strategy of the war.⁴² The combined Bourbon navy in 1779 had 121 ships of the line compared to 90 for Britain, 117 compared to 95 in 1780, and 124 compared to 94 in 1781 (French 1990, 76). This clear superiority opened up new theaters in the global war, spreading British resources thin. It compelled Britain to fight on multiple fronts. Britain would be forced to abandon a purely American perspective of the conflict and to adopt a more global view of the war in which she had to relinquish her freedom to choose when and where to strike and instead to assume a defensive position, which prevented concentration of its forces against the North American rebels (Scott 1990, 277). Not only was Britain compelled to change its strategy but also the French had to modify their own strategy since the Spanish government succeeded in imposing its own priorities for the use of the combined forces in the Americas (Reeve 2010, 86; Dull 1975, 111).

As previously noted, Spain entered the war against Britain as an ally of France, but not of the US. This important distinction was clearly explained by Diego José Navarro, Governor and Captain General of Cuba between 1777 and 1781, in a memorandum sent to several Spanish officials in America on June 12, 1779.

There is no positive order or political basis for the United States of America to be seen or considered under any other concept but that of neutrality, since, not acting as subjects of Great Britain, they do not deserve our hostility; and not openly being friends of the Spanish nation, they should not benefit from our war efforts. Thus you will observe with

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them, their ships, and [their] vassals the orders issued last November 6, limiting aid to them to what is demanded by the right of hospitality.⁴³

This statement had profound implications. For example, even though both Spain and the United States shared a common enemy, it would not be possible to plan or execute joint military operations. This particular issue arose when Diego José Navarro received an American suggestion to plan, or at least discuss, this kind of initiative. Aware of the general policy, Navarro gave a formal and cold answer to the American rebels, telling them that since the matter exceeded his own authority he had to consult with his superiors.⁴⁴ Three months later, he received a letter from Madrid informing him that he had behaved properly by responding that he “had no orders to participate in such actions and that the naval and land forces in Cuba were busy with other objectives of the utmost importance.”⁴⁵ In November 1781, the Minister of the Indies wrote to Bernardo de Gálvez, supreme commander of the Spanish and French forces in the Caribbean and his nephew, that after the conquest of British Jamaica, which was being planned at the time, no more help should be given to the Americans in their war against Britain.⁴⁶

Before considering the military actions of Spain in the Americas, it is important to mention those in Europe which involved the largest number of men, ships, and resources of the war. Gibraltar and Menorca had been ceded to Britain by the Treaty of Utrecht signed in 1713. Since Spain’s principal war aim was to recover Gibraltar, it is unsurprising that its siege proved to be the costliest, largest, and longest operation of the conflict. Spain mobilized its army and navy for the siege immediately following its declaration of war, but preparations were slow and the British navy was able to supply Gibraltar’s garrison in January 1780 and then in April of the following year. By early 1782, Spain had deployed around 28,000 soldiers in its Gibraltar campaign, about a third of its metropolitan army. With the arrival of the French contingent, the total land forces would increase to 35,000 while the British garrison at that time hovered around 3,500 men.

Despite their massive numerical superiority and the appointment of the experienced Duke de Crillon as supreme commander of the joint Franco-Spanish forces, the British withstood the siege (Adkins and Adkins 2017; Panero 2008; Terrón Ponce 2000). Prince William, Duke of Clarence, who had traveled on a ship accompanying and protecting a British merchant fleet bound for the Mediterranean in January 1780, confidently told George III that Spain’s prospects were not promising: “The idea of the Spaniard was to take Gibraltar by famine, but, as long as we keep a superiority at sea it is impossible. To take it by storm would be hardly practicable, for it is too strongly fortified, both by nature and art.”⁴⁷ His prediction proved accurate. Though 39 ships of the line were involved, and an innovative tactic of using floating batteries was employed, Franco-Spanish forces failed in their amphibious siege and the naval Battle of Cape Spartel was largely inconclusive, too. Britain’s defense of Minorca did not meet with similar success: its garrison

would surrender to the joint French-Spanish forces in early 1782, after a seven-month campaign, a victory that restored Spain's position in the western Mediterranean (Alcaide Yebra 2004; Terrón Ponce 1981).

Tallying victories and defeats, however, may shroud the benefits Spain derived from its more aggressive policy. Viewed from Madrid, once the conflict had commenced, Spain clearly profited from its continuation. The stalemate in North America helped its Mediterranean policy, for example. In August 1780, a Franco-Spanish fleet came upon a convoy of English merchant ships bound for the Caribbean and Indian Ocean off Cape St. Vincent and managed to capture 59 of the 63 vessels and brought them triumphantly to Cádiz. The loss of cargo was estimated at 1.5 million pounds, plus 1,350 seamen and 1,255 troops (Bemis 1931, 85–88). In mainland North America, too, the inconclusive, protracted nature of the war created a large buffer zone separating New Spain from the nascent United States. Madrid's ambitions were compatible with, and even assisted by, strong allied, non-European nations, whether Anglophone creoles or Chicksaws, Creeks and Choctaw Amerindians. Spain entertained a vision of the Gulf Coast region filled with French and English-speaking landowners who remained or became Spanish subjects (DuVal 2015, 223, 227, 258). Spain also gained the flexibility to enact new commercial policies. Spanish involvement in war actually boosted free trade within the empire, decreed in 1778. In 1779, for example, Charles III gave Philippine merchants the freedom to bring ships laden with Asian goods to Latin America (Ardash Bonialian 2012, 436–427).

Yet, in spite of the advantages accrued, nothing was inevitable about Spain's involvement in the conflict. Many leading British statesmen were certain that Spain did not wish to remain a belligerent. In a sense, they were right. Spain sought certain objectives, but humiliation of Britain was not a principal one. Spain would have exited the war in exchange for Gibraltar, even without recovering Minorca. George III easily grasped this, and (by 1781) was willing to contemplate this cession, as were many of his key parliamentary allies. In late 1782, Lord Shelburne reported on conversations with de Rayneval, the French envoy, on what Vergennes, France's Foreign Minister, was prepared to countenance. Various swaps were proposed: for example, Minorca for Oran, in North Africa, was broached. But, in 1782, Britain held out for Puerto Rico in exchange for Gibraltar. As George III stated explicitly to Shelburne, "Puerto Rico is the object we must get for that fortress [Gibraltar]."⁴⁸ What emerges from this correspondence is that Gibraltar was deemed expendable, but that King and Shelburne were reluctant to offer it explicitly or to make the proposal themselves, hoping that Spain, either directly or via France, would suggest it. The King explicitly approved of this negotiating strategy: "The holding of Gibraltar very high is quite judicious and if not taken I should hope Porto Rico may be got for it."⁴⁹ Two months later, George III remained disposed to cede Gibraltar, but his asking price had risen. He now demanded "the compleat restitution of every possession Spain has taken during the war" in addition to Puerto Rico (or the dyads of

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Martinique and St. Lucia OR Guadalupe and Dominica), calling such a hypothetical exchange “highly advantageous to this kingdom.” A few weeks later, however, he was prepared to accept considerably less, averring that “peace is so desirable, that as far as relates to myself, I should not be for another year’s war.”⁵⁰

The Cabinet, however, was animated by different ideas. In December 1782, Lord Grantham was tasked with informing the King that the Guadeloupe–Gibraltar swap had generated little enthusiasm. Other permutations were considered more desirable: for example, if the Bahamas were returned, Minorca restored, and the rights of logwood cutters in Honduras guaranteed, then a Guadeloupe for Gibraltar swap was palatable. Trinidad also was raised and appraised, though there was uncertainty concerning which other colonial possession could be ranked as its equivalent for the purposes of exchange. The failed Spanish siege of Gibraltar changed the equation in some respects, but George III still believed that Gibraltar was expendable if its cession could bring the war to a close and secure a lasting peace. “I am ready to avow,” he told Grantham, “that peace is not compleat unless Gibraltar be exchanged with Spain.”⁵¹ He justified this stance in a letter to Shelburne: “I would wish if possible to be rid of Gibraltar, and to have as much possession in the West Indies as possible; for it has been my purpose ever since peace has been on the carpet to get rid of ideal advantages for those that by a good administration may prove solid ones to this country.”⁵² Spain entered the war against Britain for purely strategic imperial motives. Its alliance with France not only made their combined military and naval forces superior to the British, but also forced the latter to assume a defensive position and made it impossible to concentrate her forces against the American revolutionaries.

War in the Americas

Long before Spain declared war on Britain, a new Governor had been sent to Louisiana with specific instructions to gather all possible information about the conflict between the Thirteen Colonies and Britain and to prepare for Spain’s eventual entry into the war. In December 1776, Bernardo de Gálvez, a young colonel of 30, arrived in New Orleans as head of the Louisiana Fixed Infantry Regiment and acting Governor of the province. His first priority would be to ensure the fidelity of the inhabitants to Spain, not an easy task since the formerly French population of Louisiana had rebelled against their new Spanish rulers a mere eight years earlier. With a savvy combination of economic concessions to the wealthy planters and merchants, gifts and expanded trade with the Amerindians, a reinforcement of the military garrison, and the new Governor’s deft personal touch, in just two years the Spanish new administration succeeded in winning the support of the vast majority of the population of Louisiana (Quintero Saravia 2018, 79–136).

On May 18, 1779, Spanish officials in America were secretly informed about the imminent war against Britain. Governor Gálvez immediately started preparations for an attack against the British settlements along the Mississippi River. However,

the campaign was delayed due to a strong hurricane that hit New Orleans on August 18, so the heterogeneous force assembled (170 veterans, 330 raw recruits, 20 carabineers, 60 militiamen, 80 free blacks and *mulatos*, and 2 American officers and 7 American volunteers) would not be able to leave the city until later that month. Along the march, around 600 men from the Acadian and German settlements, and 160 Amerindians from different groups joined the Spanish forces.⁵³ The objective was Fort Manchac, also known as Fort Bute, on the left bank of the Mississippi south of Baton Rouge, a British fortified post with a small garrison. On September 6, the Spanish forces arrived before Fort Manchac but instead of demanding the surrender of the garrison, which most probably would have been easily granted, Gálvez ordered his troops to attack. The Spanish forces needed a quick victory to build the morale of their inexperienced recruits and to provide them with their baptism by fire. After a short battle, Fort Manchac was captured.

From Manchac, they marched towards Baton Rouge, a better-defended British stronghold with a larger garrison, which was also rapidly conquered through the clever use of the artillery brought from New Orleans. Two days after the surrender of Baton Rouge, reinforcements arrived from Cuba, a force used to guard the 557 British prisoners of war. Their arrival permitted Gálvez to send a detachment of 50 men, under the command of Captain Juan Delavillebeuvre, to take possession of Fort Panmure in Natchez, almost 125 miles up the Mississippi, which controlled a great part of the river's left bank.

From the strategic point of view, the Spanish operations along the left bank of the Mississippi seized control of territory regarded by the crown as vital to "the protection of the vast empire of New Spain,"⁵⁴ and succeeded in dispersing British forces that otherwise could have united against Spain or the American rebels. They also relieved pressure from the British against Georgia and South Carolina and made it impossible for the two British armies operating in the North and South to unite. It additionally ensured that Spanish aid to the revolutionaries would safely reach General Washington's Continental Army. And last, but certainly not least, it removed the menace of a British attack against New Orleans.⁵⁵ From Baton Rouge the Spanish troops returned to New Orleans to regroup and plan for the next move against Mobile and Pensacola. Despite his recent victories along the Mississippi, Gálvez, who in the meantime had been promoted to the rank of general, received paltry support from Cuba. Governor Diego José Navarro considered Gálvez too inexperienced to lead the next Spanish thrust against the British. Due to a combination of surprise, daring, and overwhelming force, the first phases of the war in the Americas were completely favorable to Spain, but those that followed would require significantly larger military and naval forces against a much better prepared enemy.

On January 14, 1780, 1,300 men aboard three small warships and several transports left New Orleans, but when they were sailing in open sea a heavy storm destroyed most of the ships (Gálvez 1780). In the words of Gerónimo Girón Moctezuma, colonel of the Príncipe Regiment and Gálvez's second in

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command during the expedition against Mobile, “the troops found themselves ashore without arms or ammunition, naked and with nothing to eat in a land surrounded by enemies. There they remained for twelve days without tents or food other than the rice brought from Havana.”⁵⁶ On February 27, all of the troops and supplies were on shore near Mobile and the following day military engineers inspected the placement of the encampment and the batteries as they prepared for the siege of Fort Charlotte at Mobile.

Because of the inferior numbers of the defenders—between 120 and 300 British troops to 1,300 Spanish attackers—their only hope was to receive reinforcements from Pensacola.⁵⁷ Although Pensacola’s British military commander, General John Campbell, had been informed as early as February 12 of a strong Spanish military presence near Mobile, he was slow in coming to their aid.⁵⁸ At sunrise on March 12, the Spanish battery was in place. At ten o’clock, it opened fire. According to Gálvez, the shots hit their targets with great accuracy and “non-stop [fire] from both sides lasted till sunset, when the enemy hoisted the white flag.” After a short negotiation, the two commanders signed the articles of capitulation.⁵⁹ The British soldiers were taken prisoner, and the Spaniards hurried to take their positions inside Fort Charlotte in case of an attack by Campbell’s forces, which were less than a day’s march from Mobile. At the end, General Campbell decided against attacking and returned to Pensacola.

John Adams, who was about to leave Paris, wrote to Vergennes that “the advantages which Spain has gained in West Florida, and particularly of late at Mobile, and the probability that they will succeed in acquiring both the Floridas, show that the English are on the losing hand in this quarter.”⁶⁰ According to Representative William C. Houston, the news of the conquest represented that “the bitter Cup of ill Tidings is dashed with a little mixture of a different Quality.”⁶¹ Gálvez spent the days following the British surrender reconstructing Fort Charlotte, which he renamed Fort Carlota in honor of King Carlos III. In Mobile, Gálvez left 800 men under the command of José de Ezpeleta, who had to face not only the hostility of the local population, both of European origin and Native Americans, but also the prospect of a British counterattack which would become a reality in early 1781 and that would be repelled by a combination of blunders on the side of the attackers and fierce resistance from the Spanish defenders.⁶²

After recovering from their initial surprise, the British responded by trying to regain control of the Mississippi with an attack against San Luis de Ilinueses, modern St. Louis, Missouri. In May 1780, they attacked the Spanish garrison under the command of Captain Fernando de Leyva. Leyva’s 29 soldiers and 281 armed civilians were confronted by more than 300 British soldiers and 900 Indian warriors. The February 16, 1781 issue of the Spanish official newspaper, the *Gazeta de Madrid*, published an account of the defense emphasizing Captain Leyva’s gallant defense and the cruelties committed by the enemy while retreating from San Luis de Ilinueses.⁶³

From Mobile, Gálvez planned to go directly to Pensacola where he expected to catch the British garrison by surprise before any reinforcements could arrive. He needed the reinforcements promised from Havana, but these were nowhere to be seen, so he was forced to return to New Orleans victorious, embittered that the conquest of Pensacola had slipped from his hands. In a long report to José de Gálvez, Minister of the Indies in November 1780, he openly complained about Admiral Bonet, the supreme commander of the Spanish fleet in the Caribbean, who,

under the pretense that the conquest of Pensacola was not now in the king's interests ... only demanded for me to fortify and satisfy myself with Mobile; adding that the greatest service I could render to the king was that, and nothing would make me a better servant than to sacrifice the glory and promotions that could be awarded to me for the conquest of Pensacola ... It seems to me that the admiral was doing nothing but finding ways to deprive me of ships by using them for other pursuits and leaving us abandoned.⁶⁴

As Gálvez became exasperated with the delays, he decided to leave New Orleans for Havana, where he arrived on August 2, 1780. The following day, a fleet under the command of Admiral José Solano arrived from Cádiz in southern Spain. Gálvez's hopes for a prompt departure for Pensacola soon dissipated when the parlous condition of the disembarking troops became apparent.⁶⁵ The tensions that Gálvez had experienced earlier with Admiral Bonet were soon duplicated with his replacement, Victorio de Navia,⁶⁶ but at least the arrival of José Solano improved Gálvez's relationship with the navy. Solano played a key role in expediting preparations for the departure of the expedition against Pensacola. On October 16, 1780, 3,822 soldiers and 169 officers, on board a fleet commanded by José Solano, set sail from the port of Havana for Pensacola.⁶⁷ Just two days later, a nearly weeklong hurricane sank several ships, damaged the rest, and knocked the remaining ships off-course. Despite repeated efforts, it was impossible to regroup, as the hurricane had thrown ships to such far-flung places as Havana, Campeche, Mobile, and New Orleans.⁶⁸ When Gálvez returned to Havana, the senior military officers there awaited the downfall of the ambitious young general, but with the support of his uncle, the Minister for the Indies, he was able to maintain his position. Nevertheless, since Gálvez needed the assistance of the military and naval authorities in Havana, he avoided direct confrontation by presenting them with a new plan that instead of directly attacking Pensacola focused on reinforcing Mobile in order to prevent the British from retaking the recently conquered town (Medina Rojas 1980, 651–669).⁶⁹

On February 28, 1781, 5 warships, 27 transports, and more than 1,500 soldiers set sail from Havana,⁷⁰ but General Gálvez did not even pretend to go to Mobile or New Orleans but instead headed directly for Pensacola. The Spanish forces were clearly insufficient for a successful attack on Pensacola,

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but Gálvez was betting that once the siege started the military commanders in Cuba would have no option other than to send reinforcements. To that end, he counted on the support of Francisco de Saavedra, the special envoy of the Minister of the Indies, who had arrived in Havana and who played a crucial role in the campaign.

The voyage was uneventful, and, on March 9, the Spanish ships sighted the island of Santa Rosa, at the entrance of Pensacola Bay, where it was believed that the British had erected a fort to defend the entrance to the bay. To the attackers' surprise, a handful few soldiers were posted there and it was easily occupied. The main challenge was the shallow water over a sandbank that connected Santa Rosa island to the mainland. It was especially worrying for the *San Ramón*, a ship of the line with a deeper draft than the rest of the ships of the fleet. On March 11, its commander, naval captain José Calvo, gave the order to enter the bay, but the *San Ramón* ran aground. Gálvez insisted that the rest of the ships could easily enter the bay, but the naval officers refused to follow. Although Gálvez was the commander of the Spanish military expedition, his powers did not extend to the navy squadron, which was only responsible to Admiral de Navia in Havana. Tension escalated between Gálvez and the navy commander, verging on open rebellion. Unable to give a direct order, Gálvez resorted to challenging the navy. He went aboard the *Galveston*, a brig that had been seized to the British and that was under Gálvez's direct authority as Governor of Louisiana, hoisted the banner of chief of squadron, delivered a rousing speech where he stated that he alone would sail into Pensacola harbor to prove to the navy that it could be safely done, and gave orders to proceed. When the *Galveston* crossed unharmed inside the bay, the navy had no choice but to follow.

At this point the siege of Pensacola began, but for it to be a success, more reinforcements were desperately needed. Pensacola was strongly defended by a series of fortifications and by a garrison with between 1,800 and 1,900 men (Coker 1981, 118–119; Gálvez 1781 [1959]). The Spanish only had 1,500 soldiers. On March 22, reinforcements arrived from Mobile under the command of his trusted friend José de Ezpeleta; the following day a flotilla entered the bay carrying 1,378 more men, this time from New Orleans; and a couple of days later additional troops arrived by land, also from Louisiana's capital.⁷¹ With these additions, Gálvez now commanded just over 4,000 men, still insufficient to lay a siege, which, according to the military theorists of the time, required between 6,000 and 8,000 troops (Noizet de Saint-Paul 1792, 178, n. 2).

In order to have that number of men, reinforcements from Cuba were needed. In Havana, Francisco de Saavedra, who was in charge of coordinating the Spanish and French forces to prepare for a joint attack of Jamaica, succeeded in convincing the French and Spanish commanders that while waiting for everything to be ready they should reinforce the siege of Pensacola in case of British reinforcements were sent there. Saavedra forced the situation

and a joint Franco-Spanish fleet departed from Cuba and arrived in Pensacola Bay on April 19, with more than 5,500 soldiers, 1,505 officers and sailors of the Spanish navy, and 725 French troops, who volunteered “so they could share in the glory of this conquest.”⁷² The total number of men of the Franco-Spanish force was almost 7,500. But men were not matched with sufficient supplies and the Spanish artillery was running dangerously low on large caliber cannon balls, to the point that soldiers were paid two *reales* for each British cannon ball which could be re-fired against Penacola’s defenses. The situation was far from promising for the Spaniards, but at daybreak on May 8, construction was finished on the Spanish battery closest to the Queen’s Redoubt, and the exchange of fire began. All signs pointed to another long and uneventful day, with the siege continuing at its exasperatingly slow pace, but at half-past nine in the morning, a shot from the Spanish battery directly hit the British magazine producing a great explosion that destroyed most of the Redoubt. Spanish troops were quickly assembled for the assault, but before the order was given a white flag was hoisted in Fort George. After several hours of negotiations, the British garrison in Pensacola surrendered not only the city but the whole of British Florida.⁷³

The news of the Spanish-French victory at Pensacola went uncelebrated by the American revolutionaries for several reasons. First, because the terms of the British capitulation stated that its soldiers were to be returned to British territory only on the condition of not bearing arms against Spain or France in the present war, which left them free to fight against the American rebels. Second, as Spain’s national interest had been to prolong the war in order to weaken the British position in the continent, now the Americans would have preferred that Spain continue the war in Florida in order that the British could not concentrate their forces there. Furthermore, with the conquest of Pensacola, Spain had acquired West Florida from the British, thereby blocking the Americans’ access to the Caribbean. The American rebels were not fighting the British only for their enemy’s territories to be seized by another European colonial power.⁷⁴

The conquest of Pensacola had another important consequence for the cause of American independence. After the successful cooperation between the French and the Spanish navies, Spain assumed responsibility for the defense of the entire Caribbean, including all French possessions there, thus allowing the French fleet, commanded by the Count de Grasse, to confront the British fleet under the command of Rear Admiral Sir Thomas Graves at the Battle of the Chesapeake (September 5, 1781) which would facilitate General George Washington’s victory at Yorktown. Pensacola was a precondition for the larger Franco-Spanish design in the Caribbean. Jamaica had not only remained loyal to the British crown and was the source of crucial revenue to the Royal Treasury, but the wealthy planters of the island had succeeded in building a powerful lobby both in Parliament and in court. In this way, the defense of the island would become a major, if not the main, British priority (O’Shaughnessy 2000,

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234–237). From this moment, Britain would be on the defensive, incapable of concentrating sufficient forces against the American rebels to secure victory.

The complex preparations for the expedition against Jamaica delayed the attack. In the interim, the Spaniards decided to mount a smaller operation against the island of New Providence, in the Bahamas. In mid-April 1782, 2,000 soldiers aboard 57 ships sailed from Havana. The small garrison in Nassau (170 men, mostly ill or unfit for service) surrendered immediately after the arrival of the Spanish force in early May, but not before a serious confrontation between the Spanish military and naval commanders and Commodore Alexander Gillon, captain of the USS frigate *South Carolina*. At the bay of Nassau, Gillon demanded the immediate payment in cash of his services. The incident with Gillon had consequences, since both Havana and Madrid would seriously question “Anglo-American” participation in any Spanish military operation.⁷⁵ The problem had deeper implications than just an obstreperous American captain. If any operation were to be considered a joint one, it would contravene orders that stated specifically that Spain was only allied with France in the war against Britain, and while Spain shared a common enemy with the United States, the latter should not be considered an ally. In an *oficio reservadísimo* (secret instruction—the equivalent of a top secret order today) dated April 6, 1782, from José de Gálvez to Bernardo de Gálvez, the former interpreted and elaborated upon a November 16, 1781 royal order by stating clearly that neither Bernardo de Gálvez nor José Solano—the latter on specific instructions from the Minister of the Navy—should “ever agree to use the army or the navy of His Majesty to help the war of the American colonists against their motherland ... [but] if in the course of the operation against Jamaica this is demanded by the French, such a request should not prevent them from working closely with the French generals.”⁷⁶

Just when the Spanish troops were sailing towards New Providence, the joint Franco-Spanish attack against Jamaica received a serious blow when the British fleet under the command of Admiral Sir George Rodney defeated the French navy at the Battle of the Saintes (April 9–12, 1782). Without the participation of the French Navy, the plans for the invasion of Jamaica were postponed and ultimately cancelled. The Battle of the Saintes and the conquest of New Providence would be the last military actions of the American Independence War since peace negotiations started shortly afterwards. Britain was exhausted both financially and military. France teetered on the brink of bankruptcy. The revolutionary government struggled through the labor pains of giving birth to a new polity amid the tensions between the central authority of the Continental Congress and the real power that remained in hands of the Thirteen States. By contrast, Spain was in a far better position than its rivals and confident that it could achieve its objectives in the war either through military means or in diplomatic negotiations.

From the start of Spain's participation in the American Revolutionary War, Central America became an important theater of operations in the

struggle with Britain (Floyd 1967). Just a few months after the declaration of war, the Captain General of Guatemala, Matías de Gálvez, father of Bernardo de Gálvez and brother of José de Gálvez, was ordered to attack the British settlements in Belize. Yet before an expedition could be mounted, the British commodore, John Luttrell, sailed from Jamaica with three frigates to reinforce Belize. Then Luttrell changed his destination and decided to attack San Fernando de Omoa, in modern Honduras. The Spanish garrison in Omoa resisted the British attacks for almost a month but finally capitulated on October 20, 1779. The British occupation of the place would be short-lived, since less than a week later a Spanish relief force arrived in Omoa and recovered the fort for Spain.

Andrew O’Shaughnessy has described British military operations in Central America as “a ludicrously ambitious series of campaigns” (O’Shaughnessy 2000, 189). The intention was to seize the San Juan River and its source, Lake Nicaragua, and to thus divide the north and south dominions of Spanish America. On March 1780, 400 British soldiers and 600 Miskito Indians entered the San Juan River. With the support of the guns of the frigate *Hinchinbrook*, under the command of 22-year-old Horatio Nelson, and the expert Miskito boatmen the British attacked the Inmaculada fort which fell after a month’s siege (Dziennik 2018, 171–172). The extremely insalubrious conditions of the place determined that its British garrison had to abandon it by the end of July and shortly afterwards it was re-occupied by Spanish forces.⁷⁷ By December 1781, Matías de Gálvez left the capital of Guatemala for the port of Trujillo in the coast of Honduras, where he concentrated most of his troops for an attack against the British garrison in the island of Roatán, which surrendered on March 17, 1782 after a short battle. Returning to the mainland, the Spanish forces captured the British forts of Criba and Quepriva in Honduras. The defeat of the French fleet under admiral de Grasse at the Battle of the Saintes in April 1782 allowed Archibald Campbell, Governor of Jamaica, to send an expedition with 400 men under the command of Colonel Edward Marcus Despard that reconquered both forts in August.

Though the Central American and Caribbean campaigns were far from resounding successes, Spain was able to realize dreams it had long harbored. Britain was removed from what is now the Southeast of the US. Both Floridas—West and East—were recovered. Britain retained its Caribbean colonies, of course, but without mainland ports, Spanish shipping was safer than it had been for well over a hundred years and the treasure fleet more secure than it had been for nearly two centuries. A British invasion and occupation of Spanish America was now implausible. If anything, Spain now appeared poised to expand in North America, to make good its legal claims in the American Southwest. Where Spain and Britain clashed in North America thereafter was in the distant north, far from the most prosperous viceroyalties, in the Nootka Sound in British Columbia.

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The 1780s were, perhaps, the apogee of the Spanish empire. It was a decade of revival, marked by tremendous economic growth, demographic expansion, and sustained peace. The picture was not entirely rosy, of course. The conflict drove home to Spain's ministerial elite that colonies might rise up against the mother country and seek to separate themselves from it. In the early 1780s, numerous rebellions roiled the Spanish empire, notably in what is now Peru-Bolivia and Colombia, over just the same sorts of things—taxes (too many of them) and representation (not enough)—that had proved harbingers of Revolution in Anglo-North America. As Spanish officials had feared, the nascent US fascinated Spanish Americans. One writer in Bogotá (now Colombia) in 1793 said (disapprovingly):

Since the establishment of the Anglo-American provinces as a free republic, the peoples of America have taken on a character which is entirely different from that which they had ... the common coin of erudite discussion groups (in Spanish America) is to discuss and even form plans around the means of enjoying the same independence that they enjoy.⁷⁸

Aftermath of revolution: The 1783 peace and beyond

The war ended with four separate peace treaties: between the United States and Britain signed in Paris; France and Britain at Versailles; Spain and Britain, also at Versailles (all three signed on September 3, 1783); and Britain and the Netherlands on May 20, 1784. This complex diplomatic patchwork was designed to end the war but left open several questions that would negatively impact the diplomatic relations between Spain and the United States for decades to come. First, there was the Mississippi River question. For the United States, it was vital to have full access to the river which was their border with the Spanish empire but whose estuary South of the 31st parallel was inside Spanish territory. During the war itself, the Continental Congress initially had offered Spain exclusive navigation of the Mississippi River in return for substantive contributions toward the war effort. In the Continental Congress's "Resolution Approving Jay's Conduct in Spain" (1782), that body made clear that "the surrender of the Mississippi was meant as the price of the advantages promised by an early and intimate alliance with the Spanish monarchy; and if that alliance is to be procrastinated till the conclusion of the war, the reason of the sacrifice will no longer exist."⁷⁹ In the Paris Treaty of 1783, Britain transferred her navigation rights along the Mississippi to the United States, but the separate treaty between Spain and Britain made no mention at all of the issue, and therefore Spain did not recognize it. While Spain tried to impose taxes on all US commerce on the river, it had little military power to enforce them, so incidents between Spanish authorities in Louisiana and American ships were common. The issue would not be finally resolved until Pinckney's Treaty, also called the Treaty of San Lorenzo, on October 27, 1795, article 4 of which granted the United States free navigation of the Mississippi.

The second unresolved issue was the border with the Floridas. The United States wanted the border as far south as possible, while Spain wanted the opposite. The issue would also be settled by Pinckney's Treaty, which determined that the border would be drawn at the 31st parallel, thus accommodating the United States' wishes. In order to properly evaluate the Spanish concessions in this treaty, it is crucial to bear in mind that while these questions were somewhat relevant to the Spanish empire, they were vital for the United States. Similarly, the presence of the Spanish administration, both civil and military, was extremely weak in the region, which meant that the Spanish positions could not be backed by either the use or the threat of the use of force. Nevertheless, by 1784, Spain was treating the US as a hostile power, closing the port of New Orleans and the lower Mississippi to American navigation. It required Americans in borderland regions to swear an oath of loyalty to Charles III. Spain extended its own territorial claims eastward, into western parts of Georgia, Kentucky and Tennessee. As historian Eliga Gould (2012, 122–123) argued, “the result was a veritable war of all against all, in which Spain and the US engaged in low-grade hostilities against each other ... while vying for the allegiance of Indians, loyalists and Americans.”

The third outstanding issue after 1783 was the regulation of commerce between the United States and the Spanish empire, both in Old World and the New. During the Revolutionary War, Spain opened its ports to all American vessels. This policy was conceived from the start as a temporary measure. When the peace was signed, this access was revoked, something greatly resented by American merchants.⁸⁰ Pinckney's Treaty did not re-open Spanish ports to American commerce, but it allowed ships from both nations to seek refuge in each other's ports when in distress or when harassed by pirates. This clause would be much abused by merchants from both countries and de facto established a flourishing although non-official trade relation between the United States and Spain (Narrett 2015, 72, 285).

The fourth issue placing stress on US–Spanish relations was the status of several Amerindian polities. Although neither Spain nor the United States had attracted them to their side during the war, Spain was in a better position to gain their trust than the nascent United States. Spain's ambitions in North America were compatible with, and even bolstered by, strong allied, non-European nations, whether Anglophone creoles or Chicksaws, Creeks and Choctaw Amerindians. Spanish statesmen envisaged a Gulf Coast populated by French and English-speaking landowners who remained or became Spanish subjects (DuVal 2015, 223, 227, 258). The United States's situation stood in sharp contrast to that of Spain. It was bound to confront Amerindians, whose lands were coveted to ensure the expansion of European-origin settlers. Pinckney's Treaty tried to consolidate the status quo, but the fact is that the Amerindian policy carried out by Spanish authorities in North America tipped the scales in Spain's favor. The policy designed by Bernardo de Gálvez, when he became Viceroy of New Spain, would also have “several intriguing parallels” with subsequent policies carried out by the United States, especially during Thomas Jefferson's

presidency (Babcock 2016, 8). Although Bernardo de Gálvez and Thomas Jefferson had very different personalities, backgrounds, and careers, both were steeped in the Enlightenment, and ~~aside from~~ embracing the myth of the noble savage, they shared the idea of a demographic imperialism, that considered that hunting and gathering were to be replaced in favor of husbandry as the most productive use of land. For both, semi-nomadic Native Americans had to become sedentary farmers in order to be “civilized,” and they preferred to trade with them because it was a cheaper alternative to war, but nonetheless they were willing to wage war simultaneously if needed.

The fifth and final source of tensions between Spain and the United States during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was slavery. Spanish Louisiana and, especially, Spanish Florida were perceived as a constant threat by the politically powerful slave owners of Georgia. From the late seventeenth-century Spanish authorities in Florida had granted sanctuary to runaway slaves from the British colonies in an attempt to populate its borders and prevent foreign encroachment, in this context was born the settlement of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, a few miles North to St. Augustine, where a free-black community became a beacon luring British and later United States’ slaves into Spanish territory. However, the fluid situation in the Floridas between its surrender to Bernardo de Gálvez in 1781 and the implementation of the peace treaties of 1783 forced the new Spanish Governor, Vicente Manuel de Zéspedes, to issue an order on July 26, 1784 to clarify the legal situation of the black inhabitants of the province, which required their registration before the Spanish authorities. The order had a deep impact since it changed the traditional Spanish policy of considering all blacks in Northern Florida as free-people unless proven otherwise by legal documents. During the following years, “a newly emerging sense that the slave trade and African slavery were essential to the wealth of nations” (Schneider 2015, 3) and growing pressure from the United States government, especially from Thomas Jefferson as Secretary of State, would succeed in reversing the traditional policy of granting sanctuary to fugitive slaves in Spanish Florida. Although runaway slaves already settled in Spanish territory would not lose their free status, further fugitives would no longer be welcomed and, at least in theory Spanish authorities would cooperate with United States’ agents in their capture and return to their American owners (Landers 1984, 1990; TePaske 1975).

Not all Americans believed that the uneasy jostling for primacy along the western frontier and other conflicts portended permanent enmity. In 1787, Thomas Jefferson observed: “Our connection with Spain is already important and will become daily more so ... Besides, this antient part of American history is chiefly written in Spanish.”⁸¹ The Spanish American independence movements, though, shifted the US stance toward Spain. After 1815, popular opinion embraced the revolutionaries who sought to establish republics in place of an empire governed by a distant king. US merchants sold arms and ammunition, thousands of Americans sailed as mercenaries and privateers to fight against Spain. Some imagined an entire hemisphere composed of “sister republics.” By

1830, over 200 American babies had been named for the South American liberator, Simón Bolívar, along with numerous towns and hamlets.⁸²

The US government displayed more caution than its zealous citizenry. It did not want to embroil the US in another war so soon after the War of 1812. Congress passed the 1817 Neutrality Act to stanch the flow of arms. The government sought to keep commerce flowing between Cuba and also involved in delicate negotiations with Spanish government to acquire Florida, which occurred several years later. Much of the nineteenth century would see rising tensions between Spain and the US over Cuba, in particular, but also over Puerto Rico. Spain gradually became demonized, far from Jefferson's appreciation of Spanish culture and his anticipation of Hispano-Anglo-American relations. Spain became the US's foil. It was, in the words of historian Ivan Jaksic, "the antithesis of democratic, enterprising America. The country was corrupt beyond measure, its former glories but a distant memory."⁸³ And in 1898, of course, such prejudice was whipped into a frenzy by the war between Spain and the US, which resulted in the annexation of Puerto Rico, the Philippines and, for a time, Cuba itself.

What of Britain and Spain? Was the damage caused by Spain's intervention in Britain's war of colonial counterinsurgency irreparable? There were undoubtedly lingering resentments after 1783. Spain remained fixated on Gibraltar. The Falklands/Malvinas were a source of further conflict. But these disputes must not distract attention from the main story, which was the normalization of relations after 1783. In the 1780s, Britain remained Spain's largest customer while Spain was Britain's fifth largest continental trading partner.⁸⁴ The French Revolutionary Wars once again saw Britain and Spain as adversaries. But the Napoleonic invasion and occupation of Spain from 1808 to 1813 touched off a wholesale reevaluation of Britain's relations with the Peninsula. British support for the Spanish patriots and its military intervention, decisive in driving French troops from the Peninsula, brought many young Britons into contact with Spain's culture and landscape. It is estimated that at least 200,000 British soldiers served in Iberia during the Peninsular War, of whom 40,000 perished during the conflict.⁸⁵

British solidarity with the Spanish patriots assumed non-martial forms, from the moral and material sustenance furnished by Lord and Lady Holland to the provocative articles in support of Spain published in the *Edinburgh Review*.⁸⁶ Even Coleridge asserted that "it was not until the Spanish insurrection that Englishmen of all parties recurred, in toto, to the Old English principles, and spoke of their Hampdens, Sidneys, and Miltons, with the old enthusiasm."⁸⁷ The debates at the Cortes of Cádiz, culminating in the 1812 Constitution, one of the great documents of early nineteenth-century liberalism, also aroused keen interest in Spain in Britain, and there is some evidence the nineteenth-century usage of the word "liberal" owed much to the ideas and projects pursued by the Spanish *liberales*.⁸⁸ In the early 1820s, Jeremy Bentham seemed to concur with these sentiments when he wrote,

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Magnanimous Spaniards! For years to come, not to say ages, in you is our best, if not our only hope! To you, who have been the most oppressed of slaves, to you it belongs to give liberty to Europe ... As to our liberties—our so much vaunted liberties—inadequate as they always were, they are gone: corruption has completely rotted them.⁸⁹

Beyond the political and ideological impact of the independence of the United States (Armitage 2007), which sparked “the Age of Revolutions” (Armitage and Subrahmanyam 2010), the American Revolutionary War had a crucial impact on the three major European empires that fought it. For France, the cost of the war left the Royal Treasury almost empty. To stave off bankruptcy, King Louis XVI had no other option but to convene the Estates-General in January 1789, the death knell of the Ancien Régime in France. For Britain, the American Revolution was the denouement of its “first” empire. Since the American Revolution began when the colonists clamored for recognition of their rights as Englishmen, Britain’s subsequent imperial forays were marked by hierarchy, difference, and executive fiat. For Spain, the decade of the 1780s would be the zenith of its empire, a revival and efflorescence often obscured by its vertiginous fall, sparked by war in Europe, in the early nineteenth century.

Notes

- 1 Cumberland, chiefly known as a playwright and poet, had served as Secretary of the Board of Trade from 1775, but he was, as Samuel Flagg Bemis observed, “a man whose political experience had been limited to the art of pleasing patrons and impressing little people, a man without political imagination or real knowledge of the world,” Bemis, *Hussey-Cumberland Mission*, 48.
- 2 Bemis, *Hussey-Cumberland Mission*, 49.
- 3 *Memoirs of Richard Cumberland* [London, 1806] Ed. Henry Flanders (London, 1856; and re-issued in 1969 [New York: Benjamin Blom]), 255–257; the work to which Cumberland referred was “Anecdotes of the Eminent Painters of Spain during the 16th and 17th century”, published in 1782.
- 4 Jay to Adams, June 4, 1780, in Jay 1975, 766.
- 5 John Adams to John Jay, May 13, 1780, in Nuxoll 2010, v. 2: 115.
- 6 Ben Franklin to John Jay, October 2, 1780, in Nuxoll 2010, v. 2: 280.
- 7 The classic study and the origin of the term “Black Legend” is by Julián Juderías (1914). The subject has been much studied in Spain with mixed results since several of the works tend to approach the subject trying to vindicate Spanish colonialism. The most recent, best-selling and highly controversial book on the Spanish black legend is by María Elvira Roca Barea (2016). In English, the subject was first historically approached by Charles Gibson, William S. Maltby, and Philip W. Powell with books all published in 1971. The most recent English study is by Irene Silverblatt (2007).
- 8 The book was based on two seventeenth-century editions: Casas 1699, and Casaus [*sic* Casas] 1656. Interestingly, in the twenty years between the two English editions, the number of people massacred by the Spaniards doubled.
- 9 The accusation of being ungrateful was made by Manuel Conrotte (1920, 5–6) and Juan F. Yela Utrilla (1925, v. 1, 485). Vicente Blasco Ibañez in his novel *Queen*

- Calafia* (1925) stated that the reason why the figure of Bernardo de Gálvez was completely unknown to the American public was because he was a Spaniard.
- 10 An indication of the official interest in the subject is that Morales Padrón's book was published both in Spanish and in English in 1952 by *Publicaciones Españolas*, the official publishing arm of Franco's regime.
 - 11 In order to commemorate the United States' bicentennial, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs embarked on a large-scale editorial enterprise by publishing a series of studies by Spanish historians, including those by Antonio Acosta Rodríguez, Pablo Tornero Tinajero, Luis Ángel García Melero, Elena Sánchez-Fabrés Mirat, and María Pilar Ruigómez de Hernández. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also published between 1977 and 1986 fourteen volumes of the collection of documents related to the American Independence in Spanish Archives (*Documentos relativos a la independencia de Norteamérica existentes en archivos españoles*, 14 vols., Madrid, MAE, 1977–1986) including those preserved in the Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI) in Seville, the Archivo Histórico Nacional (hereafter AHN) in Madrid, and the Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter AGS) in Simancas, Valladolid.
 - 12 For a revision of Tannenbaum's work, see Alejandro de la Fuente 2004.
 - 13 Besides Eliga Gould's thesis, for the methodological questions and tools provided by *Entangled Histories*, see the works by Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann (Werner and Zimmermann 2006) and by Natacha Gally (2012).
 - 14 Books on the Spanish role in the American Revolutionary War include those by Thomas E. Chávez (2002), Eric Beerman (1992), Martha Gutiérrez-Steinkamp (2013), and Larrie D. Ferreiro (2016). Studies on Spanish Louisiana include those by Gilbert C. Din (1996) and David E. Narrett (2015). For Florida, see the work of Joseph Barton Starr (1976). For military campaigns, see William S. Coker and Robert R. Rea (1982), William S. Coker (1981), Jack D. L. Holmes (1965), and N. Orwin Rush (1966). For the life and career of Bernardo de Gálvez, the studies by John Walton Caughey (1934 [1998]), Jack D. L. Holmes (1978), Eric Beerman (1994), Carmen de Reparaz (1993), and Gonzalo M. Quintero Saravia (2018).
 - 15 King to Lord North, March 7, 1780, in Fortescue, v. V, 30 (no. 2963).
 - 16 King to Lord North, June 13, 1781, in Fortescue, v. V, 247 (no. 3357).
 - 17 On the evolution of the historiography on this subject see: Paquette 2009; Varela 1994; Wasserman 2009; Herzog 2004; Donézar 2004.
 - 18 In 1762, the Earl of Albemarle (George Keppel), who led the campaign, concluded that military planners should anticipate that one-third of their force would be unfit for service at any one time. During the siege of Havana itself, Albemarle had 11,000 men under his command, but only just over 5,000 were fit for duty (Charters 2014, 66, 72).
 - 19 Queen María Amalia de Sajonia (King Carlos III's wife) to Bernardo Tanucci, February 13, 1760 (quoted in Guasti 2006, 55).
 - 20 See: Delegates of Rhode Island to William Greene, Philadelphia, December 8, 1778, in Smith 1976–2000, v. 11: 304–305; Gouverneur Morris to the Journal Pennsylvania Packet, s.l., February 27, 1779, in idem v. 12: 115–121; Committee of Commerce to Bernardo de Gálvez, Philadelphia, July 19, 1779, in idem. v. 25: 658.
 - 21 In June 1777, the Congress' Secret Committee wrote to the Spanish Governor of Louisiana that “we are informed by means of Mr. Oliver Pollock of the favorable disposition you have been pleased to manifest towards the Subjects, interest and cause of the United, Free and Independent states of America upon every occasion that has presented since your Excellency's accession to the Government of New Orleans & Louisiana” (Secret Committee to Bernardo de Gálvez, Philadelphia, June 12, 1777. In Smith 1976–2000, v. 25, 624–625). The Congress' Committee of Commerce also expressed its gratitude several times to Governor Bernardo de Gálvez (Committee of Commerce to Bernardo de Gálvez, Pennsylvania, October 24, 1777, in Smith 1976–2000, v. 25, 636–638; Committee of Commerce to

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- Bernardo de Gálvez, Pennsylvania, November 21, 1777. In Smith 1976–2000, v. 25, 638–639). The Congress itself, on October 31, 1778, declared that “Governor Gálvez be requested to accept the thanks of Congress for his spirited and disinterested conduct towards these States, and be assured that Congress will take every opportunity of evincing the favorable and friendly sentiments they entertain of Governor Gálvez, and all the faithful subjects of his Catholic Majesty inhabiting the country under his government” (Continental Congress, Minutes of the October 31, 1778 session, in Ford 1904–37, v. 12: 1083–108).
- 22 Of all the Spanish contemporary testimonies, the two most important are those of Diego María de Gardoqui and the Count of Aranda. In 1794 Gardoqui, who would become the first ambassador of Spain to the United States, stated that between 1776 and 1778 Spain contributed a total of “7,944,906 *reales* and 16 *maravedies de vellón*” in cash and supplies. Diego María Gardoqui to the Duke de Alcudia, dispatch, October 26, 1794. AHN, Estado, 3884. In settling the account so as to submit a claim to the new United States, the Count of Aranda, Spain’s ambassador to France at the time, offered the figure of 5.5 million *reales de vellón* for the same period (the exact amount rendered by the count of Aranda was 5,634,910 *reales de vellón*. Socorros dados a los Estados Unidos de América por medio del sr. Conde de Aranda, Embajador de España en aquel tiempo. AHN, Estado 3889 bis, ex15. In Armillas Vicente, 2008, 187).
- 23 In his 1926 article, Samuel Flagg Bemis determined the amount of the Spanish financial aid to the United States in 13,551,888 dollars (397,230 non-refundable, and 248,098 in loans), which converted in French *livres* would be 3,387,972, and 13,551,888 Spanish reales de vellón (Bemis 1926, 93; Perkins 1986, 195–199; Dull 1985). For the conversion of the French currency to the Spanish one, see Bails, 1790, 286, 305, 372.
- 24 The exact amount of the French financial assistance to the American Revolution in Spanish currency was 166,980,000 *reales de vellón* (Armillas Vicente 1977).
- 25 Diego José Navarro to José de Gálvez, letter n. 365, Havana, October 23, 1778. AGI, Santo Domingo 1598 A and B.
- 26 The exact amount is 1,507,670 *reales de vellón*. “Razón de los préstamos o socorros en dinero que en la Nueva Orleans y en La Habana se han dado a los colonos americanos por disposición de sus respectivos gobernadores, deducida de la correspondencia de éstos desde fin de diciembre de 1776 hasta junio de 1779, New Orleans, 13 September 1780”. AHN, Estado 3884, ex. 4, n. 74. In Armillas Vicente, 2008, 187, 194.
- 27 Bernardo de Gálvez to the inhabitants of the colony of Louisiana, order draft copy, New Orleans, March 3, 1778. AGI, Cuba 112. Bernardo de Gálvez to Baltasar de Villiers, official letter n. 43, New Orleans, January 2, 1779. AGI, Cuba 112.
- 28 Bernardo de Gálvez to John Ferguson, certified copy of the letter, New Orleans, May 15, 1778. AGI, Cuba, 1232. Bernardo de Gálvez to the commanders of the Mississippi River, Punta Colorada, and Manchac, letter draft copy, s.l., July 14, 1778. AGI, Cuba 112.
- 29 Saavedra 2004, entries of July 21, 1781, 204; July 25, 1781, 204; August 1–16, 1781, 206–8; and September 12, 1781, 214. Juan Ignacio de Urriza to José de Gálvez, letter no. 861, Havana, October 26, 1781, AGI, Santo Domingo, 1657; 2,000,000 *pesos* for the French, in Juan Ignacio de Urriza to José de Gálvez, official letter no. 1038, Havana, December 20, 1782, AGI, Indiferente General, 1583.
- 30 The exact figure is 431,282,000 *reales de vellón*.
- 31 Sources: Merino 1987; Tedde de Lorca 2008, 221–224.
- 32 All the figures in *reales de vellón*.
- 33 This figure is the result of adding the defence expenditures of the years 1775, 1776, 1777, 1778, and 1784 and divided the result by 5 (the number of years). Spain

declared war to Britain on June 22, 1779, so this year has been considered as a war year despite that the defence expenditure during it was little increased, probably because 1779's war expenses were registered in the 1780's accounts. The peace was signed in January 1783 but following the previous argument we have considered it as a war year.

- 34 *Real Decreto*, November 17, 1779. In Gallardo Fernández 1808, v. 7: 49–52.
- 35 Resolution by the *Junta de Medios* in 1779, in Canga Argüelles 1827, v. 4, 43–44.
- 36 Real Cédula, San Ildefonso, August 17, 1780 (first of this date), Real Academia de la Historia, Colección Mata Linares, CIX, ff. 120–122.
- 37 Real Cédula, August 17, 1780 (second of this date).
- 38 Marichal 1990, 887.
- 39 Resolution by the *Junta de Medios* in 1779, in Canga Argüelles 1827, v. 4, 43–44.
- 40 On the role played by the Bank of San Carlos, see Calderón Quijano, 1962, 43; Torres Sánchez, 2006, 145.
- 41 Treaty of Defensive and Offensive Alliance Between the Crowns of Spain and France Against that of England (Tratado de alianza defensiva y ofensiva celebrado entre las coronas de España y Francia contra la de Inglaterra), Aranjuez, April 12, 1779.
- 42 For general considerations on the Spanish strategy, see Chávez 2010.
- 43 Diego José Navarro, memorandum included in an official letter copy, Havana, June 27, 1779, AGI, Santo Domingo 2082.
- 44 Diego José Navarro to José de Gálvez, confidential official letter n. 105, Havana, February 26, 1780, AGI, Santo Domingo 2082.
- 45 José de Gálvez to Diego José Navarro, Aranjuez, May 21, 1780, AGI, Santo Domingo 2082.
- 46 José de Gálvez to Bernardo de Gálvez, most confidential official letter draft copy, San Lorenzo, November 16, 1781, (3rd of this date), AGI, Indiferente General 1578.
- 47 WC, RA, GEO/MAIN/44612, Prince William to George III, January 26, 1780.
- 48 Lord Shelburne to the King, September 13, 1782, in Fortescue 1927–1928, vol. VI, p. 123 (no. 3918); King to Shelburne, September 14, 1782, in *ibid.*, p. 126 (no. 3919).
- 49 King to Shelburne, September 16, 1782, in Fortescue 1927–1928, vol. VI, p. 128 (no. 3923).
- 50 King to Shelburne, November 21, 1782, in Fortescue 1927–1928, vol. VI, p. 159 (no. 3987); King to Shelburne, December 2, 1782, in *ibid.*, vol. VI, p. 168 (no. 4002).
- 51 Grantham to King, December 3, 1782, in Fortescue 1927–1928, vol. VI, p. 169 (no. 4005); King to Grantham, December 11, 1782, in *ibid.*, p. 183 (no. 4020).
- 52 King to Shelburne, December 11, 1782, in Fortescue 1927–1928, vol. VI, p. 183 (no. 4021); on this December 1782 diplomatic moment, see Conn 1942, 220–221.
- 53 Bernardo de Gálvez to José de Gálvez, dispatch, New Orleans, October 16, 1779 (second of this date), AGS, SGU, leg. 6912, 1. *Gazeta de Madrid*, December 12, 1778.
- 54 José de Gálvez to Diego José Navarro, confidential letter, San Ildefonso, August 29, 1779, AGI, Cuba, 1290.
- 55 *Extracto de lo acaecido en la expedición hecha por el brigadier d. Bernardo de Gálvez, gobernador de la provincial de Luisiana, contra los establecimientos y fuertes que tenían los ingleses sobre el río Mississippi, que consiguió tomarles desalojándolos enteramente*, in Diego José Navarro to José de Gálvez, official letter no. 633, Havana, November 11, 1779 (1st of this date), AGI, Santo Domingo, 2082B. José de Gálvez to Diego José Navarro, confidential letter, San Ildefonso, August 29, 1779, AGI, Cuba, 1290. See also: Beerman and Din, 1996, 200; Caughey 1934 [1998], 163; Chávez 2002, 172; Thomas 1981, 41; Ward 2011, 201, 678.
- 56 Jerónimo Girón Moctezuma to the king, Sevilla, January 24, 1789, AGS, SGU, leg. 6915, 13.
- 57 Depending on the source, the size of the British garrison varies from 162 (Return of the Killed, Wounded and Prisoners of the Garrison of Forte Charlotte, Mobile,

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- Surrendered to Spain by Capitulation the 14th day of March 1780, Pensacola, August 26, 1780, PRO, CO 5/597) to around 300 (Hamilton 1897, 252). The Spanish sources mention 126 men: 113 soldiers and 13 officers (Relación de los oficiales, tropas y demás individuos hechos prisioneros de guerra en el sitio de la Mobila, Mobila, March 20, 1780, AGI, Cuba, 2351).
- 58 General John Campbell to General Sir Henry Clinton, Pensacola, February 12, 1780, PRO, America and West Indies, 137, f. 241.
- 59 Articles of Capitulation, Mobile (*Artículos de Capitulación propuestos por D. Elías [sic] Durnford, Esq. Teniente de Gobernador de la provincia de la Florida del Oeste, capitán de ingenieros y comandante de las tropas de Su Majestad Británica en el fuerte Charloita de la Mobila, acordados por el Sr. D. Bernardo de Gálvez, caballero pensionado de la Real y Distinguida Orden de Carlos Tercero, Brigadier de los ejércitos de Su Majestad, Inspector, Intendente y Gobernador General de la provincia de la Luisiana y General de la expedición*), Mobile, March 13, 1780, In Gálvez 1780.
- 60 John Adams to the Count de Vergennes, Paris, July 13, 1780. In Wharton 1889, v. 3, 849.
- 61 William C. Houston to William Livingston, Philadelphia, June 5, 1780, in Smith 1976–2000, v. 15: 252–53.
- 62 John Campbell to Lord George Germain, Pensacola, January 5, 1781, PRO, Colonial Office, Series 5/597; John Campbell to Sir Henry Clinton, January 5, 1781, British Headquarters Papers, 9899, reel 27. In Starr 1976, 187. José de Ezpeleta to Bernardo de Gálvez, Mobile, January 19 and 22, 1781, AGS, SGU, leg. 6912, 4.
- 63 “The king rewards Fernando de Leyva and Francisco Cartabona for their valiant defense of St. Louis (San Luis de Ilionenses),” in *Gazeta de Madrid*, no. 14, February 16, 1781.
- 64 Representación que ha hecho el mariscal de campo don Bernardo de Gálvez ... AGS, SGU, leg. 6912, EX3.
- 65 Estado de fuerza del Regimiento Inmemorial del Rey, Havana, August 28, 1780, AGI, Santo Domingo, 2082.
- 66 Copies of the letter exchanged between Bernardo de Gálvez and Victorio de Navia in Diego José Navarro to José de Gálvez, Havana, October 17, 1780, AGI, Santo Domingo, 2082.
- 67 *Escuadra del mando del Señor Don José Solano, Jefe de esta clase de la real Armada, y buques de su convoy que transportan la tropa del Ejército a las órdenes del Mariscal de campo el Señor Don Bernardo de Gálvez*, aboard the San Juan Nepomuceno, at sea close to Havana’s port, October 16, 1780, AGS, Marina 420.
- 68 *Estado general que manifiesta los oficiales y tropa que se embarcó en la expedición del mando del mariscal de campo d. Bernardo de Gálvez, que dió vela de este puerto el 16 de octubre de 1780, y parajes a que han arribado hasta hoy día de la fecha a resultas del temporal que experimentó desde el 18 al 23 del mismo mes*, in Diego José Navarro to José de Gálvez, official letter no. 894, Havana, November 20, 1780, AGI, Santo Domingo, 2082; Diego José Navarro to José de Gálvez, official letter no. 898, Havana, November 28, 1780, AGI, Santo Domingo 2082; José de Ezpeleta to Pedro Piernas, official letter, Mobile, November 6, 1780, AGI, Cuba 2.
- 69 Bernardo de Gálvez to José de Gálvez, official letter, Pensacola, May 12, 1781, AGS, SGU, 6913, Ex3.
- 70 *Estado que manifiesta los Buques de Guerra y Comboy [sic], del mando del Capitán de Navío, Don José Calvo de Irazábal en el que se conduce el Ejército que, a las órdenes del Sr. Don Bernardo de Gálvez, Mariscal de Campo, se dirige al socorro de la Movila y conquista de Panzacola*, Havana, February 17, 1781, AGS, Marina 421; *Estado que manifiesta los Buques en que se han embarcado las tropas destinadas a las órdenes del mariscal de Campo D. Bernardo de Gálvez, que dieron vela el día de la fecha*, Havana, February 28, 1781, AGI, Santo Domingo, 2083A; *Tropa*

- que se ha embarcado a la orden del Mariscal de Campo Don Bernardo de Gálvez en la Habana*, Havana, February 28, 1781, AGI, Cuba, 1377.
- 71 Gálvez “*Diario de las operaciones ...*” (first manuscript), AGS, SGU, 6913, Ex3; *Estado de los oficiales y tropa que, al mando de d. Cayetano de Salla, teniente coronel del Regimiento de Soria, sale de esta Plaza para la Expedición a Panzacola con expresión de presentes y enfermos*, New Orleans, February 28, 1781, AGI, Cuba 563; *Estado que manifiesta los oficiales y tropa que de la Nueva Orleans, salieron el 3 de este mes al mando del teniente coronel d. Cayetano de Salla, con expresión de los que quedan en aquel hospital y buques en que va cada uno, a bordo de la saetía San Francisco de Paula de Escardó*, March 23, 1781, AGI, Cuba 81. They are four versions of Bernardo de Gálvez’s journal: two in manuscript form and two in printed form. The first version (manuscript): “Diario de las operaciones de la expedición contra la Plaza de Panzacola concluida por las Armas de S.M. Católica bajo las órdenes del Mariscal de Campo D. Bernardo de Gálvez,” Bernardo de Gálvez to José de Gálvez, official letter, Pensacola, May 12, 1781, AGS, SGU, 6913, Ex3. The second version (manuscript): “Diario de las operaciones que ejecuta la expedición del mariscal de campo comandante general de ella del 9 de marzo al desembarco en la isla de Santa Rosa,” s.l, s.a., no signature, in AGS, SGU, 6913, Ex12. The third version (printed): August 10, 1781, issue of the *Gazeta de Madrid*. The fourth version (printed) is an offprint from the first printed edition with identical text but no date or place of publication.
- 72 Gálvez, *Diario de las operaciones de la expedición contra la Plaza de Panzacola concluida por las Armas de S.M. Católica bajo las órdenes del Mariscal de Campo D. Bernardo de Gálvez*, first manuscript version. In Bernardo de Gálvez to José de Gálvez, official letter, Pensacola, May 12, 1781. AGS, SGU, 6913, Exp. 3. Saavedra’s Diary, entry of April 22, 1781 (Saavedra 2004,172). *Lista de oficiales franceses que bajaron a tierra de la escuadra del caballero de Monteil. Hace presente en dicha lista se expresan las gracias que los unos esperan de su soberano por la intercesión de nuestro monarca y que los otros se recomienda [sic] a las que SM se sirva dispensarles*, in Bernardo de Gálvez to José de Gálvez, dispatch no. 25, Pensacola, May 26, 1781 (first of this date), AGI, Santo Domingo, 2548, and AGS, SGU, leg. 6913, 4.
- 73 Articles of Capitulation Between his Excellency Don Bernardo de Gálvez, Knight Pensioner of the Royal and Distinguished order of Charles III, Major-General of the armies of his Catholic Majesty, Inspector, Intendant, and Governor General of the Province of Louisiana, and General of the Expedition &c. &c. &c. and His Excellency Peter Chester Esq; Captain-General, Governor, and Commander in Chief in and over his Majesty’s province of West Florida, Chancellor and Vice Admiral of the same, &c. &c. &c. and his Excellency Major-General John Campbell, Commander of His Majesty’s forces in the said province of West Florida. In *Scots Magazine*, 43 (1781).
- 74 George Washington to Francisco Rendón, headquarters in front of York, June 8, 1781, in Fitzpatrick 1931–44, v. 9:345. George Washington to Francisco Rendón, headquarters in front of York, October 12, 1781, in Fitzpatrick 1931–44, v. 9:379. Samuel Huntington to George Washington, Philadelphia, July 3, 1781, in Smith 1976–2000, v. 17: 366–67. Edmund Jennings to John Adams, Brussels, March 4, 1782, in *Adams Papers*. Richard Potts to Samuel Hughes, July 24, 1781, in Smith 1976–2000, v. 17: 440–41.
- 75 Juan Dabán, acting Governor of Cuba, to José de Gálvez, letter no. 240, Havana, May 27, 1782, AGI, Santo Domingo, 2085 B; Bernardo de Gálvez to José de Gálvez, letter no. 133, Guárico, June 30, 1782, in Juan Ignacio de Urriza to José de Gálvez, letter no. 965, Havana, June 10, 1782, AGI, Santo Domingo, 2084.
- 76 José de Gálvez to Bernardo de Gálvez, extremely confidential order, Aranjuez, April 6, 1782 (third of this date), AGI, Santo Domingo, 2084.
- 77 The official account of the campaign in *Gaceta de Madrid*, June 12, 1781: 489–490.

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- 78 Manuel del Socorro Rodríguez, *Copia de la representación dirigida a don Pedro de Acuña y Malbar*, Bogotá, April 19, 1793. AGI, Estado, 53, N. 84-H (1a) folios 1r.–4r. English translation from McFarlane 2006, 44.
- 79 Continental Congress, “Resolution Approving Jay’s Conduct in Spain” (April 30, 1782), in Jay 1980, 164.
- 80 José de Gálvez to the intendente of Havana, to the Governor of Santo Domingo, to the Governor of Puerto Rico, to the intendente of Caracas, to the Governor of Yucatán, to the Governor of Caracas, and to the Governor of Havana, confidential official letter draft copy, San Ildefonso, August 29, 1782. Archivo General de Indias (Seville), Santo Domingo 2188; Juan Ignacio de Urriza, intendente of Havana, to José de Gálvez, letter n. 670, Havana, April 21, 1780. AGI, Santo Domingo 1657; Martín Navarro to Arturo O’Neill, letter n. 90, New Orleans, June 27, 1782. AGI, Cuba 83; Luis de Unzuaga to Bernardo de Gálvez, official letter n. 134, Havana, May 24, 1783. AGI, Indiferente General 1583.
- 81 Quotation in Delpar 2008, p. 1.
- 82 Fitz 2016.
- 83 Jaksic 2007, 6.
- 84 Ehrmann 1962, 18.
- 85 Daly 2013, 2.
- 86 Moreno Alonso 1997.
- 87 Howarth 2007, 31; Colley 2014.
- 88 Hay 2013.
- 89 Bentham 1821, 16.