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THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE/*AMÉRICA*, 1785-1826

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ABSTRACT

Over the last thirty years, the development of Atlantic history has imposed a thorough revision of both national and imperial histories and paved the way for rethinking the Age of Revolutions in a global context. In this article I argue, however, that this twenty-first century Atlantic and global approach does not coincide with the perspective of the early nineteenth-century American actors. They were thinking, in fact, in different geopolitical terms as over time it had become obvious to them that their place was America, North and South, and hence their distinctiveness lay in the hemisphere. It was within this hemispheric framework that they grasped how its peoples faced the challenges of transitioning from being colonials to leaders of independent nations, from subjects of European monarchies to citizens of American republics, from followers of overseas orders to home- and foreign-policy decision makers. As they coped with these major changes, the article concludes that Americans laid the foundations of the Western Hemisphere as a world region with its own history.

Keywords: Western Hemisphere, *América*, Atlantic History, Comparative History.

I. If today a Colombian, Haitian or Brazilian were asked to explain what *el hemisferio occidental*, *l'hémisphère occidental*, *o hemisfério ocidental* is, the answer would probably be the half of the earth west of the Greenwich meridian. The same question put to a U.S. American will more likely yield the response that the Western Hemisphere is 'the Americas'.[1] In the United

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[1] In strictly geographical terms, a hemisphere corresponds to the half of the globe divided along the equator into the northern and southern hemispheres, or along a meridian line into the eastern and western hemispheres. As the 0° (the Greenwich meridian) and 180° are usually taken as the dividing line, the western hemisphere comprises the extreme western parts of Europe, i.e. most of the British Isles and the Iberian Peninsula, West Africa, the Americas and New Zealand. The notion of hemisphere is thus quite straightforward. On the contrary,

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States the two terms are often interchangeable, whereas in Latin America, *las Américas*, *les Amériques*, *as Américas* are rarely regarded as synonyms of the Western Hemisphere.[2] For scientists and scholars studying this part of the world it is, however, more than a simple matter of semantics. At one time or other, they have had to reflect on the unity and multiplicity of the New World that Europeans arrived in in the 15th century. Obviously, geographers have long been concerned with this as they explore the possible frameworks used to analyze the phenomena found there. Historians, of course, with their focus on time and space, have contributed significantly to thinking through the Western Hemisphere / Americas geohistorical schema as they try to understand better its nature.

In 1954, Arthur Whitaker claimed that the essence of the Western Hemisphere idea was that its peoples stood in a "special relationship to one another, which sets them apart from the rest of the world". In the historian's view this meant that Americans developed an awareness of their own identity, derived from a common intellectual background (the Enlightenment) and political experience (the revolutions against and eventual independence from European imperial powers) and from the development of inter-American trade.[3] Almost half a century later Lester Langley explored the concept, arguing that while for the governments of the Americas the idea of hemispheric distinctiveness had lost its hold, it nonetheless persists for its peoples as they move across borders, develop cultural, religious and humanitarian connections, and provide each other with aid and support. For both historians, the history of the Western hemispheric singularity can be traced to the Age of Revolutions and the formation of the independent American states. Furthermore, Langley places it not only next to the history of the nation-state and global history in importance, but also considers it an integral part of Atlantic history.[4]

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the division into East and West is less so, as it is neither objective nor easily drawn on a map. The West first referred to Latin Christendom, derived from the Western Roman Empire. Then as the European states expanded, the West included the overseas colonies on the other side of the Atlantic. Finally, in the twentieth century a more economic-political use came to mean the developed world. In addition to this mutating notion is the cultural construct of Western civilization as one of rationality, growth, development, and pursuit of material wealth. Lewis and Wigen 1997: 49-51, 73-76.

[2] It is worth noting that in the regional scheme adopted by the U.S. Department of State, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs is "responsible for managing and promoting U.S. interests in the region" and its mission is to work "with our partners in the Americas". On the other hand, in Canada and Latin American countries, the term "the Americas" is used almost exclusively. Their Foreign Affairs Ministries divide work across multiple Americas: North America, Latin America, the Caribbean, Iberoamerica, South America.

[3] Whitaker 1954: 1, 4-5, 9.

[4] Langley 1989: xiii-xxii; 2003: 3, 6, 8. More recently, Juan Pablo Scarfi and Andrew R. Till-

Over the last thirty years, the development of Atlantic history has imposed a thorough revision of both national and imperial histories and paved the way for rethinking the Age of Revolutions in a global context.[5] I will argue here, however, that this twenty-first century Atlantic approach does not coincide with the perspective of the early nineteenth-century actors. They were thinking, in fact, in different geographical terms as over time it had become obvious to them that their place was America, North and South, and hence their geographical distinctiveness lay in the hemisphere.[6] They had a nascent idea of belonging to a hemisphere of their own. Theirs was, as Jefferson wrote, "One hemisphere of the earth, separated from the other by wide seas on both sides, having a different system of interests flowing from different climates, different soils, different productions, different modes of existence, and its own local relations and duties".[7] Jefferson went on to picture the not so distant day when a meridian of partition through the Atlantic Ocean would separate the hemisphere from Europe. In this way of thinking, the Atlantic would unite the northern and southern American continents to form a supra-continent, the Western Hemisphere.[8]

Indeed, if geography is "a special way of looking at the world", as Donald Meinig claims, U.S. Americans viewed theirs through the hemispheric lens. Disquieted by the convulsive and rapidly changing times, they sought to bring order and stability to their world by forging the idea of the Western Hemisphere, even though it was far from evident and not always

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man edited *Cooperation and Hegemony in US-Latin American Relations. Revisiting the Western Hemisphere Idea*, which promotes a more hemispheric approach to the study of US-Latin American relations, focusing less on differences and conflict among these nations.

[5] Armitage and Subrahmanyam 2010. Atlantic history has emerged as both the study of a region and a historical approach that emphasizes mobility and connections within the different areas of the Atlantic. For details on the state of Atlantic history, see Green and Morgan 2009.

[6] For notions of place, see Withers 2009: 637-658.

[7] Quoted in Whitaker 1954: 28.

[8] By the mid-eighteenth century, a continent was defined as a large mass of dry land with countries joined together, not separated by water. Archipelagos and small landmasses were not included in the continental category. The notion of continent was first thought up by the Greek mariners when they named the two landmasses Europe and Asia, to the west and the east of the Aegean Sea respectively. The Greeks then included Africa in their continental system. This threefold division ran through the Middle Ages and in the fifteenth century was reorganized when Europeans crossed the Atlantic and eventually added the Americas. On the eighteenth and nineteenth century world atlases, North and South America were counted as one or two units, depending on whether the isthmus of Panama was taken as a narrow connection or a line of separation. Notwithstanding this discrepancy, the division of the world into large landmasses became the prevailing vision of Americans and Europeans. Yet before being completely formalized as the four or five continents (Europe, Asia, Africa, America – North and South – and Oceania) of the late nineteenth century, many divided the globe into two continents: The Old World (Europe, Asia and Africa, connected at the isthmus of Suez) and the New World (the Americas). Lewis and Wigen 1997: 21-30.

consensual. It provided them with that much needed "strategy for thinking about large and complex matters", in Meinig's words.[9] These matters were the revolutions that had broken out in the British, French and Spanish empires, the wars of independence that were still being fought, and the independent states that were in the process of being formed. It was within this hemispheric framework that they grasped how its peoples faced the challenges of transitioning from being colonials to leaders of independent nations, from subjects of European monarchies to citizens of American republics, from followers of overseas orders to home- and foreign-policy decision makers. As they coped with these major changes, they laid the foundations of the Western Hemisphere as a world region with its own history.[10]

From its inception, however, this unifying category was flawed. On the one hand, the European empires had not fully retreated from the hemisphere, and in 1822, when prince regent Dom Pedro declared Brazil independent from Portugal, he kept it a monarchy. On the other hand, Haiti had become a sovereign state, but was shunned by North and South Americans, who did not trust its black leaders. Consequently, the driving forces behind the formation of the Western Hemisphere were first U.S. Americans, and later in the nineteenth century, Spanish Americans. They had long been pondering what it meant to be American and about *América* as their *patria* (homeland).[11] Their reflections focused on the place they held in the empire, that is, on their bond with the king; their cultural ties with the peninsular Spaniards; their political status and representation as inhabitants of the overseas Spanish dominions; and their position in the imperial economy. The Napoleonic occupation of the Iberian Peninsula in 1808 and the exile of the Spanish king to Bayonne brought these questions to the forefront. Given the extraordinary situation, it became a matter of urgency to find answers, in both deeds and words. Indeed, as the viceroyalties and captaincies-generals declared their autonomy and independence from Spain, *América* would be redefined. Territorial, political, economic, social, cultural and ideological connections and disconnections would be adjusted to the hemispheric geography.

The disintegration of the Spanish empire also brought about a shift in international relations, and hence an adjustment of U.S. foreign policy to the new configuration. In the 1930s and 1940s, at the height of the U.S.

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[9] Meinig 1986: xv.

[10] Lewis and Wigen argue that changes in metageographical categories, i.e. the spatial structures through which people organize their knowledge of the world, often coincide with changes of ideology. Lewis and Wigen 1997: ix-xii.

[11] Entin 2013: 19-33.

Good Neighbor policy, U.S. diplomatic historians analyzed these changes. They produced path-breaking studies about relations between the United States, Spain and its American dominions. Spanning the 1808 collapse of the Spanish monarchy to the end of the Spanish-American independence movement in the late 1820s, these studies concluded that enthusiasm and keen interest in developing hemispheric relations eventually gave way to indifference by the 1830s. In 1990, John J. Johnson reasoned likewise, when he analyzed the self perceptions of U.S. citizens and officials and their views of Latin Americans and their institutions. The era had come to a close and Americans went their own ways, he argued.[12] Indeed, after the Panama Congress of 1826, which did not achieve its goal of uniting the sovereign American nations into a perpetual union, league, and confederation, inter-American relations became more distant. Spanish Americans concentrated on building their nations and solving territorial conflicts among them, while U.S. Americans focused increasingly on national issues and politics. There was, nonetheless, a series of conferences of American states from the late 1880s through to the twentieth century, which is why many historians of Pan Americanism still view the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 and the 1826 Congress as the original moment of the movement.

What is clear, however, is that Americans operating on the ground had moved ahead of governments and administrations, not waiting for President Monroe's annual message, or the Panama Congress, to expand networks and strengthen connections. At the same time, these individuals were struggling to get a grip on the mutating local, regional and world order. They were all grappling not only with the question of where they stood in their shifting world, but also with the shape, size and content of that world. And they knew that the paths to be taken were multiple; the options open to them were varied. That is why discussing how and if the 1823 Doctrine and the 1826 Congress fit into the history of Pan-Americanism does them a teleological disservice. It is therefore all the more important to examine the specific dynamics of the years between the close of the eighteenth century, when Americans started demanding sovereignty, and the mid-1820s, when they convened as newly-constituted independent states to discuss common policies.

In this article, I thus examine the process of continental and hemispheric mapping to understand how the Western Hemisphere of U.S. Americans articulated with the *América* of Spanish Americans. While U.S. Americans expanded west and southward, hence aggrandizing the Union, Spanish Americans were experiencing division and recomposition. Their large im-

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12 Bemis 1940, 1943, 1949; Griffin 1937; Manning 1925; Whitaker 1941; Johnson 1990.

perial geopolitical units broke up into smaller regional and local ones as provinces, cities and *pueblos* (townships) seceded from the head cities of the American kingdoms and from Spain. As the wars came to an end the independent regions coalesced into federations and confederations that were more, or less, loosely connected. And it was at this point that Americans met to discuss the Western Hemisphere/*América* construct in Panama. May it be noted that this study does not aim to discuss the ideological underpinnings of the geographical categories of continent and hemisphere, but rather to follow those turn-of-the-nineteenth-century individuals who reflected on the changing geographical, territorial and political charts and maps of the Age of Revolutions.

II. In Query II of *Notes of the State of Virginia*, published in 1785, Thomas Jefferson described its rivers and their navigability, extending the description beyond Virginia and the Ohio Country. He subscribed, in fact, to the conception of symmetrical continental geography that rivers flowing to the Atlantic and the Pacific came from a common source in mountainous terrain in the heart of the continent.[13] Convinced of the economic and geopolitical importance of waterways for the future of the expanding republic, Jefferson therefore included in the query the rivers flowing west, in Spanish territory. He argued that along the Mississippi, Missouri, the Red River, the Río Norte (present-day Río Grande), and the Saline, goods and people could travel faster and more easily to St. Louis, Santa Fe, Natchitoches, New Orleans, and even Mexico City. However, the Spaniards had always been reluctant to allow foreigners to move freely in the empire and therefore kept tight control of the Mississippi. In 1784, justifiably worried about the U.S. expansionist drive, they closed access to the Lower Mississippi, thus damaging the livelihood of Westerners, in Kentucky and Tennessee, who relied heavily on the watercourse for transportation of their produce.[14] Jefferson became deeply concerned: "I will venture to say that the act which abandons the navigation of the Mississippi is an act of sepa-

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[13] The English geographer and imperial promoter Richard Hakluyt (1553-1616) developed this geographic idea. In the mid-eighteenth century, James Maury, Thomas Jefferson's tutor, lectured his students about it. In Ronda 2001: 2-9.

[14] Jefferson 1853: 2-15. The Treaty of Paris of 1783 granted U.S. Americans possession of eastern Louisiana, between the Appalachians and the Mississippi. The river became the boundary between the United States and Spanish Louisiana: the eastern bank belonged to the United States and the western bank to Spain, and both nations had free access to the river. However, in the last two hundred miles to the sea, Spain controlled both banks of the river as she claimed possession of the eastern one to the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi. Nobody could therefore navigate the Lower Mississippi, nor travel across Spanish territory, without permission from Spain. DeConde 1976: 38-40.

ration between Eastern and Western country".[15] For him the union of the nation depended largely on Spanish permission to transit the river unhindered. Yet Jefferson did not believe it wise to exert too much pressure on the Spaniards as they did not hold the "great Continent" strongly. The United States needed time to people it, and only once it had advanced deeper into "all America, North and South", would it be in the interest of its inhabitants that Spain should withdraw. "The navigation of the Mississippi we must have. This is all we are, as yet, ready to receive", he wrote in 1786.[16] Despite his assertiveness, the well-informed Jefferson knew that according to the law of nations, Spain had a valid case. In other words, as the United States became a continental nation in which waterways, small and large, constituted the main routes, the question of freedom of the rivers gained as much centrality as the freedom of the seas had for seafaring.[17]

Finally, in October 1795, the Pinckney, or San Lorenzo for the Spanish, Treaty was signed. Spain conceded to the United States free navigation of the Mississippi and the right of deposit at New Orleans for three years renewable. In addition, Spain accepted the border at 31° North latitude, the retreat of Spanish troops from disputed territory, and the formation of a joint survey of the U.S.-Spain boundary line. In fact, the treaty not only eased tensions on the U.S. Southwest border but it also signaled the beginning of the withdrawal of Spain from the Mississippi valley and the end of her expensive and overstretched defense policy there. "It is impossible to put gates to an open field", Minister Manuel de Godoy bitterly acknowledged in 1797.[18] Nonetheless, for the United States, the prospect of setting foot on the other side of the Mississippi had still not become real. This did not happen until 1803, when the United States unexpectedly bought Louisiana, the large trans-Mississippian territory, from France. Unsurprisingly, the astounding achievement of the Louisiana Purchase has contributed to

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[15] In 1790, Jefferson, then Secretary of State, drafted an outline of the policy for the Mississippi question, in which he put forward three solutions. The first one amounted to obtaining free navigation by force. The second proposal involved the remapping of North America: the Floridas and New Orleans would be assigned to the United States, and Spanish *Luisiana*, west of the Mississippi, to Great Britain. Jefferson admitted, however, that such an agreement with the British would eventually cause trouble with France, an ally of the United States since 1778. Finally, the third option, i.e. negotiating with Spain, would bring a peaceful end to the conflict. Jefferson 1965 (17): 113-116.

[16] Jefferson to James Madison, January. 30, 1787; Jefferson to A. Stuart, January 25, 1786. Jefferson 1903-1907: vol. 6: 66; vol. 5: 259-260.

[17] Jefferson, "Report relative to negotiations with Spain to secure the free navigation of the Mississippi, and a port on the same", December 22, 1791. Jefferson 1903-1907: vol. 3: 165-199. Jefferson's source was Swiss diplomat Emer de Vattel's *Le droit des gens* (1758), the most important book on the law of nations in the eighteenth century.

[18] Quoted in Whitaker 1934: 180.

historiographical oblivion of the diplomatic accomplishments of 1795. Yet this amounts to a misapprehension of the balance of power in the North American continent during those eight years: opposite the small young republic, defended by an undersized army, stood a large three-hundred-year old empire with a superior army and navy stationed in the Viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico) and the Caribbean Sea.

Indeed, Jefferson was very much aware of the importance of the Caribbean region. In 1786, he wrote about the dangerous effects of the Gulf Stream in the Caribbean and on the U.S. coast north to Newfoundland. To render navigation in the Gulf of Mexico less perilous, he believed an opening through the Isthmus of Panama would divert the strong tropical currents. The ocean stream would lose force, allowing for safer sea links. What is more, passage through an interoceanic canal, as opposed to circumnavigation of South America, would guarantee speedy and secure voyages to Asia.[19] The canal scheme fit perfectly, in fact, into Jefferson's waterway system. Navigability of the seas improved communications and hence contributed to further compacting the continent and expanding trade networks along the Pacific coast and across to China and the East Indies. Instead of a route by the Northwest, such as explorers had searched for endlessly, one that cut through the middle of the American continent would produce the same, if not better, results. Had the canal materialized then, Jefferson's map of North America would have most probably encompassed the southern tapering isthmus and the Caribbean islands. Moreover, annexation would be possible, as he wrote President James Madison a few years later, because the U.S. Constitution was the best calculated for an extensive territory and self-government. In other words, the political construct was made to converge with the geographical reality. The only limit to Jefferson's empire of liberty was, however, land that would require a navy to defend it, excluding therefore any faraway overseas territory.[20]

The idea of straddling the American continent at its narrowest stretch of land appeared contemporaneously in Francisco de Miranda's writings. While on a visit to the United States in the early 1780s, the revolutionary Venezuelan discussed with many U.S. political leaders, while giving shape to his plan for emancipating Spanish America.[21] In 1790, after participating in the French revolution, Miranda turned to British Prime Minister William Pitt for help to liberate his fellow Americans from Spanish rule. Because of

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[19] Jefferson to M. Le Roy, November 13, 1786. Jefferson 1903-1907: vol. 5, 470-472.

[20] Jefferson to James Madison, April 27, 1809, Madison 1984-2012: vol. 1, 140.

[21] The English translation of Miranda's account is *The New Democracy in America: Travels of Francisco de Miranda in the United States, 1783-1784*, 1963.

the extension of the continent, the lack of roads, the long and unsafe sea communications between the provinces, Miranda argued that the British maritime nation was in a good position to support Spanish Americans to establish free government. To achieve this, the building of a canal across the isthmus would facilitate the deployment of troops. In addition, the interoceanic opening would further develop trade with China and throughout the Pacific, two marketplaces the British were extremely interested in. Miranda counted on gaining Great Britain's assistance by also offering her commercial preference in the large Spanish American market. His ultimate hope was that "these two nations might form the most respectable and preponderant Political Union in the World". The question was what kind of American nation he believed would establish an alliance with "the most enlightened and celebrated Power upon earth".[22] The Venezuelan envisaged, in fact, a federal organization for Spanish America, roughly resembling the U.S. system.[23] Provincial assemblies would elect representatives to the Imperial Diet, the legislative body that passed laws for the federation named *Colombia*. Two citizens, called Incas, would compose the executive power, whose main task was to guarantee the security of the "empire". One would govern from the federal city, *Colombo*, most probably located in the geographical center, at the isthmus, while the other Inca would be itinerant. In this 1801 plan, the territorial contours of the provinces were not, however, delineated. Either Miranda assumed that they would match the existing imperial units, i.e. viceroyalties, captaincies generals and *audiencias*, or he believed that the division would be according to population, as representation in the Diet was to be proportional, and borders could only be drawn once the electoral mapping had been determined. In either case, the internal and external borders delimiting the provincial territories and the "nation" would certainly be the result of the aggregation, or disaggregation, of political-administrative units, rather than of lines drawn along geographical features, such as mountain ranges and rivers. In contrast with U.S. Americans, who started surveying their territory extensively very early to draw borders, it took Spanish Americans longer to conceive their nations as a geographical space.[24]

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[22] Miranda 1929-1950: vol. 15, 111-114; vol. 16, 154-155. Miranda's project of an interoceanic canal is also mentioned in Antepara y Arenaza 1810: 11.

[23] It is important to note that in this article, the use of 'federation' and 'confederation' follows the usage the authors gave the two terms in their writings.

[24] Jordana Dym has convincingly argued that Spanish Americans first conceived their national territory as an agglomeration of political or administrative jurisdictions and then as a geographical space. Dym 2009: 159-179.

III. In the meantime, the empire was undergoing further territorial changes. In 1801, Spain gave *Luisiana* back to France in exchange for the Duchy of Tuscany. The retrocession meant a territorial loss for Spain, but most importantly financial relief.[25] On the contrary, for the United States, the return of the French empire to the North American continent was worrisome. Furthermore, in 1802, Madrid ordered the suspension of the right of deposit at New Orleans, causing the interruption of U.S. trading along the Mississippi. Under the pressure of the Westerners, President Jefferson set out to purchase New Orleans and the Floridas and obtain the establishment of the Mississippi as the boundary. He ended up purchasing all Louisiana from Napoleon in the spring of 1803, thus doubling the size of the republic.[26] The map of the continent was redrawn: the French presence was reduced to the province of Quebec, the United States greatly enlarged its territory across the Mississippi, and Spain receded to Texas and the Floridas. However, the extent of the newly-acquired Louisiana was ill-defined, as attested by the ensuing dispute between the United States and Spain over the Mississippi boundary and ownership of the Floridas.

Soon after, major political changes also took place in the empire. In 1807, the Spanish king Charles IV allowed French troops to march through the north of Spain to Portugal, where they occupied Lisbon. The Portuguese Braganza royal court fled to its American colony and resettled in Rio de Janeiro. Meanwhile, the Napoleonic army remained in Spain. Charles IV was forced to abdicate in favor of his son and heir, Ferdinand VII, who in turn was compelled to abdication and exile in France. In his stead, Napoleon's brother Joseph Bonaparte was crowned King of Spain, in April 1808. A Spanish population hostile to the *rey intruso* (the intruding king) formed regional and local juntas in the name of Ferdinand, the *deseado* (the longed-for king). They federated, with difficulty, in a Junta Central in Madrid, which had to relocate to Seville, then Cádiz and finally the Isle of León, to escape from the French occupying army as it moved south. The Junta was eventually dissolved and replaced by a Regency Council, in January 1810, which governed in the name of the exiled king. Hence, in the lapse of two years, the central imperial government was confined to the southern port city of

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[25] *Luisiana* had indeed become very expensive to keep. Only one fifth of its expenses was covered by its own revenues, the rest being subsidized by Mexico. Spain had so far been willing to pay such a high price to guarantee the defence of precious Mexico and Cuba against British Canada and the United States with a buffer zone in Louisiana. However, in 1800, the heavily indebted Spanish king secretly signed the preliminary Treaty of San Ildefonso with France to give Napoleon time to occupy Louisiana effectively. The 1801 Treaty of Aranjuez made the retrocession official. Whitaker 1934: 178, 184-185.

[26] Madison to Robert Livingston, January 18, 1803. Madison 1998: vol. 4, 259.

Cádiz, whose merchants controlled most of the trade with the American dominions. Obviously, this geopolitical contraction sent shock waves across the Atlantic. As in metropolitan Spain, juntas were established in 1810 in Caracas, Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile, Cartagena, Santa Fé de Bogotá, and even in St. Johns Plains, West Florida, and the Baton Rouge district. While vowing their loyalty to Ferdinand, they claimed autonomy from the Regency. Very soon, however, smaller provincial towns and municipalities declared their autonomy from the provincial head cities. Thus, in an effort to keep the empire united, the Regency convened the *Cortes* (Parliament), to be held in Cadiz. After numerous long and acrimonious debates, the *peninsulares* and Spanish Americans in attendance framed the Constitution of 1812, which proclaimed that "the Spanish nation is the union of all Spaniards of both hemispheres", that is the kingdoms of Spain and of America.[27]

Despite the declaration of union, these momentous events obviously produced numerous writings about the reconfiguration of the hemisphere that Spanish Americans lived in. In 1810, William Burke, an Irish pamphleteer and friend of Miranda's, arrived in Venezuela, where he published a series of articles in the *Gazeta de Caracas*.[28] Convinced of Spanish Americans' right to independence and of the advantages of the geopolitical organization of the United States, Burke proposed the creation of the confederations of Mexico and South America, which would stand in equal friendship and alliance with the United States. "The Colombian Continent would hence comprise three large representative republics", i.e. United States, Mexico and South America.[29] For Burke, History had shown the failure of the league system of alliances by treaties as they had very frequently been violated, causing a state of constant war, Ancient Greece being the prime example. Only a confederation based on clear founding principles could guarantee freedom, happiness, union and peace among the different States (*Estados*). In Burke's plan, the people (*el pueblo*) were to elect deputies to a General Congress, which in turn would appoint the president and other government officials. The governing body would be empowered to declare war, sign peace treaties, dispatch ambassadors, contract loans and set taxes. To ensure peace at home, any disobedience of the laws would be punished in the courts or by the army, which also defended the confederation against any foreign invasion.[30]

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[27] Rodríguez 1998: 51, 64, 75-92; Elliott 2006: 373-384.

[28] The articles published from November 1810 to March 1812 in the *Gazeta* were also edited in the two-volume work *Derechos de la América del Sur y México*, in 1811.

[29] Burke 1959: vol. 2, 156.

[30] *Ibid.*, 191-195; Gutiérrez Ardila 2009: 149.

For Burke, an extensive confederation clearly raised the issues of distance and communications and therefore of the adequate form of government. A representative system of governance, as opposed to a "mere [direct] democracy", ensured that republican institutions could exist in all parts of the confederation. The example of the United States had proved it was possible. It had shown that a "general union" of the parts, and not the division into several smaller geopolitical bodies, rendered, Burke claimed, the nation great and prosperous. For this to happen, the "general government" had to be strong enough to enforce federal laws throughout the territory. In addition, a well-developed communications network covering long distances would further contribute to compacting the territory. And the solution lay in navigable rivers and the steamboat.[31] Burke obviously had the U.S. transportation revolution in mind, which he believed was exportable to South America. If passable roads and steamboat services along the Orinoco, the Paraguay, and the Marañón river network were connected, a centrally-located federal capital on the High Marañón River, in Peru, 1500 miles from the furthest corner of the confederation, could be established. If Western States congressmen traveled well over 800 miles to reach Washington D.C., Spanish American representatives could do likewise, Burke argued. Moreover, he suggested that easy links with Europe along the Marañón and Amazon to the Atlantic, and a westward waterway connection with Lima, on the Pacific, across to China and the East Indies would complete the westward passage from Europe to Asia.[32] In other words, Burke's proposal was conceived in agreement with the continental geography. Yet to present, for example, the Marañón, a partially navigable river, as a connecting artery was rather puzzling. Still, to Burke's credit, suggesting at an early stage of the revolutions to make use of the advantageous geographical features the continent had to offer certainly differentiated him from the Spanish Americans, who were thinking in essentially political terms. Moreover, Burke's U.S.-inspired project of founding the administrative capital city far from the seaboards and therefore separated from most of the colonial economic centers was also unimaginable to them. In the United States, the foundation of Washington D.C., in 1791,

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[31] Burke 1959: vol. 2, 156, 174-175, 177. In the 1780s, John Ficht designed the steamboat and soon started running a regular passenger boat on the Delaware River. However, the breakthrough of this major innovation came in the first decade of the nineteenth century, when the Fulton-Livingston Company ran a service up the Hudson from New York to Albany. By the early 1810s, steamboats were sailing up the Mississippi, from New Orleans to Natchez. Steamboating on rivers expanded rapidly, and in conjunction with stagecoaches, offered fast connections between cities and towns. In the mid-1810s, steamboats were also navigating coastal waters along the U.S Atlantic seaboard. Meinig 1993: 317-319.

[32] Burke 1959: vol. 2, 182-183.

had resulted partly from the will to protect the federal government from the pressures of strong economic interests anchored in Philadelphia, the previous capital. In sum, Burke put forward a project that necessitated not only political reorganization but also territorial planning.

Unsurprisingly, geographical distance was also deployed as an argument against federating Spanish America. In Buenos Aires, the secretary of the revolutionary junta Mariano Moreno questioned the feasibility of efficiently governing people living in far-flung regions. "It is a chimera to believe that all the Spanish Americas can form one single state". To clinch his case, Moreno referred to the Philippines, the Spanish colony "of which we have hardly any news, other than what is communicated to us by a map". Only a more geographically-reduced association could effectively address the urgent needs of its members. Interestingly, Moreno illustrated his point with an example taken from Jefferson's *Notes*. The federations of North American Indians had successfully articulated the authority of the patriarchal chief (*sachem*) with that of a sovereign general council, composed of the chiefs, who took decisions for the whole Indian nation. The solution thus lay in keeping smaller geopolitical units for which the best possible constitution would be drafted. Another good example, for Moreno, was, of course, the Swiss confederation. He therefore opposed the idea of yielding sovereignty to a remote general council, where decisions would be taken for the inhabitants of a continental federation. In 1810, the military and political situation was still so unstable, he argued, that a large federation would only produce "internal passions", thus leaving the door wide open to the invasion of a powerful foreign army.[33] Whether Moreno objected to the large federation on principle or due to unfavorable circumstances, is difficult to know as he died in 1811, leaving the question unanswered. It seems safe to say, nevertheless, that had Moreno wished to argue in favor of a large federation, he would have used the example of the U.S. constitutional experience about which Spanish Americans were well informed.

Across the Andes Mountains, in Chile, Juan Egaña, the drafter of the first constitutional project for Chile, was aware of the dangers of a poorly coordinated and badly defended continental federation. He therefore drew up a plan to unite Spanish Americans in a defensive alliance in which the provinces would send deputies to a congress, where the contributions in money, men and weapons to the war effort would be discussed. The congress would also be empowered to mediate in internal dissensions and negotiate with Spain on behalf of all Spanish Americans. The first to federate would be Chile, Peru and Buenos Aires, whose delegates would meet in Co-

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[33] Moreno 1938: 286-291.

bija, a port city on the Pacific, in northern Chile. They would then transfer to either Guayaquil, in the province of Quito, or Panama, once the northern provinces joined the alliance.[34] As a Chilean, Egaña naturally made the alliance gravitate towards the Pacific, away from the Atlantic connections, such as the *porteños* – the inhabitants of the port city of Buenos Aires – naturally had. At the same time, from the Pacific coast, he envisaged expanding it north and eastward. Egaña's foresightedness was confirmed fifteen years later at the Panama Congress, when a defensive and offensive alliance of the American nations was discussed. His fellow Chilean Camilo Henríquez, the editor of *La Aurora de Chile*, on the contrary, expressed his opposition based on the standard argument that the continent was too large and the differences too wide for a regional confederation to be a workable system for Spanish America.[35] The federation/confederation debate also took place in Venezuela and New Granada, where Francisco Javier Ustáriz and Miguel de Pombo, in 1811 and 1812 respectively, envisaged the creation of confederations in order to ease tensions among the component states and protect their independences.[36] For them, what was at stake was not the principle of federating, but the coalescing geometry, which could be of a more or less encompassing nature.

In the early 1810s, the U.S. agent for seamen and commerce to Cuba and Mexico William Shaler also penned essays on the future of hemispheric and world relations.[37] First, because of the enormous extent of the space "between Louisiana & Patagonia", where republics were being established, Shaler divided the "continent" in two: affairs south of the isthmus of Darien (present-day Panama) pertained to Spanish Americans, whereas the area north of the dividing line was of interest to the United States. U.S. vessels could therefore carry Mexican raw materials to Asian and European markets and in turn supply Mexicans with European, Asian and U.S. manufactured products. While in the Atlantic this profitable commerce would be shared with other maritime powers, namely Great Britain, in the Pacific Ocean "we [the United States] may be without a rival".[38] Mexico was hence

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[34] The title of the plan was *Proyecto de una reunión general de las colonias españolas para la defensa y seguridad en la prisión de Fernando VII*. Egaña 1949: 44-52. Juan Egaña's "Plan de Gobierno and Declaración de los derechos del pueblo de Chile", was drafted in either 1811 or 1812. On Egaña's plan, see also Collier 1967: 217-222.

[35] *La Aurora de Chile*, August 20, 1812.

[36] Gutiérrez Ardila 2009: 149-150.

[37] Stagg 2002: 1.

[38] Shaler, "Essay VI [untitled]", in Stagg 2002: 24. In this essay, Shaler describes the American Pacific coast, in particular California and Mexico, and refers to the Russian presence along the northern coast.

the key piece of Shaler's plan. And included in his map of independent Mexico were the Internal Provinces (present-day northern Mexico and U.S. Southwest), the Yucatán Peninsula, the captaincy-general of Guatemala, and California. Fast and easy communications between the East Atlantic coast and California would go through the Missouri and Columbia rivers and then south along the Pacific seaboard. "When by the fisheries, and coasting trade of that extensive coast; the trade to Asia, and the fur trade of the N.W. Coast, an important nursery for Seamen would be formed; we should be able to completely develop the resources of the western portion of our Empire".[39]

In the Caribbean, even more was at stake for the United States. On arrival in Havana, Shaler discreetly gathered information on British merchants' share of the local market. Cubans made no secret of their fear of a probable British plan of occupying Havana if war were to break out between the United States and Great Britain. Hence the economic and geopolitical importance of Cuba, all the more so given Cubans' lack of "respectable political corps", and the unlikeliness of their remaining independent without international support. For Shaler, Cuba would thus benefit largely from the protection of the United States, which would provide "with a liberal hand" arms, ammunition, money and probably an auxiliary force.[40] However, the U.S. agent could not disregard the fact that in the wake of the outbreak of the War of 1812, bold moves around the pearl of the Spanish Crown were perilous for the U.S. South. It was therefore paramount to restore the balance of power and peace in the world.

This was the preoccupation at the heart of Shaler's fifth essay. Convinced that Great Britain under the threat of Napoleonic Europe would be forced to cease hostilities against the United States, Shaler maintained that peace would be negotiated. The UK-US treaty of friendship would in turn allow Spanish Americans to choose freely the form of government best suited to their manners, habits and local circumstances. The treaty would also enable the contracting nations to guarantee free navigation of the North American great rivers, protect their territories, in particular U.S. "natural" boundaries, and to expand further: Canada, Nova Scotia, Cuba and the Floridas would be incorporated into the Union; Northeast Brazil, Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo and the Philippines into the British Empire.

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[39] *Ibid.*: 26.

[40] Shaler, "Essay III [untitled]", in Stagg 2002: 14-15. In the essay Shaler reported that less than 5,000 regular Spanish troops were stationed on the island, yet there existed numerous militias that could mobilize about 40,000 soldiers, if necessary. In 1810, there were approximatively 3,591 regulars in the Spanish Army, plus 8,076 militia in Cuba. McFarlane 2015: 18.

The remaining Spanish territory would be divided into sovereign states of roughly the same size and borders as the colonial viceroyalties, and would be "invited to join a grand confederation for the purpose of securing the great interests embraced in this treaty".[41] It was clearly Shaler's belief that a negotiated settlement of the territorial and political divisions of the hemisphere was preferable to a desperate scramble that would inevitably pitch the United States against the superior British Navy on yet another front. In short, upsetting the precarious world balance of power was clearly not in the interest of the United States.

U.S. historians have debated at length the implications of Shaler's essay. Was it the first, pre-Bolivarian outline of an American confederation, and hence of early Pan-Americanism, as Joseph Lockey interpreted it in the 1930s, when the movement was at its peak? Or was it a plan to advance American power in the world as historian Roy Nichols interpreted it during the Cold War years? More recently, J.C.A. Stagg has pointed out that Shaler's plan followed Emmer de Vattel's 18th century idea of preserving the balance of power through treaties and guaranteeing the freedom of all nations.[42] These differing interpretations should not, however, obscure the pressing questions Shaler was tackling. If the Spanish empire was on the verge of disintegration, what kind of order would emerge? Would a new world region be formed? If so, what would it look like? How would its different parts connect with each other? How would the region, and its parts, relate to the world, notably to continental Europe and Great Britain? And Shaler was not alone addressing these issues. He was part of a group of fellow North and South Americans doing so as well.

One of them was William Thornton, the developer of the steamboat, architect of the Capitol building and Superintendent of the U.S. Patent Office (1802-1828). Born and raised in Tortola (Virgin Islands), his interest in the American continent came naturally. In 1815, he published *Outlines of a Constitution for United North & South Columbia*, written, in fact, in 1800. Three points he made in the document are worthwhile mentioning. First, he claimed his attachment to the "race of the Columbians", the inhabitants of the American continent, be they of "mixed or unmixed blood". To argue that intermarriage had improved Columbians' character, making them energetic and enterprising, certainly did not tally with the prevailing idea in the United States that miscegenation caused corruption of the soul and body. Moreover, Thornton recognized the Indians as the original

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[41] Shaler, "Reflection on the means of restoring the political ballance and procuring a general peace to the world", in Stagg 2002: 22.

[42] Lockey 1939; Nichols 1956; Stagg 2002.

owners of the lands they had never sold, a notion his fellow countrymen increasingly contested. Second, the hemisphere would be organized as a federation, divided into thirteen sections, including the Caribbean islands, delimited by longitudes, latitudes, rivers, seas and mountains. This geographically gridded Columbian Union would be governed by an Inca, with presidential powers. Twenty-six Sachems and fifty-two Caziques (sic), i.e. two "senators" and four "representatives" for each section respectively, would make up the legislative branch. The seat of the government would be in America, a city located in the Panama isthmus, where a canal built by locks could be opened. Third, telegraphs, when perfected, would transmit communications from the remote regions to the central government in no longer than a day, thus solving the problem of long distances in an extensive federation.[43] In other words, Thornton's systematically conceived plan ignored previous political-administrative divisions, both in North and South America, and the distribution of the population, in such an original way that a completely new hemispheric map, disconnected from the colonial past and the republican present, emerged. As a trained scientist interested in promoting innovation and progress, he betted on providing scientific/technical solutions to what amounted to geopolitical issues.

Thornton's contemporaries, on the other hand, developed the more feasible, and potentially more profitable, plan of an interoceanic passage. In 1816, William D. Robinson traveled to Mexico to recover money he had lent the Mexicans. In Chapter XIII of his *Memoirs of the Mexican Revolution* (1820), he assessed the possible routes. Because in Panama, the Andes Mountains ran through the isthmus of Darien and the coastal waters were too shallow for large vessels to approach, Robinson believed that the interoceanic communication, either by a navigable canal or by land and water conveyance, should be opened in the more accessible isthmus of Tehuantepec, or further south, through the lake of Nicaragua. The commerce to Peru and Chile would transit through Nicaragua, and the trade stretching from Guatemala to the north-western extremity of North America through Tehauntepec. Guasacualco on the Atlantic and Tehuantepec on the Pacific would be declared free ports for world trade and cost of maintenance of the interoceanic route would be covered by a toll. Products from the northwest of North America, California, and Sinaloa would be transported in steamboats strong enough to endure the Pacific storms, to Tehuantepec through to the Gulf of Mexico, up the Mississippi, along the U.S. Atlantic coast and across to Europe. Chinese and East Indian merchandise would follow the same route. Robinson convincingly supported his argu-

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[43] Thornton 1932: 199-215.

ment with calculations: a steam vessel could take six days from the Mississippi to Guasacualco, then seven days across the isthmus and fifty days to China, which amounted to sixty-three days of steam navigation from the United States to Asia, or 12, 035 miles from Philadelphia to Canton, as opposed to 16, 150 miles along the ordinary route.[44]

On the contrary, Baptis Irvine, the U.S. special agent to Venezuela in 1818, favored building a canal at the isthmus of Darien. Less focused on the difficulty of constructing a waterway through the high mountains in Panama, Irvine highlighted the advantages the canal would offer the United States: trade with Colombia, and above all, the prospect of challenging the maritime supremacy of Great Britain as the United States would control the Pacific. As an Irish-American, Irvine was particularly sensitive to the British "master".[45] Irvine's fellow countryman and newspaper editor William Duane also promoted the Panama canal after having experienced the hardships of crossing the Andes Cordillera when traveling from Caracas to Bogotá and down the Magdalena River to Cartagena, on the Caribbean coast, in the early 1820s.[46] In sum, be it Darien, Tehuantepec, or the Lake of Nicaragua, U.S. Americans agreed that fast and easy communication was paramount to economic development and political cohesion. Connecting through roads, rivers, canals, railways in horse-pulled carriages, steamboats and trains was the "experiment in transportation" that the Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin presented in his 1808 plan to "unite by a still more intimate community of interests, the most remote quarters of the United States".[47] And for those experiencing the results of the transportation improvements in the 1810s and 1820s, the plan could work just as well beyond U.S. borders.

IV. Caught in the midst of a protracted and brutal war against the Spanish army, Spanish Americans were, however, far removed from thinking about regional and national development. In 1815, from his temporary exile in Kingston, the Venezuelan revolutionary Simón Bolívar, in desper-

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[44] Robinson 1820: 346, 361-370. In 1824, the businessman C.C. Bork took Robinson seriously. After having made the proposition to the government of Oaxaca, Bork wrote to Joel Poinsett, the first U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, requesting him to consider Robinson's project. Instead of a canal, Bork believed a railway would be more feasible. He envisaged granting the company in charge of the transportation over the isthmus exclusive privileges for twenty years, forty leagues of land to grow sugar, cotton, indigo and cochineal, and the right to manage the stores and factories on the route. C.C. Bork to Joel Poinsett, Dec. 28, 1825, Mexico, Poinsett: Box 2.

[45] Irvine 1822: 32-53.

[46] Duane 1826.

[47] Quoted in Meinig 1993: 311. For details of the Gallatin plan, see Meinig 1993: 311-316.

ate need of military aid, suggested that in exchange for arms, munitions, warships, volunteers and money, Great Britain could receive the provinces of Panama and Nicaragua. With the opening of canals, the British could transform the isthmus into the center of world trade, which they would, of course, control.[48] In fact, Bolívar never made a secret of his belief that Great Britain would be more efficient in protecting the Spanish Americans against any European power. This explains why later as the initiator of the Panama Congress, he insisted on inviting Great Britain to send an observer with no plenipotentiary powers. In fact, in his famous *Carta de Jamaica*, Bolívar expressed his hope that one day a congress would be held in the isthmus, where the representatives of the American "republics, kingdoms and empires" would meet to discuss peace and war with the nations of the "other three parts of the world".[49]

In 1824, Bolívar, as head of the Peruvian government, did send out a circular inviting the governments of Colombia (present-day Venezuela, Colombia, Panama and Ecuador), the Central American Federation (today Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Honduras) and Mexico to an assembly of American states, which would meet at the Isthmus of Panama, in 1825. Chile, Bolivia, the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata (present Argentina) and Brazil were also invited but did not attend. The meeting was to be held in Panama, in the center of the world, with one side looking toward Asia and the other to Africa and Europe, and equidistant from the "extremities".[50] The Colombian vice-president Francisco de Paula Santander sent the Adams administration an invitation, despite Bolívar's opposition to U.S. participation. He was suspicious of U.S. designs in the American continent. However, the Central Americans and *porteños* (from Buenos Aires) hailed U.S. presence at the Congress as a counterpoise to what they feared were Bolívar's continental ambition.

Bernardo de Monteagudo, a *porteño* member of the first independent government of Peru, supported in writing Bolívar's project. Before his assassination in Lima in 1825, he called for the formation of a defensive and of-

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[48] Simón Bolívar to Maxwell Hyslop, Kingston, May 19, 1815. Bolívar 1947: vol. 1, 133-134. In 1814, after Napoleon's defeat in Europe, Ferdinand VII returned to the throne. He abolished the Cortes and the Constitution of 1812, and sent the Spanish army, headed by General Pablo Morillo, to reconquer the American dominions. Revolutionary leaders fled to the Caribbean, where they looked for aid to organize an army to reconquer Tierra Firme, i.e. Venezuela and New Granada. The Haitian president Alexander Pétion and the merchant Luis Brion financed and armed the expeditionary force, which the military commander Simón Bolívar landed in the northeast coast of Venezuela at the end of May 1816. Rodríguez 1998: 185.

[49] Bolívar 1982, "Carta de Jamaica", Kingston, 6 de setiembre de 1815: 104.

[50] Bolívar, Convocatoria del Congreso de Panamá, datada en Lima el 7 de diciembre de 1824. *Ibid.*: 154.

fensive alliance to protect the Spanish-American republics against the Holy Alliance, which threatened to re-establish monarchy in the American continent. Monteagudo argued logically that in order to preserve the "American system", Spanish Americans should reproduce the European system of balance of powers. The "general federation of Spanish-American states", under the auspices of an assembly, would guarantee their newly-acquired independence and peace among them. In other words, the Panama Congress would replicate the Congress of Vienna, and the Holy Alliance would have its counterpart in a Spanish-American confederation. Monteagudo did not include Brazil in his plan as he feared that despite being independent from Portugal, the Brazilian emperor Pedro I would most certainly support the European monarchs by allowing them to use Brazil as their headquarters. And if there were to be a military confrontation with the Holy Alliance, Spanish Americans could probably count on the military and naval support of the United States and Great Britain.[51] In fact, this amounted to wishful thinking on Monteagudo's part. In the United States, there existed no political will and small military capability to become involved in a foreign war. Moreover, to fight in alliance with its former British enemy was unthinkable. Neither was Great Britain ready to harm its commercial interests in the hemisphere by abandoning its non-intervention policy.[52]

The Panama Congress was finally held in 1826. Its delegates' purpose was to discuss how to put into effect the principles of non-colonization, non-interference and non-entanglement outlined in the Monroe Doctrine. The plan of creating a system of treaties of alliance, commerce, and friendship and the formation of an international council was therefore to be put on the negotiating table. However, Secretary of State Henry Clay instructed the U.S. delegates not to engage the United States in a supranational body empowered to mediate in conflicts between the American nations. The United States refused to be bound by any treaty, convention or act to which it did not subscribe, yet agreed to sign commercial treaties that would ensure lasting good-neighborly relations among the convening nations. However, the two U.S. delegates never reached the insalubrious isthmus, where many of the participants fell ill. On June 22, the plenipotentiary ministers of Colombia, Peru, Mexico and the Central American Federation met officially to discuss a ten-point agenda. Before adjourning on July 15, they agreed upon a treaty of mutual defense and alliance, union,

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[51] Monteagudo 1825: 8-24. Monteagudo uses the terms federation and confederation interchangeably.

[52] For the international politics at the time of the Spanish-American independences, Blaufarb 2007: 742-763; McFarlane 2015: 107-124.

and confederation. They also signed a convention stating each participating state's financial payment to the maintenance of an armed force and the administration of the confederation, and one providing for future meetings. The delegations were to reconvene in the healthier town of Tacubaya, outside Mexico City, after having returned to their home countries and had the treaties ratified by their respective governments. Yet the Colombian was the only one to ratify the treaties of Panama. In 1827, the envoys of the Central American Federation, Colombia, Mexico and the United States did convene, but no formal session ever took place. Finally, they formally declared the end of the Congress, on October 9, 1828. It is fair therefore to say that the Congress did not deliver real concrete results. Nevertheless, the fact that the newly independent Americans should have come together to debate hemispheric policy very shortly after their bloody wars of independence ended is in itself an accomplishment. But as Arthur Whitaker pointed out, whereas Spanish Americans were ready to discuss a more embracing and engaging *América*, U.S. Americans were willing to consider a more restricted and less binding Western Hemisphere.

V. At the heart of the process of forming a region is the establishment of common traits of a spatialized group of individuals and differing elements that separate it from the exterior. For early 19th century Americans, however, what was "the common interest of one Large Family of Brothers [that] will unite its inhabitants" that Jesuit Juan Pablo Vizcardo wrote about in 1799?[53] What did James Monroe mean, in 1823, when he declared that "with the movements in this hemisphere we are, of necessity, more immediately connected, and by causes which must be obvious to all enlightened and impartial observers"?[54] A disconnected geography from Newfoundland to Tierra del Fuego rendered propinquity an unconvincing argument. Unbalanced and unstable trade relations did not guarantee close and lasting bonds. A not so common and not so shared experience of the independence process did not make the hemispheric neighbour a natural next of kin. Neither did the diverse cultural backgrounds and environments necessarily coalesce into a homogeneous whole. Moreover, there existed a thirty-three-year time gap between the U.S. independence in 1783 and the first lasting declaration of independence in South America in 1816. It would be therefore fair to argue that Americans had few reasons to come together as regional fellowmen. And yet they strove for convergence.

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[53] Vizcardo y Guzmán 1954: 42.

[54] James Monroe, Annual Message from President James Monroe to the United States, 18th Congress, 1st session, 22-23.

These turn-of-the-century individuals, at the junction of empires, colonies and nations were, in fact, in an unprecedented position, and they took it upon themselves to give territorial, economic, political, cultural and ideological form to the American continent. The shape and size was hopefully to be consensual. At the same time, it was a two-way process by which the hemispheric peoples formed interconnections and relations, looking for ways to make them flow more easily and for ways to delimit and define them. However, in striving for convergence, U.S. and Spanish Americans, equally concerned with geographical unity, common history, identical ideals, and cultural uniformity, approached the task differently. U.S. Americans conceived spatial organization in hierarchized geographical units, which tallied with the notions of nation-state, continent and supra-continent.[55] Their nation, i.e. the thirteen North American colonies that had federated into the United States of America, first stood alone and then among other American nations; their (North) American continent was represented on the world atlas alongside other continents; and in their (Western) hemisphere were included mainland and insular North and South America, which had become increasingly visible to U.S. Americans expanding west and southward. The newly-independent Spanish-American nations fit neatly into the hemispheric scheme. The Spanish American republics, on the other hand, gave priority to organizing their sovereign spaces in hierarchized political units, which would then match a more, or less, defined compact territory. This in part explains why Spanish Americans had to solve numerous territorial conflicts among themselves, as they juxtaposed the contours of political and geographical spaces. However, in 1826, most of them responded positively to Bolívar's invitation to the Panama Congress, initiating the shift from conceiving *América* as their continent to *América* as a more encompassing hemisphere.

Where did their Western Hemisphere / *América* stand in the globe? Even if Jefferson claimed that the hemisphere was separated from the rest of the world by two oceans, this was not the case. In fact, it was on the border of both the Atlantic and Pacific worlds. As pointed out above, early 19th century Americans clearly had their eyes set on the Pacific. They sailed up and down the ocean, off the coast of Chile, Peru, Mexico and California; they ventured across it carrying goods back and forth from Asian ports; they seriously thought about the project of building an inter-oceanic passage to avoid circumnavigation. For hemispheric peoples the Pacific was as much a site of circulation and exchange as the Atlantic. While there were obvi-

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[55] Lewis and Wigen explain that the Enlightenment cartographic tradition consisted in classifying geographical units hierarchically. Lewis and Wigen 1997: 10-12.

ous differences in the scale and magnitude of the interchanges and movements, this should not be a reason for forgetting the importance of the Pacific. The U.S. consul who sailed from Norfolk, Virginia, to Buenos Aires, crossed the Andes on a mule to Santiago de Chile, then traveled to the port of Valparaíso where he embarked for Lima certainly did not. Neither did the Spanish American rebel who paid for arms and munitions bought in the United States with Peruvian silver and Chilean copper. In other words, Americans' movements, connections and operations were both trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific, and within the hemisphere, they operated transimperially and transnationally as they moved across boundaries of colonies, states, and nations. These movements on the ground were taking place as Americans thought carefully about where and how to place their region on the world map. And if Americans temporarily drew apart after the 1830s, this does not mean that their goal to come together should be disregarded or their efforts to achieve it belittled. It was not a futile enterprise. On the contrary, this was a unique moment, one in which North and South Americans produced a hemispheric awareness that would bring and keep them together, for good or for bad, for many years to come.

Finally, the study of this age represents a formidable historiographical challenge. Because European empires disintegrated and colonies eventually became nation-states at this time, its study is at the intersection of imperial, colonial and national histories. However, more recently, in step with early modernists, historians of the revolutions and wars of independence in the American continent have embraced the Atlantic perspective of highlighting transcolonial, transimperial and transnational connections and relations. They have focused on comprehending these momentous upheavals and definitive changes in a larger geohistorical context by widening the space of action and lengthening the period. Yet, like their early modernist colleagues, they have also been somehow trapped in the fragmentation of Atlantic history into British, French, Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish Atlantics, which some claim replicate imperial histories. More importantly, they have not completely managed to extricate themselves from the centripetal force of the locale. The question then is if it is possible, and ultimately, if it is desirable.

The historian Jack Greene has argued that the hemispheric approach to the study of the early modern Americas offers the possibility of comparing local and regional developments in the larger American space, rather than connecting and relating in an unbounded Atlantic. It allows for a more comprehensive understanding of continental and insular North, Central and South America, enfranchised from the national paradigm.[56] Indeed,

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[56] Greene 2009: 299-315.

in a thorough comparative analysis of the British and Spanish empires, the modernist historian John Elliott practices what he and Greene advocate, that is comparative history concerned with differences and similarities.[57] Elliott's study logically ends in 1830, when the Spanish-American republics were finally formed, and the nation-state set the boundaries for historians. My argument is that because the early 19th-century individuals themselves increasingly thought and moved in a hemispheric framework, in which they compared and contrasted knowledge and experience, it is all the more justified, and important, to prolong this broader perspective to the national period. The study of the local, regional and national experiences of the 19th century in the hemisphere would certainly afford deeper insight into the politics, economy, society, and culture of the independent states. More could be learnt and understood about frontiers, communications, constitutional experiences, education, Indian labor, just to mention some comparable topics. Yet this is not a call for the writing of a common American history, such as Herbert Bolton's in his 'The Epic of Great America' address to his fellow historians in 1932.[58] It is rather an invitation for those who study contemporary U.S. and Latin American history to make use of the potentially profitable hemispheric framework in fields other than international relations.

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[57] Elliott 2006: xvi-xviii.

[58] In December 1932, Herbert Bolton delivered his presidential speech to the American Historical Association calling for an integrated and synthetic American history, that is a hemispheric history. Bolton 1933: 474.

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