
Article

Languages of transnational revolution: The ‘Republicans of Nacogdoches’ and ideological code-switching in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands

Arturo Chang

University of Toronto, Toronto M5S 1A1, ON, Canada.
arturo.chang@utoronto.ca

Abstract The settler-colonial and republican principles of early U.S. politics tend to be studied as paradoxical ambitions of American nation-building. This article argues that early republican thought in the United States developed through what I call ‘ideological code-switching’, a vernacular practice that allowed popular actors to strategically vacillate between anti-colonial and neo-colonial discourses as complementary principles of revolutionary change. I illustrate these claims by tracing a genealogy of anti- and neo-colonial thought from the founding of the United States to its transnational emergence in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. I demonstrate that ideological code-switching first appeared as a rhetorical strategy among the Federalist debates, where Publius argued for the feasibility of expansionist republics via a hemispheric account of American exceptionalism. These appeals to hemispheric unity remained salient into the nineteenth century among groups like the ‘Republicans of Nacogdoches’, a militia comprised of Indigenous, Mestizo, and White actors that mobilized an attack on Spain and founded the Republic of Texas in April of 1813. Drawing on archival research, I turn to the U.S.-Mexico borderlands as an example of the way marginalized groups instrumentalized links between anti- and neo-colonial politics to envision their position in the rapidly evolving landscapes of transnational revolution.

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On 17 July 1813, the front page of *The Weekly Register* (Baltimore, MD) ran an article titled, ‘Republic of Mexico’, which promoted a ‘hasty translation’ and celebration of the Declaration of Independence of Texas. The founding of Republican Texas, editor Hezekiah Niles wrote, ‘decided the fate’ of Mexico and ‘great numbers’ of followers were ‘flocking from all quarters to the standard of



Bernardo' (Niles, 1813).¹ The *Weekly Register's* report was a reference to Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara, a Mexican revolutionary who mounted a campaign for Mexican independence from within the United States.² Gutiérrez's efforts resulted in the creation of the 'Republicans of Nacogdoches, a transnational militia comprised of U.S., Mexican, Indigenous (Tonkawa, Apache, and Choctaw), and Creole volunteers (Coronado, 2013, p. 185). While members came from drastically different backgrounds, the group was united by shared visions of hemispheric emancipation and the subversion of European power in the Americas. In just the span of a year, between 1812 and 1813, the Republicans of Nacogdoches would form a coalition, mount a covert print enterprise in Louisiana, attack Spanish forces in Texas, and ultimately, found the Independent Republic of Texas (Stagg, 2009). Despite these astounding events, the movement remains largely overlooked in the study of transitional U.S. politics. And, when studied, the group has historically been depicted as violent, unprepared to govern, and merely mimicking Anglo-American ideals (Garrett, 1937; Warren, 1940; Narrett, 2002; Stagg, 2002). A need remains to interrogate the political investments of the marginalized actors involved as part of the broader context of the Age of Revolutions.³

Militia movements like the Republicans of Nacogdoches were central to the formation of radical republican and imperialist politics in the nascent United States. Current research on militia activity in the U.S. borderlands tends to study these projects as national operations deployed to forcefully displace Indigenous peoples, expel colonial authorities, and set the grounds for territorial expansion (Dahl, 2018; Frymer, 2019; Stagg, 2009). These interpretations have proven fruitful for interrogating the settler-colonial foundations of the United States, but they only partially explain the politics that moved borderlands communities. Groups like the Republicans of Nacogdoches also attracted the participation of marginalized groups that lived in constant exposure to the quickly evolving national, institutional, and colonial landscapes of the region. Given the involvement of people from different colonial standpoints, the Republicans of Nacogdoches offer a novel case that illustrates the connections between popular anti-colonial discourse and neo-colonial practices of expansion, extraction, settlement, and racial subjection.⁴

I argue that early republican thought in the United States developed through what I call ideological code-switching, a vernacular practice which adopted simultaneous commitments to anti-colonial and neo-colonial politics, and defined them as complementary components of revolutionary change. On the one hand, anti-colonial discourse produced narratives of hemispheric unity that emphasized American exceptionalism and the role of the United States in expelling European powers from the 'New World'. In the U.S., these narratives initially appealed to the unforeseen conditions of the Americas to rally support among the 'thirteen colonies' but later evolved to include neighboring revolutionary movements throughout Latin America (Coronado, 2013; Fitz, 2017). On the other hand, neo-colonial practices emerged as a strategy to argue for expansion, settlement, and



extraction as tools that prolonged the life of the republic by ‘diversifying’ territories, peoples, and interests that ultimately reproduced powers of the colonial state. These efforts created independent American states that operated like the European empires they sought to overcome (Simon, 2017), which only exacerbated the forced displacement and murder of Indigenous and enslaved peoples living in ‘frontier’ territories.

In the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, ideological code-switching catalyzed other seemingly paradoxical projects. Just within the Republicans of Nacogdoches volunteers appealed to the emancipation of Mexico, the foundation of independent Texas as a territory to be annexed by the United States, and the so-called ‘settlement’ by Indigenous communities as naturalized Mexican citizens. Navigating these languages of transnational revolution requires a more thorough account of the overlapping political visions that led to such coalitions. While these terms are not contemporary to the context, I use ‘anti-colonial’ and ‘neo-colonial’ as interpretive lenses through which we can understand the evolving interests of borderlands communities and the way marginalized groups understood their standing in the colonial world. Far from a historically contingent phenomenon, these colonial legacies continue to shape how Indigenous and Latinx peoples relate to bordered landscapes, transnational identities, and the nation-state (Ochoa Espejo, 2020; Saldaña-Portillo, 2016). This approach also highlights the importance of looking to the American borderlands as distinctive sites of political thinking from which questions of space, race, and coloniality are theorized via transnational standpoints.⁵ In that regard, this article turns to the borderlands to problematize the way political theorists have studied transnationality. The Republicans of Nacogdoches demonstrate that revolution can operate transnationally, not only in the sense that it crosses state boundaries, but also via the overlap of racial, religious, and vernacular universes that envision emancipation as emerging across colonial-regulatory spaces. In other words, the U.S.-Mexico borderlands elevate the intersecting imaginaries of revolution and decenter nationality as a necessary component of revolutionary change.⁶

Political theorists have recently approached the connection between anti- and neo-colonial politics in the early modern world as a theoretical ‘conundrum’, political ‘disavowal’, and ‘paradox’ that captivated the likes of J.S. Mill, Adam Smith, Alexis De Tocqueville, and the Federalists (Pitts, 2006, p. 175; Mackinnon, 2019, p. 58; Ince, 2021, p. 1080). These interpretations tend to emphasize alterations or creative tensions between republican liberty and imperial practices, and thus assume that these operate dichotomously in principle. Joshua Simon (2017) has defined these tensions as related to a Creole-American tradition – what he calls ‘anti-imperial imperialism’. While Simon’s interpretation correctly reveals contending impulses of expansion and anti-colonial revolution, these are not limited to Creole-elite politics. Rather, they comprise a strategic response used by American actors attempting to subvert colonial politics from within the colonial



order. That is, by resisting specific colonial states without being able to completely evade the broader problem of colonial subjection. Among the Republicans of Nacogdoches and marginalized groups within it, this problem appears via their pursuit of improved social standing through participation in transnational militia movements which promised equal civic standing, racial emancipation, and settlement in the nascent republic of Mexico.

Drawing on archival analysis, this article traces these claims through insurgent printmaking enterprises which reevaluated the transnational commitments of republican political thought. American actors invested in transnational revolutions understood that they had to speak to potential volunteers from their respective colonial standpoints: to U.S. Americans boasting independence, Mexicans calling for revolution, Indigenous nations resisting empire, and Creoles seeking to undermine Spanish power. To unite these factions, the Republicans of Nacogdoches turned to print and oral practices that connected with each community and spoke to the value of supporting their cause. These rhetorical calibrations not only influenced the way insurgents understood the principles of republicanism, but they also altered how the leaders of these movements spoke and wrote about the politics behind transnational revolution. Thus, these materials illustrate the importance of studying republican political thought as a popularly evolving enterprise that changed in response to the concerns of marginalized groups. This interpretation also problematizes scholarship on the Nacogdoches movement which characterizes their members as unthinking subjects merely following orders from the likes of James Madison, James Monroe, and other elite actors. Popular print objects produced by the Republican of Nacogdoches demonstrate that they held idiosyncratic interpretations of transnational republicanism which spoke to the distinct interests of their volunteers. These materials are valuable for understanding the way borderlands communities responded to imperial subjection from a liminal position that moved between emergent nation-states and receding colonial powers.

To examine the relation between ideological code-switching and transnational republican revolution, this article traces a genealogy of exceptionalist discourses which argued that the Americas could sustain commitments to both emancipatory and imperialist practices. I begin with the Federalist debates by demonstrating that Hamilton, Madison, and Jay used hemispheric language to justify their calls for an expansionist republic. As Hamilton argues in *Federalist No. 14*, an expansive American republic should not be rejected based on novelty – instead, ‘posterity’ would be indebted to its innovations (Hamilton et al., 2003, p. 63).⁷ I follow these hemispheric narratives into the nineteenth century, when they evolved into a topic of public interest via editorials, manifestos, comedic theater, and religious writings. Here the case of Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara and the Republicans of Nacogdoches offers an example of the ways transnational militia movements instrumentalized popular investments in Pan-American emancipation to involve Indigenous, Mestizo, Creole, and White actors in the pursuit of Mexican independence. These



events are analyzed leading up to the foundation of republican Texas in 1813, where the first Declaration of Independence and Constitution of Texas attempted to reconcile the contrasting republican imaginaries of its nascent body politic. I suggest that republican junctures between U.S. and Mexican volunteers proved too difficult to overcome, ultimately leading to the fall of the Nacogdoches movement. The final section concludes by speaking to the value of studying borderlands spaces and hemispheric discourse as strategies used by marginalized groups to theorize responses to colonial subjection and strategize their potential standing in an emergent nation-state system.

American Exceptionalism as a Hemispheric Practice

The United States' status as the first revolution of the Americas engendered republican rhetoric that appealed to political innovation and exception at both national and hemispheric registers. As Terrence Ball and Caitlin Fitz each demonstrate, the emergence of American republican thought in the U.S. was a distinctly popular-discursive phenomenon (Ball, 2003; Fitz, 2017). Conversations on the future of the United States revolved around competing ideals of republican liberty which, as Ball writes, were the 'watch-word on every patriot's lips' during and following the English-American independence movement (Hamilton et al., 2003, p. xx). The question, once independence was in hand, was not whether the U.S. could operate as a republic, but of which republican principles would guide its trajectory beyond the Articles of Confederation. Once the U.S. Constitution was ratified in 1789, debate moved toward questions surrounding the role of the Union as arbiter of the ideals of republicanism in the Americas. By the turn of the eighteenth-century many U.S. citizens saw themselves as ushers of the Age of Revolutions and viewed their efforts as setting the grounds for an American turn in republican revolution (Fitz, 2017).

Popular debate also surfaced questions surrounding the feasibility of the republican visions that moved the Age of Revolutions. Where thinkers like Jeremy Bentham, Edmund Burke, and Adam Smith critiqued the rise of republican imperialism (Ince, 2021; Pitts, 2006), Americans believed they were witnesses to the evolution of republicanism as a project grounded in the novel conditions of the Americas. These contrasting perceptions on the evolutionary trajectory of republican politics comprised a broader conversation between European history and American futurity which leaned on a contrast between known history and the splendor of yet unknown conditions.⁸ While the language of republican innovation certainly held national ramifications within the United States (Frank, 2009; Rakove, 1997), it was also importantly undergirded by narratives of hemispheric exceptionalism that cut across French, Spanish, and English colonial spaces. American colonies, in different ways, claimed to be resolving the vices of European empires



(Sanders, 2011). In other words, the ‘great experiment’ was nationally executed but relied upon a hemispheric conception of political innovation.

Republican debates in the nascent United States centered on problems of post-foundation – on the maintenance, protection, and longevity of the republic beyond its creation. Anti- and neo-colonial discourses were integral to negotiating the politics of post-foundation and these operated complementarily to address overlapping but distinct questions of state power. Anti-colonial discourse was essential to preserving the notion that the U.S. was part of a hemispheric body politic. This narrative reinforced the premise that U.S. institutions were distinctly designed – and thus feasible – for the American context. By extension neo-colonial discourse was used to justify preservationist arguments that sought to protect the national body through conquest, expansion, and forced displacement. In this way, post-foundational republican discourse developed via ideological code-switching practices that vacillated between the rejection of European colonial power and the reproduction of practices specific to the colonial state under nascent American states.

Moving between anti- and neo-colonial principles did not prove a difficult endeavor. As Adam Dahl shows, democratic thought in the U.S. connected concepts of popular sovereignty and constituent power with settler colonial practices at its foundation (Dahl, 2018, p. 45). The connection between imperial expansion and republican liberty, however, did resurface a well-known paradox. As Quentin Skinner, Maurizio Viroli, and David Armitage respectively argue, neo-Roman republicans like Niccolò Machiavelli, James Harrington, and Baron de Montesquieu each contended with the ‘republican dilemma’ of pursuing *grandezza* at the cost of imperial corruption (Armitage, 2002, pp. 31, 36, 42; Skinner, 2012; Viroli, 2001). These problems would be taken up once again in the eighteenth-century by David Hume in his *Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth* (1752) and Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), where each addressed the possibility of preserving liberty under the expansive republics of colonial modernity (Hume, [1752] 1994, p. 232; Smith, 1776). The conclusion, both in economic and institutional terms, was that an expansive republic would eventually fall to the ambitions of its leaders and to the impractical scope of its institutions. The previously unimaginable scope of modern American republics could not successfully solve the paradox of foundation and finitude. Even under a ‘perfect arrangement’, as Hume writes, a republic could ‘flourish for many ages’ but eternity would escape it (Hume, 1994, p. 233).

Rather than treat American and European visions of early modern republicanism as points of contention, it is more fruitful to understand them as parallel projects that responded to colonial order from contrasting standpoints. In the United States, these post-foundational anxieties were framed by questions of unity and stability. This is most famously the case in *The Federalist*, where Alexander Hamilton, Madison, and John Jay used anti- and neo-colonial discourses to address external



and internal threats to the Union. The first internal threat, Madison famously argued in *Federalist No. 10*, was the problem of faction within the nation-state and the ‘relief supplied’ by the ‘republican principle’ in curbing the passions of a tyrannical majority (Hamilton et al., 2003, p. 43). Factional conflict was a classic critique of republican rule in the late eighteenth-century, but unlike their European counterparts, *The Federalist* sought to remedy this problem by deploying strategies unique to the social and political condition of the Americas. Namely, via an expansionist solution that turned to conquest as a means for diversifying the body politic and its political interests. As Sheldon Wolin argues, Hamilton viewed the scale of the Americas as an imperative for expansion and a tool for ensuring the longevity of republican institutions (Wolin, 1989). Similarly, Madison believed that expansion and representation could form a ‘happy combination’ of ‘great and aggregate interests’ from the ‘national, the local and particular, to the state legislatures’ (Hamilton et al., 2003, p. 45). This arrangement was nothing short of a correction on the ‘disorders’ of European republics – one that would make America ‘the broad and solid foundation of other edifices not less magnificent, which will be equally permanent monuments of their errors’ (2003, p. 35).

The justification for these neo-colonial ambitions is best understood in hemispheric context. *The Federalist* rebutted critiques of hypocrisy by insisting that their republican experiment was possible because it was of the ‘New World’. As Hamilton asks in *Federalist No. 14*:

why is the experiment of an extended republic to be rejected merely because it may comprise what is new? ... To this manly spirit, posterity will be indebted for the possession, and the world for the example of the numerous innovations displayed on the American theater, in favor of private rights and public happiness (Hamilton et al., 2003, p. 63).

The compatibility between neo- and anti-colonial republicanism here is quickly apparent. Reconciling conquest and republican emancipation is feasible due to the unforeseen possibilities of the hemisphere, which undergirds Hamilton’s gendered narrative of American exceptionalism. When *The Federalist* needed to justify the proposed constitution in institutional terms they turned to the language of representation and the balance of power among the colonies. When the proposal for an expansive republic was argued in principle, as is the case in *Federalist No. 14*, *The Federalist* reassured readers that American republicanism would introduce unforeseen institutional arrangements.

The expansionist solution to popular upheaval was not insulated from the second, external threat of colonial order. *The Federalist* addressed continued presence of colonial powers in the Americas by calling for unity in a hemispheric valence. Madison makes his case in *Federalist No. 51*, where he characterizes the confederacy as an ‘intimate intercourse’ easily ‘fettered, interrupted, and narrowed by a multiplicity of causes’ (Hamilton et al., 2003, p. 51). An ‘extended republic’



not only expands the ‘practicable sphere’ of republican politics, it also imposes ‘diversity’ as a defense against majoritarian rule and external conquest (Hamilton et al., 2003, pp. 254–255). The expansion of the ‘practicable sphere’ of republicanism was not only a response to the threat of popular passions, but an adoption of colonial logics of power that offered to simultaneously regulate the populace while repelling the possibility of renewed European subjection. Madison’s language in *Federalist No. 51* built on Hamilton’s earlier call for an American response to European domination in *Federalist No. 11*:

The world may politically, as well as geographically, be divided into four parts ... Unhappily for the other three, Europe by her arms and by her negotiations, by force and by fraud, has, in different degrees, extended her dominion over them all ... The superiority she has long maintained, has tempted her to plume herself as the Mistress of the World ... Men admired as profound philosophers have, in direct terms, attributed to her inhabitants a physical superiority ... Let Americans disdain to be instruments of European greatness! (Hamilton et al., 2003, pp. 51–52).

Hamilton uses ‘American’ here to present unity and stability as an anti-colonial strategy – in this case, one that required working across the ‘thirteen colonies’. There is, of course, no question that national rhetoric is moving throughout *The Federalist*. It is also true that ‘America’ is sometimes used as a term synonymous with the United States. However, in reframing ‘America’ as a national term, *The Federalist* strategically universalized the cause of U.S. independence as a project of the ‘American hemisphere’. When Hamilton calls for Americans to reject ‘European greatness’, ‘American’ appeals to a narrative of political unity strengthened by the unprecedented possibilities of the hemisphere (2003, p. 52). Thus, what we find in this genealogy of American exceptionalism is a renewed understanding of the hemispheric commitments that moved early republican discourses in the United States during constitutional ratification. Indeed, American exceptionalism would grow into a nationalist program, but it emerged from perceived epistemic and political ruptures between Europe and the ‘New World’.

The mediation between anti- and neo-colonial discourse remained central under the Jefferson and Madison administrations, which instrumentalized settler colonial practices in order to undermine Indigenous and European territorial claims. As Paul Frymer demonstrates, the Jefferson administration strategically situated settlements along disputed ‘territories’ to pressure Indigenous to recede and to present a front against Spanish invasion (2019, p. 89). Thomas Jefferson reinforced these expansionist strategies by using hemispheric rhetoric to reify a breach between Europe and the Americas. Jefferson’s correspondence illustrates both the strategic value and ideological tensions that arose from the United States’ praise of hemispheric unity while only ambivalently supporting the revolutionary movements of Spanish and Francophone America. These sentiments are apparent in his



1811 letter to Tadeusz Kosciuszko, where Jefferson concedes that Spanish American revolutionaries will be ‘triumphant’ but claims that European oppressors ‘enchained their minds’ and ‘kept them in the ignorance of children’ (1811, p. 1). Similarly, in his 1813 letter to Alexander von Humboldt, Jefferson applauds the rise of Latin American countries as ‘actors on this [world] stage’ but takes the opportunity to voice concern for their leaders:

That they will throw off their European dependence I have no doubt; but in what kind of government their revolution will end I am not so certain. History, I believe, furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free civil government. This marks the lowest grade of ignorance, of which their civil as well as religious leaders will always avail themselves for their own purposes...America has a hemisphere to itself. It must have its separate system of interests, which must not be subordinate to Europe (1999, p. 193).

Jefferson’s ambivalent praise of Mexico and the Spanish-American revolutions is illustrative of the way U.S. leaders approached their allegiances to the American hemisphere in the early nineteenth-century. For him there was no question that the revolutions of South America would succeed in undermining Europe, but he downplays the political capacities of republicanism in Latin America by referencing conventional histories of republican rule. Jefferson targeted the centrality of religious, racial, and popular politics, which he argued would lead to caste wars and ‘mutual hatred’ between revolutionaries (Jefferson, 1999). Disdain for religiosity and raced-revolution was not unique to him or to the Anglo-American context. Spanish-American Creoles like Simón Bolívar also argued for the secularity of revolutionary practices and amelioration of race relations in New Granada (Lasso, 2007). What is worth highlighting here for the evolution of republicanism in the United States is that actors like Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton held anti-colonial commitments that guided their support of neighboring revolutions while simultaneously regarding the United States as the arbiter of the America-republican turn in colonial politics. These commitments reinforced the importance of hemispheric unity while rejecting the innovative value of Latin American republicanism.

While anti- and neo-colonial discourse was used extensively by the ‘Framers’, their code-switching between the two did not always match those of popular actors. Joshua Simon (2017) is correct to turn to Creole ideologies in order to analyze the imperialistic dimensions of republicanism, but the emphasis remains on a characteristically elite branch of American thinking. Popular interpretations on the relation between anti- and neo-colonial politics influenced the way U.S. citizens understood their hemispheric commitments to republican emancipation and these sometimes contested those of Creole-elites. Like *The Federalist*, popular republican imaginaries were simultaneously motivated by the goal of expelling European power and prospects of ‘frontier’ settlement. Unlike the ‘Framers’ and other elite



actors, however, the relation between anti- and neo-colonial discourses was centrally connected to the political futures of Indigenous and Mestizo insurgents invested in the success of transnational militia movements to improve their political standing in the colonies. These tensions became apparent as the Madison and Jefferson administrations responded to the competing visions of those living in ‘frontier’ territories.

Insurgent Printmaking and the Foundation of Republican Texas

By the early nineteenth century hemispheric vernaculars had cemented their place in the political imaginaries of U.S. citizens. This was especially the case in the Louisiana territories, where U.S. Americans were in contact with French, Spanish, Mexican, and Caribbean actors. New Orleans was a hub of transnational politics and thus an important case study for understanding transnational revolutions (Coronado, 2013, p. 183). During the first decade of the nineteenth-century Louisianans witnessed the production of numerous bilingual and multicultural productions that influenced collective oral and reading practices in the region. Among these, for example, was *El Misisipi*, the first newspaper in the United States to contain Spanish-language articles. *El Misisipi* was founded in 1808 by Anglo-Americans in New Orleans and published bilingually in Spanish-English format. The newspaper’s 12 October 1808 issue, for example, published commentaries on events in Spain in both languages, with the Spanish version appearing first. Newspapers like *El Misisipi* demonstrate that people in New Orleans understood politics across multiple languages, nationalities, and political loyalties. While Philadelphia remained the most prominent city for Spanish-language publications, New Orleans’s unique position as a borderlands city made it an important site for pamphleteering and insurgent organizing (Coronado, 2013). Early republican thought in the United States, in other words, developed from overlap in languages, cultures, and national communities that emblazoned the popular dimensions of radical republicanism.

Like the post-foundational rhetoric of *The Federalist*, the borderlands republicanism that emerged in Louisiana and Texas was reinforced by narratives of hemispheric unity. The emancipation of the Americas was not only a major component of public conversation in newspapers, the topic also appeared among other popular objects such as plays and pamphlets. James Workman, a Louisiana Judge in the County of Orleans, is a particularly good example of how ideological code-switching seeped into legal and popular conversations in the region. In 1804 Workman wrote and produced *Liberty in Louisiana*, a play that denounced Spanish rule and called for U.S. annexation. The play employed a comedy of errors to portray the Spanish judicial system as incompetent and dangerous for settlers who were left waiting to receive land titles, imprisoned without due process,



and otherwise lived at the mercy of colonial authorities (Watson, 1970, p. 256). While *Liberty* was designed as a romantic comedy, it proved useful for bridging anti-colonial critiques of colonial subjection with neo-colonial arguments for U.S. annexation.

Liberty was originally written as a political pamphlet that Workman distributed among Louisiana politicians, including Governor William C.C. Claiborne, who would later support Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara's recruitment efforts. Workman first sent his political writings to Jefferson, who responded that 'peace will leave territorial possessions in their present state until the men of Europe shall have recovered breath and strength enough to recommence their sanguinary conflicts which they seem to consider as the object for which they are brought into the world' ('To Thomas Jefferson from James Workman', 1801). The lack of formal support for expelling Spanish authorities from Louisiana led Workman to reassess his strategy. He turned to playwriting to narrate republican revolution for general audiences as a project led by the 'great principles of general and genuine liberty' (Watson, 1970). As he later wrote, *Liberty* sought to denounce the oppression of the Spanish Americas via the 'splendor of theatrical decoration' and employed comedy as an 'engine of enforcing his political opinions' (Watson, 1970, p. 253).

After *Liberty* was produced and performed in Charleston, SC, Workman returned to New Orleans and in 1805 founded the American Association, a secret society that planned to liberate Mexico from Spanish rule.⁹ Workman successfully recruited Lewis Kerr, a retired U.S. Army Colonel into the Society and tasked him with leading an attack into Spanish territory. Reports of the American Society reached New Spain (current-day Mexico) in 1807, where the office of Viceroy José de Iturrigaray was informed of a 'criminal project' organized by U.S. citizens in New Orleans (*Asociación Americana en New Orleans*, 1807). News of the American Society only further inflamed perceptions that the U.S., while at peace with Spain, nonetheless allowed U.S. citizens to ridicule Spanish authorities in the region. On 6 March 1807 Workman and Kerr would be tried for 'planning and setting on foot within the United States and expedition for the conquest and emancipation of Mexico' but found not guilty on the basis of inadmissible evidence (*United States v. Workman et al.*, 1807).

Liberty and the American Society are only two examples of the way popular politics influenced the development of republican thought in the United States. Conflict between republican and royalist camps along the border were primarily waged via pamphleteering. Unlike the bound publications distributed by elite Spanish-American revolutionaries in Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore, the documents distributed across neutral territory in Louisiana tended to be hand-written broadsides meant to be read aloud among neighboring communities (Coronado, 2013, p. 188). These clandestine efforts coincided with the distribution of translated Francophone republican texts in New Spain, among them the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, Rousseau's *Social Contract*, and Montesquieu's



Spirit of the Laws (Chang, 2021). In this sense, the wave of radical republican activity that arose in the United States and Mexico developed along two vectors of popular discourse. First was the formal publication of revolutionary texts in cities like Philadelphia and Mexico City. Second was the crude translation of republican texts, both canonic and vernacular, in areas still susceptible to Spanish censorship. The U.S-Mexico borderlands blended these two enterprises by encouraging the dissemination of formal and covert revolutionary printing as it traveled with actors from Philadelphia to Spanish Texas.

These conditions led to a positive reception of Gutiérrez de Lara's plan to recruit volunteers to fight for Mexican independence. Gutiérrez would cross into neutral territory and arrive at Fort Claiborne in Natchitoches in September of 1811 (Stagg, 2009, pp. 143–144). He then traveled to Washington, where he was received by President James Madison, Secretary of State James Monroe, and Secretary of War William Eustis. Meetings between Gutiérrez and the Madison administration demonstrate that U.S. officials likely anticipated a proposed alliance with Mexico and were supportive of the movement if it did not incite war with Spain. Madison likely followed events in New Spain and anticipated the fall of royalist control in the region (Stagg, 2009, p. 143). This much is clear from Madison's Annual Message on 5 November 1811, which rallied support for American revolutionary movements and critiqued European antagonism:

In contemplating the scenes which distinguish this momentous epoch, and estimating their claims to our attention, it is impossible to overlook those developing themselves among the great communities which occupy the southern portion of our hemisphere and extend into our neighborhood. An enlarged philanthropy and enlightened forecast concur in imposing on the national councils an obligation to take a deep interest in their destinies, to cherish reciprocal sentiments of good will, to regard the progress of events, and not to be unprepared for whatever order of things may be ultimately established (Madison, 1811).

Madison's use of hemispheric language in his address to Congress assumes two intersecting goals. First, to denounce the 'rigorous and unexpected' restrictions on trade from England and France, which betrayed 'ominous indications' of war with Europe (Madison, 1811). This led Madison to ask the U.S. Congress to expand the production of arms, munitions, and resources 'adequate to emergencies' (1811). After addressing European tariffs, Madison shifts into hemispheric language again to portray revolutionary movements in Latin America as a united front acting with support from the United States to expel colonial powers. Congress responded to Madison's address with a resolution promising to establish relations with Spanish American nations once they declared independence (Stagg, 2009, p. 144).

After meeting with the Madison administration, Gutiérrez's travels shifted into an informal recruitment campaign that made stops in Philadelphia, Baltimore,



Nashville, and Knoxville before returning to New Orleans on 8 April 1812. Public reception of Gutiérrez's recruitment campaigns provides evidence of the primacy of hemispheric discourse among 'common' citizens, as well as the contentious regard the Madison administration held for militia volunteers. The *Nashville Whig* (Nashville, TN), one of the newspapers most publicly supportive of the Nacogdoches movement, published recruitment articles calling for U.S. citizens to 'lend their aid' in emancipating 'another portion of the Western Hemisphere ... from the bonds of European tyranny and oppression' and to help Mexico become 'an empire among the nations of the earth' ('Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman of the First Respectability, Dated Natchitoches May 8.,' 1813). Activity in Nashville was met with concern from Madison, who requested that James Monroe investigate an 'illegal enterprise afoot' in Tennessee (Madison, 1812). Subsequent correspondence between Monroe and Tennessee Governor Willie Blount touched on concerns that Tennessee citizens were 'collecting in the county of Giles with the intention to make an incursion into some of the provinces of Spain to join the revolutionary party in contest against the existing government', an accusation Governor Blount quickly dismissed (Madison, [1812] 2004). Support for Gutiérrez's movement, however, continued to grow. On November 6, 1812, *The Enquirer* reported, in celebratory anticipation, that the 'volunteers are still at Nacogdoches...are about 600 strong – 300 Americans and 300 Creoles' and were ready to lead an attack on Spain ('Private Correspondence' 1812a).

Gutiérrez returned to Natchitoches from Washington on 28 April 1812, with plans to continue recruitment efforts and distribute republican pamphlets across the border. Gutiérrez's stay in Natchitoches illustrates the importance of popular print for subverting Spanish authority on the border. And, by extension, the influence of popular republicanism in defining the anti- and neo-colonial principles of borderlands movements. On 5 May 1811, two printing presses arrived at Natchitoches at the request of Gutiérrez and with financial support from Louisiana Governor Claiborne. As Raúl Coronado suggests, the arrival of the two presses transformed the way Spanish officers approached the problem of republican radicalization in Texas (Coronado, 2013, pp. 190–191). Texas Governor Manuel Salcedo, who had successfully defeated the 1811 Casas Rebellion, now turned to Gutiérrez's insurgent print enterprise.¹⁰ By 1812 Salcedo mounted an ideological defense of the border by persecuting Indigenous actors and defected soldiers that were distributing republican pamphlets in Texas, which in his words, threatened to 'seduce' the 'simple people' of New Spain (Coronado, 2013, p. 202).

Gutiérrez's press focused on the distribution of three documents, each addressed to distinct but overlapping transnational communities that together comprised the target audiences of the movement. The first was a proclamation entitled *Address of Colonel Bernardo, to the Republican Volunteers at Nacogdoches*, a hand-written pamphlet that later appeared in print in the *Herald Extra* (Alexandria, LA) on 31 August 31 1812 (Gutiérrez de Lara, 1812). The second was a double-sided



broadsheet titled *Jesus Maria y Jose en el nombre de Dios y Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* (Jesus Maria and Jose in the Name of God and Our Lady of Guadalupe) with three illustrated crucifixes under each name and which emphasized the religious components of republican revolution (Alvarez de Toledo y Dubois, 1811).¹¹ The pamphlet addressed all ‘Mexicanos,’ was written in Spanish, and is attributed to José Alvarez de Toledo y Dubois, a Cuban revolutionary and advocate for Spanish American independence residing in the United States (Coronado, 2013, p. 164).¹² Gutiérrez likely carried the broadsheet from Washington, where he met Toledo, and then reproduced it in Natchitoches with his signature added. The third document was a sixteen-page pamphlet entitled *El Amigo de los Hombres A Todos Los Que Habitan Las Islas y El Vasto Continente De La América Española* (The Friend of Man to all that Inhabit the Islands and Vast Continent of the Spanish Americas), written by Toledo and addressed to all ‘Americanos’. The pamphlet invoked a transnational community of Americans in efforts to call for the equal inclusion of all Americanos within the Spanish colonial system and thus reinforced Gutiérrez’s claims that Spanish authorities were enslaving Mexicans in Texas.

Rather than betray tensions within the ideological commitments of transnational militia projects, Gutiérrez’s pamphlets reveal the importance of ideological code-switching among marginalized groups attempting to address, and coalesce, different experiences of colonial order. Past scholarship on the Nacogdoches movement interprets these documents as mere ‘tirades’ from rebels ‘with superficial knowledge of revolutionary philosophy’ that simply mimicked ‘doctrines’ of the United State and France (Castañeda, 1936; Garrett, 1937, p. 291; Warren, 1940, p. 25). These interpretations not only reduce the political innovations of borderlands movements, but they also characterize their members – mostly Indigenous and Mestizo actors – as unthinking subjects. Further, this approach presents republican Texas as a product of elite actors like Madison and Monroe, most of whom were purposefully distant witnesses of these events. Instead, a focus on the popular print and oral practices of the ‘Nacogdoches Republicans’ demonstrates that Indigenous and Mestizo volunteers were very purposely involved in disseminating their interpretation of republican emancipation, which emphasized free settlement and equal standing as naturalized Mexican citizens for all volunteers (Gutiérrez de Lara, 1812).

The 1812 *Address*, for example, presented the movement as an opportunity for U.S. Americans to act on their anti-colonial principles and to reap reward for their efforts in Mexico. Gutiérrez communicated this by characterizing Mexicans as people in need of saving but Mexico as land ripe for settlement. First, Gutiérrez thanks volunteers for their ‘activity, zeal, promptitude and courage’ in aiding the ‘discomfort of tyrants...which will crown your exertions with glory, honor and fortune’ (Gutiérrez de Lara, 1812). He then outlines the terms of reward:



When this event takes place ... you are to look for the reward of your toils, dangers, sufferings, and difficulties, in the enjoyment of all the rights of honored citizens of the Mexican Republic ... To those who desire it, the right of working or disposing of mines of gold, silver, or what nature soever, which you may find will be given – the right of taming and disposing of wild horses and mules which roam unclaimed over an immense tract of country, within the limits of the Mexican Republic, will be common to all of you. (Gutiérrez de Lara, 1812).

Gutiérrez's *Address* to the Republicans of Nacogdoches helps contextualize the interests that led 'common' actors to join the militia. The proclamation sought to incite anti-colonial sentiments by instrumentalizing the language of European tyranny and American emancipation but turned to neo-colonial logic to make the enterprise materially beneficial to volunteers. Militia members are promised settlement and open extraction in Mexico and equal civic and racial standing as Mexican citizens. These principles were consistent with developing revolutionary demands in New Spain, where insurgents were emphasizing Indigenous equality, popular sovereignty, and the abolition of the Spanish caste system (Chang 2021). Thus, marginalized actors involved in the militia likely understood the movement as an opportunity to improve social standing by supporting emergent Mexican institutions. This is especially true for Indigenous actors, who likely knew of the prominent role Indigenous nations held within the Mexican independence movement, where they comprised more than half of all insurgents (Chang 2021; Guardino, 2002).

The importance of Indigenous leaders for borderlands politics was well-understood by the Madison administration. Fearing that Spain would recruit Indigenous nations to seize control of Louisiana, U.S. agents were deployed west of the Mississippi River to negotiate partnerships. These conversations aimed to present the United States as the best option for ensuring Indigenous rights in the region. U.S. representatives, however, maintained a paternalistic stance toward Indigenous leaders. As agent John Sibley reported to Kadohadacho leaders, Madison 'continued his friendly disposition Towards his Red Children' and 'wishes them all clean Paths, good Crops of Corn, good hunting & happiness' (Smith, 2011). Texas Governor Salcedo held similar meetings prompting Caddo actors to visit San Antonio and join the royalists. Gutiérrez would eventually meet with Dehahuit, *Caddi* (Leader) of the Caddo Nation and an influential political figure in the region, to discuss the participation of Indigenous actors in the militia (Coronado, 2013, p. 185). Gutiérrez, like other government agents, approached Dehahuit paternalistically and assumed that he could speak as 'Supreme Chief of the Indian Nations' (West, 1928). Gutiérrez's contempt for Dehahuit resulted in the Caddo choosing to avoid participating in the Nacogdoches movement, while the Comanche, Apache, and Carrizo nations joined the militia from both sides of the



border. Indigenous insurgents became critical for the dissemination of revolutionary documents and priority targets for Spanish authorities seeking to halt the stream of pamphlets crossing the border. Most importantly, it was Indigenous groups that moved across the border and participated in public readings of the Nacogdoches pamphlets in Texas towns (Coronado, 2013). Not only did this make Indigenous peoples targets of Spanish suppression, it also made them central to the evolution of republican thinking in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

The *Jesus, Maria y Jose* broadside, while printed from the same press, might as well have been written for a different world. The document targeted Mexicanos, not republicans or Americans, and rather than speak to the immediate rewards of revolution, it emphasized the possibilities of a Mexican republic. The pamphlet announced that ‘divine providence’ had declared the moment to ‘shake off the barbaric yoke’ of colonial oppression and ‘freely establish a new Government, and new leaders, to improve our disgraceful luck’ (Alvarez de Toledo y Dubois, 1811). In an appeal to Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, the pamphlet then turns to the general will to justify revolution:

The first governments established by man were founded upon the most exact and distributive justice ... the first rules that these governments established were by accord and the general will of the entire association ... The governments that are not subject to the interests and whims of a single man, are the same ones that for longer years conserve the precious and sweet benefit of peace; and they are at the same time the ones that best know how to wage war in defense of their rights as did Rome, Holland, Switzerland and the United States of America (Alvarez de Toledo y Dubois, 1811).

The pamphlet to the Mexican public sought to situate the revolution in New Spain within a long history of republican responses to the tyrannies of arbitrary power. As is made clear in the closing paragraph, the pamphlet attempts to link the movement in Texas with revolutions abroad by asking, ‘Does it not move you ISLANDERS and MEXICANS, the peaceful happiness enjoyed by Venezuela, Santa Fe (Bogotá), Buenos Aires, Chile, Perú, and the one which Lima will soon enjoy?’ (Alvarez de Toledo y Dubois, 1811). By intersecting the rise of radical republicanism with the primacy of Catholic identities, *Jesus Maria y Jose* returned to the motivating principles of Mexican insurgency and prepared locals in San Antonio for the arrival of the Republicans of Nacogdoches and the ‘fortunate regeneration of the New World’.

The Republicans of Nacogdoches would enter San Antonio de Béxar on 1 April 1813, with about 300 volunteers. Soon after, William Shaler, a U.S. agent supporting Gutiérrez, reported to the Madison administration that the Mexican republicans would be able to ‘form a treaty of friendship and intercourse with the U.S’. and that the victory in Texas would produce an ‘incalculably great’ effect on the ‘general revolution in Mexico’ (Stagg, 2009, p. 158). News quickly spread



throughout the United States, with many outlets celebrating the victory as a gain for the Americas. As the *Nashville Whig* announced:

St. Antonio is in possession of the Republicans... This Splendid and important victory, must, in its consequences, decide the fate of the Mexican empire. The die is now cast, and Mexico, the Paradise of the earth, released from the horrid tyranny of Spanish oppression, will shortly take rank as an independent empire, among the nations of the earth. ('Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman of the First Respectability', 1813).

The capture of San Antonio by the Republicans was a particularly attractive event for U.S. observers. Not only had U.S. citizens aided the movement, but they had succeeded in defeating Spain and erecting a republican government where the 1811 Casas rebellion had previously failed. U.S. newspapers celebrated the role of local members within the militia and commented on the event as a victory for the world – a moment that betrayed the tyranny and weakness of Europe. As *The Enquirer* reported in August of 1812, the battle for the emancipation of Mexico was a revolution 'desired by every enlightened lover of his species', a project that would 'forever sever America from Europe' ('Mexico, August 28, 1812,' 1812b). On 26 May 1813, the *Nashville Whig* followed-up on the initial report to recount that the insurgents had shown a 'disparity between American skill and bravery, and Spanish stupidity and cowardice' ('Extract of a Letter from a Respectable Gentleman at Natchitoches to His Friend in This Place, Dated May 7, 1813,' 1813). If indeed U.S. newspapers celebrated Mexican independence, they did so only insofar as this marked a victory for the broader cause of Pan-American emancipation.

On 8 April 1813, the Nacogdoches Republicans formally declared the independence of Texas and promulgated its constitution on 17 April (Stagg, 2009, p. 158). Events following the foundation of Mexican Texas illustrate a breakdown precipitated by tensions in how insurgents understood republican institutions. While the pamphlets used to engender sentiments against Spain along the frontier benefitted from overlap between U.S. and Mexican visions of radical republicanism, the founding documents of Texas required committing to concrete civic principles. The 1813 Declaration of Independence of Texas and Constitution of Texas were nothing short of Mexican republican documents that held important similarities to the 1814 Constitution of Apatzingán promulgated in New Spain. The Texas Declaration justified independence based on the loss of sovereignty in the king and abandonment of the Spanish American colonies (Declaración de la Independencia de Texas, 1813). Like the *Jesus Maria y Jose* pamphlet, the Declaration also announced the 'regeneration of the Mexican people' based on principles of 'natural law' and a defense of 'our holy Religion, as well as Justice, reason, and the sacred rights of man' (Declaración de la Independencia de Texas, 1813, p. 4). Further, like the 1814 Mexican constitution, the Texas Declaration assumed a transnational body politic that called for the 'emigration of free men of



all nations’, promising ‘honorable subsistence’ and the right to ‘enjoy unmolested the comforts of freedom with the new independent Patriots of Texas’ (Stagg, 2009, p. 275). The Texas constitution similarly vacillated between Mexican and borderlands identities. Article one declares that the ‘province of Texas shall henceforth be known only as the State of Texas, forming part of the Mexican Republic, to which it remains inviolably joined’ (Gutiérrez de Lara, 1813). Articles two and three protected the right to religion and private property for all Mexicans, while Article seventeen protected rights of settlement and reward by requiring that ‘all obligations contracted’ in the ‘name of the Mexican Republic’ be met to ensure adequate reward to foreign participants (Gutiérrez de Lara, 1813). Like the 1814 Constitution of Mexico, the Texas Constitution emphasized a transnational body politic by claiming that all citizens, both naturalized and emancipated, would enjoy equal standing within the republic. The first body politic of independent Texas was transnationally organized, defined its civic body based on migrant activity along the border, and attempted to reconcile the republican ambitions of both U.S. and Mexican volunteers.

The primacy of Mexican principles of Catholic republicanism and racial emancipation opened critical junctures within the Nacogdoches movement. By May of 1813 Shaler and Toledo allied to subvert the rise of Mexican Texas and Gutiérrez’s leadership. They did so by founding two newspapers that critiqued what they portrayed as a barbaric turn of events. First was the *Gaceta de Texas* (Texas Gazette), a Spanish-language newspaper founded on 15 May 1813 which praised U.S. volunteers for their participation within the movement and its role in helping secure Mexican emancipation (Coronado, 2013, p. 252). The *Gaceta* demonstrates that hemispheric rhetoric remained central to the way borderlands communities understood the goals of the Nacogdoches militia – particularly as it pertained to U.S. involvement. The newspaper’s aim was to portray the foundation of republican Texas as a well-intentioned project gone wrong due to Gutiérrez’s dictatorial intentions and the prominence of Mexican ideals behind the 1813 Texas Constitution. This narrative was directed at Mexican and Spanish-American readers, likely in an attempt by Toledo to salvage his position as a potential revolutionary leader in the Americas. The second newspaper, *El Mejicano* (The Mexican), responded to the *Gaceta* in bilingual format to legitimize its interpretation among both Spanish and English-language audiences. The newspaper’s first and only available issue opens with a ‘reflection’ on the *Gaceta* report which portrays events in San Antonio as a ‘great surprise’ and ‘sudden mutation’ of the original Nacogdoches movement from an emancipatory project to a ‘ghastly’ event. Dialogue between the *Gaceta de Texas* and *El Mejicano* proved instrumental for delegitimizing Mexican Texas and its republican prescriptions. Álvarez de Toledo arrived in San Antonio de Béxar on August 4, 1813, and successfully expelled Gutiérrez before being appointed commander of the movement. Shortly



after, the group would be attacked and defeated by the forces of Spanish general Joaquín de Arredondo, granting control of Texas back to Spain.

Reappraising a Political Theory of the American Borderlands

The Republicans of Nacogdoches and its surrounding borderlands context offers a reminder of the centrality of popular political thought in the development of republican politics during the Age of Revolutions. While the project of Mexican Texas was short-lived, the movement behind the project illuminates the transnational components of revolutionary change, as well as the numerous political communities that undergirded it. Further, the Republicans of Nacogdoches offer an invaluable example of the ways in which marginalized actors negotiated their evolving political loyalties. By drawing from popular discursive objects, this article demonstrated that Indigenous, Mestizo, Creole, and White actors joined transnational revolutionary movements to pursue overlapping but distinct political programs. For Indigenous nations, the Republicans offered an opportunity to resist colonial expansion from both the United States and the Spanish crown. Comanche, Apache, and Carrizo actors were influential to the distribution of insurgent republican pamphlets in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, but their contributions are missed if the field limits its attention to the bound texts speaking to Spanish-American emancipation from centers like Philadelphia and Mexico City. For Mestizo communities living on the border, the insurgency offered an opportunity to envision the emancipatory capacities of republican Mexico – a project that emphasized the religious, Indigenous, and plebeian components of revolutionary change. As the *Jesus, Maria, y Jose* broadside shows, religious interpretations of republican revolution were unique to insurgent Mexico, but the Nacogdoches movement adopted this rhetoric to better involve those living on Novohispanic soil. And for U.S. volunteers, primarily White agrarian actors, the Nacogdoches project offered a chance to act on their hemispheric commitments to revolutionary emancipation while reaping the rewards of colonial settlement. U.S. citizens were encouraged to join forces with the Nacogdoches volunteers and depicted as heroes fulfilling the role of the United States as arbiter of the republican revolutionary age in the Americas. These communities, from their seemingly disparate positionalities, together comprised the rise of transnational republican revolution in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

While the Republicans of Nacogdoches were unique in bringing together such different groups, the ideological work behind their efforts were relatively commonplace in the early nineteenth-century United States. Actors living during the Age of Revolutions were regularly met with seemingly contrasting politics of subverting colonial powers while ensuring the survival of incipient American republics. This article argues that ideological code-switching emerged as a strategy



that vernacularized overlapping investments in anti-colonial and neo-colonial politics. Namely, revolutionary groups appealed to anti-colonial politics to argue for the expulsion and subversion of European powers in the ‘New World’. At the same time, neo-colonial politics entered these conversations as a matter of self-preservation – via arguments that Americans must expand, settle, extract, and thus, displace, to ensure emancipation from colonial subjection. Rather than approach these as contradictory principles, actors used hemispheric discourse to argue that Americans were exceptionally fit to maintain republican liberty under expansive conditions. These hemispheric characterizations began in the United States, as espoused by *The Federalist*, but grew to include virtually all the American revolutionary projects that emerged in the early nineteenth-century. The ‘Republicans of Nacogdoches’ were only one of many groups attempting to link their efforts with similar insurgencies in Bogotá, Buenos Aires, Caracas, and Saint Domingue.

The U.S.-Mexico borderlands, however, do open unique questions regarding the way political theorists study – and distinguish – between the ‘west’ and ‘non-west’. By attending to popular print activity in Louisiana and Texas, I demonstrate that marginalized groups did not characterize their emancipatory ambitions along cleanly demarcated national or ideological boundaries. Rather, insurgents sought to move between contending revolutionary imaginaries within liminal national, historical, and racial spaces exposed to the ramifications of global colonial events. Movements like the ‘Republicans of Nacogdoches’ problematize lenses that emphasize the ‘non-west’ as a signifier of peoples, events, and ideas that developed beyond the scope of ‘western modernity’. Instead of attributing ‘non-western’ categories to certain texts and contexts, political theorists might look to popular movements that illustrate how marginalized groups understood themselves as operating within and beyond the regulatory powers of ‘western’ colonial structures and their reproduction through nation-building projects. In this case, the U.S.-Mexico borderlands provide an example of the ways ‘western’ and ‘non-western’ identities were blurred by Indigenous and Mestizo groups attempting to improve their political standing by intervening in the construction of an ostensibly post-colonial world.

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About the Author

Arturo Chang is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto. His research in political theory centers on the study of popular movements, postcolonial theory, decolonial politics, and revolution.

Notes

1. News of Texas' independence was applauded by most newspapers throughout the United States. Among these were the *Louisiana Herald* (1812), *The Enquirer* (Virginia, 1812), *Nashville Whig* (8 June 1813), *Aurora General Advertiser* (8 June 1813), and the *Nashville Democratic Clarion and Tennessee Gazette* (4 June 1813).
2. Gutiérrez was sent to the United States by Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, then leader of the Mexican independence movement (Stagg, 2009).
3. 'American' in this article refers to all people born in the Americas.
4. Anti- and neo-colonial discourses mark the two expressive poles of revolutionary language that guide transnational politics between the U.S. and nascent Mexico in the early nineteenth century. By anti-colonial I mean the politics that situated the Americas against colonial rule, and which led Americans to call for the subversion of colonial authority. By neo-colonial I mean the politics and strategies that reproduce practices, hierarchies, and regulatory categories of the colonial state, including expansion, settlement, extraction, racial subjection, and ethnic persecution (Young, 2001; Saldaña-Portillo, 2016; Dahl, 2018; Ince, 2021).
5. I draw on Jack Turner (2016) and Josefina Saldaña-Portillo (2016) to explicate links between the politics of past and present via the living legacies of colonial subjection among borderlands communities.
6. This interpretation builds on research emphasizing the transnational dimensions of colonial domination and its subversion by Thompson (2013), Dahl (2017), Getachew (2019) and Ochoa Espejo (2020).
7. Revolutionaries throughout the hemisphere used similar rhetoric on the novelty of American institutions to justify expansion. Simón Bolívar's *Jamaica Letter* (1817) is a good example of how these appeals were used among Creole-elite actors.
8. The debate between American and European innovation extended beyond republican politics and into questions of science, hermeneutics, naturalist interpretations of race, and the internal validity of political taxonomies (Cañizares-Esguerra, 2002).
9. The American Society is also recorded as the Mexican Association (Watson, 1970, p. 248).
10. The Casas rebellion of 1811 was the first popular republican movement of Texas. It was led by Juan Bautista de las Casas in support of Mexican independence (Chipman and Joseph, 2020, p. 246).
11. Translations are my own.
12. Toledo eventually allied with Spain and betrayed the Nacogdoches movement. Nonetheless, his early writings were influential documents arguing for Spanish-Amer



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