

WHEN NAPOLEON INVADES, I GO TO RIO:  
THE STORY OF BRAZILIAN INDEPENDENCE

Jonathan Slifkin

**B**razil, after its independence in 1822, stood out from the rest of the Americas in many respects. Brazil was, for example, the only Lusophone American nation, and (as far as I can tell) the largest American nation by land area. Brazil also possessed a relatively strong economy, a stable political system, and good relations with Europe, especially compared to its chaotic Hispanic neighbors. But by far the most striking characteristic of Brazil was its form of government: a constitutional monarchy. All other European-American struggles for independence were campaigns for political and, in many cases, social change, closely tied with the modern international philosophies of republicanism, liberalism, and the Enlightenment. Yet for Brazil, independence produced little to no political or social change. This is not to say that Brazil was unaffected by these international trends—on the contrary, republican thought and even republican revolutionary movements were major factors in Brazilian history—but that these trends and events did not lead to Brazil's independence. Independence was gained not through a revolutionary break, but rather through a process with great continuity with the colonial period; Brazil, once independent, did not attempt to form a democracy or republic

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Jonathan Slifkin is at Harvard. He wrote this paper as a Senior at the Horace Mann School in the Bronx, New York, for Dr. Susan Groppi's AP World History course in the 2012/2013 academic year.

like the United States or most of Spanish America, but reinforced “a distinctive form of conservative nationhood” by retaining its monarchy.<sup>1</sup> While the American, Haitian, Spanish-American, and French Revolutions were inspired and effected by various international currents of Enlightenment thought, independent Brazil was born of a series of strange reversals and unique situations stemming out of specific political and military events in Brazil and in Portugal.

Brazil was first made known to the Old World by Pedro Álvares Cabral, a Portuguese nobleman whose fleet of 13 ships, aiming to reach India, sighted Brazilian land on April 22, 1500. Not only was Portugal the first European power to reach Brazil, but Portugal’s claim to Brazil was supported by the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas (and Brazil’s borders were significantly extended by treaties with Spain in the 1700s).<sup>2</sup> Colonization followed a relatively familiar pattern; initial exploitation of easily accessible commodities (mostly Native American slaves and brazilwood for dye, hence “Brazil”) by Crown-chartered companies preceded more systematic settlement efforts in the mid-1500s and intensification of export-oriented agriculture and mining, specifically of sugar and gold, although many other industries would gain commercial importance by the end of the colonial period.<sup>3</sup> The natural riches of Brazil made it an extremely profitable investment for the Portuguese government and business community: a notable Portuguese nobleman remarked in 1797 that Brazil was “without doubt the leading possession of all those founded by Europeans outside their continent.”<sup>4</sup>

The same broad international demographic, social, and political trends that precipitated or facilitated independence in other European colonies were certainly present in Brazil. One example is the social tensions between the *europeus* (Portuguese-born Brazilians) and the *americanos* (native-born Brazilians) that paralleled the disagreements over political representation between the peninsulars and Creoles of Spanish America and may have exacerbated differences with the mother country.<sup>5</sup> Most importantly, the political ideas of liberalism and the Enlighten-

ment did manage to percolate into Brazil, although they were hindered by the government's censorship policies (colonial Brazil had no functional printing presses and no universities). As some colonists began to associate their interests more with Brazil than with Portugal, so too interest in new social and political ideas developed, mostly among the European-educated colonial elite. Authors such as Rousseau, Montesquieu, Raynal, and Mably were relatively widely read.<sup>6</sup> These Enlightenment influences, as well as the specific examples of other colonial revolutions, inspired two notable independence movements in Brazil during the colonial period. The first, the *Inconfidência Mineira*, organized by a group of educated elites in Minas Gerais who were upset at taxes and debt collection efforts, took place in 1789 and drew inspiration from the American Revolution: one of the leaders was charged with attempting to translate the *U.S. Constitution* into Portuguese, another had spoken with Thomas Jefferson about his plans for a revolution while studying in France, and the overall goal of the rebellion "was to declare Brazil a republic with a constitution modeled on that of the United States."<sup>7</sup> The second, the *Conjuração Bahiana* or Tailors' Revolt of 1798, was modeled instead after the Haitian Revolution, as it was instigated not by local elites but by the mostly black and mulatto unpropertied classes (such as tailors), calling for racial equality and immediate emancipation.<sup>8</sup>

In many respects, however, the sociopolitical situation of Brazil was in contrast to that of other European colonies. For example, the disagreements between the *americanos* and *européus* were relatively tame and never grew into a central political issue as in Spanish America, as there was constant migration to Brazil from Portugal and most Brazilians had relatives in the metropole, and the high concentration of slaves in the population "forced unity upon the Portuguese."<sup>9</sup> Another example is the significant role played by Native Americans in the independence struggles of other colonies. In Spanish America, grievances concerning taxes and the *repartimiento* led natives, a large segment of the population, to become an important bloc in favor of independence, and, for example, the prominent (failed) revolutionary leader and Peruvian national hero Túpac Amaru II named himself after,

claimed descent from, and drew upon the legacy of the last ruler of the Inca Empire.<sup>10</sup> In British North America, relations with the Native Americans were a major cause of rebellion: British efforts to protect native lands to the west infuriated American colonists, and one of the specific accusations in the *Declaration of Independence* was that King George had loosed the “merciless Indian savages” upon the colonies.<sup>11</sup> In Brazil, however, natives were successfully assimilated through missionary efforts and governmental policies: native slavery was abolished in 1757, intermarriage was actively encouraged (an extreme rarity in world history) and mestiços were granted preference in employment—even the public use of derogatory terms for mestiços was outlawed. By 1800, those identified as Indian comprised less than 6 percent of the total population, and so natives did not constitute a separate political force, either in support of or against independence.<sup>12</sup> Somewhat similarly, the more prominent roles of women in the Spanish-American revolutions, in which women directly participated in military auxiliary positions and in combat, or even in the American War for Independence, where women were similarly impacted economically and personally by the war effort, constitute another important contrast, both in itself and as indicative of a broader liberal ethos, with the Brazilian situation, where independence was accomplished through a conservative, top-down process by the prince and his advisors.<sup>13</sup> Yet another example of Brazil’s distinct situation is demographic. By 1800 Brazil’s population was over 2 million, and blacks constituted fully 66 percent (although almost half of them were free blacks).<sup>14</sup> The vital importance of plantation crops to Brazil’s economy, coupled with these intimidatingly large black majorities, encouraged conservative social and political views on the part of most Brazilian whites. Similarly, the demographic situation of the United States, even though only about 18 percent of the population were slaves, was enough to prevent the American Revolution from incorporating antislavery policies or any significant social change.<sup>15</sup> Finally, although the political trends of republicanism and the Enlightenment were certainly influential, it seems, due to a combination of factors (commitment to slavery, aversion to anti-religious movements, widespread

illiteracy, the government's strenuous censorship efforts that put Spain's similar efforts to shame), that many Brazilians were wary of their practical consequences, especially having seen them in action elsewhere. Both the *Inconfidência Mineira* and the Tailors' Revolt were swiftly crushed. One of the leaders of the Tailors' Revolt was charged with inciting others "to become French," and "haitianism" became a byword in Brazil for violence and chaos.<sup>16</sup> It is unclear in what way or to what extent such demographic and political background influenced Brazil's path to independence, but in any case it was not the primary factor. The social and political trends of European America and other revolutionary fronts did not cause independence or shape the political structures of Brazil after independence, which would arise rather out of a chain of idiosyncratic events and decisions relating specifically to Portugal and Brazil.

The initial catalyst triggering this chain of events was Napoleon's invasion of Portugal. When in 1807 Napoleon declared a Europe-wide embargo against Great Britain, Portugal, due to its traditional alliance and close economic ties with Britain, declined to comply, prompting Napoleon, aided by Spanish forces, to order the invasion of Lisbon in November of that year.<sup>17</sup> Unable to offer any military response, the Portuguese government decided to flee. Between November 25 and 27, the entire government boarded ships under British naval protection and fled to Brazil (the obvious refuge, as it was by far the largest, wealthiest, and most convenient part of the Portuguese Empire), abandoning metropolitan Portugal to the French and Spanish. Between 10,000 and 15,000 people, including "councilors of state, justices of superior courts, army and navy chiefs of staff, treasury officials, royal personages with courtiers, the monsignori, musicians, domestics and hangers-on," along with the "state archives, law codes, customs ledgers, the royal library, and half of the money in circulation," as well of course as the royal family, including the psychotic Queen Dona Maria I, her son and the *de facto* monarch Dom João VI, and João's 9-year-old son Pedro, were transplanted to Rio de Janeiro, making the city the new capital of the Portuguese empire.<sup>18</sup> This situation—a European colonial empire being ruled from the colony rather than

the metropole—was unique in history and was recognized as such by the Brazilians, who were “convinced that a new era had dawned for Brazil.”<sup>19</sup> And indeed, once in Rio, since the economic and cultural prosperity of Brazil was now in his self-interest, João set about dismantling the 300-year-old colonial-mercantilist apparatus, substantially reducing tariffs, legalizing factories, subsidizing wool, silk, and iron production, supporting technological importation and innovation, and opening the ports of Belém, São Luis, Recife, Salvador, and Rio de Janeiro to free trade. Thus Brazil gained its “commercial independence.”<sup>20</sup>

Rio de Janeiro itself was transformed from an isolated colonial outpost into a relatively thriving center of commerce, culture, and science. Dom João’s stay in Brazil witnessed the establishment of many theaters, libraries, and academies, and the colony’s first newspaper, as well as the doubling of Rio’s population (from 50,000 to 100,000), mostly from European immigration.<sup>21</sup> The government funded the paving of streets, land reclamation projects, and the construction of roads, bridges, and an aqueduct.<sup>22</sup> Dom João himself established “his ministry and Council of State, Supreme Court, exchequer and royal treasury, Royal Mint, royal printing office, and the Bank of Brazil” in Rio, and newly founded “a royal library, a military academy, and medical and law schools.”<sup>23</sup> The three major effects of all these new policies were 1) a new-found economic prosperity, fueled by the building boom and by the massively expanded markets and sources of investment, 2) a cultural infrastructure of theaters, academies, and opera houses that encouraged European immigration and helped create both a high culture and a nightlife, and 3) the wider dissemination of new ideas: the government sponsored major scientific enterprises, and one of the first books published by Brazil’s first operational printing press, brought from Lisbon personally by Dom João, was a Portuguese translation of *The Wealth of Nations*.<sup>24</sup> These radical and unprecedented changes to the colonial system were symbolically epitomized by Dom João’s decree of December 16, 1815, which restyled the political entity of Portugal as the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil, and the Algarves, a union of three

individual kingdoms, thus granting Brazil a coequal status with continental Portugal.<sup>25</sup>

Certainly these drastic reforms did not emerge entirely out of nothing. Many European governments had even by the mid-1700s begun to modify their colonial systems, influenced particularly by new capitalist and antislavery ideas.<sup>26</sup> Portugal had embarked on a series of colonial reforms in the 1750s to 1770s under the ministry of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, Marquis of Pombal, who reduced taxes to stimulate certain industries, chartered new Brazilian trading companies, and enlisted the local elite as bureaucrats.<sup>27</sup> Nor did Brazil's administrative changes and newly important status end all republican and revolutionary sentiment: in March of 1817, a group of Freemasons in Pernambuco, a northeastern province of Brazil, staged a local rebellion establishing a republic and calling for expanded civic rights.<sup>28</sup> But Pombal's economic reforms are not seriously comparable to the entire dismantling of the colonial system and political, economic, and cultural reinvention of Brazil, and as for the Pernambucan revolt, it soon fizzled out due to a lack of funding, subdued public support, an effective military response, and especially the eventual opposition of the rural landowners (who were afraid of potential antislavery policies). In addition, the main motivating factor of the revolt seems to have been the economic inequality between the north of Brazil and the more urban south—the independence of Brazil from Portugal was not its objective.<sup>29</sup> It is also important to note that the arrival of the government in Brazil, while opening up Brazil to greater freedom of thought, also entailed a harsher crackdown on revolutionary movements, as Brazil was no longer just an economically useful territory, but the seat of government. So in general, the relocation of the royal family and the economic reforms implemented upon their arrival “drastically altered the relationship between colony and mother country” and “preempted colonial claims for autonomy, for Brazil was now the center of the Portuguese empire.”<sup>30</sup>

Now already by 1811 British forces had expelled the French from metropolitan Portugal, which was placed under British mili-

tary regency.<sup>31</sup> Residents of Portugal, as well as traditionalists who had accompanied the court to Rio de Janeiro, therefore expected the reinstatement of the government in Lisbon and a return to normalcy. But for a variety of reasons, including the “economic exhaustion” of continental Portugal, the ever-present threat of foreign interference or a Spanish invasion, the meddling influence of the Portuguese nobility (which had largely remained in Portugal under Napoleonic rule), and simply Dom João’s personal preference, and despite João’s promise to return to the metropole “upon the signing of a General Peace,” the court did not return as expected.<sup>32</sup> A few homesick bureaucrats grumbled (“I am so sick of this country that I want nothing of it”), political leaders in Portugal dispatched petitions to Brazil to request the king’s return in 1814, and the British government, “wishing to see the Crown living once more in close proximity to England and under the protection of an army led by British officers” also made repeated attempts to secure the government’s reinstatement in Lisbon.<sup>33</sup> But Dom João appears to have felt no sense of urgency; apparently more appealing enterprises included the conquest of Uruguay and the construction of a new theater for his son’s birthday.<sup>34</sup>

João’s tardiness was not well received in Portugal, and the issue was suddenly forced in 1820 by the eruption of a liberal revolution, beginning with a political declaration from a group of merchants and aristocrats in Oporto. Economic turmoil, frustration with British military rule, and feelings of alienation from the Portuguese government, which had resided across the ocean for more than a decade, mixed with liberal sentiment stemming from Enlightenment philosophies, the example of the French revolution, and the influence of Freemasonry, incited the Portuguese public to rebellion against the British regency. The fact that it was Portugal itself that staged a revolution, and not Brazil, is yet another bizarre effect of the monarchy’s relocation. Certainly the Portuguese Liberal Revolution was very moderate compared to the French Revolution; the specific demands of local leaders from Lisbon and Oporto were “the expulsion of the British, the restoration of the monarchy and the reestablishment of the Brazil trade,” and revolutionary leaders strenuously touted their allegiance to



the King (Maria I had died in March of 1816, rendering her son King Dom João VI of Portugal, Brazil, and the Algarves).<sup>35</sup> At the same time, the revolution did not seek merely a return to the *status quo*. The revolutionaries sought the institution of religious freedom, the abolition of legal privileges for the clergy and of all remaining feudal controls, and an end to the *ancien régime* of royal absolutism, involving a reduction in the powers of the monarch and perhaps even a transition to an elective monarchy. Elections for the Cortes, the Portuguese legislative assembly, were quickly called, and the new Cortes held its first meeting on January 25, 1821.<sup>36</sup>

Shock at such a rapid deterioration of the existing political order (as well I should think as the bizarrely backwards political situation—two countries competing for the attention of their shared government, a monarchist colony with a republican metropole, a liberal revolution calling for the return of the King) seems to have initially confounded the Portuguese court in Rio de Janeiro, which immediately began “an unending round of consultation, schemes, and counterproposals.”<sup>37</sup> The question of the King’s return, which soon became the dominant item of news and political discussion in Brazil, was of top priority. It was widely understood that João’s decision to stay in Rio de Janeiro now, against the order of the Cortes, would severely, even irreparably, strain relations between Brazil and metropolitan Portugal, while a decision to go to Lisbon and submit to the liberals would likely represent the beginning of the end of Brazil’s coequal status in the United Kingdom.<sup>38</sup> Different factions within Brazil constrained João’s decision in both directions. Portuguese merchants, traditionalists in the government, and, dangerously, most of the military, in support of a partial or full return to the colonial system, urged the monarch’s return—indeed, military garrisons in Salvador staged a provincial *coup d’état* in support of the Cortes in exasperation at João’s inaction.<sup>39</sup> On the other side, opposing a return to Lisbon, were those whose interests were served by Brazil’s newly equal or even favored position in the Portuguese empire, including rural landowners and essentially everyone who had been born in Brazil or married into a Brazilian family, and those whose interests were

served by maintaining free trade, including urban consumers and all non-Portuguese businessmen and investors.<sup>40</sup>

Eventually, King Dom João VI, likely in recognition of the fact that further procrastination could inflame liberal sentiment in Portugal and potentially jeopardize the institution of the monarchy itself, decided to set sail for Lisbon on April 26, 1821, taking with him most of his family, 4,000 officials, and the royal treasury.<sup>41</sup> Three days before his departure, he commissioned his son Prince Dom Pedro, now 22 years old, who had been serving unofficially as his father's liaison to the military and had gained national prestige in his composed handling of military unrest, to stay behind as regent in Brazil.<sup>42</sup> But when João and his entourage finally arrived in Lisbon in July, leaders of the Cortes were extremely disconcerted to find the prince missing. Frightened that Pedro was about to declare Brazilian autonomy, a notion fueled by the existence of real separatist sentiment in Brazil as well as rumors spread by Portuguese-born Brazilian delegates, the Cortes, with only 46 out of the 72 Brazilian representatives present, voted to abolish the kingdom of Brazil as a separate entity, thus officially destroying its equal status in the United Kingdom. All Brazilian military forces were placed under Lisbon's direct command, all Brazilian courts and government agencies were disbanded, and, most drastically, all the Brazilian provinces were made subordinate directly to the Cortes—the viceregal government in Rio de Janeiro and Dom Pedro's position as regent were eliminated.<sup>43</sup> Military garrisons in Rio de Janeiro and Recife were reinforced with soldiers loyal to the Cortes. The legislature also abolished the commerce commission and, in accordance with the demands of the revolutionaries, made a number of attempts to revoke Brazilian free trade. Lastly, since Dom Pedro now had little to do in Brazil, the Cortes ordered him also to return to Lisbon.<sup>44</sup>

Although not properly characterized as part of an international trend, given the vastly diverging causes and reasons, this abrupt reassertion of colonial power certainly bears resemblance to similar events in other American colonies. Even in the abstract, it is clear that a people or a political entity accustomed to a certain

degree of freedom will be reluctant to surrender it. The most obvious comparison is to the Thirteen Colonies of British North America: Britain's unofficial policy of salutary neglect habituated the Americans to political autonomy and economic freedom (and cultivated a sense of entitlement to the same), so the imposition of new taxes and the renewed interest in enforcing mercantilist policies predictably met widespread resistance.<sup>45</sup> Spanish America too faced a very similar situation, and one with much more direct correspondence with Portugal's—while Portugal's royal family had just managed to escape the French onslaught, the Spanish royal family had not. Spain's colonies rejected Napoleon's legitimacy and loyally ruled themselves in the deposed King Ferdinand VII's name, but in 1814 “when Ferdinand regained the throne and proclaimed the reestablishment of royal absolutism, several colonies had grown decidedly accustomed to governing themselves and were manifestly pleased with their greater autonomy”; soon Spain nearly lost all of its American empire.<sup>46</sup> Even the Governor-for-Life of Saint-Domingue, Toussaint Louverture, was content for his country to remain within the French Empire—that is until Napoleon un-abolished slavery and attempted to reassert French military control over the colony in 1802.<sup>47</sup> The unique twist in the Brazilian situation is that its state of freedom was not caused by governmental neglect, but by the active favor of the Crown.

The orders of the Cortes arrived in Brazil on December 9, 1821, and negative reaction was immediate. As with Great Britain's attempts to consolidate authority in the Thirteen Colonies, so the actions of the Cortes to bolster their power only succeeded in pushing separatist views further into the mainstream. Outrage at the abolition of the viceregal government was nearly universal, but of greatest import and controversy was the order recalling Dom Pedro to Europe. All who had opposed Dom João's return to Portugal now still more fervently opposed the return of Dom Pedro, since the latter's return would not be a mere symbolic capitulation but would in fact instantiate the re-subordination of Brazil (or, at least, so it was perceived). Joining the usual Brazilian factions in opposition to Pedro's departure were two additional groups: the educated elite who served in Rio's viceregal government, such as

judges, magistrates, bureaucrats, and clergymen, who would soon find themselves unemployed; and culture industry professionals, including artists, writers, journalists, teachers, and scientists, who thrived on government funding and the proximity of high society.<sup>48</sup> The effect of the Cortes's orders upon Brazilian public opinion was highly unifying, bringing together virtually every segment of society, from radical republicans who supported Pedro despite their dislike of monarchy in order to protect Brazilian nationhood, to all merchants and businessmen (by 1822 Rio de Janeiro was the wealthiest city in the United Kingdom), to arch-conservatives who were always happy to support the monarch over the legislature.<sup>49</sup>

A petition from the members of the Sao Paulo regional government addressed to Dom Pedro well illustrates some of the most important political concerns present in the minds of the Brazilians. Some of them—the Cortes's intention to reduce Brazil to “a system of anarchy and slavery,” their “legislation] concerning the most sacred interest of each province, and of an entire kingdom” “without waiting for [the delegates] of Brazil,” and the new requirement of Brazilians with legal issues, given the abolition of the regional government, to “go and suffer like contemptible colonists the delays and chicanery of the tribunals of Lisbon, across two thousand leagues of ocean”<sup>50</sup>—closely match similar concerns of other exasperated colonies, including those of British North America. American colonists were particularly distressed, among other things, about their lack of representation in Parliament and the suspension of local legislatures by the British government, and about judicial abuses and British laws requiring certain legal cases to be tried in Britain or by British magistrates.<sup>51</sup> So too an article in *Revérbero Constitucional Fluminense*, Brazil's “first uncensored journal of opinion,” foreshadowed later American policies such as Thomas Jefferson's admonition against “entangling alliances” and the Monroe doctrine in its exhortation: “Let America belong to America and Europe to Europe and all will be well.... This European system to which they want to tie Brazil against the law of nature will always involve it in their habitual wars.”<sup>52</sup>

Other concerns, however, are far from familiar, especially the Brazilians' complaint that the Cortes had endeavored to "leave us as miserable orphans by tearing from the bosom of the great family of Brazil the only common parent remaining to us after they had robbed Brazil of the beneficent founder of the kingdom, Your Royal Highness's august father."<sup>53</sup> Equally noteworthy are the failures of the São Paulo petition to mention anything about taxation, the major motivation of the American Revolution, or anything about democracy or individual rights, the Enlightenment-inspired themes of the day. Another complaint of the petition—the Cortes's decentralization of the Brazilian provinces into "miserable fragments"—helps demonstrate that the foremost objective of the Brazilian movement was neither a liberal regime nor even independence, but rather national unity.<sup>54</sup> In general, the situation of Brazil was unmistakably unique. They were calling not for a revolution, but for the maintenance of the *status quo*. They were railing not against a monarch or the monarchy in general but against the leaders of the legislature, installed in a liberal, quasi-republican revolution. And most importantly, this petition was not in fact a declaration of independence—some Brazilian politicians even advocated Pedro's staying in Brazil in order to *prevent* separation from Portugal, as his departure "would encourage separatist and republican groups."<sup>55</sup> Rather, it was a plea to the prince; in the end, the decision was Dom Pedro's. I cannot think of a contemporaneous example in which the political status of a country depended so inordinately upon the decision of one person.

Thus, any explanation of Brazil's independence must hinge largely upon an explanation of Pedro's decision in this matter. Of great influence upon his decision, and of indispensable aid to Pedro afterwards, was his powerful public support, likely due both to his personal popularity and to the aforementioned unusual social and demographic situation of Brazil. Pedro was a hereditary monarch defending his traditional rights against the radicals of the Cortes; naturally conservative opinion rallied to his cause. At the same time, republicans and liberals were pleased by Pedro's policies that lowered taxes, protected private property, required warrants for arrests, and forbade secret trials and torture, as well

as his private opposition to slavery (“I know that my blood is the same color as that of the Negroes”). So “[t]he republican, being able to obtain from the monarchy what he had sought from a federal republic, not surprisingly change[d] sides.” Most everyone was terrified of what they saw as the Cortes’s treacherous plot to subjugate Brazil, and they viewed Pedro as their defender.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps more important to Pedro were the private exhortations of his closest ministers and of his wife, six months pregnant, that he remain. Pedro must also have remembered his father’s words to him upon this departure for Lisbon: “Pedro, if Brazil breaks away, let it rather do so for you who will respect me than for one of those adventurers,” “adventurers” presumably referring to leaders of republican movements.<sup>57</sup> The patronizing aspects of the Cortes’s order could not have helped its cause: it argued that “Portugal was essential for the preservation...of political stability in Brazil,” and it commanded Pedro to return to Portugal not directly, but after a tour through England, France, and Spain “to further his education.”<sup>58</sup> Some have even argued that Pedro’s personality disorders, characterized by “agitation and impulsiveness,” may have predisposed him to a radical course of action.<sup>59</sup> In any case, on January 9, 1822, now known as *Dia do Fico* (“I Shall Stay” Day) Dom Pedro instructed the president of the Rio city council, “Since it is for the good of all and the general happiness of the nation, I am ready; tell the people that I am staying.”<sup>60</sup>

Pedro’s announcement was still not quite a declaration of independence—it was actually initially intended as a moderate response—but it was not seen in such a light by the Portuguese authorities. Portuguese troops stationed in Rio de Janeiro posed a grave threat; Pedro’s successful persuasion of some Portuguese troops to stand down, as well as pressure from quickly armed civilian militias, barely avoided Pedro’s arrest and forcible transport back to Europe. Pedro soon ordered all troops who refused to swear loyalty to him to leave Rio de Janeiro and established a new ministry, headed by José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, now known as the Patriarch of Independence, who helped Pedro stand firm in his decision against Portuguese threats and cement the legitimacy of his Brazilian government.<sup>61</sup> Further policies,

including the requirement of all civil service employees to swear to support the viceregal government and the instruction to provincial governments to refuse employees sent by the Cortes, accelerated the inevitability of a political split.<sup>62</sup> Dom Pedro was also supported, unlike Washington, Louverture, Simón Bolívar, and any other originator of colonial independence, by a certain amount of international legitimacy, given that he had assumed regent power in Brazil by the express order of King Dom João VI, that he himself was a European-born monarch, and that his wife was the daughter of Emperor Francis I of Austria.<sup>63</sup>

Ironically it was the actions of the Cortes, desperate to keep Brazil within the Portuguese empire, that forced the split. In a ferocious reaction comparable to Britain's Intolerable Acts of 1774, the legislature voided all of Dom Pedro's decrees and governmental appointments, charged José Bonifácio and the other ministers with treason, jailed the Portuguese generals who had failed to arrest Pedro, and readied a force of 7,100 troops for shipment overseas to ensure compliance with their orders. When Dom Pedro finally received this news on September 7, 1822 while on the road to Sao Paulo, at the urging both of Bonifácio and of his wife, he dramatically declared Brazil's independence with his "cry of Ipiranga": "*Independência ou morte*," "Independence or Death!" He was crowned Emperor Dom Pedro I of Brazil on December 1 of that year, at age 24.<sup>64</sup> Independence was consolidated very easily and painlessly compared to the rest of European America, mainly due to the support of the British, Portugal's allies, who were eager both to maintain their trade with Brazil and to gain a monarchist ally in the Americas to offset the efforts of the United States to create a pan-American republican bloc. At the same time, the United States was the first country to grant diplomatic recognition to Brazil, on May 16, 1824, in keeping with its philosophy of supporting American nations over European colonial powers. There was a degree of military engagement between Brazil and its erstwhile mother country, involving controversial actions by both sides (for example, the Portuguese promise of freedom for slaves who fought against Brazil, or Brazil's confiscation of Portuguese property) but the last remaining defiant Portuguese troops were

expelled from the Cisplatine Province in 1823, and Portugal added its grudging recognition of independence on August 29, 1825 in return for 2 million British pounds.<sup>65</sup>

The uniqueness of Brazil's path to independence is emphasized by its unmatched political outcome. As far as I can tell, Brazil was the only American colony to initiate and obtain its independence non-militarily (certain others, such as Canada, gained independence non-militarily, but were willingly granted it by the mother country rather than accomplishing it autonomously, and are still very closely connected to the mother country). This distinct path to independence was possible only because of the relocation of the monarchy: Pedro's presence "made it possible to achieve independence...without resorting to popular mobilization."<sup>66</sup> More significant was Brazil's unique conservatism, even compared to the relatively non-radical United States. "Brazil's emancipation did not produce great alterations in the social and economic order of the time, or in the form of government." Brazil was rare both in its national unity and in its constitutional monarchy, which stood in stark contrast to the federal republic of the United States, and to the attempted federal republics of Spanish America (the Republic of Colombia, the Federation of Central America, the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata, etc.), most of which quickly dissolved. Certainly by the 1840s, "Brazil had achieved a political stability unmatched in the Americas."<sup>67</sup> It is true that Brazil was not the only American colony to form a monarchy: Mexico (probably the second most conservative American nation) was an Empire twice, and Haiti was an Empire twice and a Kingdom once in the wake of independence. But these states are not comparable to the Empire of Brazil; all were unstable, short-lived, generally unpopular, and derived not from a traditional European monarchical line but from military leaders with desire for power. They bear much greater resemblance to the political situation of France: twice an Empire and twice a Kingdom in the wake of the French Revolution, yet hardly an example of a conservative state.<sup>68</sup>

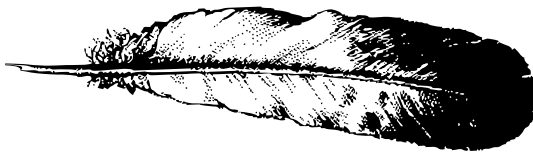


The Empire of Brazil, in contrast, was modeled on the constitutional monarchies of contemporaneous Europe. “Rather than adapting to New World conditions, the monarchy adhered to the inheritance of Europe.”<sup>69</sup> Brazil’s constitution did incorporate certain civil protections, including protection of property, freedom of speech and publication, freedom of religion, the abolition of judicial torture, etc.—certainly the era of absolute monarchy was over—but it also reflected the deeply conservative outlook of the Brazilian ruling class relative to British, French, and Spanish America: it designated Catholicism the official religion, established minimum income requirements for voting and for holding public office, subordinated the provinces to the national government (in contrast to the federal systems adopted elsewhere) and granted the Emperor broad executive powers over the legislature, the judiciary, the military, and the provincial governments, perhaps even greater than those of the King of Portugal.<sup>70</sup> Dom Pedro’s coronation was modeled after the traditions of the Holy Roman Empire and was conducted in Latin. Monarchists who supported greater freedom of the press were considered “radicals.” Slavery would not be abolished until 1888.<sup>71</sup> Also notable is Brazil’s political stability: the Constitution, unlike in many Spanish American polities, which repeatedly redefined themselves, would remain the foundation of the Brazilian government continuously for the duration of the Empire.<sup>72</sup> The important point is not that independent Brazil was no different from colonial Brazil—the end of mercantilism, for example, was a major break with colonialism—but that Brazil’s political outcome reflected Brazil’s unique situation and not the same international liberal trends that were sweeping through the Europe and the Americas.

The political history of Brazil continues from here just as convolutedly. Emperor Dom Pedro was still the crown prince of Portugal, so upon his father’s death in 1826, he assumed the Portuguese throne as King Dom Pedro IV. This situation was pleasing to no one, so Pedro abdicated in favor of his 7-year-old daughter, Maria. But Maria was soon challenged by her uncle, Pedro’s younger brother Dom Miguel, who sought the reinstatement of absolute monarchy. Dom Pedro, preoccupied by the

goings-on across the Atlantic and having become unpopular in Brazil due to his military failures, disagreements with the legislature, work towards the gradual abolition of the slave trade, and erratic behavior, abdicated the Brazilian throne as well on April 7, 1831 to aid his daughter in the Portuguese Civil War, designating his 5-year-old son, also Pedro, as his successor in Brazil. Although the regency period of Pedro II's minority was a time of political instability, Emperor Dom Pedro II ultimately presided over general good times of population growth, military success, infrastructure development, cordial international relations, and economic prosperity. The Empire of Brazil finally gave way to a republic through a military coup in 1889 (and the Kingdom of Portugal and the Algarves followed suit in 1910).<sup>73</sup>

So throughout this history, it has been clear that Brazil's political and cultural development and path to independence were shaped by the specific situations and events of the Luso-Brazilian world (Napoleon's invasion, the relocation of the monarchy, the Portuguese Liberal Revolution, etc.). The relocation of the monarchy to Rio de Janeiro especially marked a defining transformation in Brazil's political, economic, and social circumstances. Brazil's demographic and political similarities to and differences from other colonies certainly set the stage for Brazil's later similarities to and differences from other American nations, but again, I would argue that, as causal factors, they were secondary to the specific chain of events from 1807 to 1825. This chain of events led to Brazil's unique and idiosyncratic process of independence and development, which in turn led to even greater differences between Brazil and its neighbors and precipitated the relative success and prosperity of the nation in the century to come.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Boris Fausto, *A Concise History of Brazil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p. 63; and Roderick J. Barman, *Brazil: The Forging of a Nation, 1798–1852* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) p. 5

<sup>2</sup> Leslie Bethell, ed., *Colonial Brazil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987) pp. 5 and 248

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7; and “Brazil,” in *Encyclopædia Britannica 2009 Deluxe Edition*, CD-ROM, ver. 2009, Encyclopædia Britannica, Chicago

<sup>4</sup> Barman, pp. 11–12

<sup>5</sup> Fausto, p. 60; and Jay Kinsbruner, *Independence in Spanish America: Civil Wars, Revolutions, and Underdevelopment* 2nd rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000) pp. 20–21

<sup>6</sup> Emilia Viotti da Costa, *The Brazilian Empire: Myths & Histories* rev. ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press) p. 5; Neill Macaulay, *Dom Pedro: The Struggle for Liberty in Brazil and Portugal, 1798–1834* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986) p. 88; and Barman, p. 20

<sup>7</sup> Costa, p. 5; and Fausto, pp. 61–62

<sup>8</sup> David Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal* 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp. 105–106; and Costa, p. 8

<sup>9</sup> Barman, pp. 17–18

<sup>10</sup> Kinsbruner, pp. 24–25

<sup>11</sup> Claude H. Van Tyne, *The Causes of the War of Independence* vol. 1, *The Founding of the American Republic* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1922) pp. 77 and 120–121, Google Books, [http://books.google.com/books?id=4nKcJnmfSU0C&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](http://books.google.com/books?id=4nKcJnmfSU0C&source=gbs_navlinks_s) (accessed January 29, 2013); and Joyce Appleby, *Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2003) pp. 108–109 and 114

<sup>12</sup> Fausto, pp. 26 and 57; “Brazil,” in *Encyclopædia Britannica 2009 Deluxe Edition*; and Bethell, pp. 153 and 290

<sup>13</sup> Claire Brewster, “Women and the Spanish-American Wars of Independence: An Overview,” *Feminist Review* no. 79 (2005): 20–23; and Elizabeth Cometti, “Women in the American Revolution,” *The New England Quarterly* 20, no. 3. (1947): 329–330 and 332; and Fausto, pp. 70–72

<sup>14</sup> Bethell, pp. 287 and 290

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population and Housing (Philadelphia, 1793), <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1790.html> (accessed February 3, 2013)

<sup>16</sup> Costa, pp. 5–8; and Steeve Coupeau, The History of Haiti (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008) p. 37, Google Books, <http://books.google.com/books?id=tA-XfYZFNvkC&dq=the+hi+story+of+haiti> (accessed February 2, 2013)

<sup>17</sup> Fausto, p. 64; Bethell, p. 278; and Kinsbruner, pp. 35–36

<sup>18</sup> Alan K. Manchester, “The Recognition of Brazilian Independence,” The Hispanic American Historical Review 31, no. 1 (1951): 80; and Macaulay, p. 20

<sup>19</sup> “Brazil,” in Encyclopædia Britannica 2009 Deluxe Edition

<sup>20</sup> Fausto, pp. 64–65; and Macaulay, p. 25

<sup>21</sup> Fausto, pp. 66–67

<sup>22</sup> Macaulay, p. 88

<sup>23</sup> “Brazil,” in Encyclopædia Britannica 2009 Deluxe Edition; and Barman, pp. 46–47

<sup>24</sup> Macaulay, pp. 50 and 88–89; and Fausto, p. 67

<sup>25</sup> “Brazil,” in Encyclopædia Britannica 2009 Deluxe Edition; and Patricia Juarez-Dappe, “Brazil,” in Iberia and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History vol. 1, ed. J. Michael Francis (California: ABC-CLIO, 2006) p. 161. The “Algarves” refer to a region in southernmost Portugal that was considered separately simply due to historical happenstance, as it had once been a Moorish kingdom (Birmingham, p. 19)

<sup>26</sup> Fausto, p. 55

<sup>27</sup> Bethell, pp. 262–265; Juarez-Dappe, p. 161; and Birmingham, pp. 84–86

<sup>28</sup> Fausto, pp. 67–68; and Barman, pp. 57 and 60

<sup>29</sup> Fausto, p. 68; and Barman, pp. 57–58 and 60. Fear of antislavery policies among the conservative rural elite seems to have repeatedly served as the main impediment to republicanism. Leaders of the Pernambucan Revolt even made purposeful overtures to the slaveholders (“Patriots, your property rights, even those that offend the ideal of justice, are sacred”), but convinced few. (Costa, p. 8)

<sup>30</sup> Macaulay, p. 25; and Robert Tignor et al., Worlds Together Worlds Apart: A History of the World 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008) p. 652

<sup>31</sup> Barman, p. 48; and Birmingham, p. 99

<sup>32</sup> Barman, pp. 48–49 and 68

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48–49 and 53

<sup>34</sup> Macaulay, pp. 50 and 55

<sup>35</sup> Birmingham, pp. 107–108 and 111–112; Barman, p. 67; and Macaulay, p. 56

<sup>36</sup> Birmingham, pp. 112–113; Barman, p. 68; and Macaulay, p. 117

<sup>37</sup> Barman, p. 68

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 68–69; and Fausto, p. 69

<sup>39</sup> Fausto, pp. 69–70; and Barman, p. 69

<sup>40</sup> Fausto, p. 70; and Macaulay, p. 105

<sup>41</sup> Barman, p. 72; Macaulay, p. 86; and Fausto, p. 70

<sup>42</sup> Barman, pp. 70, 72, and 74

<sup>43</sup> Macaulay, pp. 104–105; and Manchester, p. 81. It is likely that resentment at the King’s show of favoritism towards Brazil also factored into Cortes’s decisions. A number of legislators publicly made disdainful remarks about Brazil, deeming it “a land of monkeys, bananas, and darkies plucked from the coast of Africa.” (Fausto, p. 70)

<sup>44</sup> Fausto, pp. 70–71; Manchester, p. 81; and Macaulay, p. 105

<sup>45</sup> Tyne, p. 199; and Tignor, pp. 641–642

<sup>46</sup> Kinsbruner, pp. 7, 35–37, and 103

<sup>47</sup> Coupeau, pp. 29–30 and 37; and Tignor, pp. 651–652

<sup>48</sup> Barman, pp. 76–77. These political segments, as far as I know, were unique among colonial relationships, and their existence constitutes another major effect of the relocation of the monarchy.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 82 and 87

<sup>50</sup> Macaulay, pp. 105–106

<sup>51</sup> Tyne, pp. 212, 398, and 432; and Tignor, pp. 641 and 644

<sup>52</sup> Barman, pp. 77–78; Appleby, p. 11; and Kinsbruner, p. 93. The “entangling alliances” phrase was in fact coined by Jefferson in his first inaugural address, though it is endlessly misattributed to Washington.

<sup>53</sup> Macaulay, p. 106

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xii and 106

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107

<sup>56</sup> Macaulay, pp. 96 and 108; and Barman, p. 99

<sup>57</sup> Barman, p. 72. Macaulay renders this quotation actually quite differently: “Pedro, Brazil soon will break with Portugal: If that happens, put the crown on your own head, before some adventurer grabs it” (p. 86), suggesting an assuredness of an imminent split. On the other hand, Birmingham, writing from the Portuguese perspective, attributes this saying altogether

to “improbable local mythology” (p. 114). I have no way of knowing what is most accurate, so it is left to the reader’s interpretation.

<sup>58</sup> Barman, p. 83; Manchester, p. 83; and Macaulay, p. 104

<sup>59</sup> Marleide da Mota Gomes and Miguel Chalub, “Dom Pedro I of Brazil and IV of Portugal: Epilepsy and Peculiar Behavior,” *Arquivos de Neuro-Psiquiatria* 65, no. 3 (2007): 710

<sup>60</sup> Barman, pp. 83–84

<sup>61</sup> “Brazil,” in *Encyclopædia Britannica*; Costa, p. 25; and *Ibid.*, pp. 84–85

<sup>62</sup> Fausto, p. 72

<sup>63</sup> Barman, p. 86

<sup>64</sup> Macaulay, p. 124; Tyne, p. 423; and Fausto, p. 72. As for the choice of the title “Emperor” instead of “King,” it seems that King was “too identified with the colonial past,” whereas Emperor avoided this connotation and also “implied both the ruler of unusually extensive territories and a monarch whose accession to the throne involved an element of election,” thus placating republicans (Barman, p. 99). This explanation would directly mirror the Ancient Roman revulsion at the term *rex* but acceptance of *imperator*.

<sup>65</sup> Manchester, pp. 86–87 and 96; Fausto, p. 76; and Macaulay, pp. 136–137 and 145. One might wonder what Pedro’s father, King Dom João VI, back in Lisbon, thought about all this, but little is known due to the Cortes’s interception of his mail. (Macaulay, p. 117)

<sup>66</sup> Costa, p. xxi

<sup>67</sup> Fausto, p. 77; Tyne, p. 105; Kinsbruner, pp. 83, 147, and 151; and Tignor, p. 654

<sup>68</sup> Kinsbruner, pp. 35 and 98–99; Coupeau, pp. x, 39–42, and 48–50; “Haiti,” in *Encyclopædia Britannica 2009 Deluxe Edition* CD-ROM, ver. 2009, Encyclopædia Britannica, Chicago; and Tignor, pp. 647–651. A good illustration is the example of Henri Christophe, a leader in the Haitian revolution who later fancied himself a Bourbon-style monarch, titling himself King Henry I, appointing a Haitian nobility, designing a dress code and court ceremony, building himself a number of chateaux, and attempting to institute agricultural feudalism. He committed suicide nine years into his reign rather than risk a coup.

<sup>69</sup> Barman, p. 102

<sup>70</sup> *Constitution of the Empire of Brazil*, art. 1, sec. 5; art. 45, sec. 4; art. 92, sec. 5; art. 98–104; art. 165; and art. 179, sec. 4–5

and 19; trans. Google Translate (1824), Political Database of the Americas, Center for Latin American Studies, Georgetown University, <http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Brazil/brazil1824.html> (accessed February 4, 2013)

<sup>71</sup> Macaulay, p. 132; Fausto, p. 72; and “Brazil,” in Encyclopædia Britannica 2009 Deluxe Edition

<sup>72</sup> “Brazil,” in Encyclopædia Britannica 2009 Deluxe Edition; Kinsbruner, pp. 142–145; and Fausto, p. 80. It is true that the stability neither of Brazil nor of any other nation formed in these Atlantic Revolutions could match that of the United States, but an explanation for that must be the subject of another paper.

<sup>73</sup> “Brazil,” in Encyclopædia Britannica 2009 Deluxe Edition; Fausto, p. 141; Birmingham, pp. 116–118 and 151–153; and Macaulay, p. 191

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