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Anthony McFarlane, *War and Independence in Spanish America*. New York: Routledge, 2013. Pp. viii, 452. ISBN 978-1-85728-783-7.

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In *War and Independence in Spanish America*, historian Anthony McFarlane¹ (Univ. of Warwick) examines the lengthy and complex struggles for independence in the main regions of Spanish America—New Spain, New Grenada, Peru, and the Southern cone. He places these wars in the context of the crisis that engulfed the Spanish Empire after Napoleon’s invasion of the Iberian Peninsula. He gives special attention to the political and social conditions of the new regimes, as well as the logistical and demographic exigencies they faced. Nor does he neglect the protracted political crises in both Spain and Latin America after 1826, when the last of Spain’s South American possessions, upper Peru (present-day Bolivia) won its independence through military force. This comprehensive book is written to appeal to students of Latin American history at the undergraduate level or higher. It is meant to provide a careful consideration of military affairs missing from most treatments of its subject, which focus chiefly on political matters.

The book comprises fifteen chapters arranged in three parts, plus an introduction that sets out its principal themes. Part I, “War and the Spanish Monarchy,” contains chapter 1, “War in the Spanish Empire”; chapter 2, “Kingdoms in Crisis,” on the post-Napoleonic crisis of legitimacy in the Bourbon Empire; and chapter 3, “Paths to War,” on prewar maneuvering by Spain and the various viceroyalties of its Empire.

Part II, “Theaters of War in Spanish America, 1810–15,” contains six geographically sequenced chapters: chapter 4, “Civic Wars and First Republics: Venezuela and New Grenada, 1810–12”; chapter 5, “‘War to the Death’ in Venezuela and the Dissolution of New Grenada, 1813–15”; chapter 6, “Revolution on the Offensive: The Campaigns of Buenos Aires, 1810–11”; chapter 7, “Counterrevolution against the United Provinces, 1811–15”; chapter 8, “Insurrection in Mexico, 1810–11”; and chapter 9, “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Mexico, 1811–15.”

Part III, “Reconquest and Liberation, 1815–25,” contains chapter 10, “Restoration and Reconquest”; chapter 11, “Republic Rearmed: The Birth of Colombia”; chapter 12, “War in the Southern Cone”; chapter 13, “Defeat and Retreat in Mexico and Peru”; chapter 14, “Bolívar and the Fall of Royalist Peru”; and chapter 15, “Conclusion.”

McFarlane sets out explicitly the distinctive governing principles of his book:

the present study differs from the political histories of independence that concentrate on ideas, institutions, and interests. Such studies generally treat war as an epiphenomenon, and if they pay attention to military matters at all it is only to remark on those rare campaigns and battles that had a decisively destructive effect on the enemy’s war-fighting capacity. In my view, this tendency to underplay, even ignore, the military dimensions of independence is misleading, for without these wars there would have been no independent states, and the Spanish monarchy would not have collapsed as completely as it did. Moreover, as several historians have recently shown, the wars had important social repercussions, particularly in widening social participation in politics and giving peasants and plebeians the chance to fight for their own interests. (5)

This is not to say that he ignores relevant political developments: Spanish America’s wars,

Unlike the wars of early modern Europe, did not produce “military revolutions” or their political corollaries. While they created some strong leaders, notably Simón Bolívar with his model for a centralized liberal republic, they had also generated countervailing forces. In settings where, during centuries of Spanish rule, the state had been weak and national identities underdeveloped, war tended to dissipate and disperse authority, and to

1. His previous work includes *The British in the Americas, 1480–1815* (NY: Longman, 1994; Spanish ed. 1992), and *Colombia before Independence: Economy, Society, and Politics under Spanish Rule* (NY: Cambridge U Pr, 1993; Spanish ed. 1997).

shift violence into the private realm rather than reinforcing power at the center. Wars had swept away the old order; in their wake they left leaders and groups who had found in violence and militarism an efficient means to remake their societies, to exercise political command, and to impose their demands. This was a legacy that, despite idealistic efforts to create a republican political life on the basis of liberal constitutions, was to bedevil Spanish American politics throughout much of the ensuing century. (423)

McFarlane also astutely pinpoints the effects of the wars of independence on the political and military history of Latin America *after* its liberation.

The central argument here is that Spanish military weakness in the Napoleonic Wars facilitated the initial uprisings in Spanish America. Spain's lack of maritime strength, a sound economy, and the requisite political will then led to the gradual and ultimate victory of independent states. Throughout, the author buttresses his positions by extensive research in Spanish archives and in the vast secondary literature on Spain and late colonial Spanish America,² including, where pertinent, the memoirs of leaders on both sides of the struggle. In the process, he reveals the crucial influences between Spain and Spanish America as they affected the pace of independence movements.

War and Independence in Spanish America is not easy to read. Its heavily footnoted narrative flows from Spain to Spanish America, from New Grenada to the Rio de la Plata region, and from Peru to Mexico in the initial push for independence, and again through all these regions in the period of decisive victory ending in 1825. There is a paucity of maps and no glossary of terms or names of persons and places. But readers willing to make the necessary effort of close, concentrated reading will be abundantly rewarded by the book's salutary emphasis on the critical military as well as political aspects of the Spanish American wars of independence.

2. Including, prominently, on the political purposes for traditional justifications of rebellion against Spanish tyranny, François-Xavier Guerra, *Modernidad e independencias: ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas* (Madrid: Encuentro, 2009), and *Las revoluciones hispánicas: independencias americanas y liberalismo español* (Madrid: Ed. Complutense, 1995); on the political aspects of socioeconomics as well as class, race, and ethnicity, John Lynch, *The Spanish American Revolutions, 1808–1826*, 2nd ed. (NY: Norton, 1986), and *Hispanoamérica, 1750–1850: ensayos sobre la sociedad y el estado* (Bogotá: Univ. Nac. de Colombia, 1987); on interactions between Spanish and Spanish American politics, Brian R. Hammett, *Revolución y contrarrevolución en México y el Perú: liberalismo, realeza y separatismo, 1800–1824* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cult. Econ., 1978), and *La política española en una época revolucionaria, 1790–1820* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cult. Econ., 1985); and, on the economic and financial weaknesses of Bourbon Spain, Josep Fontana, *La quiebra de la monarquía absoluta, 1814–20* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1987), and Carlos Marichal, *The Bankruptcy of Empire: Mexican Silver and the Wars between Spain, Britain, and France, 1760–1810* (NY: Cambridge U Pr, 2007).