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**The Venezuelan revolution; metropolis-colony relationship in the
international context**

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1. Introduction

Venezuela was the first Spanish colony to declare independence during the first wave of decolonisation, starting in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Colonies in the new world were the first to break free from their European metropolis. This process started a change in the international system, new states were created and post-colonies entered the Westphalian state system. This thesis will look at the first wave of decolonization and more specifically, the revolt of the Venezuelans. The independence of Spanish America is an interesting subject because of its particular nature. Anderson, for example, highlights the unusual character of the revolt, Creoles were descendants of the Spanish and spoke the same language but still the creoles rebelled in order to create a new and own state. There are multiple explanations for the uprising, and these explanations indicate that international factors have contributed to the revolt. For example, the revolutionary spirit and ideals which originated in France and the anti-colonial revolutions in Saint Domingue and the Thirteen Colonies. More subtle factors like liberal changes within the world markets and different colonial-metropolis views on inequality also suggest the influence of international developments on the independence movement. This thesis will research the international context and its influence on the hierarchical colony-metropolis relationship and its inhabitants and will provide an answer to the question: To what extent can international factors help to understand why Venezuelan creoles rebelled against their metropolis?

1.1 Significance

Buzan and Lawson argue that although the Spanish American wars for independence were important for the formation of the - current - international system, little attention is paid to these wars by IR scholars (2014, p. 455). These wars led to the application of new ideals like nationalism and republicanism, ideologies which would become ever more important during the nineteenth and twentieth century. Furthermore, the independence of American states enlarged the international society, from European to western (Buzan & Lawson, 2014, pp. 455 - 456). Brown approaches the independence of Latin America as a key period in which Latin American history influenced and shaped global history. He argues that Latin America's influence and participation in the global processes in the Age of Revolutions is often ignored (2015, p. 377-379). Placing the revolution within its global context provides new insights in the intertwinedness of the world and may provide new links in global history. This means that it is important to find international factors which influenced the revolution and to identify the contribution of the revolution to new processes elsewhere in the world or on a global scale. It is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse all causes

and all consequences of the Spanish American independence. . The thesis will look at one community in one colony and the international factors which influenced this community. Understanding the Venezuelan uprising while placing the conflict within its international context will provide insight in the start of the process of decolonisation, enlargement of international society and metropolis-colony hierarchy.

1.2 Literature review

It is important to know which explanations for the Venezuelan independence already exist in the literature when analysing to what extent international factors have contributed to the Venezuelan independence. Some scholars focus on the main triggers for the revolution, the French revolution and Napoleonic wars. Others focus on somewhat more internal developments in the decades and even century prior to the independence. These somewhat more internal and indirect explanations can be subdivided in three categories: the tightening of Spanish control, economic incentives and social tensions. One scholar, McKinley (1986) states that an international factor, the French invasion of Spain and the subsequent Spanish reaction to this invasion, was the main cause and not just the trigger for the revolt.

Anderson (2006) argues in his *Imagined Communities* that the several colonies developed a national identity, and he states that this national identity was the main reason for the wars. He acknowledges other explanations, like raised taxes, but argues that even if Madrid had solved all practical objections of the Creoles against the metropolis, the drive for national liberation would probably have sparked a revolt anyway. Lynch (1973) provides a somewhat more balanced view. Lynch makes a comparison with the situation of the colonies a century before their wars for independence. During the Spanish succession war, the metropolis was preoccupied with this war just as it would be a century later, during Napoleon's invasion. But the colonies did nothing to liberate themselves. Lynch attributes this to the autonomy of the colonies. A century later, when Spain decided to regain administrative and economic control over the colonies, the creoles in Spanish America started to oppose the Spanish policy.

Spain increased the taxes, which led to violent uprisings among the Venezuelans from the second half of the eighteenth century. The most important incentive, however, was the absence of a division of labour. So products of the metropolis and colony competed instead of complemented each other. Spain tried to prohibit certain industries, which made it very disadvantageous for the Venezuelans to respect its authority (Lynch, 1985, p. 16). Illegal British trade and naval blockades in times of war worsened the colony-metropolis economic relation.

Lynch states that tensions rose between Spaniards and Creoles in the American colonies. The Creoles were denied high positions in the army and bureaucracy, and the Spaniards saw themselves as

racially superior (1973, pp. 19-22). Furthermore, liberal forces in Madrid were trying to impose new legislature that would allow pardos, mulattoes and mestizos to climb the social ladder and reach an comparable status as the creoles. Madrid also tried to implement new laws protecting slaves. It is clear that the creole community of Venezuela opposed this. After the slave revolt of Saint Domingue resulted in the state of Haiti, violence spread to slaves in Venezuela. Some creoles reacted by denouncing the ideals of equality of the French revolution. In this explanation, the French invasion of Spain triggered the creole revolution, they had to take power now that the control of the metropolis had diminished, out of fear that if not they, the lower castes and slaves would seize control.

McKinley (1986) states that the French invasion was the reason for the rebellion. During the occupation of Spain, a liberal minority led the resistance. In Venezuela, radicals hijacked the attempts of moderate creoles to gain more autonomy. The moderates had followed the example set in Spain, and established a Junta. After the regency in Spain announced that it would stop the Junta movements in the colonies, the radical separatists hijacked the movement and declared independence.

This thesis argues that the three internal explanations cannot be understood without their international context, and that international factors are responsible for the measures which led to these three reasons to declare independence. Furthermore, it recognizes McKinley's contribution and his account on how the radicals could hijack the revolution. However, his account could not explain how the wish for more autonomy by the moderates became so widespread, and how some of these moderates developed into separatist radicals prior to the French invasion. The three other explanations are more able to explain this, but have not yet been put in their international context.

1.3 Definitions

It is important to define the subject of this thesis, which is the creole community of Venezuela. While in some cases creole refers to a person of mixed race, this thesis will refer to creole in the same way Benedict Anderson does: "*Creole (Criollo) - person of (at least theoretically) pure European descent but born in the Americas*" (Anderson, 2006, p. 47). Venezuelan creoles will refer to persons of pure European descent, born within the borders of the Captaincy General of Venezuela. This was an administrative district since 1777, comprising for the most part of what is now Venezuela.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

At first glance, this thesis would be a case of impact of international developments on national liberation movements. But in a broader sense, this research should be seen as a case of shifts in a hierarchical relationship. The main argument of this thesis will center around this shift in the hierarchical relationship between the colony and the metropolis and place it in the context of a broader shift in the international order, mainly on the European continent. This intertwinedness between

European history and Latin American history in the Age of Revolutions is, as stated earlier, often ignored. The thesis will work within a top-down framework of international changes and influences on the national liberation movement.

The colony-metropolis relationship is an hierarchical relation. Mattern and Zarakol (2016) describe conceptions of Hierarchy in the international system, stating that different forms of hierarchy can generate different social, moral and behavioral dynamics. This thesis will focus on the narrow conceptualisation of hierarchy structures, this conceptualisation is based on the legitimate authority relations. This reflects the colony-metropolis relationship better than the broad conceptualisation, which focuses not on power relations but on a variety of inequalities. Mattern and Zarakol describe a logic of trade offs, this means that actors have incentives and disincentives to be positioned in a certain type of hierarchical position and that this position is a balanced trade off between actors. Lake (2009) has written about relational authority. He states that a hierarchical relation can exist because the ruler provides a social order valued by the ruled, and as a consequence the ruled accepts a loss of freedom. He, too, states that there should be an equilibrium. If the ruler (metropolis) cannot provide benefits, or when these are too costly for the ruled (colony), the authority diminishes and the latter can retract its support of the hierarchical relation. This contract-functionalist logic is an instrument to analyse the shift in the hierarchical colony-metropolis relationship.

While this is an important tool for analysing this relationship and its implications to why the creoles might have revolted, or denounced this relationship, this thesis looks at international factors contributing to this revolt. An important notion, then, is the international order. The century prior to the independence saw a surge in power of Britain, and a decaying Spain. Placing the shift of the hierarchical relationship in its international context means looking into a shift in the international order as well. The international order is the distribution of power among the states on the world stage.

This thesis will focus on the way international factors changed the hierarchical relationship between the colony and the metropolis. Events in Europe, or between European powers across the world, provide most of the international factors. It is therefore important to keep the international order in mind when researching the shifts in the hierarchical relation.

1.5 Research Design

This thesis consists of qualitative research and will look at international factors contributing to the Venezuelan revolt because it was the first colony to declare independence. This means that if we look at the Creole communities in other districts, one of the major factors contributing to their rebellion could be the struggle of the Venezuelans. Looking at the first district to declare independence might provide a better picture of the underlying international factors and metropolis-colony relations that contributed to the war. The thesis will cover the Creole community and not another social class

because of the fact that many of the other classes present in the colony were royalists (Echeverri, 2016, p. 2). It is, however, important to acknowledge that not all Creoles were separatists and not all members of other classes were royalist.

The thesis is based on two sets of secondary literature by historians, with a specific purpose. The first set are works on the Spanish American independence and more specific the Venezuelan independence. These are used to outline the existing explanations and to determine which international factors might have played a role in these explanations. From studying this first set of literature, three general explanations emerge. The tightening of Spanish control, economic incentives and social tensions. These explanations describe the underlying causes for the independence, starting a century prior to independence. However, broad as they may be in the time they cover, they neglect the influence of international factors. A fourth explanation is provided by McKinley. He focuses on international factors, but he limits himself to the years from 1808 up till independence, and neglects influences prior to the French invasion. It is important to assess these four explanations to determine the importance of the explanations and the possible international factors.

The second set of literature is acquired in a later stage of the research, and is focussed around certain factors on the international stage. For example the works of Mahan on the Spanish succession war and of Harding on British naval power. These do not describe the Venezuelan independence, but its subject has been determined to be an important international factor after researching the first set of literature. The international factors that stand out, and which were researched in order to analyse the importance of international factors, are the Spanish succession war and the seven years war, which were two major wars in a more broad context of a shift of power on the European continent. The French revolution and the French invasion of Spain do also play a big role, as they provided the trigger for the radical Venezuelan creoles to take over. These factors will be linked together by analysing the change in the hierarchical relationship.

Most literature from the first set, collected to determine which international factors have to be researched to answer the research question, has been found in the composite volumes from Cambridge University press: *The Cambridge history of Latin America*. An extensive collection of work on the independence and the century prior to the independence by multiple authors can be found in this collection. After determining the international factors which have played a role in the independence, literature on these various factors was found. This literature does not or hardly cover the situation in Venezuela because the factors are international and not domestic. One work differs, McKinley's account on the independence focuses on international factors and the Venezuelan situation.

To conclude, this research will focus the Venezuelan creole independence, and the research consists of two phases. First, secondary literature on the Venezuelan independence will be used to outline explanations and detect relevant international factors. Second, secondary literature focussed

around these relevant factors will be used to analyse the importance of these factors in explaining the Venezuelan independence.

1.6 Thesis outline

This thesis argues that international factors are crucial in understanding why the Venezuelans rebelled against Spain. It is important to understand that the colony-metropolis relation is a hierarchical relation. The hierarchical relationship as described in the conceptual framework provides us with a logic of trade offs. We can view the explanations of most scholars as a change in the balance of these trade offs. This caused a change in the hierarchical relationship between the colony and the metropolis. These explanations are often described as internal factors. However, they were the product of shifting powers on the European continent, mainly the decay of Spain and the rise of Britain. If we want to answer to what extent international factors can help us understand the revolution, we must first know the main explanations. The following chapters will outline the explanations and analyse their international context. There were three wars that shaped the colony-metropolis relations, first of all the Spanish succession war. Thereafter the seven years war, and at the end of the century the Napoleonic wars.

Each explanation will be covered in two sections, first outlining the explanation and thereafter linked to its international context. For the first chapter, the tightening of Spanish control, the second part focuses mainly on the succession war and its consequences. The subsequent chapter covering the explanation of the 'Economic Incentives' has been built up in the same way, first outlining the explanation and thereafter linking this explanation to the international context. This international context will consist of the seven years war and the consequential British naval superiority and its implications. Subsequently, the third explanation, regarding social tensions, is covered. This, too, will happen in the same way as the previous two chapters. First outlining the explanation and thereafter placing the explanation in its international context. The international context is mainly the revolution in Saint Domingue and the French invasion of Spain. The last chapter before the conclusion is the chapter regarding the French invasion as a cause of the independence. The first part of this chapter is just like the previous, outlining the explanation. The second part of this chapter, however, will not place the explanation in the international context but will argue why the three other explanations and their international perspectives matter, despite McKinley's arguments to why the French invasion would be the cause of the independence. After this section, the main arguments will be covered in the conclusion and the thesis will provide an answer to what extent the international factors can help us understand the revolt of the Venezuelan creoles.

2. Tightening of Spanish control

The first shift in the hierarchical relationship between the Venezuelans and Spain was the tightening of Spanish control. This alienated the creole elite and shifted the balanced trade-off because the creoles had to give up their autonomy and did not see any returns. The measures taken by Spain and their effects on the creoles started a century prior to independence, the tightening of Spanish control was influenced by international politics on the European continent, mainly the succession war and to lesser extent the seven years war. It is important to first understand the explanation in a narrow sense, in order to understand the creole uprising.

2.1 Explanation

A century prior to independence, the Spanish succession war weakened the metropolis' position. Spain, once a great power, lost its monopoly on the colonial trade with the Americas in 1713 after the treaty of Utrecht. Meanwhile, the administration under the Bourbon dynasty struggled to improve the economy and to centralize the power in the country. During the reign of Charles III, Spain depended on its American empire to recover economically and politically, Charles III wanted more revenue from the Americas (Lynch, 1985, p. 42; Brading, 1984, pp. 397). It was important to regain administrative control over the colony in order to increase colonial revenue. However, retaking effective control over Venezuela would mean that the creoles would lose the autonomy they had enjoyed for over a century.

Spanish America rested upon a balance of power between three groups: The administration, the Church and the local elite. The bureaucracy was not the agent of imperial centralization, but a negotiator between the Crown and the Americans. For the Bourbons, this was unacceptable (Lynch, 1985, p. 8-11). This balance of power was hindering the metropolis, it could not effectively make the colony work for Spain. The Crowns capabilities to reach the full potential of the colonial resources were limited by the absence of effective military sanctions. Spain wanted to alter the balance of power and strengthen its military possibilities in the colonies. After the seven years war, Spain wanted an adequate standing army in their colonies, led by Spaniards. The fact that senior officers had more chance of getting the higher positions contributed to the alienation of the creole elites. The Spanish Crown altered the existing balance of power, it reinforced the administration by abolishing the system of *repartimiento*, to the dissatisfaction of the local elite. Furthermore, Spain restricted the influence of the Church. The Crown expelled the Jesuit order from the Americas and tried to bring the clergy under civil jurisdiction in order to curtail clerical immunity and lay hands on its property. This alienated the Church (Lynch, 1985, pp. 8-11). The measures taken by Madrid alienated the creoles,

Anderson states that this helped develop a national identity, Venezuelan creoles did not see themselves as Spaniards anymore (2006, pp. 53-58).

2.2 International Context: Succession war

The attempt by Spain to regain control over the colonies can be linked to a desire to improve its position on the European continent. Waddell states that the struggles resulting in the Spanish American independence were a matter of concern for the European states and balance of power. When France and Spain became allies, they proved to be a threat to Britain. Spanish America and its wealth became very important for the colonial rivalry between the great powers of the European continent (1985, p. 195). Waddell focuses mostly on the shock of the revolutionary years, culminating in the open struggle for independence. Brading takes things further back, almost a century. Stating that during the Spanish succession war, and the resulting treaty of Utrecht, the Spanish political and economic position was severely damaged (1984, pp. 389-392). The main reasons for the war was the fear of a powerful French-Spanish union that would disrupt the relative balance of power (Mahan, 1889, pp. 200-205). At the end of the war, Spain lost European possessions, had to grant Britain rights to trade with the American colonies and Philip V, of the house of Bourbon, rose to the throne. However, he and his descendants were excluded of inheriting the French throne in order to stop a French-Spanish personal union that would break the balance of power in Europe (Mahan, 1889, p. 203; Brading, 1984, pp. 390-391). An important fact is that the accession of the new Bourbon king, a grandson of the absolute monarch of France and challenged by civil war, enabled his French advisors to start reforming Spain to a more centralized state. One could argue that these aspirations to centralize the state that were put in motion, can be an explanation to why Spain tried to regain tighter control over the colonies. Another reason however, was the economic and political malaise that haunted Spain in the first half of the eighteenth century. This was also an effect of the lost succession war and of the dynastic ambitions of Spain to regain the lost territory, which led to multiple costly wars (Brading, 1984, p. 391-392).

The succession war was a war to keep the balance of power on the European continent in a status quo. This broad international event plunged Spain into a economic and political malaise. The Crown attempted to solve its problems by regaining full control over the colonies. The trade-off between the creoles and the metropolis altered and the creoles were alienated. The narrow explanation of the tightening of control during the eighteenth century, treated as an internal factor by scholars, was a direct consequence of a European war between great powers to retain the balance of power.

3. Economic Incentives

An even more important explanation for the break in this hierarchical relationship were the economic incentives for independence. The colony was not dependent on the metropolis, because there was no division of labour. Trade with Spain was in fact unnecessary and not beneficial to the creole elite. Policies of the Crown meant to make the colony dependent on Spanish trade agitated the creoles and caused social tensions. Not only the situation of the metropolis and its wish to increase colonial revenue caused these economic incentives, British naval and economic power forced free trade in times of war. This showed to the creoles that Spain was unable to defend the interests of the colonies, and that Venezuela could sustain its prosperity without the imperial link. This meant that the metropolis was unnecessary for the colonies' trade, this damaged the balance in the trade-off. The hierarchical relation was disadvantageous.

3.1 Explanation

The tightening of Spanish control over the colonies was meant to make the colonies economically fruitful for the Metropolis, both in products and tax revenue. Taxes on trade were not very effective, but one method to smoothen this taxation was allowing trade to and from Spain to enter and exit through a few, limited, ports only. Furthermore, the state implemented a policy of monopolies on goods like tobacco, these were extremely unpopular and led to violent uprisings (Macleod, 1985, pp. 244-248). In the years of relative autonomy the tax revenue was spent in the colonies, so education and infrastructure could be improved for the Venezuelan creoles. Now, sales taxes were raised to 6 percent and most of the tax revenue was transferred to the metropolis. This led from the 1760s on to more protests (Lynch, 1973. p. 11). The metropolis also tried to enhance their economy by controlling trade, a problem for the administration was the absence of a division of labour within the Hispanic world. The Spanish economy was reduced to exporting agricultural goods instead of industrial goods. As Lynch states, the Spanish market was not fit to import nor to export to the colonies. The Spanish products were competing with the American products (Lynch, 1985, p 16). A way to solve this was to increase manufacturing in Spain, and prohibit manufacturing in the colonies. The colony would depend on the metropolis and grant Spain cheap raw materials, agricultural goods and a consumers market for their manufactured products. The decree of the *comercio libre* allowed more free trade between Spain and the Americas. This new and more free type of trade led to a commercial crisis in the colonies, import of European products lowered the prices and profits and a lot of merchants went bankrupt (Macleod, 1985, p. 413). A royal decree, prohibited manufacturing in the early nineteenth century, was met with resistance. In times of war, British ships blockaded the transatlantic trade

between metropolis and colony, and manufacturers seized this opportunity to start manufacturing illegally both during the war of 1796-1802 and after 1804.

Britain, and its naval superiority, caused more problems for the metropolis. The fact that the production in the metropolis and in Venezuela did not complement each other and Spain saw the colonies more as a source of bullion and taxes, and less as a trading partner, caused the creoles to look elsewhere. There was an alternative, Britain had become a big exporter of goods after the industrial revolution. The only limit on the expansion of exports to Spanish America was the purchasing power of the Americans. The colonies wanted to export to Britain, and gain more purchasing power to buy more. Britain sought to expand the Britain-American trade. In times of war the British complemented the consequential shortages of British blockades. This had a powerful effect in the minds of Spanish Americans, because of the contrast between the strong and growing Britain and the weak and stagnating Spain (Lynch, 1985, pp. 7-8).

In Venezuela, the owners of the Haciendas and producers of tobacco, coffee and other products were hindered by the metropolis control over trade, the monopoly forced the Venezuelans into a situation where they were underpaid for export and overcharged for import. The creoles denounced the idea that trade should only benefit the metropolis. When Spain joined France in the war during 1796, Britain blocked Spanish trade again. The metropolis had to let go of its monopoly and open up American ports to foreign powers after Havana opened its port. Spain feared the loss of total control and revenue if it would not allow other ports to do the same, in exchange for a percentage of the revenue (Lynch, 1985, p. 22). After Spain revoked this right, the colonies simply just ignored it. Spanish ships could not make it across the Atlantic because of the dominance of the British Royal navy, so trade with foreigners was irresistible for the colonies. In 1801, Spain gave special permission to a few colonies, including Venezuela, to trade with neutrals.

3.2 International context: Seven years war and British naval power

The trade-off between the colony and the metropolis altered due to economic policies of Spain and due to new and better alternatives for the creoles. These developments coincide with all three wars mentioned before. The first measures to increase revenue were taken after the succession war because the Spanish economy lay in ruins. After the Seven Years war Britain prevails as the strongest naval power. As stated earlier, trade with foreigners, mainly the British, and naval blockades and their consequential shortages and isolation for the metropolis were in a certain way causes for the rise of independence movements. During the Napoleonic wars these problems only increased for the metropolis.

After the seven years war, a great war whose two coalitions included all major powers of Europe and which battles were fought across the world between 1756 and 1763, the navy of two great

rivals of Britain, Bourbon Spain and France, had suffered defeat. Britain had been superior during the seven years war, and although it reduced the amount of sailors and manned ships, it knew that the quality of its navy had determined British influence. The government therefore allowed the navies debt to rise, so the naval force would not decline during economic depressions. This was one of the reasons for their naval supremacy during the second half of the century. Investment and development did not cease or decline, which was very important. France, Spain and Britain saw naval power as critical after the U.S. won the independence war. Naval power was not only critical to ship soldiers but also to harass trade. An important notion is the fact that during this war, the French and Spanish together had the same amount of ships as the British, but were strategically and qualitatively less developed. They were also wary to use their ships in battle, afraid to lose the numerical balance at that time. Furthermore, after the war the British government enabled manning the naval power the same amount as in wartime, and sought to increase the navy to match the combined forces of the Bourbon enemies (Harding, 1999, pp. 127-155).

After Britain emerged as the major naval power, in combination with its industrial revolution and export industry, new wars and international developments led to the naval blockades and British trade with Venezuela. After Britain lost the Thirteen colonies, and getting even worse after Napoleon's continental system, its exports dropped. The British sought new markets and found the Spanish Americans. The link between the metropolis and the colony was severely injured. The success of the Americas to preserve their welfare in spite of the blockades and interrupted colony-metropolis trade made the Americans question the value of the imperial link. The plantation owners of Venezuela asked themselves why it was necessary to trade via the Spanish ports with foreign countries, merely to provide tax revenue for the metropolis. It was more beneficial to them to have direct access to the world market (Brading, 1984, p. 436). During the French occupation of Spain, the patriotic Junta was reluctant to abandon its monopoly but eventually allowed the colonies again a temporary trade with Britain (Waddell, 1985, p. 200). The loss of the economic system implemented by the metropolis was beneficial for the colonies, and the interruption of colony-metropolis trade showed that the colonies did not need the metropolis. Abandoning this system was an incentive for independence.

4. Social tensions

Social tensions are one of the key factors in establishing the revolutionary climate in Venezuela according to Lynch (1985, p. 30). The alienation of the creoles led to social tensions with the peninsulares. But more important were the social tensions between the upper and lower (racial) classes. These led to conflict and eventually established the revolutionary climate. This explanation paints a clear picture of the changing trade-offs and their impact on the hierarchical relation between the colony and metropolis. First, fear of a slave and *pardo* revolt caused the creoles to side with the

Spanish authorities. However, the creoles lost their faith in the metropolis, no longer believing that the metropolis was able to protect their interests after military defeats and naval blockades and liberal forces in Madrid pushed for social mobility and slave rights legislature. The international context surrounding this explanation stems mainly from the slave uprising in Saint Domingue, the French revolution and its egalitarian ideals. But more important for the hierarchical relationship were the wars from 1796 onward, these wars disturbed the hierarchical equilibrium. The metropolis could no longer provide the social order which legitimized the relational authority over the colony, because the metropolis was no longer able to defend the creole community.

4.1 Explanation

The social tension between the creoles (and even peninsulares) and the lesser classes like *pardos*, *mestizos*, indians and slaves had the greatest influence on the creole revolt. As Bolivar stated: 'A negro revolt is a thousand times worse than a Spanish invasion' (Anderson, 2006, p. 49). This could contradict the idea of importance of international factors, because the tensions between creoles and *pardos* were, of course, a domestic matter of concern. However, these domestic matters first caused the creoles to support the authority of the metropolis, they turned against their metropolis only after international factors changed the situation.

In the province of Caracas, as in other regions of Venezuela, the social hierarchy was based primarily on racial differences. The whites dominated the society, despite the fact that they made up only about a quarter of society. The slaves and the *pardos* formed around 60 percent of the population. Although the *pardos* were discriminated against legally, they still had some degree of economic mobility (McKinley, 1986, pp. 13-18). The liberal ideas in Europe calling for more equality scared the land owners, they feared the loss of a cheap labour force and, even worse, a race war like had happened in Saint Domingue. In 1789 Spain announced a new law stating the rights and duties of slaves and slave-owners, most creoles rejected and tried to stall the new law. Racial identity was very important in the Americas so Venezuelan creoles were alarmed when Spain enabled social mobility in 1795. *Pardos* were allowed into colonial militias and to buy the same rights as whites, the creoles were determined to keep the social divide as it was and they feared that the *pardos* were given an instrument for revolution by allowing them into the militias (Anderson, 2006, p. 49; Lynch, J. 1985, pp. 30-31).

It is important to note that this social divide first provided the Venezuelan creoles with reason to support the metropolis. In 1795, near Coro, a black and *pardo* revolt started. Three hundred rose under the command of Jose Leonardo Chirino and Jose Caridad Gonzalez, free blacks who were inspired by the creation of Haiti. A testimony of a local creole told of the demands of the rebels: freedom for slaves, extermination of the white males and exemption of taxes (Ruelle-Orihuela &

Soriano, 2016, p. 333). They were defeated, but only after they had sacked haciendas, killed white landowners and invaded the city of Coro. Four years later, another Haitian inspired revolt broke out near Maracaibo. But the white creoles of Venezuela did not only cooperate with the metropolis during these revolutions of blacks. In July 1797, only two months after the revolution of blacks at Maracaibo, republican conspirators called for independence and equality for all classes. The movement was too radical. Although some of the poor whites joined the revolution, most creole landowners supported the metropolis and offered resources and manpower to suppress the movement (Bushnell, 1995, pp. 97-99; Lynch, 1985, pp. 45-48).

However, the military defeats and blockades, in combination with the fear of more revolutions caused the creoles to lose their fate in the Spanish government, and started to question the ability of the metropolis to defend them in case of an uprising. When the metropolis plunged into chaos in 1808, a political vacuum emerged. The creoles had to anticipate popular rebellion, as they were convinced that if not they, more dangerous parties would seize the opportunity. (Lynch, 1985, p. 32).

4.2 International context: revolution in Haiti and invasion of Spain

McKinley states that many scholars view racial tensions in Venezuela to be more explosive than elsewhere in Spanish America. In his opinion, this is not true and he argues that the racial relations were even more stable than in other colonies. He finds it to be much more interesting not to look at the tensions, but at the kind of impact a certain disturbance had, and its effect on a seemingly stable status quo (McKinley, 1986, pp. 115-116). There are roughly speaking three disturbances of this status quo. The legislature from 1795, which allowed *pardos* social mobility, the revolution on Saint Domingue and the subsequent small uprisings in Venezuela and most importantly the collapse of the metropolis after the French invasion in 1808.

The decree of 1795 can be viewed as a domestic factor contributing to the Venezuelan revolution. However, it is important to note that this decree was not such a threat for the creoles as it seemed. The decree was launched mainly to collect money and did not grant *pardos* the same rights, only to some extent. When the elite complained, the Crown decided to raise the prices for dispensation (Lynch, 1985, pp. 30-31; McKinley, 1986, pp. 19-21).

The revolt of Saint Domingue was a greater threat to the seemingly stable status quo. Blacks rose up against their white masters and sparked a fear among the Venezuelan creoles. The revolution was a warning, Haiti was branded as an enemy of the (colonial) state and its example had to be avoided at all costs. Venezuela was vulnerable, many slaves and *pardos* lived in the colony and during the French counteroffensive, blacks fled to Venezuela. The creoles feared that these refugees could spark the revolution amongst the slaves in the colony. In 1801, over 1500 French refugees arrived, spreading the word of the horrors of the revolution. As described before, the Venezuelan creoles

continued supporting the metropolis after smaller black uprisings and after an attempted radical republican revolution (Bushnell, 1995, pp. 97-99; Lynch, 1985, p. 45).

However, the most important international factor would be the French invasion of Spain, the metropolis' authority collapsed. The benefits for the creoles of the hierarchical relationship between the colony and the metropolis were decreasing for over a long time now, but the last important benefit for the creoles was protection and security. The creoles lost their faith in the metropolis, they did not believe the metropolis was able to defend itself, let alone that the metropolis could defend them. As Lynch states:

In these circumstances, when the monarchy collapsed in 1808, the Creoles could not allow the political vacuum to remain unfilled, their lives and property unprotected. They had to move quickly to anticipate popular rebellion, convinced that if they did not seize the opportunity, more dangerous forces would do so (Lynch, J. 1985, p. 32).

5. The French invasion

Most scholars view the French invasion of Spain as the trigger for the revolution, and not the root cause for the independence, McKinley states that the French invasion was not only the trigger but also the cause of the Venezuelan struggle for independence (McKinley, 1986, p. 146). McKinley's argument is that none of the previously discussed explanations are the root causes of the revolution. The cause of the revolution was the collapse of the central authority, the way Spanish reformers and Junta's organized the resistance caused a copycat movement of moderate reformers in Venezuela, followed by a strict backlash of Spain which allowed the separatist radicals to hijack the revolution. His account on how the collapse of the metropolis led to the independence movement is extensive and gives a good overview on how a radical wing of creoles gained momentum to push for independence, however, the previously discussed explanations can help us understand how some creoles became moderate reformers, and how some creoles became, in combination with the ideals of the French revolution, radical separatists.

5.1 Explanation

According to McKinley, there was no inevitability about the collapse of the metropolis-colony relationship after 1808. Venezuela had grown and prospered in the last period of the colonial time. The relative balance within the colony could, of course, be disrupted. During the crisis, both in Spain and in the colonies, individuals came forth as leaders to take up resistance against the French. In Spain, it was a minority of constitutional liberals in favor of decentralisation. In Venezuela, a

minority of revolutionary radical separatists gained momentum and transformed the moderate autonomist movement into an independence movement (McKinley, 1986, p. 146-147).

After Napoleon invaded Spain and installed his brother as king, provincial juntas took up arms against the invaders, these juntas were led by one central Junta. In Caracas, notables drew up a petition to form a Junta themselves, like in Spain, and resist the French king and defend the Bourbon monarchy. The Captain General, however, cracked down with arrests, imprisonments and threatened to mobilize the *pardos* if the local white elite was to seize power. It is, however, urgent to say what the implications were if Venezuela formed such a Junta. It would place the colony, by taking the same measures as provinces in Spain, on the same level as the Spanish provinces. They were implicitly rejecting the colonial status of Venezuela.

This crackdown of the Captain General showed the local elite that consensus and dialogue was not possible. The moderate elite, which had cooperated with the authorities started to make way for more radical actors (McKinley, 1986, pp. 151-153). In the first month of 1810, the Spanish central Junta dissolved itself after France eliminated most centers of resistance and the Junta was forced to retreat to Cadiz. The Junta was succeeded by a Council of Regency. Spain was losing the war, it seemed that full national independence and stability would not return to the Metropolis very soon and the Council of Regency called for elections. Venezuela was closer to the Metropolis than the other South American colonies so the news of the events in Spain reached Caracas first. A few creole notables ousted the Captain-General in april and created a Junta. It would rule in the name of the king, but denied the Council of Regency any form of authority over Venezuela. (Bushnell, 1995, pp. 103-104).

The Junta formed by the coup in Caracas did not have the goal of independence, only the minority of creoles, the revolutionary radicals, did. The radicals started to take over after 1810. The moderates of the revolution tried to curb the influence of the radicals by sending them on foreign missions to attract foreign aid. But they were fighting a losing battle, especially when the Regency in Spain stated that it would halt the Junta movements in the colonies. Representative of the Regency in the caribbean, Antonio Cortabarría, negotiated with the Caracas Junta. He demanded they recognized the regency, accepted a new Captain General, disband militias and halt the free trade which was demanded by Spain earlier. Talks broke down and in the first month of 1811, Cortabarría issued a naval blockade (McKinley, 1986, p. 162).

The radicals were able to hijack the junta and revolution because of the inaction of the moderates, the moderates did not know how to react to the Spanish backlash, as they were reformers they were unwilling to go back to the situation before the junta. At the same time, they did not wish full independence and conflict with Spain. The radicals seized the opportunities, and declared independence in 1811.

5.2 Analysis: Why the broader explanations and their international perspectives matter

Although McKinley's account provides great insights in the radical separatist takeover of the Venezuelan reformist movement due to the events in Europe, his case that the French invasion was the cause of independence and not the trigger needs some nuance. From the start of the invasion, Venezuelan moderates advocated for their own Junta. When taking into account that the provincial Juntas in Spain mainly focussed on directing guerilla warfare in absence of central authority, one could argue that there was no reason for a Junta in the colony because the Captain General could pass for the central authority.

The Captain General was ousted by the moderates when Spain seemed to lose the war and the Regency called for elections. The moderates stated that the Junta would govern in name of the king, but did not accept the authority of the Regency Council. It used the opportunity to take back control and reform the relationship. The moderates wanted more autonomy for Venezuela, autonomy which was taken from them in the century prior to independence. Another reason to take control was the fear of a *pardo* uprising, if not they somebody else would take control, as stated by Lynch. This fear only increased when the Captain General threatened with *pardo* mobilisation. Furthermore, the moderates continued to allow free trade. These points are in line with the three previously discussed explanations. The moderates tried to alter the trade-off between the colony and the metropolis, because for them disadvantages did outweigh the benefits. Only after the metropolis refused the reforms and showed its intention to halt the reformist Junta did the radicals take over and denounced the hierarchical relationship altogether.

We should take into account McKinley's statement that there was no inevitability about the collapse of the metropolis-colony relationship after 1808, and that the way the French invasion developed contributed, as a cause, to the independence of Venezuela. It is true, that the events of 1810 caused the radicals to hijack the Venezuelan creole movement towards more autonomy, and can be described as the cause of the independence in this particular way. However, the way the movement developed prior to this moment and the underlying reasons why the radicals took over after the Spanish backlash instead of bowing down to the metropolis again, can be found in the three broader explanations. The goals of the reformist were to improve their position in the hierarchical relationship. The alienated creole elite wanted more autonomy from the peninsulares, the creoles wanted a better economic position by allowing more free trade and the creoles wanted to avert a *pardo* uprising.

6. Conclusion

To what extent, then, can international factors help us understand why the Venezuelan creoles rebelled against their metropolis? International factors have certainly played a major role in causing the rebellion. In the narrow sense, creoles were inspired by the new ideals and revolutions in France and the US. The collapse of Spain provided a trigger for moderate creoles to strive for more autonomy, and the reactions of the Spanish resistance and thereafter the Regency council caused the radical wing of the creoles to take over the movement and declare independence. This narrow explanation focuses almost solely on the collapse of Spain in 1808.

However, in a more broad sense, the collapse of the empire was a process that lasted for over a century, a shift in the balance of power on the European continent at the end of the seven years war caused Britain, mainly due to its naval success, to be the most powerful state. Spain was decaying, leaving less incentives for the colony to remain in the hierarchical relationship and its attempts to make a comeback as superpower only led to a disadvantageous policy for the creoles. The hierarchical relationship, in the form of a contract-functionalist logic, was severely damaged over the course of the eighteenth century. The creoles lost their autonomy and faced discrimination, an incentive to break with the metropolis. However, this alone did not lead to a break of the hierarchical relationship. The economic position of the creoles did not favor a continuation of the relationship as well. Venezuela was able to sustain prosperity without Spain by illegal trade with Britain. Spanish products competed with the products of the colony, causing restrictive measures for the Venezuelans. The Venezuelans did not need the metropolis and were hindered by it. The only true remaining reason to sustain the hierarchical relationship was the social order created by Spain. This equilibrium in relational authority disappeared after the French invasion of Spain, Venezuelan creoles no longer believed that the metropolis could guarantee their safety. The hierarchical relationship was not worth the loss of (economic) freedom. This imbalance created reformist creoles, who wanted a fair balance between benefits and disadvantages of the relationship. The final and direct blow was the liberal Junta/Regency in Spain which gave the moderate creoles the hope they could alter the unfair balance. When talks broke down, the radicals had a chance to take over, and the creoles took up arms against their metropolis.

The reasons why the Venezuelan creoles rebelled are inextricable with the changes in the international order in the century prior to the independence. The underlying explanations of the revolution are a direct result of international factors, such as the succession war, the seven years war, the revolution in France and the formation of the USA and Haiti. These underlying explanations led to creole reformist and creole radicals. Another important international factor is of course the French invasion of Spain during the peninsular war. This was the direct trigger for the revolution, because

the events after the invasion allowed the radical creoles to hijack the revolution. Internal, or domestic, factors alone are unable to explain sufficiently why the Venezuelan creoles pushed for independence, furthermore, the seemingly internal reasons for the revolution can be linked almost directly with events or changes on the international stage.

The thesis has provided an answer to the research question but the research has been limited to one colony. In order to further investigate the effect of international factors on decolonization in the context of a contract-functional logic within a hierarchical relationship, research will have to be carried out in a similar way in respect to other colonies.

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