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# Political Elites and State Building: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Brazil

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The process whereby political independence came to the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in America has been the object of a rich body of scholarly interpretation. Although most of this literature concentrates on the causes of independence, several authors, particularly those concerned with the Brazilian case, have tried to explain also the reasons for the differences in the political evolution of the two colonial empires. Without denying the value of some of these explanations, this essay argues that they are not entirely satisfactory and that an alternative, or at least supplementary, explanation can be found in the nature of the political elites that emerged in the two colonies as a consequence of differing colonial policies.<sup>1</sup>

## SOME TRADITIONAL EXPLANATIONS

The most striking difference in the political evolution of the Spanish and the Portuguese colonial possessions is the well-known phenomenon of the Balkanization on the Spanish part, in contrast with the unified nation that emerged from the Portuguese domain. To put it in quantitative terms, at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Spanish colony was divided administratively into four viceroyalties, four captaincies-general, and thirteen high courts; by mid-century it was fragmented into seventeen different countries. In contrast, the Portuguese colony, of comparable size, which up to 1820 was still divided into eighteen captaincies-general, by 1825 had already been transformed into one independent nation.

This paper was written while I was in Princeton as a member of The Institute for Advanced Study, whose support is greatly appreciated. I benefitted from comments by several members of the Institute, particularly Clifford Geertz and John H. Elliott. I am also grateful to Raymond Grew for his suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> Many of the arguments and data presented here were developed in connection with the research done for my Ph.D. dissertation, "Elite and State-Building in Imperial Brazil" (Stanford University, 1975), and, in Brazil, *A Construção da Ordem: A Elite Política Imperial* (Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1980).

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Another important difference, although not as clear cut as the first, regards the nature of the two political systems. Brazil managed to maintain a reasonably stable constitutional monarchy, and this for sixty-nine years, while most of the Spanish-speaking countries, Chile being the conspicuous exception, had to cope with constant political upheavals that ended frequently in civilian or military caudillistic types of government. My main concern here will be with the first type of difference, although it could easily be argued that the nature of the independence movement was closely related to the subsequent evolution of the emancipated countries.

One first explanation found in the literature is based on economic factors. Celso Furtado, for instance, argues that the early decline of the mining cycle in the Spanish colony in the seventeenth century, and the consequent reflow to agriculture, led to greater isolation among the units within the colony than occurred in the Brazilian case, where the mining cycle took place in the eighteenth century and provided greater integration. The argument is not convincing. The Brazilian gold rush had already begun to subside by mid-eighteenth century and by the end of that century the same reflow to agriculture had taken place in the mining areas.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, even had the cycle been in effect in 1822, the year of Brazilian independence, only the center-south of the country would have been affected, leaving out part of the northeast and the entire north.

The more elaborate economic analysis of the colonial period undertaken by Osvaldo Sunkel and Pedro Paz turns out to be inconclusive regarding the impact of economic factors on the unification/fragmentation of the colony. According to these authors, important economic links developed among several units of the Spanish American empire, particularly after the introduction of the somewhat more liberal Bourbon reforms during the eighteenth century. But they also point out economic conflicts among these same units which favored fragmentation instead of unity. The maintenance of the integrity of the Portuguese colony is attributed by Sunkel and Paz to the presence of the monarchy, a traditional political explanation that will be examined below.<sup>3</sup>

Some authors mention social factors as important explanatory elements. More specifically, the presence of slavery in Brazil is said to have been a powerful incentive for the dominant classes to adopt a monarchical solution in

<sup>2</sup> Celso Furtado, *Economic Development of Latin America. A Survey from Colonial Times to the Cuban Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 13–18. On the decadence of the mining economy, see, for instance, Kenneth R. Maxwell, *Conflicts and Conspiracies: Brazil and Portugal, 1750–1808* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973). Caio Prado, Jr., recognizes that the bulk of colonial commerce was done with the metropolis. The only internal commercial link that, according to him, had some impact in terms of unifying parts of the colony was provided by the cattle trade. See Caio Prado, Jr., *The Colonial Background of Modern Brazil* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 271–72.

<sup>3</sup> Osvaldo Sunkel and Pedro Paz, *El Subdesarrollo Latino-Americano y la Teoría del Desarrollo* (México city: Siglo XXI, 1970), 275–343, esp. 300, 328.

order to avoid the breakdown of social order, a likely consequence were the unity of the former colony to collapse.<sup>4</sup> It is certainly true that nowhere else in the Spanish American empire, except in Cuba, was slavery as important as in Brazil, both in terms of the number of slaves and of the economic weight of the slave sector of the economy. There is also no denying that sectors of the Brazilian elite were greatly concerned with the possibility of slave revolts. The events of 1791 in Saint Dominique were still remembered by the slave owners, and some of the rebellions of the colonial period had clear racial and social overtones.<sup>5</sup> But the fear of slave revolts varied a great deal in different parts of the colony. In Rio de Janeiro, where the major decisions regarding independence were made, it was barely expressed. In fact, the greatest resistance to the monarchical and unitarian solution came from areas where the perception of threat was strongest, such as Bahia and Pernambuco. Furthermore, the fear of popular mobilization was not a privilege of the Brazilian upper classes—it was present all over Spanish America among Creoles. And it did not prevent them from developing the factional rivalries that helped to create different nuclei of national identity.

Slavery certainly had an impact in restraining intraelite conflict in Brazil, but it does not seem to have been a crucial element in keeping the country together at the time of independence. Members of the elite involved in the emancipation process did not consider the maintenance of the unity of the country as a necessary condition to preserve slavery. In the case of one of the most important among them, José Bonifácio, the perception was in the opposite direction: being personally and openly against slavery, he nevertheless resisted British pressures for a quick end to the slave trade lest the measure destroy the weak bonds that kept the provinces together.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See Hermes Lima, *Notas à Vida Brasileira* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1945), 8–10, 136–40. For a similar view, see Emília Viotti da Costa, “The Political Emancipation of Brazil,” in *From Colony to Nation, Essays on the Independence of Brazil*, A. J. R. Russell-Wood, ed. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 70. A different view, arguing that slavery was favored by political decentralization, is presented by Manoel de Oliveira Lima, *The Evolution of Brazil Compared with That of Spanish and Anglo-Saxon America* (Stanford: Stanford University Publications, 1914), 51–52.

<sup>5</sup> This was particularly the case of a frustrated rebellion that took place in Bahia in 1798. Several slaves were involved in it, and twenty-four of the thirty-four people indicted were either blacks or mulattos. See Affonso Ruy, *A Primeira Revolução Social Brasileira (1798)* (Rio de Janeiro: Laemmert, 1970), 114–17. The position of the Bahian elite is described in John Norman Kennedy, “Bahian Elites, 1750–1822,” *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 53 (August 1973), 415–39.

<sup>6</sup> On José Bonifácio, see Octávio Tarquínio de Souza, *José Bonifácio, 1773–1838* (Rio de Janeiro: J. Olympio, 1945). See also Leslie Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 42–43. The idea of transforming the former colony into a “great nation,” in a “vast empire,” was almost an obsession among many leaders of the independence movement, as the minutes of the first Council of State, created in 1822, well indicate. One councillor, comparing D. Pedro to the Roman emperors, declared that it would be “the greatest pleasure of my life to see Brazil, from the Amazon to the Prata, united in one single

A third possible explanation can be traced to the colonial administrative policies of Spain and Portugal. It is known, for instance, that the Spanish policy under the Habsburgs was guided by a federal conception of the empire, in contrast to the more centralized Portuguese policy. One consequence of this difference was the establishment of thirteen high courts of justice—*audiencias*—in the Spanish colonies, as compared with only two on the Portuguese side. Some authors have remarked that the territorial limits defined by these courts formed in several instances the boundaries of the future independent nations.<sup>7</sup> But here again there are difficulties. First, in both the Spanish and Portuguese cases, there was an initial phase of a more liberal colonial policy followed by a centralization effort during the eighteenth century, not to mention the fact that from 1580 to 1640 the two crowns were united. Second, despite the policy differences, the end result in terms of internal communication among the distinct units of the two colonies was similar, i.e., the links were very weak in both cases. The authority of the viceroys within either side was more nominal than real outside their own territorial jurisdictions. The *oidores* (judges) of *audiencias* and captains-general were appointed by the crown and could communicate directly with it, eschewing the mediation of the viceroys. Both the Portuguese and Spanish crowns played one colonial authority against another as a strategy of political control.<sup>8</sup> Third, the exclusion of Creoles from the most important positions in the Spanish colonial administrative bodies, a practice reinforced under the Bourbons, reduced the impact these bodies could have had in forming local centers of Creole power.<sup>9</sup>

Even assuming that the Portuguese policy led to closer contacts between the colony and the metropolis, it did not generate greater communication among the captaincies. It is almost consensual among historians that at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese court in Rio in 1808, the captaincies were very much

kingdom." See Senado Federal, *Atas do Conselho de Estado*, José Honório Rodrigues, ed. (Brasília: Senado Federal, 1973), I, 23.

<sup>7</sup> See C. H. Haring, *The Spanish Empire in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 137; and also John Leddy Phelan, *The Kingdom of Quito in the Seventeenth Century. Bureaucratic Politics in the Spanish Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), 122-23.

<sup>8</sup> For case studies on the relationships of colonial administrators among themselves and with the metropolis, see Dauril Alden, *Royal Government in Colonial Brazil with Special Reference to the Administration of the Marquis of Lavradio, Viceroy, 1769-1779* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), esp. ch. 16; and Phelan, *Kingdom of Quito*, esp. pt. II. A recent argument in favor of a basically similar tradition can be found in Claudio Veliz, *The Centralist Tradition of Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

<sup>9</sup> The introduction of the more aggressive *intendentes* (intendants) during the Bourbon period, as substitutes for the *corregidores* (district magistrates), together with the continuing exclusion of Creoles, might have had the unintended effect of spurring local government represented by the *cabildos* (municipal councils). This was, according to John Lynch, what happened in the Rio de la Plata viceroyalty. See his "The Crisis of Colonial Administration," in *The Origins of the Latin American Revolutions, 1808-1826*, R. A. Humphreys and John Lynch, eds. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 122-23.

isolated from each other politically. Even after the arrival of the court, the northern part of the colony, which from 1624 to 1775 had been completely separated from the rest as a different state, continued to deal directly with Lisbon instead of obeying the Portuguese regent in Rio de Janeiro. The situation of the captaincies at the end of the colonial period was described in the following terms by the French botanist Saint-Hilaire, who had direct knowledge of several of them: "[the captaincies] hardly communicated with each other; frequently they even ignored each other's existence. There was no common center in Brazil: it was a huge circle the radii of which converged far from the circumference."<sup>10</sup>

The most common explanation points to a political factor. It argues that the flight of the Portuguese court to Brazil at the end of 1807 as a consequence of the invasion of Portugal by the Napoleonic troops and the settlement of the court in Rio de Janeiro at the beginning of 1808 made possible a smooth transition to independence under a monarchical system, and by doing so, reversed the centrifugal tendencies among the provinces and provided the basis for national unity.<sup>11</sup> Again, there is no denying the importance of this event. A monarchy was contemplated in several parts of the former Spanish colony, and a short experiment with it was made in Mexico, where a plebeian candidate proved unconvincing as king. Among the *libertadores*, San Martín was convinced that only a monarchical solution would avert anarchy after the wars of independence had been completed.<sup>12</sup> But the presence of the Portuguese court in Rio did not make a monarchy a necessary outcome in Brazil. The events of the years 1821 and 1822 show that the option for a monarchy under the Portuguese Prince Pedro was a decision of the national political elite, and one for which popular support existed, particularly in Rio. The option became clearer in 1831 when the now Pedro I of Brazil was forced to resign; instead of establishing a republican government, as all other independent countries in the Americas had done and as many Brazilians wanted, the national elite decided to proclaim as emperor Pedro's five-year-old son, who

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in J. F. de Almeida Prado, *D. João VI e o Início da Classe Dirigente do Brasil* (São Paulo: Ed. Nacional, 1968), 134. The same view can be found in J. M. Pereira da Silva, *História da Fundação do Império Brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: B. L. Garnier, 1864), 135; Henrique Handelman, *História do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: RIHGB, 1930), 710; Viotti da Costa, "Political Emancipation," 66, and others.

<sup>11</sup> See Pereira da Silva, *História da Fundação*, 275; C. H. Haring, *Empire in Brazil. A New World Experiment with Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 23-24; John Armitage, *The History of Brazil from . . . 1808 to . . . 1831* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1836), II, 138; Tobias Monteiro, *História do Império. A Elaboração da Independência* (Rio de Janeiro: F. Briguiet e Cia., 1927), 851; Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, *História da Independência do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1917), 349-50.

<sup>12</sup> See Carlos A. Villanueva, *La Monarquía en América. Bolívar y el General San Martín* (Paris: Librería Paul Ollendorff, 1911), esp. 235-51. According to Villanueva, besides Mexico and San Martín's Argentina, the idea of a monarchy occurred also to elements of the elite in Venezuela, Chile, Peru, and Colombia.

then became Pedro II of Brazil. The presence of the court in Rio certainly made the decision to keep the monarchy easier, but it did not make it a certainty for there were strong tendencies, particularly in the northern areas of the country, toward a republican solution and secession from Rio.<sup>13</sup> If the decision was a political one, a look at those who made it would be useful in searching for a more satisfactory explanation.

#### THE POLITICAL ELITE AS AN EXPLANATORY FACTOR

The political elites formed during the Spanish and Brazilian colonial periods confront us immediately with a major contrast. The great majority of the Brazilian elite at the time of independence and up to mid-century had three common characteristics: first, they were all trained in one university, Portugal's Coimbra; second, they were trained mostly in civil law; third, they were principally bureaucrats, especially magistrates or judges. Although there are, to my knowledge, no quantitative studies of the elites of the Spanish-speaking countries, from the evidence available it can be safely asserted that no group comparable to the Brazilian was present in any of them. Many elites were certainly highly educated, but not in one place and in one subject, and not with practical experience in matters of government.<sup>14</sup>

This fact, I will argue, was due to a clear difference in the colonial educational policies of Portugal and Spain. Portugal refused systematically to allow the organization of any institution of higher learning in her colonies, not considering as such the theological seminaries. Only after the arrival of the Portuguese court were two medical and two military academies allowed. The reason for this policy was clearly stated by the Conselho Ultramarino (Overseas Council) in 1768 when it denied a request made by the still rich gold-mining captaincy of Minas Gerais to build its own school of medicine. The Conselho answered that the question was a political one and that a favorable decision could lead to a further request for a law academy, and the whole process would end up in independence, since "one of the strongest unifying

<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to observe that the Spanish American countries served as a negative example for the Brazilian elite. During the difficult years of the regency, 1831-40, troubled by constant rebellions, some of which with secessionist and republican tendencies, it was common for members of the national elite, liberals and conservatives alike, to insist on the maintenance of the monarchy as a way of preventing the evils of fragmentation and internal struggle that had befallen Brazil's neighbors.

<sup>14</sup> Not by coincidence, the most specific and detailed study available deals with the Chilean elite, the most homogeneous of the Spanish-speaking countries. See Alberto Edwards Vives, *La Frontera Aristocrática en Chile* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Ercilla, 1936). Other useful works include Tulio Halperin-Donghi, *Revolución y Guerra. Formación de una Elite Dirigente en la Argentina Criolla* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 1972); Robert G. Gilmore, *Caudillism and Militarism in Venezuela* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1964); D. A. Brading, "Government and Elite in Late Colonial Mexico," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 53 (August 1973), 389-414; and Seymour Martin Lipset and Aldo Solari, eds., *Elites in Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).

bonds that keeps the dependency of the colonies, is the need to come to Portugal for higher studies.”<sup>15</sup>

As a consequence of the refusal, Brazilian students had to go to Portugal for their training. From 1772 to 1872, a total of 1,242 of them, coming from all captaincies, were enrolled at Coimbra, of whom 80 percent attended before 1828, when two Brazilian law schools were opened.<sup>16</sup> As it turned out, a substantial part of the leadership involved in the independence movement at the national level, as well as the majority of the national political elite in the three decades that followed, was drawn from this group of university graduates. As Table 1 shows, all of the university-educated cabinet ministers during the first decade of independence were trained in Portugal, and by mid-century almost half of the ministers still belonged to this Coimbra generation.<sup>17</sup>

Nothing of the sort happened in the Spanish colony. It was the consistent policy of the colonial government to encourage the organization of universities under the aegis of the state or of the church. The royal universities were modeled after the University of Salamanca, the religious ones mostly after that of Alcalá. At the end of the colonial period, twenty-three (or twenty-five, according to some authors) universities had been created, the first ones, those of Peru and Mexico, as early as 1551. The geographical distribution of these universities presents a striking coincidence: there were universities in almost all of the regions that later became independent countries, except for some of the small Central American nations. The twenty-three universities were scattered in what eventually would become thirteen different countries.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Américo Jacobina Lacombe, “A Igreja no Brasil Colonial,” in *História Geral da Civilização Brasileira*, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, ed. (São Paulo: Difel, 1965–1972), *Tomo I*, vol. II, 72.

<sup>16</sup> See Francisco Morais, “Estudantes Brasileiros na Universidade de Coimbra (1772–1872),” *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*, 62 (1940), 137–335.

<sup>17</sup> I am defining as the national political elite the persons who occupied the top positions in the political system. The core of this elite was formed by cabinet ministers, state councillors, and senators, a total of 342 persons. A total of 1,027 deputies, who served in ten legislatures, were also considered, although in less depth due to the greater difficulty in finding information on them. State councillors were appointed for life by the emperor and in good part overlapped with ministers and senators. Senators were elected but also held a life tenure. Deputies were elected for a four-year term. For the sake of simplicity, I will present complete data only for ministers. There are no major variations for the rest. A parallel work independent of this study arrived at somewhat similar conclusions about the nature of the Brazilian elite: see Eul-Soo Pang and Ron L. Sec-kinger, “The Mandarins of Imperial Brazil,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 14:2 (1972), 215–44. The importance of juridical training was also stressed by Roderick and Jean Barman, “The Role of the Law Graduate in the Political Elite of Imperial Brazil,” *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, 18 (November 1976), 432–49.

<sup>18</sup> On the colonial universities, see John Tate Lanning, *Academic Culture in the Spanish Colonies* (Folcroft: The Folcroft Press, 1969), 3–33, and German Arciniegas, *Latin America, a Cultural History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 151–52. Arciniegas lists twenty-five universities, which Lanning reduced to twenty-three, arguing that some were counted twice because of their transformation from minor to major universities.



TABLE 1  
*Place of Higher Education of Cabinet Ministers, by Period, 1822–1889*  
 (in percentage)

	1822–31	1831–40	1840–53	1853–71	1871–89	Total
Portugal						
Coimbra	71.8	66.7	45.0	—	—	28.5
Other	<u>28.2</u>	<u>16.1</u>	<u>—</u>	—	—	<u>8.0</u>
Total	100.00	82.8	45.0	—	—	36.5
Brazil						
Two law schools	—	3.3	45.0	75.0	84.1	49.5
Other	—	<u>6.6</u>	<u>10.0</u>	<u>20.8</u>	<u>14.3</u>	<u>11.5</u>
Total	—	9.9	55.0	95.8	98.4	61.0
Other Countries	—	6.3	—	4.2	1.6	2.5
Total number of ministers	(39)	(30)	(20)	(48)	(63)	(200)

*Note:* The total number of ministers during 1822–89 was 219, so that only 19 had no higher education. The figures for senators are similar to the ones shown above. Senators were elected for a life tenure. Being among the first who were selected, the Coimbra generation lasted even longer among them. It made up 62 percent of the total in the third period and 9 percent in the fourth. SOURCE: José Murilo de Carvalho, *A Construção da Ordem: A Elite Política Imperial* (Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1980), 63, 66.

My contention is that the phenomenon was no coincidence at all. The Spanish colonial universities made possible the creation of numerous local educated elites, with little if any contact with the mother country or with other neighboring colonial subdivisions. When the struggle for independence began, few of these people had, as did the *libertadores*, the larger view of the whole colony in mind, the majority being limited by its parochial experience. But at the same moment, in the former Portuguese colony, there was a single elite, one which was, so to speak, a small club of friends and former classmates. Its members came from all parts of the huge colony, but they had got to know each other at Coimbra where they had an organization of their own. The absence of universities in the colony had also the consequence of holding the number of graduates to a small group. As mentioned, only slightly over a thousand Brazilian students were enrolled at Coimbra after 1772. In clear contrast, the Royal University of Mexico alone graduated around 39,000 before independence, and it has been calculated that the total number of graduates for the entire Spanish colony was 150,000.<sup>19</sup> This greater diffusion

<sup>19</sup> Lanning, *Academic Culture*, 53.

of higher education also multiplied the chances for competing leaderships and for the spread of political conflict.

The ideological content of the education of the Spanish and Portuguese elites was another source of divergence. Since its beginning in 1290, the University of Coimbra had been under the intellectual influence of the University of Bologna, the major European center of study of Roman law at the time. Several of the Coimbra faculty had been trained at Bologna and were for this reason called "the *bolônios*."<sup>20</sup> From the end of the sixteenth century until 1759, the Jesuits controlled the College of Arts and managed to reduce the emphasis on legal studies, but did not eliminate them. In 1759 they were expelled from Portugal by the Marquis of Pombal, the powerful minister of King José I. As part of the marquis' overall policy to promote the economic recovery of the empire, the university was submitted to a drastic reform with new emphasis being put on the natural sciences, particularly zoology, botany, and mineralogy. The new rector to whom Pombal entrusted the reform was the Brazilian Francisco de Lemos. After the death of D. José and the fall of Pombal in 1777 there was a reaction against his reform, the emphasis on natural sciences was abandoned, and civil law regained its ancient prestige. But the reform movement, while it lasted, managed to bridge somewhat the gap between Portuguese education and the achievements of the European Enlightenment, and it trained an important group of scientists, among whom were several Brazilians who were still politically active at the time of independence.<sup>21</sup> But the majority of the Brazilian elite at independence had been trained at Coimbra after law degrees were again predominant. In the first two decades following independence, as Table 2 shows, there was still among the cabinet ministers a considerable group of scientists and of persons with a military training. Military education was imparted at the Colégio dos Nobres (College of the Nobles), an institution created by Pombal; it, too, placed strong emphasis on the natural sciences and intended thereby to transform the scions of noble families into subjects more useful to the king.

The concentration of training in one place and in one discipline gave the elite a solid ideological homogeneity. The Romanist tradition was of particular importance. Although Roman law was used for various purposes after the

<sup>20</sup> For a history of the University of Coimbra, see Teófilo Brago, *História da Universidade de Coimbra nas suas Relações com a Instrução Pública Portuguesa*, 4 vols. (Lisboa: Tip. da Academia Real das Ciências, 1892-1902).

<sup>21</sup> On Pombal's effort to revitalize the Portuguese and colonial economies, see Maxwell, *Conflicts and Conspiracies*, esp. chs. 1,2. On his educational reforms, see Laerte Ramos de Carvalho, *As Reformas Pombalinas da Instrução Pública* (São Paulo: USP, 1952). The activity of the reform generation in Brazil was studied in Kenneth R. Maxwell, "The Generation of the 1790s and the Idea of Luso-Brazilian Empire," in *Colonial Roots of Modern Brazil*, Dauril Alden, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 107-44; and in Maria Odila da Silva Dias, "Aspectos da Ilustração no Brasil," *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, 278 (January-March 1968), 105-70.

TABLE 2  
*Field of Higher Education of Cabinet Ministers, by Period, 1822–1889*  
 (in percentage)

	1822–31	1831–40	1840–53	1853–71	1871–89	Total
Law	51.3	56.7	85.0	77.1	85.7	72.5
Exact sciences	20.5	13.3	5.0	2.1	—	7.0
Military	28.2	20.0	10.0	18.7	7.9	16.5
Medical	—	6.7	—	2.1	6.4	3.5
Religious	—	3.3	—	—	—	0.5
Total number of ministers	(39)	(30)	(20)	(48)	(63)	(200)

*Note:* The figures for senators are similar, with some minor variations. The importance of training in law is greater among them for the first two periods (61 percent and 71 percent, respectively); there is a substantial presence of religious education in the second period (28 percent); and the general presence of military education is less significant (8 percent).

SOURCE: José Murilo de Carvalho, *A Construção da Ordem: A Elite Política Imperial* (Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1980), 68.

revival of its study in Europe at the end of the eleventh century, in Portugal “the *bolônios*” had been using it consistently to help consolidate the power of the kings. As Teófilo Braga puts it: “The jurists were the theoretical organizers of this monarchical dictatorship; the transformation of the feudal regime under D. João I takes place by virtue of the predominance of Chancellor João das Regras, a legist of the school of Bologna.”<sup>22</sup> The absorption of a centralizing, postclassical version of the Roman tradition was instrumental in infusing the future Brazilian leaders with a strong statist orientation, a firm belief in the reasons of the state and in its supremacy over church and barons.

At the same time, Coimbra managed to isolate its students from the most dangerous aspects of the French Enlightenment, admitting only the reformist and Christian version of the *Lumières*.<sup>23</sup> It is noteworthy that several Brazilian

<sup>22</sup> Braga, *História da Universidade*, I, 126. On the general influence of Roman law and its instrumental part in strengthening the authority of the kings, see Hans Julius Wolff, *Roman Law. An Historical Introduction* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), ch. 7. Its influence and the role of university-trained jurists is also stressed by Max Weber. See H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 93. For a demonstration of a more diversified use of Roman law during the period of emergence of the modern state, see Myron Piper Gilmore, *Argument from Roman Law in Political Thought, 1200–1600* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941). The influence of Roman law, particularly the *ius civile*, on the Brazilian legislation, is described in Theresa Sherrer Davidson, “The Brazilian Inheritance of Roman Law,” in James B. Watson *et al.*, *Brazil: Papers Presented in the Institute for Brazilian Studies, Vanderbilt University*, (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1953), 59–90.

<sup>23</sup> See Cabral de Moncada, *Um “Iluminista” Português do Século XVIII: Luis Antônio Verney*, quoted in L. R. de Carvalho, *As Reformas Pombalinas*, 26–27. Even Pombal’s reform did

students who went to France or England, and even some priests trained in the colony, were more influenced by the subversive ideas of the time and more willing to put them into practice through political action than were their Coimbra fellows. It might not be an exaggeration to say that it was easier to have access to the *philosophes* in the captaincy of Minas Gerais, four hundred miles to the interior of Brazil, than at Coimbra. The library of one priest who participated in a 1789 political rebellion which occurred in that captaincy was made the object of a study, the revealing title of which is "The Devil in the Canon's Library." The devil was *l'Encyclopédie*, Diderot, Voltaire, d'Alembert, Mably, and the like.<sup>24</sup>

From the studies available on the elites of the Spanish-speaking countries, it can be concluded that no such ideological homogeneity existed among them. For one part, as already noted, the greater diffusion of higher education favored wider diffusion of ideas. For another, although Roman law was also very influential in Spain, most of the colonial universities were controlled by religious orders and dedicated to religious training. Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians competed for the control of higher education as a weapon of religious conquest. Even the state-controlled Royal University of Mexico put the emphasis of its training in theology, thus departing from its model, the University of Salamanca, where law had the upper hand.<sup>25</sup> This type of education was less likely to convey a concern with and knowledge of state building than was the training imparted at Coimbra.

The statist orientation of the Brazilian elite was further enhanced by the elite's third characteristic, its occupational composition. As can be seen in Table 3, up to 1853 the overwhelming majority of cabinet ministers were public employees. A similar picture can be obtained for senators and deputies. And among these public employees, the magistrates had a dominant position,

not go so far as to accept authors such as Rousseau and Voltaire. It remained politically conservative, in line with the authoritarian views of the marquis. Many of the scientists trained under the influence of the reform were sent to Brazil, commissioned by the crown to explore the economic potentialities of the colony. The captaincy of Minas Gerais alone, rich in mineral resources, had thirty-four such scientists holding public office at the end of the colonial period. See José Ferreira Carrato, *Igreja, Iluminismo e Escolas Mineiras Coloniais* (São Paulo: Ed. Nacional, 1968), 240-45.

<sup>24</sup> See Eduardo Frieiro, *O Diabo na Livraria do Cônego* (Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia, 1957), and also Alexander Marchant, "Aspects of the Enlightenment in Brazil," in *Latin American Enlightenment*, Arthur P. Whitaker, ed. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1961), 95-118. The more progressive aspects of the activities of intellectuals in the colony are stressed in E. Bradford Burns, "The Intellectuals as Agents of Change and the Independence of Brazil, 1724-1882," in *From Colony to Nation*, Russell-Wood, ed., 211-46. Many of the more radical intellectuals, though, were priests or had been trained in France or England. Particularly active were physicians trained in France at Montpellier.

<sup>25</sup> See Lanning, *Academic Culture*, 18, 33. For the general impact of the Catholic Church, see Richard E. Greenleaf, *The Roman Catholic Church in Colonial Latin America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971). On the influence of the Enlightenment in Latin America in general, see Whitaker, ed., *Latin American Enlightenment*.

TABLE 3  
*Occupation of Cabinet Ministers, by Period, 1822–1889*  
 (in percentage)

	1822–31	1831–40	1840–53	1853–71	1871–89	Total
Public employees						
Magistrates	33.3	45.7	47.8	30.0	12.1	29.7
Military	46.7	31.4	13.0	20.0	6.1	22.4
Other	6.7	5.7	—	4.0	1.5	3.7
Total public employees	86.7	82.9	60.8	54.0	19.7	55.8
Professions	6.6	14.3	26.1	40.0	65.1	35.1
Other	6.7	2.8	13.1	6.0	15.2	9.1
Total number of ministers	(45)	(35)	(23)	(50)	(66)	(219)

*Note:* The percentages of public employees among senators are, for the first three periods, 65, 67, and 57, respectively. The figures for magistrates for the same periods are, in percentages, 42, 53, and 43. Among deputies, public employees represented around 40 percent until the end of the fifties, magistrates accounted for about 30 percent of the total.

Occupation was used here as an indication of training and socialization, not of social origin or of class links. Many public employees, for instance, including judges, were sons or relatives of landowners if not landowners themselves. Available data on social origin, though, are not very complete and not very reliable.

SOURCE: José Murilo de Carvalho, *A Construção da Ordem: A Elite Política Imperial* (Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1980), 79.

be it among ministers, senators, councillors, or deputies, except during the first period when the military predominated among ministers.

Magistrates, as Stuart Schwartz has shown, were the backbone of the Portuguese state, over which they had made their influence felt since the fourteenth century. They were a surprisingly modern professional group with elaborate training and career patterns. They were made to circulate from colony to colony and from the colonies to the higher posts in Portugal. And since the exercise of judicial functions was always linked to public administration in general, the whole process transformed several of these magistrates into consummate statesmen. Another important point about this group, which was true also for the entire Portuguese bureaucracy, was that there was relatively little discrimination against Brazilian nationals. Brazilian judges served in different types of courts both in Portugal and in the colonies of Asia and America.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sovereignty and Society in Colonial Brazil: The High Court of Bahia and Its Judges, 1661–1751* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973). By the same author, see

The Spanish bureaucracy was not very different from the Portuguese in terms of professionalization, and the magistrates—particularly the *oidores* of the *audiencias*—were its most important part.<sup>27</sup> The major difference here, and this has frequently been pointed out, was the much greater degree of exclusion of American-born Spaniards from the higher posts in the Spanish side. This fact has been singled out with reason as an important source of alienation of upper class Creoles and of conflict with *peninsulares*.<sup>28</sup> And it must be added that the exclusion had also the consequence of preventing the development of a sizable group of Creoles with practical experience in government matters at the highest levels of public administration, that is, of state building proper. Participation in the *cabildos*, the local administrative bodies, was not likely to provide such experience.

In summary, I am arguing that the presence in Brazil by the time of independence of an elite that by the place and content of training, by career pattern and occupational experience, constituted a closely united group of people, ideologically homogeneous, statist oriented, and practical in government matters, was a basic factor in the maintenance of the unity of the former colony and in the adoption of a centralized monarchical system. This could have been a not sufficient condition, but it seems to me that it was a necessary one. The great number of rebellions, some with secessionist tendencies, that took place in Brazil both before and after independence shows that the business of keeping the country together was a very difficult task indeed. Between 1831 and 1848 alone, more than twenty minor revolts and seven major ones broke out in different parts of the country. In three of the latter, the leaders proclaimed independent republican governments. Had there been numerous local and parochial elites, instead of a united national elite, the colony would most probably have broken apart into several different countries, just as happened on the Spanish side.<sup>29</sup>

"Magistracy and Society in Colonial Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 50 (November 1970), 715-30.

<sup>27</sup> See Phelan, *Kingdom of Quito*, 119-46.

<sup>28</sup> A selection of texts on the conflicts between Creoles and *peninsulares* can be found in Humphreys and Lynch, eds., *Origins*, pt. VII. M. A. Burkholder and D. S. Chandler challenge the traditional view of the exclusion of Creoles in their study of *audiencia* appointments. But they recognize that after 1776 discrimination against the American born increased. See M. A. Burkholder and D. S. Chandler, "Creole Appointments and the Sale of Audiencia Positions in the Spanish Empire under the Early Bourbons, 1701-1750," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 4 (November 1972), 187-206.

<sup>29</sup> In a recent book, Jorge I. Domínguez, after discarding several possible explanations for the political evolution of the Spanish colonies, also stresses the nature of the relationships between elite groups and the government as an explanatory factor, concentrating on the cases of Chile, Mexico, Cuba, and Venezuela. The difference from my approach is that he is dealing not only with the political elite, but primarily with the economic and local elites, and he does not give particular emphasis to socialization factors. The specificity of the Brazilian case, it seems to me, was exactly the presence of a national political elite, that is, of an elite that could aggregate the interests of the dominant groups and protect them through the mediation of the state power. See Jorge I. Domínguez, *Insurrection or Loyalty. The Breakdown of the Spanish American Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

It is significant, for example, that very few of the graduates of Coimbra, or of the military trained at the College of the Nobles for that matter, took part in the rebellions. A look at the list of persons indicted for participation in three of the preindependence rebellions shows that, aside from a few intellectuals trained in Europe outside of Portugal, the most conspicuous participants were priests and local lower-rank military.<sup>30</sup> Priests, in fact, provided the clearest opposition to the magistrates among the educated elite. Most of the lower clergy had been educated in Brazil and were both more parochial, in the sense of lacking concern for maintaining the unity of the country, and more influenced by politically subversive ideas, such as popular sovereignty and republicanism. Two years after independence, a rebellion, led mostly by priests, went as far as to proclaim an independent republican government in the northeastern part of the country. By mid-century, when the rebellions had ended and the monarchy was solidly established, priests had been completely eliminated from the national political elite.

One alternative explanation that has been put forward for the difference in political behavior between magistrates and priests points in the direction of their different class origins, priests being recruited among the lower strata of the population. There may in fact have been some difference in social origin, in general, between the two groups. Only families of substance could afford to send their sons to Coimbra. But, on the other side, it is well known that to have a priest in the family was as prestigious as to have a magistrate or lawyer. It was also very convenient for rich families to have one of the sons become a priest since a noninheriting male heir made it easier to keep the family estate intact. And the fact is that almost all priests who took part in the rebellions were rich and the offspring of wealthy families. Some priests were usurers, some landowners, some even plantation and slave owners. In terms of social origin, therefore, there seems to be little or no difference between the rebellious priests and the magistrates. The major difference was in their ideology and training.

As far as the military are concerned, their participation in the rebellions was limited to members of the lower ranks or to officers of the militia corps. Most of the higher ranking officers who appear among the national political elite during the first and second decades after independence were trained at Coimbra or at the College of the Nobles, and they did not differ very much in terms of political outlook from the magistrates, being also deeply involved in state affairs. Their number among the elite, particularly among senators and deputies, was progressively reduced in favor of magistrates and lawyers, reflecting the consolidation of the monarchical system. In the meantime, the training of the military took a more technical direction and was clearly separated from the training of the political elite. This fact, together with a change in the social composition of the officer corps and the influence of positivism,

<sup>30</sup> See J. M. de Carvalho, *A Construção*, 145.

gradually helped to alienate them from the civilian elite and from the monarchy. They would come back to the national political scene at the end of the empire as allies of republican groups.<sup>31</sup>

The absence of a radical break in the Brazilian process of independence made it possible for the national elite to replicate the policy that had produced it. Only two law schools were established during the empire, and the members of the elite, as previously shown, continued to be drawn from the graduates of these schools. An elaborate system of advancement in the political career was also developed: starting as a municipal judge, the politician would slowly proceed up to the highest posts of ministers and state councillors in a further reinforcement of the ideological unity, statist orientation, and familiarity with public office that were found among their Portuguese antecedents.

#### THE POLITICAL ELITE AND THE NATURE OF THE STATE

From the previous discussion it can be concluded that the presence of an elite such as the one found in Brazil at the end of the colonial period was no accident at all. It was the product of an explicit effort made by the Portuguese state. And this brings us to the problem of the nature of this state and of its relationships with society. The Portuguese state would and could train such an elite because it had itself benefitted from an early consolidation which dated from the accession to power of D. João I after his victory at the battle of Aljubarrota in 1385. D. João won with the support of the merchant class and this, according to Oliveira Martins, meant the end of the Middle Ages in Portugal, a final blow against the feudal barons, who were already weakened by the long struggle against the Moors.<sup>32</sup> But, unlike the case in England, a modern market economy and a liberal society did not develop in Portugal at the same time that a modern state was being molded. With the overseas adventure, commercial capitalism developed under the protection of the crown, the king being the country's first and most powerful merchant. An independent bourgeoisie could not ascend to become a dominant social class as in other European countries. As a consequence, there was a predominance of the state and a weakness of the institutions of political representation, one characteristic of which was the pervasive overrepresentation of public employees among the political elite.<sup>33</sup>

In Brazil, this predominance—and that of the magistrates in particular—led eventually to a reaction. In 1855, a House bill was introduced in the Brazilian

<sup>31</sup> On the military, see John Henry Schulz, "Brazilian Army and Politics, 1850-1894" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1973).

<sup>32</sup> Oliveira Martins, *História de Portugal* (Lisboa: Guimarães Editores, 1968), 158.

<sup>33</sup> On the economic evolution of Portugal, see João Lúcio de Azevedo, *Épocas de Portugal Económico* (Lisboa: Livraria Clássica Ed., 1973). The development of a powerful bureaucratic stratum is described in Raymundo Faoro, *Os Donos do Poder. Formação do Patronato Político Brasileiro* (Porto Alegre: Globo, 1958), chs. 1-3.



Congress intended to establish restrictions on the eligibility of magistrates and other public employees to serve as legislators. In the illuminating debate that followed, some deputies called attention to the consequences of the continued predominance of magistrates for the nature of political representation in Brazil. I quote one of them: "Can we say, Mr. President, that a House represents faithfully the interests of all classes in society when 82 of its 113 members are legists [magistrates]? Where are, Gentlemen, the representatives of the industrial classes, of the landowners, of the capitalists, of the merchants?" Another had voiced a similar concern: "In this House there are no merchants, no farmers, all are public employees, so to speak." The role of the magistrates in politics was forcefully defended during the debate, but the fact remained that political representation was impaired by the overwhelming presence of government employees in the legislature.<sup>34</sup>

In a parallel direction, there was a constant complaint against the excessive size and influence of the central bureaucracy. One of the most perceptive politicians and social reformers of the last years of the regime, Joaquim Nabuco, attributed this overgrown structure to slavery. In his view, the existence of slave labor prevented the majority of the free population from developing economic alternatives to public employment, to which the majority was forced to turn as a source of income; slavery made public employees, in his words, "the government's serfs."<sup>35</sup> Nabuco was, of course, overstating the case. But public jobs were certainly the aspiration of many, and the bureaucracy weighed heavily on the state's budget. By the end of the empire, expenditures on personnel ate up 60 percent of the central budget, and almost 70 percent of the civil service was concentrated in the central government. This contributed to the high visibility of the national government, and the state in general, and led some observers to view the political system as stateful, and the state as a leviathan dominating an inert society. On the other side, those who stressed the existence of a powerful land- and slave-owning class, in control of the export-oriented economy, concluded that the government was simply the representative of the interests of this class.<sup>36</sup> The present discussion of the political elite can help to reconcile such conflicting views.

The continuity that characterized the process of independence, and the centralized monarchical system that was established—in good part, as I have argued, because of the nature of the political elite—gave the state apparatus a

<sup>34</sup> See J. M. de Carvalho, *A Construção*, 138. At the time, the House had 77 members who held law degrees in a total of 113 members. Of the 77, there were 43 judges, and several others were also public employees.

<sup>35</sup> Joaquim Nabuco, *Abolitionism: The Brazilian Antislavery Struggle*, Robert Conrad, ed. and trans. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 128.

<sup>36</sup> For the first view, Faoro, *Os Donos do Poder*, 262; for the second, Nestor Duarte, *A Ordem Privada e a Organização Política Nacional* (São Paulo: Ed. Nacional, 1939). On the concept of stateful societies, see J. P. Nettl, "The State as a Conceptual Variable," *World Politics*, 20 (July 1968), 559–92.

significant weight of its own, and made the government a major actor in the life of the country, as had been the case in Portugal. It made possible the partial fusion of the bureaucracy and the political elite, giving at times the impression that it was the government and not social groups and classes that was represented in Congress. But, on the other side, unlike Portugal, Brazil had a strong landowning class highly dependent on slave labor. This class dominated the economy of the country, which was based mostly on exports of coffee, sugar, and tobacco. And the central government depended on the taxes levied on external trade, which amounted to 70 percent of the budget. So, the stability of the government required an alliance between the bureaucracy and the landed classes.

But this was an unstable alliance. Several observers besides Joaquim Nabuco have pointed out how the slave system restricted economic opportunities for elements of the middle sectors, both rural and urban. Moreover, the long-term stagnation of the sugar economy in the northern part of the country contributed to the unemployment of members of landed classes also. In addition, the near monopoly held by foreigners on the commercial sector of the larger cities aggravated the situation. The bureaucracy became then one of the few alternatives for all those job seekers, and the scramble for public jobs was a widely recognized fact. Having been either expelled from the slave economy in its decadent sector, or denied channels of upward mobility by the general constraints of a slave society, many members of the bureaucracy had no strong commitment to maintain the slave system. They could support or even initiate social reforms once convinced that the fiscal basis of the state, that is, of their salaries, would not be threatened by such action. In fact, the major abolitionist law of 1871, that which declared free all children born thenceforward to slave mothers, was passed over the strong opposition of landowners, who bitterly attacked the government and the emperor. The approval of the law was made possible by the large number of public employees in the House.<sup>37</sup>

This was a complex situation indeed. The elite, and the state itself, were dependent on the slave economy and were in some sense the supporters of the slave society. But they were also able to detach themselves from the interests of slavery and become an instrument of reform. This contradiction was perceived by Joaquim Nabuco when he observed that the state was at the same time a shadow of slavery and the only force capable of putting an end to it.

<sup>37</sup> The vote in the House showed a combination of political and economic pressures. Public employees voted overwhelmingly for the measure, but most of them came from the northern and northeastern parts of the country where the importance of slave labor was becoming less pressing because of the lack of economic dynamism. The south had fewer public employees among its representatives, and its growing coffee economy depended heavily on its slave workforce. Southern representatives voted overwhelmingly against the measure. See J. M. de Carvalho, "Elite and State-Building," 329-39.

This was also the reason why the regime was, on one side, able to survive for sixty-nine years, but, on the other, very vulnerable. One year after his daughter, then regent, was enthusiastically applauded in the streets of Rio for abolishing slavery, the aging emperor was quietly sent into exile after being overthrown in a bloodless coup d'état engineered by a sector of the bureaucracy he had always overlooked, the military, and by the republican landowners of the most prosperous coffee areas.

A unified elite was instrumental in consolidating the political power of the dominant classes by neutralizing the consequences of their internal divisions and by keeping at bay political mobilization from below. But in view of the very lack of cohesion within these classes, and as a consequence of its own training, the elite could achieve this goal only by building a national state apparatus, which then became a major political actor in its own right. Now, the major common interests between the state and the dominant classes were the maintenance of order and the control of political mobilization. When it came to specific issues that affected differently the economic interests of various sectors of the dominant classes, the elite, and particularly its bureaucratic component, was able to play one sector against the other and implement important reforms, even at the cost of the political legitimacy of the regime. So, instead of a dichotomic division of state versus society, or of the mechanistic representation by the state of the interests of the landowners, Brazilian political reality looked more like a field of dialectical tensions which did not lead to radical ruptures, but was nonetheless dynamic enough to generate political and social changes.<sup>38</sup>

#### POLITICAL ELITES AND STATE BUILDING

The case of nineteenth-century Brazil suggests some speculations on the role of political elites in general.

The classical studies of political elites remain up to now the ones written by Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca. But both authors are guilty in this subject of reductionist explanations, a psychological reductionism in the case of Pareto, a sociological reductionism in the case of Mosca. In Pareto's view, elites appear and disappear according to the distribution of what he called the residues, particularly the residues of coercion and of persuasion. In the same vein, Mosca sees elites as a function of societal forces. If force predominates in society, an elite of warriors will emerge; if wealth, an elite of plutocrats; if religion, an elite of priests, and so on. Neither of the two have paid attention to the possibility of politically created elites, especially trained for the tasks of

<sup>38</sup> For an elaborate analysis of the compromises between the central government and local power elites using the Weberian notion of patrimonial bureaucracy, see Fernando Uricoechea, *The Patrimonial Foundations of the Brazilian Bureaucratic State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

government, and to elites that could reproduce themselves and have a significant impact on the nature of the political systems.<sup>39</sup>

However, from the mandarins or *literati* that for more than one thousand years were carefully trained to administer and govern the Chinese agrarian society, to the professional revolutionaries of Lenin, history is full of examples of these elites.<sup>40</sup> Without going into the rather sterile discussion that involved many American scholars during the sixties about the existence or nonexistence of power elites,<sup>41</sup> I shall assume as historically demonstrated the presence of particular types of elites that were especially important for the political evolution of some states and inquire into the nature of these groups and into the conditions of their emergence.

From the discussion of the Brazilian case, it is apparent that one basic characteristic of these elites is their homogeneity. The more homogeneous an elite, the greater its chances of being successful, *ceteris paribus*. But there can be different types of homogeneity. The most obvious one is social homogeneity, which is obtained by recruitment of the elite from one particular social class or social group. This type of homogeneity, it seems to me, is not always present in these governing elites and is seldom sufficient to produce a unified elite. The Chinese gentry, according to Chung-li Chang, had no such characteristic; the Portuguese magistracy also was not recruited from a single social group, and the same can be said of the bolsheviks. Even an elite as socially homogeneous as the British developed some additional means to reinforce its unity. Such was, for instance, in good part, the role of the education imparted at Eton, Harrow, Oxford, and Cambridge. In W. L. Guttsman's view, these schools were very efficient in providing the British elite, not so much with a particular expertise, but with a common ethos, an aristocratic style of life appropriate for a class that believed itself destined to rule.<sup>42</sup> In Latin America, the best example of a socially homogeneous elite was the Chilean. Its homogeneity was also increased by higher education, although not as much as in the British case. And another important factor

<sup>39</sup> See Vilfredo Pareto, *Sociological Writings*, selected and introduced by S. E. Finer (London: Pall Mall Press, 1966), 51-71; and Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class* (New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1939), ch. 2.

<sup>40</sup> On the Chinese *literati*, see Chung-li Chang, *The Chinese Gentry. Studies in Their Role in Nineteenth-Century Chinese Society* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970). An interesting, although somewhat overdrawn, comparison between the Chinese mandarins and the Brazilian elite can be found in Pang and Seckinger, "Mandarins of Imperial Brazil," 215-44. On revolutionary elites, see Harold D. Lasswell and Daniel Lerner, eds., *World Revolutionary Elites: Studies in Coercive Ideological Movements* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1966); and Robert A. Scalapino, *Elites in the People's Republic of China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972).

<sup>41</sup> The debate involved sociologists and political scientists. For a critical evaluation, see John Walton, "Discipline, Method, and Community Power: A Note on the Sociology of Knowledge," *American Political Science Review*, 52 (June 1958), 463-569.

<sup>42</sup> See W. L. Guttsman, *The British Political Elite* (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1963), 151-58.

accounting for the exceptional homogeneity of the Chilean dominant class was its concentration in agriculture and in one geographical area, the Central Valley, where 60 percent of the population also lived.<sup>43</sup> The same homogeneity did not obtain among the dominant classes of other Latin American countries, not to mention other former colonies, such as those of Africa, where ethnic and tribal cleavages made almost impossible the formation of a socially homogeneous dominant class. In the Brazilian case, it can be said that a substantial part of the elite, at least at the time of independence, was also recruited among the dominant class.<sup>44</sup> But—and this is true also for other countries of the area—recruitment in the dominant class was not sufficient to generate a unified elite because this class was itself divided into conflicting sectors, or at least into sectors that had no strong bonds to keep them together.<sup>45</sup>

It seems, therefore, that, if not instead of social homogeneity, there must be present, at the least as an additional factor, the element of ideological homogeneity. The latter can be generated through various means. Usually it comes about through a common world view implanted by formal training, through common career experiences, through common political or life experiences, or through combinations of the above. In China, there was Confucianism and the elaborate examination system besides the career itself. In Portugal, there was Roman law and Coimbra and the bureaucratic experience. In Russia, there was Marxism and the party organization, besides the shared experience of a protracted struggle. The same can be said of modern China, where the Long March produced a closely united group of comrades that for a long time after victory provided the nucleus of the socialist state.<sup>46</sup>

In the Brazilian case, it is my argument that social homogeneity alone

<sup>43</sup> See Vives, *La Fronda Aristocrática*, 15 *et passim*.

<sup>44</sup> As mentioned, data on the social origin of the elite are extremely scarce and not very reliable. According to the information I could gather, around 50 percent of the elite had some sort of connection either with the landed or the commercial upper classes. The actual figure was probably higher. One sector of the elite that presented a clear change in its recruitment pattern was the military. From a more aristocratic origin at the beginning of the empire, the military elite began to recruit more and more from lower-middle sectors and from their own ranks. See J. M. de Carvalho, *A Construção*, 86–89.

<sup>45</sup> Conflicts among sectors of the dominant classes in some Spanish-speaking countries are described by Dominguez, *Insurrection or Loyalty*. In Brazil, landowners were involved in the rebellions of 1789, 1817, 1824, and 1848; they were the major actors of one republican rebellion that lasted from 1835 to 1845 in the south, and of two rebellions in 1842 that involved two of the most important provinces close to the capital of the empire. When basic issues, such as slavery or land property, were debated in Congress, conflicts of the interests of different sectors of the upper classes became always apparent.

<sup>46</sup> On China, see Scalapino, *Elites in the People's Republic of China*. An interesting negative example of the importance of socialization is provided by a study of the Algerian elite. According to this study, different political experiences, and not social or ethnic differences among the various sectors of the elite, accounted for the difficulties in establishing a stable political system. See William B. Quandt, "The Algerian Political Elite, 1954–1967" (Ph.D. diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1968).

would not have been sufficient to weld a unified elite, as the rebellions led by upper-class elements, including priests, demonstrate. The multiplication of these rebellions during the regency period, 1831–1840, ended by providing a further element of unification of the national elite since its members read into them the threat to order and national unity, the materialization of which could be seen in their Spanish-speaking neighbors. In the latter, the fact that the elites existing at the end of colonial rule were not unified by a common view and a common experience favored their involvement in conflicts which resulted in further fragmentation and contributed to the breakdown of the political unity of the major colonial centers and to extreme political instability.

Finally, a third factor appears among the elites I have been talking about. Besides being homogeneous, these groups have a common training that, in addition to reinforcing their unity, provides them with a special capacity for the tasks of government and organization in general. This is evident among the elites that have a strong bureaucratic component, from the Chinese mandarins to the Turkish elite of the Ataturk period, with the Portuguese, Prussian, and Japanese elites in the middle.<sup>47</sup> But the bolshevik experience shows the possibility of training such an elite outside the state apparatus. Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* argues cogently the need for special training. He states that the professional agitator and organizer should be carefully trained, under the party's supervision; should combine theory and practice; should expand his experience to different factories and eventually to the whole country; and should learn from the leaders of other parties. Without such men, he concludes, the proletariat could not sustain a steady struggle.<sup>48</sup> With the help of this trained and ideologically homogeneous group of people, he and other leaders were able to organize the masses in order to destroy the old regime and, particularly, to build a revolutionary state from the ashes of the old.

Since these elites are politically engineered, it is very difficult, if not utterly impossible, to establish a priori the conditions for their emergence. I shall observe only that they tend to have special importance during the initial phase of state building, which is characterized by the delimitation of a territory, the establishment of a tax system, the organization of justice, the control of the means of physical coercion, and so on. That is, to paraphrase Marx, during the phase of primitive accumulation of power. This usually takes place in times of intense political change, such as liberation from colonial rule or revolutions,

<sup>47</sup> On the Prussian elite, see Hans Rosenberg, *Bureaucracy, Aristocracy, and Autocracy: The Prussian Experience, 1660–1815* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958). On the Turkish elite, Frederick W. Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1965). There is a striking similarity between the Brazilian imperial elite and the Turkish elite of the period between 1920 and 1954 in terms of education and occupational distribution. According to Frey, the consolidation of the Turkish state under Mustafa Kemal was achieved by an elite heavily dominated by bureaucratic elements.

<sup>48</sup> V. I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* S. V. and Patricia Utechin, trans. (London: Clarendon Press, 1963), 152–53.

or in the type of situation that has been called conservative modernization.<sup>49</sup> But this observation is not of much help since, even in those circumstances, the elites I am talking about may or may not be present. If they were present in Brazil in 1822, they were not in other countries of Latin America; if they were present in Russia in 1917 and after, they were not in Mexico in 1910.

As a product of political decisions, the emergence of these elites must be left in good part to the uncertainties of historical contingency. The important point is that they represent a particularly strong example of human intervention in molding history, and that this intervention is never an innocent one. In fact, these elites are especially effective in consolidating the political power either of divided socially dominant classes or of poorly organized dominated classes after the victory of a revolutionary movement. But however different is the social content of the policies implemented in these cases, one characteristic tends to remain constant. By usually operating from within the structure of state power, these elites seldom, if ever, favor the development of autonomous political participation. If they are efficient in accumulating power, they almost always fail when it comes to distributing it.

<sup>49</sup> On the role of elites in conservative modernization, see Rosenberg for the Prussian case. The Meiji reform and the Atatürk revolution were analyzed by Ellen Kay Timberger in "A Theory of Elite Revolutions," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 7 (Autumn 1972), 191-207.