Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

HISTORY 1130: Themes in Global History: Trade, Economy, and Empires

Dr. Jari Eloranta
Professor of Comparative Economic and Business History
Appalachian State University, Department of History
Office: Anne Belk Hall, 249S (Office hours: see syllabus)
Phone: 262-6006
E-mail: elorantaj@appstate.edu
http://www.appstate.edu/~elorantaj
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

**STRUCTURE:**

A. Explorers in Context  
B. Iberian Exploration and Expansion  
C. Costs and Benefits of Iberian Imperialism  
D. Rulers, Wars, Bureaucracy: The Costs and Consequences of an Empire?  
E. The New World: Why did their empires fall against the Spanish and Portuguese?
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

A. Explorers in Context

Interesting Reading:

Prince Henry ‘the Navigator’: A Life

Author: Peter Russell

Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

A. Explorers in Context

Still, after five centuries, the so-called “discovery” of America is a provocative issue, and Columbus remains a mysterious and controversial figure who has been variously described as one of the greatest mariners in history, a visionary genius, a mystic, a national hero, a failed administrator, a naive entrepreneur, and a ruthless and greedy imperialist. Columbus's enterprise to find a westward route to Asia grew out of the practical experience of a long and varied maritime career, as well as out of his considerable reading in geographical and theological literature. He settled for a time in Portugal, where he tried unsuccessfully to enlist support for his project, before moving to Spain. After many difficulties, through a combination of good luck and persuasiveness, he gained the support of the Catholic monarchs, Isabel and Fernando.

Movie “1492”:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9W1G3Tn31A
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

A. Explorers in Context

The first milestone: Ceuta, 1415
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

A. Explorers in Context

Vasco da Gama: Indies, 1498
B. Iberian Exploration and Expansion

*Circa period between 1385 to 1700*

- Between 1385-1580, Portugal went from a state of real threat and war against Castile to have a vast overseas empire: possessions in America (through settlement and conquest), the islands (Azores and Madeira) Africa and Asia. *Portugal became the pioneer of navigations and one of the most important powers in the world; later, Spain, France, England and Holland would also engage this oceanic expansion, providing competition and pushing Portugal to the effective colonization of Brazil, but by the end of 16th century, the annexation of the Portuguese kingdom by Spain put on hold this process;*

- Simultaneously, Spanish kingdoms went also from a state of civil war to have a vast empire: possessions in America (through settlement and conquest), and in Europe (acquired through the accession to the throne of Charles I). *Spain became the most important power in the world, but by the 17th century there were challenges to this authority by France, England and Holland that ultimately led to the loss of the European empire.*
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

B. Iberian Exploration and Expansion

Splitting the World

- Right line: Bula Inter-Coetera (1493) = division of the “New World” = West (Spain) and East (Portugal);
- Left line: Line established by the Tordesilhas treaty (1494) = new division; previous one was controversial
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

B. Iberian Exploration and Expansion

Primary source: the treaty itself
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

B. Iberian Exploration and Expansion
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

B. Iberian Exploration and Expansion

https://jspivey.wikispaces.com/Imperial+systems+European+monarchy+compared+with+a+land-based+Asian+empire+Jay+P+E+Block
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

B. Iberian Exploration and Expansion

Factors for the Portuguese pioneerism

- **1st Modern Nation State:** independent in 1139 = consolidation King + Bourgeoisie in 1385 (Avis Revolution);
- Mercantile bourgeoisie already consolidated and traditional in Europe;
- Favorable geographical position = “facing” the Atlantic Ocean;
- **1415:** Conquest of Ceuta (Morocco)
- **1416:** “School of Sagres” = rendezvous point for information exchange
B. Iberian Exploration and Expansion

Spain: delayed nation/empire

- Relative “delay” when compared to Portugal = late consolidation of Spanish State;
- Marriage of “Catholic Kings” = Fernando (Aragon) and Isabel (Castile) = end of Reconquista only in 1492 = Portugal did it in 1249: conquest of Al-Gaarb (Algarve);
- “Investment” on navigation, enterprise of Christopher Columbus = “circle navigation” = arrive at East navigating towards to West = discovery of America (12/10/1492)
C. Costs and Benefits of Iberian Imperialism

-First, Portuguese ships, then Spanish and finally, in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, British, French and Dutch ships set out to discover a world, a world they originally called the Other World, but eventually called the New World.

--Another motive was an economic one. Western Christendom felt itself to be shrinking and decaying at a time when Islam seemed to be enlarging its domain. Europe was exposed to attacks from the infidel east. Europeans also knew and agreed that the Far East was rich in luxuries. It was the Spanish who embraced the simple desire for gold and silver. Europe had scant resources in precious metals and the economy itself needed gold and silver. A final motive was political, economic and cultural in nature. We tend to speak of imperialism when we observe nations conquering other lands and the 15th century was no exception. As naval technology advanced, and as Europeans settled down to the notion that there was a much larger world at their disposal, they naturally made the attempt to colonize foreign lands.
C. Costs and Benefits of Iberian Imperialism (cont.)

-Both Spanish and Portuguese governments established in the New World a pattern of political administration common back in their main lands. Representatives of the throne were sent to administer the newly won empire and to impose centralized control. The native populations were treated cruelly and for the most part, the Spanish government remained totally indifferent to native traditions, customs and laws. The interests of the Spanish crown were basically to convert the natives to Christianity, extend Spain's power over its lands and to gain at least some portion of profit.

-For Portugal, the effective colonization of Americas occurred later, due to other interests and the profitability of the Indian trade, leaving Brazil almost forgotten for 30 years since its “discovery” in 1500; once the Eastern market was not that lucrative, they decided to begin the colonization process, supported by noblemen, merchants and businessman.

-The gains of overseas exploration of the New World were substantial. Gold and silver flooded into Europe, especially into Spain and ultimately into the hands of Italian and German bankers and merchants. Economic conditions seemed to be improving and the population was increasing. But with this wealth came poverty as investors and businessmen sought to take advantage of their new found wealth. The other gain was the simple fact of an awareness of new parts of the globe. For here was Europe sagging in its economy and its political power fragmented. If the Age of Discovery did anything, it restored the self-confidence of Europe, and in turn, Europe rediscovered itself.
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

C. Costs and Benefits of Iberian Imperialism

The basic economic system: Mercantilism

- **Mercantilism**: a set of economic practices and measures adopted, mainly characterized by the rigorous State’s presence and intervention
Mercantilism’s main characteristics:

- **Metallism**: accumulation of precious metals extracted from the occupied regions;
- **Positive trade balance**: more exports and less imports, allied to international trade treaties always favorable;
- **Encouraging manufacturing production**: making products with raw materials coming from the colonies, for resale to settlers;
- **Encouraging the shipping industry**: transportation of products and raw materials and maintain the safety of the colonies and their own metropolises;
- **Favorable demographic policy**: occupation of the conquered areas and defense of territories = consolidating security and production;
- **Protectionism**: high tariffs for foreign products = protect the country's industry
- **Colonialism**: the colonies only trade with the country that discovered (Metropolis) = "Commercial Exclusivism";
- **Formation of trade companies**: European countries (Metropolis) created companies to sell the products produced, by granting to those corporations a monopoly (exclusive) for negotiations: e.g.: West and East Indian Companies.
**The colonies:**
- Specialized economy: agricultural monoculture
- Depending on Metropolis’ external investments
- Depending on external markets’ behavior = plant and produce what is more lucrative
- Predominance of compulsory labor force (slavery):
  - Portugal: black slavery (Africa)
  - Spain: native slavery (local Indians)
D. Rulers, Wars, Bureaucracy: The Costs and Consequences of an Empire?

*The Catholic Monarchs (1474-1516):*
-Civil war for the succession on Henry IV (died 1474) only ended in 1479. Federal government of Spain by Ferdinand II of Aragón and Isabella I of Castile who had married in 1469. Never governed under the title of ‘king and queen of Spain’. After the death of Isabella in 1504 Ferdinand was regent of Castile until 1516. There was never any attempt to achieve the political, administrative and legal union of both kingdoms.

-Attempts to restore social order to both kingdoms: in Castile to reassert royal power by means of administrative reform (conciliar government that excluded the high nobility from government); it allowed to curb the power of the nobility that had hitherto compromised the internal peace of the kingdom.
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

The Inquisition was a feared institution of repression.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSe38dzJYkY

See also this parody by Mel Brooks:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqqZnvfJ9Jg
D. Rulers, Wars, Bureaucracy: (cont.)

*The Avis monarchy 1385-1580:

-Eight monarchs:
  - Alfonse V (1438-1481); John II (1481-1495), Manuel I (1495-1521) and John III (1521-1557). **Regarded as the apex of the Portuguese monarchy and oceanic expansion.**
  - Consolidation of the ultramarine expansion model, pursuing the naval path to the Indies through coasting sailing.
  - Shift from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic as the center of geopolitical importance; decadence of Italian city-states, no longer holding the monopoly of trade with East.
  - Portugal still struggling with economic problems: recurrent famines, lack of competitiveness of its industries, poor economic management by the monarchy. These problem are somewhat alleviated by the influx of revenues regarding the Indian trade (silk, spicies and other goods), **but the expenses of the state often outstrip its revenues, particularly with the implementation of very expensive foreign policies related to the possessions of the brand new empire.**

-King Sebastian I disappeared at the Battle of Ksar-el-Khebir (1578), putting the dynasty in jeopardy (had no heirs); his uncle (Cardinal Henry) takes over for less than two years;

-1580: **Iberian Union:** Philip II of Spain takes over the Portuguese Crown due to his family connections with the Portuguese Royal Household: both kingdoms will be only one for 60 years.
D. Rulers, Wars, Bureaucracy: (cont.)

*The Habsburg monarchy 1516-1621:*

- Three monarchs:
  - Charles I (1526-1556), also Holy Roman Emperor thus also known as Charles V; Philip II (1556-1598); and Philip III (1598-1621). Regarded as the zenith of the Spanish monarchy and empire.
  - Dynastic unity of Spanish kingdoms was consolidated, even though each region continued to have ample autonomy. Preponderance of Castile in political, economic and social terms continues.
  - Shift from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic as the center of geopolitical importance means that Castile is the main concern of the monarchy. It is also the economic and demographic powerhouse of Spain.
  - Castile continues to suffer from economic problems: recurrent famines, lack of competitiveness of its industries, poor economic management by the monarchy. These problems are somewhat alleviated by the influx of precious metal from America, but the expenses of the state often outstrip its revenues, particularly with the implementation of very expensive foreign policies related to the possessions in Italy and the Low Countries.

- Traditional view devotes particular attention to the study of the question of how the Spanish monarchy prevented a modern state and society to develop: the revolt of the Communities thus destroyed the emerging middle class; the inquisition and the Counter-Reformation stifled ideas and science; reluctance to engage in mercantile activity prevented Spain from developing a modern economy.
D. Rulers, Wars, Bureaucracy: (cont.)

*The Habsburg monarchy 1516-1621: (cont.)

-This view is very strongly tinted by the desire of historians to explain the development of Spanish history in the 20th century: most importantly why Spain had not become a modern democracy like France or Great Britain. Instead Spain was viewed as a backward country: an underdeveloped economy, an extremely bloody civil war, a forty-year long dictatorship, isolation from Europe. The early modern period is often used as an explanation of ‘where did it all go wrong’.

-Spain, and above all Castile a key piece in his international strategy both in economic and military terms. *The foreign policy aimed to protect his dynastic interests and the unity of Christendom against internal and external threats.* Overall he is regarded to have conducted a ruinous foreign policy, and a huge deficit was accrued despite the high revenues from the American colonies.

-Another step in the process of centralization was provided by the rapid development of bureaucracy led by the king himself. The extremely personal nature of Philip II’s rule, where each decision was personally approved by the monarch, meant that the process of government was extremely slow.
D. Rulers, Wars, Bureaucracy: (cont.)

*The Habsburg monarchy 1516-1621: (cont.)
-The fight against the enemies of Christianity both within and without the Spanish frontiers was one of the main concerns of his reign. Triumphs in the foreign policy during this period: the Turkish threat was contained after the victory of Lepanto (1571); the kingdom of Portugal and its empire became part of the domains of the Spanish crown (1581); France remained a catholic country; the rebellion in the Low Countries brought about by excessive taxation and determination to impose religious orthodoxy at the expense of Protestantism (1566, ongoing) contained. Only problem was England. English support of Dutch rebels and attacks against the Spanish fleet of Indies led to a war, but it ended with the defeat of the Armada (1588).
-These activities meant that the military expenditure of the crown rose and, again, outstripped income (even though income had increased again); no attempts were made to re-structure the tax system, the burden of taxation rested on Castile and the American Empire.
D. Rulers, Wars, Bureaucracy: (cont.)

*The Habsburg monarchy 1621-1700:*
- **Two monarchs:** Philip IV (1621-1665), Charles II (1665-1700). *Period of even deeper crisis: economic slowdown, particularly due to the decrease of commercial activity; urban decline; famine and plague.*
- **Attempts for tax reform continued as Castile could not keep up the fiscal pressure and the revenue from the colonies was proving insufficient.**
- **Loss of territories:** recognition of the independence of the United Provinces of the Netherlands (1648), Roussillon and Cerdanya lost to France (1659).
- Charles II became king at the age of four and the regency was in the hands of a succession of incapable regents. The coming of age of a biologically incapable king did not alleviate the situation, these personal circumstances only helped to accelerate the decline of the kingdom. Much needed reform of the administrative system did not take place, there were signs of economic and demographic recovery, but still unable to support military expenditure. Loss of what little international prestige Spain had left, as France made territorial gains at the expense of Spanish empire.
- Some signs of Spanish weakness was the restoration of Portugal’s independence (December 1st, 1640), breaking apart from the Iberian Union, and the ousting of the Dutch from Brazil as the outcome of the Restoration Wars (1648-1654), enabling the Portuguese to reestablish the colonization of Brazil.
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

D. Rulers, Wars, Bureaucracy: The Costs and Consequences of an Empire?

Charles V

Philip II’s palace and the King

Ribeira Palace in Lisbon

Charles II

Philip II’s lands in Europe
Spanish Armada and Spain’s Humiliation

1. Armada anchored off Calais: the harbour was too small for the ships to enter, but its shore batteries offered some protection from English attack
2. MAP: English reinforcements approach - they had been guarding the approach to London
3. Fireships drifting swiftly with the wind and current towards the packed crowd of Spanish ships.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzVkAtS3lmg
E. The New World: Why did their empires fall against the Spanish and Portuguese?
Jared Diamond (Guns, Germs, and Steel)

-From Pizarro's home town of Trujillo, Jared Diamond pieces together the story of the Spaniards' victory over the Inca, tracing the invisible hand of geography. On the surface, the Spaniards had discovered a foreign empire remarkably similar to their own. The Inca had built an advanced, politically sophisticated, civilization on the foundations of successful agriculture. They had ruthlessly conquered their neighbors in South America, and by 1532 governed a vast territory, the length and breadth of the Andes. It is, indeed, astonishing to think how small Pizarro's army was: 62 horsemen and 102 infantry, to attack an empire of at least five million.

-
Jared Diamond (*Guns, Germs, and Steel* (cont.))

- In the end, the Europeans arrived and a single Spanish slave arrived, infected with smallpox and the consequences were devastating. The disease emptied the continent, killing millions of indigenous people who lacked any prior exposure, and therefore any immunity. The European triumph was complete.

**-DO YOU “BUY” THIS ARGUMENT? WHAT ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED? OR HISTORICAL ACCIDENTS?**
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest
Spanish and Portuguese settlements in Americas

Thoughts?
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

The conquest of Peru

Thoughts?
Lecture 13: The Iberian Empires: Beginnings and the Dynamics of World Conquest

The execution of Atahuallpa

The Spanish (Cortes) arrive in 1519

The Spanish assaulting a temple in Mexico

The war did not favor the Aztecs…

Your thoughts?
Several post-Conquest native sources record laments and poems about the fall of Mexico-Tenochtitlán. The earliest is a remarkable annal, written perhaps as early as 1528 in Nahuatl, but already using the Spanish alphabet.

Broken spears lie in the roads;
we have torn our hair in grief.

The houses are roofless now, and their walls are reddened with blood.

Worms are swarming in the streets and plazas, and the walls are splattered with gore.
The water has turned red, as if it were dyed, and when we drink it, it has the taste of brine.

We have pounded our hands in despair against the adobe walls, for our inheritance, our city, is lost and dead.
The shields of our warriors were its defense, but they could not save it.

We have chewed dry twigs and salt grasses; we have filled our mouths with dust and bits of adobe; we have eaten lizards, rats and worms....
Five questions. Getting three right = attendance. Getting five right = automatic half a point of extra credit.

1. According Pomeranz-Topik, Columbus was: [A] a brilliant mariner [B] lucky fool [C] a Swedish jazz player [D] a great figure in world history [E] all of the above


4. 

5. For the conquered, this meant: [A] massive economic growth [B] equality with the Europeans. [C] devastation and genocide. [D] new economic opportunities and lots of parties. [E] ability to convert to Christianity, which they did willingly.
ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?