ABSTRACT

On 8 February 1822, Haitian President Jean-Pierre Boyer entered Santo Domingo and ended the short-lived experiment of a moderate republic and the triumph of a popular and radical vision of nationhood. For the next two decades, this unified Haitian Republic faced the scrutiny of Spanish, French, and British slave empires, fueled by the accounts and reports of those Dominicans who rejected this change in events. Using government correspondences, reports, pamphlets, and proclamations, this study argues that the Haitian Unification affected Dominican political allegiances and drove white elites to support Spanish monarchy in contrast to those in Santo Domingo who supported Haitian republicanism and emancipation. In doing so, this study brings together the different literatures in discussion with each other: race and nation in the Dominican Republic, Latin American independence and nationalism, and an Atlantic perspective of empires and nation-states.

This study begins by examining the events leading up to the Haitian Unification and how Dominican and Spanish responses focused on its negative impact, calling for Spain to take back its former colony. Next, this analysis focuses on Haitian reforms in Santo Domingo such as land and Church as a part of the republic’s vision for transforming a former colonial society into an integral part of the Haitian nation. Finally, it investigates Haiti’s successful defense of its sovereignty in Santo Domingo in part because of its official recognition by the French. By 1833, white Dominican elites who witnessed the Haitian defense of sovereignty and Spanish retreat articulated a narrative
lauding their Hispanic ties and identity with Spain while associating blackness with Haiti and rejecting those who supported the republic’s rule. The genesis of this struggle over the role of race in Dominican nationalism and how it manifests itself in its relationship to Haiti play out today within Dominican politics and society.