

Institution: University of Bristol
Unit of Assessment: 28 Modern Languages and Linguistics
Title of case study: Policymakers and descendants of freedom fighters benefit from new insights into Latin American struggles for independence
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Politicians and diplomats in Britain and Latin America, together with descendants of the 7,000 British and Irish mercenaries who served under Simón Bolívar between 1810 and 1830, have benefited over the past five years from fresh insights into how Britain helped Colombia and Venezuela achieve independence from colonial rule. This more accurate understanding of historical relationships, gained through original research undertaken at the University of Bristol since 2005, has illuminated many personal histories, underpinned national bicentenary commemorations and helped to inform British foreign policy.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p><i>Context</i></p> <p>This research relates to the struggles for independence from colonial rule that took place in what is now Colombia and Venezuela between 1810 and 1830. Led by Simón Bolívar, these struggles involved mercenaries from Britain and Ireland and still have resonance today.</p> <p>The key researcher, Matthew Brown, now Reader in Latin American Studies at the University of Bristol, laid the foundations for this research through archival studies he conducted internationally between 2000 and 2004 while a doctoral student at University College London. He was a Teaching Fellow in Bristol's Department of Hispanic, Portuguese and Latin American Studies in 2004-05, and was appointed Lecturer in July 2005. Brown conducted further substantive archival research in Colombia, Spain, Venezuela and the UK in 2004 -2011, during which period he became Senior Lecturer and then Reader at Bristol. All of the qualitative and quantitative analysis that shaped the relevant publications and their impact was done after his employment at Bristol began in 2005, drawing on contextual information and the preliminary analyses advanced in his doctoral thesis.</p> <p><i>Nature of the research</i></p> <p>Before this research project began, little was known about British participation in the independence of Colombia and Venezuela, although some military officers were commemorated in Bogotá and Caracas because of their heroic involvement in certain key battles of the armed conflict. Brown undertook quantitative analysis of military service records in Colombia, Venezuela and the UK and created a Filemaker Pro database of the lives and careers of over 3,000 of the mercenaries which went beyond the military focus and anecdotal nature of previous research. His qualitative analysis explored the social, cultural, economic and political interventions of the British and Irish mercenaries in the region – a topic hitherto untouched by scholars.</p> <p>The research outputs (detailed below) were underpinned by the construction of a prosopographical database of foreign mercenaries who served in the wars of independence in Colombia and Venezuela, published online as a genealogical tool at www.bris.ac.uk/hispanic/latin/research. The database contains previously unpublished information on origins, names, dates of birth and death, professions and activities of all the known participants in the expeditions which assisted Simón Bolívar. Other outputs using this information include a monograph and several articles on the subject, analysing the encounter between the British and Colombians with particular regard to subjects such as honour codes, marriage, pensions, race, slavery and national identity. This research led to Brown being invited to organise and edit a new release of biographies for the <i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (2009) on 'Britons and Latin America', including researching and writing six of the biographies himself, with two further biographies commissioned for 2014.</p>
3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Impact case study (REF3b)

- [1] Brown, M. (2006), *Adventuring through Spanish Colonies: Simón Bolívar, Foreign Mercenaries and the Birth of New Nations*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. Can be supplied on request.
- Translated into Spanish by Katia Urteaga Villanueva and published in Colombia as: Brown, M. (2010) *Aventureros, mercenarios y legiones extranjeras en la independencia de la Gran Colombia*, Medellín: Ediciones Carreta La Histórica. This has become the standard reference work on the subject, cited by sources as varied as Niall Ferguson, *Civilisation* (2011) and Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Legions).
- [2] Brown, M. ed. (2008), *Informal Empire in Latin America: Culture, Commerce and Capital*, Oxford: Blackwell. Can be supplied on request.
- [3] Brown, M. ed. and trans. (2009), *Simón Bolívar: The Bolivarian Revolution, introduced by Hugo Chávez*, New York and London: Verso. Can be supplied on request.
- [4] Brown, M. and Roa Celis, M.A. eds (2005), *Militares extranjeros en la independencia de Colombia: Nuevas perspectivas*, Bogotá: Museo Nacional de Colombia – with a foreword by the then President of Colombia, Alvaro Uribe. Can be supplied on request.
- [5] Six articles in the 2009 edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*:
- Brown, M. (2009) 'Alexander Alexander', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*; available online at www.oxforddnb.com), Oxford: OUP
 - Brown, M. (2009) 'Mary English, d.1846', in *ODNB*
 - Brown, M. (2009) 'John Devereux, 1778-1860', in *ODNB*
 - Brown, M. (2009) 'Rupert Hand, d.1846', in *ODNB*
 - Brown, M. (2009) 'James Henderson, 1783-1848', in *ODNB*
 - Brown, M. (2009) 'Richard Longfield Vowell, 1795-1870', in *ODNB*

4. Details of the impact(indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact of the research, which is expected to continue into 2014 and beyond, forms two related strands, as set out below.

Dissemination and changing public perceptions of the subject

50 descendants of the 19th-century adventurers contacted Brown after using his database in the course of tracing their ancestors in South America. Some have located new memoirs which are in press as a result. Brown was approached by Verso publishers to provide a new and accessible translation and edition of the writings of Simón Bolívar. This was published in 2009 [= 3 above]. The Venezuelan Embassy in London consulted with Brown to select a group of memoirs written by British and Irish mercenaries, to be translated into Spanish for the first time and published in 2014 as part of the bicentenary of Venezuelan independence by Monte Avila Editores in Caracas. These popular editions will be widely distributed to ensure maximum dissemination of these new perspectives on the geopolitical context of independence, as part of the Venezuelan government's own academic impact agenda [a].

Brown has given ten invited public lectures as part of the commemoration of the bicentenaries of independence, for example in Medellín (2007 & 2011), Salamanca (2009), London (2009, 2010, 2012), Paris (2010), Bogotá (2010) and Caracas (2011). The lectures in Medellín were financed by the Mayor of Medellín, while the lectures in Caracas were financed by the British Council in Venezuela. One event was hosted by the Venezuelan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was the subject of a tweet in which the Minister for Latin America, Temir Porrás, drew the attention of his then 13,000 followers to the 'shared history' of Britain and Venezuela, and was considered valuable by the British Embassy in Caracas [b]. In April 2011, Brown spoke at the Venezuelan Solidarity Campaign conference 'Defending the Majority, Not Punishing the Poorest' in London, discussing the history of bilateral solidarity movements. At the other end of the political scale, in April 2012, Brown spoke at the Annual Meeting of the Anglo-Venezuelan society, leading a discussion chaired by the head of Diageo Latin America on how the historical relationship between the two countries can be a basis for contemporary business relations. A total of 700 people, from

members of the general public and political activists to diplomats and business leaders, have attended these talks. This major public engagement initiative has led to changing cultural perceptions of independence and Britain's role in it. Press reports and audience reaction documenting this impact are available on the *Bolivarian Times* blog [h], which was launched in October 2011 and as of 11 November 2013 had received 10,529 hits. Users accessing the blog (published in English and Spanish) come from across the world, including Spanish America, the US and Europe. The blog has brought the research to the attention of new groups, including French divers and archaeologists investigating the shipwreck of the 'Indian', which crashed off the coast near Brest in 1817, the descendants of several volunteers from the 1810s, and an American family who found an unpublished travel diary from 1819 and plan to transcribe and publish it on the blog.

In September 2012, Brown organised 'Britain and the Independence of the Bolivarian Republics', a one-day event at Canning House in London. One hundred people attended, including (according to questionnaires) economists, engineers, retired diplomats, teachers, academics, filmmakers, FCO researchers, social workers and community organisers, with a 50/50 mix of Britons and Latin Americans. The first session featured papers from the leading global academic researchers on the subject: Racine (Guelph, Canada), Gutierrez (Externado, Colombia) and Mondolfi (Metropolitana, Venezuela). The second session was an open debate about Britain's links with Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela, led by public historians Quintero (UCV, Caracas) and Sobrevilla (Kent) and by the serving ambassadors from Venezuela and Colombia. Every word spoken at the event was transcribed and published on *Bolivarian Times* in both Spanish and English. This included a Public Letter agreed by the audience at the event and addressed to the U.K. Minister for Latin America, Hugo Swire MP. Audience members stated that their preconceptions had been overturned. Typical comments from the audience questionnaires include [g]: 'this has kindled my interest both in the history and in the present' (retired teacher); 'plenty of stimulating ideas on how to strengthen relations and take this forward' (serving FCO diplomat); 'I was surprised by the influence on emerging South American republics of English institutions and practices' (retired engineer); 'I enjoyed the excellence of historically-based research [combined with] political insights' (Director-General, Canning House); 'Very interesting to see the extent of interest and the common interest in finding a historical basis for promoting good international relations today' (business person); 'it was very interesting and has inspired me to read more about the period [...]. I was surprised at how many people were interested in Mary English (my great great great great grandmother) and had read my grandmother's book about her. Also I had not heard before about the discovery of the wreck of the Indian' (legal publishing editor).

In December 2012 Hugo Swire MP replied to the letter: 'I would like to congratulate you on your successful event on 5 September. I know that a number of officials from Americas Directorate at the FCO attended the event and thought it was excellent. There was an impressive and distinguished turnout and a discussion of many useful themes. We are pleased that attendees wanted to see stronger relations between the UK and Latin America'. As a direct result of the success of this event, the FCO supported Canning House in organising a series of ten historical lectures on Latin America in 2013: Brown gave one of these, attended by 50 people including the family of Thomas Cochrane, one of the mercenaries discussed in the original research. The Minister concluded his letter thanking the event for its 'suggestions on how we might further strengthen our relations with Latin America' and promising to pass on ideas regarding language and history plans to 'forge modern, adaptive relationships in the region' [d].

In late September 2012, Brown was interviewed by the BBC website on this subject. There were 427 comments, which led to a spike in hits on the blog.

In November 2012, Brown was a major academic contributor to BBC Radio 4's 'The Invention of Spain' series on the independence of Latin America. Other contributors were recorded by the BBC at the 5/19/12 Canning House event. The programme attracted 2 million listeners and attracted wide enthusiasm across the UK and Spain, with typical online comments being that 'it should be required listening for anyone wanting to understand Spanish and Latin American history'. The success of this programme has led to a role for Brown as a regular media commentator on Latin American issues, e.g. on the death of Hugo Chávez (BBC World Service, BBC Bristol, BBC News24, March 2013) and on social unrest in Brazil (BBC Scotland Newsweek, June 2013).

Impact case study (REF3b)

In December 2012, Brown was invited to work with teachers of Spanish in UK schools on this subject, specifically to help them incorporate coverage of it into their teaching in order to revitalise students' interest in Latin American history. The seminar was organised and funded by the Prince's Teaching Institute. A London schoolteacher said in her feedback that '[a]s someone with a very keen interest in Latin America I couldn't have been more interested or inspired by your talk' [i].

British Policy towards Latin America

The era studied in this research project constitutes the last period of clear British policy towards Latin America (which, in brief, was to influence local politicians in order to secure preferential trade relations, with a strict emphasis on the abolition of the slave trade and establishing independence from all European imperial powers, especially France). Greater knowledge of the implementation of that policy in Colombia and Venezuela has been drawn upon in recent reconfigurations of British Latin America policy, and in diplomatic bilateral representations more generally [e]. The effect of Brown's research can be seen in the House of Lords debate on the subject (24 June 2010) [j].

At the annual conference of the Society for Latin American Studies, hosted by the University of Bristol in April 2010, there was a high-profile public debate sponsored by Santander Group. Speakers included the then Minister for Latin America, Chris Bryant MP, H.E. Samuel Moncada, the Venezuelan Ambassador to the UK, and representatives of the NGOs Oxfam and Transform. The subject was 'British Policy in Latin America: Is there one, and what should it be?' This forum led to direct public policy declarations from the minister regarding Latin America, specifically on covert involvement in the Colombian violent conflict, which had never happened before. When he became Foreign Secretary after the 2010 election, William Hague MP made a policy speech on Latin America (the first Foreign Secretary to do so), the first page of which drew implicitly on Brown's research on Britain in Latin America during the independence period [c].

The FCO has been one of the most enthusiastic promoters of Brown's research. In July 2011, Brown travelled to Caracas to give a week of talks on the subject of this research as part of the British Embassy / British Council events to commemorate independence. In January 2012, he was invited to speak to Latin-Americanist desk-officers at the FCO on the subject.

The event at Canning House in September 2012 referred to above led to the writing of an open letter to the new Secretary of State with responsibility for Latin America, Hugo Swire, outlining how best Britain could build on its historic relationship with Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [a] Dr Samuel Moncada, Venezuelan Ambassador to the United Kingdom (2006-2013), now Venezuelan Ambassador to the United Nations
- [b] Her Majesty's Ambassador to Venezuela, Mrs Catherine Nettleton
- [c] Canning House lecture by William Hague MP (9 November 2010)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/britain-and-latin-america-historic-friends-future-partners>
- [d] Letter from Minister of State for Latin America, Hugo Swire MP (7 December 2013)
- [e] Colombian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Mauricio Rodriguez
- [f] Viscount Montgomery of El-Alamein, former Chair of the Cross-Party Latin America group
- [g] Questionnaires completed at the 5 September 2012 event at Canning House (Britain and the Independence of the Bolivarian Republics')
- [h] Bolivarian Times blog: <http://bolivariantimes.blogspot.co.uk>
- [i] Letter from Christopher Pope, co-Director, The Prince's Teaching Institute, 18 December 2012
- [j] House of Lords Debate on Latin America moved by Viscount Montgomery of Alamein:
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100624-0003.htm>