

Institution: University of Nottingham
Unit of Assessment: 28
Title of case study: Providing bi-partisan perspectives on war to bring about cultural and personal reconciliation
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Work with veterans, diplomats, trauma specialists and journalists under the auspices of the International Consortium for the Study of Post-Conflict Reconciliation and Reconstruction (ICSPRR) has allowed Professor Bernard McGuirk's research to contribute to processes of reconstruction and reconciliation between Argentina and the UK. Dialogue between Argentinian and British war veterans from the 1982 conflict was facilitated for the first time and underpinned new understanding, beginning a process of healing. Through expert advice, McGuirk has influenced the thinking and approach to diplomacy of the Argentine Embassy in London and has influenced the way young diplomats in the Argentine Foreign Service in Buenos Aires are trained. His insights have informed broadcast and media content for two prominent journalists.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Key researcher: Professor Bernard McGuirk, Professor of Romance Literatures and Literary Theory (1978-present)</p> <p>The Nottingham-based ICSPRR (established 2004) arose from a Leverhulme-funded project on Post-Conflict Cultures and is a forum for the analysis of conflicts and post-conflict societies across a broad spectrum of cultures and languages. It has a Managing Board including international experts on human rights law, diplomacy and international relations, military history, trauma psychiatry and the media. There is an associated imprint, Critical, Cultural and Communications Press, under the editorship of McGuirk and McDonald Daly, which publishes the series <i>Studies in Post-Conflict Cultures</i>. Its seminars and annual conferences have all informed and been informed by McGuirk's research, enabling it to draw on specialist inputs from researchers internationally through jointly-organized events and institutional and individual collaborations.</p> <p>The research began as a response to the then forthcoming twenty-fifth anniversary in 2007 of the Falklands-Malvinas conflict in the South Atlantic. In particular, McGuirk began by exploring the growing number of Argentine publications which centred on ways of conceptualising defeat and victory, and on the dangers of abjection and triumphalism. His research into poetry, novels, plays and military memoirs focused on political, cultural and personal questions connected with conflict and developed to embrace more popular forms such as songs and television programmes. In identifying equivalent cultural expressions in English he found that there was a significant overlap in the area of military memoirs.</p> <p>The underpinning research of this case study has concentrated on three strands:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) The principal strand has focused on the political and cultural impact of the 1982 conflict in the South Atlantic. Primarily, McGuirk has examined literary and cinematographic representations of the war over twenty-five years. The materials analysed include a wide range of work from the UK, Argentina and elsewhere, including theatrical performance, veterans' memoirs, TV soap operas, popular fiction and music, children's literature, protest song and accounts of trauma psychiatry. Some of the principal issues examined include the interface between propaganda and literary and cultural expression, the transmutation of historical events into public mythologies and the formation of national(istic) imaginaries. In analysing the different cultural texts about the war and its aftermath McGuirk has also explored questions of individual identity, trauma, perceptions of the nation and the experience of war (3.1). ii) The second strand, arising directly from the first, has examined a variety of responses to the experience of war and has challenged the ways in which different political and military protagonists have sought to make sense of the conflict and its consequences (3.2). iii) The third strand has centred on the role of the political cartoon in conflict and post-conflict cultures. Working with cartoons from the UK, Argentina and elsewhere, McGuirk has explored the generic qualities of the cartoon and its capacity for political intervention, the nature of the critical perspectives presented and the capacity of the cartoonist to say what others might not dare to (3.3, 3.4 and 3.5). <p>From these distinct but closely related research strands, the main insights and findings have been:</p>

- That the strained relations between the UK and Argentina from 1982 to the present can be productively reassessed by analysing the damaging cultural mythologies constructed around key polarisations such as: winner/loser, end of dictatorship/entrenchment of Thatcherism, territorial sovereignty/community self-determination;
- That the UK and Argentina need to pay closer attention to the continuing plight of veterans and PTSD sufferers, not least because of the high number of suicides of ex-combatants on both sides;
- That, while there has been some public debate about the on-going resonance of the conflict, it is cultural and artistic work which has underlined the need to deal with veterans' trauma and suffering;
- That a key effect of reflection on the conflict is to reassess the relationship between politicians and the military, and consequently to question the relationship between sovereignty and the interests of the nation;
- That the political cartoon provides a relatively under-analysed vehicle for critique of the manipulated political and cultural assumptions that have underpinned politicians' discourse in the UK and Argentina in the years since the end of the conflict in the South Atlantic.

3. References to the research

- 3.1 B J McGuirk, *Falklands-Malvinas: An Unfinished Business* (Seattle: New Ventures, 2007), 369pp. ISBN 978-1-905510-05-04. Available on request
- 3.2 'Transcendental Echoes or the Snares of Intra-Colonialism. Falklands-Malvinas and the Poetry of War', and transcriptions of interviews with BBC Radio Nottingham, Radio 4, and *Clarín*, in *Hors de Combat: The Falklands-Malvinas Conflict in Retrospect* (second revised edition), eds. Diego García Quiroga and Mike Seear (Nottingham: Critical Cultural and Communications Press, 2009), pp. 121-32 and pp.144-45; 146-47; 175-80. ISBN 978-1-905510-25-2. Available on request
- 3.3 'Nazionalismi e identità, *Argentinidad, Britishness e Irishness* nella rappresentazione del conflitto Falklands-Malvinas', in *Conflitti. Strategie di rappresentazione della guerra nella cultura contemporanea*, eds. V. Fortunati, D. Fortezza, M. Ascari (Rome: Meltemi, 2008), pp. 193-210. ISBN 978-88-8353-654-0. Available on request
- 3.4 'Annot Liberation or Oh! What a Beastly War: The Falklands-Malvinas Conflict in the Political Cartoon, from *Humor to The If... Chronicles*', *Journal of Romance Studies*, vol.8, No. 2 (2008), pp.73-94. ISSN 1473-3536. Submitted to REF2.
- 3.5 'Scimmiettare le culture: stereotipi e differenze di genere nel fumetto politico. Fra isole immaginarie e repubbliche delle banane', in *Politica 2.0*, ed. Federico Montanari (Rome: Carocci, 2010), pp.71-96. ISBN 978-88-430-5657-6. Available on request

All of the items above were peer-reviewed. The quality of the underlying research is further demonstrated by the award in 2004-2005 of a Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowship (£12.5k) to the then Centre for the Study of Post-conflict Cultures (now ICSPRR).

4. Details of the impact

McGuirk's insights into the ways that cultural production has articulated ideas and challenged accepted (partisan) opinion about the Falklands-Malvinas war created channels for enhanced understanding of the self, conflict, military identity, sovereignty, nationalism and political discourse. Specifically, it helped veterans begin a dialogue that would lead to healing and reconciliation, and it helped to effect a broadening in the political and cultural perspective underpinning Argentinian diplomatic training and practice. It has also influenced the approach to reporting of two prominent journalists.

Contributing to processes of reconciliation and healing for veterans of the Falklands/Malvinas conflict

McGuirk's research has helped soldiers to overcome the battlefield trauma they experienced during their involvement in the Falklands-Malvinas conflict. By bringing together veterans from both sides in mediated encounters under the auspices of the ICSPRR (beginning in 2006 and continuing through to 2013), dialogue was initiated that has led to a sustained process of healing (subsequently continued through a veteran-led online support forum and on-going meetings of the ICSPRR's veteran forum the *Grupo Nottingham/Malvinas*) (5.1). Discussions at ICSPRR encounters built on McGuirk's research insights into the literary and cultural representation of issues such as the nature of military identity, the physical and mental traumas of war, and the

nature of the nation and sovereignty (3.1, 3.2, 3.4).

Reflecting on the impact of the work and regular meetings of the ICSPRR between 2006 and 2012, a veteran Commander (Capitán de Fragata) of the Argentine Navy commented that 'McGuirk's research has **helped change many a mind of adult soldiers [sic] and bring them to consider each other from a more humanized perspective**. Though this effect is unwanted when at war, it is crucial to build a durable peace'. A journalist (ex-editor of the *Soldier* magazine) observed a veteran come face to face with his old adversaries: 'There's a picture of them eyeing each other up and it was all very tense, but by the end everything had thawed and they were talking as friends.' A retired British Major and veteran of the conflict commented that, after the sessions, **soldiers approached him to say how therapeutic it was and how it had helped them get over events**. The President of the Argentine War Veterans Association observes that the bringing together of former enemies: '... probably represents one of the most important events regarding the Malvinas issue. Argentine military personnel and their British counterparts met, saw each other's human dimension and found out what really happened during the hand-to-hand bloody battles [...] **To be able to give a great hug to my erstwhile opposite number, with whom I had previously only had written contact, was a most rewarding and uplifting experience**.' One Argentine veteran describes the act of bringing together ex-combatants to exchange experiences and points of views as 'revolutionary', and another says that **it helped me obtain a broader view of the Malvinas-Falklands conflict and reconcile some issues I struggled with**. More generally, Professor McGuirk's research has helped me consider the Malvinas-Falklands conflict as a possible springboard for a better relation between Britain and Argentina and has engaged my interest into areas that I would probably never have considered' (5.2). ICSPRR meetings are also attended by journalists, academics, and doctors specialising in PTSD. A Norwegian Psychiatrist and Professor in traumatic stress (a world authority on the psycho-traumatology and psychological support aspects of war) observed after one meeting in 2012 that **the veterans 'obviously profited' from the encounters** (5.3).

The statements above illustrate how the work of the ICSPRR has **contributed decisively to processes of reconciliation**, effectively filling the gap left by the absence of official support mechanisms and infrastructure for Falklands-Malvinas veterans in both the UK and Argentina. It has provided a sympathetic environment, **enabling dialogue between ex-soldiers from both sides**. The statements included above from key military personnel involved in the conflict attest to the degree to which the encounters **helped them to reflect on and discuss their personal experiences of the trauma of war in a way that moved them towards personal reconciliation**. A retired British Major comments that 'I don't think you can put a price on the reconciliation of veterans. War isn't an impersonal thing to do, wounds run very deep and hatred runs very deep, so **to get people around the table and to get them engaging is something extraordinary**' (5.2).

The impact which McGuirk's research has had directly through the ICSPRR has been amplified through the (subsequent) independent collaboration of the veterans from both sides in the *Grupo Nottingham/Malvinas*. **Its regular meetings between veterans in the years since 2006 (on-going after 2008) have led to significant amelioration of trauma and mental problems**. Its online social media presence constitutes a sustainable source of support for veterans and their families (5.4).

Influencing the understanding and perspectives of the Argentine Ambassador

Complementing the work with veterans described above, McGuirk has collaborated with H.E. the Ambassador of the Republic of Argentina to the Court of St James, and with the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For this collaboration, McGuirk focused on the areas of his research which alerted the Ambassador to post-82 debates and took her beyond the limited political agendas of both nations. He was able to bring to her attention writers' and cartoonists' views of the conflict which challenged popular and nationalistic positions and with which she was not familiar. That approach was aimed at broadening perspectives and shifting perceptions about political discourse in both countries. This research with its balanced, non-partisan insights into the nature of the 1982 war (and its political, cultural and psychological effects) has been warmly appreciated by the Embassy and has **influenced the Ambassador's approach to her role in the UK**: McGuirk was

invited to brief her in the approach to the thirtieth anniversary of the conflict in 2012 on both British and international perspectives. Subsequently, in May 2012, the Ambassador attended a colloquium in Nottingham on Anglo-Argentine relations 1982–2012, at which she met Argentine and British veterans of the conflict and Falkland Islanders. That visit was followed by five reciprocal invitations to McGuirk (2012-2013) to address Argentine and Latin American diplomats and historians at the Argentine Embassy in London. Her repeated requests for briefings and her recommendation of McGuirk for a training role with future Argentine diplomats indicates the degree to which she values his understanding of the issues and the constructive potential in a broad approach which goes beyond narrow political and ideological interests.

The Ambassador was instrumental in the issuing of an invitation to McGuirk to lead a course for the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs' National Institute of the Foreign Service to instruct trainee diplomats on UK foreign policy and Anglo-Argentine reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction (Buenos Aires, April 2013). Based on the success of this initial encounter (5.5), he has been invited to return to lead another such course, in collaboration with a fellow member of the ICSPRR (also Chief Executive of Juniper Productions, former Director of political programming at BBC TV, Member of the BBC Board of Governors): 'Further to the success of Professor McGuirk's acceptance of the Ambassador's proposal that he visit and instruct the trainee diplomats at ISEN, at the Chancellery in Buenos Aires, in Spring 2013, I am aware that another such visit involving myself and Professor McGuirk is being considered by the Embassy as an appropriate extension of the impact made by our respective dealings with the Embassy since 2012.' He adds that in his capacity as a producer and director of television programmes and as a media specialist whom McGuirk had introduced to the Ambassador, 'I regularly consult with [the Ambassador] and her fellow diplomats on these matters. This **on-going involvement in a high-impact area in current Anglo-Argentine relations stems in the first instance from the Embassy's awareness of McGuirk's published research and up-to-the minute expertise** in such matters since the 1982 Falklands-Malvinas conflict and its reliance on his network of specialist advisors in academe and the media' (5.6).

Providing new perspectives for broadcasters and journalists on war

Complementing this work with veterans and the Argentine Embassy, McGuirk's research also influenced the approach of broadcasters and journalists producing work on the Falklands-Malvinas conflict, contributing to expanded perspectives for viewers and readers. With a worldwide readership and a monthly circulation in excess of 250,000, *Soldier* is the official magazine of the British Army and was voted best internal news magazine in Britain in 2008, 2009 & 2010 (5.7). Read extensively by all ranks, the magazine has an annual feature on the conflict. The former editor of the publication has significant experience in reporting defence and security issues, including working in operational theatres and troubled areas of the world. He says of the ICSPRR group: '**It's changed how I report, yes. It's given me an insight into the complexities of things, especially for something like the Falklands-Malvinas, with the huge resonance that it has**' (5.8). Shah concurs: 'Professor McGuirk's research has been of **great value in informing programming ideas and proposals for documentary production**. His examination of the Falklands-Malvinas conflict in terms of representation in the media, in literature and other forms of expression has **contributed to our own coverage of the story in political programmes** made by Juniper and in documentary proposals put to the BBC and Channel 4' (5.6).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Falklands-Malvinas blog (Veteran's Support Group)

<http://nottinghmallvinas.blogspot.fr/2013/04/2006-anglo-argentine-post-conflict.html>

5.2 Dossier of Veterans' statements (available on file).

5.3 Correspondence from Norwegian Psychiatrist & Professor in traumatic stress (available on file).

5.4 President of the Argentine War Veterans Association.

5.5 Correspondence between McGuirk and staff in the Argentine Embassy (London) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (available on file).

5.6 Factual Statement from Chief Executive of Juniper Productions, former Director of political programming at BBC TV, Member of the BBC Board of Governors (available on file).

5.7 <http://www.army.mod.uk/soldier-magazine/soldier-magazine.aspx>

5.8 Factual Statement from the former editor of *The Soldier* magazine (available on file).