The ‘Franklins of Colombia’: Immigration Schemes and Hemispheric Solidarity in the Making of a Civilised Colombian Nation

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Abstract. During the 1820s, Colombia’s diplomats in London, Washington and Philadelphia worked hard to obtain diplomatic recognition for their nascent republic. Their efforts were also geared towards making Colombia attractive to European and North American settlers whose industry and work ethic would, they hoped, turn it into a civilised and modern Euro-Atlantic nation. The immigration schemes they promoted enable us to understand the type of nations the nation-makers of post-independence Spanish America envisioned and how, by appealing to sentiments of hemispheric solidarity – among other means – they sought to turn their visions into reality. A comparison with similar eighteenth-century schemes promoted by the Bourbons, moreover, reveals the persistence, albeit with some critical modifications, of late-colonial ways of thinking and envisioning society.

Keywords: nineteenth-century Colombian history, Colombian diplomatic history, nation-making, immigration to Latin America, hemispheric American relations

Fortune calls upon Your Excellency to be the Franklin of Colombia.¹

During the 1820s, the heavy fighting that had characterised the wars of independence throughout Spanish America gave way to a struggle over the type of political entities that the emerging nations were to become.² Independence

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¹ José Rafael Revenga, secretary of foreign relations, to Francisco Antonio Zea, plenipotentiary minister in Europe and the United States, 24 Dec. 1819 (see note 14).

² For the wars’ violent nature, see Clément Thibaud, Repúblicas en armas: Los ejércitos bolivarianos en la guerra de independencia en Colombia y Venezuela (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta, 2003).
from Spain made visible a political horizon in which republicanism was by no means the only available form of political organisation. In the years following independence, monarchical imaginaries, federalist republican projects and plans to establish centralised republics vied for primacy in the political debates of Spanish American statesmen.3

In northern South America, patriot victories at the battles of Boyacá (1819), Carabobo (1821) and Maracaibo (1823) signalled Spain’s military defeat and expulsion from the territory that in late 1819 had become the Republic of Colombia.4 With Spanish forces mostly expelled, Colombia’s nation-makers embarked on a political process characterised by factionalism and conflict over how best to organise the emerging polity. While some voices argued for the need to establish a constitutional monarchy, the prevailing view favoured republicanism. Among republicans, some were liberals and others conservatives. Of the liberals, some were federalists and others centralists. Some conservatives favoured centralism, while others backed local interests.5 Adding to this political fragmentation, economic uncertainty – derived largely from the financial insolvency of the nascent state, its difficulties to establish a firm tax base and secure international loans and the direct destruction of material wealth the wars generated – further contributed to the instability that characterised ‘the aftermath of revolution in Latin America’.6

In the sphere of international relations, Colombia’s first generation of diplomats attempted to conceal this climate of internal factionalism and impending political crisis. In their North Atlantic destinations, the group of diplomats I call ‘the Franklins of Colombia’ focused on obtaining diplomatic recognition and securing loans to fund the establishment and consolidation of the young republic’s political order.7 As part of their duties, Manuel Torres, 

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4 The Republic of Colombia, covering roughly the area that today constitutes Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama, was created by the Fundamental Law of 17 December 1819. Because the diplomatic agents studied in this article represented the Republic of Colombia, I use the term ‘Colombia’ throughout to refer to the territory covered by the republic created in 1819 (what historians today, to avoid confusion, tend to call ‘Gran Colombia’). For the Fundamental Law see Manuel Antonio Pombo and José Joaquín Guerra (eds.), Constituciones de Colombia (Bogotá: Imprenta de Echeverría Hermanos, 1892).
7 Key studies for understanding the efforts to obtain recognition and financial loans include Malcolm Deas, ‘The Fiscal Problems of Nineteenth-Century Colombia’, Journal of Latin
José María Salazar, Francisco Antonio Zea and the other envoys also promoted immigration schemes designed to make the new country attractive to European and North American settlers.

Focusing on these immigration schemes, this article stresses the persistence of colonial imaginaries in the ways in which Spanish American nation-makers envisioned the nations they were creating. In stressing continuities, albeit allowing for modifications, my approach contributes to challenge what Matthew Brown and Gabriel Paquette have critically called a ‘dominant image’ that characterises the 1820s ‘either as the end of something important (i.e., colonial rule) or as the beginning of something else that became important subsequently (i.e., the “republican” or “national” period’). In line with their reappraisal of the 1820s, I argue that the schemes reveal the persistence after colonialism of a racialised analytical framework that associated whiteness (interpreted here as a cultural marker, as opposed to a late-nineteenth-century biological marker) with civilisation and other positive concepts such as Enlightenment, rationality and prosperity. The acknowledgment of persistence is important because it forces us to rethink the idea of whitening the nation as a mid-nineteenth-century strategy emblematised in Domingo Faustino Sarmiento’s *Facundo* and in Juan Bautista Alberdi’s maxim ‘to govern is to populate’. Instead, the idea of whitening — or, as Brooke Larson put it, de-Africanising and de-Indianising — the nation through immigration emerges as a continuous ideal connecting the late eighteenth century with the mid-nineteenth century and beyond.

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late colonial 1780s and the early republican 1820s, however, allowed for a critical modification, namely the expansion of the pool of desirable immigrants from Catholic foreigners to useful foreigners, even if they were Protestants.

In addition, my focus on the immigration schemes allows me to interpret the renewed interest in hemispheric relations during the 1820s through Colombian eyes. The US reception of Colombian diplomats and the results of the immigration schemes make possible an alternative assessment of the conflicting narratives of US imperialism and racial prejudice, and hemispheric solidarity and enthusiasm.

Finally, locating the 1820s immigration schemes within a larger narrative of human mobility during the nineteenth century makes it possible to connect the usually disconnected histories of Latin America’s early nation-making and Atlantic migration. A focus on the ambitious, though largely unsuccessful, immigration schemes of the 1820s makes it possible to understand migration not just as flow but also as intellectual and political project. Such an approach can add to our understanding of why mass migration happened when it did by helping us understand why it didn’t happen when it was desired and actively promoted.

The Schemes

On 24 December 1819, merely a week after the approval of the Fundamental Law that created the Republic of Colombia, Francisco Antonio Zea received the instructions that were to guide his conduct as Colombia’s plenipotentiary minister in Europe and the United States. The instructions defined Zea’s main task as ‘the double aim of [securing] that our independence be recognised and, if possible, protected’ by the governments to which he was to be accredited. Obtaining ‘weapons, ammunition, and military uniforms’ and promoting ‘the migration [to Colombia] of agriculturalists, artisans, and some mineralogists’ also figured among Zea’s aims. To achieve them, secretary of foreign relations José Rafael Revenga urged Zea to:


Excerpt our newspapers … and present the public with them. Establish communication with the best writers of those countries … Frequent the society of wise men … and earn their benevolence and support … [Do as] the illustrious [Benjamin] Franklin [who] obtained more good in France for his country through the natural sciences than through all diplomatic efforts … Fortune calls upon Your Excellency to be the Franklin of Colombia.14

Just as did Franklin, when serving as the first US ambassador to France, Zea was to display his enlightened education, scientific achievements and diplomatic skills not only to convince Europeans and North Americans of the need to support Colombia’s political struggle, but also of the benefits of migrating to a land of opportunities.15

Zea’s task required him to establish connections that would make it easier for him and his fellow ‘Franklins of Colombia’ to create a positive image of their country. By exhibiting the most civilised traits in their personal behaviour, these Colombian diplomats aimed to create the impression that Colombians resembled the civilised inhabitants of Europe and the United States. This sense of likeness, in turn, was expected to contribute to the success of the immigration schemes Colombia’s envoys were promoting. In theory, thus, the work of the diplomatic agents would help Colombia become as civilised as the North Atlantic nations it sought to emulate.

The aims of the immigration schemes were clear; so was their centrality to nation building. In London, Philadelphia, Washington and New York, Zea, Torres, Salazar and their collaborators had to enlist ‘industrious’, ‘skilled’, ‘robust’, ‘laborious’ and ‘useful’ foreigners of ‘good morals’.16 The influx of these foreigners, secretary of the interior José Manuel Restrepo believed, would ‘increase Colombia’s physical and moral strength’ and reduce the ‘risk of a civil war with its blacks and mulatos’.17

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14 Revenga to Zea, ‘Instrucciones a que … habrá de arreglar su conducta el E.S. Francisco Zea en la misión que se le ha conferido por el gobierno de Colombia para ante los del continente de Europa y de los Estados Unidos de América’, Bogotá, 24 Dec. 1819, Archivo General de la Nación, Colombia (hereafter AGNC), Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores (hereafter MRE), Delegaciones – Transferencia 2 (hereafter DT2), 242, 320v.
15 Franklin served in France as agent of the 13 rebel colonies from 1776 to 1778. In 1778, following France’s recognition of their independence, Franklin became plenipotentiary minister and, two years later, the first US ambassador to France. He remained in this post until 1785. Preceded by his fame as a scientist and inventor, Franklin, in the words of a biographer, enjoyed ‘France’s adoration’. Walter Isaacson, Benjamin Franklin: An American Life (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), p. 328.
16 These characterisations are recurrent in the diplomatic correspondence. See Revenga to Santos Michena, Bogotá, 12 June 1826, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 321, 4v; Revenga to Zea, ‘Instrucciones’, 317v–318r; Pedro Gual to Revenga, Bogotá, 9 Feb. 1824, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 310, 18r.
17 Restrepo, ‘Exposición que el secretario … del interior … hizo al Congreso de 1824’, in Administraciones de Santander (Bogotá: Biblioteca de la Presidencia de la República, 1824).
By the time Zea received his official instructions, the efforts had already started. Earlier in 1819, Venezuelan Luis López Méndez, acting as unofficial envoy in Great Britain of the yet-to-be-created republic of Colombia, printed a number of flyers directed to ‘persons wishing to emigrate to South America’. To those wishing to reside and cultivate land ‘on the banks of the Oronoko … or in the interior of Venezuela’, the flyer offered ‘a free gift’ of 100 hundred acres (to a single man), 150 acres (to a man travelling with his wife), 50 additional acres (for each child aged ten and older), and 20 additional acres (for each child under ten). To make the offer more enticing, the flyer offered the following description:

The Country is chiefly clear of Wood, and immediately fit for the purposes of Agriculture, or feeding of Cattle; it abounds with Game and Live Stock … and grows Sugar, Cocoa, Cotton, Indigo, delicious Fruits, &c. and will produce all those articles of Commerce grown in the United States, with one half the Labour. The Climate is salubrious, and may almost be said to possess perpetual Spring.\(^1\)

The timing and content of the flyer reveal several key elements of the 1820s immigration schemes. First, the fact that it was distributed before the creation of the Republic of Colombia and before any laws promoting the immigration of foreigners were passed suggests that the envoys not only followed instructions and legislation but also shaped those instructions and contributed, through practice, to creating the legal framework that supported the immigration schemes. Second, in an attempt to assuage potential fears and present the idea of crossing the Atlantic as uncomplicated and obviously advantageous, the flyer highlighted the vast economic potential of the lands to be granted, the immediacy with which this potential could be exploited and the wholesomeness of the climate. Third, tacitly acknowledging that the United States were at the time already becoming an attractive destination for immigrants, the handbill drew a direct comparison between ‘the banks of the Oronoko’ and the United States. While both were presented as lands of great opportunity, the former – because they required ‘one half the Labour’ to produce the same commodities – were presented as clearly better than the latter. The idea of living in a land of ‘perpetual spring’, one that was ‘immediately fit’ for productive enterprises, must, no doubt, have sounded tempting. The lack of detail

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and complete absence of legal securities that could offer credibility to the promises, however, must have acted as strong deterrents to potential migrants.

The next logical step after creating the Republic of Colombia was to give legal weight to the intentions and promises of López Méndez’s flyer. Between 1821 and 1825, a series of laws put these promises on firmer ground. Article 183 of Colombia’s first national constitution established that ‘all foreigners of whatever nation will be admitted to Colombia’, where ‘they will enjoy in their persons and properties the same security as the rest of the citizens’. Less than a week after the signing of the constitution, the congress passed the first ‘law on naturalisation of foreigners’, which stated that ‘all persons born outside Colombia … could obtain naturalisation papers’. Renouncing ‘all links tying them to other governments’, contributing ‘some sort of industry or useful occupation’, swearing ‘to uphold, obey, and observe [Colombia’s] constitution’, and spending ‘three years of continued residence on Colombian territory’ were listed as the requirements to become naturalised.

Neither the constitution nor the naturalisation law mentioned any benefits the foreigners were to obtain after adopting their new nationality. Hoping to increase the number of ‘useful and laborious foreigners’, especially ‘farmers and artisans’, the government passed another law (7 June 1823) authorising the distribution of ‘up to 3 million fanegas of lands belonging to the state’. In 1825 the government expanded the naturalisation benefits to foreigners serving for six months or more in Colombia’s national navy or in the merchant navy.

Through ‘contracts celebrated with companies or individuals’ who recruited and transported the immigrants, the Colombian government sought to populate tierras baldías (unoccupied lands) ‘with families brought from France, England, Germany, Switzerland and the United States. Colonisation entrepreneurs, including John Deveraux, James English and the disreputable Gregor MacGregor, and commercial houses like Paravey, Simons and d’Esmennardt from France and London-based Herring, Graham and Powles took up the project of turning the plans into a reality (or in MacGregor’s case of promoting migration to a fake republic of his own making with the explicit aim of defrauding potential settlers).

19 ‘Constitución de la República de Colombia’ (1821), in Pombo and Guerra (eds.), Constituciones, p. 143.
20 The residency requirements decreased if a foreigner acquired property in Colombia or married a Colombian. ‘Ley sobre naturalización de extranjeros’ (3 Sept. 1821), Gaceta de Colombia, 5 (20 Sept. 1821).
21 Gaceta de Colombia, 87 (15 June 1823). 1 fanega = 1.58 acres.
22 AGNC, República, Libros de Manuscritos y Leyes Originales, 50, 94.
23 ‘Contrata de cesión y venta de tierras baldías’, Gaceta de Colombia, 182 (10 April 1825); ‘Quinta contrata de cesión de tierras baldías’, Gaceta de Colombia, 206 (25 Sept. 1825).
Working closely with the newly established Colombian Society for Agricultural and Other Purposes, presided over by Colombia’s plenipotentiary minister in London, Manuel José Hurtado, these companies led the recruitment efforts in Europe and shared with the Colombian government the risks associated with these ambitious schemes. According to Hans Rheinheimer, a total of 25 agreements or concessions were made with such individual entrepreneurs and companies. By the end of 1825, more than 2.3 million fanegas (about 3.65 million acres) had been ‘freely granted’ or sold at very low prices to national and foreign companies. The lands covered patches of Colombia’s territory in the central highlands (Cundinamarca, Boyacá, Vélez), fertile central valley (Mariquita and Neiva), Caribbean lowlands (Cartagena, Santa Marta, Panama), Pacific lowlands (Chocó) and Venezuela (Caracas, Zulia, Mérida). An unambiguous legal framework and clearly specified portions of the national territory designated for settlement, Colombia’s diplomatic envoys soon came to learn, proved insufficient to guarantee a substantial migration. During the first half of the 1820s, however, they worked hard to recruit as many potential immigrants as possible.

One of the most common ways of promoting the schemes was through books specifically targeted at potential migrants. During the 1820s, a number of descriptions of Colombia were published in London and Philadelphia. Their generally positive tone suggests that Colombian nation-makers contributed, directly or indirectly, to these publications. As gave recruits the option to stay in Colombia. Matthew Brown, *Adventuring through Spanish Colonies: Simón Bolívar, Foreign Mercenaries and the Birth of New Nations* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), pp. 113–18. For MacGregor’s fraudulent scheme, see David Sinclair, *Sir Gregor MacGregor and the Land that Never Was: The Extraordinary Story of the Most Audacious Fraud in History* (London: Headline, 2003).


28 Mollien’s work, characterised by its negative depiction of how Colombians treated foreigners, appears exceptional in its non-adherence to Colombia’s immigration schemes. Throughout
David Sowell put it, these writers counted on ‘friendly advisors’ who provided key information and planted their own agendas in the accounts of these foreign travellers. It is well known, for example, that Francis Hall worked closely with a group of enlightened Venezuelans called the ‘Club of Caracas’.²⁹ William Duane was closely connected with Colombia’s envoy to the United States, Manuel Torres, and secretary of foreign relations, Pedro Gual, Revenga’s successor.³⁰ And Zea and Alexander Walker collaborated in the writing of one of these descriptions. In addition, Colombian diplomats reached out to printers in Philadelphia and London to facilitate publication of favourable accounts and, on occasions, even established printing houses funded by Colombia’s government.³¹

Some of the accounts were explicit advertisements for Colombia’s immigration schemes. Hall’s Colombia, for example, highlighted (in capital letters) – in both its London (1824) and Philadelphia (1825) editions – the fact that it included a detailed treatment of Colombia’s ‘inducements to emigration’. The anonymous Colombia, attributed to Zea and Walker, was intended for ‘the general reader, the merchant, and the colonist’. It promoted migration to Colombia as one of the best ways to relieve ‘Europe of … its surplus population’ by emphasising, as did López Méndez’s flyer, ‘the superiority over the United States which Colombia derives from its proximity to Europe, its climate, its productions, and its distinguished geographical situation’.³² Both accounts also included detailed explanations of the legal framework that made migration possible, as well as translations of the most relevant decrees.

³¹ The accounting books of Colombia’s diplomatic delegation in London include payments to several printers, including Rudolf Ackermann, whose pro-revolutionary publications in English and Spanish made him a valuable friend of the Spanish American cause. ‘Diario de los gastos de delegación’ (1829), AGNC, MRE, DT 2, 325, 2–15; Eugenia Roldán Vera, The British Book Trade and Spanish American Independence: Education and Knowledge Transmission in Transcontinental Perspective (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003). In 1822, Zea signed a contract with Carlos Cazar to establish and run a printing house devoted to the publication of news about Colombia’s politics and economic prospects. It is not clear if the printing house actually published anything. ‘Contracto hecho entre … Francisco Antonio Zea … y Carlos Cazar de Molina, para formar un establecimiento litográfico’, London, 1 Aug. 1822, AGNC, MRE, DT 2, 242, 262.
³² [Walker and Zea], Colombia, vol. 1, p. cxvi.
regarding migration and naturalisation. Less explicit, but still assertive in their promotion of migration to Colombia, were Cochrane’s Journal, Hamilton’s Travels and Duane’s Visit to Colombia. Cochrane described Colombia as offering ‘every facility for enterprise, and every prospect of success’. In his opinion, because the country ‘is still … thinly populated, … [its] numbers may be augmented by emigration from Europe’. Warning that the Colombian government still needed to work on facilitating the migration of Europeans, Hamilton praised the potential of the country’s highlands stating: ‘What a climate and soil for Europeans, and how astonishing would be the produce under proper agricultural cultivation!’ Duane’s more cautious adherence to the immigration schemes is made evident in his transcription of the 1823 address to congress of secretary for the interior Restrepo, which presents Colombia as a country open to receiving foreigners and offering them opportunities to pursue professional development in scientific fields.

Colonial Persistence and National Modifications

Colombia’s approach was neither unique nor newly invented. Like Revenga, Argentina’s secretary of foreign relations Bernardino Rivadavia instructed his agents in Britain and the United States to foster ‘the transportation and establishment’ in the newly created republic ‘of industrious families … from any point in Europe, especially from the northern nations’. The Argentine government, like its Colombian counterpart, worked with commercial houses to recruit agriculturalists and mineralogists to whom the government offered land, financial loans and religious protection. Seeking to add legal weight and some degree of specificity to the promises, a succession of laws in 1821 and 1822 authorised the transportation of European families willing to move to Patagonia. In addition, decrees of 13 and 14 April 1824 created a ‘commission in charge of recruiting workers and artisans in Europe’. Mexico and other newly independent Spanish American nations

34 Cochrane, Journal, pp. vii, 55.
35 Hamilton, Travels, p. 155.
36 Duane, Visit, pp. 537–42.
39 Moya, Cousins and Strangers, p. 49.
40 Registro oficial de la República Argentina (Buenos Aires: La República, 1880), p. 59.
pursued similar approaches that reveal the xenophilia (at least among the elites) characteristic of this early nation-building phase.41

The promotion of immigration schemes targeting Europeans and North Americans was not exclusively undertaken by newly independent nations. Cuba, which remained a Spanish colony, also pursued similar schemes after the establishment, in 1812, of the ‘Comisión de Población Blanca’, whose 1818 guidelines stated that immigrants ‘had to be Catholic’ and ‘had to take an oath of loyalty and vassalage’.42 In contrast to the Spanish American republics, Cuban elites also promoted, legally until 1820 and surreptitiously until the 1860s, the importation of African slaves to serve as labour for the expanding sugar economy. The simultaneous expansion of the European and African populations of the island, the Comisión argued, should ultimately result in a more loyal Cuban population by balancing the potential restiveness of African slaves with the perceived loyalty of European immigrants.43

Cuba’s dual immigration system (white immigrants to ensure loyalty and black slaves to provide labour for sugar production) was not a creation of the nineteenth century. During the 1780s and 1790s, imperial officers throughout Spanish America pursued a similar strategy. In New Granada, as part of a plan to establish effective control of the Darién (in the north-western tip of the viceroyalty), viceroy Antonio Caballero y Góngora promoted the immigration and settlement of English, Irish and German Catholics. To this end, he worked closely with Spain’s ambassador in Philadelphia, Diego de Gardoqui, who promised to ‘send as many families as I may be able to acquire … to contribute to this beautiful goal’.44 Spanish authorities in Florida, Trinidad and other sparsely populated, poorly protected and underdeveloped areas of Spanish America pursued similar schemes with metropolitan support.45 In fact, for Spanish minister

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44 Gardoqui to Caballero y Góngora, New York, 23 Feb. 1788, Archivo General de Indias, Santa Fe, 645.
of state José Moñino, count of Floridablanca, actively encouraging ‘foreign Catholics’ to migrate to Louisiana, Trinidad and other underpopulated areas of Spanish America, as well as territories mostly populated by *indios bárbaros* (unconquered indigenous groups), offered the best means to ‘defend [Spain’s] vast regions from its [foreign] enemies’ and to calm ‘the restless and turbulent spirits of some of [Spanish America’s] inhabitants’. To ‘populate, make habitable and fortify’, Floridablanca wrote in his 1787 *Instrucción Reservada*, was the formula to strengthen Spanish presence, achieve order and ensure the loyalty of the crown’s subjects.46

Equally concerned with promoting the economic development of Spanish America’s vast territories, Floridablanca called for the mass transportation of African slaves as the best means to promote agriculture and trade.47 Numerous imperial officers and intellectuals throughout Spanish America, both before and after Floridablanca’s *Instrucción*, also argued for the need to import African slaves. In 1778, for instance, Santa Marta’s governor Antonio Narváez y la Torre declared that the importation of African slaves ‘needs to be requested and promoted … because it is [through their labour] that plantations are developed and export goods are produced’.48 During the 1790s Cuban planter Francisco Arango y Parreño was another to propose the importation of African slaves en masse. Seeing the destruction of Saint-Domingue’s sugar economy, Arango called on Spanish authorities to ‘take advantage of the [current] moment to bring to your soil the wealth that the narrow territory of Guarico [Saint-Domingue] gave to the French nation’.49 While Narváez’s petition fell on deaf ears, Arango’s call became a foundational step in Cuba’s transformation into the world’s leading sugar producer.

Regardless of the outcome, the promotion of both the immigration of European and North American Catholics and the traffic in African slaves reveals a clear logic: white immigrants had the potential to strengthen Spanish control of underpopulated areas and to increase the loyalty of Spanish subjects; black slaves, despite their potentially restive spirit, were perceived as tools much needed to foster economic growth. The promotion of

white immigration and the traffic in African slaves underscore the degree to which – for late colonial authorities, as for Spanish American nation-makers in the 1820s and Alberdi in the 1830s – to govern was to populate.

For the Franklins of Colombia, many of whom were intellectual heirs of Floridablanca and other Spanish reformers and, like Narváez and Arango, members of the community of enlightened creoles, Floridablanca’s formula – to populate, make habitable and fortify – was completely logical.50 As the nascent Colombian republic adopted an increasingly antislavery stance, however, the legal traffic in African slaves ceased to be an option.51 The idea of promoting North Atlantic immigration to combat the unruliness and backwardness of the black and indigenous population persisted. In the transition from colony to nation, the pool of desired immigrants expanded from encompassing European and North American Catholics in the 1780s, to including, even in Cuba, Protestants from these northern locations in the 1820s. The Enlightenment tenets common to both late colonial officials and early nation-makers made them see European and North American immigrants, both Catholics and Protestants, as a source of order, civilisation and prosperity.

**Hemispheric Solidarity and the Image of the Nation**

The enlightened education of the Franklins of Colombia was also central to their strategy of enticing potential migrants in their diplomatic destinations. By demonstrating their virtues and education – most of them were well-read, fluent in English, French and Spanish and had a number of publications in politics, geography and the natural sciences to their names – Salazar, Torres and other Colombian diplomats were effectively advancing the argument that Colombians, like US citizens and British subjects, were enlightened and civilised. Gaining the trust and friendship of US and British intellectuals, politicians and businessmen also made it possible for Colombian envoys to stand on firm ground when arguing for the good prospects that the new nation’s immigration and naturalisation laws offered to foreigners.

In London, Zea, a former director of Madrid’s Royal Botanical Garden, impressed politicians and intellectuals with his enlightened traits. Like Franklin, Zea used his knowledge of the natural sciences to persuade his

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50 Zea and Salazar, for instance, had been active participants in the enlightened circles of Santa Fe (Bogotá) before independence. For New Granada’s enlightened creoles, see Renán Silva, *Los ilustrados de Nueva Granada, 1760–1808: Genealogía de una comunidad de interpretación* (Medellín: Banco de la República / EAFIT, 2002).

51 While Colombia abolished slavery only in 1851, the ley de manumisión of July 1821 abolished the slave trade and, by freeing the children of slaves born after the proclamation of the law, traced a path towards abolition. See Harold Bierck, “The Struggle for Abolition in Gran Colombia”, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 33: 3 (1953), pp. 365–86.

Soon after his arrival Zea reported that prestigious writers, among them William Walton and Alexander Walker, were enthusiastic supporters of the Colombian cause. Walton, who had been writing favourably about the independence of the Spanish colonies since the early 1810s, claimed in 1819 that he had ‘spent more than four thousand pounds to sponsor the printing of [Colombian] propaganda’. Walker, according to José María del Real, one of Colombia’s first diplomatic envoys, ‘not only serves our cause with his pen, but also has served me … with such zeal and friendship that I can assure you that I would not exist if it were not for him’. Closely collaborating with Zea, Walker was also active in the promotion of Colombia as a destination for ‘industrious and laborious’ foreigners. However, while usually cordial, the reception of British politicians was far from enthusiastic and was sometimes even unwelcoming.

In the United States, by contrast, the growing sense of the existence of ‘a hemispheric American community’ united ‘against colonial tyranny’ made political figures and the general public receptive from the very first moment. In fact, judging by Salazar’s frequent and friendly correspondence with secretary of foreign relations Henry Clay, the US government, as Revenga anticipated in his instructions to Zea, felt ‘more than any other [country], sympathy for our luck and a great interest in seeing its own [republican] doctrine triumph’. Early recognition by the United States of the independence of Colombia, Mexico and Argentina (then called the United Provinces of the

53 Revenga to Zea, ‘Instrucciones’.
54 Walton to Simón Bolívar, quoted in Gutiérrez, El reconocimiento de Colombia, p. 120.
56 Walker and Zea collaborated in the writing and translation of a description of Colombia first published in both English and Spanish in 1822 (see note 27).
57 George Canning, British foreign secretary 1822–7, was often dismissive and frequently refused to meet with Colombian envoys. Given that Britain had formal diplomatic relations with Spain, the British Foreign Office was, at least during the first half of the 1820s, not willing to openly recognise Colombia’s independence. Official recognition came only in 1825. See William Kaufmann, British Policy and the Independence of Latin America, 1804–1828 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1951), pp. 164–81; Gutiérrez, El reconocimiento de Colombia, pp. 59–63.
59 Revenga to Zea, ‘Instrucciones’, 316r.
Río de la Plata), and President Monroe’s 1823 address to congress, further demonstrate the extent to which the northern republic favoured the addition of new republics to the world map.\(^6\) Receptiveness towards recognition, however, did not imply that Salazar, Torres, Leandro Palacio and Alejandro Vélez could stand still waiting for US politicians, intellectuals and the general public to act upon their favourable perception. Like Zea in London, Colombian envoys in the United States worked hard to gain the trust and support of key political and intellectual figures and to recruit potential immigrants. As the 1820s progressed, they discovered that sympathy had its limits.\(^6^1\)

Salazar and his predecessor Torres constitute the best examples of the connections envoys established in the United States. Shortly after his arrival, Salazar informed vice-president Francisco de Paula Santander that ‘it has given me great satisfaction the way in which both the [US] government and citizens have welcomed me’. Having visited New York, Philadelphia, Washington and Boston, Salazar reported that ‘I have acquired good relations in the four cities … and have [become a member of] some literary circles.’\(^6^2\) Between 1823 and 1828 Salazar joined Boston’s Historical Society, ‘the Columbian Institute at Washington, … the American Philosophical Society, and other literary societies’.\(^6^3\) As member of these learned societies he had the opportunity to meet and frequent US intellectuals, businessmen, journalists and government officials, including Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams, Mathew Carey and William Duane. Moreover, by entering these circles he joined the enlightened communities to which belonged some of the most respected founding fathers – George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson.\(^6^4\)

Before Salazar’s arrival, most of the heavy lifting in favour of the Colombian cause had been the work of Manuel Torres. A resident of


\(^6^2\) Salazar to Santander, Philadelphia, 26 June 1823, in Cortázar (ed.), *Correspondencia*, vol. 11, p. 290.


Philadelphia since 1796, Torres’ active support for the independence of Colombia and Spanish America had long preoccupied Spanish authorities in Philadelphia. During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, Torres hosted numerous travellers who ended up playing critical roles in the creation of the Spanish American republics. The list of visitors to Torres’ Philadelphia home includes Francisco de Miranda, Simón Bolívar, Pedro Gual, José Álvarez de Toledo and José Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara. Between 1819 and his death in 1822, Torres served as the first official envoy of the Republic of Colombia. As informal champion of the Spanish American cause and then as official representative of Colombia, Torres also established close relations with prominent US politicians and the editors of newspapers that functioned as sounding boards for the voices promoting Spanish America’s independence and immigration schemes. One of these editors, Torres’ close friend William Duane, even gave him the moniker ‘the Franklin of the southern world’.

Of particular importance to spreading the enthusiasm for Colombia were Duane’s *Aurora*, printed in Philadelphia, and Hezekiah Niles’ *Niles’ Weekly Register*, published in Baltimore. Duane’s enthusiasm, largely acquired through his friendship with Torres, offered early Colombia an important outlet to disseminate news about the progress of the war and the prospects peace could offer. Like the *Aurora*, other daily newspapers in the United States – Philadelphia’s *National Gazette* and Washington’s *National Intelligencer* are frequently mentioned in the diplomatic correspondence – as well as many weekly and monthly magazines and periodicals informed their readers about Colombia’s political events, business opportunities and inducements to immigration. Sometimes these periodicals published translations of speeches and decrees obtained from Colombian diplomats, sometimes their foreign news sections gave information about Colombian politics and economics. In the frequency with which these news outlets informed their readers about Colombia it is possible to discern the trajectory of a hemispheric sense of solidarity, fraternity and enthusiasm that, after reaching its peak in the middle years of the 1820s, began to wane and, by 1827, had descended into indifference.

Among the weekly and monthly magazines and periodicals, *Niles’ Weekly Register* clearly stands out as the most important publishing vehicle for

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65 Bowman, ‘Manuel Torres’.
Colombian news. Washington, Philadelphia, Boston and New York also figured as important centres for the publication and dissemination of Colombian news. A quantitative analysis of the number of articles mentioning Colombia suggests that the US reading public paid attention to Colombian events throughout the 1820s, with the most acute interest concentrated in the decade’s middle years (1825–7). It is not possible to establish beyond reasonable doubt that the spike in 1825–7 resulted directly from the efforts of Colombia’s diplomats. Interest in Colombia (and, most likely, the other Spanish American republics) might have been boosted by the ‘fraternal rhetoric’ and the sense of friendly ‘neighborliness in the New World’ promoted by Monroe’s 1823 address to congress. Whatever the cause of this spike, the frequency of Colombia’s appearance in US newspapers and magazines suggests that after 1827 interest in the emerging South American republic began to wane.

This trend is consistent with the trajectory of enthusiasm for Spanish America evident in celebrations of US independence during the 1820s. Taking as indicators toasts during the Fourth of July celebrations in the United States, Caitlin Fitz established that ‘between 1816 and 1825, 55 percent [of these celebrations] offered toasts to hemispheric independence’. By contrast, ‘by 1828, only 9 percent did; and by 1829, there was just one southward-looking toast’. For the Franklins of Colombia, as Salazar wrote in May 1827, the shift ‘from enthusiasm to indifference’ was palpable.

The willingness of US newspapers to report on Colombia’s political events, commercial prospects and incentives to potential migrants cannot merely be attributed to a commitment to inform their readers about world events. Such an interpretation would overemphasise the agency of US journalists and editors in detriment to the zeal of Colombian diplomats. Rather than in the places of publication, the chain of communication started in Bogotá.

The following analysis is based on information from ‘Chronicling America — Historic American Newspapers’ (http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/). The database consulted includes only weekly, monthly and quarterly publications. I further limited the results to newspapers and magazines (excluding reports, trade journals and scholarly journals). The ten publications that featured the most articles mentioning Colombia are, in descending order: NWR, Christian Register, Saturday Evening Post, Christian Secretary, The Columbian Star, Genius of Universal Emancipation, The Albion, Christian Watchman, Western Recorder and The Christian Advocate. NWR published about 30% of the 1,153 articles in these ten periodicals mentioning Colombia.

Of the total of 1,153 news pieces mentioning Colombia, 522 were published in the period 1825–7. For the periods 1822–4 and 1828–30 the numbers are 312 and 319.


Salazar to SFR, Washington, 10 May 1827, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 142, 9v.

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72 Salazar to SFR, Washington, 10 May 1827, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 142, 9v.
with the instructions of the secretary of foreign relations. In the first step of the chain, Gual, Revenga and their successors instructed the envoys to translate and ‘send … to the editors of the most famous newspapers’ documents like the annual addresses to congress of Colombia’s vice-president and secretaries of the interior and foreign relations, as well as legislation that had been passed promoting immigration to the new republic.\(^73\) The instructions asked diplomatic agents to ‘work … in the Aurora with our indefatigable Duane’ and to submit materials ‘to the [editors] of Edinburgh’s magazines’ and ‘the [British] Encyclopedia’.\(^74\) Following those instructions the envoys paid for translations and then ‘insert[ed the news] in different newspapers'.\(^75\) One of the first things Salazar did after arriving in Philadelphia was to establish ‘friendship with the main journalists’ and to ensure publication of ‘some important documents’.\(^76\) As Colombia’s plenipotentiary minister, Salazar considered it one of his main tasks ‘to insert in the newspapers … everything I have seen as convenient to the good name and honour of the republic’.\(^77\)

Working with Duane in the Aurora and with the editors of the National Intelligencer and the National Gazette, Colombia’s envoys not only reached out to these newspapers’ readers but also widened their audience by relaying news to other periodicals. Niles’ Weekly Register, for example, often acknowledged that the news, speeches and compilations of laws it published about Colombia were ‘taken from the Aurora’ or reproduced ‘from the National Intelligencer’.\(^78\) The information chain connecting Bogotá to what can be called first-tier newspapers (the Aurora, the National Intelligencer and the National Gazette) and second-tier periodicals (those gathering information from first-tier ones) allowed Colombia’s government to reach a ‘powerful group of Federalist elites … intimately connected to Washington’s administration’ and, presumably, interested in investing in profitable ventures.\(^79\) In both the United States and Great Britain, these elites would – the

\(^73\) SFR to Fernández Madrid, Bogotá, 12 May 1827, AGNC, MRE, DT\(^2\), 310, 118r. See also SFR to Manuel Hurtado, Bogotá, 29 July 1824, AGNC, MRE, DT\(^2\), 310, 30r; SFR to Hurtado, Bogotá, 28 Feb. 1825, AGNC, MRE, DT\(^2\), 310, 38v; SFR to Hurtado, Bogotá, 2 Nov. 1825, AGNC, MRE, DT\(^2\), 310, 63r.

\(^74\) Gual to Torres, Bogotá, 1 Aug. 1821, AGNC, MRE, DT\(^2\), 128, 146; SFR to Fernández Madrid, Bogotá, 12 May 1827, AGNC, MRE, DT\(^2\), 310, 118r.


\(^77\) Salazar to SFR, Washington, 10 May 1827, AGNC, MRE, DT\(^2\), 142, 9r.

\(^78\) For examples of news published in NWR that was originally published in other newspapers see ‘Repertorio noticioso’, pp. 216, 218, 224, 228, 270.

Colombian government hoped – create companies ‘to promote Colombia’s colonisation and agriculture, the opening of roads, and other analogous objectives’.

The connections with journalists and editors also allowed Colombian diplomats to counter rumours that could endanger the national image and negatively affect the willingness of US citizens and British subjects to migrate to Colombia. When rumours emerged about Colombia’s political instability after news of Venezuela’s rebellion in 1826 reached the United States and Europe, Salazar published in the National Intelligencer an official newsletter about the ‘re-establishment of the constitutional order’ in Colombia. In response to a defamatory account accusing the Colombian government of sentencing two US citizens ‘to six years labour on public works’, Alejandro Vélez published the following note in Philadelphia’s National Gazette:

A Government like that of Colombia, which has given so many convincing proofs of her love of justice and respect for the laws of nations, could not have acted in the manner specified … If unfortunately the rules of the most strict justice have been transgressed, the American Government knows … that Colombia is willing to indemnify her merchants, when the justice of the case be well substantiated.

Like Salazar and Vélez, Javier Medina, Colombia’s commercial agent in New York, frequently defended Colombia’s name … when it has been unjustly attacked. Countering ‘infamous libels’ spread by ‘the enemies of our independence and our institutions’ was one of the most important aspects of the effort to uphold Colombia’s reputation.

The efforts went well beyond these reactive measures. The arsenal of Colombian envoys to defend the national honour also included prevention. When Salazar and Vélez discovered the intentions of exiled Venezuelan Rafael Domínguez to publish a weekly newspaper highly critical of the Colombian government, they moved quickly to avert the threat. After learning that Domínguez felt disgruntled about his living conditions in Philadelphia and frequently expressed his desire to return to Colombia, Vélez and Salazar offered him free passage to Cartagena. Domínguez accepted, sailed to Colombia, and the threat was contained.

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81 Salazar to SFR, Washington, 9 Jan. 1827, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 142, 4r.
82 Vélez to SFR, Philadelphia, 14 Feb. 1828, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 143, 88r.
84 ‘Prospecto de un periódico semanal que se publicará en castellano con el título “El Fénix”’, Philadelphia, 7 Jan. 1828, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 143, 123.
On occasions, ensuring that Colombia’s image remained favourable required Colombian envoys to set straight the counterproductive effects of misplaced good intentions. In 1825, at a public dinner to celebrate the anniversary of US independence, the organisers honoured Simón Bolívar by hanging his portrait next to those of George Washington and the Marquis Lafayette. The friendly gesture, however, turned sour because Bolívar’s portrait ‘was so badly drawn that it shows [his] face extremely disfigured and resembling that of a mulato’. A celebratory gesture, intended to congratulate Colombia on its recently achieved independence, ended up marking a fundamental difference between the two nations. While both Bolívar and Washington were celebrated as founding fathers, the latter was honoured as the hero of a white, civilised nation. Bolívar’s portrait, by contrast, brought to mind the familiar and much dreaded image of the black republic of Haiti. Hoping to prevent such misunderstandings in the future, Palacio advised that painters be hired to draw ‘good’ portraits of Bolívar and Santander in order to send them to the United States and Europe. Nothing less than the image of the nation was at stake.

The misunderstanding surrounding Bolívar’s portrait reveals a major fault line running through the rhetoric and politics of hemispheric solidarity and fraternity based on common adherence to and interest in expanding republicanism. The incident made evident that solidarity, fraternity, sympathy and enthusiasm did not mean equality. Colombia and its founding father could be admired and celebrated, but far from celebrating Washington, Lafayette and Bolívar as equals, the gesture affirmed US superiority over its southern neighbours. In the United States of the 1820s the positive sentiments of solidarity and fraternity coexisted with racial prejudice and anti-Catholicism. These negative sentiments toward the ‘sister republics’ of the south first became publicly evident in the international sphere during the inaugural conference of American nations held in Panama in 1826. Political divisions in the United States resulting in the rise of a Democratic Party that strongly opposed the pan-Americanism espoused by John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay, coupled with political instability in South America and Bolívar’s increasing authoritarianism, turned the tide against Spanish America. Thus, as Caitlin Fitz

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86 For the effect of Haiti on the imagination of US political leaders, see White, Encountering Revolution, pp. 124–202.
concluded, ‘the year 1826 … was the beginning of the end for the inter-American ardor’. By the end of the decade, the prevailing sentiment was ‘one of limited interest, if not disdain, for the peoples and institutions of the emerging republics’.

Since many factors play a part in an individual’s decision and ability to migrate, it is hard to establish the extent to which US hemispheric enthusiasm (and the indifference that superseded it) affected the outcome of the immigration schemes. It is also hard to establish a causal relation between the work of the Franklins of Colombia and the actual number of immigrants reaching Colombia during the 1820s. To approximate any type of conclusions it is necessary to turn to the experiences of those who actually migrated.

Not a Stream but a Trickle

In addition to a number of foreign adventurers who fought in the wars of independence and stayed in the new republic, some skilled individuals from the United States petitioned Colombia’s envoys in the northern republic to obtain permission to travel to and settle in Colombia. A number of petitions forwarded to Bogotá by Colombian diplomats between 1823 and 1825 suggest that immigration was an individual adventure in which skilled foreigners applied to move to Colombia. Through petitions like the one Daniel Large directed to Salazar in Philadelphia, potential immigrants expressed their ‘desire of going to … Columbia [sic]’ and inquired about the encouragement to be given to individuals with specific skills and professional backgrounds. That of Large, a ‘mechanic … well acquainted both with the theory and the practice of … mechanical arts’ including making ‘steam engine[s], … water mills … [and] machine[s] … for spinning cotton [and] wool’, as well as ‘constructing bridges, roads and canals’, was an easy case. Considering him a good ‘acquisition for the country’, Salazar forwarded the petition stating his desire ‘to see him established in our capital or any other point’ as quickly as possible.

Like Large, Thomas McConell, a lawyer qualified to teach ‘ancient languages and mathematics’, appeared useful enough for Salazar to recommend him to Bogotá’s prestigious Colegio de San Bartolomé. In 1824 and 1825, a significant number of petitions from military men wishing to join Colombia’s army or to serve in its navy also

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89 Fitz, ‘Hemispheric Dimensions’, p. 379.
90 Johnson, Hemisphere Apart, p. ix.
92 Large to Salazar, Philadelphia, 20 April 1824, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 134, 69r; Salazar to Gual, Philadelphia, 21 April 1824, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 130, 19v.
93 Salazar to José María Esteves, Washington, 15 April 1825, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 130, 102v.
reached the new nation’s diplomatic office in Washington. Early in 1826 the frigates _La Plata_ and _Cundinamarca_ sailed from the United States to Cartagena transporting artisans and mechanics whose occupations suggest that, like Large and McConell, they intended to settle in Bogotá or some other urban setting.

*La Plata’s* list of passengers provides valuable hints about the type of immigrants who moved from the United States to Colombia. Of the 26 passengers on board, 25 were men (20 of whom were single). The only woman, a North American dressmaker called Catarina Hughes, appears as a clear exception in a migration scheme that mainly targeted male settlers. As expected from a ship sailing from the United States, most migrants were US citizens, but there were also Italians (six), Englishmen (two), Germans (one), Dutchmen (one), Frenchmen (one) and Irishmen (one). In terms of occupations, tailors (five), carpenters (three), chair makers (three), saddlers (three), shoemakers (two) and hatters (two) were counted among *La Plata’s* immigrants. Both the individual petitions and *La Plata’s* passenger list clearly depict the civilising influence that the migrants were to bring to Colombia. Their occupations and skills, most of which had direct application in urban environments, would contribute to disseminating modern arts and crafts in Colombia’s cities. Most importantly, since their nationalities matched Colombians’ idea of whiteness, the immigrants’ origins and marriage status could contribute to bringing Colombia closer to the ideal of becoming a civilised, European-like nation. The fact that most of their occupations made the settlers more fit for urban environments than for the countryside also hints at a potential limitation of the immigration programme: how to attract rural settlers who could, literally and metaphorically, change the face of the countryside.

Early in 1826 the _Gaceta de Colombia_ advised that 199 foreigners ‘of those that the London-based Colombian association of agriculture and colonisation agreed to introduce’ to the republic ‘had arrived in La Guaira’. From there, the foreigners (all of them recruited in Scotland) moved to their intended location.

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94 Salazar to Gual, Philadelphia, 1 May 1824, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 134, 74r; Salazar to Gual, Washington, 20 May 1824, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 134, 73r; Salazar to Gual, Washington, 20 April 1825, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 134, 75r–81r; Salazar to Gual, Washington, 21 April 1825, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 134, 82r; Salazar to Gual, Washington, 20 May 1825, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 134, 90r–91r.

95 ‘Artesanos a quienes se han dado papeletas de pasaje para ir a bordo de la fragata _La Plata_’, 2 May 1826, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 137.

96 The urban bias of the immigrants is also evident in Brown’s list of foreign adventurers. Nearly 70% of the 384 foreigners who stayed settled in Bogotá and Caracas. Brown, *Adventuring through Spanish Colonies*, pp. 174, 176.

97 Of the foreign adventurers that make up Brown’s study, 66 (roughly 20% of the 384 who stayed) married Colombian women. *Ibid.*, pp. 179–82.

destination: Topo, less than ten miles southwest of La Guaira. Their arrival was intended to be the beginning of a wave of immigrants that would bring civilisation, industry and modernity to Colombia’s rural areas. Topo’s auspicious beginnings, however, quickly turned into dramatic failure. By the end of 1826, in large part because of London’s 1825 financial crisis, the Colombian Society for Agricultural and Other Purposes was forced to cease operations and withdrew the support it had been providing to the Scottish settlers. Less than a year later, in June 1827, most of those who had remained in Topo sailed to New York and, from there, moved to Canada, where they settled in the city of Guelph. About a decade later, a traveller passing through Topo ‘found it entirely deserted’. Other similar projects to establish agricultural colonies never made it beyond the planning stage. Most projected settlements remained visions.

The schemes’ ambitious hopes for massive immigration, thus, failed to materialise. The promising developments of the years 1823 to 1826 foundered when, following public disturbances in Venezuela, it became evident that the Colombian government was unable to guarantee public order, personal security for immigrants and a safe environment for foreign merchants and entrepreneurs. In reference to ‘the general mistrust that spread throughout England’ about the possibilities Colombia could offer to immigrants and investors, interior secretary Restrepo cited the ‘interior state of Colombia’ as the main reason for the growing disenchantment of British subjects. In Washington, Salazar warned that ‘only the complete and quick reestablishment of order could restore the reputation of [our] republic’. Echoing the concerns of Restrepo and Salazar, the British commissioner in Bogotá, Patrick Campbell, doubted the ability of Colombia’s government to protect those British subjects who were already in the republic. In his response to Campbell, secretary of foreign relations Revenga could offer no words of comfort and was forced to agree with the British commissioner’s pessimistic interpretation of the prospects for European migration to Colombia.

Campbell’s complaints went beyond safety concerns related to public order. In his opinion, a more fundamental limitation of the immigration schemes was inscribed in the laws of 4 July 1823 and 30 April 1825, which demanded that foreigners wishing to obtain naturalisation papers renounce their previous nationality. For Campbell, ‘the oath of renunciation’ constituted a great barrier to the immigration of British subjects. Considering it ‘vicious in principle, and … liable to be viewed as an injury’ to Britain, Campbell informed

99 Rheinheimer, *Topo*, pp. 55, 123, 125, 133.
100 Restrepo, ‘Exposición que el secretario … del interior … hace al Congreso de 1827 …’, in *Administraciones de Santander*, vol. 2, p. 251.
101 Salazar to SFR, Washington, 10 May 1827, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 142, 9v.
102 Revenga to Campbell, Bogotá, 22 July 1826, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 309, 33v.
Revenga that ‘such renunciation will not be allowed’ and that it was in the best interest of the Colombian government to reconsider these requirements.\footnote{Campbell to Revenga, Bogotá, 5 June 1826, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 319, 101–3.}

Moreover, recent scandals involving the mistreatment of British subjects residing in Colombia made Campbell further question the ability of the Colombian government to protect foreigners. In particular, he complained about the murder of a British subject in Cartagena and the insults to which two other British Protestants had been subject for merely taking off their hats instead of kneeling at the passing of a religious procession.\footnote{Campbell to Revenga, Bogotá, 5 May 1826, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 319, 87–8; Campbell to Revenga, Bogotá, 15 June 1826, ibid.} These affronts to the religious freedom and tolerance inscribed in Colombia’s legislation were ‘indicative of the existence of a [popular] feeling’ that could ‘frustrate the intentions of the government of Colombia unless some additional measures are taken’.\footnote{Campbell to Revenga, Bogotá, 5 May 1826, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 319, 87v.} Even if the British authorities (and the same could be said for those of the United States) were willing to interpret these incidents as minor ones, it is not difficult to imagine the general message that British settlers residing in Colombia would have transmitted to potential migrants. It seems reasonable to believe that, contrary to what happened decades later in the successful story of late nineteenth-century Italian migration to Argentina, in the Colombian case ‘the postage stamp’ became a powerful agent in deterring migration.\footnote{Italian parliamentarian Enrico Ferri referred to ‘the mail stamp’ as ‘the most powerful Argentine immigration agent’. Quoted in Moya, Cousins and Strangers, p. 52.}

In the final analysis, despite the efforts of Colombian diplomats and the legal encouragement the Colombian government offered, problems of public order, legal restrictions and cultural attitudes towards non-Catholics conspired to hasten the demise of the immigration programme. While no immigration estimates for this early period are available, it is easy to conclude, from the limited evidence that we do have, that the number of immigrants who entered Colombia during the 1820s amounted to no more than several thousand (most likely not reaching 10,000). In an 1830 letter to Colombia’s new secretary of foreign relations Vicente Borrero, British ambassador William Turner summarised the aims, hopes and final failure of Colombia’s immigration scheme:

The British … beheld with sincere pleasure the wise desire early shown by [the Colombian] government to invite and encourage the immigration into the republic of foreigners who, by applying the arts and sciences of Europe to the cultivation of its hitherto neglected territory, might develop the vast resources which are to be derived from the variety of its climate and the fruitfulness of its soil. Associations
were accordingly formed in Great Britain to send out artisans, labourers, and implements for the purpose of extracting the riches offered by nature to the enterprising and industrious.

It was however soon discovered that the advantages tendered by the government were not obtained by the invited settler. The spirit of liberality evinced by the legislature was far from imitated by the inhabitants of the provinces and the subordinate offices of the executive, whose distance from the seat of government enabled them to violate with impunity the wise and liberal laws which, throughout so extensive a territory, it was always difficult to promulgate and frequently impossible to enforce.

The spirit of speculation was consequently soon checked by the reports of those settlers, who had returned to their country, having found the promised advantages that had tempted them to emigrate rendered nugatory by the jealousy of foreigners entertained by the natives, by the spirit of petty oppression, and by the want of effectual protection.

In light of these constraints, Turner asked rhetorically: ‘what confidence can the governments of Europe entertain of their subjects being welcome in the republic of Colombia?’ The unwritten answer implied that Colombia was not yet ready to become the Euro-Atlantic, civilised and modern nation its enlightened nation-makers envisioned.

The inability to entice potential migrants was not solely a Colombian problem. The immigration schemes promoted by Argentina and Mexico during the 1820s faced a similar fate. Instead of counting the number of immigrants in the hundreds of thousands, as did Argentina, Brazil and the United States in the second half of the century, during the 1820s both Argentina and Mexico, like Colombia, managed to attract only a few thousand foreigners. In 1832, a British diplomat estimated, there were ‘no less than from 15,000 to 20,000’ foreigners (including women and children) in the city and province of Buenos Aires. ‘Of these about two-thirds were British and French’; the remainder were Italians, Germans, and people of other countries, including the United States. For Mexico, figures were significantly lower, leading a historian to characterise immigration during the first half of the century as ‘not a stream, but a trickle’. An estimate, based on shipping records for Veracruz, puts the number of foreigners entering Mexico in 1830 at 451 (among whom there were 66 North Americans, 75 English, 99 French, 52 Germans, 13 Italians, and seven Swiss). During this pre-mass-migration decade, the

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107 Turner to Borrero, Bogotá, 19 June 1830, AGNC, MRE, DT2, 320, 114–18.
only country in the Americas that received more than 150,000 immigrants was the United States.\footnote{An estimated 150,000 foreigners (mostly Europeans) arrived in the United States during the 1820s. For US immigration data, see the database \textit{Historical Statistics of the United States} (http://hsus.cambridge.org).}

In addition to the specific problems analysed in this article, global forces having little to do with Colombia or Spanish America conspired to make the schemes of the Franklins of Colombia fail. Absent the ‘five concurrent and interrelated trends’ or ‘revolutions’, that, according to José Moya, ‘explain why the massive displacement of people occurred between the mid-nineteenth century and the Great Depression’, the 1820s schemes were doomed from the very beginning.\footnote{In Moya’s explanation the combination of demographic explosion, the triumph of liberalism, the commercialisation of agriculture, industrialisation and innovations in transportation constitute the five revolutions that made mass migration possible. Moya, \textit{Cousins and Strangers}, pp. 13–44 (quote p. 14).} For bigger numbers, the whole hemisphere still had to wait several decades.\footnote{Immigration data for Argentina, Brazil and the United States put the number of immigrants to these three countries at 9.7–9.8 million (1840–1932), 4.5–4.4 million (1821–1932), and 32.2–32.5 million (1820–1932) respectively. \textit{Ibid.}, p. 46.}

\textbf{Conclusion: Immigration as Intellectual Project and Immigration as Flow}

Argentine founding father Juan Bautista Alberdi understood the task of governing as one closely associated with peopling the territory one was ruling. In his opinion, ‘to govern is to populate’, because ‘to populate is to instruct, educate, moralise, improve the race’. Populating, he warned, needed to be done correctly, because ‘to populate could also be to infest, coarsen, enslave, if the transplanted population, instead of being civilised, is backward, poor, corrupted’. Therefore ‘To populate is to civilise when [you] populate with civilised peoples, that is to say, with people from civilised Europe.’\footnote{Alberdi, \textit{Gobernar es poblar}, pp. 267–71.} The association between governing, populating and civilising was by no means of Alberdi’s own making. As this article has shown, three decades before Alberdi, early Colombia’s diplomats – following Spanish colonial practice – made populating the emerging republic with the right type of settlers a central element of their nation-making enterprise.

In Great Britain and the United States Colombia’s diplomatic representatives succeeded in presenting themselves as virtuous counterparts to their enlightened hosts. It is fair to say that they all fulfilled their duty of becoming the Benjamin Franklins of Colombia. However, although they managed to convince their US and British interlocutors that Colombians were sophisticated and enlightened, this did not suffice to entice significant numbers of ‘industrious and laborious’ emigrants to cross the Atlantic and settle in the United States.\footnote{An estimated 150,000 foreigners (mostly Europeans) arrived in the United States during the 1820s. For US immigration data, see the database \textit{Historical Statistics of the United States} (http://hsus.cambridge.org).}
Colombia. Despite the diplomats’ efforts, the enthusiasm of political figures and the general public in the United States for the Colombian cause and the legal encouragement the Colombian government gave to the immigration schemes, internal restrictions worked against the goal of attracting immigrants en masse. In lieu of the exuberant promises of land, resources and prosperity, immigrants encountered religious bigotry, legal and physical restrictions to access the plots of land that were promised and a complete lack of public order. Thus, the 1820s immigration schemes designed to change the socio-racial and cultural composition of the new republic failed to materialise into a real flow of immigrants. They remained mostly projects on paper.

But failure is always relative. The outcome of the efforts of the Franklins of Colombia needs to be assessed in a broader context that includes acknowledging that these schemes were part of a larger mission and that the achievements of other Spanish American republics during this early stage of national formation were similarly disappointing. Since obtaining diplomatic recognition and securing loans (both of which they achieved) ranked higher in the agenda of Colombia’s first diplomats, it seems unfair to indict their missions as failures simply because they were not able to enlist significant numbers of immigrants. Moreover, the fact that envoys from other newly independent Spanish American states like Argentina and Mexico obtained similar results strongly suggests that the Franklins of Colombia not only did everything they could but actually succeeded in recruiting potential migrants. Other powerful forces, including racial perceptions, anti-Catholicism in the United States and Great Britain and lack of religious tolerance in Colombia, worked against the new state’s desires and its diplomats’ efforts. That said, it is only when compared to the massive influx of immigrants that entered Argentina and Brazil during the second half of the nineteenth century that the 1820s immigration schemes of Colombia and other Spanish American nations can be characterised as outright failures. But, as José Moya clearly put it in respect of Argentina, the later influx happened under wildly different circumstances and responded to ‘mightier laws’ and forces neither produced nor controlled by any of the countries on the receiving end of the mass migration of the late nineteenth century.  

The history of immigration to Latin America, however, does not need to be a story of mass migration. Historians of mass migration to places like Argentina and Brazil are right to assert that the earlier immigration schemes, with their civilising rhetoric and their unimpressive outcomes, have ‘more to do with the intellectual history of the region’s elites … than with the demographic and sociocultural history of its peoples’.  


116 Ibid.
like Daniel Large, Thomas McConell, the unidentified British subject murdered in Cartagena, the passengers of La Plata, the Scottish settlers of Topo and the hundreds (maybe thousands) of foreigners who settled in the other designated rural areas of the newly established republic, migration was much more than part of the intellectual history of Colombia’s elites. Their lived experience of mobility across an ocean and their efforts to adapt to their new homes made these migrants as worthy of study as those who came afterwards. They may have been pushed by different forces and pulled by different incentives, but, like the late-nineteenth-century migrants, those who settled in Colombia (and other nascent Spanish American nations) during the 1820s are part of the history of immigration to Latin America. In history, small numbers, while less impressive than large ones, also matter.

Spanish and Portuguese abstracts

Spanish abstract. Durante los años 1820, los diplomáticos de la joven nación colombiana en Londres, Washington y Filadelfia trabajaron duramente para obtener el reconocimiento diplomático a su naciente república. Sus esfuerzos también estuvieron encaminados a convertir a Colombia en un lugar atractivo para colonos europeos y norteamericanos cuya actitud industriosa y de trabajo, ellos esperaban, habría de convertirla en una nación euro-atlántica civilizada y moderna. Los esquemas migratorios que promovieron explican el tipo de naciones que vislumbraron los creadores de la América hispana de la postindependencia y cómo, al apelar a sentimentos de solidaridad hemisférica – entre otras maneras – intentaron hacer de su visión una realidad. Una comparación con esquemas similares promovidos por los borbones en el siglo XVIII, por otra parte, revela la persistencia, aunque con algunas modificaciones importantes, de formas de pensar e imaginar la sociedad heredadas del periodo colonial tardío.

Spanish keywords: historia colombiana del siglo XIX, historia diplomática de Colombia, construcción nacional, inmigración a Latinoamérica, relaciones hemisféricas americanas

Portuguese abstract. Durante os anos vinte do século dezenove, os diplomatas da jovem nação colombiana em Londres, Washington e Filadelfia trabalharam arduamente para obter reconhecimento diplomático para sua república nascente. Seus esforços tinham também a finalidade de tornar a Colômbia atraente para colonos europeus e norteamericanos, cuja diligência e laboriosidade, eles esperavam, transformariam o país em uma nação euro-atlântica moderna e civilizada. Os regimes de imigração que eles promoveram tornam claro o tipo de nações que os arquitetos de nação da América espanhola pós-independência vislumbravam e como, ao apelar à sentimentos de solidariedade hemisférica – entre outras maneiras – eles procuraram transformar suas visões em realidade. Entretanto, uma comparação com regimes similares promovidos pelos Bourbons no século dezoito revela a persistência, ainda que com algumas modificações críticas, da maneira de pensar e vislumbrar sociedades herdadas do período do colonialismo tardío.
Portuguese keywords: história colombiana do século dezenove, história diplomática colombiana, construção de nação, imigração à América Latina, relações hemisféricas americanas