

Hemispheric models of material progress in New Granada and Colombia (1810-1930)*

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Resumen Este artículo plantea que los líderes de la Nueva Granada y de Colombia examinaron modelos de progreso material e intelectual tanto en los Estados Unidos como en los países vecinos dentro del hemisferio. Para muchos hispanoamericanos, el progreso material ya alcanzado por los Estados Unidos y el Atlántico Norte en general era un fin ideal, y consideraron como modelos potenciales algunas de las instituciones estadounidenses. En cuanto a los medios para alcanzar ese fin ideal, personas influyentes de la Nueva Granada y de Colombia encontraron en países vecinos un conjunto más pragmático de experiencias que les ayudaría a fomentar su propio progreso. A lo largo de la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, y más activamente a principios del XX, algunos líderes colombianos buscaron seguir el ejemplo de países como Argentina, uno de los precursores del progreso latinoamericano contemporáneo.

Palabras clave:

Inmigración, Estados Unidos, América Española, Nueva Granada, Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela. Cuba.

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Abstract

This article argues that New Granadian and Colombian leaders examined models of material and intellectual progress in the United States and in their neighboring countries within the hemisphere. For many Spanish-Americans, the material progress already achieved by the United States and the North Atlantic overall was an idealized end, and they looked at some U.S. institutions as potential templates. As for the means to meet such an idealized end, influential people in New Granada and Colombia found among their neighboring countries a more pragmatic set of experiences that would help them foster progress in their own right. Over the second half of the nineteenth century, and more actively when turning into the twentieth, some Colombian leaders sought to follow the example of countries such as Argentina, one of the front-runners of Latin American contemporary progress.

Key words:

Immigration, United States, Spanish America, New Granada, Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela, Cuba.

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Introduction

“Our country is destined to be *the great nation of futurity* [...] We are the nation of human progress,” stated the editorial board of *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* in a patriotic article that was published in 1839.¹ (“The Great Nation of Futurity,” 1839: 426-427). This idea, largely shared within the Western hemisphere, thrilled Spanish-Americans shortly after their independence from Spain. They believed that a partnership with the “friend of human liberty, civilization, and refinement” –as the United States was largely perceived– would assure the adoption of republican institutions in the newly independent territories, and that a coalition to unite a continent-wide America would be feasible and sturdy, eager to prevent further European colonialism. When seeking national progress, sovereignty and republicanism were deemed vital in Spanish America. Over the course of the nineteenth century, New Granadians –later Colombians– fostered material progress by looking at the United States and the North Atlantic overall. However, having realized that the United States did not provide the appropriate comparative framework for developing particular aspects of the desired progress, they sought models within Latin America. When in 1916 the New York *Munsey’s Magazine* dedicated a full issue promoting South America as “A Land of the Future”, many Colombian citizens had already embraced such a conviction (Mc. Conaughy, 1916: 495-527). Over the first century as an independent country, statesmen and influential people in New Granada and Colombia fostered progress by analyzing not only the United States’ institutions and developments, but also global experiences–mainly from neighboring countries in Latin America–an issue largely ignored by the historiography.

Influential people in Spanish America intertwined positive and negative references to the United States over the course of the nineteenth century. The weight of one or the other depended heavily on the complexity of domestic statecraft in Spanish America and on a variety of convictions regarding the Spanish-Americans’ different ways to envision their own nations. While many influential

¹ Italicized in the original.

men invited their fellow citizens to look no longer at Europe but at the United States as a role model of progress, other persuasive figures reconsidered a more traditional, European-like model, mainly after disseminating the idea that the Anglo-Americans' "Manifest Destiny" was "to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions" ("Annexation", 1845: 5). If salutary expressions underlined the U.S. material prosperity and its pragmatic statecraft institutions, critical outlooks stressed the U.S. moral flaws and the country's failure to fulfill international pacts. Adulated or criticized, the United States remained as a key referent when developing processes of state formation in Spanish-America.

The first section of this article examines the dominant perception that the United States was both a powerful as well as convenient ally for Spanish-American nations, and a model of republicanism worth following. The second section scrutinizes testimonies from some influential men of New Granada, and argues that admiration and emulation surpassed any suspicions of the United States that some Spanish-Americans –including some New Granadians– held over the century. The third section focuses on the circulation of ideas through which New Granadian and later Colombian leaders realized that Latin America, rather than the United States, presented compelling models worth following to promote foreign immigration. Immigration was largely viewed as the cornerstone of national progress in Spanish America. Despite admiring U.S. institutions and material prosperity, statesmen and influential people in New Granada and Colombia fostered progress by analyzing neighboring countries' own experiences. This article delves neither into the well-studied history of the canal zone in Panama nor into the larger history of so-called American imperialism. This article focuses on the search for hemispheric references of national prosperity in the United States and Spanish-American countries throughout the Colombia's first century as an independent territory.

Liberty and Hemispheric Idealizations

Aiming to shape new republics, Spanish-Americans had been looking to the United States' institutions since the late eighteenth

century. Although prohibited by colonial administration, intellectual and political leaders of Spanish-American independence examined and circulated documents from the United States' revolutionary age (De Onís, 1952: 37). Their references to the Union indicate that while some important intellectual leaders found the U.S. republicanism compelling, many influential figures sympathized with monarchical institutions. Influential people in Spanish America started to regard the American Constitution as paradigmatic mainly after their independence from Spain. Ever since, while some Spanish-American revolutionary leaders sought to imitate blindly the U.S. political system, other influential men offered positive references to this system, but warned about the importance of analyzing it critically before attempting to apply it in territories like Mexico (Hale, 1972: 202–204). In New Granada, Miguel de Pombo and Vicente Azuero analyzed deeply the federalist system, and the United States was among their chief referents. (López & Kalmanovitz, 2016). References to the United States in regards of whether to establish federal or central governments were heavily debated in Spanish America until roughly 1870 (Breña, 2013: 273; Safford, 1985: 383–384).

After independence, many Spanish-Americans displayed open admiration for the United States. In 1821, the Mexican politician Fray Servando Teresa de Mier asserted that true freedom could be achieved only through republican institutions, which in his view were the source of the United States' progresses (Hale, 1972: 201). In 1833, *El Mercurio Peruano* stated that Peruvian statesmen sought to imitate Anglo-Americans, because the latter “are precisely who have created and maintain the best of these [republican] institutions” (“Contestación dada á las objeciones hechas en la tribuna contra la existencia del colegio militar”, 1833: 2). In 1834, the Mexican politician Lorenzo de Zavala extolled the Anglo-Americans as a “laborious, active, thoughtful, circumspect, religious amidst the multiplicity of sects, tolerant, avaricious, free, proud, and persevering people” (Zavala, 1834: iii–iv). Throughout the 1840s, similar opinions were held by New Granadians Mariano Ospina Rodríguez, Pedro Alcántara Herrán, and Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, and Argentinians Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and Juan Bautista Alberdi. (Alberdi, 1886; Barrenechea, 1988; Martínez, 2001; Ospina Rodríguez, 1990; Safford, 1976). Convinced that democracy was

the “lighthouse” to avoid chaos, Alberdi once affirmed that “Democracy stands there [in the United States] both in dress as well as in manners and in the political constitution of states [...] Thus any fashion, habit or institution will be for us more beautiful as more democratic in essence” (Alberdi, 1886: 276). Along with U.S. institutions, these Spanish-Americans held in high regard Anglo-Americans’ traits in general.

After the U.S. hostilities in Texas throughout the 1830s, some Spanish-American statesmen and intellectuals became more concerned about the lack of republican institutions and education in their own nations than about the U.S. expansionism. In 1832, *Mercurio Peruano* (1832: 1) published an article drawing attention to the U.S. education system, and stating that “a free government cannot be supported by an ignorant population”. Mexican Lorenzo de Zavala justified the independence of Texas –in which he played a dominant role– by affirming that Mexico could develop a truly liberal society not only by adopting idealized constitutional types, but also, and more importantly, by getting rid of the colonial past and transforming Mexican society. The ideal model, Zavala affirmed, was the United States’ society (Hale, 1972: 208). Both New Granadian Mariano Ospina Rodríguez and Argentinian Domingo Faustino Sarmiento coincided to believe that the U.S. invasion of Mexican territory stemmed from the ambition of a powerful country before the “vacuum of power” of the Spanish-American nations, which also “lacked strong institutions and the education needed to successfully administer the State” (Ospina Rodríguez, 1990: 7). Decades later, Sarmiento himself would bring U.S. educators to modernize the Argentinian school system (Bushnell, 1993: 128–129). Many Spanish-Americans believed that building strong bonds with the United States was not only desired, but also highly convenient in terms of emulating practical educational and democratic institutions. In New Granada, some politicians and intellectuals shared this view and sought to follow the model of the United States over the nineteenth century.

Following the U.S. Model

Despite asymmetrical references to the United States within the hemisphere, many New Granadian leaders analyzed U.S. institu-

tions and embraced the overarching idea that the United States was the hemispheric friend and guarantor of liberty. In 1811, Miguel de Pombo translated into Spanish and published in Santa Fe the Constitution of the United States. The same year, Antonio Nariño's *La Bagatela* started disseminating liberal ideals, news of the United States, and explanations of the U.S. constitution—though Nariño opposed federalism in New Granada (De Onís, 1952: 37; Garrido, 1993). Years later, after the Monroe Doctrine was proclaimed indicating that the United States would not allow further European colonialism in the Americas, New Granadians largely perceived the United States as a powerful ally. In 1832, the *Gaceta de la Nueva Granada* summarized what Spanish-Americans who sympathized with republican ideals believed. “The government [of New Granada] wants to strengthen the bonds that bind us with that magnanimous and powerful nation,” the editors claimed, “because she is destined by nature and by its position among American powers to deal with invasions [...and] incessant attempts to introduce their [European] anti-liberal principles in the institutions of this hemisphere's peoples” (“Relaciones exteriores,” 1832: 3). Over the first half of the nineteenth century, many New Granadians perceived the United States as a model in a cultural and a political sense.

New Granada's President Francisco de Paula Santander (1832-37) also avowed his admiration to the United States and its political system. In May 1832, former Governor of New York Morgan Lewis and some other influential Anglo-Americans offered a public dinner in honor of Santander. In his speech, Santander stressed the United States' liberal institutions and claimed that New Granada's politics found inspiration among them. “What better model could we choose to establish a government of laws than that your happy nation presents to the liberal world?” Santander affirmed, “The United States presented us laws protecting the rights of citizens, perfect legal equality, an alternative authority chosen by the people, a well-combined education system, a pure moral, and a finished model of upright, virtuous, and patriotic magistrates” (“Comida dada en Nueva York al Jeneral Santander”, 1832: 5). Being aware of the differences between the Anglo-American and New Granadian contexts, and of the challenges that implementing U.S.-like institutions would face leaders back in New Granada, Santander declared,

“the distance that existed between the social education of Anglo-American people and the people of Colombia was certainly great; therefore, the obstacles we would find in imitation [of the United States] would be big” (“Comida dada en Nueva York al Jeneral Santander,” 1832: 5). As other Spanish-American leaders would claim later, the U.S. education and political systems were highly admired and worthy of being imitated.

While some Spanish-Americans debated about the controversial U.S. actions in Mexico over the 1840s, New Granadian leaders nurtured stronger bonds with the United States. Beyond diplomacy, New Granadian leaders were aiming to populate their country with skillful and knowledgeable North Americans. Policymakers looked at the United States’ liberal institutions and sought to promote the immigration of farmers, miners and artisans that would potentially settle in New Granada. Although several unsuccessful immigration plans and laws were passed since the 1820s, a new law “*sobre inmigración de extranjeros*” (about immigration of foreigners) was passed in June 1847. The author was New Granadian liberal statesman Manuel Ancízar. Embodying what the historiography has called “El Plan de Ancízar,” this law welcomed immigrants not only from Europe, but also from North America and Asia. It granted naturalization to any immigrant upon their arrival to New Granada, “by establishing equality of rights and privileges between native and adopted citizens,” as reported in a Washington newspaper inviting skilled U.S. immigrants to New Granada (“Iron Steamers Wanted on the Magdalena River”, 1850: 3). U.S. emigration was also promoted in New York. “We note that New Granada has begun an active career of emulation regarding developments in the United States”, said *The New York Herald* in May, 1848, “and it does everything possible, with the most liberal rulings, to attract to their promising coasts the course of emigration” (“¿Cuál es el efecto de la emigración en las Repúblicas Americanas?”, 1848: 280). In November 1848, *Gaceta Oficial* also highlighted the key role the immigration of “honest and industrious people” would play in the New Granada’s “progress and development” and Anglo-American immigrants were highly welcomed (“Inmigración”, 1848: 561). In New Granada, “El Plan de Ancízar” and similar liberal policies drew mainly from Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera’s first administration (1845-49) and from liberal

thinkers that founded the Liberal party in 1848 and that conducted the Liberal reforms of 1849-53 (Delpar, 1981: 5-7).

The name Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera was familiar to many U.S. political figures, mainly after his attempts to promote U.S. immigration to New Granada and foster friendly relations with the United States. In 1861, *The New York Times* claimed that besides being a “great admirer of the institutions, manners and customs of the United States [...] Mosquera [...] has had in view, many years, a favorite project, viz., to plant North American colonies in some of the most luxuriant and healthful regions in Western New-Granada.” (“Gen. Mosquera”, 1861). Bearing these and other goals in mind, in 1849 Mosquera established the Instituto Caldas, a corporation meant to “preserve morality, [and to] encourage industry, education, immigration of foreigners, statistics, and roads” (González, 1975: 8). By 1850, Tomás C. de Mosquera, as well as other liberal intellectuals, aimed to bring civilization and material progress by mirroring some of the United States’ developments.

Over the 1850s and 1860s, the idea of the United States as a model worth emulating remained in the New Granadian’s public sphere. The conservative newspaper *La Civilización* affirmed in 1849 that the United States was without a doubt the “model nation” of civilization. The authors perceived the United States as closer to the “absolute civilization” than any other place in the world, including France. Despite the fact that France was a democratic nation, the editors found the French Revolution of 1848 disruptive enough to risk the pillars of civilization, namely “security, liberty, and property.” (“Qué es la civilización,” 1849: 5) “The absolute civilization, the perfect civilization,” the editors argued, “would be the reunion of instruction, morality, and wealth in the extreme; but the most advanced nation is still infinitely far of such a state; so when speaking of civilization, it is only about the nations’ and individuals’ relative status. We call civilized society the one outpacing others in education, morality and wealth” (“Qué es la civilización”, 1849: 2).

Among the editorial board of *La Civilización* was New Granadian politician Mariano Ospina Rodríguez, an open admirer of the United States. As former Secretary of Interior in the Pedro A. Herrán administration (1841-45), Ospina tried to implement an ambitious plan to modernize the New Granadian education system. The

U.S. system was among his referents (Safford, 1976: 117-121). Mariano Ospina and many other influential citizens would send their children to study in the United States, where schools were increasingly imparting the practical knowledge they believed necessary to foster any country's civilizing process (Safford, 1976: 151-159). New Granadians aligned with this way of thinking would share a concluding remark on the United States *La Civilización* published: "The United States appears, therefore, as the area destined to save the Christian civilization with its laws, sciences, literature, arts, industry and culture from the cataclysm that Europe threatens it." ("Qué es la civilización", 1849: 2). After the last Mosquera administration (1866-67), New Granadian official models of progress also drew from Latin America's own experiences.

Immigration and Regional Models of Progress

Colombian statesmen and influential leaders found in countries such as Argentina compelling evidence to believe that the former Spanish colonies' progress was not doomed, as many assumed (Carmacho Roldán, 1898: 481-482). Argentina received 1,200,000 immigrants by the end of the nineteenth century, and developed a robust process of industrialization and steady economic growth until 1930 (Germani, 1966: 166; Pineda, 2009; Rocchi, 2006). From 1870 to 1930, Argentina experienced a dramatic change in its social and economic landscapes, which inspired Colombians to follow in its footsteps from the late nineteenth century.

In New Granada and elsewhere in the hemisphere, influential people realized that to achieve progress in a timely fashion, the promotion of immigration was necessary. The U.S. immigration tradition, however, was by no means the ideal model to drive waves of new settlers to countries such as New Granada, as previously believed (García Estrada, 2006: 44-45). In December 1850, the influential Italian geographer Agustín Codazzi assessed that colonizing New Granada required special conditions because of its geographical peculiarities as a mountainous and tropical country. He also stressed that previous attempts to establish European colonies in some South American countries failed in choosing the colonized territories, bringing premature death to the new settlers.

As he observed, “malignant fevers” and other illnesses were easily developed by the newcomers when settling in territories located under 1,200 meters above the sea level (Codazzi, 1850: 692). In his “*Apuntamientos sobre inmigración i colonización*,” Codazzi considered that the U.S. model of immigration did not fit New Granada’s reality because the United States, unlike New Granada, offered European-like landscapes, weather, and culture, in addition to all sorts of opportunities, rights, liberties, and securities (García Estrada, 2006: 44-45). Instead, Codazzi suggested New Granadians look at Venezuela’s Colonia Tobar, a project of immigration in which he played a dominant role by choosing lands suitable for Europeans. Based on Venezuela’s and New Granada’s analogous landscapes, Codazzi invited to analyze immigration enterprises in comparable contexts, and to avoid thinking that “a torrent of immigrants” was coming to South America “as easy as we saw them moving to North America” (Codazzi, 1850: 692). Aiming to analyze other models of immigration and to foster complementary ways to reach the desired progress, the Colombian government enhanced its diplomatic body over the second half of the century.

By the 1860s, the Colombian diplomatic body worked primarily on resolving boundary issues. Thereafter, Colombian diplomats began to analyze the possibilities for material progress and economic growth (Rivas, 1961: 8). In 1866, Law 23—“*Orgánica del servicio diplomático y consular*”—exhorted Colombian diplomats overseas to report foreign trade statistics as well as any information useful to Colombia’s prosperity such as news on modern scientific, industrial, and artistic developments (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Colombia, 1901: 93–94). The number of Colombian diplomatic missions grew, and more countries gradually began to host Colombian statesmen. At the same time, Colombian businessmen also began to seek relations within the Americas and Europe, opening new paths for Colombia’s material prosperity (Rivas, 1961). Besides negotiating the common borders with the Colombia’s neighboring countries, Colombian diplomats developed far-reaching relations, seeking to foster ways to achieve progress within Latin America. Some Colombian statesmen were particularly keen on Argentina’s developments.

As strengthening bonds with Spanish-American nations became key, countries with no Colombian diplomatic representation such as Argentina received the first diplomatic missions in the early 1870s. In 1872, President Manuel Murillo Toro appointed the renowned liberal intellectual Florentino González as General Consul of Colombia in Buenos Aires to “promote political and literary relations between Colombia and this country.” (AGN, MRE, CCA, BA, c. 110, f. 3). One of González’s main goals was to establish a postal convention between these two countries. “For now, our relations with this country will not be many,” González anticipated in a letter to the Argentina’s Secretary of Foreign Affairs, “They may be limited for some time to a mere exchange of ideas on political and literary subjects.” (AGN, MRE, CCA, BA, c. 110, f. 3). However, he stated, “even under this view, we should fix an easy mode of communication, because Colombia and the Republic of Argentina having institutions that have more points of similarity than those of other countries in South America, the events [...] unfolding in one of the two nations will serve the other to appreciate their goodness or defects.” (AGN, MRE, CCA, BA, c. 110, f. 3). Since 1859 Florentino González had already resided in both Peru and Chile as a Colombian diplomat (González, 1975: 9.) González was well aware of South American realities, and indicated that the core of the Colombian government’s aims was to learn from these countries’ resemblances. “It is therefore very useful [our] reciprocal knowledge,” González affirmed, “I’ve always had the conviction of the utility that this [knowledge] would bring to us.” (AGN, MRE, CCA, BA, c. 110, f. 3). As a key figure in the first Mosquera administration (1845-49), González had witnessed similar governmental approaches when seeking the United States protection. Florentino González died in Buenos Aires in 1874, and no further diplomatic relations between Colombia and Argentina were developed until the late 1880s (González, 1975: 10).

Understanding Argentinian patterns of immigration and, overall, its material progress, became a Colombian government’s paramount goal. The United States had already attested that European immigration was a driver of material progress. But it was the European colonization of Argentina and the economic development that followed which reinforced the idea held by many Colombians

that immigration was “the fastest means of progress.” (Camacho Roldán, 1898: 161). The Colombian politician and entrepreneur Salvador Camacho Roldán synthesized what at the time was a widely shared belief in regards of foreign immigration. Immigration “gives the necessary arms to cultivate the land and [everything else] any country needs,” Camacho asserted, “it brings from older countries more advanced industries and habits of social discipline. It serves, ultimately, to improve the native breed by crossing it with another stronger and in a higher state of evolution race” (Camacho Roldán, 1898: 161). As Camacho, many other Colombians aimed to replicate the example of countries such as Argentina, bringing to Colombia “civilized, moralized, and provided-with-strong-work-ethic European immigration.” (Camacho Roldán, 1898: 161). The Argentinian case confirmed that bringing European immigrants to their soil was key to transform the “national character,” a widely shared goal in Latin America in terms of “regenerating the race” by means of Europeanization (Germani, 1966: 165). In Salvador Camacho’s words, Argentina was in 1888 a “new country with enormous territory, [...] with an immigration of 200,000 people a year, which promises to extend to larger figures, and with a spirit of enterprise that almost rivals the *yankees*’ well-known activity.” (Camacho Roldán, 1898: 455). While the United States represented for a long time the Colombians’ model in terms of republican institutions, Argentina became their dominant model in terms of immigration and colonization.

Looking for reliable information to devise feasible ways to achieve their own country’s progress, Colombian statesmen strengthened bureaucratic efforts in Argentina. In May 1888, Antonio Samper was appointed as Colombian General Consul in Buenos Aires (AHCA, MRE, CGC, c. 444, ff. 13-13v). Besides opening the Colombian Consulate office, Samper focused on acquiring official documents to provide the Colombian government with background information about Argentina. In a letter dated September 1890, Samper requested from the Argentinian administration a copy of every single Argentinian official publication regarding its legislative, executive, and judicial branches. By making clear that he had already purchased and sent to the Colombian government the publications available in the marketplace, he insisted on receiving directly any un-

published documents and novelties. “The Colombian government,” Samper said, “has the greatest interest in studying everything that relates to the Republic of Argentina’s government and its progress. [...] Please excuse my plea, Dear Minister, and believe that it stems from both the admiration that Argentina’s progress and development causes the [Colombian] government, and from the very lively sympathy that this nation inspires in it.” (AHCA, MRE, CGC, c. 444, ff. 6-7). The Argentinian government responded positively to this petition, which encouraged Samper to keep searching for information about Argentinian strategies to prosper (AHCA, MRE, CGC, c. 444, f. 9).

Having spent two years in his diplomatic mission, Antonio Samper reported with a great deal of detail relevant observations for the Colombia’s prosperity. In March 1891, Samper sent to the Colombian Minister of Foreign Affairs a comprehensive manuscript about Argentina’s drivers to progress. In his “*Informe*,” besides explaining the benefits of the Argentinian cattle industry, its railway system, and other economic enterprises, Samper delved into Argentinian strategies and types of immigration. The Colombian consul observed how Colombia could learn from these practices, emphasizing the importance of considering topographic, cultural, and political differences between these two South American countries. As Samper considered European immigration as one of the most relevant forces of Argentina’s prosperity, he advised to follow specific guidelines to encourage migration to Colombia. Samper concluded by suggesting that because immigration was suspended in Argentina at the time, there was an opportunity to encourage European immigration to Colombia, where “everything is to be created in regards of immigration.” (AHCA, DyC, MRE, CGC, c. 444, ff. 56-57).

After the Colombian government undertook a conservative-like plan of national “Regeneration” in the 1880s, efforts to bring Europeans to Colombia continued with no major changes to previous immigration laws. By the end of the century, however, some influential men revealed preferences for bringing Spanish rather than Italian or Chinese people. Based on other countries’ experiences, Colombian statesmen considered Spaniards harmless and easily adaptable to the Colombian idiosyncrasy. Moreover, Spaniards represented one third of the European population that immigrated

to Latin America (García Estrada, 2006: 52–53). In fact, roughly two million Spaniards entered Argentina from 1857 to 1930. Cuba, similarly, attracted a large number of skilled and literate Spaniards, mostly from the Canary Islands (Moya, 1998: 1, 218). As no major changes were introduced in the Colombian immigration legal system, immigrants entering the country by 1930 did so under the legal framework passed during the nineteenth century.

Having analyzed these neighboring countries' experiences, Colombian statesmen identified that by targeting immigrants with specific skills, they could boost already flourishing economic activities. Law 117 of 1892 had authorized the Colombian Government to promote skilled immigrants to work in already prosperous mining and agricultural enterprises, such as growing coffee and sugar cane (García Estrada, 2006: 54). Based on this law as well as on Argentina's and Cuba's experiences, over the 1920s the Colombian government developed a strong campaign to foster emigration from Cuba to Colombia.

Aiming to bring skilled workers to develop emerging Colombian industries, pamphlets advertising Colombia were delivered intensely in Cuban sugar plantations. Cuba was facing an economic crisis after the international price of sugar dropped, diminishing the domestic job market. The Colombian General Consul in Cuba identified in this crisis an opportunity to bring to Colombia the longed-for workforce. Strikingly, this Consul's aim was not to promote European immigration directly from Europe—as had been customary—but from one of the main destinations for Spaniards in the Americas.² In a letter to the Colombian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Consul Julio Esaú Delgado indicated that had already begun an aggressive campaign in both Spanish and Portuguese colonies in Cuba, and that after distributing 80,000 pamphlets advertising Colombia, he was sending to Colombia roughly 120 immigrants per month (AGN, MRE, CCA, BA, c. 117, ff. 58-59). “The consuls of Mexico, Argentina, and Central American countries are engaged in the same work as mine,” the Colombian Consul affirmed, “but they have not been able to bring to their soil half of the exodus

² Pedro Alcántara Herrán had also intended so in the late 1840s, but rather than Spaniards, he focused on bringing Germans, Irish, and other European immigrants already settled in the United States (Posada & Ibañez, 1903: 134).

that I send to my country.” (AGN, MRE, CCA, BA, c. 117, f. 70). Bringing from neighboring countries skilled Europeans who were already used to tropical settings and cultures was a successful official attempt to foster progress through immigration in Colombia. Promoting European emigration became a more sophisticated task after Colombia developed consistent agricultural enterprises.

Besides Argentina, Colombian leaders actively looked to other Latin American neighbors for models of material progress from 1870 to 1930. Soon after the Colombian congress passed Law 69 of 1871, the first law “*sobre fomento de varias mejoras materiales*” (about fostering material progress), statesman Anibal Galindo contacted Peruvian railroad builders to start the construction of railways in Colombia, with little success (Colombia, 1875: 783–789; Galindo, 1900: 142). Through the 1870s, however, local governments would hire Cuban engineer and entrepreneur Francisco Javier Cisneros to begin constructing the rail system in Colombia (Campuzano Hoyos, 2006: 191–204; Horna, 1973: 67–70). In terms of industry and economic policy, a series of Colombian entrepreneurs visited and analyzed modern factories in Mexico, and Colombia’s president Rafael Reyes (1904–09) extolled Mexican economic policies and tried to follow “the example of Mexico.” (Ospina Vásquez, 1987: 363). General Rafael Uribe Uribe, envoy to Brazil, Argentina, and Chile from 1905 to 1909, wrote a massive manuscript describing local aspects of South American countries and how Colombia could learn from them; his mining and agricultural analysis, mainly about coffee, would eventually impact Colombian economy (Uribe Uribe, 1908). Legal institutions also drew from neighboring interactions. Colombian policy makers adopted the Argentinian patent law as a model to develop a “modern” Colombian patent system in 1925 (Casas Sanz de Santamaría, 1963: 64). Overall, the period 1870–1930 embodies an epoch in which the Colombian government actively engaged with Latin American neighbors’ developments.

For a long time from the early 1800s, many influential Spanish-Americans fueled images of the United States as the representation of both a powerful ally and a model of civilization worth following. Over the first half of the century, the hemispheric models of civilization and material progress embodied the United States’ republican institutions as well as its forward-thinking citizens and

steady economic growth. Following the model of the United States, however, became problematic after realizing that fostering material progress depended heavily on foreign immigration. Consciousness of religious differences and their colonial heritage in general also played a dominant role. By analyzing patterns of immigration in countries such as Venezuela, Argentina, and Cuba, Colombian statesmen improved their strategies to bring waves of immigrants who would embody highly-valued breed, traits, and knowledge. Although Colombians looked to the North Atlantic when fostering material prosperity, references to the United States as well as to neighboring countries were largely intertwined in Colombia over its first century as an independent country ■

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