Shaping South America:

Jens Martin Bolstad's Consular Knowledge Production, 1901–1905

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Abstract

This thesis examines how the Swedish-Norwegian Consul General Jens Martin Bolstad (1858–1905) produced and disseminated knowledge about South America in his official reports between 1901 and 1905. The study introduces Bolstad as a "knowledge actor" whose consular position enabled him to gather, interpret and reproduce local information to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Stockholm. It analyses Bolstad's reporting on interstate tensions, emerging efforts at regional cooperation and the shadow cast by the "Colossus of the North" (the United States). The research relies on archival consular reports, examining how they serve as active sites of knowledge production rather than mere factual records. By contextualising Bolstad's reports within a broader historiography on Swedish perceptions of South America, the thesis reveals both the persistence of nineteenth-century Eurocentric tropes and the emergence of more formal policy-focused narratives. The study argues that Bolstad's portrayal of South America, caught between hegemony and unity, echoed contemporary imperial legacies while influencing Swedish-Norwegian foreign policy outlooks. These findings underscore the value of examining diplomatic documents as rich historical sources, demonstrating that consular offices played a pivotal role in shaping European understandings of distant regions at the turn of the century.

Keywords: Jens Martin Bolstad, South America, Consular Knowledge Production, consular reports, knowledge actor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, foreign policy, geopolitical constructions

Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning

Den här studien handlar om hur en svensk-norsk konsul, Jens Martin Bolstad (1858–1905), formade och spred kunskap om Sydamerika i början av 1900-talet. Genom att granska hans rapporter, skrivna mellan åren 1901 och 1905, får man en unik inblick i hur han beskrev och tolkade de politiska konflikterna, de försiktiga samarbetena och den växande närvaron av USA ("Kolossen i norr"). På så vis kan man se hur enskilda tjänstemän inte bara rapporterade fakta, utan också bidrog till att skapa en bild av en hel kontinent för beslutsfattare hemma i Sverige och Norge. Forskningen bygger på ett så kallat kunskapshistoriskt perspektiv, där man undersöker hur "kunskap" inte är något neutralt, utan formas i ett socialt och historiskt sammanhang. Bolstad var, genom sin konsulära roll, en viktig mellanhand: han hämtade intryck och information på plats i Sydamerika—från tidningsartiklar till samtal med lokalbefolkning—och förmedlade en tolkad version vidare till utrikesdepartementet i Stockholm. I rapporterna framträder Sydamerika ofta som en region präglad av spänningar mellan stater (till exempel Chile, Peru och Bolivia), samtidigt som det fanns försök att bilda allianser för att stå starkare inför yttre hot. Dessa rapporter visar också hur föreställningar om kontinenten blandades med tidsperiodens eurocentriska tänkande, där vissa länder sågs som mer "moderna" eller "stabila" än andra. Genom att studera Bolstads material får man en fördjupad förståelse för hur bilden av "det avlägsna Sydamerika" växte fram i Skandinavien. Det lyfter fram hur en enskild individs arbetsuppgifter och personliga perspektiv kunde eventuellt påverka utrikespolitik. I en tid då kommunikation över Atlanten tog flera veckor, blev konsulns ögon och öron på plats ett slags filter, som formade vilka händelser, konflikter och möjligheter som hamnade i fokus. Studien visar också hur modern historieskrivning kan dra lärdom av diplomatiska källor: administrativa rapporter och förodningar kan, när man granska dem närmare, rymma spännande berättelser om makt, identitet och hur vi "vet" något om världen.

Contents

Introduction 5
Aim and Research Questions 7

Research Overview and Theoretical Considerations 8
The Meanings and Connotations of South America 8
Knowledge and Perceptions of South America in Sweden 1800–1905 9
The Idea of Latin America 13
History of Knowledge 17

Material, Method and Theory 21
Analytical Concepts 22
Consul J. M. Bolstad 27
Limitations 29

Disposition 30

Hegemony or Unity:
Bolstad's Observations on South American Power Plays 32
23 March 1901 32
30 March 1901 38
28 October 1901 41
26 May 1903 43

Between Rivalries and the 'Colossus of the North':
Bolstad's Insights on South American Ambivalence 48
20 October 1904 48
17 January 1905 52
23 February 1905 55
22 March 1905 60
13 July 1905 63
25 August 1905 68

Conclusion 70

References 72

Introduction

Research that historicises epistemology—examining the frameworks through which we understand and classify the world—has stressed how geographical concepts and labelling carry both political and epistemological power. Terms like "Latin America" or "South America" may seem self-evident today, yet the process of naming and demarcating regions emerges from specific historical and imperial contexts. Such geographical boundaries are not neutral lines on a map; instead, they help construct normative ideas of what a continent "is," shaping both perception and policy. During the Age of Empires, for instance, divisions between the "Old World" and the "New World" further entrenched notions that certain territories belonged to different stages of civilisational development. When states and intellectuals refer to "Latin America," they draw on inherited colonial frameworks that categorise, define, and, at times, constrain how we conceive of the people and places contained within.

In the Swedish context, historians like Magnus Mörner have claimed that the average Swede around 1900 had an incomplete or heavily stereotyped understanding of Latin America.[1] Sweden-Norway was, of course, also part of a larger research landscape in anthropology that sought original racial characteristics. Published works, educational materials and adventure books of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries drew on racist or social-darwinist ideas, depicting the

[1]Magnus Mörner, 'Latinamerika-Bilden i Sverige under 1800- och 1900-Talen.', in *Årsbok / Kungl. Humanistiska Vetenskaps-Samfundet i Uppsala*, vol. 1979/1980 (Årsbok / Kungl. Humanistiska vetenskaps-samfundet i Uppsala Uppsala : Kungl. Humanistiska vetenskaps-samfundet i Uppsala, 1943-, 1981), 80–124.

region as politically unstable, racially "mixed", and in need of European guidance.[2] Such portrayals reinforced repetitive narratives and overshadowed the more complex realities. It is one thing to point out these biases, but the political and diplomatic vehicles that perpetuate or challenge them are less commonly studied. In other words, how might foreign policy actors, individuals working within the Swedish-Norwegian state apparatus, create and reproduce images that influence both official strategy and public ideas?

This thesis takes its starting point precisely from that question, by shifting focus from general public perceptions to the consular sphere. Consuls play pivotal roles in gathering, filtering and relaying information from abroad back to metropolitan capitals. Specifically, I investigate how Swedish-Norwegian General Consul Jens Martin Bolstad (1858–1905) shaped and reproduced knowledge about South America between 1901 and 1905. During these years, Bolstad was stationed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, reporting on topics as varied as territorial disputes, the rise of the United States as a regional power and local political dynamics. By examining his consular reports, from formal correspondence to appended newspaper clippings and personal observations, I explore how Bolstad portrayed South America and constructed interpretive frameworks for Swedish-Norwegian policymakers.

[2]There were also Swedish translations of the German Friedrich Gerstäcker's travels in the 1860s, aimed at children and youth. "Resa omkring verlden : en familjebok / af Fredrik Gerstäcker ; öfversättning från 2:a originalupplagan af C.D. [Carl Joh. Dahlberg]." (1860–1861) and "Den lilla geografen : jordbeskrifning i sammandrag för vetgiriga gossar och flickor / från tyskan af Gustaf Thomée" (1862), Sennor Aguila : bilder ur lifvet i Peru / öfvers. fr. tyskan (1868). These were published between 1882–1894, "Verlden i smått : skildringar af länder och folk / bearb. af A. W. Grube ; öfv. af T. Wilson." The geographer Magnus Roth (1828–1895, teacher of geography at the new elementary school in Stockholm), also published several textbooks, including *Illustrerad geografi för lägre skolor* (1877) och *Illustrerad Geografi för allmänna läroverken* (1881) Sigfrid Almquist (1844–1923, Lecturer at the Stockholm Secondary Education Institute), *Geografi för folkskolan*, 1886. An example of travelogues is John Landin's book about Argentina., *Från Argentina. Reseminnen och studier*, 1890. Another example of a German whose works were translated was Friedrich Joachim Pajeken, "Karaibens hemlighet : en berättelse från Sydamerikadet tropiska Sydamerika för den mognare ungdomen / af Friedrich J. Pajeken ; med 8 illustrationer ; från tyskan af Tom Wilson." (1892) Hultkrantz, J V, "Några bidrag till Sydamerikas fysiska antropologi" (1898). Interest in indigenous peoples can also be seen in published "Adventure Books" from various authors published by Adolf Johnson between 1892 and 1907. Only in the year 1900 were titles published as "Indianlifvet i Chile" ("Berättelse från Sydamerika" av Julius Grundmann), "Indianborgen och dess skatter" ("Berättelse från vilda västern i Amerika" av J. Grundmann.), "Indianhöfdingen Baribal", "Indianskan Hindöga", "Förrädarens straff. En indianhistoria." "Indianfursten Tecumsche" and so on. They also published a series called "Youth's Library" from 1886 to 1924, where titles such as "Bland rödskinn och hvita", "Carl Cassau, På spaning bland indianer" were promoted.

Aim and Research Questions

The thesis aims to introduce a discussion on geographical conceptualisations and connotations based on consular knowledge production. Due to Bolstad's profession as a consul, the meaning and significance he attributed to phenomena held great importance for the United Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway, particularly concerning foreign policy. The primary objective is to conduct a systematic empirical analysis of the creation and reproduction of ideas about South America, as well as perceptions of the countries encompassed by this term, as depicted by Bolstad in his consular reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Stockholm. The secondary objective is theoretical, aiming to emphasise the importance of consular knowledge production and to position the consul as a crucial knowledge actor. The research questions that my thesis addresses are:

- Which aspects and topics does Jens Martin Bolstad emphasise in his reports?
- How did Jens Martin Bolstad contribute to constructing and disseminating knowledge about South America between 1901 and 1905?

By answering the first question, I display the material's content and argue for the breadth and potential of consular knowledge production in general. By scrutinising Bolstad's reports, I trace the political ideas embedded in his accounts, as well as the repetitive narratives that coloured Swedish-Norwegian perceptions of South America. This approach underscores the power of foreign policy actors in shaping influential images, whether they intended to or not. These research questions enable me to investigate the factors that drive Bolstad's collection and dissemination of information about South America, including his personal interests, professional responsibilities, and cultural biases.

Research Overview and Theoretical Considerations

A central premise is that naming, conceptualising and categorising regions carry political and epistemological consequences. These acts shape what people, especially diplomats or state officials, see as possible, desirable or threatening. Hence, I built upon research that treats "knowledge" not as a static repository of facts, but as something formed through institutional practices, personal biases, and broader cultural repertoires. The establishment of my aims results from various perceptions and discussions regarding the ideas of knowledge and continental constructs, notably the geocultural concept "Latin America" and the understanding of South American culture in Sweden during the 19th century.

The Meanings and Connotations of South America

The South American continent is associated with a variety of meanings and interconnected ideas. These meanings and connotations play a crucial role in knowledge production, which is the central focus of my study and will be elaborated on further in this section. Here, I will highlight key historical meanings that form the basis of my interpretative framework. This includes examining the intellectual and cultural background of the term "Latin America" as a Western construct, along with the works of Swedish historians who addressed South America, particularly regarding 19th-century ideas and the knowledge about South America that emerged in Sweden. While there are studies that analyse concepts like "Latin America" and "South America" from a Latin American perspective, my focus is on the reports of a Swedish-Norwegian consul who provided information to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm.[3] Thus, it is more relevant to investigate previous research on the concepts and historical contexts that likely shaped his viewpoint.

[3]See Arturo Ardao, *Génesis de la idea y el nombre de América latina* (1980); Miguel Rojas Mix, "Bilbao y el hallazgo de América latina: Unión continental, socialista y libertaria"(1986); Paul Estrade, "Del invento de 'América Latina' en París por latinoamericanos (1856–1889)" (1998); Mónica Quijada, "Sobre el origen y difusión del nombre 'América Latina': O una variación heterodoxa en torno al tema de la construcción social de la verdad" (1998); Vicente Romero "Du nominal 'latin' pour l'Autre Amérique: Notes sur la naissance et le sens du nom 'Amérique latine' autour des années 1850"(1998); Román De la Campa, *Latin Americanism* (2000); Aims McGuinness, "Searching for 'Latin America': Race and Sovereignty in the Americas in the 1850s" (2003); Michel Gobat, "The Invention of Latin America: A Transnational History of Anti-Imperialism, Democracy, and Race." (2018).

Knowledge and Perceptions of South America in Sweden 1800–1905

Research on Swedish individuals in South America and Latin America, as well as perceptions and knowledge production about South America during the 19th century, is limited. However, some studies shed light on the prevailing currents of thought and offer valuable insights into these topics.

As mentioned in the introduction, in "Latinamerika-bilden i Sverige under 1800- och 1900-talet" (1981), historian Mörner emphasised that Latin America has never really had a place in the consciousness of the Swedish people during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[4] He describes the image of Latin America in Sweden as being fragmentary and unnuanced. However, Folke Lindberg has shown that the general Swedish public generally lacked political interest. Lindberg points out that only about 6% of the population had the right to vote in the second chamber in the early 1870s; moreover, far from everyone with the right to vote exercised it. It is difficult to imagine a politically engaged population when they did not have the right to vote. Lindberg emphasised that if few showed interest in political matters in general, there were even fewer who followed the course of foreign political events.[5]

Mörner argues that the elite's perception of America largely stemmed from French interpretations of the New World. He highlights that Guillaume-Thomas Raynal's influential work, *L'Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les Deux Indes* (1770), posited the New World as a land of future potential while depicting South Americans as inferior to North Americans.[6] Mörner highlights that Raynal's book served as the primary reference for the first monograph on Latin America published in Swedish in 1809.[7] Mörner also notes that the views of the officer and traveller Carl August Gosselman (1799–1843) on Latin America shaped the elite's perception of the region. According to Mörner, Gosselman argued that the Spanish-American republics struggled with governance, attributing their political turmoil to a lack of self-governance skills. Gosselman claimed these states copied the U.S. model of government and militarism. Mörner argued that this negative portrayal was reflected in newspaper reporting and had an impact on the relationship between Sweden and Latin America. However, Mörner also

[4]Mörner, 'Latinamerika-Bilden i Sverige under 1800- Och 1900-Talen.', 80.
[5]Nils Ahnlund and Folke Lindberg, *Den Svenska Utrikespolitikens Historia 3. 4 1872-1914* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1958), 15.
[6]Mörner, 'Latinamerika-Bilden i Sverige under 1800- Och 1900-Talen.', 81.
[7]*Spaniens och Portugalls Besittningar uti Södra Amerika* (1809) published anonymously in Linköping, Mörner, 81.

states that rumours about the instability and unrest in Latin America piqued the interest of many members of Sweden's nobility and bourgeoisie. Ongoing industrialisation in Sweden began to influence its connections with South America. 1875 Pedro Nisser facilitated a Swedish industrial exhibition in Bogotá, followed by two additional exhibitions in 1886 and 1890, orchestrated by E. A. Adde in Buenos Aires.[8]

Mörner emphasised that, like many travellers of the 19th century, the concept of "racial mixing" (*rasblandning*) was used to share with their audience. The travellers highlighted different groups' diverse social, physical, and professional traits, and they frequently noted that the newly established Latin American nations required the presence of white individuals to achieve success in any endeavour.[9] By the mid-19th century, the political turmoil in Latin America had become a crucial aspect of the limited content found in textbooks. Chile occasionally stood out as South America's most orderly and distinguished nation. In the closing years of the 19th century, the presence of social Darwinism was increasingly noticeable. The idea of "racial mixing" was viewed negatively, with "racially mixed individuals" being labelled as lazy and uneducated, among other things. Chile was regarded positively mainly because it had a relatively higher population of whites, and the ongoing instability there was perceived as an obstacle to its prosperity. The indigenous people, referred to as the "Indians," were consistently denigrated, with the prevailing belief that they had never contributed meaningfully to humanity or agricultural development.[10] Mörner points out that no native expressions from Latin Americans reached Sweden during the 19th century. In the early 20th century, industrialisation influenced Latin America's image, which facilitated quality exports; it appeared to be a tangible opportunity. A group of keen ethnographers and archaeologists also shared their findings through publications.[11]

Historian Sven Ola Swärd argues in *Latinamerika i svensk politik under 1820- och 1820-talen* (1949) that the Swedish interest in South America during the early 19th century was mainly political.[12] In the early 19th century, the empires of Spain and Portugal in America broke into 17 independent republics and a monarchy. Before 1808, South American countries had ties

[8]Mörner, 86.
[9]Mörner, 87.
[10]Mörner, 88.
[11]Mörner, 89.
[12]Sven Ola Swärd, *Latinamerika i Svensk Politik under 1810- och 1820-Talen* (Uppsala, 1949).

only to Spain and Portugal. The crowns were strict with immigration and foreign trade to these countries. Swärd describes a hopeful idea that spread: if the Spanish republics gained independence, it would revolutionise world trade, making trade with the continent accessible to more countries.

Swärd highlights that the interest in Latin America can also be placed within a broader conceptual context. A significant current of ideas during this time was the admiration for America.[13] The post-war period had given rise to cultural pessimism and despair regarding Europe's future. The war-ravaged and economically troubled Europe was widely perceived to lack the capability for life-giving political and cultural renewal. For many, America emerged as the great country of the future, with American culture viewed as the salvation of Western civilisation. The uprisings in South America spurred optimistic trade projects and speculations, which, according to Swärd, may have been somewhat linked to the old notions of Eldorado, the prosperous South America of legend. The situation of the ancient world after the Napoleonic wars also necessitated a search for new markets. Attention was now focused on South America, which for centuries had been subjected to exploitation and mercantilist trade policies by the states of the Iberian Peninsula.[14] Sweden also viewed this as an opportunity for successful trade with the newly established republics. Swärd wrote that during the 1810s and 1820s, South America was the focus of extensive Swedish project engineering. Speculations regarding Portuguese and Spanish America were a distinctive aspect of Sweden's foreign policy during this period, reflecting efforts to expand trade and diplomatic relations. However, he argued that these were primarily founded on hypotheses and illusions, which led to failures and disappointments.[15]

A diplomat and author, Axel Paulin dedicated himself to studying Swedish consuls and other figures in South America. Throughout his life, he held multiple assignments in the region. His works, published from 1946 to 1951, significantly enhanced my understanding of the various consuls present on the continent during the 19th century.[16] However, his studies were more general and did not focus extensively on any single individual. Instead, they highlighted the consuls' service

[13]Swärd, 9.
[14]Swärd, 10.
[15]Swärd, 295.
[16]Commercial attaché in Buenos Aires in 1911, commercial counsellor in 1920 and acting chargé d'affaires on various occasions. He was consul in 1923, chargé d'affaires in Rio de Janeiro in 1923-1924 and 1926, in Mexico and Cuba in 1924, in Buenos Aires in 1925-1926, 1928-1931 and 1932-1933. Paulin was chargé d'affaires in Santiago de Chile in 1934-1942 and ministre plénipotentiaire in 1940. See: https://runeberg.org/vemardet/1957/0795.html

and travels. Paulin identified a significant shift in this context during the Napoleonic Wars, beginning with Brazil. Portugal faced invasion by the French, prompting the royal family to abandon their homeland in 1807 and seek refuge in the colony across the Atlantic. The court was settled in Rio de Janeiro, where North America, alongside several European nations, quickly found it necessary to appoint diplomatic representatives. Sweden promptly followed this trend, and by early 1808, a chargé d'affaires was present in the Brazilian capital. Concurrently, a consulate, or what was referred to at that time as a trade agency, was established.[17]

Paulin notes that the conflicts occurring in South America garnered considerable attention in Sweden, especially from the then Crown Prince Carl Johan. As early as 1808, there was mention of a diplomatic representative in Rio de Janeiro, with Lorentz Westin, the son of the renowned city major and tannery elder Jacob Westin, fulfilling the role of consul general there. The reason Brazil enjoyed particular favour in this context is attributed to its monarchical system of governance, with the regent being the former king of Portugal.[18] Carl Johan closely monitored the developments occurring across the Atlantic. At his own expense, he had translated de Pradt's work, *Les trois derniers mois de l'Amérique méridionale et du Brésil* (1817), for distribution in Sweden, which forecasts the inevitable liberation of the Ibero-American colonies from their parent nations. Paulin remarked that it could be observed he might not have been entirely against the idea of possibly exchanging his role as crown prince for that of a powerful emperor or king in South America. While he was well-informed about the events there through his trusted agents, he wished to gain direct insights into the situation. To accomplish this, in 1815, he sent J.A. Graaner to La Plata.[19]

[17]Axel Paulin, *Sveriges Officiella Relationer Med La Platastaterna under 1800-Talet* (S.l., 1946), 1.
[18]Paulin, 2.
[19]Paulin, 3.

The Idea of Latin America

Even though my thesis does not analyse the term "Latin America", discussions about the connotations of South America during the 19th and early 20th century, regarding geographical conceptualisations, unavoidably include the idea of "Latin America".

Two scholars have explicitly written influential histories and philosophies on the concept "Latin America" in English. First, semiotician Walter D. Mignolo with *The Idea of Latin America* (2005) and second, the historian Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo with *Latin America: The Allure and Power of an Idea* (2017).[20] Tenorio-Trillo and Mignolo demonstrate numerous articulations behind the concept of "Latin America," situated within and driven by the prevailing ideals of their contexts. The concept is fluid and has varied meanings throughout history.[21] Tenorio-Trillo, for instance, argues that the idea has obscured more than it has revealed. What makes this concept intriguing is its evolution into a widely accepted cultural-geographical entity. Tenorio-Trillo emphasises that its power derives from this very acceptance.[22] What unites both Tenorio-Trillo and Mignolo is the attempt to draw attention away from the dominant cartographic image of "Latin America." This can, for example, involve questioning the American (U.S.) portrayal, the "textbook existence" as Tenorio-Trillo puts it, of "Latin America."[23] The narrative in both studies outlines how "Latin America" emerged within European and American intellectual contexts. They ask what circumstances made these articulations reasonable to formulate.

Mignolo shows how "Latin America" as a concept (i.e. the idea of what Latin America *is*) grew out of a colonial and Eurocentric order. For Mignolo, an idea is therefore never "free" from its

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[20]Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005); Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Latin America : The Allure and Power of an Idea* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

[21]Tenorio-Trillo examines official documents, correspondence, and texts from the colonial and independence eras to trace how the concept of "Latin America" has been constructed and used. For example, independence speeches and political manifestos from the 19th century. He also analyses the works of prominent "Latin American" intellectuals, such as Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and José Martí, who shaped discussions of identity and modernity. Mignolo examines primary sources from the colonial period, such as the writings of missionaries (e.g. Bartolomé de las Casas) and early colonial administrators, to illuminate how coloniality shaped knowledge and identity. He uses maps and geographical texts from the Renaissance onwards to examine how the Western worldview was created and how "Latin America" was defined in relation to Europe and other regions. He combines this with analyses by contemporary postcolonial and decolonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon and Aníbal Quijano. Mignolo also draws from Western philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and G.W.F. Hegel, whose ideas about civilisation and history helped establish hierarchies between Europe and the colonial world.

[22]Tenorio-Trillo, *Latin America*, 2.

[23]Tenorio-Trillo, 137.

conditions but carries historical layers of power, categorisation and hierarchisation. He argues that "Latin America" arose where Europe and later the U.S. dominated the global discourse and constructed the region as "Latin" to distinguish it from Anglo-Saxon North America. Mignolo shows that colonial distinctions shape how we think and talk about specific regions and that ideas are always part of a more extensive system of knowledge and power (*the colonial matrix of power*).[24] For Mignolo, an idea is not an abstract notion but a node in a network of relations among language, power, and identity. He highlights how Europe's invention of "Latin America" exemplifies the reproduction of an idea that perpetuates old colonial dynamics structures. Mignolo criticises the Western concept of knowledge by emphasising its colonial and Eurocentric roots, which he argues have marginalised alternative ways of knowing and understanding the world. Mignolo argues that modernity cannot exist without coloniality, since coloniality is a constitutive part of modernity. This means that the Western concept of knowledge is embedded in power relations created during colonialism and continues to define what counts as "scientific" or "rational" today. He describes how Western knowledge constructed colonised peoples as "without history" and as objects of study rather than subjects with their own perspectives. This epistemic power relationship has excluded non-Western traditions from being considered legitimate sources of knowledge.[25]

Tenorio-Trillo discusses how the concept of "Latin America" has evolved into an alluring yet ambiguous notion, shaped by both internal and external forces. According to him, an idea is not something that arose once and for all and then remained constant, but is constantly reformulated in different political and cultural stages. Tenorio-Trillo's reasoning shows the historicisation of the concept. He follows how "Latin America" as an idea has been used in different eras (for example, during the independence processes of the 19th century, during the Pan-Latin American movements of the 20th century, and up to today's globalised world). The idea is not only constructed "from above" (by colonial power or a certain elite), but also "from within" by intellectuals, politicians, and social actors in the Latin American states themselves. Tenorio-Trillo demonstrates that the concept

[24]Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, xiii.

[25]Mignolo also proposes a shift in epistemology, from a Eurocentric perspective to a "geo-/body-political epistemology". This involves recognising knowledge that is rooted in decolonial and marginalised experiences, such as those of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants in Latin America. He sees this as a strategy to counter the hegemonic power over knowledge maintained by Europe and North America. However, I do not use this option in my research. Mignolo, 101.

of "Latin America" has frequently been employed to unite diverse nations around a shared cultural identity, while also delineating boundaries between "us" and "them". In this way, the idea of Latin America is as much a social and political tool as a philosophical or scientific term.[26]

Tenorio-Trillo describes that in Europe, the idea of "Latin America" was an application of two political currents in the late 18th and 19th centuries, *Iberismo* and *Latinité*.[27] These were geopolitical strategies that responded to shifts in European empires in the 19th century and the emergence of new nation-states in an increasingly industrialised world. Terms like these also culturally corresponded to the Romantic idea of the *Volksgeist*. The background to *Latinité* was primarily driven by France's imperialist interests as a means of justifying its "civilising" mission in the South. The language used to name this new reality was French, which, at the time, was the *lingua franca*.[28]

Mignolo argues that "Latinidad" (*latinité)* and "Latin" America as prominent phenomena should be understood in relation to European history, marked by growing imperialism rooted in a capitalist economy, as well as Europe's desire to determine and shape the form of "liberation" in the non-European world.[29] Mignolo claims that what happened in the mid-19th century was that the idea of "America" became divided. The weight of the separation did not align with emerging nation-states but rather with the imperialist narrative, a designation that established an "Anglo-America" in the North and a "Latin America" in the South on the new Western Hemisphere. At this point, "Latin America" became a name for the restoration or installation of the Southern European and Catholic—a "Latin civilisation"—in South America. Concurrently, though under the radar, the absence of indigenous peoples continued to be reproduced, as had already occurred early in the colonial period.[30]

[26]Tenorio-Trillo, *Latin America*, 34–40.
[27]Tenorio-Trillo, 42.
[28]Tenorio-Trillo, 42.
[29]Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, 57.
[30]Mignolo, 57.

Mignolo emphasises that the different "Americas," particularly their linguistic designations, exist today only due to the European perspective on modernity.[31] Like Mignolo, Tenorio-Trillo argues that there has never been a "Latin America" that has not been meaningful or meaning-creating in relation to Europe and the rest of the Americas. Tenorio-Trillo calls the idea of a Latin part of America a modern turn on an old imperialist idea.[32] Where Mignolo emphasises language, Tenorio-Trillo also emphasises culture. Over time, the adjective *Latin* in "Latin America" has accumulated a multitude of meanings, including racial, cultural, and historical beliefs. When various nation-building projects failed, certain characteristics remained, portraying a Latin part of America as backwards, Catholic, chaotic, traditional, and violent—a "place" where new theories and social orders could be applied. A place open to discussions spanning from conservatives to progressives, royalists and republicans, and, since the mid-20th century, populists and Marxists.

Tenorio-Trillo argues that "Latin America" has undergone numerous articulations and variations based on a fundamental idea: the idea of race.[33] Tenorio-Trillo also points out that "Latin America", as a racial-cultural idea in the 19th century, was used as a basis for creating inclusion. However, it was not articulated as an anti-racist idea but as an argument for superiority. Mignolo argues that the history of "Latin America" after independence is that of the elite, but perhaps not those one might first consider. Mignolo contends that it is primarily a political project of the Creole elite. *Latinité* was used by this elite to create their own postcolonial identity. This proved to be a double-edged sword: on one hand, it created the idea of a new continent; on the other, it celebrated European origins, which suppressed indigenous populations.[34] Mignolo suggests that the "Latin" Creoles placed themselves in political, economic, and intellectual dependencies on France, England, and Germany.

Both Mignolo and Tenorio-Trillo problematise the idea of Latin America as something given. They show that ideas are conditioned by historical, social and colonial power structures. The

[31]Mignolo's study employs various premises and assumptions identified by the anthropologist Arturo Escobar in his "modernity/coloniality research project." One of the foundational conditions, and perhaps the most relevant in this context, is the assumption that there is no modernity without coloniality; coloniality sustains modernity, hence the term modern/colonial. From this, the idea that modernity is the name for the historical process in which Europe embarked on its path toward global hegemony follows. Colonialism has distinct historical and geographical locations; coloniality is the underlying power structure that persists globally despite independence. Mignolo, xiii.

[32]Tenorio-Trillo, *Latin America*, 3–4.

[33]Tenorio-Trillo, 4.

[34]Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, 57–58.

main difference lies in the emphasis. Mignolo emphasises the colonial–decolonial dimensions of knowledge production and how Europe and North America have defined and controlled "Latin America" as an idea. Tenorio-Trillo focuses more historically on how the idea of Latin America has changed over time and what functions it fulfils internally in the region, not only in relation to an external power centre. Many scholars differ in their approaches, not treating "Latin America" as a linguistically or historically constructed idea, but rather as a region already established on the map. More often, the concept "Latin America" is not problematised, and studies instead proceed from the traditional term "Latin American Studies," which aims to study, for instance, history from a regional context. Tenorio-Trillo and Mignolo address the shaping of the idea of "Latin America" as an idea; other approaches use Latin America as a cultural-geographical subcontinent where ideas take form. The concept of modernity and the idea of the modern are central points of contention in the various articulations of "Latin America" in both Tenorio-Trillo's and Mignolo's analyses. Either "Latin America" is a modern idea, or it is a place where modernity is formed.

In my analysis, I refrain from using the term "Latin America" as it is inappropriate given my source material. I have noticed his colleagues writing in French use the term, however, Bolstad wrote in Norwegian and mainly used "South America" when discussing the continent in general.[35] I will use the term only when referencing the scholars who use it.

History of Knowledge

Given that my second aim is to highlight the consul as a producer of knowledge, the History of Knowledge is a relatively new field of research that is interesting to explore. Of course, what is essential in the field is to set knowledge as the object of historical studies. Johan Östling and David Larsson Heidenblad's (with colleagues) contribution to the field of the History of Knowledge reflects their ambition to redefine historical inquiry by focusing on knowledge as a socially and historically situated phenomenon. In their programmatic work, *The History of Knowledge* (2023), Östling and Larsson Heidenblad call what they are doing in the field a shift in perspective by "making knowledge—not science, culture, politics, or ideas—central to historical study, new

[35]He uses the word "Latin America" when mentioning two conferences that have the word in their names.

questions, methods, research objects, and source materials become significant."[36] They draw on various intellectual traditions and emphasise the study of knowledge not as an isolated or elite-driven process but as something embedded in broader societal and cultural contexts. Their approach seeks to transcend traditional distinctions, such as those between the history of science, intellectual history, and cultural history, to provide a more integrative and dynamic perspective on how knowledge operates within societies.

Östling and Larsson Heidenblad note that earlier discussions within the German-speaking academic world had a profound influence on their work. Scholars such as Philipp Sarasin were pivotal in proposing a shift from the traditional "Wissenschaftsgeschichte" (history of science) to "Wissensgeschichte" (history of knowledge), focusing on the circulation of knowledge and its societal contexts rather than on institutions or elite actors alone. Sarasin's argument for studying knowledge as a social phenomenon capable of transcending institutional and geographical boundaries resonated with Östling and Larsson Heidenblad's emphasis on circulation as a core concept.[37] Östling and Larsson Heidenblad also cite Peter Burke and Lorraine Daston as significant influences. Burke's encyclopedic works, such as *A Social History of Knowledge* (2000 and 2012), laid the groundwork for thinking about knowledge in its many forms—scientific, artisanal, popular, and implicit. Daston, on the other hand, has argued for a broader definition of the history of knowledge to include diverse and non-Western knowledge traditions, challenging the Eurocentric and teleological tendencies of the history of science.[38] These perspectives helped shape Östling and Larsson Heidenblad's pluralistic approach, where even contested or marginalised forms of knowledge, such as alchemy or indigenous practices, become legitimate study subjects. The field draws methodological inspiration from cultural history and the "New Cultural History" movement, notably Lynn Hunt's emphasis on understanding shared mentalities and cultural frameworks. Michel Foucault's work on discourses and power, as well as Reinhart Koselleck's studies on political and historical concepts, further inform the analytical tools they apply to understanding the circulation and societal roles of knowledge.[39]

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[36]Johan Östling and David Larsson Heidenblad, *The History of Knowledge*, trans. Lena Olsson, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2023), 4, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009047715.
[37]Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, 14.
[38]Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, 12–14.
[39]Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, 8–9.

One of the most compelling arguments made by Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, and why this research field is of interest to me, is that the history of knowledge serves as an integrative field, capable of bridging divides between historical subfields and fostering interdisciplinary dialogue.[40] They propose that the history of knowledge serves as a venue for synthesising insights from diverse fields, such as the history of science, media studies, the history of education, intellectual history, and others. This integrative capacity stems from the field's focus on knowledge as a fundamental and universal aspect of human societies—an element that intersects with nearly every domain of historical inquiry.

Östling and Larsson Heidenblad argue that a foundational understanding of knowledge aligns with the perspectives of anthropologists and sociologists. They emphasise that knowledge exists within broader cultural and social contexts. Citing Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth, they portray traditions of knowledge as a series of statements about the world, conveyed through language and symbols, all rooted in established social relationships. Various components are interlinked, indicating that knowledge cannot exist solely as an individual endeavour. Instead, it is formed and preserved through the collective actions of individuals who share and maintain it.[41] They argue that the history of knowledge should encompass not only systematic and rational forms of knowledge, such as those found in the natural sciences, but also tacit, practical, and indigenous knowledge. By doing so, the field challenges traditional hierarchies that have often privileged Western, academic, or elite knowledge systems.[42] This pluralism allows the history of knowledge to engage with diverse historical actors and contexts, from artisans and religious figures to global and colonial networks. Östling and Larsson Heidenblad also address criticisms of the field's perceived lack of boundaries, acknowledging that the broad definition of knowledge can make it difficult to delineate its scope. However, they argue that this openness is a strength rather than a weakness, as it allows for the study of knowledge's intersections with power, identity, and culture. By analysing what is considered knowledge in different historical contexts, and what is excluded or marginalised, they reveal the processes through which knowledge systems are constructed and contested.[43] Östling

[40]Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, 8.
[41]Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, 7.
[42]Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, 14.
[43]Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, 6–7.

and Larsson Heidenblad do not see this ambiguity as problematic; instead, they believe that the most crucial aspect of research is its potential to provide new insights into past societies, phenomena, and transformation processes.

In this study, I do not find it feasible to engage with the broadest concept in the field, namely, the circulation of knowledge. My interest lies in the production of knowledge, a concept that the field is inclined to move away from in favour of discussing circulation. The approach would be different if I were examining the transfer of reports or messages among various consuls. However, since I focus on the knowledge production and representation of South America by a single individual conveyed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is inappropriate to apply the notion of knowledge circulation. Instead, I incorporate the concept of the knowledge actor into my analytical framework. As Östling and Larsson Heidenblad define, knowledge actors provide a versatile framework for analysing the human dimensions of knowledge processes. By emphasising the roles of individuals and networks, the concept allows researchers to investigate how knowledge is shaped, circulated, and contested within specific historical contexts. Furthermore, it challenges traditional hierarchies by recognising the contributions of diverse actors, including non-elite participants and audiences. For historians, the concept offers a powerful tool for exploring the dynamic interplay between knowledge, society, and culture, while encouraging interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the past.[44]

Östling and Larsson Heidenblad emphasise that researchers should consider the content of knowledge in their analyses of knowledge actors. As Sarasin contends, it is inadequate to examine knowledge actors purely in terms of their societal positions or networks; researchers must also consider the specific types of knowledge they produce, disseminate, or contest. This dual focus enables scholars to understand how knowledge is influenced by its social and cultural contexts while also highlighting the agency of individuals within those contexts.[45]

[44]Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, 21–22.
[45]Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, 21.

Material, Method and Theory

Some scientific expeditions and research trips from Sweden and Norway to South America were made at the end of the 19th century. As seen above, these have also received attention in historical research. These kinds of research trips to other continents gained importance in shaping perceptions, knowledge production and ideas of different continents. On the other hand, those who spent a lot of time on the ground in South America and actively monitored what happened, ideas and rumours that spread, revolutions and revolts that broke out and societies that united and divided–were the consuls. This service position has received little attention in the history of ideas research and historical inquiry. Still, it must nevertheless be seen as a carrier of knowledge, an information collector, and a mediator of ideas.

That being said, I am not the first to notice the potential of consular reports as a historical source. The economic historian Theo Barker argued that the consular reports are a neglected historical source already in 1981.[46] At least two other historians are investigating the Swedish-Norwegian consular service as we speak.[47] Consular activity has mainly been noticed by historians with an interest in economics as actors who promoted foreign trade and shipping. There was a significant union conflict in my analysis period (1901–1905) concerning the consulate system in Sweden-Norway. This could explain why much of the research on the Swedish-Norwegian consulate systems and relations has centred on domestic issues highlighted by Swedish historians.[48] Historian Aryo Makko observes that consuls have seldom been viewed as significant actors within

[46]Theo Barker, 'Consular Reports: A Rich but Neglected Historical Source', *Business History* 23, no. 3 (November 1981): 365, https://doi.org/10.1080/00076798100000048.

[47]Martin Almbjär and Alida Clemente, 'Mercantilism from below? Swedish Consuls and Merchant Networks between Naples and Stockholm in the Mid Eighteenth Century', *Business History* ahead-of-print (21 June 2023), https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2023.2227574; Martin Almbjär, 'Scandinavian Diplomacy in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Period [Elektronisk Resurs]', in *Early Modern European Diplomacy*, vol. 353–371 (Berlin; Boston: Early modern european diplomacy, 2024), http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-231419; Martin Almbjär, 'Swedish Consuls in Galicia [Elektronisk Resurs] the Economic Function of Consuls in Turbulent Times (1793–1806)', in *Scandinavian Economic History Review* (Scandinavian Economic History Review, 2024), http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-527904; Aryo Makko and Leos Müller, *I Främmande Hamn : Den Svenska Och Svensk-Norska Konsulstjänsten 1700-1985* (Malmö: Universus Academic Press, 2015); Lisa Hellman et al., *Connected Oceans* (Lund: Universus Academic Press, 2022); Leos Müller, 'The Swedish-Norwegian Consular Services in the 19th Century (1814-1905)' (DOBU Verlag, 2010), 261–70, https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-54456.

[48]Torbjörn Nilsson, 'Striden om konsulerna: unionspolitik och modernisering 1870-1905', in *Historia, krig och statskonst*, Försvarshögskolans acta. B, 2000, 365.

the Swedish context, which he interprets as a potential reason for the minimal attention consuls have received in Swedish history in general. He posits that this cause can be linked to the overall diminishing interest in history as a subject within the Swedish foreign service and its policy-making. Makko highlights a notable disinterest in Sweden regarding its own colonial history from the late 19th century. He contends that this deficiency also encompasses Sweden-Norway's involvement in and connection to imperialism as a broader concept.[49] Internationally, British consular reports are the most popular archives studied by different scholars.[50] All articles that use consular reports are concerned with whether they affected trade significantly or impacted various decisions, which is reasonable. I have yet to find studies that use consular reports to investigate knowledge production, reproduction of information and European (Swedish-Norwegian) ideas about other continents (South America).

Analytical Concepts

Historians specialising in the study of knowledge conceptualise knowledge as a phenomenon shaped by social and historical contexts. Their primary focus lies in the beliefs held by individuals across various societies and historical periods regarding their understanding of themselves and the surrounding world. As a result, any entity recognised, engaged with, or acted upon as knowledge presents itself as a subject of potential scholarly inquiry. Östling and Larsson Heidenblad argue that the relevance of the knowledge assertions made by previous generations, in terms of their validity or truthfulness today, is generally not of interest. Instead, research should centre on the processes through which certain notions were established as knowledge among people and the implications

[49]Aryo Makko, 'I Imperialismens kölvatten? Ett maritimt perspektiv på stormaktsspelet, kolonialism utan kolonier och den svensk-norska konsulsstaten, 1875–1905 : [A maritime perspective on great power politics, imperialism without colonies and Swedish-Norwegian consulship, 1875-1905]', *Historisk Tidskrift* 134, no. 3 (2014): 501.

[50]W. B. Winn, 'Reports of British Diplomats Concerning the Status of Protestantism in Latin America in 1851', *Journal of Church and State* 10 (1 September 1968), https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/10.3.437; Russell M. Posner, 'A British Consular Agent in California: The Reports of James A. Forbes, 1843-1846', *Southern California Quarterly* 53 (1 June 1971), https://doi.org/10.2307/41170342; Irina Podgorny, 'Fossil Dealers, the Practices of Comparative Anatomy and British Diplomacy in Latin America, 1820–1840', *The British Journal for the History of Science* 46 (31 August 2012), https://doi.org/10.1017/s0007087412000702; Harold F. Peterson and R. A. Humphreys, 'British Consular Reports on the Trade and Politics of Latin America, 1824-1826.', *The Economic History Review* 14 (1 January 1944), https://doi.org/10.2307/2590461.

this had for diverse societies and cultural frameworks.[51]

In their work, Östling and Larsson Heidenblad define the concept of "knowledge actors" as individuals or groups who contribute to the production, circulation, and transformation of knowledge within specific historical contexts. This concept serves as a means of embedding knowledge within its broader social and cultural frameworks while emphasising the role of human agency in shaping knowledge processes. According to Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, knowledge actors can include not only prominent intellectuals, scientists, and reformers but also a diverse range of participants, such as journalists, educators, students, and even audiences, who collectively influence the dynamics of knowledge.[52] The authors stress that knowledge actors are not merely passive recipients or transmitters of knowledge but active agents whose actions and decisions play a crucial role in determining how knowledge is created, shared, and institutionalised. Drawing on social history and cultural theory, Östling and Larsson Heidenblad describe knowledge actors as individuals situated within specific societal and historical contexts, whose authority and influence are shaped by their access to resources, networks, and forms of capital. They argue that the capacity of individuals to act as knowledge actors depends on their theoretical and practical expertise as well as their ability to engage with broader societal structures.[53] While the concept emphasises individual agency, Östling and Larsson Heidenblad also point out that knowledge processes are rarely driven by solitary actors. Instead, they highlight the importance of networks, collaborations, and collective efforts in setting knowledge in motion.[54] Additionally, Östling and Larsson Heidenblad stress that researchers should integrate the content of knowledge into their analyses of knowledge actors.[55]

Building on these theoretical perspectives and the notion that the History of Knowledge is a platform for synthesising insights, I have developed concepts and an analytical framework to guide my research.

[51]Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, *The History of Knowledge*, 5.
[52]Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, 21–22.
[53]Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, 21.
[54]Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, 22.
[55]Östling and Larsson Heidenblad, 21.

Conditions of Production

During the Swedish-Norwegian Union from 1814 to 1905, the king and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Stockholm were responsible for managing foreign policy. During the Union, the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs represented the interests of both Sweden and Norway. Norway did not have its own foreign administration at the time, and both countries shared diplomatic and consular services.[56]

The 1887 consular instructions specify that the consul is directly subordinate to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Board of Trade, and the Norwegian Government's Department for Internal Affairs, as well as the royal mission in the country where the consul serves.[57] Upon taking office, a consul or paid vice-consul must take an oath as a Swedish and Norwegian civil servant, unless he has already done so.[58] The consul is tasked with diligently protecting the interests of the United Kingdoms, striving to enhance these interests, especially concerning trade and shipping, and faithfully executing any obligations imposed by laws, regulations, or relevant authorities.[59] It is essential for the consul to foster a respectful and dignified relationship with local authorities and to avoid any involvement in political protests, neither encouraging nor supporting actions against the established government.[60] The consul must remain well-informed about the legal and customary framework of the host country, adjusting his actions accordingly.[61] Perhaps the most relevant instruction for this thesis is that the consul should also gather information about district conditions and regulations from local authorities, even if they are unrelated to trade and shipping, as they could impact the United Kingdoms, and provide reports based on these findings.[62] Each consulate must have at least one copy of the current regulations and general instructions about consular duties.[63] The consular instruction clearly defined Bolstad's role and point of departure. The content

[56]Örjan Romefors et al., *Utrikesförvaltningens Källor 1520-2000* (Stockholm: Riksarkivet, 2017), 46.
[57]§12. 1. *Kongl. Maj:Ts Nådiga Förordning Angående Konsulatväsendet* (Stockholm: Utrikesdep., 1887), 4.
[58]The oath, with its format announced by the Minister for Foreign Affairs during the appointment notification, must be taken in writing in two copies–one in Swedish and another in Norwegian. These copies should be submitted to the Minister, who will then send the Norwegian copy to the Norwegian Government's Departement för det Inre. §46. *Kongl. Maj*, 4.
[59]§49. 1. *Kongl. Maj*, 16.
[60]§50. *Kongl. Maj*, 17.
[61]§51. 1. *Kongl. Maj*, 17.
[62]§69. 3. *Kongl. Maj*, 23.
[63]According to §65, this was obvious. *Kongl. Maj*, 21.

of his reports primarily reflected his professional practices and responsibilities. Bolstad operated within a network of diverse information sources, and his professional responsibilities and historical context guided his decisions regarding the utilisation of information and the composition of his reports. I define these conditions as *conditions of production*.

Reproduction of Information

In discussing the term "information," I mean what Bolstad designated as pertinent sources for communication and reproduction, the kind of material he uses. This encompasses his gathering of information through reading reports, staying updated with the news, listening to rumours, and more. From there, Bolstad formed his understanding, shaping knowledge related to the items he collected and the details of each object. He developed this culminated insight into a report that was sent to Sweden-Norway. Alongside his storytelling, Bolstad frequently translated documents from their original language into Norwegian to support his report. These translations, along with the accompanying files, acquired significance due to his decision to include the object and forward it to the Ministry for their review of the report's content. By utilising information from various sources, he constructs knowledge for himself, which manifests as both information and knowledge in the product that the Ministry observed.

I define how he communicates and shares other details and objects as the *reproduction of information*. Information is a facet of the knowledge production process. However, I don't perceive information as merely raw data or facts. Some interpret information as unprocessed, while knowledge is seen as processed. I view knowledge and information both as processed concepts. Everything that Bolstad presents is a result of processing. The information he shares with the ministry is also someone else's constructed product. It is crucial to consider that Bolstad likely held differing perspectives. Still, the knowledge he decided to document and share demonstrates his judgment as a consul. While the entire range of written and printed records may not entirely illuminate historical, cultural, political, or human experiences, they convey broader ideas regarded as significant through the consul's reproduction of information.

Consular Knowledge Production

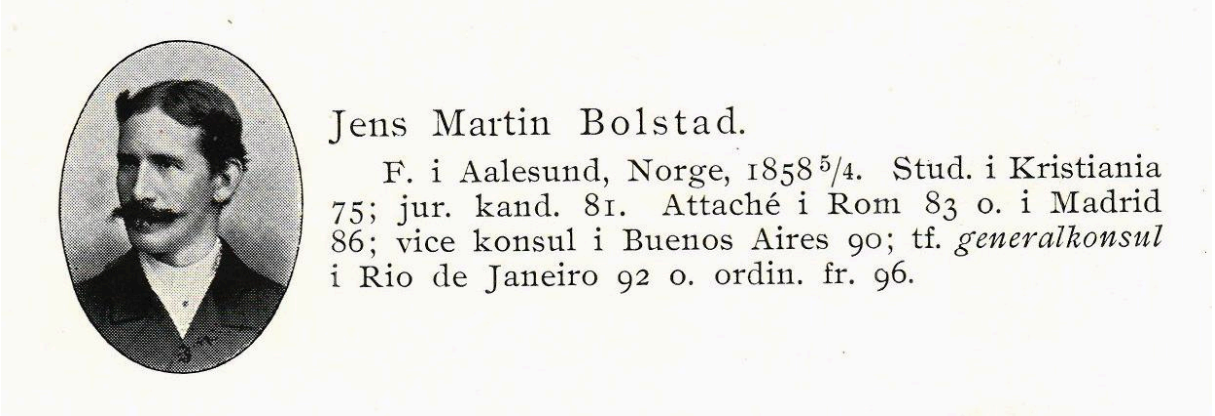
Although not mentioned in the consular instructions, I argue that an essential aspect of the consular activity is that the consul must provide his own contextual interpretations for the information he chooses to share. Following his statements is a description of an event. Historian of ideas Annika Berg insightfully discusses the significance of individual historical figures and their contexts.[64] Berg contends that any historian must acknowledge that the entirety of another person's perceived worldview is ultimately unattainable. However, this does not negate the necessity of outlining this worldview as a framework for the contexts that the actor deemed relevant and genuinely engaged with. The task is to construct a reasonable, though incomplete, depiction of the structures and relationships, thoughts, and ideas to which the historical figure has had any connection.[65] I interpret Bolstad's reports as expressions of his self-perceived context. I provide context for his reports by highlighting the events he discusses based on other historical research. Occasionally, his details are vague, and he presumes the recipient has prior knowledge. In such instances, I include additional context to enhance understanding.

I argue that another essential responsibility of consuls is to convey an "image" of their host countries, reflecting the reality on the ground. This seems like such an obvious point that it often gets overlooked. The creation of an image naturally arises from their work. Whether intentional or not, consuls inevitably craft images shaped by their consular duties. Unlike travellers of his era who actively sought to depict South America in their writings, this image formation is a byproduct of their primary responsibilities. I refer to the concept of "image" as defined by historian Eva Block. She describes it as a broad and multifaceted idea encompassing various social understanding elements, including facts, values, and suggested actions. "Image" signifies a unified perception of

[64]Annika Berg, 'Ur Galen Synvinkel? Om Inlevelsens Gränser Och Psykiatrihistoria Ur Patientperspektiv', in *Konsten Att Kontextualisera : Om Historisk Förståelse Och Meningsskapande*, ed. Staffan Bergwik, Linn Holmberg, and Karin Dirke (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2022).
[65]Berg, 'Ur Galen Synvinkel? Om Inlevelsens Gränser Och Psykiatrihistoria Ur Patientperspektiv', 131.

reality, incorporating factual knowledge and individual experiences. This comprehensive view impacts both personal and societal actions, as well as their outlook on the future.[66]

The concept of *consular knowledge production* encompasses the entire process by which a consul, as a knowledge actor, collects information, narrates it, leading to translations, attaches relevant objects, and compiles finished reports. This collection of different elements represents how a consul produces knowledge. This concept enables the examination of consuls as knowledge actors and the revelation of phenomena within the history of ideas (or any relevant field). It does not have to be limited to shedding light on specific ideas or images related to particular geopolitical conceptualisations, countries or continents. However, this thesis focuses on the intriguing ideas and images that Bolstad constructs about South America through his consular knowledge production. By analysing his reports, I can pinpoint various influential currents of thought as well as conflicting ideas.



Camila Cid, *Jens Martin Bolstad*, 21 November 2024, Project Runeberg, https://runeberg.org/spg/3/0088.html.

Consul J. M. Bolstad

Jens Martin Bolstad was born on April 5, 1858, in Aalesund, Norway, and died in 1905 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. At 23 years old, he earned a degree in law from the University of Christiania in 1881.

[66]An 'image' can also describe the dynamics of a political situation or development over time. Block discusses how 'images' change over time, often in connection with changes in social conditions, and how these can be analyzed by limiting the investigation to specific times or events. Block points out that the concept of 'image' is often used instead of 'opinion' in social research, which has its roots in studies of mass media and social psychology. Kenneth Boulding's definition of 'image' has influenced this, where 'image' is understood as a totality of cognitive, affective and evaluative components. Eva Block, *Amerikabilden i Svensk Dagspress 1948-1968 : [The Image of America in Swedish Daily Newspapers 1948-1968]* (Lund: LiberLäromedel/Gleerup, 1976), 13–16.

His career in South America began as Acting Consul General in Buenos Aires from October 1888 to July 1889, followed by serving as Vice Consul in Buenos Aires from March 19, 1890. He acted as Consul General in Rio de Janeiro from December 22, 1891, to February 1896. He held the position of Minister Plenipotentiary on a special mission to Brazil from January 3, 1892, to August 3, 1893. He was then sent as Minister Plenipotentiary on special missions to Colombia in May 1894, to Venezuela in December 1894, and to Chile in May 1895. He returned to Rio de Janeiro on November 3, 1895, and resumed the role of Acting Consul General in Rio de Janeiro on February 7, 1896. He was appointed permanent Consul General on December 4, 1896, until his death. In other words, he spent most of his adult life abroad. It is hard to believe that he was entirely up to date on what was happening in Sweden and Norway during this period, except for foreign policy ambitions within the framework of his office. However, I am convinced that he had preconceptions —knowledge and prejudices—about South America, which influenced his reporting and information gathering. Bolstad is a fascinating figure to study and follow, as he spent a significant portion of his adult life in South America. The essential aspect of his correspondence to the Foreign Office, which also distinguishes his style, is reporting on current debates of ideas that he considered necessary for the United Kingdom to receive. In his reports, he often wrote about several simultaneous phenomena.

In this thesis, I draw on Bolstad's reports from the final four years of his tenure. It might appear minimal or trivial. However, I certainly do not view it that way. The benefits of this approach are that I can provide a detailed illustration of how consular insights are formed and highlight the diversity of topics involved. To conduct this study, I analyse handwritten consular reports from Bolstad to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Stockholm, examining his data collection methods and the content and narratives of his reports. Additionally, I reviewed appendices, newspaper articles, publications, translations of news articles and debates, constitution documents, and more, often included in Bolstad's reports. These supplementary materials clarify the report's content and highlight what he considered most relevant for the Ministry. I have thus dealt with official reports and their appendices; handwritten letters and other types of unofficial correspondence, as well as service letters, are outside the scope of this analysis.

In selecting the primary documents considered for my analysis, I have done a fundamental and overall archival categorisation of his work that has not been done before on this consul's professional work.[67] This thesis is based on a review of 169 consular reports. Of these, I have particularly examined the 52 reports from 1900 to 1905, in which Bolstad recounts political events and makes general statements about South America. I have specifically selected reports with political content that depict relations between different South American countries, as well as reports where the term "South America" and its meanings are mentioned. I have chosen to study the reports as they appear to the reader, with the aim of conveying information, providing an image of what is happening on the continent, and possibly contributing to potential action. I have analysed the content and message of the reports, not whether the reports played any driving role in Sweden-Norway's activities as an international actor.

The consuls, of course, performed more tasks within the framework of their office; however, it is the narrative aspect of political and cultural events that interests me. The unique characteristic of a consular report is its dual function of recounting events and offering analyses and recommendations for potential approaches. These reports cover and address political events and may also delve into military, cultural, and trade policy matters within the regions the respective diplomat oversees. Despite being a formal aspect of their professional responsibilities, consuls had the latitude to articulate their ideas within these reports. They illuminate situations of significance to the consuls and encapsulate their assessments of ongoing debates and conflicts they witnessed.[68] By examining the consul's knowledge production, we observe the plurality of simultaneities, conflicting ideas, and interrelated political and cultural contexts. In doing so, I also explore the potential of studying consular reports as historical sources for creating images and ideas about countries and continents.

Limitations

As my study spans four years, the long-history approach is not feasible. My aim for this thesis is to provide insight into the potential of studying consular knowledge production for understanding

[67]My private possession, not published.
[68]Romefors et al., *Utrikesförvaltningens Källor 1520-2000*, 225.

images and the construction of a continent, offering a nuanced example. Further research will enable the discovery of other insights that span a more extended period. I have no intention of presenting Bolstad as a typical representative of official consular activities in South America. That would require an effort to conduct comparative studies of several consuls. While many researchers today utilise easily accessible digitised materials, my situation is different. None of my source materials is digitised, but they can be accessed by anyone visiting Riksarkivet in Marieberg, Stockholm.

Disposition

While I have examined numerous reports and essentially reviewed Bolstad's entire career, I have opted to focus my analysis on a selection of particularly noteworthy reports from 1901 to 1905 in this thesis. Beyond the fact that the report itself possesses a narrative style that would be tedious if omitted, it also offers a chance to illustrate the volume of information communicated through a single report. Every segment of the analysis is grounded in empirical evidence, meaning it relies on particular reports in which Bolstad emphasises an issue, perspective, or opinion.

The analytical portion of this thesis is divided into two chapters that examine Bolstad's reports on South America from different perspectives. The first chapter, titled "Hegemony or Unity: Bolstad's Observation on South American Power Plays, 1901–1905," focuses on Bolstad's descriptions of the territorial and political tensions that shaped the continent around the turn of the century. Particular attention is paid to how he narrates conflicts involving countries such as Chile, Peru, and Bolivia, as well as the attempts at regional cooperation he observes. This chapter also examines the role of national ambitions and hegemonic aspirations in Bolstad's portrayal, as well as whether he suggests that genuine unity or collaboration is possible among the South American states.

The second chapter, "Between Rivalries and the 'Colossus of the North': Bolstad's Insights on South American Ambivalence," builds upon the previous analysis by centering on the influence of external powers, especially the U.S. It discusses how Bolstad balances his account of internal rivalries with the looming threat of the "Colossus of the North" and examines to what extent

external pressure migh lead either to greater cohesion or deeper divisions among South American nations. This chapter illustrates how Bolstad both warns of and reflects on the growing American presence, as well as points to possible efforts toward collective defence or shared foreign policy.

Finally, the "Conclusion" draws together the thesis's main findings, referencing overarching research questions and showing how Bolstad can be understood as a "knowledge actor" within the consular domain. Here, I summarise the implications Bolstad's portrayal may have had for Swedish-Norwegian foreign administration, as well as how notions of "hegemony versus unity" and "internal rivalries versus external threats" illuminate the broader political climate in early twentieth-century South America. I also consider possible avenues for future research, including comparisons with other consular sources or more detailed studies of how Bolstad's material was subsequently used by decision-makers in Stockholm.

Camila Cid, *Bolstad's signature*, 6 December 2024.

Hegemony or Unity:

Bolstad's Observations on South American Power Plays

A central aspect of Bolstad's consular knowledge production was his detailed reporting on the enduring tensions among South American nations. These tensions were shaped by a dual struggle: the drive to assert national sovereignty through internal consolidation, and the simultaneous need to present a united front against perceived external threats. Bolstad's reports reveal how fragile alliances, historical rivalries, and competing ambitions played out across the continent, often complicating efforts at regional cooperation. Chile, in particular, emerges as both a key power and a major obstacle to regional unity—asserting its interests forcefully while resisting external mediation. Throughout this chapter, Bolstad provides a layered narrative of South America's fragmented diplomacy, where attempts at solidarity were often undermined by competition for hegemony. His observations reflect not only the geopolitical rivalries of the time but also the recurring difficulty of balancing national ambition with collective action. By documenting events such as territorial disputes, congresses aimed at fostering scientific and political cooperation, and symbolic gestures of fraternity, Bolstad offers insight into both the forces that pull these nations apart and the fleeting moments that hint at unity. As a consular knowledge actor, Bolstad weaves official reports, personal encounters, and regional media into a coherent analysis, highlighting the tension between the ideals of regional cooperation and the realities of power politics. This chapter explores how Bolstad captured these dynamics, offering a nuanced view of South American diplomacy in the early 20th century, where visions of unity contended with the stark ambitions of rising regional powers.

23 March 1901

1873 Peru and Bolivia entered a secret Treaty of Defensive Alliance. In April 1879, after discovering the pact between Peru and Bolivia, Chile declared war on both nations (War of the Pacific, 1879–1883). This conflict arose over control of the Atacama Desert, a region rich in nitrate and guano, which were highly valued for their use in fertilisers and explosives. Within four years, Chile

triumphed over the collective military efforts of Bolivia and Peru. This eventually resulted in Chile's annexation of the Peruvian Tarapacá department and Arica province, along with the Bolivian department of Litoral, leaving Bolivia without access to the sea.

On 23 March 1901, Bolstad reported on the continuing difficulties among the states along the Pacific coast.[69] He informed, as per the Treaty of Ancon (October 20, 1883), Chile held territories Tacna and Arica for ten years until 1894.[70] A plebiscite would then be held in these territories to determine whether they should belong to Chile or Peru. The party that did not retain them would receive 10 million pesos in compensation from the winner. However, this provision was not fulfilled in 1894 or in the subsequent years. Although the Billinghurst-Latorre Protocol (April 16, 1898) proposed a solution, it failed to gain ratification in the Chilean Chamber of Deputies and was subsequently shelved by both the Chilean Congress and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[71] Bolstad noted that the repeated efforts of the Peruvian minister in Santiago, Guillermo Billinghurst (1851–1915), to revive the matter had proved fruitless.[72]

Following this, he recounted a conversation with a Chilean contact who shared prevailing sentiments within Chilean political circles. The strategy, Bolstad wrote, was to gradually "Chileanise" Tacna and Arica to ensure their permanent incorporation into Chile:

> Ved en Samtale med en Chilener havde jeg anledning til at höre, at Stemningen i de chilenske Kredse er for at vinde Tid og lidt efter lidt at "chilenisere" Tacna og Arica, som man gjerne vil beholde. Kolonister fra Chile ere

[69]Jens Martin Bolstad, '23 Mars 1901', Consular report (Rio de Janeiro: Kongl. Svenska och Norska Generalkonsulatet, 23 March 1901), SE/RA/221/2210.02/1/42, Riksarkivet in Stockholm/Täby, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/arkiv/XAlxgzwIUgP28ec00TtYi0.

[70]Officially "Tratado de Paz y Amistad entre las repúblicas de Chile y del Perú": https://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/archivos2/pdfs/MC0000329.pdf

[71]On April 9, 1898, Billinghurst formalised an agreement with Chilean Foreign Minister Raimundo Silva Cruz through a memorandum, which outlined the intention to conduct a plebiscite and sought the Queen of Spain, Maria Cristina of Habsburg-Lorraine, to serve as the arbitrator for establishing the voting conditions. Consequently, a Protocol bearing their signatures was executed in Santiago on April 16, 1898, between Billinghurst and the newly appointed Chilean Foreign Minister, Admiral Juan José Latorre. Its eighteen articles contained the agreements reached for holding the plebiscite. The Peruvian Congress endorsed the Protocol, viewing it as a diplomatic victory; however, the same sentiment was not echoed in the Chilean parliament. Sergio González Miranda, *La Llave y El Candado: El Conflicto Entre Perú y Chile Por Tacna y Arica (1883-1929)* (Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2008), 58.

[72]Bolstad, '23 Mars 1901', 1–2.

> derfor blevne forhjulpne did for at nedsætte sig, ligesom til Fünktionærer ere blevne tagne födte Chilenere, og Troppestyrken i nævnte Gebet er föröget.[73]

Bolstad's account illustrates Chile's use of settlement policies, administrative appointments, and military presence as tools to consolidate control.

The phenomenon of Chilenisation concerning Tacna, Arica (and Tarapacá) denotes the systematic efforts undertaken by Chile to assimilate these territories, which were acquired after the War of the Pacific, within its national framework. This assimilation process entailed diverse political, cultural, and economic strategies designed to reinforce Chilean sovereignty and identity within these regions, which had previously belonged to Peru. The initiatives aimed at Chilenisation were characterised by both official state policies and informal societal dynamics, illustrating the intricate nature of national integration in a disputed border region.[74]

Beyond the tensions with Peru, Bolstad observed a shift in Chile's diplomatic relations with Argentina. He wrote that "*[f]orholdet mellen Chile og Argentina var ved forsonlig Stemning saavel hos Præsident Errazuriz som hos Præsident Roca blevem ret godt, og man ventede kŭn paa arbitrage for at bringe Grændsespörgsmaalet ùd af Verden.*"[75] The relationship between the two countries had improved significantly, thanks to the conciliatory attitudes of Chilean President Federico Errázuriz Echaurren (1850–1901) and Argentine President Julio Argentino Roca (1843–1914). Both leaders appeared willing to resolve their border disputes through arbitration.[76] Bolstad informed that the Argentine Vice President, Norberto Quirno Costa (1844–1915), a former minister in Santiago, had

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[73]"In a conversation with a Chilean I had occasion to hear that the mood in Chilean circles is to gain time and little by little to 'Chilenise' Tacna and Arica, which they would like to keep. Colonists from Chile have therefore been helped to settle there, just as native Chileans have been taken as officials, and the troop strength in the said area has been increased", Bolstad, 2.

[74]González Miranda, *La Llave y El Candado*, 16.

[75]"The relation between Chile and Argentina was by conciliatory mood as well with President Errazuriz as with President Roca become rather good, and one waited only for arbitration for to bring the boundary-question out of the world.", Bolstad, '23 Mars 1901', 2.

[76]Not explicitly mentioned in the report, but Bolstad is probably refering to the event called "El Abrazo del Estrecho," 15 February 1899 (Punta Arenas, Chile). The presidents of Chile (Federico Errázuriz Echaurren) and Argentina (Julio Roca) resolved the border dispute over the sovereignty of the Puna de Atacama. The event had no immediate geopolitical or strategic consequences, but it did have significant diplomatic repercussions that demonstrated the two countries' willingness to compromise. This conciliatory embrace between Argentina and Chile was the precursor to the treaty known as the "Pactos de Mayo" (*El Tratado de Equivalencia Naval, Paz y Amistad*). It was an international agreement signed with the aim of ending the boundary dispute and consolidating the friendship between the two countries. It was signed in Santiago de Chile on May 28, 1902.

been preparing for a private visit to the Chilean capital. He noted that "*[e]fterretning blev meget vel optaget, og bebudedes Besöget at skulle give anledning til og Udtryk for den aller varmeste Fraternisering mellen argentinere og chilenere.*"[77] The planned visit was particularly well-received and seen as a symbol of growing fraternity between the nations.

The report then provided insights into Chilean domestic politics, including the presidential election in June 1901. These details underscore Bolstad's effort to contextualise Chile's geopolitical stance within its internal political dynamics. He attributed the conciliatory atmosphere to the Chilean and Argentine presidents while noting opposition from more nationalist factions within Chile. Bolstad argued that this was evident in the ongoing presidential election, where President Errázuriz maintained strict neutrality. The relations between the two countries were also influenced by the marginalisation of what he called the "ultra-Chilean" (*det ultra chilenske Parti*) party (in Spanish, *Partido Conservador*) led by the former minister in Rio, Chilean diplomat and journalist Joaquín Walker Martínez (1853–1928). He informed that this party, which vehemently opposed President Errázuriz and advocated a more aggressive stance towards Argentina, was in a diminished position. Bolstad wrote that they "*gjerne vilde seet Chile antage en trùende og krigersk Tone hellere end at vige en Fodsbred ligeoverfor Argentina*."[78] Bolstad informed that the candidacy of Claudio Vicuña Guerrero (1886–1977), supported by the united liberal parties (*Alianza Liberal*), who would likely have aligned with the ultra-Chilean party, was surpassed by Germán Riesco (1854–1916), a more conciliatory liberal. This led to a contest between Germán Riesco and Pedro Montt (1849–1910), and according to Bolstad, a moderately conservative candidate known for his amicable stance towards Argentina.[79]

Meanwhile, frustrations mounted in Peru over the unresolved status of Tacna and Arica. President Eduardo López de Romaña (1847–1912), disillusioned by the lack of progress, recalled Peru's minister and legation staff from Santiago, withdrawing them along with the legation's archives.[80] Bolstad speculated whether this signalled a potential rupture between Peru and Chile or merely served as a symbolic protest. He wrote, "*[d]et er mùligt, at Perú's Skridt vil vise sig kùn at*

[77]"The news was very well received, and it was announced that the visit would give rise to and expression of the warmest fraternisation between Argentines and Chileans." Bolstad, '23 Mars 1901', 2.
[78]"They would like to see Chile adopt a threatening and warlike tone rather than give way to Argentina." Bolstad, 2–3.
[79]Bolstad, 3.
[80]Bolstad, 3.

være en platonisk Protest mod Chile, og at ingen alvorligere sorte skyer ville drage op over Horizonten."[81] However, Bolstad then informed that the previously mentioned visit to Chile by the Argentine Vice President had been postponed. He also noted that Argentina's closer ties with Bolivia added complexity, as both Peru and Bolivia viewed Argentina as a natural ally.

In parallel with these disputes among the nations, Bolstad reported on the Latin American Congress, convened in Montevideo from March 20 to 31, 1901. The participants included those officially appointed by their governments and unofficial representatives chosen by scientific institutions to represent their countries. He informed that Brazil's delegates were selected by the president of the "Historical Institute," the Marquis of Paranaguá. He also mentioned that Chile had both official delegates and unofficial representatives from various societies. As the name of the event suggested, *Segunda reunión del Congreso científico latino americano,* Bolstad reported that the main objective of this congress was to foster closer ties among the South American states through discussions on scientific matters. He wrote:

> Samtidig er ialfald i Montevideo forsamlet en latinsk-amerikansk Kongres (- Brasilien er der ogsaa repræsenteret ved flere fremragende Mænd saaledes den tidligere Vicepræsident Dr Manuel Victorino Pereira, Botanikeren Dr Barbosa Rodriquez, Advokaten Dr Sà Vianna og andre), hvis Maal skulde være gjennem Diskussioner om videnskabelige Æmner at nærme de forskjellige Sydamerikanske Stater til hverandee. Kongressens Præsident blev en argentiner. Baade betydeligere Chilenere og Perúanere tage Del i den. Man har villet antyde, at et indirekte maal med disse Kongresser ogsaa skulde foreligge, et politisk, nemlig efterhaanden at gjöre disse Stater solidariske og samarbeidende, for at danne et fælles Værn, hvus Kolossen i Nord, de Forenede Stater, skulde ville trænge ind, og öve Tryk mod nogen af dem. Denne Tanke kommer ialfald ei frem og ligger ogsaa fjernere, saalænge Chile ei vil indrömme Kabinetterne i Rio, Bùenos Ayres eller Lima nogen ledende Stilling og disse ei ere tilböielige til at söge Hegemoniet i Santiago.
>
> Hver for sig have disse stater nok at gjöre med at ùdvikle sig, hvortil de have saa rige Betingelser. Det vilde være at önske, at de kùnde opnaa det i Fred.[82]

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[81]Bolstad, 4.

[82]"At the same time, a Latin American Congress is assembled in Montevideo (- Brazil is there also represented by several eminent men, thus the former Vice-President Dr Manuel Victorino Pereira, the botanist Dr Barbosa Rodriquez, the advocate Dr Sà Vianna and others), the aim of which through discussions on scientific subjects bring the different South American states nearer to one another. The Congress's President became an Argentine. Both more notable Chileans and Peruvians take part in it. It has been suggested that there should also be an indirect goal with these Congresses, a political one, namely to gradually make these states solidary and cooperative, in order to form a common defence, into which the Colossus of the North, the United States, would want to penetrate, and exert pressure against

These paragraphs in his report show several things. Firstly, there was an idea of uniting the various South American countries through scientific discussions when other alternatives did not seem possible. The Latin American Congress in Montevideo is portrayed as a forum for scientific and political collaboration. Second, there was an indirect political idea of using the congresses to make the states solidary and cooperative in forming a common defence in case of potential pressure from the United States, often referred to as the "Colossus of the North" (*Kolossen i Nord*). Bolstad hints at the underlying political aim of fostering unity against potential U.S. interference, though he notes significant obstacles to this goal, including Chile's reluctance to yield leadership. Thirdly, Chile was considered the problem and the brake on such unification. Fourthly, Bolstad considered that these states had enough to do to develop themselves, for which he thought that they had rich conditions and that it would be desirable if they could do so in peace.

The totality of Bolstad's report underscored his role as a knowledge actor, as he comprehensively analysed South America's political and diplomatic landscape. His focus on territorial disputes, regional alliances, and the persistent challenges of unity offered valuable insights and a nuanced portrayal of the continent's dynamics at the time. Bolstad operated within a network of official diplomatic channels, informal conversations, and regional observations. He reproduced knowledge by weaving together multiple narratives, including the unresolved Treaty of Ancon, the shifting political dynamics in Chile, and the broader implications of the Latin American Congress. His inclusion of direct quotes from Chilean sources, detailed accounts of political developments, and contextual reflections demonstrated his active engagement in interpreting and reshaping information. By highlighting the interconnectedness between domestic politics, regional diplomacy, and larger geopolitical forces, Bolstad provided the Swedish-Norwegian Ministry with crucial perspectives on emerging alliances, potential conflicts, and the trends shaping South America's future.

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some of them. This idea does not come to the fore and is also more distant, as long as Chile does not want the Cabinets in Rio, Buenos Aires or Lima to have a leading position and these are not inclined to seek hegemony in Santiago. Individually, these states have enough to do with developing themselves, for which they have such rich conditions. It would be to wish that they could attain it in peace." Bolstad, 4–5.

30 March 1901

By 30 March 1901, Bolstad continued to inform the Swedish-Norwegian ministry about the ongoing Congress in Montevideo mentioned in the previous report. While it was intended to focus on scientific topics, the Congress evolved into a platform for political undercurrents, particularly concerning the principle of arbitration. Bolstad illustrated how this shift disrupted the event and strained relations among participants, particularly with Chile.[83]

During one session, a paper authored by the Brazilian delegate Manoel Alvaro de Souza Sá Vianna (1860–1923), *Arbitrage Internacional: 2o. Congreso Scientifico Latino Americano* (1901), on the resolution of disputes through arbitration, was presented and proposed as a topic for discussion.[84] Bolstad emphasised the fact that the subject was not planned and sparked immediate controversy. He reported that arbitration was debated, but the Chilean representatives distanced themselves from the discussion, and news of the debate quickly caused unease in Santiago.[85] The unofficial Chilean delegates were said to have attended the debate, but the official delegate, Miguel Cruchaga Tocornal (1869–1949), chose not to attend, expressing regret that political topics had been introduced.[86] Cruchaga then withdrew to Buenos Aires, soon followed by his Chilean colleagues, despite efforts to persuade them all to stay.[87] Bolstad emphasised the Chilean resistance and contextualised it by retelling a previous event. He wrote that at the Pan-American Congress in Washington (1889–1890), Chile's delegates took a similarly firm stance against establishing the principle of resolving all disputes through arbitration. He noted that Chile may not have chosen its motto "by reason or by force" in its coat of arms for nothing: "*Chile har maaske vel ikke for Intet valgt som Valgsprog i sit Vaaben "por la razon ó por la fúerza" (med gode Fornuftgrúnde (eller med*

[83]Jens Martin Bolstad, '30 Mars 1901', Consular report (Rio de Janeiro: Kongl. Svenska och Norska Generalkonsulatet, 30 March 1901), SE/RA/221/2210.02/1/42, Riksarkivet in Stockholm/Täby, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/arkiv/XAlxgzwIUgP28ec00TtYi0.

[84]Manoel Alvaro de Souza Sá Vianna, *Arbitrage Internacional. 2.o Congreso Cientifico Latino Americano.* (Lima: Moreno, 1901).

[85]Bolstad, '30 Mars 1901', 2.

[86]In his original report Bolstad wrote "Dr. Gorochaga". After looking at the report from the conference, he must have ment Miguel Cruchaga Tocornal. Congreso Científico Latinoamericano, 'Segunda Reunión del Congreso científico Latino Americano celebrada en Montevideo del 20 al 31 de Marzo de 1901' (Montevideo: Tip. y Enc."Al libro inglés, 1901), 18, https://archive.org/details/segunda-reunion-del-congreso-cientifico-latino-americano-montevideo-1901.

[87]"Chile has perhaps indeed not for nothing chosen as motto in its arms 'por la razon ó por la fúerza' (with good grounds of reason (or with Right) or with Power)." Bolstad, '30 Mars 1901', 1–2.

Ret) eller med Magt)".[88] It reflected their preference for asserting national interests unilaterally rather than submitting to multilateral mediation.

Simultaneously, unrest in Bolivia was growing. The prospect of losing permanent access to the Pacific Ocean provoked dissatisfaction in both Sucre and La Paz. Bolstad reported that Bolivia had hoped that once the Tacna and Arica issue was resolved, arrangements could be made for a port in Camarones, Mejillones, or Arica, if not in Antofagasta.[89]

In 1884, Bolivia entered into a truce that relinquished control of the entire Bolivian coastline, the Antofagasta province, along with its rich deposits of nitrate, copper, and other minerals to Chile. Also known as the Truce of Valparaíso (4 April 1884), it was signed to halt military actions and establish a temporary boundary. Chile maintained control over the occupied territories, including the Bolivian coast. The agreement allowed Bolivia to use the ports of Arica and Antofagasta for commerce, albeit under Chilean administration.[90]

In the given context, Bolstad informed that statements from a then-recent note sent (August 13 1900) by Chile's minister in Sucre, Abraham König (1846–1925), to the Bolivian minister Eliodoro Villazón (1848–1939) were highlighted. Bolstad commented that König had taken a more assertive stance on the matter. He translated and emphasised the original sentence of Königs note, "*Nuestros derechos nacen de la victoria, la ley suprema de las naciones*" to "*Seiren er den överste Lovmellem Nationerne*" as significant to reproduce.[91] Historian José Miguel Concha explains in *Iniciativas chilenas para una alianza estratégica con Bolivia (1879-1899)* (2011) that König's message of the note had been viewed as a shift in the stance that the Chilean government had upheld regarding granting Bolivia sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean as compensation for the coastline it lost during the war, as well as a reaffirmation of the right to reclaim the territories annexed in the conflict.[92]

Chile's reluctance towards arbitration was interpreted not only as a general political stance

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[88]Bolstad, 2.

[89]Bolstad, '23 Mars 1901', 3–4.

[90]The Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1904) marked the formal end of the War of the Pacific and established the current borders between Chile and Bolivia. However, the treaty did not resolve Bolivia's aspirations for a Pacific outlet, which have remained a source of tension between the two countries. José Miguel Concha, *Iniciativas chilenas para una alianza estratégica con Bolivia (1879-1899)* (Plural editores, 2011), 78.

[91]"Victory is the supreme law between nations", Bolstad, '30 Mars 1901', 2.

[92]Concha, *Iniciativas chilenas para una alianza estratégica con Bolivia (1879-1899)*, 145–49.

bit also a strategic move specifically tied to maintaining control over Tacna and Arica.[93] Bolstad further highlighted the symbolic weight of Peru's earlier withdrawal of its legation from Santiago. Upon returning to Callao and Lima, the Peruvian minister Cesáreo Chacaltana Reyes (1845–1906) was welcomed with tributes. Bolstad emphasised that Chacaltana expressed some bitterness about the futility of appealing to Chile's goodwill (*Velvillie*), reconciliation (*Forsonlighed*), and sense of justice (*Retfærdighedsfölelse*).[94]

Rumours circulated in the South American press that Chile had officially declared its intention to permanently annex Tacna and Arica, provoking widespread dismay across regional capitals. Bolstad informed that Chile had hastened to clarify through its representatives that the Treaty of Ancon would be fulfilled. However, he remarked that this clarification was widely interpreted as a delaying tactic, first to "Chileanise" the territories, then to proceed with a plebiscite: "*Först skulle vi chilenisere Territoriet, saa skùlle vi afstemme.*"[95] Bolstad concluded by noting that Bolivia, facing increasing marginalisation, might seek mediation from Argentina or Brazil, hinting at shifting regional alliances and the broader implications of Chile's stance for South America. Speculation suggested that diplomatic overtures had already been made in Buenos Aires, and informal inquiries directed to the Brazilian cabinet regarding possible intervention between Chile and Peru.[96]

Bolstad's report reflected his integration of direct observations, diplomatic communications, and local reactions. By including both official statements and the conduct of delegates, he offered a multifaceted view of the political climate in South America. He transformed scattered information—news from the Congress, diplomatic notes, and public sentiment—into a cohesive narrative that highlighted underlying tensions and ambitions. Chile was presented as staunchly defensive of its territorial claims and deeply sceptical of arbitration mechanisms, a stance made clear through its behaviour at both the Latin American and Pan-American Congresses. This resistance reflected Chile's preference for unilateral action over collective dispute resolution, reinforcing its commitment to securing national interests through assertive, rather than negotiated,

[93]Bolstad, '30 Mars 1901', 2–3.
[94]Bolstad, 3.
[95]"First, we will Chileanise the territory, then we will hold a vote." Bolstad, 3.
[96]Bolstad, 3.

means.

Bolstad situated these developments within broader political and cultural contexts, providing a deeper understanding of the region's challenges during this period. The handling of Tacna and Arica exemplified the symbolic weight of territorial disputes in shaping national identity and sovereignty. Chile's efforts to reshape the social fabric of these regions before any plebiscite represented a deliberate strategy, mirroring colonial practices of identity reconstruction to consolidate control. At the same time, Bolstad portrayed Peru and Bolivia as seeking external support to counterbalance Chile's dominance. The broader theme of regional disunity emerged as a central narrative. By documenting these dynamics, Bolstad offered the Swedish-Norwegian authorities valuable insights into the complex interplay between regional rivalries and global power structures. The involvement of Brazil and Argentina, along with the indirect influence of the U.S., demonstrated how South American nations alternated between roles as allies and competitors in an unstable diplomatic landscape.

28 October 1901

By late October 1901, the territorial dispute between Chile and Peru over Tacna and Arica remained unresolved, continuing to dominate Bolstad's reports.[97] He likened the situation to the unfulfilled Article 5 of the Peace of Prague (1866), suggesting that, just as that European treaty clause had lingered unresolved, so too had the post-Ancon arrangements dragged on in South America.[98]

For many Chileans, Bolstad noted, retaining Tacna and Arica was regarded as a matter of national survival—a "vital necessity" (*Livs-Nödvendighed*).[99] Conversely, for Peru, the return of these territories had become a deeply rooted national cause (*Nationalsag*).[100] Recently, Peru had taken a more active stance, issuing a circular note to the South American governments. As the

[97]Jens Martin Bolstad, '28 October 1901', Consular report (Rio de Janeiro: Kongl. Svenska och Norska Generalkonsulatet, 28 October 1901), SE/RA/221/2210.02/1/42, Riksarkivet in Stockholm/Täby, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/arkiv/XAlxgzwIUgP28ec00TtYi0.

[98]The Peace of Prague was a treaty signed by the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austrian Empire at Prague on 23 August 1866, it marked the end of the Austro-Prussian War, but left certain provisions – particularly §5 – unfulfilled. Bolstad refers to the fact that §5 became particularly controversial and difficult to interpret.

[99]Bolstad, '28 October 1901', 1.

[100]Bolstad, 1.

Brazilian government received the note, it was published in the newspaper *O Paiz* on 9 October. Although he considered it somewhat lengthy and presented the matter from the Peruvian perspective, Bolstad argued that this circular note seemed interesting enough to warrant reproduction. He reasoned it was because "*ved det Lys, den kaster over det lille, enige, handlekraftige, haardnakkede og gridske Chiles Politik.*"[101] His characterisation of Chile as "small, united, energetic, stubborn, and greedy" reflects its aggressive stance in securing Tacna and Arica. Chile's delays in fulfilling the Treaty of Ancon demonstrate a disregard for formal agreements favouring unilateral actions, a hallmark of colonial dominance strategies. The note represented Peru's attempt to counteract Chile's actions by appealing to broader South American solidarity. Peru's circular note, while an appeal for regional support, also highlighted the challenges of presenting a unified South American front. Different nations, driven by their unique interests and histories, often undermine such efforts at solidarity.

Bolstad argued that the circular note had been particularly significant at that time, as a rather sharp tension had once again arisen between the countries.[102] He described it as due to Chile's construction of roads in the disputed Cordillera territory. Argentina protested these roads as strategic, while Chile defended them as merely exploratory and commercial. Bolstad observed how Chile's assertive policies had positioned it against multiple neighbours, including Argentina and Peru, while Bolivia increasingly sought Argentina's support:

> Chile er ikke bange for kjækt at hævde sin Holdning mod sin östlige Nabo, ihvorvel det har seet Bolivia söge Tröst i Buenos Ayres i den senere Tid og uagtet det véd, at det nu i Nord, i Perú, i Tilfælde af en Konflikt vil have en mùligens neutral men bitter Fiende, som endnù ikke har glemt Nederlagene ved Chorrillos og Miraflores.[103]

He frames Chile's actions as assertive and strategic, despite the potential risks of antagonising Argentina and Peru. The reference to Peru's defeats at Chorrillos and Miraflores highlights how historical wounds influence contemporary politics. These dynamics illustrate the fragile balance of

[101]"by the light, it casts over the small, united, energetic, stubborn and greedy Chile's policy." Bolstad, 2.
[102]Bolstad, 2.
[103]"Chile is not afraid of asserting its position against its eastern neighbor, even though it has seen Bolivia seek comfort in Buenos Aires in recent times and regardless of the fact that now in the north, in Peru, in the event of a conflict, it will have a possibly neutral but bitter enemy, who has not yet forgotten the defeats at Chorrillos and Miraflores." Bolstad, 2.

power in South America at the time. The dispute over roads in the Cordillera reflects the difficulty of achieving regional unity. Chile's actions underline its prioritisation of national interests over cooperative frameworks, even as Argentina emerges as a potential ally for Bolivia and Peru. The construction of roads in disputed territories illustrates the intersection of modernity and geopolitical strategy. Chile's justification that the roads were "exploratory and commercial" ties into the narrative of modernisation. Argentina's protests about the roads being "strategic" highlight the dual-use nature of infrastructure, revealing how modern projects can deepen existing tensions rather than foster regional integration.

Bolstad's report reflected his access to both official documents and local media, as well as his ability to interpret their broader significance within the regional context. By translating and appending the Peruvian circular note, he provided the Swedish-Norwegian Ministry with a direct insight into Peru's diplomatic stance, while his characterisation of Chile as "stubborn and greedy" demonstrated his active role in shaping the narrative for his audience. Through this detailed portrayal of Chile's assertiveness, Bolstad constructed a wider picture of South American geopolitics, highlighting how Chile's actions provoked tensions with its neighbours. He situated these developments within a framework of historical grievances, such as Peru's military defeats, and ongoing shifts, including Bolivia's search for support from Argentina.

26 May 1903

The Venezuelan crisis of 1902–1903 was a significant international incident involving a naval blockade by Germany, Britain, France and Italy against Venezuela due to President Cipriano Castro's (1858–1924) failure to meet debt obligations. This event is notable for its implications on international law and the geopolitical dynamics of the time. The crisis was resolved through diplomatic intervention by the U.S., which led to the development of the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, asserting the U.S.'s right to intervene in Latin American countries to stabilise

economic affairs if they could not pay international debts.[104] The Venezuelan crisis also contributed to the formulation of the Drago Doctrine. Argentine Foreign Minister Luis María Drago (1859–1921) advocated for a hemispheric strategy to counter the risk of European intervention for debt recovery. This doctrine urged nations in the Western Hemisphere to collectively oppose any intervention in the New World aimed at debt enforcement.[105]

In his report from 26 May 1903, Bolstad noted that the incident intensified discussions about regional unity and the role of external powers, particularly the U.S. Following the crisis, voices emerged across South America calling for greater unity among the continent's larger states:

> Efter Konflikten i Venezuela blev der fra flere Hold i Sydamerika fremhævet, at det var en Fremtidens Nödvendighed for de större Sydamerikanske Stater at holde sammen. De Skridt, som den argentinske Udenrigsminister Dr Drago tog i Washington for at söge nærmere og skarpere udtalt, hvilken Stillning de Forende Stater i Fremtiden vilde tage ligeoverfor eventuel europæsk Indgriben i Sydamerika, ville være Deres Excellence bekjendte og ligesaa deres ret negative Resultat.[106]

He referenced the Drago Doctrine, Argentina's diplomatic attempt to clarify the U.S.' stance on European intervention in South America. The limited success of these efforts led Bolstad to subtly critique the political idealism of South American unity in the face of external powers:

> Det var politiske Drömmere, som i den Anledning mente, at Fremtidens maal maatte være Dannelsen af en alliance mellem Brasilien, Chile og Argentina. For den, der vèd, hvor vanskeligt der er at komme bort fra de historiske Forúdsætninger og som har seet Ligevægts - Princippet Chile-Brasilien contra Argentina hævdet og fastholdt, maate den Idyl fremkalde et lidet Smil.

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[104]Enunciated on December 2, 1823, by President James Monroe, the Monroe Doctrine became a significant element of USA's foreign policys. The Monroe Doctrine asserted that any European interference in the Western Hemisphere was intolerable, and that the United States ought to refrain from engaging in disputes among European nations. Monroe declared that the New World and the Old World should remain clearly defined as separate realms of influence; therefore, any attempts by European nations to exert control or influence over sovereign states in that region would be perceived as a danger to U.S. security. Consequently, the United States would acknowledge and refrain from interfering with the established European colonies and would not intervene in the domestic matters of European nations.

[105]Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine : Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 230.

[106]"After the conflict in Venezuela, it was emphasised from several directions in South America that it was a future necessity for the larger South American states to stick together. The steps which the Argentine Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Drago, took in Washington to find out more closely and more sharply, what position the United States would take in the future in relation to possible European intervention in South America, would be known to Your Excellency and also their rather negative result." Jens Martin Bolstad, '26 May 1903', Consular report (Rio de Janeiro: Kongl. Svenska och Norska Generalkonsulatet, 26 May 1903), 1, SE/RA/221/2210.02/1/42, Riksarkivet in Stockholm/Täby, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/arkiv/XAlxgzwIUgP28ec00TtYi0.

> For œieblikket omhùldes det Fremtidsmaal imidlertid virkelig med milde Hænder. Der er i de tre Stater en Fredens og Venskabets Stemming, som det gjör godt at se.[107]

He remained sceptical and wrote that some "political dreamers" *(politiske Drömmere*) believed that the future goal should be to form an alliance between Brazil, Chile, and Argentina. Despite noting the optimism for regional unity, he underscored the enduring challenges of historical tensions, for those familiar with the historical conditions and who had seen "the principle of equilibrium" (*Ligevægts-Princippet*)—Chile and Brazil versus Argentina—asserted and maintained, such an idea might have seemed a bit unrealistic. Such aspirations evoked, in Bolstad's words, "a slight smile".

He was probably referring to the fact that, although Brazil and Chile did not explicitly or formally maintain an alliance at the time, they shared a common source of irritation: their neighbour, Argentina. Both Brazil and Chile avoided displaying their alliance in certain historical contexts to prevent retribution from Argentina. Although the conflict over Acre in 1899 was regarded as a bilateral issue, Chile only expressed its support for Brazil after Argentina declared its backing of Bolivia and Peru in their confrontation with Chile. In this regard, Chile aligned itself with Brazil in terms of its antagonistic stance towards Argentina.[108]

Although the sentiment for an alliance was genuine, it faced significant historical and geopolitical barriers. Despite these tensions, there was an atmosphere of peace and friendship among Brazil, Chile, and Argentina, which Bolstad found encouraging. Symbolic gestures of goodwill, such as naval visits and diplomatic exchanges, reflected a growing desire to strengthen ties between historically rival nations. For instance, the Brazilian warship *Admiral Barroso* visited Chile in return for a previous Chilean visit, prompting grand celebrations in Santiago that also honoured Argentina:

> I disse Dage er det brasilianske Krigsskib "Barroso" i Chile for at gjengjælde et tidligere chilenskt Besög. Der har raadet en storartet Festjubel i Santiago. Men herved ere ikke alene de chilensk-brasilianske

[107]"There were political dreamers, who on that occasion believed that the goal of the future must be the formation of an alliance between Brazil, Chile and Argentina. For those who know how difficult it is to get away from the historical assumptions and who have seen the principle of equilibrium Chile-Brazil contra Argentina asserted and maintained, the idyll must evoke a slight smile.
For the moment, however, that future goal is really being handled with gentle hands. There is in the three states a mood of peace and friendship, which it does good to see." Bolstad, 1.

[108]Carmela Marcuzzo, 'Assessing the Brazilian-Chilean Bilateral Relations: Public Diplomacy, Nation Branding and Presidential Diplomacy' (Leiden University, 2017), 10, https://hdl.handle.net/1887/45261.

> Broderstemninger bleven anslaaede. Ogsaa Argentinas Navn er bleven draget frem dèr og i lige Grad hyldet.
>
> I disse Dage er samtidig Admiral Montt, General Vergara og andre Chilenere som officiel Deputation i Buenos Ayres for at hilse Argentinerne. Der er bleven storartet modtagne og der synes virkelig at have raadet den aller oprigtigste Broderfölelse og Begeistring, der især igaar, den argentinske Frihedsdag og Nationalfest, i fölge Telegrammer kom til sit höieste Udtryk.[109]

At the same time, Admiral Jorge Montt Álvarez (1845–1922), General Pedro Nolasco Cruz Vergara (1857–1939), and other Chileans visited Buenos Aires to greet the Argentines as an official delegation. They were warmly received, and sincere brotherly feelings were expressed, particularly on Argentina's Independence Day and National Festival.[110]

Further reinforcing this goodwill, the Brazilian president made an unprecedented decision to decorate the warships in the harbour, dress them overall, and give an official salute to Argentina. The Foreign Minister informed the Brazilian minister in Buenos Aires of this decision, conveying heartfelt wishes for Argentina's continued prosperity and honour and for closer and stronger friendship and union between Argentina, Chile, and Brazil. Additionally, the officers of the Barroso in Santiago paid an official congratulatory visit to the Argentine Legation, and Brazil's diplomatic representative in Chile expressed his feelings for the Argentine people in Chilean circles. Bolstad translated and forwarded the last part of the telegram:

> "Jeg beder Deres Excellence fremföre mine Komplimenter for Herr Drago og forsikre ham om de hjertelige ønsker, som Brasiliens Regjering og Folk nære for den argentinske Nations Stadige Velgang og Ære og for, at stedse Venskabet og Unionen mellen den Argentiske Republik, Chile og Brasilien maa blive Knyttet inderligere og fastere."[111]

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[109]"These days the Brazilian warship 'Barroso' is in Chile to repay a previous Chilean visit. There has been a great celebration in Santiago. But it is not only the Chilean-Brazilian feelings of brotherhood that have been affected by this. Argentina's name has also been brought forward there and celebrated in equal measure.
These days, Admiral Montt, General Vergara and other Chileans are at the same time as an official deputation in Buenos Ayres to greet the Argentinians. There has been a magnificent reception and there really seems to have been the most sincere feeling of brotherhood and enthusiasm, which especially yesterday, the Argentine Independence Day and National Day, came to its highest expression in the following Telegrams." Bolstad, '26 May 1903', 2.

[110]Bolstad, 2.

[111]"'I ask Your Excellency to convey my compliments to Mr. Drago and to assure him of the hearty wishes of the Government and People of Brazil for the continued success and honor of the Argentine nation and for the friendship and union between the Argentine Republic, Chile and Brazil to be more deeply and firmly linked.'" Bolstad, 2–3.

These gestures, Bolstad interpreted, reflected a genuine desire among the three nations to foster closer relations, despite the complex historical and political realities that existed. At that moment, he concluded, the three governments and their peoples were disposed to engage in a spirit of harmony and reconciliation: "*Det kan saaledes ikke nægtes, at der i dette øieblik er de bedste Dispositioner hos de tre Regjeringer og Folk til at enes og gaa forsonligt og villigt sammen.*"[112]

Bolstad's report reflected his role as a keen observer of diplomatic activities and symbolic gestures in South America. His access to official communications, telegrams, and public celebrations enabled him to construct a rich and layered narrative. He effectively translated these diplomatic gestures—such as naval visits and public ceremonies—into a broader commentary on the evolving relationships among South American states. By emphasising the significance of these actions and linking them to longstanding historical tensions, he shaped a nuanced portrayal of the region's dynamics.

Bolstad presented South America as a continent striving for unity, yet continually challenged by its historical divisions. He contextualised acts of goodwill within the larger framework of geopolitical realities, including the persistent balance of power among Brazil, Chile, and Argentina, as well as the wider influence of U.S. foreign policy. His detailed account provided the Swedish-Norwegian authorities with valuable insights into both the symbolic and practical dimensions of South American diplomacy. By interpreting these events in light of both past conflicts and contemporary aspirations for unity, Bolstad deepened their understanding of the region's shifting political landscape.

[112]"Therefore it cannot be denied that at this moment there are the best dispositions on the part of the three governments and people to unite and go together amicably and willingly." Bolstad, 2–3.

Between Rivalries and the 'Colossus of the North':

Bolstad's Insights on South American Ambivalence

This chapter shifts focus to Bolstad's geographical context—Brazil—and its evolving relationship with the United States, set against a backdrop of regional rivalries and global power shifts. A central theme in Bolstad's consular reports is the ambivalence of South American nations toward U.S. influence, balancing admiration for its progress with fear of domination. Brazil, in particular, emerges as both a partner and a pivot point in this dynamic. Bolstad's observations reveal how diplomatic gestures, economic engagements, and cultural perceptions shaped the responses of Brazil, Chile, and Argentina to the growing presence of the "Colossus of the North." His reports embody the very ambivalence that characterised European perspectives on South America: a fascination with modernisation and power, tempered by anxieties over sovereignty and dependence. Brazil's alignment with Washington is contrasted with regional suspicion, as neighbouring countries viewed Brazil's ambitions with increasing unease. Through his focus on ambassadorial appointments, commercial ventures in the Amazon, and symbolic ceremonies, Bolstad exposes the layered nature of South American diplomacy—rooted in historical ties yet challenged by modern geopolitical realities. His accounts reflect not only external influences but also the internal divisions within South America, where Brazil's efforts to assert leadership often deepened the continent's fragmentation.

20 October 1904

On 20 October 1904, Bolstad reflected on the future positioning of Brazil and the entire South America in relation to the U.S., highlighting the wide range of possible predictions. He remarked that sentiments (*Fölelserne*) towards the "Northern Colossus" (U.S) had remained divided since

Cuba's "Liberation" ("*Befrielse*"), yet a significant portion of the population retained a firm and unshakable confidence in American loyalty and disinterestedness.[113]

The use of quotation marks around "Liberation" points to what historian Louis A. Pérez describes as "[a] Cuban war of liberation was transformed into a U.S. war of conquest."[114] In 1898, the U.S. entered the Cuban War of Independence (1895–1898) against Spain, which became the "Spanish–American War". It resolved the war within a few months, yet it did so without granting the Cuban freedom fighters the authority to govern the island. The U.S. maintained its occupation of Cuba until 1902, when the Cuban Republic was formed with Tomás Estrada (1835–1908) serving as its inaugural president. Nevertheless, true independence was not fully achieved; Cuba was compelled to incorporate the Platt Amendment into its Constitution, which allowed the U.S. the authority to intervene in Cuba's domestic matters. This provision remained effective until 1934.[115]

Included in the report was a brochure titled *Le Brésil et la Loi Monroe*, which, Bolstad noted, provoked significant controversy. The brochure, published by Laemmert & Co. in Brazil, lacked any reference to its publisher, year, or printing place. Locally, it faced strong criticism for its pessimistic tone and alleged factual distortions. Although the author remained anonymous, Boldtad wrote that many speculated that they were German or Teuto-Brazilian (German-Brazilian), suspecting that the brochure served to support German interests in South America.[116]

According to Bolstad, the author demonstrated a thorough knowledge of Brazilian history, expressing both explicit and one-sided opinions, while revealing a profound distrust of the "Friend in the North" (*Ven i Nord*).[117] One figure who might have been particularly unsettled by the brochure, he suggested, was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Baron do Rio Branco (1845–1912). The author, Bolstad observed, downplayed Rio Branco's role in arbitration disputes over Misiones

[113]Jens Martin Bolstad, '20 October 1904', Consular report (Rio de Janeiro: Kongl. Svenska och Norska Generalkonsulatet, 20 October 1904), 1, SE/RA/221/2210.02/1/42, Riksarkivet in Stockholm/Täby, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/arkiv/XAlxgzwIUgP28ec00TtYi0.
[114]Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba : Between Reform and Revolution*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2006), 137.
[115]Pérez, 143.
[116]Bolstad, '20 October 1904', 2.
[117]Bolstad, 2.

with Argentina and Guyana with France, casting him as subservient to U.S. interests.[118] Furthermore, he noted that the author critisised Brazil's earlier misjudgements in its relations with the La Plata nations and depicted it as equally naive in dealings with the U.S. Brazil in its view, was wilfully ignoring impending threats, conceding to American demands, and allowing interference in its economic affairs.[119]

Opening the brochure, the reader first encounters the following:

> **AU LECTEUR.**
>
> Nous tenons à déclarer que notre manière d'envisager la politique des États Unis ne nous est dictée par aucun sentiment d'antipathie contre la noble nation que, pour la bienfait de la civilisation humaine, Dieu plaça au nord de l'Amérique. Admirateur et ami des Américains, nous déplorons seulement le sort des républiques latines qui ne sont devenues ni ce qu'elles pouvaient ni ce qu'elles devaient être.[120]

This introduction strikes a friendlier tone towards the U.S. than Bolstad suggested. It acknowledges admiration for the U.S. as a noble nation placed by God for the benefit of civilisation. Yet disappointment is evident: Latin republics, in the author's eyes, have failed to fulfil their potential. A sharper critique emerges later, however. The author describes U.S. influence in South America as: "*L'influence ou plutôt la domination américaine sur le continent méridional est un fait relativement récent et fatal, car elle représente le besoin indomptable d'expansion d'une race envahissante.*"[121] Here, the U.S. is portrayed as a force of relentless expansion, asserting dominance over the Western Hemisphere.

The title and content of *Le Brésil et la Loi Monroe* underscore the enduring power of the Monroe Doctrine in shaping South American geopolitics. While the doctrine claimed to shield the Americas from European interference, it also served as a tool for U.S. regional dominance. The brochure argued that:

> Une fois établie, la doctrine de Monroe ne s'évanouit plus, seulement elle changea de but et s'élargit. Elle cessa de signifier exclusivement un principe de défense nationale ou l'interdiction à l'Europe de se mêler des affaires

[118]Brazil vs. Argentina (Missiones territory) arbitrated by U.S. President Cleveland. Brazil vs. France (Guyane / Oyapoc) settled by Swiss arbitration.
[119]Bolstad, '20 October 1904', 1–2.
[120]*Le Brésil et la Loi Monroe* (Brazil: Laemmert & Co), 1, Bolstad, '20 October 1904'.
[121]Le Brésil et la Loi Monroe (Brazil: Laemmert & Co), 10, Bolstad.

> politiques du Nouveau Monde, mais devint l'expression d'aspirations impérialistes, un défi arrogant au monde entier. Dans les restes mêmes qu'il lui attribua ce symbole, elle représente le principe de la domination américaine sur les deux continents du Nouveau Monde, protection toute ambitieuse et toute égoïste et sans ménagements. Car elle embrassa le garant de l'intégrité territoriale des républiques latines, soit parce que les intérêts militaires de l'avenir l'exigent, soit parce qu'on pense ainsi éviter des complications internationales dans l'éventualité d'une prise de possession, qui d'ailleurs ne semble pas nécessaire de sitôt.[122]

The author contended that the Monroe Doctrine, far from being a mere shield against European meddling, had morphed into a bold instrument of U.S. imperialism—undermining Latin American sovereignty under the guise of protection.

Bolstad's report illustrates his engagement with both diplomatic materials and public discourse, as well as his ability to synthesise these into critical analysis. His position enabled him to draw from diverse perspectives—literary, political, and media-based—to provide his superiors with detailed insights into South America's evolving diplomatic landscape.

Through the lens of the *Le Brésil et la Loi Monroe* controversy, Bolstad explored the deep ambivalence in South America towards the U.S., particularly in the aftermath of Cuba's so-called "liberation." While many continued to express confidence in U.S. loyalty and disinterestedness, undercurrents of distrust increasingly surfaced, especially concerning American influence in the region. Bolstad reproduced key arguments from the brochure, emphasising its criticism of U.S.–Brazil relations and its suspicion of American intentions, and positioned the debate it provoked as a reflection of broader geopolitical tensions in South America.

By highlighting the specific criticisms of Baron do Rio Branco and Brazil's concessions to the U.S., Bolstad provided valuable insights into the shifting dynamics of South American diplomacy and the internal debates over national sovereignty. His inclusion of the brochure's critiques, along with speculation about its anonymous author, further contextualised these power struggles. The suggestion that the author might have been German or Teuto-Brazilian raised questions about the brochure's motives, hinting at possible alignment with German interests and underscoring concerns about German imperial ambitions in Brazil.

Bolstad's portrayal of the brochure's criticism and its mixed reception underscored his role as a knowledge actor, tasked with constructing and disseminating a nuanced understanding of the

[122]Le Brésil et la Loi Monroe (Brazil: Laemmert & Co), 10-12, Bolstad.

region's diplomatic realities. His analysis links Brazil's evolving diplomatic posture, U.S. regional influence, and the shaping power of public opinion. The public's scepticism toward the brochure, alongside its sharp critique of U.S. ambitions, reveals a recurring tension in South American history: the ongoing challenge of navigating external pressures while preserving national sovereignty and a cohesive regional identity.

17 January 1905

On 17 January 1905, Bolstad commenced his report by examining the symbolic significance of ambassadorial rank as an indicator of both the sending and receiving countries' stature as a great power.[123] He situated this within a broader global context, noting that while ambassadorial status had traditionally been reserved for the most influential nations, it was no longer strictly tied to such power dynamics. As examples, he pointed out that France maintained an ambassador in Switzerland and that Spain, despite its diminished global influence, both received and sent ambassadors. In South America, the U.S. was the first nation to appoint a representative of ambassadorial rank, followed by Mexico. Now, Brazil has also taken this significant step. Bolstad reported that David E. Thompson (1854–1942) had recently been appointed U.S. ambassador to Brazil, and shortly thereafter, Joaquim Nabuco (1849–1910) was named Brazil's ambassador to Washington.[124]

The exchange of ambassadors was widely perceived within Brazil as recognition of the country's growing international importance. This diplomatic upgrade, Bolstad observed, had been carefully prepared in the press and, when it materialised, was met with great satisfaction. Brazilian commentators believed the appointment reflected the U.S. admiration for Brazil's progress and a desire to strengthen bilateral ties. Yet he questioned this interpretation. He suggested that U.S. strategic interest, rather than admiration alone, was likely at play: "*Heri turde man maaske tage feil. Sende de Forenede Stater ambassadör til Rio, turde Gründen vistnok söges i personligt arbeide derfor fra den hidtilværende Envoyé og i Overbevisningen om, at den ændrede nordamerikansle*

[123]Jens Martin Bolstad, '17 January 1905', Consular report (Rio de Janeiro: Kongl. Svenska och Norska Generalkonsulatet, 17 January 1905), SE/RA/221/2210.02/1/43, Riksarkivet in Stockholm/Täby, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/arkiv/UPaYddPZdKEPnpp96t64V2.
[124]Bolstad, 1.

Udenrigs-Politik ogsaa kræver en större aktiv Indflydelse i Sydamerika."[125] In Bolstad's view, the decision could be attributed to the efforts of the former U.S. envoy and a growing conviction in Washington that its evolving foreign policy demanded a more active role in South America. Brazil, he implied, should not view this development as unambiguously favourable.[126]

Despite his reservations, Bolstad acknowledged that the U.S. had, in effect, recognised Brazil as the largest and most influential republic in South America, positioning it as the potential hegemonic power. He then turned to consider the regional implications of this shift, particularly the reactions in Chile and Argentina. Brazil's ally, Chile, he noted, might not have been entirely pleased with this development: "*Allerede Brasiliens egen Allierede Chile vil Skridtet i saa Henseende behade mindre*".[127] Still, Bolstad remarked that Chile could take some solace from the recent visit of a North American squadron to Valparaiso, during which an admiral delivered a speech suggesting that, should current trends continue, Chile may achieve hegemony in South America in the future—an assertion that was well received by the Chilean public.[128]

Argentina, he argued, would likely respond with even greater unease to Brazil's ascendant status. He remarked that "*[d]et vil der utvivlsomt öge, om ikke aabenlyst saa i al Stilhed, den Mistro mod Brasilien, der vaktes nylig ved Brasiliens Beslutnings Beslutning om at öge sin Flaade.*"[129] This development, Bolstad contended, would probably deepen Argentina's quiet mistrust, which had already been stirred by Brazil's recent decision to expand its navy. Bolstad indicated that the strengthening U.S.–Brazil ties and increasing regional rivalries could have diminished the likelihood of a trilateral alliance between Brazil, Argentina, and Chile. This alliance had been proposed as a counterbalance to U.S. influence in South America: "*Den sammenslutning mellem Argentina, Brasilien og Chile, hvorom der för var Tale just for at möde Nordamerikas fremtidige Politik, vil dermed maaske forpurres.*"[130]

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[125]"Here one might have made a mistake. If the United States sent an ambassador to Rio, the reasons should probably be sought in the personal work of the previous envoy and in the conviction that the changed North American foreign policy also requires a greater active influence in South America." Bolstad, 2.

[126]Bolstad, 2.

[127]"Already Brazil's own ally Chile will the step in such regard please less.", Bolstad, 2.

[128]Bolstad, 2.

[129]"It will there undoubtedly increase, if not openly then in all silence, the mistrust against Brazil, that was awakened recently by Brazil's decision's decision to increase its fleet." Bolstad, 3.

[130]"The union between Argentina, Brazil and Chile, of which there was talk precisely to meet the future politics of North America, will thus perhaps be thwarted."Bolstad, 3.

Moreover, he expressed doubt that Washington harboured illusions about Brazil's strength relative to Argentina:

> Jeg tiltror iövrigt ikke Cabinettet i Washington et saadant Feilsyn som at tænke sig Brasilien kraftigere end Argentina. Brasilien er en Koloss i Udstrækning og Muligheder ja, men Argentina er tyve aar forùd, og med gunstigere Betingelser i Jord, Raceblandning og Klima, og Argentina vil ganske vist vogte sig for at standse op nù og tabe det Forsprang, det har vùndet.[131]

While Brazil had vast territory and potential, Argentina, Bolstad asserted, was decades ahead in economic development, racial mix, and geographical advantages. He predicted Argentina would remain alert and determined not to surrender its lead. Bolstad contrasted Brazil's symbolic elevation with Argentina's material strengths, highlighting how diplomatic gestures could mask deeper geopolitical realities. In response to these changes, Bolstad observed that the Argentine press reacted with a blend of calm curiosity and assertiveness, likely advocating for the need to appoint its own ambassador in Washington.[132]

Drawing on his understanding of diplomatic protocols, local press discourse, and regional dynamics, Bolstad provided Swedish-Norwegian authorities with a detailed picture of the shifting power balance in South America. He situated the Brazil–U.S. relationship within a broader geopolitical framework, acknowledging the symbolic significance of Brazil's upgraded status. He integrates various viewpoints, including domestic reactions within Brazil, expected responses from Chile and Argentina, and possible driving factors behind U.S. foreign policy. By integrating domestic reactions, media commentary, and foreign policy shifts, Bolstad painted a picture of rising ambitions and growing rivalries. He pointed out that Brazil's closer alignment with the U.S. exacerbated tensions with Argentina and Chile, reinforcing existing fractures in the region and complicating attempts to build a united South American front.

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[131]"I credit moreover not the Cabinet in Washington such an error as to think Brazil stronger than Argentina. Brazil is a colossus in extent and possibilities yes, but Argentina is twenty years ahead, and with more favourable conditions in soil, race-mixture and climate, and Argentina will indeed guard itself for to stop up now and lose the lead it has won." Bolstad, 3.

[132]Bolstad, 2–3.

23 February 1905

In his report dated 23 February 1905, Bolstad remarked that "*[a]t Sydamerika vil aabnes op, i samme Grad som Nordamerika, er sikkert, og at dets Virksomhed vil blive lige intens som hint nordlige Lands er sandsynligt, men hidtil er deet gaaet langsomt.*"[133] With this, he contrasted the certainty of South America's eventual development with the slow pace of its progress. He suggested that while the region held immense potential, comparable to North America's, it had yet to fully realise its opportunities. This observation set the stage for his examination of growing foreign interest in the region, particularly from the U.S., Germany, and Italy. Bolstad identified Amazon as a focal point for international competition, with Brazil positioned as both a host and a vulnerable actor in this dynamic.

To contextualise this, he recounted the notable voyage of the U.S. warship *Wilmington* on the Amazon River in 1899. This journey coincided with Bolivia's establishment of a customs booth at Puerto Alonso, amid the escalating Acre conflict.[134] *Wilmington* sailed upstream to Manaus and, notably, to Iquitos (capital of the Department of Loreto, Peru). Bolstad noted that this voyage surprised many, as it was not authorised by the Brazilian government and went against its wishes. This incident drew considerable attention in both the U.S. and Europe. Subsequently, in 1902, Germany dispatched the cruiser *Falke* to the Amazon. *Falke* followed a similar route to Manaus and Iquitos but ventured 80 miles up the Ucayali River. In 1905, Italy joined the exploration efforts with the cruiser *Dogali*, which also journeyed to Manaus and Iquitos. This advanced beyond the point reached by *Falke,* who had just returned to Iquitos and Manaus, where parties had been organised from both the Peruvian and Brazilian sides. While *Dogali* was officially on a scientific mission—aiming to create maps, conduct hydrographic studies, and research local flora and fauna—Bolstad speculated that commercial interests likely underpinned the voyage, adding, "*skulde man kanske gjætningsvis tillæge 'for den kommercielle Interesse de kùnde have?*".[135]

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[133]"That South America will open up, to the same extent as North America, is certain, and that its activity will become as intense as that of the northern country is probable, but so far it has gone slowly."
Jens Martin Bolstad, '23 February 1905', Consular report (Rio de Janeiro: Kongl. Svenska och Norska Generalkonsulatet, 23 February 1905), 1, SE/RA/221/2210.02/1/43, Riksarkivet in Stockholm/Täby, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/arkiv/UPaYddPZdKEPnpp96t64V2.

[134]A border conflict between Brazil and Bolivia, The Acre War 1899–1903.

[135]"Perhaps one should presumably add 'for the commercial interest they could have?'"Bolstad, '23 February 1905', 1–2.

Bolstad highlighted the growing interest among U.S. financiers, who, earlier in 1905, had travelled to the Amazon to explore opportunities in Pará and Manaus. He linked this surge in attention to the influence of the 1904 St. Louis Exposition, which had raised awareness among North American capitalists of the region's vast natural resources. Encouraged by this, they began to assess potential investments in production and infrastructure.[136] The Brazilian government appeared welcoming to these new opportunities and eager to foster relationships with American interests. As Bolstad described, "*Brasilianerne aabne armene og ville gjerne modtage disse nye Venner.*"[137] Brazil embraced American investors and dignitaries with open arms, reflecting its desire to attract foreign capital and modernise its infrastructure.

The St. Louis Exposition (*The Louisiana Purchase Exposition*) was an international exhibition in St. Louis, Missouri, from April 30 to December 1, 1904. This event enabled countries to showcase their cultural heritage, technological advancements, and artistic achievements. Visitors were drawn to the impressive buildings and architecture, diverse foods, lively music, and the presentation of different cultures. In the published guide detailing Brazil's involvement in the exposition, F.M. de Sousa Aguiar (1855–1935) emphasised Brazil's natural resources, productive capabilities, and advancements, targeting leaders of major industries to enhance their factory outputs.[138]

Bolstad emphasised that the impression left at St. Louis was one filled with expectations. While direct political intervention by the U.S. in Brazil was not desired, he observed that the presence of American capital, technological collaboration, and a willingness to invest was met with great enthusiasm. Among those welcomed were the American yacht *Margaret* and its distinguished passengers—capitalists Messrs. van Brunt and van Sehtader, engineer Carthell, and other associates—who had recently arrived and were received with notable hospitality. These visitors, with backgrounds in railroads, mining, and industrial enterprises in the U.S., sought to familiarise themselves with Brazil's railway infrastructure, particularly in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul. They aimed to evaluate funding opportunities and explore

[136]Formally "The Louisiana Purchase Exposition" was an international exposition held in St. Louis, Missouri, United States from April 30 to December 1, 1904.

[137]"The Brazilians opened their arms and would gladly welcome these new friends." Bolstad, '23 February 1905', 2–3.

[138]F. M. de Souza Aguiar, *Brazil at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition* (St. Louis: Saml. F. Myerson ptg. co, 1904), https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.brazilatlouisian00braz/.

potential investments in these regions. While in Rio de Janeiro and Petrópolis, they were hosted by José Carlos Rodrigues, editor-in-chief of the *Jornal do Commercio* (referred to by Bolstad as a "*fuldkommen angloman og yankee forguder*"), and former Navy Captain José Carlos de Carvalho, who had served as the commissioner at the St. Louis exposition.[139] Treated as highly esteemed guests, the group was introduced to several ministers, the President of the Republic, and welcomed warmly by the American Ambassador. Festive receptions aboard the *Margaret* further reinforced the cordial atmosphere, marked by strong expressions of sympathy and expectation. Bolstad noted that during one such event, the Minister of Public Works, Lauro Müller, may have overstepped in his speech, expressing a profound desire for Washington.[140]

The visitors were subsequently taken to São Paulo, where the State Government hosted them at the Hotel Rotisserie Sportsman. Bolstad noted that they received increased attention, mainly since a Canadian-North American company, Light and Power Co, had made substantial capital investments in tramways and electrical installations in the area. On the festivities organised in São Paulo, Bolstad wrote:

> Ogsaa i São Paulo bleve Festligheder arrangerede, ved hvilke de fra Nord og Syd fraterniserede og hvor varme og begeistrede Ord faldt. Dog blev det betragtet som maaske overdreven Iver, at Sekretæren for agerbruget Dr Carlos Botelho udtalte Haabet om den Dags snarlige Komme, da der i Amerika ei skulde være Tale om Skillemærker om Nord eller Syd, men kùn om et fælles Fædreland. Hvad Chiles minister her vil have tænkt ianledning Besöget og lignende œieblikke derunder, turde vel ikke været vanskeligt at gjætte.[141]

Bolstad noted that individuals from the North and South interacted warmly, exchanging enthusiastic words. However, he remarked that some of these displays bordered on excessive zeal. He pointed in particular to a speech by Secretary of Agriculture Carlos José de Arruda Botelho, who expressed hope for a future in America where distinctions between North and South would

[139]"Complete angloman and yankee worshiper", Bolstad, '23 February 1905', 4.
[140]Bolstad, 4.
[141]Festivities were also organised in São Paulo, at which those from North and South fraternised and where warm and enthusiastic words were spoken. However, it was regarded as perhaps excessive zeal, that the Secretary for Agriculture Dr Carlos Botelho expressed the hope of the day soon coming, when in America there would be no talk of distinctions of North or South, but of a common Fatherland. What Chile's minister here will have thought about the visit and similar moments below, it shouldn't have been difficult to guess." Bolstad, 5.

vanish, leaving only a shared fatherland. Bolstad added, with a touch of irony, that it was not difficult to imagine what the Chilean minister present might have thought of such overtures.

In parallel to discussing foreign interests and celebratory festivities, Bolstad reflected on what he termed a curious feature in South American diplomacy:

> Deres Excellence vil have bemærket et pudsigt Drag i sydamerikansk Politik: Brasilien og Chile ere, saa at sige, Allierede; de skulde saaledes antages at have samme Sympathier, samme Antipathier; Brasilien har fraterniseret en Smùle med Washington og ansat ambassadör der (hvorvel det kanske ogsaa var en liden personlig Tanke af Baron Rio Branco paa at ordne sin Retrætepost til naar han skal forlade Udenriksministeriet), Chile har havt ubehageligheder med den nordamerikanske minister i Santiago, Mr Wilson, og fremkaldt Kjölighet i Washington; Chile har Traktater med Bolivia netop antaget Keiser Wilhelm II af Tydskland som arbiter for mùlige Stridsspörgsmaal; Brasilien drager Gang paa Gang frem som Skræmmebillede den teutoniske Fare i de tre sydlige Stater; Chile lægger ei Skjul paa en vis Modvillie mod Nordamerikanere; Brasilien drömmer om en blomstrende Fremtid, hvor Rio og Washington i broderlig Forening skulle före det ganske Amerika an. – Det vilde ganske vist være ulempeligt at sammenligne Sydamrikanske Republikker med Athen, Sparta og andre græske Fristater og Georg Washingtons Land med de macedoniske Egne, men hvad der er hændt en gang, kan hænde to, og hvad Filip af Macedonien gjorde Sydover, kan en af Th. Rooseveldts Efterfölgere komme til at gjöre mod Syd ogsaa: man ser muligheden deraf i Sydamerika, men man drager paa Skuldrene deraf, – og I Brasilien smiler man og sér sydover, ikke mod Nord.[142]

In this passage, Bolstad highlighted the contradictions within South American alliances. Brazil and Chile, ostensibly allies, harboured diverging sympathies. Brazil, he noted, gravitated towards Washington, having recently appointed an ambassador there—a move Bolstad speculated was perhaps partly Baron Rio Branco's personal strategy for securing a future post. Chile, by contrast,

[142]"Your Excellency will have remarked a curious trait in South-American politics: Brazil and Chile are, so to speak, allies; they should thus be assumed to have same sympathies, same antipathies; Brazil has fraternised a little with Washington and appointed ambassador there (although it perhaps also was a personal thought of Baron Rio Branco to arrange his retreat post for when he shall leave leave the Foreign Ministry); Chile has had unpleasantnesses with the North-American minister in Santiago, Mr Wilson, and called forth coolness in Washington; Chile has treaties with Bolivia just accepted Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany as arbiter for possible questions of dispute; Brazil time and time again brings forward as a frightening image the Teutonic danger in the three southern states; Chile lays no concealment upon a certain disinclination toward North Americans; Brazil dreams of a blossoming future, where Rio and Washington in brotherly union should lead the whole America on. – It would certainly be inconvenient to compare South American republics with Athens, Sparta and other Greek free states and George Washington's land with the Macedonian regions, but what has happened once can happen twice, and what Philip of Macedonia did southwards can one of Th. Roosevelt's successors come to do toward South also: one sees the possibility thereof in South America, yet one shrugs the shoulders at it, – and in Brazil one smiles and looks southward, not toward North." Bolstad, 3.

experienced tensions with the U.S. minister in Santiago, Henry L. Wilson, resulting in strained relations. Instead, Chile had accepted Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany as an arbitrator for disputes with Bolivia, while Brazil repeatedly portrayed the German influence in the three southern states as a threat. Bolstad observed that Chile openly expressed hostility toward North Americans, whereas Brazil envisioned a prosperous future where Rio and Washington collaborated closely to guide the entire American continent.[143] He closed his reflection with a comparison, suggesting that while it might be inappropriate to liken the South American republics to ancient Greek city-states and the U.S. to Macedon, history tends to repeat itself. Just as Philip of Macedon expanded southward, so too, Bolstad warned, might one of Roosevelt's successors turn ambitions towards the South. In South America, the possibility was acknowledged but typically dismissed. In Brazil, however, the gaze was fixed southward, not northward.[144]

Another noteworthy aspect of this report is Bolstad's favourable portrayal of German capitalists, especially when contrasted with the critical remarks aimed at English capitalists and the editor-in-chief, as previously noted. He noted that the German capitalists closely observed the visitors and wanted to engage. The English capitalists, who owned the São Paulo Railway stretching from Santos to Jundiaí, were keen to acquire the valuable yet deteriorating Sorocaba Railway, estimated to be worth between £3 and £4 million sterling. They believed they could secure the deal and prevent the Companhia Paulista from accessing funds in London for the purchase. According to Bolstad, they used boastful words about it (*brugte pralende Ord derom*).[145] However, the State of São Paulo purchased railroads from the Union (referring to the United States of Brazil) for £3,500,000 and then leased them to Companhia Paulista, funding this through a loan from the Dresden Bank in Germany, thus rendering the English money market irrelevant. Bolstad characterised this as a triumph for the Germans and a humiliation (*Ydmygelse*) for the São Paulo Railway Party, for the chief of the *Jornal do Commercio*, who was the guardian of its interests, as well as a lesson for the English financiers not to use grandiose language at inopportune moments.[146]

[143]Bolstad, 3.
[144]Bolstad, 3.
[145]Bolstad, 6.
[146]Bolstad, 5–6.

Bolstad constructed an image of South America as a region on the brink of significant transformation, driven by both external interest and internal ambition. He highlighted the intensifying focus from foreign powers—including the U.S., Germany, and Italy—on the Amazon region, describing expeditions, scientific missions, and commercial ventures that underscored its strategic and economic potential. This growing interest, Bolstad suggested, revealed the broader economic rivalries among global powers, with Brazil acting both as a battleground and as a beneficiary of foreign investment. His reflections on the so-called "St. Louis Effect" emphasised the role of American capital and cultural diplomacy in reshaping Brazil's economic and political orientation. While foreign investment was welcomed, Bolstad noted the risks of over-reliance, particularly as regional rivalries intensified.

The report also underscored the complex dynamics between Brazil and Chile. Brazil aspired to closer ties with the U.S. and cultivated its emerging image as a leading South American power, while Chile preferred European arbitration and remained wary of North American influence. Bolstad captured this divergence through the symbolism of diplomatic receptions and speeches, highlighting hopes for pan-American unity and a shared "American fatherland." At the same time, Bolstad's account revealed the underlying tensions that such aspirations could provoke among neighbouring states. His observations on the German-English financial rivalry further illustrated how Brazil's economic development was intricately linked to global power plays.

Drawing from a wide range of sources—diplomatic exchanges, financial dealings, and public discourse—Bolstad offered Swedish-Norwegian authorities a nuanced narrative of South America's evolving position in the world. Brazil, in his analysis, stood at a crossroads: seeking modernisation and alignment with the U.S., yet risking fragmentation at home and distrust abroad.

22 March 1905

On 16 March 1905, Bolstad reported that the U.S. envoy to Brazil, David Thompson, was formally received by President Rodrigues Alves (1848–1919) to present his credentials as ambassador. This event marked a diplomatic milestone: Thompson was the only North American ambassador

stationed in South America, and Brazil was the sole country on the continent where non-ecclesiastical foreign envoys held ambassadorial rank. Bolstad observed that the speeches delivered at the reception were notably longer than usual, and their content heralded a new era for Brazil—one in which the nation, with U.S. support, would pursue substantial progress. He highlighted that the inauguration of embassies in Rio and Washington was regarded as yet another triumph for Baron Rio Branco, positioning Brazil ahead of Argentina and other regional powers. This development, Bolstad remarked, provoked irritation in Buenos Aires, where the Cabinet was in the process of appointing its own representative, the former Washington envoy Assiz Brazil.[147]

Brazilian media gave the event considerable attention. Bolstad pointed out that *Jornal do Commercio* typically neglected political leading articles, and made an exception on this day. Its editor-in-chief, José Carlos Rodriguez—whom Bolstad described as known for his Yankee enthusiasm (*yankee-sværmeri*)—published a leading article titled "A Embaixada Americana."[148] Bolstad found it interesting enough to include both the original Portuguese text and his translation in his report. Similarly, *A Noticia* underscored the symbolic importance of the occasion, calling it the dawn of a "new era" (*nyt Tidsrum*).[149] Bolstad, however, expressed some surprise at portrayals of Brazil as a peaceful force destined to bring South America closer to the U.S. under President Roosevelt's vision of "international policing."[150]

The press coverage continued. On 17 March, *O Paiz* featured an article emphasising Brazil's enhanced prestige and influence within South America. It affirmed Brazil's intention to preserve internal stability and regional relations while aligning broader interests with those of the U.S. The goal, as framed by the media, was steady and peaceful progress for all nations on the continent.[151]

Yet not all aspects of the event were celebratory. Bolstad noted that one incident had caught attention and provoked dismay in Brazil. Specifically, the ambassador Thompson referenced the

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[147]Jens Martin Bolstad, '22 Mars 1905', Consular report (Rio de Janeiro: Kongl. Svenska och Norska Generalkonsulatet, 22 March 1905), 1, SE/RA/221/2210.02/1/43, Riksarkivet in Stockholm/Täby, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/arkiv/UPaYddPZdKEPnpp96t64V2.

[148]Bolstad, 2.

[149]Bolstad, 2.

[150]The concept of "international policing" (or "international police power") refers to Roosevelt's belief in the U.S.'s role as a global enforcer of stability and order, the judge of civilisation in the Western Hemisphere. Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine*, 232.

[151]Bolstad, '22 Mars 1905', 2–3.

riots in Rio from November 1904.[152] Bolstad remarked that this was viewed as an internal matter, beyond the ambassador's concern. President Rodrigues Alves responded diplomatically and redirected the conversation's tone and focus. Bolstad also observed that amid the celebratory atmosphere, there was an underlying awareness that Brazil was not as entirely stable as it should be and suggested that perhaps American "international police" might be necessary in unwanted circumstances. Despite these tensions, Bolstad concluded that the prevailing mood was one of optimism. The belief that Brazil was poised to assume a leading role as a South American power remained strong.[153]

To construct a detailed account of the event, Bolstad drew on official proceedings, press commentary, and public sentiment, capturing the interplay between diplomatic gestures, media narratives, and broader regional dynamics. He reproduced and analysed speeches and articles that framed the ambassadorial appointment as a pivotal moment in U.S.–Brazil relations, highlighting how the event signalled Brazil's symbolic elevation in international standing. Through his analysis, Bolstad constructed an image of Brazil as a rising power, leveraging its partnership with the U.S. to assert regional leadership. He contextualised this development within South America's geopolitical landscape, acknowledging Argentina's unease and the symbolic rivalry between Brazil and its neighbours. Bolstad emphasised the strategic importance of Brazil's alignment with the U.S., while also pointing to the internal and regional challenges that accompanied this new position. His report provided Swedish-Norwegian authorities with insights into Brazil's aspirations and the evolving dynamics of South American diplomacy.

Central to Bolstad's account was the significance of Thompson's appointment as the first U.S. ambassador to South America, with Brazil uniquely hosting such a high-ranking envoy. This was framed as a symbolic victory for Baron Rio Branco, particularly in his rivalry with Argentina, and as evidence of Brazil's enhanced status. The length and tone of the speeches at the reception underscored the importance attributed to this moment, suggesting that Brazil, with U.S. support, was poised for significant progress. Bolstad highlighted the varying interpretations in the Brazilian press: *Jornal do Commercio* hailed the embassy's establishment as a major milestone, affirming

[152]"The Vaccine Revolt" took place in Rio de Janeiro, between 10 and 16 November 1904.
[153]Bolstad, '22 Mars 1905', 3.

Brazil's growing international importance; *A Noticia* linked Brazil's alignment with the U.S. to Roosevelt's concept of "international policing," portraying Brazil as a potential stabilising force in a turbulent region; *O Paiz* acknowledged Brazil's increased influence but stressed its commitment to peaceful progress and stable relations with neighbouring countries. These differing perspectives reflected a national sentiment marked by optimism, pride, and cautious pragmatism.

A moment of discomfort, however, arose during Thompson's remarks when he referenced the November 1904 riots in Rio. Some perceived this as an overreach, viewing internal disturbances as a private matter, and the suggestion that Brazil might require U.S. "international policing" struck a nerve regarding national sovereignty and external interference. President Rodrigues Alves, responding with diplomatic tact, diffused the situation and preserved the positive tone of the occasion. Despite these tensions, Bolstad's broader narrative remained clear: Brazil was stepping into the role of a regional leader. This vision of Brazil's destiny—aligned with the United States, elevated in diplomatic stature, and committed to fostering stability and progress—resonated throughout his report. By weaving together symbolic events, media interpretations, and political rivalries, Bolstad provided a nuanced account of Brazil's rise, one that underscored both the opportunities and the challenges of its growing prominence in South America.

13 July 1905

This report documents a pivotal moment in U.S.–Brazilian relations, as Joaquim Nabuco, Brazil's first ambassador to Washington, was officially received by President Theodore Roosevelt. Bolstad emphasised the ceremonial grandeur of the occasion, noting its significance as a symbolic affirmation of a "new era" in the ties between the countries. Additionally, he highlighted the challenges and tensions that accompanied this growing relationship.[154]

According to Bolstad, the event occurred on May 24, 1905. He noted that the press in Brazil on the 26th reported telegrams showing how extraordinary the reception had been. He

[154]Jens Martin Bolstad, '13 July 1905', Consular report (Rio de Janeiro: Kongl. Svenska och Norska Generalkonsulatet, 13 July 1905), SE/RA/221/2210.02/1/43, Riksarkivet in Stockholm/Täby, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/arkiv/UPaYddPZdKEPnpp96t64V2.

recounted how Nabuco, accompanied by his staff, was transported from the Arlington Hotel to the White House in the President's own carriage, a gesture that underscored the importance attributed to the visit. The ambassador was escorted by the President's naval aide, while his entourage—civilian secretaries Lima e Silva, Chermont, and Velloso, and military attaché Pedereiras—followed in a separate carriage. Upon arrival, they were led by the Secretary of State to the Blue Room, where President Roosevelt awaited, surrounded by his cabinet and close advisors. Nabuco's speech, delivered in this distinguished setting, attracted considerable attention, not only for its eloquent form but also for its content.[155] In a translation, Bolstad reproduced parts of the speeches, beginning with Nabuco's:

> I Deres Embede, Herr Præsident, er der Timer, der blive Epoker, Gestus'er, som forblive nationale Holdninger, der ei ændres. Derfra skriver sig den stedsevarende Karakter af Monroes administration, ligesom af Washingtons og Lincolns. Den bemærkelserværdige Popularitet, som hævede dem til den överste Magt, syntes Verden Forbudet paa en af disse afgjörelser, som sætte faste mærkepæle paa vort Continets Veie. Dette Lands Stilling i Verden giver det endnu andledning til Store Initiativer i Ledelsen af det fællea amerikanske Ideal. For vor Del skulle vi altid optage dem med densamme Kontinentale Interesse og den samme nationale Sikkerhed som indtil idag. Brasiliens ønsker ere for de Forenede States forögede moralske Indflydelse, saadan som den röber sig i Tilstedeværelsen for förste Gang i Verden af en uhyre neutral Zone af Fred og fri Kappestrid mellem Menneskene.[156]

Nabuco emphasised the historical significance of prior administrations and the remarkable popularity that had elevated them to supreme power, shaping the future of the continent. He pointed out that the U.S.'s position in the world created opportunities for significant initiatives toward a shared American ideal. He expressed that Brazil aspired for a greater moral influence from the U.S. and remarked that it represented, for the first time globally, a neutral zone of peace and fair competition among individuals. Bolstad commented that Nabuco concluded by expressing his

[155]Bolstad, 1.

[156]"In Your office, Mr President, are there hours that become epochs, gestures, which remain national attitudes that not change. From there, the ever-present character of Monroe's administration, as well as Washington's and Lincoln's, emerges. The remarkable popularity, which raised them to the uppermost power, seemed the world the pledge upon one of these decisions, which set firm markers upon our continent's ways. This land's position in the world gives it yet occasion to great initiatives in the leadership of the common American ideal. For our part should we always receive them with the same continental interest and the same national security as until today. Brazil's wishes are for the United States' increased moral influence, such as it reveals itself in the presence for first time in the world of an immense neutral zone of peace and free competition between the men." Bolstad, 1–2.

satisfaction that they had a leader cut to its shape and stature (*Form og Statur*) at the head of the mighty North American nation.[157] He also included part of Roosevelt's response, which translated:

> Jeg modtager med mere end vanlig Fornöielse det Brev, hvormed Deres Regjering for förste Gang akkrediterer en ambassadör i Washington, og specielt kjært for mig er det, at Valget er faldt paa den, som ved sin Erfaring of sit store Kjendskab til de offentlige anliggender er saa skikket til at beklæde denne Stilling. Det er særlig behageligt at modtade de Fölelser, De udtrykker for mig, naar de komme fra saa berömmelig en Kilde. Jeg har det oprigtige œnske og den dybe Overbevisnig om, at de to Regjeringers skridt at hæve, begge, sin Repræsentation hos hinanden til förste Kathegori, vil medföre det Resultat, at de mægtige Venskabsbaand, som siden den brasilianske Uafhængighed vedvare ubrödelige mellem begge, endu nöiere maatte blive knyttede.[158]

Roosevelt emphasised Nabuco's extensive experience and profound knowledge of public affairs. He also conveyed a strong belief that the two governments would foster a lasting friendship, which had remained unbroken since Brazilian independence. After reading his speech, Roosevelt approached the ambassador and spoke admiringly of Brazil's great natural resources and the vital role it was undoubtedly called to play in the 20th century. He further stated that Brazil should become a guardian and defender of the Monroe Doctrine in cooperation with the U.S. Nabuco expressed gratitude to the president for his sympathies towards Brazil and for the kind words he received. He added, in Bolstad's translation, "*at hürtigen eller gradvis Brasilien skulde vandre paa den nu bredere Venskabens Vei med de Forenede Stater. I den Latinske Amerikas Uafhængigheds Jord plantedes ialmindelighed det amerikanske Ideal ved Frugten, som er Friheden, ikke ved Grenen, som er Ordenen, men de Forenede Stater og Brasilien gik anderledes frem og med större Udbytte.*"[159] Nabuco emphasised that Brazil and the U.S., unlike many other Latin American countries, had established their societies with both freedom and order.

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[157]Bolstad, 2.

[158]"I receive with more than usual pleasure the letter, with which Your Government for first time accredits an ambassador in Washington, and especially dear to me is it, that the choice has fallen upon the one who, by his experience and his great knowledge of the public affairs, is so fitted to occupy this position. It is particularly pleasant to receive the feelings you express for me, when they come from so renowned a source. I have the sincere wish and the deep conviction, that the two Governments' step to raise, both, their representation with each other to first category will bring about the result, that the mighty bonds of friendship, which since the Brazilian independence endure unbreakable between both, yet more closely may be tied." Bolstad, 2–3.

[159]"that Brazil should quickly or gradually walk on the now wider path of friendship with the United States. In the soil of Latin American independence, the American ideal was usually planted by the fruit, which is freedom, not by the branch, which is order, but the United States and Brazil proceeded differently and with greater profit." Bolstad, 3.

Drawing on diplomatic ceremonies, press coverage, and official communications, Bolstad constructed a comprehensive narrative. According to telegrams and media reports, the Brazilian ambassador had become the man of the hour in Washington, and American circles were said to be most flatteringly taken with Brazil, its friendship, and its worth as a partner on the path of progress (*Fremskridtets Vei*). In Rio, the impression of this growing intimacy between the two countries was overwhelmingly positive, and the local Foreign Minister sought to accentuate it to convey the impression of a diplomatic triumph for his country.[160]

Although Brazil achieved an important diplomatic milestone with Nabuco's ambassadorship, Bolstad also drew attention to underlying tensions in the relationship with the U.S. Despite the overall positive tone, he identified two incidents that strained bilateral ties: the controversy surrounding the Rio de Janeiro Light and Power Co., where Brazilian resistance to perceived foreign dominance temporarily soured relations, and a racial discrimination incident involving Brazilian naval officers in Norfolk, Virginia, which required diplomatic damage control to preserve harmony.[161]

The first issue arose when the Rio de Janeiro Tramway Light and Power Co. sought to acquire a monopoly over electricity distribution in Rio de Janeiro, covering lighting, streetcars, and power—similar to what it had already achieved in São Paulo. Competing interests, such as the Belgian gas company and the electric firm Guinle & Co., grew anxious. Light and Power Co.'s request for an operating permit was initially denied by Minister of Industry Lauro Müller. A fierce battle ensued in the press. One side argued that the request violated national laws and recent regulations on electrical wiring and water usage, insisting that foreign companies should first and foremost be cautious and obedient. No North American overreach, they declared, would be tolerated. The other side maintained that there was no intention to disrespect Brazilian law and that the permit should be granted. Bolstad observed that some pointed criticism was also directed at the American ambassador, which, whether as a genuine belief or thinly veiled threat, caused ill feelings. Eventually, the conflict subsided, and the government granted the permit. Light and Power Co. went to acquire two major streetcar companies (Carris Urbanos and São Cristóvão) and the

[160]Bolstad, 3.
[161]Bolstad, 4–5.

majority of shares in the Belgian gas company, along with some concessions, and would eventually come close to achieving the monopoly it sought.[162]

The second incident of threatened harmony emerged from a telegraphic report stating that officers from the Brazilian warship *Benjamin Constant*, then visiting North America, had faced mistreatment at a hotel in Norfolk, Virginia, where they were denied service as "coloured gentlemen."[163] A complaint was made to the Brazilian ambassador in Washington, prompting intervention by U.S. authorities. The Brazilian Foreign Minister, disturbed by the incident, especially since Brazil had deliberately sent only white officers and now felt wounded in its most sensitive area, requested clarification. The ambassador, however, downplayed the event, insisting there was nothing of consequence. Bolstad remarked that, fortunately, American friendship was preserved. He noted that it was also deemed necessary to refute the tale through the Brazilian legations abroad officially. The Brazilian press also worked to discredit the reports as absurd and unfounded.[164]

Bolstad's report offered the Swedish-Norwegian authorities a nuanced understanding of Brazil's aspirations and the challenges it faced in deepening its ties with the U.S. Through translations and analyses of key speeches, he conveyed both the symbolic and practical significance of Brazil's diplomatic achievements. His selection of passages from Nabuco and Roosevelt highlighted mutual respect, shared values, and the vision of a closer, strategic partnership. Roosevelt's admiration for Brazil's potential and its envisaged role as a regional leader, co-guardian of the Monroe Doctrine, was central to this narrative. While the reception of Nabuco was widely celebrated, Bolstad ensured that underlying tensions were not overlooked. By including critical incidents—such as the Light and Power dispute and the Norfolk discrimination case—he presented a balanced account of the complexities involved in maintaining U.S.–Brazil relations. North American investments, though welcomed, carried the risk of backlash if perceived as intrusive, and the Norfolk incident exposed sensitive issues tied to race, identity, and national pride.

Ultimately, Bolstad constructed an image of Brazil as a rising power, eager to align with the U.S. to assert regional leadership, yet navigating a landscape marked by rivalries, symbolic overtures,

[162]Bolstad, 4.
[163]Bolstad, 5.
[164]Bolstad, 5.

and political challenges. Brazil's growing closeness with the U.S. was not only framed as a triumph over its South American neighbours, but also as a reflection of its self-perception as an exceptional partner—distinct from the rest of South America. This sense of Brazilian exceptionalism, Bolstad suggested, contributed to the ongoing fragmentation of South American identity. His observations on the press, public sentiment, and diplomatic disputes enriched the broader analysis of the continent's evolving geopolitical landscape, illustrating how symbolic gestures and practical realities were deeply intertwined in Brazil's pursuit of influence.

25 August 1905

On 15 August 1905, Bolstad reported on a renewed interest in regional arbitration among South American nations, tracing its roots to a proposal made in 1899 by legislator Moreira da Silva. The original suggestion aimed to authorise the President of Brazil to conclude a convention with other South American states for the creation of an Arbitration Court, empowered to settle disputes with binding decisions.[165] Bolstad considered the idea was inherently favourable to the Brazilians, as their constitution included and enshrined the principle of arbitration. The proposal had not progressed and had remained dormant in Congress until then. Bolstad noted that during the recent Third Latin American Congress from 6–16 August 1905, ideas that concerned all of South America were of interest.[166] He suggested that the revival of Moreira da Silva's proposal was likely influenced by the congress's broader focus on continental cooperation. Under this atmosphere, the matter was brought before a committee for review.

The committee's report, as Bolstad detailed, expressed sympathy for the spirit of the initiative but ultimately advised against proceeding. While it acknowledged that a distinct South American arbitration tribunal could be beneficial—especially given that these nations were not obliged to submit their disputes to The Hague and it could further promote rapprochement among the South American states—it maintained that such treaties were already within the constitutional

[165]Jens Martin Bolstad, '25 August 1905', Consular report (Rio de Janeiro: Kongl. Svenska och Norska Generalkonsulatet, 25 August 1905), SE/RA/221/2210.02/1/43, Riksarkivet in Stockholm/Täby, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/arkiv/UPaYddPZdKEPnpp96t64V2.

[166] *Terceira reunião do Congresso scientifico latino-americano celebrada na cidade do Rio de Janeiro em 6 a 16 de agosto de 1905*.

authority of the president. As such, no additional authorisation from Congress deemed necessary. In essence, the proposal was considered redundant.[167]

Bolstad speculated that the current government, especially under the guidance of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, might still pursue the concept of a South American tribunal. He pointed out that recent expressions of Luso-American and Hispano-American fraternal sentiments ("*efter Dage, hvor luso-amerikanske og hispano-amerikanske Broderfölelser ere blevne dyrkede*"), could lend further momentum to the idea.[168]

In this concise report, Bolstad underscored Brazil's continuing efforts to promote regional unity through legal and diplomatic channels. By reviving the proposal in a context of enhanced South American solidarity, Brazil positioned itself once again as a leader in shaping the continent's political future. His acknowledgement of Brazil's constitutional arbitration principle reinforces Brazil's image as a potential leader in advancing regional unity. Bolstad situated the proposal within a broader framework of cultivated "Luso-American and Hispano-American fraternal sentiments," reflecting the cultural and historical bonds that influenced South American diplomacy. The idea of a regional arbitration tribunal aligned with global trends toward institutionalised conflict resolution, exemplified by the establishment of the Hague Tribunal. This aspiration illustrated South America's desire to engage with modern legal and diplomatic standards while safeguarding regional autonomy. Bolstad's analysis revealed the interplay between constitutional formality and political symbolism, offering the Swedish-Norwegian authorities insights into the delicate balance Brazil sought to maintain—asserting leadership without inciting resistance.

[167]Bolstad, '25 August 1905', 2.
[168]Bolstad, 2.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to investigate how the Swedish-Norwegian Consul General Jens Martin Bolstad (1858–1905) shaped and disseminated knowledge about South America through his official reports between 1901 and 1905. By examining these reports in light of the concepts "conditions of production," "reproduction of information," and "consular knowledge production," I have shown that Bolstad was not merely a neutral observer. Instead, he acted as a "knowledge actor," interpreting events, selecting sources, and framing local developments in ways that potentially influenced foreign policy debates at home.

My first research question asked *which aspects or topics Bolstad emphasised*. The analysis reveals a recurring focus on interstate rivalries (e.g., Chile–Peru, Chile–Bolivia) and their historical roots, along with attempts at regional cooperation such as scientific congresses in Montevideo. Bolstad's reports underscore persistent tensions stemming from unresolved territorial disputes, yet also highlight the region's capacity—and occasional attempts—to forge unity in the face of external threats. This points to a more nuanced view than a purely conflict-driven narrative.

The second question examined *how Bolstad's work contributed to the construction and dissemination of knowledge about South America*. Here, the concept of consular knowledge production proved vital. Bolstad curated newspaper clippings, official statements, and his observations to create cohesive narratives for the Swedish-Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In doing so, he granted significance to some stories while downplaying others. His selective emphasis on, for example, Chile's "Chilenisation" efforts or Peru's frustration over the Treaty of Ancon, shaped how policymakers in Stockholm might have understood the political climate. Consular reports thus emerge as more than dry administrative records; they represent dynamic sites of knowledge-making, reflecting both Bolstad's personal perspective and wider diplomatic norms.

A central outcome of this study is that Bolstad's reports capture South America in a state of flux. He depicts a region striving to consolidate new political structures while grappling with the lingering legacies of war and disputed borders. While internal tensions often took precedence, Bolstad also highlighted the role of external powers—particularly the United States, known as "the Colossus of the North"—in shaping local strategies. In other words, he connected regional

dynamics to global questions of hegemony and influence. Moreover, by translating and appending foreign documents, he effectively became both a filter and a co-producer of meaning, linking distant audiences to on-the-ground events.

These findings lend additional depth to earlier historiographical claims that Swedish perceptions of Latin America were fragmentary or laced with Eurocentric tropes. Bolstad's accounts indeed contain echoes of contemporary imperial attitudes—evident in how certain nations' motives were understood or depicted as more "civilised" or "backward." At the same time, his detailed reporting on specific conflicts and congresses reveals a level of complexity often missing from prevailing stereotypes. Consequently, this thesis not only confirms but also refines the picture of how nineteenth-century Eurocentrism shaped the Scandinavian understanding of the region.

While focusing on one consul's work for a relatively brief period has allowed for a deep, context-rich analysis, it also opens the door to further investigations. Comparative studies of other Swedish-Norwegian consuls (or consuls from different European nations) could show whether Bolstad's reporting style was typical or exceptional. Similarly, tracing how policymakers in Stockholm reacted—or failed to react—to Bolstad's insights would clarify the tangible impact of consular knowledge production. Research into later periods, when new forms of communication emerged, might shed additional light on how diplomats and consuls adapted their methods in an increasingly globalised world.

Viewed through a knowledge-historical lens, Bolstad's consular reports illustrate the transformative power of individual diplomatic actors. His role as a knowledge actor challenges the notion that the flow of information is neutral or automatic. Instead, every translation, editorial choice, and commentary carried the imprint of his interpretations. By highlighting Bolstad's impact, this thesis underscores the broader insight that foreign policy is shaped not just by high-level negotiations but also by the day-to-day efforts of individuals who decide *which* events, perspectives, and rumours deserve a place in official archives. It is through such acts of selective reporting and interpretation that perceptions of distant regions—like South America in the early twentieth century—take form.

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