

UCLan Research Centre on Migration, Diaspora and Exile Seminar Series 2022-2023

“Britain’s Informal Empire in Spain, 1830-1950”

by [Dr Nick Sharman \(University of Nottingham\)](#)



Image: The British-owned Rio Tinto mines at the beginning of the twentieth century (via Getty)

The explosive growth of the British Empire in the nineteenth century saw much of the developing world falling under direct or indirect British economic and political control. Nick Sharman argues that Britain’s need for markets for its expanding industries and for control over its trade routes meant that Spain came within its informal imperial reach for over a century. From its military support for the Liberal Monarchy in the 1830s to the naval blockades of the Iberian Peninsula in the two World Wars, Britain intervened with force whenever diplomatic influence failed. Economically, Spain’s mineral supplies were essential for Britain’s engineering, chemical and munitions industries right up to the 1940s. Strategically, defence of the Gibraltar naval base was fundamental to the security of its imperial trade routes in the Mediterranean and Atlantic.

On the Spanish side, the effect of these pressures was to fuel the long and bitter conflict between protectionism and free trade, a chronic source of the country’s political instability. In the twentieth century, they were an important influence on the development of the Franco regime’s autarkic economic nationalism. Nick follows the impact of Britain’s informal imperialism on the development of Spain’s political and economic thinking by highlighting the contributions of six politically active economists between the 1830s and the 1940s.

[Nick Sharman](#) is a Research Fellow at the University of Nottingham where his subject is the economic and political relationship between Britain and Spain in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He has had a career in business and local and regional government and has written widely on regeneration issues in local and regional Government. More recently his work has concentrated on the history of the Anglo-Spanish relationship and his book, *Britain’s Informal Empire in Spain, 1830-1950: Free Trade, Protectionism and Military Power*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan last year.

Wednesday 14 Dec 15.00-16.00

[Online Link](#)



Attendance is free

Hosted by The UCLan Research Centre on Migration, Diaspora and Exile (MIDEX)

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