Britain and the Cuban Question: The Struggle Against Disorder in the Spanish Atlantic World, 1815-1867

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The struggle against disorder in the Spanish Atlantic world, 1815-1867

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Abstract

In the early nineteenth century, British statesmen understood and approached the Cuban Question not as a distant and trivial colonial problem, but as a matter of profound grand strategic significance—indeed, that Cuba represented in microcosm the problem of 'international disorder' plaguing the Atlantic world after the Age of Revolutions and the spectre of rival powers gaining strategic advantage from that disorder. British statesmen saw Cuba's slave trade as a pivotal issue—one that could potentially cause a slave revolution like Haiti's, invite an U.S. seizure of the island, and thus destabilise the Atlantic world brining severe forms of conflict. To deal with this problem, British leaders sought to advance a new form of 'order' for the Atlantic world—a set of rules and patterns of international behaviour, the crux of which was antislavery, that would conjure the possibility of disorder degenerating into graver forms of geopolitical conflict.

Following in the trend of diplomatic historians who have started to put world order and disorder at the core of international history, this dissertation explores Britain's ordering of the disarrayed Atlantic world in competition with the United States—which also tried to advance its own version of order, only based on closed slaveholding empires opposing Britain's antislavery. It seeks to answer the question: how did British statesmen envision disorder and pursue order in the Spanish Atlantic world between 1815 and 1867? Analysing the correspondence of key statesmen in high office during this period—like George Canning, Lord Palmerston, and Lord Clarendon, intellectuals like abolitionist James Stephen, and diplomatic agents around the Atlantic world—with regards to the Cuban Question, this dissertation will show that the pursuit of order for the Atlantic world was a key objective and worry of British statesmen after the Napoleonic Wars. Using the statesmen's understanding of the concepts of 'disorder' and 'order', this dissertation provides a new conceptual understanding of their foreign policy, looking beyond the traditional balance-of-power Eurocentric narrative: it re-signifies the period 1815-67 as one of international disorder outside of Europe and of bitter competition between the Anglo-Saxon powers to correct it and shape the future of Atlantic international politics. Moreover, it will show how the idea and duty to 're-order' the world was not only central in British statecraft since the early 1800s, but also one which was the basis of divisions between political traditions within the British establishment; and shaped foreign policy decisions and imperial strategy.

To my parents.

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A grateful mind
by owing owes not, but still pays,
at once indebted and discharged.

—John Milton. *Paradise Lost*, IV: 14-17.

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Once again quoting John Milton, personal favourite of mine, I hold 'a debt immense of endless gratitude' with everyone aforementioned. I will always be grateful and never able to fully repay.

Contents

Abbreviations

AHN	*Archivo Histórico Nacional* (Madrid).
BL	British Library.
BPP	British Parliamentary Papers.
CC	*Some Official Correspondence of George Canning, Vols. 1-2*, ed. Edward J. Stapleton. London, 1887.
DSCE	*Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Generales. Serie Histórica* (1808-1977).
FO	Foreign Office Records, the National Archives (Kew).
Hansard	*Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series.
LQV	*The letters of Queen Victoria, a selection from Her Majesty's correspondence between the years 1837 and 1861, published by authority of His Majesty the King*, London, 1907.
PV	*Private Correspondence with Sir George Villiers (afterwards fourth Earl of Clarendon) as minister to Spain 1833-7*, ed. Roger Bullen and Felicity Strong. London, 1985.
PRO	Public Record Office Papers, the National Archives (Kew).
WD	*Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur, Duke of Wellington, K.G. Vols. 1-3*, ed. by his son, Arthur, 2nd Duke of Wellington. London, 1867.

Note

For the purpose of reading clarity, primary sources have been transcribed adhering to modern British English orthography conventions regarding capitalisation and spelling.

All translations from Spanish and French are my own.

Thy mission remember, Roman, is to rule all nations with empire—thine arts, to impose upon the world the use of peace, to give it to the vanquished, and to crush those who oppose it.

Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, 850-853.

Man's mission during the short space of time he has to wander the Earth is precisely to avoid disorder, to correct disorder. To create methods that allow him to order things, to put them in their place. That is what separates man from beast. The building of order.

Rafael Chirbes, *Crematorio* (2006).

Rome will endure even in the pettiest city where magistrates endeavour to oppose disorder, negligence, fear and injustice. And she will only perish with the last city of men.

Marguerite Yourcenar, *Memoirs of Hadrian* (1955).

And then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me; that, when I waked,
I cried to dream again.

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, III, 2.

Introduction

'The new order of things arisen in the West'[1]

After the bitter wars of the 1810s brought the independence of its American viceroyalties, the Spanish empire in the Western Hemisphere shrank to merely the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico. Though territorially insignificant compared to the almost 5 million square miles lost in the mainland, their strategic value made them enclaves without parallel in the world, Cuba in particular. The port of Havana was the best defended deep-water harbour in the Caribbean and it controlled the entrance to the Gulf of Mexico—and with it, the mouth of the Mississippi River and America's waterways.[2] It was situated in the centre of the West Indies, in the middle of not only all trade routes, but also of refuelling routes (something of particular strategic significance as navies transitioned from sail to steam).[3] Since the bloody slave revolution and war in neighbouring Haiti (Saint Domingue) in the 1790s, Cuba's already rich plantation economy had virtually been without rival.[4] By 1868, it accounted for around 30 per cent of global sugar production, being one of the wealthiest colonies on Earth.[5] And its soil also held abundant copper ores, which were essential for the expanding metallurgic industries of western Europe.[6]

For Britain, emerging from the Napoleonic Wars as the greatest maritime and commercial power of all, these opportunities took a central place in the strategic calculus. However, so did the grave threats the island also represented. There was a huge population of African descent—according to the estimates of the British consul in Havana, in 1846 it was close to 473,000, of which approximately 324,000 were slaves

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[1] James Stephen, *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies; or an enquiry into the objects and probable effects of the French invasion to the West Indies and their connection with the colonial interests of the British Empire* (London, 1802), 197-8. (acc. Google Books).

[2] Andrew D. Lambert, "Slavery, Free Trade and Naval Strategy, 1840-1860," in *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975*, ed. Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (Brighton: Sussex Academic, 2012), 74.

[3] On the refuelling issue and the centrality of West Indian islands for this see Kenneth J. Blume, "Coal and Diplomacy in the British Caribbean during the Civil War," *Civil War History* 41, no. 2 (1995): 116–41.

[4] See Tomich Dale, "World Slavery and Caribbean Capitalism: The Cuban Sugar Industry, 1760-1868," *Theory and Society* 20, no. 3 (1991): 297–319; Rafael Marquese et al., *Slavery and Politics: Brazil and Cuba, 1790-1850* (Alburquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016).

[5] Dale, "World Slavery and Caribbean Capitalism: The Cuban Sugar Industry, 1760-1868," 298; B.W. Higman, "The Sugar Revolution," *Economic History Review* 53, no. 2 (2000): 213–36.

[6] Chris Evans and Olivia Saunders, "A World of Copper: Globalizing the Industrial Revolution, 1830-70," *Journal of Global History* 10, no. 1 (2015): 3–26.

and 149,000 were free people of colour; the white population was around 426,000. The odious slave trade kept these numbers increasing. Although in 1817 the Spanish government agreed by treaty with Britain to abolish the Cuban slave trade by May 1820, the illegal traffic continued well past that date. Precise data regarding the illegal import of slaves are unavailable; but comparing reports from British commissioners in Havana and West Africa, historian David Murray estimates that around 389,687 African slaves could have been smuggled into Cuba between 1820 and 1867.[7] In Britain, anxiety increased about the growing African population rising up against the white planters as it had happened in Haiti—where the 1791 slave revolution and ensuing war resulted in the destruction of that island's prosperity and the emergence a revolutionary state avid to expand its revolution to neighbouring slaveholding dependencies (for example, British Jamaica or the U.S. South).[8] Before a Haitian-like revolution shook Cuba, however, it was expected the United States would wrestle the island from Spain's control and annex it. 'It would not be expected for the United States…which has a population of two million slaves in its southern provinces, situated in the immediate neighbourhood of Cuba, to remain for a long time without sufficient motive for an active intervention', warned Foreign Secretary Lord Aberdeen in 1830.[9] Already in November 1822, two months into his second tenure as foreign secretary, George Canning had warned the Cabinet in stark terms that 'no other blow that could be struck by any foreign power in any part of the world would have a more sensible effect' on British interests than a U.S. invasion of Cuba.[10]

This dissertation argues that British statesmen understood and approached the Cuban Question not as a distant and trivial colonial problem, but as a matter of profound grand strategic significance—indeed, that Cuba represented in microcosm the problem of 'international disorder' plaguing the Atlantic world after the Age of Revolutions and the spectre of rival powers gaining strategic advantage from that disorder. British statesmen saw Cuba's slave trade as a pivotal issue—one that could potentially destabilise the Atlantic world and bring severe forms of conflict. As put in 1830 by William Huskisson, former secretary of state for war and the colonies, the island's slave trade 'hazards in its

[7] See David R. Murray, "Statistics of the Slave Trade to Cuba , 1790-1867," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 3, no. 2 (1971): 131–49.
[8] Julia Gaffield, "Haiti and Jamaica in the Remaking of the Early Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World," *William and Mary Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (July 2012): 583–614. Henry Theo Kilbee to Joseph Planta, 8 Feb. 1825, no. 3, FO 72/304.
[9] Earl of Aberdeen to Henry Addington, 17 Feb. 1830, no. 3, FO 72/366.
[10] George Canning's memorandum for Cabinet, 15 Nov. 1822, *CC* i, 52.

results the peace happily existing in all parts of the world'.[11] To deal with this problem, British leaders sought to advance a new form of 'order' for the Atlantic world —a set of behavioural rules and patterns of international behaviour that would conjure the possibility of disorder degenerating into graver forms of geopolitical conflict.

At the same time, Britain's main rival in the Atlantic world, the United States, also sought to expand its own preferred version of order, particularly after the 1830s and 1840s. For the U.S. too, the crux of the matter lay with the question of slavery. Whilst Britain pressed for a version of order encompassing antislavery and free trade as elements to correct revolutionary disorder—seeing in the slave trade the origin of such disorder—the United States defended an order of closed, independent empires where socioeconomic institutions, such as slavery, would not be molested by foreign intermeddling and supranational, non-American juridical regimes. Thus, long before the Anglo-American "special relationship" emerged, Britain and the United States became locked in a struggle over the future of Atlantic order, in which Cuba—one of the greatest slaveholding areas in the Western Hemisphere, as well as a key strategic enclave, hanging by the thread to the weakened Spanish Crown—was a primary battlefield.

Back in 2006, in her article 'A Long Atlantic in a Wider World', Donna Gabaccia proposed a new periodisation for Atlantic history. She argued that circa 1800, the early-modern Atlantic world collapsed to revolution and 'globalisation from below', only to re-emerge again circa 1860 with 'a new geography, and place in the world'. From this second Atlantic emerged the contemporary economic, geopolitical, intellectual, and social forces that characterised the twentieth century. Gabaccia concluded her article encouraging 'further specialised studies to provide the groundwork for a much more nuanced analysis of the transition from one Atlantic to the other'.[12] This is precisely the gap this dissertation will fill; examining the transition through the lens of what the great powers considered 'the Cuban Question'.

For the great powers, policy towards Cuba was never limited to the island itself but rather reflected a vision of order for the Atlantic as a whole. It concerned strategic issues spanning from the West Indies to West Africa, from Europe to the Mexican Gulf, interconnected corners of what this dissertation will refer to as the "Spanish Atlantic world"—a "Braudelian" geopolitical and geoeconomic space entangled by issues such as the slave trade, the expansive thrust of newly formed states, the trade in key products such

[11] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 20 May 1830, vol. 24, c. 878. (William Huskisson).
[12] Donna Gabaccia, "A Long Atlantic in a Wider World," *Atlantic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2006): 8, 17.

as sugar, copper and cotton, the flow of European capital, and the dynamics of colonial reform.[13] As noted by Douglas Egerton, 'one edge of the post-colonial Atlantic world affected virtually all other corners of the basin'. There indeed was, as he stated, a connection between the local and the global, 'the great national saga unexpectedly altered distant corners of the world'.[14] By analysing British policy towards Cuba between 1815 and 1867 in competition with the United States, this dissertation reveals that the transition period Gabaccia spoke of, was characterised by a state of profound disorder in which the Anglo-Saxon powers sought to advance their preferred versions of order, and in doing so clashed against each other.

Following in the trend of diplomatic historians who have started to put world order and disorder at the core of international history, this dissertation explores Britain's ordering of the disarrayed Atlantic world in the early-to-mid nineteenth century. It will expand the focus beyond Europe and the Concert order—to which historians have limited their studies, as it will be seen—and dive deep into the concept of 'disorder' and 'order' as understood by nineteenth-century by statesmen. Issues plaguing the post-1815 Atlantic world such as the slave trade and slavery, filibustering, piracy and colonial revolution, which historians have typically studied as separate, are analysed holistically in this dissertation as part of the grand strategic problem concerning the future of Atlantic order—that is, the shape and form of the international system and the *forces profondes* running through it and affecting interstate relations.

In doing so, this dissertation not only helps to reconsider and better understand a crucial period of modern history as a period of changing and rising world order in the expanded Atlantic world, looking beyond the shibboleth of the Eurocentric balance-of-power narratives; but it also shows that the vocation for global order indeed ran in the veins of British statecraft since the early 1800s—and not simply since the late nineteenth century as it has been argued.[15] By analysing the correspondence and other records of key statesmen in high office between 1815 and 1867, like George Canning, the Viscount Palmerston, and the Earl of Clarendon, intellectuals like the abolitionist James Stephen,

[13] Although the Spanish empire also encompassed archipelagos in Asia such as the Philippines, they remain absent from this project. As shown by the correspondence analysed, they did not form part of the strategic picture of the Spanish world, largely an Atlantic picture, in terms of which British statesmen throughout the century thought about world ordering.
[14] Douglas R. Egerton, "Rethinking Atlantic Historiography in a Postcolonial Era: The Civil War in a Global Perspective," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 1, no. 1 (2011): 80, 91.
[15] See John Bew, "World Order: Many-Headed Monster or Noble Pursuit?," *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 1 (2017): 14.

and diplomatic agents around the Atlantic world—Henry Theo Kilbee, Henry Fox, Joseph Crawford—with regard to the Cuban Question, this dissertation shows that 'order' and 'disorder' were conceptual realities which shaped the worldview and foreign policy of nineteenth-century leaders. Beyond the issues affecting the European balance of power, British leaders were deeply worried by the disorderly situations affecting the Atlantic world—particularly the slave trade. These situations they referred to as threatening the 'tranquillity' of the world, having the potential for 'new evils', or being threating to 'good order'.[16] Essentially, this dissertation does not merely use a concept to better understand the history, but uses the statesmen's understanding of the concepts of 'disorder' and 'order' to provide a new understanding of their foreign policy and their historical period: it re-signifies the period 1815-67 as one of international disorder outside of Europe and of bitter competition between the Anglo-Saxon powers to correct it and shape the future of Atlantic international politics. Moreover, it will show how the idea and duty to 're-order' the world was central in British statecraft: it accounted for the basis of divisions between political traditions within the British establishment (Canningites and Castlereaghans); and it shaped foreign policy decisions and imperial strategy.

Order and disorder in the nineteenth century

There is much debate amongst International Relations (IR) theorists and different schools of thought about what 'order' actually means: from a mere description of a specific distribution of power worldwide, to a more abstract construct of regimes and norms regulating interstate relations.[17] 'Order' and 'disorder' are concepts which have their own intellectual histories—though the study of 'disorder' remains largely underdeveloped. This dissertation does not seek to provide a new definition of the terms or critically revise the existing IR scholarship on the topic; rather, it uses the order/disorder framework held by nineteenth-century British statesmen themselves, to further understand international politics 1815-67 and their response to foreign policy crises.

[16] Memorandum by the Earl of Clarendon, 1 Aug. 1854, in Richard Van Alstyne, "Anglo-American Relations, 1853-1857: British Statesmen on the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty and American Expansion," *American Historical Review* 42, no. 3 (1937): 497.

[17] A good summary of the IR Theory approaches to the concept of "world order" can be found in Amitav Acharya, *Constructing Global Order: Agency and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 4–12.

Indeed, for some years now historians have used the conceptual framework of world order to analyse international history. From Henry Kissinger's *World Order* (2014) to Ayse Zarakol's *Before the West* (2022), during the last decade historians have moved the field of international history past the traditional regional balance-of-power narrative, and have returned to the "big history" theme, focussing on the set of '(man-made) rules, understandings and institutions that govern (and pattern) relations between the actors of world politics' and create 'the dynamics of economic and geopolitical power'—to use Zarakol's definition of 'world order'.[18]

Patrick Cohrs is the most recent, and perhaps most significant, historian to have placed 'order' at the centre of the study of international history. His book *The New Atlantic Order* (2022) paves the way to study international history through the world ordering lens—how powers attempted to create a 'legitimate peace' that would henceforth establish a normative frame for the development of international politics.[19] Cohrs, moreover, raises the important concept of 'Atlantic order': he argues the crux of all problems in the interwar years to lie in the desire of each of the great powers to re-forge the transatlantic relation after the stark 'disorder' of the First World War. Largely constructing his analysis of the nineteenth century on the work of Paul Schroeder, Cohrs argues that the Concert of Europe had 'indeed fostered global stability' and that only after the Crimean War (1853-6) and the 1860s the 'legitimate equilibrium between the great powers' began to degenerate into a war-prone order spurred by nationalism and imperialism.[20]

This interpretation is shared by many diplomatic historians who rightly see the 'pathbreaking cooperative endeavour' that was the Concert of Europe, to use the words of Kyle Lascurettes, as productive of a stable form of international order that generally kept geopolitical disorder at bay for decades.[21] From these assumptions of the Concert of Europe usually stem others about a relative global geopolitical stability in the nineteenth

[18] Ayse Zarakol, *Before the West: The Rise and Fall of Eastern World Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 22; Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1.
[19] Patrick O. Cohrs, *The New Atlantic Order: The Transformation of International Politics, 1860-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).
[20] Cohrs, 7, 45–50, 53. For Paul Schroeder's analysis of the Concert of Europe see Paul W. Schroeder, "Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?," *American Historical Review* 97, no. 3 (1992): 683–706; and "The Lost Intermediaries: The Impact of 1870 on the European System," *International History Review* 6, no. 1 (1984): 1–27.
[21] Kyle M. Lascurettes, *Orders of Exclusion: Great Powers and the Strategic Sources of Foundational Rules in International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 93.

century. However, as Antoinette Burton argues about imperial history, the 'presumption of basic stability remains the working premise of … grand narrative forms', even if disorderly situations of violence, confrontation, and threat were a constant in the nineteenth century.[22] The same applies to international history. "Optimistic" readings about nineteenth-century stability are largely Eurocentric and, therefore, of limited use to those seeking to understand the broader picture of early-nineteenth century Atlantic order.

Much of the Atlantic world remained in disarray after the old power structures of the eighteenth century had been swept away by the American, Haitian, and Spanish-American revolutions, and as new dynamics of geopolitical, economic, social power emerged in the international system. British statesmen were well aware that, though having recently vanquished Napoleon—'the new order of things arisen in the West', as put by statesmen and Tory abolitionist James Stephen—held the seeds of future geopolitical conflict.[23] The question of Atlantic order was central to British statecraft during the nineteenth century, even if Europe had been relatively pacified in 1814-15.

This dissertation will thus shed light on a significant element of international history which "optimistic" readings about Concert-fostered global stability have left unanswered: the profound Atlantic disorder existing in the nineteenth century, and the Atlantic powers' struggle to re-order it. In order to understand that the Atlantic great powers were locked in this confrontation, this project analyses the construction of world order over decades—that is, a constant, sustained foreign-policy struggle to preserve a preferred power pattern in international politics—moving beyond the moment of great power conferences at the end of major wars (Westphalia, Utrecht, Vienna, Versailles, Potsdam) to which the literature has limited the world order debate for decades.[24]

Focussing only on the great power conferences narrows the chronological scope in which to trace the development (construction of, threats to, and ultimate fall) of a world order; and it tends to obscure the subtleties and nuances with which each leadership in a

[22] Antoinette Burton, *The Trouble with Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2.
[23] James Stephen, *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies*, 197-8.
[24] Some examples include Mark Jarrett, "No Sleepwalkers: The Men of 1814/15. Bicentennial Reflections on the Congressof Vienna and Its Legacy," *Journal of Modern European History* 13, no. 4 (2015): 429–38; Stella Ghervas, "Balance of Power vs. Perpetual Peace: Paradigms of European Order from Utrecht to Vienna, 1713-1815," *International History Review* 39, no. 3 (2017): 404–25. Mark Mazower provided an interesting history of the idea of international government and international rules, but still concentrating his analysis of the practical development of such idea to the traditional world ordering conferences. Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London: Penguin, 2012), 3–30.

set moment in history addressed the question of world order. Kyle Lascurettes's recent book *Orders of Exclusion* (2020), for example, argues that the leaders of the great powers from Westphalia to Yalta almost indistinctly used the ordering conferences on 1648, 1713, 1815, and 1919 to exclude their rivals from the post-war system in order to dominate it themselves. This 'theory of exclusion' thus takes 'ordering' as the natural disposition of any victorious power to ostracise uncomfortable players from the international arena.[25] Though an interesting contribution to the field of IR theory, Lascurettes's book does not delve deep into the historical intricacies of past world orders. Ideas of 'order' in the nineteenth century were certainly more complex than he presents them, as this dissertation will show. Lascurettes presents Britain as a power comfortably sitting at the centre of the Concert of Europe, fighting off radical liberalism and nationalism to preserve the Vienna *status quo*.[26]

A significant commonality between all the works dealing with world order is the lack of attention to the problem of 'international disorder'. As Aaron McKeil suggests, any problem of 'international order' really entails 'the problem of mitigating and circumventing international *disorder'*, and therefore to fully understand the problem of world order requires of a 'clearer grasp of the relation between order and *disorder* in world politics'.[27] Indeed, as he noted, extensive as the literature on world order is, the concept of 'disorder' remains largely underdeveloped. The scholarly literature has framed 'disorder' as a term of contemporary, largely post-Cold War international relations, usually taking it as a synonym of, if not war, then of the most generic forms of political, economic and social instability at the systemic level.[28] The latest example of this is Helen Thompson's *Disorder* (2021) which regardless of its title fails to provide a conceptual definition of 'disorder', using the term to describe a series of unstable political and economic situations resulting from competition for scarce resources.[29] Lascurettes, on his

[25] Lascurettes, *Orders of Exclusion*, 35.
[26] Lascurettes, 94–113.
[27] Aaron McKeil, "On the Concept of International Disorder," *International Relations* 35, no. 2 (2021): 198 (My emphasis).
[28] Since the end of the Cold War, scholars have been interested in questioning whether the 'new world order' is really that 'ordered'. In this sense, historians and political scientists have spoken even of a 'new world *dis*order' when analysing the complex geopolitical and geoeconomic dynamics of the post-Cold War international system. See, for example, Lawrence Freedman, "Order and Disorder in the New World," *Foreign Affairs* 71, no. 1 (1991): 20–37; Mohammed Ayoob, "The New-Old Disorder in the Third World," *Global Governance* 1 (1995): 59–77; Kim R. Holmes, "New World Disorder: A Critique of the United States," *Journal of International Affairs* 46, no. 2 (1993): 323–40.
[29] See Helen Thompson, *Disorder: Hard Times in the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

part, does argue that just as 'order' does not mean peace, 'disorder' does not mean war, but he only defines it as a term that 'denotes… a lack of external constraint on the units of the system, allowing them to act in ways that, collectively, work to disturb the *status quo*'.[30] He might not have taken 'disorder' as a synonym of war, but he certainly took it as a synonym of 'international anarchy'.

Historians trying to understand 'disorder' have not significantly expanded the definition beyond systemic anarchy either. Andrew Philipps, when dealing with Western and Eastern orders in his *War, Religion, and Empire* (2011), states that disorder (equivalent to war in his case studies) emerged as a result of 'confessionalism and military revolution' being at the heart of international politics in the early modern era.[31] Cohrs also frames the sources of twentieth-century great power conflict in systemic problems, such as the struggle for self-determination, ideological strife within declining European polities, and economic distress that spurred competitive imperialism.[32] Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford, whose *Rage for Order* (2016) is a seminal work on British world ordering in the early 1800s, takes a more juridical/constitutional approach to disorder, which they see as a phenomenon of lawlessness: they explore situations in which 'chimeric reforms, unmanageable legal conflicts, and clumsy inquiries' could create disorderly situations in which the rule of law and the implementation of justice failed.[33] Each of these interpretations, as it can be seen, would perfectly fit the thesis of the English School which frames disorder as a general disruption of the society of states which no higher power can prevent—in other words, as a synonym of anarchy.[34]

Understanding the concept of 'disorder' is a fundamental first step before analysing how British leaders formulated strategy and implement policy to deal with it. As previously stated, 'disorder' is not merely a concept that scholars use to describe an international reality, but actually a situation the protagonists of this study understood and referred to. Although the terms were not so prevalent in nineteenth-century lexicon as they are today, statesmen did perceive particular phenomena as disorderly and were

[30] Lascurettes, *Orders of Exclusion*, 17.
[31] Andrew Phillips, *War, Religion and Empire: The Transformation of International Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 83.
[32] Cohrs argues the failure to address these problems of "disorder" in the 1920s accounted for the coming of the Second World War. See Cohrs, *New Atlantic Order*.
[33] Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford, *Rage for Order: The British Empire and the Origins of International Law, 1800-1850* (London: Harvard University Press, 2016), 75, 27.
[34] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 3–8.

beginning to term these problems of order. Such disorderly phenomena included political, social, and economic situations with grave destabilising effects or potential—thus whilst not directly threatening to peace in itself, it held the seeds of future geopolitical conflict. Statesmen referred to these situations as threatening to the state of 'peace and good order' and 'tranquillity' of the world—a noun referring to the state of peace and security in which the British desired to see regions and which was constantly repeated by Canning, Palmerston, Aberdeen, Clarendon, and their agents around the Atlantic world throughout the private and official correspondence. This dissertation uses term 'disorder' as a heteronymous concept for of these situations.[35]

The Cuban slave trade was clearly a case of disorder, risking slave revolution, war and intervention. Various forms of military despotism hindering trade, piracy and privateering, and filibustering expeditions; also counted upon these situations threatening to 'peace and good order'. Statesmen stressed that these issues were not isolated, but symptomatic of a wider political problem engulfing the Atlantic world and intimately related with the decline of the Spanish empire in America. Britons saw Spain as a 'sick man' of Europe which could not stand on its own, prey to the other great powers, particularly France, the United States, and Russia, and were greatly worried by this. In 1818, for example, Sir Philip Roth, a British agent in Madrid, warned the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs that 'Russia is now all the fashion with the [Spanish] Court'.[36] This sentiment points towards a belief that the great powers were profiting from Spain's political decline.[37]

A declining polity, incapable of exerting its authority in the Western Hemisphere and imploding to revolution and civil war in Europe, was a recipe for geopolitical disaster if left unchecked in the long-term. This idea about the long temporal factor of disorder clearly appears in British strategic thinking. James Stephen, who was also one of the architects of the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Tract Act and whose works will be carefully

[35] Some examples include: Kilbee to Canning, 12 May 1824, (secret) FO 72/304; Kilbee to the Earl of Clanwilliam, 22 July 1822, (pvt.) no. 1, FO 72/261; Kilbee to Planta, 10 Sept. 1824, (pvt.) no. 13, FO 72/304; George Villiers to Viscount Palmerston, 12 June 1836, BPP: Correspondence with Foreign Powers relating to the Slave Trade. 1836. (Class B) HCP (002), LIV.377, 54, p. 6; Palmerston to Villiers, 15 Dec. 1836, no. 14, FO 84/201; Aberdeen to Henry Lytton Bulwer, 4 Apr. 1844, no. 3, FO 84/519.

[36] Sir Philip Roth to Edward Cooke, 22 Oct. 1818, enclosed in Cooke to Castlereagh, 8 Nov. 1818, in *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv, 73.

[37] Britain was especially concerned about the degree of Russian influence over Ferdinand VII. British statesmen would therefore see that Spain was too weak to resist Russian intermeddling. Wellesley to Castlereagh, 21 Dec. 1818, *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv, 94.

analysed in following chapters, encapsulated this idea of the destabilising potential when he spoke of the revolutionary Atlantic world being 'pregnant probably with new wars and with new civil revolutions'.[38] Canning thought about Spanish American republican recognition as a pre-emptive way to avoid 'the erection of a set of wild and buccaneering piratical republics' in the future.[39] Allowing such a situation to continue 'in a very few years will prove fatal to our greatness, if not endanger our safety'.[40] Slave trading nations were also seen to be 'short-sighted' because of the terrible peril they put Atlantic order in by allowing the trade to increase slave populations.[41] Palmerston referred to the slave trade as an element that put Cuba at risk 'in the future'.[42]

Nevertheless, the importance of the Cuban Question in British foreign policy after 1815 has not been stressed by the historiography as much as it has been for U.S. foreign policy.[43] It is not widely considered as one the grand questions analysed in the generalist literature of British post-Napoleonic foreign policy—despite the wide geopolitical, geoeconomic, and moral implications converging over it. Only the seminal work of David Murray, *Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade* (1980), focusses on British diplomacy towards the island's slave trade—remaining to the date the authoritative monograph on the subject. There has not been, since then, a renewed comprehensive study of Britain's policy towards this geopolitical question as there has been for other nineteenth-century issues.[44]

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[38] James Stephen, *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies* 197-8.
[39] Canning to Wellington, 29 Oct. 1822, WD *i*, 465. (My emphasis).
[40] Earl of Liverpool to Wellington, 8 Dec. 1824, WD *ii*, 366.
[41] Lamb to Cea Bermúdez, 13 July 1825, enclosed in Lamb to Canning, 8 Aug. 1825, no. 8, FO 84/41; Copy of Villiers's note to the Cea Bermúdez Cabinet, 31 Dec. 1833, enclosed in Villiers to Palmerston, 31 Dec. 1833, no. 2, FO 84/140.
[42] Palmerston to Lord Howden, 7 Apr. 1851, no. 12, FO 84/836.
[43] From James Callahan 1899-book to Ada Ferrer's recent oeuvre, Cuba remains a widely-studied subject in U.S. historiography. James M. Callahan, *Cuba and International Relations: A Historical Study in American Diplomacy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1899); Gerald Horne, *Race to Revolution: The United States and Cuba During Slavery and Jim Crow* (New York: Monthly Review, 2014); Louis Pérez, *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens, GA, 2003); Ada Ferrer, *Cuba: An American History* (London: Scribner, 2021).
[44] The Congress, Eastern, and Portuguese questions are some which recieve constant historical revisitation. See, for example, Miroslav Sedivy, *Crisis Among the Great Powers: The Concert of Europe and the Eastern Question* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017); Bruce Collins, "The Limits of British Power: Intervention in Portugal, 1820-30," *International History Review* 35, no. 4 (2013): 744–65; Norihito Yamada, "Canning, the Principle of Non-Interference and the Struggle for Influence in Portugal, 1822-5," *Historical Research* 86, no. 234 (2013): 661–83; Matthew Rendall, "Defensive Realism and the Concert of Europe," *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 3 (2006): 523–40; P. E. Caquet, "The Napoleonic Legend and the War Scare of 1840," *International History Review* 35, no. 4 (2013): 702–22.

In 2007, Rafe Blaufarb introduced the idea that the decline of the Spanish empire in America had led to a geopolitical dilemma concerning the post-Spanish Western Hemisphere which 'complicated the efforts of the Atlantic powers to navigate the uncharted waters of the post-Napoleonic international order' which he called the 'Western Question'—thereby tracing a comparison with the famous Eastern Question.[45] Belonging to the so-called 'new diplomatic history', Blaufarb revisited Spanish American independence showing it to be a major geopolitical question for the great powers, showing that historians indeed have been over-reliant on the classical accounts of the early twentieth century or too focussed on South American nation-state-formation processes to study the geopolitics of it.[46] His analysis of post-Napoleonic geopolitics connecting both sides of the Atlantic has definitely been an influential and fresh approach, traces of which can be seen in new scholarly contributions. For example, essays in Dale Tomich's collection *Atlantic Transformations* (2020) study the connections and reverberations of European politics in the Caribbean and vice versa.[47] Historians like Ulrike Schiemder or Martin Öhman have also begun to introduce into their accounts more factors concerning the transnational connectivity of imperial polities, analysing phenomena such as post-Napoleonic economic depression, abolition, or the international ambitions and activities of the Holy Alliance—traditionally considered to be only an alliance of European autocrats against European liberalism.[48] Blaufarb's contribution breathed fresh life into

[45] Rafe Blaufarb, "The Western Question: The Geopolitics of Latin American Independence," *American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (2007): 746.
[46] For example Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *La Independencia de La América Española* (Mexico DF, 2010).
[47] Albert García-Balañà's analysed the Spanish-Moroccan war of 1860 as an African war due to the large number of Cuban African soldiers mobilised by the Spaniards, providing an interesting Atlantic perspective on an otherwise Mediterranean conflict as well as an insight into the embittered racial climate existing in Cuba by the mid-century. Albert García-Balañà, "Transatlantic Patriotisms: Race and Nation in the Impact of the Guerra de África in the Spanish Caribbean in 1860," in *Atlantic Transformations: Empire, Politics and Slavery during the Nineteenth-Century*, ed. Dale Tomich (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 45–79. Another case, this time of European influence on the other side of the Atlantic, is José Antonio Piqueras's explanation of the end of the Cuban slave trade which he pinned on the Vienna Congress diplomacy, perhaps exaggerating the importance the peacemakers gave to abolition as well as the real significance of the famous Vienna Note – which, as has been signalled by many historians, was little more than a dead letter. José Antonio Piqueras, "The End of the Legal Slave Trade in Cuba and the Second Slavery," in *Atlantic Transformations: Empire, Politics and Slavery during the Nineteenth-Century*, ed. Dale Tomich (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 79–105.
[48] Martin Öhman, "A Convergence of Crises: The Expansion of Slavery, Geopolitical Realignment, and Economic Depression in the Post-Napoleonic World," *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 3 (2013): 419–45; Josep M. Fradera, "1780-1880: A Century of Imperial Transformation," in *Atlantic Transformations: Empire, Politics and Slavery during the Nineteenth-Century*, ed. Dale W. Tomich (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 1–19; Ulrike Schiemder, "Spain and Spanish America in the System of the Holy Alliance," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 38, no. 1–2 (2015): 147–69.

the study of post-Spanish Atlantic geopolitics, where debate had been previously much stifled by Paul Schroeder's influential view that the decline of the Ottoman and the Spanish empires could not be compared, hence there being no basis to engage in the study of a "Western Question" in terms similar to the Eastern Question.[49]

However, Blaufarb's analysis stops at the moment of diplomatic recognition of the South American republics (c. 1825) and leaves the analysis of the Western Question rather limited in both temporal and thus thematical scope. To be more precise, he argues that the Western Question did not live beyond this point: 'Unlike the Eastern Question', he writes, 'the Western Question was not perennial, nor did it provoke major armed conflict between the great powers.' The successive 'land grabs' of former Spanish territory by bordering powers brought the Western Question to an end fairly quickly and peacefully, according to him.[50] However, Blaufarb actually engages in an involuntary contradiction when he finishes his article thus: 'the Western Question had burst the bounds of its original Atlantic context to pose the problem of the global distribution of power'. This suggests that the Western Question did indeed rage on even after recognition.[51] In limiting the scope of the Western Question to the 1820s, Blaufarb unintentionally echoes the traditional histories he so heavily criticised. This dissertation contends that the Western Question lasted far beyond the 1820s, and re-signifies it as a fundamental problem of conflicting visions of Atlantic order between the Anglo-Saxon powers. The reason why Cuba serves as a perfect microcosm to represent this struggle is that the key element in the struggle for Atlantic order was the question of slavery.

Antislavery: the crux of Britain's struggle for Atlantic order

The slavery question entailed the most significant problem of nineteenth-century Atlantic geopolitics, for it was the core of the struggle between alternative visions of world order. In order to understand this, it is necessary to focus on the geopolitical implications of the slave trade and slavery. This angle of analysis on slavery and the slave trade runs against the current of recent historiographical fashions. The renewal of scholarly interest in the worlds of the Haitian Revolution, by historians from John Baur in the 1970s to Laurent

[49] Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848* (Oxford, 1996), 726.
[50] Blaufarb, "Western Question," 760.
[51] Blaufarb, 763.

Dubois and David Geggus in the 2000s, has influenced a notable historiographical focus to appear on the question of slave agency and revolution.[52] Studies of abolition have changed significantly in the last thirty years, illuminating the role of antislavery civil society, of missionaries, naval officers, slaves collaborating with slavery, and slave revolts, rediscovering abolition as an enormously complex political, social, cultural, and economic phenomenon in which state action (mainly Britain's) played only a part. But the effect of widening the lens in this way has been that it is now somewhat unfashionable to study the geopolitical dimensions of abolition, deemed perhaps to be too conservative or classical an approach.

This is especially striking because actually it is the new histories of abolition and slavery that have pointed at the existence of an irreconcilable struggle between slavery and antislavery existing at the core of the Atlantic world and polarising it. For example, Ada Ferrer in her book *Freedom's Mirror* (2014) argues that the Atlantic world witnessed a contradictory paradigm during the age of abolition: as antislavery achieved its grand victories after the Haitian Revolution, Cuba followed a completely opposite path, retrenching the foundations of its slaveholding society to unprecedented levels.[53] Ferrer focuses on comparing the paradoxical differences between Cuba and Haiti in the age of abolition but does not address the wider, strategic picture of what it meant for the international system to have such radically opposed systems co-existing just a few maritime miles from one another.[54] Free Haiti was a dangerous example not only for the slaveholding plantation systems of British Jamaica and Spanish Cuba, but for the entire geopolitical stability of the Atlantic. The co-existence between antislavery and of slavery firstly, speaks to the complexities of abolition: whilst British statesmen acknowledged the intrinsic danger of the slave trade they also knew slavery was an important socio-economic foundation of societies like Cuba's, and eliminating it could unleash as great a

[52] John E. Baur, "International Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution," *The Americas* 26, no. 4 (April 1970): 394–418; Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2004). See collection of essays: David P. Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001); David P. Geggus and Norman Fiering, eds., *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Penguin, 2001).

[53] Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[54] For this see also Ada Ferrer, "Haiti, Free Soil, and Antislavery in the Revolutionary Atlantic," *American Historical Review* 117, no. 1 (2012): 40–66; Ada Ferrer, "Cuban Slavery and Atlantic Antislavery," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 31, no. 3 (2008): 267–95.

storm as allowing it to continue indefinitely.[55] Secondly, and most important, it shows that for many governments, a retrenchment of slavery was thought of just as good a solution as abolition to prevent the terrible consequences of servile revolution. This underlines a contest between opposite versions of how to deal with the disorder emerging from the Age of Revolutions and also on how to organise economics, society and politics in the future.

The identification of the slave trade and slavery with disorder was not merely a geopolitical calculation of the British elite; antislavery was the key to any form of world order because it represented a 'culturally and historically contingent vision of "the good"'—the universal philosophical moral value *par excellence* on which any plan for world order is settled, as put by Andrew Philipps.[56] Antislavery was a central element in Regency and Victorian Britain's identity, ethos, and worldview—which though subject to particularities, as with empire, remained fairly consistent across successive administrations—and was thus the basis to any project of world order. (It was in the methods to manage such a worldview that statesmen differed the most on, as following chapters will show).

The powerful abolitionist movement at the end of the Enlightenment, the auspice of Evangelical notions, and the memory of the Haitian Revolution, placed the notion of antislavery at the very centre of Britain's global agenda. The strategic struggle against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, which historians have acknowledged was a fundamental basis of the modern British worldview, was also intimately linked to antislavery.[57] Already in the 1790s, abolitionist politicians began to look beyond the immediate war with France and started to perceive in abolition a way of rendering the British empire more secure and more powerful. William Wilberforce, the most prominent parliamentary leader of the abolition cause, argued that the slave trade was actually diminishing Britain's maritime capacity and weakening the Royal Navy—quite the argument to make at a time of war. One of the reasons for the defence of the slave trade was because it 'creates employment for the greater number of ships and seamen': many

[55] On British interest with slavery for economic reasons after abolition see: Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade since 1807* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Joseph Mulhern, "After 1833: British Entanglement with Brazilian Slavery" (Durham University, 2018).
[56] Phillips, *War, Religion and Empire*, 5.
[57] Ronald Hyam, *Understanding the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); H.M. Scott, "The Second 'Hundred Years War', 1689-1815," *Historical Journal* 35, no. 2 (1992): 443–69; Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 4 (1992): 309–29.

sailors serving on slavers ended up becoming royal marines and the experience navigating tropical, stormy waters was greatly appreciated by the Navy.[58] Slave ships were essentially seen as a good naval academy: slave trading thus formed part of a synergetic colonial system that served all British interests holistically—the 'good old school' as Horatio Nelson put it.[59] Wilberforce claimed in Parliament that that serving on slave ships 'taught [sailors] to play tyrant': serving in these ships of evil stunted the good seamanship the Navy required.[60] As Christer Petley puts it, Wilberforce saw schooling marines on slave ships as 'a drain on not only the physical strength but also the moral fibre of Britain's first line of national defence'.[61] Even Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger, who was initially quite cold towards abolition, ended up considering the suppression of the trade necessary to stop the possibility of a slave revolution in the middle of the war with France, deeming it necessary to preserve 'the security of our West India possessions against internal commotions, as well as foreign enemies'.[62] Abolition became a grand strategic way to defeat the French; as Britain achieved victory over Napoleon, it was deemed to become a deeply entrenched nature of the British political and moral 'self'.

Scholars have noted this and studied it deeply. One of the most significant examples is Richard Huzzey who in *Freedom Burning* (2012) argues that antislavery became a 'hegemonic ideology' of the British official mind.[63] This ideology, present in every policy action of ambassadors, foreign policy makers, naval officials…forged an 'antislavery state'. Huzzey reveals that, contrary to what historians like Michael Barnett have argued, the idea of humanitarianism was not at the centre of abolition.[64] Furthermore, he argues that abolition can only be understood 'by decoupling our idea of anti-slavery from anachronistic expectations of antiracism, anticolonialism, or

[58] Quoted in Christer Petley, "The Royal Navy, the British Atlantic Empire and the Abolition of the Slave Trade," in *The Royal Navy and the British Atlantic World, c. 1750-1820,* ed. John McAleer and Christer Petley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 109.
[59] Petley, 97–98.
[60] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History,* vol. 28 (1791), cols. 55-57, 62.
[61] Petley, "The Royal Navy, the British Atlantic Empire and the Abolition of the Slave Trade," 111.
[62] Cobbett, Parliamentary History, vol. 29 (1792), cols. 1143-44. See also David Geggus, "The British Government and the Saint Domingue Slave Revolt, 1791-1793," *English Historical Review* 96, no. 379 (1981): 285–305.
[63] Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 208.
[64] Barnett insists that abolition was a 'breaching of established categories of humanity' and presents abolitionists almost as philanthropic crusaders confronting a powerful pro-slavery socioeconomic establishment. See Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 57–60.

humanitarianism'. For Britain the morality of a modern world based on free labour meant power, and was to be defended with power.[65]

Thus the slave trade had palpable geopolitical ramifications but, importantly, it was perceived as a threat to the British self for reasons in addition to, and quite distinct from, the geopolitical risks it created. For British leaders the disorder represented by the slave trade elevated how its moral dimensions were understood—that is, from a question of values to the level of an existential threat.

In order to trace the origins of this identification between the British modern ethos and the idea of abolition, it is necessary to look into British reactions to the events occurring during the Age of Revolutions (c. 1776-1815). Christopher Leslie Brown argues that the loss of the thirteen colonies in 1783 triggered a period of crisis for the first British empire, which set Britain on the path of antislavery and abolition because of a desire—whether conscious or unconscious—to accrue 'moral capital' by distinguishing Britain from its former colonies and their allies, France and Spain, on the slavery question.[66] As David Brion Davis points out in his classic monograph *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (1975), by the late eighteenth century the British began to see slavery as a the result of a combination of 'corrosive forces of the New World environment' (now dominated by Spain, France, and the United States) and as 'symptom of institutional disintegration'.[67] This assumed moral superiority had the effect of softening the blow of a humiliating military defeat.

In reality, of course, Britain could make little claim to holding the most 'liberal' credentials. Even though autarkic closeness is usually associated with the Spanish world (a fallacious extrapolation of the sixteenth-century monopoly), in the late eighteenth century it was actually the British empire which had become more closed on itself.[68] The series of laws leading to the pre-revolutionary Anglo-American estrangement—the Proclamation Act (1750), the Stamp Act (1765), the Quartering Acts (1765) or the Tea Act (1773)—reveal authoritarian impulses on the part of a metropole that was failing in its attempt to create an institutionalised transatlantic polity. By the late eighteenth century, it was actually Spain that had proven capable of preserving a constitutional cohesion of

[65] Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, 19.
[66] Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).
[67] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 386–87.
[68] M. Elvira Roca Barea, *Imperiofobia y Leyenda Negra: Roma, Rusia, Estados Unidos y El Imperio Español* (Madrid: Siruela, 2016), 426–27.

its overseas empire and was a far more open, 'liberal' polity than the first British empire.[69] Its imperial model in the Americas lasted almost fifty years more than Britain's.

It was nevertheless a useful narrative for Britain to comfort itself. As shown by Brendan Simms, the loss of the thirteen colonies represented a geopolitical and existential trauma like no other—even if in reality the Georgian fiscal-military state efficiently navigated and survived a crisis of severe magnitude (something which other states, most notably France, would not be able to when the time came). After 1783, many turned to explanations about the moral exhaustion of a hubristic nation to account for imperial loss. Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, conveniently published between 1776 and 1789, divulgated how this grand empire past had easily fallen on account of moral gangrene and political corruption; many saw Britain as the new decaying Rome.[70]

The 'moral capital' provided by abolition must have been a coveted element for a society in need of energy and stimulus after the disaster, and for a state whose century-long victorious imperial strategy had just been soundly defeated. After the passage of the 1807 Abolition Act, the strength of French and Spanish overseas power and the dynamism of the new thirteen colonies could be attributed to the immense profits of slave trading—a moral outrage which Britons had voluntarily ceased to engage in. The abolition of chattel slavery (1833) further comforted Britons, Linda Colley argues, into believing they were 'different and better than their European neighbours and even their one-time American colonists'.[71] As Duncan Bell states, by the early nineteenth century Britain abandoned the eighteenth-century belief on 'qualified pluralisms' existing in the wider world and embraced a 'more judgemental, more arrogant, conception of global hierarchy'.[72]

Political hierarchisations have been associated by the historiography usually to late nineteenth-century social imperialism, when Britons (and other Europeans) perceived the peoples of the world along the axis civilised v. uncivilised.[73] For Britain, abolitionism offered a useful metric to measure the moral credentials of those who claimed

[69] Gonzalo M. Quintero, *Bernardo de Gálvez* (Madrid: Alianza, 2020), 321.
[70] Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire, 1714-1783* (London: Penguin, 2008), 662–69.
[71] Linda Colley, *Britons: Foring the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 361.
[72] Duncan Bell, "Empire and International Relations in Victorian Political Thought," *Historical Journal* 49, no. 1 (2006): 284.
[73] Bell, 283.

membership of the 'civilised world' already in the early century. It was Foreign Secretary Canning who claimed that the slave trade was the 'scandal of the *civilised* world': immorality was a problem concerning the civilised nations; the barbarous world had no notion of morality (hence it needed to be civilised).[74] For British statesmen, it was the 'right and duty of every maritime nation' to suppress the slave trade and not doing so was, in the words of Tory abolitionist James Stephen, an act of 'moral apostacy'.[75]

It is significant that the countries signalled to be engaging in this moral apostacy were the Catholic, absolutist, agricultural nations like Spain and France in opposition to whom Britons had long defined their own national identity.[76] British perceptions about Spanish attitudes towards the slave trade contributed to create a general identification of moral apostasy with Catholicism. For example, paraphrasing the arguments of the Spanish foreign minister at the time, the Duke of San Carlos, Sir Henry Wellesley (British minister in Madrid, 1809-21) had told Lord Castlereagh that the Spanish saw slave trading as a way of evangelisation for 'every negro became a Catholic from the moment he set foot in any of the Spanish possessions'.[77] This perception of the evil Catholic abroad was possibly heightened amidst civil strife in Ireland and the debate over Catholic emancipation—finally approved in 1829 at the cost of polarising British politics throughout the 1820s and causing a major fracture within the Tory Party.[78] This sentiment is expressed clearly in a letter Lord Holland sent to abolitionist William Wilberforce in 1815, when the government was considering appealing to the Pope to pressure Catholic nations to abolish the trade: 'I am afraid you will not find His Holiness as much disposed to anathematise rapine and murder committed under the sanction of the powerful Crown of Spain, as to disdain the extravagances of the Catholics in Ireland'.[79]

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[74] Canning to the Duke of Wellington, 30 Sept. 1822, in *Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur, Duke of Wellington, K.G., i* [hereafter *WD i*], ed. by his son, Arthur, 2nd Duke of Wellington, (London, 1867), 323. (My emphasis).

[75] James Stephen's memorandum to Viscount Castlereagh, 8 Sept. 1818, *Correspondence, Despatches, and other papers, of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry, iv* [hereafter *Castlereagh Correspondence*], iv, ed. by his brother, Charles William Vane, Marquess of Londonderry. (London, 1853), 27, 31-2.

[76] The lax morality of Catholics was identified with the prevalence of the slave trade among Catholic nations. This was a common prejudice in Britain, especially due to the Quaker influence in the abolitionist movement. See Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, chaps. 5, 8, 9.

[77] Sir Henry Wellesley to Castlereagh, 26 Aug. 1814, pvt., FO 72/160.

[78] This British political and religious prejudice towards Catholics was nurtered by the historic Anglo-Irish estrangement over the religious question, which became even more bitter during the nineteenth century. See Oliver P. Rafferty, "The Catholic Church, Ireland and the British Empire, 1800-1921," *Historical Research* 84, no. 224 (2011): 288–309.

[79] Quoted in David R. Murray, *Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 53.

Identifying Catholicism (in Ireland or abroad) with the slave trade question served to reinforce long-held prejudices about the dubious morality of the 'papists' and to justify measures for their oppression (within and without the United Kingdom). As Canning warned the Vatican secretary of state in 1822, the fact that all of the nations engaged in the slave trade 'are with no exception Catholic' was having the 'terrible effect of associating the ideas of Catholicism with those of slavery'.[80] Of course Canning was not warning Cardinal Consalvi this could happen; for the British it was already a reality. By contraposition, the 'moral' nations who had subscribed to an international abolitionist endeavour were Protestant, merchant, northern states like the Netherlands or Denmark—first European nations to sign abolitionist treaties with Britain. British statesmen made of the slave trade a measuring unit for institutional and moral progress. The distinction between moral and immoral nations, institutionally thriving or institutionally declining empires, would play a significant part in nineteenth-century British foreign policy. Lord Palmerston would be the uttermost representative of the statesman embodying this nationalist English Protestant identity; David Brown argued this was a useful electoral and political appeal, but it was also part of a deeply engraved worldview which directly influenced the making of foreign policy, not just the selling of it to the middle-classes.[81]

A key historian of abolition, Seymour Drescher, however, argued that Britain would have never abandoned the profitable slave trade just to obtain a moral high ground from where to (in the future) exercise imperial power. He saw this as 'conspiracy theories and counterhistory'.[82] 'Slavery between 1787 and 1807 was not a wasted machine which the British government could phase out like a bankrupt venture, accumulating moral capital in return', he wrote.[83] For Drescher the main reason behind the economic suicide of abolition ('econocide') was the immense popular pressure of the abolitionist movement.[84] Britain committed econocide in order to appease a dangerous popular clamour, specifically the popular mobilization of 1814 which according to Drescher 'shocked the British government into making abolitionism a foreign policy priority'.[85]

[80] Canning to Cardinal Consalvi, 1 Nov. 1822, WD *i*, 473. (My translation).
[81] On Palmerston's use of this nationalist-Protestant rhetoric in his foreign policy discourse see David Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy, 1846-55* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).
[82] Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Leiden: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 233.
[83] Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 165.
[84] Drescher, 183–85.
[85] Drescher, *Abolition*, 230.

Chaim Kaufmann and Robert Pape also put forward the idea that abolition responded to popular demand and was a political manoeuvre for the Tory government to preserve power.[86] That the British government gave in to popular pressure concerning abolition could be a sign of the weakening of the authoritarian British state, which progressively started to be more and more conditioned by public opinion.

Drescher's interpretation has many flaws, which are rooted in his insistence on making abolition a one-cause issue and refuting 'decline theory'—the idea that by 1800 slavery was less profitable of a business due to the rise of modern capitalism, defended by historian Eric Williams in his *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944). Drescher's focus on refuting the decline theory has made his historiographical critics too focus solely on the realm of economic history, when actually some of the most significant imprecisions of Drescher's argument have to do with geopolitics and naval strategy. Drescher for example argues that Britain bombarded Algiers in 1816 to end the white Christian slave trade in order to obtain the support from the great powers to end the Atlantic trade, which the British public opinion was mainly concerned about. 'It was neither designed to demonstrate power, accumulate glory, nor wipe out corsairing … but to sustain the credibility to other Europeans and Americans purchasing slaves on the west African coast', he argues.[87] This interpretation completely ignores that the bombardment of Algiers had more to do with preventing Russia from sending a naval squadron to the western Mediterranean to deal with Barbary corsairs (a strategic catastrophe for British security) and the United States from using the issue of white slavery to meddle in the Mediterranean, than with obtaining international support for the Atlantic campaign as the British public desired.[88]

Drescher's critics have not refuted this and have primarily focussed on the economic arguments. Selwyn Carrington and Dale Tomich have both revitalised the 'Williams debate' by bringing even more evidence to support William's classic thesis about the slave trade diminishing as a consequence of the invigoration of British

[86] Chaim Kaufmann and Robert Pape, "Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade," *International Organization* 53, no. 4 (1999): 631–68.
[87] Drescher, *Abolition*, 235.
[88] For the geopolitical implications of the bombardment of Algiers see Brian Vick, "Power, Humanitarianism and the Global Liberal Order: Abolition and the Barbary Corsairs in the Vienna Congress System," *International History Review* 40, no. 4 (2018): 939–60; Mark Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna and Its Legacy: War and Great Power Diplomacy after Napoleon.* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 202.

capitalism.[89] Carrington, for example, has shown that as a consequence of the American Revolution, West Indian planter profits began to fall irreversibly and that abolition in 1807 was an economic necessity, not an econocide: sugar had become too expensive to produce and market after 1776, he argued drawing evidence from the private papers of key planters.[90] The debates about abolition seem thus to continue orbiting the same economic themes, the same pulse between forced labour, free labour, free trade, and capitalism.[91] Abolition was a multiheaded phenomenon: this was shown in the most complete survey on the different worlds of the slave trade, Davis's *The Problem of Slavery*, which illustrated economic, intellectual, political, and religious ramifications of the slavery question.[92] However, geopolitics and foreign policy were also an important part of it and are missing from the key accounts of the slavery problem. Drescher's reduction of abolition to a simple victory of popular pressure and the focus of the historiographical debate on the either refuting, endorsing or revising 'econocide' and 'decline theory' has focussed the debate away from the geopolitical element, which has the effect of obscuring the intent to which the British used abolition—as a stabilising, ordering element, but also as a civilizational parameter to divide the world between moral and immoral nations as a way to legitimise its exertion of ordering power over the latter.

The moral power provided by abolition gave Britons the sense that they had the duty and thus the legitimacy to engage in the re-ordering of the world. Gabriel Paquette analysed how Britain used this notion of Spanish moral inferiority to legitimise its recognition of the Spanish American republics, exorcising their secession from any notion of 'revolution'. The Spanish empire broke apart not because of the colonies' revolutionary attitude but because of 'Spain's decay, decrepitude, and decadence that rendered it an incompetent sovereign, unable to tend properly to its people overseas'.[93] British ideas concerning the moral corruption of Spain can be traced to the sixteenth century with the rise of the infamous 'black legend'—a primitive form of Anglo-Dutch

[89] See Selwyn H.H. Carrington, "'Econocide' — Myth or Reality? — The Question of West Indian Decline, 1783-1806," *Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y Del Caribe*, no. 36 (1984): 13–48; Eric Williams, *The Economic Aspect of the Abolition of the West Indian Slave Trade and Slavery*, ed. Dale Tomich (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).
[90] See Selwyn H.H. Carrington, *The Sugar Industry and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1775-1810* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002).
[91] Richard Huzzey, "Free Trade, Free Labour, and Sugar in Victorian Britain," *The Historical Journal* 53, no. 2 (2010): 359–79; Gavin Wright, "Slavery and Anglo-American Capitalism Revisited," *Economic History Review* 73, no. 2 (2020): 353–83.
[92] Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*.
[93] Gabriel Paquette, "The Intellectual Context of British Diplomatic Recognition of the South American Republics, c.1800-1830," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2004): 81.

political propaganda that presented the Spain of the Counterreformation as a land of evil, moral corruption, and cruelty. According to Paquette, the black legend was 'deeply entrenched' in the British mind.[94] Spanish historian Elvira Roca Barea, who analysed not only the Spanish black legend but also the 'legends' associated with Rome, the United States, and Russia, conveyed this same idea about the sixteenth-century Hispanophobia being 'a basic construct of the English nation'.[95] Roca Barea argues that British national intelligentsia considered the Victorian age as a second Elizabethan age: they returned to a Hispanophobic discourse that remembered the Spanish Armada and the Counterreformation, and invoked the old myths of English resilience against the cruel, Catholic Goliath of the south.[96] British perceptions of Spanish imperial decay and decadence thus became a way of employing the moral capital obtained from abolition, as argued by Brown, to legitimise its assumption of the right to craft a new order that served its preferences. It was indeed a process, with many contradictions to it, but with a profound strategic component to the point abolition became an 'attitude of the mind', in the words of Robert Anstey, an interiorised, unquestionable pillar of foreign policy.[97] The notion of moral superiority infused foreign policy: it was not a mask or a deceit; it was part of the strategy to promote geopolitical equilibrium and ensure Britain's security interests. In the same way, as will be shown in Chapter Two, it facilitated an identification of immoral polities (slaveholding polities) with geopolitical threats to British interests.

Why order the world? Pre-emption and economy

There are many examples in the history of the modern state system where, when facing disorder, great powers have responded by putting forward new forms of order—geopolitical patterning, international behaviours and norms to constrain disorder. 'Ordering', however, is far more complex an action than simply dealing with punctual moments of disorder in some corner of the world. Ordering the world constitutes an expansive grand strategic effort to define, forge, and impose the structure of the international system with the objective of ensuring that the structure—almost the "ghost

[94] Paquette, 82.
[95] Roca Barea, *Imperiofobia*, 229.
[96] Roca Barea, 230.
[97] Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810* (London: Macmillan, 1975), xiii.

in the machine"—in its functioning benefits the interests of the ordering power. This was done through a myriad of compounded policies throughout a long period of time (i.e. in constant struggle against disorder) and not simply during a great power conference at the end of a major war. Benton and Ford put forward a key definition of Britain's ordering during the nineteenth century: a 'frenetic and polycentric effort to use legal change to order people, places, and transactions stretching from the banks of the Río de la Plata to the Persian Gulf' that 'changed the composition of world regions and installed empire as the ghost in the machine of global governance'.[98] This dissertation adds to their definition the fact that ordering attempted to re-work the structure of the international system, fostering certain patterns of behaviour which benefited British national interests whilst blocking or hindering those which might make them suffer. The main elements Britain sought to install were antislavery and free trade; and this it sought to do through bilateral treaties with other powers but also through the use of force (see Chapter Three).

Pre-emption is key to understanding ordering. British nineteenth-century ordering embedded the international system of certain dynamics that served British interests and spared Britain of having to recourse to intervention at a heavier cost of men and treasure to ensure a favourable situation unfolded and an unfavourable one was conjured. For Britain, this strategy was crucial because, contrary to what the myth of *Pax Britannica* often suggests, it had emerged extremely weakened from the twenty-five years of war with France. This desire to order the world (to pre-empt at a structure level) is key to understand 'the role of Britain as a weak hegemon in the complex and fragile global order emerging in the early nineteenth century'.[99] Thus, though tainted with moral, almost philosophical, conceptions of delivering a better world—which were important and had a deep effect on the formulation of strategy as it will be seen in following sections of this introduction—ordering was primarily a geopolitical endeavour consisting in dealing with potentially inflammable situations before they ignited the fire of severe conflict.

The pre-emption of threats at the lowest possible cost was a key objective of successive British governments after 1815. Amortising the colossal national debt (amounting to £902 million in 1816) whilst cutting taxes after a decade of war-driven high fiscal pressure, arguably was the chief political priority after the Napoleonic Wars.[100]

[98] Benton and Ford, *Rage for Order*, 1–4.
[99] Benton and Ford, 1–4.
[100] Norman Gash, "After Waterloo: British Society and the Legacy of the Napoleonic Wars," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 28, no. 5 (1977): 152.

It was an electoral, party, and personal commitment for many ministers; as well as a constant element in the opposition's repertoire to attack sitting governments. As Aberdeen put it in 1841 to his close friend the Princess Lieven, wife of the former Russian ambassador in London, the main constraint on foreign policy were Sir Robert Peel's own promises regarding the debt: 'he has pledged by some means or other, to equalise the revenue and the expenditure'. Failing to do so, thought Aberdeen, could compromise the survival of the ministry.[101] Lord Palmerston too faced the pressure of free traders, Tories, and Liberals who believed his interventionist foreign policy and abusive use of the Navy would drain state resources and force an increment in taxation. His clashes and tensions with those who sought to rationalise Britain's war-torn finances by reducing foreign policy and navy expenditure, such as William Gladstone and the Radicals Richard Cobden, John Bright, and Joseph Hume ('the parliamentary Cerberus', Palmerston called them), were notorious examples of this.[102]

Maintaining an expansive foreign policy that attended to increasing threats and interests was not easily compatible with stark financial sacrifices. Ordering served this purpose given that it permitted (in theory) to "act on the cheap" by intervening to destroy incipient threats before they were so serious as to require a severe intervention at great cost for life and treasure. Ordering also entailed creating the structures and regimes to prevent disorder from emerging in the future and to ensure that the very working dynamics of the international system automatically served British national interests whilst hindering those of its rivals—thus sparing the state (and the taxpayer) of future necessity for action. The increasing cost of ordering, however, became a progressively delicate issue: as it will be seen in Chapter Five, a point was finally reached in which Britain's ordering started to risk having the very economic and military consequences it had sought to pre-empt.

As previously stated, this notion of sustained 'ordering' is something that escapes the historian solely focussed on the great-power conferences at the close of a major war. Past international orders were not built over a series of meetings at Vienna, Paris, or Yalta to which statesmen arrived with 'a long-term master plan and sober debate and

[101] Aberdeen to Princess Lieven, 21 Dec. 1841, in Ernest Parry (ed.) *The correspondence of Lord Aberdeen and Princess Lieven, 1832-1854,* i, (London: Royal Historical Society, 1938), 190.
[102] Christine Gunter and John Maloney, "Did Gladstone Make a Difference? Rhetoric and Reality in Mid-Victorian Finance," *Accounting, Business & Financial History* 9, no. 3 (1999): 329–31; Anthony Howe, "Two Faces of British Power: Cobden versus Palmerston," in *Palmerston Studies II*, ed. David Brown and Miles Taylor (Southampton: University of Southampton, 2007), 176.

consideration, based on deep reflection about the future', but rather by a great power's sustained efforts to reshape various aspects of world politics as they were hindered or affected by a disorderly situation.[103] In that sense, and quoting Robert Kagan, an ordering power never gets to retire, since order requires a constant struggle against disorder.[104]

British statesmen clearly understood this. As it will be further illustrated in Chapter One, the greatest sensitivity towards disorder and the drive to order came in 1822—at the height of the existing Concert of Europe's powers. Europe might have been relatively pacified in 1815 but there was still enormous potential for conflict in the Atlantic world. Dealing with these situations and protecting British interests required a constant, world-spanning effort to, as put by Foreign Secretary Clarendon in 1854, 'restrain [third parties] from committing acts of violence in an unsettled quarter of the world where the interest of British commerce required that peace and good order should prevail'.[105] The struggle against disorder appears as a central dynamic of world politics at the highest level of analysis, of which statesmen, were aware of and consciously engaged in.

It is important to note, however, that there was no conscious plan for the creation of a 'world order'; Britain's strategy was limited to correcting disorder and fostering certain type of patterns of power. With the benefit of hindsight, the historian can indeed look at the result of fifty years of 'struggle against disorder' or 're-ordering' and observe that a system of 'world order' had indeed emerged. This 'system' included institutions such as the mixed-commission courts on both sides of the Atlantic world that served to tackle the slave trade, keep foreign colonial authorities engaged in the trade in check, and liberate the enslaved Africans (who were then resettled on demand as indentured labourers or soldiers all over the Atlantic world).[106] It was also a system of laws and observed behaviours: British naval power and treaties with minor powers managed to order the sea, juridically backing the supremacy of the Royal Navy and ensuring the

[103] Francis J. Gavin, "Asking the Right Questions about the Past and the Future of World Order," *War on the Rocks*, January 2020, https://warontherocks.com/2020/01/asking-the-right-questions-about-the-past-and-future-of-world-order/.
[104] Robert Kagan, 'Superpowers don't get to retire: What out tired country still owes to the world', *The New Republic* (27 May 2014). https://newrepublic.com/article/117859/superpowers-dont-get-retire
[105] Memorandum by the Earl of Clarendon, 1 Aug. 1854, in Van Alstyne, "Anglo-American Relations, 1853-1857," 497.
[106] On how the system of liberated Africans worked, redeploying former slaves around the empire depending on demand for labour or soldiers, see Maeve Ryan, *Humanitarian Governance and the British Antislavery World System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022).

extension of its war rights to areas beyond British waters. Benton and Ford defined this as 'a series of permissive spaces for imperial enforcement that relied on British municipal law', 'a thin skin of jurisdiction over oceans by stretching municipal (domestic) law to its limit and assembling small states into loose systems to facilitate exchange in extensive commercial network'.[107] It also included friendly alliances with ideologically aligned governments—many of which were supported by British influence and money. Trade and capital flowed through this system, aided by the free trade treaties British governments laboured to obtain from other powers. Michael Doyle defined it as an 'empire of *Pax Britannica*' but rather than an 'empire' he defined a system of world order: an 'external system—a unipolar world peripheral system. Regions were linked and dominate, loosely or closely, by British sea power, and only Britain linked the diverse parts of the world, the hub to the spokes of the peripheral wheel'.[108] ('Order' and 'empire', as will be seen in the following sub-sections, often risk overlapping).

The conscious plan of creating a 'world order'—as in a sort of post-imperial federation of Anglo-Saxon states—emerged in the late nineteenth century, as the Empire's strength began to wither and the United States augmented its power to unseen levels.[109] Duncan Bell has written extensively on the nexus between the imperial federation and the concept of a 'world order' in the late century, providing huge insight into the intellectual foundations of late Victorian notions of global order. Taking 'world order' as a distribution and settlement of power at a global level, Bell explores visions of world government (via a superposition of the British Empire to the international system) held by late Victorian imperial pundits.[110] His focus is on the intellectual basis of this imagined future world system, exploring a variety of ideas including race, hierarchy, religion, economics, and imperial imagination resulting from the social imperialism of the late century, rather than the geopolitical phenomena risking the resurgence of great power conflict.[111] Bell however, has pointed out the existence of a powerful vocation within various sectors of the British colonial, political, religious, military, and economic

[107] Benton and Ford, *Rage for Order*, 20, 2.
[108] Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 236.
[109] Bew, "World Order," 14.
[110] The idea of "disorder" is not interrogated in Bell's work. Duncan Bell, "Victorian Visions of Global Order: An Introduction," in *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Duncan Bell (Cambridge, 2007), 1–18; Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*.
[111] See Duncan Bell, *Dreamworlds of Race: Empire and the Utopian Destiny of Anglo-America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020); Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*.

establishment to expand a version of British order in the world as a way of expanding civilisation and augmenting geopolitical and economic prowess. The notion of reordering the tectonic elements of global politics, Bell shows, permeated Victorian political thought. This dissertation builds on this notion, exploring the ordering vocation within a the high echelons of statecraft and the making of foreign policy, one of the lacuna within the scholarship of British order.[112]

Order and empire in the age of Castlereagh, Canning, and Palmerston

World order can seldom be dissociated from the history of empires. In the particular case of Britain, histories dealing with British order/ordering are, essentially, histories of the British Empire as a political unit.[113] However, in the case presented by this dissertation, the agent subject is not the 'empire' but the 'great power'. Even if briefly, it is necessary to unpack the notion of what the 'empire' meant for early nineteenth-century British statesmen; British Atlantic ordering after 1815 is *not* tantamount to the rise of the second British Empire.

Sometimes for the sake of narrative clarity, historians have granted some great powers, particularly those of ancient periods, the category of "empire" instead of "kingdom" or "republic" to emphasise their geographical vastness or their socio-political potency.[114] This is part of a larger trend, since historically studies of world order have tended to overlap with studies of empire given that for decades, historians and political scientists concerned with the question of world order made 'empire' the unit of such discipline. This has put forward an imagery of vast empires, from Rome to the Great Mongol Nation, commanding world-spanning orders throughout history. The first contemporary historical studies of world order by Arnold Toynbee, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, and Alfred Zimmern actually considered empire to by a synonym of order. Dickinson, for example, argued in *The European Anarchy* (1915) that the causes of war

[112] See Bell, "Empire and International Relations."
[113] Some examples include: Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*; Benton and Ford, *Rage for Order*; Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).
[114] Essentially defining 'empire' as Dominic Lieven did in a 'simple and unsophisticated way': 'a very great power that has left a mark on the international relations of an era and rules over wide territories and many peoples'. See Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

could only be prevented by the prevalence of a 'common law and a common authority' established after the triumph of empire, 'as it once achieved by Rome'.[115] They believed that it was the destiny of the British Empire to transform itself into a 'world spanning imperial federation or commonwealth' that would essentially perpetuate order.[116] Zakarol, whose *Before the West* shows how early modern Asian empires had also created an expanded visions of world order, argues that it is 'impossible for empire not to have an ordering effect' even if it is 'possible to create order without conquest'.[117]

It is important not to fall into this trap when discussing British ordering in the early nineteenth century. For the statesmen this dissertation examines, the empire did not have a soul of itself but was rather an appendix, an instrument to be wielded at the service of the interests of the United Kingdom. The empire between 1815 and 1860 did not have foreign policy agency but rather served the core British foreign policy objective of keeping disorder at bay. For Castlereagh, Canning, Palmerston, Aberdeen, and Clarendon, 'order', and not 'empire', was the objective. This explains a series of what can be considered anti-imperial, anti-Jingoistic behaviours in which statesmen at the beginning of the century engaged. Castlereagh relinquished the Dutch East Indies, which Britain had seized during the war, in exchange for a British order of the seas (via the neutral rights question) and a handful of island enclaves around the world.[118] Canning was no slave to imperial pride: he despised the East India Company and saw it as the main obstacle impeding Britain from entering 'the trade between the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, directly across the Pacific', which 'is the trade of the world must susceptible of rapid augmentation and improvement'.[119] Historians often claim that Canning looked back with nostalgia to the eighteenth century system, but actually he ran from this system and from its imperial institutions.

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[115] G. Lowes Dickinson, *The European Anarchy* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 7.
[116] Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), 150; Michael Lang, "Globalization and Global History in Toynbee," *Journal of World History* 22, no. 4 (2011): 757.
[117] Zarakol, *Before the West*, 23.
[118] Interestingly, there is no specific history of the island question at the Vienna Congress. This take on Castlereagh's "island" or "maritime" approach to peace comes from reading key works on the Congress of Vienna and the Foreign Secretary. Some examples include Brian E. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and Politics after Napoleon* (Boston, 2014); Jarrett, *Congress of Vienna and Its Legacy*; Christopher Bartlett, "Castlereagh, 1812-22," in *The Makers of British Foreign Policy: From Pitt to Thatcher*, ed. T. G. Otte (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 52–75; Christopher Bartlett, *Great Britain and Seapower, 1815-1853* (Oxford, 1963); John Bew, *Castlereagh: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[119] Canning to the Earl of Liverpool, 7 Jul. 1826. CC *ii*, 74.

Palmerston did not see empire as the objective of the British state, either. Douglas Peers thought it 'striking' that 'for all his efforts asserting Britain's political, maritime, commercial, and at times moral leadership', Palmerston 'lacked an intellectually robust philosophy of empire and its responsibilities'.[120] This is not as striking as it seems when considering that it was order Palmerston pursued, and that for him imperial pawns in India, the Americas or the Mediterranean, were merely a set of stabilising elements Britain counted with to survive in the disarrayed world of the 1800s. He had no interest in expanding British territory or subduing all 'uncivilised' territory to British rule. As he put it to Clarendon in 1857, at a time when European imperialism raged:

> It is very possible that many parts of the world would be better governed by England, France and Sardinia than they are now … [but] we do not want to have [them] … We want to trade with [them], we want to travel through [them], but we do not want the burthen of governing [them] … Let us try to improve all of these countries by the general influence of our commerce; but let us abstain from a crusade of conquest which would call down upon us the condemnation of all other civilised nations.[121]

The use of the verb 'improve' is euphemistical: he meant influencing those countries so that their policies served British interests. He does not mention conquest as Britain's objective but rather ensuring those countries did not develop circumstances which could hinder British trading and transit interests—essentially, keeping them ordered, safe from disarray.

This is not to say that this was overarching vision of empire. As argued by John Darwin, there were as many British empires as there were British imperialists.[122] It would be fallacious to apply the 'empire' vision of military officials in outposts in India or of colonial officials in Australia to the early nineteenth-century statesmen who still recalled the Age of Revolutions. Even among statesmen in the high echelons there was division. No need to go further than the Duke of Wellington himself, whose idea of 'empire', contrary to Castlereagh's, Canning's and Palmerston's, was primarily centred on securing

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[120] Douglas Peers, "'He Had a Jolly Way of Looking at Disasters': Palmerston and India in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," in *Palmerston Studies II*, ed. David Brown and Miles Taylor (Southampton: University of Southampton, 2007), 121.

[121] Palmerston to the Earl of Clarendon, 1 Mar. 1857, in *The life and letters of George William Frederick Villiers, Fourth Earl of Clarendon,* ed. Herbert Maxwell (London: Edward Arnold, 1913), 300.

[122] A core argument of Darwin's colossal work. The empire did not work as a cohesive body but rather was expanded through the interests and actions of all its officials and agents acting independently and without coordination around the world. See John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System 1830-1970* (Cambridge, 2013).

and expanding British India—as Peers demonstrated years ago.[123] However, from the correspondence analysed in this dissertation it is possible to conclude that, generally, foreign secretaries and prime ministers in the early nineteenth century shared in this vision of empire as an utilitarian feature through which the state managed to order regions in disarray and secure its interests.

An insightful critic might, however, justly claim that the activities with which order was secured were of imperial nature, thus intrinsically linking 'ordering' to the expansion of the British Empire. Indeed, actions such as the annexation of islands, economic coercion, and violent interventions could be classified as 'imperial'. This dissertation counters this, given that for the foreign secretaries, 'empire' was not the desired end of these activities. Indeed, as Jeffrey Mankoff has pointed out, 'empire' has become 'a term of opprobrium', often 'used interchangeably' with 'imperialism'.[124] In the early nineteenth century, these activities were not envisioned as 'imperialistic' a term which, as Duncan Bell argues, was 'used for much of the Victorian period to characterise the despotic municipal politics of France; it was only in the late 1860s, and especially the 1870s, that it entered mainstream use to refer to policies of foreign conquest'.[125] As Donald Southgate put it many years ago, 'Palmerston's Britain was not ready for the positive, formal imperialism of the later nineteenth century'.[126] The Regency empire did not follow that logic but was rather, as put by Christopher Bayly, a 'reactive and pragmatic' empire, 'seeking to pre-empt rather than to colonise and above all to save money'—pre-emption and economisation being, as previously mentioned, the key objectives of 'ordering'.[127] Imperial expansion during the early century was only one of the ways Britain's leaders sought to deal with world disorder; as rightly put by Benton and Ford, 'historians have struggled to interpret these trends as part of a broader process of international ordering'.[128]

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[123] Douglas Peers, "The Duke of Wellington and British India during the Liverpool Administration, 1819-27," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 17, no. 1 (1988): 5–25.
[124] Jeffrey Mankoff, *Empires of Eurasia: How Imperial Legacies Shape International Security* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022), 6–7.
[125] Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 5n.
[126] Donald Southgate, *The Most English Minister: The Policies and Politics of Palmerston* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 143.
[127] Christopher Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989), 249.
[128] Benton and Ford, *Rage for Order*, 119.

The slaveholding order: the United States and Spain

Although this dissertation is focussed on British foreign policy, as a work of international history, it does shed light on some important elements of early nineteenth-century Atlantic geopolitics to which historians have not paid significant attention, in particular, the enormous foreign-policy agency of the United States and Spain in the Atlantic world, trying to advance a version of order opposite to Great Britain's in order to protect their slaveholding empires.

This dissertation shows that a great part of the 'disorder' Britain confronted was the result of the United States' attempt to expand a version of world order contrary to British interests. Like Britain, the United States was also motivated since the early 1800s to advance a version of political Atlantic order that would suit its national interests—namely the survival of the Union or what historians have come to describe as the 'Union paradigm', by which the U.S. approach to the world was conditioned by anxiety about the fragility of the Union and the necessity to be constantly balancing conflicting interests between states.[129] Whether for empire-craving Southerners or statesmen in the antislavery North, the triumph of Britain's abolitionist Atlantic order would represent a political victory of the British Empire over the American Republic—a *de facto* undoing of the colonists' victory in 1783, since it would force the United States to accept British imperial norms (including the maritime right of search) and risked the Union breaking up in slave revolution and war like Saint Domingue.

Nonetheless, most of the scholarship keeps the debate about the origins of American world order limited to the early twentieth century, and rarely does it look to the decades prior to the Civil War.[130] Not even Kyle Lascurettes mentions U.S. ordering in the nineteenth century through the Monroe Doctrine (1823), even though this clearly fitted with his theory about 'ordering to exclude' rivals from the international system.

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[129] See David Hendrickson, *Peace Pact: The Lost World of the American Foundling* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), ix–xiv; Jay Sexton, "An American System: The North American Union and Latin America in the 1820s," in *Connections after Colonialism: Europe and Latin America in the 1820s*, ed. Matthew Brown and Gabriel Paquette (Tuscaloosa: Alabama University Press, 2013), 143–47.

[130] Some examples include, Charlie Laderman, *Sharing the Burden: The Armenian Question, Humanitarian Intervention and Anglo-American Visions of Global Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); Michael Kimmage, *The Abandoment of the West: The History of An Idea in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 2020); Thomas David Schoonover, *Uncle Sam's War of 1898 and the Origins of Globalization* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003); James R. Holmes, *Theodore Roosevelt and World Order: Police Power in International Relations* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006).

Moreover, a great number of historians still take the United States as being largely dormant between the War of 1812 and the Mexican war (1846-8), and alien to any "world ordering" efforts. Most notably Walter Lafeber argues that it was only after 1846, and up to 1861, that the United States engaged in world politics with a vehemence and interest that would not be seen again until the Cold War.[131] Ada Ferrer's recent *Cuba: An American History* (2022), to cite another example, also tiptoes over the geopolitics of the 1820s and 1830s.[132] There is not much detail on pre-1850 great power clashes in Lester Langley's classic monograph on Caribbean geopolitics either. He concentrates especially on great power diplomacy with Mexico, mentioning the 1830s briefly and only to provide background to the severer crises of the late 1840s.[133] Mark Lawrence does point out that Spain's Carlist War (1833-9) activated U.S. aggressiveness towards the Spanish Atlantic world, but nevertheless does not engage significantly with this nor with the geopolitics of the slavery question in the 1830s, nor with the Atlantic implications of it.[134]

There are in the literature, however, some significant exceptions which have inspired this dissertation to look for traits of American world ordering in the nineteenth century confronting Britain's model. In *This Vast Southern Empire* (2016) Matthew Karp argues that U.S. Southern statesmen—largely in control of naval and foreign policy—'imagined an alternative slaveholding "history of the future"' and 'worked to actively build it'. Pro-slavery foreign policy was not simply about preserving slavery in the United States or expanding empire in the tropics, but about protecting 'systems of slave property across the hemisphere'.[135] Jay Sexton in his *The Monroe Doctrine* (2016), also points out the fact that early nineteenth-century American statesmen desired to 'embed in the fabric of international relations certain principles and structures'—including republicanism, radical liberalism, and, of course, protection of national institutions including slavery.[136] And like in Britain's case, this geopolitical necessity for an Atlantic order was combined with the philosophical, moral belief, as Caitlin Fitz puts it, that 'saw the Western

[131] Walter Lafeber, "The Constitution and United States Foreign Policy: An Interpretation," *Journal of American History* 74, no. 3 (1987): 695–717.
[132] Ferrer, *Cuba: An American History*.
[133] Lester Langley, *Struggle for the American Mediterranean: United States-European Rivalry in the Gulf-Caribbean, 1776-1904* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1976).
[134] Mark Lawrence, *The Spanish Civil Wars: A Comparative History of the First Carlist War and the Conflict of the 1930s* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 142.
[135] Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2016), 4, 7.
[136] Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 55.

Hemisphere not only as separate from Europe but also politically and morally superior'.[137] In this sense, American statesmen clearly followed in what John Bew argues constitutes a vocation for world order: a desire and will to 'guide the international future towards a more desirable destination'—although in this case, the 'desirable destination' included the abhorrent enslavement of the African race in the plantations of the Western Hemisphere.[138]

In its quest to confront British ordering, the United States found an unlikely ally in a monarchical power of old Europe: Spain. Most of the historiography of nineteenth-century international history does not consider the agency Spain still had in foreign policy: it is taken as a declining power with little to no influence in international affairs. Mark Lawrence argues that historians usually assume the (foreign) cultural perception of Spain being 'laggard in terms of modernity and venerable in terms of tradition' (almost a black legend bequeath).[139] Spanish historians in the twentieth century assumed the idea of Spain's decline in part due to the influence of the Francoist regime: the nineteenth century was seen as a period in which Spain was under the yoke of foreign powers and poisoned by liberalism. Federico Suárez Verdeguer, one of the most important diplomatic historians writing in that period, describes Spain as being 'internationally insignificant after Trafalgar'.[140]

Although in the 1980s and 1990s, a more liberal-inclined group of scholars—the so-called 'school of Valencia'—started to revise and refute this idea of Spain's irremediable international decline, they have not done so with regard to Spain's role in great power politics.[141] They have reconsidered the period 1840-68 as one of 'reactivation and international projection' in Spanish foreign policy, but still continue to follow old historiographical schemes about Spain's subordination to the great powers.[142] The canon established in the early twentieth century by Jerónimo Bécker's *Historia de las*

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[137] Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics: The United States in an Age of American Revolutions* (New York: Norton, 2016).
[138] Bew, "World Order," 14.
[139] Mark Lawrence, *Nineteenth-Century Spain: A New History* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 1.
[140] Federico Suárez Verdeguer, "La Intervención Extranjera En Los Comienzos Del Régimen Liberal Español," *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, no. 13 (1944): 412. (My translation).
[141] Lawrence, *Nineteenth-Century Spain*, 3. Some of the representatives of the Valencia school include Adrian Shubert and José Álvarez Junco, *Spanish History since 1808* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000); Juan Pablo Fusi and Jordi Palafox, *España, 1808-1996: El Desafío de La Modernidad* (Madrid: Espasa, 1997).
[142] Juan Bautista Vilar, "España En La Europa de Los Nacionalismos: Entre Pequeña Nación y Potencia Media (1834-1874)," in *La Política Exterior de España: Desde 1800 Hasta Hoy*, ed. Juan Carlos Pereira (Barcelona: Ariel, 2017), 538.

Relaciones Exteriores de España en el siglo XIX (1925) and reinforced by José María Jover's *España en la Política Internacional* (1999), by which Spain only acted abroad when Britain and France were in agreement and abstained from doing so when they were not, is still very present in the literature.[143] Some historians like Juan Vilar have expressly repeated Bécker's and Jover's canon, whereas others like Isabel Burdiel, author of the most recent and complete biography of Queen Isabella II, have shown preference for Spain's dependence only of one power—in her case, the Second French Empire to which Spain was 'subordinated to', she argues.[144] This canon (or 'dogma' in the words of Lawrence), has been systematically reproduced without critical questioning in all important studies of nineteenth-century Spain.[145]

This dissertation shows that it is absolutely simplistic if not gravely erroneous. Spain proved not only capable of turning against Britain and challenging its interests but also of doing so in colligation with the United States—both struggling to advance a form of Atlantic order favourable for their slaveholding empires. As will be seen in Chapter Four, Spain actually conducted rapprochement with the United States to protect Cuban slavery from British ordering. Rapprochement between Spain and the United States, which challenges the Bécker canon, has not attracted the attention of diplomatic historians (especially of Spanish ones) for two main reasons. The first is that historians have been conditioned by the assumption that the Quadruple Alliance (1834) and the Carlist war debt made Spain diplomatically dependent on Britain—as well as by the vision of Spain as a declining low-rank power with little to say in international affairs unless supported both by Britain and France.[146] Second, the overarching historiographical focus on the War

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[143] Jerónimo Bécker y González, *Historia de Las Relaciones Exteriores de España Durante El Siglo XIX: Apuntes Para Una Historia Diplomática*, vol. 2 (Pamplona: Analecta, 2006); José María Jover, *España En La Política Internacional, Siglos XVIII-XX* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 1999); José María Jover, "Caracteres de La Política Exterior de España En El Siglo XIX," in *Política, Diplomacia y Humanismo Popular: Estudios Sobre La Vida Española En El Siglo XIX*, ed. José María Jover (Madrid: Turner, 1976), 83–138.

[144] Vilar writes: 'When there was an understanding between France and the United Kingdom, Spain would go hand-in-hand with them; when there was none, Spain would not move'. (My translation). Vilar, "España En La Europa de Los Nacionalismos...," 540.

[145] Lawrence, *Nineteenth-Century Spain*, 127. See also: Juan Bautista Vilar, "Aproximación a Las Relaciones Internacionales de España, 1834-1874," *Historia Contemporánea*, 2011, 7–42; Juan Francisco Fuentes, *El Fin Del Antiguo Régimen (1808-1868): Política y Sociedad* (Madrid: Síntesis, 2008), 215; María Teresa Menchén, "La Cuádruple Alianza (1834). La Península Ibérica En Un Sistema Occidental," *Cuadernos de La Escuela Diplomática* ii (1989): 31–51.

[146] Menchén, "La Cuádruple Alianza (1834). La Península Ibérica En Un Sistema Occidental"; Manuel Rodríguez Alonso, *Gran Bretaña y España: Diplomacia, Guerra, Revolución y Comercio, 1833-1839* (Madrid: Actas, 1991); Lawrence, *Nineteenth-Century Spain*; Isabel Burdiel, *Isabel II: Una Biografía (1830-1904)* (Barcelona: Penguin, 2018); Vilar, "España En La Europa de Los Nacionalismos..."; Vilar, "Aproximación a Las Relaciones Internacionales de España, 1834-1874."

of 1898—the causes of which are usually analysed only in the short-term—has inclined U.S., British, and Spanish historians to assume that the United States had always been irrevocably set on the path to take Cuba, something that annuls *ad hoc* any possibility of considering a U.S.-Spanish rapprochement over Caribbean issues in previous decades.[147] But this alliance did exist and was primarily motivated by the British threat. Britain might have contributed to forge the Spanish liberal state in the 1830s, but when its ordering of the Atlantic began to threaten Cuban prosperity, Spain quickly sided with the United States. Only when the unbridled expansionist desires of the American South degenerated into filibusterism in the 1850s, did Spain turn again towards Britain. Until then however, British ordering gave both powers common cause to unite diplomatic efforts and, as put by Thomas Reynolds, the U.S. chargé d'affaires in Madrid in 1847, 'lay the foundations … on which speedily and easily to build up [relations] strongly again'.[148]

This dissertation thus considers in expansive transatlantic geopolitics in the nineteenth century, exploring the big tectonic movements occurring in the international system. The grand strategic picture from a perspective of clashing world orders has not been considered by historians, which largely keep the study of Atlantic geopolitics limited to the study of Anglo-American bilateral relations and clashes over Canada, the dynamics of informal imperialism in South America, and of course the questions of European states system—the Spanish Marriages issue of 1846 being the only one in which Spain his given relative attention.[149] This new take on British, U.S. and Spanish relations, will help

[147] Louis Pérez, *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); John L. Offner, *An Unwanted War: The Diplomacy of the United States and Spain over Cuba, 1895-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); John Lawrence Tone, *War and Genocide in Cuba, 1895-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Lawrence, *Nineteenth-Century Spain*. Histories of U.S. foreign policy and empire do not consider the 1840s rapprochement either. See: A.G Hopkins, *American Empire: A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); Steven Hahn, *A Nation without Borders: The United States and Its World in the Age of Civil Wars, 1830-1910* (New York: Penguin, 2017).

[148] Thomas Reynolds to James Buchanan, 18 Aug. 1847, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5313, 435.

[149] Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Kinley Brauer, "The United States and British Imperial Expansion, 1815-60," *Diplomatic History* 12, no. 1 (1988): 19–37; Rebecca Matzke, "Britain Gets Its Way: Power and Peace in Anglo-American Relations, 1838-1846," *War in History* 8, no. 1 (2001): 19–46; Nick Sharman, *Britain's Informal Empire in Spain, 1830-1950: Free Trade, Protectionism and Military Power* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); David McLean, "Trade, Politics and the Navy in Latin America: The British in the Paraná, 1845-46," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 35, no. 3 (2007): 351–70; David McLean, *War, Diplomacy and Informal Empire: Britain and the Republics of La Plata, 1836-1853* (London: British Academic Press, 1995); Laurence Guymer, "The Wedding Planners: Lord Aberdeen, Henry Bulwer, and the Spanish Marriages, 1841-1846," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 21, no. 4 (2010): 549–73; Roger Bullen, "The Great Powers and the Iberian

reconsider a period in which international history brings the question of Atlantic geopolitics to the fore, focussing on the contest between two polarly-opposed versions of world order.

Aims and methodology

The main question this project answer is: how did British statesmen envision disorder and pursue order in the Spanish Atlantic world between 1815 and 1867? The following questions stem from the former: Was there an evolution in the vision of disorder between 1815 and 1867, what factors accounted for it, and how did this affect British policy towards the Cuban Question? What policies did Britain use to order the Spanish Atlantic world? How and why do the tools of ordering, and the utilisation of these tools, change over time? How did the United States and Spain react to British ordering? What did the geopolitical struggle between the slaveholding empires and abolitionist Britain mean for Atlantic international politics? How did short-term political and tactical considerations hinder Britain's long-term plans for order, and what impact did this have on British ordering statecraft henceforth? To what extent had Britain managed to re-order the Atlantic by the 1860s? By answering these questions, this dissertation re-signifies the period 1815-1867 as one of profound Atlantic disorder and of clashing world orders, in which Britain tried to further its own version of order in competition with the United States.

This work resides at the intersection between imperial history, 'world order studies', slavery studies, and the recent emergence of a distinct scholarly area of enquiry into the history of the Atlantic world as a geographic and normative construct. A key aim is to bring into one sole analytical framework regions and events which historians have treated as separate but which were part of an aggregate Atlantic strategic picture. The dissertation will demonstrate the geopolitical dimensions of the question of the Cuban slave trade, which had significant strategic significance for Britain, the United States, and Spain. With reference to the slave trade question, this dissertation will also demonstrate how discourses of morality and state responsibility, which were incubated within domestic and transatlantic slavery debates from the late eighteenth century onwards, went on to materially shape British statesmen's understandings of order, disorder, and the

Peninsula, 1815-48," in *Europe's Balance of Power, 1815-1848*, ed. Alan Sked (London: Macmillan, 1979), 54–79.

right—or even duty—of Britain to remake the world in its self-perceived moral image. In this regard, one of this dissertation's important contributions is that it brings the latest literature on empires and order into dialogue with the latest scholarship on the abolition of the slave trade, whose diplomatic, strategic and geopolitical dimensions have remained understudied in recent decades even as the field has expanded hugely in terms of its breadth and depth. Finally, this dissertation will explore the deep contradictions (strategic and ethical) that Britain engaged when addressing the slave trade question in the Spanish Atlantic world, illustrating overarching tensions and outright contradictions policymakers faced when trying to apply ideas of world order in a competitive international system and the ultimate failure in the 1860s of the ordering project.

In order to provide this history of British struggle against Atlantic disorder, this dissertation will take on a systemic study of the big-, grand strategic-picture of Anglo-American-Spanish interactions in the Atlantic world. In terms of primary material, it takes on a thematic approach analysing the correspondence—private and public—relating to the Cuban Question of various statesmen: Canning, Wellington, Palmerston, Aberdeen, Clarendon, and Lord John Russell, mainly. The main focus is on holders of high office, but it not exclusive on them. Minor political figures sitting in the House of Commons or the House of Lords, such as Robert Wilson, William Huskisson, Lord Brougham, as well as the descendants of key abolitionists, like Thomas Macaulay or Bishop Wilberforce, delivered important speeches in parliament addressing issues of grand strategic nature which however are not reflected in many histories of the period.

The main focus has been placed on the analysis of the Slave Trade Papers at the National Archives. The historiographical fashion revitalising the agency of the slave and of small local histories in the slave-holding countries has taken historians studying abolition to the archives in Cuba, Brazil and other places around the Atlantic world, and away from those of the great powers orchestrating abolition or strategically protecting the slave trade.[150] This dissertation revisits this immense corpus of sources at F.O.84 which constantly referred to the transatlantic geopolitical implications of the slave trade—thus

[150] See, for example, Manuel Barcia, *The Great African Slave Revolt of 1825: Cuba and the Fight for Freedom in Matanzas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012); Jesús Sanjurjo and Manuel Barcia, "New Approaches to the Slave Trade, Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans," *Atlantic Studies : Global Currents* 17, no. 3 (2020): 297–301; Inés Roldán de Montaud, "The Misfortune of Liberated Africans in Colonial Cuba, 1824-1876," in *Liberated Africans and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1807-1896*, ed. Richard Anderson and Henry B. Lovejoy (New York: Universtiy of Rochester Press, 2020), 153–73.

constituting an invaluable source for the study of British ordering of Atlantic world through the abolitionist campaign.

Other important correspondence analysed includes the F.O. sections of the Spanish and U.S. embassies, the consular papers concerning Cuba and West Africa, and U.S. diplomatic correspondence in the volumes edited by William Manning. An important angle also analysed is the information that policymakers in London were receiving from agents on the field since this intelligence created their strategic perceptions of threats and disorder. The project looks not only at ambassadors and ministers but also at consular papers and the papers of the mixed commissions for the slave trade, all of which can give an interesting insight into the actual manifestations of 'disorder' on the ground. The small, apparently isolated issues—such as issues concerning piracy in the Caribbean Sea or the report of an isolated agent somewhere in the West Indies—triggered a much grander political response because they were considered symptoms of a more severe problem of international disorder. The initial restrictions on account of the pandemic, which closed archives and prevented travel for the first fourteen months of this PhD, have nonetheless given me the chance to focus great attention on the nineteenth-century edited volumes of correspondence of statesmen, which have not been closely read nor comprehensively considered by most historians in recent decades, but which still constitute a valuable and efficient source of evidence, and a perfect complement to the official records of the Slave Trade Papers.

Hansard is a key source at the heart of this study, as it has enabled a focussed keyword analysis of the speeches of key statesmen in search of the lexicon of order, disorder, and grand strategy. Settling for a basic conception of grand strategy—the long-term thinking of how the state can achieve its major goals, with what means, and how may it be affected by grand transformations of power at the international level—, speeches and correspondence of statesmen have been surveyed looking for language denoting long-term, big-picture thinking.[151] This has centred the search on key moments of geopolitical crisis in which statesmen discussed the particularities of the crisis but always alluding to the overarching state of things in both sides of the Atlantic. These crises include the colonial restoration crisis of the mid-1820s, revolutionary fear in Cuba amidst the Carlist War (1833-9), the independence and U.S. annexation of Texas (1837, 1845), the *Escalera* Conspiracy (1843-4), the filibuster expeditions to Canada (1838-9),

[151] This definition of grand strategy largely builds on the concept as outlined by Nina Silove, "Beyond the Buzzword: Three Meanings of Grand Strategy," *Security Studies* 27, no. 1 (2018): 27–57.

Cuba (1850-3) and Central America (1855-7), and the international crisis of the 1860s, of which the American Civil War was just an episode.

The same method has been applied to the published and unpublished correspondence. During these moments of crisis, statesmen used a series of words depending on the type of disorderly behaviour they were describing. For example, the individual executors of disorder—slave traders, rogue armies, or filibusters—are usually referred to with terms such as 'pirates', 'miscreants', 'adventurers', or people 'lacking in patriotism'. The idea of piracy underpins much of the discourse about disorder, but with regards to something larger in scale than mere pirate ships. The British would for example speak of 'piratical' or 'buccaneering republics' being set up in regions such as the Caribbean under the protection of the United States.

The second group of words used in the methodological approach is the group of words used when referring the disordering behaviours or policies of rival powers such as the United States or Spain. When referring to them, British statesmen turned to moral categories: 'arrogance', 'ambition', 'jealousy', 'corruption', 'perversion'. Particularly the malcontent for Catholic, slaveholding nations contributed to this infusion of moral judgement into political reasoning and grand strategic thinking. As to the actions of disorder, the verbs being used by British (but also American and Spanish) statesmen make reference to forms of strife: 'exciting insurrection/insubordination' and also 'interfering' and 'disturbing', are classic recurrences.

The general outcome of disorder was generally associated with 'evils' of difficult cure and management. Imagined future scenarios of disorder were described with very ominous words, such as 'wretchedness' and 'destruction', and included references to the de-evolution of human (and specifically white) civilisation, and the 'triumph of barbarism' and the 'savage races'. All of this lexicon of appears, both jointly and separately, in British official and private diplomatic correspondence. Essentially, statesmen in the nineteenth century perceived a wide variety of issues such as the danger of servile insurrection and war, the political struggle between great powers, the advent of different forms of government, economics, and morality, as part of an interconnected process of Atlantic transformation. The existence of a variety of perspectives of disorder points at a clear sophistication of strategic thinking in British foreign policy that breaks with previous conceptions about war, order, and great power politics.

The dissertation follows a thematic approach, looking at the series of Atlantic-world crises holistically and considering the nature and causes of disorder, the use of

violence in ‘ordering’, and the challenges to British ordering from within and without. Statesmen, as it will be seen, reflected upon these grander issues of international politics when they were trying to understand the dynamics of an ongoing crisis. Thus, instead of focusing solely upon the handling of individual crises, the focus is placed in the extent to which the language might reflect a perception of the Cuban Question and the Spanish Atlantic world in expansive, rather than issue-led terms. Careful attention will be paid to seeing whether their approaches to the Spanish world were framed in terms of ordering a world that was in disarray and that hindered Britain’s key interests, before Britain’s rivals did so. Careful attention will also be paid to the time-frame within which they think: where statesmen engage in thinking about (and planning for) the long-term, and where they apply a big-picture frame of reference, encompassing large regions like the Atlantic world, will support the view that they are thinking with a grand strategic mindset, rather than simply framing opportunistic responses to isolated crises. It will provide evidence that the disorder of the Western Hemisphere was connected to the other grand strategic questions of the time such as the expansion of U.S. power in the Americas, French power in Europe, and with the wider imperatives of British empire-building across the world and the ongoing activities of the ‘antislavery world system’. This will show that British understandings of and approaches to the Spanish world connected these grand strategic themes and the declining Spanish empire played a significant role in the configuration of a modern, Anglo-Saxon Atlantic order.

Thesis outline

The thesis is divided into six thematic chapters that holistically address British ordering of the Spanish Atlantic world in strategic competition with the United States between 1815 and 1867:

Chapter One focusses on the theme of disorder; it contends that when the dust settled after the Napoleonic Wars and Atlantic revolutions, the concept evolved to be associated with the foreign policy of rival ‘roguish’ powers, in particular with the United States, rather than with systemic phenomena, such as piracy or revolution. This chapter analyses how Castlereagh, Wellington, Canning, and Palmerston, as well as their agents across the Atlantic, regarded the United States as a power not only profiting from disorder

but also seeking to expand it, and how different visions about disorder defined different traditions in British statecraft.

Chapter Two explores from where British statesmen believed disorder originated, contending that they thought it was an intrinsically moral question: the crooked morality of foreign leaders was translated into a disordering foreign policy; this spurred an easy creation of dichotomy between others' immoral disorder and Britain's morally right order, which however came to articulate British foreign policy henceforth.

Chapter Three delves deeper into this idea of Britain as an international benign force and explores the role played by violence in world ordering, arguing that Britain used violence as an extension of its moral superiority and that, on account of this, it progressively became locked up in a spiral of morally-driven belligerence towards other powers.

Chapter Four analyses how the powers "suffering" Britain's violent ordering, Spain and the United States, responded to it. This chapter re-signifies the *Escalera* slave conspiracy (1843-4) as an inflection point for Atlantic geopolitics, arguing it triggered a powerful backlash of the slaveholding empires against Britain, consequently polarising the Atlantic and paving the way for a rival version of Atlantic order to emerge.

Chapter Five looks at how this increasing international competition occasioned much severer crises and contingencies that forced Canning and Palmerston to abandon grand strategic plans for order and focus on the short-term. This, however, did not impede a debate beginning in the British political establishment on whether the ordering preferences Britain had been crusading for since the 1820s should be readapted to the challenging world of 1850—something which will support the case for the existence of a primacy of foreign policy in British statecraft.

Chapter Six uses Britain's dilemma regarding intervention in the American Civil War as a case study to show that after forty years of aggressive ordering, Britain reached 1861 absolutely exhausted and was incapable of intervening in the conflict to secure its interests because it lacked both an objective and means to achieve it: ordering had been overstretched, the different ordering preferences Britain had articulated its Atlantic foreign policy (mainly around antislavery and free trade) collided with each other, rendering British statesmen incapable of setting out a clear path of action.

The conclusion reflects on how Britain's policy towards the Cuban Question shows that the post-revolutionary Atlantic was in a state of disarray in which the Anglo-Saxon powers fought each other in a tepid diplomatic, economic, and political contest to

further their own version of world order—a contest that could indeed be classified as a ‘cold war’.

Chapter 1

‘Such ingenious rogues’[1]

Agents of Atlantic disorder after 1815

Late in the summer of 1821, the Spanish royalist privateer *Panchita* seized the *Lord Collingwood*, a British brig carrying ‘rather leaky beef’ from Buenos Aires to Havana, and escorted her to Puerto Rico.[2] The prize court at Puerto Rico ruled that the ship had been captured as ‘good prize’ whilst conducting illegal trade with the rebellious colonies of South America.[3] Lord Castlereagh instructed the minister in Madrid, Sir Henry Wellesley, to demand of the Spanish government the immediate release of the ship and a reparation for the more than £6,000 the losses amounted to. The Spanish government refused an enquiry into the *Collingwood* case and, refused to pay any reparation or restore the ship.[4] When a year later, in September 1822, George Canning replaced Castlereagh as Foreign Secretary, the Foreign Office had still received no response to its communications on the case of the *Collingwood*. ‘We have been trifled with too long by the Spanish government in matters so vitally important [since] the year 1821!’, he complained to William A’ Court, the new British minister in Madrid.[5] Indeed, as both men were well aware, the *Collingwood* case was only one of many instances of Spanish privateer attacks on British merchant vessels.

The problem, Canning understood, was however far greater: it entailed ‘the utter relaxation of the authority of old Spain over the whole of that part of the world’.[6] Spain, incapable of commanding an efficient force against the insurgents, turned to privateering

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[1] Palmerston to Clarendon, 31 Dec. 1857, in *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902*, ed. Kenneth Bourne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 335.
[2] Matthew McCarthy, *Privateering, Piracy and British Policy in Spanish America, 1810-1830* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2013), 58.
[3] Prize Court Final Judgment, 22 Dec. 1821, no. 8, FO 316/1.
[4] Ana Clara Guerrero Mayllo, “La Política Británica Hacia España En El Trienio Constitucional,” *Espacio Tiempo y Forma. Serie V, Historia Contemporánea*, no. 4 (1991): 215–39; D.A.G. Waddell, “Anglo-Spanish Relations and the «Pacification of America» during the «Constitutional Trienium», 1820-1823,” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 46 (1989): 455–86.
[5] Canning to Sir William A’ Court, 18 Oct. 1822, WD *i*, 377-78.
[6] Canning to Wellington, 27 Sept. 1822, WD *i*, 304.

as a way of harassing the rebellious colonies of South America and their trading partners.[7] Pirates took cover in thickness of Cuban jungle and prepared the expeditions supported on occasions by island authority.[8] This made the island a direct objective of the Colombian, Mexican and American governments. Britain's recognition of the South American republics as independent would pressure Spain to accept meditation, forcing an end to the war and thus ending these perils. Britain would otherwise risk the restoration of Spain's abrasive commercial monopoly over the Americas, or the 'erection of a set of wild and buccaneering piratical republics'.[9]

The disorder emerging from the collapse of the Spanish empire was, to a certain point, a structural phenomenon—the disappearance of the imperial polity unleashed anarchy both in land and sea. Canning's tenure of the Foreign Office, however, brought about a deeper conception of the idea of 'disorder'. In the wake of dealing with the structural crisis of Spanish American emancipation, Canning observed that some powers were eager to profit from instability. Specifically, he pointed to the United States.

This chapter thus explores how in the early 1820s statesmen began to contextualise the situation of piracy, slave trading, filibustering in the wake of Atlantic revolution, as a broader problem of disorder associated with the actions of rival powers, particularly the United States, which were deemed interested in keeping the region unstable to further their strategic objectives whilst hindering Britain's.

This correlation between disorder and the actions of the great powers has not been widely considered by the scholarly literature. Studies of the phenomena amounting to 'disorder' in the nineteenth century tend to centre and emphasise the disorderly effects of pirates, privateers, and slave traders, 'set-piece villains of the *Pax Britannica'*, and Britain's policing of the seas against them.[10] By implicitly framing such actors as non-state—criminals of the high seas who escaped the justice of weak political authorities, or even shadowy yet crucial players in the 'Hidden Atlantic'—such histories downplay the

[7] See Rebecca Earle, "The Spanish Political Crisis of 1820 and the Loss of New Granada," *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 3, no. 3 (1994): 253–79; McCarthy, *Privateering, Piracy And...* ;
[8] Mark C. Hunter, "Anglo-American Political and Naval Response to West Indian Piracy," *International Journal of Maritime History* 13, no. 1 (2001): 63–65; Matthew McCarthy, "'A Delicate Question of a Political Nature': The Corso Insurgente and British Commercial Policy during the Spanish-American Wars of Independence, 1810–1824," *International Journal of Maritime History* 23, no. 1 (2011): 277–92.
[9] Canning to Wellington, 29 Oct. 1822, WD *i,* 465. (My emphasis).
[10] Benton and Ford, *Rage for Order*, 118.

role of states as active patrons and proponents of that disorder.[11] This is notably the case of Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford who condensed all of Britain's nineteenth-century ordering efforts to a 'post-Napoleonic preoccupation with lawfulness across the globe'.[12] The structural factor is implicit in that phrase: one can only be preoccupied with 'lawfulness' when the absence of higher law-enforcing authorities is rendering the system anarchic and lawless. Their overstatement of the structural phenomenality of disorder is in part the result of the legalist-constitutionalist approach they take, itself influenced by Wilhelm Grewe's *The Epochs of International Law* (1984). Grewe had also correlated the structural absence of law with forms of political disorder, and had seen British actions against this as key to making 'international law increase in scope to become universal'.[13] This legal ordering against structural anarchy (understood as the absence of law) is a valid *a posteriori* interpretation of the resulting effect of the British system of world order, but it is not the way in which British statesmen conceived disorder, at least not for the entire century.

Treating the phenomenon of disorder largely as a structural phenomenon—or even as an organic outworking of an absence of strong ordering forces—means that the agency of rival great powers in an active and intentional process of disordering is obscured. As to state agents behind disorder, Benton and Ford, like other historians, have tended solely to focus on the rapacious 'petty despots' sitting on the Barbary coast, the East Indies, or the River Plate, organising piratical and slave trading expeditions and harassing foreign commerce.[14] A great power like the United States remains part of the 'great power politics' chapter, away from minor disorderly phenomena.

However, as this chapter will show, Canning and his successors did not regard the early American republic as a fellow great power rival, but as a power whose elite mischievously engineered situations of instability in the Spanish Atlantic to further its

[11] On the "Hidden Atlantic" and the role of its actors (slave traders, pirates) and their influence on international politics see the works of Michael Zeuske, "Out of the Americas: Slave Traders and the Hidden Atlantic in the Nineteenth Century," *Atlantic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2018): 103–35; It has been Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); Rafe Blaufarb, *Bonapartists in the Borderlands: French Exiles and Refugees on the Gulf Coast, 1815-1840* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005).

[12] Benton and Ford, *Rage for Order*, 164.

[13] Wilhelm G. Grewe, *The Epochs of International Law* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 429.

[14] Benton and Ford, *Rage for Order*, 183. On the Barbary pirate regencies see Caitlin M. Gale, "Barbary's Slow Death: European Attempts to Eradicate North African Piracy in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Journal for Maritime Research* 18, no. 2 (2016): 139–54; and Vick, "Power, Humanitarianism and the Global Liberal Order: Abolition and the Barbary Corsairs in the Vienna Congress System."

national objectives—namely, the annexation of Cuba. The Spanish American revolutionary wars were thought to give the United States the opportunity to flex its naval muscle fighting off piracy, to become a great power patron to the emerging republics. The war also increased opportunities of a slave revolution taking place in Cuba and providing the motive for U.S. intervention.[15] Canning understood ending the war meant depriving the United States of such opportunities and 'cure all the evils and dangers of the present state of things in the West Indian seas'.[16]

In the following years, Lord Palmerston and his diplomatic agents around the Atlantic world started to see that the United States was not only profiting from disorder, but purposefully exacerbating instability to provoke a geopolitical rift from which to profit. Writing in 1839, amidst the first filibuster crisis into Canada, Henry Fox, the British minister in Washington D.C., warned Palmerston not to look to the War of 1812 to understand American behaviour and plan Britain's response because 'the objects and motives of discord are widely different now from then'.[17] And added later: 'Great Britain is in the Right and the United States in the Wrong, in the want of mischief ensuing'.[18] The minister was pointing out how competition with the United States was now going to be characterised by America's pulsion to disorder the world and Britain's effort to keep it in order. It was in the context of Anglo-American rivalry in the Spanish Atlantic, long before anything resembling a special relationship emerged, that British leaders started to articulate a clear understanding of active agent disorder as a major strategic threat.

Given that statesmen like Canning, Palmerston, and Villiers reiterated the noun 'rogue' in their correspondence to refer to powers (particularly the United States) engaging in disordering activities such as filibustering or the slave trade, this dissertation will refer to this category of disordering powers as 'roguish states'. This use of the term 'roguish state' should not be confused with the modern acceptation of the term 'rogue state'—a term popularised by President Bill Clinton's national security advisor Antony Lake to refer to post-Cold War authoritarian nations with a 'chronic inability to engage constructively in the outside world'.[19] Such definition of rogue state does not apply to the present context: whereas British leaders might have thought of the Barbary corsair

[15] Hunter, "Anglo-American Response to Piracy"; Piero Gleijeses, "The Limits of Sympathy: The United States and the Independence of Spanish America," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24, no. 3 (1992): 481–505. Kilbee to Planta, 3 Apr. 1824, no. [?], FO 72/304.
[16] Canning's memorandum to Cabinet, 15 Nov. 1822, CC *i*, 53.
[17] Henry Fox to Palmerston, 10 Aug. 1839, no. 34, FO 115/69.
[18] Fox to Palmerston, 13 Nov. 1839, no. 46, FO 115/69.
[19] Anthony Lake, "Confronting Backlash States," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 2 (1994): 46, 45.

regencies or the West African slave trading kingdoms in terms more analogous to Lake's definition, the roguish state they were truly worried about was not an ostracised Islamic piratical emirate but the United States of America, a power fully integrated in the family of nations. (It should be noticed that this was thought specifically of the United States, but not exclusively. France and Russia were sometimes also described to be engaging in disordering, for example by keeping their neighbouring regions 'barbarous and powerless' in order to keep them under their influence).[20]

As will be seen in the first section, signalling the United States as a roguish power in the Atlantic world also accounted for a major divergence in foreign policy thinking between two emerging traditions of British statecraft: those following in Castlereagh's strategy of appeasing the Americans and focussing on preserving the Concert of Europe, and those following in Canning's notion of the United States as main threat, the Western Hemisphere as an increasingly important theatre for British interests, and the Concert of Europe as a trap to quickly disentangle from.

The second section will then analyse how the statesmen following in Canning's strategic vision (notably Palmerston) envisioned that the United States expanded and increased disorder in the Spanish Atlantic: through a support for the slave trade, through filibustering expeditions, and finally, by thwarting Britain's strategic ability to deal with situations of disorder. This chapter will thus show that, beyond balance-of-power calculations, British leaders were concerned with a peculiar type of rival which instead of legitimately and lawfully competing in the international system "as an equal", did not abide by the rules of nations and expanded disarray as way of fulfilling its interests and halting opponents. Very much, it could be contended, like some powers the Western democracies face nowadays.

Canning and the threat of the roguish United States

In the immediate aftermath of the Congress of Vienna, regarding the Atlantic world, British politicians seemed to mainly worry about challenges to the 'laws of nations' and 'rules of expediency founded on international rights'—very much in the way Benton and Ford argue they did.[21] Crime in the high seas and queries about international law in the

[20] Villiers to Palmerston, 22 Sept. 1836, PV, 524.
[21] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 03 July 1822, vol. 7, c. 1866. (Joseph Marryat)

campaign against the slave trade were the predominant issues. After all, Napoleon had been the sole 'enemy and disturber of the tranquillity of the world', and after his defeat his vanquishers were left to the task of re-ordering the world he had shattered.[22] The enemies parliamentarians and ministers now signalled out were none other 'the common enemies of mankind', those 'sailing under a black flag, bearing the inscription "We are friends to plunder, and enemies to every power we come up with"'.[23] These essentially included non-state actors or very minor rogues in the system such as the Barbary regencies and Cuba—a piratical state which Spain could not control due to the 'disgusting and painful' South American revolutions that weakened its control over that quarter of the world.[24]

However, not all voices blamed disorder on non-state actors and phenomena such as piracy. Few situations had a greater capacity for disturbance than slave revolution in the West Indies. Historians have long considered the powerful 'spectre of Haiti' as an influence in the policies of colonial repression and retrenchment of tropical slavery conducted by many European colonial powers.[25] As it has been noted to be the case with Atlantic international history, the geopolitical side of this 'Haiti spectre' is still to be considered. Some statesmen stressed that the situation of ensuing Atlantic disorder was the fault of certain ill-minded powers looking to hinder Britain and profit from instability—perhaps by weaponizing a slave revolt. Among these powers, was the United States.

Robert May has argued that visions of the United States as a 'rogue state' were common in European and Central American public opinion in the 1850s, during the surge

[22] Vienna Declaration read by Castlereagh to the House of Commons. *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 07 Apr. 1815, vol. 30, cc. 374-375.
[23] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 03 July 1822, vol. 7, cc. 1859, 1862- 1863. (Joseph Marryat, Sir George Cockburn).
[24] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 03 July 1822, vol. 7, c. 1866 (Stephen Lushington); *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 23 July 1822, vol. 7, c. 1729 (Joseph Marryat); *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 20 Mar. 1815, vol. 30, c. 302. (Castlereagh).
[25] See, for example, Carrie Gibson, "'There Is No Doubt That We Are under Threat by the Negroes of Santo Domingo': The Specter of Haiti in the Spanish Caribbean in the 1820s," in *Connections after Colonialism: Europe and Latin America in the 1820s*, ed. Matthew Brown and Gabriel Paquette (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013), 223–35; Ada Ferrer, "Speaking of Haiti: Slavery, Revolution, and Freedom in Cuban Slave Testimony," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, ed. David Geggus and Norman Fiering (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 223–48; Ferrer, "Cuban Slavery and Atlantic Antislavery"; Manuel Barcia, "'A Not-so-Common Wind': Slave Revolts in the Age of Revolutions in Cuba and Brazil," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 31, no. 2 (2008): 169–93; Gaffield, "Haiti and Jamaica."

in filibustering.[26] However, this perception preceded the filibuster problem by decades and had an enormous significance in shaping British strategy. Previously, in the 1810s that abolitionist James Stephen flagged the possibility of this spectre of revolution being used as spearhead by Britain's rivals in the Atlantic: France and, particularly, the United States. In *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies* (1802) he had pointed out how 'our natural enemy' would be 'placed in a capacity of annoyance not less formidable than unparalleled: … at least two hundred thousand adult male negroes of whom probably a third part are already inured in some degree of arms, at the door of our most valuable settlement and ready to assist the ambition of the [French] Republic'.[27] This is probably one of the first interpretations of agent disorder: a rival power flinging the forces of disruption (such as a black revolutionary government) at Britain.

In a memorandum he sent to Castlereagh on the eve of the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle (1818), the subject of Stephen's fears had changed from France to the United States. He believed the United States, 'a power not very scrupulous as to the means of gratifying its ambition', would certainly try to use Haiti's 'inflamed military spirt' as '*point d'appui* ... for belligerent purposes' against Britain in the Atlantic. This would mean, he starkly put it, 'a danger to the Western world'.[28] Stephen laid the definitional basis of agent disorder—the disturbance or 'annoyance' of British (and civilisation's) interests by a rival power's intentional exacerbation or aggravation of a problem of structural disorder (such as the slave trade)—and pointed to the probable disordering agents. In other words, he believed particular states strove to spread 'mischief' to expand their interests and hinder Britain's.

Canning's return to the Foreign Office in 1822 consolidated the idea of the United States a roguish state of the kind, willing 'to interfere directly and by force' in Cuba because 'it conceives that the interests of the United States would be so directly affected by … the occupation of Havana'.[29] Over the following years, British diplomats in Madrid would in vain try to get successive Spanish governments to understand that Cuba was

[26] Robert E. May, "The United States as Rogue State: Gunboat Persuasion, Citizen Marauders, and the Limits of Antebellum American Imperialism," in *America, War and Power: Defining the State, 1775-2005,* ed. Lawrence Sondhaus and A. James Fuller (New York: Routledge, 2007), 29–63.
[27] Stephen, *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies,* 86-7.
[28] Stephen's memorandum to Castlereagh, 8 Sept. 1818, *Castlereagh Correspondence,* iv, 18.
[29] Quoted in Harold Temperley, "The Later American Policy of George Canning," *American Historical Review* 11, no. 4 (1906): 792.

'peculiarly exposed to the operations and intrigue of neighbouring countries' and that the slave trade increased this 'exposition'.[30]

This was a major breakpoint with his predecessor, Castlereagh. Historians like John Bew and William Hay have shown that in grand strategic preferences (especially non-intervention and the Eastern Question), Canning's foreign policy was not so different from Castlereagh's.[31] Their attitude towards the United States, however, represents the most significant difference between them and enduring schism between future Canningites and Castlereaghans.

Castlereagh was quite the Americanophile: although he despised republicanism, he did not see in the United States a Jacobin radical state, rather a partner of the Atlantic family of nations. Bradford Perkins showed that he was keen to cultivate good relations with the Americans on account of an affinity that transcended mere strategic considerations of preventing Franco-American collusion.[32] Indeed, Castlereagh saw in the United States a nation 'whose interests were … naturally and closely connected' to Britain's.[33] As Bew put it, he 'was the first British Foreign Secretary to emphasise the community of interests which might emerge between the two nations', in most occasions against the opinions the press, public opinion and his own cabinet colleagues.[34]

For Canning this was far from the case. His bourgeois-commercial Liverpool background, as well as his bitter experience with the Madison Administration during his first tenure as Foreign Secretary in the Duke of Portland's ministry (1807-09), made him see the United States as the main obstacle to British commercial and political interests.[35] But rather than contempt for America's militant republicanism, as Perkins suggested, Canning's resentment of the United States had to do with a primarily geopolitical

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[30] Villiers to Francisco Martínez de la Rosa, 12 Apr. 1834, enclosed in Villiers to Palmerston, 15 Apr. 1834, no. 1, FO 84/155.

[31] See John Bew, "'From an Umpire to a Competitor': Castlereagh, Canning and the Issue of International Intervention in the Wake of the Napoleonic Wars," in *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, ed. Brendan Simms and D.J.B. Trim (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 117–38; William Anthony Hay, "Lord Liverpool: Alliances, Intervention and the National Interest," in *The Tory World: Deep History and the Tory Theme in British Foreign Policy, 1679-2014*, ed. Jeremy Black (London: Routledge, 2016), 103–19.

[32] See Bradford Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams: England and the United States, 1812-1823* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964).

[33] Lord Castlereagh, 14 Feb. 1816, *The Parliamentary Debates from the year 1803 to present time*, xxii (London, 1816; acc. Google Books), 587.

[34] Bew, *Castlereagh*, 445–48.

[35] On Canning's clash with the Madison Administration and the build up to war of 1812 see Bradford Perkins, "George Canning, Great Britain, and the United States, 1807-1809," *American Historical Review* 63, no. 1 (1957): 1–22.

question.[36] He did not only see in the United States an aggressive expansionist power whose 'ambitious and overbearing views are becoming daily more developed', but also a power which profited from disorder in the Spanish world and, more important, exacerbated it in various ways.[37]

Canning stepped into the Foreign Office in 1822 believing that disorder in the Western Hemisphere was the result of Spain 'lacking the will and power' to bring order back to its former lands and 'even in the colonies which remain nominally in allegiance to it'.[38] No power, he believed, benefited from this situation; it is 'productive of other inconveniences to other states', he acknowledged, something which reinforces the idea of this being a systemic, a common problem.[39] Evidence from the West Indies, however, soon convinced him that that the United States was not suffering from disorder but actually was taking advantage of it to the point of seeking to encourage it. In the early autumn of 1822, he received a letter (it was addressed at the late Castlereagh) from a Mr Wilmont, a British agent in St Thomas Island, in which it was stated that the U.S. warship *Grampus*, assigned to the antipiracy patrol, was actually trying to provoke a clash with the Spanish privateer fleet 'with anxious hopes that it would lead to a Spanish war and the capture of Cuba and Puerto Rico'.[40] Canning was deeply worried by this news. He sent this Wilmont report to Wellington, who was at the Congress of Verona, adding: 'see how the Yankees deal with royal Spanish privateers which take liberties with their commerce. I hope I may not have to tell you, before you return, that the Yankees have occupied Cuba'.[41] He officially informed the Cabinet of the situation in his November 1822 memorandum: 'The United States of America not contented with punishing the capturing vessels with capture … shall insist upon taking security against the like attacks upon the commerce of its citizens in the future, and shall make the military occupation of Cuba a part of that security'.[42] The situation had changed. It was not that the United States was profiting from other's piracy and privateering but rather that, on top of structural

[36] Bradford Perkins, *Prologue to War: England and the United States, 1805-1812* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 14.
[37] Canning to Liverpool, 7 Jul. 1826, CC *ii*, 73.
[38] Canning to A' Court, 18 Oct. 1822, WD *i*, 380.
[39] Canning to A' Court, 18 Oct. 1822, WD *i*, 379-80.
[40] Mr Wilmot to the Marquess of Londonderry, 6 Aug. 1822, enclosed in Canning to Wellington, 8 Nov. 1822, WD *i*, 513.
[41] Canning to Wellington, 8 Nov. 1822, WD *i*, 511.
[42] Canning's memorandum for Cabinet, 15 Nov. 1822, CC *i*, 56.

disorder, the United States was increasing the tension in the region to further its objectives.

Canning centred the South American recognition debate, which began directly after this and continued up to 1824, around the rapidly-evolving notion that the situation of disorder benefited the United States. He concluded in his 1824 memorandum that leaving 'so large a part of the world for any length of time in a state of outlawry' meant 'throwing the wealth, the power and the influence of these great dominions into the hands of the people of the United States'.[43] Prime Minister Lord Liverpool clearly followed in Canning's thesis. He tried to persuade anti-recognition cabinet ministers like Wellington with the following argument: 'if we allow these new states to consolidate their system and their policy with the United States of America, it will in a very few years prove fatal to our greatness, if not endanger our safety'.[44] Recognition of the new states would lead to the 'erection of responsible forms of government on the Spanish American continent', in other words under the influence of Britain, and would thus entail 'the abolition of a conflict of maritime pretensions and jurisdictions'.[45] It was imperative to do this quickly because the chance existed that the United States would otherwise extend its influence over them and lock Britain out of the region: 'it must be recollected that our abstinence will not necessarily much retard that constitution, if other powers do not hesitate as long as we'.[46]

The recognition debate also evidenced the existence of differing traditions within British statecraft. It was long ago that Muriel Chamberlain argued that two political traditions—the anti-Concert of Europe Canningites (Canning, Palmerston, Lord Grey, Lord Melbourne, Lord John Russell) and the pro-Congress system Castlereaghans (Castlereagh, Wellington, Aberdeen, Sir Robert Peel, Lord Derby, Lord Salisbury)—dominated British foreign policy in the nineteenth century.[47] However, historians have rightly stressed the dangers of tracing too stark differences between them; traditions were porous, mixed with party politics, domestic policy and finance (not just foreign policy),

[43] Canning's memorandum for Cabinet, 30 Nov. 1824, WD *ii*, 356.
[44] Earl of Liverpool to Wellington, 8 Dec. 1824, WD *ii*, 366.
[45] Canning to Wellington, 29 Oct. 1822, WD *i*, 465.
[46] Canning to Wellington, 29 Oct. 1822, WD *i*, 465.
[47] Muriel Chamberlain, *"Pax Britannica"? British Foreign Policy, 1789-1914* (New York, 1984), 4–18; and *British Foreign Policy in the Age of Palmerston* (Harlow, 1980).

and more often than not statesmen held views belonging to them both (notably Palmerston and Peel, who shared in elements of both Castlereagh and Canning).[48]

Nonetheless, the question of recognition and the reasons driving its supporters (Canning, Liverpool, William Huskisson) and its detractors (Wellington, Peel, the Earl of Westmorland, George IV), illustrates that the division between both traditions did indeed exist and it was on account of visions of 'disorder' and Britain's supposed role as an ordering power.

The Castlereaghan tradition shared in basic principles of Conservatism—spreading from ideological affinity with monarchical legitimism, to staunch opposition to Catholic emancipation (which Canning favoured), advocacy for the Corn Laws, and consecration to the Concert of Europe.[49] It also advocated for a small "c" conservative conduction of policy that would preserve existing equilibria and *status quo*. This made them staunch opposers of reform, both domestically and also internationally, often bridging both realms. Castlereagh, for example, opposed the Greek insurrection and supported the Ottoman Empire fearing that conceding independence to the Greeks would threaten monarchical stability throughout Europe.[50] Wellington, on his part, also questioned whether it could ever be expected for the West Indies to remain in peace if 'saints and sinners in England choose to discuss the question of negro emancipation' regardless of the 'consequences of the daily excitation of the negro population'.[51]

The key cause of disorder (potentially explosive geopolitical situations), Castlereaghans found in rupture with the *status quo*—specifically with Canning's rupture with the established order of the Restoration. Wellington agreed with Austrian Chancellor Prince von Metternich that abandoning the Concert of Europe regarding the Spanish

[48] Richard Gaunt, "From Country Party to Conservative Party: The Ultra-Tories and Foreign Policy," in *The Tory World: Deep History and the Tory Theme in British Foreign Policy, 1679-2014*, ed. Jeremy Black (New York: Routledge, 2016), 152–53.

[49] See Mark L. Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789-1989* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 91–94. On the key issues underpinning Tory ideology (and accounting for the Tory split of 1846) see the seminal works of Boyd Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce: The Economic Policies of the Tory Government, 1815-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); R. W. Davis, "The Tories, the Whigs, and Catholic Emancipation, 1827-1829," *English Historical Review* 97, no. 382 (1982): 89–98; Paul Adelman, *Peel and the Conservative Party, 1830-1850* (London: Routledge, 2014); Norman Gash, *Sir Robert Peel: The Life of Sir Robert Peel after 1830* (Harlow: Longman, 1972).

[50] See the recent article by Jay Mens, "The Eastern Question as a Moral Question: European Order, Political Compromise, and British Policy Towards the Greek Revolution (1821–1828)," *International History Review*, 2022, 1–15, https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2022.2140177 (Published online). .

[51] Wellington to the Earl Bathurst, 26 Dec. 1824, WD *ii*, 380; Wellington's memorandum to Cabinet on defence, 1 Jan. 1825, WD *ii*, 391.

American question placed Britain in a 'a system of complete isolation', but the duke went beyond that.[52] 'I am aware', he wrote in 1824, 'of the mischief which it does to us as well as to the world'.[53] Castlereaghans clearly believed that Canning's abandonment of the Britain's role as patron of the Concert order fostered disorder.

The prosecution of Irish Catholic leader Daniel O'Connell in late 1824 provides an interesting case to tease out Wellington's, Peel's (then Home Secretary) and others', understanding of 'disorder' as such.[54] O'Connell had issued a 'seditious' proclamation in which he expressed 'hope [that] some Bolivar will arise to vindicate their rights … if Parliament does not attend the Roman Catholic claims'.[55] He thus had to be prosecuted for 'exciting the people of Ireland to rebel after the example of those in Colombia'.[56] The existence of an 'Irish legion' in the wars of Spanish American represented a transnational connection between both cases—a connection British statesmen knew could have dangerous implications for British rule in Ireland.[57] The origin of this renewed 'seditious tendency', Castlereaghans saw it, laid in Canning's connivance with revolutionary disorder in the Americas: holding that 'the people of Colombia are guilty of no crime, and that Bolivar is a hero and no rebel', had encouraged this disorder in Ireland, where now there was no ground to persecute O'Connell.[58] 'This unexpected view of the O'Connell case has only tended to confirm all my objections to our unfortunate decision on these [Spanish] colonies', wrote Wellington, who realised it was 'an inconsistency to prosecute and punish Mr O'Connell for holding up the insurrection of the people of South America and the conduct of Bolivar to the imitation of the people of Ireland, at the very moment at which are going to make a treaty with Bolivar'.[59] Wellington had long envisioned acting with consistency in Ireland as important for British rule there: 'we want in Ireland the influence of manners as well as laws'; but how to achieve this if Britain engaged in so flagrant an inconsistency regarding rebellion in the island and rebellion in

[52] Prince Klemens von Metternich to Wellington, 11 Feb. 1824, WD *ii*, 207. (My translation. Original text: '*le gouvernement Britrannique semble se vour à un système d'isolament complet'*).
[53] Wellington to Metternich, 24 Feb. 1824, WD *ii*, 222.
[54] Sir Robert Peel to Wellington, 29 Dec. 1824, WD *ii*, 383.
[55] Peel to Wellington, 29 Dec. 1824, WD *ii*, 384.
[56] Wellington to Peel, 30 Dec. 1824, WD *ii*, 385.
[57] On this connection see: Matthew Brown, *Adventuring through Spanish Colonies: Simón Bolívar, Foreign Mercenaries and the Birth of New Nations* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006); Jose Brownringg-Gleeson, "Fighting an Empire for the Good of the Empire? Transnational Ireland and the Struggle for Independence in Spanish America," *Radical History Review*, no. 143 (2022): 32–49.
[58] Wellington to Peel, 30 Dec. 1824, WD *ii*, 385.
[59] Wellington to Peel, 26 Dec. 1824, WD *ii*, 377.

the Americas?[60] Precisely because of this he had warned Canning in 1822 against Spanish American recognition on account of 'the origin of the dispute with the colonies' being a revolution: 'If we go further, we shall lose our character for justice and forbearance, which after all is what constitutes our power', he had written.[61] Now Britain faced the uncomfortable position of bringing 'the rebel Bolivar and the rebel state of Colombia into diplomatic relation with His Majesty at the very in which we prosecute Mr O'Connell for holding them up as examples to the people of Ireland'.[62] Peel was particularly worried that Canning's revolutionary policy in America would condition the government's response to the Irish problem: 'nothing would be more fatal than to abandon the prosecution on the ground that O'Connell had appealed to Bolivar's example'; it would imply 'that it is quite safe to hold up Bolivar's example in Ireland', he told the duke.[63]

Castlereaghans essentially saw Canning's policy had put Britain in the wrong: 'we are all right in Ireland [prosecuting O'Connell's sedition]; but the mischief is that we are wrong elsewhere [supporting sedition in America]', wrote Wellington.[64] King George IV—who despised Canning's anti-Concert of Europe stance, and conspired with Austrian and Hanoverian agents to get rid of him—also agreed that Britain's connivance with revolution in the Western Hemisphere was encouraging grave disorder elsewhere.[65] 'The liberalism of late adopted by the King's government' as to the South American colonies, he wrote to Liverpool, was separating Britain 'from our Allies' and 'will very soon lead to consequences that will end in disturbing the tranquility of Europe'.[66] Perhaps the most vivid example of this type of Castlereaghan thinking was provided by Lord Westmorland, Lord Privy Seal, who argued that by following Canning's thesis 'we are erecting ourselves into *grand signors'* of the world.[67] The term '*grand signor*' is not used by any chance: since the sixteenth century, Europeans had used this term to refer to Ottoman rulers—thus Westmorland evoked the imagery Oriental anarchy and despotism to refer to the results of Canning's foreign policy.

[60] Wellington to the Earl of Clancarty, 6 June 1822, WD *i*, 241.
[61] Wellington to Canning, 10 Nov. 1822, WD *i*, 517.
[62] Wellington to Peel, 30 Dec. 1824, WD *ii*, 385.
[63] Peel to Wellington, 29 Dec. 1824, WD *ii*, 383.
[64] Wellington to Peel, 2 Jan. 1825, WD *ii*, 395.
[65] On the king's scheming to get rid of Canning see Harold Temperley, "Canning, Wellington, and George the Fourth," *English Historical Review* 38, no. 150 (1923): 206–25.
[66] George IV to Liverpool, 27 Jan. 1825, WD *ii*, 402. (Emphasis in original).
[67] Earl of Westmorland to Wellington, 16 Oct. 1823, WD *ii*, 151.

Canning's vision of global politics was quite different. He believed that 'at the present state of the world no questions relating to continental Europe can be more immediately and vitally important to Great Britain than those which relate to America'.[68] The emergence of the United States and the destabilising potential of Atlantic issues (notably collapse of the Spanish empire and its danger to Cuba) were responsible for this. To those following in the axiomatic Atlantic principles of this tradition, this dissertation will refer to as 'Canningites'—given that followed strategic vision once held by Canning. It is important to emphasis, that the term is here used to define a grand strategic tradition. 'Canningite' is a term historians use to refer to the faction of Oxford friends and devotees of Pitt the Younger which grouped together under Canning's leadership within the splintered Tory Party in the 1820s.[69] These included men like William Huskisson, Lord Grenville, former prime minister Lord Sidmouth (Henry Addington), and eventually Palmerston as well.[70] From this 'Canningite party' emerged notions of liberal Toryism different from the more conservative positions held by the core of the Party regarding Catholic Emancipation and economic liberalism.[71]. In terms of foreign policy, 'Canningite' has merely been applied to a peculiar use of foreign policy rhetoric and discourse to manipulate public opinion—just like Canning (and Palmerston after him) often did—not to strategic preferences.[72] It is important to emphasise that the 'Canningite' tradition this dissertation refers to are not exactly the followers of his party but those sharing in Canning's strategic vision of the Atlantic. This strategic view was Palmerston's, who indeed had been Canningite in the proper sense of the term, but also Clarendon's, who had not.

The 'Canningites' understood the importance of Europe, the geopolitical core and the one place from where an invasion of the British Isles could be launched, but understood it as part of a broader Atlantic picture. Essentially, they did not advocate for a continental-based strategy. It is important to note that this Canningite Atlantic vision was distinctly opposed to the Hanoverian connection that still casted its shadow over

[68] Canning's memorandum for Cabinet, 15 Nov. 1822, CC *i,* 48.
[69] See the long paper by A. Aspinall, "The Canningite Party," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 17, no. 4 (1934): 176–226.
[70] Stephen M. Lee, "Palmerston and Canning," in *Palmerston Studies I*, ed. David Brown and Miles Taylor (Southampton: University of Southampton, 2007), 1–19; A. Aspinall, "The Last of the Canningites," *English Historical Review* 50, no. 200 (1935): 639–69.
[71] See David Craig, "Tories and the Language of 'Liberalism' in the 1820s," *English Historical Review* 135, no. 576 (2020): 1195–1228.
[72] Jonathan Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism: English Liberalism, National Identity and Europe, 1830-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 47.

British politics. It was through the personal union with Hanover that both George IV and William IV (as kings of Hanover) interfered with foreign policy and dragged Britain into thorny issues concerning constitutionalism and anti-liberal intervention in Germany—very much to Canning's and Palmerston's distaste.[73] For the statesmen of this tradition, Hanover represented royal interference in foreign policy and an unwelcomed British military and political compromise with Europe. Palmerston celebrated the end of the Union upon the death of William IV in 1837 because 'for a century it has embarrassed and impeded our march both at home and abroad'.[74]

As it can be seen, the question of Atlantic order was central to British statesmen in the 1820s; it was believed that disorder abroad hindered the nation at home—a clear example of the 'primacy of foreign policy' not only in the sense of foreign policy being a prime issue of the domestic political debate, but in the sense that international dynamics were seen to directly affect the British nation. Castlereaghans believed connivance with anti-monarchical disorder in America would foster disorder at home, whilst Canningites (quoting General Robert Wilson) believed that 'mischief … must ensue, not only to our national character, but to our internal condition, from a continuance of an unsettled state of things in those countries [South America]'.[75] Atlantic order thus became a central issue for both traditions because a favourable one was key for British interests and even national survival. Precisely because of this, they were bound, as will be seen in Chapter Three, to disagree in the ways to achieve Atlantic order and tackle disorder.

The ways of disorder: 'adventurers', 'squatters', and strategic boycott

Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, statesmen following Canning's strategic vision about the United States (Palmerston, Villiers and their agents in the Atlantic world, mainly Henry Theo Kilbee and Henry Fox), started to signal certain geopolitical phenomena as having been encouraged by the U.S. government to increase disorder in the Atlantic and thus further U.S. strategic goals.

[73] See Christopher D. Thompson, "The Hanoverian Dimension in Early Nineteenth-Century British Politics," in *The Hanoverian Dimension in British History, 1714-1837*, ed. Brendan Simms and Torsten Riotte (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 86–111.
[74] Palmerston to Frederick Lamb, 12 June 1837, quoted in Thompson, 108.
[75] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 08 Feb. 1830, vol. 22, c. 218. (Robert Wilson)

Firstly, they regarded the United States was using the slave trade as a vector to facilitate the annexation of Cuba. As Palmerston put it in 1851, 'another element of danger with reference to the designs which adventurers from the United States … is the vast number of slaves which the island contains'.[76] From the 1820s, British officials started considering the possibility that the United States was encouraging and protecting the slave trade precisely to disrupt the Caribbean environment and have a chance of annexing Cuba. Even though slave revolution is thought to be precisely what the Americans wanted to avoid, British agents understood they sought it as a necessary step prior to annexation. As Kilbee noted, a slave revolution gave the United States the opportunity to 'obtain the great object of their ambition' by making the intervention justifiable 'both on the ground of humanity and upon that of protecting the lives and property of their own citizens'.[77]

It is clear from the correspondence that British statesmen believed in the existence of an American long-term plan for the takeover of Cuba. For example, when in late 1836 an Uruguayan businessman in Madrid came to George Villiers, the British minister, with rumours of an imminent U.S. invasion, the British minister dismissed it as a 'cock and bull story'.[78] As he told Palmerston, 'the United States are lying in wait for Cuba as a tiger does for its prey'.[79] This imagery of the stealthily stalking tiger illustrates how British leaders knew the plan of the United States was to wait until the proper moment, the moment in which a Haitian-like catastrophe took place in Cuba or appeared imminent. It was understood the slave trade served in this long-term plan.

Cuba was indeed a prime objective of successive U.S. administrations since the Louisiana Purchase (1803) but it is thus highly improbable that there was direct American involvement in revolutionising the island's slave population to achieve this.[80] Annexation was a crucial element of to the 'Union paradigm': the way in which Cuba entered the Union might decide its fate: Northerners wanted to impede the slaveholding states from increasing their representation in the Senate, hence why they wanted to annex Cuba without slavery; Southerners, on their side, regarded Cuba as the way to enhance their position in the Union and protect their slaveholding economies from revolutionary

[76] Palmerston to the Lord Howden, 7 Apr. 1851, no. 12, FO 84/836.
[77] Kilbee to Planta, 8 Feb. 1825, pvt. no. 3, FO 72/304.
[78] Villiers to Palmerston, 15 Dec. 1836, PV, 572.
[79] Villiers to Palmerston, 8 Apr. 1837, PV, 629.
[80] The context of U.S. ambitions over Cuba in the early 1800s can be found in Horne, *Race to Revolution.*

contagion coming from the Caribbean.[81] Cuban slavery was intimately connected with the slavery and sectional questions within the United States.

Nevertheless, British agents in Cuba and statesmen in Whitehall were convinced that the United States did seek to stir up trouble in the island in order to annex it. Only months prior to the 1825 great slave revolt of Matanzas, Kilbee reported that 'the constant state of doubt and agitation most uncomfortable to tranquillity' was the result of the 'machinations of neighbouring countries'.[82] This did not relate only to Colombian and Mexican schemes. As early as 1820, much earlier than historians have considered the United States began to intermeddle in Cuba, Kilbee had noted American agents in the island were setting up a pro-annexation party among Creole landowners and merchants. These American agents 'are undoubtedly the most intelligent and most active persons here', and were moved 'above all by the hope that the slave trade would be saved' and the island afforded 'the protection it requires'.[83] British officials knew that this befriending of the Cuban Creoles was part of Washington's strategy to destabilise Cuba. The government would eventually make it clear that any 'pretended declaration of independence' from the Creoles 'with a view of immediately seeking refuge from revolts on the part of the blacks under the shelter of the United States would justly be looked upon as the same in effect as formal annexation'.[84]

In his May 1824 secret memorandum to Canning, Kilbee stated that the problems in the island had an external causation. He wrote 'this island is ripe for revolution' but at the same claimed that 'at the present moment, little danger is to be apprehended from the internal state of the island; the real danger is from without'.[85] He insisted on this again in September after learning from the Captain General of Cuba in late 1824 that the colonial government knew of U.S. agents stationed in the island 'expecting and desiring an explosion': 'Our greatest danger will still be from without'.[86]

The British also saw the considerable involvement of American capital and citizens in the Cuban slave trade, as well as the U.S. government's refusal to sign conventions against the slave trade, made it evident to British parliamentarians and

[81] Michael Kochin and Michael Taylor, *An Independent Empire: Diplomacy and War in the Making of the United States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020), 68–70.
[82] Kilbee to Planta, 10 Sept. 1824, pvt. no. 13, FO 72/304.
[83] Kilbee to William Hamilton, 30 June 1820, pvt. no. 13, FO 72/261.
[84] Russell to John Crampton, 16 Feb. 1853, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, VII, Doc. 2998, 492-493.
[85] Kilbee to Canning, 12 May 1824, (secret), FO 72/304.
[86] Kilbee to Planta, 10 Sept. 1824, pvt. no. 13, FO 72/304.

government officials that the United States had a clear interest in the dangerous slave trade ensuing. Indeed, as extensive literature has shown, despite having abolished the trade and officially persecuting it, the United States remained one of most involved nations in the traffic. New York in particular boomed as a slave trading metropolis —its connection with Havana and the Dahomey in Africa being a central element of Atlantic commerce.[87]

Although some radicals (and Tories) did contend that no one could doubt that 'the United States meant in good faith to co-operate with us in effecting the suppression of the slave trade', a significant number of British statesmen understood that the U.S. government was involved in the disordering actions of its agents and citizens.[88] Many expressed 'astonishment' at 'a nation which had made the rights of man the basis of their legislation, and declared the slave trade to be a piracy' for allowing 'if not the flag of the United States, at least the capital of its subjects to be employed in it'.[89] The cognitive dissonance of these parliamentarians cannot go unnoticed: as it as it has been vastly studied, British capital too remained central in the Brazilian slave business throughout the nineteenth century.[90]

Still, Palmerston constantly expressed that the actions of the U.S. government against the trade were 'infinitely short of their best endeavour'.[91] Despite official compromises from the U.S. government, Palmerston received detailed reports from all over the Atlantic showing how U.S. officials and citizens were involved in the slave trade. Throughout the 1830s, the Mixed-Commission in Sierra Leone continued to send 'proof of the aid given by the citizens of the United States to [Spanish] slave dealers' on the Slave Coast. The Star-Spangled banner had replaced the Portuguese and the French flags as the one most used by slavers.[92] The Havana commissioners also reported that if the Cuban slavers were 'able to avoid the effects' even of anti-slave trade measures such as the equipment clause (which Villiers had laboriously obtained from the Spanish in 1835),

[87] On the role of the American metropolis in the Atlantic illegal slave trade see John Harris, *The Last Slave Ships: New York and the End of the Middle Passage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020); and the classic monograph by Leonardo Marques, *The United States and the Transatlantic Slave Trade to the Americas, 1776-1867* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).
[88] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 02 May 1843, vol. 68, c. 1163. (Joseph Hume).
[89] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 10 May 1838, vol. 42, cc. 1133. (Sir Robert Inglis).
[90] See Mulhern, "After 1833: British Entanglement with Brazilian Slavery"; Sherwood, *After Abolition*.
[91] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 02 May 1843, vol. 68, c. 1234. (Palmerston).
[92] Palmerston to Fox, 21 Jan. 1837, no. 203; Palmerston to Fox, 28 Feb. 1837, no. 204, BPP: Correspondence with Foreign Powers relating to the Slave Trade. 1836. (Class B) HCP (002), LIV.377, 54. pp. 143-144.

it was 'by means of the Americans'. '[Slavers] say Great Britain in vain labours to extinguish this commerce as long as the American Government refuses the cause of abolition', they wrote in 1836.[93]

In Brazil as well, the British minister, William Ousely, denounced the use of American steamers in the Atlantic voyage.[94] Slave ships were constructed and armed in the United States and then sold to Portuguese and Spanish dealers.[95] British agents progressively referred to these activities with the typical terminology of disorder. In 1839, the commissioners in Sierra Leone, for example, denounced the 'zeal and alacrity with which the U.S. consul in Havana assists illegal adventures and recklessly invite[s] [the American flag's] prostitution by every pirate and smuggle who can afford to pay the fees of the consular office'.[96]

Following the same *cui prodest* logic as with the slave trade, British officials understood the U.S. government orchestrated and benefited from the 'piratical expeditions' of filibusters, as Fox labelled them in 1838, into Texas and Canada in the 1830s, and the Caribbean in the 1850s.[97] Truly, these 'bands of brigands' entering foreign territory to 'excite the obedient to revolt, and the tranquil to disturbance' were never met with anything other than the verbal condemnation by U.S. officials.[98] As Frank Owsley and Gene Smith showed years ago, since the 1790s filibusters had been a prime instrument for an almost parasitic form of U.S. expansion into borderland regions with weak foreign government presence.[99]

As British officials saw it, rather than official conductors of territorial expansion, filibusters harvested further opportunities for U.S. expansion in several ways. Firstly, Anglo-American rifts over 'freebooters', as they were also called, would paralyse the diplomatic agenda and keep regional conflicts ensuing. In February 1839, for example, a filibustering expedition 'apparently supported by the governor of Maine', halted the resolution of the contentious New Brunswick and Maine border issue. Fox told

[93] Commissioners to Palmerston, 1 Jan. 1836, no. 139. BPP: Correspondence with Commissioners... 1835 (Class A), HCP (005) L.1, 50. pp. 206-207.
[94] William Ouseley to Palmerston, 12 May 1836, no. 104, BPP: Correspondence with Foreign Powers relating to the Slave Trade. 1836. (Class B) HCP (002), LIV.377, 54. p. 67.
[95] Palmerston to Fox, 31 May 1838, no. 5, FO 115/68.
[96] Commissioners H.W. Macaulay and R. Doherty to Palmerston, 31 Jan 1839, no. 25, BPP: Correspondence with Commissioners, 1840. (Class A) HLP XVIII [i], 18, pp. 26-8.
[97] Fox to Palmerston, 24 Nov. 1838, no. 35, FO 115/69.
[98] Fox to Palmerston, 16 Dec. 1838, no. 42, FO 115/69; Russell to Crampton, 16 Feb. 1853, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, VII, Doc. 2998, 493.
[99] See Frank L. Owsley and Gene A. Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800-1821* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997).

Palmerston that 'the U.S. government is now prepared to categorically deny the existence of an agreement, to the extent understood by Her Majesty's authorities, respecting the exclusive exercise by Great Britain of jurisdiction within the disputed territory'.[100] Even though U.S. Secretary of State John Forsyth assured Fox that those alleged pirates were only a 'land-agent's party employed for purposes of civil action', the grievances and ambitions of the Maine filibusters were 'ground now assumed by the government of the United States'.[101] Something similar occurred in the late 1850s, only over the continental Caribbean. Ouseley, now British envoy to Costa Rica, reported that 'one of the chief objectives of these buccaneers' was 'to cause difficulty between Her Majesty's Government and that of the United States, and to prolong the duration of the subjects of contention' between them.[102] Filibusters essentially perpetuated a state of chaos which aided them in their quest to overthrow weak Central American governments and install slaveholding regimes. They harvested great support in society and political circles to the point, warned Fox, that the even a pro-British president (a was Martin Van Buren) might be forced 'into an opposite and less prudent course'.[103]

Secondly, British leaders saw filibuster expeditions as paving the way for U.S. annexation of contended territory. As Fox put it to Palmerston in 1838 and 1839, filibustering expeditions were part a 'meditated invasion'—a combined effort 'of interested and powerful men on the frontier … and orders of the supreme government' of the United States.[104] 'By the present method —the people waging war while the government professes peace', he wrote, 'they [hope to] sooner or later gain possession of Canada without the cost of national war'.[105] Back in 1830, Wilson had also called to the attention of the House of Commons that the illegal occupation of foreign territory by U.S. citizens was the prelude to formal intervention and annexation. He believed the purpose of the 'squatters' entering Texas with slaves and resisting Mexican authority and antislavery laws was to 'encourage disorder', cause a clash with the Mexican authorities, and then 'call on the government of the United States' to annex the disarrayed region and

[100] Fox to Palmerston, 23 Feb. 1839, no. 7, FO 115/69.
[101] Fox to Palmerston, 7 Mar. 1839, no. 8, FO 115/69.
[102] Ouseley to Malmesbury, 2 Apr. 1859, BPP: Correspondence with the United States respecting Central America, 1856-60. 1860. Command Papers. 2748, LXVIII.653, 68, p. 232.
[103] Fox to Palmerston, 20 Apr. 1839, no. 15, FO 115/69; Fox to Palmerston, 28 Sept. 1839, no. 41, FO 115/69.
[104] Fox to Palmerston, 19 Nov. 1838, no. 34, FO 115/69; Fox to Palmerston, 1 Dec. 1838, no. 38, FO 115/69.
[105] Fox to Palmerston, 19 Nov. 1838, no. 34, FO 115/69.

protect them.[106] As Fox had said about the filibusters into Canada, it mattered not if it was 'rash and unprincipled … and entirely unconstitutional' for 'in the event of an actual military collision with [foreign] force, however brought about, the whole people of the United States would come to their succour'. The federal army would occupy the contended land and 'would keep the constitutional question to be decided afterwards'.[107] As Henry Ward put it to Palmerston in 1836 about Texas, filibustering did not concern the 'adventurers, men recognising no laws, and seeking for nothing but the means of turning their land to the utmost account', but the 'question of general policy' of 'whether it were advisable to allow the United States to pursue a system of aggrandisement without any endeavour on our part to check them'.[108] Palmerston told his minister in Washington D.C. to watch closely for the 'formation of clubs or applicated societies in several states of the Union' where under the protection of roguish governors (like the one of Maine) 'bands of rebels and pirates' were recruited, knowing that they served the broader purpose of territorial expansion.[109] He came to understand that this was the way in which the United States operated in the international system. In 1857, he clearly outlined it in a letter to Clarendon: by the 'indirect agency of such men [filibusters] … some independent North American states would be established in Central America in alliance with the United States if not in the Union … in short Texas all over again'.[110]

The clear advantages favoured by these expeditions were combined with the fact that U.S. government was clearly unwilling to put an end to them despite condemning them, to prove that the United States had a disordering agenda. For if the United States was not helping them, it was not hindering them either. Fox, for example, pointed out that the orders issued by the U.S. government to prevent filibustering into Canada were 'worse than nugatory' and argued that 'lawless Americans are actually encouraged by these means to defy their government as incompetent'.[111] This, he believed, was 'suspicious'.[112] 'I have no expectation that the federal government will be able, *even if they are willing*, to restrain the aggressions', he wrote in November 1839, after a year of chaos along the border.[113] He also found it suspicious that 'no American citizen has yet been prosecuted

[106] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 20 May 1830, vol. 24, c. 898. (Sir Robert Wilson).
[107] Fox to Palmerston, 28 Sept. 1839, no. 41, FO 115/69.
[108] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 05 Aug 1836, vol. 35 c. 932-933. (Henry Ward).
[109] Palmerston to Fox, 15 Dec. 1838, no. 20, FO 115/68.
[110] Palmerston to Clarendon, 31 Dec. 1857, in *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 335.
[111] Fox to Palmerston, 19 Nov. 1838, no. 34, FO 115/69.
[112] Fox to Palmerston, 1 Dec. 1838, no. 38, FO 115/69.
[113] Fox to Palmerston, 13 Nov. 1839, no. 46, FO 115/69.

out of the multitudes publicly engaged in the crime'.[114] Palmerston was also wary about the fact that state armouries in the border states had been left conveniently unguarded by government forces and had then been easily ransacked by filibusters.[115]

The sheer number of citizens involved in filibustering also suggested that the U.S. government was turning a blind eye, if not supporting it. Sir Robert Wilson had claimed in 1830 that, though he was 'far from saying that the government of the United States encouraged any seditious proceedings' (it can even be argued he said it with irony), he found suspicious that '5,600 of its subjects [had] become squatters in that province … and [had] taken possession of it without any right' without any government acquiesce.[116] This argument re-emerged in 1850 amidst the surge of filibuster expeditions towards Cuba. Again, British statesmen did not directly accuse the U.S. government of supporting filibusters—Clarendon said in public to genuinely believe that 'the President and Government of the United States were most earnest in their endeavours to put a stop to'.[117] However, prominent voices in Parliament like Lord Brougham's (who had been part of William Wilberforce's circle and was part of the tradition that saw the slave trade as a geopolitical threat) did denounce that it really could not be understood 'how 6,000 or 8,000 men could be armed, trained, and sent off from a country without the knowledge of the government'.[118]

President Franklin Pierce's rejection of an anti-filibustering treaty and guarantee of Cuba in 1853 also gave Lord John Russell, then foreign secretary, sufficient reason to doubt the sincerity of America's wish to get rid of filibusters. As he put it to John Crampton, the British minister in Washington D.C., 'the statement made by the President that a convention duly signed and legally ratified … would but excite these bands of pirates to more violent breaches of all the laws of honesty and good neighbourhood is a melancholy avowal for the chief of a great state'.[119] Even prudent Aberdeen distrusted the Americans, who had never wished to sign a guarantee of Spanish sovereignty over Cuba.[120]

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[114] Fox to Palmerston, 10 Aug. 1839, no. 33, FO 115/69.
[115] Palmerston to Fox, 15 Dec. 1838, no. 20, FO 115/68.
[116] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 20 May 1830, vol. 24, c. 898. (Wilson).
[117] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HL Deb. 11 Aug. 1854, vol. 135, c. 1535. (Clarendon)
[118] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HL Deb. 07 June 1850, vol. 111, c. 874. (Brougham).
[119] Russell to Crampton, 16 Feb. 1853, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, VII, Doc. 2998, 492-493.
[120] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HL Deb. 07 June 1850, vol. 111, c. 874-875. (Aberdeen).

Aside from the active creation of disorder from which to eventually profit, British leaders believed the strategy of the United States entailed depriving Britain of its capacity to combat disorder.

In the case of the Spanish Atlantic, one of Britain's main elements of ordering was the *illusion* of naval deterrence. The Royal Navy had emerged from the Napoleonic Wars victorious but weakened. Myths about British naval hegemony after 1815 are an extrapolation of equally equivocal assumptions about political hegemony: budget cuts, the overbearing number of officers, and the severe manning problem, were just some of the issues accounting for the weakness of the navy compared to previous decades. Statesmen after 1815 were well aware 'they were not wielding "Nelson's Navy"'.[121] However, they understood it was strategically vital for Britain to make sure other powers—in particular the medium and small powers that looked up to bigger ones for patronage and protection—believed the navy retained Nelson's might. As Palmerston put it to Cabinet upon returning to office in 1846, after considering the Tory foreign policy had destroyed this illusion of deterrence: 'this empire is existing only by sufferance and by the forbearance of other powers and our weaknesses, being better known to others than it is felt by ourselves, tends greatly to encourage foreign states to things calculated to expose us to war or to deep humiliation'.[122]

The essence of British naval hegemony thus rested on the credible compromise to do so in case of crisis—which allowed Britain to exert influence from a position of respect, command, and dominion. For example: despite their republican convictions, South American *libertadores* were more pro-British than pro-American because of the belief that British naval power kept the Holy Alliance from sending an expedition to the Americas.[123] This is particularly significant given that, despite the fact that Simón Bolívar was to a certain extent an Americanophobe, and that U.S.-South American relations had been strained by the rapprochement to Spain to secure the 1819 Florida purchase, the influence of the American Revolution in South America was still very powerful.[124]

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[121] Evan Wilson, "The Limits of Naval Power: Britain after 1815," in *Navies in Multipolar Worlds: From the Age of Sail to the Present*, ed. Paul M. Kennedy and Evan Wilson (London: Routledge, 2021), 65–69.

[122] Palmerston's memorandum to Cabinet on National Defence, Dec. 1846, *Bulwer,* iii. 332

[123] *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, vi, 205.

[124] William Shepherd, "Bolivar and the United States," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 1, no. 3 (1918): 270–98; Gleijeses, "Limits of Sympathy"; John Lynch, *Simón Bolivar and the Age of Revolution* (London: University of London, Institute of Latin American Studies, 1983); José Antonio Ayala, "Las Relaciones Diplomáticas Entre España y Estados Unidos Durante El Trienio Liberal (1820-1823)," *Anales de La Universidad de Murcia. Filosofía y Letras.*, 1978, 237–54; Jonathan

Canning himself recognised that the former Spanish colonies trusted Britain in spite of 'the partiality which has unquestionably been shown by this country to Spain' because they truly believed it to be mistress of the sea.[125] It was precisely this capacity that British leaders feared the United States could rob the nation of.

The campaign against piracy and privateering gave the United States the opportunity to increase its prestige and, more importantly, to pour resources into shipbuilding. As shown by Mark Hunter, the 'navalist' establishment in the United States used the antipiracy policy to increase the power of the navy and favour maritime expansion.[126] Indeed, a new naval culture emerged in the United States during the 1820s, and although the U.S. Navy was not as advanced as the British government might have feared in 1822, American statesmen across both parties were paving the way for an increment of American naval power—which, as it has been shown by Claude Berube, would quickly expand during the presidency of Andrew Jackson (1829-37) and the 1840s.[127] The early United States, before Manifest Destiny became the obsession, was aware of the possibilities offered by geopolitical crises worldwide (from Greece and Asia, to its own backyard in Spanish America) and was determined to use naval power as ideological extension of its republican values against the conservative forces of Europe led, Americans thought, by the British.[128]

Canning rightly worried (since the ambition did exist) that this increasing navalist agenda, combined with Castlereagh's timid response to the Spanish American revolutions, would lead the United States to replace Britain as the *apparent* naval protector of the Western Hemisphere. 'The accustomed awe of our maritime preponderance is daily diminished in the eyes of all nations', he warned in his November

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Israel, *The Expanding Blaze: How the American Revolution Ignited the World, 1775-1848* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Anthony McFarlane, "The American Revolution and the Spanish Monarchy," in *Europe's American Revolution*, ed. Simon P. Newman (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 26–50.

[125] Canning's memorandum to Cabinet, 15 Nov. 1822, CC *i*, 56.

[126] Hunter, "Anglo-American Response to Piracy," 65–66. Also see Mark C. Hunter, *Policing the Seas: Anglo-American Relations and the Equatorial Atlantic, 1819-1865* (St. John's, Nfld.: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2008).

[127] Berube provides an interesting account of how the Navy came to represent an extension of American republican ideology and value, almost serving as an ideological spine for U.S. diplomacy and imperialism across the world. See Claude Berube, *On Wide Seas: The US Navy in the Jacksonian Era* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2021), 1–18. On the development of the navalist agenda in the 1840s under the auspices of a growing slaveholding empire, see Matthew Karp, "Slavery and American Sea Power: The Navalist Impulse in the Antebellum South," *Journal of Southern History* 77, no. 2 (2011): 283–324.

[128] On the global agenda of the early republic in the 1810s and 1820s see Nancy Shoemaker, "The Extraterritorial United States to 1860," *Diplomatic History* 42, no. 1 (2018): 36–54.

1822 memorandum.[129] If on account of the growing U.S. maritime power and of Britain's lukewarm attitude towards the revolutions, 'the New States of America … give a decided preference in their ports to the people of the United States over ourselves, the navigation of these extensive dominions will be lost to us, and will in a great measure be transferred to our rivals'.[130] Anything working against this illusion was inflicting a double blow on Britain: first, it hindered the capacity of informal coercion, a key of British ordering; secondly, it forced Britain to assign more resources to naval construction to preserve the illusion, thus defeating the ordering purpose of maximising political efficiency and reducing costs.[131]

Another equally important strategic element coming into question was the right of search. The United States escaping the right of search made Britain lose a crucial strategic instrument to combat the disordering slave trade and impacted the entire British system of order. This is the reason why Palmerston was so critical of the Webster-Ashburton treaty (1842), 'the most disgraceful surrender to the American bully'.[132] The treaty ceded Britain's strategic capacity to act against the slave trade, in exchange for a crooked settlement for the north-western border Oregon (which was also disastrous and actually made North America 'more insecure').[133] Palmerston was more worried about the slave trade question than the Oregon boundary, as noted by David Brown. Brown stated the reason for this was Palmerston's obsession to get the Americans to agree to a reciprocal a right of search, without which he knew the transatlantic slave trade would never be fully suppressed.[134] Indeed, the treaty would allow the United States to escape the right of search and, moreover, would dilute Britain's credibility and its legitimacy to ask other powers for the right of search if allowed the Americans to escape without it. 'Look to the effect of this proceeding in other countries', he warned, thinking about the French who, Palmerston thought, would immediately abandon right-of-search compromises and collaboration in the Slave Coast against slavers.[135] As he put it to his friend Sir John Easthope, editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, the proposed treaty would mean:

[129] Canning's memorandum to Cabinet, 15 Nov. 1822, CC *i*, 50.
[130] Canning's memorandum to Cabinet, 30 Nov. 1824, WD *ii*, 358.
[131] By 1826, the Royal Navy started building warships with the objective of equalling or surpassing 'the best the Americans could built'. Bartlett, *Seapower*, 71.
[132] Palmerston to William Temple, 30 Sept. 1842, *Bulwer*, iii, 99
[133] Palmerston to the Earl of Minto, *Bulwer* iii, 60.
[134] David Brown, *Palmerston: A Biography* (New: Yale University Press, 2011), 267.
[135] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 2 May 1843, vol. 68, c. 1234.

> All our laws and treaties with foreign powers against the slave trade would become waste paper and the United States would not only exercise the right which they possess of refusing to make a treaty for the suppression of the slave trade but they would exercise the power of annulling *de facto* all the treaties which the other governments of Christendom have made for that purpose.[136]

Nonetheless, Brown did not explain the rationale behind this, the real reasons why Palmerston envisioned the right of search to be so important a strategic issue. It was not merely an instrument to ensure naval hegemony; he considered it the cornerstone of Britain's strategic maritime structure in the Atlantic world. Renouncing it did not only mean that the Royal Navy's pursuit of slave traders would be kept to a narrow jurisdictional area and that consequentially it would be harder to prevent the United States from furthering its slave-related geopolitical goals; it meant incapacitating Britain to act pre-emptively against disordering rivals: 'You do not increase your chances of permanent peace by conceding to a neighbouring power a greater means of annoying you in time of war', he said in the House of Commons. And he added with daring irony: 'it might be well to conciliate the government of Spain, and create feelings of good will between the countries by giving up Gibraltar'.[137] The comparison was not by any chance arbitrary or without significance. Gibraltar was easily Britain's most precious overseas enclave, the key to controlling the Mediterranean, one of the most important regions for British interests; drawing equivalence between the loss of Gibraltar and the United States escaping the right of search gives a sense of how crucial an issue this was for Palmerston. Both issues held the same strategic significance because both referred to Britain's control of maritime networks and capacity to act against rival powers in case of war and, more importantly, to prevent war. Giving up on it 'is an act of weakness and pusillanimity … a source of weakness to us in our dealings with every other power', he wrote.[138] Anglo-American tension had more to do with this struggle for strategic capability than with a mere rationale of territory and military forces. Until the end of his career, Palmerston continued to put the Ashburton treaty as an example of a policy that let the United States have a strategic advantage over Britain and which thus held the potential for future war.[139]

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[136] Palmerston to Sir John Easthope, 1 Jan. 1842, Easthope Papers, BL, Add. Mss. 86842.
[137] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 2 May 1843, vol. 68, c. 1236.
[138] Palmerston to Lord Monteagle, 28 Oct. 1842, in *The Foreign policy of Victorian England*, 258.
[139] Palmerston to Clarendon, 18 June 1857, quoted in Gavin B. Henderson, "Southern Designs on Cuba, 1854-1857 and Some European Opinions," *Journal of Southern History* 5, no. 3 (1939): 385.

British competition with the United States in the Spanish Atlantic was, as it can be seen, somewhat different from other forms of strategic competition with European partners. The belief that the United States disordered the region and hindered Britain's mechanisms to re-order it, characterised British strategic thinking until the 1860s, in particular the strategy of statesmen following in the Canningite tradition—most notably, Palmerston. On the other hand, Castlereaghan Tories—who would again take power in 1841-6, 1852, and 1858-9—continued to have a different view on Atlantic disorder and, as it will be seen in Chapter Three, also on the methods to deal with it. As British relative power in the Atlantic began to wither on account of increasing international competition on the eve of the American Civil War, British leaders would reconsider their ordering preferences and visions of disorder in the framework of Anglo-American relations—this will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Six of this dissertation.

Interestingly, the idea of the of a 'roguish great power' was not exclusively British. As it will be seen in Chapter Four, the Americans and the Spanish also believed Britain to be a disordering force which purposefully sought to start a slave revolution, takeover Cuba, and destroy its slaveholding economic competitors. The idea of agent disorder was therefore extended among the Atlantic powers to the point it can be argued that it was a defining characteristic of post-1820 Atlantic international politics—and one which shaped great power dynamics after Napoleon in ways that historians have not previously considered.

Chapter 2

Jealousy, evil, and arrogance

Sins of nations; sources of disorder

To fully understand the implications on foreign policy of Atlantic rivals being considered as roguish powers, it is necessary to dive into what British leaders thought made a roguish great power different from any other strategic rival. This essentially requires to interrogate the perceived source of disorder—a topic about which there has been very little analysis of in the literature. Even Andrew Philipps, who indeed takes the less systemic and, in his words, more 'sociological approach' to world order, considers the agency only of 'maladaptive rulers' who might have 'compounded rather than alleviated systemic disorder'.[1] This crucial part of the puzzle is still missing from studies of order in the nineteenth century (and not only from studies of this period).[2] This chapter seeks to fill this gap by analysing what British leaders believed made roguish great powers (the agents of disorder) follow their disordering agenda. It contends that when it came to the Spanish Atlantic world, British statesmen believed that the roots of problem with roguish great powers like the United States and Spain was immorality—specifically, three immoral behaviours: jealousy, evil/cruelty, and arrogance.

Gabriel Paquette suggests that Britons saw the intrinsic moral corruption of the Spanish as the prime cause of the geopolitical decline of their empire, and British virtue as the element legitimising the recognition of revolutionary republics. He thus concludes moral behaviours were an explanation of major problems of disorder such as the collapse of an empire.[3] Building on Paquette's argument, this chapter shows that British leaders regarded the immorality of Spanish and U.S. leaders to be the driving force of Spain's and the United States' geopolitically disruptive behaviours and actions in the Atlantic world. They essentially framed their critique of Spain and the United States as powers whose political agenda of disorder was driven by immorality. The idea of morality and

[1] Phillips, *War, Religion and Empire*, 120.
[2] Benton and Ford, *Rage for Order*; Cohrs, *New Atlantic Order*; Vick, "Power, Humanitarianism and the Global Liberal Order: Abolition and the Barbary Corsairs in the Vienna Congress System"; Bell, "Victorian Visions of Global Order: An Introduction."
[3] See Paquette, "Intellectual Context of Recognition."

foreign policy thus became deeply associated. On account of this, it is possible to argue that during the early nineteenth century essentialist ideas about rival states' moral character came to the fore as a defining characteristic of British statecraft. This would progressively lead to an infusion of ordering practices with moral questions, and, consequently, to the emergence of a moral mandate to order the world and prevent the ensue of evil/disorder.

Associations between morality and foreign policy are a contentious topic in academic debates. For decades, scholars have interrogated the role of morals in foreign policy looking at the conduction and application of policy to contend whether moral ideas matter in foreign policy, or whether they are just rhetoric figures that easily perish in the 'unending struggle for power' that is international politics, where 'the interests of individual nations must necessarily be defined in terms of power', as established by the classical Realist tradition.[4]

In order to determine whether policy was consistent with established moral principles or not, scholars have focussed on the 'means' of foreign policy. This approach indeed illustrates very clearly the contrast between established moral parameters and state action, and almost inevitably leads to conclusions about amoral power calculus always taking precedence over ideology, morality, and ethical principles. For example, Richard Huzzey, who has extensively studied the relation between morality, antislavery, and foreign policy in nineteenth-century Britain, followed this methodical approach and concluded that Britain developed a morally consistent foreign policy towards some issues, such as the slave trade, and not others, such as slavery and sugar duties, and only in some regions.[5] Chris Evans too has paid close attention at the moral inconsistencies of Britain's abolitionist agenda, showing that the moral rhetoric of abolition was nothing more than that, a rhetoric, because the state had powerful interests in the slaveholding economies of Cuba and Brazil.[6] Scholars have turned to other issues of nineteenth-century diplomacy to illustrate how morality had little place in the execution of foreign policy: perhaps the most notable and studied one is the inconsistency between Britain's moral

[4] Owen Harries, "Power, Morality, and Foreign Policy," *Orbis* 49, no. 4 (2005): 599–612; Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Mainspring of American Foreign Policy: The National Interest vs. Moral Abstractions," *American Political Science Review* 44, no. 4 (1950): 833–54.
[5] See Richard Huzzey, "The Moral Geography of British Anti-Slavery Responsibilities," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 22 (2012): 111–39.
[6] Chris Evans, "Brazilian Gold, Cuban Copper and the Final Frontier of British Anti-Slavery," *Slavery and Abolition* 34, no. 1 (2013): 118–34.

support for European liberalism and its support to the Prussian, Italian, and Austrian autocrats whose regimes were threatened by the 1848 revolutions.[7]

By contrast, there has been very little critical questioning of how moral ideas influenced the inception of foreign policy ideas and even of strategic calculus. Paul Kennedy did consider appeasement as a policy to be a 'peculiar mixture of morality and calculated interest' that brought together the moral (almost evangelical) 'abjuration of war' and the national necessity for staying out of conflicts both for strategic and electoral reasons, but did not engage deeply into the moral reason of it.[8] Other than that, this topic remains largely unexplored despite its importance. Morality has been taken into far more consideration in debates discussing social imperialism and humanitarianism.[9] Palmerston and his contemporaries are taken the uttermost representatives of amoral Realism, and scholars cite *ad nauseaum* his famous quote about Britain having 'no permanent friends nor rivals' only 'permanent interests' to prove so.[10]

However, those who cite it usually obviate the rest of the *Hansard* quote, which actually refers to something quite different from amorality. Palmerston contended that the 'real policy of England' consisted, 'apart from questions which involve her own particular interests, political or commercial', in being 'the champion of justice and right; pursuing that course with moderation and prudence, not becoming the Quixote of the world, but giving the weight of her moral sanction and support wherever she thinks that justice is, and wherever she thinks that wrong has been done'. To conduct this policy, '[England] is sure to find some other State, of sufficient power, influence, and weight, to support and aid her in the course she may think fit to pursue'. But finding this ally was entirely contingent: 'I hold with respect to alliances, that England is a power sufficiently strong, sufficiently powerful, to steer her own course … We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests

[7] Some examples include George Billy, *Palmerston's Foreign Policy: 1848* (New York, 1993); Alfonso Goizueta Alfaro, "Forging Liberal States: Palmerston's Foreign Policy and the Rise of a Constitutional Monarchy in Spain, 1833–7," *Historical Research* 94, no. 266 (2021): 827–48; Frank Weber, "Palmerston and Prussian Liberalism, 1848," *Journal of Modern History* 35, no. 2 (1963): 125–36.

[8] Paul M. Kennedy, "The Tradition of Appeasement in British Foreign Policy, 1865-1939," *British Journal of International Studies* 2, no. 3 (1976): 195–215.

[9] See Rob Skinner and Alan Lester, "Humanitarianism and Empire: New Research Agendas," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40, no. 5 (2012): 729–47.

[10] Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994); Brown, *Palmerston*; Kenneth Bourne, *Palmerston: The Early Years, 1784-1841* (London: Allen Lane, 1982); Schroeder, *Transformation*; Muriel Chamberlain, *Lord Palmerston* (Cardiff: GPC, 1987); Chamberlain, *Age of Palmerston*.

it is our duty to follow'.[11] Thus not even the method was amoral; the method was simply one of *realpolitik* if the latter is understood as 'thinking in terms of what is practically possible rather than what it is ideally desirable' for the realisation of state objectives.[12] Palmerston did not care about allies as long as they served Britain's interest. That interest, that 'real policy of England' was based 'on higher considerations than those ought to be impressed on the minds of the Members of this House and the country'.[13] It was a question that, as Stephen wrote in his 1818 memorandum, mixed 'moral with political topics'.[14]

Moral ideas were crucial in British understanding of disorder and what caused it. Looking at the language employed by statesmen to analyse the great power politics in the Atlantic during moments of international crises, it appears that the sources of disorder were traced to three immoral behaviours the leaders of roguish powers engaged in: jealousy, evil/cruelty, and arrogance. The first section of this chapter analyses how these three immoral behaviours were understood to have traceable geopolitical consequences that rendered the Spanish Atlantic a more disordered and dangerous space for Britain's (and civilisation's) interests. This will show that the strategic and the moral were intimately connected in Britons' worldview to the point moral interests were tantamount to strategic interests. The second section will continue by arguing that even though this moral-strategic concept did have its political implications and was used by politicians to amass political capital at home, it remained a core doctrine in British statecraft. Moreover, because of this, British foreign policy became a hostage of moral progress: as society evolved within the United Kingdom, so did the susceptibility towards disorder abroad and the demand for it to be ordered. This would be the driving cause behind the increase of British ordering violence in the 1830s (discussed in Chapter Three) and the eventual cause an overstretch of ordering preferences in the 1850s British leaders had to readapt to.

The geopolitical consequences of jealousy, evil, and arrogance

Notions about Protestant moral superiority and virtue vis-à-vis other cultures played an important role in the making of Victorian worldviews. It was on grounds of morality that

[11] *Hansard*, 3rd series, HC Deb. 1 Mar. 1848, vol. 97, c. 122
[12] John Bew, *Realpolitik: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 28.
[13] *Hansard*, 3rd series, HC Deb. 12 July 1858, vol. 151, c. 1340.
[14] Stephen's memorandum to Castlereagh, 8 Sept. 1818, in *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv, 30

Victorians defined whether nations were civilised, semi-civilised, or barbarous.[15] Palmerston, for example, was one to adopt this vision, taking Asia and Near-Eastern countries as less civilised on account of the inherently immoral behaviours of Islam, which he thought encouraged 'criminal violence and promises reward, the enjoyment of vicious indulgence in the life to come'.[16] Within the 'civilised' camp, however, Britons believed some nations were more civilised than others. Morality and cultural prejudice also served as a categorising criterium here: Catholic, slave trading nations were not comparable to Protestant, merchant, abolitionist ones, and did not receive the same diplomatic treatment not only due to cultural malcontent towards them, but because of a genuine belief that peoples with a lower level of civilisation than Britain's were prone to develop a disordering foreign policy. In the Atlantic world, British government officials believed that the immoral behaviours American, French, and Spanish ruling classes engaged in (jealousy, cruelty, and arrogance) accounted for the origin of disorder. This made immorality also a strategic threat, not simply a matter of cultural condescendence.

Jealousy and consequent greed were sins British leaders imputed on rival maritime nations, in particular France and the United States. Actually, 'jealousy' was not something only the British accused rivals of. U.S. diplomats, for example, constantly accused the British and other Europeans of 'some jealousy of American progress'.[17] A considerable number of American politicians believed that Britain's insatiable appetite for empire and commerce drove its ambitions to abolish slavery everywhere and ruin its competitors.[18]

In British strategic calculus, however, 'jealousy' responded to something less mundane and much harder to deal with: it was an intrinsic character of peoples, even some sort of spiritual deficiency (statesmen constantly used the noun 'spirit' in allusion to the sources of rivals' conduct), which predisposed them for hatred towards Britain and disordering actions to curtail it, for example through the slave trade. Palmerston believed it was 'national jealousy' what kept the French from renewing the mutual search treaty in 1842.[19] Kilbee similarly noticed that the Cuban slave traders defended the trade as

[15] On the different categories of nations see Bell, "Empire and International Relations."
[16] Quoted in Brown, *Palmerston*, 131.
[17] Edward Everett to John Calhoun, 26 Feb. 1845, Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, VII, Doc. 2834, 236.
[18] Calhoun to Abel Upshur, 27 Aug. 1843, in *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*, ed. Clyde Wilson (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), xvii, 381. See also chapter 4 of this dissertation.
[19] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 16 July 1844, vol. 76, c. 939.

something ‘promoting the interests of the island and merely thwarting the selfish visions of Great Britain’.[20]

British statesmen across parties and foreign policy traditions believed this jealous spirit stemmed from the immoral character of foreign leaders. Back in 1802, Stephen had argued that the ‘morality of the French statesmen’ was not strong enough to repudiate instruments of disorder, such as arming Africans and weaponizing Haiti, to ‘wound Carthage [Britain] in the most vulnerable side, clip the wings of her commerce, and enrich herself with her spoils’. After the ruin of Saint Domingue, Jamaica was an ‘object of jealousy and envy that France will not have justice or moderation enough to resist’.[21] Canning and Wellington too believed the problem lay in the lack of ‘public feeling’ regarding the slave trade, and in the French leaders’ absolute refusal to ‘submit to see any advantages, commercial or territorial, acquired by Great Britain’.[22] Henry Addington (Lord Sidmouth’s nephew), minister in Madrid between 1830 and 1833, too noticed that Spanish leaders were uninterested by abolition—an issue ‘coldly considered’ in Madrid—because it ‘creates no immediate national interest’.[23] The same was thought of Cuba, where Palmerston denounced the Spanish officers were ‘demoralised’ by their vested interest and involvement in the slave trade.[24] The profit was so high that ‘subordinate officers are unable to resist the temptation’.[25]

Avaricious planters and subordinates supporting the slave trade were also a threat to Spanish sovereignty over Cuba because their avarice made them have no ‘patriotism’ for the Mother Country. ‘The union with Spain rests almost solely upon the conviction that it is their interest to maintain it’, wrote Kilbee. This was particularly dangerous because ‘when that motive ceases to exist’, for example if Spain was convinced to tackle the slave trade, ‘the separation would … be speedily attempted’.[26] This support of the slave trade for reasons of commercial jealousy and greed, was also ruining the economy: it was thought to stimulate ‘the production of some articles of commerce’ when actually it was ‘originating in superabundant labour and vague speculation, have returned upon

[20] Kilbee to Canning, 1 Jan. 1825, no. 19, FO 84/39.
[21] Stephen, *The Crisis of Sugar Colonies*, 90-1.
[22] Canning to Wellington, 17 Dec. 1822, WD *i*, 658; Canning to Wellington, 30 Sept. 1822, WD *i*, 324; Wellington to Canning, 19 Nov. 1822, WD *i*, 547.
[23] Addington to Palmerston, 18 Feb. 1831, no. 2, FO 84/121.
[24] Palmerston to Lord Howden, 11 Sept. 1851, no. 43, FO 84/836.
[25] Clarendon to Howden, 30 Mar. 1855, no. 17, FO 84/962.
[26] Kilbee to Planta, 6 Feb. 1826, no. 3, FO 72/304.

the island in the shape of bankruptcy and destitution'.[27] British officials noticed that because of this 'bribery and corruption are everywhere' in the island.[28] So it was not only slave revolution that endangered Cuba; its unpatriotic, greedy planters who could sell the island to the United States to protect their interests or ruin it by causing a slave revolution, also entailed a grave disordering potential.

The United States was taken as the avaricious nation *par excellence*. In the words of Joseph Crawford, British consul-general in Cuba (1842-1864), 'the desire of Gain in the American character is superior to all other considerations'.[29] George Cornewall Lewis, who served as Chancellor of the Exchequer in Palmerston's first government (1855-8), also believed that behind slavery and sectionalism, the 'main problem of the Union' was 'that every leading public man is almost of necessity driven to disgraceful compromises and to dishonest compliances and professions'.[30] As Jonathan Parry has noted, 'American society was frequently criticised for its materialism and lack of civilisation and ethics', to the point that Briton's saw the collapse of the Union in 1861 as a result of this materialist greed.[31] However, Britons had been thinking in these terms of their transatlantic cousins long before the American Civil War. For example, amidst the filibustering crises in 1838-9, Fox had warned Palmerston that 'few American statesmen could be trusted' because they were moved by a 'vindictive and sanguinary temper' against Britain.[32] He even spread doubts over the impartiality of President Martin Van Buren, whose 'family possess considerable property' in the town of Oswego, 'one which could be most benefited by the annexation [of Canada]'.[33]

American avarice accounted for its involvement in all forms of disorder. Only a few British statesmen attributed American connivance with slavery to the 'antipathy for colour' existing in the Southern states.[34] The surge of the slave trade and retrenchment of slavery in the late 1850s was taken as the result of 'selfish habits of the mind' that urged for the 'restoration of bad institutions … by the sanguine egoist'.[35] American involvement

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[27] Copy of Villiers's note to the Cea Bermúdez Cabinet, 31 Dec. 1833, enclosed in Villiers to Palmerston, 31 Dec. 1833, no. 2, FO 84/140.
[28] Joseph Crawford to the Earl of Malmesbury, 1 July 1858, no. 26, FO 84/1046.
[29] Crawford to Malmesbury, 1 July 1858, no. 26; FO 84/1046.
[30] George Cornewall Lewis to Sir Edward Twisleton, 21 Jan. 1861, *Letters of Sir George Cornewall Lewis, Bart., to various friends* ed. by his brother Sir Gilbert Frankland Lewis (London: Longman, 1870), 391.
[31] Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, 248.
[32] Fox to Palmerston, 10 Jan. 1841, no. 1, FO 115/69.
[33] Fox to Palmerston, 1 Dec. 1838, no. 38, FO 115/69.
[34] *Hansard*, 3rd series, HC Deb. 26 Feb. 1845, vol. 77, c. 1298.
[35] "The Slave-Trade in 1858", *Edinburgh Review*, 108, no. 220 (Oct. 1858), 542.

with Cuban slave trade and slavery was well known to respond to the immense profits, 'by far the greatest we know off', moved by that awful business.[36] Filibustering too had to do, argued Fox in 1838, with the 'spirit of jobbing and speculating in land which for some years past has taken possession of the American mind'.[37] Throughout the 1830s, the Foreign Office received detailed reports about the invasive economic activities of the United States. British leaders were not only concerned about expansionism into newly independent Texas, where slavery was reinstated to power the cotton industry, but also into Nova Scotia waters where U.S. rapacious fishing, 'in numbers almost incredible and in the highest degree injurious', had 'already much diminished' the fisheries, which 'will erelong be entirely destroyed'.[38] This greediness and utter need for economic expansion drove the 'frightful and murderous spirit of aggression … that animated the American border population'.[39] The consequences of this did not translate only into filibustering and slave trading but also into severe economic distress: the crisis of 1857, for example, Lewis believed had been 'mainly caused by the over-trading of the Americans'.[40]

A society corrupted to the core was immune to British ordering efforts; moreover, not only would imposing them be useless but may even produce of another 'source of discord and trouble'.[41] Ordering endeavours encouraged roguish nations to redouble their disordering efforts. Fox, for example, warned Palmerston that a convention to extradite filibusters would only 'be forthwith used by the border citizens of the Republic as a new engine of annoyance and injury'.[42] Similarly, the Havana commissioners alarmingly reported that the Cubans had taken the 1835 equipment treaty as a further encouragement to trade in slaves since greater difficulties importing slaves pushed prices up making it even a more profitable business than before: 'they continue the traffic not only from the great additional value attached to it by their importations, but from the feeling that if they now run greater risks they also gratify their rancour against England'.[43] Rogue nations

[36] *Hansard*, 3rd series, HC Deb. 26 Feb. 1845, vol. 77, c. 1298; Crawford to Malmesbury, 1 July 1858, no. 26, FO 84/1046.
[37] Fox to Palmerston, 1 Dec. 1838, no. 38, FO 115/69.
[38] Report by John Liddle on fisheries, enclosure no.3 in Palmerston to Fox, 6 Oct. 1838, no.16, FO 115/68.
[39] Fox to Palmerston, 20 Aug. 1839, no. 38, FO 115/69.
[40] Lewis to Sir Edmund Head, 21 Jan. 1861, *Letters of Sir George Cornewall Lewis*, 391.
[41] Fox to Palmerston, 20 Aug. 1839, no. 38, FO 115/69.
[42] Fox to Palmerston, 20 Aug. 1839, no. 38, FO 115/69.
[43] Commissioners to Palmerston, 1 Jan. 1836, no 139. BPP: Correspondence with Commissioners. 1835 (Class A), HCP (005) L.1, 50. p. 207.

operated criminally, in pursuit of gain, and any attempt to correct their behaviour encouraged them to escalate their disordering agenda.

Even so, the Anglo-Saxon racial brotherhood accounted for certain candour in British public opinion and government circles for the American cousins. Some of the foulest American behaviours were excused as the result not of an intrinsic corruption but of exogenous elements such as nature. 'In the Northern States the English race would remain unimpaired but I cannot help suspecting that it degenerates under a warmer sun', wrote Lewis in 1856 to explain why U.S. Southerners defended slavery so vehemently.[44] Ideas of moral perversion and evil were rarely applied to the Anglo-Saxons, although a notable exception can be found in the correspondence of Prime Minister Lord Liverpool. Back in 1818, the 'savage, cunning, and cruel' behaviour of U.S. General Andrew Jackson in the takeover of Florida, where two British citizens had been killed, served Liverpool to warn Castlereagh against forging a 'tie of freedom and connection' with the United States (even though Liverpool had brokered the Peace of Ghent himself and was weary of entering into quarrels with a vital economic partner).[45]

In general, however, darker sins of cruelty and evil were seen to be the intrinsic elements of the morality of an inferior race—Spaniards—of whom the British held a cultural, stereotypical conception far harsher than the one they had of the Americans or even the French. British sources had reflected this associative imagery between evil and the Spanish moral character since the 1810s. One of the most important examples is Stephen's pamphlet *An Inquiry into the Right and Duty of Compelling Spain to Relinquish her Slave Trade in Northern Africa* (1816) in which he stated that the Spanish, on mere account of cruelty and 'perverted taste', were neglecting the 'duty' that 'civilised nations owe to Africa', which was in a 'state of infancy'.[46] The rulers of Spain, he thought, were 'cruelly resolved that Africa shall not be civilised', because for them 'the slave trade, like the Inquisition, had a positive attraction'.[47] Spaniards were no better than Shakespeare's Shylock, insisting 'to take from Africa not only a "pound of flesh" but to cut it "nearest to the heart" of the unhappy victim'.[48]

[44] Lewis to Head, 6 July 1856, *Letters of Sir George Cornewall Lewis,* 315.
[45] Liverpool to Castlereagh, 18 Sept. 1818, Castlereagh Correspondence, iv, 38. On Liverpool conducting negotiations at Ghent, see Hay, "Lord Liverpool."
[46] Stephen, *An Inquiry…*, 47-48.
[47] Stephen, *An Inquiry…*, 10-11.
[48] Stephen, *An Inquiry…,* 11.

It is possible to find traces of the arguments Stephen made about the cultural disposition of Spaniards for evil, in Canning's and Kilbee's correspondence with regards to the Cuban slave trade in the 1820s. Kilbee described the Cuban slave trade also with a language that alluded to the immorality of the Spanish islanders and their disposition towards evil: 'The slave trade to this island … is carried on with great cruelty,' he wrote, '[and] itself is looked upon as anything but criminal'.[49] By arguing that for the Cubans the trade was 'anything but criminal', Kilbee was almost denying them the moral capacity to see good: it was as if evil was normalised, natural, in that society. He therefore recommended Canning to 'correct the public opinion of this country' as to the evilness of the trade and Britain's abolitionist intentions.[50] They had to change the hearts and minds of the Cubans so that they realised that 'the true interests of the island are intimately connected with the carrying of [abolition] effectually into execution'.[51] He was seeking to tackle the origin of disorder which was in the moral realm.

Palmerston was even more vocal about the evil nature of Spaniards than Stephen, Canning, and Kilbee. Contrary to what Jesús Sanjurjo has recently argued about Palmerston's higher regard for Hispanic civilisation, the Foreign Secretary had long represented 'the degenerate Spanish' as part of an inferior group of nations whose destiny it was to be dominated by 'the Anglo-Saxon race … by reason of its superior qualities'.[52] (The Spanish did not feel his supposed civilizational candour either, rather his condescendence and reprimand: 'The British … treat our officials as though they were natives of one of their colonies', remarked a Spanish foreign minister in 1850).[53] It was actually not uncommon for Palmerston to refer to the occasional Iberian ruler as a 'tyrant of the Robespierre school' or a 'demon of disorder'.[54] For him Britain had 'an inborn

[49] Kilbee to Canning, 1 Jan. 1825, no. 19, FO 84/39.
[50] Kilbee to Canning, 1 Jan. 1825, no. 19, FO 84/39.
[51] Kilbee to Canning, 1 Jan. 1825, no. 19, FO 84/39.
[52] Palmerston to Clarendon, 31 Dec. 1857 (private), *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 335. For Sanjurjo's argument about Palmerston and the Hispanic world see Jesús Sanjurjo, *In the Blood of Our Brothers: Abolitionism and the End of the Slave Trade in Spain's Atlantic Empire, 1800-1870* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2021), 100.
[53] Quoted in Piero Gleijeses, "Clashing over Cuba: The United States, Spain and Britain, 1853-55," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 49, no. 2 (2016): 224.
[54] Morning Chronicle, 16 Jul. 1844 (acc. British Newspaper Archive); Palmerston is well known to have influenced the articles of the Morning Chronicle until 1848, and to have penned some himself. It is safe to claim that these words about General O'Donnell were his own or dictated by him. For his relation with the Chronicle see: Darwin F. Bostick, "Sir John Easthope and the 'Morning Chronicle', 1834-1848," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 12, no. 2 (1979): 51–60; David Brown, "Compelling but Not Controlling?: Palmerston and the Press, 1846-1855," *History* 86, no. 281 (2001): 41–61. Palmerston to Russell, 14 Dec. 1846, in *The Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, i, ed. G.P. Gooch (London, 1825), 139.

sense of Right and Wrong' whilst Spain, on the other hand, actively contributed 'to demoralize its own officers and accustom them to violate the law'.[55] He was sure that the Spanish would one day dare 'say that the happiness of the Queen Isabella's subjects in Cuba would be promoted by an unlimited importation of negroes'.[56] Lord Howden, who served as minister in Madrid between 1850 and 1855, concurred that it was the 'mass demoralization' existing at the core of Spanish politics and society what accounted for the surge of the slave trade anywhere the Spanish ruled. Not even honourable officials could be trusted to take on the abolitionist task.[57]

Villiers, who spent much of the 1830s living with and closely observing the Spaniards, thought them to be not much better than barbarians (although he did end up enjoying bullfighting more than he had initially expected).[58] He saw Spain's engagement in the slave trade was nothing other than 'war upon the human race', and the atrocities committed during the Carlist War as exceeding levels of 'ordinary barbarity'.[59] The summary execution of the seventy-year-old mother of Carlist General Cabrera by the liberal *Cristino* authority, for example, reinforced the idea that cruelty was something inherent to the Spanish character, regardless of ideology.[60] 'All attempts to humanise the war … will be useless', he concluded, 'because the sense of the nation is against it … The belligerents have no more wish to be separated than two bulldogs and will only fly upon those who try to pull them apart'.[61] In another letter to Palmerston he wrote: 'one might as well lecture a Cherokee against scalping as a Spaniard upon mercy', directly comparing a European nation to the Native American tribes the British had long considered uncivilised.[62]

Spanish cruelty had noxious geopolitical consequences which in the first place affected Cuba. British agents in Cuba believed one of the most dangerous practices in Spain's repertoire (other than the slave trade itself) was that of re-selling liberated Africans (*emancipados*) into slavery. Since 1824, when the first case was notified, many slaves liberated by the Mixed Commission were again sold to planters 'at a price … which

[55] Palmerston to Howden, 7 Apr. 1851, no. 12, FO 84/836; Palmerston to Howden, 11 Sept. 1851, no. 43, FO 84/836.
[56] Palmerston note, 7 Aug. 1861, enclosed in Russell to Crawford, 10 Aug. 1861, no. 1, FO 84/1139.
[57] Howden to Palmerston, 25 Aug. 1851, no. 33, FO 84/837.
[58] Villiers to Palmerston, 28 Jan. 1834, PV, 99.
[59] Copy of Villiers's note to the Cea Bermúdez Cabinet, 31 Dec. 1833, enclosed in Villiers to Palmerston, 31 Dec. 1833, no. 2, FO 84/140.
[60] Villiers to Palmerston, 7 Mar. 1836, PV, 389.
[61] Villiers to Palmerston, 7 May 1836, PV, 423.
[62] Villiers to Palmerston, 18 Nov. 1833, PV, 77.

is the third part of the value of a slave' 'instead of being employed as free labourers'.[63] The *emancipado* question was one that ever gnawed at statesmen and abolitionists during the nineteenth century, challenging the most complex dynamic and principles of humanitarianism and abolition, as recent studies have shown.[64] Even at the height of the Crimean War, Villiers (then Lord Clarendon, serving as foreign secretary) remained particularly worried about this issue which took up a significant part of his slave trade correspondence.[65] The *emancipado* question did not only evidence the roguery of the Spanish, since the re-selling was often done 'under the sanction and direction of the Captain General'; it also posed a severe destabilising potential.[66] The correct treatment and disposal of *emancipados* into programmes of apprenticeship was key to reintegrate them into society and prevent them from turning to arms and revolution. As Kilbee warned, 'a slave once emancipated cannot be again reduced to slavery'.[67] If only 'the Spanish authorities in Cuba were a little more imbued with those humane and just sentiments', Palmerston believed, 'neither the tranquillity of Cuba nor the honour and credit of the Spanish government would suffer any injury'.[68] The 'accumulation of emancipated negroes in the island of Cuba' in this *de facto* state of slavery 'cannot remain for any length of time without danger to public tranquillity', Villiers continued to insist in following years.[69] Far from protecting the island, Spain was contributing to bring about its doom. Lord Aberdeen ironically wrote in 1844 that if the British government was truly after emancipation in Cuba 'no matter what unlaw or at what cost of blood and social order, they could hardly wish a more certain course to be pursued than that which … the government of Madrid has permitted if not sanctioned'.[70]

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[63] Villiers to Istúriz, 27 May 1836, enclosed in Villiers to Palmerston, 29 May 1836, no. 5, FO 84/201.
[64] Ryan, *Humanitarian Governance and the British Antislavery World System*; Luis Martínez-Fernández, "The Havana Anglo-Spanish Mixed Commission for the Suppression of the Slave Trade and Cuba's Emancipados," *Slavery and Abolition* 16, no. 2 (1995): 205–25; Inés Roldán de Montaud, "On the Blurred Boundaries of Freedom: Libertated Africans in Cuba, 1817-1870," in *New Frontiers of Slavery*, ed. Dale Tomich (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 127–57; Roldán de Montaud, "The Misfortune of Liberated Africans in Colonial Cuba, 1824-1876."
[65] Clarendon to Howden, 15 Jan. 1855, no. 5, FO 84/962; Clarendon to Howden, 20 Jan. 1855, nos. 7-10, FO 84/962; Clarendon to Howden, 2 Feb. 1855, no. 11, FO 84/962; Clarendon to Howden, 21 Feb. 1855 no. 13, FO 84/962; Clarendon to Howden, 9 Mar. 1855 no. 16, FO 84/962; Clarendon to Howden, 8 Apr. 1856 no. 11, FO 84/987.
[66] Palmerston to Bulwer, 3 Aug. 1846, no. 8, FO 84/628.
[67] Memorandum from Kilbee, 9 Oct. 1824, BPP: Correspondence with Commissioners 1824-25, HCP (001) XXVII.281, 121-122.
[68] Palmerston to Villiers, 15 Dec. 1836, no. 14. FO 84/201.
[69] Villiers to Palmerston, 12 June 1836, BPP: *Correspondence with Foreign Powers relating to the Slave Trade*. 1836. (Class B) HCP (002), LIV.377, 54. p.6.
[70] Aberdeen to Bulwer, 2 May 1844, no. 4, FO 84/519.

Barbarian practices concerning the slave question were seen to profoundly disturb not just Cuba but the other regions of the Atlantic. As early as 1816, Stephen had pointed out that the consequences of Spain's immoral practices would not be geographically limited to the region in which they were enacted, because 'the baneful influence of the slave trade extends itself beyond the theatre of its immediate action'.[71] In his 1818 memorandum to Castlereagh, he clarified this by warning that the consequences of not stopping the slave trading powers in West Africa would be that Cuba could be 'as amply supplied after 1820 as before' and that Haiti, if retaken by the French, could be transformed into a 'craving and insatiable slave market in the centre of the Antilles'. War with the slave trading powers might then stand as 'the only remaining mean of putting a stop the slave trade and rescuing from hopeless barbarism and misery a whole quarter of the globe'.[72]

Spain's refusal in 1847 to abolish slavery in its African possessions, something which could only respond to a desire to 'encourage and perpetuate … barbarous practices and atrocious cruelties', since the rocky Spanish island colonies in the Bight of Biafra could barely be said to have 'any purpose agricultural or domestic', also had a powerful unsettling effect in the region.[73] Palmerston warned in the House of Commons that if Britain withdrew from West Africa and allowed slaveholding empires like Spain to dominate the region,

> The whole coast of Africa would swarm with slave traders and pirates … The natives would go back to their trade in slaves … The negroes would strip off their jackets and trousers, and go back to the state of nudity in which they were before. All the labours which benevolent men have bestowed on the civilisation of Africa would be spent in vain.[74]

This rather fiery speech of powerful imagery has of course to be taken against the context of Palmerston's defence of the West Africa Squadron from the free-trade radicals who were so eagerly after a drastic cut in naval expenditure. But even if apparently exaggerated in tone, Palmerston's argument was based on a genuine strategic calculation. In his confidential dispatch to Henry Lytton Bulwer, minister in Madrid, he argued it was imperative to cut Spain's immoral, slaveholding presence in Africa because

[71] Stephen, *An Inquiry…*, 5.
[72] Stephen's memorandum to Castlereagh, 8 Sept. 1818, in *Castlereagh Correspondence,* iv, 22, 28.
[73] Palmerston to Bulwer, 31 Dec. 1847, no. 16, FO 84/673.
[74] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 22 Feb. 1848, vol. 96, cc. 1123-1124. (Palmerston).

> It also has the effect of shaking the belief of the African chiefs in the sincerity desire proposed by the powers of Europe to put down the slave trade … It must be difficult for these uninstructed chiefs to understand how it happens that the same nations which make slave trade an offence when carried out by sea, should permit and encourage it and even partake in it themselves when it is carried on by land.[75]

Similarly in 1850, when the Spanish sought to reassert their sovereignty over the island of Corisco, off the bight of Biafra, Palmerston wrote to Howden: 'it would be undesirable that this island should belong to Spain' because it would entrench slavery in the area and reinforce the Cuban slave trade.[76]

This thinking was not limited to Africa. In 1855, Clarendon received notice of Cuban filibustering into the Mexican Main for the purpose of enslaving Yucatan Indians and sending them to the Cuban plantations.[77] This 'nefarious undertaking' of 'the most cruel and unjustifiable character' (again, the moral notion) would lead 'to a wholesale extermination of the unfortunate aboriginal race of Yucatan', believed Clarendon. Although the sincerity of his concern for the Yucatans' welfare cannot be known, the correspondence shows that what clearly troubled him about this new slave trade was that it 'created in the Yucatan the same state of things which exists in the interior of Africa, where wars are carried on against certain tribes for the purpose of making and selling prisoners'.[78] There was direct correlation between the barbarity and uncivilization like the one thought to exist deep in Africa and the 'revolting and barbarous state of things' produced by Spain's 'atrocities with the exportation of Yucatan Indians to Cuba'.[79] Immoral practices by states were seen to have a disturbing effect on entire geographical areas.

Closely related to the concepts of evil and barbarism, was the idea of arrogance. Already in the 1780s, many had looked at Britain's own hubris and avarice in the wake of the Seven Years War (1756-63) as the beginning of a moral corruption that resulted in the loss of the thirteen colonies.[80] This accusation of hubris as condemning nations and fostering disorder was now being thrown at Britain's rivals. In their correspondence, Canning, Kilbee, Palmerston, and Villiers among others identified arrogance as the key

[75] Palmerston to Bulwer, 31 Dec. 1847, no. 16, FO 84/673.
[76] Palmerston to Howden, 20 July 1850, no. 2, FO 84/756.
[77] Clarendon to Howden, 15 Jan. 1855, no. 5, FO 84/962;
[78] Clarendon to Howden, 8 May 1855, no. 19, FO 84/962; Clarendon to Otway, 4 July, no. 2, FO 84/962.
[79] Clarendon to L.C. Otway, 15 Sept. 1855, no. 9, FO 84/962.
[80] Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat*, 666.

to understanding Spanish behaviour on several issues. No matter how much the British insisted to the Spanish on the doom that would overtake them if they persisted in the evils of the slave trade or war with the former South American colonies, the Spanish refused to listen. 'These mischievous monkeys', wrote Villiers, 'are determined to give their guardians [the British] a great deal of trouble'.[81]

The crisis of colonial restoration in 1824 perfectly illustrates how a significant number of British government officials and parliamentarians believed Spanish arrogance pointlessly spilled blood and severely endangered the tranquillity of the Atlantic. Late in that year, Miguel Ricardo Álava, a Spanish general Wellington had befriended during the Peninsular War, told the duke that Mexico and Colombia were assembling a flotilla with which to carry out an imminent invasion of Cuba.[82] Rumour also had it that the invaders would try to fan a slave revolution to take control of the island; this had been a common practice of the *libertadores* during the wars of independence which the Cubans had looked to with horror.[83] If Colombia and Mexico 'recur to the people of colour', warned Kilbee, 'the final destruction of the island would speedily follow'.[84] This was a disastrous prospect, for surely the United States would take the island pre-emptively before a slave insurrection of any kind took place.[85] The Spanish had the power to stop this imminent disaster, the British government believed, by ending the war with their former colonies. But they found that 'Spain is not at all inclined to enter into reasonable arrangements with those states'.[86] The term 'reasonable' served Kilbee to picture Spain as an irresponsible power, that did not attend to reason and was willing to risk a major conflagration. War with the former colonies was something not even the powerful Cuban planters (who had proven capable of thwarting major policy of the metropole, such as the penal code of 1822) could convince the Spanish government to forsake.[87]

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[81] Villiers to Palmerston, 28 Oct. 1837, PV, 729.
[82] Wellington to Canning, 14 Nov. 1824, WD *ii*, 341.
[83] Peter Blanchard, "The Slave Soldiers of Spanish South America: From Independence to Abolition," in *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, ed. Christopher L. Brown and Philip D. Morgan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 255; Peter Blanchard, *Under the Flags of Freedom: Slave Soldiers and the Wars of Independence in Spanish South America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008).
[84] Kilbee to Planta, 8 Feb. 1825, no. 3 (pvt.), FO 72/304.
[85] Kilbee to Planta, 3 Apr. 1824, no. [?], FO 72/304; Kilbee to Planta, 30 Nov. 1824, no. 14, FO 72/304. Most of Kilbee's correspondence with William Hamilton, Permanent Undersecretary of State, concerned Mexican and Colombian designs over Cuba in the late stages of the wars of independence. This correspondence also describes the use the Spanish made of Cuba to continue their fruitless war against the revolted colonies. Their correspondence can be found in TNA FO 72/261.
[86] Kilbee to Planta, 2 Mar. 1825, pvt. no. 5, FO 72/304.
[87] Kilbee to Planta, 19 Nov. 1825, pvt. no. 21, FO 72/304.

For the Spanish government, of course, colonial restoration was an ontological issue of regime survival. The monarch could not simply abandon his subjects 'to a foreign yoke nor to the dishonourable machinations of ill-intentioned demagogues', settled the Spanish chief minister in 1824.[88] For both Kilbee and Canning this was merely a sign of 'capricious tyranny' and of 'overbearing arrogance'.[89] 'His Catholic Majesty's ministers are wholly insensible', wrote Canning, as to 'the danger of an attack from the New States of America'.[90] Sir Frederick Lamb (minister in Madrid, 1824-7) did not even think it was a question of arrogance but of absurd fanaticism, very typical of the Catholic nations: 'non-recognition was with the king [of Spain] an article of faith; his conscience, his religion,' he wrote. 'The king has really been persuaded that he is bound by an ancient oath of Charles V not to alienate any of the Spanish dominions'.[91]

Stubborn and proud, the Spanish government 'cling[s] to the idea of reconquest' even after the massive royalist defeat at Ayacucho (December 1824).[92] Britons saw Spain as a culturally violent nation; it was not uncommon to see comparisons in Parliament of Spain's war on the colonies with its bloody eighty-year war on the Netherlands, back in the sixteenth century.[93] Ferdinand VII and his ministers engaged in the colonial conflict, wrote Kilbee, 'with a want for a fight truly Spanish … [They] will neither make an effort to resist the danger which threatens them nor will they [come] to some arrangement with the independent states'.[94] It was not in Spanish nature to look for the benefits of enlightened, peaceful policy: as Aberdeen put in 1830, if only the Spanish government abandoned dangerous dreams of restoration and engaged in a 'prudent administration' of the Cuban colony, it would 'find a considerable compensation for the loss of the continental provinces'.[95]

But arrogance, like cruelty, was not an ideological choice but an unescapable cultural feature. This was made evident by the fact that the liberal statesmen who ascended to power in 1833 were seen to be no better than their *ancien régime* predecessors. 'I have no great reliance upon the large or liberal views of those legislators',

[88] Count of Ofalia's memorandum 'On Spanish America' to A' Court, 30 Apr. 1824, FO 185/98.
[89] Kilbee to Planta, 6 Feb. 1826, pvt. no. 3, FO 72/304; Canning's memorandum to Cabinet, 15 Nov. 1822, CC *i*, 57.
[90] Canning to Sir Frederick Lamb, 1 Aug. 1825, no. 9, FO 72/300.
[91] Lamb to Canning, 20 June 1825, no. 5, FO 72/301.
[92] Kilbee to Planta, 19 Nov. 1825, pvt. no. 21, FO 72/304.
[93] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 15 June 1824, vol. 11, cc. 1350-1353. (Sir James Mackintosh). See also Paquette, "Intellectual Context of Recognition."
[94] Kilbee to Planta, 18 May 1824, pvt. no. 7, FO 72/304.
[95] Aberdeen to Addington, 17 Feb. 1830, no. 3, FO 72/366.

commented Villiers after the first liberal Cortes assembled in 1834. Cea Bermúdez, who headed the first liberal government after Ferdinand VII, 'will not see that he is inflicting a great injury upon Spain in order to inflict a little one on Mexico'.[96] Villiers expressed shock at how the Spanish liberals, who were fighting a war for their survival against the Carlists, could not see that recognition would 'produce a favourable effect upon the foreign money markets' and help the Spanish queen raise foreign loans for her armies.[97] Even Prime Minister Juan Álvarez de Mendizábal, who was Britain's political protégé, resisted letting go of the colonies and demanded £2 million from the British government 'in return for Spain's recognising the South American independence'. Villiers told him: 'we would not guarantee him two pence for that which it was the interest of Spain not to lose another day in doing'.[98] To the British minister's disappointment, Mendizábal put the recognition question before the Cortes and was immediately made a hostage of the colonists there: he has 'got the South American question into such a mess … that I almost fear he will not clear himself of these great difficulties'.[99] Mendizábal's arrogant 'parliamentary blunder' might even bring him down, losing Britain a valuable ally before a commercial treaty (Palmerston's great endeavour) was signed.[100] Long after absolutism had fallen, British leaders continued to see Spanish hubris as a prime cause of disorder in the Peninsula and the Atlantic.

A moral mandate, or a hostage of morality

Framing of immoral behaviours as sources of disorder, and therefore of Britain's actions against this disorder as part of a 'moral foreign policy', also served the political interests of the British elite—particularly of the Whigs. Canning and Palmerston were both master manipulators of public opinion and played the moral-liberal factor of their foreign policy (which was not always as liberal as it might have appeared) to further in their personal political agendas. Canning used a liberal foreign policy discourse to bulwark his position with popular support in the mid-1820s when the king and the grand Tories were after his head; Palmerston used it to enhance his position in the public eye and to amass political

[96] Villiers to Palmerston, 24 Oct. 1833, PV, 65-66.
[97] Villiers to Palmerston, 18 Apr. 1836, PV, 412.
[98] Villiers to Palmerston, 22 Feb. 1836, PV, 379.
[99] Villiers to Palmerston, 7 Dec. 1835, PV, 341.
[100] Villiers to Palmerston, 13 Dec. 1835, PV, 346.

capital for the frail Whig coalitions of Lord Grey (1830-4) and Lord John Russell (1846-52).[101]

Domestic political situations might have contributed to catalyse the discursive identification of disorder and immorality, and British morality with its ordering policy aboard. The 1832 Reform Act expanded the franchise and gave the vote to a liberal-minded middle class with increasing interest in foreign affairs. As put by David Brown, the Reform now forced foreign policy 'to be constructed in reference not only to the Parliament, the Cabinet, and the Crown, but also "the nation"'. In an 'age of growing national consciousness', as Brown put it, the politician managing to put forward the idea of a moral-liberal foreign policy would harvest political capital and popular support, and would have good munition against the rival party.[102]

Just as the Reform Act made it important for government legitimacy to count with popular support, the Abolition of Slavery Act (1833) in a way stiffened Britain's own moral standards. Although some regions of the empire retained slaves up to 1838, the Act had the political effect of increasing Britain's eagerness to end the slave trade. Villiers made this point clearly to Cea Bermúdez, in October 1833: 'after the great and generous efforts lately made by the British Nation for the extinction of slavery, His Majesty's Government would insist upon the complete fulfilment of the engagements which already existed'.[103] When in 1835, Villiers again warned the Spanish government that the same 'Parliament and whole British nation' who were suppling the Spanish queen with arms and money, 'felt the deepest interest in the course pursued by Spain upon a matter where her good faith was so seriously compromised', he was sending a clear message about what he expected the conduct of the Spanish government to be with regards to adding an equipment clause to the anti-slave trade treaty.[104] When this failed, he wrote to Palmerston the following: 'I am determined to make [the Spanish government] swallow the equipment articles'.[105] More effective and persuasive methods were about to be employed to meet the demand for order set by new British moral standards, in particular regarding Spain.

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[101] Chamberlain, *Pax Britannica?*, 13–14; Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy, 1846-55*, 12. See also Laurence Fenton, *Palmerston and the Times: Foreign Policy, the Press and Public Opinion in Mid-Victorian Britain* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012).
[102] Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy, 1846-55*, 2; Haas, *Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics*, 98–99.
[103] Villiers to Palmerston, 23 Dec. 1833, no. 1, FO 84/140.
[104] Villiers to Palmerston, 13 May 1834, (Separate), FO 84/155.
[105] Villiers to Palmerston, 29 Aug. 1834, PV, 195

In such a political climate, both Tory and Whig ministers were keen to pursue order abroad to avoid political erosion at home. Scholars have shown that foreign policy became a significant element in the political battle between the parties, as well as the element parties used to distinguish themselves. Adrian Brettle suggested this of the 1850s, a moment of 'foreign policy primacy' on account of the ongoing geopolitical flux abroad; however, this already had begun to be an element of British political life since the late 1820s and 1830s.[106] The campaign against the slave trade, uniting both moral considerations and diplomatic praxis, was one of the issues both parties attacked one another with. In 1838, Tory MP Sir Robert Inglis blamed Palmerston and claimed that 'notwithstanding all the endeavours … the trade has been aggravated in all its horrors'.[107] Stratford Canning (possibly resenting not having been chosen for high office) also accused Palmerston of not doing enough to get the Americans on board a right-of-search treaty without which the policing of the seas was a useless task.[108] Also on account of the 'ferocity' and immoral conduct of the Spanish liberal army, Villiers reminded Palmerston that 'the English public seems to take an interest in Spanish affairs, you are therefore likely to be attacked'.[109] He certainly was. Peel accused him of avoiding the topic in the House—'why did he not mention the murder of the mother of Cabrera?'—and even raised the question of 'whether these scenes were not the result of the noble Lord's own policy?'.[110]

When in power, the Tories too faced tremendous criticism from the Whigs and were forced to adapt their policy. Palmerston accused Peel of doing the biding of Iberian despots like generals Narváez, O'Donnell, and '*Senhor* whoever he may be who conducts for the moment the foreign affairs of Brazil': 'If the line of conduct to be pursued by Her Majesty's Government in respect to the Slave Trade is to be regulated by a regard to the feelings of the governments of the slave-trading countries … they may as well permit Spain and Brazil to go on as they like violating the treaties they have entered into with us'.[111] Aberdeen wrote a private letter to Bulwer reminding him 'not [to] forget Cuba'

[106] See Adrian Brettle, "The Enduring Importance of Foreign Policy Dominance in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Politics," in *The Primacy of Foreign Policy in British History, 1660-2000: How Strategic Concerns Shaped Modern Britain*, ed. William Mulligan and Brendan Simms (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 154–66.
[107] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 10 May 1838, vol. 42, cc.1123-37,
[108] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 10 May 1838, vol. 42, c. 1153.
[109] Villiers to Palmerston, 3 Mar. 1836, PV, 387.
[110] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 10 Mar. 1837, vol. 37, c. 273. (Sir Robert Peel)
[111] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 16 May 1845, vol. 80, cc. 473-474.

after 'Palmerston made an attack yesterday on our slave trade policy'.[112] Bulwer knew of the importance of this question and how directly it could affect the government at home: 'I have not lost sight of Cuba', he assured him.[113]

Nevertheless, public and political convenience itself did not account for the framing of immorality as disorder. Statesmen held a 'divine confidence in British religious and commercial values', as put by Jonathan Parry.[114] Religion played a crucial role in constructing a worldview in which power politics and morality were intertwined. This has been pointed out by scholars about colonialism, and how British imperialism was deeply influenced by a Christianizing imperial mission, carried out by missionaries, colonial officers, and politicians within without the British Isles.[115] However, as Duncan Bell notes, further research on 'the impact of theology on Victorian conceptions of world politics' is still needed.[116]

Although it is not the purpose of this dissertation to do so, it is worth signaling out that when statesmen's referred to Britain's role as a world ordering power, they did so with a clearly religious language. Linda Colley argued that for many statesmen, 'Great Britain was still Israel, and its crusade against slavery was just one more vital proof and guarantee of its supremacy among the nations. British gun-boats sailed under God's protection because they carried out God's work'; foreign policy language, this chapter has shown, reflects this.[117] The idea that Britain only knew prosperity and power because it had steered on the right path, a moral path that had begun with the abolition, and that immoral nations were on the path of political and moral doom, was central in statecraft. If Britain owed its prosperity to its morality, a duty was imposed to combat immorality elsewhere in order to preserve it. Russell had already used these arguments in 1850, amidst the first attacks on the West Africa squadron by coalescent free trade Radicals and protectionist Tories. He had stressed that

> Other considerations and other motives which may influence the House in coming to a decision on this question … we have been blessed with great mercies during the past year … It appears, then, to me … that if we were to decide to allow this trade to be pursued freely and unhampered, that we should

[112] Aberdeen to Bulwer, 17 July 1844, (private), Aberdeen Papers, BL, Add. Mss. 43146.
[113] Bulwer to Aberdeen, 23 June 1844, no. 283, FO 84/519.
[114] Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (London ; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 16.
[115] See, for example, Hilary M. Carey, *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c. 1801-1908* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[116] Bell, "Empire and International Relations," 95.
[117] Colley, *Britons: Foring the Nation, 1707-1837,* 360.

> no longer have a right to expect a continuance of the signal blessings which we have enjoyed. … the high, the moral, and the Christian character of this nation, is the main source and secret of its strength.[118]

This stance pointed to ordering being a religious moral obligation that could not be neglected. Stephen had already alluded to this back in 1818, when had reminded Castlereagh that the British statesmen could not disregard from the moral necessity of combating the slave trade. The moral duty 'stands now on so broad a basis of national character … the British statesman must regard it as an unchangeable part of our system which, like the Constitution itself, he cannot accommodate to his policy, but must accommodate his policy to it'.[119]

For Palmerston, in particular, religion was very present in his worldview and foreign policy. Although he had been tolerant with Catholics within the United Kingdom—he had supported Emancipation in 1829—and was hostile towards any form of clerical political power; his foreign policy was infused with a certain notion of English Protestant nationalism but not merely for an electoral purpose.[120] Palmerston too shared in the idea that Britain's imperial prosperity was heavenly recompense for the nation's virtue regarding slavery: 'It is a curious coincidence that from the time when this country first began to abolish the slave trade, followed up by abolishing slavery within the dominions of the Crown … this country has prospered in a degree which it never experienced before … The world is governed by a Divine Providence, and … nations are made to suffer for their misdeeds, and derive advantage from the good deeds which they perform'.[121]

He thus criticised Peel's appeasement of the Spanish slave trade along a moral-religious line as much as a strategic one. He argued that 'our duties do not consist in merely abstaining from evil', he said, 'but in doing as much good as we can; and that from those who have great power, and are possessed of great influence, the more is to be expected as to the good within their power to achieve'.[122] This essentially made it Britain's responsibility to 'call down the vengeance of Heaven, not only upon the authors of such enormities, but upon those who having the power to prevent such crimes, had

[118] *Hansard*, 3rd series, HC Deb. 19 Mar. 1850, vol. 109, c. 1183.
[119] Stephen's memorandum to Castlereagh, 8 Sept. 1818, in *Castlereagh Correspondence*, iv, 30
[120] John Wolffe, "Lord Palmerston and Religion: A Reappraisal," *English Historical Review* 120, no. 488 (2005): 907–36.
[121] *Hansard*, 3rd series, HC Deb. 12 July 1858, vol. 151, c. 1340.
[122] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 08 July 1845, vol. 82, c. 178.

culpably neglected to do so'.[123] Palmerston made it even clearer in 1848, at the hearings of the House of Commons Select Committee for the Suppression of the Slave Trade. When Radical MP Richard Cobden questioned whether 'it is our duty also by armed cruisers and by paying subsidies to other countries, to induce them to do the same act of justice to their slaves', Palmerston responded: '"Duty" is a word of many interpretations. I do consider it to be the moral duty of this country; a duty which this country owes to itself'.[124]

Not all statesmen were so militant in their infusion of theological doctrine and foreign policy as Palmerston's—or Gladstone's and Disraeli's in the following decades, both of whom followed in Palmerston's footsteps in this sense, as John Wolffe argues.[125] Castlereagh, for example, took a tolerant, appeasing approach to religious strife within the United Kingdom, and his foreign policy had a markedly secular, power-politics approach—especially if compared to the messianic, profoundly religious foreign policy of conservative powers like Russia during the Concert era.[126] Although further research is indeed required to see how statesmen's religious views affected the formulation of foreign policy, the body of sources analysed in this dissertation show that notions of morality—determined as a result of a certain religious positioning—had a key place in British strategic calculus. This infusion of theology and geopolitics created a duty to deliver a geopolitically stable and also morally acceptable world order—a 'world we are bound to provide', Canning had written to Wellington in 1822.[127]

However, providing a moral world order to an increasingly demanding society would eventually become a problem. Both Canning and Palmerston expressed on occasions that they could not relax the pressure on Spain regarding the slave trade because of 'feeling of great disappointment in the Parliament and people of England' (Canning) and 'the strong and widely diffused feeling in this country upon the subject' (Palmerston).[128] Canning had made of antislavery diplomacy a key part of his 'public' foreign policy, publishing the slave trade dispatches for the first time to show government

[123] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 16 July 1844, vol. 76, c. 924.
[124] Testimony of Viscount Palmerston, M.P., BPP: First Report from the Select Committee on the Slave Trade (18 Apr. 1848) 1847-1848, HCP 272, XXII.1, pp. 19-20.
[125] See Wolffe, "Lord Palmerston and Religion: A Reappraisal."
[126] On Castlereagh's religious tolerance see Bew, *Castlereagh*, 571.
[127] Canning to Wellington, 29 Oct. 1822, WD *i*, 465.
[128] Canning to Lamb, 4 Apr. 1825, BPP: Correspondence with Foreign Powers on the Slave Trade, 1824-1825, HCP (004) XXIX.463, 17; Palmerston to Russell, 17 July 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/22.

moral and rally popular support.[129] For Palmerston, it was a central part of his ethos as a statesman.[130] These rigid standards clashed with political and economic necessities brought about by the mid-century crisis, causing severe crisis of consistency in British policy. This was clearly seen, for example, with the sugar duties question in the mid-1840s: the liberalisation of sugar imports ruined the free-labouring West Indies and boosted demand for slaves in Brazil, Cuba, and the American South. Moral inconsistency forced a strategic contortion of discourse to avoid the pitfall of hypocrisy: free trade was presented as the means for rationalising economies and bringing about the end of slavery, covering the fact that it debunked abolitionism because of the unaffordable 'moral price' of sugar.[131] This shows a gap existing between what was signalled as morally ordered, and what suited national interests. Eventually, as the gap grew wider and the dissociation more evident leaders would have to readapt their visions of disorder because it was becoming increasingly difficult to address them, also in geopolitical terms. Increasing difficulties to face the roguish, immoral powers after the 1840s was also in contempt with the rigid moral standard Britain had against them. This would force British leaders to begin to acquiesce with disorder and even re-adapt their visions of it—however, at great political and strategic cost, as will be seen in chapters Five and Six of this dissertation.

[129] Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government*, 41.
[130] See Robert George McGregor, "Lord Palmerston and British Anti-Slavery, 1830-1865" (University of Southampton, 2019).
[131] On the sugar question see Anthony Howe, *Free Trade and Liberal England, 1846-1946* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); and Huzzey, "Free Trade, Free Labour, and Sugar in Victorian Britain."

Chapter 3

Treaties, rights, and 'barbarians'

Patterns of violence in British ordering

In 1835, as Spain bled white in a civil war between the liberal *Cristinos* and the pro-absolutist Carlists, Villiers wrote to Palmerston: 'our objective is to make this country English'.[1] The significance of this phrase transcended the mere desire that Spain quickly consolidate a liberal system and sign a commercial treaty to import British manufactures. It reflected a desire to make Spain into an 'English country' by transforming it into an ordered unit of the international system that followed British strategic preferences and did not hinder British interests. Villiers and Palmerston even coined the term 'Portugalize' to specify the objective of making Spain become just like its neighbour—Britain's oldest ally.[2] During the Carlist War, Britain employed 'friendly counsel and advice' to help Spain develop liberal institutions and become Britain's main ally in western Europe against France and Russia.[3] However, these diplomatic methods were not always sufficient, and as the moral and strategic demand for order increased after 1820, British leaders sought more effective forms of ordering to tackle disorder.

Christopher Bayly argued in his *Imperial Meridian* (1989) that it was *after* the emergence of liberalism at home and abroad in 1830 that Britain's exercise of violence overseas diminished; that it had been in the transition between the first and second empires (c. 1780-1830) that Britain had attempted 'to establish overseas a despotism which mirrored in many ways the politics of neo-absolutism and the Holy Alliance of contemporary Europe' and thus increased the violence of its imperial action overseas.[4] This chapter presents the opposite argument: it was after 1830, that forms of state violence (naval, economic, diplomatic, and military) became central to Britain's endeavour to re-order the world. The empowerment of the Canningite ordering tradition (through Palmerston's tenures of the Foreign Office); increasing levels of disorder abroad (due to

[1] Villiers to Palmerston, 10 Oct. 1835, PV, 302.
[2] Villiers to Palmerston, 30 Dec. 1836, PV, 578. On the "Portugalize effort" in the context of the Carlist War and the Quadruple Alliance see Goizueta Alfaro, "Forging Liberal States," 837.
[3] *Hansard,* 3rd series. HC Deb. 2 Aug. 1832, vol. 14, c. 1067. (Lord Palmerston).
[4] Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 8.

Spanish and American increasing roguishness); and increasing susceptibility towards disorder at home (on account of social and economic changes); led British ordering to be much more interventionist and aggressive.[5]

A vast number of variables can be looked to for evidence of British violence on the world stage: colonial praxis (as Bayly did), military intervention and planification, economics, and even political thought. This chapter focusses on the high political dimension, and identifies an increasing predisposition to employ violence as a means to order the Atlantic. By looking at how statesmen thought of, and ordered the conduction of violent intervention, this chapter shows patterns that evidence an increasing proclivity in British high politics after 1830 to resort to violence to order.

The first section will reflect on how statesmen of the Canningite tradition thought of violence not only strategically necessary also as morally and legally legitimate to use. In this the two traditions became at loggerheads: Castlereaghans favoured appeasement of roguish states for the sake of equilibrium and Europe and resented the use of violence; Canningites increasingly justified violence not only as a legitimate tool, but also as tool it was morally necessary to use to enforce treaties on roguish nations which were in contempt of international law. Though both traditions of statecraft are indeed porous, and sometimes respond a historiographical categorisation rather than to actual historical realities, in the question of how to deal with Atlantic disorder represented a constant divide between both traditions which endured until the 1850s.

The second section will use three criteria to trace increasing levels of violence in the ordering policy of Canningite statesmen, particularly of Palmerston. Firstly, the verbal predisposition of statesmen to resort to violence in times of crisis; secondly, the way violence was thought of as capable of advancing Britain's possibilities of tackling disorder (i.e. how violent intervention was intentionally used to deliver a better position

[5] Doyle traced ten major military interventions between 1825 and 1840: Gold Coast, Burma, India, Portugal, Greece, Spain, South Africa, Syria, Afghanistan, and China; five times as many as in the ten previous years of peace, 1815-25 (limited to Guadalupe and Ceylon). This methodology however, offers a limited picture. Measuring the violence of these interventions is not an easy task and it could be argued that because of the lineal development of technology and industry, interventions were naturally going to be more violent and bloody only on account of the use of more modern and lethal weaponry each time. Increasing levels of violence could also be traced not the nature of the conflict itself but rather to the number of violent conflicts (regardless of how bloody they were) going on at the same time. A frozen picture of 1840, for example, could serve to present Britain (then engaged in simultaneous conflict in Syria, China, and Afghanistan) as a power committed to violence merely on account of how many expeditions it conducted abroad and not on the nature and importance of violence. See Appendix 2 in Michael W. Doyle, *The Question of Intervention: John Stuart Mill and the Responsibility to Protect* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 227–32.

for Britain in its quest to re-order the Atlantic and was therefore intimately linked to the idea of creating order); thirdly, the commitment of statesmen to use violence in spite of the political, economic, and diplomatic costs of doing so. This demonstrates that British leaders used violence in spite of balance-of-power calculations, convinced as they were of Britain's moral right to use it. Eventually, British ordering became an intrinsically violent endeavour that other powers in turn regarded as a form of disorder to be combatted.

Enforcing order on 'barbarians': violence as a right

Great power conferences and bilateral treaty agreements were initially British leaders' preferred instruments to order the Atlantic world, but this did not remain the case for long. Since the 1810s, voices in the British establishment had been advocating for unilateral violence instead of collaborative (futile) diplomacy. In his 1816 *Inquiry*, Stephen had pointed out that the Vienna Note against the slave trade 'though decisive in its moral and legal consequences … does not in any degree decide how far the other powers of Europe may or ought to interpose [the slave trade]'.[6] Britain was therefore 'left to prosecute the work alone': 'she need only to instruct the commanders of her ships of war now on the Africa station, to seize and send to Sierra Leone all vessels under Spanish colours carrying slaves'.[7] He referred to this action as a 'short and simple process', something which denotes the notion of efficacy, simplicity, pinned on unilateral intervention. But Castlereagh had gone through immense troubles to secure peace in 1814-15 and was not willing to press a violent enforcement of abolition; the issue was barely touched at the following great power summit at Aix-la-Chapelle.[8] The collaborative diplomacy or violent approach to Atlantic ordering became *the* main divergence between the Castlereaghan and the Canningite traditions.

Whether defenders of legitimism, opposers of Emancipation, or men of the Vienna spirit; Castlereaghans from Castlereagh himself in 1820 to Malmesbury in 1858 favoured a policy of appeasing Atlantic rogues instead of confronting them. Although prominent of diplomatic historians have demonstrated that 'appeasement' has long been a tradition

[6] Stephen, *An Inquiry*, 13.
[7] Stephen, *An Inquiry*, 70.
[8] Paul M. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France, 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 86.

in British statecraft, there still is much delving to be done in the nineteenth century in search of its origins.[9] Geoffrey Hicks has been one of the historians to do so and has rightly demonstrated that appeasement held a central role in the statecraft of the Conservative Party—and thus that it could be best classified as a 'Conservative' approach to foreign policy rather than as a wide-spanning tradition in British statecraft.[10] Hicks, however, refers to Europe, and does not interrogate the question of appeasement of the United States. George Bernstein, who does, reaches a completely different conclusion: that appeasement of the United States was a Liberal policy forced by the a pro-American middle-classes on which the Liberal Party was electorally dependent.[11] The correspondence analysed in this dissertation, however, confirms that it was among the Conservatives that there was a greater disposition to appease, and specifically to appease the Americans for strategic reasons. Palmerston, who dominated the Liberal Party's foreign policy throughout the mid-century, was not at all appeasing of the Americans; even if he was not extremely vocal against them in public for political reasons he recognised the danger of giving in to their demands: 'propitiating the Yankees by countenancing their schemes of annexation would be like propitiating an animal of prey by giving him one of one's travelling companions. It would increase his desire for similar food', he wrote to Clarendon in 1857.[12] Tories were the ones recurring more often to appeasement to conduct diplomacy. But where Hicks uses the adjective 'Conservative', it would perhaps be more appropriate to use the adjective 'Castlereaghan' because, even though Hicks traced precedents of Lord Derby's appeasement of France and Prussia over the Luxembourg Crisis (1867) in Robert Peel's and Lord Aberdeen's appeasement of France in 1841-6, the appeasement tradition went all the way back to Castlereagh, the United States having been the subject of it in 1814-22.[13]

After the War of 1812, Castlereagh was willing to appease American expansion—even concede to it by ceding Astoria, in the border, something Canning considered a strategic mistake—to keep Atlantic tension to a minimum and thus have a free hand in

[9] See Kennedy, "The Tradition of Appeasement in British Foreign Policy, 1865-1939"; Paul W. Schroeder, "Munich and the British Tradition," *Historical Journal* 19, no. 1 (1976): 223–43.
[10] Geoffrey Hicks, "'Appeasement' or Consistent 'Conservatism'? British Foreign Policy, Party Politics and the Guarantees of 1867 and 1939," *Historical Research* 84, no. 225 (2011): 513–34.
[11] See George L. Bernstein, "Special Relationship and Appeasement: Liberal Policy towards America in the Age of Palmerston," *Historical Journal* 41, no. 3 (1998): 725–50.
[12] Palmerston to Clarendon, 4 July 1857, quoted in Henderson, "Southern Designs on Cuba," 385.
[13] Hicks, "'Appeasement' or Consistent 'Conservatism'? British Foreign Policy, Party Politics and the Guarantees of 1867 and 1939," 519–20.

Europe.[14] He found tensions with the Americans to be an annoying distraction from the matters truly important—namely, European equilibrium. On account of this, Castlereagh fought Liverpool bitterly during the Congress of Vienna in 1814, when the prime minister demanded of him to let go the contentious Polish-Saxon question fearing Britain would find itself entangled in matters 'we have less to do to with' when the Americans resumed hostilities (which he expected them to do soon).[15] The notes taken by Sir Stratford Canning (Canning's cousin and one of Britain's most important diplomats in the nineteenth century) during his interview with Castlereagh before leaving for Washington D.C. as minister in 1820, are the clearest example of the way the foreign secretary wanted to conduct Anglo-American relations:

> [Policy to be] pacific, conciliatory, forbearing. [We] cannot oppose them with success on inferior local points; National animosity [is] a considerable part of their strength; In angry discussing we have all to lose … we cannot recede, and hence the great delicacy of treating with them; When it is not worth our while to call out our whole strength, they must always have an advantage over us.[16]

This Castlereagh bequeath became the defining feature of a tradition of statecraft running in Conservative administrations. Wellington understood the security threat posed by the United States to Canada and the West Indies, but he did not regard it in such a high stance as threats in Europe or Asia.[17] Regarding recognition for the South American republics, his main concern was that it would upset Britain's relations with Spain and push it into the arms of France; he cared little if the United States obtained the ascendancy over the newly created states if Britain avoided a quarrel with Spain.[18] Similarly, Aberdeen's and Peel's concession of the Oregon border via the Webster-Ashburton treaty (1842) obeyed to the surge in militant Anglophobia in French politics which risked the *entente cordiale* with France suddenly collapsing.[19] Castlereaghan appeasement, essentially, underpinned the idea of avoiding an Atlantic war that would diverge British

[14] T.C. Elliot, "The Surrender at Astoria in 1818," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 19, no. 4 (1918): 271–82.
[15] Quoted in Bew, *Castlereagh*, 380–81.
[16] Notes on the interview between Sir Stratford Canning and Viscount Castlereagh, 27 Jul. 1820, Stratford Canning papers, TNA FO 352/62.
[17] Wellington was keen to spend more on the defences of Canada and keep the upper hand in the Great Lakes. See Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, 33–40.
[18] Wellington to Liverpool, 7 Dec. 1824, WD *ii*, 364.
[19] On the entente cordiale and Aberdeen's difficult keeping of the peace with France and the United States see Muriel Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen* (New York, 1983), 301–60.

attention from Europe. As Westmorland put it to Wellington in 1823, 'we have no stomach for war'. He said this precisely regarding 'our conduct in the Floridas', which Britain had passively let the United States seize by military force in 1819.[20]

On the other hand, statesmen of the Canningite tradition like Stephen, Canning, and Palmerston, believed the unilateral use of violence was something to be avoided but certainly not something to be demonised. Britain, they believed, could not cooperate to re-order the world with the same powers that were fostering instability to further their interests and diminish Britain's. There is a striking similarity between Stephen's, Canning's, and Palmerston's conceptions of violence. Stephen believed that war with the slave trading powers might be necessary 'even if while the state of our public burdens and finances most urgently pleads for the continuance [of peace]'.[21] Canning believed Britain should prepare for war against a Franco-American alliance in the Atlantic because 'peace, however desirable and cherished by us, cannot last for ever'.[22] Palmerston's was even more decisive in the use of violence: 'peace is an excellent thing and war a great misfortune but there are things more valuable than peace and many things much worse than war', he said to Aberdeen in 1853 on the verge of Britain's intervention in the Crimea.[23] It is impossible to trace a direct connection between the three statesmen but it is undeniable that there was a shared spirit and opinion about how Britain should navigate peace and war. Though manifested on different issues, it is clear that for them unilateral use of violence (even risking confrontation) was a necessary mechanism to ensure the broader objective of order.

This might beg the question of whether Canning or Palmerston were somehow warmongers, eager to recur to violence and disregard cooperative diplomacy. On the contrary. Both statesmen initially saw cooperative, concert-based approaches as the best way of ensuring a cost-saving and efficacious ordering of the world.

Canning had believed that enforcing bilateral treaties on these nations put them 'at our mercy as to the continuance of the slave trade'.[24] He had considered them the way of creating a 'general law' based 'upon the aggregate of … separate engagements between State and State'.[25] As to the problem of maritime insecurity, he had continued the

[20] Westmorland to Wellington, 16 Oct. 1823, WD *ii*, 151.
[21] Stephen's memorandum, 8 Sept. 1818, *Castlereagh Correspondence,* iv, 27.
[22] Canning's memorandum for Cabinet, 30 Nov. 1824, WD *ii,* 358.
[23] Palmerston to Aberdeen, 1 Nov. 1853, in *The life and correspondence of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, Vol. 2, ed. Evelyn Ashley (London: Bentley and Son, 1879), 285.
[24] Canning to Wellington, 15 Oct. 1822, WD *i,* 355.
[25] Canning to Wellington, 30 Sept. 1822, WD *i,* 328.

cooperative approach taken by Castlereagh: he instructed Kilbee to collaborate with U.S. agents 'for the attainment of the great object both governments had in view'; that is, cleansing the seas of pirates and slave traders.[26] U.S. shipping had been seriously harassed too by Spanish Cuban-based privateers; Britain expected cooperation in this aspect.[27] Canning expressed disillusion when he understood such disorder in the Caribbean actually helped the Americans and was encouraged by them. 'Yankees are just the rogues that we have always hitherto taken them to be, but which I was willing to hope they might have resolved to be no longer', he wrote to Liverpool in 1824.[28] He had *hoped*; but hoped in vain.

On a similar line, Palmerston believed that 'all treaties upon the slave trade must be a mutual right of search' and was eager to negotiate with rogues to attaint it.[29] He was very enthusiastic about the French mutual right-of-search treaty signed in 1831 'free from objection on the score of national feeling' overcoming the 'maritime jealousy' which had been hindering it.[30] It 'induced His Majesty's Government to hope' that other governments would 'be willing to acceded to all the provisions of the important conventions'.[31] He was then very disappointed when the Americans and the French escaped a mutual right-of-search treaty in 1842 which he had always truly believed was the key to stopping the trade.[32]

It was a genuine disillusionment at partners' connivance with disorder that drove Canning and Palmerston to use unilateral violence. Canning's rupture with the Concert of Europe, for example, on account of the Western Hemispheric issues was not due to the fact he wanted to return to the eighteenth-century system—as Harold Temperley defended back in 1966 in his classic monograph *The foreign policy of George Canning* and historians have kept arguing after him—but because he believed the existing order was hindering Britain's interests.[33] At the Congress of Verona (1822), the Allies made it

[26] Kilbee to Canning, 29 May 1824, no. 71, FO 84/29.
[27] On the combined efforts against piracy see the works of Hunter, *Policing the Seas*; "Anglo-American Response to Piracy."
[28] Canning to the Earl of Liverpool, 6 Aug. 1825, CC *i*, 283.
[29] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 15 Aug. 1838, vol. 44, cc. 1313-1314.
[30] Palmerston to Sir Charles Vaughan, 14 June 1833, no. 2, FO 84/143; *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 15 Aug. 1838, vol. 44, c. 1314.
[31] Palmerston to Vaughan, 14 June 1833, no. 2, FO 84/143; Palmerston to Vaughan, 31 May 1833, no. 1, FO 84/143.
[32] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 15 July 1845, vol. 82. c. 552. (Palmerston); Palmerston to Temple, 25 Feb. 1842, *Bulwer*, iii, 86.
[33] Harold Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning, 1822-1827: England, the Neo-Holy Alliance, and the New World* (London, 1966). Diplomatic historians usually repeat Temperley's argument about Canning wanting to return to the eighteenth-century system when discussing British foreign policy

very clear that they would not participate in Britain's projects of creating a 'general law of nations' against the slave trade via treaty. According to Wellington, they did not trust British philanthropy and believed British motives were 'not connected with the human desire'.[34] Moreover, Canning believed the great powers were trying to use the Concert to hinder British interests.[35] France, for example, fearing the influence Britain might gain in the Iberian Peninsula after the 1820 revolutions had installed liberal governments in Spain and Portugal, flagged the threat of Concert-intervention against these governments to pressure the Iberian powers 'to give up all connexion with England'.[36] For Canning the Concert of Europe meant 'all the Allies leagued against us'.[37] In these conditions, Britain could not operate to manage a peaceful, diplomatic solution to the problem of post-Napoleonic disorder in the Atlantic world.

For Palmerston it was an issue that transcended trust. He believed that cooperative diplomacy, as the Castlereaghan Tories continued to practise it in the 1840s, had proven to be fruitless since partners could not be trusted, and was thus dangerous for British interests and prestige. As he saw it, during their 1841-6 ministry, the Tories made 'permanent sacrifices of our national interests' with no other result than invigorating the slave trade and hindering Britain's position in key theatres such as the Caribbean and West Africa. 'This is a Heads I lose, Tails you win, diplomacy', he pointed out to Russell.[38] In 1844, the Palmerstonian *Morning Chronicle* published a column denouncing the effects of Aberdeen's *entente cordiale* 'on the Spanish colonies': 'the slave trade restored in Cuba by a lieutenant [General O'Donnell] who followed [Queen] Christina to Paris … [France] has completely cheated us of all influence there. … Commercial fairness or facilities to England are not to be expected.'[39] The French, 'who have been deceiving us about … almost every matter', were playing the British also on this matter of the

between 1822 and 1827. See Chamberlain, *Age of Palmerston*; Norihito Yamada, "George Canning and the Spanish Question, September 1822 to March 1823," *Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (2009): 343–62.

[34] Wellington to Canning, 28 Oct. 1822, WD *i*, 450, 453.

[35] Canning to Wellington, 17. Dec. 1822, WD i, 658. For Canning's rejection of the Concert because of France's instrumentalization of it and not because of an ideological rejection of the congress system see Norihito Yamada, "George Canning and the Concert of Europe, September 1822-July 1824" (London School of Economics and Political Science, 2004); and Yamada, "Canning and the Spanish Question."

[36] Wellington to Canning, 10 Dec. 1822, WD *i*, 638; Canning to Wellington, 13 Dec. 1822, WD *i*, 650.

[37] Canning to Wellington, 24 Sept. 1823, WD *ii*, 137.

[38] Palmerston to Russell, 9 Jan. 1845, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, *i*, 77-8.

[39] Morning Chronicle, 7 Jul. 1844 (acc. British Newspaper Archive). For the relation between Palmerston and main newspapers see Brown, "Palmerston and the Press"; Fenton, *Palmerston and the Times: Foreign Policy, the Press and Public Opinion in Mid-Victorian Britain*.

Atlantic slave trade.[40] 'I have heard, and from pretty good authority … that a pamphlet … which was distributed among the [French] deputies against the right of search, was written at the request of [French premier François] Guizot, and was revised and corrected by Guizot before it went to press', Palmerston told his brother William.[41]

Aberdeen's lack of 'energy, spirit, and sagacity', Palmerston believed, was encouraging the offending parties to destroy Britain's credibility and humiliate it.[42] In spite of their cordial relation, François Guizot did not renew the mutual right-of-search treaty which had been so laboriously achieved in 1831. Palmerston accused Aberdeen of trusting the offending powers and denounced that 'since the present Government have been in office, the slave trade is increasing in every country in which it is carried on'.[43] This was directly linked to British weakness, to the inability to act strategically against disorder: 'there can be no doubt that England does not now enjoy the same consideration and exercise, the same influence abroad as in our time for the low, submissive tone taken on all foreign questions by our government at home', he wrote to Russell.[44] For him it was not casual that during this period of Tory indolence and naivety, Britain suffered the umpteenth humiliation from the Spanish, this time on account of the 1845 penal law against the slave trade. It was imperative to employ much harsher means to reverse this dangerous trend: 'I attach no value whatever to any law that the Spanish government may pass on the subject of slave trade, I want British authority to be employed in effecting that object', he claimed.[45]

Thus the prime reason owing the increasing predisposition to use violence was the 'bad faith' of the roguish nations. The idea of 'bad faith' was omnipresent in British diplomatic correspondence concerning the Spanish Atlantic; it was understood as a government's intentional breaching of international compromises it had signed with the objective of furthering its interests. This idea would become the key source of legitimacy for the use of violence against offending powers. If powers refused their commitments, Britain would enforce compacts by force. It was thus very important to understand why treaties failed, who broke them, and where 'bad faith' lay.

[40] Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 16 Apr. 1840, *Ashley*, i, 367.
[41] Palmerston to Temple, 25 Feb. 1842, *Bulwer*, iii, 86.
[42] Palmerston to Temple, 12 Feb. 1845, *Bulwer*, iii, 148-9.
[43] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 5 May 1845, vol. 80, c. 206.
[44] Palmerston to Russell, 14 Nov. 1842, *Ashley*, i, 456.
[45] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 5 May 1845, vol. 80, cc. 204-205.

Until the 1830s, 'bad faith' was attributed to 'those *ci-devant* governors of Cuba' bullying the metropole to make the 1817 anti-slave trade treaty 'a mere dead letter'.[46] 'The authorities of the colony take no notice of these arrivals, and their negligence is seconded by the connivance of the naval officers, and by the apathy of the government of Spain', Villiers reported.[47] The regime of *facultades omnímodas* (absolute powers conferred by the king on the Captain General to disregard metropole legislation if it was in the best interest of the security of the colony) on which Cuba operated made it easier for the governors to bypass the treaty and to hinder the efforts of the British commissioners.[48] Since the installation of this regime in 1825, Kilbee noted it had become 'more difficult for His Majesty's Commissioners to obtain proofs respecting cases of illicit slave trade than for any other individual in the island'.[49]

But as the number of treaty violations continued to increase in the 1830s and 1840s— there was not 'one packet from Cuba without an account of new and glaring violations of the faith of Spain', complained Aberdeen—British leaders started looking for culprits in the high echelons of the metropole rather than in the colony.[50] Addington was the first to suggest in 1831 the agency of the Spanish government in the question: he noted that whilst the Spanish ministers kept delaying their response to Britain's 1826 proposal of an equipment clause, they mischievously turned a blind eye (if not a helping hand) to the numerous slave expeditions leaving Cádiz for the Slave Coast.[51] Palmerston and Villiers soon accused the Spanish liberal government of acting 'in a manner most indifferent to the wishes and feelings of [Spain's] ally' and of compromising 'her good faith'.[52] The slave trade only persisted to Cuba, Palmerston was sure, by means of 'secret instructions of [Spain's] government'.[53] Colonial governors were instructed by Madrid to disregard law and treaty for foul purposes; the evidence arriving at the Foreign Office had convinced him of it. British commissioners at Havana informed that 1835, when the equipment clause was approved, had still been the worst year since the establishment of

[46] Villiers to Palmerston, 9 Sept. 1834, PV, 201; Kilbee to Canning, 12 Jan. 1824, no. 68, FO 84/29.
[47] Kilbee to Canning, 1 Jan. 1825, no. 19, FO 84/39; Canning to Lamb, 4 Apr. 1825, BPP: Correspondence with Foreign Powers on the Slave Trade, 1824-1825, HCP (004) XXIX.463, 17.
[48] Marquese et al., *Slavery and Politics*, 141–45.
[49] Kilbee to Canning, 30 Aug. 1825, no. 56, FO 84/39.
[50] Aberdeen to Bulwer, 2 May 1844, no. 4, FO 84/519.
[51] Addington to Manuel González-Salmón, 8 Dec. 1830, enclosed in Addington to Palmerston, 12 Dec. 1830, no. 4, FO 84/110; Addington to González-Salmón, 5 Feb. 1831, enclosed in Addington to Palmerston, 7 Feb. 1831, no. 1, FO 84/121.
[52] Palmerston to Villiers, 22 Nov. 1833, no. 2, FO 84/140; Villiers to Palmerston, 13 May 1834 (Separate), FO 84/155.
[53] Palmerston to Villiers, 22 Nov. 1833, no. 2, FO 84/140.

the commission in terms of the import of slaves: around 15,000.[54] The penal law both Palmerston and Aberdeen had pressured the Spanish government for years to approve with 'the force and value of constitutional law', was finally emptied of any real power, intending 'no doubt, to maintain the slave trade'.[55] A notoriously scandalous case was seen in 1848, when Palmerston received definite proof that 'Queen Christina is about to engage in a considerable enterprise of slave trade for supplying negroes … and that the governors [of Cuba and Puerto Rico] have received from the Spanish government private orders to lend themselves to the transaction'.[56]

The Spanish tried to excuse themselves (and British diplomats sometimes fell for their excuses) by blaming the Cubans: over supper with Howden in 1851, Foreign Minister the Marquis of Pidal claimed that the most honourable men 'sent out there had invariably taken upon themselves to play into the hands of the Cubans'.[57] When Howden foolishly bought into Pidal's excuses Palmerston bluntly reminded him that 'such systemic breaches of treaty and law' were only possible because 'the persons guilty of those crimes feel confident that they might rely upon powerful protection at Madrid to spare them from the punishment'.[58] He was definitely not going to allow the Spanish to try to escape their responsibility by playing the card of innocence or incompetence. Both Villiers and him believed these treaty violations concerned 'the national character of Spain herself' and revealed that 'the Sovereign of Spain has not adjourned to the good faith pledged in her compacts'.[59]

Imputing 'bad faith' on foreign governments and not on their agents was an inflection point in British ordering; if the states with which Britain had signed treaties against disorder were still responsible for disorder, violence became morally and legally legitimate. The reason for this was that British leaders believed 'bad faith' against treaties, (the 'building materials' of normative order as put by Benton and Ford) situated the offending nation outside the boundaries of international law.[60] John Stuart Mill—whose philosophy, as Jennifer Pitts argued, would articulate most of British political thinking in

[54] Commissioners to Palmerston, 1 Jan. 1836, no. 139. BPP: Correspondence with Commissioners. 1835 (Class A), HCP (005) L.1, 50. p. 206.
[55] Aberdeen to Bulwer, 23 Oct. 1844, no. 17, FO 84/519; Bulwer to Aberdeen, 11 Jan. 1845, no. 4, FO 84/574. Palmerston's and the penal law allusion in Palmerston to Villiers, 10 Aug. 1837, no. 10, FO 185/172.
[56] Palmerston to Bulwer, 29 Apr. 1848, no. 3, FO 84/721.
[57] Howden to Palmerston, 17 Jan. 1851, no. 1, FO 84/837.
[58] Palmerston to Howden, 11 Dec. 1850, no. 12, FO 84/756.
[59] Palmerston to Villiers, 22 Nov. 1833, no. 2, FO 84/140.
[60] Benton and Ford, *Rage for Order*, 6.

the late nineteenth century—contended that a failing reciprocity of the kind constituted a disregard for international law and was a defining feature of barbarous states (which in his view were 'uncapable of understanding' the fundamental principles of the society of nations due to 'deficiencies of mind and character').[61] 'Barbarians will not reciprocate. They cannot be depended on for observing any rules', he wrote.[62] However, these notions had been part of British strategic thinking long before the appearance of *A Few Words on Non-Intervention* (1859).

Already in 1823, Canning concurred in that breaking treaties was something that only 'a barbarous state, out of the pale of political society' would do.[63] On the subject of colonial restoration and Spain's intentional prolongation of a pointless war, Sir James Mackintosh too argued that 'we cannot continue to treat Spain … as if she were under the government of civilised men, and not under the tyranny of ignorant and ferocious barbarians'.[64] In 1834, Villiers had stressed to the Spanish prime minister, Francisco Martínez de la Rosa, that the attitude of the Spanish government as to the treaties had put the nation 'in contempt of that good faith without which the relations of international society must cease to exist'.[65] British statesmen had long thought of the existence of a supra-state structure that regulated relations between the different powers based on a lawful and honourable observance of signed compacts. Canning had spoken about how treaties constituted a 'general law … incorporated into the public law of the civilised world', and how going against those treaties meant acting against the fabric of relations between civilised powers.[66]

The usual roguish powers Britain dealt with, especially Spain and the United States, were thought to act against this social connection. Fox, for example, argued that the American government's disregard for filibusters had the United States in contempt of 'the international duty' it owed the community of civilised nations.[67] Russell, in 1853, similarly accused the Americans of not being 'people so enlightened' as they claimed, for

[61] Jennifer Pitts, "Boundaries of Victorian International Law," in *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Duncan Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 76–77.
[62] John Stuart Mill, "A Few Words on Non-Intervention" (1859). Appendix I in Doyle, *The Question of Intervention*, 217.
[63] Canning to Wellington, 28 Oct. 1823, WD *ii*, 159.
[64] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 15 June 1824, vol. 11, c. 1378.
[65] Villiers to Martínez de la Rosa, 12 Apr. 1834, enclosed in Villiers to Palmerston, 15 Apr. 1834, no. 1, FO 84/155.
[66] Canning to Wellington, 30 Sept. 1822, WD *i*, 328.
[67] Fox to Palmerston, 4 July 1839, no. 25, FO 115/69.

failing to 'perceive the utility of those rules for the observance of international relations' after they had refused to sign a convention to protect Cuba from filibusters.[68] In 1856, the Earl of Albemarle, a Liberal peer, went as far as saying that when Vattell published the *Law of Nations* that would bring henceforth peace if upheld, there still had not 'arisen a community of Anglo-Saxons on the other shore of the Atlantic … addicted to commerce' and with 'morbid jealousy of interference in their affairs'. 'The existence of this people changed the whole question' respecting international law.[69]

Palmerston's writings suggest that it was disrespect for treaties, and international law more broadly, that made him perceive Americans as 'rogues'. Writing at the time William Walker's filibustering expeditions into Nicaragua violated the existing Anglo-American pact over Central America (Clayton-Bulwer treaty, 1850), he stated that it was impossible that 'the treaty could be permanently kept in existence and that it would be honestly observed' because 'Yankees are such rogues, such ingenious rogues that it is hardly possible to hope that even if the present questions were settled to their liking … that some new cavils would not be found'.[70] The significance of the treaties thus went far beyond creating 'a patchy regulatory regime' of 'permissive spaces for imperial enforcement' of law against criminals, as Benton and Ford argued.[71] The treaties set the boundary which, when trespassed, allowed British statesmen to give the trespassing nations (*civilised* nations) the category of 'barbarous', making it possible to subject them to a different diplomatic treatment—a much more violent one for, as Clarendon put in 1857, the restraints of international law 'do not apply to barbarous states'.[72]

Both on account of Britain's moral superiority as a nation upholding the compact, and on the offender's barbarian nature, the right to use violence to enforce them was not only embedded in the treaties but also a fundamental part of the ordering mission. Already in 1818, Stephen had stressed to Castlereagh that Britain 'should not permit a solitary exception to frustrate their benevolent object'. Abolition was the 'right and duty of every maritime state', that it required of the 'unanimity of all other civilised states', and abdicating from it was a 'moral apostasy'.[73] Canning took Stephen's arguments beyond

[68] Russell to Crampton, 16 Feb. 1853, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, VII, Doc. 2998, 492-493.
[69] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HL Deb. 22 May 1856, vol. 142, c. 514.
[70] Palmerston to Clarendon, 31 Dec. 1857, in *Foreign Policy of Victorian England,* 335.
[71] Benton and Ford, *Rage for Order*, 20.
[72] Quoted in E.D. Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism, 1855-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 58.
[73] Stephen's memorandum, 8 Sept. 1818, *Castlereagh Correspondence,* iv, 33.

that by proclaiming that 'no power has the right … to interrupt by its single act the consenting policy of all the civilised world on a matter on which the dictates of Christianity and morality are clear'. If this Christian dictate was ignored, then it would be imposed 'without her consent'. 'It would be a measure of some, though justifiable violence'.[74] Historians have presented Canning as rather reluctant to intervene in the affairs of other nations, and he certainly was, but not in a case of bath faith against the moral duty to uphold the treaties constituting the 'pale of social connection with other nations'.[75] In this case, he stated, Britain had 'not only a right conferred, but a duty imposed' to intervene violently.[76]

Under Palmerston that idea of moral duty and right to employ violence was developed into a form of doctrinal diplomatic jurisprudence. For him this almost was the fine print of treaties: they 'give England the right of enforcing those engagements if chiefs themselves should neglect to do so'; although he claimed this with regards to Britain's treaties with West African nations, the same rationale applied to the Spanish and the Portuguese—whom in 1839 Palmerston had declared to be 'morally at war with us' on account of the slave trade.[77] As he stated in 1848 at the hearings of the House of Commons Select Committee for the Suppression of the Slave Trade, the violence Britain exercised on third nations was 'founded upon authority given to us by treaties voluntarily entered into with us by other countries'.[78] After all, it must be considered that the treaties in a way protected Spain from an outright invasion of its waters and ports like happened with Brazil in 1850. Palmerston himself acknowledged that 'our slave trade treaty with Spain would prevent you from dealing with Cuba as we dealt with Brazil', because Brazil was refusing to sign a treaty with Britain, whereas Spain had a valid treaty which was however not fulfilling.[79] Violence against Spain was therefore conducted *through* the treaty with means 'which would not lead to war with Spain or at least be an act of war against her'.[80]

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[74] Canning to Wellington, 30 Sept. 1822, WD *i*, 329
[75] Canning to Wellington, 30 Sept. 1822, WD *i*, 329
[76] Canning to Wellington, 29 Oct. 1822, WD *i*, 465.
[77] Testimony of the Viscount Palmerston, M.P., BPP: First Report from the Select Committee on the Slave Trade (18 Apr. 1848) 1847-1848, HCP 272, XXII.1, pp. 17-18. On the 1839 Portuguese case see Leslie Bethell, "Britain, Portugal and the Suppression of the Brazilian Slave Trade: The Origins of Lord Palmerston's Act of 1839," *English Historical Review* 80, no. 317 (1965): 776; and Maeve Ryan, "The Price of Legitimacy in Humanitarian Intervention: Britain, the Right of Search, and the Abolition of the West African Slave Trade, 1807-1867," in *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, ed. Brendan Simms and D.J.B. Trim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 231–55.
[78] Testimony of Viscount Palmerston, M.P., BPP: First Report from the Select Committee on the Slave Trade (18 Apr. 1848) 1847-1848, HCP 272, XXII.1, p. 19.
[79] Palmerston to Russell, 13 Aug. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/22.
[80] Palmerston to Russell, 13 Aug. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/22.

Palmerston thought this possible because he considered that 'the treaty already existing between this country and Spain establishes a mixed foreign and Spanish jurisdiction in Cuba'.[81] This implied that Britain was a co-responsible and co-jurisdictional party, charged with the responsibility of enforcing law and order alongside the Spanish, a responsibility from which the British government could not simply abdicate.

Spain's evasion of the compromises also prevented Britain from fulfilling its rightful duty, hence Palmerston suggested that Spain's breaching of the engagements gave Britain 'a right of war … and if we choose, we have a right to take any forcible means short of war for compelling a fulfilment to those engagements'.[82] This was not only a rhetorical figure used in a pamphlet, but the philosophical basis legitimising British representatives to remind the Spanish ministers that 'Her Majesty's Government would be obliged to have to recourse to other measures than negotiations to enforce the fulfilment of the engagements entered into by Spain', as Arthur Aston did following Palmerston's orders in 1841.[83] Officials insisted that Britain had 'a right to have these engagements fulfilled' and was 'entitled to require the accomplishment of its anxious wishes'.[84] Even a cautious Castlereaghan like Aberdeen understood this as the framework the treaty had established: Britain was a responsible party too, with a say in Cuban affairs, and therefore in possession of 'the right to require that effectual measures shall be taken to put an end to these acts and to prove that they are not committed under the authority of the government of Madrid'.[85] It is not surprising that whilst debating the penal law in 1845, Spanish senators denounced that the 1817 and 1835 treaties were not a contract between two equal parties because they granted Britain rights over Spain's colonies without giving Spain similar rights over Britain's.[86] U.S. Secretary of State John Forsyth feared that Britain, thinking 'herself to have under the treaty a right to call upon Spain for faithful and efficient performance of the obligations contracted', would 'enforce compliance by means which would eventually affect the territorial rights of her ally to

[81] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 5 May 1845, vol. 80, c. 205.
[82] This was an anonymous article in the *Morning Chronicle*, later published separately in a pamphlet which assured Palmerston's authorship: 'The style of these articles and the great knowledge and ability which they evidence, at once suggest the belief, that they were written by Lord Palmerston … and it is now well understood that his Lordship was their author.' *Lord Palmerston on the Treaty of Washington*: *Articles from the "Morning Chronicle"*. (London, 1842), 1. (acc. Google Books). *Morning Chronicle*, 20 Sept. 1842, in *Palmerston on the Treaty of Washington*, 9.
[83] Aston to Palmerston, 24 Jul. 1841, no. 171, FO 84/354.
[84] Villiers to Martínez de la Rosa, 12 Apr. 1834, enclosed in Villiers to Palmerston, 15 Apr. 1834, no. 1, FO 84/155; Villiers to Palmerston, 13 May 1834, (Separate), FO 84/155.
[85] Aberdeen to Bulwer, 2 May 1844, no. 4, FO 84/519.
[86] DSCE, Senado 1844-1845, 4 Jan. 1845, no. 27, c. 276.

the island of Cuba'.[87] He was not entirely wrong: this legitimation of the rightful use of violence did not remain a vocal pledge for long, and soon was translated into actual violent ordering against roguish powers.

Order through violence: increasing British belligerence in the Atlantic

This right to use violence became a foundational construct of a violence-consenting and violence-driven Atlantic order. From 1830 onwards, there was an observable increase in British *belligerence* in the Atlantic against roguish powers. Britain did not engage in gratuitous war-making with the disordering powers, but leaders did indeed show a proclivity to use the threat of violence more often, to display localised levels of violence to further national aims; and moreover they showed an increasing predisposition to use violence—founding it to be efficient and successful—without significant worry about the consequences of doing so. Contrary to what Bayly argued about 1830 marking the beginning of a new, liberal, less violent empire, the liberal upheaval at home and abroad made British leaders much more predisposed to use violence to secure Britain's interests from the actions of roguish powers.

Palmerston and Villiers inaugurated the Foreign Office and Madrid embassy respectively showing greater belligerence towards the Spanish government than previous leaders. This was in turn due to the recent changes in Britain (the Reform and Abolition acts) but also due to the situation of civil war in Spain, which they believed would make Spain's rulers more sensitive to British pressure. In April 1834, Villiers warned Prime Minister Martínez de la Rosa (with whom the Quadruple Alliance treaty was about to be signed!) that Spain should prepare 'for an expression of indifference on the part of His Britannic Majesty as to the fate of [Cuba], grounded solely on the wilful and unpardonable manner in which the slave trade has been permitted'.[88] Previous foreign secretaries had always respected the sovereignty of Cuba. Canning had plans for an eventual British takeover of Cuba—merely on account of the war scare provoked by France's invasion of Spain in 1823—but just once (briefly in April 1825) did he actually threaten Spain with letting Cuba fall should the anti-slave trade treaty continue to be

[87] John Forsyth to Aaron Vail, 15 Jul. 1840 in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5044, 16.
[88] Villiers to Martínez de la Rosa, 12 Apr. 1834, enclosed in Villiers to Palmerston, 15 Apr. 1834, no. 1, FO 84/155.

defied.[89] Villiers and Palmerston did not take long to threaten the liberal government with abandoning the island to the vultures that circled it, and did so whilst negotiating the treaty that provided for foreign intervention in the Carlist War.

The threat seemed to be successful: only a month after it was made, Villiers reported that Martínez de la Rosa was showing a more 'positive language' with regards to issues important for Britain—such as the recognition of Belgium, the South American republics, and the equipment clause.[90] This led the minister to believe that the Spanish only reacted when in fear of losing their precious colony. He transmitted this to Palmerston the 13 May 1834, eight days after reporting Martínez de la Rosa's 'positive language', on a separate dispatch 'to prevent it being printed with the papers upon the subject' (something which speaks to the secrecy of what it contained): leaving abolition in Spanish hands would only be 'productive of fresh delays', he wrote, and 'though His Majesty's government would resort to the language of menace with the greatest reluctance, … the time might come when forbearance would be no longer possible'.[91] Approaching his second tenure of the Foreign Office, Palmerston was receiving the input that the threat of violence, and letting violence play out, served British interests well. This relative success of violent threats, along with the failure of cooperative diplomacy and the 'excited state of [British] public opinion upon this great question', encouraged the preference of leaders for violence.[92]

In the coming years, British statesmen considered a violent intervention in the Spanish Caribbean (almost short of a takeover of Cuba) an effective way of preserving British interests in moments of crisis. In early 1836, as the *Cristinos* continued to lose ground in the Carlist War, Villiers recommended sending 'a few idle ships upon the East or West India stations' to secure British positions in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines in case of a Carlist victory. He was convinced of the propriety of this: 'we [will] soon put [them] in our pocket'.[93] During the autumn, a radical uprising took place in Santiago de Cuba and back in Spain the queen regent faced a revolution of her own palace guard: revolution, Villiers had long feared, was the prelude to Carlist victory and

[89] Three memoranda outlining plans for the British seizure of Cuba were presented to Canning weeks before the French invasion. See Memoranda nos. 1-3 by Colonel George de Lacy Evans to Canning, 9 Apr. 1823, *CC i*, 116-20. See also Chapter Five of this dissertation.
[90] Villiers to Palmerston, 5 May 1834, PV, 135.
[91] Villiers to Palmerston, 13 May 1834, (Separate), FO 84/155.
[92] Villiers to Palmerston, 13 May 1834, (Separate), FO 84/155.
[93] Villiers to Palmerston, 2 Jan. 1836, PV, 532.

even greater scenarios of chaos, such as French intervention in Spain.[94] He immediately pressed the matter to Palmerston of deploying warships to Cuba. He was especially fearful that in the event of a radical revolution and a subsequent Carlist victory in Spain and overseas, Britain would lose the two million loan Spain had secured with the savings from its *cajas de ultramar* (colonial customs duties). He wanted a series of commissioners to appear onboard British men-of-war in Havana to collect the debt. Palmerston did not object to this: on the margin of Villiers's minute he wrote 'this proposal must be considered a perfect secret', something which implies he did consider it as a possibility if the circumstances required it.[95] Again in November, as the *Cristino* side plunged into chaos after major defeats in the battlefield, Villiers heard rumours of a possible Carlist uprising in Cuba.[96] A few days later he was writing a private letter to Palmerston insisting that if the Carlists obtained victory, 'we might go whistle for our security unless we send an expedition to conquer an island in the Tropics'.[97] This did not finally occur since the Carlist surge ended up in fiasco, but as it can be seen, with ever more frequency and normality did British statesmen allude to a violent intervention in Cuba (something which had been unthinkable during the 1820s) or similar.

The preference to use violent intervention to secure national interests also creeped in from the lower levels of the administration. In 1825, amidst the crisis of colonial restoration, Kilbee (by then only in charge of the Havana Mixed Commission) had recommended to Canning 'a powerful intervention of His Majesty's Government' in Cuba, for that 'alone can prevent this island from falling into the hands of the United States or from final destruction'.[98] Agents in the field were first-hand witnesses to disorder and were thus prone to call for aggressive state intervention to deal with it. During the American Civil War, even before hostilities broke out between the North and the South, Lord Lyons, minister in Washington D.C., warned the government that probably British consuls in Southern cities would petition the Admiralty for warships to set sail to protect their interests. 'The first thing which always occurs to the consular mind when in trouble is to ask for a British man of war', he wrote.[99] Lyons suggested the existence of a mindset in the diplomatic establishment that saw naval violence as key to

[94] Villiers to Palmerston, 21 May 1836, PV, 431.
[95] Villiers to Palmerston, 20 Oct. 1836, no. 263, FO 72/462.
[96] Villiers to Palmerston, 5 Nov. 1836, PV, 553.
[97] Villiers to Palmerston, 11 Nov. 1836, PV, 572.
[98] Kilbee to Canning, 2 Mar. 1825, pvt. FO 72/304.
[99] Lord Lyons to Russell, 25 Nov. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34.

protect British interests from disorder. In some cases, this was reported as if it were standard procedure without taking into consideration the political and naval risks of recklessly sending men of war to any foreign shore where disorder flickered. In 1860, Russell set out to 'warn the Admiralty not to listen too readily to applications of consuls for men of war' to prevent the more than foreseeable clash with the U.S. Navy.[100]

This preference for violence also reached the public. By the 1840s, Britons had developed a perception of their own power and would call for it to be used. For example, amidst a crisis in Cuba in 1844, the *Morning Chronicle* published an article directly warning General O'Donnell ('who can speak good English … and we know that he reads our paper very attentively, especially when it contains anything relating to the island of Cuba') that 'if Spain refuses to grant our reasonable demands for justice, a few vessels of war blockading Havana and Matanzas will soon lead to his recall'.[101] Ordering violence reinforced, and was simultaneously encouraged by, a surge of feverous nationalism in British society. The public appreciated the masculine attribute of a tough, moralistic foreign policy which Palmerston came to embody.[102] In a way, Palmerston fed this triumphant use of violence to the public to harvest support for the government and, in doing so, increased public hunger for the same thing in the future. As Lewis put it to his friend Sir Edmund Head, governor general of Canada, when Britain faced conflict in China, Italy, the Near East, and Persia in 1857, 'the country is not very fond of these disputes but the pugnacious spirit of the people is strong when the government has once got up the quarrel'.[103]

British use of violence, above all, served the objective of dealing with a problem of disorder and improving Britain's position to deal with it in the future. Intervention became all about pre-emption—'*prevention* is a wise method of dealing with this as with other classes of malefaction', Villiers wrote in 1833.[104] As shown in the Introduction to this dissertation, pre-emption was at the core of Britain's ordering: it entailed dealing with potentially disruptive threats and improving Britain's position to deal with an escalated version of threat. Castlereaghans tended to pre-empt a threat by ensuring there was no cause for quarrel (usually through appeasement). Canningites, on the contrary, recurred

[100] Russell note, 10 Dec. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34.
[101] *Morning Chronicle*, 16 July 1844 (acc. British Newspaper Archive).
[102] See Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy, 1846-55*.
[103] Lewis to Head, 27 Jan. 1857, *Letters of Sir George Cornewall Lewis,* 323-324.
[104] Copy of Villiers's note to the Cea Bermúdez Cabinet, 31 Dec. 1833, enclosed in Villiers to Palmerston, 31 Dec. 1833, no. 2, FO 84/140. (Emphasis in original).

to pre-emptive violence. Canning had set the example in 1807 when, as foreign secretary, he ordered the bombardment of Copenhagen to stop the Danes from handing their fleet and strategically vital harbour to the French. As A.N. Ryan put it, Canning 'forced a crisis' to prevent having to deal with a much severe one and from a more hazardous position.[105]

The use of violence ('forcing a crisis') or the threat to do so, became a preferred tool of those following the Canningite tradition—particularly Palmerston's—to deter roguish powers from engaging in disorder and to provide Britain with an improved position (in political, military, and geographical terms) from which to tackle disorder more effectively in the future. For example, the threat of using naval power against Spain in various occasions throughout the 1830s and 1840s helped to prevent situations which would have given roguish rivals a strategic advantage over Britain. In 1837, it was the presence of British warships in the south-east coast of Spain that allowed Palmerston to exhort the Spanish government to 'civilly decline' France's request to send ships to Ceutan waters and use the strategically vital deep-water harbour of Mahon.[106] That Palmerston thought of using warships as pre-emptive instruments against disorder can be seen in that in November 1833, he had forced the Spanish government to allow British warships to harbour at Spanish ports where 'English people and property could be in danger' or 'where it may be necessary to show that England desires the government of the queen be firmly consolidated and that it disproves of anything done against it'.[107] Of course this was Britain's way of supporting the liberal queen but also of getting hold of an advantageous commanding position in the seas of Spain vis-à-vis other powers, particularly France. 'As long as we have a respectable squadron [in the Mediterranean]', he had written to Prime Minister Lord Melbourne in 1835, 'we may express our opinions and wishes with some authority to all parties … We want to act by moral effect produced

[105] A.N. Ryan, "The Causes of the British Attack upon Copenhagen in 1807," *English Historical Review* 68, no. 266 (1953): 55.
[106] Villiers to Palmerston, 21 Oct. 1837, PV, 727; Palmerston to Villiers, 16 Nov. 1837, no. 157, FO 72/476; Villiers to Palmerston, 24 Aug. 1837, no. 113, FO 72/476; Palmerston to Villiers, 5 Oct. 1837, PV, 718.
[107] Juan de Vidal to Cea Bermúdez, 25 Nov. 1833, no. 192, AHN Estado 5487. (My translation. Original text: 'con el objeto de proteger personas y bienes ingleses que pudieran estar en peligro a consecuencia de algún alboroto o donde conviniese manifestar que la Inglaterra desea que el gobierno de la Reina, Nuestra Señora, se consolide y que desaprueba de todo atentado contra él'.)

by the presence of our fleet and the *uncertainty* in the minds of others, what that fleet may do; and thus to prevent the necessity of its having to act by force of arms'.[108]

Again in 1847, when Spanish troops crossed the border to protect Queen María II of Portugal from a revolutionary *junta*, Palmerston urged Bulwer, minister in Madrid, to remind the Spanish government that 'we have a strong squadron on the coast of the Peninsula and that Spain has ports'.[109] He managed to deter the Spanish from permanently occupying Lisbon —a sensible strategic enclave for the control of the River Tagus and the eastern Atlantic.[110] As he put it to Sir Charles Napier, naval executor of his foreign policy: 'there are no better peace-keepers than a well-appointed fleet of three-deckers'.[111] Even pacifist of statesmen such as Lyons understood that 'no greater service could be rendered to the cause of peace, than to make [the rival] aware of the real perils' of violent engagement with Britain.[112]

This illusion of deterrence was certainly key to keep the Americans at bay: war with the United States could only be avoided 'if the Americans believe that England would put forth her whole strength at the outset and give them a sharp lesson before they have time to get up an army or navy'.[113] This was one of the few things clear to Palmerston during the American Civil War.[114] He knew it was imperative to increase spending to ready the Canadian forces for war with the United States—sending no less than 10,000 British troops.[115] He expected the threat of war to preserve peace. The idea of Britain being capable of exerting violence was key to preserve order: 'no man with an eye in his head or half and idea in his brain could fail to perceive' that 'the conquest of our North American provinces by the North Americans' would be followed by a destruction of 'the position of England'. Even if 'theoretical political economists may discuss at their leisure the question as to the value of the colonies to the Mother Country' (even if he himself had sometimes fantasised with letting the colonies go) at a moment of crisis, he was

[108] Palmerston to the Viscount Melbourne, 30 Oct. 1835, quoted in Charles K. Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston 1830-1841: Britain, the Liberal Movement and the Eastern Question*, vol. 2 (London: G. Bell, 1951), 843. (My emphasis).
[109] Palmerston to Bulwer, 26 Nov. 1846, *Bulwer*, iii, 264.
[110] Palmerston to Russell, 9 Aug. 1847 (private), *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, 275.
[111] Palmerston to Charles Napier 28 Nov. 1847, *Life and letters of Admiral Sir Charles Napier*, ed. Hugh Noel Williams (London: Hutchinson, 1917), 220.
[112] Lyons to Russell, 21 May 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/35.
[113] Lyons to Russell, 3 Jan. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34.
[114] See Chapter Six of this dissertation.
[115] Palmerston to Russell, 9 July 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.

willing to use violence to keep them within the empire because the mere demonstration of violence was an element of order.[116]

When criticised for his aggressive policy against other powers, Palmerston stressed the pre-emptive nature of order, arguing that those nations had been 'refrained from taking steps that might have plunged us into conflict with one or more of these powers'.[117] Certainly this was the case in 1855, when the Spanish attempted to appoint a notorious slave dealer, Domingo Mustich, as governor of the island of Fernando Po.[118] Britain could only consider this act, Clarendon warned, 'as a direct encouragement of the slave trade' and warned the Spanish government that if Mustich was appointed, Fernando Po would be considered 'as a central depot for slaves, [and] it will be dealt with accordingly by the naval forces of Her Majesty'.[119] Even amidst the Crimean War, Britain had not forgotten about the slave trade and was willing to use violence against Spain. Palmerston revised Clarendon's correspondence with Howden and was sure to include a handwritten note expressing that

> The Spanish government ought to be made clearly to understand that whether they like it or not they will be compelled to fulfil their treaty engagements, that we have the means and the power to do so and that those means and power will be exerted till the end is accomplished. They have trifled with us too long on this matter and their evasions ought to be brought to an end.[120]

In the event, Mustich never made it to Fernando Po.

The necessity to make Britain more efficient in tackling problems of disorder playing on the maritime and economic strengths of the nation to enhance its position as ordering power, also drove the scarce territorial expansion of the British empire in the early nineteenth century.[121] Perhaps the most significant elements in this blue-water strategy, as it has been called, or 'Tory worldview' (although it was also shared by non-Foxite liberals), were the chains of islands Britain gained control of, allowing it to

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[116] Palmerston to Russell, 9 Sept. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.
[117] *Hansard*, 3rd series, HC Deb. 1 Mar. 1848, vol. 97, c. 122
[118] Clarendon to Otway, 16 Oct. 1855, no. 12, FO 84/962.
[119] Clarendon to Otway, 17 Oct. 1855, no. 13, FO 84/962.
[120] Palmerston's note to Howden, 28 Oct. 1855, no. 11, FO 84/963.
[121] See Andrew D. Lambert, *Seapower States: Maritime Culture, Continental Empires and the Conflict That Made the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); "The Tory World View: Sea Power, Strategy and Party Politics, 1815-1914," in *The Tory World: Deep History and the Tory Theme in British Foreign Policy, 1679-2014*, ed. Jeremy Black (London: Taylor & Francis, 2015), 121–48; Daniel A. Baugh, "Great Britain's 'Blue–Water' Policy, 1689–1815," *International History Review* 10, no. 1 (1988): 33–58.

command geographical areas without having to waste copious resources on territorial administration and defence. As disorder augmented in the Spanish Atlantic in 1830s, it became necessary to obtain control of new enclaves—even if it was not peacefully. No example shows this better than that of Fernando Po and Annabon, the two Spanish islands off the Bight of Biafra that had obsessed British statesmen for decades.[122]

Interest for Fernando Po remerged in 1838 as the Foreign Office received a report from Permanent Colonial Undersecretary Sir James Stephen, son of the prominent abolitionist, in which it was stated that 'the sovereignty of that island is an object of much importance to Great Britain with a view to the suppression of the slave trade'.[123] Palmerston favoured a shift towards a more localised theatre in the campaign against the slave trade and for that he agreed it was necessary to possess a naval base off the Slave Coast 'without loss of time'.[124] It was the island off the coast, not the vast complexity of the mainland that interested him. His opinions about the 'new Africa policy' defended by imperialists like Fowell Buxton or free-trader projects about cracking the African trade open are well known: he did not only consider it unfeasible to 'begird with [settlements] the whole circumference of Africa', but also 'wild and crude'.[125] Blockading the whole coast of Africa, as some Tories later advocated for, was a 'chimerical attempt' even if done in collaboration with France, 'even if assisted by … the United States'.[126] In this he sometimes clashed with the lords of the Admiralty Board, whom Palmerston believed had 'an aversion to the measures necessary for putting down the slave trade' and wanted to conquer and colonise the African kingdoms in the coast in order to avoid sending ships and men to their deaths in the region.[127]

Palmerston ran from anything entailing massive annexation of continental territory. It was not necessary: 'it would be quite enough if we could stop the bunghole through which the Dahomey slave trade ensues and these are but a few', he insisted right to the

[122] The British interest for Fernando Po went back to the late eighteenth century and reemerged in the 1820s. See Jeff Pardue, "Antislavery and Imperialism: The British Suppression of the Slave Trade and the Opening of Fernando Po, 1827-1829," *Itinerario* 44, no. 1 (2020): 178–95; Martin Lynn, "Britain's West African Policy and the Island of Fernando Po, 1821-43," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 18, no. 2 (1990): 191–207; Robert T. Brown, "Fernando Po and the Anti-Sierra Leonean Campaign: 1826-1834," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 6, no. 2 (1973): 249–64.
[123] Sir James Stephen to William Fox-Strangways (Foreign Office), 2 Feb. 1839, TNA CO 82/11.
[124] Palmerston to Henry Southern, 18 June 1839, no. 8, FO 84/279: Palmerston to Southern, 28 Mar. 1839, no. 4, FO 84/279.
[125] Quoted in John Gallagher, "Fowell Buxton and the New African Policy, 1838-1842," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 10, no. 1 (1950): 44.
[126] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 16 July 1844, vol. 76, cc. 943, 945.
[127] Palmerston to Russell, 13 Aug. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/22.

end of his career; 'the best action against the slave trade is therefore that on the *coast* of Africa'.[128] His idea of acquiring territory always served this specifically maritime approach that would help unlock the full potential of British power and also avoid having to send marines ashore, where they usually perished to tropical disease. Fernando Po suited these objectives perfectly.[129] Already in 1831, a letter from the Admiralty had pointed towards the island as a 'means by which so great a waste of human life may be spared'.[130] Palmerston was prepared to offer the Spanish state £60,000 for the island. This was 'a sum far above the real value … in any ordinary point view'; his willingness to pay such a price reflects the importance which he attached to the island which he saw as very valuable for Britain's project of Atlantic ordering.[131] When the Spanish refused (by delaying and not responding) to grant the British what Palmerston believed would be a vital asset to enforce the anti-slave trade treaties, sheer force was resorted to.[132] Palmerston soon informed Aston that 'the subject does not admit any further delay … Her Majesty's Government wishes to secure without more loss of a time a territorial possession near the Bight of Biafra to serve the purpose of the suppression of the African slave trade'.[133]

In November 1840, HMS *Wolverine* bombarded Spanish slave factories on the island of Corisco, next to Fernando Po, and captured a Spanish citizen in an attempt to force the Spanish government to sell the island.[134] Following the attack, British naval officials signed treaties with local African chiefs to encircle Spain's slaving enclaves on the mainland.[135] The Spanish government immediately started to draft a law to allow the sale of the island, in spite of significant opposition at home.[136] Carlos Alfaro Zafortea

[128] Palmerston to Russell, 13 Aug. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/22. (My emphasis).
[129] Palmerston to Henry Southern, 28 Mar. 1839, no. 8, FO 84/279.
[130] Captain Elliot to Sir G. Shee, 15 Dec. 1831, enclosed in Palmerston to Granville, 4 Jan. 1832, BPP: Correspondence with Commissioners. 1833 (Class A) (007), XLIII.1, 43, pp. 57-8.
[131] Palmerston to Southern, 18 June 1839, no. 8, FO 84/279.
[132] Arthur Aston to Evaristo Pérez de Castro, 9 June 1840, enclosed in Aston to Palmerston, 15 June 1840, no. 8, FO 84/318; Palmerston to Aston, 19 Mar. 1840, no. 6, FO 84/318; Aston to Palmerston, 18 Apr. 1840, no. 4, FO 84/318.
[133] Palmerston to Aston, 22 May 1840, no. 12, FO 84/318.
[134] Henry Dumaresq to Commander William Tucker (HMS *Wolverine*), 8 Nov. 1840, enclosure no. 22, BPP: Correspondence with Foreign Powers relating to the Slave Trade. 1841 (Class B), Command Papers (403) XLIII.1, 43. p. 46; Miguel Ricardo Álava to Palmerston, 10 Mar. 1841, no. 15, BPP: Correspondence with Foreign Powers relating to the Slave Trade. 1841 (Class B), Command Papers (403) XLIII.1, 43. p.19; Aston to Palmerston, 23 Mar. 1841, no. 22, BPP: Correspondence with Foreign Powers relating to the Slave Trade. 1841 (Class B), Command Papers (403) XLIII.1, 43. p.43.
[135] Colonial Office to J. Backhouse, 23 Oct. 1840, FO 84/337, f.194.
[136] Antonio Carrasco González, "El Proyecto de Venta de Fernando Póo y Annobón a Gran Bretaña En 1841," *Estudios Africanos* 10, no. 18–19 (1996): 52.

argues that the issues like those of Corisco and Fernando Po are perfect examples of Britain's 'general disregard for the rights of weak powers, especially in territories with scarce or no government presence'.[137] Although a cultural condescendence for weaker powers (especially a Hispanic, Catholic one) did exist, this 'disregard' really shows that there was an increasing perception about violence delivering objectives swiftly and effectively.

Violence, however, did not necessarily have to entail the bombardment of slaving enclaves. Keeping violence within this war-like frame is what has led historians to argue that only half-civilised nations suffered British vehemence. Jesús Sanjurjo, for example, argues in his book *In the Blood of Our Brothers* (2021) on the end of the Spanish slave trade, that nations higher in the civilizational tier (Spain and the United States, among them) escaped the fate of Brazilians, Portuguese, and South Americans.[138] Sanjurjo supports his claim with Palmerston's famous letter to Sir George Bonham in which he signalled 'China, Portugal, [and] Spanish America' as 'half-civilised nations' which 'require a dressing every eight or ten years to keep them in order' because 'they care little for words and they must not only see the stick but actually feel it'.[139]

However, some important British actions on the Atlantic theatre were fundamentally 'violent' towards the slaveholding powers even if they did not include (as with the case of Brazil) the bombardment of city-ports. British incisive abolitionist policies in Cuba, for example, were sensitively felt in Washington D.C. This was the case of the stationing of HMS *Romney*, a hulk manned by liberated Africans, at Havana harbour between 1837 and 1845 with the purpose of sheltering *emancipados* and prevent them from being resold into slavery by the Spanish. [140] As Lord Lyons would say years later, even if the purpose of a ship was non-belligerent, 'a people like the Americans … are more likely to be irritated than awed by a demonstration which they believe to be no more than a demonstration'.[141] This was clearly the situation with the *Romney*: the Americans were sure that it did not serve a pacific purpose.

Even though it had been transformed into a transport ship in 1820, it was still intimidating at sight (a fifty-eight gun fourth rate ship); that it was manned by liberated

[137] Carlos Alfaro Zaforteza, "Sea Power, State and Society in Liberal Spain, 1833-1868" (Unpublished PhD, Thesis: King's College London, 2010), 178.
[138] Sanjurjo, *Blood of Our Brothers*, 100.
[139] For the full document see Palmerston to Sir George Bonham, 29 Sept. 1850, FO 17/173.
[140] Palmerston to Villiers, 6 June 1837, no. 10, FO 185/172.
[141] Lyons to Russell, 25 Nov. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34.

Africans was also terrifying for slaveholding powers trying to avoid servile revolution.[142] U.S. officials described the ship as 'floating citadel' with which Britain exerted a 'blow to the internal quiet and safety of that island' which 'vibrates through the southern parts of our Union'.[143] They tirelessly collaborated with the Spanish to get it removed from Havana, but in vain. Even when the marines aboard the *Romney* suffered the penalties of not being let ashore, and even when the British commissioners were politically attacked by Havana authorities, Palmerston refused to give in.[144] He even sent a squadron under the command of Vice-Admiral Hyde Parker to Cuban waters to support and protect the hulk in 1840.[145] It was no coincidence either that after returning to government in 1846, Palmerston sent the Earl of Dundonald (previously known as Lord Cochrane) to command the West India Squadron: a veteran of liberal wars across the world (Spanish American revolutions, Greek independence) and a close friend of the Americanophobe Lord Auckland, Dundonald personified this belligerent imagery displayed towards the slaveholding powers—both Spain and the United States.

Another example of a British threat of violence towards Spain affecting the United States was seen in 1847, on account of British alleged intentions of annexing Cuba if the Spanish government did not pay its debt to British bondholders. Palmerston made sure these rumours ran wild. In the House of Commons he warned 'foreign governments who are the debtors to British subjects, that the time may come when this House will no longer sit patient under the wrongs and injustice inflicted upon the subjects of this country'.[146] He also used his media pundits at the *Morning Chronicle* to flag that 'the only terms on which any satisfactory settlement [of the Spanish debt] can be ever made' was by annexing the island of Cuba.[147]

Actually, he had no intention of using violence to recover the £46 million invested by irresponsible shareholders who had decided to bet their fortunes on the stability of a foreign government. In private communications he constantly reiterated to British agents abroad that 'it is for the British government entirely a question of discretion and by no

[142] For an account on the role of the Romney in the desestabilisation of Cuba 1839-45 see Jennifer Louise Nelson, "Slavery, Race, and Conspiracy: The HMS Romney in Nineteenth-Century Cuba," *Atlantic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2017): 174–95.
[143] Washington Irving to Ramón María Narváez, 10 Mar. 1845, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5272, 344.
[144] Commissioners to Palmerston, 30 Sept. 1839, no. 3, FO 84/274.
[145] Hugh Thomas, *Cuba or the Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 203.
[146] *Hansard*, 3rd series, HC Deb. 6 July 1847, vol. 93, c. 1305.
[147] Quoted in Reynolds to Buchanan, 27 July 1847, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5310, 410.

means a question of international right whether they should or should make this matter the subject of diplomatic negotiations'.[148] At Whitehall it was well known that 'Her Majesty's Government cannot interfere authoritatively with the government of Spain in order to compel that government to make arrangements respecting the foreign debt of Spain'.[149] However, electorally it was important for Palmerston to appear to support bondholders during the financial duress resulting from the 1847 banking crisis and crash of railway shares. He also was under pressure from Parliament, where Lord George Bentinck, leader of the protectionists and Peel's bane, made a fiery address arguing that the 'recovery of just debts is a lawful cause of war'.[150]

Above all, debt was also an important diplomatic tool: in more than one occasion Britain had threatened a debtor country with sending warships to collect owed money to gain leverage and further other diplomatic goals. Back in 1841, for example, Aston had bullied the Spanish into selling Fernando Po by warning them that Spain would otherwise 'immediately be called upon to fulfil its engagements for the payment of the bond-holders … no further delay permitted'.[151] After years of Tory impotence and soaring slave trade numbers to Cuba, Palmerston was determined to scare the Spanish into abolition. General Ramón María Narváez, the Spanish premier, was not impressed by Palmerston's bravado: he became entrenched in his positions and refused to accept any of his ministers' plans for the settling of the debt.[152] Months later, Bulwer and the entire British legation were expelled from Madrid, accused of collaborating with revolutionaries against the regime.[153] But the Americans indeed were terrified at Palmerston's declarations. Thomas Reynolds, U.S. chargé d'affaires in Madrid, believed the debt issue was 'an old trick played over again' Britain was as 'pretext to get possession of the Havana or at least gain the regulation and control of its duties' and 'destroy the contraband slave trade'.[154] Secretary of State James Buchanan agreed: 'admitting the right of the British government

[148] Palmerston's Circular to British representatives, 15 Jan. 1848 (draft), FO 83/110.
[149] Edward Stanley to Henry Chard, 8 Mar. 1847, BPP: Correspondence between Great Britain and Foreign Powers relative to Loans by British Subjects, 1823-47. 1847. Command Papers (839), LXIX.453, 69. p.12.
[150] *Hansard*, 3rd series, HC Deb. 6 July 1847, vol. 93, c. 1286.
[151] Aston to Palmerston, 24 Jul. 1841, no. 171, FO 84/354.
[152] Javier Moreno Lázaro, "Las Deudas Externa y Colonial. Contratos y Mercados (1808-1920)," *XI Congreso Interncional de La Asociación Española de Historia Económica*, no. 8 (2014): 19.
[153] Bulwer to Palmerston, 20 Apr. 1848, no. 4, FO 72/741.
[154] Reynolds to Buchanan, 20 July 1847, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5308, 407-409; Reynolds to Buchanan, 27 July 1847, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5310, 411.

to wage war against Spain for the recovery of this debt' was a first step towards the British takeover of Cuba.[155]

British leaders were also very vehement on the question filibustering into the Canadian provinces, an issue in which Fox recommended using 'a suitable demonstration of British force' to face off American disordering.[156] Britain should not trust American leaders to cure the evil themselves, not even those professing friendship for Britain offered a 'sufficient national security' and it 'would be a fatal error to rely upon it'.[157] Using force, Fox reassured Palmerston, 'will not lead to collision, but on the contrary, it will be the means of averting the risk of collision'—again the pre-emotive factor.[158] In December 1838, Palmerston warned that if needed British forces in Canada would trespass the border in pursuit of the Maine and Michigan filibusters: 'Her Majesty's Government must consider themselves released from all restrictions as to the nature and extent of the means which may be necessary … to repel the invasion', he wrote.[159] This was exactly the same position Canning had adopted towards Cuban-based piracy in 1822, when he authorised British marines to go ashore in Cuba in pursuit of pirates and slave traders. 'That the execution of these orders involves a violation of the Spanish territory is not overlooked nor denied', he had written, 'but the growing magnitude and the urgency of the evil and the clear and painful conviction that the government of Spain lacks either the will or the power to suppress it' had made it 'a measure no less of necessity than of obligation'.[160] Castlereaghans like Wellington had stressed then that no action should be taken 'unless in concert with the government of the Havana' but Canning had refused.[161] Spain and the United States were both guilty of the same crime to British eyes: allowing disorder to foster, and were thus rendered a similar treatment.

Ordering soon became trapped in the spiral of violence. Even during the moments of economic duress, like in the late 1840s, Palmerston insisted that *only* through force could the trade be stopped and Atlantic order guaranteed:

> The effectiveness of the means to suppress the slave trade uniformly varied in direct proportion to the amount of force employed … if any method could

[155] Buchanan to Saunders, 17 June 1848, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5065, 57.
[156] Fox to Palmerston, 13 Nov. 1838, no. 46, FO 115/69.
[157] Fox to Palmerston, 28 Sept. 1839, no. 41, FO 115/69.
[158] Fox to Palmerston, 13 Nov. 1839, no. 46, FO 115/69.
[159] Palmerston to Fox, 15 Dec. 1838, no. 20, FO 115/68.
[160] Canning to A' Court, 18 Oct. 1822, WD *i*, 379.
[161] Wellington to Canning, 10 Dec. 1822, WD *i*, 638;

> be pointed out which would abolish the slave trade without the employment of force, I should think that method one which ought to be preferred but I have never yet heard of any such a method.[162]

By 1847, with a banking crisis hitting the United Kingdom after the demise of the railway mania, the repeal of the Corn Laws only starting to make its effect, and revolution starting to shake Europe, the West Africa station held thirty-two warships—the largest Royal Navy squadron after the home (thirty-five) and Mediterranean (thirty-three) ones.[163] Palmerston believed further steps had to be taken, and it is specially significant that he thought 'those steps'—which were '[the government's] duty to take'—could be taken 'without any danger to peace, and without any peril of failure'.[164] And even if such a danger existed, 'we must not care for giving offense to the guilty parties whose crimes we are endeavouring to punish or prevent'.[165]

Moreover, it is striking that *British* violence was seen as a way to provide order whilst the violence of other powers, like Spain or the United States, was clearly seen to be disruptive. An example which clearly reflected this thinking was provided in 1858 by Hugh Cairns, Solicitor General, who when discussing encroachments in India argued that 'the war we wage is the war of nations, and not the war of freebooters … England knows how to make war and conquer, but also knows how to treat those who are conquered … she offers to those who are conquered and who submit to her arms that protection for their lives and property which will be the best earnest to them'.[166] The idea that Britain did not freeboot or filibuster, unlike the United States or Spain, placed its violence actions in a superior level and made them legitimate, necessary, and even positive.

British leaders eventually considered using ordering violence in a clearly disordering, disruptive way. In 1855, fearing a U.S. invasion of Canada, Palmerston considered sparking a slave revolt in the American South to cripple the Union. 'If we are weak in Canada, the Americans are still more vulnerable in the Slave States and a British force landed in the southern part of the Union, proclaiming freedom to the blacks, would

[162] Testimony of Viscount Palmerston, M.P., BPP: First Report from the Select Committee on the Slave Trade (18 Apr. 1848) 1847-1848, HCP 272, XXII.1, pp.17-18.
[163] Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 165, 170.
[164] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 08 July 1845, vol. 82, c. 178. (Palmerston).
[165] Palmerston to the Anti-Slavery Society, 18 Oct. 1842, in *Bulwer*, iii, 366.
[166] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 14 May 1858, vol. 150. c. 710.

shake many stars from their banner', he wrote to Secretary of War Lord Panmure.[167] For the sake of containing a disordering nation, Palmerston considered the idea of unleashing the long-feared catastrophe of a second Saint Domingue on American soil, regardless of the shock this would mean for geopolitical tranquillity in the Atlantic world. Actions and attitudes like these would have significant consequences—as will be seen in the next chapter. Perhaps the definite proof of Britain's increasing belligerence is that roguish powers like Spain and the United States, sufferers of that violence, turned against Britain, determined to resist its violent ordering.

[167] Palmerston to Lord Panmure, 24 Sept. 1855, in ed. George Douglas, Fox Maul-Ramsay, Earl of Dalhousie, and George Ramsay, *The Panmure papers; being a selection from the correspondence of Fox Maule, second Baron Panmure, afterwards eleventh Earl of Dalhousie* [hereafter *Panmure Papers*], i (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), 403.

Chapter 4

'The avarice of Carthage'[1]

The *Escalera* conspiracy and the backlash against British ordering

In the autumn of 1843, massive slave revolts broke out in the Cuban district of Matanzas, and soon spread all over the island. In every district, the authorities and slaveholders responded with a frenzy of brutality. Almost 3,000 slaves suffered torture at the hands of the authorities and plantation owners. 'The negroes are cut to pieces and butchered wholesale in every direction. Surely the other nations of the Earth will not suffer life to be taken away as it is in this island', wrote the British consul-general, Joseph Crawford.[2] In early 1844, a military commission was set up in Matanzas to examine the causes of the revolt and purge the culprits. The Spanish authorities expressed a strong belief that foreign (British) abolitionist agents had encouraged the revolution. They blamed the former British consul, David Turnbull, and his co-religionists. Since Palmerston appointed him as superintendent for liberated Africans in 1838, and then as consul-general in 1840, Turnbull had been Spain's *bête noire* in Cuba. He was seen as a radical abolitionist who—with or without British government help, that was the question—was determined to revolutionise the slaves of Cuba and set up a new Haiti. In 1842, he had been forced to flee to Jamaica. The Spanish however still believed that he conspired from abroad to set the island on fire, amassing support from former British slaves, Cuban runaways, and the Jamaican colonial government. Under torture, prisoners confessed that indeed they had received help from British agents. These twisted confessions were taken by the Spanish authorities as the definite proof that the British were behind the uprising. Regardless of the complaints made by the British government, many were arbitrarily tried by the military commission and *emancipados* under British protection were re-sold into slavery.[3]

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[1] John C. Calhoun to Abel Upshur, 27 Aug. 1843 (confidential), *in The Papers of John C. Calhoun*, ed. Clyde Wilson (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), xvii, 381.
[2] Crawford to Aberdeen, 9 Mar. 1844, quoted in Aberdeen to Bulwer, 2 May 1844, no. 4, FO 84/519.
[3] Aberdeen to Bulwer, 25 Mar. 1844, no. 2, FO 84/519. Between 1844 and 1845 the British minister in Madrid tirelessly tried to negotiate with the Spanish government some compensation for the arbitrary abuses of the Matanzas military commission. See Bulwer to Martínez de la Rosa, 18 Sept.

This episode, the so-called *Escalera* conspiracy, was perhaps one of the most important crises in Anglo-Spanish relations since 1815 and certainly a crucial event in Cuban history. But the *Escalera* was not merely a paranoid rampage of colonial elites against supposedly revolutionary slaves. It was also a significant event for great power politics. The aftermath of the *Escalera* saw an explosion of Atlantic geopolitics as the slaveholding powers which had allegedly suffered Britain's intermeddling turned against the great ordering power. In the United States, the need to protect slavery was translated into territorial expansion into Texas and Mexico. Discourses of hemispheric nationalism reappeared as strongly leading to new diplomatic alliances, geopolitical reconfiguration, and dusting of dreams of empire in the tropics. For its part, Spain—that power which historians have relentlessly classified as insignificant in nineteenth-century international politics—regarded the *Escalera* as evidence that British 'ordering' of the Atlantic world posed a severe threat to its sovereignty over Cuba. It motivated Spain to confront Britain in a variety of geographical theatres with the object of indirectly protecting the island.

British, Spanish, Cuban, and American historians nonetheless continue to address the *Escalera* focussing on the "conspiratorial question"—proving or disproving, almost in an archaeological fashion, whether or not there really was a conspiracy of slaves and British abolitionists, or whether it was a Spanish invention to excuse the repression—as it has been the case for generations now, and do not go extensively into the geopolitics behind it.[4] The purpose of this chapter is not to dwell on whether the conspiracy existed or not, but to analyse the unexplored geopolitical implications of the *Escalera* and their significance in the struggle for order between the Anglo-Saxon powers.

This chapter thus builds on the notion of the 'clash of empires' over Cuban slavery first put forward in 1988 by Robert Paquette in his seminal work *Sugar is Made with Blood*—where he argued that the conspiracy represented not only a colonial issue but a

1844, enclosed in Bulwer to Aberdeen, 21 Sept. 1844, no. 1, FO 84/519; Martínez de la Rosa to Bulwer, 2 Dec. 1844, enclosed in Bulwer to Aberdeen, 25 Jan. 1845, no. 10, FO 84/574; Bulwer to Aberdeen, 9 Feb. 1845, no 5. FO 84/574.

[4] Manuel Barcia, "Exorcising the Storm: Revisiting the Origins of the Repression of La Escalera Conspiracy in Cuba, 1843-1844," *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 15, no. 3 (2006): 311–26; The main examples of Escalera scholarship include: Nelson, "Slavery, Race, and Conspiracy"; David R. Murray, "British Abolitionists in Cuba, 1833-1845," *Historical Papers* 11, no. 1 (2012): 105; Murray, *Odious Commerce*; Barcia, "'A Not-so-Common Wind': Slave Revolts in the Age of Revolutions in Cuba and Brazil"; Aisha K. Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba: La Escalera and the Insurgencies of 1841-1844* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Jonathan Curry-Machado, "How Cuba Burned with the Ghosts of British Slavery: Race, Abolition and the Escalera," *Slavery and Abolition* 25, no. 1 (2004): 71–93; Andrés Pletch, "'Coercive Measures': Slave Rebellion, Torture, and Sovereignty in Cuba, 1812–1844," *Slavery and Abolition* 40, no. 2 (2019): 271–94.

broader clash between the Atlantic great powers, a problem 'with international roots … and international results'.[5] This chapter will show that beyond re-entrenching slavery in the island and embittering Anglo-American relations, the conspiracy (and Britain's supposed responsibility of it) resulted in the emergence of an alternative version of world order held by the United States and Spain antagonistic to Britain's, revealing that questions of 'world order' centred the statecraft of the Atlantic great powers in the nineteenth century.

In order to show this, it is important to look at the nature of the *Escalera* threat and how it was felt in the slaveholding centres of power. As the first section of this chapter will show, elites in the slaveholding empires, spooked by years of aggressive British ordering, constructed the 'British threat' which presented Britain as a force of disorder seeking to ruin its competitors by destroying the very foundations of their political, social, and economic systems. Events in Cuba were their proof. British abolition was put into context by U.S. and Spanish elites and discovered to be the keystone of a plan to, in the words of John Calhoun, South Carolina slaveowner and former vice-president to Andrew Jackson, gain 'power and monopoly' and the 'exclusive control of the cotton trade'. 'Abolition is but the pretext'.[6] 'We are forced to believe that she is acting … to revive the industry of her East and West India colonies, to find new markets for her surplus manufactures, and to destroy, as a far as possible, the rivalry and competition of … the United States', concurred Abel Upshur, the U.S. secretary of the navy.[7] More radical commentators believed Britain actually wanted to enslave the white race and make 'all the world dependent upon her for the supply of sugar, coffee, and rice'.[8] Spanish officials had exactly the same idea: British philanthropic desire to emancipate slaves had suspiciously emerged 'after the occupation of India', a territory thought to require of 'the ruin of our Antilles' to be profitable.[9]

This made the *Escalera* different from previous slave insurrections and thus the response different as well. As the second section will analyse, this threat led the slaveholding powers to mobilise all of their resources (military, economic, intellectual)

[5] Robert L. Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood: The Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict between Empires over Slavery in Cuba* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 266.
[6] Calhoun to Upshur, 27 Aug. 1843, *Papers of John C. Calhoun*, xvii, 381.
[7] Upshur to Edward Everett, 28 Sept. 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, VII, Doc. 2677, 11.
[8] Duff Green to Upshur, 17 Oct. 1843, enclosed in Upshur to Calhoun, 30 Nov. 1843, *Papers of John Calhoun*, xvii, 579.
[9] DSCE, Senado 1844-1845. 4 Jan. 1845, no. 27, c. 276. (My translation).

to protect their political and economic systems at the imperial core. This 'grand strategic mobilisation', as this section will show, was marked by three steps: a geopolitical realignment in the Atlantic world, which regrouped of slaveholding powers against Britain; a backlash against British instruments of order, supported by this realignment; and finally, an expansion of empire in the periphery to protect the slaveholding cores. This new geopolitical turn of the slaveholding empires after the *Escalera,* it will be argued, amounted to the rise a new vision of order that defending imperial and national sovereignty against Britain's interventionism. This chapter will therefore re-signify the *Escalera* as crucial moment in Atlantic international history since it inaugurated a period of fierce struggle between rival great powers with opposing visions of Atlantic order.

Constructions of Britain as an agent of disorder

Slave revolution was, as it is well known, a common phenomenon in the nineteenth-century Atlantic world. Large numbers of slaves had revolted against the Spanish in 1812, 1825, and 1836. Spanish brutality was nothing unseen. Slave revolution however had never excited such a powerful geopolitical realignment as the *Escalera*. The reason for this lies in the perceived different nature of the slave threat: it was the first time that slaveholding elites perceived a rival great power (Britain) to be orchestrating it. General Leopoldo O'Donnell, Captain General of Cuba (1843-8), wrote a letter in February 1844 to the Spanish government officially informing that 'even though the true origin of the rebellion has not been discovered, there is a moral conviction that behind it are the manoeuvres of abolitionist societies and the schemes of the English … There is no doubt of the suspicion that such criminal actions have been perpetrated by the English'.[10] His choice of words is particularly relevant: 'a moral conviction'; it almost seems as if he had had a hunch that the British were responsible. British guilt is, however, hardly probable. Diving into the Foreign Office archives it is clear that Crawford had been warning for over a year about the possibility of slave revolution and had turned down pleas of help

[10] Leopoldo O'Donnell to the Secretary of State, 29 Feb. 1844, no. 20, AHN Estado, Leg. 8039. (My translation).

from many conspirators.[11] Plus it had never been Britain's object to impose abolition 'no matter at what cost of blood and social order', as Aberdeen reminded the Spanish.[12]

The British threat was essentially constructed (with or without basis) by elites in both Spain and the United States. The idea of threat-construction automatically brings up the question of purpose, which taints arguments with ideas of cynicism and hypocrisy, as if it was purposefully set up by interest-vested elites. Indeed, elites in both Spain and the United States were heavily invested in the slave business and were keen that policy served their interests. The case of the U.S. southerners (and even northerners, invested in the financial sector of the Cuba trade) is well known; Spain's, not so much. Many statesmen of the conservative *Moderado* Party in Spain had invested their fortunes in the Cuban sugar, copper, and railway businesses—the Queen Mother and her morganatic husband were among the richest Cuban shareholders. O'Donnell, heavily invested himself as well, served as guarantee for many *Moderado* financial involvements in the island hence why, Bulwer reported, there were 'secret influences strongly operating in his favour and support'.[13]

These business interests, however, are not especially relevant to the question. They played a part in making these statesmen invested in confronting the British but this did not make the British threat any less political or civilizational. U.S. and Spanish elites did truly think British plans of world domination passed through the destruction of economic and political rivals in the Western Hemisphere. This essentially made the response to the *Escalera* not a response to a slave insurrection in Cuba but a response to the power seeking to destroy Spain's colonial system and the U.S. South. In other words, it made it a question of survival, of existential threat.

Existential threats of course do not simply spring from the ground. As Charles Nathanson argued about the Cold War threat, when looking at the construction of a threat, it is crucial to take into account the previous antipathies and doubts about each other, since these are bound to increase, constituting the epistemological basis of the future threat.[14] The ten-year period preceding the *Escalera* had clearly been one in which a British abolitionist threat had been looming over the slaveholding empires. Britain's

[11] Crawford to Aberdeen, 18 Apr. 1844, no. 16 (separate), FO 72/634; Crawford to Aberdeen, 22 May 1843, no. 27, FO 72/634.
[12] Aberdeen to Bulwer, 2 May 1844, no. 4, FO 84/519.
[13] Bulwer to Aberdeen, 15 May 1844, no. 11, FO 84/519.
[14] Charles E. Nathanson, "The Social Construction of the Soviet Threat: A Study in the Politics of Representation," *Alternatives* 13, no. 4 (1988): 444.

abolition of slavery in 1833 sparked fears in the United States especially as British authorities began to liberate foreign slaves which happened to come ashore British possessions. In 1834, for example, the American vessel *Enterprise* was wrecked by storms on the shores of British Bermuda and the slaves that travelled on board were automatically liberated by the authorities. The British government refused to give any compensation to the American owners. 'When or where has the doctrine ever been established that slavery … was prohibited or contrary to the law of nations?', U.S. minister Stevenson complained.[15] 'Emancipation had altered the municipal law of the West Indies, not the status of slavery in an international context', claimed Secretary of State John Forsyth.[16] The sense spread that Britain was trying to expand this domestic law of hers into the international system.

Fears increased significantly after 1838, when the HMS *Romney* and its Afro-Caribbean crew (some whom had been recruited amongst liberated slaves) became stationed at Havana harbour. Spanish prime minister the Count of Ofalia expressed his fear to Villiers that if the crew went ashore, the island would be filled with 'wandering negroes and mulattoes who contaminated by the bad example of insurrections and the fallacious doctrines invented by the revolutionists of both the Old and the New World were likely to cause riots and other most fatal evils in that pacific and faithful country'.[17] Spanish ministers began to worry about the expansion of British influence in Spain's colonial sphere. In December 1841, Aaron Vail, the U.S. chargé d' affaires in Madrid, reported back to the secretary of state, Daniel Webster, that the new Spanish government, under the traditionally considered pro-British *Progresista* Party, considered the presence of the *Romney* to be 'a badge of foreign domination and as exercising the influence over the minds of the slave people'.[18] Other forms of British violence, such as the incursions in the West Africa islands, were also particularly worrying to the Spanish. The liberal-conservative newspaper *El Corresponsal* constantly reminded that 'the possession of those African islands constitutes the key to our commerce, not only in slaves but also in

[15] Stevenson to Palmerston, Jul. 1836, enclosed in Stevenson to Forsyth, 6 Aug. 1836, S. *Doc. No. 174, 24th Cong. 2nd. Sess.* (1837).
[16] Quoted in Karp, *Vast Southern Empire*, 18.
[17] The Count of Ofalia to Villiers, 29 Dec. 1837, enclosure no. 1 in Villiers to Palmerston, 7 Jan. 1838, no. 2, BPP: Correspondence with Foreign Powers relating to the Slave Trade. 1837-8 (Class B: Further Series), Command Papers, L.439.50, p.2.
[18] Vail to Daniel Webster, 28 Dec. 1841, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5262, 329.

many other products, between Africa and our Havana and their cession to England would bring that rich possession of ours [Cuba] considerable problems'.[19]

Events between 1833 and 1841 convinced the Spanish and the American governments that Britain represented a clear threat to them. By 1841, the same year Palmerston left office, officials in both Spain and the United States produced almost identical analyses of the reasons for Britain's vigour against them and of the possible future scenarios they would encounter. In January, Vail informed Forsyth that the Spanish foreign minister, Joaquín María de Ferrer, entertained no doubt that Britain's sole purpose was to 'foster the growth and prosperity of her Asiatic dominions' and that to manage this:

> England has resolved to ruin all the West India islands: she has commenced the execution of her plan by abolishing slavery in her own colonies and she is now seeking the completion of it through the extension of her system to the Spanish islands by means of her treaties for the suppression of the African slave trade, and the propagation of abolition doctrine among the slave population of those islands.[20]

Across the ocean, in Washington D.C., Congressman Francis Pikens presented to the to the House Committee for Foreign Affairs a report warning that Britain was encircling the United States territorially and also politically. Its abolitionist campaign was threatening 'one half the states of this confederacy'. This, added to 'her military position in Bermuda and her growing power in the West Indies', put in serious jeopardy 'our national independence'.[21] It was also clear to both governments that Cuba was key to obtaining Britain's objective. 'The geographical possession of the island, its fertility, population, wealth and agricultural resources give it a value and importance which England, in her incessant endeavours to cover the globe with a net of her domination, could not but have been remarked', wrote Vail.[22]

Still a trigger was needed to spark the construction of the threat. Just as the Americans in the twentieth century grew significantly concerned about the Soviets once

[19] "El Corresponsal", no. 779. 19 Jul. 1841. Quoted in Carrasco González, "El Proyecto de Venta de Fernando Póo," 52. (My translation).
[20] Vail to Forsyth, 15 Jan. 1841, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5248, 315.
[21] Pikens Report to the House Committee for Foreign Affairs. *Congressional globe*, 26th Cong., 2nd Sess., 170–71 (February 13, 1841).
[22] Vail to Forsyth, 15 Jan. 1841, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5248, 315.

they marched into Eastern Europe, nineteenth-century Americans started to seriously fear the British after two significant events that took place at the same time as the island of Cuba burned in revolution (hence the connection drawn): the Del Monte affair (1842-3), and the Argaiz affair (1844).

Domingo del Monte was a Cuban Creole who had befriended the U.S. diplomat Alexander Everett during his 1840 mission to Cuba. In November 1842, he assured him that British agents were conspiring to revolutionise the slaves and, with the help of massive military reinforcements from Jamaica, establish a military black republic under British protection.[23] Everett panicked and circulated Del Monte's letter around Washington D.C. Fear ran wild those months. According to Gerald Horne, this letter, combined with worrisome similar reports from the consul in Jamaica, contributed to create a 'miasma of fear' in Washington D.C., where 'hair-raising talk about Cuba becoming another Haiti' was on every mouth.[24]

Official reports from the U.S. consul in Havana, Robert Campbell, and the U.S. minister in Madrid, Washington Irving, soon confirmed that Del Monte was clearly exaggerating.[25] But regardless of the evidence, U.S. statesmen were determined to believe that which was clearly being disproved. Even a pragmatic Whig like Daniel Webster—who was sure that Britain would never embark such a scheme because it would mean war with the United States and possibly with France as well ('she can hardly fail to see this, and probably does not desire it')—could not help believing it.[26] 'Many causes of excitement and alarm exist'; 'enough danger exists in that quarter to render caution and vigilance', he told both Campbell and Irving.[27] Even if Vail had informed how 'the late change in the administration of the government of England has brought about … a more moderate and conciliatory spirit' on colonial affairs, the experience of the 1830s had left a nasty burn.[28] Americans were ripe for such kind of fear. Since the days of the Haitian

[23] Robert L. Paquette, "The Everett-Del Monte Connection: A Study in the International Politics of Slavery," *Diplomatic History* 11, no. 1 (1987): 11.
[24] Horne, *Race to Revolution*, at 63, 73, 74.
[25] Webster to Washington Irving, 17 Jan. 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5048, 29. Webster to Irving, 14 Mar. 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5049, 31;
[26] Webster to Robert Campbell, 14 Jan. 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5047, 28.
[27] Webster to Campbell, 14 Jan. 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5047, 28; Webster to Irving, 14 Mar. 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5049, 31.
[28] Vail to Webster, 30 Nov. 1841, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5261, 326.

Revolution they had feared slave insurrection but only recently were they associating it with British schemes. Britain's recognition of Texan independence in 1841 had been taken by many in U.S. official circles as a prelude to further intermeddling; many feared the creation of a 'negro nation, a sort of Haiti on the continent [under] the protection of the British government'.[29] That same, latent fear, now flickered in Cuba. 'Both are equally important to our safety', wrote Calhoun.[30]

Changes in U.S. State Department in 1843-4 did not help to calm down troubled spirits in America for whilst Webster, though fearful, had still held doubts about the British threat, Upshur, who replaced him as secretary of state in July 1843, and Calhoun, who in turn replaced Upshur in April 1844, had none. Britain 'has the ambition of Rome and avarice of Carthage', Calhoun wrote to Upshur in August 1843, amidst rumours of slave revolt in Cuba.[31] Their tenures increased the Union's susceptibility to the foreign threat. In June 1843, for example, the 74-gun battleship HMS *Illustrious* sailed for Cuba causing every sort of ominous conjectures in Washington D.C. Campbell even feared that the British were about to set up a puppet state for their protégé General Espartero, who had just been toppled and exiled from Spain.[32] Crawford had actually asked for a greater naval deployment precisely fearing a slave uprising during the summer but to the eyes of the United States it was clear that Britain, 'determined to adopt the most stringent measures' to abolish the slave trade, was on its way to set the island ablaze.[33] Campbell immediately asked for naval assistance in order to, in case of war, 'give [the Creoles] an adequate idea of our power' and win them to the side of the United States.[34] Crawford meanwhile worryingly reported to the Foreign Office the presence of 'foreign men of war'—two schooners and a brig—for a 'purpose I have not been able to discover'.[35] U.S. and British warships could well have collided off the coast of Cuba had it not been for pragmatic General O'Donnell, who sent the U.S. ships back home fearing the British

[29] Abel Smith to Calhoun, 19 June 1843, *Papers of John Calhoun*, xvii, 253.
[30] Calhoun to Upshur, 27 Aug. 1843 (confidential), *Papers of John Calhoun,* xvii, 381.
[31] Calhoun to Upshur, 27 Aug. 1843 (confidential), *Papers of John Calhoun,* xvii, 381.
[32] Campbell to Upshur, 9 Nov. 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5265, 334.
[33] Crawford to Commodore H.D. Byng (Jamaica), 6 June 1843 enclosed in Crawford to Aberdeen, 9 June 1843, no. 29, FO 72/634; Campbell to Upshur, 5 Oct. 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5264, 332.
[34] Campbell to Upshur, 5 Oct. 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5264, 332.
[35] Crawford to Vice-admiral Charles Adam, 8 Nov. 1843, enclosed in Crawford to Aberdeen, 9 Nov. 1843, no. 45, FO 72/634.

would respond to their presence with an invasion.[36] U.S. leaders had become trapped in a security dilemma motivated by the belief in an omnipresent British threat which was dangerously clouding their reason.

In January 1844, Pedro de Alcántara y Argaiz, Spain's Anglophobe minister in Washington D.C., was dismissed all of a sudden, despite his good understanding with the Americans. 'No minister could more happily unite an extreme zeal for his sovereign with qualities rendering him every way acceptable to the government and people of the United States', wrote Upshur.[37] President Tyler even wrote to Queen Isabella II, expressing how Argaiz's recalling was 'sincerely and deeply felt by this government'.[38] The U.S. government was not satisfied by the explanation that Argaiz had been brought back by the *Moderados* because of his *Progresista* convictions.[39] Upshur believed it a scheme of the British and instructed Irving to pay close attention 'to every movement which England may make with reference to Cuba … or to affect the institution of African slavery now existing there'. 'This government should be prepared to act with reference to its own safety and interest … and exercise a sleepless vigilance in watching over the rights of Spain in that quarter in a matter that so nearly concerns her own interest and security', he concluded.[40] U.S. officials in Madrid would continue to investigate the Argaiz affair up to 1847, when they finally learned, from a source that did not allow 'the faintest shadow of a doubt', that indeed the British minister had been responsible.[41] This insistence reveals the degree of importance attached to Argaiz's recall. It was a situation which clearly revealed that Britain, 'jealous of our designs upon the island', was trying to estrange Spain from the United States.[42] These two events show how fear was running wild in political circles in the United States in 1843-4. They might seem trivial but, as Robert Jervis argued, states can 'be sensitive to threats … that critical observers regard as miniscule': it is important to consider that the slaveholding U.S. society had for years been worryingly

[36] Campbell to Upshur, 9 Nov. 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5265, 334.
[37] Upshur to Irving, 9 Jan. 1844, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5050, 32.
[38] President Tyler to Isabella II, 15 Feb. 1844, in Carlos Seco Serrano, "Espartero y Cuba: Entre Inglaterra y Norteamérica," *Revista de Indias* 29 (1969): 605.
[39] Irving to Calhoun, 2 Apr. 1844, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5267, 337.
[40] Upshur to Irving, 9 Jan. 1844, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5050, 32.
[41] Thomas Reynolds to Buchanan, 12 Aug. 1847, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5312, 415.
[42] Irving to Calhoun, 23 Apr. 1844, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5268, 339.

observing the expansion of British power and trade at the expense of slaveholding powers.[43]

The situation unfolding at the time of the *Escalera* was by all means one of 'moral panic' as described by sociologist Stanley Cohen in the 1970s: a 'condition, episode, person of group of person [which] emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests'.[44] As sociologists Eric Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda have written, reactions to a moral panic are 'out of proportion to the real and present danger a given threat poses to the society. In response to this exaggerated concern, "folk devils" are created, deviant stereotypes identifying the enemy, the source of the threat, selfish, evil wrongdoers who are responsible for the trouble'.[45] Britain's agents, representatives of an empire thought to be insatiable, were seen as the protagonists. Turnbull, was for example described by the U.S. consul in Havana as 'an arch fiend … a Glasgow bankrupt, with some talent, more pretension, a great fanatic, and regardless of truth'.[46] Ofalia had also denounced to Villiers the existence of British agents 'so-called *abolitionists'* whose only purposes was to expand 'ideas of insubordination' among the slave population.[47]

Past fears and tensions combined with a moral panic and convenient signalling of 'the culprit', led to the construction of the enemy. In this case, this combination of factors resulted in Britain being labelled a power that expanded 'disorder' for its own benefit. U.S. diplomat Edward Everett could not have put it clearer to Calhoun in 1844: 'disorders in Cuba were stimulated by England with an eye to the eventual possession of the island'.[48] U.S. and Spanish officials and intellectuals began to refer to Britain and its actions in the international system with a lexicon of disorder alluding to the way in which Britain policy operated, threatening stability and other nations. For example, a report by *Real Sociedad Económica Matritense de Madrid*, defended the expansion in West Africa to contain the 'piratical' actions of the Royal Navy: 'they molest, detain, and even seize, in the manner of pirates, our merchant ships, submitting them to the unappealable

[43] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 373.
[44] Quoted in Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, "Moral Panics: Culture, Politics, and Social Construction," *Annual Review of Sociology* 20 (1994): 155.
[45] Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 156.
[46] Campbell to Upshur, 5 Oct. 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5264, 332.
[47] Ofalia to Villiers, 25 Feb. 1838, enclosed in Villiers to Palmerston, 3 Mar. 1838, no. 13, FO 84/224. (Emphasis in the original).
[48] Alexander Everett to Calhoun, 2 Aug. 1844, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, VII, Doc. 2832, 261.

sentence of the so-called "Mixed Tribunal"'.[49] British mischief was thought to be such, that Spanish statesmen feared that even ships not engaged in the slave trade would be detained if spotted on the West Africa coast.[50]

Another interesting example is Facundo Goñi's 1848 treatise on Spanish foreign policy. Rodrigo Escribano Roca and Pablo Guerrero Oñate have analysed much of his work and of other *Moderado* strategists but have surprisingly missed the Anglophobe, disorderly factor.[51] Goñi signalled Britain as 'the most declared enemy of our possessions' (*el enemigo más declarado de nuestras posesiones)* precisely on account of the slave question. 'The wishes of England are well understood: to end slavery in one blow in the Spanish colonies', he wrote, 'for this way she would manage … to wrestle them from our possession through grave perturbations or at least to annihilate their prosperity'.[52] The use of the expression 'grave perturbations' (*graves perturbaciones*) is particularly interesting since it reflects how the *Escalera* had come to define Spanish notions about how Britain operated on the world stage.

Goñi's analysis was shared by the people in power. The Senate commission deciding on the penal law against the slave trade denounced Britain as a world-spanning cause of disorder. Senators drew attention to China where Britain 'has made an atrocious war on another nation, a terrible war in which she has not spared blacks, whites, or people of whatever colour; and, what is the great reason for such a disaster? The Senate knows it: a bit of opium … The philanthropic and beautiful voice of humanity … masks the most sinister intentions'.[53] In Congress, barely some months after the *Escalera, Moderado* deputy Juan María Blanco La Toja argued that 'having noticed that the 1835 treaty was not being observed, the English government has though it necessary to use all the means possible to obtain its goal [of destroying the Spanish Antilles]. They have used all of their

[49] Quoted in I.K. Sundiata, "Cuba Africana: Cuba and Spain in the Bight of Biafra, 1839-1869," *The Americas* 34, no. 1 (1977): 92.
[50] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1844-1845. 31 Jan. 1845, no. 76, c. 184.
[51] See Rodrigo Escribano Roca and Pablo Gutiérrez Oñate, "Navalismo y Panhispanismo Como Horizontes de Regeneración Imperial En España (1814-1862)," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 79, no. 1 (2022).
[52] Facundo Goñi, *Tratado de las relaciones internacionales de España*: *Lecciones pronunciadas en el Ateneo de Madrid* (Madrid, 1848), 117. (My translation). Original text: 'Pueden comprenderse bien los deseos que abriga la Inglaterra de acabar si fuera posible de un golpe con la esclavitud de las colonias españolas pues con ese acto conseguiría sino emanciparlas de nuestra tutela a vueltas de graves perturbaciones, por lo menos aniquilar su producción.'
[53] DSCE, Senado 1844-1845, 4 Jan. 1845, no. 27, c. 276. (My translation).

resources, knowing the Spanish government has not the strength to oppose them … They have caused the insurrections which we are still putting down and punishing'.[54]

More importantly, the *Escalera* consolidated the idea that Britain was willing to weaponize slaves against rival powers with slaveholding economies. Just as the British had done at the beginning of the century with French and American designs to weaponize Haiti, now the Spanish and the Americans associated the civilizational catastrophe of servile insurrection with actions of their traditional strategic rival.[55] Pedro Fernández-Villaverde, another *Moderado* deputy, drew attention in the Cortes to the idea that the British were trying to revolutionise the African slaves in Cuba to form 'a negro archipelago that will then intimidate the states of the South of America'.[56] Blanco La Toja even made the very imaginative claim that the British were training Africans in Guinea on the ways of revolution so that they would revolutionise Cuba upon their arrival on board Spanish slave ships: 'those negroes cannot be called *bozales* anymore, but rather *ladinos*; they even speak English'.[57] Exactly the same thing was being said by U.S. officials in Havana, who thought it very suspicious that almost all slaves recently imported to the island already spoke 'either English or Portuguese'.[58]

In the United States, it was not only radicals like Duff Green who believed 'Tory sympathy for the negro is but another name for Tory oppression of the white labour' and that Britain had resolved 'under the mask of humanity to the black race … to enslave the white'.[59] Calhoun believed that giving in to Britain's plans for abolition would bring about 'consequences unparalleled in history': the white race would have to flee, 'abandoning our country to our former slaves, to become the permanent abode of

[54] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1844-1845. 31 Jan. 1845, no. 76, cc. 182-183. (My translation). Original text: 'En las costas de África se han dedicado a ensayar a esos mismos negros que hoy no se puede llamar bozales sino ladinos; hoy son todos verdaderamente ladinos, saben hasta el inglés. Es necesario que pusieran en juego todos sus recursos una vez convencidos de que el gobierno español no tenía fuerza para hacerse obedecer … [Ellos] nos han producido las insurrecciones que todavía se están persiguiendo y castigando'.

[55] See Stephen, *The Crisis of Sugar Colonies.*

[56] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1844-1845. 31 Jan. 1845, no. 76, cc. 198.

[57] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1844-1845. 31 Jan. 1845, no. 76, cc. 182-183. (My translation). Original text: 'En las costas de África se han dedicado a ensayar a esos mismos negros que hoy no se puede llamar bozales sino ladinos; hoy son todos verdaderamente ladinos, saben hasta el inglés. Es necesario que pusieran en juego todos sus recursos una vez convencidos de que el gobierno español no tenía fuerza para hacerse obedecer … [Ellos] nos han producido las insurrecciones que todavía se están persiguiendo y castigando'.

[58] William Robertson to Webster, 20 Mar. 1854, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, XI, Doc. 5508, 749.

[59] Green to Upshur, 17 Oct 1843, enclosed in Upshur to Calhoun, 30 Nov. 1843, *Papers of John Calhoun*, xvii, 579

disorder, anarchy, poverty, misery, and wretchedness'.[60] Even Upshur, who was more pragmatic, knew that if Britain was sincere in its commitment against slavery, it would try to revolutionise the Southern States simply because there was no other way to end an institution 'so interwoven with those states, with their legislation, their habits, their feelings and their social character'.[61]

These attitudes speak as to a generally shared conception of what agent disorder looked like to the nineteenth-century Atlantic powers: a rival's weaponization of slave-controlled disarrayed states (as Haiti was perceived to be or as Cuba could easily become). This notion would henceforth characterise understandings of British foreign policy, particularly in the antebellum United States. In 1847, for example, when Spain was being pressured to repay its debt, Reynolds worryingly reported that Britain planned to disguise abolitionists as debt collectors, send them to Cuba, and thus finally 'succeed in producing an insurrection and erecting Cuba into a free negro dependency of Great Britain'.[62] And in the 1850s, when the United States turned its eye toward the Dominican Republic, many expansionists sought to legitimise the invasion flagging *Escalera*-like fears about Britain trying to set up another black puppet state to destroy the United States. 'Under the specious title of "the mediating power"…England always holds the negroes in readiness to be let slip like bloodhounds on the whites', wrote William Cazneau, a Texan expansionist appointed as U.S. envoy to the Dominican Republic.[63]

Signalling Britain as an agent of disorder was part of what Charles Nathanson called the 'principle of the ghost', which in this case consisted of the creation of a disorderly alter-ego to present the 'self' as ordered in contraposition.[64] It was a process of othering—central to the construction of threats, as many constructivists have observed since 'the quality of an Other is most often associated with its difference, with its lack of similarity to the Self'.[65] In particular, the *Escalera* pushed the United States towards defending an alternative version of Atlantic order to combat 'the system of household

[60] Address of Southern Delegates in Congress to their Constituents, adopted 22 Jan. 1849, *Papers of John Calhoun,* xxvi, 240.
[61] Upshur to Everett, 28 Sept. 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* VII, Doc. 2677, 11.
[62] Reynolds to James Buchanan, 27 July 1847, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5310, 411.
[63] Quoted in Luis Martínez-Fernández, "Caudillos, Annexationism, and the Rivalry between Empires in the Dominican Republic, 1844-1874," *Diplomatic History* 17, no. 4 (1993): 580.
[64] On this "ghost principle" see Nathanson, "The Social Construction of the Soviet Threat," 469.
[65] Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 7.

murder stimulated by zealots' that Britain, a 'trampled and devastated country of the Old World', wanted to impose.[66]

An alternative order: geopolitical realignment and imperial sovereignty

The slaveholding empires realised the magnitude and closeness of the British threat of 'disorder' and therefore turned to more aggressive foreign policy to protect their imperial cores and uphold a system of international order that would sustain world slavery. It was a global endeavour. As Upshur told Everett, 'we cannot permit [slavery] to be disturbed by a foreign power without introducing a train of worse evils the end of which no human sagacity can foresee'.[67] Both the United States and Spain began to reassert the power of their slaveholding empires to determine the future of the Atlantic system and keep abolitionist Britain from doing so. However, Spain's turn towards more assertive policy has been simply ignored by the scholarship.

The *Escalera* threat triggered what can be called a 'grand strategic mobilisation' in Spain: government and society resources were readapted and invested in a more expansive foreign policy that look toward protecting the slaveholding empire.[68] Martínez de la Rosa, serving as foreign minister (1844-6), assured Congress in 1845 that 'the government will attend with the greatest interest all of the enclaves that [Spain] still has in many parts of the world, enclaves that will help Spain abandon this state of dejection'.[69] *Moderado* deputies pressured their own government to increase expenditure in foreign policy, 'to attend to our commerce and redeem ourselves from all the offences we suffer as a nation who has no one looking over its interests and protecting it in the high seas'.[70] 'Cuban slavery has very powerful enemies', argued Alejandro Llorente y Lannas (soon

[66] Committee report on the annexation of Texas, 25 Nov. 1843, in *Papers of John Calhoun,* xvii, 568.
[67] Upshur to Everett, 28 Sept. 1843, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* VII, Doc. 2677, 17.
[68] Grand strategy here refers to the long term plan of a nation, using military, economic and diplomatic instruments, to further in its core national objectives. The definition results from the reading of: Silove, "Beyond the Buzzword"; Williamson Murray, "Thoughts on Grand Strategy," in *The Shaping of Grand Strategy: Policy, Diplomacy, and War*, ed. Williamson Murray, Richard Hart Sinnreich, and James Lacey (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1–34; and Paul M. Kennedy, "Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition," in *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*, ed. Paul M. Kennedy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 1–11. The literature on grand strategy is further analysed in Chapter Five of this dissertation.
[69] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1844-1845, 9 Apr. 1845, no. 102, c. 449.
[70] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1844-1845. 9 Apr. 1845, no. 102, c. 448.

to be foreign minister).[71] 'Every day the government is questioned for … not having sent three warships to Montevideo and to Fernando Po, for not making sure our flag can be spotted in every sea', complained Ramón de Santillán, government spokesperson.[72] The demand for a more aggressive foreign policy was rotund but not only in parliament. Various civil associations such as the *Sociedades económicas de amigos del país* or the *Ateneo de Madrid* began to organise symposiums, conferences, in which plans for empire were presented. As shown by Escribano Roca and Guerrero Oñate, many of these ended up serving as basis for official policy documents.[73]

The strategy of the slaveholding powers had three clear components: a rapprochement between them, which led to a *de facto* polarisation of the Atlantic world along lines of slavery and abolitionism; a backlash against the instruments of British ordering, notably by the Spanish in Cuba; and thirdly, a turn towards imperial expansion in the periphery as a means of protecting imperial cores from British intermeddling.

The U.S.-Spanish rapprochement was a central part of the polarisation of the Atlantic world and post-*Escalera* geopolitical realignment. Spain, which for greater part of the 1830s had been dependent on Britain to win the Carlist War, turned away from its 'liberal' ally and looked for rapprochement with the United States. Notwithstanding assumed geopolitical rivalries over Cuba, the Spanish elite understood in the 1840s that the United States was the best option it had to retain slavery and sovereignty over the island. This was a major change in foreign policy: even though the United States had on multiple occasions assured the Spanish government that it could count on its military resources to protect Cuba, Spain had always trusted it would not have to openly side with the Americans given that the fierce competition with Britain (and to a lesser extent France) was the best guarantee that the island would remain Spanish.[74]

Spanish ministers also believed that the great powers abstained from intervening in the island fearful that removing Spanish authority would immediately unleash slave revolution. They might have been overconfident of their capacity to keep the slaves in line but then so were the great powers, which complied whenever this danger was flagged. In 1836, for example, when Villiers demanded the dismissal of Captain General Tacón

[71] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1844-1845. 7 Nov. 1844, no. 25, cc. 177-178.
[72] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1844-1845. 5 May 1845, no. 122, c. 143.
[73] Escribano Roca and Gutiérrez Oñate, "Navalismo y Panhispanismo," 231.
[74] Forsyth to Vail, 15 Jul. 1840, Aaron Vail to Forsyth, 15 Jan. 1841, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5044, 16; DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1836-1837, 5 Apr. 1837, no. 160, cc. 2508-2511. (My translation).

for his involvement in the slave trade, Prime Minister Mendizábal warned him if Tacón left, 'no one who could be sent to replace him would have a chance of keeping the island in subjection', forcing the British minister to back off.[75] As noted by U.S. minister Cornelius Van Ness, the Spanish 'believe the fear of the negroes is worth an army of 100,000 and that it will prevent the whites from making any revolutionary attempts'.[76] Indeed, the Spanish played the card that if Cuba was not Spanish, 'then it shall be negro … because there is no other power capable of ruling over 400,000 negroes in the Tropics'.[77] This approach suddenly changed in 1838 when it became evident that Spain's element of deterrence—the Africanization threat—was apparently being wielded by Britain against Spanish interests. From 1838 onwards, Spain changed its balancing strategy and began betting on an alliance with the greatest slaveholding power in the North Atlantic, the United States, to secure its colony.

The *Romney* crisis brought both governments much closer together. When the British hulk arrived in Havana, Ofalia immediately turned to the U.S. minister in Madrid, John Eaton, 'on the basis of the strict friendship which unite the Sovereign of Spain and the United States', to help secure Spain's 'ultramarine dominions from violent commotions, contests and reactions'.[78] He shared with him information on British abolitionists—clergymen, merchants, the consul—and on their involvement in the 1835 revolt in Matanzas. It could not 'be concealed from the perspicacity of the government of the United States', he wrote, that Britain was willing to 'afford support to conspirators'.[79] Ofalia reminded his interlocutor that if Cuba suffered the 'terrible catastrophe of Saint Domingo' there would be consequences 'greater than could be calculated at first sight and which are usually felt even at great distances'—clearly referring to the American South.[80] Eaton agreed with him: 'this issue is more sensibly felt in the United States than can be in this Monarchy where the evil is merely of colonial character'.[81]

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[75] Villiers to Palmerston, 7 Feb. 1836, no. 2, FO 84/201.
[76] Cornelius Van Ness to Forsyth, 10 Dec. 1836, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5241, 300.
[77] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1836-1837, 5 Apr. 1837, no. 160, cc. 2508-2511. (My translation).
[78] Ofalia to Eaton, 22 Feb. 1838, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5245, 309.
[79] Ofalia to Eaton, 22 Feb. 1838, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5245, 309.
[80] Ofalia to Eaton, 22 Feb. 1838, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5245, 309.
[81] Eaton to Ofalia, 10 Mar. 1838, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5246, 310.

Eaton was not the most brilliant U.S. diplomat of his time (Van Ness took him for an 'indolent' who 'regularly disposes of two bottles of rum') and actually told Forsyth how surprised he was that 'such a communication against English abolitionist interference should be addressed to me', still thinking Spain and Britain stood firmly together in Atlantic affairs.[82] But his apparent blindness to Ofalia's overture did not abort the rapprochement. More capable men like Forsyth ensured nothing alienated it. In early 1839, he instructed his consul in Havana 'not to do or say anything likely to be constructed into a manifestation of any desire on the part of the United States to seize any chance in the ownership of [Cuba] … The policy of this government in relation to the island of Cuba is to look to its continuance in its present political condition as a possession of the Spanish Crown'.[83] In the meantime, Ferrer and Vail discussed at great length the possibility of Spain purchasing warships in the United States; apparently the Spanish foreign minister also made 'numerous inquiries touching the present condition of our naval establishment'.[84] By mid-1841, Vail gladly informed Webster that the government of Spain was now absolutely sure that 'in alliance with us [they] have the best if not the sole security for the preservation of her West Indies'.[85]

U.S.-Spanish cordiality would of course cool down when Southern dreams of empire degenerated into filibustering expeditions to Cuba, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic. However, looking at the post-*Escalera* rapprochement thinking about the 1850s filibusters' crises is just as unhelpful as looking at the post-*Escalera* thinking about the Spanish-American War that closed the century. Lineal interpretations of U.S.-Spanish relations, as if everything since 1815 was leading to the ineluctable 1898 *Desastre*, make it impossible to see that before filibustering and as a result of the British *Escalera* threat, Spain and the United States came closer on a variety of international issues. The U.S. government and Spain's *Moderados* sought to consolidate this anti-British realignment and bring France into the equation. Calhoun believed that with the *Moderados* in power in Madrid, and 'the overthrow of the British influence there' after the fall of General

[82] Quoted in John F. Marszalek, *The Petticoat Affair: Manners, Mutinity, and Sex in Andrew Jackson's White House* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2000), 349. Eaton to Forsyth, 25 Mar. 1838, in Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs XI, Doc. 5247, 313-14.
[83] Forsyth to Nicholas Trist, 19 Mar. 1839, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5043, 13.
[84] Vail to Forsyth, 15 Jan. 1841, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5248, 315.
[85] Vail to Webster, 23 Aug. 1841, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5253, 320-1.

Espartero in 1843, this could be easily achieved.[86] This was necessary to face Britain with as many allies as possible: 'we know the English societies are everywhere', argued Blanco La Toja. 'In Martinique and Guadeloupe they help runaway slaves, in Cuba with Mr Turbull they make incendiary proclamations'.[87] Both governments tried to draw up an entente with the French to deter the British from taking further action in the Caribbean. In the words of Argaiz: 'an alliance between Spain, France, and the Union would acquire enough preponderance in the European balance to make Great Britain abandon any design which, currently or in the future, she might have against Cuba'.[88] Late in 1844, Irving drew up a secret meeting with the Spanish minister in Paris and pro-slavery French deputies scheming to organise 'a coalition between the French and the Spanish colonies, Brazil and the Southern parts of the United States to protect themselves from the abolition intrigues and machinations of England'.[89] Spain and the United States participated in the creation of a markedly anti-British front in Europe all around the issue of slavery.

This rapprochement reached other issues of policy as well, for example the expansion of the United States westwards. Irving noted that U.S. conduct in the Oregon question was applauded in Madrid. In 1844, he wrote: 'the firmness and fearless way in which we have maintained our rights to the very verge of a war with the most powerful nation in the world, will have a salutary effect on all our foreign relations. I already feel the benefit of it in my own sphere and rejoice in seeing the national name breaking with fresh lustre through a cloud of prejudice which had artfully of late years been cast over it in Europe'.[90] During the 1846-8 war with Mexico, Spain showed benevolent neutrality toward the United States compared to the quasi-hostility of other European nations. Whilst the British allowed Mexican privateers to use Jamaican ports as a 'place of refuge', the Spanish ensured Cuba remained hostile to Mexican privateering.[91] This sharply contrasts with moments in history in which Spain had proven incapable (or unwilling) to tackle privateers in Cuba when British shipping was the target back in the 1820s. Even

[86] Calhoun to Upshur, 27 Aug. 1843 (confidential), *Papers of John Calhoun,* xvii, 381.
[87] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1844-1845, 1 Feb. 1845, no. 77, c. 199.
[88] Argaiz's memorandum to the Marquis de Viluma, 1 Jul. 1844, quoted in Seco Serrano, "Espartero y Cuba," 601.
[89] Irving to Calhoun, 16 Oct. 1844, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5271, 342.
[90] Irving to Buchanan, 18 Jul. 1846, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5282, 357-8.
[91] Campbell to Buchanan, 10 Aug. 1845, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5276, 350; Francisco Javier de Istúriz to Saunders, 5 Aug. 1846, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5284, 359-62.

though on several occasions Spanish ministers reiterated their observance of a 'strict neutrality', their support for the Union was clear.[92] Foreign Minister the Marquis of Miraflores declared that Spain would not allow Cuba to become a place from where 'any act of hostility against a Nation united to Spain by close and friendly relations' could be launched.[93] Not only that: the Spanish actually conducted quasi-filibustering expeditions *from* Cuba into the Mexican Main, further showing the leniency of their neutrality.[94]

General Narváez's *Moderado* government was attacked by the *Progresistas* in the Cortes on account of this pro-American policy. Salustiano Olózaga, former *Progresista* prime minister, accused the government of 'causing the ruin of the Mexican republic', which 'as Spaniards we suffer as if we had been defeated ourselves', and of encouraging U.S. expansionism and thereby threatening Cuba.[95] The government responded saying that Cuba was precisely the reason for Spain not supporting Mexico: 'we deeply feel the fate of that Spanish race … but that is feeling; and this is politics … As *Señor* Olózaga knows, we are in possession of a pearl and that pearl of the seas could very easily be lost. The United States have become too much to be irritated with recklessness and folly actions'.[96] José María Bermúdez de Castro, a *Moderado,* also reminded Olózaga that Mexico had sealed its own fate by not recognising the 'entrance of Texas into the Union of States', something which implicitly points to a Spanish legitimation of U.S. expansion westwards and thereby acceptance of the reasons for war on Mexico which almost all of Europe rejected.[97]

Similarly, the United States had no intention of alienating Spain and pushing it back into the arms of Britain. President James Polk, again presented by many historians as one of the great champions of expansionism, reiterated in his personal diaries how he

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[92] Martínez de la Rosa to Calderón de la Barca, 30 Oct. 1845, enclosure no. 1 in Calderón de la Barca to Buchanan, 15 May 1846, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5280, 353-55; The Marquis of Miraflores to Calderón de la Barca, 14 Feb. 1846, enclosure no. 2 in Calderón de la Barca to Buchanan, 15 May 1846, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5280, 353-55

[93] Miraflores to Jasper Livingstone, 14 Feb. 1846, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5278, 352.

[94] See Laura Muñoz Mata, "De Independencia a Independencia. Cuba En Las Relaciones Hispano-Mexicanas Durante El Siglo XIX," in *México y España En El Siglo XIX: Diplomacia, Relaciones Triangulares e Imaginarios Nacionales*, ed. Agustín Sánchez Andrés and Raúl Figueroa Esquer (Mexico: UMSNH, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas: Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, 2003), 147–61; Raúl Figueroa Esquer, *La Guerra de Corso En México Durante La Intervención Norteamericana, 1845-1848* (Mexico: Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, 1996).

[95] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1847-1848, 1 Dec. 1847, no. 14, cc. 108-109.

[96] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1847-1848, 1 Dec. 1847, no. 14, c. 113.

[97] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1847-1848, 2 Dec. 1847, no. 15, c. 119.

wanted nothing to do with 'any revolution by which the Spanish authority should be overthrown'. 'We must preserve our national faith with Spain and take no part in the civil war or revolution in Cuba [for] the best mode of approaching Spain with the view to purchase Cuba would be do so in a manner to satisfy her of our friendly disposition'.[98] Indeed, when in 1848 the United States finally offered $100 million for Cuba it was only able to do so because of the excellent relationship with Spain, cultivated for the past years. Secretary of State James Buchanan had insisted to Polk that the 'Cuban question' was 'the gravest and most important question that had ever been submitted to Cabinet' because it could certainly lead to war both with France and Britain.[99] If the Americans took the decided risk was because, as Buchannan expressed it to Campbell, 'the relations between Spain and the United States have long been of the most friendly character'.[100] He was then very precise in instructing General Saunders, the envoy to Spain, that everything had to be done 'by the free consent of Spain'.[101] Cuba could never be obtained by 'violation of national faith and honour', only by means of 'peaceful negotiation'.[102] Other paths, believed Polk, would 'only postpone, if not defeat, the acquisition of the island'.[103] Moreover, the friendship with Spain was key if not to manage annexation, to prevent 'a powerful foreign power' from getting hold of it.[104]

Although the rapprochement did not cover many issues—notably the 'flour question' by which the Spanish continued to refuse to pull down trade barriers to American flour imported to Cuba—it nevertheless set the basis for the geopolitical reconfiguration of the Atlantic.[105] This catalysed a backlash against the instruments of British ordering within Spanish territories. We can speak almost of the course of international politics influencing the domestic arena.

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[98] *The Diary of James K. Polk during his presidency, 1845 to 1849* [hereafter, *Diary of James Polk*] iii, ed. Milo Milton Quaife (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co, 1910), 487.
[99] *Diary of James Polk*, iii, 478.
[100] Buchanan to Campbell, 9 June 1848, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5064, 53.
[101] Buchanan to Saunders, 17 June 1848, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5065, 57.
[102] Buchanan to Campbell, 9 June 1848, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5064, 53.
[103] *Diary of James Polk*, iii, 477.
[104] *Diary of James Polk*, i, 71.
[105] The flour duties question was a recurring theme in U.S-Spanish correspondence. Van Ness to McLane, 14 May 1834, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5231, 274; Irving to Narváez, 10 Mar. 1845, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5272, 344; Saunders to Buchanan, 14 Dec. 1848, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs* XI, Doc. 5329, 457.

Whilst assuring that Spain would respect the compromises it had entered into with Britain, the Spanish government ordered the Captain General of Cuba to turn against the institutions and regimes through which, so it was believed, Britain had been able to disorder the empire. The anti-slave treaties and the juridical institutions they provided for (the mixed-commission and the commissary judges) were seen as the major threats to Spain's hold over its Caribbean possessions and the British consul as the operative agent behind the threat. '[The Spanish] are alarmed at the loss of that moral authority on which their sway depends if they seem to be acting on the compulsion or insistence of foreigners', reported Bulwer.[106] In early 1844, as slaves were being lashed to confess in the sugar fields, the Spanish government instructed the Captain General to prevent the British consul from attending any meeting in which political or diplomatic issues were discussed.[107] It was irrelevant that Crawford had been one of the agents most visibly working to prevent slave revolution; the Spanish had been resentful of every British representative in Cuba since Kilbee, and now the *Escalera* had given them the pretext to consider their fears rightly founded. To Spanish eyes, Crawford was no better than Turnbull: though more pragmatic, he was still a *foreign* abolitionist whose object it was to terminate the slave trade to Cuba and if possible slavery as well. And, as General O'Donnell saw it, anyone meddling in the slave question was 'covertly aiming at the independence and separation [of Cuba] from Spain'.[108]

The government thus acted to reduce the power of Crawford's office and, with it, Britain's political influence. As reported by the British commissioners, Crawford was suddenly considered to be only a commercial agent and thus lacking any authority to discuss political matters (which of course included 'any denunciations we make of disembarkations of negroes') with the island authorities.[109] O'Donnell also tried to move the Mixed-Commission to Puerto Rico to show that Spain was no vassal of Britain, restore the prestige to the colonial authority as well as relax the pressure on the slave trade.[110] When that failed, he 'required Her Majesty's Commissioners in addressing him to refrain from all observations inculpatory of Spanish functionaries, however strong the general

[106] Bulwer to Aberdeen, 27 Apr. 1844, no. 10, FO 84/519.
[107] Commissioners to Aberdeen, 15 Mar. 1844, no. 96. BPP: Correspondence with Commissioners. 1844 (Class A), HLP, X[i], 10. pp. 129-30.
[108] Commissioners to Aberdeen, 7 Mar. 1844, no. 93. BPP: Correspondence with Commissioners. 1844 (Class A), HLP, X[i], 10. p. 126. Bulwer to Aberdeen, 2 Mar. 1844, no. 2, FO 84/519.
[109] Commissioners to Aberdeen, 15 Mar. 1844, no. 96. BPP: Correspondence with Commissioners. 1844 (Class A), HLP, X[i], 10. pp. 129-30.
[110] O'Donnell to the Secretary of State, 20 Mar. 1844, no. 2 (reservado), AHN Estado, leg. 8039.

reasons'.[111] When complained to, O'Donnell claimed that 'according to those same treaties…the Mixed Court [had] no authority, nor the English consul, to make these denunciations'.[112] Because of this policy, Britain suddenly found itself lacking any instrument of power in Cuba. This enabled the slave trade to surge again. As many as 7,280 slaves were imported into Havana area only in 1844 and many *emancipados* were re-sold into slavery.[113] 'The country is in the most awful conditions', concluded the commissioners only four months into O'Donnell's governorship.[114]

When news of the consular affair reached Europe, Bulwer protested vehemently. He insisted that stiffer measures had to be implemented against the slave trade—a new penal law, nothing less—to save the island from Haiti's fate.[115] He also insisted O'Donnell had to be forced to respect the authority of the British consul.[116] But the Spanish government was not willing to change the orders sent to the Captain General or accept further impositions. Prime Minister Luis González Bravo's April note to Bulwer is an outright declaration of political independence and rejection of British intermeddling. In an extremely rough tone—Bulwer himself noticed this[117]— González Bravo argued that both the Mixed Commission and the British consul were abusing their powers and weakening 'the indispensable prestige of the first authority of the island':

> The British consul at Cuba has transformed himself from a commercial agent into a diplomatic one, and into a representative not of the commercial interests of British subjects but of the British government, who watches upon the fulfilment of the treaty. His representations upon this subject, which are generally unfounded, are, from an excess of his zeal, so frequent that they already become an obstacle to the administrative course of the authorities of the island.[118]

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[111] Commissioners to Aberdeen, 20 Mar. 1844, no. 97, BPP: Correspondence with Commissioners. 1844 (Class A), HLP, X[i], 10. p. 134; Bulwer to Luis González Bravo, 6 Feb. 1844, enclosed in Bulwer to Aberdeen, 9 Feb. 1844, no. 9, FO 84/519.
[112] O'Donnell to Commissioners, 14 Mar. 1844, enclosure no. 4 in Commissioners to Aberdeen, 15 Mar. 1844, no. 96. BPP: Correspondence with Commissioners. 1844 (Class A), HLP, X[i], 10. p. 132.
[113] See Table 7 in Murray, "Statistics of Slave Trade," 147. Bulwer to Luis González Bravo, 5 Feb. 1844, enclosed in Bulwer to Aberdeen, 9 Feb. 1844, no. 9, FO 84/519; Aberdeen to Bulwer, 25 Mar. 1844, no. 2, FO 84/519.
[114] Commissioners to Aberdeen, 15 Mar. 1844, no. 96. BPP: Correspondence with Commissioners. 1844 (Class A), HLP, X[i], 10. pp. 129-30.
[115] Bulwer to Alejandro Mon, 12 May 1844, enclosed in Bulwer to Aberdeen, 15 May 1844, no. 11, FO 84/519.
[116] Bulwer to González Bravo, 5 Feb. 1844, enclosed in Bulwer to Aberdeen, 9 Feb. 1844, no. 9, FO 84/519.
[117] 'Far less friendly than his verbal assurances have been'. See Bulwer to Aberdeen, 15 May 1844, no. 11, FO 84/519.
[118] González Bravo to Bulwer, 8 Apr. 1844, enclosed in Bulwer to Aberdeen, 15 May 1844, no. 11, FO 84/519.

As to the Mixed Commission, the Spanish premier complained it had been 'converted into a sort of investigating and denouncing commission' which 'tampers upon all principles of jurisprudence' and 'has excessed the circle of its attributes'.[119] Essentially, he declared that the Captain General was only protecting Cuba against noxious foreign intermeddling, and that he would continue to do so, regardless of the compromises signed with Britain. In a desperate (and futile) attempt to get the system back in place, Aberdeen demanded O'Donnell be recalled immediately; whilst he remained in Havana 'the honourable observance of the treaty of 1835' was impossible.[120] However, the problem was not with the Captain General but with Spain itself, which had changed its submissive position of the 1830s and was not willing to tolerate further British intervention. Bulwer quoted González Bravo's words during a conversation they had on the Crawford affair: '"our government thinks for the interest of Spain as well as for its engagements that those treaties are to be executed: but for this very reason we must maintain our ascendancy and the superiority of our government in the colony which the well-meant but frequently indiscrete zeal of your agents, round whom rally a large portion of the discontented, attack"'.[121] And as a further form of defiance, O'Donnell stayed in Cuba.

The new abolitionist measures demanded by the British also came under attack. In 1845, the Spanish Senate assembled to debate the new penal law against the slave trade Britain was so insistent on. Aberdeen had ordered Bulwer to stress upon the Spanish government the necessity of using 'their utmost endeavours and influence to obtain the sanction of the legislature to the measure'.[122] The debate during the session turned into a fiery cry to resist British influence and protect the Spanish empire. Members openly proclaimed that they would not approve the law unless 'the obstacles that so badly harm the island of Cuba' were removed.[123] And so they were: the penal law became merely a face-saver which, as put by David Murray, evidenced 'the crisis over British abolitionist policy which was coming rapidly to a head'.[124]

Spain's backlash against the instruments of British ordering was closely linked to the geopolitical realignment in the Atlantic. Ministers expected that the resistance of

[119] González Bravo to Bulwer, 8 Apr. 1844, enclosed in Bulwer to Aberdeen, 15 May 1844, no. 11, FO 84/519.
[120] Aberdeen to Bulwer, 2 May 1844, no. 2, FO 84/519.
[121] Bulwer to Aberdeen, 27 Apr. 1844, no. 10, FO 84/519.
[122] Aberdeen to Bulwer, 23 Oct. 1844, no. 17, FO 84/519.
[123] DSCE, Senado 1844-1845. 4 Jan. 1845, no. 27, cc. 278-9. (My translation).
[124] Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 208.

France and the United States to the right of search would aid Spain rid itself from it as well, 'or is Havana so far away from the United States for our mariners not follow their example?'. [125] The rejection of the penal law also had a foreign policy component regarding the American alliance: Spain had to resist this umpteenth British encroachment to please the United States. 'We have no other protection than that of one single power, the United States, which shares our same interest of preserving slavery and keeping the Antilles in our possession … We should consider the alarm we will excite in our American friends with this penal law, not on account of the law itself but on account of the law being a follow up of the demands of England', argued Blanco La Toja.[126] Resisting that British-imposed law was the only way to 'prove to our American friends that they can rest assured' regarding the prevalence of the slavery in the island.[127] Spain essentially set out to imitate the United States in its struggle against Britain. Notions about the United States posing a threat on an equal basis to Britain would not reach parliamentary debates until after 1848—once filibustering began.[128] Back in 1844, the American alliance was greatly valued over the British one. Irving pleasingly reported to Calhoun:

> The Spanish [are] wide awake in everything connecting Cuba and the slave trade, and cautious of giving through motives of humanity any opening for foreign intermeddling in the interior affair of their colonies. In fact the Treaties concerning the slave trade entered into with Great Britain in 1817 and 1835 are felt as shackles by the nation.[129]

U.S. politicians understood Spain's backlash against the British as part of a global struggle of sovereign nations, intimately connected with the prevalence of slavery in the Western Hemisphere. This had already been seen in the Pikens report (1841) which had signalled abolitionist Britain as an enemy of the sovereignty of nations since 'there is no international law consistent with the separate independence of nations that sanctions the pursuits of even pirates, to murder and arson over the soil and jurisdiction of one of the

[125] Dictamen de la comisión sobre el proyecto de ley represiva del tráfico de negros. DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados. 1844-1845. 8 Feb. 1845, Appendix to no. 72, c.3; DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados. 1844-1845. 5 Feb. 1845, no. 80, c. 226.
[126] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados. 1844-1845. 31 Jan. 1845, no. 76. c. 183.
[127] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados. 1844-1845. 5 Feb. 1845, no. 80, c. 224.
[128] Gonzalo Morón: 'Regarding Cuba and Puerto Rico we have two enemies, two nations that compete for them and look disfavourably to Spain's interests in holding them'. DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1848-1849. 3 Mar. 1849, no. 47, c. 482.
[129] Irving to Calhoun, 18 Jan. 1845, in *Papers of John Calhoun*, xxi, 150.

states of this confederacy'.[130] This was the crystallisation of a decades-long struggle against perceived British breaches of U.S. independence and sovereignty, especially through the slavery and right-of-search questions.[131]

Now the *Escalera* encouraged U.S. leaders to take command of this international movement, support nations in their struggle against abolitionism, retrieving ideas about a closed hemisphere safe from European (British) intervention. In late 1843, as slave revolution raged in Cuba, Duff Greene had written the following letter to Upshur who had immediately forwarded it to Calhoun: 'The United States [is] to take a decided stand upon this subject. Not in favour of the slave trade, but in support of existing institutions—not in favour of slavery in the abstract, but against the impertinent interference of England in the domestic institutions of the United States, of Cuba and Brazil'.[132] Greene was extremely influential on Upshur and Calhoun; his discourse quickly penetrated deeper levels of U.S. strategic thinking. The *Escalera* motivated a return to a full disposition to enforce the Monroe Doctrine as originally conceived—blocking European (British) intermeddling in the Western Hemisphere.

The first time it was clearly expressed in an official document was in April 1844, in the famous 'Pakenham letter' with which Calhoun, now secretary of state, let Richard Pakenham, British minister to the United States, know of Washington's intention to annex Texas. Historians have focussed on this letter but for reasons different to the one that concerns this dissertation. They have used it to tell the story of how Calhoun's callous words wrecked the North-South consensus Upshur had built over Texan annexation.[133] Histories of Cuba do not mention the letter either.[134] Why should they, it may be asked, since it is explicitly specific to Texas? Even though it concerns Texas, the Cuban Question is all over its paragraphs: the events of the *Escalera* clearly encouraged the U.S. secretary of state to make an official declaration to the British warning that the United States was going to defend its sovereignty (and other nations') from imperial interference.

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[130] Pikens Report to the House Committee for Foreign Affairs. *Congressional globe*, 26th Cong., 2nd Sess., 170–71 (February 13, 1841).
[131] *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, vi, 37.
[132] Greene to Upshur, 17 Oct. 1843, enclosed in Upshur to Calhoun, 30 Nov. 1834, in *Papers of John Calhoun*, xvii, 579.
[133] Sam Haynes, "Anglophobia and the Annexation of Texas: The Quest for National Security," in *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansionism*, ed. Sam Haynes and Christopher Morris (Arlington: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 130; Andrew J. Torget, *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 251.
[134] Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood*; Pérez, *Cuba and the United States*; Thomas, *Cuba*.

Beyond the annexation announcement, Calhoun defended this vision of world order contrary to Britain's which the United States was going to make the core of its foreign policy:

> [If we] concede to Great Britain the right of adopting whatever policy she might deem best in reference to the African race within her own possessions, [the United States] in the other part claim the same right for themselves. The policy she has adopted in reference to the portion of that [African] race in her dominions may be humane and wise; but it does not follow if it prove so with her, that it would be so in reference to the United States and other countries whose situation differs from hers. But whether it would be or not, it belong to each to judge and determine for itself.[135]

The Pakenham letter brought back principles which clearly relate to the anti-British hemispheric nationalism that had originated with the Monroe Doctrine. Dexter Perkins claims that the 'Doctrine had been virtually neglected since 1826 until the early forties', but did not explicitly say what factors led to its re-emergence.[136] The *Escalera* was definitely one of the most important: after all, the conspiracy represented the most severe threat of European (British) intervention since 1810s. Considering the Monroe Doctrine a hemispheric defence of the slave trade empires, as Stephen Chambers proposed in *No God But Gain* (2015), these declarations and formulation of a defensive empire after the *Escalera* could be interpreted as the United States activating its foreign policy again to block the Western Hemisphere from European control, only this time on account of slavery, an institution 'most sensible to foreign intrusion', rather than monarchical restoration.[137]

Monroe Doctrine principles once again shaped foreign policy after the *Escalera*. President Polk, for example, directly 'reassert[ed] Mr Monroe's Doctrine' to deny the possibility of the British establishing a foothold in Cuba from where to target the slaveholding South, joining both hemispheric nationalism and defence of slavery and the slave trade.[138] Though the extent to which the illegal slave trade supplied the American South is far lower than W.E DuBois suggested in his account of the U.S. slave trade,

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[135] Calhoun to Pakenham, 18 Apr. 1844, *British Foreign and State Papers*, xxxiii, 238.
[136] Dexter Perkins, "Polk and the Monroe Doctrine," *Virginia Quarterley Review* 43, no. 1 (1967): 148.
[137] Wise to Calhoun, 12 Jan. 1845, *Papers of John Calhoun*, xxi, 97. See Stephen Chambers, *No God but Gain: The Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine and the Making of the United States* (New York: Verso, 2015).
[138] *Diary of James Polk*, i, 71.

American financial involvement in the Cuban-African voyages was significant.[139] The United States was also a large consumer of Cuban sugar and Brazilian coffee—both slave-grown products.[140] It was in the economic interest of the United States that Cuba continue to be supplied with cheap labour, hence it was it was crucial to keep the British out of the island.

Diplomatically, the United States also retrieved Monroe Doctrine principles by forging alliances with Western Hemispheric countries trying to rid themselves of British imperialism, for example Brazil. Brazil had been a country the United States had had difficult relations with at the dawn of independence because of its monarchical system (it had actually been Britain's hope to prevent an entirely republican America). The passage of the Aberdeen Act (1845), which authorised British warships to seize Brazilian vessels suspected of slave trading and paved the way for the exercise of naval violence against this nation, did not pass without notice to the Americans. The U.S. minister in Rio advised Calhoun 'not [to] allow the mass of the matter or my prolixity to deter you from giving the subject of the slave trade your serious attention … England is determined to taking some decided action upon this subject against this government [Brazil] in reference to our flag, which may involve us in difficulty without timely action on our part'.[141] The Damocles sword of the Aberdeen Act began to be regarded in Washington D.C. as 'the reason [why] a [Brazilian] treaty with the United States has always been delayed or prevented'.[142] The British factor seemed to encourage the Americans to draw closer ties with the Brazilians. By 1845, and on account of Britain's manifest intervention against the 'domestic institutions' of foreign countries, U.S. officials were referring to Imperial Brazil as one of the 'two elder states of North and South America' which, along with the United States, was 'in a moral sense responsible for the whole family of states in the New World'.[143] American politicians thus consecrated the two major slaveholding powers in the world as 'moral defenders' of the weaker states of the New World from the European

[139] This critic of DuBois's numbers can be found in Marques, *The United States and the Transatlantic Slave Trade to the Americas, 1776-1867,* 8.
[140] Marques, 187.
[141] Wise to Calhoun, 1 May 1845, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, II, Doc. 276, 571.
[142] Minute by Robert Schenck to William Marcy, 28 Oct. 1853, in Manning, *Interamerican States Papers*, II, Doc. 655, 442. On the tightening U.S.-Brazilian friendship on account of the slave trade see Gerald Horne, *The Deepest South: The United States, Brazil, and the African Slave Trade* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); and Leonardo Marques, "The Contraband Slave Trade to Brazil and the Dynamics of US Participation, 1831-1856," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 47, no. 4 (2015): 659–84.
[143] Wise to Calhoun, 12 Jan. 1845, *Papers of John Calhoun,* xxi, 99.

powers, or rather from Britain's abolitionist order. Americans made slavery replace revolutionary republicanism as the element sealing off the Western Hemisphere from Europe.

An assertive foreign policy and expansion of empire was put to that end. The United States moved into Texas and Central America, and 'kept a vigilant watch' over the Spanish Philippines where British expansion was also expected after the Opium Wars.[144] Only a year after the *Escalera,* in December 1845, the U.S. Congress made the first formal resolution proposing the purchase of Cuba to protect the slaveholding South.[145] This expansion of empire served an ordering purpose: closing the key regions of the empire and protecting the non-English Atlantic world from the disastrous consequences of Britain's policies. As put by one U.S. statesman in 1844, the expansion of territory and navy served the purpose of 'protecting our protection'.[146] In other words, ensuring the slaveholding empires had command of strategic positions that would allow them to repel Britain's future (dis)ordering incursions, which *were* expected. Empire was a cure for disorder, a way to protect the core from it. Interestingly, a report from a Charles Augustus Davis to senator Dixon H. Lewis called for greater investment in the navy to defend U.S. interests from 'the rapacity of an outside Barbarian afloat who may be disposed to batter down our sea ports and cut up our coasting trade'. If not, 'we shall become what China has become'.[147] This direct allusion to the forceful opening of China and ripping apart of its trade as a result of the Opium War helps to identify this 'Barbarian afloat' as none other than Great Britain. Like the Spanish, the Americans also took the Opium War as a clear example of British mischievousness and cynicism; the mistreatment of China and imposition of the drug trade on its people was clear proof to elites in the slaveholding powers of Britain's hollow morality.

Imperial expansion in the periphery to protect the imperial core has been widely studied in the case of the United States.[148] The case of Spain is still largely unknown.

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[144] Reynolds to Buchanan, 27 Jul. 1847, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5310, 410; Reynolds to Buchanan, 20 Jul. 1847, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs,* XI, Doc. 5308, 409.
[145] Resolution by Senator David Levy to open negotiations with the Government of Spain for the purchase of the Island of Cuba… *Congressional globe,* 29th Cong., 1st Sess., 92 (December 22, 1845).
[146] Charles Augustus Davis to Dixon H. Lewis, 5 Apr. 1843, *Papers of John Calhoun,* xvii, 139.
[147] Davis to Lewis, 5 Apr. 1843, *Papers of John Calhoun*, xvii, 139.
[148] Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973); Haynes, "Anglophobia and the Annexation of Texas"; David Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1975).

Spanish elites developed a world-spanning Cuba-centric strategy, which subordinated all imperial actions in the periphery (Europe among it) to the protection of the Caribbean core. 'Cuba might yet become the apple of discord that starts a war between the two great maritime powers of Europe and America', warned a *Moderado* deputy in 1845. In preparation for this scenario, 'the Antilles demand Spain's protection and aid in ensuring the absolute prevalence of social order, property and justice'.[149]

Preparations began in Africa: Spain reasserted its control over Fernando Po and Annabon between 1844 and 1846 as way of protecting Cuba. José de Moros and Juan Miguel de los Ríos, two influential members of the liberal-conservative intelligentsia, argued that it was imperative to colonise West Africa because 'if an English colony was settled in Fernando Po', Britain 'would have the power to halt, or rather to completely annul, the commerce of our Antilles with that part of Africa'. 'Every ship crossing that region will be accused of being intended for the traffic of negroes, detained, persecuted and even unjustly sentenced', they wrote.[150] Merchant classes across Spain but particularly in Catalonia—where the 1842 British free-trade treaty had been violently opposed after it risked wrecking local manufacturing—were also interested in using Fernando Po to crack open African trade before the British competitor did so, and to keep the Cuban slave trade going. Economic institutions in Barcelona, such as the *Tribunal Comercial*, agitated the anti-British sentiment of the bourgeoisie which even demanded breaking the 1817 treaty. These were quickly echoed in Madrid.[151] In only four years, the threat of Britain's encroachment had led Spain from considering selling a long-forgotten island to being eager to colonise it.

Imperialism did not stop in Fernando Po. On April 1845, Martínez de la Rosa informed Congress of major developments in foreign policy: Spain sent warships to Africa and Montevideo, 'to protect the interests of Spaniards and to make the Spanish flag seen'; it dispatched agents to China, seeing the Opium War (so very bitterly criticised by the Spanish) as opening 'a bright future … for the island Cuba in the Atlantic and for

[149] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1844-1845. 29 Jan. 1845, no. 75, c. 171.
[150] José de Moros y Juan Miguel de los Ríos, *Memorias sobre las Islas Africanas de España: Fernando Póo y Annobon* (Madrid, 1844), 65. (acc. Google Books). (My translation). Original text: 'Colocada una colonia inglesa en Fernando Poo, tendría en su mano impedir o más bien anular completamente el comercio de nuestras Antillas con aquella parte del África … a pretexto de que se dirigían al tráfico de negros los buques que por allí cruzaran, serían todos registrados, perseguidos y quizá juzgados con injusticia'..
[151] Sundiata, "Cuba Africana"; Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla, "Defendiendo La Esclavitud En Las Antillas, En La Barcelona Del Trienio Esparterista," *Historia Contemporánea*, no. 66 (2021): 371–401.

the Philippine Islands in the other sea'. Relations with South American countries were improved: 'those countries no longer are Spanish colonies … but there are still ties of blood, customs, language, religion, that make us look upon each other as brothers'.[152] It was the beginning of a policy of pan-Hispanism which was not merely restricted to members of the imperialist intelligentsia of the 1860s as it has been suggested.[153] Already in the 1840s, the Spanish government was trying to use its soft power to regain a foothold in the New World. Far from tales of stagnation and diplomatic apathy, Spain was conducting a resourceful and dynamic foreign policy; its leaders were attentive to international developments and how these could be exploited to Spain's advantage.[154]

In parallel to this, there was significant investment in the navy which the Cortes demanded be increased to at least half the size of the American navy.[155] The comparison is not by any chance a coincidence: Spain was looking to imitate the only naval power that could face the Royal Navy—reinforcing the idea of Britain being perceived as the threat and the United States, as both an ally and a role model. During the following years, Spain would continue this expansionist course and even engage in an assertive foreign policy in Europe—notably by intervening in Portugal (1847), leading Palmerston to fear an invasion of Lisbon and creation of an 'Iberian Union'.[156]

Going back to the immediate aftermath of the *Escalera*, it is possible to observe that the combination of the moral panic caused by the British threat and the grand strategic mobilization on the part of the slaveholding powers, articulated an entirely opposite version of Atlantic order to Britain's. Given that this vision of order was created using Britain's as the epitome of disorder, both were destined to clash. It is not uncommon for Americans, especially at this moment, to argue that a war between Britain and the United States would never be a limited conflicted: 'it might enkindle universal hostilities which would make its end less sure.'[157] Back in 1843, as Cuba burned, Calhoun had presented the Anglo-American struggle as one involving a direct conflict of order and threatening

[152] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1844-1845. 9 Apr. 1845, no. 102, c. 449.
[153] Escribano Roca and Gutiérrez Oñate, "Navalismo y Panhispanismo," 225–28. Goñi, *Tratado…*, 229.
[154] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1844-1845. 9 Apr. 1845, no. 102, c. 449.
[155] DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados 1844-1845. 17 Apr. 1845, no. 110, c. 540; See Carlos Alfaro Zaforteza, "The Moderado Party and the Introduction of Steam Power in the Spanish Navy, 1844-1854," *War in History* 13, no. 4 (2006): 441–67.
[156] Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 9 Aug. 1847 (private), in *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902,* ed. Kenneth Bourne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 275; Palmerston to the Marquess of Normanby, 17 Feb. 1847, *Bulwer*, iii, 289.
[157] Thomas Clemson to Calhoun, 27 June 1846, *Papers of John Calhoun*, xxiii, 234.

a world war: 'England has but one alternative: to harmonise her interest with that of the other portions of the civilized world, or resort to force to maintain her preeminence. If she adopts the former, freedom of commerce and non-interference with the institutions of other nations must be the basis of her policy; but if the alter, she must prepare for universal conflict with the civilized world. The danger is she will select the latter'.[158] The explosion of Atlantic geopolitics as a result of the *Escalera*, shows that the Anglo-Saxon powers were pitted into a struggle for order in the post-revolutionary Atlantic; the triumph of the rival's order would be tantamount to the permanent ensuing of disorder.

[158] Calhoun to Green, 8 Sept. 1843, *Papers of John Calhoun*, xvii, 424.

Chapter 5

‘Short-sighted men’

The Cuban crises of British grand strategy

The new geopolitical dynamic unfolding after the *Escalera* soon challenged Britain’s unilateral ordering of the Spanish Atlantic world. In 1849, the first of a series of filibustering expeditions left the American South for Cuban shores. Many more would follow in the next years, reviving the anxiety for the United States taking Havana or setting up slaveholding dependencies around the Caribbean basin.[1] As the slaveholding powers grew more vigorous and assertive, Britain had to use more resources to combat disorder and uphold its interests. During the 1850s, however, voices started to emerge within the British establishment questioning whether doing so really served national interests. Powerful figures from all parties (Benjamin Disraeli, Russell, George Cornewall Lewis, and Lord Derby) questioned the utility of Palmerston’s opposition to the United States and suggested it would be more beneficial to settle differences with the (once considered to be) roguish power. They added their voices to the ongoing Radical crusade to step down violence against the slave trade in order to reduce government expenditure. At the core of the debate lay the question of whether Britain’s policy was actually contributing to secure the grand strategic objective of Atlantic ‘tranquillity’ or whether the government—and Palmerston in particular—was actually endangering it by opposing all nations thought to be disorderly.

The debate emerged as the response of certain sectors in the establishment to a perceived failure in British grand strategy to re-order the Spanish Atlantic world, in a clear case of ‘the primacy of foreign policy’, as defined in a book by William Mulligan and Brendan Simms—foreign policy marking the tempo of domestic politics. Interestingly, in their introduction to the volume, Mulligan and Simms state that purpose of the book is to explore ‘the way in which the internal development of the British Isles

[1] Tom Chaffin, “‘Sons of Washington’: Narciso López, Filibustering, and U.S. Nationalism, 1848-1851,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 15, no. 1 (1995): 79–108; Robert E. May, *Manifest Destiny’s Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

was substantially driven by considerations of grand strategy'.[2] The chapters concerning Britain in the nineteenth century, with Adrian Brettle and Anthony Howe in charge, showed how foreign policy was the main element accounting for the struggles between political factions and finally the reason for the collapse of the party system in the 1860s.[3] Their focus, however, remains centred in how statesmen used a foreign policy discourse to attack the opponent, thus showing the importance of foreign policy in the domestic political debate and arguing in favour of the 'primacy'. This chapter focusses on the phase prior to that, on the reasons *why* issues of foreign policy were so important in the domestic political debate—beyond it being an area statesmen could easily criticise the action of the other given that it was linked to the contentious question of increasing expenditure. It contends that a perceived failure in Britain's grand strategy to re-order the Spanish Atlantic world, on account of the mismanagement of two Cuban crises (1825 and 1851), triggered a debate that sought to alter the ordering schemes the nation had been following since the 1820s.

This chapter thus begins by analysing the way in which Britain's grand strategy for order failed on account of contingencies over Cuba in Canning's and Palmerston's tenures. Since the revival of academic interest in grand strategy in the early 2010s, historians and theorists have studied a vast number of issues relating to it—such as whether or not statesmen and their states have a grand strategy, whether or not states need a grand strategy, or whether grand strategy is feasible or not for democratic nations in the era of mass public opinion and political polarization.[4] Understanding the causes (and

[2] Brendan Simms and William Mulligan, "Introduction," in *The Primacy of Foreign Policy in British History, 1660-2000: How Strategic Concerns Shaped Modern Britain*, ed. Brendan Simms and William Mulligan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 4.

[3] Brettle, "The Enduring Importance of Foreign Policy Dominance in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Politics"; Anthony Howe, "Radicalism, Free Trade, and Foreign Policy in Mid-Nineteenth Century Britain," in *The Primacy of Foreign Policy in British History, 1660-2000: How Strategic Concerns Shaped Modern Britain*, ed. William Mulligan and Brendan Simms (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 167–80.

[4] Collin Dueck, *The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Hal Brands, *What Good Is Grand Strategy?: Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to Geroge W. Bush* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Hal Brands, *American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2018); Anne Applebaum, "Putin's Grand Strategy," *South Central Review* 35, no. 1 (2018): 22–34; Rush Doshi, *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); Patrick Porter, "Why Britain Doesn't Do Grand Strategy," *The RUSI Journal* 155, no. 4 (2010): 6–12; Daniel W. Drezner, Ronald R. Krebs, and Randall Schweller, "The End of Grand Strategy: America Must Think Small," *Foreign Affairs*, no. 3 (n.d.): 107–17; Ronald R. Krebs, "Pluralism, Populism, and the Impossibility of Grand Strategy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy*, ed. Thierry Balzacq and Ronald R. Krebs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 673–90;

cases) of grand strategic failure has not been one of the most popular. On the theme of failure, scholars have only gone as far as outlining the limitations of grand strategic praxis in a very theoretical manner and showing how domestic politics increasingly got in the way of elaborating sophisticated strategy.[5] Studying grand strategic failure entails focussing on how statesmen deal with short-term crisis that might cause them to deviate from established long-term objectives. It essentially entails looking at the agency of the statesmen. Given that ordering required statesmen to think of how they wanted the world to look like in long-term, this study would not be complete without looking at how statesmen dealt with contingencies to those long-term plans.

This chapter first looks at how Canning and Palmerston, two statesmen who were evidently compromised with the strategy of Atlantic ordering, ended up forsaking long-term objectives when faced with an imminent crisis over Cuba in 1825 and 1851, respectively. In both occasions, they ended up protecting Spanish rule over Cuba from France and the United States without having obtained any assurances from the Spanish that the disordering slave trade would cease, relinquishing long-term aspirations and settling for a *status quo* that actually, deep down, did not favour British interests. They ended up being the 'short-sighted men' they accused the Spanish of being for allowing the slave trade to ensue. A forensic analysis of the handling of these crises, as provided in the first section of this chapter, reveals just how difficult the actual praxis of grand strategy is, and that when the fear of invasion is so imminent, statesmen tend to forget about long-term threats and objectives.

The second section will analyse how crises like Cuba's spurred a change in the course of ordering policy. It will show that the *reason* behind foreign policy marking the tempo of politics at home resided in a genuine belief of the elite that the government's

Georg Löfflmann, "From the Obama Doctrine to America First: The Erosion of Washington Consensus on Grand Strategy," *International Politics* 57 (2020): 588–605.

[5] David M. Edelstein, "The Limits of Grand Strategy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy*, ed. Thierry Balzacq and Ronald R. Krebs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 604–37; Andrew D. Lambert, "'The Deflection of Strategy by Politics'. British Grand Strategy, a German Island and the Dardanelles Debacle," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 44, no. 5 (2021): 760–73. Paul C. Allen did attempt to take on where Geoffrey Parker left it and historicise the grand strategic failure of Philip III of Spain but, whilst providing an interesting new view on Spanish attempts at securing peace in the Low Countries at the turn of the sixteenth century, failed to provide an atomised case study that could help understand the exact meaning of a 'failure of grand strategy'. In his case, the failure of grand strategy was merely equal to non-deliverance: peace was the strategy and war the result of policy failure. Paul C. Allen, *Philip III and the Pax Hispanica, 1528-1621: The Failure of Grand Strategy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). For the previous attempt at historising the strategy of the Spanish Habsburgs see Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

(particularly Palmerston's) wrong approach to the question of Atlantic order, specifically the relation with the roguish United States and the coercive campaign against the Cuban slave trade, risked disorder abroad ensuing and even reaching the home front. After both crises, but, as it will be seen, the effects were particularly strong after the crisis of 1851, statesmen started to pressure the executive (Derby's, Aberdeen's, and Palmerston's) to deescalate violent ordering in the Atlantic world: it was not strategically favourable, it was not economically or politically wise, and it was not morally legitimate.

The second section of this chapter also shows that the 1850s were a momentous decade in which the ordering preferences of the 1820s started to fade on account of short-term imperatives such as economic angst, worries about social upheaval, and concerns about military overstretch. More importantly, it shows how the question of world order and disorder influenced changing dynamics within British statecraft. British politicians did not cease to be grand strategic—only Canning and Palmerston demonstrated non-strategic behaviours in 1825 and 1851—on the contrary; they put forward new grand strategic principles concerning the question of Atlantic order. The main of these pillars was relaxing the tension with the United States; the basis of an Anglo-American special relationship were about to be set. During the 1850s and 1860s, however, within the political establishment co-existed the old generation (mainly, Palmerston) futilely striving to impose the 1815 Atlantic order principles in response to 1815 perceptions of disorder, and the new generation of statesmen (Gladstone, Disraeli, the 15th Earl of Derby, Salisbury) seeking an understanding with the United States to protect Britain's precarious position at home and abroad.

Contingency halts strategy: the Cuban crises of 1825 and 1851

'Grand strategy' is a term that has been primarily used to treat post-1945 international history. Historians have of course traced the grand schemes of states in the past.[6] However, until recently there has not been a critical understanding of how statesmen in the past thought in grand strategic terms.[7] Just as 'order' and 'disorder' existed as

[6] See, for example, Andrew D. Lambert, *The Crimean War: British Grand Strategy against Russia, 1853-56* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Jeremy Black, "British Strategy and the Struggle with France, 1793-1815," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31, no. 4 (2008): 553–69.

[7] John Bew, Maeve Ryan, and Andrew Ehrhardt, "Grand Strategy and the Historical Mind," in *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy*, ed. Thierry Balzacq and Ronald Krebs (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 637–57.

phenomena of international politics of which, as this dissertation has shown, statesmen had a clear understanding of grand strategy—'acting beyond the demands of the present' and taking 'a longer view', to use the definition of Williamson Murray—, meaning it was something statesmen in the age of Palmerston consciously thought of and responded to, not merely a term that historians can use *a posteriori* to conceptualise a certain type of state behaviour.[8]

Grand strategy, albeit not always being neatly outlined in a written document, was deeply entrenched in policymaking as a British 'habit of the mind', as scholars have recently put it, or a 'pattern of behaviour'—to use one of Nina Silove's proposed manifestations of grand strategy.[9] The expression 'general policy of England', with which statesmen alluded to core commercial, geopolitical, and moral interests of the nation, often came up in debates concerning long-term issues (such as preparations for peace in times of war, intervention or non-intervention, the preservation of territorial enclaves, the advancement of rivals in key regions), exemplifying this type of big-picture thinking.[10] Statesmen were not only grand strategically minded but grand strategically conscious as well: when policy was drafted according to the long-term lines of national interest it was considered to be, in the words of Sir Robert Wilson, 'founded in the *spirit* of our general policy'.[11]

Abolition was seen as a long-term endeavour to prevent catastrophe from shaking the Atlantic world and disorder from ensuing. It was not uncommon for British statesmen to refer to those endangering the tranquillity of Atlantic via the introduction of more slaves to Cuba as 'short-sighted men'.[12] Canning and Palmerston both knew this, as this dissertation has shown. However, when the security of Havana was at stake, they both forgot about this and became 'short-sighted men' themselves. The crises of 1825 and 1851 have not been amply discussed by the literature. The former was treated by Harold Temperley but largely as a way of explaining European dynamics at the time of the

[8] Murray, "Thoughts on Grand Strategy," 2.
[9] See Bew, Ryan, and Ehrhardt, "Grand Strategy and the Historical Mind"; Silove, "Beyond the Buzzword," 43.
[10] *Hansard,* 3rd series. HC Deb. 05 Apr. 1807, vol. 48, c. 517 (First Lord of the Treasury); *Hansard,* 3rd series. HC Deb. 20 July 1866, vol. 184, c. 1218 (Samuel Laing), c. 1256 (Lord Stanley); *Hansard,* 3rd series. HC Deb. 08 Feb. 1850, vol. 108, c. 535 (Lord John Russell); *Hansard,* 3rd series. HC Deb. 05 Aug. 1836, vol. 35, c. 932. (Henry Ward).
[11] *Hansard,* 3rd series. HC Deb. 03 June 1819, vol. 40, c. 867. (My emphasis).
[12] Lamb to Cea Bermúdez, 13 July 1825, enclosed in Lamb to Canning, 8 Aug. 1825, no. 8, FO 84/41; Copy of Villiers's note to the Cea Bermúdez Cabinet, 31 Dec. 1833, enclosed in Villiers to Palmerston, 31 Dec. 1833, no. 2, FO 84/140.

Concert era.[13] The latter is often lost in U.S.-centric accounts about filibustering in which William Walker and his 1856 expedition to Nicaragua take the spotlight.[14] Both crises, as it will be seen, caused a deep fracture in British grand strategic statecraft.

After months insisting on the Spanish government the necessity of adopting 'measures that will give efficacy' to the 1817 treaty, Canning gave up on friendly diplomacy.[15] On 4 April 1825, he dispatched instructions to Fredrick Lamb, minister in Madrid, ordering him to:

> Frame a strong [complaint] to the government of Spain, calling upon His Catholic Majesty to ease into effect with good faith the engagement into which he solemnly entered for the abolition of the traffic in slaves, and adding explicitly that if Spain expects His Britannic Majesty to take any further interest in the preservation of Cuba to the Mother Country, that interest can only be conditioned on the sincere execution, by Spain, of the Treaty of 1817.[16]

This was the first threat of the kind. As David Murray argues, never before had the British linked Spanish sovereignty over Cuba to the abolition of the slave trade so explicitly.[17] Lamb first threatened the Spanish verbally and then addressed a written note to the government on 13 July, fully expressing the threat and including reports from commodores on the Slave Coast reporting an increase in the number of slavers flying Spanish colours .[18] However, by 1 August Canning destroyed the credibility of his own red line: in a long dispatch to Lamb he instructed him to let Cea Bermúdez know, 'before entering upon any topic', that 'we could not see with indifference any attempt by other powers … by France for instance, or by the United States of North America, to assume

[13] The 1825 crisis is studied through the lens of Anglo-French diplomacy in the wake of the Congress of Verona and with a largely European perspective. Temperley, "The Later American Policy..."
[14] Some examples include May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America*; Michel Gobat, *Empire by Invitation: William Walker and Manifest Destiny in Central America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Lester Langley, "The Whigs and the Lopez Expeditions to Cuba,1849-1851: A Chapter in Frustrating Diplomacy," *Revista de Historia de América*, no. 71 (1971): 9–22.
[15] Canning to George Bosanquet, 25 Feb. 1825, no. 4, FO 185/101; Bosanquet to Cea Bermúdez, 22 Mar. 1825, no. 5, FO 84/41.
[16] Canning to Lamb, 4 Apr. 1825, no. 1, FO 185/101.
[17] Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 86.
[18] Lamb had first mentioned the possibility to Cea Bermúdez during a conversation at Aranjuez in June. See Lamb to Canning, 18 June 1825, no. 4, FO 84/41. He put the threat in writing in a letter to the Spanish minister with date of 13 July 1825. See Lamb to Cea Bermúdez, 13 July 1825, enclosed in Lamb to Canning, 8 Aug. 1825, no. 8, FO 84/41; Commodore Bullen to the Admiralty, 25 Mar. 1825, enclosed in Canning to Lamb, 31 May 1825, no. 2, FO 185/101; John Wilson Croke (Political Secretary to the Admiralty) to Joseph Planta, 17 May 1825 (copy in no. 2), FO 185/101.

(under whatever colour) the occupation of Cuba'.[19] This completely undid the threat of letting Cuba fall to another power should the 1817 treaty continue to be defied.

The reason for this sudden change of heart was a looming crisis over Cuba. On 25 May, Permanent Undersecretary Joseph Planta received the most worrying news from Kilbee: a French battleship, *Nymph,* had left Martinique and was headed for Havana, with the pretext of protecting the harbour from an imminent Mexican-Colombian attack. Kilbee had learned from high-ranking sources in the island that 'an attempt will shortly be made to restore the authority of Spain in Mexico *with the assistance of foreign powers*'. 'Things certainly bear a warlike appearance', he wrote.[20] Canning had long feared this. On 19 April, he had written to the Viscount Granville, ambassador in Paris, expressing fear at 'the possibility of an occupation of the Havana by France'. He ordered him to appease the French premier, the Count of Villèle, and remind him that Britain wanted to protect Cuba but that 'it has never entered our contemplation to land a man at the Havana'.[21] Canning saw the *Nymph* affair as 'an experiment to see how far a French force might be incidentally and imperceptibly slipped into the Havana. Villèle ought to know that our eyes are open to the possibility of such a manoeuvre. … I fear prudence might desert him'.[22] The danger existed that once a French army was stationed in Havana, it would never leave. Villèle could well be seeking compensation for the fruitless invasion of Spain in 1823 (by 1825 it was clear that the expedition had not rendered the grand political benefits initially expected) and for the ultimate loss of Haiti after its recognition as an independent state (1824).[23]

For a month, Canning tried to learn what were the real intentions of the French, hoping these would not be the ones he feared.[24] It would not be until the autumn that officials in London became aware that the French had actually only tried to get the Cubans to convince the Spanish government to make peace with the former colonies. To that purpose the French agent sent that same year to recognise Haiti's independence, the Baron de Mackau, on board the *Nymph,* 'had recently appeared to allude directly to the affairs

[19] Canning to Lamb, 1 Aug. 1825, no. 5, FO 72/300.
[20] Kilbee to Planta, 13 Apr. 1825, no. 9 (pvt.), FO 72/304. (Emphasis in the original). (received 25 May).
[21] Canning to Granville, 19 Apr. 1825, *CC i,* 266.
[22] Canning to Granville, 21 June 1825, *CC i,* 277.
[23] Canning to Granville, 12 Jul. 1825, *CC i,* 281.
[24] Canning to Granville, 31 May 1825, no. 39, FO 27/327; Granville to Canning, 6 June 1825, no.119, FO 27/330; Canning to Granville, 21 June 1825, *CC i*, 277; Canning to Granville, 8 Jul. 1825, *CC i*, 280; Canning to Granville, 12 Jul. 1825, *CC i*, 281.

of Spanish America and to convey the hope that other nations would follow the example of France'.[25] This was something that had greatly disappointed all of those who had 'supposed that France had openly declared herself and had endorsed the cause of Spain'.[26] France's recognition of Haiti, which Kilbee thought had 'saved the dignity of the King of France', attempted to show the way to the Spanish to do the same with their colonies *through* French mediation. Efforts to do so were acknowledged by Kilbee in a dispatch to Planta later that year.[27] Ideas of a French-backed restoration of Spanish dominion in Mexico were only entertained by fantasising royalist refugees settled in Cuba.[28]

By then however, Canning had already shown his hand to the Spanish and had even recurred to the United States. On 7 August, he had met with the U.S. minister in London, Rufus King, and agreed that Britain would not take Cuba for itself, whilst getting in exchange the compromise that 'neither of us [will] allow that it should fall into the hands of France'.[29] No compromise was reached regarding U.S. ambitions towards the island. By early 1826, Lamb would confirm that the United States would still intervene in case the servile population revolted.[30] The irrational fear of seeing the French take possession of Havana had made Canning forsake all lines of strategy.

Palmerston experienced a crisis of striking similarity to Canning's. In July 1851, he had threatened the Spanish government with letting Cuba fall should the slave trade fail to be contained: 'the people of this country instead of looking with displeasure at attempts which may be made to sever Cuba from the Spanish monarchy, may be led to view [them] with satisfaction'.[31] By early August, Havana seemed about to suffer the fate of Rio de Janeiro, which had been bombarded by British warships a year earlier.[32] After learning that 'the Captain General of Cuba has directed the governor of St Jago de Cuba to disregard any official communications made to him by the British consul in that city on the subject of infractions of the treaties', Palmerston sent a detachment of cruisers to Cuban waters. 'Her Majesty's Government are fully determined that the slave trade of

[25] Kilbee to Planta, 30 Jul. 1825, no. 15 (pvt.), FO 72/304.
[26] Kilbee to Planta, 30 Jul. 1825, no. 15 (pvt.), FO 72/304.
[27] Kilbee to Planta, 19 Nov. 1825, no. 21 (pvt.), FO 72/304.
[28] Kilbee to Planta, 13 Apr. 1825, no. 9 (pvt.), FO 72/304.
[29] Canning to Rufus King, 7 Aug. 1825, quoted in Charles K. Webster, *Britain and the Independence of Latin America, 1812-1830: Select Documents from the Foreign Office Archives*, vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 520–24.
[30] Lamb to Canning, 9 Feb. 1826, no. 13, FO 72/314.
[31] Palmerston to Howden, 10 July 1851, no. 33, FO 84/836.
[32] On the bombardment of Rio see the classic account by Leslie Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

Cuba shall be put down and were prepared to resorting to more active measure on its part than might otherwise be necessary' he wrote to Howden, minister in Madrid.[33]

Again, an invasion scare changed everything: news arrived that the New Orleans filibuster Narciso López sailed with his private army to Cuba. The Spanish authorities managed to deal with López, who was executed, but it took long for the British to learn these news and, even when they did, they still expected imminent expeditions to leave Southern ports. Palmerston gave orders to the Admiralty to send steam cruisers to the region.[34] On 11 September, he dispatched new instructions to the commander of the West India Station, Sir George Seymour, allowing the use of force to prevent filibuster expeditions from landing.[35] This policy was maintained by the West India Squadron in the years to come: as of early 1854, commanders were still reporting that the 'presence of ships of war in the neighbourhood' was hoped to have had 'the effect of checking those disgraceful proceedings which certain unprincipled adventurers now carry under the United States flag'.[36]

All of this Palmerston did without having obtained a single guarantee from the Spanish as to the contention of the slave trade. A dispatch to Howden in October shows how sharply his attitude to the problem had changed. He claimed the purpose of the warships had been 'to prevent any band of adventurers of any nation from landing in Cuba to excite or join insurrection', and *then* did he turn to say: 'the best way in which [the Spanish government] could make its acknowledgements for this measure on the part of Her Majesty's Government would by honourably fulfilling the treaty engagements'.[37] The original situation of conditionality had degenerated into a mere *quid pro quo*: Palmerston left it to the discretion of the Spanish government to do something about the slave trade *a posteriori*—in compensation for a British naval aid which had not even been officially requested by Madrid.

The case could be made that conceding to the short-term was necessary on these occasions, that it was a form of 'strategic pragmatism'.[38] However, Canning's and Palmerston's impulsive reaction to the crises and lack of long-term thinking rendered

[33] Palmerston to Howden, 7 Aug. 1851, no. 37, FO 84/836.
[34] Admiralty to Lord Stanley of Alderley, 5 July 1851, FO 84/865.
[35] Quoted in Amos A. Ettinger, *The Mission to Spain of Pierre Soule, 1853-1855: A Study in the Cuban Diplomacy of the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), 48.
[36] Rear Admiral H.W. Bruce to Secretary of the Admiralty, 10 Jan. 1854, no. 140, BPP: Accounts and Papers: Colonies. Slave Trade Correspondence. 1854 (Class A), xv, 201.
[37] Palmerston to Howden, 17 Oct. 1851, no. 49, FO 84/836.
[38] On the case for "strategic pragmatism" see Edelstein, "The Limits of Grand Strategy."

Britain's interests harder to achieve. As shown in Chapter One, a key element of British world power was the illusion of deterrence: it was crucial for the weak empire to appear capable, both materially and politically, of enacting the threats its statesmen made to extract diplomatic gains. As Lord Lyons put it on an occasion, 'crying out wolf now when there is no wolf … shall only weaken the effect of any future offer'.[39] This was exactly what happened during the Cuban crises. The credibility of Britain suffered greatly as the bluff was called, hindering its capacity to exert similar threats in the future. By August 1825, Canning was forced to tackle the slave trade issue just as forbearing Castlereagh would have done: with careful diplomatic means. He instructed Lamb to 'remove, as far as possible, all of Cea's fears, either of an unfriendly intention, or even any lukewarmness or indifference on the part of the British government in the concerns of Spain'.[40] When on 10 December 1825, Canning instructed Lamb to remind the Duke of Infantado, Cea Bermúdez's successor, of his predecessor's promises he wrote the following: 'You will at the same time refer to the Spanish minister to the note which you delivered on the 13th of July last' (the note containing the April threat), but then, in the margin annotated: 'No'.[41] In 1826, when Britain was trying to get the Spanish to agree to the inclusion of an equipment clause that would ease the detention of slavers found with no slaves onboard, Canning ordered Lamb to handle the matter more carefully: 'Employ in that communication every topic which you may think likely to make an impression in the mind of the Spanish minister [and] you will take care that in your communication the names of His Majesty's commissioners shall not be introduced'.[42] Spanish sovereignty over Cuba was not mentioned.

Palmerston also suffered in his relation with the Spanish because of the blow to British credibility. To his embarrassment, the Spanish government resented the anti-filibustering patrol. Foreign Minister Miraflores considered it 'most untimely' for he believed it increased the possibility of a dispute with the United States that would bring war to Cuba. He starkly warned Howden that 'if by any unfortunate combination of circumstances, a new element of disturbance were added to the numerous ones which, in spite of the respectable government of the United States, are fostered against that island by American pirates … [Spain] will hold the Cabinet of London responsible for the fatal

[39] Lyons to Russell, 24 Nov. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[40] Canning to Lamb, 1 Aug. 1825, no. 5, FO 72/300.
[41] Canning to Lamb, 10 Dec. 1825, no. 9, FO 84/41.
[42] Canning to Lamb, 21 Jul. 1826, no. 7, FO 84/54.

consequences which might therefrom ensue to Spanish domination'.[43] (Murray clearly missed this letter from Miraflores, since he stated that 'Spain naturally welcomed this military help').[44] This was a clear case of what Hal Brands described as the 'inherent dilemma of engaging enemies'—that 'it can discomfit insecure friends'.[45]

Uncovering the British bluff also encouraged the Spanish to continue defying the slave trade treaties, knowing that British warships would come to their succour in the event of squabble with the Americans, and even become more aggressive towards the British. In 1825, Cea Bermúdez made the accusation that the slave trade was actually being 'carried on by British capital and for the benefit of British subjects' and told Lamb that if Britain wanted something done about this it could begin by increasing the number of cruisers 'particularly on the coast of Cuba'.[46] It is rather easy to read between the lines: if Britain wanted Spain's support for its abolitionist campaign, it had better protect Cuba from Spain's enemies, like France was doing, instead of foolishly threatening to let it fall. Lamb noticed that Canning's backchanneling with the Americans had been seen by the Spanish as an expression of British machinations and self-interest; anything other than an explicit support *to* Spain (in the way France had done by sending the *Nymph*) was taken in Madrid as being supportive of Spain's revolutionary enemies.[47] As he noted, 'only if we aid her' in her plans for colonial restoration could Britain 'establish a firm footing in the Peninsula and an influence equal to that possessed by any other power. If we refuse our assistance it is natural that Spain should attach herself more closely to other connections'.[48]

Canning's reaction lost Britain significant leverage. Spain did not feel pressured to accept the equipment clause. The Spanish ministry delayed their response 'making some [objections] chiefly of metaphysical nature'.[49] Much of their reluctance probably had to do with Lamb's refusal of their petition for warships to protect Cuba from the Mexicans.[50] The slave trade continued to increase in the following years. According to Kilbee's report, 1825 was the year in which the trade reached its peak after the prohibition

[43] Miraflores to Howden, 19 Aug. 1851, enclosed in Howden to Palmerston, 20 Aug. 1851, no. 30, FO 84/837.
[44] Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 227.
[45] Hal Brands, "Barack Obama and the Dilemmas of American Grand Strategy," *Washington Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (2016): 111.
[46] Lamb to Canning, 18 June 1825, no. 4, FO 84/41.
[47] Lamb to Canning, 7 Feb. 1826 (separate), FO 72/314.
[48] Lamb to Canning, 20 June 1825, no. 5, FO 72/301.
[49] Lamb to Canning, 18 Aug. 1826, no. 8, FO 84/54.
[50] Lamb to Canning, 7 Feb. 1826 (separate), FO 72/314.

became effective in 1820: as many as thirty-seven expeditions sailed from Africa and over 11,000 slaves entered Havana during that year.[51]

In Palmerston's case, few things distinguished the Spanish government's attitude those days from the time of the *Escalera* when British authority was so fiercely contested. The Spanish refused to accept further British demands or fulfil the compromises already in place because doing so would 'essentially constitute undermining the sovereignty and independence of the nation'.[52] Miraflores sent Howden a particularly aggressive note warning that Spain saw the slave question as 'a matter of interior administration of her dominions, which is by no means comprised in the treaties relative to the slave trade, and in which it cannot allow the interference of any foreign power'.[53] The problem of the authority of the British consul re-emerged like in 1844, with the Spanish authorities refusing it and Palmerston insisting that his agents better be 'attended to promptly' and the illegalities they denounced 'acted upon efficaciously', but without any success.[54] Slave trade numbers soared in the early 1850s: 3,687 slaves entered Cuba by January 1852; another 5,943 followed by January 1853, and 9,383 by January 1854.[55] A point of ridicule, which clearly infuriated Palmerston, was reached when Miraflores dared say that the 1835 treaty was limited only to the African coast. 'The text of the treaty is plain, simple and explicit', Palmerston replied, '[it] declares that the Spanish slave trade is thereforward totally and finally abolished in all parts of the world … It is needless to prove that Puerto Rico and Cuba are parts of the world', he replied.[56] His words and angry underlining makes the sentiment transcend the dispatch.

Keeping the United States out of Havana, albeit momentarily, justified relinquishing the ordering crusade, but the abandonment of long-term policy did not go unnoticed to the Victorian political establishment. Crisis might have been averted, but paradoxically, the way in which Britain had done so, had increased the possibility of a new crisis emerging in the near future, or so many statesmen thought. In 1830, on the brink of a Spanish intervention in Mexico (with foreseeable consequences for Cuba in

[51] See Table 4 in Murray, "Statistics of Slave Trade," 141.
[52] Miraflores to Howden, 28 June 1851, enclosed in Howden to Palmerston, 8 July 1851, no. 45, FO 84/837.
[53] Miraflores to Howden, 23 Aug. 1851, enclosed in Howden to Palmerston, 28 Aug. 1851, no. 34, FO 84/837.
[54] Palmerston to Howden, 10 July 1851, no. 33, FO 84/836. The problem had continued since the days of the *Escalera.* Commissioner Kennedy to Palmerston, 7 Mar. 1849, BPP: Correspondence with the Commissioners, 1849-1850 (1850) HLP XVII [i], 17, p. 17.
[55] See Table 9 in Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 244.
[56] Palmerston to Howden, 13 Aug. 1851, no. 39, FO 84/836. (Emphasis in original).

everyone's mind), parliamentarians looked back to 'the course pursued by England in 1825' for culprits.[57] Canning had been dead for three years but Wellington's ministry took the blame. 'Those who advised His Majesty at that period [1825] would have been guilty of a great oversight and neglect of duty', said General Sir Robert Wilson.[58]

Britain's compliance with roguish Spain had only compromised the security of the nation in the long-run. William Huskisson, former secretary of war and colonies, made the case that Canning's failure to secure an American guarantee had only given 'encouragement to the United States to interfere with these new States of America'.[59] Spain had also been given time to rearm and prepare further expeditions against its former colonies: 'During these four or five years what had Spain been doing? She was employed in recruiting her forces, and adding to her resources; availing herself of the advantage of having her towns garrisoned, and her police managed by the troops of a foreign power, she was enabled to unite her forces at Cuba, for the purpose of attacking and endeavouring to recover her ancient colonies'.[60] Britain, he argued, should have looked 'forward from present to the future times', thinking about 'the consequences—with reference to the general interests of the world—which must result from America attempting to obtain that which persons, whose views and opinions had greatly influenced the policy of that republic, were known to have ardently' (i.e. permanent holdings in the Caribbean).[61]

The 1825 crisis remained a landmark example of bad political choice for the following years. In 1836, when debating a 'question of general policy' (i.e. grand strategic) relating to the secession of Texas and the possible 'system of aggrandisement' the United States would pursue after that, Henry Ward reminded Palmerston 'that in 1825 there had been a somewhat similar project' to which the British government had not reacted adequately.[62] These attacks on the government show this grand strategic consciousness, but they did not lead to a profound questioning of British strategy. The political monopoly exercised by the Whigs at home thanks to the Reform Act, and the weakness of the unstable United States and of civil war-ridden Spain allowed Britain to regain the momentum it had lost as a result of the 1825 crisis. The situation in 1851, however, would not be the same.

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[57] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 20 May 1830, vol. 24, c. 894. (Wilson).
[58] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 20 May 1830, vol. 24, c. 878. (Wilson).
[59] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 20 May 1830, vol. 24, cc. 898-899. (Huskisson).
[60] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 20 May 1830, vol. 24, cc. 878-879. (Huskisson).
[61] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 20 May 1830, vol. 24, c. 882. (Huskisson).
[62] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 07 Aug. 1836, vol. 35, cc. 932-933. (Ward).

Ordering preferences under scrutiny, 1851-9

The tactical (mis)handling of the Cuban scare in 1851 demonstrated that the existing principles of ordering did not go unquestioned after a major crisis in the Atlantic world. Filibustering was a sound issue in the public debate. Benjamin Disraeli, who was quickly climbing to the high echelons of Conservative leadership, accused Palmerston in the House of Commons of not collaborating enough with Spain to protect Cuba. A violent attack on the government followed in the upper house.[63] Lord Stanley (soon to be 14th Earl of Derby) questioned the Marquess of Lansdowne up to four times on the subject—'the noble Marquess does not seem to have heard my question'—growing angrier each time he the failed to provide an answer. In 'a tone [which] surprised' spectators, Stanley cornered the frightened Leader of the Lords who was eventually forced to admit he was 'not prepared to answer a question of that kind'. Lansdowne even needed the Earl Grey and Lord Beaumont to step in to draw Stanley away. They tried to evade his question with a feeble excuse: 'it is contrary to all practice—contrary to the duties of Her Majesty's Government—to answer such a question'.[64]

Palmerston might have been optimistic about his handling of the Cuba situation—'the question of the reparation to be made to Spain by the United States has been satisfactorily settled … and for the present moment there seems to be no danger of a renewed attack on Cuba', he wrote in December 1851, ten days before he was sacked—but Russell, then prime minister, certainly did not see it that way.[65] As he told Sir Francis Baring, First Lord of Admiralty, there still was 'an immediate difficulty' in 'preventing the adventures against Cuba'. 'These exertions can at any moment occasion a hustle', he wrote.[66]

The 1851 Cuban crisis excited new fears about the expansive oceanic thrust of the United States. As John Crampton, minister to the United States, put it to Clarendon in 1853, the questions of Cuba and Central America were all 'part of the more general question of aggression and domination of the United States in every part of this

[63] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 07 June 1850, vol. 111, cc. 898-99. (Disraeli).
[64] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HL Deb. 07 June 1850, vol. 111, cc. 875-877. (Lord Lansdowne).
[65] Palmerston to Russell, 16 Dec. 1851, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/9J.
[66] Russell to Sir Francis Baring, 21 Dec. 1851, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/9J.

continent'.[67] Bulwer, his predecessor at the Washington D.C. embassy, had also argued that 'Central America … is daily becoming the most important spot of earth in the whole world' not on account of the ill-fated peoples of the Caribbean basin but because it was a region ripe for U.S. expansion if Britain did not stop it soon.[68] As Kenneth Bourne suggests, statesmen were particularly alarmed by the desire of the United States to acquire 'strategic islands and communications to challenge Britain's local naval superiority' in the area.[69]

After the *Escalera*, the Union had become much more defensive of the slaveholding economies and was now decided to take on British ordering with sheer force. Palmerston's actions in 1851 had given the Americans plenty of encouragement to do so. Amidst the Cuban crisis, Palmerston had suggested emancipating all Cuban slaves to create 'a most powerful element of resistance against any scheme for annexing Cuba to the United States'.[70] Historian N.H. Brasher once argued that Palmerston was above all motivated by a profound 'practical common sense', but this proposal for emancipation was a reckless idea.[71] The Spanish were abhorred by it —'we do not understand how his Lordship can seriously recommend such a measure which would involve the destruction of the wealth of the natives of Cuba', wrote Miraflores—but the true danger was in the reaction this caused in the United States.[72]

As if the expansion of the West India station had not been worrying enough for the Americans, who had threatened military action if the naval reinforcement 'eventually led to the encroachment of the rights of peoples of the United States', Palmerston's support for emancipation confirmed that Britain was trying to Africanise the island just like in 1843 and 1844.[73] It was not long before the U.S. minister in Madrid, the pro-slavery General Pierre Soule, accused the British of trying 'to introduce as many negroes as possible in the island of Cuba', then free them from slavery, and throw them against the United States. Howden told Clarendon how Soule's vociferations could easily be

[67] Crampton to Clarendon, 7 Feb. 1853, in Van Alstyne, "Anglo-American Relations, 1853-1857," 493.
[68] Bulwer to Clarendon, Mar. 1854, in "Anglo-American Relations", 494.
[69] Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, 171.
[70] Palmerston to Howden, 20 Oct. 1851, no. 50, FO 84/836. Palmerston enclosed for reference a Colombian law for the abolition of slavery. Palmerston to Howden, 11 Sept. 1851, no. 45, FO 84/836.
[71] N.H. Brasher, *Arguments in History: Britain in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1968), 93.
[72] Miraflores to Howden, 29 Sept. 1851, enclosed in Howden to Palmerston, 1 Oct. 1851, no. 35, FO 84/837.
[73] Crittenden to Crampton, 6 Oct. 1851, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, VII, Doc. 2722, 72.

anticipating not another filibustering expedition but actually an invasion 'by the government itself of the United States'.[74] He was not far from right. The Africanisation fear (which Palmerston had contributed to spread) almost led to an American takeover of Cuba in 1854. It was sheer luck that kept it from happening: dissension in the United States on account of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which threatened to rip the seams of the Union, forced President Franklin Pierce to abandon his project of annexation.[75] Palmerston's successors spent the next years trying to convince the wary Spaniards and the aggressive Americans that Africanisation was 'a charge falsely imputed' and that Britain had no intention of taking Cuba in that or any other way.[76] By 1854, Clarendon recognised in the House of Lords that those reckless rumours of British-supported Africanisation 'have been made the pretext for all those buccaneering expeditions against Cuba' and had gravely threatened Spanish sovereignty over the island.[77] He did not say, however, that Palmerston had been the source of them.

After the scare, British statesmen of various parties and tendencies, from within and without the government, started to think very carefully about whether it was worth it to risk war with America to prevent Cuba from going ablaze in a (distant?) future. Contrary to what Murray suggested about there being consistency in the strategies of foreign secretaries between 1851 and 1853 regarding Cuba, the early 1850s saw a complete reconsideration of methods to deal with it American expansion.[78] When Lord Malmesbury became foreign secretary in Derby's short-lived 1852 ministry, he brought back the Castlereaghan ways, attempting to create a tripartite Anglo-French-American guarantee of Cuba.[79] This was precisely what Palmerston had laboured to avoid in 1851. He had met the French ambassador in September 1851 to discuss Cuba, but only to prevent the Spanish from inviting French President Louis Napoleon to be a part in the Cuban solution. Even though rumour had it that he 'had not consented … [nor] refused' to a joint guarantee of Cuba alongside the French, he was not willing to cooperate.[80]

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[74] Howden to Clarendon, 13 Dec. 1854, no. 29, FO 84/934.
[75] On this crisis see Gleijeses, "Clashing over Cuba."
[76] Howden to Joaquín Francisco Pacheco, 29 Oct. 1851, enclosed in Howden to Clarendon, 29 Oct. 1854, no. 26, FO 84/934; Russell to Crampton, 16 Feb 1853, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, VII, Doc. 2998, 491.
[77] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HL Deb. 11 Aug. 1854, vol. 135, c. 1535.
[78] "The policies pursued by the different British ministries and Foreign Secretaries in 1852 and 1853 did not vary significantly in part because room to manoeuvre was so narrow". See Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 231.
[79] Memorandum by Malmesbury, 26 Nov. 1852, FO 84/874.
[80] John Chandler Davis to Webster, 19 Sept. 1851, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, VII, Doc. 2952, 439.

Whilst he entertained the French over tea at the Broadlands, Crampton informed the U.S. acting secretary of state that British warships would 'prevent by force any adventurers of any nation from landing with hostile intent upon the island of Cuba'.[81] Palmerston confirmed these orders again only a few weeks later.[82]

Russell proved to have the most discordant policy of all. He was the main figure on the Liberal camp to challenge the vision of the United States as a roguish power. When even cautious Aberdeen defended firmness against America—for example in 1854, when the USS *Cyane* bombarded Greytown in Nicaragua, a city under British protection—Russell advocated for negotiation to prevent a more serious quarrel.[83] Briefly in control of the Foreign Office between December 1852 and February 1853, Russell proposed to allow the United States take Cuba if the Spanish did not comply with the 1835 treaty. He did not mean it as a threat but rather as a way to rid Britain of the contentious and everlasting problem of the slave trade.[84] In 1856, out of a Liberal cabinet for the first time in his life, he led a powerful criticism of Palmerston's anti-American vehemence in the Atlantic. He called for rapprochement with the United States alluding to shared values and brotherhood, almost pointing towards an intrinsic Anglo-American "special relationship":

> I am convinced that there are no two countries whose interest and duty it is more to cultivate friendly relations with each other. There is room for us both on the globe. We have a great empire to rule and great duties to fulfil; the United States are no doubt destined to great empire and to great duties, and let us both use the power which God has given us for the benefit of the human race.[85]

He was joined not only by anti-Palmerstonian liberals like Gladstone and Radicals like John Roebuck, but by Tories as well. Disraeli became a fierce critic of Palmerston's Atlantic policy. Often historians have argued that Disraeli was troubled by his dual condition as a Protectionist Tory and as an admirer of Palmerston's nationalistic foreign

[81] Crampton to Webster, 27 Sept. 1851, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, VII, Doc. 2954, 442.
[82] 'Every care will be taken in executing these preventive measures against expeditions' of filibusters. Palmerston to Crampton, 22 Oct. 1851 enclosed in Crampton to Webster, 12 Nov. 1851, in Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence relating to Interamerican Affairs*, VII, Doc. 2956, 445.
[83] Aberdeen to Clarendon, 5 Nov. 1854, in "Anglo-American Relations", 498.
[84] Russell to Howden, 31 Jan. 1853, no. 8, FO 84/903.
[85] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 16 June 1856, vol. 142, cc. 1507. (Russell).

policy—which he would eventually make his own during his premierships.[86] This, however, was not the case regarding issues of Atlantic order in the 1850s. Disraeli, whose early foreign policy still requires scholarly attention, called to revise the long-held perception of 'every expansion of the United States as an act detrimental to [Britain's] interests and hostile to her power', for this only set Britain on 'a course which, while it will not prevent that expansion on the part of the [United] States, will involve this country in struggles that may prove of a disastrous character'.[87] This went beyond the Castlereaghan tradition of appeasing the Americans; it was a realisation that Britain's interests, and the interests of the Atlantic world, required of a good understanding with the North Americans. Disraeli even contended that perhaps it was Britain, and not the Union, the roguish-behaving power in the Atlantic: the 'feeling of distrust in the United States' towards Britain, he claimed, 'has its origin in the conviction that the policy of this country is hostile to the legitimate development of their power'.[88]

The reasons for this change of heart regarding agent disorder responded to the increasing power of the American Union and Britain's incapacity to face it in material and political terms. British dependency on American cotton was the most important, albeit not the only one, factor tempering views about the 'Yankee rogues'. Clarendon might have dismissed criticisms like Russell's and Disraeli's as a 'cowardly feeling with respect to the war with the United States', but he acknowledged that 'as soon as the orders [for war] were given we should have undignified meetings throughout Lancashire and an expression of opinion in the House of Commons that would upset the government'.[89] He thus advised Palmerston to hold his hand against the filibusters, for war with America would 'frighten the cotton lords' both in the Southern United States and at home.[90] And not just the 'lords'. If the cotton industry entered a depression, the Lancashire working class, the support of which Palmerston was eager to harvest, could easily become the protagonist of a revolution like the one Britain had narrowly avoided in 1848.[91] The 1855

[86] See, for example, Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy, 1846-55*, 216; Geoffrey Hicks, "Don Pacifico, Democracy, and Danger: The Protectionist Party Critique of British Foreign Policy, 1850-1852," *International History Review* 26, no. 3 (2004): 529; Jonathan Parry, "Disraeli and England," *Historical Journal* 43, no. 3 (2000): 699–728.
[87] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 16 June 1856, vol. 142, cc. 1511-1513. (Disraeli)
[88] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 16 June 1856, vol. 142, cc. 1511-1513. (Disraeli)
[89] Clarendon to Palmerston, 4 June 1856, quoted in Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, 197.
[90] Clarendon to Palmerston, 23 Dec. 1855, quoted in Bourne, 191.
[91] Antony Taylor, "Palmerston and Radicalism, 1847–1865," *Journal of British Studies* 33, no. 2 (1994): 119. On Palmerston wanting to harvest the support of the lower classes see Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy, 1846-55*, 44. On the Lancashire working class see H. I. Dutton and

Sunday Trading Riots were a reminder that the proletariat was still excluded from the bourgeois-controlled Reform system and eager to get in.[92] The Crimean War, the first major war since the Reform Act, was already 'a test for Britain's institutions'; many feared the system would not survive a shock as disturbing as an American war and subsequent cotton famine.[93]

The British public composed of an ever-growing bourgeoise concerned by the weariness of British economic and military power in the mid-century, was more worried about a war erupting with the United States than about long-term plans for 'order' through abolition. Although the Crimean War had inflamed national animosity (Palmerston had certainly pressured with war because he knew it was popular), it appeared as if by 1856 it had declined due to ensuing economic angst and Aberdeen's mishandling of the war (which brought down his ministry).[94] 'The questions with the United States are now occupying the public attention and Parliament even more than peace [in Europe]', wrote Clarendon in 1856.[95] This is particularly significant: rather than being worried about building a long-term, stable settlement for Europe after what had been first general war since 1815, public and politicians were more worried about uncomfortable quarrels in the Western Hemisphere disrupting the cotton trade and pushing taxes up. Palmerston, who had always used nationalistic foreign policy and even a war-mongering attitude to harvest popular approval to his policies, fell out of touch, as John Vincent put it many years ago, with the peace-coveting British public as he continued to press for a violent foreign policy, particularly in Persia, but also in China and America.[96]

Indeed, the ministry would hardly survive an American war after Crimea. The opposition to Palmerston was making austerity the key of its economic program. Disraeli made an ideological ethos of financial stability in order to 'rehabilitate the Conservatives as a national party' after the 1846 schism over the Corn Laws. Gladstone too embodied this commitment within the Liberal camp.[97] More than ever, cutting taxes became the key to electoral victory. As Lewis, then serving as chancellor of the exchequer, put it, there

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J. E. King, "The Limits of Paternalism: The Cotton Tyrants of North Lancashire, 1836–54," *Social History* 7, no. 1 (1982): 59–74.

[92] Brian Harrison, "The Sunday Trading Riots of 1855," *Historical Journal* 8, no. 2 (1965): 219.

[93] Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, 45.

[94] Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy, 1846-55*, 160–62.

[95] Clarendon to Earl Cowley, 22 Apr. 1856, Cowley Papers, FO 519/173.

[96] John Vincent, *The Formation of the British Liberal Party* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1967), 248.

[97] Angus Hawkins, "A Forgotten Crisis: Gladstone and the Politics of Finance during the 1850s," *Victorian Studies* 26, no. 3 (1983): 289–302.

was a 'well-sustained agitation for reducing the Income Tax to the peace standard' something which was very challenging due to 'the large amount of army and navy estimates'.[98] Britain was already increasing expenditure to keep up in the naval arms race with France, which after the invasion scare of 1852 (and despite the Crimean coalition) continued to monopolise defence planning.[99] A memorandum by Inspector-General of Fortifications Sir John Fox Burgoyne, one of late Wellington's strongmen, reminded Palmerston's government that 'the one power in the world against which we need essential *preparations* for the *possible* contingency of war' was France; the United States 'has grown in such magnitude of power' that it would 'appear to be pure waste of means' to invest in military preparations for a war in America the British would not be able to win.[100] A good relation with the United States was therefore a key not only to British security abroad but specially to stability at home.

New grand strategic principles were in the making; in the process of habilitating the Americans as allies, statesmen began to downplay the importance American disordering mischief. Some even overturned decades of state narrative to put the blame of disorder on the excessive zeal of past British governments. Malmesbury, for example, believed Palmerston's policy against Brazil and Spain regarding the slave trade had been that of a roguish power. He stated he had been 'committing acts of piracy to prevent a worse crime'.[101] Gladstone refuted the notion that Britain had a moral right to order the behaviour of others, challenging the legitimacy of the ordering mandate: 'It is not an ordinance of Providence that the government of one nation shall correct the morals of another'. This had actually weakened Britain's moral fibre and even disturbed world peace: 'You involve yourselves in all sort of difficulties and find in the first place that the opinion of your sincerity is destroyed, that you are in constant risk of collision with foreign nations, and that from some cause or combination of causes you cannot gain your object'.[102] The issue transcended opposition-politics and also included the Cabinet. Lewis, as close as a minister could be to Palmerston and Clarendon, forced them to look

[98] Lewis to Head, 27 Jan. 1857, *Letters of George Cornewall Lewis,* 324.
[99] Jonathan Parry, "The Impact of Napoleon III on British Politics, 1851-1880," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 11 (2001): 157; David Brown, "Palmerston and Anglo-French Relations, 1846-1865," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 17, no. 4 (2006): 683; Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 171–75.
[100] 'Some observations on the Defence of Great Britain and its Possessions…', Memorandum by Sir John Fox Burgoyne, 11 Dec. 1857, PRO 30/22/9J. (Emphasis in the original).
[101] Earl of Malmesbury, *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister, i* (London, 1884), 358.
[102] *Hansard,* 3rd series. HC Deb. 19 Mar. 1850, vol. 109, c. 1162.

in the mirror of their own hypocrisy regarding Britain's indiscriminate use of ordering violence: it was no different from the actions of the roguish powers they bitterly criticised. On account of the bombardment of Canton (1856), Clarendon had stressed that international law 'does not apply to barbarous states', but Lewis faced him with the contradiction: 'this doctrine may be made a cover for any aggression … when it suits our purpose we regard [foreign countries] as civilised … and when it does not … we treat them as barbarous'. Britain would not have tolerated such an action had the Americans or the Russians done it, he argued.[103]

As a result of this panorama, one of the key elements of the previous Atlantic strategy that lost strategic appeal was the violent suppression of the Cuban slave trade. Although usually associated with the drive for economisation of Radical MPs, the debate was significantly framed around the geopolitical perils of pursuing violent abolition. The Radicals claimed that 'an armed force could not put down the slave trade' and that 'on the contrary, it extended and aggravated the evil' because 'we ran the risk of coming into angry collision with powerful maritime states, thereby endangering and compromising the peace of the world'.[104] John Bright and William Hutt argued that deescalating maritime violence against the slave trade meant taking 'a rational and moral view of the question' that would help preserve peace and overcome 'discord between the two countries', Britain and the United States.[105] They were supported by the Tories who had long been trying to get rid of the anti-slave trade squadrons—they had come close to doing so in 1852.[106] Disraeli made the case that the squadrons only increased the chance of war with America: the 'public men of America [had] a sincere desire to cultivate friendly relations with the Government and people of this country' and thus Britain 'could not allow an accidental ebullition' by preserving or expanding them. Compared with war with America, the campaign against the slave trade was an issue, said Disraeli, of 'transient nature'.[107]

Statesmen close to the Palmerstonian circle also started to acknowledge that the Cuban slave trade was a problem that could not be solved, and moreover, one which fruitlessly attempting to solve damaged Britain's capacity to interact with states in pursuit

[103] Quoted in Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, 58.
[104] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 12 July 1858, vol. 151, c. 1287 (Hutt).
[105] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 18 June 1858, vol. 151, c. 41. (Bright).
[106] Andrew D. Lambert, "The Ultimate Test: The Fourteenth Earl, the Admiralty and the Ministry of 1852," in *Conservatism and British Foreign Policy, 1820-1922: The Derbys and Their World*, ed. Geoffrey Hicks (New York: Routledge, 2011), 57.
[107] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 18 June 1858, vol. 151, c. 55.

other issues on the diplomatic agenda. Howden's dispatch to Russell in February 1853 was particularly damning in this sense: 'The question of the slave trade paralyses the influence of an English representative at this Court directly or indirectly it casts its shine over every communication he has with the Spanish Foreign Office'.[108] In October 1854, as the slave trade to Cuba surged again, Howden wrote to Clarendon: 'it is useless to press the subject [of abolition] further … It might even be impolitic'.[109] Even Crawford, who from Havana kept asking for greater action against the trade, started to convey by 1858 the pessimistic feeling that Britain laboured in vain to stop the odious traffic. All efforts were futile unless the Americans and the Spanish came 'under a sense of their material degradation'.[110] Pinning the end of the slave trade to a sudden moral epiphany of the slave trading nations was equal to admitting defeat.

It is clear that by 1854, the objective of Atlantic tranquillity through abolition had lost strategic appeal, also within the Canningite ordering tradition of statecraft. As an American invasion of Cuba appeared imminent, the Spanish decided to work by the frame of abolition in exchange for security and had begun a promising abolitionist agenda hoping it would gain them British protection. In October 1853, the Anglophile Ángel Calderón de la Barca was appointed foreign minister, and on his first days in office made a solemn declaration 'that he would do all in his power to cause the treaty engagements of Spain towards Great Britain be faithfully observed'.[111] In December, the liberal Marquis de La Pezuela was appointed Captain General of Cuba; his abolitionist policies *did* make a difference, even to point of alienating the United States. British chargé d'affaires L.C. Otway reported 'with satisfaction' that the authorities in Cuba 'appear at length to be endeavouring to suppress the traffic'.[112] 'I do not think I can fulfil the instructions which I have [as British diplomat] … in a manner more pleasing to [the British government] and gratifying to myself', he wrote in October of that year.[113]

However, Clarendon failed to deliver naval assistance to Cuba in late 1854 (at height of the Crimean War) as a U.S. expedition seemed imminent. He did not want to risk a clash with the United States; he had not even asked for Spanish cooperation in the

[108] Howden to Russell, 10 Feb. 1853, no. 7, FO 84/903.
[109] Howden to Clarendon, 29 Oct. 1854, no. 26, FO 84/934.
[110] Crawford to Malmesbury, 1 July 1858, no. 26, FO 84/1046.
[111] Otway to Clarendon, 2 Nov. 1853, no. 21, FO 84/904.
[112] Otway to Clarendon 27 Aug. 1853, no. 12, FO 84/904.
[113] Otway to Ángel Calderón de la Barca, 23 Oct. 1853, enclosed in Otway to Clarendon, 2 Nov. 1853, no. 21, FO 84/904.

Crimean War knowing a Cuban guarantee would be asked in return.[114] This led the Spanish government to recall Pezuela and end the abolitionist measures that had scared the Americans into organising an invasion of the island.[115] The Spanish had been willing to trust Britain never 'to look with indifference at the spoliation of one nation by another nation, the subversion of all principles and the oblivion of the Law of Nations on which the peace of the world is resting, would then be sanctioned'.[116] Clarendon did not take the opportunity to prove them right. The next time Howden complained about the rocketing slave trade numbers, the Spanish foreign minister blamed it on Britain's abandonment of Spain: 'it is not necessary to state here again the sacrifices which the state of things has imposed upon the Government of Her Catholic Majesty, nor the strenuous efforts which this government is making for the proper defence of that island'.[117]

Given that the strategic contention of the slave trade risked a rift with the United States —there already had been clashes between the U.S. Navy and the Royal Navy patrols off the coasts of Cuba and Hispaniola—and that the existing policies had not managed to overcome the problem of Spanish bad faith, geopolitical abolition began to be abandoned. In 1858, when the U.S. government complained about how the squadron Palmerston had sent to the West Indies the previous year was part of 'a system of espionage and annoyance' to the American merchant marine, Malmesbury immediately withdrew it.[118] As Crawford saw it, this was mere cowardice; there was not serious risk of clash. American complaints were 'devoid of all foundations'.[119] 'Such a statement only goes to prove the animus of the American consuls' who acted by 'excessive zeal' knowing that everything they said 'would be acceptable to [their] government, hence therefore the gratuitous charge of espionages'.[120]

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[114] The best account on Spain and Cuba in the Crimean War can be found in Luis Mariñas Otero, "España Ante La Guerra de Crimea," *Hispania* 26, no. 106 (1966): 432–36.
[115] Gleijeses, "Clashing over Cuba," 227.
[116] Count of Alcoy to Howden, 9 Feb. 1853, enclosed in Howden to Russell, 10 Feb. 1853, no. 7, FO 84/903.
[117] Francisco Joaquín Pacheco to Howden, 27 Oct. 1854, enclosed in Howden to Clarendon, 29 Oct. 1854, no. 26, FO 84/934.
[118] Malmesbury to Crawford, 11 June 1858, no. 4, FO 84/1046. Palmerston's ministry had reinforced the overworked West India anti-slave trade squadron after receiving intel that 'extreme preparations are being made for carrying on the slave trade' by means of American vessels. Clarendon to Admiralty, 31 Dec. 1856, (draft), FO 84/1037; Earl of Shelburne to Admiralty, 11 June 1857, (draft), FO 84/1037. Clarendon had been informing Howden of the inability of the West India Squadron to tackle the increasing levels in the slave trade, desperately asking for Spanish cooperation: Clarendon to Howden, 30 Mar. 1857, no. 12, FO 84/1015; Clarendon to Howden, 20 May 1857, no. 20, FO 84/1015.
[119] Crawford to Commodore Henry Kellett 28 July 1858, enclosed in Crawford to Malmesbury, 3 Aug. 1858, no. 35, FO 84/1046.
[120] Crawford to Malmesbury, 3 Aug. 1858, no. 35, FO 84/1046.

But statesmen in London were not willing to risk it. Only a handful continued to stress the long-term geopolitical threat of the slave trade—those personally linked to the abolitionist movement such as Lord Brougham (a historic member of Wilberforce's circle), the Bishop of Oxford (Wilberforce's own son), and Crawford, whose political importance was directly proportional to the existence of a problem on which he was an authoritative expert.[121] Oxford notably warned in 1858 that 'while we suffer Cuba to continue a slave importing state, it must in the nature of things be a continual provocative of the most dangerous extremities between England and America'. Brougham concurred.[122] Crawford, on his part, understood that Britain had 'to choose the least of two evils' but believed that, contemplating the long-term, the wrong decision had been taken.[123] 'The most deplorable effects are to be anticipated from this measure as well as from the immunity conceded to the American flag, since the door is thrown open for the slave traders to carry on the traffic', he warned.[124] Views like these, were no longer widely shared.

Even Palmerston, who had spent his time in opposition in the 1840s calling for greater naval presence in the West Indies, did not complain at the measure adopted by the government.[125] He thought American points to be logical—'it is always, no doubt, to be expected that when an additional number of inspecting and preventing ships appear on a particular station, those with whose traffic they interfere should endeavour to raise a cry against it, and misrepresent the objects we have in view'—and merely encouraged the government to 'urge upon the American government to send cruisers to the coast of Cuba to prevent [the defiance of their flag by slavers], by their own legitimate action'.[126] He held his ground in opposing Hutt's and Bright's motion against the African squadron, but condoned dismantling the West Indian one. It is impossible to know what would have Palmerston ordered had he been in office in June 1858, but in January, a month before his government fell, his foreign secretary had written the following to Howden: 'I concur with you in thinking that it would be impolitic to make any official communication at

[121] Though the figures provided by the British commissioners are by far the most reliable regarding the volume of the Cuban slave trade, Murray did point out that Crawford might have exaggerated some already appalling numbers. This 'reflected the disillusionment of fifteen years spent at Havana in the same futile task'. Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 261.
[122] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HL Deb. 17 June 1858, vol. 150, cc. 2201-2202.
[123] Crawford to Malmesbury, 23 July 1858, no. 31, FO 84/1046.
[124] Crawford to Malmesbury, 1 July 1858, no. 26, FO 84/1046.
[125] For Palmerston demanding the focus of the abolition be shifted to the West Indies see: *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 16 July 1844, vol. 76, c. 943, 945.
[126] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 18 June 1858, vol. 151, c. 53. (Palmerston).

present to the Spanish government on the subject' of the slave trade; thus it must have been known that the situation in the West Indies was in a troublesome state.[127] Another indicator of the relaxation of British ordering is that, during the 1850s, the issue of foreign intermeddling in Cuba barely appeared in the Spanish Cortes, not even from the more radical deputies or those from the constituencies traditionally linked to Cuba and the slave trade.[128] Indeed, internal convulsions and attempts to draft a new constitution centred the Spanish national debate but, nonetheless, the contrast with the 1840s, when even questions concerning municipal legal problems had somehow found a connection with the Cuban Question, is not without significance.

It is clear Palmerston's views were changing. As this dissertation has shown, he was a firm opposer of appeasing the United States on any subject, but towards the end of his first ministry (1855-8) his foreign policy shows that the ensuing political and international climate had forced him to self-restrain. In 1857, Crampton was recalled to prevent a rift with the Americans over the Crimea enlistment crisis. He was replaced with Lord Napier—a man who did not hide his social acquaintance with William Walker, his support for American expansion into Central America and Cuba, and his anti-abolitionist tendencies.[129] Napier never saw the United States as a roguish power (perhaps he was somehow of a rogue himself) and did not hesitate to recommend allowing the Union to take possession of Cuba as a way to permanently end the slave trade and Anglo-American quarrels.[130] 'Napier takes a narrow and limited view of the results of United States extension', wrote Palmerston, showing he still understood the issue transcended the West Indian theatre.[131] He saw his own minister to the United States as a man abiding to the dangerous theses of 'forbearance of the United States' and the dangerous spirit of the Ashburton treaty which giving 'successive proofs of our weakness and gullibility shall have encouraged them to demand our North American provinces'.[132] 'Napier', he wrote angrily to the foreign secretary, 'should keep his opinions to himself'.[133]

[127] Clarendon to Howden, 21 Jan. 1858, no. 3, FO 84/1045.
[128] Only one mention by Foreign Minister Claudio Antón de Luzuriaga in 1855, alluding to the surge of the African race in the island and the danger this posed for the whites. DSCE, Congreso de los Diputados. 1854-1856. 8 Mar. 1855, no. 101, c. 2760.
[129] Brian Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of the Union: Cotton, Federal Politics, and the Global Origins of the Civil War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 2009), 219.
[130] Lord Napier to Clarendon, 26 May 1857, no. 80, FO 5/671.
[131] Palmerston to Clarendon, 4 July 1857, *Southern Designs on Cuba*, 385.
[132] Palmerston to Clarendon, 18 June 1857, *Southern Designs on Cuba*, 385.
[133] Palmerston to Clarendon, 4 July 1857, *Southern Designs on Cuba*, 385.

In spite of these opinions, Palmerston kept him in his post and ended up agreeing to send Sir William Ouseley in a special mission to Washington D.C. and then to Costa Rica to 'establish a perfect understanding with the United States upon the points respecting which differences have hitherto existed between the two countries'.[134] It had only been four years since Russell's proposal to send a special envoy had been deemed something that would encourage American aggression.[135] Bourne argues that Palmerston had finally understood that the most sensible position to adopt was to 'acquiesce in American expansion but not promote it'.[136]

After the 1851 crisis, essentially, British Atlantic grand strategy began its most profound transformation to the date: it was now acknowledged that the preferences of Atlantic order held since the 1820s could no longer be implemented without significant cost for the nation, and hence needed to be redressed. Bourne believed this change was due to domestic issues—such as the political belligerence in parliament and the press, the financial crisis of 1857, the Crimean war debt, and the commercial dependency on the United States—but when looking at the broader Atlantic picture, it is clear this was a case of primacy of foreign policy.[137] Brettle and Howe rightly saw that foreign policy was a widely used political weapon in the 1850s (hence the primacy, they argued),[138] but the reason for this being so, was that the conduction of foreign policy, particularly of Atlantic ordering, was seen to have a disorderly effect on the international system and subsequently in the internal functioning of the nation. Statesmen began to understand that the complexity and delicacy of international affairs in the 1850s made it reckless for Britain to try to impose single-handed a version of Atlantic order as it had done in previous decades. Even Palmerston acknowledged, perhaps unconsciously, that world politics had become ever more complicated: writing to Russell in 1853, he advised him not to take on the Foreign Office and the Leadership of the House of Commons, as Castlereagh and Canning had both done, because 'the Foreign Office work was not in their time a quarter of what it is now'.[139] Though writing about the bureaucratic workload, Palmerston's letter hints at a qualitative difference in the complexity of international

[134] Clarendon to Napier, 12 Oct. 1857, BPP: Correspondence with the United States respecting Central America, 1856-60. 1860. Command Papers. 2748, LXVIII.653, 68, p. 52.
[135] Aberdeen to Clarendon, 5 Nov. 1854, in "Anglo-American Relations", 498.
[136] Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, 205.
[137] Bourne, 200.
[138] See Brettle, "The Enduring Importance of Foreign Policy Dominance in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Politics"; Howe, "Radicalism, Free Trade, and Foreign Policy in Mid-Nineteenth Century Britain."
[139] Palmerston to Russell, 24 Dec. 1852, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii, 119.

politics. (He could be one to notice, since he had served in government with both Castlereagh and Canning). Moreover, the *forces profondes* that had pushed the nation beyond the borders of national and European policy in the 1820s, were now asking for a new grand strategy based on Atlantic retrenchment and Anglo-American cooperation instead of militant engagement against powers formerly thought of as rogues. In this situation, old ordering schemes were increasingly perceived as the origin of new disorder itself.

The late 1850s saw the embryonic emergence of new grand strategic principles amongst the British political establishment. The men in power, however, still belonged to the Vienna generation and held "outdated" strategic principles; Palmerston became prime minister for the second and last time in 1859 facing an outright contradiction between what he thought Britain should do to achieve order in the Atlantic and what the political establishment (on which he depended to remain in power) believed best suited British interests. During the period of grand strategic reconfiguration—which had a lot to do with the demise of the 1815 generation—Britain was strategically disorientated. Not surprisingly, Palmerston inaugurated his last ministry squabbling with Queen Victoria over which were the true principles of British foreign policy (on account of intervention in the Italian unification wars).[140]

Brown, however, did not take these doubts (and Britain's contradicting policy on many questions in the 1860s) as signs of disorientation but rather of pragmatism, given that Palmerston 'was dealing with a rapidly changing world in which familiar debates about liberal constitutional and autocratic monarchical government were giving way to nation-state formations [and] … increasingly developing military-industrial complexes'.[141] Indeed, the world of 1860 was very different from that of 1830 and this could have trumped existing strategies. However, pragmatism or *realpolitik* are political tactics, not ends in themselves.[142] The strategic disorientation can be seen in that, by 1859, British leaders did not have a clear strategic objective—the one they had, was not possible to achieve due to all that has been addressed in this chapter. No example illustrated this disorientation better than the question of intervention in the American Civil War—a watershed moment for the future of Atlantic order which the old British elite was unable

[140] Palmerston to Russell, 29 Oct. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21; Queen Victoria to Russell, 21 Aug. 1859, *LQV*, iii, 461; Russell to Queen Victoria, 23 Aug. 1859, *LQV*, iii, 461; Palmerston to Queen Victoria, 23 Aug. 1859, *LQV*, iii, 462.
[141] Brown, *Palmerston*, 450.
[142] See Bew, *Realpolitik.*

to deal with because its existing preferences for order had been challenged and new ones had not yet emerged.

Chapter 6

'The shackles of Right and Wrong'[1]

Britain's absent strategy for order during the American Civil War

The sectional conflict plaguing the United States between 1861 and 1865 was an issue of first-rate global significance, the implications of which have been deeply treated by historians for years now.[2] The war was an explosion of cumulative Atlantic disorder. Whilst Britain's leaders questioned the strategic convenience of ordering, the existing elements of Atlantic order had begun to crumble. As B.D. Schoen contended in *The Fragile Fabric of the Union* (2009), the apparent victory of slaveholding regimes and failure of the British antislavery project made the Southern United States claim the ultimate victory of their socio-political model, thus encouraging them to protect it to the point of sectional conflict with the North.[3] Indeed, as Catherine Hall puts it, 'the tide was running against abolitionist truths'.[4] The free labour experiment in the British West Indies had collapsed by the late 1850s—the islands were irrevocably economically depressed. Slaveholding empires seemed to be on a upturn: Spain invaded the Dominican Republic, unleashing fears about Haitian submission and the possible restoration of slavery in Hispaniola Island.[5] The slave trade was also on the rise all over the world again, and even Britain engaged, like other powers, in the "trade" and transfer of indentured labourers (Indian and Chinese 'coolies', and African *emancipados*).[6] American newspapers did not

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[1] Palmerston to Russell, 2 Nov. 1862, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii, 333.

[2] Don H. Doyle, "Introduction: The Atlantic World and the Crisis of the 1860s," in *American Civil Wars: The United States, Latin America, Europe, and the Crisis of the 1860s*, ed. Don H. Doyle (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 1–15; *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 2015); David T. Gleeson and Simon Lewis, eds., *The Civil War as Global Conflict: Transnational Meanings of the American Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2014).

[3] Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of the Union*, 221–24.

[4] Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 338; Huzzey also acknowledges that the decline of civil abolitionism in the 1850s, after the moral defeat against the free traders in 1846, had weakened the movement. See Huzzey, "The Moral Geography of British Anti-Slavery Responsibilities"; Huzzey, "Free Trade, Free Labour, and Sugar in Victorian Britain."

[5] Russell to Alexander Buchanan, 17 May 1861, no. 4, FO 84/1139.

[6] On the indentured labour question see Jonathan Connolly, "Indentured Labour Migration and the Meaning of Emancipation: Free Trade, Race, and Labour in British Public Debate, 1838-1860," *Past & Present* 238, no. 1 (2018): 85–119.

lose the chance to label this 'the resurgence of European slave trade'; Southerners celebrated what they interpreted to be the defeat of antislavery and the obvious triumph of their theses.[7] The global tension between slavery and abolition, that pulse between contending Atlantic orders, ended up ripping the seams of the Union.[8]

Though a major crisis of disorder, the American Civil War also presented Britain with a great opportunity to impose its version of Atlantic order once and for all. The implosion of a major rival state is, as Kyle Lascurettes puts it, a clear 'moment of order change opportunity': 'a major war and sudden great power death present unique opportunities for dominant actors to pursue international order changes'.[9] However, Britain did not intervene in the conflict. That the greatest power in the world remained immobile during the greatest shock to the Atlantic international system since the Napoleonic Wars was not a coincidence, but rather the result of a crisis of existing ordering preferences. As this chapter shows, when the war erupted, Britain's leaders found they did not have a clear strategy with which to protect or further national interests because they no longer knew what they wanted the Atlantic world to look like. They had no plan for world order and thus remained paralysed before an 'order change opportunity', victims to the profound disorder caused by the collapse of the Union.

British involvement in the American Civil War has long been a topic debated by historians and one that has received significant scholarly attention since the 1990s, when the classical accounts of the 1920s and 1930s were deeply revised.[10] The question of intervention and of the personal sympathies of men like Palmerston, Russell, and Gladstone to the North, the South, and the slavery question, have been some of the most popular for diplomatic historians. The issue of what motivated and finally stopped British intervention is one, however, in which there is very little historiographical consensus. Some historians argue in favour of the pro-South British thesis stressing that slavery was not a diplomatic impediment for Britain because, in this case as in all other prior to this, Palmerston did not part from his amoral 'chief maxim of foreign policy to take advantage of the weakness of his opponents' even if this meant, as Jasper Ridley puts it bluntly,

[7] Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of the Union*, 221–36.
[8] On the origins of the Civil War being in the Anglo-American Atlantic contest between slavery and antislavery see Edward B. Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009).
[9] Lascurettes, *Orders of Exclusion*, 31.
[10] The traditional accounts par excellence are E.D. Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War*, vol. i, ii (London: Longman, 1925); and Donaldson Johnson and Edwin J. Pratt, *Europe and the American Civil War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1931).

throwing 'all his weight into the scales on the side of slavery'.[11] Kinley Brauer does not go as far as this: he recognised that slavery was still very important for Palmerston, but that above all the prime minister favoured neutrality as a pragmatic way of securing British interests.[12] Other American historians like Howard Jones, who has widely revisited the topic, have contended that the 'aristocratic, anti-revolutionary, and self-interested' British watched with expectation as its old rival destroyed itself, intervention being thought of as the 'prerogative' of 'aggressive leaders such as Palmerston and Napoleon … to influence affairs … and restore the halcyon days when iron rule assured international order'.[13] This conclusion might have been the result of too heavy a reliance on Union sources (notably the papers of the U.S. minister in London and his son), and a desire to present the British as reactionary and cynical in contrast to Abraham Lincoln's mythical presidency. Brian Reid calls this a '"New World-Old World" antithetical approach'.[14]

This reading of British policy as pro-Southern has been (albeit indirectly) soundly counterargued both by historians and IR theorists stating that Britain clearly leaned towards the North (actually, something not far from what Johnson and Pratt had argued in the 1930s). Abraham Lincoln's antislavery commitment was crucial, argues David Brion Davis, in driving Palmerston into a position of non-intervention in benefit of the Union.[15] IR scholars theorising over the war (or rather historicising their theory) like Brent Steele have also contended that self-identification with antislavery after the Emancipation Proclamation came into effect (January 1863) was key to explain British neutrality.[16] Brian Reid argues soundly against the pro-Southern hypothesis contending that actually the Europeans, and particularly Palmerston, did not want to see a divided

[11] Jasper Ridley, *Lord Palmerston* (London: Constable, 1970), 549, 544; See also Chamberlain, *Palmerston*, 114; Chamberlain, *Pax Britannica?*, 115.
[12] Kinley Brauer, "The Slavery Problem in the Diplomacy of the American Civil War," *Pacific Historical Review* 46, no. 3 (1977): 439–69.
[13] Howard Jones, *Abraham Lincoln and a New Birth of Freedom: The Union and Slavery in the Diplomacy of the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 3. See also Howard Jones, *Union in Peril: The Crisis over British Intervention in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). See also D.P. Crook, *The North, the South, and the Powers, 1861-1865* (New York: John Wiley, 1974).
[14] For this critique of Howard Jones see Brian Holden Reid, "Power, Sovereignty, and the Great Republic: Anglo-American Diplomatic Relations in the Era of the Civil War," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 14, no. 2 (2003): 55–58.
[15] David Brion Davis, *Inhumane Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 317–18.
[16] Brent J. Steele, "Ontological Security and the Power of Self-Indetity: British Neutrality and the American Civil War," *Review of International Studies* 31, no. 3 (2005): 519–40.

Union: schemes for using a united America as a counterpoise against Russia, combined with the prospect of the endless European quarrels over a myriad of American republics if secession triumphed, made Palmerston's government take an anti-interventionist, and thus pro-Northern, stance.[17]

All of the historians aforementioned, whether defending a pro-South or a pro-North hypothesis, presume a degree of political agency in decision-making regarding the war. Other historians, by contrast, have suggested that the decision of British leaders was not taken free handed and that Britain's leniency towards the North or the South was dictated by exogenous forces. Scholars emphasising the power of international regimes and societal rules over foreign policy, tend to argue that Palmerston's ministry sided with the North in order to consolidate precedents for international law as to the questions of belligerence, neutrality, and blockades, believing this would serve Britain in its future wars.[18] Historians have also presented Britain as pro-Northern out of strategic necessity to avoid war with the Union: the weakness of Canada's defences; the frailty of the coalition government at home; and the electorally-daunting prospect of ending up fighting on the side of a slave state; are some of the reasons that would explain the British turning the other cheek every time the Americans defied their neutral rights (perhaps with the exception of the *Trent* crisis).[19] Paradoxically, that same military risk the Union posed is what, according to Gregory Downs, made Britain lean towards the South in an attempt to see the end of the Northern republic that tried to carve an empire out of British territory.[20] As it can be seen, few historians really believe British neutrality was strict and, by looking at the personal preferences of statesmen, try to see if there was even a slightest leaning to one side or the other.[21]

Parting from the debate as it is currently framed—along the line of trying to somehow prove that in reality British policy leaned more towards the North or the South—this chapter focuses on what the question of intervention revealed about Britain's

[17] Reid, "Power, Sovereignty and the Great Republic," 49.
[18] Richard Little, "British Neutrality versus Offshore Balancing in the American Civil War: The English School Strikes Back," *Security Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 68–95; Maartje Maria Abbenhuis, "A Most Useful Tool for Diplomacy and Statecraft: Neutrality and Europe in the 'long' Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914," *International History Review* 35, no. 1 (2013): 9–11.
[19] Francis M. Carroll, "The American Civil War and British Intervention: The Threat of Anglo-American Conflict," *Canadian Journal of History* 47, no. 1 (2012): 88–114.
[20] See Gregory P. Downs, *The Second American Revolution: The Civil War-Era Struggle over Cuba and the Rebirth of the American Republic* (Chapel Hill: North California University Press, 2019).
[21] Duncan Andrew Campbell, "Palmerston and the American Civil War," in *Palmerston Studies II*, ed. David Brown and Miles Taylor (Southampton: Hartley Institute, University of Southampton, 2007), 144–68.

capacity to deal with disorder and manage ordering at the twilight of Palmerston's age. By closely analysing Palmerston's correspondence with Russell, and the latter's with the agents on the field, Lord Lyons and William Stuart, this chapter reveals that a genuine strategic myopia, an incapacity to settle upon long-term goals, impeded British leaders to settle for a clear course at a moment when British economic and geopolitical interests were suffering greatly.

The first section analyses the early correspondence of statesmen, focussing on their discussions of strategic prospects as secession materialised in the winter of 1860-1 and on the eve of the start of the war (spring 1861), and shows that, contrary to the established historiographical canon, British leaders did not see in either secession or reunion significant strategic advantage. Palmerston was not eager to catalyse breaking up the Union to weaken the United States nor did he see any benefit in the United States remaining one, sole power. He knew that both a divided North and South and a reunified Union posed severe threats to the British interests; from the very beginning, the Civil War was seen as a lose-lose situation. In this light, the debate concerning Britain's Confederate or Union soft spot becomes futile since, even if personal sympathies existed, Palmerston never considered supporting any side of the war because both represented a threat. This panorama forced Britain into a neutrality that barely served its most immediate interest of avoiding a major war with the United States. Neutrality was not an example of political choice but of political vacuum. The picture of Britain in the American Civil War is not that of a comfortable spectator that observes affairs unfold from at a distance, but rather that of someone tied up and unable to move as their property is being destroyed.

The question remains of why British leaders with a proven grand strategic mindset were paralysed not only as their interests suffered but also as a 'window of opportunity' to further arrange the system to Britain's convenience opened before them. In its second section, this chapter contends that the men in power in 1861 were prisoners of their own vision of order and were thus incapable of overcoming the slavery question so intrinsically related to intervention in the war. Britain's incapacity to act in such a situation (both of threat and opportunity) because of the 'shackles', as Palmerston called them, of long-time assimilated and interiorised dogmas of foreign policy, rendered Britain incapable not only of profiting from the opportunity presented by the demise of the rogue great power, but even of protecting its core interests in the medium term. This reveals Britain's ordering to have reached an impasse in the 1860s; grand strategic preferences of order were no longer possible; and it would not be long before visions of disorder and

preferences of order finally changed and adapted to the reality of the world to spare Britain from the (passive and active) sufferings of being the leader of a unilaterally-held world order.

To intervene, or not to intervene? Britain's absent purpose in the war

Against the widely-held assumptions of neutrality being the obvious position for a Britain that supported Southern free trade but not slavery, and Northern antislavery but not protectionism, looking at British positions from the onset of the conflict reveals that the intervention debate was never articulated by a grand strategic end: Palmerston disregarded intervention from the very beginning of the war because he did not see a clear purpose for it. On the eve of secession, he had admitted in a private letter to Russell that indeed Britain lacked a plan regarding the war: 'Considering all the various uncertainties connected with this matter, it might perhaps be best to wait a while until we can see our way more clearly both as to the object to be aimed and as to the best means of arriving at it'.[22] Doubts flooded him whenever he came close to deciding on intervention because he genuinely did not know if it served Britain's interests.[23] His continual referral to the changing nature of the war or the complexity of the legal question concerning belligerent and neutral rights to excuse Britain's inactivity, further evidenced the lack of a clear long-term objective.[24] The government was acting reactively, waiting for events to unfold in order to respond to them. British leaders simply did not have an answer for 'the great question of all' which 'is the American'.[25]

Prominent historians have nonetheless argued that Palmerston did not intervene because Britain had a vested interested in the United States destroying itself in the war.[26] Jones argues that 'the great majority of British interventionists were not so malevolent as

[22] Palmerston to Russell, 14 Apr. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.
[23] Palmerston to Russell, 2 Oct. 1862, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii, 326; Palmerston to Russell, 22 Oct. 1862, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii, 328.
[24] In January 1862, amidst the *Trent* crisis, Palmerston was writing the following to Russell: 'I think a good appeal might be made on this subject to the federal government, and they might be asked to inform us whether they consider the Confederate states a belligerent state with which they are at war or a revolted portion of the Union whose rebellion they are striving to suppress'. The legal question was an important concern for British leaders but it also served as a parapet against the lack of long-term strategy to address the Union and the Confederacy. Palmerston to Russell, 1 Jan. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.
[25] Russell to Cowley, 9 Sept. 1861, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii, 320.
[26] Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, 252–54. See also Crook, *The North, the South, and the Powers*; Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*.

to want the American republic to commit national suicide so they might further their own ends', but for much of the historiography Palmerston seems to make the cut of malevolence.[27] Many historians take for granted that the Realist-flavoured premise of supporting anything that weakened rivals' power, through secession in this case, was the bread and butter of Palmerston's foreign policy. Historians like Douglas Lorimer have stressed how British statesmen, including Palmerston and Clarendon (who was not in office in Palmerston's last ministry but remained an influential voice in it), wished for the war to continue as a way of weakening the United States.[28] Muriel Chamberlain too argues that 'from the British point of view there was a great deal to be said in favour of the break-up of the United States' as to establishing a more favourable balance of power.[29] Reid, who even called Palmerston 'the ultimate realist', contends that the prime minister had long been convinced of Alexis de Tocqueville's prediction that Russia and America would eventually dominate the world and thought that letting the civil war rage on would give Britain a chance to halt the process or at least slow it down.[30] Even Brown suggests that by 1862 Palmerston had subtly drawn his ministry 'into an increasingly pragmatic, pro-Southern position' hoping for separation.[31]

In this, however, historians have erred. First of all, Palmerston was not 'consistently opposed to involvement' as Reid argues.[32] Pressured by a key government financier, Sir Anthony de Rothschild, he had considered communicating 'confidentially with the South by the men who have come over here from hence' in May 1861. He even thought of George Dallas, the U.S. minister in London, who was 'no friend of Lincoln', as a possible ally with whom to broker mediation between the contenders.[33] Palmerston also was one of the first to propose involvement on account of the cotton question. In October 1861, thinking that 'this cotton question will most certainly assume a serious character by the beginning of the year … if the American Civil War has not by that time come to an end', he told Russell that Britain would be 'obliged either singly or conjointly

[27] Howard Jones, "History and Mythology: The Crisis over British Intervention in the Civil War," in *The Union, the Confederacy and the Atlantic Rim*, ed. Robert E. May (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1995), 32.
[28] Douglas A. Lorimer, "The Role of Anti-Slavery Sentiment in English Reactions to the American Civil War," *Historical Journal* 19, no. 2 (1976): 408.
[29] Chamberlain, *Pax Britannica?,* 115.
[30] Reid, "Power, Sovereignty and the Great Republic," 67.
[31] Brown, *Palmerston*, 452.
[32] Reid, "Power, Sovereignty and the Great Republic," 58.
[33] Palmerston to Russell, 5 May 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.

with France to talk to the Northerners … as to allow cotton loaded ships to come out'.[34] These attempts at intervention however responded, like in the case of the *Trent* crisis, to short-term necessities. What was lacking was a long-term plan of which intervention or non-intervention were a part of.

Secondly, it is very difficult to sustain, as all of these previous accounts suggest, that Palmerston believed Britain was profiting from the war because it weakened the United States and halted its ascendancy. In a letter to Russell he philosophised (as he often did) about how 'it may be said that the object of war is peace, and that the purposes of peace are mutual good will and advantageous commercial intercourse', concluding that 'the barbarous proceeding' which was the American war, 'has deprived war of its legitimate object, by stripping peace of its natural fruits'.[35] He thus did not expect the war to bring any of the 'fruits of peace' Britain had an appetite for, nor to provide future conditions to harvest them.

Indeed, the war plunged the Atlantic into a deeper state of disorder. Cotton trade was restricted, maritime insecurity prevailed, and, specifically, the Cuban slave trade increased again. A year into the war, Crawford reported a 'revival of interests in expeditions to the Slave Coast' and considered the reason to be 'the state of affairs in the United States', which spurred maritime insecurity and thus facilitated slave expeditions. Constant expeditions by Spanish and Portuguese slavers made slaves 'so very cheap', a lot of 800 was on sale for $28 000, $35 each, 'that they are hardly to be resisted, so great is the temptation'.[36] The bloodshed and humanitarian catastrophe could not be ignored either, even by statesmen like Lord Granville, who acknowledged 'we might selfishly argue that it was not politically disadvantageous to us that both parties should exhaust themselves'. 'It would be monstrous', he nonetheless told Russell, 'not to avail ourselves of a good opportunity to put an end to the crimes and calamities now desolating North America'.[37]

Of course some Britons did see separation as something desirable. Paradoxically some saw it as a way to end slavery and rid Britain of the expensive, coercive approach to the abolition of the slave trade.[38] Under the pen-name of James Spence,[39] Lord Robert

[34] Palmerston to Russell, 6 Oct. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.
[35] Palmerston to Russell, 13 June 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/22.
[36] Crawford to Russell, 8 Mar. 1862, no. 6, FO 84/1174.
[37] Granville to Russell, 29 Sept. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/25.
[38] Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, 57.
[39] Lorimer, "The Role of Anti-Slavery Sentiment in English Reactions to the American Civil War," 409.

Cecil, soon-to-be 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, argued in the *Quarterly Review* that secession would eventually mean abolition since the independent South would soon 'be exposed to the same moral influences as those which are gradually chasing slavery from the colonies of every European power'. And added a sharply logical argument: 'we are very good friends with the Kingdom of Spain and the Empire of Brazil, in both of which slavery flourishes'.[40] He also defended his argument from his seat in the House of Commons: 'see how slavery had been exterminated in past times …making England the partisan of the North, enlisting its aid to reduce the white man to slavery in order that the negro might be benefited, would cause slavery to remain to the end of time a point of honour with the South'.[41] John Roebuck too, though a liberal and no friend of the Confederacy, argued: 'have we not acknowledged Brazil? Are we not in constant communication with Russia? And is there not slavery in both those countries?', and infuriated Union supporters by reminding them that 'in the South there is not that hatred, that contempt of the black man which exists in the North' where 'they are like the hunted dog whom everybody may kick'.[42] In the upper chamber, Lord Campbell supported these arguments by urging Russell to recognise the Confederacy before Lincoln, 'swelling with omnipotence', ordered a slave revolution of the worst kind.[43] Moreover, he contended that slavery was not something to consider when recognising the South. The government, he claimed, 'have deceived the working classes of the country by confounding questions about slavery' when the only question recognition concerned was 'whether separation or reconquest will be most conducive to the welfare of the negro'. For Campbell the answer was clear: the violent North would not rest until all blacks had been subdued into misery or exterminated, and the Southern planter class driven into exile.[44]

Lorimer argues that Palmerston's shared this line of thinking and that his antislavery was not at odds with his pro-Confederacy feelings and policy because, among other things, an independent South would be easier to bully into accepting abolition.[45] Indeed, Palmerston did not trust Northern antislavery and, just like Lord Campbell, believed that if the Northerners were true abolitionists and were truly 'ready to make all

[40] James Spence, 'The Recognition of the Southern Confederacy', *Quarterly Review,* 112 (July-Oct. 1862), 569-570.
[41] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 30 June 1863, vol. 171, c. 1819.
[42] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 30 June 1863, vol. 171, c. 1774-1775.
[43] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HL Deb. 23 Mar. 1863, vol. 169, cc. 1722-1723.
[44] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HL Deb. 23 Mar. 1863, vol. 169, cc. 1730-1732.
[45] Lorimer, "The Role of Anti-Slavery Sentiment in English Reactions to the American Civil War," 411–12.

their present exertions and sacrifices on account of their hatred of slavery', they would not doubt 'joining us in our operations against the slave trade by giving us facilities for putting it down when carried under the United States flag'.[46] However, he never saw separation as a strategically beneficial for Britain.

Every statesmen, and arguably every Briton, could have had a personal opinion about the war and had picked a side, but sympathy did not equate to strategic interest—especially not for Palmerston.[47] When considering the possible outcomes of the war in the context of forty year-old conceptions of Atlantic order and disorder, it becomes clear that reunion or separation were irrelevant to him because both were expected to further disorder the Western Hemisphere. Actually, Palmerston only celebrated an eventual North-South permanent division if 'at the same time Mexico could be turned into a prosperous monarchy' that could 'stop the North Americans, whether Federal or Confederate States, in their projected absorption' of that country, showing that both options were thought of as equally dangerous to the territorial integrity of third parties.[48]

Contrary to what "Realist readings" of Palmerston's foreign policy suggest, the prime minister did not expect a divided America to render the balance of power more stable or British interests any safer. Southern independence was not seen as something Britain would profit from, especially if it was brought about with war. Lyons did foresee some benefit in a mutually agreed separation, believing that in such case the independent South 'would have in all probability to establish a low tariff and throw themselves paternally into our arms', but no one ever considered a pacific outcome to be possible.[49] Already in the autumn of 1859, whilst informing of the assault by abolitionists on Harpers Ferry armoury,[50] Lyons foresaw the dissolution of the Union would be violent.[51] Palmerston believed that even 'separation by mutual agreement' would foster disorder in the future since the two-state solution 'will have implanted underlying hatred in the breasts of those who being close neighbours ought to be also friends'.[52] Amicable vicinity

[46] Palmerston to Russell, 24 Sept. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21. Lord Campbell on the slave trade and the United States supporting it at *Hansard*, 3rd series. HL Deb. 23 Mar. 1863, vol. 169, c. 1731.
[47] On the diversity of opinions, trascending class and ideology, see Duncan Andrew Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War* (New York: Boydell Press, 2003).
[48] Palmerston to Russell, 19 June 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/22.
[49] Lyons to Russell, 12 Nov. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34.
[50] This event is considered to have been the "Sarajevo murder" to the American Civil War.
[51] Lyons to Russell, 25 Oct. 1859, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34; Lyons to Russell, 6 Dec. 1859, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34.
[52] Palmerston to Russell, 13 June 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/22.

would be short-lived and war would continue as a war between nations, resuming both the humanitarian carnage and the disruption of the cotton trade. Moreover, the viciousness shown by both armies—Victorians were specially appalled by Union brutality in the takeover of New Orleans—did not help visualising a future friendship between North and South, whether in union or divided.[53]

Early in 1860, Lyons doubted 'whether [secession] would be good or bad for us'—'it is not easy to determine'—but by November he admitted that 'one cannot but tremble at the idea of serious troubles in the Southern states which we are so entirely dependent upon for cotton'.[54] Coldly considering 'the practical questions which secession would be likely to raise for us', he saw they were all negative.[55] He feared British vessels would be made to pay separate custom duties to each government claiming possession of a port, and that British subjects could come under danger 'either from a servile insurrection, from lynch law, or from a bombardment'.[56] Russell believed Lyons' analysis to be 'prudent and right'.[57] Palmerston also agreed with him: 'Nothing could be more unadvisable than for us to interfere in the dispute, if it should break out, between any of the states of the Union and the federal government', he wrote after reading Lyons's letter.[58]

In separation, moreover, Britain would find potential a threat, though not exactly from the power historians have long thought regarded as the imperialist aggressor the British feared—the North. Recent studies have shown that the threat to Canada has been greatly exaggerated.[59] For much of his tenure as Lincoln's secretary of state, William H. Seward did indeed proffer an aggressive language towards Britain but even if in the beginning this scared Lyons, who thought that 'with such a minister … and such a government, to keep on good terms will be no easy matter', it never made a determining impression on Palmerston.[60] The prime minister, who agreed with Lyons on many things, thought it 'very disagreeable' that 'our relations with the Northern States of America are liable to be affected by the character of Seward'.[61] Even though he ordered reinforcements

[53] Palmerston to Russell, 14 June 1862, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii, 325.
[54] Lyons to Russell, 8 May 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34; Lyons to Russell, 12 Nov. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34.
[55] Lyons to Russell, 25 Nov. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34.
[56] Lyons to Russell, 25 Nov. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34.
[57] Russell's note on Lyons's letter of 25 Nov., 10 Dec. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34.
[58] Palmerston's note to Russell on Lyons's letter of 25 Nov., 11 Dec. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 20/22/21, f. 360.
[59] Downs, *The Second American Revolution*; Carroll, "The Threat of Anglo-American Conflict". For the exaggeration of Canada threat see Reid, "Power, Sovereignty and the Great Republic."
[60] Lyons to Russell, 6 May 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/35.
[61] Palmerston to Russell, 9 July 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.

to be sent to Canada, he doubted 'Lincoln and Seward being foolish enough to draw the sword against us' as they struggled to hold their ground in the war.[62] Lyons too ended up seeing that Seward was not prepared to put his Anglophobic bravado into action, and by the time he returned to Washington D.C. in November 1862, he understood that his bellicosity was mostly verbal, and fears of it happening 'simply chemical'.[63] Even after the serious *Trent* crisis, Russell was sure that whatever 'the Yankee Republic means … if we are calm and firm they will not do it'.[64] Other than the danger of spill-over skirmishes along the border, which Lyons had warned Seward to better be watchful of, Britain had little to fear from Union territorial aggrandisement.[65]

It was an independent South that greatly worried the British. Already in 1859, Lyons had reported that war between Britain and some slave states was probable on account of the disorder encouraged by Southern draconian policy. The persecution of 'unorthodox notions of slavery' ('the orthodox notion seems to be that slavery is a divine institution'), 'the re-enslavement of all the emancipated negroes, the purging of the South of all whites suspected of abolition tendencies' and the re-enactment of the 1822 Negro Seaman's Act, were all 'sources of trouble between us and the Southern states' which could give Britain 'a good *casus belli*'.[66]

Palmerston envisioned an independent South along the same lines he had envisioned rogue powers in the past: disordering states that would not honour their good faith and would disregard signed agreements in contempt of international society. Southerners could be chivalrous and open to trade, unlike the mob-driven Northerners, but still he envisioned the future Confederacy as disordering nation craving to expand its empire of slavery and expected it to bring slaves 'in great numbers … to grow cotton and sugars within the territories now possessed and to be hereafter possessed' by it.[67] Since the 1850s, many voices in the South had advocated for the legalisation of the slave trade. Some of these voices, furthermore, were Irish-Americans who also supported the Irish revolt against British rule.[68] Even if as the war began, the Southern elite appeared to have

[62] Palmerston to Russell, 9 Sept. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.
[63] Lyons to Russell, 11 Nov. 1862 (no. 1), Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[64] Russell to Clarendon, 23 Apr. 1862, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii, 324.
[65] Lyons to Russell, 23 Apr. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/35; Lyons to Russell, 6 May 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/35.
[66] Lyons to Russell, 6 Dec. 1859, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34.
[67] Palmerston to Russell, 14 Apr. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.
[68] See David T. Gleeson, "Securing the Interests of the South: John Mitchel, A.G. Magrath, and the Reopening of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," *American Nineteenth Century History* 11, no. 3 (2010): 279–97.

supressed their expansionist rhetoric and had been quick to legislate against the slave trade attempting to gain European support, Palmerston's private letters to Russell clearly show that he still did not trust the Confederacy.[69] The Confederate government would not take long to 'repeal their law against the slave trade' and breach any signed compromises against the slave trade, of that he was sure. Moreover, with a rogue power of the kind, international covenants were useless:

> That engagement would not indeed prevent them conquering and annexing part or the whole of Mexico and of Central America, nor from establishing in such conquered territories the institution of slavery … Secondly, such engagement if entered into might be evaded by adventurers from the Southern States setting themselves in Mexico and as citizens of Mexico or as founders of an independent state establishing slavery and slave trade.[70]

'It is natural that Americans belonging to the Northern states and who are anxious to prevent good relations between Europe and the Southern states should try to impress upon us the probability that the Southern Confederation will endeavour to extend slavery and revive the slave trade', Palmerston wrote to Russell, 'but the thing is in itself but too likely'.[71] Southern hunger for empire would not be stopped and Southerners would recur to the same old disordering tactics to expand their territory. Palmerston was well informed by Lyons (through Russell) of Southern feelings on slavery having become 'a ferocious passion' that could lead to incursions in northern Mexico by means of 'squattering'—that policy the British knew, for decades now, consisted in occupying a territory, spreading disorder, and then calling for U.S. intervention and annexation to correct it.[72]

The South also remained invested in the Cuban slave trade. Soon after the start of the war Russell received notice from the British consul in Charleston about how the breakaway states were taking advantage of the Union squadrons having been withdrawn from West Africa to 'organise a scheme … for procuring slaves from the coast of Africa to be introduced in Cuba by means of vessels ostensibly fitted out as privateers but really

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[69] Concealment of imperial dreams and desires became the official diplomatic policy of the South in 1861. It vocally abdicated from imperialism to harvest European support in ways it would have never done prior to 1861. Robert E. May, "The Irony of Confederate Diplomacy: Visions of Empire, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Quest for Nationhood," *Journal of Southern History* 53, no. 1 (2017): 87–95.

[70] Palmerston to Russell, 14 Apr. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.

[71] Palmerston to Russell, 14 Apr. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.

[72] 'The [Mexicans] will be (to use the American expression) "squattered out" of the country by their Anglo-Saxon neighbours whenever and wherever any considerable number of the energetic race choose to settle'. Lyons to Russell, 29 Dec. 1859, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34. On 'squattering' see Chapter One of this dissertation.

intended to carry on the nefarious occupation of slavers'.[73] Both had been object of British anxieties, hence the insistence at the Congress of Paris (1856) of outlawing privateering and thus inflicting a harsh blow on the slave trade.

The brutality with which Southerners conducted the war signalled them as a rogue, disordering nation. William Stuart, chargé d'affaires at Washington D.C. during Lyons' absence, warned Russell on several occasions that the Richmond government was threatening to 'raise the black flag'—unleashing an unprecedented level of brutality.[74] He feared the Southerners would answer emancipation with mass killings, and thought the 'war may become worse than any that we have ever heard of in barbarism and atrocity'.[75] As it can be seen, a division of America through war did not offer significant opportunities to Britain: on the contrary it only offered a 'prospect of great difficulty and evil', believed Palmerston—a surge in disorder manifesting in the appearance of two roguish, expansionist states instead of one, humanitarian catastrophe, and foreseeable the contraction of international trade.[76]

A united America after a Northern victory was not seen as a solution to the existing perils of disorder for two main reasons. Firstly, reunion would only be achieved by subjugation of the South, an option Palmerston believed was 'suicidal' for it would entail the destruction of 'a part of the territory of the Union the advantages of which no bounty of Heaven has bestowed' (he was referring to the cotton fields, which would be utterly ruined).[77] Secondly, the United States was not, at least for Palmerston, a preferred partner. The 'arbitrary proceedings of the Washington government as to the supply of cotton … and the diminution of our export to America by their high tariffs' would not be easily forgotten.[78] The cotton question, contrary to what historians have argued, was a key in creating resentment towards the North. Often has the South's cotton boycott and enactment of 'King Cotton' diplomacy been thought of as something which did not fail to excite a great deal of resentment against the arrogant Confederacy.[79] David Campbell even contends that this was the prime cause for Anglo-Confederate estrangement and

[73] Russell to Lyons, 22 Aug. 1861, no. 23, FO 84/1137.
[74] William Stuart to Russell, 7 Oct. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[75] Stuart to Russell, 31 Oct. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[76] Palmerston to Russell, 14 Apr. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.
[77] Palmerston to Russell, 13 June 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/22.
[78] Palmerston to Russell, 13 Nov. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.
[79] Howard Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy: A History of Union and Confederate Foreign Relations* (New Haven: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 20–22.

subsequent Anglo-Union alignment.[80] This interpretation overestimates the power of 'King Cotton' diplomacy and does not consider that British agents saw the Union's martial economic policy as chiefly responsible for the cotton famine. Dixie was not to blame. Upon the capture of New Orleans, Union General Benjamin Butler allowed every type of excesses, and despite the moral shock the ill-treatment of women and prisoners produced on Victorian Britons, nothing was quite as painful as the destruction of over 250,000 bales of cotton.[81] The British government appealed to the Union to stop 'the vindictive measures which the army had adopted towards the South', but Stuart noticed that 'the remonstrances of Your Lordship … only render both the measures and their authors more popular, as it has been the case in regard to General Butler'.[82] Just as with the territorial expansion question, the historian has misplaced British hatred for one America or the other.

As the cotton famine hit Lancashire mills and made unemployment rocket in the early autumn of 1862, Stuart was primarily blaming the Union Treasury for refusing to implement 'liberal policy' and making it 'very unlikely that cotton will come out upon any terms'.[83] That the Confederates were 'less likely than ever to allow cotton to come out', as he reported in October 1862, was taken as foreseeable retaliation for Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.[84] Russell even thought it was 'unreasonable' to blame the Southerners for boycotting or even destroying cotton since 'they could not be expected to leave [cotton] in warehouses to become prize of war and to be sold for the profit of the Federal government'.[85] The one time the French fantasied with military intervention in 1862 was merely to 'keep the Army and Navy of the United States at such a distance from the plantations as to enable the planters to set quietly to work, to cultivate the cotton, and the ships to carry it unmolested from port'.[86] Lyons, who did not hide his sympathies were 'naturally inclined towards the North', also ended up reporting that the Union's wartime, economic policy of appointing military agents to confiscate the cotton and

[80] Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War*, 239.
[81] Stuart to Russell, 23 June 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[82] Stuart to Russell, 29 July 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[83] Stuart to Russell, 29 Sept. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[84] Stuart to Russell, 7 Oct. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[85] Russell to Lyons, 31 May 1862, BPP: Correspondence relating to the civil war in the United States of North America. 1863. Command Papers (3107), LXXII.7, 72, p. 3.
[86] Lyons to Russell, 23 May 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36. Stuart to Russell, 23 June 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.

prohibiting private trade with the South…) was only creating heavier restrictions of trade and not managing to restart the supply chains.[87]

Antislavery did not excite any candour for the Union cause in the hearts of British statesmen either; it was seen as nothing but a fraud. The British were well aware not only that the Emancipation Proclamation 'was entirely political and … little philanthropical', but also that Washington's compromise against the slave trade was very shaky.[88] The only reason Lincoln and Seward accepted a slave trade treaty even though Russell had disregarded their (apparently *sine qua non*) demand for a guarantee of Haiti and Dominica being kept free from Spanish interference, was because they intended to bind Britain by treaty to the Union and thus add 'an obstacle to [the British] ever entering into commercial or political relations with the South'.[89] The political urgency to sign an anti-slave trade convention also contrasted with the indolence towards the actual suppression of the slave trade: naval patrols were withdrawn from West Africa and the West Indies as soon as the war started, and Union captains in the high seas refused in more one than case to intercept slavers flying Confederate colours and to send emancipated slaves to the British West Indies.[90] 'The expression of abolition sentiments is extremely unpopular' especially since abolition was seen as something that would for ever destroy the possibility of the South re-joining the Union.[91] It was expected that the price of reunion (other than months of war and economic illiberalism) would be the restoration of the antebellum status of slavery; Lincoln seemed willing to pay that price.[92] Many in the North, informed Stuart, 'are fighting to restore the Union as it was' (i.e. with slavery untouched).[93]

The war, British leaders expressed clearly, was not going to purge the United States of any of the characters that made it detestable to the old, Vienna-generation British elite. It was still regarded as radical nation, similar to Jacobin France—epitomic enemy of the English.[94] Tension on the high seas also reinforced the idea of the Union still being

[87] Lyons to Russell, 6 May 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/35; Lyons to Russell, 11 Nov. 1862 (no. 2), Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[88] Stuart to Russell, 29 Sept. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[89] Lyons to Russell, 10 May 1861, no. 4, FO 84/1137; Russell to Lyons, 31 May 1861, no. 15, FO 84/1137; Lyons to Russell, 11 May 1861, no. 5, FO 84/1137.
[90] Russell's note to Lyons, 16 May 1861, FO 84/1137, f. 43; Russell to Lyons, 13 June 1861, no. 16, FO 84/1137; Lyons to Russell, 10 Apr. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34; Lyons to Russell, 10 May 1861, no. 4, FO 84/1137.
[91] Lyons to Russell, 8 Nov. 1861, no. 12, FO 84/1137.
[92] Lyons to Russell, 8 Apr. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[93] Stuart to Russell, 29 July 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[94] It was the in the North where Stuart feared to see 'some of the worst excesses of the French Revolution'. Stuart to Russell, 7 Oct. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.

the rogue power the British had been wary of for decades. The famous case of the *Trent* was only one of many American interferences with British trade which Palmerston warned that 'if repeated must inevitably lead to collision between the navies of the two countries'.[95] Many Britons assumed, especially those overseas, that a 'reunited Confederation' would not put its fiery military spirit to rest but would rather 'turn its arms against England and in particular invade Canada'.[96] Cuba too remained a problem; American Caribbean ambitions were not thought of exclusively as a Southern enterprise: Lyons warned in April 1861 that Seward 'was not clear' about Cuba and could be expected to 'to turn the Cuban Question to the profit and glory of the North and the confusion of the South'—i.e. annexing it without slavery, something that would still entail a geostrategic catastrophe for Britain.[97] Tensions would not disappear as easily. As Lyons worryingly informed Russell, President Lincoln himself had 'added by his own hand' to a diplomatic dispatch to be sent to London, that 'the United States would stand to England in the same relation which they already stood in two previous periods of their history'.[98] This sombre reminiscence of the wars of 1776 and 1812 certainly gave statesmen in London an idea of whom they were dealing with.

Given this situation, it was impossible for British leaders to establish a grand strategic objective to obtain from the war. This lack of strategic preference can be seen, for example, in the genuine disorientation of agents on the field. Lyons and Stuart wrote their letters with a shaky, insecure hand: they were never sure of what to recommend (and thus seldom recommended anything, other than standing still), constantly urging Russell not to act just yet, and to wait for tomorrow's news to take a decision on today's problems. They basically conveyed the feeling that planning for the long-term was useless: 'if one is to conjecture what the state things will be in a month or in week hence, one may only "guess"'. It is 'pure speculation… we are (as usual) to be on the eve of a crisis which is to clear everything up', wrote Lyons.[99] Palmerston even complained Lyons's dispatches were merely 'well written essays on the probable future of the North American republics which would be read with in interest in the *Edinburgh Review*'. 'A dispatch to a diplomatic agent ought to be an instruction … or an explanation of the policy of the British government', Palmerston reminded Russell, 'but the dispatch from Lyons, to

[95] Palmerston to Russell, 25 Aug. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/22.
[96] Lyons to Russell, 11 Nov. 1862 (no. 1), Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[97] Lyons to Russell, 1 Apr. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/35.
[98] Lyons to Russell, 24 June 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/35.
[99] Lyons to Russell, 16 May 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.

which this draft answers, does not admit any of these replies, and accordingly your draft is neither an instruction to be acted upon, nor an explanation'.[100]

The reason for this however, was not Lyons's indolence; it was the lack of a clear strategic objective rendered his information useless. For example, he had not been able to see any advantage for British interests in the election of any candidate to the presidential election of November 1860, showing how there was little room for supporting any faction in a future civil war. Lincoln was a protectionist 'rough farmer' who despised England; John Breckinridge was a 'well-educated and well-mannered man', but eager to annex Cuba; and Stephen Douglas was suspected of 'filibustering tendencies in his foreign policy'.[101] The reason why it was difficult for him to establish 'the success of which candidate is the desired for England' had nothing to do with his diplomatic ability—which was considerable, as it has been amply shown by Brian Jenkins' and James Leahy's biography of him.[102] Lyons's conclusions before leaving the Washington D.C. embassy temporarily in 1862 were particularly stark in this sense: '1) we have a very small chance of getting cotton from this country for a long time to come; 2) there is no Union feeling in the South; 3) the war has become one of separation or subjugation'.[103] In other words, it seemed nothing could be done but wait for the system to reconfigure itself; there was little space for strategic action.

The 'shackles' of the old order

As Paul Kennedy notes, the 'capacity of nation's leaders' to the establishing of ends and setting out of means to attain that end constituted the 'crux of grand strategy'.[104] British leaders had failed at establishing long-term ends to be obtained from the post-war Atlantic; the American Civil War evidenced a major failure in British grand strategic statecraft. Even the pro-interventionists lacked any sort of grand strategic plan for the post-war world. For Russell, who led the interventionist stance, it was a question solely of peace as in the cessation of hostilities, not as in the construction of a settlement

[100] Palmerston to Russell, 25 Apr. 1862, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii, 324-325.
[101] Lyons to Russell, 23 July 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34.
[102] Lyons to Russell, 23 July 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34. See Brian Jenkins and James Leahy, *Lord Lyons: A Diplomat in the Age of Nationalism and War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).
[103] Lyons to Russell, 9 June 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[104] Kennedy, "Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition," 5.

providing for long-term stability. As he put it to Grey, 'if a friend were to cut his throat, you would hardly like to confess, "he told me he was going to do it, but I said nothing as I thought he would not take my advice"'.[105] For him, peace itself was an end. This was not the opinion of his colleagues: a peace *settlement* was required, and Britain did not have a clear idea of what it wanted the post-war Atlantic to look like. Following with Russell's own analogy, it would not have been enough to take the knife from you friend's hands, you would have to offer him an alternative to suicide, one which Britain did not have. Lewis based his long memorandum to Cabinet discouraging intervention, on the fact that Britain had no plan to address the 'perplexing matters' such as slavery, the question of border states, of territories, and all of the other issues that accounted for the American constitutional crisis.[106] Grey concurred: 'what is the precise nature of the interference you suggest? And what grounds is there for believing or hoping that such interference … would be attended with beneficial results?', he asked Russell.[107] The foreign secretary insisted that 'no country has ever waited to make peace until it was unable to carry on war' but he himself did not know what type of peace Britain was after.[108] And that was the key to any form of intervention.

The question still pending is why no one was capable of elaborating such a plan. Indeed, British leaders were still addressing other pressing matters in international politics with a long-term perspective. For example, as to Eastern affairs, particularly regarding the 1860 Syrian civil war and the possibility of European intervention, Palmerston never lost sight of the long term. He was eager to prevent 'the Eastern Question as it is called' from being 'utterly nearly settled though not much to our liking', with Russia and France taking the lead in the Levant and Britain's strategic and economic interests in the Ottoman Empire suffering as a consequence of it.[109] After the French intervened in September 1860, Palmerston became worried about 'what to do when they leave'—an attitude that perfectly fits in Liddle Hart's grand strategic premise of looking 'beyond war to subsequent peace'.[110] Therefore it was not as if that 'habit of the mind',

[105] Russell to Sir George Grey, 28 Oct. 1862, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii, 332.
[106] Crook, *The North, the South, and the Powers*, 235.
[107] Grey to Russell, 27 Oct. 1862, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii, 329.
[108] Russell to Grey, 28 Oct. 1862, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii, 332.
[109] Palmerston to Russell, 20 July 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21. Britain was on the verge of concluding a 'Moorish loan' treaty, as Palmerston called it, with the Turkish government. See Gladstone to Russell, 24 Nov. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/19.
[110] Palmerston to Russell, 25 Feb. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.

as Bew, Ryan, and Ehrhardt term it, had simply disappeared.[111] As recollected by Brown in his biography of the prime minister, Palmerston continued to believe that the 'prevention of evil is the proper function of statesmen and diplomatists', contrary to what Lewis, an early champion of splendid isolation, argued about 'our foreign policy being too timorous'.[112] However, regarding the Atlantic world, Palmerston was no longer able to do this because he was not sure what evils to prioritise over which and what state of order was he after.

The cotton question was powerful factor accounting for British immobility. Lyons had stressed in May 1860, how it was of the uttermost importance to acquire 'the means of getting cotton from some other quarter before abolition makes any great progress' but apparently the warning did not come early enough.[113] Palmerston acknowledged days before the bombardment of Fort Sumner that 'as long as we are dependent on America alone for our [cotton] supply we are not politically in a condition to deal with the United States with free and independent action'.[114] India was far away, its cotton was of poor quality, and the Syrian civil war endangered routes through the Levant. Gladstone had dusted an 1858 memorandum that urged the government to support the construction of the Suez Canal to ensure that 'trade with India would be carried in perfect security if [Britain] were at war with the United States'.[115] Palmerston, however, thought this was no immediate solution to the cotton problem—its commercial advantages 'would be next to nothing'—and had long feared a canal through the Egyptian isthmus would open 'a shortcut to India' to the French in case of war—the threat of which was looming in 1859.[116] Dependency on American cotton was thus impossible to overturn.

Other than cotton, the reason for British immobility lied in the overstretch of ordering preferences which had begun to flicker in the 1850s: Britain's preferences of order were no longer achievable with the strategies implemented to the date. Conflict between desired ends and disposed means rendered Britain an immobile giant in the face of both surging disorder and geopolitical opportunity. No one put this rupture of the strategic mindset in a clearer way than the man who had been upholding and extending that order for decades: Palmerston.

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[111] See Bew, Ryan, and Ehrhardt, "Grand Strategy and the Historical Mind."
[112] Quoted in Brown, *Palmerston*, 449–50.
[113] Lyons to Russell, 8 May 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/34.
[114] Palmerston to Russell, 6 Oct. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.
[115] Memorandum on the Suez Canal (24 Sept. 1858) enclosed in Gladstone to Russell, 28 Oct. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/19.
[116] Palmerston to J.T. Delane, 16 Dec. 1859, in *The foreign policy of Victorian England*, 346.

'The French are more free from the shackles of principles and of Right and Wrong on these matters, as on all others, than we are', he wrote to Russell on 2 November 1862, during the week when Cabinet discussed intervention in the war.[117] These ideological poles, the very words, 'Right' and 'Wrong', had been the basis of the language, ideology, and action of ordering; as this dissertation has shown, both terms constantly reappear in the correspondence of statesmen who alleged Britain was in that path of 'Right' and rogue powers were in the path of 'Wrong'. But in the face of a major crisis in world order, Palmerston signalled those two poles as elements that were restraining Britain and causing serious disadvantage for it. He acknowledged that morality—this famous capacity to distinguish good from evil which had elevated Britain above all other powers and entitled it to re-order the world—was preventing his government from securing national interests. The French, though amoral and cynical, at least were able to protect theirs. Britain had become a hostage of its own long-held preferences: the apparently self-interested nation was inflexible to react to secure its interests when the morality of it was questioned. After all, intervening in the American Civil War could entail a direct challenge to British antislavery—the very ethos of its idea for Atlantic order.

The coalescence between an internationally-minded public opinion and the existing moral mandate the British government (particularly Palmerston himself) had assumed regarding slavery, was a powerful combination of factors that impeded the ministry from influencing the outcome of the war. As fierce as the commercial enmity towards the Northern Union was, it was highly doubted that the 'public opinion in England could be brought to the point of toleration of slavery', or of having their the country being 'part to any arrangement for securing and perpetuating slavery elsewhere'.[118] Palmerston had expressed as regards to the Italian Question that 'public feeling' would not doubt to turn against the government, declaring it had 'betrayed our principles'; the same could be expected of the slavery question and Southern recognition.[119] There was no proposal, he believed, 'which the Southerners would accept, the Northerners agree too, and the people of England would approve of'.[120] It was impossible to 'mix ourselves up with the acknowledgement of slavery'.[121] The anti-interventionist sector in Cabinet agreed with him that any intervention in the war that

[117] Palmerston to Russell, 2 Nov. 1862, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii, 333.
[118] Lyons to Russell, 4 Feb. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/35.
[119] Palmerston to Russell, 29 Oct. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.
[120] Palmerston to Russell, 2 Nov. 1862, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii, 333.
[121] Quoted in Brown, *Palmerston*, 451.

could lead to the recognition of a slave state would not be tolerated by public opinion. As Grey put it to Russell, 'it would offend a large and powerful section of the people of this country, who would view it as a gratuitous sanction of slavery'.[122]

Mediation was a dead end because any negotiation would have to include a recognition and acknowledgement of Southern slavery, otherwise the South would never agree to negotiate. Slavery was the path to peace but it did not guarantee it by any means. It would be especially dangerous if, as many feared, the Union reacted with war to Britain's recognition of the South; Britain would then find itself in a war 'against our own kinsmen for slavery' which would be 'highly unpopular'.[123] Roebuck made this clear in the House of Commons when Lord Cecil dared say the Confederacy was a 'natural ally'. That triumphant 'Slave Confederacy', he said, 'might be the natural allies of the noble Lord and of the order to which he belonged, but they never could be the natural allies of Englishmen, for all our instructive traditions of freedom were opposed to such alliance'.[124] The political climate was unstable. As Lewis put it to Head in 1861, the House of Commons had been 'seized with a mania of appointing committees' on questions of foreign policy that gravely weathered the government.[125] Intervention in America would give the opposition the best ammunition against the government. The Tories in particular, argued Lewis, eagerly desired the government to intervene in America in order to launch a critic of Palmerston's overspending at a time of financial duress when budget cuts had been promised.[126] Also, given the certain eagerness to accelerate the coming of a second Reform—'four attempts have been made by four different administrations and all have failed plainly'—Palmerston could not risk alienating public opinion or the various factions within a frail government he had built up with extreme care.[127]

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[122] Grey to Russell, 27 Oct. 1862, *Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell*, ii, 329.
[123] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 30 June 1863, vol. 171, c. 1815. (W.E. Foster)
[124] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 30 June 1863, vol. 171, cc. 1817-1818. (Roebuck).
[125] Lewis to Head, 10 Mar. 1861, *Letters of Sir George Cornewall Lewis,* 393.
[126] Lewis to Head, 13 May 1861, *Letters of Sir George Cornewall Lewis,* 318.
[127] Palmerston to Russell, 16 Nov. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21. On the importance Palmerston attatched to the passing of the Second Reform Bill see Robert Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote in British Politics, 1848-1867: The Making of the Second Reform Act* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 105; Robert Saunders, "The Politics of Reform and the Making of the Second Reform Act, 1848-1867," *Historical Journal* 50, no. 3 (2007): 571–91. On the frailty of the Palmerston government and the prime minister's fear of a foreign policy crisis over America breaking it, see David Krein, *The Last Palmerston Government: Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and the Genesis of "Splendid Isolation"* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1978).

Behind the particularities of acknowledging a slave state or suffering a cotton famine that destroyed the Lancashire economy, the incapacity to act in the American Civil War reveals Britain's incapacity to ultimate plans for world order.[128] As argued by Sven Beckert, the Civil War tore the existing political and economic order to pieces; Britain was clearly not capable of navigating this shock to the system.[129] By the 1860s, the vehement ordering power was merely a giant with feet of clay. This is reflected not only on the strategic indecision on non-intervention, but also on the fact that Britain became more dependent on former roguish powers to navigate the situation—in particular, France. Even if some historians have presented their united front in American affairs as sign of Anglo-French harmony, it actually reveals a profound weakness of British capacity to exercise political power over Atlantic questions. Seldom was harmony found. British leaders were still deeply suspicious of Napoleon III. Lewis, for example, was sure the French really wished for an Anglo-American war that would justify their recognition of the South and would re-open the cotton trade routes for them.[130] Anglo-French hostility between 1859 and 1863, playing out in the naval arms race between both powers, was a prime issue of concern in British politics. Historically, the Anglo-French *entente cordiale* had betrayed Britain's weakness on the international stage. When feeling strong, Britain had been particularly Francophobe (1830s, 1846-51), and when feeling in anxious about its own power (1841-6, 1859-65) it had striven to remain close to the enemy in order to keep it in check.[131] That this marriage of convenience had to be drawn together at a time of surging disorder and windows of opportunity opening in the Atlantic system was a clear sign of British weakness.

Palmerston found he had little option but to recourse to the French to contain American disorder. Firstly, he had thought of forcing Mexico to abolish slavery—'an engagement which we have never yet asked, I believe, any state to conclude; our objects hitherto has been to procure the evils of [the slave trade]'—in order to make its soil unappealing to Southern filibusters, although he admitted that 'the Mexican government

[128] On the ensuing industrial crisis in Lancashire see Jim Powell, *Losing the Thread: Cotton, Liverpool and the American Civil War* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021), 167.
[129] Sven Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 5 (2004): 1418.
[130] Lewis to Twisleton, 5 Dec. 1861, *Letters of Sir George Cornewall Lewis,* 407.
[131] On the Anglo-French relations in previous decades, see Chamberlain, *Aberdeen;* David McLean, "The Greek Revolution and the Anglo-French Entente, 1843-4," *English Historical Review* 96, no. 378 (1981): 117–29; Brown, "Palmerston and Anglo-French Relations, 1846-1865"; Goizueta Alfaro, "Forging Liberal States."

would probably not be strong enough to prevent adventurers from the Southern Confederacy doing whatever they choose within Mexican territory'.[132] He then proceeded to give France *carte blanche* to restore monarchy in Mexico given that 'we cannot with our 700 marines take part in such an enterprise'. He had wanted Spain to orchestrate the monarchy scheme—'France should remain behind'—but in the end it was a French army that sat an Austrian archduke on the throne.[133] Trying to convince the Americans of a solid Anglo-French *entente cordiale* over American affairs also became a desperate obsession of the British government, to the price of giving them a free hand in Latin America.[134] This forced Britain to rally behind France on every matter. In Washington D.C., neither Lyons or Stuart would move without consulting Edouard Mercier, the French ambassador to the United States: Stuart's insistence to Russell on mediating were not the result of his own reading of American affairs but rather of Mercier's—he proposed intervention only when Mercier thought it possible.[135] Lyons even wished the French would intervene alone rather than alongside Britain.[136]

The case of reliance on the French in the American Civil War only noted that Britain was drastically failing in its endeavour to unilaterally re-order the Atlantic world: political necessity was making it increasingly lenient about disorder (American Civil War, slave trade), and, moreover, reliant on powers it had formerly considered disorderly. During the 1860s, the slave trade surged on both coasts of Africa. Palmerston found that, amidst a naval war scare with France and a possibility of war with the Union, the Admiralty's 'aversion to the measures necessary for putting down the slave trade' was in the way of providing warships to contain it.[137] Britain would have to lean on former slave trade offenders, France and Portugal, to deal with it even though 'it is unreasonable to expect honesty in a Portuguese or a Frenchman at all events about the slave trade'.[138]

As to Cuba, since 1858, Britain had been charging the Spanish themselves with abolition, progressively falling back on its own abolitionist agenda. Rather than stepping up violence in Cuba, Palmerston recommended to 'urge strongly on the Spanish government the necessity of passing some more tougher laws against the slave trade …

[132] Palmerston to Russell, 14 Apr. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.
[133] Palmerston to Russell, 19 June 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/22.
[134] Lyons to Russell, 18 June 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/35.
[135] Stuart to Russell, 23 Sept. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36; Stuart to Russell, 21 July 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36; Lyons to Russell, 23 May 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[136] Lyons to Russell, 18 Nov. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/36.
[137] Palmerston to Russell, 13 Aug. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/22.
[138] Palmerston to Russell, 9 Dec. 1860, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.

laws such as ours'.[139] After decades of failed compromises and dead-letter treaties it is hardly probable he thought new laws would now be of any effect. A weary and old Palmerston actually could not answer back to Lord John Manners, a Tory MP, when in July 1864 he accused him of not having done enough against Cuba: 'Why does he not propose a Bill with regard to Spain similar to the Aberdeen Act in regard to Brazil?', he asked. 'We have a treaty with Spain', interrupted Palmerston. 'Yes, you have a treaty, but you say it is inefficacious', replied Manners. 'The reason why the noble Lord does not seek to legislate as to Spain is not that which he has given, but another. I will tell the House what it is. It is because he dare not'.[140] Although Palmerston had encouraged Russell to come up with a 'scheme … which might be put in force against Cuba, and which would not lead to war with Spain', Britain had indeed been steadily withdrawing from the island question.[141] Right up the eve of the American Civil War, Russell expected to have U.S. warships patrolling Cuban waters alongside Britain's.[142] The impossibility of enforcing a preferred vision of order to the Atlantic world, forced the nation into a passive situation and condemned it to endure the suffering of disorder.

The Cuban slave trade, which increased during the American Civil War, met its death in 1867, although not to Britain's hand. What 'a great glory to your administration of our foreign affairs' would it be to 'exterminate that hydra', Palmerston had piqued Russell in 1861, yet the factors accounting for its end were far from anything related to a surge in British ordering violence.[143] It was largely due to systemic factors: firstly, the abolitionist commitment of two Spanish captains general, Domingo Dulce and Francisco Serrano.[144] Secondly, the end of the American slave market. By 1865, the consul general in Havana informed Russell that emancipation by constitutional provision in the United States was going to set the island on the course of emancipation.[145] Events in America made Cuba less disorderly than before. It was the victory of the Union in the Civil War, and not a triumphant British order, what eventually consolidated antislavery as a prime element of Atlantic order.

[139] Palmerston to Russell, 17 July 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/22.
[140] *Hansard*, 3rd series. HC Deb. 12 July 1864, vol. 176. c. 1386.
[141] Palmerston to Russell, 13 Aug. 1862, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/22.
[142] Russell to Lyons, 31 May 1861, no. 15, FO 84/1137.
[143] Palmerston to Russell, 24 Sept. 1861, Russell Papers, PRO 30/22/21.
[144] See Downs, *The Second American Revolution*; and Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 299–325.
[145] Bunch to Russell, 1 June 1865, BPP: Correspondence with British Ministers and Agents in Foreign Countries, and with Foreign Ministers in England, Relating to the Slave Trade, HLP XV [i], 15, 219.

However, as this chapter has shown, even before the Union's triumph, Britain had been progressively retrenching from the endeavour of ordering the Atlantic world on account of political exhaustion and grand strategic disorientation. British preferences of moral-geopolitical Atlantic order had been withering since the 1850s. As shown by Adrian Brettle, by 1864, a new worldview was in the making in the British establishment, one characterised by a stark conservative vision of letting the world be as it was and which advocated not specifically for a Castlereaghan approach but rather for an isolationist one. Cecil was at the centre of it.[146] The future Lord Salisbury showed that all priorities for order could not be sustained whilst national interests suffered: 'in truth, the whole slavery dispute seems petty and trivial, when we read the weekly narrative of American carnage or the daily tale of Lancashire starvation', he wrote in his *Quarterly* article.[147] Britain had to worry about its core interests—the empire in Asia and Africa, and political, social, and economic reform at home—and disentangle from far-reaching questions such as an antislavery-driven quest for Atlantic order. Britain's original idea of world order was served by the outcome of the Civil War, indeed; but the conservative premises of this new worldview would ensue. After the death of Palmerston, Britain became a more isolationist power, willing to collaborate with partners such as the United States to rid itself of the burden of ordering the Atlantic, and engaged in a territorial expansion of empire that had bared little resemblance to the other ordering preferences of the early-to-mid century.

British apprehension for a U.S. takeover of Cuba started to decline: when the Cuban Revolution of 1868-78 gave the United States a chance to take the island, both Liberal Clarendon (Foreign Secretary 1868-70) and Conservative Derby (Foreign Secretary, 1874-8), allowed the Americans to capitalise the situation to extract concessions from the Spanish, clearly showing, as Christopher Bartlett wrote, that Britain now had 'no sympathy for Spain or desire to thwart the United States'.[148] Eventually, British benevolent neutrality aided the United States takeover of Cuba and Philippines in

[146] See Adrian Brettle, "1864: The Genesis of a New Conservative World?," in *The Tory World: Deep History and the Tory Theme in British Foreign Policy, 1679-2014*, ed. Jeremy Black (New York: Routledge, 2015), 187–202.
[147] James Spence, 'The Recognition of the Southern Confederacy', *Quarterly Review*, 112 (July-Oct. 1862) 569, 570.
[148] See the following works by Christopher Bartlett, "British Reaction to the Cuban Insurrection of 1868-1878," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 37, no. 3 (1957): 311; and "Britain and the Abolition of Slavery in Puerto Rico and Cuba, 1868-1886," *Journal of Caribbean History* 23, no. 1 (1989): 97–98.

1898.[149] On the brink of war with France over Fashoda in Egypt, worried by the South African Boer war, and trying to contain *Weltpolitik*-driven Germany; British leaders no longer shared in Canning's view about the U.S. takeover of Cuba being 'the most sensitive blow that could be struck by any foreign power in any part of the world'.

[149] Christopher Hull, *British Diplomacy and US Hegemony in Cuba, 1898-1964* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 24–31.

Conclusion

The pursuit of Atlantic order

This dissertation has shown that Britain's handling of the Cuban Question transcended the island itself and encompassed a broader endeavour to re-order the post-Spanish Atlantic world in competition with the United States. Beyond the mere readjustment of the West Indian balance of power as the United States expanded, and the campaign against the slave trade; British leaders understood Cuba had the potential to set the disorderly Atlantic world ablaze. Stepping aside from the scholarship's current taste for history from below approaches to deal with the Atlantic world, this dissertation has reconsidered the geopolitical significance of the slave trade as such a disorderly phenomenon which powers like the United States used as a vector through which to further their objectives—namely, the takeover of Cuba. British statesmen saw the United States and also Spain, as roguish powers with a clear interest in rendering the system unstable, moved in their ambition by crooked moral behaviours (jealousy, cruelty, arrogance) and not merely by cynical interest.

Focusing on statesmen's conception of disorder sheds new light on the how and the why of certain strategies and policies. Visions of one's own morality and of others', influenced perceptions of geopolitical peril and thus shaped foreign policy responses. This perception of geopolitical-moral disorder was a prime reason for the emergence of a form of British moral exceptionalism, that in turn put forward an ordering mandate to reshape the world along legitimate, moral lines—employing 'justifiable' violence to do so. Eventually, this locked Britain in a spiral of violence that backfired at home and abroad, forsaking any chance of a British-led Atlantic order.

The vehement ordering of the Atlantic caused the 'ordered' powers to develop a much more aggressive foreign policy against Britain. In this, Spain was an actor whose significance historians have seldom considered. Overcoming traditional narratives of irrevocable decline, this thesis has shown that Spain successfully navigated a precarious international position, playing the Anglo-Saxon powers against each other to secure its possession of Cuba and its slave-run economy. Foreign policy still remains an unfashionable topic in the study of Spain's nineteenth century compared to party-politics

and civil wars, but, as it has been shown, there is still much to be said about Spain in international politics after 1815. Spain was assertive on a number of theatres (including Europe) to protect Cuba and its economy, showing an aggressiveness that directly contradicts historians' assumptions about vassal-dependency on Great Britain during the 1800s.

This dissertation has also furthered in our understanding of the primacy of foreign policy in British statecraft, showing world-ordering ambitions to be at the centre of that debate. The question of how to re-order that which was in disarray heavily influenced the inception of foreign policy, the course of political events within the United Kingdom, the expansion of empire and use of violence, and even accounted for major political divergence in traditions of statecraft (Canningites and Castlereaghans). It did so since 1800—much earlier than historians have suggested. John Bew argued that the pursuit of world order had been a maxim of Anglo-American statecraft since the 1890s in response to a perceived weakness of the Empire; this dissertation has shown this was the case since the early nineteenth century, and that the question of 'order' back then transcended the Concert of Europe and was motivated by a perceived surge in Atlantic disorder.[1]

Order and disorder were part of the strategic framework through which British statesmen observed and responded to changes in the Atlantic world. Understanding that British foreign policy was marked by an 'ordering' agenda, and looking into the underlying dynamics disorderly of the post-revolutionary Atlantic, puts forward not only a more nuanced understanding of British statecraft but also of Atlantic geopolitics in general. This dissertation shows that prior to any special relationship emerging, the Anglo-Saxon powers fought each other bitterly to advance their own version of Atlantic order after the demise of Spain's empire, revealing the period 1800-60 to be one of profound geopolitical struggle in the Atlantic world. Ultimately, this work presents an alternative take on *la longue durée* of modern Atlantic politics to Patrick Cohrs' in his book *The New Atlantic Order*—the analysis of which opened this thesis—refuting the notion that the Concert order provided 'global stability' between 1815 and 1856.[2] The Atlantic world continued to be in disarray after 1815, with both Anglo-Saxon powers trying to advance a version of order to correct such state of disorder.

The analysis the Cuban Question put forward in this dissertation points at the existence of an Anglo-American Atlantic 'Cold War' over the spoils of the Spanish

[1] See Bew, "World Order."
[2] Cohrs, *New Atlantic Order*, 43, 71.

empire. Some historians have already alluded to the fact that the game of slavery, hemispheric nationalism, and militant republicanism held by the United States 'was not unlike the Cold War thinking of the twentieth century'.[3] But beyond the rather easy comparison, this dissertation has shown that the phenomenon indeed existed—if 'cold war' is defined as a tepid conflict, a stagnated situation of tension that could anytime result in war, between great powers with polarly-opposed worldviews, and therefore alternative visions of world order.

As argued by Alan Taylor, the War of 1812 had been a civil war of the Anglo-Saxon world, rooted in the fact that 'neither Britons and nor Americans thought that their political systems could coexist for long on a shared continent'.[4] After reaching a stalemate in North America, the existential conflict between their doctrines was taken to the former Spanish America, where since the eighteenth century they had shared a 'deep and longstanding entanglement with Spain's global lordship'.[5] The Spanish world collapsed as a result of the Age of Revolutions, but the struggle for order was *over* its spoils—specifically, over Cuba. The island question came to represent that last phase of 'entangled history' between the Anglo and the Spanish worlds, as put by Eliga Gould; this final phase—or transition phase 'between one Atlantic and another', as suggested by Donna Gabaccia—was marked by the struggle between two rival visions of Atlantic order.

Britain pressed for a version of order encompassing antislavery and free trade as elements to correct revolutionary disorder. It aimed to bind Atlantic nations via treaties and norms, consolidating the 'pale connection' of 'international society', as many statesmen put it, and thus prevent new forms of geopolitical conflict whilst helping trade and civilisation thrive. The United States, on the contrary, defended an order of closed, independent empires where socioeconomic institutions, such as slavery, would not be

[3] Sexton, "An American System," 146; Karp, *Vast Southern Empire*, 82.

[4] Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Vintage, 2011). Taylor's account of the War of 1812 has hugely contributed to the critical reassessment of the conflict, which has far wider implications than has generally been asserted. Other recent histories of the War of 1812 and the right of search and impressment include: Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: North California University Press, 2008); J. C. A. Stagg, *The War of 1812: Conflict for a Continent* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012). For a traditional account of the causes of the war see Reginald Horsman, *The Causes of the War of 1812* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962).

[5] Eliga H. Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery," *American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (2007): 784.

molested by foreign intermeddling. This hemispheric nationalism also had a geoeconomic dynamic: the United States sought to protect the prosperity of the Western Hemisphere which Britain, having lost interest in the economic potency of its West India islands, was thought wanted to plunge it into ruin to the advantage of its colonial possessions in the Eastern Hemisphere. Thus there was also a geoeconomic as well as moral and geopolitical dynamic characterising the struggle between the Anglo-Saxon powers.

Both powers saw each other's version of order as intrinsically dangerous to their survival. The existential threat of the other markedly signals their struggle as one between polarly-driven orders. From Canning in the 1820s to Palmerston in the 1860s, British statesmen believed the expansion of the slaveholding empires would bring about the permanent installation of disorder at the heart of the Atlantic—witnessing the 'erection of wild buccaneering republics', of 'adventurers setting themselves … as founders of independent states', and Africa succumbing to 'barbarism', forever deprived of civilisation and trade. For the United States, the triumph of British abolitionist theses would represent a triumph of the British Empire over the American Republic, a *de facto* undoing of the colonists' victory in 1783, since it would force the United States to accept British imperial norms (right of search) and risked the Union breaking up in racial war like Saint Domingue. Walter Lafeber actually hints at the idea of order being central but did not fully explore it: 'The years from 1846 to 1861 were frenetic precisely because so many Americans believed the survival of their liberty and property interests at home depended on following certain foreign policies', he wrote.[6] He referred to the 1846-61 period as the most frenetic … in United States diplomatic history until the Cold War'.[7] Cuba stood as a central enclave in this grand strategic protracted struggle between the Anglo-Saxon powers, as the region where they both tried to advance their versions of order knowing that setting them up in Cuba would ultimately influence the rest of the Atlantic world.

[6] Lafeber, "The Constitution and United States Foreign Policy: An Interpretation," 700.
[7] Lafeber, 700.

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