Chapter 5

The Royal Navy, the British Atlantic Empire and the Abolition of the Slave Trade

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In June 1805, Horatio Nelson was pursuing a French fleet in the Caribbean. He had been drawn across the Atlantic from the Mediterranean by his opponents as part of the complex naval campaign that concluded, some four months later, with his famous victory off Cape Trafalgar. Learning that the French Admiral Villeneuve had sailed with his fleet for the West Indies, Nelson 'was in a thousand fears for Jamaica', Britain's most productive and valuable colony in the region, knowing that a successful attack on the island was 'a blow which Bonaparte would be happy to give us'. His main concern was to locate Villeneuve's fleet and engage it in battle, but while sailing in Caribbean waters he also found time to reflect on the relationship between the British Isles and the British colonies of the region. Writing to a long-standing friend from his flagship, *Victory*, Nelson proclaimed, 'I have ever been and shall die a firm friend to our present colonial system', and went on:

> I was bred, as you know, in the good old school, and taught to appreciate the value of our West India possessions; and neither in the field or in the senate shall their interests be infringed whilst I have an arm to fight in their defence, or a tongue to launch my voice against the damnable and cursed doctrine of Wilberforce and his hypocritical allies.

His correspondent was a sugar planter named Simon Taylor – a lynchpin in the transatlantic anti-abolitionist lobby that stood staunchly opposed to William Wilberforce's efforts to end the slave trade. Nelson confided to this wealthy and influential colonial slaveholder his hope that 'kind Providence may some happy day bless my endeavours to serve the public, of which the West India colonies form so prominent and interesting a part'.[1] For a man who 'was often guarded' about what he wrote in his letters, this was a very open expression of views. To Nelson, the white British colonists of the Caribbean were part of the wider British public, the colonies themselves of intrinsic value to the British nation and abolitionism, personified by Wilberforce, 'cursed' and 'hypocritical'. But while they were forcefully put, such ideas were unexceptional, particularly among naval officers like Nelson who had spent several years on one of the West Indian stations, forming strong affiliations with the white slaveholding colonists of the region.[2]

This chapter explores the sort of support for the British West Indian planters and opposition to abolitionism that Nelson expressed. It pays particular attention to the intersection between naval matters and the debate over the British slave system during the period between the 1780s and the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, arguing that apologia for the slave trade had a strong influence on debates about the future of the empire. These drew on deep-rooted principles about the value to the nation of the British colonies in the Caribbean and of the trade with the West Indies carried on by British merchant ships, part of a merchant marine that provided the expertise and manpower essential to the rapid and successful mobilisation of the Royal Navy. Such arguments in defence of the existing British slave system were articulated by a much broader constituency than just those with a direct material stake in colonial plantation slavery, and they served for a long time to rebut calls for

reform. However, the Haitian Revolution, the British victory at Trafalgar and revisions to the abolitionists' arguments had all helped to neutralise the influence of such 'old school' naval arguments in defence of the slave trade by the time that parliament finally abolished it in 1807.

To understand how the navy featured in the trans-imperial dispute about the slave trade it is necessary to examine how statesmen and other commentators perceived the interwoven questions of British sea-power, national security and colonial affairs. We must therefore seek to draw connections between scholarship on naval history, imperial history and the history of abolition. Naval historians, including N. A. M. Rodger and Daniel Baugh, have studied how a British maritime system of overseas trade shaped naval policy and resulted in what Baugh calls a 'blue-water policy', in which the Royal Navy became the first line of British defence against foreign attack.[3] Kathleen Wilson, David Armitage and other historians interested in the relationship between Britain and its empire, have written about the escalation of a British blue-water patriotism by the middle of the eighteenth century: a view of the empire that celebrated overseas commerce, maritime power and an extended British Atlantic community – a community that included the inhabitants of the British Isles as well as transatlantic colonists.[4] There is also a rich scholarship on the ways in which that community tore itself apart in the era of the American Revolution and on the formation of new British patriotic imperial ideas and identities towards the end of the eighteenth century.[5] Such work provides valuable context for our understanding of the debate over the future of the British slave system, including the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and of slavery itself during the 1830s.

The abolition debates convulsed the British Atlantic world in the late 1780s and during the turbulent period that followed. These debates were informed by the blue-water ideals examined by Baugh, Wilson and Armitage, but while contemporaries were acutely aware that the navy was instrumental to the empire and that naval affairs were of central importance to discussions about colonial slavery, few historians have studied this theme. Abolition has, of course, attracted a great deal of attention, but until fairly recently scholars have tended to concentrate on abolitionist organisation and argument.[6] New studies by David Lambert, David Beck Ryden and Srividhya Swaminathan, among others, have focused instead on proslavery networks and rhetoric.[7] Such work has started to demonstrate how slaveholding planters, slave merchants and their allies had a profound influence on the debate through targeted lobbying and sophisticated arguments about the value and purpose of the West Indian colonies to the British empire. Other recent work has highlighted the ways in which the ideas and actions of enslaved people, not least during the period of the Haitian Revolution, shaped the British debate about slavery.[8] This chapter seeks to take this further by focusing on how anti-abolitionists mobilised potent ideas about the navy and national security in defence of the slave trade and how abolitionists adapted those arguments to their own purposes as the circumstances of the colonies changed, during a period of war and revolution.

The maritime empire

The eighteenth-century British 'empire of the sea' was varied and changing – consisting principally of the British Isles themselves, West African and Asian trading posts and various American colonies, each context undergoing alterations (and sometimes sudden transformations) in economic value, political arrangements and territorial extent. There was

no single imperial project either. Even though they conceived of the British Isles and transatlantic colonies as part of one large and complex system of commerce, governance and military power, British ministers and commentators disagreed over the relative importance of sections of the empire and over relations between them. As Stephen Conway's chapter in this volume demonstrates, conflicting ideas about the British Atlantic empire informed debates about the future of this broad transatlantic polity in the period of imperial crisis that preceded the American Revolution. That crisis and the conflict it produced was a major episode of what Steve Pincus identifies as an ongoing series of eighteenth-century debates 'over how best to organize and run the empire', which took place in the British Isles as well as across the Atlantic in the colonies.[9] And the struggle over the future of the British slave system was another important episode in this series of transatlantic British clashes about the character and trajectory of an empire that was, as Wilson puts it, a focus for a 'multiplicity of visions, aspirations and experience'.[10]

Despite this, there were legal frameworks and associated structures of thinking that gave shape and meaning to something that was otherwise continually changing and subject to debate. One thing that eighteenth-century Britons tended to agree about was that the success of their empire and the security of their nation were profoundly connected. Baugh notes that 'financial, maritime and naval capabilities were thoroughly interdependent', to the point that the empire served the navy just as much as the navy served the empire. The overseas empire was, for most of the eighteenth century, made up of trading posts and colonies that contemporaries tended to see as 'maritime', in the sense that their primary purpose was their contribution to British overseas commerce. Based around the seventeenth-century Acts of Navigation, this empire, despite undergoing rapid territorial

expansion, remained – at least in the minds British government ministers – a commercial and maritime empire linked to the navy.[11]

The seventeenth-century Navigation Acts were an explicit and largely successful effort to institutionalise the relationship between empire and navy. The most important parts sought to ensure that commerce between British possessions was carried on in British ships manned by British crews. In return for trading in this exclusive way, colonial planters were given preferential treatment in home markets, where a system of protective duties gave their produce a virtual monopoly. Edmund Burke described the Navigation Acts as 'the cornerstone of the policy of this country with regard to its colonies'.[12] Baugh has called them 'the backbone of policy in the Atlantic empire'.[13] Jacob Price argues that in legal terms the empire 'as an effective jurisdiction' was in fact the creation of the Navigation Acts. They established a legal framework controlling British transoceanic trade into what contemporaries often called the 'navigation system', which remained firmly in place until the nineteenth century.[14] This system was the product of concerns about keeping a strong navy and training sailors who could be called on to defend the nation, and it ensured that the value to Britain of its transatlantic colonies went far beyond profits for merchants and prospects for migrants. Rodger puts it like this:

> To a greater and greater extent, Britain's real wealth was generated, and seen to be generated, from a maritime system in which overseas trade created the income which paid for the Navy, merchant shipping trained the seamen which manned it, so that the Navy in turn could protect trade and the country.[15]

One of the fundamental assumptions of naval planning during the eighteenth century was that the expanding merchant marine acted as a nursery for British sailors, who could be

pressed into national service when the country went to war. Rodger argues that 'few informed observers' would have disagreed with Lord Haversham on this question when he stated, in 1714, that 'Your trade is the mother and nurse of your seamen; your seamen are the life of your fleet; and your fleet is the security and protection of your trade: and both together are the wealth, strength and glory of Britain.'[16] In this formulation, 'the Atlantic empire was' as Baugh puts it, like 'a "back yard" in which the sinews of war were generated for use in the "front yard", that is to say, in Europe and European seas'.[17]

Desire for security and protection was heightened by the fact that Britain was a potentially vulnerable Protestant nation with powerful Catholic European neighbours. After 1688, British politicians were anxious to protect their revolution settlement of a constitutional Protestant monarchy, which seemed to ensure the much-vaunted liberties of British subjects: property rights, a powerful elected legislature and freedom before the law. For most of the eighteenth century, Britain was vulnerable to the wealth and military might of Catholic France, particularly when the French formed an alliance with Spain. The British army was only a medium-sized force by European standards, and no real match for the large conscript armies of continental Europe. Debate raged over how much of her military resources Britain should commit to theatres of warfare on the European continent, particularly given the commitments there of Hanoverian monarchs. But despite such tensions, from the time of the Restoration, successive British governments recognised the Royal Navy as the nation's main line of defence – a point of pride for many Englishmen, who tended to associate large standing armies with continental and Catholic despotism.[18]

Proud of their liberty but fearful that it was insecure, Protestant Britons understood that the main purpose of their navy was to defend the nation. The primary role of the Royal Navy was therefore not as a tool for overseas expansion, but defence of the kingdom and the security of its commerce were nevertheless synonymous. The government invested heavily in defence of its maritime trade on the western side of the Atlantic, particularly in the Caribbean, sending fleets and troops to protect its West Indian colonies and their trade as well as establishing naval bases and dockyards at Port Royal, Jamaica, and English Harbour, Antigua. After 1740, a Western Squadron patrolling the windward approaches to the English Channel became a key to English protection that also offered defence in wartime for merchant convoys returning from the colonies. During the eighteenth century, the Royal Navy grew larger with each successive war and impressed a rising share of seamen from a merchant marine also experiencing rapid expansion due to the increasing volume of overseas trade, focused primarily on Britain's own colonies.[19] British naval strength was ultimately the product of economic strength, and duties on colonial exports entering Britain, along with excise levies on goods manufactured from colonial staples, boosted the coffers of a treasury whose primary concern was expenditure on the armed forces, especially the navy. The revenue accrued from colonial trade was therefore an important 'sinew' of British military might, helping to underpin the growth of the largest navy of any European power, which required continual and heavy reinvestment in order to remain seaworthy and ready for duty.[20] In those ways, colonies, trade and naval strength came to form a mutually reinforcing holy trinity to members of successive governments, intent on stimulating economic expansion and securing Protestant British freedoms at home and overseas.

Caribbean colonies were especially important within this system. North America directly provided some supplies for the Royal Navy, including pitch and tar as well as trees used for masts, but the navy was more reliant on Baltic supplies for those items. Tobacco, rice, indigo, fur, flax, hides and corn from North America, along with the North Atlantic fisheries, were all important branches of British Atlantic trade. But slave-grown Caribbean sugar was far more important than any of them. Between the 1750s and the 1820s, sugar was Britain's most valuable import, growing from 25,000 tons in 1710 to nearly 100,000 tons by the time of the American Revolution.[21] The West Indies accounted for about a fifth of all British imports and around seven per cent of the nation's exports. Caribbean trades, principally in exports of sugar, also helped to sustain important markets and industries in the metropole.[22] The sugar colonies of the West Indies were therefore at the centre of the eighteenth-century British empire and, as such, of calculations about colonial wealth and naval strength.

British commercial wealth and financial stability rested so heavily on the Caribbean sugar islands – especially Jamaica – that their defence in wartime took precedence over everything but protecting Britain itself.[23] French colonies in the region were just as important, if not more so, to France, which meant, as one contemporary put it, that 'whenever the nations of Europe are engaged … in war with each other' the colonies of the West Indies 'are constantly made the theatre of its operations'.[24] The great British fear was that France and Spain would seek to conquer Jamaica – a fear that might have become a reality in 1782, had Admiral Rodney not intercepted a French fleet intended for the island and defeated it at the Battle of the Saintes. Nelson's pursuit of Villeneuve's force to the Caribbean during the summer of 1805 offers another instance of this anxiety. Nelson suggested to the Admiralty that his decision to sail to the region in search of the French fleet had 'saved these Colonies, and two

hundred and upwards of sugar-loaded Ships' from French attack.[25] He had followed Villeneuve without orders but in the firm, and correct, belief that 'the Ministry cannot be displeased', knowing the value that the British government placed on protecting its interests in the Caribbean.[26]

Blue-water anti-abolition

By the time of the Napoleonic Wars, over three million enslaved men, women and children had been taken across the Atlantic from Africa in British ships, most of them destined for British sugar colonies in the West Indies. About one in every ten of the people forced to endure the Middle Passage died before reaching the Americas, and many more died during the three-year 'seasoning' period that followed their arrival in the New World.[27] Most of the survivors went on to labour on colonial plantations. Those vast properties were made up of hundreds of acres of sugar cane, along with the works buildings that turned cane juice into semi-refined muscovado sugar ready for export to Europe. In Jamaica even relatively small sugar plantations required a slave workforce of about 100 people, and on the largest estates there were over 500 enslaved workers. These properties relied on the transatlantic slave trade because their appalling living and working conditions ensured that deaths outnumbered births. Despite the forced arrival of over two and a half million enslaved people in the British colonies in the West Indies by the early nineteenth century, the overall slave population of these islands was only 750,000.[28] Demographic conditions on most of the islands were such that, without the supply from Africa to replenish or increase the captive workforce, the enslaved population would go into decline. The staggering wealth of the sugar islands in the Caribbean and their value to Britain therefore rested on the labours and

sufferings of hundreds and thousands of enslaved people, and on a well-developed system of institutionalised manslaughter.

These colonies were also acutely unequal and unstable societies. They produced huge wealth for a small number of white colonials fortunate and skilful enough to become successful sugar planters, but they were sites of miserable and arduous labour for the majority of the population.[29] In most of the British island colonies enslaved people outnumbered white colonials by a ratio of around ten to one, which meant that the wealthy or aspiring white inhabitants were a privileged but vulnerable minority, ever fearful of slave uprisings. Before the Haitian Revolution, local whites, assisted by imperial troops and naval support, succeeded in suppressing these uprisings, but large-scale revolts, such as the one that took place in Jamaica during 1760, had the potential to become as profound threats to the British imperial system as invasions by foreign powers.[30] For these reasons, Michael Duffy's description of the plantation colonies of the British Caribbean as a 'precarious money box' neatly summarises the status of these islands in the minds of British statesmen and administrators: sources of considerable commercial wealth but acutely vulnerable to external attack or internal revolt.[31]

Supporters of the slaveholders took a view of the empire in which the slave system was essential to British prosperity and security, maintaining that the plantation colonies should receive every available means of support and defence from the mother country. In 1787, when a newly formed abolition society proposed an immediate end to the slave trade, they responded in robust fashion.[32] They claimed that slaves were content on the plantations and better off there than in Africa. Planters presented themselves as humane managers who

used punishments no worse than those regularly meted out within the British Army or Royal Navy. However, this defence enjoyed little success. Metropolitan British audiences had long been suspicious of slavery – seeing it as likely to inculcate the vices of despotism and luxury in masters – and they were easily persuaded by the moral case against the British slave system, particularly by the arguments against what most perceived to be its foulest element: the transatlantic slave trade.[33] Even planters, such as the pro-colonial polemicist and Jamaican slaveholder Bryan Edwards, admitted that 'the Slave Trade may be very wicked'.[34] Since a man so deeply invested in the slave system as Edwards found himself unable to defend slave trading in abstract moral terms, it is unsurprising that statesmen who sympathised with the planters also conceded the justice of abolitionist reasoning on this point. Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies and an opponent of abolition in parliament, emphasised that 'the general principle of the slave trade' was 'incompatible with the justice and humanity of the British constitution'.[35] If morals alone had been at stake in the debate about the slave trade, the slaveholders would have swiftly lost it.

They were on much stronger ground when they made pragmatic arguments about the importance of their maritime commerce, including the slave trade, to British wealth and to national security – in other words when they made a blue-water defence of their system. As Michael Taylor comments, 'the argument that colonial trade fostered British navigation was a natural harbour for pro-slavery rhetoric', allowing polemicists to play on public and ministerial concerns about navigation, the navy and the defence of the realm.[36] The argument went that the commerce of the West Indian colonies needed the slave trade; Britain needed West Indian commerce; and so therefore Britain needed the slave trade. Or, as the author of an anti-abolitionist tract summarised things: 'the immediate abolition of the

Slave Trade would be a measure ruinous to the Colonies, and of the greatest detriment ultimately to this country'.[37] It was an argument that spelled out the rationale behind the existing navigation system by pointing out that the protection of British liberties at home rested in part on the deracination of countless enslaved Africans.

'The peculiar protection of Great Britain is in her naval strength', claimed Simon Taylor, the Jamaican planter to whom Nelson wrote in 1805. In a memorandum for the Governor of Jamaica, Taylor explained that this strength depended 'on her commerce'. He argued that 'to maintain & encrease her naval strength it is highly important to encourage the species of commerce, which while it produces a beneficial application of British manufactures, at the same time creates employment for the greater number of ships & seamen'. British trade with the West Indies therefore combined 'the means of benefitting at once the wealth & the naval strength of the mother country'.[38] Elsewhere, he presented a more sensational picture, arguing that abolition would destroy Caribbean export markets, without which, 'manufacturers and artisans should be thrown out of employ and when they are frantick with hunger and their wives and children are starving rise against government': a prediction that rested on a conviction that colonial maritime trade was the baseline for an interdependent, transatlantic British nation – a nation that faced defeat and anarchy if wrong-headed metropolitan reformers were allowed to attack the rudiments of its strength and independence.[39]

Planters rehearsed these arguments as part of the public debate about the future of the empire. For instance, in his *Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica* of 1790, the planter and travel writer William Beckford wrote:

> If abolition ... shall take place, our interest in the West-India islands must be at an end, seventy millions of property will wear away with time, and be sunk at last: the revenue will suffer an annual diminution of three millions at least; the price of sugar, which is now become a necessary article of life, must be immediately enhanced; discontentment and dissatisfaction may dismember the empire.[40]

Edwards described his influential two-volume *History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, published three years later, as a 'political and commercial survey of his majesty's dominions in the West Indies; which ... are become the principal source of the national opulence and maritime power'. He pointed out the 'vast dependance [*sic*] of the British West Indian colonies on their parent country, for almost every thing that is useful and ornamental to civilized life' and argued that 'every article of their products and returns' were 'in fact as truly British property, as the tin which is found in the mines of Cornwall'. He speculated:

> To what extent the naval power of Great Britain is dependant on her colonial commerce, it is difficult to ascertain. If this trade be considered in all its channels, collateral and direct, connected as it is with our fisheries, &c. perhaps it is not too much to affirm, that it maintains a merchant navy on which the maritime strength of the kingdom so greatly depends, that we should cease to be a nation without it.[41]

One of the most vocal friends of the planter class during the slave-trade debates, William Cobbett, described the British colonies in the West Indies as 'out-works to the kingdom'. These transatlantic bulwarks were 'ancient possessions' that had become 'so naturally and so firmly attached to the mother-country as to be, by foreign nations as well as by ourselves, regarded as part of England'. Cobbett encouraged his readers to look upon Caribbean slave

islands as '*insular* colonies', situated at a convenient distance from the mother country, so that ships and men were always within easy reach of the Royal Navy, and without which 'England could not long maintain her naval power'.[42]

These arguments defended the slave trade, which made up no more than 3 per cent of all British trade, by presenting it as a key to the much larger West Indian trade, which accounted for about a fifth of all imports and exports into the mother country.[43] The great strength of this patriotic argument against abolition lay in its congruity with the blue-water policies and ideologies of British politicians and large sections of the public, emphasising the connection between colonial trade, naval strength and the preservation of national sovereignty. By the start of the 1790s, despite the rapid rise of abolitionism, slave-traders and slaveholders had good reason to hope that this patriotic pragmatism would trump the abolitionists' sentimental rhetoric.

Abolition and security

The blue-water defence of the transatlantic slave system made abolitionism appear dangerous. Flag officers from the Royal Navy who spoke against abolition at the 1790 House of Commons inquiry into the slave trade answered questions about whether they considered 'the ships employed in the French West India trade as one of the principal sources of the naval power of France', whether those French ships were large 'fine vessels' and 'well manned', and whether West Indian trade provided a 'nursery for seamen'. The seven officers responded that commercial navigation served the navies of each nation. Asked whether the slave trade should continue, they each responded in the same manner: by 'all means', 'unquestionably', 'without a doubt', 'certainly'.[44] The colonial agent for Jamaica,

Stephen Fuller, liaised with these men about their appearance at the enquiry and helped organise their testimony, calculating that such respected members of the British establishment, who had no obvious direct investment in the colonies, enhanced not only the arguments but also the reputation of the campaign against abolition. In an encouraging letter to the elderly Admiral Barrington, Fuller estimated their contributions 'as of more consequence to the West India Islands, than all the rest of the Evidence put together'.[45] He well understood the power of friendly expert testimony from the Royal Navy at a time when Britain was locked in a naval arms race.

During the early 1790s, as the possibility of war with France loomed, the Admiralty and ministers were acutely nervous about naval strategy. The size and capabilities of the French navy, which had posed a serious challenge to the Royal Navy in every theatre of the recent American War of Independence, was a particular point of concern. The pro-planter lobby presented flourishing French commerce with the West Indies, particularly with the large and productive colony of Saint Domingue, as the main source of French marine capability, pointing out that, while the British parliament discussed abolition, the French government offered financial rewards to merchants who imported enslaved Africans into its colonies.[46] During the ensuing military struggle with Revolutionary France, the fear of revolution and of revolutionaries held back all types of reform in Britain, including the abolitionist cause, as several scholars have noted, but naval concerns were a serious impediment to abolition even before events in Paris took a radical turn, and the way the war was fought ensured that they remained a significant part of the debate.[47]

In 1793, when war broke out, the British government immediately focused on protecting its colonies and trade while attacking those of the enemy. The main design of the British government, beyond the European theatre, was to the west, in the Caribbean, where Britain fought a decisive war of attrition against France at a heavy cost in money and lives. Between December 1795 and March 1796, the largest single overseas expeditionary force ever to leave Britain (comprising over 30,000 men) was dispatched to the region. One third of that army perished during the deadly summer of 1796, mainly from yellow fever, in an effort that protected the British colonies as part of what Dundas, the government minister responsible for its planning, called a 'war for security'.[48] In 1799, Dundas reflected that 'Great Britain can at no time propose to maintain an extensive and complicated war but by destroying the colonial resources of our enemies and adding proportionately to our own commercial resources, which are, and must ever be, the sole basis of our maritime strength'.[49] The principle that naval might and West Indian colonial commerce were intertwined was therefore as influential as ever in the calculations of the British ministry as the eighteenth century drew to a close and war with France raged on.

In 1796, Dundas urged parliament not to vote for the abolition of the slave trade. He argued that such a significant imperial reform was not worth risking at a critical moment in the war. The Caribbean was affected by revolutionary ideas and uprisings, and Dundas argued that abolition could destabilise the British islands by encouraging enslaved people to expect further change and to seek self-emancipation through revolution. As such, although he claimed to be sympathetic to the abstract principles behind calls for an end to the slave trade, he thought abolition too dangerous to risk in practice.[50] His primary concerns appear to have been widely shared by parliament. Despite the popularity of abolition in the House

of Commons before the outbreak of hostilities in 1793, both Houses of Parliament rejected Wilberforce's motions during the war with Revolutionary France.

There were, nonetheless, rhetorical ways to square the abolition of the slave trade with the interests of British security and counter-revolution. In the Commons debates of 1792, Prime Minister Pitt – a firm and constant ally to his friend Wilberforce – rebutted planter claims about the incendiary threat of abolitionist campaigning. He mentioned 'the danger to which the islands are exposed from those negroes who are newly imported' and told the house that he was satisfied that 'among the many arguments for prohibiting the Slave Trade' the fact that abolition would best preserve 'the security of our West India possessions against internal commotions, as well as foreign enemies, is among the most prominent and most forcible'. The reckless importation of many potentially rebellious enslaved Africans, he maintained, 'may annihilate in a single day the industry of a hundred years', and he did not want to expose the 'important interests' of the plantation economy in the sugar islands to further danger. War did not steer Pitt away from this view. At the height of the Caribbean campaign, he continued to advocate 'speedy and immediate abolition', believing that this was best 'with regard to the safety of the islands' as well as 'with a view to the cause of humanity and justice'.[51]

Pitt offered a prescient critique of the slave trade that sought to answer concerns harboured by conservatives like Dundas about the safety of the empire. He accepted that the security of British-Caribbean sugar plantations was of fundamental importance to the nation at home. The loss of the Caribbean colonies would create an existential threat to Britain, and the revolution in Saint Domingue drove home the point that such loss could be inflicted not

only through external attacks on British islands but also by enslaved people within the colonies. Faith in the tried-and-tested system of navigation as a bulwark of British naval security therefore helped deter parliament from meddling with the British slave trade at the height of the French Revolution and while Britain was pitted against her bitterest international rival in a precarious Caribbean struggle. Pitt's arguments, however, showed that the blue-water patriotic defence of the Atlantic slave system was not quite watertight, offering a way to reconcile the interests of national security with the reform of a colonial system that had begun to look more vulnerable to internal revolts, and more in need than ever of far-reaching improvement.

Abolitionists understood that they had to remodel the ingrained assumptions of the imperial parliament in order to achieve change. On initiating the Commons debate over the slave trade, Wilberforce maintained that he wanted to appeal not to the 'passions' of his fellow MPs but asked instead 'for their cool and impartial reason'. He argued that abolition was 'reconcileable with our truest political interest' and that an end to the slave trade need not spell disaster for the plantations or for Britain. Rather it would encourage West Indian planters to improve conditions on their properties so as to promote an increase in the slave population. Turning to the naval dimension of the problem, Wilberforce used evidence collected by his colleague Thomas Clarkson to demonstrate that the slave trade was not a nursery for British seamen but 'their grave'. Defenders of the slave trade contended that the Royal Navy had to be prepared to sail in all latitudes with seasoned crews, but it was undeniable that slaving voyages were especially deadly. The white crews of the ships were heavily susceptible to disease during circumnavigation of the Atlantic. Arguments spun from such evidence were tightly woven with religious and moral concerns. Wilberforce presented

slave trading as a cause of depravity among sailors 'taught to play the tyrant': a drain therefore on not only the physical strength but also the moral fibre of Britain's first line of national defence.[52] When he first offered these critiques, they were undermined by the size of the French colonial system and the threat of its navy, but as revolution tore down slavery and sugar production in the French islands of the Caribbean, and as Britain obtained a position of naval mastery over her old adversary, the situation changed to favour the abolitionists. Between 1805 and 1806, the obvious impolicy of facilitating the colonial trade of enemy powers in wartime helped bring about the end of British slave trading to foreigners and to possessions conquered by Britain, but the new circumstances of a revolutionary Caribbean and British naval success also proved propitious to the campaign against the entire British slave trade.[53]

By the beginning of the nineteenth century abolitionists were developing pragmatic arguments about the value of a reform to slavery for the defence of the British West Indies. These built on earlier anti-slavery arguments, including the suggestions of James Ramsay, a former naval surgeon, who in an influential essay of 1784 had argued that it was possible to augment British strength and wealth by turning enslaved people in the Caribbean into 'useful fellow-citizens'. A reformed system of slavery would limit the powers of slaveholders and provide rights to enslaved labourers, turning them from discontented drudges into a loyal and productive workforce, labouring for the benefit of Britain and able to contribute to the defence of the colonies.[54] In 1802, the abolitionist James Stephen reprised those arguments in an influential essay in response to Napoleon's Caribbean armada of the same year. The huge French expedition aimed to reinstate slavery in the French empire and reverse the revolution in Saint Domingue.[55] It had sailed unopposed by the British during the

fragile Peace of Amiens, but Stephen knew that when war resumed between Britain and France (as it did in May 1803) so too would another round of Caribbean conflict, and he wrote about the threat that this French force would then present to the British colonies. He suggested that the best way to prepare was to improve the conditions of enslaved people in order to encourage them to remain loyal if conscripted to fight an invasion force. It was a solution that promised to avoid the huge costs of sending white British soldiers and seamen to the Caribbean while continuing to 'attain the end' for which the lives of such men had 'been hitherto sacrificed so freely', namely propping up 'those rich colonies' of the Caribbean colonial empire and, with it, the British war effort.[56]

Stephen's work played upon the longstanding concerns about the importance to Britain of the Caribbean colonies. It also drew on new assumptions about the future of the British empire in the Caribbean. The agency of enslaved people, as rebels or potential rebels, made it increasingly obvious that the slave system of the region was inherently unstable. In the 1780s, French colonies had produced more sugar than the British islands. But a decade of revolution had demonstrated how a European power could lose control of valuable sugar colonies to internal insurrections, a lesson underlined in 1804 when Napoleon's expeditionary force was finally defeated by the former slaves of Saint Domingue, under the leadership of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who declared independence and renamed the country Haiti. To enslaved people elsewhere, this was inspirational; to slaveholders, it was deeply disturbing. For administrators interested in governing the British empire, the fate of Saint Domingue now offered a cautionary tale. Moreover, years of Caribbean warfare had shown that the cost of defending the colonies of the region with white British troops was so high that it was difficult to think of it as sustainable in the long term. By the time that

Stephen wrote his essay, ending the slave trade seemed to offer partial solutions to those problems. It was certainly difficult for administrators in London to see how abolition could make the situation in the British Caribbean more precarious. Perhaps ending an unpopular trade that accounted for a small part of the nation's overall commerce could be risked without serious damage to the much larger trade with the West Indies, particularly given that self-sustaining enslaved populations existed in parts of the Caribbean and some planters, nettled by abolitionist critiques, showed willingness to institute reforms that could enable births to exceed deaths elsewhere.[57]

Those sympathetic to abolitionism in government believed that ending the slave trade was the best way to effect what Stephen called an 'interior reformation' to master-slave relations within the colonies, forcing slaveholders to improve the conditions of their slaves.[58] Several influential observers argued that this would help to create a more tractable enslaved population. In 1804, the Under Secretary for the Colonies, Edward Cooke, predicted that the British parliament would soon end the slave trade and speculated that enslaved people born in the Caribbean were less likely to rebel than newly arrived Africans. Cooke wrote to the Governor of Jamaica, informing him that although the most recent abolitionist bill had stalled in the House of Lords, it would certainly be reintroduced to parliament and passed in a later session. He noted that the ending of the slave trade 'is not likely to interfere with the immediate interests of the planters of Jamaica to any great degree' and summarised his argument by stating:

> The disparity of numbers which exists between the whites and blacks is not likely to undergo any great alteration & the influence of a free black government in St Domingo may be always dangerous; the extinction

> therefore of that class of slaves on whose fidelity there is no reason to rely, and the propagation of those alone who by habits of infancy, childhood and education, are susceptible of attachment appears to be the securest system.[59]

The Haitian Revolution had therefore helped persuade the metropolitan government to reconsider the importance of security in their Caribbean colonies. A year later, the Colonial Secretary, Earl Camden, took the same line as Cooke. He thought that the best way for Jamaica to avoid an internal revolution was to 'prevent the necessity of importing fresh Negroes from Africa, whose minds cannot be softened by any principles of attachment to their masters', and when he introduced the Abolition Bill to the House of Lords in February 1807, the new prime minister, William Grenville, devoted a large part of his speech to these themes. Holding up the example of Saint Domingue as a warning planters, he told them that 'the danger is at your own door' and was best avoided by 'obstructing the importation of more Slaves'. His speech focused on the threat to the sugar colonies from dangerous 'internal foes', but argued that ceasing slave importations would result in a state of society 'where the happiness of its members is consulted', where 'order and regularity will prevail'.[60] This case rested, as David Ryden, concludes, on the idea that the measure 'would further the cause of humanity at no expense to Empire or planter'. Grenville was committed to the moral cause of abolition and described the slave trade as 'the greatest injustice … by which the annals of mankind can possibly be disgraced'. But he also knew that pragmatic arguments were required to persuade a conservative Upper House, which had dashed abolitionist hopes time after time. The Lords approved his proposed bill in a vote of 100 to 34; it easily passed through the Commons and received royal assent on 25 March 1807.[61]

Conclusion

On 21 February 1807, two days before the motion for abolition was debated in the House of Commons, the full text of Nelson's letter to Simon Taylor, sent from *Victory* in the Caribbean during the Trafalgar campaign, appeared in William Cobbett's *Political Register*.[62] Cobbett was connected to Taylor through George Hibbert, an MP and London merchant heavily invested in West Indian sugar and slavery.[63] Facing near-certain defeat in parliament over the question of the slave trade, this anti-abolitionist network attempted to invoke the heroic reputation of Lord Nelson, who since his death at Trafalgar sixteen months earlier had been transfigured in the public imagination: from a celebrated military hero into a patriotic martyr.[64] Opponents of abolition clearly hoped that Nelson's 'old school' views – valuing the West India colonies, opposing Wilberforce and deriding abolitionist ideas – could still shape the debate. They continued to argue that the slave trade was an integral part of the British navigation system. As the bill sailed through parliament, Hibbert pointed out that British trade to and from the Caribbean employed nearly a thousand ships and more than 17,000 sailors. 'There could be no question', he concluded, 'as to the beneficial influence' of this 'upon our maritime, commercial, and naval prosperity'.[65] By 1807, however, those points had ceased to be effective in defence of the slave trade. Instead, it was its abolition that seemed increasingly to offer likely solutions to the problem of securing valuable but vulnerable colonial assets, and not even Nelson's mighty reputation could prevent it.

In his letter to Taylor, Nelson had claimed that the success of Wilberforce and his allies 'would certainly cause the murder of all our friends and fellow-subjects in the colonies'.[66] Taylor had earlier told Nelson that the outcome of the abolition debates 'will decide whether in future Britain shall have West India colonies or not or whether 80 millions

sterling and the lives of all the white people in them are to be sacrificed'.[67] When the news of abolition finally reached the aged Taylor in Jamaica, he interpreted it as an act of betrayal and self-harm: the result of 'a madness persuading the minds of People at home' that would eventually 'annihilate the colonies' and 'most materially injure' the mother country.[68]

The ending of the slave trade did contribute to the economic decline of the sugar industry in the British Caribbean colonies, and it provided the context for new forms of slave resistance. But the apocalyptic visions of the anti-abolitionists did not materialise. Deprived of new captive labourers from Africa, most planters failed to find effective ways to encourage population growth and resorted instead to extracting as much labour as possible from their dwindling workforce. In Jamaica, the largest British sugar producer, they struggled to maintain pre-abolition levels of output, and by the end of the 1820s the Jamaican economy was in crisis, although this did not have the predicted effect of hurting metropolitan Britain, where industrialisation was in full flow and whose overseas trade and empire were expanding on other frontiers.[69] The post-war years witnessed a series of uprisings and protests in the British Caribbean led not by newly arrived Africans but by enslaved people who had been born in the colonies. These events demonstrated that it was not simply the slave trade but the institution of slavery itself that created conditions for social unrest, and they influenced the debates that led to the ending of slavery in the empire during the 1830s.[70] None of those outcomes had been foreseen or desired by members of parliament when they voted to end the slave trade. They hoped that they were strengthening the slave system in a valued branch of the British empire, and it was only with hindsight that the Abolition Act of 1807 came to be understood as a step on the road to full emancipation.

Historians of abolition have long debated whether parliament ended the British slave trade for moral or economic reasons. One of the questions at stake in these discussions is whether Britain abolished the trade out of altruism or because it seemed somehow to be in the national interest.[71] In fact, contemporaries did not tend to make much of a distinction. Legislators and administrators accepted the immorality of human trafficking but required reassurance that abolishing it would not undermine the nation's economic and maritime strength. For a time anti-abolitionists made effective use of arguments based around entrenched blue-water principles, pointing out that the power of the navy and the defence of British liberties at home depended on the financial and maritime contributions of colonial commerce, including the slave trade. But revolution in the French Caribbean and the achievement of British naval mastery helped abolitionists to present the end of the slave trade as a safe measure, one which they claimed would shore up, rather than upset, the relationship between the slave colonies and the British metropole. Abolition was possible in 1807 because it was a popular measure, not just with the public but within elite circles. It passed through parliament thanks to the effective marshalling of religious, humanitarian and pragmatic arguments, under a sympathetic ministry, at a time when a unilateral reform appeared to offer no obvious threat to British interests and when fear of insurrection underlined the desirability of reform. It makes sense, therefore, as Philip Morgan remarks, to see the ending of the slave trade as a consequence of 'a coalescence of interests and ideology rather than as a triumph of ideology over interests'.[72]

The debate over the ending of the slave trade was defined in large part by blue-water ideals about maritime colonial trade and the national interest that had developed since the seventeenth century. These principles retained their power into the nineteenth century in

ways that sometimes provided a common grammar of understanding to competing British points of view on the slave trade, part of the intricate set of discursive overlaps that, as Swaminathan has noted, are easy to miss within a hostile dialectic.[73] The old British Atlantic system of colonial preference and Navigation Acts remained in place in 1807, and although some abolitionist campaigners took a more radical and principled stance, the men who engineered the passage of the Abolition Act through parliament sought to reform the old empire, not to destroy it. Moreover, the abolition of the slave trade became a feasible prospect thanks in part to the success of the old navigation system and the pursuit of blue-water British war aims. What Duffy calls a 'naval Armageddon' – in which the Royal Navy confiscated the colonies, choked the commerce and crushed the sea-power of Britain's European rivals – brought 'a decisive end to an era of 250 years of European maritime imperial rivalry' and the beginning of a definitive British global ascendency, allowing Britain to take the lead on abolition.[74] Therefore one of the unforeseen consequences of Nelson's 'endeavour to serve the public' during the wars with France was to provide conditions conducive to the eventual success of Wilberforce and his 'doctrine', something he did not hope for, but which remain part of his legacy nonetheless.

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[1] Horatio Nelson to Simon Taylor, HMS *Victory* off Martinique, 11 June 1805, printed in John Knox Laughton, ed., *The Naval Miscellany* (London, 1902), I, pp. 438–9. Another version, redacting the reference to Wilberforce, appears in Nicholas Harris Nicolas, ed., *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*, 7 vols (London, 1844–46), VI, pp. 450–1. On Taylor, see Richard B. Sheridan, 'Simon Taylor, Sugar Tycoon of Jamaica, 1740–1813', *Agricultural History* 45 (1971), 285–96.

[2] Roger Knight, 'Pursuing Nelson', *The RUSI Journal* 151 (2006), 70. Nelson's first long sea voyage, at the age of 12, was to the West Indies in a merchant ship. He spent many of his formative years in the Royal Navy in the region, and in 1787 married Frances Nisbet, niece of a Nevis sugar planter. Roger Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory: The Life and Achievement of Horatio Nelson* (London, 2006), pp. 26–7, 43–117. See also the chapter by Siân Williams in this volume. In 1796 Nelson wrote to his old naval patron, William Locker, expressing displeasure about Wilberforce 'meddling again with the slave trade'. Nelson to Locker, HMS *Agamemnon*, Genoa Mole, 4 March 1796, in Nicolas, ed., *Dispatches and Letters*, II, p. 131.

[3] See N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649–1815* (London, 2004); Daniel A. Baugh, 'Great Britain's "Blue-Water" Policy, 1689–1815', *The International History Review* 10 (1988), 33–58; Baugh, 'Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce: The Uses of "a Grand Marine Empire"', in Lawrence Stone, ed., *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London, 1994), pp. 185–223.

[4] Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon', *Past and Present* 121 (1988), 74–109; David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000).

[5] For Atlantic perspectives on the American Revolution, see Eliga Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000); Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the American War of Independence* (Oxford, 2000). On British thinking about empire in the aftermath of the American War, see P. J. Marshall, 'Britain Without America – A Second Empire?', in P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume 2. The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 576–95; Christopher L. Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006).

[6] For examples, see Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760–1810* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1975); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (1975; Oxford, 1999); Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilisation in Comparative Perspective* (New York, 1987); John Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Antislavery: The Mobilisatition of Public Opinion Against the Slave Trade, 1787–1807* (Manchester, 1995).

[7] David Lambert, *White Creole Culture, Politics and Identity during the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge, 2005). David Beck Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783–1807* (Cambridge, 2009); Srividhya Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade: Rhetoric of British National Identity, 1759–1815* (Farnham, 2009).

[8] See Claudius Fergus, '"Dread of Insurrection': Abolitionism, Security, and Labor in Britain's West Indian Colonies, 1760–1823', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 66 (2009), 757–80; Gelien Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolts and the British Abolitionist Movement* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2006).

[9] Steve Pincus, 'Rethinking Mercantilism: Political Economy, the British Empire, and the Atlantic World in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 69 (2012), 34.

[10] Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2002), p. 15.

[11] Baugh, 'Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce', p. 186. See also Stephen Conway, 'Empire, Europe and British Naval Power', in David Cannadine, ed., *Empire, the Sea and Global History: Britain's Maritime World, c.1763–c.1840* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 22–40.

[12] Quoted in Conway, 'Empire, Europe and British Naval Power', p. 35.

[13] Baugh, 'Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce', p. 192.

[14] Jacob M. Price, 'The Imperial Economy, 1700–1776', in Marshall, ed., *Oxford History of the British Empire*, p. 78.

[15] Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 180.

[16] Quoted in Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 180.

[17] Baugh, 'Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce', p. 203.

[18] See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT, 1992); Baugh, 'Great Britain's "Blue-Water" Policy'.

[19] N. A. M. Rodger, 'Sea-Power and Empire, 1688–1793', in Marshall, ed., *Oxford History of the British Empir*e, pp. 170, 175–6; Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, pp. 302, 319; Baugh, 'Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce', p. 196.

[20] John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London, 1989); François Crouzet, 'The British Economy at the Time of Trafalgar: Strengths and Weaknesses', in David Cannadine, ed., *Trafalgar in History: A Battle and its Afterlife* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 7. See also Martin Daunton, 'The Fiscal-Military State and the

Napoleonic Wars: Britain and France Compared', in Cannadine, ed., *Trafalgar in History*, p. 19.

[21] See Price, 'Imperial Economy', figures at p. 81.

[22] Michael Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar, and Seapower: The British Expeditions to the West Indies and the War Against Revolutionary France* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 15–16; John McCusker, 'The Economy of the British West Indies, 1763–1790', in John McCusker, *Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic World* (London, 1997), p. 316.

[23] See Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia, PA, 2000), p. 208; Michael Duffy, 'World-Wide War and British Expansion, 1793–1815', in Marshall, ed., *Oxford History of the British Empire*, p. 190.

[24] Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies: Third Edition, with Considerable Additions*, 3 vols (London, 1801), III, p. 433.

[25] Nelson to William Marsden, Esq, Admiralty, 12 June 1805, in Nicolas, ed., *Dispatches and Letters*, VI, p. 453.

[26] Nelson to Taylor, 11 June 1805, in Laughton, ed., *The Naval Miscellany*, I, pp. 438–9.

[27] See 'Voyages: The Transatlantic Slave-Trade Database', http://www.slavevoyages.org [accessed 12 January 2015]. On 'seasoning', see Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, MA, 2008), pp. 49–51.

[28] 'Voyages Database'; J. R. Ward, 'The British West Indies in the Age of Abolition, 1748–1815', in Marshall, ed., *Oxford History of the British Empire*, p. 433.

[29] See Trevor Burnard, '"Prodigious Riches": The Wealth of Jamaica before the American Revolution', *Economic History Review* 54 (2001), 506–24; Justin Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic, 1750–1807* (Cambridge, 2013).

[30] Thousands of enslaved people were involved in the fighting during the Jamaican revolt, usually referred to as Tacky's revolt after one of the leaders. It was, according to Trevor Burnard, the biggest single shock to the British imperial system before the American Revolution. Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004), pp. 10, 170–1.

[31] Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, p. 3.

[32] For an overview of proslavery arguments in this period see Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade*, pp. 191–203.

[33] On the arguments of this period and British attitudes towards slavery, see Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade*; Brown, *Moral Capital*.

[34] Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, 2 vols (London, 1793), II, p. 35.

[35] William Cobbett, *Parliamentary History* 32 (1796), col. 751.

[36] Michael Taylor, 'Conservative Political Economy and the Problem of Colonial Slavery, 1823–1833', *The Historical Journal* 57 (2014), 992.

[37] Anon., *Observations on Slavery and the Consumption of the Produce of the West India Islands* (London, 1792), p. 4.

[38] Nugent Papers, National Library of Jamaica, Kingston, Jamaica, MS72 (NLJ), 'Calculations of Mr Simon Taylor'.

[39] Taylor to George Hibbert, Kingston, 11 May 1798, Taylor Family Papers, Institute of Commonwealth Studies Library, London (ICS), I/B/21.

[40] William Beckford, *A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica Island*, 2 vols (London, 1790), II, pp. 315–16.

[41] Edwards, *History* (1793), I, p. iii; II, pp. 365–6, 375.

[42] *Political Register*, 7 July 1804, col. 11; 18 January 1806, cols 65–6; 16 February 1805, cols 225, 237.

[43] For trade figures, see Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (1977; Chapel Hill, NC, 2010), p. 21.

[44] 'Minutes of Evidence on the Slave Trade', *House of Commons Sessional Papers*, vol. 72 (1790), Part 2, pp. 404–80.

[45] Michael W. McCahill, ed., *The Correspondence of Stephen Fuller, 1788–1795: Jamaica, The West India Interest at Westminster and the Campaign to Preserve the Slave Trade* (London, 2014), pp. 134, 136–7.

[46] Anon, *The Slave Trade Indispensable: In Answer to the Speech of William Wilberforce, Esq. On the 13th of May, 1789. By a West India Merchant* (London, 1790), pp. 15–16; 'Minutes of Evidence', pp. 469–70.

[47] On the political impact of the French Revolution, see Anstey, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp. 276–8; Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, p. 437; Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade*, p. 198.

[48] Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, pp. 370, 374–5; Cobbett, *Parliamentary History* 32 (1796), col. 752.

[49] Quoted in Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, p. 371.

[50] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 32 (1796), cols 751–3.

[51] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 29 (1792), cols 1143–4; 32 (1796), cols 894–5.

[52] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 28 (1791), cols 55–7. For defences of the slave trade as a nursery of seamen, see Anon, *Slave Trade Indispensable*, p. 67; 'Minutes of Evidence', p. 476.

[53] On the abolition of the trade to foreign and conquered territories, see Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, pp. 442–4; Anstey, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp. 346–57, 364–76.

[54] James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (London, 1784), quote at p. 293.

[55] For an overview of the expedition and of the Haitian Revolution, see Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), especially pp. 251–301.

[56] James Stephen, *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies; or, An Enquiry into the Objects and Probable Effects of the French Expedition to the West Indies; and their Connection with the Colonial Interests of the British Empire* (London, 1802), quotes at pp. 115, 120. On the influence of Stephen and new pragmatic abolitionist arguments, see John Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 165–9.

[57] Philip Morgan, 'Ending the Slave Trade: A Caribbean and Atlantic Context', in Derek R. Peterson, ed., *Abolition and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic* (Athens, OH, 2010), pp. 105–10.

[58] Stephen, *Crisis*, p. 121.

[59] Edward Cooke to George Nugent, Downing Street, London, 1 August 1804, NLJ.

[60] Camden to Nugent, Downing Street, 9 February 1805, NLJ; *Substance of the Debates on the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade* (London, 1808), pp. 14, 20.

[61] Ryden, *West Indian Slavery*, p. 257; *Substance of the Debates*, p. 3; Anstey, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 396.

[62] *Political Register*, 21 February 1807, col. 296. Curiously, Cobbett chose to redact the name 'Wilberforce' from Nelson's diatribe, perhaps conscious of the sensitivities that he could arouse by the posthumous publication of a private letter in a public debate.

[63] Hibbert to Taylor, London, 1 August 1804, ICS, XVII/A/55.

[64] See Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, pp. 525–58.

[65] George Hibbert, *Substance of Three Speeches in Parliament on the Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade and on the Petition Respecting the State of the West-India Trade, in February and March, 1807* (London, 1807), p. 53.

[66] Nelson to Taylor, 11 June 1805, in Laughton, ed., *The Naval Miscellany*, I, pp. 438–9.

[67] Taylor to Nelson, Kingston, 15 October 1802, British Library, Egerton MS1623.

[68] Taylor to Hibbert, Kingston, 18 June 1807, ICS, I/I/29.

[69] On Jamaican economic decline and labour practices after abolition, see Drescher, *Econocide*, pp. 142–61; Barry W. Higman, *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica, 1807–1833* (Cambridge, 1976); Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832–1938* (Baltimore, MD, 1992), pp. 118–19.

[70] The most significant uprisings were in Barbados (1816), Demerara (1823) and Jamaica (1831). See Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British Caribbean* (Ithaca, NY, 1982), pp. 241–321; Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolts*.

[71] See Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1944); Roger Anstey, 'A Re-interpretation of the Abolition of the British Slave Trade, 1806–1807', *English Historical Review* 87 (1972), 304–32; Drescher, *Econocide*; Ryden, *West Indian Slavery*.

[72] Morgan, 'Ending the Slave Trade', p. 121.

[73] Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade*, p. 171.

[74] Duffy, 'World-Wide War', p. 203.