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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Department of History

**LORD PALMERSTON AND BRITISH ANTI-SLAVERY,  
1830-1865**

Robert George McGregor

A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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# UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

## ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

### Doctor of Philosophy

LORD PALMERSTON AND BRITISH ANTI-SLAVERY, 1830-1865

By Robert George McGregor

This thesis considers Lord Palmerston's relationship with British anti-slavery, that is the Government's efforts to suppress the international slave trade and to abolish global slavery, from his entry into the Foreign Office in 1830 through to the end of his second Liberal Premiership in 1865. By bringing together the fields of Palmerston studies and British anti-slavery studies, the extent and nature of Palmerston's anti-slavery policy as well as the motivations that underpinned it can be more clearly understood. This biographical focus simultaneously reveals a great deal about Palmerston's worldview, identity and legacy, whilst providing a new vantage point from which to reassess anti-slavery politics in mid-Victorian Britain. Furthermore, it raises questions about the nature of the core beliefs which informed Victorian political culture.

By examining Palmerston's overarching strategy for suppressing the slave trade and the practical implementation of that approach over time, making extensive use of private papers, parliamentary speeches and Foreign Office dispatches, this thesis demonstrates the important role played by Palmerston in guiding Britain's anti-slavery movement. The analysis considers Palmerston's negotiations with an array of countries from three continents and explores how Palmerston cajoled, pushed and forced foreign nations to accept and/or comply with Britain's convictions, albeit to different degrees depending on how highly individual countries ranked on his imagined 'scale of civilisation.'

It is clear, however, that the extrinsic influence of public opinion, broadly conceived, had a limited impact upon Palmerston and is an incomplete means by which to explain his lifelong enthusiasm for anti-slavery. Palmerston's determination to suppress that traffic was inspired by a mix of intrinsic motivations, including a sense of moral duty, a desire to advance Britain's economic, political and imperial interests, as well as sincere humanitarian impulses. Anti-slavery politics had a complex and profound impact on Palmerston during this period, leading him to describe the suppression of the slave trade as his life's proudest achievement, yet it is an aspect of his career seldom appreciated by historians. It is this thesis' attempt to make sense of Palmerston's lasting relationship with this movement, especially his motivations for engaging with it, that much of this work's originality can be found. An examination of Palmerston's language of duty and compassion, of his responses to various forms of Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary pressure, and of the extent and ways in which he was able to use anti-slavery as an instrument of Great Power politics add a unique contribution to our knowledge of Palmerston and Palmerstonism, illuminates the complicated nature of Britain's anti-slavery movement, and demonstrates the liberal-internationalist values inflecting Victorian political culture.



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## Declaration of Authorship

Print name: ROBERT MCGREGOR

Title of thesis: LORD PALMERSTON AND BRITISH ANTI-SLAVERY, 1830-1865

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission.

Signature:

Date



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## Introduction

### 1) Background to the problem

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Palmerston, successively a Junior Lord of the Admiralty, Secretary at War, Foreign Secretary, Home Secretary and Prime Minister, left an indelible mark on the history of nineteenth century Britain. Born into the world of Georgian high society, five years before the French Revolution, and departing as the Victorian Prime Minister of a heavily industrialised imperial nation, the ‘age of Palmerston’ has often been seen as one of rapid and momentous change.<sup>1</sup> Over the last three decades, studies of Palmerston have expanded the field beyond ‘high political’ accounts of his ministerial and diplomatic engagements and focused instead on the change he experienced, and in many ways helped to shape, regarding the evolution of British politics and society.<sup>2</sup> Yet although such work has vastly enriched our understanding of Palmerston and the Victorian era, it leaves almost unnoticed his extraordinarily vibrant and complex relationship with British anti-slavery.

Over the course of Palmerston’s life, the transformation in Britain’s attitudes towards slavery and the slave trade was profound. In 1784, the year of Palmerston’s birth, the slave trade remained intimately intertwined with Britain’s economy, society and culture.<sup>3</sup> While Britain was not the first country to engage in slave-trading, it had become the dominant supplier of enslaved Africans to the New World; carrying approximately 3.4 million humans across the Atlantic between 1650 and 1807.<sup>4</sup> To put this into perspective, this was more than ‘all other slave-carrying nations put together.’<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David Brown, *Palmerston: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p.2.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Brown, *Palmerston*. See also David Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy, 1846-55* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002). See also E.D. Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism, 1855-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> For more on how slavery and the slave trade came to dominate Britain’s economy between 1660 and 1800, see Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For more on how slavery dominated Western culture in the Atlantic world, see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).

<sup>4</sup> For more on how the approximate number of humans carried into slavery by British slave traders has been generated, see David Richardson, ‘The British Empire and the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1660-1807’, in *Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume 2, The Eighteenth century*, ed. by P.J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 440-464 (pp.440-442). See also David Eltis and David Richardson, ‘The “Number Game” and Routes to Slavery’, *Slavery & Abolition*, 18 (1997), 1-15.

<sup>5</sup> Richardson, ‘The British Empire and the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1660-1807’, p.440.

Moreover, Britain was also one of the world's largest slave-holding nations. In particular, Britain's Caribbean colonies of Barbados, Jamaica and the Leeward Islands, as well as its ceded ones of Grenada, Martinique, Demerara and Dominica, had developed into major marketplaces for slave traders and become the world's primary producers and exporters of cheap, slave-grown sugar.<sup>6</sup> When William Wilberforce brought forward his first Parliamentary bill to abolish the slave trade on 18 April 1791,<sup>7</sup> therefore, it was easily defeated, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Palmerston voting against it and decrying Wilberforce's 'blind enthusiastic zeal.' Such a move would be 'ineffectual and ruinous,' he told the House of Commons.<sup>8</sup>

Remarkably, however, by the time the 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Palmerston entered British politics a decade and a half later, Parliament had almost entirely and 'instantaneously' changed its mind.<sup>9</sup> Following two decades of campaigning by abolitionists, former slaves and the British people,<sup>10</sup> including a boycott of slave-grown sugar,<sup>11</sup> that institution was persuaded to abolish the British slave trade in February 1807.<sup>12</sup> Almost immediately, moreover, the Government began its crusade against the international slave trade; turning Britain into the world's 'crusading abolitionist.'<sup>13</sup> At home, anti-slavery societies such as the African Institution were established to keep up the pressure on the Government and to fight for abolition in other countries.<sup>14</sup> In 1833, shortly after Palmerston entered the Foreign Office, Parliament abolished slavery throughout the majority of the British Empire (the Act covered the West Indies, Mauritius, and the Cape).

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<sup>6</sup> For an overview of British slavery, see James Walvin, *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery* (London: Fontana Press, 1992). See also Michael Craton, *Sinews of Empire: A Short History of British Slavery* (London: Temple Smith, 1974). For a comparison of British and New World Slavery, see David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> William Wilberforce, *Parliamentary Register (1780-1796)*, xxix, 182-224 (18 April 1791).

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Bourne, *Palmerston: The Early Years, 1784-1841* (London: Allen Lane, 1982), p.59. See also Brian Connell, *Portrait of a Whig Peer: compiled from the papers of the Second Viscount Palmerston, 1739-1802* (London: Deutsch, 1957), p.213.

<sup>9</sup> David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.4.

<sup>10</sup> For more on the history of popular protest against the British slave trade, see John Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave trade, 1787-1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). See also Seymour Drescher, 'Whose Abolition? Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave Trade', *Past & Present*, 143 (1994), 136-166.

<sup>11</sup> For more on the British sugar boycott, see Clare Midgley, 'Slave Sugar Boycotts, Female Activism and the Domestic Base of British Anti-Slavery Culture', *Slavery & Abolition*, 17, 3 (1996), 137-162.

<sup>12</sup> There is a substantial literature on the history of Britain's abolition of the slave trade in 1807, with historians disagreeing strongly on why abolition took place. See pp.26-29 of this Introduction.

<sup>13</sup> James Walvin, *England, Slaves and Freedom, 1776-1838* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), p.14.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the African Institution, see Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery, 1833-1870* (Harlow: Longman, 1972), pp.17-18, chp.1.

Although this did not apply to the East India Company, meaning that Indian slavery was left virtually unaffected,<sup>15</sup> Britain was a nation transformed having emancipated approximately 750,000 people of African descent who were considered to be the legal property of British slave-owners, and paid £20 million in compensation to Britain's Caribbean planters.<sup>16</sup>

Palmerston's formative years were almost undoubtedly influenced by this unprecedented national movement and this vast transformation in British attitudes towards slave-trading and slavery; first at the University of Edinburgh where he lived and studied between 1800 and 1803 under the guidance of Professor Dugald Stewart, one of the most eminent luminaries of the Scottish Enlightenment,<sup>17</sup> and then at St John's College, Cambridge, where Palmerston lived for three years at a time when it was emerging as 'the second Evangelical capital' behind Clapham and retained strong links with its former fellow, William Wilberforce.<sup>18</sup> Even if the assertion of Henry Brougham was true, that Palmerston's family were 'enemies to abolition in a degree that scarcely ever was exceeded,'<sup>19</sup> this was certainly not reflective of the environment which moulded Palmerston's intellectual worldview and political conscience. In Scotland, a place where Palmerston later claimed he laid 'the foundation of whatever useful knowledge and habits of mind I possess,'<sup>20</sup> the young Palmerston was taught that slavery was both a

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<sup>15</sup> For more on the passage of Britain's Emancipation Act, see Izhak Gross, 'The Abolition of Negro Slavery and British Parliamentary Politics, 1832-1833', *The Historical Journal*, 23, 1 (1980), 63-85. For more on the messier situation in India during this period and the obfuscation over the legal status of slavery there, see Andrea Major, *Slavery, Abolitionism and Empire in India, 1772-1843* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> For more on the compensation given to Britain's colonial slave-owners, see Nicholas Draper, *The Price of Emancipation: Slave-ownership, Compensation and British Society at the end of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>17</sup> Gordon Macintyre, *Dugald Stewart: The Pride and Ornament of Scotland* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2003). See also Nicholas T. Phillipson, 'The Pursuit of Virtue in Scottish University Education: Dugald Stewart and Scottish Moral Philosophy in the Enlightenment', in *Universities, Societies and the Future*, ed. by Nicholas T. Phillipson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), 82-101. For the impact of Stewart on his pupils, see Donald Winch, 'The System of the North: Dugald Stewart and his Pupils', in *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth Century Intellectual History*, ed. by Stefan Collini, Donald Winch and John Burrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 23-62.

<sup>18</sup> John Oldfield, 'Palmerston and Anti-Slavery', in *Palmerston Studies*, ed. by David Brown and Miles Taylor, 2 vols (Southampton: Hartley Institute, 2007), II, 24-38 (p.26). For more on the connection between St John's College and Christian Evangelicalism, see Ford K. Brown, *Fathers of the Victorians: The Age of Wilberforce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp.501-502. For an account of Palmerston's education in both Edinburgh and Cambridge University, see Brown, *Palmerston*, chp.2.

<sup>19</sup> Bourne, *Palmerston*, p.59.

<sup>20</sup> 'Autobiography', written by Palmerston for Lady Cowper, c.1838-39, Palmerston Papers, University of Southampton Library (hereafter PP), D/26. Palmerston's autobiography was subsequently printed in 1870, see 'Autobiographical sketch entire, as given to me – HLB', in Henry Lytton Bulwer, *The Life of Henry John*

cruel and inefficient system of labour, one that not only deprived humans of their natural 'rights' and forced them to toil under conditions of 'severe hardship,' but posed 'a great and almost insurmountable barrier' to the march of 'progress.'<sup>21</sup> For the number of individuals to whom slavery secured 'the bare necessities of life,' Stewart lectured, bore no proportion to those who 'under a more liberal system of policy would have enjoyed many of its comforts and accommodations.' Where humans had the prospect of 'bettering their condition' and had 'emancipated themselves from the tyranny of their domestic masters,' they had generally 'raise[d] them[selves] to a more elevated rank.'<sup>22</sup>

It is true, however, that the impact of Palmerston's education was not immediately clear, for Palmerston did not join Wilberforce's anti-slavery movement when he left Edinburgh for Cambridge University in 1803 nor position himself as 'an ardent or enthusiastic supporter of abolition.'<sup>23</sup> As biographers have pointed out, Palmerston stood as a Pittite Tory in the general election of 1806, running for the seat of Cambridge University, and made no public pronouncements in support of abolition.<sup>24</sup> Despite his public passivity, however, it would be a mistake to see Palmerston as an intellectual advocate of slavery or as a 'spokesman for the supporters of the slave trade,' as Jasper Ridley has claimed.<sup>25</sup> Following discussions with Palmerston during that election, for example, the prominent abolitionist and Dean of Carlisle Isaac Milner wrote to Wilberforce, his close friend and political ally, to vouch for Palmerston's sincere commitment to ending the slave trade. 'I could not discover the most latent hostility or ground for suspecting hostility [to abolition],' he wrote, 'and he must be a deceiver... of a very deep cast, if he deceives at all in this instance.'<sup>26</sup> This conversation led Milner to

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*Temple, Viscount Palmerston: with selections from his diaries and correspondence*, 3 vols (London: Bentley, 1870-1874), I, pp.367-383, quote at p.367.

<sup>21</sup> Dugald Stewart, 'Lectures on Political Economy Vol.II', in *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, ed. by Sir William Hamilton and John Veitch, 11 vols (Edinburgh: Constable, 1854-1860), IX, pp.404, 256.

<sup>22</sup> Stewart, 'Lectures on Political Economy Vol.II', p.256.

<sup>23</sup> Oldfield, 'Palmerston and Anti-Slavery', pp.27-28.

<sup>24</sup> For an account of the 1806 general election, see Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.41-47. See also Bourne, *Palmerston*, pp.48-63.

<sup>25</sup> Jasper Ridley, *Lord Palmerston* (London: Constable, 1970), p.587.

<sup>26</sup> Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, 7 February 1806, quoted in *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce*, ed. by Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, 2 vols (London: Murray, 1840), II, p.68. See also Francis Horner to J.A. Murray, 7 February 1806, quoted in *The Horner Papers: Selections from the Letters and Miscellaneous Writings of Francis Horner, MP, 1795-1817*, ed. by Kenneth Bourne and William Banks Taylor (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), p.404. Francis Horner assumed that Milner had 'made the Viscount swallow the Abolition,' for he believed Palmerston was pro-slavery and that the cause of abolition was 'much against his stomach.' Horner suspected that Milner supporter Palmerston because of fears that Petty 'would emancipate the Catholics.'



support Palmerston in the forthcoming election, 'in full confidence that that same ingenuousness of mind which has determined you to speak so far in favour of abolition as you do [at] present, cannot fail... to terminate in you being a warm and active abolitionist.'<sup>27</sup> Palmerston's defeat at that election, moreover, has often been explained by contemporaries and historians as a result of Palmerston's mistaken and unwarranted reputation as an 'enemy' of abolition.<sup>28</sup> William Wilberforce, for example, conceded this was the case shortly after the election, writing to Reverend Thomas Gisborne that Palmerston had lost 'owing to his being supposed, *mistakenly I believe*, to be our enemy.' Historians such as Brown have supported this notion, arguing that Palmerston was 'the victim of unfounded supposition and rumour on this subject' during the election.<sup>29</sup> Thus, whilst it was an indication of his political naivety not to make any public declarations in support of abolition (one might assume because he did not want to alienate anti-abolitionist supporters), and of his failure to recognise 'the importance of moral and religious concerns in this election,'<sup>30</sup> one should not doubt Palmerston's sincerity on this matter.

Palmerston eventually entered Parliament through the pocket borough of Newport in June 1807, four months after the Ministry of All the Talents successfully passed the Abolition Act.<sup>31</sup> Palmerston therefore had no opportunity to engage in the momentous abolition debates of February and March that year.<sup>32</sup> Preoccupied with finding a constituency to represent following his defeat in Cambridge as well as by events in the Admiralty where he had taken up a junior post,<sup>33</sup> Palmerston did not even record his opinion on anti-slavery in his political journal of 1806 and 1807; an omission that led Jasper Ridley to claim that Palmerston held no strong feelings about the slave trade.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Isaac Milner to Palmerston, 7 February 1806, PP, SLT/1.

<sup>28</sup> William Wilberforce to Reverend Thomas Gisborne, 11 February 1806, in *Correspondence of William Wilberforce*, II, p.73.

<sup>29</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.44. See also Herbert C.F. Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, 2 vols (London: Longmans Green, 1936), I, p.14; Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, pp.22-23. Muriel E. Chamberlain, *Lord Palmerston* (Cardiff: GPC Books, 1987), p.20; Bourne, *Palmerston*, pp.57-61; Oldfield, 'Palmerston and Anti-Slavery', pp.26-28.

<sup>30</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.45.

<sup>31</sup> For an account of Palmerston entering Parliament as the MP for Newport, see Brown, *Palmerston*, p.56.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, 'Slave Trade Abolition Bill', *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* (hereafter *Hansard*), 1st Series, viii, 717-722, 940-943, 945-995, 1040-1053 (10, 20, 23, 27 February 1807). See also 'Slave Trade Abolition Bill', *Hansard*, 1st Series, ix, 59-62, 63-66, 114-140 (6, 9, 16 March 1807).

<sup>33</sup> For an account of Palmerston entering the Admiralty, see Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.56-58. See also Bourne, *Palmerston*, pp.80-85.

<sup>34</sup> Palmerston's Journal, in Bulwer, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, I, pp.38-82. Palmerston did note on 5 February 1807 that Lord Grenville had moved the second reading of the Slave Trade Abolition Bill, but he did not convey his opinion (p.68).

One should not read too much into this omission,<sup>35</sup> however, for what those journals demonstrate above all is that the young Palmerston was concerned primarily with European events at that time, and in particular with issues of 'war and peace.'<sup>36</sup> Yet, considering that Britain was fighting for its very survival in the Napoleonic Wars, this is not overly surprising.

For much of the 1810s and 1820s, it seems, Palmerston gave little thought to questions of slavery and anti-slavery, focusing intensely on the war against France and the bureaucratic challenges of reforming the War Office.<sup>37</sup> For although he bemoaned how the 'stupid old Tory party' were too slow to abolish colonial slavery in a frustrated letter to his brother in 1826,<sup>38</sup> and disagreed strongly with the Duke's apathy towards the enslavement of 5,000 Greek subjects by the Turkish and Egyptian fleet following the Battle of Navarino,<sup>39</sup> it was not until 1829, upon reaching his 'political maturity,'<sup>40</sup> that Palmerston finally defined his political philosophy regarding slavery and abolition. Removed from the responsibility of government for the first time in twenty years, having broken away from the Duke of Wellington's Government in the spring of 1828,<sup>41</sup> Palmerston sketched out his ideas on a range of topics in his private journal, including that of slavery. What is most significant about this journal, as Brown states, is that Palmerston borrowed 'striking and explicitly from the teachings of Dugald Stewart and the ideas of Whiggish Enlightenment thought.'<sup>42</sup> Echoing almost word-for-word Stewart's lectures from Edinburgh, Palmerston wrote that the institution of slavery was 'illogical,' 'unjust' and 'as repugnant to common sense as to the common feelings of mankind.' 'To hear masters... talk of slavery,' he mocked, 'one should suppose mankind is in a universal error about it & that it is the most delightful condition in which a human being can be placed. If you believe the West Indian [planter], none are so happy & so well off as the [enslaved Africans] of a sugar plantation.' The reason given for maintaining this cruel

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<sup>35</sup> Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, p.23.

<sup>36</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.49.

<sup>37</sup> For an account of Palmerston's tenure at the War Office, see Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.60-76. See also Bourne, *Palmerston*, pp.90-132.

<sup>38</sup> Palmerston to William Temple, 17 July 1826, PP, GC/TE/179.

<sup>39</sup> Palmerston's Journal, in Bulwer, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, I, pp.258-262.

Palmerston argued that Britain should intervene to rescue these enslaved people, since their capture had occurred during the British assisted Greek war of independence.

<sup>40</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.127.

<sup>41</sup> For an account of Palmerston's split from the Wellington Government in spring 1828, see *Ibid*, pp.122-126.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p.127.

institution, meanwhile, was ‘to add to injury mockery & insult.’ For it was wrong to keep Africans enslaved over alleged ‘vices’ they had committed when it was the institution of slavery which ‘necessarily & invariably produce[d]’ these ‘vices.’ Complete emancipation, therefore, was the only way to ‘relieve them from their abject condition,’ and those who continued to argue for slavery, Palmerston concluded, ‘must either be insincere or their minds... incapable of appreciating the tone & value of the simplest conclusion.’<sup>43</sup>

Thus, in the same way as 1829 witnessed the ‘flourishing’ of the earlier Palmerston, with the ‘Whiggish stamp’ left on him by his time in Edinburgh once more becoming clearly visible,<sup>44</sup> it is evident that that year was also a turning point in Palmerston’s attitude towards slavery and anti-slavery. For the remainder of his life, this thesis argues, Palmerston was wedded to the cause of anti-slavery. At the helm of the Foreign Office and later as Prime Minister, he led the British anti-slavery movement for over three decades. Between 1830 and 1865, he was an indefatigable proponent of suppressing the slave trade and instrumental in turning abolition into a major element of Britain’s foreign policy. Anti-slavery, it seems, sparked in him an intense feeling of sympathy, compassion and perhaps even empathy for enslaved Africans, especially as someone administering the affairs of a free and independent state. It was an issue that tempted him almost to break through treaties, violate Britain’s obligations and to take whatever measures were necessary to ensure that Britain’s foreign policy was effective. And, although success in this matter was inconceivable to many of his contemporaries, the Duke of Wellington, for instance, lamenting in a private letter to Lord Aberdeen that Britain ‘shall never succeed,’<sup>45</sup> through his tenacity, persistence and fervour this objective was largely accomplished by 1865.

Reflecting on his political achievements in an illuminating private letter to Sir John Crampton, Palmerston claimed in February 1864 that there were ‘no two men in England more determined enemies of the slave trade than Lord John Russell and myself... [for] we have both laboured assiduously and with much success for the extirpation of that abominable crime.’ Projecting the suppression of the slave trade as the crowning

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<sup>43</sup> Notebook containing newspaper cuttings, anecdotes, notes on Irish affairs, 1827-c.1832, PP, BR22(ii)/13.

<sup>44</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.133, 112.

<sup>45</sup> Leslie Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade: Britain, Brazil and the Slave Trade Question, 1807-1869* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p.66.

achievement of his political career and the one thing that ought to define his legacy, Palmerston went on to write that:

During the many years I was at the Foreign Office, there was no subject that more constantly or more intensely occupied my thoughts or constituted the aim of my labours. And though I may boast of having succeeded in accomplishing many good works... the achievement which I look back to with the greatest and the purest pleasure was forcing the Brazilians to give up their slave trade.<sup>46</sup>

It is no doubt curious, then, that although Palmerston has been remembered by historians as many things, including a reactionary throwback to the eighteenth century,<sup>47</sup> a 'product of the Regency period,'<sup>48</sup> and even an enlightened harbinger of mid-Victorian democracy,<sup>49</sup> his relationship with anti-slavery has not featured prominently in accounts of his life and career, and he has not been widely regarded as an abolitionist.

On the contrary, so far there have not been any published monographs looking specifically at Palmerston's relationship with anti-slavery, and only a few historians have examined this topic in any detail. In 1958, for example, R.J. Gavin briefly assessed Palmerston's anti-slavery policy in his doctoral thesis, but focused primarily on the rationale for British imperialism in Africa and the 'particular character' that effort assumed.<sup>50</sup> In 1996, Roderick Braithwaite touched upon Palmerston's anti-slavery efforts in his work, *Palmerston and Africa*, but concentrated mainly on the Rio Nuñez Affair; an aspect of his own family history.<sup>51</sup> In 2003 John Oldfield gave a paper on *Palmerston and Anti-Slavery* at the University of Southampton's Palmerston Congress. Designed to

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<sup>46</sup> Palmerston to Sir John Crampton, 17 February 1864, in Evelyn Ashley, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston, 1846-1865*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1876), II, pp.263-264. This was not the only occasion that Palmerston claimed to be as zealous about suppressing the slave trade as anyone else. See also Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 21 July 1862, Russell Papers, National Archives, Public Record Office (hereafter RP, TNA PRO) 30/22/14C, ff.254-256; Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxxiii, 1196-1199 (26 February 1864), c.1196.

<sup>47</sup> Philip Guedalla, *Palmerston* (London: Benn, 1926), pp.ix, 405.

<sup>48</sup> Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, p.586.

<sup>49</sup> Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, pp.5, 367.

<sup>50</sup> R.J. Gavin, 'Palmerston's Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865' (PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 1958). See also R.J. Gavin, 'Palmerston and Africa', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 1, 6 (1971), 93-99.

<sup>51</sup> Roderick Braithwaite, *Palmerston and Africa: The Rio Nuñez Affair, Competition, Diplomacy and Justice* (London: British Academic Press, 1996).

instigate discussion into an understudied part of his life and career, this sketched Palmerston's views on slavery and the slave trade outlining the broad contradictions.<sup>52</sup>

More significantly, Palmerston's biographers have tended to pass over their subject's relationship with anti-slavery. For although his exertions and motivations have not been ignored, with several recording his profound hatred of slavery and his 'crusade' against the slave trade, it is commonly treated in a few pages and dismissed as something of a curious anomaly.<sup>53</sup> Notably, this could be because Palmerston's anti-slavery commitments have been difficult to reconcile with traditional interpretations of him and his significance. For much of the twentieth century Palmerston was interpreted as a 'mixed bag of contradictions' and a somewhat 'two-dimensional figure.'<sup>54</sup> At home, he was viewed as a reactionary statesman who survived longer than the period in which he was formed and to which he belonged. Opportunistic, unprincipled and of negligible reforming character, historians have continually dismissed progressive tendencies on the grounds that 'at the bottom of him' was a 'moral vacuum.'<sup>55</sup> In foreign politics, meanwhile, Palmerston has been viewed as promoting constitutionalism, free trade and 'civilisation' abroad, but predominantly as a British (or English) nationalist; his political decisions relying less on liberal principles than the love of his country and the 'interests of England.' In general, moreover, he is not seen as a serious politician but jaunty, cavalier, and something of a Regency beau. Thus, tending to define British anti-slavery as an idealistic enterprise that overrode national interests, associated with evangelical piety and earnest principles, Palmerston's 'moral crusade' has provided an 'awkward fit' into much historical research.<sup>56</sup>

In 1926, for example, Philip Guedalla found it difficult to equate Palmerston's 'untiring' work ethic towards anti-slavery with his depiction of him as 'the last candle of

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<sup>52</sup> Oldfield, 'Palmerston and Anti-Slavery'. See also John Oldfield, 'After Emancipation: Slavery, Freedom and the Victorian Empire', in *The Victorian Empire and Britain's Maritime World, 1837–1901*, ed. by Miles Taylor (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 43-63 (pp.47-49).

<sup>53</sup> Guedalla, *Palmerston*, pp.ix, 301, 330, 374; Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, I, pp.231-242, 353-354; II, pp.275-276, 408-414; 428; Donald Southgate, *The Most English Minister...: The Policies and Politics of Palmerston* (London: Macmillan, 1966), pp.147-153; Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, pp.21-23, 26, 48, 79-81, 184-185, 192, 194, 265, 267, 276-277, 280, 281-282, 297-298, 484, 545-545, 548-550, 559; 587; Bourne, *Palmerston*, pp.622-624; Chamberlain, *Lord Palmerston*, pp.2, 56, 122.

<sup>54</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.2, 484.

<sup>55</sup> William Laurence Burn, *The Age of Equipoise: A Study of the Mid-Victorian Generation* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964), p.18.

<sup>56</sup> Burn, *The Age of Equipoise*, p.18.

the eighteenth century.<sup>57</sup> At the same time as being an 'indomitable relic,' 'ancient beau' and 'emblem of reaction,' someone who belonged to a time when slavery was universally accepted in Britain, Guedalla claimed that Palmerston was an 'old abolitionist' who held a 'strong distaste for slavery' and 'despised' America 'for their slave-owning.'<sup>58</sup> As for the slave trade, it was apparently 'his whole life's abomination.'<sup>59</sup> To overcome this contradiction, Guedalla argued that Palmerston's anti-slavery endeavours were an uncharacteristic deviation. In other ways, he claimed, Palmerston failed 'to recognise the latest flowers of freedom,' such as in his disdain for trade unions.<sup>60</sup> In 1936, Herbert Bell faced a similar problem. For at the same time as characterising Palmerston as a backward-looking conservative and English nationalist vigorously pursuing the 'interest of England,' Bell cast Palmerston as 'the life-long enemy of the slave trade' and his anti-slavery policy as an act of 'national altruism.'<sup>61</sup> Contradicting the rest of his foreign policy, Bell alleged that Palmerston was 'not accountable for his actions' where the issue of slavery was concerned.<sup>62</sup> To justify this inconsistency, Bell defined Palmerston's nationalism as being 'of a particular type.' Describing him as a 'moral nationalist,' Palmerston apparently coveted for Britain not only 'material' but 'moral pre-eminence.'<sup>63</sup> At other times, however, Bell seemed to jettison all notions of Palmerston as a nationalist and, confusingly, to embrace his fervent internationalism; anti-slavery was 'the great humanitarian enterprise of his life,' Bell lauded, describing his crusade as motivated by 'personal feeling' and 'conviction.'<sup>64</sup>

Palmerston's relationship with anti-slavery has also appeared incongruous with the research of Donald Southgate and Jasper Ridley, both of whom drew similar conclusions in 1966 and 1970 about the nationalist, conservative nature of Palmerstonian politics. Struggling to reconcile Palmerston's desire to preserve the 'interests of England' with their depictions of him as 'the scourge of slave traders' and 'a great champion of abolition,'<sup>65</sup> both scholars offered numerous, often superficial explanations for why Palmerston acted so vigorously against the slave trade. Southgate, for example, viewed

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<sup>57</sup> Guedalla, *Palmerston*, pp.ix, 405.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, pp.344, 358, 353, 330, 374.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p.374.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p.301.

<sup>61</sup> Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, II, pp.429, 275, 428.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, I, p.235.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, II, p.426.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, I, pp.231, 334.

<sup>65</sup> Southgate, *The Most English Minister*, pp.xxii-xxiii, 147; Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, pp.587-589, 184.

Palmerston's anti-slavery policy as a manifestation of his religious faith despite arguing later that Palmerston did not have a strong attachment to Christianity,<sup>66</sup> or else as part of his personal vanity project; Palmerston, he wrote, wished 'to be remembered' for 'world-bettering.'<sup>67</sup> Likewise, Ridley dismissed Palmerston's anti-slavery 'zeal' as an eccentricity, claiming he was 'not quite sane' where slavery was concerned,<sup>68</sup> before putting it down to an earnest sense of 'duty' and later insisting that Palmerston was pressured into it by the force of public opinion.<sup>69</sup> In addition, Ridley claimed that Palmerston's views on the slave trade only changed 'after all of the British aristocracy had changed [their minds] on this question.'<sup>70</sup>

Despite Kenneth Bourne's major redefinition of Palmerston's *Early Years* in 1982, in which he reimagined Palmerston as the 'first true Victorian' with respect to 'his attitude to 'Liberalism, to nationality and to economics,'<sup>71</sup> and as a balance of power politician rather than a nationalist,<sup>72</sup> he also struggled to explain his subject's relationship with British anti-slavery. Interpreting Palmerston as a conservative at home and a calculating exponent of *realpolitik* abroad, Bourne was adamant Palmerston was no ideological crusader for 'civil and religious liberty all over the world' and, viewing the slave trade as unrelated to the power balance in Europe, did not believe anti-slavery was overly important to Palmerston.<sup>73</sup> Again, Bourne suggested a variety of reasons why Palmerston's anti-slavery policy was not an 'actual crusade,' and why he pursued foreign governments 'relentlessly' despite having no anti-slavery 'passion.'<sup>74</sup> Initially, for instance, Bourne claimed Palmerston's treaty-making could be explained as part of Earl Grey's commitment to retrenchment; his actions an attempt to reduce the cost of the naval force Britain was obliged to maintain off the African coast.<sup>75</sup> Later, Bourne claimed that Palmerston's actions were not special but 'inevitable,' since anti-slavery was supported by every member of the Government. Hence, any Foreign Secretary, 'whoever he might

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<sup>66</sup> Southgate, *The Most English Minister*, pp.xxviii, 148, 408-409.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p.147.

<sup>68</sup> Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, pp.185, 184.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, pp.184, 192.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, pp.23, 587.

<sup>71</sup> Bourne, *Palmerston*, p.628.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, pp.350-351, 624.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, pp.348, 624.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, pp.622-623.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p.622.

have been,' would have acted in the same way.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, like Southgate, Bourne also puts Palmerston's actions down to a desire for popularity; claiming that he 'no doubt... remembered that it was accusations of lukewarmness on this issue that had cost him crucial support in Cambridge in his first effort to enter Parliament.'<sup>77</sup> If anything, Bourne joked finally, Palmerston's policies were motivated by his desire to annoy other countries, and especially France; for 'if anything could have made Palmerston embark upon an actual crusade against the slave trade it was something personal like that.'<sup>78</sup> 'All this did not mean that Palmerston was insincere about the anti-slavery campaign,' Bourne concludes. 'For him, as for the Whig Administration in general, it was a happy coincidence of humanitarianism and expediency.'<sup>79</sup>

Since the early 1990s, the nature of Palmerston and Palmerstonism has been significantly revised by historians of British Liberalism as well as by Palmerston's most recent biographer. As such, Palmerston's anti-slavery beliefs and endeavours have now been more coherently accommodated and explained. In 1991, for example, Palmerston was propounded as a figure genuinely committed to anti-slavery for principled reasons by E.D. Steele, who re-appraised Palmerston as 'not merely liberal but genuinely progressive by contemporary standards.'<sup>80</sup> At home, Steele claimed that Palmerston possessed a 'genius for adaptation.' By this, he meant that Palmerston sensed the changing wind of democratic politics and altered his stance accordingly; pioneering a new kind of politics on the mass platform that prepared the way for democratic reform.<sup>81</sup> In foreign politics, moreover, this translated into an equally progressive agenda, with Palmerston supporting the development of liberalism in Europe wherever practical and not being hamstrung by ideological differences.<sup>82</sup> Thus, Palmerston's 'lifelong opposition to slavery' fitted neatly into Steele's vision of him as an advanced reformer.<sup>83</sup> 'It was Palmerston,' Steele wrote, 'who gave substance to the international declaration of intent to abolish the slave trade in 1815.'<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p.624.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p.623.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p.623.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p.623.

<sup>80</sup> David Steele, 'Temple, Henry John, third Viscount Palmerston (1784–1865), Prime Minister', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2009)

<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27112>> [accessed 17 February 2016].

<sup>81</sup> Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, pp.5, 367.

<sup>82</sup> Steele, 'Temple, Henry John, third Viscount Palmerston (1784–1865), Prime Minister'.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.



Although Steele enlivened debate about the real nature of Palmerston, his revisionist account is at times unpersuasive and has been criticised by Bruce Kinzer and Paul Smith for exaggerating Palmerston's intentions.<sup>85</sup> Steele's interpretation, for instance, appears to overstate Palmerston's conception of the value of democratic politics. As his lifelong opposition to Parliamentary Reform and wariness of the working classes indicate, Palmerston was no progressive democrat.<sup>86</sup> Rather than a possessing 'genius for adaptation,'<sup>87</sup> it is more convincing to see Palmerston holding an inherent Whiggism and small 'c' conservatism which led him to reject any kind of radical change. In foreign politics, meanwhile, Steele's projection of Palmerston as a progressive advocate of constitutionalism seems to neglect the fact that Palmerston was unprepared to go further than offer 'moral support' to foreign liberal movements on a number of occasions, such as during the Polish, Italian and German uprisings of the early 1830s.<sup>88</sup> Above all, though, one might posit that Steele's interpretation fails to adequately explain where Palmerston's strongly held progressive instincts originated and what caused his faith in 'the national will' to become so prominent after 1855.<sup>89</sup>

In 2010, David Brown once more reinterpreted Palmerston's life and career in his compelling new biography, which finally 'made sense' of Palmerston by embracing his complexities.<sup>90</sup> Examining Palmerston and his world through the interaction of 'high' and 'low' politics, making comprehensive use of the Palmerston papers, and accepting that Palmerston 'defied neat categorisation,'<sup>91</sup> Brown's approach not only gives a more profound impression of the man and his times but coherently accommodates Palmerston's 'sincere' and 'focused' relationship with anti-slavery.<sup>92</sup> Crucially, Brown

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<sup>85</sup> Bruce L. Kinzer, 'Palmerston and Liberalism, 1855-1865. By E.D. Steele', *The American Historical Review*, 5, 97 (1992), 1525-1526. See also Paul Smith, 'Palmerston and Liberalism, 1855-1865. By E.D. Steele', *The English Historical Review*, 426, 108 (1993), 144-145.

<sup>86</sup> Kinzer, 'Palmerston and Liberalism', p.1526; Smith, 'Palmerston and Liberalism', p.145. For more on Palmerston's opposition to Parliamentary Reform, see H.C.F. Bell, 'Palmerston and Parliamentary Representation', *The Journal of Modern History*, 4, 2 (1932), 186-213. For an example of Palmerston's wariness of the masses, see Palmerston to Lord Aberdeen, 12 February 1854, PP, HA/G/10/1-2. In his letter to the Prime Minister, Palmerston claimed that it was not sensible to enfranchise men who would 'murder their children to get nine pounds to be spent in drink.'

<sup>87</sup> Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, pp.5, 367.

<sup>88</sup> For more on Palmerston's responses to the liberal movements in Poland, Italy and Germany during the 1830s, see Bourne, *Palmerston*, pp.352-357, 365-367, 367-369.

<sup>89</sup> Smith, 'Palmerston and Liberalism', p.144.

<sup>90</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.4.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, p.2.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, p.240.

identifies the 'Palmerstonian mindset' as one rooted in the intellectual tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment and shaped by Dugald Stewart.<sup>93</sup> As such, he recasts Palmerston as a principled, progressive, and forward-looking politician, whose 'belief in liberal progress... was sincere and informed his understanding of his political responsibilities and obligations.'<sup>94</sup> Disagreeing with traditional portraits of Palmerston as a 'cavalier adventurer' acting upon a narrow definition of Britain's national interests,<sup>95</sup> Brown argues that Palmerston was 'serious in his approach to politics' and that his foreign policy was an expression of his coherent political mindset.<sup>96</sup> On one hand, then, Palmerston's foreign policy was based on a 'cold assessment' of Britain's 'material and strategic self-interest,' and was a continuous diplomatic game of 'checks and balances.'<sup>97</sup> Yet, on the other hand Palmerston held a strong belief in the values of constitutionalism, liberty, freedom, honour, progress and 'civilisation,' and hoped to express these values in his foreign policy wherever applicable. 'There was, then, nothing evangelical about Palmerston's "liberal" foreign policy,' since balance of power considerations played 'a major part' in his decision-making, yet if only 'a thread' of Victorian Whig-Liberalism manifested in that policy it belied a sincere desire to advance progressive politics.<sup>98</sup> As an issue that correlated with his Scottish Enlightenment values, therefore, anti-slavery allowed Palmerston to maintain a 'continuous undercurrent of liberalism' in his 'broader policy objectives.'<sup>99</sup>

However, although the nature of Palmerston has now been dramatically revised, one might argue that anti-slavery is still not considered an overly important aspect of Palmerston's life and career, and that his complex relationship with it has been overlooked and obscured. Even where historians have begun to consider it in a more sophisticated way, for example, it has not taken centre stage. Invariably, anti-slavery has been used as a lens through which to recognise the value of larger issues, and has not in itself been considered vital to the development of Palmerston or used to reassess the nature of Palmerstonism. For example, even though Brown goes further than earlier biographers by analysing Palmerston's interactions with anti-slavery in a variety of ways,

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, pp.4-6.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p.6.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p.2.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, p.6.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, pp.300, 448.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, p.300.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, p.237.

his account does just this. In his analysis of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, for instance, Brown identifies that agreement's slave trade provision as one aspect which infuriated Palmerston, but primarily uses this to highlight how Palmerston remained 'publicly active' in opposition.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, when analysing Palmerston's visit to Scotland in 1853 and in particular a speech he gave celebrating the abolition of the Brazilian slave trade, Brown does not analyse the ramifications of that address in terms of anti-slavery, but in order to examine Palmerston's Anglo-centrism.<sup>101</sup> Finally, during his discussion on the U.S. Civil War, Brown contemplates how far Palmerston's response to that conflict was influenced by his long-standing opposition to slavery, but above all reflects on the balance of *real-* and *idealpolitik* at the heart of Palmerstonian foreign policy.<sup>102</sup> Thus, Brown illuminates how issues relating to the slave trade and slavery 'touched his career' at many points,<sup>103</sup> but it is not viewed as a particularly special area of interest and anti-slavery does not come to the forefront as intrinsic to the development of Palmerston.

In general, historians continue to underplay the significance of extra-European affairs, and especially the suppression of the slave trade, to Victorian Britain; with opportunities and dilemmas outside of Europe often depicted as diminutive aspects of British foreign politics. In other words, viewing nineteenth-century Europe as the heart of international diplomacy, historians have overwhelmingly focused scholarship on Palmerston's agenda on that continent. For example, although Brown acknowledges that Palmerston's efforts to end the slave trade require more attention, he analyses Palmerston as a fundamentally European statesman. 'The spectre of war' remained a constant threat in Europe, he argues, and therefore, 'to Victorian minds,' was 'of more fundamental significance.'<sup>104</sup> This focus on European politics is not a new development, however, for it was a consistent feature of Palmerston studies throughout the twentieth century. In 1951, for example, C.K. Webster judged Palmerston's contribution to the 'Liberal Movement' in Europe more noteworthy than his work suppressing the slave trade, despite acknowledging that Palmerston spent more time negotiating that issue than 'any other single question.'<sup>105</sup> Likewise, thirty years later Bourne asserted vigorously

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, pp.267-269.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, pp.351-358.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, pp.451-452.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p.130.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p.237.

<sup>105</sup> Charles Kingsley Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, 1830-1841: Britain, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Question*, 2 vols (London: Bell, 1951), I, p.vi.

that Palmerston's policy was 'centred in Europe,' and challenged 'anyone who doubts that' to witness the 'overwhelming mass of European papers and correspondence' Palmerston left behind at the Foreign Office. If anything, Bourne was surprised Palmerston spent so much time dealing with 'mundane' extra-European affairs.<sup>106</sup> Above all then, the nature of Palmerston and Palmerstonism has been consistently critiqued through a European frame of reference.<sup>107</sup> To what extent Palmerston was a Liberal, Conservative, nationalist, balance of power politician, or anything else, has been determined by his European foreign policy. This is demonstrably a legitimate and profitable undertaking. Yet it must be stated that there were also other, alternative liberal courses that transcended Europe, such as the anti-slavery movement, deserving of attention.

Historians of slavery and abolition have also tended to overlook the complex relationship between Palmerston and British anti-slavery. In general, historical research has focused on the period between 1787 and 1838, and divided this period into two distinct phases. The first of these charts the rise of the movement to abolish the British slave trade, which culminated in the Abolition Act of 1807.<sup>108</sup> The second deals with the destruction of West Indian slavery and of that institution throughout the British Empire.<sup>109</sup> In addition, historians have concentrated their attention on other areas, such as the human experience of the middle passage,<sup>110</sup> plantation life and resistance,<sup>111</sup> the history of Africa from the perspective of its indigenous people,<sup>112</sup> and the long-term

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<sup>106</sup> Bourne, *Palmerston*, p.624.

<sup>107</sup> For another example, see Jonathan Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism: English Liberalism, National Identity and Europe, 1830-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>108</sup> See, for example, Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810* (London: Macmillan, 1975); Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery*; Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>109</sup> See, for example, William Law Mathieson, *British Slavery and its Abolition, 1823-1838* (London: Longmans Green 1926); Walvin, *England, Slaves and Freedom, 1776-1838*; Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 1988); Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (London: Pan Books, 2006).

<sup>110</sup> See, for example, Herbert S. Klein, *The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007); Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (London: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993).

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire, c.1600-c.1836: A West African Imperialism in the era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977); Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of A West African Slaving Port, 1727-1892* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004); Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

impact of slavery on African society.<sup>113</sup> As such, the period after emancipation, and in particular Victorian Britain's anti-slavery crusade, has been relatively understudied. Where this topic has been looked at, moreover, there is no clear line of historiography that deals with this theme and time period. Rather, the history of Victorian anti-slavery has developed by intersecting with a wide variety of historical approaches; from diplomatic, political and naval,<sup>114</sup> to economic, cultural and gender,<sup>115</sup> through to global and transnational.<sup>116</sup> Historians have therefore analysed Victorian anti-slavery in a number of diverse ways and from many different perspectives.

One approach that has been somewhat neglected, however, is biography; an omission which is perhaps surprising considering the predominance of this approach to studying the pre-emancipation era. Although there has been enormous scholarly interest in the lives of individual abolitionists who helped to end the British slave trade, especially Granville Sharp, John Newton, William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson,<sup>117</sup> those individuals who played a prominent role in the abolition of the international slave trade

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<sup>113</sup> See, for example, Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>114</sup> For diplomatic histories of British anti-slavery, see William Law Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade, 1839-1865* (London: Longmans Green, 1929); Reginald Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London: Butterworth, 1933); Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*. For political histories of British anti-slavery, see P.M. Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France, 1814-48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012). For naval histories, see Christopher Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade: The Suppression of the African Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Longmans Green, 1949); W.E.F. Ward, *The Royal Navy and the Slavers: The Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969); Raymond Howell, *The Royal Navy and the Slave Trade* (London: Croom Helm, 1987).

<sup>115</sup> For an economic history of British anti-slavery, see Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*. For a cultural history of British anti-slavery, see David Turley, *The Culture of English Anti-Slavery, 1780-1860* (London: Routledge, 1991). For a gender history of British anti-slavery, see Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>116</sup> For global histories of British anti-slavery, see John Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution: An International History of Anti-Slavery, c.1787-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); William Mulligan and Maurice Bric (eds.), *A Global History of Anti-Slavery Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). For a transnational history of British anti-slavery, see Derek R. Peterson (ed.), *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa and the Atlantic* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010).

<sup>117</sup> See, for example, E.C.P. Lascelles, *Granville Sharp and the Freedom of Slaves in England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928); Andrew Lyall, *Granville Sharp's Cases on Slavery* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2017); Jonathan Aitken, *John Newton: From Disgrace to Amazing Grace* (London: Continuum, 2007); Reginald Coupland, *Wilberforce* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923); Oliver Warner, *William Wilberforce and his Times* (London: Batsford, 1962); Robin Furneaux, *William Wilberforce* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974); John Pollock, *William Wilberforce* (Tring: Lion, 1978); Stephen Michael Tomkins, *William Wilberforce: A Biography* (Oxford: Lion, 2007); William Hague, *William Wilberforce: The Life of the Great Anti-Slave Trade Campaigner* (London: Harper Perennial, 2008); Earl Leslie Griggs, *Thomas Clarkson: The Friend of Slaves* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1936); Ellen Gibson Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

have not received the same generous treatment. There have not been copious biographies of Thomas Fowell Buxton, for instance, despite him being Wilberforce's successor as the Parliamentary champion of the anti-slavery movement.<sup>118</sup> Similarly, neither Henry Brougham nor Joseph Sturge have commanded the same level of academic attention, despite their crucial role in establishing the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (hereafter BFASS), which still exists today in the form of Anti-Slavery International.<sup>119</sup> Over time, moreover, a number of anti-slavery scholars have praised Palmerston specifically as being one of the key protagonists against the international slave trade, with some even acknowledging that his efforts deserve further scholarly recognition. Yet, despite making clear that further research needs to be done, these calls have largely gone unheeded or ignored.<sup>120</sup>

On the contrary, a number of historiographical traditions have emerged in this field which have had the opposite effect: marginalising and undervaluing the salience of Palmerston to British anti-slavery. One of the major, long-running arguments, for example, is that the British Government was something of a puppet in this era, dancing to the tune of abolitionist groups inside-and-out of Parliament. Furthermore, that it was strongly influenced, even directed, by the strength of a vociferous, well-mobilised public opinion. As Bernard Nelson stated as long ago as 1942, 'public opinion exerted a continuous and formidable pressure on the government in the interest of international abolition which could not be ignored.'<sup>121</sup> Over time, this argument has not abated but instead been made and remade by numerous scholars of anti-slavery. In 2010, for

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<sup>118</sup> See, for example, Oliver Barclay, *Thomas Fowell Buxton and the Liberation of Slaves* (York: William Sessions, 2001); David Bruce, *The Life of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton: Extraordinary Perseverance* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013).

<sup>119</sup> See, for example, Arthur Aspinall, *Lord Brougham and the Whig Party* (London: Longmans Green, 1927); G.T. Garratt, *Lord Brougham* (London: Macmillan, 1935); Robert MacKenzie Stewart, *Henry Brougham, 1778-1868: His Public Career* (London: Bodley Head, 1985); Alex Tyrrell, *Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party in Early Victorian Britain* (London: Helm, 1987). For more on the BFASS, see James Heartfield, *The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1838-1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>120</sup> See, for example, Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade*, pp.60, 140, 182; Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.385; Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p.266; Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade*, pp.24, 78, 183, 190; Temperley, *British Antislavery*, p.155; Roger Anstey, 'The Pattern of British Abolitionism in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, ed. by Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (Folkstone: Dawson, 1980), 19-42 (pp.33-34); Stanley L. Engerman and David Eltis, 'Economic Aspects of the Abolition Debate', in *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, ed. by Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (Folkstone: Dawson, 1980), 272-293 (p.283).

<sup>121</sup> Bernard H. Nelson, 'The Slave Trade as a Factor in British Foreign Policy, 1815-1862', *The Journal of Negro History*, 2, 27 (1942), 192-209 (p.192). See also Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade*, pp.187-188, 191; Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*, pp.188, 250.

example, Seymour Drescher argued in his historical synthesis, *Abolition*, that anti-slavery public opinion experienced a rise and fall during the nineteenth century; reaching its 'zenith' in the 1830s and 1840s before 'waning' in the following decades,<sup>122</sup> whilst in 2012 Richard Huzzey refined Drescher's view in his acclaimed account, *Freedom Burning*, arguing against this 'decline' thesis and instead positing that anti-slavery public opinion diversified and fragmented during the nineteenth century into 'competing ideologies of freedom.'<sup>123</sup> Once again though, Huzzey concluded that the overriding impetus behind the Government's anti-slavery policy was the extrinsic influence of anti-slavery sentiment. 'A real fear of public wrath over slavery issues meant that politicians had to tread carefully if they were to avoid censure of opponents,' he states.<sup>124</sup> Public opinion, therefore, exerted 'a negative impulse for their actions, as they were motivated by wanting to avoid the perception of being weak on anti-slavery principles.'<sup>125</sup>

Another long-standing tradition in this field is that Victorian anti-slavery politics was not the brainchild of one party or individual. During this period it was the Foreign Office that administered Britain's anti-slavery policy, yet the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs have rarely been credited with playing an important personal role; whether it was Lord Castlereagh (in office from 1812-1822),<sup>126</sup> George Canning (in office from 1807-1809 and 1822-1827),<sup>127</sup> Lord Palmerston (in office from 1830-1834, 1835-1841 and 1846-1851) or Lord Aberdeen (in office between 1828-1830 and 1841-1846).<sup>128</sup> On the contrary, the established view is that Britain's anti-slavery policy was impersonal and non-partisan; that it had become institutionalised in the Foreign Office and constituted 'something close to an anti-slavery "official mind"'.<sup>129</sup> Roger Anstey, for example, first introduced this idea into the field of slavery and abolition in 1968, arguing that as a 'good and proper concern of policy' anti-slavery had become 'the received

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<sup>122</sup> Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.284-285, 271, 275, 267.

<sup>123</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, chp.8, esp. pp.204-206.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, p.205.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, p.205.

<sup>126</sup> For more on Lord Castlereagh's anti-slavery policy, see Nelson, 'The Slave Trade as a Factor in British Foreign Policy', pp.192-202.

<sup>127</sup> For more on George Canning's anti-slavery policy, see Leslie Bethell, 'The Independence of Brazil and the Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade: Anglo-Brazilian Relations, 1822-1826', *The Journal of Latin American Studies*, 1, 2 (1969), 115-147.

<sup>128</sup> For more on Lord Aberdeen's anti-slavery policy see W.D. Jones, 'The Origins and Passage of Lord Aberdeen's Act', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 42, 4 (1962), 502-520. See also Muriel E. Chamberlain, *Lord Aberdeen: A Political Biography* (London: Longman, 1983), pp.311-314, 317-319, 350-351, 357, 368-389, 526.

<sup>129</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.52.

conviction' of the British Government, 'something which did not require to be argued afresh as one generation of officials succeeded another, as one Foreign Secretary gave place to his successor.'<sup>130</sup> Recently, Anstey's interpretation has been echoed by Huzzey, who argued that despite there being 'no single set of uncontested policies,' 'a narrow set of approaches' influenced all of Britain's Foreign Secretaries in the nineteenth century. *Freedom Burning*, therefore, sets out to dissect 'the anti-slavery lobe of the official mind.'<sup>131</sup>

In addition to these long-held traditions, moreover, is a relatively new interpretation in this field which again marginalises the role and significance of Palmerston in ending the international slave trade. Namely, in his account Huzzey reimagines Victorian Britain as an 'anti-slavery nation.'<sup>132</sup> By this, he means that Britain's 'institutions, policies, and people' had been 'shaped by that identity' and, in the words of the American Senator Thomas Hart Benton, that Britain was a land where anti-slavery was 'the policy of the government, the voice of law, and the spirit of the people.'<sup>133</sup> At the heart of this 'anti-slavery nation,' Huzzey posits, was an 'anti-slavery state,' responsible for executing Britain's anti-slavery policy across the globe.<sup>134</sup> Crucially, however, rather than identifying Palmerston, or even the position of the Foreign Secretary more generally, as a major element at the centre of Britain's anti-slavery state, Huzzey relegated both to a position of minor importance. For although Huzzey acknowledged that every single dispatch relating to anti-slavery crossed Palmerston's desk,<sup>135</sup> that he was in office extensively as Foreign Secretary and then as Prime Minister, and that the Slave Trade Department 'enjoyed a particular patronage' under him, he adamantly rejected the

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<sup>130</sup> Roger Anstey, 'Capitalism and Slavery: A Critique', *The Economic History Review*, 21, 2 (1968), 307-320 (p.318). The concept of the Foreign Office 'official mind' originates from Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher and Alice Denny's account, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1981). The idea behind this concept was not entirely new, however. Reginald Coupland, for instance, argued in his 1933 account that the British anti-slavery movement was a collective one not dominated by individuals; the country was 'acting together with *one mind* and voice to influence history.' See Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*, p.188. For more on the 'official mind' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Thomas G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). See also William Gervase Clarence-Smith, 'The British "Official Mind" and Nineteenth Century Islamic Debates over the Abolition of Slavery', in *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975*, ed. by Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), 125-142.

<sup>131</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.52.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, chp.1.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, p.19. It is worth noting that Senator Thomas Hart Benton did not mean this as a compliment.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, chp.3.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, p.44.



notion that that department was Palmerston's 'personal fiefdom.'<sup>136</sup> On the contrary, Huzzey defined the anti-slavery state as a collaborative, transnational 'network' encompassing a collection of institutions, such as the Cabinet, the Admiralty, the Royal Navy, the Slave Trade Department of the Foreign Office, the Secretary of State as well as the Consular Service, which comprised overseas ambassadors, consuls, and commissary judges.<sup>137</sup> For Huzzey, then, the Foreign Secretary was merely one small cog in this larger, more complex operation. And, vitally, one that was not essential for the machinery of state to keep working; for without Palmerston's 'personal patronage,' Huzzey stated, nothing significant would have changed since anti-slavery had become 'national politics.'<sup>138</sup>

One might argue, however, that Palmerston's omission from British anti-slavery studies is not just significant in itself, but has impacted our understanding of the history which remains. In other words, that by leaving out this vitally important figure we are left with an incomplete and slightly misleading portrait of Victorian Britain's anti-slavery crusade. It is notable, for instance, that Huzzey sets out to analyse '*the British state's* anti-slavery policy' in *Freedom Burning*,<sup>139</sup> which is essentially a conflation of the policies of Lord Palmerston, the Duke of Wellington, Lord Aberdeen, Lord Granville, Lord Clarendon, Lord Malmesbury and Lord John Russell, all of whom administered the Foreign Office at various points during the thirty-five year period between 1830 and 1865. This is not to say that Huzzey's assessment is overly simplistic, however, for on the contrary his novel conceptualisation of it is compelling. Subscribing to John Darwin's theory of a 'British system of world power,' Huzzey argues that Britain's anti-slavery policy operated within an 'anti-slavery world system.'<sup>140</sup> By this, he means that anti-slavery politics 'never existed independently of imperial and foreign policy anxieties or of the perceived and suspected actions of other countries,' and that Britain's policymakers were therefore 'flexible, responsive, and opportunistic with different peoples in different circumstances.'<sup>141</sup> Essentially, that although Britain's overall strategy was consistent across this period – to enlist the world's nations to Britain's global right-of-search

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid, p.70.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, pp.42-51.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, p.70.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, p.53. This is my emphasis, not in the original text.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, pp.51-65. See also John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>141</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.41.

network – statesmen tailored a set of bespoke approaches to individual countries depending on a range of factors, including ‘the terrain, atmosphere, and individuals involved.’<sup>142</sup>

Significantly, the most important factor was how ‘civilised’ the opposing country was perceived to be according to Victorian statesmen’s imagined international hierarchy of nations.<sup>143</sup> Utilising the work of political scientist Edward Keene, this view is grounded upon the notion that Britons were ‘beginning to think of themselves and their societies in a novel way’ during the nineteenth century, adopting the notion of ‘civilisation’ to define themselves and others.<sup>144</sup> The rise of this modern concept provided an elaborate way of ranking the development of different societies against one another, and as a result a ‘virtual league table of nations’ was formed.<sup>145</sup> At the same time as the Foreign Office placed Britain at the very top of its imagined hierarchy, therefore, Huzzey argues that it sub-divided the rest of the world’s nations into one of four distinct categories of nation, ‘advanced,’ ‘civilised,’ ‘semi-civilised’ and ‘barbarous,’ with this status dictating how each country was to be treated in relation to one another.<sup>146</sup> Nations that were deemed to be ‘advanced,’ for example, such as the Great Powers of Europe and the U.S. were approached respectfully, with anti-slavery treaties secured by ‘discretion and negotiation’ and Britain’s power restrained by the simple fact that ‘war would never have been a viable strategic choice.’<sup>147</sup> Building on the work of Matthew Mason, who argued that Britain played a ‘toothless, even hapless role’ in Anglo-American diplomacy and that the ‘harshest language’ Palmerston authorised was to criticise American officials of ‘carelessness,’<sup>148</sup> Huzzey asserted that British statesmen tended to be ‘timid and pliant’ when dealing with powerful countries.<sup>149</sup> Meanwhile, Huzzey argues that nations considered to be ‘civilised’ were treated far less graciously.<sup>150</sup> Essentially, because these

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid, pp.51-52.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, pp.52-53.

<sup>144</sup> Edward Keene, ‘A Case Study of the Construction of International Hierarchy: British Treaty-Making Against the Slave Trade in the Early Nineteenth Century’, *International Organisation*, 61, 2 (2007), 311-339 (p.318).

<sup>145</sup> Keene, ‘A Case Study of the Construction of International Hierarchy’, p.319.

<sup>146</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.52-53.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, pp.53-58, quotes at pp.56, 57.

<sup>148</sup> Matthew Mason, ‘Keeping up Appearances: The International Politics of Slave Trade Abolition in the Nineteenth Century Atlantic World’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 4, 66 (2009), 809-832 (p.826). See also George L. Bernstein, ‘Special Relationship and Appeasement: Liberal Policy towards America in the Age of Palmerston’, *The Historical Journal*, 41, 3 (1998), 725-750.

<sup>149</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.56.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, pp.58-60.

nations were unable to resist Britain's overtures let alone to bloody its nose, statesmen were willing to 'cajole, push and bully' them into anti-slavery commitments and even to indulge in 'unilateral assertions of British power' to override any obstinacy.<sup>151</sup> The weakness of 'semi-civilised' nations, moreover, such as the Ottoman Empire, led them to be treated in a different manner altogether, and in fact to receive almost the same respect and courtesies that were afforded to 'advanced' nations.<sup>152</sup> Not wanting to apply too much pressure in case it undermined anti-slavery or hindered Britain's interests, the Government took a 'cautious and pragmatic' approach' with these 'shaky' regimes.<sup>153</sup> Lastly, nations that were perceived to be 'barbarous,' such as West African states, were again treated very differently.<sup>154</sup> Huzzey argues that Britain treated African peoples disrespectfully, discourteously and contemptuously during the Victorian era, promoting the idea that 'traditional rights under international law could be suspended when dealing with African nations on matters concerning the slave trade,' and thus opening up that continent to an array of violent and brutal policies.<sup>155</sup> The realities of world power, therefore, meant that 'different options seemed appropriate to different countries at different times,' and that Britain's policymakers could pursue their idealistic objective of slave-trade suppression using whatever tactics were expedient to ensure compliance at the same time as safeguarding the country's national interests.<sup>156</sup> Britain's anti-slavery policy, Huzzey concluded,

aimed to get away with as much as possible without sparking war or permanent damage to Britain's local or global standing; the whole point was to guide a world system that advanced the causes of Christian civilisation and British dominance at the same time, not to purchase one at the price of the other.<sup>157</sup>

There is much to admire about Huzzey's revised conceptualisation of Britain's anti-slavery policy, not least how it treats this subject in a more inclusive way than former histories of British anti-slavery; connecting it to the rest of Britain's political and imperial

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid, pp.58, 59.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid, pp.60-63.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, pp.61, 62.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, pp.141-147.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, p.142.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, pp.52-53.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, pp.63-64.

history rather than seeing it as 'quite unlike any other diplomatic issue.'<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, Huzzey's argument is carefully made, persuasive and refreshing, bringing forward an entirely new and more complex way of appreciating Britain's anti-slavery policy in the Victorian period. Despite its merits, however, there are perhaps a few problems with Huzzey's interpretation which must be confronted. To begin with, Huzzey's analysis of Britain's 'anti-slavery world system' is predicated upon a tightly focused analysis of just three countries: the U.S., Brazil, and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>159</sup> For Huzzey, this case study approach is undoubtedly a good one, for it illustrates some of the main distinctions in Britain's anti-slavery policy towards 'advanced,' 'civilised,' and 'semi-civilised' countries respectively. This is ideal considering that his account is intentionally panoramic and far-reaching, endeavouring 'to scratch the surface' of many different ideas and to 'show how they fit into the shape of anti-slavery practices more generally.'<sup>160</sup> As Huzzey rightly points out, moreover, the case studies selected work well because their experiences were 'broadly representative' of Britain's policy towards nations who possessed 'similar wealth and power.'<sup>161</sup> One might argue, however, that by focusing upon only these three countries Huzzey naturally tends to overgeneralise, for he does not necessarily have the space to explore all of the nuances of his own interpretation. It is not just that Huzzey cannot cross-reference Palmerston's anti-slavery policy towards the U.S. with another 'advanced' power, for instance, in order to drill deeper into his analysis, for even within his selected case studies he has been forced to omit some important lines of enquiry. As one of Huzzey's reviewers claims, in other words, 'there is more to be said on all of these subjects, because this work's striking breadth makes it nearly impossible to comprehensively cover any one subject.'<sup>162</sup>

It is also problematic that Huzzey refrained from analysing Britain's anti-slavery policy towards 'barbarous' states alongside the other categories of nation, deciding to make an 'an arbitrary but necessary division' between 'civilised' and 'non-civilised'

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<sup>158</sup> Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, pp.103-104.

<sup>159</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.51-65.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, p.20.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, p.53.

<sup>162</sup> Christopher Myers, review of *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain*, by Richard Huzzey', *The Journal of Social History*, 48, 2 (2014), 468-470 (p.470). See also Kevin Grant, review of *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain*, by Richard Huzzey, *Victorian Studies*, 57, 3 (2015), 556-559 (p.558); Joshua Newton, review of *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain*, by Richard Huzzey', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 41, 3 (2013), 538-539 (p.538).

countries.<sup>163</sup> Britain's policy was substantially different towards countries that were under British 'ownership,' Huzzey claims, in contrast to its policy towards independent states.<sup>164</sup> Once again, this justification makes perfect sense for Huzzey, whose work explores anti-slavery throughout the nineteenth century and cleverly uses Britain's policy towards 'barbarous' nations in the mid-century period as a springboard to explain Britain's 'scramble' into Africa in the late-century period.<sup>165</sup> However, this justification does not necessarily hold sway in the early and mid-nineteenth century, since Britain's imperial conquest of Africa had not truly started then and most of the states that Britain engaged with were independent.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, by choosing not to analyse Britain's treatment of 'barbarous' countries alongside 'advanced,' 'civilised' and 'semi-civilised' ones, Huzzey's analysis obscures the staggering inequalities that were present in Britain's global anti-slavery policy.

Lastly, although Huzzey can draw notable support from Edward Keene and David Newsome for his argument that Britain's foreign policy was influenced by notions of an international hierarchy (for both these scholars argue that British statesmen devised 'a sort of pecking order' of the world's nations, which ranked countries according to factors such as religion, race and culture) this interpretation is by no means universally accepted.<sup>167</sup> Historians of Victorian Britain, for example, have generally preferred to conceptualise Britain's foreign politics by reference to overarching political philosophies such as commercialism, liberalism, conservatism or imperialism,<sup>168</sup> to particular

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<sup>163</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.41.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, p.41.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*, chp.6.

<sup>166</sup> Britain's only colonies in Africa during the pre-1865 period were the Cape of Good Hope (1806), Sierra Leone (1808), the Gambia (1821), Natal (1843) and Lagos (1861). See 'Chronology', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Andrew Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 712-741.

<sup>167</sup> Keene, 'A Case Study of the Construction of International Hierarchy'; David Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture: Perceptions and Introspections in an Age of Change* (London: Murray, 1997), p.94, 90-102. Newsome argued that this 'pecking order' placed Britain firmly at the top. Beneath Britain, policymakers privileged Protestant, 'Anglo-Saxon,' and commercially minded nations such as Prussia and the Low Countries. Beneath these countries were then Catholic and 'Latin nations,' like France, Spain and Portugal. Non-Christian countries were lower still, followed by non-white and non-European peoples and nations. See also Georgios Varouxakis, "'Great" versus "small" nations: size and national greatness in Victorian political thought', in *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth Century Political Thought*, ed. by Duncan Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 136-158.

<sup>168</sup> See, for example, D.C.M. Platt, *Finance, Trade, and Politics in British Foreign Policy, 1815-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968); Bernard Semmel, *Liberalism and Naval Strategy: Ideology, Interest and Sea Power during the Pax Britannica* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986); Geoffrey Hicks, *Conservatism and British Foreign Policy, 1820-1920: the Derbys and their world* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Muriel E. Chamberlain, *'Pax Britannica'? British Foreign Policy, 1789-1914* (Harlow: Longman, 1988).

geographical locations such as Europe,<sup>169</sup> or by identifying it with an individual politician.<sup>170</sup> To establish the hierarchical framing of Britain's foreign policy, therefore, Huzzey's work might usefully have offered a closer definition of what contemporary British politicians understood by the concepts of 'civilisation' and 'barbarism,' and how these views led them to form an imagined hierarchy of nations.

Another problem with marginalising Palmerston from the history of British anti-slavery is potentially even more significant. Indeed, it is perhaps due to the long-standing traditions in this field that the historiography of Victorian anti-slavery became polarised during the twentieth century, with historians battling to define the nature of the Foreign Office's 'official mind.' Ever since the publication of Eric Williams's *Capitalism & Slavery* in 1944 argued that abolition was never the outworking of deeply-held moral values but a rational economic response to the declining profitability of the British slave trade,<sup>171</sup> one might argue that the field of slavery and abolition as a whole has been partitioned into two rival and isolated camps; with one side privileging the selfish, calculating nature of British anti-slavery and the other presenting it as an ideological, self-sacrificing moral triumph.<sup>172</sup> For whilst Williams's thesis has been warmly applauded and built upon by historians such as David Ryden and Joseph Inikori,<sup>173</sup> and ambitiously extended into the nineteenth century by scholars such as Warren Howard, Marika Sherwood, Catherine Hall and Nicholas Draper,<sup>174</sup> it has simultaneously been opposed, sometimes strenuously, by historians like David Brion Davies, Roger Anstey, Seymour Drescher, Stanley Engerman,

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<sup>169</sup> See, for example, A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1954); Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

<sup>170</sup> See, for example, Howard Temperley and Lillian Margery Pensons, *Foundations of British Foreign Policy: From Pitt (1792) to Salisbury (1902)* (Oxford: Cass, 1966); Christopher Howard, *Britain and the Casus Belli, 1822-1902: A Study of Britain's International Position From Canning to Salisbury* (London: Athlone Press, 1974); Keith M. Wilson (ed.), *British Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Policy: From Crimean War to First World War* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Thomas G. Otte (ed.), *The Makers of British Foreign Policy: From Pitt to Thatcher* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>171</sup> Eric Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944).

<sup>172</sup> Nicholas Draper makes this point excellently, see Nicholas Draper, review of *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain*, by Richard Huzzey, *Journal of British Studies*, 52, 3 (2013), 801-802.

<sup>173</sup> David Beck Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Joseph Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>174</sup> Warren S. Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law, 1837-1862* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963); Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade Since 1807* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland, Katie Donington and Rachel Lang, *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Howard Temperley and David Eltis.<sup>175</sup> Importantly, much of the work produced by these scholars has undermined William's cynical interpretation and rehabilitated the romantic idea that British abolition was a victory for altruism and morality *over* national self-interest. As Boyd Hilton acknowledges, this dichotomy has persisted over time and appears to be perpetuating in the early twenty-first century too, for although the field has been enriched and popularised by this fascinating debate research questions have continued to revolve around 'binary oppositions':

Were abolitionists motivated by altruistic principles or material self-interest? If the former, was Christian moralism or humanitarian sensibility the driving force, and if the appeal to principle was mere humbug, then was economic greed or a desire for imperial aggrandizement the spur?<sup>176</sup>

Scholars working in this field have recently begun to try and shift this fixed position, and to embrace a more nuanced perspective of Britain's anti-slavery motivations. In 2010, Philip Morgan sketched out a new way of looking at the abolition of the British slave trade; 'as a coalescence of interests and ideology rather than as a triumph of ideology over interests.'<sup>177</sup> For at the same time as he supported David Brion Davis' interpretation that a 'moral revolution' occurred during the late-eighteenth century and agreed that 'abolitionists unquestionably emphasised moral, as opposed to economic or political, reasons for action,' he outlined 'some of the key interests that facilitated abolition.' These included, for example, the 'improving tendencies of Caribbean planters,' 'entrepreneurial schemes for imperial expansion after the American Revolution,' 'slave resistance,' and 'strategic attempts by the British state during the

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<sup>175</sup> See, for example, Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*; Anstey, 'Capitalism and Slavery: A Critique'; Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977); Stanley L. Engerman, 'The Slave Trade and British Capital Formation in the Eighteenth Century: A Comment of the Williams Thesis', *Business History Review*, 46, 4 (1972), 430-443; Howard Temperley, 'Capitalism, Slavery and Ideology', *Past & Present*, 75, 1 (1977), 94-118; Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*; David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, 'The Importance of Slavery and the Slave Trade to Industrialising Britain', *The Journal of Economic History*, 60, 1 (2000), 123-144.

<sup>176</sup> Boyd Hilton, '1807 and All That: Why Britain Outlawed Her Slave Trade', in *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa and the Atlantic*, ed. by Derek R. Peterson (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 63-83 (pp.68-69).

<sup>177</sup> Philip D. Morgan, 'Ending the Slave Trade: A Caribbean and Atlantic Context', in *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa and the Atlantic*, ed. by Derek R. Peterson (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 101- 128 (pp.103-104).

Napoleonic Wars to achieve competitive advantage.<sup>178</sup> Moreover, despite his advocacy of the ‘official mind’ thesis potentially being a part of the problem, Richard Huzzey also sought to take a more interconnected approach in *Freedom Burning*; arguing that ‘we do not have to choose simply between anti-slavery as a “perfectly virtuous” crusade and anti-slavery as perfidious, bigoted insincerity.’<sup>179</sup> ‘Officials and the public largely accepted the suppression of the slave trade as a moral *and* material national interest,’ he posits, ‘just as they saw Britain’s fate as tied up with its overseas interests.’<sup>180</sup> Thus, whilst historians ‘were right to see a crafty national interest at work in Britain’s policies,’ they were ‘wrong to assume, invariably, that this rendered humanitarian intentions false.’<sup>181</sup>

Nevertheless, one might argue there is still work to be done to move the field away from this unhelpful dichotomy. For example, although Huzzey registers the presence of material interests in his chapter on Africa, drawing attention to how the nexus of commerce, Christianity and ‘civilization’ was a key driver for Britain’s anti-slavery policy in that continent during the late-nineteenth century,<sup>182</sup> he does not analyse their impact upon the Government’s anti-slavery policy ‘either in the initial take-up of anti-slavery by an expansive Britain prior to emancipation’ or indeed in the mid-nineteenth century period.<sup>183</sup> As Nicholas Draper states, Huzzey’s ‘story is thus one of the progressive erosion of a self-denying tradition as it deteriorates into self-interest.’<sup>184</sup> Why Britain sought to construct an anti-slavery treaty system between 1807 and 1867, in other words, is accorded chiefly to Britain’s ‘anti-slavery ideology,’<sup>185</sup> whilst Eric Williams, ‘who wrote about the same issues.. as Huzzey and argued for the essential unity of the pre-and

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<sup>178</sup> Morgan, ‘Ending the Slave Trade: A Caribbean and Atlantic Context’, pp.121, 103-104. See also 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. by John McAleer and Christer Petley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 97-121. Petley takes Morgan’s lead in his recent assessment of how the Royal Navy featured in the British abolition debates, arguing that by understanding how ‘blue-water ideals about maritime colonial trade and the national interest’ influenced Parliament one can again see the ending of the slave trade as a conflation of interests and ideology. See also Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900*, chp.3. Mann argues there were two ‘intimately related and mutually compatible’ (p.91) lines of thought that influenced British policymakers’ decision to annex Lagos in 1961: an *idealpolitik* idea of developing Africa and ending the slave trade and a more *realpolitik* one of expanding British commerce.

<sup>179</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.212.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid*, p.65.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*, p.64.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid*, chp.6.

<sup>183</sup> Draper, review of *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain*, by Richard Huzzey, p.802.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid*, p.802.

<sup>185</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.8, see also pp.206-210.



post-emancipation periods in terms of the relationship between anti-slavery and national policy,' is dismissed summarily in one line.<sup>186</sup> One might contend, therefore, that *Freedom Burning* again oversimplifies Britain's anti-slavery policy in the mid-nineteenth century, by presenting it as a purely disinterested, 'ideological movement.'<sup>187</sup>

## II) Outline and structure of the thesis

To enrich and deepen our understanding of Lord Palmerston and of British anti-slavery in the mid-Victorian era, this thesis will aim to unite the two currently isolated fields of Palmerston studies and British anti-slavery studies. Primarily, by exploring the depth and complexity of Palmerston's relationship with anti-slavery and treating the suppression of the slave trade as a major objective of his foreign policy, it will attempt to broaden our understanding of Palmerston's anti-slavery policy as well as the motivations that underpinned and shaped it. At the heart of this thesis, then, are two fundamental research questions. Namely, *how* and *why* did Palmerston endeavour to suppress the international slave trade between 1830 and 1865?

To begin with, the first three chapters of this thesis will explore Palmerston's anti-slavery policy. It will start, in chapter one, by exploring Palmerston's personal conceptualisation of 'civilisation' and 'barbarism,' in order to comprehend his personal view of an international hierarchy of nations. Chapter two will then move on to analyse the overarching strategy underpinning Palmerston's policy, which he refined and perfected over the course of his career. Indeed, it is vital to understand both of these things before moving on in chapter three to examine how and in what ways Palmerston's anti-slavery policy was implemented in practice; and in particular how it was different with regard to 'advanced,' 'civilised' and 'barbarous' countries. As such, this study will seek to expand and build upon Huzzey's conceptualisation of Britain's 'anti-slavery world system,' and endeavour to showcase more of the nuances and complexities within that system which were necessarily overlooked by Huzzey in his 'brief review.'<sup>188</sup> By focusing solely on the efforts of Palmerston, this thesis will have considerably more space to accommodate a wide range of different countries, including all of the Great Powers as

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid, p.108.

<sup>187</sup> Draper, review of *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain*, by Richard Huzzey, p.802.

<sup>188</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.53.

well as a plethora of European, South American and African nations. Furthermore, by analysing 'barbarous' countries simultaneously alongside 'advanced' and 'civilised' ones, it will show in full and tragic clarity the true nature of Palmerston's anti-slavery policy.

Vitally, however, this thesis will omit from discussion Palmerston's anti-slavery policy towards 'semi-civilised' countries such as the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, one might argue that Palmerston would not have recognised a distinction between 'civilised' and 'semi-civilised' countries, and therefore that it would not make sense to analyse Palmerston's response to the Ottoman Empire as if it were an entirely separate category of nation. According to Huzzey's definitions of 'civilised' and 'semi-civilised' states, for instance, there were few if any real differences between these groupings aside from the fact that 'semi-civilised' countries were non-Christian, and thus automatically perceived to be 'degraded' peoples for whom domestic slavery was a 'natural phase' which would eventually be eclipsed.<sup>189</sup> As chapter one will demonstrate, however, Palmerston's conceptualisation of 'civilisation' was far more complex and fluid. For him, being an Islamic nation did not necessarily preclude one from being judged and ranked as 'civilised' in his imagined international hierarchy. Palmerston stressed in 1838, for example, that the Ottoman Empire had gained an unwarranted reputation as the 'sick man of Europe,' and that following increased communication with the Western powers it would soon elevate itself to a higher status.<sup>190</sup> Crucially, moreover, as will be shown Palmerston believed strongly that religious tolerance was a greater indication of one's 'civilisation' than one's commitment to any particular faith, be it Christianity, Judaism or Islam.<sup>191</sup>

Even if one were to contend that Palmerston defined the Ottoman Empire as a 'civilised' state, furthermore, in the same category as Portugal and Brazil, it would still not make sense to compare Palmerston's anti-slavery policy towards that country with his policies towards nations engaged in the transatlantic slave trade. The reason being, that Palmerston perceived the East African slave trade, and indeed Ottoman slavery itself, to be of an entirely different nature and type to the transatlantic slave trade and New World slavery. As Thomas Otte explains, although slaves were still considered 'chattel' in the Islamic world 'under the complete domination of their owners,' British officials on the

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid, p.60. See also Keene, 'A Case Study of the Construction of International Hierarchy', p.313.

<sup>190</sup> See Chapter 1, p.39.

<sup>191</sup> See Chapter 1, p.59. See also Chapter 4, p.211.

spot deemed there to be significant differences in ‘the practice of slavery’ in these countries, ‘reflecting local circumstances and variations in Islamic customs and laws.’<sup>192</sup> In general, for example, slavery in the Ottoman Empire was believed to be ‘domestic rather than economic,’ rarely forcing enslaved peoples to labour under the brutal, intolerable conditions that Africans experienced in New World plantations.<sup>193</sup> Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe, the British ambassador to Constantinople, for example, observed that ‘unlike the African in America, the slave in Turkey is rather a domestic servant than a field-drudge or beast of burthen.’ They were ‘not ostensibly ill-treated,’ he went on, and were occasionally able to rise ‘to posts of profit and honour.’ On the contrary, slaves in Turkey were often perceived to be an integral part of Muslim households, and as such provided with ‘a degree of protection against abuse as well as carefully defined routes of escape from their current status.’<sup>194</sup> It was the opinion of Canning’s successor, Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer, for instance, that female slaves in the Ottoman Empire lived luxurious, indulgent lives, with their position less akin to that of a brutalised and enslaved African and more like that ‘of an adopted child.’<sup>195</sup> Crucially, these perceived differences between Ottoman and New World slavery meant that Palmerston tended to accept ‘assumptions of the relative mildness of slavery in the Ottoman dominions.’<sup>196</sup> In November 1857, for instance, he urged Lord Clarendon, the Foreign Secretary in his first Liberal Government, to ‘concentrate our efforts’ on the suppression of the Atlantic slave trade. This was the best way forward, he argued, ‘with a view to accomplishing some good.’<sup>197</sup> Essentially, then, if one is to try and understand Palmerston’s relationship with anti-slavery it would be beneficial to limit the parameters of this thesis to the transatlantic slave trade and New World slavery, where Palmerston evidently believed this institution was more

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<sup>192</sup> T.G. Otte, “‘A Course of Unceasing Remonstrance’”: British Diplomacy and the Suppression of the Slave Trade in the East’, in *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975*, ed. by Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), 93-124 (pp.93-94).

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, p.94.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid, p.94.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, p.104. For more on contemporary perceptions of the Ottoman Empire, see V.G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Mankind: European Attitudes to the Outside World in the Age of Imperialism* (London: Harmondsworth, 1969), pp.131-138; Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Ottomans: Dissolving Images* (London: Penguin, 1995), pp.208-230; Robert Irwin, *For the Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), pp.141-188. For more on the Ottoman slave trade and slavery, see Ehud R. Toledano, *The Ottoman Slave Trade and its Suppression, 1840-1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Erdem Y. Hakam, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and its Demise, 1800-1909* (London: Macmillan, 1996).

<sup>196</sup> Otte, “‘A Course of Unceasing Remonstrance’”, p.96.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, p.96.

harmful and abhorrent than the supposedly benign form of it which existed in the Islamic world.<sup>198</sup>

For the same reason, this thesis will also omit Palmerston's anti-slavery policy towards North and East African states, such as Morocco, Persia, Egypt, Sudan and Zanzibar. As Kristin Mann points out, African 'slavery' has long been understood by historians to be 'so fundamentally different from American slavery' that it has often been referred to in quotation marks.<sup>199</sup> Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, for instance, treated the institution of African slavery in their 1977 account as but one of a broad range of servile relationships that existed on the continent, not unlike kinship or marriage. Above all, they insisted that in Africa slavery was chiefly a mechanism by which outsiders could be brought into society and absorbed into 'local kin groups.'<sup>200</sup> Indeed, Mann found this was the case in Lagos, explaining that Lagosians wanted slaves primarily 'for the social, military, and political support they could provide in a culture where command of people was key.'<sup>201</sup> Like in the Islamic world, moreover, Britain's consular officials in Africa commonly promoted the idea that 'local slavery was a benign institution, vastly different "in effect and influence" from the compulsory labour of slaves in foreign countries.' Benjamin Campbell, the British Consul in Lagos, for instance, wrote to Lord Clarendon in 1857 that enslaved peoples often worked alongside their masters in the field and were 'regarded as a member of the family,' whilst the acting British Governor of Lagos, William McCoskry, felt that African slavery was 'not, properly speaking, slavery' at all.<sup>202</sup> Once again, then, it would arguably be stretching the aims of this thesis if one were to include Palmerston's anti-slavery policy towards East and North African nations, whom Palmerston did not perceive to be committing the same types of crime as nations engaged in transporting Africans from a state of freedom in West Africa to one of slavery in the New World.

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<sup>198</sup> For more on the subject of slavery in the Islamic world, see William Gervase Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>199</sup> Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900*, p.10.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, p.10. See also Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), see pp.3-81.

<sup>201</sup> Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900*, p.5. For more on African slavery in the pre-colonial period, see Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>202</sup> Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900*, pp.165, 169.

The final three chapters of this thesis will then move on to consider Palmerston's motivations for pursuing anti-slavery, assessing why exactly he was moved to act against the transatlantic slave trade. Firstly, chapter four will examine the extent to which public opinion, moral duty and humanitarianism influenced Palmerston, before chapter five digs deeper into the latter by examining how enlightenment attitudes of moderation, balance and stability and laissez-faire beliefs about free trade played their part in shaping Palmerston's unique understanding of humanitarianism. Lastly, chapter six will then explore Palmerston's motivations for pursuing anti-slavery from a *realpolitik* perspective, and seek to establish the different ways in which Palmerston was using anti-slavery to advance Britain's national interests. As a result, this new vantage point might also help to overcome the stark polarisation that remains entrenched in the field of slavery and abolition, which sees British anti-slavery as a movement underpinned by either national self-interest or selfless idealism. For by analysing Palmerston's personal motivations in detail, one might be able to find a new way through this impasse; to appreciate how the nature and meaning of anti-slavery in mid-Victorian Britain was more delicately shaded than the binary representations that are currently predominating. Fundamentally, this thesis might suggest that the nature of Britain's campaign to suppress the slave trade lay somewhere in between these two extremes: that like Palmerstonian politics, British anti-slavery in the mid-nineteenth century was characterised by neither selflessness nor selfishness but prudence, moderation and balance, or essentially by a 'marriage of pragmatism and idealism.'<sup>203</sup>

More broadly, by focusing on Palmerston's vibrant relationship with this neglected liberal cause outside of Europe, this thesis will attempt to shine a new light on Palmerston's political identity. Significantly, by understanding Palmerston's anti-slavery aims and agendas, this study will confront traditional portraits of him as either a sluggishly conservative nationalist or balance of power politician seeking to preserve the 'interests of England' above all else, as well as caricatures of him as unserious, flamboyant and cavalier; someone who got his way via swaggering 'gunboat diplomacy.' On the contrary, it will develop the interpretation of Palmerston put forward recently by David Brown; viewing him instead as a sincerely progressive, liberal statesman who sought to pursue his political ideals at the same time as protecting the country's national

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<sup>203</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.152.

interests; as one influenced by the coherent principles of the Scottish Enlightenment who was serious, thoughtful and intelligent, and embodied ‘the mid-century equilibrium.’<sup>204</sup> In addition, this thesis will pose the question whether Palmerston’s political legacy should be redefined in line with the assessment that Palmerston himself made of it in 1864. If anti-slavery truly was an issue that defined his life and career, one he considered to be his crowning ‘achievement’ and ‘purest pleasure,’<sup>205</sup> might it not be appropriate to remember him, as Isaac Milner did, as a ‘warm and active abolitionist,’ or perhaps even as an ‘anti-slavery minister’?<sup>206</sup>

By taking a biographical approach to the history of British anti-slavery, focusing on the actions and motivations of one vital individual, this thesis will also use Palmerston as a prism through which to analyse this field from a valuable new vantage point, and to draw some wider conclusions about this broad and complex subject. Notably, by challenging the interpretation that conceives the role of the British Foreign Secretary as almost moribund, pressured into action by a vociferous ‘public opinion’ and consumed by the ‘official mind’ of the Foreign Office, as only a minor cog in the grand operation conducted by British anti-slavery state, this new perspective might help to demonstrate the extent to which an individual minister could direct the progress of, and leave a major impression on, Britain’s anti-slavery policy. By underlining Palmerston’s agency, impact and significance, this study might demonstrate that Palmerston was a leader in the Government who played a strong personal role in shaping the Government’s anti-slavery policy. To put it another way, therefore, this thesis will seek to determine whether Palmerston was an ‘anti-slavery minister’ at the heart of an anti-slavery state.

Finally, by approaching the history of nineteenth century Britain from this new perspective, this thesis can raise some interesting questions about the core beliefs and public values which underpinned Victorian political culture. In his weighty and insightful account of this subject, Angus Hawkins argues that it was ideas about ‘the past, morality and community’ which ‘delineated those “habits of heart and mind” informing Victorian politics.’<sup>207</sup> He demonstrated, for instance, that ‘all shades of Victorian political opinion

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<sup>204</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.6, 480.

<sup>205</sup> Palmerston to Sir John Crampton, 17 February 1864, in Ashley, *Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, II, pp.263-264.

<sup>206</sup> Isaac Milner to Palmerston, 7 February 1806, PP, SLT/1.

<sup>207</sup> Angus Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture: “Habits of Heart and Mind”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.12.

drew legitimacy from competing partisan visions of the past,' with 'the evocation of historical struggles giving meaning to immediate aims.' That politics was seen as a 'practical moral activity rather than the product of ideology or doctrine,' in which religion was 'intimately intertwined' with politics. And finally, that 'politics was understood as a social activity whose values were embedded in the community, rather than being a function of narrow individual interests.'<sup>208</sup> Hawkins argued, therefore, that these 'crucial conservative aspects of Victorian political culture' formed 'the bedrock of public values and political belief' in this period, and thus help to explain 'why Britain entered the twentieth century with historic, if adapted, institutions such as a hereditary monarchy, a hereditary House of Lords, and an Established Anglican Church intact.'<sup>209</sup> Seeking to craft a new interpretation of the politics of the nineteenth century, Hawkins' work thus sets out to challenge superficial accounts of nineteenth century Britain as 'a liberal modern state,' and to draw historians' attention to the 'comprehensive, coagulated conservatism' at the heart of this seemingly 'Liberal age.'<sup>210</sup> As Miles Taylor summarises pithily, *Victorian Political Culture* 'reasserts the place of conservatism with a small and a large 'c' in the nineteenth century.'<sup>211</sup> Significantly then, this thesis provides an opportunity to evaluate Hawkins' key historiographical intervention. For not only is Palmerston uniquely placed to do this given that he has recently emerged as 'the defining political personality of his age,'<sup>212</sup> but if we are to view anti-slavery as a major issue in Victorian politics then it surely makes sense to look closely at how it illuminates our understanding of this era as a whole.

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid, pp.2-12, quotes at pp.2, 3, 8.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid, pp.18, 12, 386.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, pp.386, 16.

<sup>211</sup> Miles Taylor, review of *Victorian Political Culture: "Habits of Heart and Mind"*, by Angus Hawkins, *Parliamentary History*, 38, 2 (2019), 301-302 (p.302).

<sup>212</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.4. See also Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p.194.





## Chapter 1 – A ‘scale of civilisation’: Palmerston’s conceptions of ‘civilisation,’ ‘barbarism’ and the international hierarchy of nations

It is curious given the high significance that ideas of ‘civilisation’ and ‘barbarism’ held in the mid-nineteenth century that the topic of an international hierarchy of nations did not feature prominently in Palmerston’s private, official, or semi-official papers. Palmerston, it seems, rarely discussed these ideas with his family or with his political colleagues, nor did he think about them in private long enough to pen a personal memorandum about them. However, just because there is not one series of letters or private memorandum proving unequivocally that Palmerston conceived the world in this way, defining nations as either ‘advanced,’ ‘civilised’ or ‘barbarous’ according to an imagined hierarchy, it does not mean that no evidence exists to suggest this was not, in fact, the case. By piecing together evidence from his private correspondence, speeches to Parliament, and official dispatches relating to the suppression of the slave trade, one can begin to locate Palmerston’s unique view on this topic.

To begin with, it is clear that during his youth Palmerston was taught about and held a keen interest in these ideas. At Edinburgh University, for instance, the young Harry was introduced to what Peter Mandler describes as ‘the civilisational perspective,’ which presumed that all peoples and nations were undergoing a ‘natural progression from primitive to advanced states’ regardless of factors such as race. As Mandler explains, this march of progress was seen as natural in two senses: firstly, because it was ‘constitutionally embedded in human nature by its Maker,’ and secondly because it was thought to be universally applicable anywhere, ‘to all peoples.’<sup>1</sup> In terms of the stages of human social development, moreover, eighteenth century scholars postulated that humans passed through ‘four distinctive stages characterized by a nation’s modes of subsistence.’ These stages were defined by ‘hunting, pasturage, agriculture, and... commerce, and were each associated with given practices of social, political, and civil organization as well as manners and morals.’<sup>2</sup> Curious to explore these ideas further,

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Mandler, ‘“Race” and “Nation” in Mid-Victorian Thought’, in *History, Religion, and Culture: British Intellectual History, 1750-1950*, ed. by Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 224-244 (pp.226-227).

<sup>2</sup> Sadiyah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p.189.

Harry wrote an essay during his time at Edinburgh on ‘the comparative advantages and happiness of a savage and civilised life,’<sup>3</sup> a paper that was perhaps also inspired by his discussions with Mungo Park - the famous African explorer who had recently published an account of life in West Africa and who lodged with Dugald Stewart briefly in November 1800.<sup>4</sup> A few years later, in 1804, Palmerston composed another essay on this subject during his time as a student at Cambridge University. On this occasion he set out to argue that ‘Europe never will relapse into barbarism,’ before presenting it to a ‘select party of literati.’ Pleased with his work, Palmerston reported to his sister, Frances Temple, that it had produced ‘an animated discussion.’<sup>5</sup> Although it is important to recognise that these essays were composed explicitly for the purpose of generating debate and refining his analytical skills, and thus not necessarily a true representation of Palmerston’s personal views,<sup>6</sup> the fact he decided to write upon these topics is perhaps itself illustrative of the sincere curiosity and fascination that he had with them.

As he grew older, one might argue that despite Palmerston no longer conducting research into these ideas or presenting his findings in the form of essays or debates, his views on ‘civilisation’ continued to develop and eventually settled into a coherent and workable political philosophy. Notably, one that reflected ‘the civilisational perspective’ he was taught in Edinburgh and which shaped and determined how he responded to international events at the Foreign Office. As the title of his 1804 paper suggests, Palmerston came to believe that the concept of ‘civilisation’ was not necessarily as simple as countries being judged against one another and ranked into one of three discrete groupings, either into an ‘advanced,’ ‘civilised’ or ‘barbarous’ category.<sup>7</sup> Instead, he spoke of it regularly as being a ‘scale of civilisation,’ or a spectrum that every country was

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<sup>3</sup> Henry John Temple, ‘The comparative advantages and happiness of a savage and civilised life’, in *Book of essays by 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Palmerston (bound volume), 1800-1806*, PP, BR22(ii)/6.

<sup>4</sup> Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa: performed under the direction and patronage of the African Association, in the years 1795, 1796, and 1797*, 4th edn (London: Bulmer, 1800). See also Henry John Temple to Lady Palmerston, 16 November 1800, PP, BR22A/1c. The young Harry was apparently ‘very much pleased with him,’ writing to his mother that ‘his manners are very pleasant and agreeable, without the least affectation. “His airs sat round him easy, Genteel but unaffected,” as the ballad says. His countenance is very good natured, but one should not think by his appearance that he was at all calculated to undergo the hardships he suffered.’

<sup>5</sup> Palmerston to Frances Temple, 24 February 1804, PP, BR24/5/3.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the essays that Palmerston wrote and delivered in weekly debates at Dugald Stewart’s house, and then to his friends at Cambridge University, see Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.25-26, 38. Harry wrote that the essays ‘were written to set off to the best advantage a given argument or a particular side of a debatable question,’ and therefore ‘to be considered as exercises in composition and not as records of decided opinion.’

<sup>7</sup> Palmerston to Frances Temple, 24 February 1804, PP, BR24/5/3.

placed on according to their unique characteristics, and made clear that it was possible for every country to climb upwards towards the summit of ‘civilisation’ or to fall backwards, to ‘relapse,’ into a demoralised state of ‘barbarism,’ depending on the choices made by political leaders.<sup>8</sup> ‘Civilisation’ was therefore a fluid concept and not a static one, which recognised and accommodated the fact that the achievements and failings of nation-states were transient.<sup>9</sup>

Greece, for example, was one country that had made such a transition. Despite it being ‘the seat of civilisation’ during the ancient past, it was widely acknowledged to have been ‘long covered with darkness and immersed in barbarism.’<sup>10</sup> Hence, when Parliament debated whether or not to assist Greece by guaranteeing its independence from Turkey in 1832, Parliamentarians in support of this measure, such as Palmerston, framed the action as a rescue mission; Britain would be ‘restoring that country to a state of independence,’ Palmerston claimed, ‘by which it may again become the seat of civilization, and a living member of the nations of Europe.’<sup>11</sup> Likewise, the Ottoman Empire was perceived to be making a similar evolution. Palmerston maintained after 1838 that it had gained an undeserved reputation as the ‘sick man of Europe,’ and an empire likely to crumble in the near future unless it was urgently ‘civilised’ by the Great Powers.<sup>12</sup> Turkey ‘is not going down [in the scale of nations],’ he wrote to George Hodges, Britain’s consul-general in Serbia. ‘On the contrary she is rallying, slowly if you will and to superficial observers imperceptibly, but light from without has been let in upon the

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Palmerston, Address to the Royal Museum and Library, Salford, in *The Times*, 7 November 1856, p.7. See also Palmerston, Address to Manchester Town Hall, in *The Times*, 7 November 1856, p.7; Palmerston, Address to the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, in *The Times*, 7 November 1856, p.7. It was not just Palmerston that used this phrase, see also *Morning Post*, 26 August 1840, p.4.

<sup>9</sup> See also Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, p.20-21. This forms a central part of Parry’s definition of what ‘civilisation’ meant to nineteenth century Liberals. It was ‘a Liberal commonplace,’ he argues, that all peoples had potential for ‘improvement and civilisation’ and that ‘barbaric passions’ were close to the surface of any society.

<sup>10</sup> Palmerston, ‘Greek Loan Convention’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xiv, 1266-1274 (8 August 1832), c.1274. See also Palmerston, ‘The Interests of England and the General Interests of Civilisation bound up in the Emancipation of Greece’, Debate on second reading of Greek Convention Bill, 8 August 1832, in *Opinions and Policy of the Right Honourable Viscount Palmerston, G.C.B., M.P., & c., as Minister, Diplomatist, and Statesman, during more than Forty Years of Public Life. With a memoir by George Henry Francis, Esq.* (London: Colburn, 1852), pp.218-20.

<sup>11</sup> Palmerston, ‘Greek Loan Convention’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xiv, 1266-1274 (8 August 1832), c.1269.

<sup>12</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.215. In the late 1820s, Palmerston viewed the Ottoman Empire as a ‘barbarous’ nation in decline. ‘I should not be sorry,’ he wrote to his friend Edward Littleton in September 1829, ‘to see the Turk kicked out of Europe, & compelled to go and sit cross-legged, smoke his pipe, chew his opium, & cut off heads on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus; we want civilisation, activity, trade & business in Europe, & your Mustaphas have no idea of any traffic beyond rhubarb, figs and red slippers (p.213).’

interior of Turkey [and] communication has been established between Turkey & the rest of Europe.' Thus, given a decade of peace, Turkey would resume her place among the world's most 'civilised' nations.<sup>13</sup> Closer to home, Palmerston viewed England and Scotland as two nations that had risen from a modest, almost humble position to become 'the bright example... to all Europe, with respect to everything connected with the civilisation of man.'<sup>14</sup> In May 1841, Palmerston proudly declared to the House of Commons that the United Kingdom of Great Britain 'now holds a proud position among the nations of the earth; and exercises a great influence upon the destinies of mankind.' It rode 'pre-eminent,' he asserted, 'on the ocean of human affairs.'<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, Palmerston's conception of 'civilisation' appreciated that there was a distinct blurring with some countries as to whether they should be disparaged as 'barbarous' or admired as 'civilised.' In an undated private memorandum that he composed about Russia, for example, in which he tabulated all of the acquisitions made by the Russian Empire since 1721 in order to estimate the present size of their population, Palmerston's assessment of that country was distinctly mixed.<sup>16</sup> On one hand, he wrote, the transformation of Russia was 'extraordinary and rapid.' In the space of one century it had changed from 'a barbarous and almost unknown nation' into one that had now 'take[n] its place among polished nations.' Palmerston put this ascent down to 'the spirit of conquest' which had emerged in Russia since the House of Romanov took power. From that period, he wrote, there arose 'a spirit of invasion and aggrandisement' that had led to successive Russian victories on the battlefield, and since then this spirit had passed down to 'every sovereign who obtained the reins of government.' Thus, Russian expansion towards the Bosphorus and the West had been relentless. In particular, Palmerston praised the impact of Peter the Great, who he described as a 'genius' and a 'great man,' who had forced his people 'into the notice of civilised Europe.'

However, in the same memorandum Palmerston suggested that although the progress of Russian civilisation was impressive, it could not be compared 'except in outward appearance to those which nature had produced.' For Russia was 'unsupported

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<sup>13</sup> Palmerston to George Hodges, 2 January 1838, PP, GC/HO/4.

<sup>14</sup> Palmerston, Address to City Hall, Glasgow, in *The Times*, 29 September 1853.

<sup>15</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), cc.654-655.

<sup>16</sup> Palmerston, Memorandum on the 'Possessions acquired by Russia since the year 1721', PP, MM/RU/1/1-3.

by the broad basis of civil and religious liberty,' he lamented, was 'mastered by aggression,' and instead of extending her power by her 'moral influence' had awed others 'into blind submission by the presence of a slavish army.' Whilst its expansionist and warlike policies had been justified by a comprehensible need for more cultivatable land, such as would aid their peasant population, unlike other nations who would finally end this 'spirit of conquest' and turn their ideas from 'foreign colonisation to industry at home,' Palmerston bemoaned that Russia had no desire to end her fighting. 'Russia seeks repose only that she may follow up her designs and again take wins,' he wrote. 'Peace in her councils never was an end but a means to prepare herself for fresh wars.' Thus, whereas 'other nations devote themselves heart and soul to peace,' he went on, 'because they feel a real want of that tranquillity which they know how to make a good use,' in Russia 'no useful reform is followed up' and anything regarding 'social order' or 'the welfare and civilisation of the many' was not considered the object of the Russian Government.<sup>17</sup> The only 'point of civilisation Russia [took] advantage of,' in other words, was the 'material improvements which tend[ed] to increase her military resources.' As such Russia could never claim to be truly 'civilised' or 'enlightened' like the other Great Powers of Europe, but at the same time was still a part of this elite group of 'polished' (or 'advanced') nations because of her military power. Despite this blurriness about the status of some countries, however, it is also evident that for Palmerston there were certain points on this spectrum, this 'scale of civilisation,' when it became possible to deduce a noticeable difference between countries, and therefore to draw a line of demarcation between those that had attained a certain level of 'civilisation' and those that had yet to reach that landmark. These points might neatly be labelled as 'barbarous,' 'civilised' and 'advanced.'

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<sup>17</sup> Palmerston, Memorandum on the 'Possessions acquired by Russia since the year 1721', PP, MM/RU/1/1-3. See also Palmerston to Prince Esterházy, 20 November 1833, PP, GC/ES/53. Palmerston made a similar point in a private letter to the Austrian ambassador to London, Prince Esterházy. Russia was intent on 'pursuing... an undeviating system of encroachment upon neighbouring nations on all sides, instead of labouring to civilise the barbarous millions over whom they already rule, & to fertilise and cultivate the boundless wastes which lie within the extensive frontier of the empire.'

l) Race, education and 'acts of civilised life': Palmerston's distinction between 'barbarous' and 'civilised' nations

First and foremost, one might argue that at the bottom and middle part of this spectrum Palmerston made a distinction between what he called 'uncivilised' or 'barbarous' countries and 'civilised' ones. When he was discussing Britain's anti-slavery policy towards Africa, for example, Palmerston repeatedly described African nations as 'uncivilised' or 'barbarous,' and as so different to countries he judged to be 'civilised' that they were deserving of this special, degrading label.<sup>18</sup> In order to understand what Palmerston meant by this term, however, it is crucial to investigate how far it was infused with hierarchical and racist connotations. Indeed, post-colonial historians assert that mid-Victorian England was 'profoundly imbued with strong concepts of race... formerly associated with contemporary thought in Germany, France and Italy, but not with England.'<sup>19</sup> In particular, Catherine Hall has described this era in her esteemed work, *Civilising Subjects*, as one of hardening racial thinking.<sup>20</sup> Taking a transnational approach that dissolved the artificial boundaries of 'home' and 'empire' and instead emphasised their interconnectedness in 'the English imagination,' Hall analysed the complex ways in which 'English values' were shaped and defined during the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> By focusing on two groups of people, Baptist missionaries who travelled to Jamaica to 'civilise' the African-Jamaicans and abolitionist non-conformists living in Birmingham, she demonstrated how the post-emancipation decline of the British sugar colonies, the occasionally violent land conflicts in the Caribbean, and the ambivalent responses of Britain's newly freed subjects to the teachings of Christian missionaries, gradually became interpreted by Victorians 'as evidence of the failings of the black race.'<sup>22</sup> Although 'representations of racial difference' were certainly not fixed in this era but fluid, changeable and 'continually being reworked' in response to historical events, this degenerative reading of West Indian history ultimately 'won wide enough consent to become hegemonic and legitimate political consequences.'<sup>23</sup> What made this narrative so

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<sup>18</sup> Palmerston's parliamentary speeches and private papers are strewn with these descriptions of Africa. See, for example, Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 969-974 (16 July 1844), c.971. See also Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 21 July 1862, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/14C, ff.254-256.

<sup>19</sup> Mandler, "Race" and "Nation" in Mid-Victorian Thought', p.224.

<sup>20</sup> Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Oxford: Polity, 2002).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, pp.1-22.

<sup>22</sup> Frederick Cooper, 'Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867. By Catherine Hall', *The Journal of Modern History*, 75, 4 (2003), 945-947 (p.946).

<sup>23</sup> Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p.276.

contagious, moreover, was how it coexisted alongside a simplified 'liberatory' understanding of British history.<sup>24</sup> For as the achievements of white, male, Christian Britons were asserted and celebrated, Britain's sense of moral and intellectual superiority was ratified and reinforced. Thus, by the late-1860s, Hall claims, abolitionist influences had noticeably declined and blackness had become equated with a void of 'civilisation,' and therefore used as a 'rationale for their malignant exclusion from the body politic.'<sup>25</sup>

During his time in Edinburgh at the very beginning of the nineteenth century, however, it is apparent that these racist attitudes towards black Britons and Africans had little impact on the shaping of Palmerston's enlightenment worldview. Indeed, Palmerston was taught Dugald Stewart's 'favourite doctrine': that there was no biological difference between white and black people, that the latter were 'not deficient in their intellectual powers naturally,' and that 'the difference between them and the Europeaner is owing chiefly to education.'<sup>26</sup> In his lectures, Stewart clarified that when 'all mankind' stood in front of 'the Great Author of their being' they stood in 'common relation.' Urging his charges not to forget this sentiment, which he felt 'ought never to be banished completely from the mind' but instead 'deeply engraved on every heart,' he recalled the words of Adam Ferguson that 'in every state of society and under every form of government... "he who has forgotten the original equality of mankind easily degenerates into a slave, or, in the capacity of a master, is not to be trusted with the rights of his fellow citizens."' <sup>27</sup>

The young Harry was patently attentive to this lesson, for in one of his letters home to his mother in March 1801 he wrote excitedly about a black woman from Sierra Leone who had come with her children to stay in Stewart's house.<sup>28</sup> It was that lady's hope to leave her children in Scotland, he explained, and to have them educated there in order to become 'civilised.' Although he was disappointed not to have met her personally, Harry had been told by Stewart (who had been 'interested about her' and of 'establishing' his 'favourite doctrine') that she was 'remarkably clever and well-informed,' possessed 'a

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<sup>24</sup> Cooper, 'Civilising Subjects', p.946.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p.945.

<sup>26</sup> Henry John Temple to Lady Palmerston, 28 March 1801, PP, BR22A/1c.

<sup>27</sup> Stewart, 'Lectures on Political Economy Vol.II', p.361. See also Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn (London: Cadell, 1793), p.147.

<sup>28</sup> Henry John Temple to Lady Palmerston, 28 March 1801, PP, BR22A/1c.

great facility of expressing herself,' was 'eloquent,' and 'preached very well.' After discussing a number of topics with her, Stewart was purportedly 'well satisfied with her talents.' This was the atmosphere of Palmerston's youth, then, one where racial caricatures were avoided and racist schools-of-thought challenged and dispelled.

As an adult, however, a useful case study of Palmerston's attitude towards race is the sugar debates of the early 1840s, which have recently been taken by Richard Huzzey as an early indication of the hardening racialised views in mid-Victorian Britain.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, those debates were not confined to discussions of Protective duties and free trade, but tragically descended into 'a virulent racist counter-attack' upon the population of black Britons living in the Caribbean.<sup>30</sup> The perception among British MPs, he argues, was that black Britons in the West Indies were enjoying a life of idleness and luxury, earning 'extortionate wages for little work,' carrying 'silk umbrellas,' and drinking away their days on 'Madeira or Champagne' whilst the predominantly white working classes suffered in northern England's dark satanic mills.<sup>31</sup> Britain's black subjects overseas, therefore, were cast as 'exploiters of privilege at the cost of the poor in Britain.'<sup>32</sup> Lord George Bentinck, for example, asked Parliament whether the ordinary British people had intended 'that those slaves should be raised to a condition far beyond their own,' while Lord John Russell, the Leader of the Whigs in the House of Commons, introduced the government's proposal to narrow the difference in sugar duties by comparing 'the freedman's alleged plenty with the British labourer's desperate need.'<sup>33</sup> 'I do not think that we should be justified in giving our attention exclusively to their interests,' he said of Britain's freed black subjects, 'whilst the people of this country were suffering from want of [the] common comforts of life.'<sup>34</sup>

Thus, Huzzey concluded that after the apprenticeship debate ended in 1838 the freed people of the West Indies rapidly lost their connection with slavery and with the sympathy and pity that that status had evoked. 'For all but a minority of Protectionist abolitionists, Britons overwhelmingly rejected the notion that freed people should get

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<sup>29</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.93-97, 99-106.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p.96.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p.95.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p.95.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p.94.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p.94.



compensation, assistance, or support for their years of suffering,' were 'entitled to no special sympathy for being slaves and deserving few avenues for ambition.'<sup>35</sup> Echoing the words of Catherine Hall, he agreed that by the 1850s 'Britons might indeed hate slavery, but their enthusiasm for the racialised other was strictly limited.'<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, Huzzey argued that the sugar debates exposed, above all, just how little supporters of anti-slavery cared about 'racial equality.'<sup>37</sup> For they demonstrated that the objective of British emancipation was not to promote black rights nor to alter 'existing racial and economic hierarchies.'<sup>38</sup> Quite the opposite, 'whenever the free market seemed to be to the advantage of black over white interests,' as it was perceived to be in the 1840s, it was swiftly 'muted by state intervention.'<sup>39</sup> As such, he called on historians to decouple their idea of anti-slavery from 'anachronistic expectations of antiracism... or humanitarianism.'<sup>40</sup>

By analysing Palmerston's response to the sugar debates, then, it is apparent that his conception of race had developed over time and was now in alignment with that of his Whig counterparts. For although Palmerston remained keen to avoid racial caricatures and carefully eschewed racist stereotypes of black workers, at the same time he was prepared to give his support to a policy which demonstrated an unequivocal racial preference for Britain's white working-class labourers. Indeed, during the sugar debates Palmerston chose not to defend West Indian labourers from the virulent abuse they were receiving from fellow MPs, nor to write privately to Lord John Russell or to any other Whig colleague opposing the racialised language that the party was propagating; let alone disagree with the Government's policy. Rather, Palmerston argued strongly for the reduction of duties on Cuban and Brazilian produce and consistently proclaimed the benefits that would befall northern England's industrial workers. Although Palmerston did not adopt the narrative that pitted white labourers living within Britain in direct opposition to Britain's black ones living in the Caribbean, moreover, Palmerston nevertheless went on to criticise the latter in a similar manner to his counterparts; focusing specifically on black workers' laziness and idleness. The British sugar trade was

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p.97.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p.96. See also Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p.379.

<sup>37</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.96.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p.210.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p.210.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p.19.

unfortunately being carried on by 'indolent and unskilful' individuals he told the House of Commons in May 1841, for Britain's emancipated labourers had been utterly demotivated by the system of Protection. 'Show me [any] trade that is... open to fair competition and I will show you a trade carried on with intelligence, enterprise, and success,' he declared. 'Show me [any] trade that is highly protected and I will show you a set of men, supine, unimproving, and probably labouring under perpetual embarrassment.'<sup>41</sup>

Conscious of the need to obtain the approval of abolitionists in Parliament, moreover, Palmerston rejected the notion that the welfare of England's working classes was to be ameliorated at the expense of Britain's black labourers. For he maintained that 'protection is not only erroneous in principle but... utterly useless to those for whose particular benefit it is maintained.'<sup>42</sup> Thus, by reducing the Protective duty on sugar Britain's black labourers would be able to improve their condition and means of subsistence at the same time, for it would imbue their work with 'that stimulus which fair, and free, and wholesome competition never fails to give to every description of labour to which it is applied.'<sup>43</sup> Evidently, then, Palmerston tried to suggest that the reduction of the sugar duties was in the best interests of every party; the West Indian landowners, the working classes living in Britain, and Britain's freed black labourers in the Caribbean. This perspective, however, risks losing sight of what impact the Government's policy would actually have on Britain's Caribbean subjects. As Huzzey rightly argues, the crux of this matter was that the Government's free trade policy was a direct rejection of special protection for emancipated workers, and expressly anticipated a black peasantry exporting cheap raw goods for the benefit of industrial workers in Britain. As such, even if Palmerston was insistent that the Government's policy was levelling the international playing field, in reality it reflected a clear hierarchy in favour of Britain's white industrial labourers and restored what can only be described as white privilege. By supporting the Whig Government's free trade policy on this occasion, therefore, Palmerston was arguably showing, as Hall and Huzzey suggest, the limits of his enthusiasm for anti-slavery and a clear disinterest in pursuing 'racial equality.'<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), c.656.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, c.656.

<sup>43</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvii, 1340-1346 (26 February 1845), c.1346.

<sup>44</sup> Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p.379; Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.96.

Nevertheless, there is still more to understand about Palmerston's conceptualisation of race in the mid-nineteenth century. It is important to add, for example, that upon looking through Palmerston's private and semi-official correspondence he never described African peoples as 'barbarous' on account of any perceived biological, innate variations between ethnic groups. In addition, it is not insignificant that Palmerston held the same level of contempt for other 'barbarous' peoples of different racial backgrounds. In an undated private memorandum that he wrote on the role of the Governor-General of India, for instance, Palmerston described India as 'inhabited by a population that was "scarcely half civilised,"'<sup>45</sup> whilst in a private letter to his wife he described those who had taken part in the Indian mutiny as 'savage barbarians.'<sup>46</sup> In his 1829 political journal, moreover, Palmerston described the white working class people of Ireland as 'barbarous' and 'ferocious,' justifying the British state's reluctance to intervene with more relief there on the grounds that it would rob those people of 'the honest pride of independence,' and would annihilate 'those little good offices of reciprocal benevolence which cast a cheering and redeeming beam even over the local barbarism.'<sup>47</sup> And in 1849, Palmerston fumed at the Austrian government for their role in crushing the revolutionary movements that had swept that country the year before, writing in a private letter to Lord Ponsonby how 'the rulers of Austria (I call them not statesmen or stateswomen)' were 'the greatest brutes that ever called themselves by the undeserved name of civilised men' and ought to be considered 'barbarous' due to 'their atrocities in Galicia, in Italy, in Hungary, [and] in Transylvania.' 'Their late exploit of flogging forty odd people, including two women at Milan,' he asserted, 'is really too blackguard and disgusting a proceeding,' and those responsible could only 'blush in private for the disgrace which such things throw upon their country.'<sup>48</sup>

In many ways, however, it is perhaps unsurprising that Palmerston did not express his prejudices using the language of biological essentialism. His avoidance of these arguments, for example, seems to reflect the resilience of 'the civilisational perspective' in the mid-nineteenth century. As Mandler demonstrates, English intellectual thinking

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<sup>45</sup> Palmerston, Memorandum on the role of the Governor-General of India, PP, MM/IN/4.

<sup>46</sup> Palmerston to Lady Palmerston, 29 August 1857, PP, BR23AA/1/21.

<sup>47</sup> Notebook containing newspaper cuttings, anecdotes, notes on Irish affairs, 1827-c.1832, PP, BR22(ii)/13.

<sup>48</sup> Palmerston to Lord Ponsonby, 9 September 1849, in Ashley, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston I*, pp.139-141.

remained 'determinedly universalistic and monogenetic' in the mid-Victorian period, especially in contrast to other European countries. If anything, he argues, 'the civilisational perspective' was reinforced as it was partly ideas of race that were seen as responsible for the errors on the continent that had caused the revolutions of 1848. The 'ladder of civilisation,' Mandler wrote, remained the 'dominant metaphor' in Britain as opposed to 'the branching tree of peoples and nations.'<sup>49</sup> As Sadiah Qureshi suggests, moreover, in her fascinating work examining how human exhibitions of living foreign peoples were commercially successful during the nineteenth century, it was not until the late Victorian period when biological essentialism became the dominant form of racialised taxonomy within Britain, and when Victorians started to believe there were inherent physiological, anatomic, moral and intellectual differences between races. Only from the 1860s, she highlights, did the study of 'anthropology' become recognised as an academic discipline, with scholars such as Robert Knox arguing that human differences between black and white peoples warranted the division of humans into multiple species.<sup>50</sup>

Crucially, however, this is not to say that racism was not prominent in Britain until the end of the nineteenth century. Human difference was a topic of 'protracted and vigorous debate' throughout this era, Qureshi argues, demonstrating in *Peoples on Parade* how the social, political, and physical criteria used to classify humans was made and remade during the Victorian period.<sup>51</sup> In the early nineteenth century, for instance, Qureshi demonstrates that human differences were generally explained using a variety of environmental rather than physical factors, 'including complexion, physiognomy, physical makeup, language, religion, clothing, and political, social, and economic organisation.'<sup>52</sup> This environmental interpretation of human difference was even studied from the 1840s as an academic discipline called 'ethnology.' It was commonly believed, for instance, that black peoples' complexion differed because they lived 'in hotter climates and were scorched by the sun, while lighter skins and more refined physiognomies were the products of more temperate zones.'<sup>53</sup> In addition, it was assumed that moral and intellectual development was linked to social organisation, and that black peoples' lagged

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<sup>49</sup> Mandler, "Race" and "Nation" in Mid-Victorian Thought', pp.225, 229-230, 233.

<sup>50</sup> Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade*, pp.5-6, 187-189.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p.278.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p.6.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p.6.

behind white Europeans because of the fact that African states were predominantly organised into ‘hunter-gatherer societies,’ which were thought to be ‘less advanced than agricultural and commercial nations.’<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, although different to biological essentialism, Qureshi argues that a ‘racialist taxonomy’ was still brought created, consolidated and promoted by these perceived differences, because of the fact that they automatically led black Africans to be placed at the bottom of an imagined developmental spectrum as ‘barbarous savages,’ whilst white Europeans were invariably positioned at the top as ‘civilised’ peoples.<sup>55</sup> Significantly, then, Qureshi demonstrates that multiple different ‘racialist taxonomies’ existed in the nineteenth century, with both ethnographical and anthropological schools of thought competing with one another to define human difference.

Although Palmerston did not promulgate the form of biological, scientific racism that became prevalent in the late Victorian era, therefore, one might argue his views were nonetheless racialised, for as will be shown he adopted this more transient, ‘elastic’ racialist taxonomy which classified human differences in terms of environmental factors and which conflated race with ethnocentric ideas of ‘civilisation.’<sup>56</sup> Indeed, Palmerston certainly discriminated against Africans during his time in office, believing them to be unequal to European peoples in terms of their intellectual capabilities. For it was his perception that African societies did not value, or at least did not make good enough provision for, education. Like his mentor Dugald Stewart, Palmerston placed great weight by the importance of education and by the latter part of his career came to view it as the single most important way of bringing about one’s self-improvement. During his tours of northern England and Scotland in the 1850s and 1860s, for example, Palmerston was desirous to give his ‘name and position to the educational establishments of the people,’<sup>57</sup> and frequently arranged to patronise centres of education such as schools, libraries, museums, universities, and working men’s institutions. During his visit to Manchester in 1856, for instance, Palmerston deliberately chose to receive an address in the Royal Museum and Library; an important local institution whose readers were ‘chiefly

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p.6.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p.6, 188-189.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p.214.

<sup>57</sup> Mayor of Salford, Address to the Royal Museum and Library, Salford, in *The Times*, 7 November 1856, p.7.

of the working classes.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, in Yorkshire Palmerston attended the annual soiree of the Mechanics' Institute and Literary Society,<sup>59</sup> and in an impassioned address signalled his support for the committee's plans to erect a new school of science and art.<sup>60</sup> In Leeds, Palmerston took the chair at the annual meeting of the Ragged School Society and Shoeblack Brigade to show his support for one such school that was already established.<sup>61</sup>

In addition, Palmerston championed the construction of new educational establishments (and their benefactors) in the public addresses that he gave whilst on these tours, explaining to his audiences (who often came from working class backgrounds) his great passion for the 'diffusion of knowledge.'<sup>62</sup> There could be no 'more honourable devotion of time' or 'proper application of wealth' than 'placing within the reach of the lower-classes means of instruction,' he told an audience at the Manchester Town Hall in November 1856.<sup>63</sup> For as Palmerston explained, education would not only 'invigorate' people's intellects, contribute to their 'individual happiness,' and make them 'more useful and honourable member of society,' but it would 'raise them as citizens in the scale of civilisation.'<sup>64</sup> By learning about more than just the business of their own profession, devoting their time to understanding the 'laws of nature,' 'the history of this country,' and even 'the constitution of the universe,' he declared, British subjects would 'become liberal and enlightened,' their minds would be

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<sup>58</sup> For a report of Palmerston's visit to The Royal Museum and Library, see *The Times*, 7 November 1856, p.7. In 1856, Palmerston also inspected the Exhibition of Art and Industrial Treasures at the New Manchester Mechanics' Institution, see *Morning Post*, 6 November 1856, p.4.

<sup>59</sup> For a report of Palmerston's visit to the Leeds Mechanics Institute and Literary Society, see *Morning Post*, 27 October 1860.

<sup>60</sup> Palmerston, Address to the Leeds Mechanics Institute and Literary Society, in *The Times*, 27 October 1860, p.12. As well as moral support, Palmerston contributed £50 to the proposed expansion of the institution.

<sup>61</sup> For a report of Palmerston's visit to the Leeds Ragged School Society and Shoeblack Brigade, see *The Times*, 26 October 1860, p.10. This event was particularly important, as *The Times* pointed out on 30 October 1860, because 'ragged schools' were not an accepted orthodoxy and had previously been criticised by the Established Church as 'a stumbling block' to children's development. Palmerston's patronage was therefore significant in revising this notion. It gave the charities 'greater authority' and generated a wave of educational philanthropy. For more on this topic, see Patricia Midgley, *The Churches and the Working Classes: Leeds, 1870-1920* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), p.190.

<sup>62</sup> Palmerston, Address to the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, in *The Times*, 7 November 1856, p.7. See also Palmerston, Address to the Royal Museum and Library, Salford, in *The Times*, 7 November 1856, p.7; Palmerston, Address to Manchester Town Hall, in *The Times*, 7 November 1856, p.7; Palmerston, Address to Leeds Victoria Hall, in *The Times*, 27 October 1860, p.12.

<sup>63</sup> Palmerston, Address to the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, in *The Times*, 7 November 1856, p.7.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

filled 'with awe' and 'raised above the ordinary grovelling ideas of life,' and they would find themselves 'a superior being to what [they] had been before.'<sup>65</sup>

During his 1863 rectorial address to Glasgow University, moreover, Palmerston informed his audience of students and staff that education would not only advance an individual's intelligence but inculcate a series of moral values.<sup>66</sup> He explained his belief, for instance, that the very act of studying would teach people to acquire 'self-discipline and self-control,' values that were 'essential in every period of life' since they would help to control the 'lively passions' and 'strong will' of humankind.<sup>67</sup> More particularly, Palmerston argued that the study of English Literature would develop the values of 'love' and 'friendship' as well as the deprecation of 'anger.'<sup>68</sup> The study of Mathematics would encourage 'the pursuit of truth,' Philosophy would develop people's understanding of logic and 'fundamental principles,' History would inform one of 'great matters,' whilst Science – whether chemistry, geology or physics – would 'strengthen and encourage' one's faith and devotion to God.<sup>69</sup>

Overall, therefore, it was Palmerston's belief that education had the potential to improve one's moral and intellectual qualities, and to raise up a country's citizens 'in the scale of society.'<sup>70</sup> More importantly, however, as every citizen began to lift themselves up by their improved knowledge and intellect, Palmerston predicted that the nation itself would be annually raised in 'the scale of nations.'<sup>71</sup> As he told an audience in Glasgow in September 1853, due to the impressive efforts made by that place to secure the 'intellectual improvement' of the working classes, the nation of Scotland had now become a beacon of 'civilisation' to the rest of Europe.<sup>72</sup> It is perhaps for this reason, then, that Palmerston professed that of all the duties of government there were 'none more important,' 'more interesting,' or 'attended with more permanent and general

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Palmerston, Address to the University of Glasgow, in *The Times*, 31 March 1863, p.9.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. For more on Palmerston's focus on education in his tours of the country, see Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.468-470.

<sup>70</sup> Palmerston, Address to Manchester Town Hall, in *The Times*, 7 November 1856, p.7.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Palmerston, Address to City Hall, Glasgow, in *The Times*, 29 September 1853.

benefit' than the spreading of education among the working classes,<sup>73</sup> and that it was 'one of the most important subjects to which a public man can devote his attention.'<sup>74</sup>

Palmerston's contemptuous view of Africans as 'barbarous,' therefore, was arguably drawn from his underlying assumption that they were poorly educated and did not value intellectual or moral self-improvement. For although Palmerston's public and private papers do not contain crude or ignorant racial stereotypes, they demonstrate his opinion that whilst Africans were capable of learning 'acts of civilised life,'<sup>75</sup> at present they were perpetuating 'barbarous' 'practices,' 'customs' and 'habits.'<sup>76</sup> For example, Palmerston liked to imagine Africans living in a state of primitive simplicity, preferring to be in a 'state of nudity' than to don western 'jackets and trousers,'<sup>77</sup> to live in mud 'huts' rather than to construct brick houses or to build cities, and to submit themselves to a basic agricultural and subsistence economy instead of attempting to cultivate and control the geographical landscape.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, he was 'utterly disgusted' by African rituals such as human sacrifice, which he believed were performed 'extensively' over the whole continent and posed serious obstacles to the progress of European civilisation.<sup>79</sup>

In addition, Palmerston imagined African societies to be poorly governed and led by self-seeking, dishonest and corrupt individuals. In an autographed minute that he wrote in the margins of a Foreign Office dispatch in October 1859, for example, Palmerston explained that there existed throughout Africa a number of deeply entrenched, reactionary interest groups that held a vested interest in maintaining the slave trade. These groups, he stated, were regrettably but invariably headed by the rulers

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<sup>73</sup> Palmerston, Address to the Royal Museum and Library, Salford, in *The Times*, 7 November 1856, p.7.

<sup>74</sup> Palmerston, 'Education Bills', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cxxxvii, 697-699 (16 March 1855), c.697.

<sup>75</sup> Palmerston to John Duncan, 29 May 1849, National Archives, Foreign Office Papers (hereafter TNA, FO) 84/775, ff.3-8.

<sup>76</sup> These phrases appear commonly in Palmerston's parliamentary speeches and foreign office dispatches. See, for example, Palmerston, 'The King of Dahomey and the Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxv, 284-291 (14 February 1862), c.285. See also Palmerston to John Beecroft, 5 July 1851, TNA, FO84/858, ff.28-29; Palmerston to John Duncan, 29 May 1849, TNA, FO84/775, ff.3-8. Occasionally, they appear in his private correspondence as well, see Palmerston to Russell, 21 July 1862, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/14C, ff.254-256.

<sup>77</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1119-1126 (22 February 1848), c.1124.

<sup>78</sup> This is the impression Palmerston gave in an undated private memorandum on the potential economic potential of Mombas. In that place, he stated, Africans lived on a plantation where 'comfortable huts were erected for their accommodation.' This African state was not industrialising, but 'presented a picture of perfect content,' with 'each individual [having] a portion of ground to cultivate.' See Palmerston, 'Account of Mombas: British settlement there – its commercial capabilities', PP, MM/AF/3/1-9.

<sup>79</sup> Palmerston, 'The King of Dahomey and the Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxv, 284-291 (14 February 1862), c.285.



of African states themselves, who 'not unnaturally prefer[red] themselves to their subjects.' For it was his understanding that African rulers were 'all powerful over their respective tribes,' and that 'the profits from the slave trade [went] to them' since they were the ones co-ordinating slave hunts and mediating with European merchants, whilst 'the profits of legitimate commerce [went] to their people' because they were the ones engaging in private, small-scale agricultural enterprise. Thus, it was in African rulers' own selfish interests, he argued, to continue the slave trade for as long as possible and 'to prohibit their subjects from trading legally in order that the whole of the commerce of Europe and America may pass through their own hands, and that they may reap the whole profit.'<sup>80</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that Palmerston denied African nations the designation of being a 'nation' or a 'state,' ruled by a 'monarch' or 'sovereign,' and instead derogatorily referred to them as 'tribes' or 'natives' under the dominion of a 'Chief.'<sup>81</sup> Even the chairs that African 'Chiefs' sat on, Palmerston once wrote, 'scarcely deserve[d] the dignified character of "throne".'<sup>82</sup>

Finally, it was Palmerston's belief that Africans had been 'barbarised' by their engagement in the European-stimulated commerce in slaves. Describing that trade as an infection, he told Parliament in 1845 that it had 'contaminated' the mind of every person who had ever participated in it,<sup>83</sup> and on another occasion likened it to an addictive drug that would 'lead the natives away from their recent habits of legitimate commerce and tempt them back again to their former practices of man-stealing,' unless European nations helped to wean them off of it.<sup>84</sup> Essentially, what Palmerston meant by this was twofold. On one hand, Palmerston believed that the slave trade led African nations to become locked into a cycle of 'violence, of rapine and of bloodshed.'<sup>85</sup> For instead of cultivating domestic agriculture, producing exports that might be bartered for European and American commodities and extending the arm of commerce to the nations of the world, thereby creating a self-sustaining economy by which everyone derived advantage and from which law and order could be maintained by the desire to preserve this lifestyle, it was Palmerston's contention that the slave trade led African states to engage in

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<sup>80</sup> Gavin, 'Palmerston's Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865', p.240.

<sup>81</sup> Palmerston's dispatches used this register throughout. See, for example, Palmerston to John Beecroft, 21 February 1851, TNA, FO84/858, ff.11-13.

<sup>82</sup> Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 31 July 1851, PP, GC/BA/313/1-2.

<sup>83</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.142.

<sup>84</sup> Palmerston to Earl Granville, 2 April 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.19-20.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

constant internal warfare with one another; fuelled by the need to steal men, women and children to be sold as slaves to foreign merchants. Moreover, that it led African rulers to contrive or keep up quarrels with their own subjects and neighbours, and to seek out causes of punishment for them as an excuse for selling them into slavery for the sake of producing an income for themselves. And ultimately, that it led Africans to reject the development of their own natural resources as well as lawful commerce, to reject the daily advance of peace and happiness, and thus to reject the basis of Western 'civilisation.'<sup>86</sup>

However, it was perhaps not just this cycle of violence that Palmerston referred to when he described Africans as having been 'barbarised' by the slave trade. On the other hand, it was apparent to him that the traffic had imbibed an aggressive spirit into anyone who participated in that atrocity; that it had created a lust for bloodshed, for fighting, and a warped logic that the cultivation of agriculture was derogatory to one's dignity. This view was put to Palmerston by the King of Dahomey in July 1850, for instance, who rejected his proposed anti-slavery treaty on the grounds that the community under his care 'were a warlike people... and of course unaccustomed to agricultural pursuits.' The King asked 'if we had seen any farms between the swamps and [his capital of] Abomey,' Britain's consul reported, and asserted that he 'would not disgrace himself... to be laughed at by sending the warriors from his palace yard to plant and cultivate cotton.'<sup>87</sup> For Palmerston, therefore, the slave trade had effectively brought Africans backwards in terms of human advancement, to the point where they were no longer 'civilised' but more beasts than men. Palmerston, for instance, commonly described African kings as 'wild' or 'savage',<sup>88</sup> and on occasion compared them directly to animals. In 1851, he threatened to treat the King of Dahomey like a 'mad dog',<sup>89</sup> and in 1863 mocked him as a

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<sup>86</sup> This was the argument that Britain's naval officers were charged with making in all of their negotiations with African rulers, see Lord John Russell, Instructions to Her Majesty's Niger Commissioners, 30 January 1841, in C.W. Newbury, *British Policy Towards West Africa: Select Documents, 1786-1874* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965) pp.154-159. For a detailed analysis of these instructions, see Chapter 3, pp.107-111. Palmerston's representations to the King of Dahomey also made this the basis of his argument for an anti-slavery treaty, see Palmerston to King Gezo of Dahomey, 29 May 1849, TNA, FO84/775, ff.15-18, 27-29. See also Palmerston to John Beecroft, 25 February 1850, TNA, FO84/816, ff.14-22.

<sup>87</sup> John Beecroft to Palmerston 22 July 1850, TNA, FO84/816, ff.148-151.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, Palmerston, 'Account of Mombas: British settlement there – its commercial capabilities', PP, MM/AF/3/1-9. See also Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 12 June 1851, PP, GC/RU/1083/1-2.

<sup>89</sup> Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 27 August 1851, PP, GC/BA/315/1-2.

‘wild beast.’<sup>90</sup> When a British naval officer met with the Dahomean King in the same year, moreover, and managed to extract from him warm words about Britain, Palmerston praised him as a veritable ‘van Amburgh,’ in reference to an American animal trainer popular in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>91</sup> For both these reasons, then, Palmerston told Earl Grey in December 1849 that ‘the slave trade must first be driven out from any place before... civilisation can be firmly established, for the habits and practices connected with the slave trade render the men who carry it on and the African districts in which it is practiced, unfit... for civilisation.’<sup>92</sup>

Although the universality of ‘the civilisational perspective’ inhibited Palmerston from embracing a worldview predicated on there being inherent and permanent differences in humans, therefore, it is clear Palmerston still utilised a racialised taxonomy of human difference in the mid-nineteenth century, with his perspective being comparatively superficial and based more on environmental differences and ethnocentric ideas of ‘civilisation.’ Palmerston believed there were tangible differences between ‘barbarous’ peoples living in Africa and ‘civilised’ ones living in Europe on account of their varying methods of education and styles of clothing, their differing forms of political, social and economic organisation, as well as their differing levels of interaction and engagement with the international slave trade.

II) Economic and military power, ‘achievements’ and national ‘character’:  
Palmerston’s distinction between ‘civilised’ and ‘advanced’ nations

At the other end of his imagined spectrum of ‘civilisation,’ it is apparent that Palmerston drew another line of demarcation between what he referred to as ‘strong and civilised nations’ and ‘weaker and less civilised ones.’ Indeed, Palmerston made this distinction in a private letter to Lord John Russell in October 1864, during a discussion about Britain’s ongoing trade negotiations with Japan for a commercial treaty. ‘I am inclined to think,’ he wrote, ‘that our relations with Japan are going through the usual and unavoidable stages of the intercourse of strong and civilised nations with weaker and less civilised ones.’

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<sup>90</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 25, March 1863, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/22/45.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Gavin, ‘Palmerston’s Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865’, p.24.

First [comes] agreement for trade, next breach of engagement, injustice and outrage – the redress demanded and refused – then reparations enforced by hostility. Then temporary acquiescence – then renewed endeavours to break engagements – then successful display of superior strength and then at last peaceful and settled commercial intercourse advantageous to both parties. We have gone through all these stages with China – we have got only halfway with Japan.<sup>93</sup>

There is a clear tension here, then, in that Palmerston considered both Britain and Japan (as well as China) to be ‘civilised’ as opposed to ‘barbarous,’ but to differing degrees, with Britain cast as higher up than Japan in his imagined ‘scale of civilisation.’ This distinction, however, seems to reflect the labels coined by Richard Huzzey in *Freedom Burning*, of some nations being deemed to have progressed so far beyond others in terms of their development that they were taken by contemporaries as being ‘advanced’; sitting at the very summit of ‘civilisation.’<sup>94</sup> Although these terms remain a little problematic and ambiguous, then, in that all non-‘barbarous’ nations were deemed to be ‘civilised’ but some more so than others, the rest of this thesis will employ the term ‘advanced’ to denote those nations in the upper echelon of Palmerston’s imagined ‘scale of civilisation,’ and the term ‘civilised’ to denote those nations in the middle echelon; with the bottom stratum reserved for nations perceived to be ‘uncivilised’ or ‘barbarous.’

Once again, the distinctions between ‘advanced’ and ‘civilised’ nations were by no means axiomatic and there was undoubtedly space for the line between them to be blurred. For example, there was perhaps confusion over how to rank countries such as Spain, the Netherlands and Sweden, who in former periods of history had been among the ‘advanced’ nations of their age.<sup>95</sup> Would it have been sensible to group these countries under the same broad category as ‘new countries’ from South America which were still seeking to be officially recognised by European leaders?<sup>96</sup> Likewise, there may have been difficulty over whether to group nations such as Portugal, which still possessed

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<sup>93</sup> Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, p.543.

<sup>94</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.51-52.

<sup>95</sup> Modern histories tend to see these countries declining in global significance from the late-seventeenth and early eighteenth-centuries. See, for example, Henry Kamen, *Empire: How Spain Became A World Power, 1492-1763* (New York: Perennial, 2004); R.C. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* (London: Hutchinson, 1965); Michael Roberts, *Sweden as a Great Power, 1611-1697: Government, Society, Foreign Policy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1968).

<sup>96</sup> For more on the emergence of ‘new countries’ in South America, see John Tutino (ed.), *New Countries: Capitalism, Revolutions, and Nations in the Americas, 1750-1870* (London: Duke University Press, 2016).

an overseas empire,<sup>97</sup> together with countries that held no colonial possessions or with one like Brazil who had only recently become independent.<sup>98</sup> And finally, where would one place countries that possessed unusual wealth like the Hanseatic League of Bremen, Lübeck and Hamburg,<sup>99</sup> boasted a rich cultural heritage like Naples,<sup>100</sup> or that had proven its military prowess on the battlefield like Mexico,<sup>101</sup> but did not possess all of these things simultaneously?

The answers to these questions were by no means straightforward. First and foremost, one might posit that Palmerston distinguished between ‘advanced’ and ‘civilised’ countries based on their military strength and economic power. In January 1851, for example, Palmerston wrote a private letter to Viscount Halifax, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in an effort to persuade him to provide more money in the upcoming budget for the defence of England, and in particular for the raising of a partially trained militia of about 100,000 men that could be called out under arms if required. Crucially, in this letter Palmerston stated his opinion that ‘every other country that deserves to be called a Power has this kind of reserve force,’ before going on to name these countries as ‘France, Austria, Prussia, the United States [and] Russia.’<sup>102</sup> Palmerston therefore made it explicitly clear that he regarded ‘advanced’ nations to be those with overwhelming military capabilities and the economic power to finance large standing armies. This was not the only time, moreover, that Palmerston identified these six countries as ‘the Great Powers’ of Europe and America, for in the House of Commons he routinely stated his belief that Britain and the U.S. were ‘equal powers,’ whilst he commonly grouped Britain together with France, Russia, Austria and Prussia as ‘the five greatest powers of Europe.’<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> For an overview of the Portuguese empire in Africa, see James Duffy, *Portuguese Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959). For an overview of the Portuguese empire in India, see R.P. Rao, *Portuguese Rule in Goa, 1510-1961* (London: Asia Pub. House, 1963).

<sup>98</sup> For more on Brazilian independence, see Bethell, ‘The Independence of Brazil and the Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade’.

<sup>99</sup> For more on the wealth of the Hanseatic League, see Carsten Jahnke, ‘The Baltic Trade’, in *A Companion to the Hanseatic League*, ed. by Donald J. Harreld (Brill: Leiden, 2015), 194-240.

<sup>100</sup> For more on the cultural heritage of Naples, see Jerry H. Bentley, *Politics and Culture in Renaissance Naples* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

<sup>101</sup> For more on the military experience of Mexico, see Richard Bruce Winders, *Crisis in the Southwest: The United States, Mexico, and the Struggle over Texas* (Wilmington: SR Books, 2002).

<sup>102</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Halifax, 24 January 1851, in Evelyn Ashley, *The Life and Correspondence of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1879), II, p.177.

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, Palmerston, ‘Treaty of Washington’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvii, 1162-1219 (21 March 1843), cc.1200, 1207.

Although he never said it unequivocally, one might assume that for Palmerston the reason for this distinction came down to the simple fact that 'advanced' nations with the greatest wealth and military capabilities had the greatest power to influence world affairs, whereas 'civilised' ones who were deficient in these areas had only limited means through which to exert a force on international politics. 'Advanced' powers, as Keene puts it, could conduct 'large-scale social, economic and military projects' and hence offer ruinous opposition to the British Government, whilst 'civilised' countries inevitably lacked the power to threaten British dominance and were unable to provide substantial resistance to Britain across the globe (unless supported by a Great Power).<sup>104</sup> For Britain, then, it undoubtedly made sense to treat 'advanced' powers more respectfully and to be wary of the capabilities which might be deployed against them. Moreover, it was vital for Britain to cultivate carefully both the European and North American balance of power so as to prevent a situation whereby Britain found itself outnumbered and vulnerable.

At the same time, however, it is important to examine whether Palmerston differentiated between 'advanced' and 'civilised' countries based on more than just their real economic and military power. For if one is persuaded by Keene's analysis that British statesmen's imagined hierarchy of nations was 'socially constructed,' based on *perception* rather than reality, then it might also be the case that Palmerston judged nations against one another in terms of how far he perceived them to have accomplished significant 'achievements.'<sup>105</sup> Specifically, by 'achievements' Keene referred to a country's 'unique political, social, cultural, economic and technological' successes, all of which appeared to indicate the superior abilities of 'advanced' powers.<sup>106</sup> It is notable, however, that Palmerston rarely mentioned other countries' 'achievements' during the nineteenth century. Both in public and in private, he tended to eschew analysis of what other countries were doing well and to focus far more on their failings. If anything, moreover, Palmerston often held substantially lower opinions of foreign nations than their unique list of accomplishments would logically lead him to hold. For example, if Palmerston had sincerely felt that one's achievements could be used to rank countries within his imagined hierarchy then Portugal and Spain would most likely have been placed higher up in his

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<sup>104</sup> Keene, 'A Case Study of the Construction of International Hierarchy', p.330.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, pp.313, 330.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p.330.

mind (and possibly even placed in the ‘advanced’ category), since in the early 1830s both of those nations decided to change the form of their Governments and to adopt the system of constitutional monarchy.<sup>107</sup> They were subsequently lauded by Palmerston as beacons of liberalism and, in 1834, given privileged status alongside Britain and France as founding members of the western European constitutional alliance.<sup>108</sup> The Iberian Peninsula would soon ‘resume its proper place among the states of Europe,’ Palmerston wrote to Frederick Lamb, ‘and many results favourable to the civilisation and happiness of mankind may be looked for in due course of time.’<sup>109</sup> Yet, despite being praised for their political achievements in the 1830s, this transformation never seemed to come to pass. On the contrary, Palmerston wrote some years later that Portugal was ‘of all European nations the lowest in the moral scale.’<sup>110</sup>

Likewise, if the achievements outlined by Keene had been an important consideration for Palmerston then he almost certainly would not have judged the U.S. to be ‘advanced,’ but perhaps even ‘barbarous.’ For despite their economic and military power and their perception as a ‘stable, prosperous and devout’ nation,<sup>111</sup> Palmerston was deeply disdainful of the United States’ republican and democratic system of Government.<sup>112</sup> In private, he ridiculed Americans as ‘Yankees’ and North America as ‘Yankeeland,’<sup>113</sup> believing that a government dictated by ‘the passions of irresponsible masses’ would be inherently aggressive, expansionist and unable to balance a ‘multitude of conflicting interests.’<sup>114</sup> Moreover, he was convinced that it created leaders who were

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<sup>107</sup> For more on the civil wars in the Iberian Peninsula and Palmerston’s responses to them, see Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.133-136, 158-163.

<sup>108</sup> For more on the formation of the Quadruple Alliance, see, *Ibid*, pp.165-166, 180-182. See also Palmerston to William Temple, 21 April, 12 May 1834, PP, GC/TE/219, 221.

<sup>109</sup> Palmerston to Frederick Lamb, 14 November 1833, Beauvale Papers, British Library (hereafter BP, BL), Add Ms 60464, ff.182-191.

<sup>110</sup> Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, II, p.411.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote in British Politics, 1848-1867: The Making of the Second Reform Act* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p.142.

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, Duncan Andrew Campbell, ‘Palmerston and the American Civil War’, in *Palmerston Studies*, ed. by David Brown and Miles Taylor, 2 vols (Southampton: Hartley Institute, 2007), II, 144-167 (pp.152, 147-148). See also Brown, *Palmerston*, p.450; Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, p.548.

<sup>113</sup> Although in America this term was used to describe an inhabitant of New England or the Northern States, English writers and speakers commonly applied it to inhabitants of the United States as a pejorative term of ‘ridicule or reproach.’ See ‘Yankee, n. and adj.’, *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford University Press, 2019) <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/231174?rskey=Re8U5T&result=1#eid>> [accessed 1 September 2015]. For example, see Palmerston to William Temple, 1 September 1842, PP, GC/TE/304.

<sup>114</sup> Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p.214. See also Palmerston to Lord Normanby, 7 May 1847, in Ashley, *The Life and Correspondence of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, II, p.40.

not inspired by deeply held principles or a 'sense of honour,' but swayed by a 'reckless desire to hold their positions by all and any means.'<sup>115</sup> Once again though, despite criticising the U.S. for their political failings and even admonishing American statesmen as 'wild' and 'foolish' on occasion,<sup>116</sup> Palmerston still recorded his belief that the U.S. was a community 'rising in the scale of civilization' and attaining every degree of 'prosperity,' 'power' and 'wealth.'<sup>117</sup> Moreover, he often used familial language to describe America; they were Britain's 'relatives,' a 'kindred nation,' and a community 'sprung from the same ancestry as ourselves.'<sup>118</sup>

Rather than judging a nation's degree of 'civilisation' according to its unique achievements, therefore, one must recognise that Palmerston preferred to rank countries within his imagined hierarchy based on something different: his perception of their national 'character.' Whilst Keene was right that Palmerston's understanding of 'civilisation' was 'socially constructed,'<sup>119</sup> in other words, it is apparent that he placed far greater value by a country's behaviours that its achievements, and especially by how far a nation appeared to observe the gentlemanly qualities of virtue, honour and integrity. As will be shown, it was Palmerston's contention that 'advanced' powers invariably possessed a more upstanding and righteous national character than 'civilised' ones, and none more so than Britain. For despite Britain's 'great wealth,' 'unbounded resources' and 'military and naval strength,' it was the 'moral dignity' which marked 'the character and conduct of the British people' that he declared in 1841 to be the most important reason for Britain's global pre-eminence.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, p.551.

<sup>116</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 9 September 1861, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/21. See also Palmerston, Memorandum on the character of American statesmen, 14 May 1846, PP, MM/US/7. Palmerston went through a number of American statesmen remarking on their character: 'Polk is an ordinary man,' he wrote, 'in manners he is unattractive & vulgar.' 'Breese is a common place lawyer from Illinois.' 'Hannegan is a wild red-faced Irishman from Indiana.' 'Cass [is] an old woman.' 'Old Adams has vindicated his character for eccentricity.'

<sup>117</sup> Palmerston, 'Defences of Canada', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxxvii, 1633-1637 (13 March 1865), c.1634.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* See also Palmerston, 'Reinforcements for Canada', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clviii, 1521-1523 (24 June 1861), c.1523.

<sup>119</sup> Keene, 'A Case Study of the Construction of International Hierarchy', p.313.

<sup>120</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), c.654. For more on Britain's national 'character,' see Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).



To begin with, Palmerston's belief that 'advanced' powers held especially virtuous national characters was something he mentioned on many occasions. In a public speech in Manchester Town Hall in November 1856, for example, Palmerston argued that 'larger powers' possessed a truer understanding of morality, of 'the principles of right and wrong,' than 'weak and small states.' For it was unfortunately the case, he held, that these values were 'not quite so steadily kept in view' in those states, and that private interests were more able to sway Government officials and to dictate national policy.<sup>121</sup> Palmerston did not elaborate further in this speech over which countries he was referring to or what particular incidents had led him to take this generalised view, but it is possible he was influenced by the Governments of Portugal and Brazil and their inability to confront the slave-trading interests in Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro.<sup>122</sup> Between 1834 and 1851, Britain's ministers in those places wrote repeatedly to Palmerston, in public and private, of the increasing influence that the Portuguese and Brazilian clubs were able to exert over the Government when it came to the issue of slave trade, and of their clandestine ways of bribing officials into taking their line and pursuing their interests.<sup>123</sup>

A nation's virtue was determined by more than just a good moral compass, however. In addition, Palmerston told Parliament on several occasions that 'advanced' nations were more accepting and tolerant of religious diversity than 'civilised' ones, this evil having been 'dispelled' by 'the progress of civilisation,' the 'enlightenment,' and by increasing 'intercommunication between people of different countries and different creeds.'<sup>124</sup> In nations where all of these things were less marked, however, such as Spain and India, Palmerston felt that religious prejudices were still harboured and continued to be passed down from one generation to the next. In 1861, for example, Palmerston told Parliament that Spain had recently made a 'great improvement' over its acceptance of religion diversity (for everybody knew that in former times it had 'governed upon the most intolerant religious principles'), but went on to argue that it still had a long way to

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<sup>121</sup> Palmerston, Address to Manchester Town Hall, in *The Times*, 7 November 1856, p.7.

<sup>122</sup> See Chapter 3, pp.135-138.

<sup>123</sup> See, for example, Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 1 February, 7 May 1838, 21 January, 27 January, 2 March 1839, PP, GC/HO/492, 519, 533, 546, 554. See also James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 October 1848, 17 January 1850, PP, GC/HU/6, 20.

<sup>124</sup> Palmerston, 'Protestants in Spain', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxxii, 1008-1012 (17 July 1863), c.1008. See also Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, p.21. Parry argues that religious tolerance was central to the meaning of 'civilisation' for nineteenth century Liberals.

go before this evil was fully eradicated, and in this respect was 'far behind any civilised, and, I will almost say, any uncivilised nation.'<sup>125</sup>

Furthermore, Palmerston made the argument in private that 'advanced' nations were more honourable and dutiful because they were led by statesmen who were consciously benevolent to their own people, who pursued 'interior reform,' and sought to advance 'the welfare and civilisation of the many' as opposed to their own vested interests.<sup>126</sup> In January 1834, for example, Palmerston praised the leaders of Prussia as 'enlightened' for this exact reason.<sup>127</sup> Significantly, Prussia had undertaken the first of a series of 'pseudo-reform measures' at the beginning of that year, the most important of which being the foundation of the Prussian-led German Zollverein.<sup>128</sup> The Zollverein was primarily 'a customs association based on the abolition of internal tariff barriers between a number of German states,' and was intended to increase the prosperity of continental Europe.<sup>129</sup> But crucially it was also perceived as the beginning for a political union between the German states, one which *The Times* felt would 'join the people in a closer alliance than their religion or civil institutions' and which would 'do more to promote their internal peace, and to consolidate their external security, than all their joint garrisons or military contingents.'<sup>130</sup> Although Palmerston was initially concerned about the prospect of a protective system which excluded the products of British industry by exorbitant duties,<sup>131</sup> he came around to the idea that it would have 'little effect' on England's commerce yet would do much good for Prussia.<sup>132</sup> A 'successful governmental reform initiative,' the Zollverein would not only free 'the internal communications of Germany from the various impediments to which it was now liable,' but would be 'favourable to the prosperity and to the happiness of the German community' and an

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<sup>125</sup> Palmerston, 'Protestant Worship in Spain', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxii, 2199-2201 (17 May 1861), c.2200. See also Palmerston, 'The Bible in Spain', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxv, 1541-1542 (14 March 1862). In India, moreover, Palmerston believed the country was rife with 'religious prejudices' between Hindus and Muslims. This posed 'obstacles to the progress of European civilisation.' See Palmerston, Memorandum on the role of the Governor-General of India, PP, MM/IN/4.

<sup>126</sup> Palmerston, Memorandum on the 'Possessions acquired by Russia since the year 1721', PP, MM/RU/1/1-3. See also Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, p.21. Parry argues that the breaking down of 'vested interests' was again central to how Liberals defined 'civilisation.'

<sup>127</sup> Palmerston to Lord Minto, 17 January 1834, PP, GC/MI/558/1-2.

<sup>128</sup> Frank Lorenz Müller, *Britain and the German Question: Perceptions of Nationalism and Political Reform, 1830-63* (Gordonsville: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p.31.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, p.32.

<sup>130</sup> *The Times*, 30 December 1833, p.7.

<sup>131</sup> Müller, *Britain and the German Question*, p.34. See also Bourne, *Palmerston*, p.371.

<sup>132</sup> Palmerston, 'Russian Policy', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xxxi, 645-652 (19 February 1836), c.648.

‘instrument of incalculable and boundless good.’<sup>133</sup> By November 1840, therefore, Palmerston wrote to Queen Victoria praising the leaders of Prussia for their enlightened reforms and for improving the condition of their country. ‘Those abuses [which had riddled Prussia in the past] have now in general been removed,’ he wrote, and ‘the people in many parts of Germany have been admitted, more or less, to a share in the management of their own affairs.’ As such, ‘a German feeling and a spirit of nationality has sprung up among all the German people.’<sup>134</sup> And, a few years later during a private visit to Berlin, Palmerston wrote home to his brother his admiration for the Prussian King’s ‘enlightened views.’ ‘There can be no doubt that under his reign Prussia will make rapid advance in improvement of every kind,’ he wrote. ‘In short, Prussia is taking the lead in German civilisation.’<sup>135</sup>

Another signifier of a nation’s character related to what Palmerston called ‘good faith,’ by which he meant their honesty, trustworthiness and loyalty to the fulfilment of their commitments. To elaborate, it was Palmerston’s understanding that whenever nations communicated with one another, whether in the form of written dispatches between Governments or via oral meetings between representatives, their promises formed a bond; one that denoted virtually a legally binding contract that could not be broken. This contract could become ‘solemn’ over time and even more difficult to break if communications were formalised via the signing of a treaty. It was this bond, then, that Palmerston regarded as vitally important to the upkeep of one’s national character. Indeed, keeping strictly to ones promises and engagements, even if this meant ‘casting aside all selfish interests’ and ‘petty intrigues,’ was believed to be essential to maintaining trust between nations and therefore for safeguarding ‘national security’ and ‘permanent tranquillity.’<sup>136</sup>

Notably, ‘good faith’ was a quality that Palmerston frequently reminded ‘advanced’ powers of during his time at the Foreign Office, believing an honourable

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<sup>133</sup> Müller, *Britain and the German Question*, p.36.

<sup>134</sup> Palmerston to Queen Victoria, 11 November 1840, in *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, ed. by Arthur Christopher Benson and Viscount Esher, 3 vols (London: Murray, 1907), I, pp.247–248.

<sup>135</sup> Palmerston to William Temple, 13 October 1844, in Bulwer, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, III, pp.159–160.

<sup>136</sup> Palmerston explained this to Viscount Granville in March 1831, see Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 18 March 1831, in Bulwer, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, II, pp.55-56.

course to be well-suited to a 'great country.'<sup>137</sup> In 1831, for example, Palmerston began to fear that France was breaking its promise not to interfere with the independence of Belgium. As such, Palmerston instructed Viscount Granville, Britain's ambassador to Paris, to 'hint' to officials that Britain's confidence in her was diminishing, and to prove to Britain that it 'does not mean to open a new chapter of encroachment and conquest.'<sup>138</sup> Later, Palmerston again expressed his wish that the French Government 'make up their minds to act with good faith about Belgium... to be honest with stoutness or to play the rogue with boldness,' and not to try and conceal their 'spirit of aggrandizement.'<sup>139</sup> Escalating his concern even more throughout the year, Palmerston asserted in March that unless Casimir P rier, the French Prime Minister, was 'willing to take the straight line,' to 'act fairly with the four powers' and to 'settle the matter amicably and honourably,' then he foresaw events would 'end in war.'<sup>140</sup> Evidently, Palmerston was confident that France would feel so strongly about maintaining its national character and reputation for 'good faith' that it would put aside any selfish interests it might be harbouring and change its foreign policy to reflect these concerns.

In contrast, Palmerston did not automatically presume that 'civilised' states would fulfil their commitments to Britain, believing them to be less reliable and trustworthy. During his negotiations with Portugal for an anti-slavery treaty in the 1830s, moreover, Palmerston appeared to try and steer Portugal into following the good example set by Britain, making sure to praise Portugal whenever it kept its engagements and to scold it on any occasion that it did not live up to them. When Lisbon followed through with its 'long promised Decree' for the total abolition of the slave trade throughout the Portuguese empire in 1836,<sup>141</sup> for instance, Palmerston immediately instructed Howard de Walden to state 'how highly Her Majesty's Government appreciates the enlightened policy, the generous sentiments, and spirit of good faith' which had dictated that measure. Clearly surprised, Palmerston admitted 'how proud Great Britain would feel if her ally... were to go forward in [that] honourable course.'<sup>142</sup> Some years later, Palmerston's pride had turned into dejection, as he admonished Portugal for its

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 7 January 1831, in Ibid, p.33.

<sup>139</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 9 March 1831, in Ibid, p.51.

<sup>140</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 18 March 1831, in Ibid, p.33.

<sup>141</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 22 December 1836, TNA, FO84/203, ff.110-112.

<sup>142</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 17 January 1837, TNA, FO84/215, ff.3-5.

capriciousness. Britain could 'attach no weight to any professions which the Portuguese Government may make of its desire to repress and abolish the slave trade,' he wrote,<sup>143</sup> for 'the truth is that this trade enriches a few [Portuguese] governors, some subordinate officers and a number of private merchants at the expense of the best interests of the state... To benefit a few individuals, ...Portugal permits her flag to be disgraced, her laws to be violated, her good faith to be impeached, and her treaty engagements to be broken.'<sup>144</sup>

It is clear, moreover, that for countries such as Spain who wanted to be considered among Europe's elite powers, cultivating a reputation for 'good faith' was integral to its ambitions. It is notable, for example, that when the Spanish Government rejected Palmerston's wily scheme to help prevent freed Africans in South America from being 'reduced to slavery' upon landing in Cuba (which would essentially have involved relocating them to a British colony),<sup>145</sup> Madrid aimed to be as frank and open as possible when stating its reasons for declining. In a forty-page dispatch, it listed all of the unintended consequences of Palmerston's plan and the multiple domestic laws which prevented its execution, before concluding with its hope that Britain would 'state to it the good faith with which the Spanish Government has behaved in this matter.' Essentially, then, it was Spain's goal to persuade Britain that it could be a 'loyal' ally, had shown 'the dignity and honour of a great and generous nation,' and that it was determined to 'fulfil with religious strictness the treaties which unite it with other nations.'<sup>146</sup>

The final distinction that Palmerston made between 'advanced' and 'civilised' states related specifically to the slave trade. Just like he argued that participating in the slave trade had 'barbarised' the people of Africa, Palmerston maintained that if a nation engaged with that traffic then its national character would be tainted and any claim it had to be an 'advanced' nation undermined. Palmerston declared on numerous occasions, for instance, that slave-trading was 'a disgrace to any civilised or Christian state' and a

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<sup>143</sup> Palmerston to George William Jerningham, 3 November 1838, TNA, FO84/251, ff.11-13.

<sup>144</sup> Palmerston, 'Draft of note to be presented by Lord Howard de Walden to the Portuguese Government', TNA, FO84/281, ff.56-124, enclosed in Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 20 April 1839, TNA, FO84/281, f.54-56.

<sup>145</sup> Palmerston to Arthur Ingram Aston, 25 May 1840, TNA, FO84/318, ff.41-43, and enclosed draft convention between Britain and Spain, ff.44-51.

<sup>146</sup> Antonio González to Arthur Ingram Aston, 20 December 1841, TNA, FO84/355, ff.434-457, enclosed in Arthur Ingram Aston to Lord Aberdeen, 22 December 1841, TNA, FO84/355, ff.414-415.

'scandal of the civilised world,'<sup>147</sup> and was not cautious about letting the world know of the individual nations he felt were perpetuating this crime and thus 'degrading' and 'demoralising' themselves in the process.<sup>148</sup> Spain, Portugal and Brazil, for example, were invariably singled out by Palmerston during the nineteenth century as the worst of all the criminals engaged in the slave trade. Grouped together as the 'great offenders,'<sup>149</sup> Palmerston described Portugal as 'habitually and systematically addicted to the [slave] trade' and Brazilians as nothing but 'degenerate Portuguese.'<sup>150</sup> 'Nothing,' he wrote, would 'wipe away the disgrace which these facts affix to the character of Portugal.'<sup>151</sup> With regards to Spain, moreover, Palmerston told John Crampton in 1864 how 'no Spaniard [could] reflect without a blush upon the long-continued and systematic violation... of the treaty engagements of the Spanish Crown' over the slave trade, and that 'as long as this state of things is allowed to continue Spain never can... take or hold her proper and natural position among the Powers of Europe.'<sup>152</sup>

For Palmerston, however, it was not just that these countries were perpetuating a vile crime that stripped them of any right to be considered 'strong and civilised countries,' but that they were unquestionably the ones to blame for introducing 'barbarous practices' into Africa; for leading a whole continent into becoming 'barbarised.' In February 1850, for instance, Palmerston made an official complaint to the Brazilian Government, part of which stated that by breaching its treaty engagements Brazil was opposing 'an insurmountable barrier to the progress of legitimate commerce and of civilisation on the continent of Africa.' Vast regions of the African continent, he explained, had been 'endowed with extraordinary fertility' and were 'abound with valuable productions' affording 'almost unlimited resources for the commerce of the other quarters of the globe.' But rather than living up to their potential, these vast regions were instead made 'the scene of violence, of rapine and of bloodshed' by slave traders. Thus,

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<sup>147</sup> See, for example, Palmerston, 'Foreign Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xlii, 1144-1152 (10 May 1838), c.1150. See also Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 12 May 1838, TNA, FO84/249, ff.27-33.

<sup>148</sup> Palmerston to James Hudson, 29 March 1851, TNA, FO84/842, ff.57-62.

<sup>149</sup> Palmerston, Address to the British and Foreign Anti-slavery Society, Broadlands, 18 October 1842, PP, SLT/19. This speech was subsequently printed in Bulwer, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, III, p.434-436.

<sup>150</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 19 May 1838, TNA, FO84/249, ff.39-41; Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, II, p.411.

<sup>151</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 24 March 1838, TNA, FO84/248, ff.26-29.

<sup>152</sup> Palmerston to Sir John Crampton, 17 February 1864, in Ashley, *Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, II, pp.263-264.

by breaching its treaty engagements Brazil was 'the promoter not only of a crime in Brazil, but of desolation and barbarism in Africa.'<sup>153</sup>

Following an examination of Palmerston's conceptualisation of 'civilisation' and 'barbarism,' it is therefore apparent that Palmerston conceived there to be an international hierarchy of nations during the mid-Victorian era. Moreover, that this hierarchy, formed by a complex mix of realist and constructivist influences, took the form of a 'scale of civilisation,' with blurred but ultimately faint lines of demarcation between 'barbarous tribes,' 'weak and less civilised nations,' and 'strong and civilised nations.' To understand how Palmerston turned his conceptualisation of 'civilisation' and 'barbarism' into a coherent and workable strategy, however, one that determined and shaped how he responded to international events at the Foreign Office and later as Prime Minister, it is first vital to explore the broad contours of the anti-slavery policy which Palmerston adopted to try and eliminate the slave trade. As such, chapter two will now analyse Palmerston's overarching strategy for ending the international slave trade.

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<sup>153</sup> Palmerston, 'Draft of note to be presented by James Hudson to the Brazilian Government', January 1850, GC/RU/317/enc 1, enclosed in Lord John Russell to Palmerston, 9 February 1850, PP, GC/RU/317. See also Palmerston to James Hudson, 27 February 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.10-11, and enclosed draft note, ff.12-19.





## Chapter 2 – Exterminating the ‘hydra’: Palmerston’s strategy for ending the international slave trade

Lord Palmerston was not the inventor of Britain’s anti-slavery policy in the Victorian period, for successive British Governments had endeavoured to end the slave trade for over two decades before his arrival in high office. As will be shown, moreover, Palmerston largely continued the work of his predecessors and did not radically alter the policy which he inherited upon his entrance to the Foreign Office. Yet, ever since 1830 and with increasing zeal throughout his career, one might argue that Palmerston strived to refine and perfect Britain’s policy, and to transform anti-slavery into an active and major element of the nation’s foreign policy. Before moving on to analyse the complexities of Britain’s ‘anti-slavery world system,’<sup>1</sup> this chapter will outline the overarching strategy that Palmerston embraced throughout his career to try and end the slave trade, and illuminate the manifold ways in which he sought to improve the policy he inherited.

### 1) Refining Britain’s network of anti-slavery treaties

To begin with, the first principle underpinning Palmerston’s anti-slavery policy, and one which had in fact underpinned the policy of all his predecessors, was that Britain should concentrate its efforts on abolishing the slave trade and consciously avoid interfering in other countries’ domestic laws over the institution of slavery.<sup>2</sup> For although it was Palmerston’s hope that both of those atrocities be eliminated in the near future, he was convinced that if Britain tried to conduct a campaign for global emancipation before the slave trade had been diminished to its smallest possible extent, this campaign would be unsuccessful and Britain’s efforts squandered. Painting a vivid image of the problem to Parliament in July 1845, Palmerston encouraged the House to imagine the institution of slavery as a ‘vast living tree’ and the slave trade as ‘the root’ which gave to it ‘life, spirit, and stability.’ To upheave this ‘vast living tree’ by attacking the trunk itself, he argued, would ‘baffle the utmost exertions’ of Britain’s strength, since its ‘mighty roots’ were too ‘strongly, vigorously, and deeply imbedded in the soil.’ But, if Britain planted its axe at

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<sup>1</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.51.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.54.

'the root' and 'cut off the supply of nourishment,' that ancient tree would 'sicken and decay' and Britain would 'no longer find any difficulty' in bringing the condition of slavery 'to the ground.'<sup>3</sup> For Palmerston, however, this was much more than just a metaphor. As he went on to explain, from his perspective it made perfect sense to try and end the slave trade first, before any attempt was made to get other countries to abandon slavery:

When you ask people to put an end to slavery, to emancipate their slaves, you ask them, almost in so many words, to give up their property. To give up that on which their existence depends. You can, therefore, hardly expect them to assent to your proposal. But when you ask them to concur with you in the abolition of the slave trade, all you require of them is to combine with you to prevent other persons from committing the crime. Vitally, you are much more likely to succeed in this object, because the same motives which influence them against your proposition in the one case influence them in your favour in the other. For you would very frequently find the same slave-owners who would struggle against you to the last for the preservation of their own means by which to cultivate their slave-worked lands, eager to aid you in preventing the introduction, on the part of others, of fresh slaves, who would be bringing into cultivation fresh tracts of land whose produce would enter into injurious competition with that of their own existing estates.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, to attack the institution of slavery would be strewn with practical problems, not least how to persuade foreign slave-owners, who possessed an interest in that institution, to comprehend, support and tolerate its abolition. Although Palmerston did not call them out specifically, he was evidently well-aware that powerful southern slave-owners in the U.S. would fight tooth and claw to retain their way of life and means of existence.<sup>5</sup> To attack the slave trade instead, however, was eminently feasible according to Palmerston. For it would not lead to fierce opposition from slave-owners but, conversely, encourage them to combine with abolitionists to help push this agenda

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<sup>3</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-179 (8 July 1845), c.143. Palmerston's language about the slave trade was reminiscent of Thomas Clarkson's, who wrote in his account: 'By aiming at the abolition of the slave trade' instead of slavery, they were 'laying the axe at the very root.' See Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808), I, p.286.

<sup>4</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-179 (8 July 1845), c.144.

<sup>5</sup> Although he never put pressure on American slave-holders, the U.S. Government was afraid of Palmerston instituting a policy of undermining American slavery. See Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.53-54. See also Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government's Relations to Slavery*, comp. and ed. by Ward M. McAfee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.163.

forward since both groups held a strong desire and/or interest to support this cause. The first principle of Palmerston's anti-slavery policy, therefore, and one that he maintained for this rest of his life, was that 'the best and shortest mode of destroying slavery' lay in first dismantling the system of slave trade which nourished and supported it.<sup>6</sup>

In order to reduce the slave trade to its narrowest possible limits, then, Palmerston decided upon his arrival at the Foreign Office to continue the policy of his predecessors by targeting that trade at its two most vulnerable points: firstly, at the demand side of the triangular trade via the signing of treaties with European and American Governments that compelled them 'to put a stop to the [slave] trade within the markets in their dominions,' and secondly at the point of interception between the source of enslaved Africans and the marketplace for them, via the establishment of a British 'naval police' stationed along the coastlines of West Africa, Brazil and the West Indies.<sup>7</sup> Vitaly, the formation of this anti-slavery squadron required Britain to negotiate an additional range of treaties with the nations of Europe and America in order to arm this 'slave trade prevention service'<sup>8</sup> with the legal rights it needed to stop and search foreign vessels suspected of engaging in that crime, to seize and detain them if these suspicions proved correct, and to haul them into nearby ports for prosecution by a lawfully appointed arbitrator.<sup>9</sup> Palmerston was convinced that this 'system of treaties, coupled with repressive means,' was 'the best system that could be adopted for putting an end to the slave trade.'<sup>10</sup> And, until the end of his life, he placed great stock by the mutual right-of-search, describing it as 'essential' and 'indispensable' to achieving abolition.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-179 (8 July 1845), c.144. Palmerston repeated this strategy on many occasions, see also Palmerston, 'Treaty of Washington', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvii, 1162-1219 (21 March 1843), cc.1201-1202; Palmerston, Address to the British and Foreign Anti-slavery Society, Broadlands, 18 October 1842, PP, SLT/19.

<sup>7</sup> Palmerston narrated to the House of Commons on 8 July 1845 'the system' which Britain had maintained since 1814 to try and end the slave trade. See Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, lxxxii, 142-179 (8 July 1845), c.152.

<sup>8</sup> Palmerston called it this on another occasion, see Palmerston, 'Suppression of the Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxx, 466-481 (16 May 1845), c.472.

<sup>9</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-179 (8 July 1845), c.152.

<sup>10</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1119-1126 (22 February 1848), c.1124.

<sup>11</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-179 (8 July 1845), c.155. Palmerston vehemently disagreed with the commissioning of an inquiry in 1845 to investigate whether the right-of-search was the best mode of suppressing the slave trade. 'To appoint a Commission to inquire whether the right-of-search is essential for the suppression of the slave trade is just about as rational as appointing a Commission to inquire whether two and two makes four.' See Bulwer, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, III, p.164.

Upon his entrance into high office, however, it was apparent to Palmerston that this system was incomplete and riddled with problems. Between 1814 and 1830 eighteen bilateral anti-slavery treaties had been agreed with nations connected to the slave trade, with Denmark (1814), Spain (1814, 1817), the U.S. (1814), Portugal (1810, 1815, 1817), Algiers (1816), Tripoli (1816), Tunis (1816), Madagascar (1817, 1820), the Netherlands (1818, 1822, 1823), the Imam of Muscat (1822), Sweden (1824) and Brazil (1826).<sup>12</sup> However, although these treaties were undoubtedly useful as a starting point - many of them containing 'general engagements' to prohibit the slave trade, granting Britain the right-of-search, and binding the contracted parties to use their 'best endeavours' to secure its complete abolition - they were also conservative in their scope and ambition, meaning that slave traders quickly found legal loopholes and exploited them.<sup>13</sup> Britain's treaties with Portugal and Spain, for instance, granted Britain only a limited right-of-search north of the equator (they were unable to prosecute unless slaves were physically discovered on board), enabling slave traders to escape capture simply by making their voyages across the Atlantic in the southern hemisphere.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, only a handful of these agreements (such as those with Sweden and the Netherlands)<sup>15</sup> contained stipulations allowing slave traders to be prosecuted for the possession of slave-trading equipment, such as chains, shackles, a slave deck, additional hatches, or even substantially extra provisions than were necessary, as opposed to the rest which demanded enslaved Africans themselves be physically present on board before a conviction could be made.<sup>16</sup> This oversight meant that countless slave traders were able to escape seizure and condemnation in spite of the fact that Royal Navy officers knew very well their intended origin and purpose.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Britain's treaties were not always permanent, nor did they all prescribe legal punishments for subjects who broke

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<sup>12</sup> Palmerston narrated and evaluated these treaties in May 1845, see Palmerston, 'Suppression of the Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxx, 466-481 (16 May 1845), cc.467-468.

<sup>13</sup> Palmerston, 'Suppression of the Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxx, 466-481 (16 May 1845), cc.468, 472.

<sup>14</sup> Palmerston, 'Suppression of the Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxx, 466-481 (16 May 1845), c.468.

<sup>15</sup> Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade*, p.15.

<sup>16</sup> Ward, *The Royal Navy and the Slavers*, pp.119-137.

<sup>17</sup> The Royal Navy informed Palmerston frequently of occasions when they were forced to let suspected slave traders pass due to deficiencies in Britain's anti-slavery treaties. Subsequently, Palmerston passed this information on to his ambassadors. See, for example, Palmerston to Henry Addington, 24 December 1830, FO84/110, ff.15-18.

these agreements. The Anglo-Brazilian treaty of 1826, for instance, was limited to three years (1827-1830) and contained no legal deterrent to slave-trading of any kind.<sup>18</sup>

During his first decade at the Foreign Office, Palmerston therefore endeavoured to go further than his predecessors and to improve this incomplete, trouble-laden system, making it his duty to strengthen and upgrade Britain's existing network of anti-slavery treaties. Within a matter of years, for example, he had compelled nations such as Denmark (1834),<sup>19</sup> Sweden (1835),<sup>20</sup> Spain (1835)<sup>21</sup> and the Netherlands (1837),<sup>22</sup> all of whom had already consented to some form of agreement with Britain, to accept new and improved anti-slavery treaties.<sup>23</sup> In addition, he put so much pressure on Portugal to agree fresh terms that Lisbon begrudgingly complied in 1842, but only after he was out of Office.<sup>24</sup> Far more comprehensive in scope and ambition, these treaties each contained two stringent new clauses that tightened up some of the loopholes from the earlier agreements; firstly the 'equipment clause,' which ensured that any ship equipped for slave trade constituted *prima facie* evidence of being a slaver and was therefore liable to face conviction without slaves being physically present on board, and secondly the 'break-up clause,' which ensured that slave-trading vessels were broken-up and sold at auction once condemned, thus preventing them from being purchased by another slave trader and immediately put out to sea under a new captain.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, some of these

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<sup>18</sup> For a detailed account of this treaty, see Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, pp.27-61. Palmerston managed to get this treaty recognised as legally valid until 1845 by making the Brazilian Government accept his interpretation of a separate clause of the 1817 Anglo-Portuguese Treaty. See *Ibid*, pp.88-95.

<sup>19</sup> For Palmerston's negotiations with Denmark, see TNA, FO84/142, ff.215-222; FO84/158, ff.232-303.

<sup>20</sup> For Palmerston's negotiations with Sweden, see TNA, FO84/158, ff.312-315; FO84/181, ff.189-235.

<sup>21</sup> For Palmerston's negotiations with Spain, see TNA, FO84/110, ff.15-18; FO84/121, ff.1-87; FO84/130, ff.4-57; FO84/140, ff.1-90; FO84/155, ff.3-135; FO84/144, ff.130-131.

<sup>22</sup> For Palmerston's negotiations with the Netherlands, see TNA, FO84/131, ff.9-10; FO84/158, ff.211-212; FO84/205, ff.13-76; FO84/226, ff.1-36.

<sup>23</sup> For the revised Anglo-Danish Treaty, see Palmerston to Henry Wynn, 24 April 1834, TNA, FO84/158, ff.232-235, and enclosed treaty, ff.236-245. For the revised Anglo-Swedish Treaty, see Palmerston to Sir Edward Disbrowe, 18 May 1835, TNA, FO84/181, ff.189-190, and enclosed additional article, ff.191-184. For a draft of the revised Anglo-Spanish Treaty, see Palmerston to George Villiers, 6 October 1834, TNA, FO84/155, ff.26-29, and enclosed draft treaty, ff.30-89. For the revised Anglo-Dutch Treaty, see Sir Edward Disbrowe to Palmerston, 30 December 1836, TNA, FO84/205, ff.72-73, and additional article, ff.74-76.

<sup>24</sup> For Palmerston's negotiations with Portugal, see TNA, FO84/155, ff.174-358; FO84/178, ff.13-309; FO84/202, ff.1-198; FO84/203, ff.5-118; FO84/215, ff.1-225; FO84/248, ff.6-98; FO84/249, ff.1-199; FO84/250, ff.4-301; FO84/251, ff.5-299; FO84/281, ff.6-306; FO84/282, ff.4-405; FO84/283, ff.4-346; FO84/284, ff.62-74; FO84/320, ff.1-260; FO84/321, ff.4-242; FO84/361, ff.167-215; FO84/362, ff.1-103. See also L.M. Bethell, 'Britain, Portugal and the Suppression of the Brazilian Slave Trade: The Origins of Lord Palmerston's Act of 1839', *The English Historical Review*, 80, 317 (1965), 761-784.

<sup>25</sup> Spain was reluctant to accept this, see George Villiers to Palmerston, 23 December 1833, TNA, FO84/140, ff.43-48. Palmerston insisted that any ships caught by the Royal Navy would be broken-up and sold, see Palmerston to George Villiers, 27 January 1834, TNA, FO84/155, ff.5-8. The Netherlands was also initially

treaties also increased substantially the size of the geographical search area within which Britain's cruisers could exercise the right-of-search. The Anglo-Spanish treaty of 1835, for example, permitted British cruisers to execute that right virtually 'all over the world,' with the only excluded areas being in the Mediterranean and North Seas and in certain parts of Europe.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, some of these treaties also included stipulations to reduce the insatiable appetite for the slave trade that continued to exist across Europe and America. Namely, Spain and Portugal were obliged to promulgate a severe penal law against the traffic - if not the death penalty then the 'heaviest secondary punishment'<sup>27</sup> - whilst the latter was pressured to issue a declaration that the slave trade was akin to 'piracy.'<sup>28</sup> It was believed that both measures would dampen the morale of slave traders by providing a tangible deterrent, one that would finally make the risk of participation outweigh the financial gains that could be made whilst also attaching a 'moral stigma' to those who continued to engage in it.<sup>29</sup>

Significantly, however, this declaration that slave-trading was akin to 'piracy' did not have any formal legal ramifications, for it was not meant to confer new rights on to British cruisers under international law. In order for Britain to gain additional powers, it

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reluctant to accept this clause, see Sir Edward Disbrowe to Palmerston, 4 November 1836, TNA, FO84/205, ff.51-52. After discussing the matter with Britain's envoy, however, they soon agreed. See Sir Edward Disbrowe to Palmerston, 30 December 1836, TNA, FO84/205, ff.72-73. For an example of a slave trader re-purchasing their own condemned vessel, see Leslie Bethell, 'The Mixed Commissions for the Suppression of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century', *The Journal of African History*, 1, 7 (1966), 79-93 (p.88).

<sup>26</sup> James Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as connected with Europe and America; From the Introduction of the Trade into Modern Europe Down to the Present Time; Especially with Reference to the Efforts made by the British Government for its Extinction* (London: Longmans, Brown, 1842), p.230. The Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of 1842 contained a similarly enormous search area, see Bethell, 'Britain, Portugal and the Suppression of the Brazilian Slave Trade', p.782.

<sup>27</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 8 February 1840, TNA, FO84/320, ff.12-13. The Anglo-Spanish Treaty obliged Spain to promulgate a penal law affixing 'a severe punishment' to the crime of slave trade, see Palmerston to George Villiers, 22 February 1836, TNA, FO84/201, ff.3-6. However, by December 1841, Spain had not executed this treaty obligation, see Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as connected with Europe and America*, p.233. Portugal decided to pass its own penal law against the slave trade in December 1836, to obviate the need for one in the treaty Lisbon was negotiating with Britain. See Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 22 December 1836, TNA, FO84/203, ff.110-112, and enclosed Decree for the total abolition of the slave trade throughout the Dominions of the Queen of Portugal, ff.127-142.

<sup>28</sup> Initially, Portugal refused to attach the crime of piracy to the slave trade, since Lisbon objected to the death penalty, see Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 24 April 1838, PP, GC/HO/515. A compromise was found however, since the 1842 Anglo-Portuguese Treaty obliged Portugal to declare the slave trade piracy just without the punishment of death penalty. See Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.187. Spain refused to declare the slave trade piracy during negotiations, see George Villiers to Palmerston, 9 September 1834, TNA, FO84/155, ff.117-118.

<sup>29</sup> Palmerston, 'Draft note to be presented to Viscount de Sá da Bandeira', TNA, FO84/281, ff.129-174, enclosed in Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 27 April 1839, TNA, FO84/281, ff.127-128.

would have required (at the very least) to seek a substantially different declaration - one not just defining the slave trade under this name and attaching to it a moral stigma but granting Britain permission to *treat* suspected slave traders as 'pirates.'<sup>30</sup> New powers such as this were never properly pursued by Palmerston, however. For although this measure was touted by Parliament on multiple occasions during the 1830s,<sup>31</sup> and despite the fact Palmerston accepted the enthusiasm of the House for such a course of action, promising in public to do everything possible to make it a reality,<sup>32</sup> in private he held reservations about the expediency of pursuing such a change to international law. In a personal memorandum that he composed in February 1838, for instance, in which Palmerston discussed three different definitions of 'piracy' and how each definition would affect the 'mode of proceeding against offenders,' Palmerston concluded that no definition beyond that already in use would be tolerable to foreign nations.<sup>33</sup> If by 'piracy,' he wrote, Britain meant 'the attacking & plundering [of] a merchant ship on the high seas & the murdering of her crew by a ship sailing under no national colours, with a crew belonging to no one nation in particular but consisting of outlaws & sea robbers responsible to no Government & protected by the laws of no country,' then the established punishment attached to this definition would be utterly 'impracticable.' For no nation, Palmerston wrote, would consent 'to render its subjects liable to the infliction of capital punishment' summarily and on the spot by the captain of the detaining warship, nor to 'the yard-arm justice & quarter deck judgement of the naval officers of other nations.' Britain, he insisted, would certainly never allow its subjects to be given capital punishment 'without trial[,] without conviction & at the arbitrary will of any foreign naval officer who in any part of the world might choose to decide that a British merchant ship met with on the high seas was engaged in slave trade.' If piracy was

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<sup>30</sup> The only country that agreed to this separate distinction was Brazil. Article I of the 1826 Anglo-Brazilian treaty declared that the Brazilian slave trade was to be 'deemed and treated as piracy.' See Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.89.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Inglis, 'Foreign Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xlii, 1123-1137 (10 May 1838), cc.1134, 1136. See also Inglis, 'Foreign Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxiv, 1314 (15 August 1838), c.1314; Brougham, 'Negro Emancipation', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xl, 1284-1316 (20 February 1838), cc.1286, 1315. Buxton also favoured this approach to ending the slave trade, see Thomas Fowell Buxton to Palmerston, 29 May 1837, PP, SLT/8. *The Times* also encouraged the British Government to make other nations declare the slave trade piracy, arguing it was 'a more direct and effectual mode of proceeding' than 'the whole complicated machinery of rights-of-search and mixed commissions.' See *The Times*, 15 May 1845.

<sup>32</sup> Palmerston promised to insert a declaration that 'the slave trade should be treated as piracy' in the five power treaty, see Palmerston 'Foreign Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxiv, 1314-1316 (15 August 1838), c.1314.

<sup>33</sup> Palmerston, 'Remarks on Lord Broughams proposed address on foreign slave trade', 18 February 1838, PP, SLT/12.

defined slightly differently, moreover, and slave ships were instead towed to the law courts of the country that detained them, to be tried and punished according to that country's unique laws on piracy, this measure would also be 'impracticable.' France and the U.S., for instance, had already insisted that their citizens could 'never be made liable to the jurisdiction' of any foreign tribunal – including an English court. Neither of them, therefore, would concur with Britain in the proposed negotiation. And finally, if piracy was again defined slightly differently, and slave ships were to be towed to the law courts of the country whose flag the ship hoisted, and there tried and punished according to their unique laws on piracy, this also would not accomplish anything more than was already the case. If anything, it might make it harder to condemn slave traders. For neither Spain nor Portugal, two of the worst slave traders in the nineteenth century, could be trusted to arbitrate against slave traders from their own countries, and certainly not if this would mean issuing them with a severe punishment. To try and get an international consensus to define and treat slave traders as pirates, therefore, would 'resolve itself into a nullity' Palmerston felt, for no negotiation could ever accomplish anything more than the object already attained – to attach the 'new name of "piracy"... to slave trade,' with no 'nature of the punishment to be inflicted upon them.'

In addition to strengthening and upgrading Britain's network of anti-slavery treaties, however, Palmerston worked hard to expand Britain's 'system of treaties.'<sup>34</sup> In particular, he sought to enlist nations that had never previously made an anti-slavery compact with Britain, either due to their unwillingness to grant Britain invasive maritime rights or simply because previous British Governments had deemed one unnecessary. In 1831 and 1833, for example, Palmerston successfully negotiated two very significant (albeit conservative and limited) anti-slavery conventions with France,<sup>35</sup> a country which in the past had continually rejected Britain's overtures for such a treaty. Although France had been willing to make declarations against the slave trade at the congresses of Vienna (1815), Aix-la-Chapelle (1821) and Verona (1822), these were merely vague 'announcements of the principle that the traffic in slaves ought to be suppressed' and not

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<sup>34</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1119-1126 (22 February 1848, c.1124.

<sup>35</sup> For Palmerston's negotiations with France, see TNA, FO84/123, ff.1-195; FO84/131, ff.92-251; FO84/142, ff.1-144.



specific agreements which could be carried into execution.<sup>36</sup> In 1818, 1823 and 1827, moreover, France had refused the British Government's invitation to negotiate a workable, bilateral arrangement.<sup>37</sup> Due to Palmerston's persistence, however, France became the first Great Power to sign an anti-slavery treaty with Britain in 1831 and the first to grant British cruisers the right-of-search, making that agreement 'the most useful arrangement for the accomplishment of... the abolition of the slave trade.'<sup>38</sup>

In the years that followed, Palmerston added many other European countries to these Anglo-French Conventions, the majority of whom did not hold prior anti-slavery agreements with Britain. Between 1833 and 1841, for example, Palmerston negotiated treaties with Sardinia (1834),<sup>39</sup> the Hanse Towns of Bremen, Lübeck and Hamburg (1837),<sup>40</sup> Tuscany (1837),<sup>41</sup> and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (1838).<sup>42</sup> Essentially, all of these nations agreed to honour the stipulations of the Anglo-French agreement and were written into it as subsidiary adherents. Palmerston did not confine his ambitious extension of Britain's treaty network to Europe however. From 1833, Palmerston strived to add the U.S. to his international suppression system.<sup>43</sup> In two vital ways, though, the domestic context of antebellum America was entirely different to Europe, causing his overtures to be met with unbending opposition throughout much of the mid-nineteenth century. Firstly, the institution of slavery was deeply embedded in America's economy, culture and society, with 'southern sensitivity' towards anti-slavery commanding overwhelming sway over the Federal Government's foreign policy.<sup>44</sup> Although the Union

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<sup>36</sup> Palmerston, 'Suppression of the Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxx, 466-481 (16 May 1845), c.467. Temperley argues these announcements were superfluous, for in reality France, Spain and Portugal were all eager to continue the slave trade. See Temperley, *British Antislavery*, pp.8-9.

<sup>37</sup> Palmerston narrated the history of Britain's attempts to sign an Anglo-French right-of-search treaty to Parliament in 1845, see Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvii, 1340-1346 (26 February 1845), c.1344.

<sup>38</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.158.

<sup>39</sup> For Palmerston's negotiations with Sardinia, see TNA, FO84/159, ff.122-227.

<sup>40</sup> For Palmerston's negotiations with the Hanse Towns, see TNA, FO84/207, ff.157-287; FO84/224, ff.125-204.

<sup>41</sup> For Palmerston's negotiations with Tuscany, see TNA, FO84/205, ff.208-209; FO84/224, ff.209-268; FO84/257, ff.92-126.

<sup>42</sup> For Palmerston's negotiations with the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, see TNA, FO84/159, ff.238-276; FO84/181, ff.85-86; FO84/207, ff.301-344; FO84/224, ff.275-350; FO84/257, ff.204-226.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to Sir Charles Vaughan, 31 May 1833, TNA, FO84/143, ff.1-4. For Palmerston's negotiations with the U.S. in 1833 and 1834, see TNA, FO84/143, ff.1-96; FO84/157, ff.98-138.

<sup>44</sup> Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, chp.5, quote on p.xi. See also Hugh G. Soulsby, *The Right of Search and the Slave Trade in Anglo-American Relations, 1814-1862* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1933), chp.2, esp. pp.8-9, 43-45; Betty Fladeland, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Anti-Slavery Co-operation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), pp.323-324; Mason, 'Keeping up Appearances', pp.820-821.

had prohibited the American slave trade in 1807 and declared it piracy in 1820, this legislation was only enough to end slave importations into North America.<sup>45</sup> When it came to suppressing the international trade, however, the U.S. refused to take responsibility for policing its flag and did not permit British cruisers to do it for them; declining the right-of-search repeatedly in the 1830s and 1850s.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, American complicity in the slave trade was rife. U.S. citizens commonly 'provided vessels, outfitted them, financed voyages, and furnished goods to be exchanged for slaves on the African coast,' contributing heavily to the Cuban and Brazilian slave trades.<sup>47</sup> Secondly, yet no less significantly, the war of 1812 had an enduring effect on Anglo-American relations in this period, evoking a great deal of enmity within the U.S. towards Britain and especially over the prospect of a peacetime right-of-search.<sup>48</sup> Hence, every time Palmerston proposed an anti-slavery treaty to Washington based, in their eyes, on abandoning a degree of America's hard-won coastal sovereignty, he provoked strident American nationalism and faced accusations over the sincerity of his agenda.<sup>49</sup> The U.S. Government therefore became one of Palmerston's main obstacles to ending the slave trade, with their flag becoming one of the chief haunts of slave traders seeking to evade the Royal Navy during the nineteenth century.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, after 1838 the Palmerstonian crusade did have some success in extending Britain's treaty network further afield than Europe. In South America, for example, Palmerston secured treaties with a host of countries.<sup>51</sup> Haiti (1839),<sup>52</sup> Venezuela

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<sup>45</sup> Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, pp.149-150.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, pp.155-156.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, pp.156, 150, ix. Fehrenbacher argues the U.S. was 'negligent' suppressing the international slave trade, and played a 'major role' in perpetuating it.

<sup>48</sup> Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, pp.8-9. See also Soulsby, *The Right of Search and the Slave Trade in Anglo-American Relations*, p.8; Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, p.158.

<sup>49</sup> Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, pp.9-13. See also Soulsby, *The Right of Search and the Slave Trade in Anglo-American Relations*, p.10; Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, pp.ix, 158.

<sup>50</sup> Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, pp.161-162. See also Soulsby, *The Right of Search and the Slave Trade in Anglo-American Relations*, pp.39, 46-47.

<sup>51</sup> For an overview of the 'Palmerstonian crusade' in South America, see James Ferguson King, 'The Latin American Republics and the Suppression of the Slave Trade', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 3, 24 (1944), 387-411.

<sup>52</sup> As the world's first nation of freed slaves, Haiti enthusiastically signed up to the Anglo-French conventions of 1831 and 1833, see King, 'The Latin American Republics and the Suppression of the Slave Trade', p.410.

(1839),<sup>53</sup> Uruguay (1839),<sup>54</sup> Argentina (1839),<sup>55</sup> Bolivia (1840),<sup>56</sup> Mexico (1841)<sup>57</sup> and Chile (1841)<sup>58</sup> all signed up to a variation of the Anglo-Spanish Treaty or of the Anglo-French Conventions by the summer of 1841.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, Palmerston was in negotiations with Ecuador, Peru and New Granada when he left Office that year, with all of these countries having signed up to some form of anti-slavery compact by the end of Palmerston's third stint at the Foreign Office in 1851 along with the newly formed Dominican Republic.<sup>60</sup> In North America, Palmerston concluded an anti-slavery treaty with Texas (1840) that was very similar to the Anglo-French Conventions,<sup>61</sup> and seen by historians as a 'blatant' exchange for 'official recognition.'<sup>62</sup> In West Africa, moreover, Palmerston instructed Britain's naval officers and colonial Governors to negotiate anti-slavery agreements directly with 'native Chiefs,' along 'the whole line of the coast of Africa,' in February 1838.<sup>63</sup> The Royal Navy were told to 'take advantage of every favourable opportunity to secure the suppression of the slave trade in places within their influence,' James Bandinel recorded in 1839, and to propose that African rulers took up 'legitimate commerce.'<sup>64</sup> By the end of 1841, six agreements had already been concluded, with the Chiefs of the

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<sup>53</sup> For Palmerston's negotiations with Venezuela, see TNA, FO84/206, ff.294-297; FO84/225, ff.238-295; FO84/260, ff.81-173; FO84/293, ff.3-173.

<sup>54</sup> For Palmerston's negotiations with Uruguay, see TNA, FO84/160, ff.150-299; FO84/182, ff.8-126; FO84/206, ff.64-226; FO84/225, ff.136-145; FO84/259, ff.3-104; FO84/294, ff.7-149; FO84/330, ff.8-122. The treaty was not ratified until January 1842, see TNA, FO84/375, ff.47-139.

<sup>55</sup> For Palmerston's negotiations with Argentina, see TNA, FO84/160, ff.10-161; FO84/182, ff.6-67; FO84/206, ff.64-217; FO84/225, ff.62-133; FO84/259, ff.15-100; FO84/294, ff.2-154; FO84/330, ff.5-78.

<sup>56</sup> The reconstituted republic of Bolivia (formerly the Peru-Bolivian Confederation) 'agreed immediately to the draft proposed by the British minister in Lima, and the treaty was accordingly signed at Sucre on 25 September 1840.' See King, 'The Latin American Republics and the Suppression of the Slave Trade', p.408.

<sup>57</sup> For Palmerston's negotiations with Mexico, see TNA, FO84/157, ff.152-154; FO84/206, ff.3-56; FO84/225, ff.1-47; FO84/259, ff.146-182; FO84/293, ff.213-259; FO84/330, ff.199-266; FO84/374, ff.9-56.

<sup>58</sup> Britain encountered 'no opposition' for an anti-slavery treaty in Chile. In August 1841, 'Chile accepted unlimited duration in return for the restriction of the right-of-search to the African coasts and to twenty-league zones off the shores of Brazil and the Spanish Caribbean colonies.' See King, 'The Latin American Republics and the Suppression of the Slave Trade', pp.408-409.

<sup>59</sup> For reasons not entirely clear, Palmerston (nor his successors) ever made anti-slavery treaties with the remaining republics of Latin America, such as Paraguay, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala or Costa Rica. King is similarly confused on this point, see King, 'The Latin American Republics and the Suppression of the Slave Trade', p.409.

<sup>60</sup> King, 'The Latin American Republics and the Suppression of the Slave Trade', pp.404-408. Ecuador eventually signed a treaty in 1846, Peru in 1850, New Granada in 1851 and the Dominican Republic in 1850.

<sup>61</sup> Palmerston to Russell, 18 October 1840, PP, GC/RU/963.

<sup>62</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p.197. See also Bourne, *Palmerston*, p.617; Turley, *The Culture of English Anti-Slavery*, pp.211-216. For Palmerston's negotiations with Texas, see TNA, FO84/342, ff.332-346.

<sup>63</sup> Robin Law, 'Abolition and Imperialism: International Law and the British Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade', in *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa and the Atlantic*, ed. by Derek R. Peterson (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 150-174 (p.151).

<sup>64</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as connected with Europe and America*, p.297.

Timmanys, Bonny, Cartibar, Cameroons, Aboi, and Egarra.<sup>65</sup> Between 1841 and 1846, the Foreign Office claimed that a further 38 treaties had been made with African rulers, followed by another 29 by the end of 1848.<sup>66</sup> Whilst, by 1865, the Parliamentary Select Committee called to investigate Britain's settlements in Africa made the bold claim that Britain had succeeded in making agreements with 'all the coastal chiefs.'<sup>67</sup> Overall, it is difficult to state with confidence the exact number of agreements that were concluded by Britain with West African states. Nevertheless, by drawing together the various memoranda which mention these treaties, one might estimate that 120 compacts were signed with West African states between 1841 and 1865.<sup>68</sup>

Expanding Britain's anti-slavery network enormously during his time in Office, from one containing 18 treaties in 1830 to one underpinned by as many as 163 treaties in 1865, was undoubtedly an impressive effort.<sup>69</sup> However, Palmerston's decision to enlist a vast array of smaller, weaker nations within Britain's global treaty system, including those who barely had enough resources to engage in the slave trade at all, occasionally drew the ire of abolitionists in Parliament. In 1838, for example, Lord Brougham argued in the House of Lords that treaties with Austria, the Hanse Towns, Sicily and Tuscany were a pointless waste of time, and that Palmerston should refocus his efforts on getting treaties with 'the greatest of all the criminals engaged in these guilty crimes,' namely Portugal, Brazil and Cuba.<sup>70</sup> Was it really a triumph, he asked sarcastically, to enlist Austria to

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Gavin, 'Palmerston's Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865', pp.154, 155.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p.155.

<sup>68</sup> In addition to the 6 agreements that had been made during the year 1841, the 38 treaties made between 1841 and 1846, and the 29 treaties made by the end of 1848, a separate record of treaties kept up by the Foreign Office between 1844 and 1850 shows that 2 agreements, 8 treaties and 28 engagements were negotiated in West Africa, making a total of 38 compacts. See 'Africa. West Coast. Treaties. Slave Trade. 1844 to 1850', TNA, FO93/6/3. Between 1849 and 1850, then, one might presume that a further 9 treaties were signed in West Africa (=38-29). Furthermore, this record of treaties goes on to show that between 1851 and 1859 another 20 engagements, 3 treaties and 1 agreement were made (making a sum of 24 treaties), and that between 1860 and 1864 a further 8 treaties, 1 declaration, 2 additional articles, 2 agreements, and 1 engagement was made (making a sum of 14). See 'Africa (West Coast). Treaties. Slave Trade. 1851 to 1859', TNA, FO93/6/7 and 'Africa. Various treaties. 1860-1879', TNA, FO93/6/8. The total number of compacts made with West African Chiefs between 1841 and 1864 might therefore be estimated at 120 (=6+38+29+9+24+14).

<sup>69</sup> Palmerston concluded 25 anti-slavery treaties in Europe and America between 1830 and 1865: France (1831, 1833), Denmark (1834), Sardinia (1834), Sweden (1835), Spain (1835), the Netherlands (1837), the Hanse Towns (1837), Tuscany (1837), the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (1838), Haiti (1839), Venezuela (1839), Uruguay (1839), Argentina (1839), Bolivia (1840), Texas (1840), Mexico (1841) and Chile (1841), Holy Alliance (1841), Portugal (1842), Ecuador (1846), Peru (1850), the Dominican Republic (1850), New Granada (1851), U.S. (1862). In total, Britain's system of treaties therefore amounted to 163 (=18+25+120) by 1865.

<sup>70</sup> Brougham, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xl, 596-609 (29 January 1838), c.607.

Britain's anti-slavery network? This nation, 'with all its colonies, with all its slave plantations, with all its vessels engaged on the African coast... but which no black slave ever heard of before!'<sup>71</sup> *The Times* also disagreed with Palmerston's approach, writing in 1841 that it was 'as if the colliers of Staffordshire and the manufacturers of Derbyshire were to sign a round-robin against smugglers of French brandy.'<sup>72</sup> For Palmerston, however, both these viewpoints were short-sighted, overlooking how slave traders could adopt what came to be known as 'flags of convenience.' Indeed, Palmerston was acutely aware that the national flag of any nation could be adopted by piratical slave traders at any time, and abused unremittingly on the high seas in order to cover their illegal proceedings. All slave traders had to do, in fact, to represent themselves underneath the nationality of another country was procure a false flag and forged papers. Thus, Britain's entire anti-slavery system could be undermined if just one country refused to consent to the right-of-search and did nothing themselves to stop their flag falling prey to slave traders.<sup>73</sup> As Thomas Buxton lamented in his 1840 account of *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy*, there was little point ensuring 'that ninety-nine doors are closed if one remains open; to that outlet the whole slave trade of Africa will rush.'<sup>74</sup> Rather than allowing slave traders to dictate to Britain the anti-slavery treaties that needed to be signed, therefore, and reacting pragmatically to whatever flag was chosen next to cloak their insidious practices, Palmerston made up his mind to act proactively in this period; to sign up 'every state... which has a flag that sails on the ocean' to his international treaty system.<sup>75</sup> Aiming to pre-empt the actions of slave traders, Palmerston's anti-slavery policy was, therefore, as J.F. King has described it, 'preventative.'<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Brougham, 'Negro Emancipation', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xl, 1346-1351 (20 February 1838), c.1347. See also Ashburton, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xl, 613-614 (29 January 1838), c.613. Ashburton agreed with Brougham: 'Year after year, fresh treaties are ostentatiously paraded as having been recently concluded with foreign states, and with small and insignificant states too.' A treaty had recently been concluded with Bolivia, for instance, 'although that country never had any slaves, and never had been engaged in the trade.'

<sup>72</sup> *The Times*, 22 December 1841, p.4. 'Such documents cost little, and do little,' *The Times* stated. They were 'inland powers with half-a-dozen seaports, and no trade beyond the Mediterranean or Baltic.' As such, it was 'a mere farce to congratulate ourselves on the protest of distant Powers scarcely interested in the question... as if we had gained any real and substantial victory.' See also *The Times*, 19 May 1845, p.4.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to Baron Hummelauer, 11 December 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.145-160. Palmerston explained in detail how slave traders operated: 'The slave traders... belongs to no particular nation, but are a gang of buccaneers and pirates, consisting of adventurers and criminals, born in various countries, and who shift their residence from country to country, and their traffic from flag to flag, as best suits their convenience.'

<sup>74</sup> Thomas Fowell Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Murray, 1840), p.209.

<sup>75</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), c.651.

<sup>76</sup> King, 'The Latin American Republics and the Suppression of the Slave Trade', p.387.

In a similar way to how anti-slavery conventions with 'civilised' nations drew criticism from contemporaries, Palmerston's agreements with West African states were likewise considered needless and insignificant, and have even been ridiculed by early historians of British anti-slavery. Christopher Lloyd, for instance, described the negotiations leading up to an anti-slavery agreement as 'amusing' in his account. Despite the conferences being carried on in accordance with 'the best diplomatic traditions,' he wrote, 'the high contracting parties were thus Her Majesty the Queen, represented by a young naval officer of comparatively junior rank, resplendent in gold braid and epaulettes, and a savage[,] whose clothing often consisted of nothing more than a top hat and a string of beads.'<sup>77</sup> When it came to making anti-slavery compacts with West African states, however, Palmerston's reasoning was again sound. To dismiss them as futile, he maintained, was foolish and ill-judged. For since the slave trade was a complex and multifaceted problem, it required an equally complex and multifaceted solution; like the mythical 'hydra' of Greek legend, it could not be defeated unless one struck out with a herculean effort at its multiple serpentine heads simultaneously.<sup>78</sup> Palmerston's 'third course' with West African Chiefs, as he called it, was therefore designed with this expressly in mind: he sought to strike a blow at the slave trade's third and final weak point, 'its origin' in Africa.<sup>79</sup> This, he declared to the House in 1847, was 'the best method' of putting an end to the slave trade.<sup>80</sup> For it was Palmerston's strong opinion that preventing Africans from being taken out of Africa in the first place was 'far better and more effectual than catching them on the coast of America.'<sup>81</sup> 'Half the evil has been done by the time the slaves are captured on the American waters,' he wrote vehemently,

the razzia has been made in Africa[,] the villages have been burnt, the old people and infants have been murdered, the young and the middle-aged have been torn from their homes & sent to sea, and what is more important, the slave sellers have sold their slaves, have got their money, are setting to work to get a fresh supply, and do not care the loss of a bad half penny what becomes of the cargo they have been paid for.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade*, p.150.

<sup>78</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 24 September 1861, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/21/145, ff.561-564. See also Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 3 September 1850, PP, GC/BA/310/1-2. A hydra was a mythological serpent with nine heads which, if cut off, grew back stronger.

<sup>79</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.153; Palmerston, 'Supply – The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xciv, 129-138 (9 July 1847), c.135.

<sup>80</sup> Palmerston, 'Supply – The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xciv, 129-138 (9 July 1847), c.135.

<sup>81</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 13 August 1862, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/22/28, ff.92-96.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

In addition to his 'preventative' strategy of ending the slave trade, however, Palmerston also refined the anti-slavery policy of his predecessors by approaching the subject pragmatically and opportunistically wherever he could. For it is evident that whenever an advantageous situation presented itself in Europe or America which could be exploited by Palmerston in the interests of anti-slavery, he was remarkably adept at identifying and taking advantage of it; something which is surely a testament to how deeply ingrained anti-slavery was at the forefront of his mind. If, for example, a foreign country underwent a significant change in Government and Palmerston suspected that the new regime would be more amenable to making an anti-slavery treaty than its predecessor, Palmerston invariably moved quickly to try and secure a right-of-search arrangement. For instance, this is precisely what led to the successful completion of the Anglo-French and the Anglo-Spanish treaties during the early 1830s. With regards to the former, Palmerston's decision to appeal to France at the beginning of 1831 was never spontaneous but deliberately planned. It was due to the French Revolution of July 1830, he told Parliament in 1844, an event inspired by 'the spirit and principles of liberty,' that he and the Grey Government had deemed it the perfect moment to request from Paris an anti-slavery treaty. 'We thought that we might confidently appeal to such a sovereign and to such a government to co-operate with us in putting down this detestable slave trade.'<sup>83</sup> In private, moreover, Palmerston had received representations from Cabinet Ministers such as by Lord Holland and Sir James Graham imploring him to act decisively and to take advantage of this ideal moment to get France's approval for a treaty it had previously rejected.<sup>84</sup> 'Surely the time is now arrived,' Graham wrote passionately, 'when her Government, founded on the principles of liberty and right, just emancipated from oppression and wrong, must see the necessity of meeting the unanimous wish of freemen in every clime, and the impossibility of braving the opinion of the civilised world.'<sup>85</sup> The second Anglo-French convention of 1833, moreover, was also initiated due to a change in the French Government. Following the departure of Horace Sébastiani in October 1832, for instance, whom Palmerston never trusted,<sup>86</sup> and the arrival of the Duc de Broglie, who

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<sup>83</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), c.932.

<sup>84</sup> Lord Holland to Palmerston, 26 December 1830, PP, GC/HO/65; Sir James Graham to Palmerston, 11 January 1831, Graham Papers, British Library (hereafter GP, BL), Add Ms 79705, ff.9-12.

<sup>85</sup> Sir James Graham to Palmerston, 11 January 1831, GP, BL, Add Ms 79705, ff.9-12.

<sup>86</sup> Palmerston to Lord Holland, 9 April 1831, Holland Papers, British Library (hereafter HP, BL), Add Ms 51599, ff.31-33. 'For with all due respect to his excellency, for whom personally I have much good will,

he felt was 'able' 'honest' and 'liberal,'<sup>87</sup> Palmerston urged Granville to press ahead with negotiations. 'Now is the time to get our slave trade supplementary convention signed,' he wrote, for 'Broglie will take up that question with more zeal than Sébastiani.'<sup>88</sup>

When it came to Spain, Palmerston was moved to act by similar circumstances. Namely, the death of King Ferdinand in 1833 and the civil war that engulfed that country immediately afterwards set the scene for Palmerston to press Spain for a new anti-slavery treaty. With the encouragement once more of Graham, who advised Palmerston to take this course in May 1833,<sup>89</sup> Palmerston offered the court of Isabella a *quid pro quo*: Britain would assist her militarily against Don Carlos, but only if she conciliated Britain by agreeing to add an equipment clause to the 1818 Anglo-Spanish Treaty. 'That was the only return we asked from Spain for our assistance in the War of Independence,' Palmerston told Parliament some years later. 'We said we wanted nothing from her but a slave trade treaty, and we got it.'<sup>90</sup> Indeed, when Isabella's party eventually won control of the Spanish Government in 1834, having received valuable military support from Britain, Palmerston reminded her to repay her debts to Britain on this account, telling Parliament in 1844,

We thought the Spanish Government owed us a debt of gratitude which we might justly call upon them to pay. And how did we demand payment? Not by... extorting from her any sordid or mercenary advantages for England, political or commercial. We demanded a better treaty for the suppression of the Slave trade. We called upon those who were engaged in a glorious struggle for their own emancipation, from political servitude, to join us in endeavouring to rescue the unoffending people of Africa from a form of slavery infinitely more dreadful.<sup>91</sup>

By taking advantage of these tumultuous moments in French and Spanish history, therefore, Palmerston managed to obtain anti-slavery treaties from two of the countries who most obstinately opposed the right-of-search during the 1810s and 1820s.

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there is no believing his word, or trusting his promises,' Palmerston wrote of Sébastiani. He had 'defects in his morale,' which were 'awkward faults for a Minister for Foreign Affairs, [especially] in turlish times.'

<sup>87</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 2 October 1832, PP, GC/GR/1430.

<sup>88</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 27 October 1832, PP, GC/GR/1436.

<sup>89</sup> Sir James Graham to Palmerston, 15 May 1833, PP, GC/GR/38.

<sup>90</sup> Palmerston, 'Brazil – Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxxvi, 1383-1835 (12 July 1864), c.1385.

<sup>91</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), c.933.



Palmerston's ability to take advantage of propitious situations in order to attain anti-slavery treaties only grew more acute over time. In South America, for instance, Palmerston's pragmatism is evident in a number of the treaties that he secured in the 1830s. In Buenos Aires, for example, Palmerston had sought to negotiate an anti-slavery treaty with the Argentine Government of Juan Manuel de Rosas from 1836. Since Rosas did not favour a treaty, negotiations dragged on for over two years. Shortly after France erected a blockade on the mouth of the Río de la Plata in 1838, however, the situation changed rapidly. Palmerston took advantage of Rosas's need for British support in that crisis to conclude an anti-slavery treaty with him in January 1839.<sup>92</sup> At the same time, Palmerston used the French blockade of that coast to secure another anti-slavery treaty in the Río de la Plata region, this time with the new Uruguayan Government of Fructuoso Rivera. Having been helped into power by France, Rivera wanted 'to gain British favour,' something Palmerston was happy to oblige him with by demanding (and getting) an anti-slavery treaty in July 1839.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, Palmerston took advantage of yet another favourable opportunity in South America to secure an anti-slavery treaty with New Granada in 1851, a power who for many years had rejected Palmerston's representations on the grounds that there was no 'substantial evidence the Granadian flag was being abused to protect the slave trade.'<sup>94</sup> Even when Palmerston had returned to Office in 1846, for instance, and had begun to deal directly with the Granadian Minister in London, a satisfactory agreement had been impossible to reach.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, thanks to Palmerston's pragmatic approach, the deadlock was finally broken in 1851 when he 'seized upon the enthusiasm of the new Liberal administration of Jose Hilario Lopez' to sign a right-of-search treaty shortly after that new Government assumed Office.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> King, 'The Latin American Republics and the Suppression of the Slave Trade', pp.398-399. See, for example, Palmerston to John Mandeville, 17 January 1839, TNA, FO84/294, ff.2-3. Palmerston pointed out that the French blockade had 'no natural connection with the slave trade treaty and ought not to prevent the Argentine Government from concluding an arrangement which would be so honourable to the Republic.' For more on the context of France's intervention in the Río de la Plata, see John F. Cady, *Foreign Intervention in the Río de la Plata, 1838-1850: A Study of French, British, and American Policy in relation to the Dictator Juan Manuel Rosas* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929).

<sup>93</sup> King, 'The Latin American Republics and the Suppression of the Slave Trade', p.400.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p.405.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

The most significant example of Palmerston's opportunistic anti-slavery policy came in 1862 when he finally managed to persuade the U.S. Government to consent to the right-of-search by essentially taking advantage of the American Civil War. The international dimension of the Civil War has attracted considerable attention from historians in the last two decades, yet where it has been explored anti-slavery is rarely more than a footnote in the history of that conflict.<sup>97</sup> Unlike issues such as how the British public conceived the conflict,<sup>98</sup> why the Government took a neutral policy, and how far that policy was upheld in practice,<sup>99</sup> moreover, Palmerston's personal position has been relatively unappreciated.<sup>100</sup> Many historians have treated him as a 'virtual cipher,' sitting back while other Cabinet members set the agenda,<sup>101</sup> whilst his biographers have tended to underplay the influence of anti-slavery in his decision-making. A common argument is that Palmerston's response to the Civil War relegated anti-slavery concerns beneath a cold, calculated policy that sought to protect Britain's national interests.<sup>102</sup> To an extent, this argument is undeniable since there was too much at stake for *realpolitik* considerations not to influence British policy. The conflict profoundly altered the balance of power in the North America, for instance, and threatened Britain's Canadian provinces.<sup>103</sup> It also endangered Britain's vital economic and commercial interests, especially in the textile industry.<sup>104</sup> During the war, moreover, Palmerston did not unequivocally support the North, widely associated with anti-slavery, or condemn the South, which was wedded to the institution of slavery. At best, he pursued a policy of strict neutrality – deeming this the most appropriate course to safeguard Britain's interests in the North and the South. 'The only thing to do,' Palmerston told Russell privately in October 1861, was 'to lie on our oars and... give no pretext to the

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<sup>97</sup> See, for example, Ephraim Douglas Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green, 1925), I, pp.9-10, 275-276; Howard Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy: A History of Union and Confederate Foreign Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), pp.101-102; Amanda Foreman, *A World on Fire: An Epic History of Two Nations Divided* (London: Penguin, 2011), pp.235-237.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, Duncan Andrew Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2003) See also R.J.M. Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001).

<sup>99</sup> See, for example, K.T. Brauer, 'British Mediation in the American Civil War: A Reconsideration', *The Journal of Southern History*, 38, 1 (1972), 49-64.

<sup>100</sup> The only account dedicated to Palmerston's view of the U.S. Civil War is Campbell, 'Palmerston and the American Civil War'.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p.147.

<sup>102</sup> See, for example, Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.452, 455; Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, chp.38. Historians of the U.S. Civil War have also argued this. See, for example, Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy*, p.33.

<sup>103</sup> Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, chp.8.

<sup>104</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.448, 451; Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy*, pp.13-14.

Washingtonians to quarrel with us.’<sup>105</sup> At worst, however, Palmerston actively opposed the North and disregarded his anti-slavery sentiments. As his biographers have demonstrated, Palmerston did not necessarily stick to his official policy, and seemed to lead his government into an ‘increasingly pragmatic, pro-Southern position,’ despite the Confederacy’s obvious links to slavery.<sup>106</sup> ‘In the great battle between freedom and slavery,’ Ridley stated, Palmerston betrayed his anti-slavery pieties and ‘threw all his weight into the scales on the side of slavery.’<sup>107</sup>

It is apparent, however, that anti-slavery played a more complex role in framing Palmerston’s response to that conflict than historians have so far credited, and specifically that Palmerston did not betray his anti-slavery sentiments nor relegate his hatred of slavery beneath a cold assessment of Britain’s material interests. Indeed, it would be unfair to claim that Palmerston’s policy of neutrality was formed in a vacuum from anti-slavery considerations, since in at least three ways anti-slavery was a part of his rationale for non-intervention. Firstly, even if Palmerston had wanted to intervene and offer mediation to the North, he believed that Britain would have no grounds on which to propose a settlement due to their irreconcilable differences over slavery. As he pointed out to Edward Ellice in private in May 1861, Britain would have great difficulty ‘in suggesting any basis of arrangement to which both parties could agree and which it would not be repugnant to English feelings and principles to propose.’ The South, he explained, would inevitably demand the continued acknowledgment of slavery in any settlement, as well as the right to recapture fugitive slaves. But, these were things the North might oppose and Britain could never endorse: ‘We could not mix ourselves up with the acknowledgement of slavery and the principle that a slave escaping to a free soil state should be followed, claimed, and recovered, like a horse or an ox.’<sup>108</sup> Secondly, Palmerston’s decision to ‘keep quite clear’ of the Civil War was consistent with his long-running policy not to interfere in the domestic politics of other nations over the institution of slavery. Justifying non-intervention through the language of anti-slavery,

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<sup>105</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 18 October 1861, PP, GC/RU/1139.

<sup>106</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.452-455.

<sup>107</sup> Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, p.554. Contemporaries in the Union also felt this. For example, Harriet Beecher Stowe began to question whether there had been a decline in Britain’s ‘noble anti-slavery fire.’ See Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.22.

<sup>108</sup> Palmerston to Edward Ellice, 5 May 1861, in Ashley, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, II, p.209. Palmerston made a similar point to Lord John Russell a year later, see Campbell, ‘Palmerston and the American Civil War’, pp.159, 161.

Palmerston told Russell in October 1861 that to intervene would be akin to an act of enslavement, since it would 'impose restraints' on America's 'national liberty.' If America wanted to quarrel, he argued, or even to 'shackle its own subjects,' it was not Britain's role to prevent them since 'it was an infringement on national independence to restrain other nations.'<sup>109</sup>

Finally, and most importantly of all, Palmerston continued to pursue his long-running aim to suppress the slave trade during the Civil War, at the same time as he strove to maintain Britain's national interests through official neutrality. Seeking to take advantage of the Union's desperate position at the beginning of the conflict, Palmerston's Government swiftly set out to extort a right-of-search treaty from Washington.<sup>110</sup> 'The northern Americans,' Palmerston wrote to Russell privately, 'declare that the question between north & south turns on slavery[,] and is whether slavery shall extend beyond the limits within which it is now confined... Well, if the north are really true to make all their present exertions... on account of their hatred of slavery, why should they not prove their abhorrence... by joining... in our operations against slave trade, by giving us facilities for putting it down when carried under US flag.'<sup>111</sup> Unlike his earlier efforts, however, which invariably met with resistance, this time Palmerston's overtures pushed against an open door. William Seward, the U.S. Secretary of State, immediately went back on over thirty years of American policy and, without any need for persuasion, granted a mutual right-of-search in a verbal agreement with the British envoy. The present Administration, he asserted, had 'none of the squeamishness about allowing American vessels to be boarded and searched which had characterised their predecessors.' They were 'quite willing,' he added, that British cruisers 'should overhaul any vessels which gave reasonable grounds for suspicion.'<sup>112</sup>

This sudden and dramatic change of heart from the American Government has drawn the attention of scholars, and has been explained as one aspect of Seward's wily plan to keep Britain out of the war, or perhaps even to repair Anglo-American relations

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<sup>109</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 18 October 1861, PP, GC/RU/1139.

<sup>110</sup> Lord John Russell to Lord Lyons, 22 August 1861, TNA, FO84/1137, ff.64-65.

<sup>111</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 24 September 1861, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/21/145, ff.561-564.

<sup>112</sup> Lord Lyons to Lord John Russell, 10 September 1861, TNA, FO84/1137, ff.155-160.

following the Trent affair.<sup>113</sup> Allegedly, Seward hoped that the treaty would contribute towards a new identification of the North with the anti-slavery cause and therefore produce 'favourable British attitudes' toward the Union.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, sensing an opportunity to 'smash the slave traders' and 'exterminate that hydra,' Palmerston pressed Russell to take advantage of this overnight revolution in American policy, which he swiftly did.<sup>115</sup> After demanding 'a more formal assurance' that British cruisers could exercise the right-of-search without giving offence to the U.S. Government,<sup>116</sup> Seward signed an unofficial memorandum in November 1861.<sup>117</sup> 'In a few minutes,' he claimed, it would do more to end the slave trade 'than had been effected by the separate efforts of the two Governments during many years.' Unfortunately, this memorandum was not 'sufficiently explicit' to enable the Royal Navy to act upon it,<sup>118</sup> so plans for a formal treaty were subsequently drawn up, agreed, and, after the concoction of a bizarre subterfuge which made it appear that the impetus for the treaty had come from Seward, signed in April 1862.<sup>119</sup> Contrary to claims that Palmerston betrayed his sincere anti-slavery beliefs during the Civil War and relegated that issue beneath a cold assessment of Britain's national interests, Palmerston's relationship with anti-slavery was thus vital to how he conceived and responded to that conflict. For not only were anti-slavery arguments used to justify Britain's policy of neutrality, but anti-slavery itself was maintained as an active British policy during the war. Fundamentally, moreover, it was by taking advantage of this unique international context that Palmerston's anti-slave trade

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<sup>113</sup> The Trent affair was a serious diplomatic incident which occurred in 1861, at the beginning of the U.S. Civil War. In November, the Union warship *USS San Jacinto* intercepted the British mail packet *RMS Trent* and illegally removed two Confederate diplomats, James Murray Mason and John Slidell, who were on their way to London to discuss the Confederacy's case for diplomatic recognition. The British Government protested vigorously at this insult to Britain's national honour and violation of its maritime sovereignty. For more on this diplomatic crisis, see Norman B. Ferris, *The Trent Affair: A Diplomatic Crisis* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977).

<sup>114</sup> Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War*, I, p.10, 275-276; Soulsby, *The Right of Search and the Slave Trade in Anglo-American Relations*, pp.11, 174-175; Taylor A. Milne, 'The Lyons-Seward Treaty of 1862', *The American Historical Review*, 38, 3 (1933), 511-525 (pp.511-512); Conway W. Henderson, 'The Anglo-American Treaty of 1862 in Civil War Diplomacy', *Civil War History*, 15, 4 (1969), 308-319 (pp.314, 316); Phillip E. Myers, *Caution and Co-operation: The American Civil War in British-American Relations* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2008), pp.239-240, 208-209; Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy*, pp.101-102. Palmerston's contemporaries also argued this, see *The Times*, 24 May 1862, p.10.

<sup>115</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 24 September 1861, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/21/145, ff.561-564.

<sup>116</sup> Lord John Russell to Lord Lyons, 19 October 1861, TNA, FO84/1137, ff.76-78.

<sup>117</sup> William Seward, 'Informal Memorandum, Washington, 13 November 1861', TNA, FO84/1137, ff.185-187, enclosed in Lord Lyons to Lord John Russell, 13 November 1861, TNA, FO84/1137, ff.179-184.

<sup>118</sup> Lord John Russell to Lord Lyons, 7 December 1861, TNA, FO84/1137, f.87.

<sup>119</sup> 'Treaty between Her Majesty and the United States of America, for the Suppression of the African Slave Trade, signed at Washington, April 7, 1862', TNA, FO84/1171, ff.129-136. Seward believed this subterfuge would hoodwink the Senate into agreeing to it, see, Henderson, 'The Anglo-American Treaty of 1862 in Civil War Diplomacy', p.318. See also Myers, *Caution and Co-operation*, pp.207-213.

policy with the U.S. was finally rewarded with success. Rather than interpreting the 1862 treaty as the result of Seward's cunning plan to solicit British support for the North, therefore, it should more fairly be regarded as the culmination of over thirty years' worth of determination, diligence and zeal by Palmerston, and of his agile, pragmatic and opportunistic anti-slavery policy.

## II) Perfecting Britain's 'maritime police'

In addition to bolstering and expanding Britain's network of anti-slavery treaties, Palmerston also tried to strengthen and upgrade the quality of Britain's means of repression during his time in Office; namely, its anti-slavery squadrons in both West Africa and Brazil. Indeed, one of the first decisions that Palmerston made upon entering the Foreign Office in November 1830 was to resist the short-sighted proposal of Sir James Graham, the First Lord of Admiralty, to withdraw nearly all of Britain's cruisers from the West African coast.<sup>120</sup> Struck by the 'increasing charge of the squadron' which currently amounted to £100,000 a year, the 'deadly climate' that was killing around a third more British seamen than any other foreign station, as well as the unproductivity of the navy on account of it not having the legal powers to stop and search French-flagged vessels, Graham questioned whether the African squadron really was a 'necessity.' These difficulties were compounded, moreover, by the lack of facilities for victualling the squadron. For although Britain had establishments at Sierra Leone, Fernando Po and Ascension, the latter was 'little better than an uninhabited rock.' Unless a right-of-search treaty with France was negotiated immediately, then it was Graham's preference to scrap the whole African squadron and reduce the navy's expenditure. Although Palmerston fully supported Graham's plan of negotiating an anti-slavery treaty with Paris, it is apparent that he firmly resisted any such proposal to withdraw Britain's maritime police from Africa. Following Graham's representation, for instance, Palmerston succeeded in getting France to consent to the right-of-search but thereafter did not permit the Admiralty to withdraw any ships from the West African squadron. On the contrary, the treaty which Palmerston negotiated pledged that both Britain and France would retain a strong naval presence on the African coast.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Sir James Graham to Palmerston, 11 January 1831, GP, BL, Add Ms 79705, ff.9-12.

<sup>121</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p.157.

Throughout his career, Palmerston became a staunch advocate for sending more cruisers to join Britain's fleet of anti-slavery squadrons. In 1848 he told the House of Commons Select Committee, which had been investigating the Government's anti-slavery policy, that in his opinion 'the effectiveness of the means to suppress the slave trade uniformly varied in direct proportion to the amount of force employed.'<sup>122</sup> Thus, he made clear that he did not want to see any relaxation of Britain's efforts but rather an increase in their exertions and an enlargement of the force employed for this service.<sup>123</sup> If Britain's naval police was substantially diminished, he went on, or worse withdrawn, he believed it would be 'quite impossible' for Britain to abolish the slave trade.<sup>124</sup> In official dispatches and in private, then, Palmerston wrote frequently to the Admiralty asking them to reinforce Britain's anti-slavery squadron, and especially at times when he felt their presence would have the greatest impact. In September 1850, for example, Palmerston was 'very much delighted with the aspect of things at Rio with reference to slave trade,' and sensed that Britain had 'a fair prospect of crushing the hydra.' He therefore wrote to Sir Francis Baring imploring him to reinforce Britain's squadron and to 'make the Brazilians still more sensible of their inability to resist us about slave trade.'<sup>125</sup>

In 1862, moreover, Palmerston opened up to Lord John Russell in private about how he had always implored the First Lord of the Admiralty to deploy not just a greater number of vessels on the West African and Brazilian coastlines, but also the most suitable ones for Britain's anti-slavery squadrons; namely, those best equipped for the role of hunting down and capturing slave traders.<sup>126</sup> In particular, Palmerston believed that small, nimble and stealthy vessels were what was required to keep up with modern slave traders, who increasingly purchased 'fast sailing American clippers' to try and evade capture.<sup>127</sup> As steam technology developed, furthermore, Palmerston believed this too could be useful for Britain's naval police, and not only to ensure that Britain's cruisers kept up with the most technologically advanced slave traders - a handful of whom had

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<sup>122</sup> Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.17.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, p.4, 18.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, p.7.

<sup>125</sup> Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 3 September 1850, PP, GC/BA/310. As Prime Minister, Palmerston urged his Foreign Secretary, Lord John Russell, to continue pressing the Admiralty to reinforce the African squadron. See Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 8 January 1865, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/15D, ff.9-10.

<sup>126</sup> Lord John Russell to Duke of Somerset, 7 September 1862, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/31, ff.125-126.

<sup>127</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 13 August 1862, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/22/28, ff.92-96.

begun to use this technology from around the late-1840s.<sup>128</sup> As James Hudson, Britain's Minister in Brazil, told him in 1848, steamers would be less affected by 'the haze, the sea breeze, and [the] approaching night,' which was of prime importance considering that slavers often ran the gauntlet by leaving port to cross the Atlantic under the cover of darkness and in the most inhospitable conditions. 'A sailing cruiser might almost as well lie in Portsmouth as in Rio,' Hudson insisted, for 'a capture may be made while sailing on a cruise, but nine times out of ten she is useless to follow a slaver under these circumstances.'<sup>129</sup> A representative example of Palmerston lobbying the Admiralty for the right kind of cruisers to be deployed in the anti-slavery squadrons can be seen in July 1856. On that occasion, Palmerston wrote to Sir Charles Wood, the First Lord of the Admiralty, immediately after the Crimean War had come to an end requesting that now he had 'more naval means' at his disposal he use them 'to reinforce the squadrons for prevention of slave trade... by seven steamers of light draft and good speed.'<sup>130</sup>

When it came to enlarging and upgrading Britain's anti-slavery squadrons, Palmerston was not as successful as he wanted to be. In part, this was due to the fact that Britain's squadrons had to be pared back multiple times in the mid-nineteenth century and re-deployed to other parts of the world during moments of crisis. In 1840, for example, the Opium War with China 'compelled the Government to remove a portion of the squadron from the coast of Africa.'<sup>131</sup> Likewise, Palmerston reported to the House in 1845 how 'the dispute with New Granada' had drawn away 'a portion of our squadron from the West Indian station,' whilst 'the necessity of sending a squadron to the River Plate... took away a portion of the squadron on the Brazilian coast.'<sup>132</sup> Between 1854 and 1856, the Crimean War also forced Britain to re-deploy cruisers from the anti-slavery squadron.<sup>133</sup> However, undoubtedly the biggest hindrance to the growth of Britain's anti-

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<sup>128</sup> See, for example, James Hudson to Palmerston, 24 March 1849, PP, GC/HU/10. Some of these steamers, such as the *Serpente*, had been manufactured in England. See also James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 July 1849, PP, GC/HU/14.

<sup>129</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 12 September 1848, PP, GC/HU/5.

<sup>130</sup> Palmerston to Sir Charles Wood, 20 July 1856, PP, GC/WO/191. See also Henry Addington to W.A.B. Hamilton, 31 January 1850, TNA, FO84/823, ff.21-22. The Brazilian slave trade was carried on with such activity and success that Palmerston argued it was now expedient to employ 'some steamers on the coast of Brazil.'

<sup>131</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.154.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* See also Lord Auckland to Palmerston, 21 December 1848, PP, GC/AU/59. Auckland made reductions 'of some consequence both in men and material' to navy in 1848.

<sup>133</sup> Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, p.94. This was unpopular with some naval officers on the West African station, who complained publicly of being stretched even before the Crimean War. See Commander Arthur Parry Eardley-Wilmot, *A Letter to the Right Honourable Viscount*



slavery squadrons, Palmerston believed, was the institutional opposition of the Admiralty. In 1862, for example, despite receiving a report from the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Duke of Somerset, showing that the squadron on the west coast of Africa had been 'strengthened,'<sup>134</sup> Palmerston lamented in private to Russell how the Admiralty had not taken much interest in the suppression of the slave trade over the last thirty years, nor given it priority when deciding where to deploy their most agile ships. 'If there was a particularly old, slow going tub in the navy,' he wrote, 'she was sure to be sent to the coast of Africa to try to catch the fast sailing American clippers, and if there was an Officer seriously addicted to drinking, he was sent to a station where rum is a deadly poison.'<sup>135</sup> Upon being informed of Palmerston's viewpoint, Somerset angrily refuted his assertions. In the Admiralty's defence, he pointed out, there was not only a dearth of 'small vessels' in the British navy, especially since Parliament had urged them to build more ironclads, but not enough supply from the Government to cope with the demands of the anti-slavery squadron. 'More vessels,' he cried, 'involve more relief, more repairs, more work in dockyards, more coals on the station and, consequently, higher estimates.'<sup>136</sup> Although his rebuttal was well-made, however, it did not change the fact that only six years previously Somerset himself had called for the anti-slavery squadron in West Africa to be disbanded, in a proposal remarkably similar to the one made by Graham thirty years earlier. That 'useless service' was a waste of time and money he argued in a lengthy memorandum, was 'destructive' to the health and lives of the sailors who were a part of it, and was futile whilst the U.S. refused to grant the right-of-search.<sup>137</sup>

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*Palmerston, M.P., one of Her Majesty's Secretaries of State, & C, on the present state of the African Slave Trade, and on the necessity of increasing the African Squadron* (London: Ridgway, 1853).

<sup>134</sup> Duke of Somerset to Palmerston, 8 August 1862, PP, GC/SO/94.

<sup>135</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 13 August 1862, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/22/28, ff.92-96. See also Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 8 January 1865, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/15D, ff.9-10. Palmerston claimed that 'all the naval men hate the slave trade service and care nothing about putting an end to the slave trade.' Russell agreed. For when Somerset refused to allow British cruisers to sail too close to Cuba for fear of offending the Spanish Government a month later, he suspected this was merely 'one of the thousand and one cavils by which the Sea Lords of the Admiralty endeavour to avoid the disagreeable duty.' 'Palmerston says that in his time the Admiralty always sent the slowest and worst craft to catch the swift vessels used by the slave traders,' he wrote, 'but where there's a will there's a way. And if the Admiralty have the will to put down the slave trade, it will be put down and not allowed to revive.' See Lord John Russell to Duke of Somerset, 7 September 1862, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/31, ff.125-126.

<sup>136</sup> Duke of Somerset to Lord John Russell, 9 January 1865, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/26/113, ff.440-444.

<sup>137</sup> Duke of Somerset, Memorandum on the slave trade, 1859, PP, GC/SO/22/enc 1, enclosed in Duke of Somerset to Palmerston, 11 January 1860, PP, GC/SO/22.

Despite the fact Palmerston was unable to pursue his goal of substantially enlarging the size of Britain's anti-slavery squadrons, he was evidently more successful when it came to altering the distribution of the navy. For as well as seeking to ensure that the navy deployed the correct number and class of vessels for Britain's anti-slavery squadrons, Palmerston was determined to make sure that Britain's anti-slavery patrols were evenly balanced on both sides of the Atlantic. During the 1840s, for instance, Palmerston profoundly disagreed with Lord Aberdeen's policy of withdrawing Britain's anti-slavery squadrons from the West Indies and Brazil and moving the whole force over to the African station. This decision was supported by some of the naval officers employed on the African coastline, but Palmerston suspected this idea was not well thought through nor accepted by officers serving on the South American station. The prospect of 'blockading the whole extent of the coast of Africa,' he told Parliament in 1844, 'from the northernmost point on the west where the slave trade begins round to the northernmost point on the east where that traffic ends, is to promise a physical impossibility.' There were simply too many islands off the coast which slave ships could conceal themselves in or where enslaved Africans could be embarked. Moreover, if slavers managed to escape the British squadron on the coast of Africa they would then have 'a fair run for it across the Atlantic and would go in perfect security to the port of their destination.'<sup>138</sup>

A more sensible policy, Palmerston felt, was to return to having separate anti-slavery squadrons on either side of the Atlantic, giving the Royal Navy ample opportunity to intercept slave traders at the points of supply and demand. In both places, he argued, ships should be assigned small ranges of coastline to patrol and in places where slavers were most likely to be found.<sup>139</sup> After he returned to Office in 1846, therefore, Palmerston decided to try and reverse Aberdeen's decision and to redeploy an anti-slavery squadron to the South American station. As early as October 1847, he informed Lord Howden that when the Plate Squadron was broken up 'some more cruisers will be sent to check slave trade on the coast of Brazil.'<sup>140</sup> This was imperative, he felt, to execute effectively the recently passed 'Aberdeen Act,' which had empowered the Royal Navy

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<sup>138</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), c.943.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howden, 2 October 1847, PP, GC/HO/955. Lord Howden replaced James Hudson as Britain's Minister of Legation in Rio de Janeiro whilst he spent time recuperating in London. Howden was Britain's Minister in Brazil between September 1847 and September 1848.

with additional powers to suppress the slave trade within Brazilian territorial waters.<sup>141</sup> ‘When the Brazilian slave traders have more of their good vessels taken,’ Palmerston explained, ‘they may be more inclined than they are [at present] to acquiesce’ in ‘proper’ anti-slavery measures.<sup>142</sup> James Hudson agreed wholeheartedly with this proposal; sending to London countless appeals for more ships.<sup>143</sup> In September 1848, for instance, he complained that there was only a single British cruiser on that station, HMS *Grecian*, which had made ‘one capture in three years.’<sup>144</sup> Urgently, Palmerston forwarded Hudson’s letters on to the Admiralty, repeating his demands for reinforcements to be made to the squadron off the Brazilian coast.<sup>145</sup>

Palmerston’s requests, however, were initially denied, with the Board of Admiralty claiming there would be difficulties in victualling British cruisers around Rio de Janeiro since the nearest British colony, Demerara, was 3,000 miles away. Furthermore, the Board insisted that under the terms of the Anglo-French Treaty of 1845 it was obliged to maintain at least 25 ships on the West African coast, which made it very hard to increase the force off in the South Atlantic.<sup>146</sup> Yet, with the help of Sir Francis Baring, the First Lord of the Admiralty, who was amenable to Palmerston’s request,<sup>147</sup> and the fortuitous ending of the war against Juan Manuel de Rosas which had obliged the South America Squadron to be despatched to the Río de la Plata for almost a decade,<sup>148</sup> Palmerston’s wish was finally granted by the summer of 1849.<sup>149</sup> After the Anglo-French blockade of

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<sup>141</sup> For more on the passage and particulars of the Aberdeen Act, see Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, chp.9.

<sup>142</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howden, 2 October 1847, PP, GC/HO/955.

<sup>143</sup> See, for example, James Hudson to Palmerston, 25 April 1849, PP, GC/HU/12. Hudson also wrote to Commodore Herbert begging him to send up to Brazil HMS *Harpy*. This would enable Britain to waylay the slave steamers on leaving the port of Rio. However, Herbert declined, lamenting that his squadron had been ‘literally reduced to nothing considering the service required of them.’ See also James Hudson to Palmerston, 15 August 1849, 21 February 1850, 27 July 1850, 2 September 1850, 11 January 1851, 11 February 1851, 15 March 1851, 14 July 1851, PP, GC/HU/15, 21, 22, 26, 29, 31, 32, 36A.

<sup>144</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 12 September 1848, PP, GC/HU/5. The number of British cruisers on that station varied between 1846 and 1849. At times, there were as many as four steamers on that coast before it was reinforced in 1850. See James Hudson to Palmerston, 24 March 1849, TNA, FO84/767, ff.10-15.

<sup>145</sup> See, for example, Sir Francis Baring to Palmerston, 21 May, 1849, PP, GC/BA/275. Baring summarised the contents of Palmerston’s letter to him in his reply.

<sup>146</sup> Sir James Dundas to Sir Francis Baring, 18 May 1849, PP, GC/BA/275/enc 1, enclosed in Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Sir Francis Baring to Palmerston, 21 May 1849, GC/BA/275. ‘If you can spare the Plate squadron,’ Baring told Palmerston, ‘I could perhaps do you some service.’

<sup>148</sup> See Cady, *Foreign Intervention in the Río de la Plata*, pp.244-246, 253.

<sup>149</sup> See, for example, James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 July 1849, PP, GC/HU/14. Hudson reported to Palmerston that two new vessels had arrived on the Brazilian coast: HMS *Griffin* and *Rifleman*. See also Board of Admiralty to Palmerston, 9 September 1849, PP, GC/HU/14/enc 1. The Admiralty reported to Palmerston that ‘the settlement of the Plate difficulties will release the Squadron there & I trust they will be more efficient’ than the present state of affairs.

Argentina was lifted that year, the Admiralty once more had vessels to spare for Britain's anti-slavery patrol and decided to deploy cruisers to Brazil for that purpose,<sup>150</sup> along with Rear Admiral Reynolds the officer in charge of the South American station.<sup>151</sup> In spring 1850, moreover, the anti-slavery squadron was reinforced once again, 'rendering the squadron on the Brazilian coast much more effective than it has lately been.'<sup>152</sup>

Finally, and perhaps most intriguingly, Palmerston also tried to improve the performance of Britain's anti-slavery squadrons during his time in Office by ensuring that the Admiralty had access to the best possible information about the movements and activities of illegal slave traders in the areas which they policed. This information, he believed, could be used to co-ordinate Britain's patrols more intelligently and systematically, and thus to maximise the chances of naval officers making a capture. To do this, Palmerston strived to improve Britain's intelligence-gathering network in Brazil, where the majority of slave voyages began and ended after the collapse of the Portuguese-flagged slave trade in 1839. In particular, he began to use Britain's legation in Rio de Janeiro to establish a clandestine network of informants from among persons 'intimately acquainted with the practices and proceedings of the Brazilian slave trade.'<sup>153</sup> Essentially, these insiders, who no longer wanted to be part of that insidious traffic, would give information to the legation that would lead to the capture of slave ships, such as where and when Brazilian slavers would be leaving port as well as finer details like the 'name, class, build, rig, owner, consignee, and history of the slave vessel in question.'<sup>154</sup> Britain's minister of the legation would then pass on this secret information to the Rear Admiral of the South American station, who would subsequently co-ordinate Britain's efforts and organise cruisers to be in the right places at the right times. In return for this information, Palmerston agreed to pay these informants a share of the spoils for any

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<sup>150</sup> See, for example, Sir Francis Baring to Palmerston, 25 March 1850, PP, GC/BA/279. Baring asked Palmerston to send him 'a copy of Hudson's private letter of 17 January 1850 confidentially and I will see how far I can meet his wishes.' See also Sir Francis Baring to Palmerston, April 1850, PP, GC/BA/281. Baring admitted in April, 'I have not got the men or the steamers that Mr Hudson applies – in fact a steamer which can get up her steam in 10 minutes[,] steams 11 knots an hour & [close] to the [basin] is not so easy to find in this part of the world.' However, he promised to keep trying to free up vessels for the anti-slavery squadrons: 'Still I think that the [double fire] 9 gunned on the Brazils & on the African coast is of great importance... I will do [what] is in my power but I must be more grounded than I could wish.'

<sup>151</sup> Sir Francis Baring to Palmerston, [n.d.] April 1850, PP, GC/BA/281.

<sup>152</sup> Palmerston to James Hudson, 31 March 1850, PP, GC/HU/48. See also Lord Eddisbury to John Parker, 30 March 1850, TNA, FO84/823, ff.75-76; Palmerston, Minute, 31 March 1850, PP, GC/HU/20/enc 1.

<sup>153</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 13 August 1849, TNA, FO84/765, ff.223-226.

<sup>154</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 11 April 1851, TNA, FO84/844, ff.334-340.

slaver that was successfully caught, condemned, and sold at auction (usually at a rate of ten percent of the tonnage and bounty money), using the Government's Secret Service Fund to support this initiative.<sup>155</sup>

During his third stint at the Foreign Office, then, the British Legation in Rio de Janeiro managed to recruit a number of well-placed former slave dealers using the Secret Service Fund; including, for instance, the Captain of the Port of Rio and Inspector of Shipping, Senhor Leopoldo da Camara, who Hudson told Palmerston in private had 'great power in this port and a perfect knowledge of the ships fitting for slave trade,'<sup>156</sup> as well as the Head of the Rio de Janeiro Custom House, who was willing to give Hudson 'complete command of the[ir] resources.'<sup>157</sup> In addition, Hudson reported how officers in the Brazilian service, pilots on the coast, and 'men of independent fortune' had also come forward to lend their knowledge to Britain, whilst he was working hard to bribe 'some of the Brazilian justices of the peace and officers of customs' for even more information.<sup>158</sup> Palmerston was generous with his use of the Secret Service Fund to support this initiative, paying between £5,000 and £7,000 a year to keep up this network of informants and making clear to Hudson in March 1850 that he was even willing to give his most trusted informant a permanent pension, again drawn from the Secret Service Fund. That fund was 'not large,' he wrote, and the sums being asked of him were 'certainly large,' but he was willing to pay them. 'Whatever it may be absolutely necessary to give, may be issued over more than one year.'<sup>159</sup> As Palmerston told Russell some years later, it was his belief that the slave trade thrived by bribery, so in order to put down this crime one had 'to fight the slave traders with their own weapons and to kill their trade with those "silver lances" which the Greeks say "will conquer all things".'<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> See, for example, Palmerston, Minute, 30 October 1849, TNA, FO84/765, f.221. Palmerston agreed to pay an informant 10 percent of the tonnage and bounty money paid for the capture and condemnation of any vessel which the informant helped to catch. See also Palmerston to James Hudson, 8 November 1849, TNA, FO84/766, ff.16-17. For more on Palmerston's use of the Secret Service Fund, see Gavin Burns Henderson, 'Lord Palmerston and the Secret Service Fund', in *Crimean War Diplomacy and Other Historical Essays*, ed. by Gavin Burns Henderson (Glasgow: Jackson, 1947), 238-241.

<sup>156</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 12 September 1848, PP, GC/HU/5.

<sup>157</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 17 January 1850, PP, GC/HU/20. See also Hudson to Palmerston, 17 January 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.141-150.

<sup>158</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 17 January 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.141-150.

<sup>159</sup> Palmerston to James Hudson, 31 March 1850, PP, GC/HU/48. See also Palmerston to James Hudson, 4 April 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.22-23.

<sup>160</sup> Palmerston, Memorandum, 'Remarks on despatch to Lord Lyons', 14 March 1860, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/21/19, ff.66-71.

Significantly, the importance of this clandestine initiative should not be understated. Armed with accurate and up-to-date intelligence, British cruisers were able to plan their excursions much more systematically and therefore to maximise their chances of capturing slavers. In January 1850, for example, Hudson declared that he was so satisfied with his network of informants that he was able 'to know with certainty where the slave ships are lying [and] when [they were] about to sail.'<sup>161</sup> Moreover, Britain's informants were sometimes able to double bluff their slave-trading colleagues and to arrange for slave vessels to leave port 'in places where they could not escape from Her Majesty's cruisers.'<sup>162</sup> It was information drawn from this network, for example, that led HMS *Hydra* to prevent the esteemed slave steamer *Providentia* from leaving the port of Santos between March and August 1849 (despite several attempts to do so),<sup>163</sup> and which led to her eventual capture by HMS *Rifleman* in January 1850.<sup>164</sup> In addition, it was due to the strength of the intelligence which Hudson had at his disposal that he requested reinforcements on the Brazilian coast in August 1849; 'we have obtained access to the slave dealers secrets,' he wrote to Palmerston excitedly, 'and I should regret not being able to make use of our knowledge.'<sup>165</sup> By the summer of 1850, moreover, following the Brazilian Government's decision to pass their own anti-slavery law, Brazilian politicians were so amazed by the precision and correctness of British intelligence that they asked Hudson for access to his informants.<sup>166</sup> Without consulting Palmerston, Hudson obliged this request, much to the chagrin of Palmerston who felt it 'scarcely prudent' to give away the identities of Britain's most important spies.<sup>167</sup> Nevertheless, by 1851, Hudson and the Brazilian Government evidently began to work together in earnest and to great effect. As he explained to Palmerston in April, 'no cargo of slaves was landed on the coast' of Rio de Janeiro or the adjoining provinces without him receiving 'intelligence of it before the Brazilian Government.' Hudson would then inform the

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<sup>161</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 17 January 1850, PP, GC/HU/20.

<sup>162</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 27 July 1850, TNA, FO84/804, ff.301-303.

<sup>163</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 July 1849, PP, GC/HU/14. See also James Hudson to Palmerston, 13 August 1849, TNA, FO84/765, ff.168-171, 223-226; James Hudson to Palmerston, 15 August 1849, PP, GC/HU/15.

<sup>164</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 20 February 1850, TNA, FO84/802, ff.379-382; Palmerston to James Hudson, 13 April 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.32-33 Other slavers caught due to the information provided by this network included the *Paquete de Santos*, *Santa Cruz*, *Astrea*, *Sereia*, *Leonidas*, *Astro*, *Rival* and the *Lucy Ann*. See James Hudson, Memorandum, 'List of slavers denounced to Her Majesty's Legation at Rio de Janeiro and captured in consequence of information,' TNA, FO84/804, f.304.

<sup>165</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 15 August 1849, PP, GC/HU/15.

<sup>166</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 11 April 1851, TNA, FO84/844, ff.334-340.

<sup>167</sup> Palmerston, Minute, 16 May 1851, TNA, FO84/844, f.311. See also Palmerston to Hudson, 7 June 1851, TNA, FO84/842, ff.96-97.

Brazilian Minister for Foreign Affairs of the intelligence via private memorandum, who subsequently despatched a police force to the location indicated. Remarkably, Hudson claimed, 'upon every occasion' the information he transmitted was 'correct to the minutest particular.'<sup>168</sup>

### III) A new approach: Palmerston's 'Christian League against the slave trade'

Besides the methods handed down to him by his predecessors, however, Palmerston also came up with an imaginative and ambitious solution of his own to try and combat the slave trade during his time at the Foreign Office. Throughout the 1830s, one of Palmerston's most audacious and pioneering experiments was to try and form what he described as a 'Christian League against the slave trade.'<sup>169</sup> Essentially, his idea was to try and change the entire nature and focus of Britain's anti-slavery policy; to take it in a bold new direction by replacing Britain's messy and complicated system of bilateral anti-slavery treaties with something more akin to an Anti-Slavery Confederation, or perhaps even an Anti-slavery League of Nations, where 'all the powers of Christendom both in the Old and in the New World' were united in 'a General League' to put down the slave trade.<sup>170</sup>

The benefits of a more joined-up and integrated approach were obvious. From Britain's perspective, it would mean that the Foreign Office no longer had to keep track of which countries had signed up to its treaty network, exactly what terms different countries had signed up to, and when (if at all) these treaties were due to expire. Logistically, it meant British diplomats no longer had to negotiate anti-slavery treaties with a plethora of different nations all at the same time, or constantly make the case for Britain's solution to this crime to foreign statesmen. Vitaly, a 'Christian League' against the slave trade would simplify such matters noticeably, setting out a common set of rules and regulations governing exactly how that illegal trade could be extinguished, with 'members' expected to sign up to all of them without qualification or further negotiation. If every nation in Europe and America could be persuaded to become a contracted member of this 'Christian League,' therefore, which in practice meant agreeing to abolish

<sup>168</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 11 April 1851, TNA, FO84/844, ff.334-340.

<sup>169</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), c.650.

<sup>170</sup> Palmerston to Baron Hummelauer, 11 December 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.145-160.

their domestic slave trade, close their markets to the slave trade, declare the slave trade 'piracy,' and, most importantly, consent to a permanent, comprehensive right-of-search arrangement, then Palmerston was confident that that hydra could be slain within a matter of years.<sup>171</sup>

The challenge, however, was evidently one of how to establish such a grand vision as an anti-slavery League of Nations. How could Britain get all the countries of Europe and America to agree to a multilateral treaty when it was having so much trouble getting them to sign bilateral ones just with Britain? 'Rome was not built in a day, [and] neither are treaties between the five leading powers of Europe,' the *Sunday Times* joked in 1841,<sup>172</sup> whilst getting the U.S. to accept these conditions would be very difficult if not impossible due to the War of 1812.<sup>173</sup> Nevertheless, as he explained the House of Commons in July 1844, Palmerston had not just dreamt up this scheme without a feasible plan of how to carry it into execution, but had come up with a four-point plan to see his vision realised.<sup>174</sup>

To begin with, Palmerston explained, Britain needed to negotiate a new anti-slavery treaty with all the Great Powers of Europe, one that included Britain and France alongside Russia, Austria and Prussia.<sup>175</sup> It was important, moreover, that it contain 'all the leading stipulations' which the other powers of Europe had at different times agreed, in order to demonstrate that the Great Powers were sincere about fulfilling their declaration from the Vienna Conference to end the slave trade once and for all.<sup>176</sup> Vitally, it was Palmerston's belief that this treaty would form 'the foundation of a great European league against Slave trade.'<sup>177</sup> For it was his intention, after it had been concluded, to invite 'all the other powers and states of Europe to accede to it,' and thus to establish 'a

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<sup>171</sup> Palmerston explained his idea of a Christian League to Parliament in 1841, see Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), cc.650-651. See also Palmerston to Sir John Hobhouse, 25 July 1838, Broughton Papers, British Library, Add Ms 46915, ff.101-102. In private, Palmerston felt 'It will not be very easy to put a stop to this slave trade till we have got all the powers of Europe embarked in a league against slave trade carried on by Christians.'

<sup>172</sup> *Sunday Times*, 26 December 1841, p.4.

<sup>173</sup> In May 1841, Palmerston singled out the U.S. as the 'single exception' to his worldwide Christian League. Palmerston did not believe that the U.S. would 'stand aloof, and refuse to join the league, when they find themselves the only Christian nation that has not subscribed to its engagements.' See Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), c.651.

<sup>174</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), cc.937-938.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, c.937.

<sup>176</sup> Palmerston to Horace Sébastiani, 31 May 1836, TNA, FO84/207, ff.17-21.

<sup>177</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), c.937.



general European League' against the slave trade.<sup>178</sup> This task would not be too hard, he felt, since many European nations had already signed anti-slavery treaties with Britain and if any lingering doubts remained they would be swiftly erased by the awe-inspiring sight of the Holy Alliance working in tandem with Britain and France. Once this task had been completed, Palmerston explained to the House that 'confederated Europe' would join together and approach the U.S., 'entreating it to accede also to the league which we had formed.'<sup>179</sup> Due to Washington's reluctance to conclude a bilateral treaty with Britain over the slave trade, Palmerston did not necessarily feel that this appeal would be successful. But, he was confident the Government in Washington would be stirred by the magnitude of the proposal and by the exceptional manner in which it was made, by a united, confederated Europe:

When the Government and people of the United States saw all the powers of Europe banishing from their minds all jealousy of each other in the pursuit of a generous object; when they saw England, France, and Russia, the three great maritime Powers of Europe, giving each other freely and without suspicion a mutual Right-of-search; when they saw Austria and Prussia, two great commercial Powers, but destitute of any navy of their own, permitting, without fear or hesitation, their ships of commerce to be searched by the ships of war of their great maritime neighbours; when they saw all the smaller states of Europe engaging without the slightest apprehension of abuse, to submit their flags to be searched for this great end; when we, the states of Europe, should have exhibited to the Americans such a spectacle of mutual confidence and such an abandonment of selfish feelings for the attainment of a noble purpose, is it not fair to assume that the United States... [will be] induced to do something effectual to assist in suppressing the Slave trade?<sup>180</sup>

The final part of Palmerston's plan, which he proposed to move on to once the U.S. was on board with this multilateral treaty, was to invite other American countries to accede to it and to become full contracted members. Again, with the combined weight of Europe and the U.S. in its favour, he predicted it would only take a short period of time before Britain would have constructed an anti-slavery network containing all of the Christian

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, cc.937-938.

powers in the New World as well as the Old, and therefore complete his 'general League of Christendom.'<sup>181</sup>

Unfortunately for Palmerston, however, this imaginative and ambitious plan did not come to pass. His plan came unstuck from the very beginning since he never received the full backing of the other European Great Powers for a comprehensive, trail-blazing anti-slavery treaty. Austria and Prussia, for instance, were always hesitant about granting Britain formal legal powers to stop and search their merchant vessels and instead preferred an unofficial arrangement to achieve the same object,<sup>182</sup> whilst Russia was happy to accept the right-of-search but opposed a permanent treaty.<sup>183</sup> As such, Palmerston faced constant delays and setbacks between 1834 and 1841, as he strived to persuade the Holy Alliance to accept Britain's particular solution. Perhaps more significantly, France actively opposed signing a more comprehensive treaty, preferring the moderate and limited nature of the conventions it had agreed with Britain in 1831 and 1833.<sup>184</sup> As such, Palmerston was met with stern resistance by the French Government throughout the negotiations, despite the fact they were officially co-proposing the treaty alongside Britain.<sup>185</sup> For over two years, for instance, Paris refused to respond to any of Palmerston's dispatches on this topic,<sup>186</sup> with Count Molé later admitting that his prolonged silence was intentional; he aimed to stall London indefinitely and force Palmerston to drop the treaty.<sup>187</sup> The wider international context also exacerbated tensions between Britain and France over anti-slavery. From mid-1840, Anglo-French

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<sup>181</sup> Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, Lord George Russell, Marquess of Clanricarde, 4 March 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.202-213, 263-272, 313-322.

<sup>182</sup> See, for example, Lord Minto to Palmerston, 24 September 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.57-59. Prussia suggested furnishing the Royal Navy with 'a list and description of any ships fitting out in the ports of Prussia' bound to trade with Africa. British cruisers could then distinguish between real and fraudulent Prussian vessels, exercise the right-of-search accordingly, and treat Prussian slavers as pirates. See also Prince Metternich to Prince Esterházy, 21 October 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.169-173, enclosed in Baron Hummelauer to Palmerston, 12 November 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.167-168. Metternich suggested granting a limited right-of-search to the Royal Navy for five years, during which time he would allow British arbitrators to prosecute the 'denationalised' Austrian slave traders as pirates. Palmerston again opposed this scheme, see Palmerston to Baron Hummelauer, 11 December 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.145-160.

<sup>183</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, Lord George Russell, Marquess of Clanricarde, 4 March 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.202-213, 263-272, 313-322.

<sup>184</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, pp.177-178.

<sup>185</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to Horace Sébastiani, 31 May 1836, TNA, FO84/207, ff.17-21.

<sup>186</sup> For Palmerston's reminders to the French Government, see Palmerston to Earl Granville, 31 October, 27 December 1836, TNA, FO84/207, ff.94-96, 110-111; Palmerston to Earl Granville, 27 February, 9 June 1838, TNA, FO84/256, ff.2-3, 15-16.

<sup>187</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, pp.202-203.

relations splintered due to their disagreement over the Eastern Question,<sup>188</sup> prompting Palmerston to shelve the project for over a year until a more propitious time. In the summer of 1841, the Whig Government then collapsed and the Tories won the subsequent general election.<sup>189</sup>

Despite the fact that the Great Power treaty was all but agreed when Palmerston left the Foreign Office at the end of August, and the fact it was finally signed by his successor Lord Aberdeen in December of that year,<sup>190</sup> the final death blow to Palmerston's pioneering, multilateral anti-slavery treaty came when France refused to ratify it in 1842 following loud and repeated protestations against it in the French Chambers.<sup>191</sup> Moreover, due his hard-line stance during the Eastern Question, the French Government now refused to do business with Palmerston; François Guizot, the French Foreign Minister, citing a mix of personal and diplomatic reasons why he could not sign the treaty until he was out of Office.<sup>192</sup> With the fate of that treaty now doomed, Palmerston's hopes for a 'Christian League against the slave trade' were fatally dashed. As he told Parliament in July 1844, 'the moment the French ratification of that Treaty was refused, of course there was an end to all ideas of a European League.' For without France's backing it would be impossible to unite the whole of Europe behind it and, 'as to making any joint application to the United States of America,' it 'put such a thing entirely out of the question.'<sup>193</sup> During his third term at the Foreign Office and as Prime Minister, Palmerston therefore abandoned plans to create a 'Christian League' and returned his focus to bilateral anti-slavery treaties.

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<sup>188</sup> For more on Britain's breakdown in relations with France over the Eastern Question, see Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.215-237.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, pp.240-242.

<sup>190</sup> Lord Aberdeen to Sir Robert Gordon, Lord Westmoreland, and Lord Stuart de Rothesay, 20 December 1841, TNA, FO84/372, ff.9-11, 157-159, 199-201. The treaty was signed on 20 December 1841 by Britain, France, Austria, Prussia and Russia.

<sup>191</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, chp.8.

<sup>192</sup> For Guizot's private response, see Henry Bulwer to Palmerston, 13 August 1841, PP, GC/BU/247. See also François Guizot, *Memoirs of a Minister of State, From the Year 1840* (London: Bentley, 1864), pp.131-147. For Guizot's diplomatic response, see François Guizot to Henry Bulwer, 17 August 1841, TNA, FO84/370, ff.95-97, enclosed in Henry Bulwer to Palmerston, 20 August 1841, TNA, FO84/370, ff.93-94. Nevertheless, to his final days in Office, Palmerston continually pressed Guizot in private not to let personal matters get in the way of this issue. He also sent a long official dispatch refuting the reasons why France could not sign the treaty. See Palmerston to Henry Bulwer, 17 August 1841, PP, GC/BU/507; Palmerston to Henry Bulwer, 24 August 1841, TNA, FO84/370, ff.29-48.

<sup>193</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), c.940.

Evidently, then, Palmerston was open-minded and imaginative during this period, experimenting with an alternative multilateral anti-slavery treaty that, if successful, would have potentially ended the slave trade quicker than the bilateral approach that Britain had been pursuing for decades. In this regard, Palmerston's vision for how to end the slave trade was far more ambitious and internationalist in scope than historians have so far credited. For although P.M. Kielstra has explored Palmerston's efforts to negotiate a multilateral treaty with the other Great Powers of Europe in the 1830s, looking in detail at the politics of international abolition that took place between Britain, France, Russia, Austria and Prussia, his work places this negotiation firmly in the context of Anglo-French anti-slavery collaboration.<sup>194</sup> As such, Kielstra interprets this episode as but one more example of Britain preferring to 'act alone' against the slave trade than in co-operation with France, and of this narrow-minded British attitude ultimately disrupting international anti-slavery efforts.<sup>195</sup> Yet, whilst Kielstra's focus on the deteriorating relationship between Britain and France is useful in showing how those two powers drifted apart in the 1830s over the issue of anti-slavery, and especially in demonstrating how domestic interests, events and concerns shaped foreign policy in France and Britain regarding anti-slavery, it arguably overlooks the significance of this episode in terms of it being the first step towards what Palmerston conceived as a truly global anti-slavery policy. Indeed, by understanding Palmerston's negotiations with the Holy Alliance as a stepping stone towards his favoured 'Christian League against the slave trade,' it is possible to view Palmerston's actions not in terms of a parochial unilateralism, but as part of a bold vision of uniting Europe and America against the slave trade. Although his plan for an 'anti-slavery league of nations' never came to fruition, then, it demonstrates that his preference was for the international problem of slave trading to be confronted and tackled by an international effort and solution, one incorporating *all* the countries of Europe and America, rather than simply by individual nation states such as Britain or France acting alone.

In spite of his failure to establish his preferred 'Christian League against the slave trade,' Palmerston's overarching strategy for ending the slave trade was nevertheless uniform and robust in this period, revolving around the creation and refinement of a

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<sup>194</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, pp.168-170, 176-178, 202-206, 210-211.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, p.163. For more on Kielstra's argument that Britain's unilateralism disrupting international anti-slavery efforts, see chapter 7 in book, pp.163-206.

legally-binding (bilateral) treaty network which encompassed 'advanced' 'civilised' and 'barbarous' nations alike. Notably, Palmerston took it upon himself to strengthen and bolster Britain's existing network of anti-slavery treaties; to extend them dramatically to include countries that had previously been excluded as well as those formerly unwilling to sign up to the right of-search. Furthermore, he endeavoured to enlarge and upgrade Britain's anti-slavery squadrons on both sides of the Atlantic so as to enable the Royal Navy to effectively police the slave trade. Essentially, Palmerston's overarching strategy was thus to attack that 'hydra' at all of its weakest points: to extinguish the demand for enslaved Africans in Europe and America, to sever the supply of them in Africa, and to intercept the illegal trade between these two marketplaces on the Atlantic Ocean, all through the method of formal anti-slavery treaties. One might add, moreover, that Palmerston favoured a 'preventative' strategy of seeking anti-slavery treaties with every nation that had a flag upon the ocean; preferring to pre-empt which flags would be abused by slave-traders rather than to react retrospectively to whatever flag was adopted next as their 'flag of convenience.' Furthermore, that Palmerston pursued anti-slavery pragmatically as well, taking advantage of changes in foreign governments, revolutions, and even Civil Wars to extort the legal powers which Britain needed to suppress the international slave trade. How exactly this broad-based strategy was implemented in practice, however, was not as straightforward. Chapter three will now move on to locate Palmerston's anti-slavery policy within Britain's 'anti-slavery world system,' exploring the varied and complex tactics he employed with each category of nation to try and persuade them to enlist to his global treaty network.



## Chapter 3 – Implementing the strategy: Locating Palmerston’s approach within Britain’s ‘anti-slavery world system’

Precisely how Palmerston executed his strategy for how to end the slave trade within the confines of Britain’s ‘anti-slavery world system’<sup>1</sup> was nuanced and complex; differing subtly and sometimes markedly depending on whether he perceived countries to be ‘advanced,’ ‘civilised’ or ‘barbarous’ within his imagined ‘scale of civilisation.’<sup>2</sup> Whereas ‘advanced’ powers were invariably treated with caution, dignity and respect, ‘civilised’ ones were handled far less generously and their rights under international law strained. ‘Barbarous’ nations, moreover, were disrespected, insulted and disparaged, to the point where they were contemptuously excluded from the family of ‘civilised’ nations and denied the legal protections this status afforded. This chapter will analyse how Palmerston implemented his anti-slavery policy, looking first at his differing approaches towards treaty-making with each category of nation. It will then explore the different methods and techniques he employed to get countries from ‘advanced,’ ‘civilised’ and ‘barbarous’ nations to accept and/or comply with his terms; ranging from official forms of pressure to non-official methods, through to the use of physical coercion.

### 1) Palmerston’s treaty-making: sovereign equality, compromise and dominance

Firstly, how Palmerston approached foreign states for an anti-slavery treaty varied considerably depending on the individual country that he was dealing with. A major aspect of Palmerston’s treaties with ‘advanced’ powers, for example, was how they emphasised the ‘sovereign equality’ of the parties involved and ‘upheld mutuality and reciprocity as norms.’<sup>3</sup> As Edward Keene points out, although Britain often held the upper-hand in practice, in theory ‘advanced’ powers could play an ‘active role’ suppressing the slave trade.<sup>4</sup> Hence, right-of-search agreements between these powers were always defined as ‘mutual,’ with British merchants liable to the same stop-and-

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<sup>1</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.51.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 1, p.38.

<sup>3</sup> Keene, ‘A Case Study of the Construction of International Hierarchy’, p.313.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

search procedures as the subjects of the other 'advanced' powers,<sup>5</sup> whilst each power was encouraged to maintain their own anti-slavery squadron off the African coast.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, 'advanced' powers were also allowed an independent role in the judicial process of adjudicating suspected slavers. Indeed, they were granted the right to arbitrate cases in their own national courts and thus to retain full legal sovereignty over the prosecution of their citizens and property.<sup>7</sup>

With 'civilised' states, however, Palmerston's negotiating position was far less generous. As opposed to negotiating bespoke anti-slavery treaties, as he did with 'advanced' powers, these states were expected to 'accede' to one (or some variation of one) that Britain had already completed with another country in the past; which in practice meant they agreed to honour the stipulations of the original treaty and were simply written into it as subsidiary adherents. Denmark, Sardinia, the Hanse Towns, Tuscany and Naples, for instance, were all invited to 'accede' to the Anglo-French Conventions during the 1830s.<sup>8</sup> Emblematic of the fact that these 'civilised' states were treated as a common bloc, in his invitations to these countries Palmerston enclosed a note containing blank spaces for his agents abroad to fill in with the particulars of the country in which they resided; such as the name of the Foreign Secretary and the Head of State. 'The Undersigned has been directed to transmit for the information of \_ [name of

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<sup>5</sup> For an example of Palmerston using this phrase with the U.S., see Palmerston to Sir Charles Vaughan, 14 June 1833, TNA, FO84/143, ff.7-20. See also Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 25 June 1839, TNA, FO84/296, ff.23-24; Lord John Russell to Lord Lyons, 22 August 1861, TNA, FO84/1137, ff.64-65. For an example of Palmerston using this phrase with France, see Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 4 February 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.9-12. For an example of Palmerston using this phrase with the Holy Alliance, see Palmerston to John Bligh, 30 September 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.78-90. See also Palmerston to Ralph Abercrombie, 9 July 1835, TNA, FO84/181, ff.97-100.

<sup>6</sup> For an example of Palmerston encouraging France to maintain their own squadron, see Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 19 April 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.19-21. See also Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 15 July, 15 October 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.27-29, 32-34. For an example of Palmerston doing the same thing with the U.S., see Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 20 February 1839, TNA, FO84/296, ff.3-4. See also Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 16 May 1839, TNA, FO84/296, ff.13-15; Lord Clarendon to Lord Napier, 25 August 1857, TNA, FO84/1026, ff.34-35. For an example of Palmerston agreeing to allow the Holy Alliance to maintain their own squadrons, see Palmerston to Baron Koller, 27 August 1841, TNA, FO84/372, ff.72-77.

<sup>7</sup> For an example of Palmerston allowing France to retain full legal sovereignty over its citizens, see Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 28 November 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.170-172. This was still not Palmerston's favoured option, but he was willing to accept it. See Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 9 December 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.47-48. For an example of Palmerston allowing the Holy Alliance to retain full legal sovereignty over its citizens, see Palmerston to Baron Koller, Schleinitz(?), Baron Brunow, 27 August 1841, TNA, FO84/372, ff.24, 173, 225. The U.S. was the only 'advanced' power to accept a Mixed Commission Court, see Lord John Russell to Lord Lyons, 28 February 1862, TNA, FO84/1171, ff.58-64.

<sup>8</sup> Palmerston to Henry Wynn, 4 October 1833, TNA, FO84/142, ff.215-217; Palmerston to Augustus Foster, 18 February 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.122-124; Palmerston to Canning, 27 February 1836, TNA, FO84/207, ff.157-158; Palmerston to Ralph Abercrombie, 27 December 1836, TNA, FO84/205, ff.208-209; Palmerston to William Temple, 18 February 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.238-240.



Foreign Secretary] the accompanying copies of the two Conventions... and to invite \_ [name of Head of State] in the name of His Majesty... to accord \_ [name of country's] accession thereto,' the invitation read.<sup>9</sup> If 'civilised' states decided not to accede to an existing convention, furthermore, usually because they disagreed with one or more of its stipulations, then Palmerston invariably got them to sign a bilateral treaty based upon a standardised British draft.<sup>10</sup>

In South America, similarly, Palmerston sent a circular memorandum around to a number of British agents in 1835 enclosing the draft treaty that was to be used as the basis for all anti-slavery negotiations on that continent. Not only was this draft treaty virtually identical to the Anglo-Spanish Treaty of the same year, it being essentially copied and pasted from that agreement, but in this case even Palmerston's instructions contained blank spaces to be completed by the British minister. 'You will immediately enter into negotiation with the Government of \_ [name of country] for concluding a Treaty between Great Britain and that Country... The requisite powers... will be sent out to you so soon as I shall have received a notification that the \_ [name of country] Ministers agree to enter into the negotiation.'<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, treaties were signed with Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, New Granada and Chile which, although not technically accessions, were the same as them in all but name.<sup>12</sup> Palmerston did not send the same circular to Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia or Ecuador, but as in Europe he did offer them a bilateral treaty that was essentially the same as the Anglo-Spanish one; which they all eventually accepted.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Palmerston, 'Note to be presented to the Governments of the Hanseatic League of Lübeck, Bremen and Hamburg', TNA, FO84/207, ff.159-160, enclosed in Palmerston to Canning, 27 February 1836, TNA, FO84/207, ff.157-158.

<sup>10</sup> Sweden and the Netherlands, for example, preferred to annex additional articles on to their existing bilateral treaties with Britain rather than accede to the Anglo-French Conventions. See, for example, Palmerston to Sir Edward Disbrowe, 18 May 1835, TNA, FO84/181, ff.189-190, and enclosed draft of proposed additional article, ff.191-184. Similarly, Spain negotiated a new bilateral treaty with Britain based on the Anglo-French Conventions, see Palmerston to George Villiers, 6 October 1834, TNA, FO84/155, ff.26-29, and enclosed draft treaty, ff.30-89.

<sup>11</sup> Palmerston to Richard Pakenham, Sir R.K. Porter, William Turner, B.F. Wilson, J. Walpole, 13 November 1835, in 'Correspondence with Foreign Powers on Slave Trade, 1835 (Class B)', *Parliamentary Papers*, I, 329 (1836), p.82.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the Anglo-Venezuelan Treaty, in Sir R.K. Porter to Palmerston, 5 April 1839, TNA, FO84/293, ff.72-74, and enclosed treaty, ff.99-131.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, the Anglo-Argentine Treaty, in Palmerston to John Mandeville, 24 November 1838, TNA, FO84/259, ff.21-23, and enclosed treaty, ff.24-45. See also King, 'The Latin American Republics and the Suppression of the Slave Trade', p.410. King makes this point as well: 'With the exception of the Haitian and Dominican agreements, they were based upon a standard British draft and differed significantly only in cases in which limitations of jurisdiction or the areas of search were stipulated.'

Notably, accession of any kind was simply unpalatable to ‘advanced’ powers, implying as it did that the acceding party was not important enough to take part in the original negotiations. It was for this reason that Friedrich Ancillon and Count Nesselrode refused to accede Prussia and Russia to the Anglo-French Conventions in 1834, for example,<sup>14</sup> obliging a frustrated Palmerston to organise another Great Powers conference ‘in order to work back again, by a process of negotiation, to the point at which Great Britain and France have already arrived.’<sup>15</sup> During negotiations for the Anglo-French Conventions, moreover, France also disliked the idea of ‘acceding’ to a principle of maritime law established solely by Britain, and initially wanted to delay acceptance until after the U.S. had agreed to it.<sup>16</sup>

It was not just how negotiations were framed that differed with ‘civilised’ states, however, but what treaty obligations Palmerston expected them to accept. For example, although the most important norm of mutuality was maintained in every anti-slavery treaty that Palmerston signed with these states, in that the right-of-search was still defined as ‘mutual,’<sup>17</sup> the majority of ‘civilised’ countries agreed to adopt terms that stripped them of any responsibility to police the slave trade underneath their flag. In South America, for instance, Palmerston included an article in many of his treaties exempting nations from the arduous task of sending cruisers to West Africa,<sup>18</sup> whilst in

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<sup>14</sup> Count Nesselrode to John Bligh, 27 August 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.99-109, enclosed in John Bligh to Palmerston, 10 September 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.97-98. The Russian Government ‘decline being Parties to any Convention of that nature without a renewal of negotiations on the subject,’ Nesselrode stated. See also Ralph Abercrombie to Palmerston, 13 October 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.60-61. Prussia agreed with Russia, proposing to renew negotiations for a new anti-slavery treaty.

<sup>15</sup> Palmerston tried to convince Prussia and Russia not to force through a renewal of negotiations, see Palmerston to John Bligh, 30 September 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.78-90. See also Palmerston to Ralph Abercrombie, 27 October 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.46-47; Palmerston to Ralph Abercrombie, 9 July 1835, TNA, FO84/181, ff.97-100. Palmerston eventually gave up when he realised the Holy Alliance would not back down, see Palmerston to Ralph Abercrombie, 27 July 1835, TNA, FO84/181, ff.101-102.

<sup>16</sup> Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 4 November 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.144-147.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to Canning, 3 September 1836, TNA, FO84/207, ff.167-172. The Hanse Towns wanted the mutuality element of the right-of-search agreement removed. They did not want the right to search British vessels, since this implied an obligation to create an anti-slavery squadron. Palmerston persuaded them to accept the mutuality clause of the right-of-search.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Palmerston’s right-of-search treaty with Mexico which exempted them from employing cruisers on the African coast, in Richard Pakenham to Palmerston, 3 March 1840, TNA, FO84/330, ff.227-244. See also Palmerston’s right-of-search treaty with Uruguay which did the same thing, in Palmerston to John Mandeville, 22 February 1838, TNA, FO84/259, ff.3-5. Palmerston’s treaty with Venezuela did not include a formal reservation clause, but his chargé d’affaires made clear that any treaty would not obligate Venezuela to maintain an anti-slavery squadron. See Sir R.K. Porter to Guillermo Smith, 22 March 1838, TNA, FO84/260, ff.128-132, enclosed in Sir R.K. Porter to Palmerston, 11 April 1838, TNA, FO84/260, ff.124-127.

Europe he did the same thing by adapting the accession agreements.<sup>19</sup> The Anglo-Sardinian treaty had been ‘carefully framed’ to remove any naval obligations, Palmerston observed to Augustus Foster, Britain’s representative in the country, ‘so as to meet the peculiar circumstances in which His Sardinian Majesty is placed.’<sup>20</sup> In addition, ‘civilised’ countries in South America were invariably made to sign treaties that barred them from adjudicating cases of slave trade in their own national courts. Unlike their counterparts in Europe who were permitted to arbitrate cases in their own national courts,<sup>21</sup> these nations were pressured to establish Mixed Commission Courts with Britain, wherein the verdict of the British judge was given equal weighting to that of the host country and split decisions decided by a coin toss.<sup>22</sup> This controversial clause was successfully disputed by Mexico, Venezuela and New Granada, all of whom were determined to cling on to their

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<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Palmerston’s right-of-search treaty with Naples and Sicily which adapted the accession agreement to exempt them from employing cruisers on the African coast, in Palmerston to William Temple, 24 April 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.242-246, and enclosed treaty, ff.248-259. See also Palmerston to William Temple, 12 May 1837, TNA, FO84/224, ff.290-294. Palmerston’s accession agreement with Denmark also removed any obligation for them to deploy a naval squadron, see Henry Wynn to Palmerston, 10 May 1834, TNA, FO84/158, ff.265-266. In some cases, ‘civilised’ countries in both Europe and South America feared dishonour or reprisals if they could not meet their treaty obligations, and actually requested to be relieved of this duty. This was the case in Naples and Sicily, see Prince Cassaro to William Temple, 24 March 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.274-276, enclosed in William Temple to Palmerston, 26 March 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.269-270. This was also the case in Mexico, see Committee Report of the Chamber of Deputies, 31 August 1837, TNA, FO84/225, ff.34-43, enclosed in Lord Ashbarnham to Palmerston, 3 October 1837, TNA, FO84/225, ff.21-23.

<sup>20</sup> Palmerston to Augustus Foster, 24 April 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.126-127, and enclosed treaty, ff.128-137.

<sup>21</sup> All of the European nations which acceded to the Anglo-French Conventions were granted the right to arbitrate vessels in their own national law courts. However, Palmerston often inserted a clause into the accession treaties which insisted that *bona fide* slave vessels would be tried in the Mixed Commission Court closest to where the vessel was captured, and invariably in a British colony. See, for example, Palmerston’s negotiations with the Hanse Towns where this was the case, Palmerston to Canning, 29 November 1836, TNA, FO84/207, ff.175-179. See also Palmerston’s negotiations with Sardinia where this was also the case, Palmerston to Fox, 24 October 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.146-153, and declaration, ff.154-159; Palmerston to Fox, 10 November 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.168-169, and additional article, ff.170-174.

<sup>22</sup> In some cases, ‘civilised’ countries elected not to submit an arbiter for the Mixed Commission Court in Sierra Leone due to financial concerns, meaning that only a British judge presided. See, for example, Palmerston’s negotiations with Argentina over this issue, in John Mandeville to William Fox-Strangways, 4 May 1838, TNA, FO84/259, ff.64-66; Palmerston to John Mandeville, 24 November 1838, TNA, FO84/259, ff.21-23, and enclosed draft treaty, ff.24-45. It was eventually decided that Britain could unilaterally judge and arbitrate cases that came before the Mixed Anglo-Argentine Commission Court, see John Mandeville to Palmerston, 29 May 1839, TNA, FO84/294, ff.115-120. See also Palmerston’s negotiations with Uruguay over this same issue, Palmerston to John Mandeville, February 22, 1838, TNA, FO84/259, ff.3-5. Once again, it was decided that Britain could unilaterally judge and arbitrate cases that came before the Mixed Anglo-Uruguayan Commission Court, see John Mandeville to Palmerston, 13 July 1839, TNA, FO84/294, ff.147-149. King argues, moreover, that ‘by mutual agreement with Britain most of the republics waived their right to establish mixed courts in their own territory.’ See King, ‘The Latin American Republics and the Suppression of the Slave Trade’, p.411.

sovereign rights,<sup>23</sup> yet Palmerston was convinced that only British judges could guarantee slave traders were properly condemned and got his way in every other negotiation.<sup>24</sup>

How anti-slavery treaties were written up, translated and signed was also different for 'civilised' countries, for in the main they were not honoured with the historic tradition known as 'the alternation of precedence.'<sup>25</sup> Indeed, it was 'established usage' in the nineteenth century that when treaties were to be signed original copies were drawn up for every contracting member, with each treaty containing multiple translations to reflect the languages of all the nations involved. Each treaty would be signed by all the parties, with signatures placed underneath one's own language. Vitally, the order in which the translations and signatures appeared in each treaty was highly significant, for they denoted the importance of one's country in relation to the other signatories. As such, there were established rules to determine the exact order of merit. In these rules, the privileged status of Britain and other 'advanced' powers was self-evident. For example, when the Hanse Towns acceded to the Anglo-French Conventions, five copies of the accession treaty were drawn up – one for Britain, France, Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck. It was required that precedence be given to the English language and signature in the British version and to the French language and signature in their copy. But, since the Hanse Towns were not considered to be 'equal' to Britain or France, those powers did not concede to them 'the alteration of precedence.' Thus, the Germanic language and signature of the Hanse Towns could not take precedence on any of their own treaties. Rather, because of their superior status, Britain and France would take precedence over Bremen, Hamburg and Lübeck, with the order of Britain and France decided by alphabetical order.

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<sup>23</sup> Mexico objected to Mixed Commissions because it asserted that only the Mexican Supreme Court of Justice could judge offences committed on the high seas by Mexican subjects. See Committee Report of the Chamber of Deputies, 31 August 1837, TNA, FO84/225, ff.34-43, enclosed in Lord Ashbarnham to Palmerston, 3 October 1837, TNA, FO84/225, ff.21-23. Venezuela objected to Mixed Commissions for the same reason, see José Gallegos to Sir R.K. Porter, 4 February 1836, TNA, FO84/206, ff.308-310, enclosed in Sir R.K. Porter to Palmerston, 19 February 1836, TNA, FO84/206, ff.301-303. For Palmerston's concession to Mexico, see Palmerston to Richard Pakenham, 10 June 1840, TNA, FO84/330, ff.207-212. For Palmerston's concession to Venezuela, see Palmerston to Sir R.K. Porter, 15 December 1836, TNA, FO84/206, ff.294-297. For more on New Granada's objections and Palmerston's concession on this point, see King, 'The Latin American Republics and the Suppression of the Slave Trade', pp.410, 404-406.

<sup>24</sup> King, 'The Latin American Republics and the Suppression of the Slave Trade', pp.410-411.

<sup>25</sup> Palmerston explained this tradition in his correspondence with Britain's envoy to the Hanse Towns, see Palmerston to Canning, 10 April 1837, TNA, FO84/224, ff.125-130.

Such was the importance attached to this historic tradition that if the form of a treaty was not technically correct it was common for powerful nations to refuse signing them until the mistake was rectified. For example, the anti-slavery treaty arranged with the Hanse Towns was originally drawn up incorrectly, with the English language and signature taking precedence in four out of the five treaties (whereas it should only have taken precedence in the British treaty).<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the French ambassador refused to sign any of them until they were modified.<sup>27</sup> It was not just the Hanse Towns, crucially, that were denied ‘the privilege of the “alternate,”’ but any nation not considered to be ‘of the first order.’<sup>28</sup> Thus, although exceptions could be made (the Grand Duke of Tuscany, for example, was awarded this privilege in his anti-slavery treaty with Britain following Queen Victoria’s accession to the throne in 1837, in what was intended to be a ‘very flattering’ gesture)<sup>29</sup> it was protocol for Britain ‘to demur as to conceding alteration’ unless Britain was anxious to manifest its ‘high respect’ for a Government’s ‘character’ or to acknowledge their ‘talents and virtues.’<sup>30</sup>

Significantly then, it would perhaps be a little simplistic to characterise Palmerston’s treaty-making with ‘civilised’ and ‘advanced’ countries as ‘the same’ or ‘identical.’<sup>31</sup> For upon closer inspection, they did not receive equal levels of respect nor diplomatic courtesies when contracting treaties. Huzzey was undoubtedly right, however, that Palmerston’s treatment of ‘barbarous’ nations ‘stood in stark contrast.’<sup>32</sup> By cross-examining the standardised treaty drafted by the Foreign Office in 1839, for example,<sup>33</sup> with the agreement eventually sent out to West Africa with Britain’s naval officers in

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<sup>26</sup> It is important to note that France came before Great Britain. Thus, in the British copy, Britain should have come first, followed by France and then the Hanse Towns. In the French copy, France should have come first, followed by Britain and then the Hanse Towns. In the copies to be retained by the Hanse Towns, France should have come first, followed by Britain and then the Hanse Towns.

<sup>27</sup> Canning to Palmerston, 28 March 1837, TNA, FO84/224, ff.148-149. When Britain’s representative in Sardinia mistakenly signed an accession treaty written only in French, Palmerston immediately sent a formal note protesting that this should not set a precedent. He told Britain’s chargé d’affaires to get a declaration acknowledging this signed in three languages – English, French and Italian. See Palmerston to Fox, 24 October 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.164-167.

<sup>28</sup> Ralph Abercrombie to Palmerston, 20 June 1837, TNA, FO84/224, ff.235-237.

<sup>29</sup> Palmerston to Ralph Abercrombie, 18 July 1837, TNA, FO84/224, ff.213-215; Ralph Abercrombie to Palmerston, 12 August 1837, TNA, FO84/224, ff.245-246.

<sup>30</sup> Palmerston to Ralph Abercrombie, 18 July 1837, TNA, FO84/224, ff.213-215.

<sup>31</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.52; Keene, ‘A Case Study of the Construction of International Hierarchy’, p.322.

<sup>32</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.52.

<sup>33</sup> James Bandinel, ‘Expedition and Mission to Africa, Draft of Treaty’, TNA, FO84/336, ff.71-75.

1841,<sup>34</sup> it is clear that 'barbarous' nations were to receive none of the diplomatic courtesies routinely upheld with 'advanced' states, nor the basic principles of mutuality contained in treaties with 'civilised' ones.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, Palmerston arguably oversaw a deliberate effort to remove all semblance of 'sovereign equality' from the text of that agreement.

To begin with, the original treaty drawn up in February 1839 by James Bandinel, Superintendent of the Slave trade Department, was not dissimilar from what might have been proposed to 'advanced' (let alone 'civilised') nations. For example, the treaty gave African states a direct role in the process of suppression; requiring them to deploy ships in their territories to stop-and-search suspected slavers and to use their 'utmost power and influence' to encourage nearby African states to do the same.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, when it came to the arbitration process, the treaty granted African states comparatively generous privileges. Instead of establishing Mixed Commission Courts, for instance, slave traders detained under the flag of an African state were to be delivered for adjudication 'to the Chief,' or any law court appointed by him for that purpose.<sup>37</sup> If they wanted, therefore, African rulers could decide where arbitration would occur and exercise their absolute authority to judge cases themselves.

Despite Bandinel's treaty receiving the approval of the Queen's Advocate, however, Palmerston dictated that it should be modified dramatically after consultation with Lord John Russell, the Colonial Secretary, in the winter of 1839.<sup>38</sup> In particular, Palmerston challenged Bandinel to strip it 'of all diplomatic language and expressions,' and to reduce it 'to a very few pithy articles couched in terms so peremptory and intelligible as to defy misconstruction.' For it was his opinion, he explained,

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<sup>34</sup> James Bandinel, 'Draft of Agreement Proposed to be entered into with African Chiefs', TNA, FO84/337, ff.368-369.

<sup>35</sup> For an excellent analysis of these two compacts, see Keene, 'A Case Study of the Construction of International Hierarchy', pp.327-329.

<sup>36</sup> Article 5, Article 3, in James Bandinel, 'Expedition and Mission to Africa, Draft of Treaty', TNA, FO84/336, ff.71-75.

<sup>37</sup> Article 6, in *Ibid.* It also allowed suspected slavers covered under an African flag to be delivered up to 'the nearest British possession' for adjudication.

<sup>38</sup> Sir James Stephen to James Bandinel, 26 December 1839, TNA, FO84/300, ff.96-98.

That the Treaty as a model for general purposes might conveniently be reduced into the form of a simple agreement to be entered into by the contracting parties, instead of a regular convention between power & power.<sup>39</sup>

Although the reason Palmerston gave for this change was one of utility, since he believed a formal treaty 'might not be well understood by the barbarous and semi-barbarous tribes with whom the expedition [would] have to negotiate,' a more likely explanation was that Palmerston wanted to avert any embarrassment caused by the notion that Britain was in any sense equal to 'barbarous and 'semi-barbarous tribes.'<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the ramifications of this decision were enormous, for as he stated, Palmerston intended to transform not just the language of the document to be presented to African states but the very nature of that document, as well as how those states were understood and defined in relation to the 'civilised' world. Vitaly, instead of concluding 'a regular convention,' which assumed a legally binding compact underpinned by historic practice, and instead of this formal transaction being made between two equal parties, 'between power & power,' Palmerston wanted them to sign a 'simple agreement' of dubious legality which demonstrated unambiguously their unequal relationship. Moreover, since 'treaties' were the principal medium through which international law was defined, worked out, and understood in the Victorian era,<sup>41</sup> by denying them a 'regular convention' Palmerston was also compelling African nations to accept that their 'barbarousness' disqualified them from taking up their place in the 'family of civilised nations,' and therefore to forfeit their ancient rights and protections under international law.<sup>42</sup>

Whether or not Bandinel was aware of the gravity of his actions, this challenge was dutifully accepted by the Superintendent of the Slave trade Department, who slimmed down the second draft to include only the conditions that appeared 'likely to be needed,' and constructed them in a format he felt was 'as natural' as possible, using 'as

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Keene, 'A Case Study of the Construction of International Hierarchy', pp.315, 317.

<sup>42</sup> This decision reflected a more general intellectual shift in this era, with Victorians increasingly viewing international law as a compact between 'civilised' nations rather than one based on universal 'natural law.' See Jennifer Pitts, 'Boundaries of Victorian International Law', in *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth Century Political Thought*, ed. by Duncan Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 67-88.

simple words' as he could find so they could be literally translated into 'a barbarous language.'<sup>43</sup> The result, which Palmerston found agreeable but imperfect,<sup>44</sup> was significant in that it did not just simplify the treaty (defining 'articles' as 'terms' and 'stipulations' as 'conditions') but removed nearly all elements of reciprocity.<sup>45</sup> For example, while Britain was to lose none of the powers granted to it in the first draft, African rulers were no longer authorised to engage in processes of suppression or arbitration, or to assist in the expansion of anti-slavery principles. Only British vessels, it was decreed, would be entitled to enforce the agreement and only British law courts permitted to adjudicate suspected vessels.<sup>46</sup> Quite the opposite of the first draft, then, any notion of Britain being sovereign equals with African states was removed and West Africa's perceived inferiority consecrated in law.

Once again, however, Palmerston intervened in December 1840 after talking to Russell about the second draft of Bandinel's treaty. Directing Bandinel to make one more vital change, Russell informed the Foreign Office that 'Lord Palmerston wished the word Treaty not to be used, as it implied a negotiation under the Foreign Office.'<sup>47</sup> In addition, a separate Colonial Office minute explained that Palmerston 'desired that the compacts to be made with the African chiefs should be described as "arrangements" or "agreements," or by some other word which would exclude them from the class of Diplomatic Conventions.'<sup>48</sup> Once more then, the official motive that Palmerston gave was one of utility; to ensure the Foreign Office retained departmental control over 'treaty'-making in the Foreign Office. However, this was evidently not the only reason. James Stephen, for instance, stated in 1841 that this decision was not simply 'verbal or trivial, nor 'to reserve to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs his own exclusive power of negotiating Treaties,' but 'to mark the distinction between the agreements with barbarous Chiefs and the international compacts of civilised states.'<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> James Bandinel to Sir James Stephen, 10 April 1840, TNA, FO84/336, ff.20-26; James Bandinel, Minute on Draft of Agreement with African Chiefs, 14 April 1840, TNA, FO84/336, ff.27-28.

<sup>44</sup> Palmerston, Minute on James Bandinel's letter to Sir James Stephen, 10 April 1840, TNA, FO84/336, ff.20-26. See also Palmerston, Minute on Draft of Agreement proposed to be entered into with African Chiefs, TNA, FO84/337, ff.49-50.

<sup>45</sup> James Bandinel, Draft of Agreement proposed to be entered into with African Chiefs, 14 April 1840, TNA, FO84/336, ff.31-32.

<sup>46</sup> Term 3, in *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Lord John Russell to James Bandinel, 13 December 1840, TNA, FO84/337, ff.355-356.

<sup>48</sup> Keene, 'A Case Study of the Construction of International Hierarchy', p.327.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*



Thus, after marking every expression which seemed 'to imply, in any way' a formal compact between 'civilised' nations,<sup>50</sup> Bandinel restructured the treaty again; purging it of all diplomatic language. The treaty, for instance, was renamed an 'agreement,' with the 'terms' condensed to fit on to a single page.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, Bandinel then did the same thing to the 'Instructions' that were to be sent out with Britain's naval officers. The word 'negotiate' was omitted completely, for instance, as was any mention of the negotiators being 'plenipotentiaries' and the African state being a 'contracting party.' Instead, Britain's 'commissioners' were to 'confer' with the 'native Chiefs.' Furthermore, Britain's representatives were informed explicitly that it was their task to conclude an 'agreement,' not a 'treaty,' and that this did not require the Government's 'ratification,' only their 'sanction.'<sup>52</sup> Believing they would do 'very well,' Palmerston swiftly endorsed these alternations.<sup>53</sup>

## II) Official forms of pressure

In addition to his differing approaches to treaty-making, it is evident that the methods and techniques Palmerston used to persuade foreign countries to accept and/or comply with his terms was diverse; varying considerably depending on whether Palmerston perceived countries to be 'advanced,' 'civilised' or 'barbarous.' To begin with, Palmerston's use of coercion in official government channels was noticeably different with each category of nation. Palmerston's formal representations to 'advanced' powers, for example, were perhaps unsurprisingly couched in civil and amicable language. However, they were not necessarily 'timid and pliant,' nor 'toothless, even hapless,' as Huzzey and Mason have argued.<sup>54</sup> Crucially, to apply pressure on powerful nations, Palmerston employed an array of rhetorical measures that were not outwardly aggressive but forceful nonetheless. For instance, Palmerston's representations to the Great Powers of Europe and America often characterised the slave trade as a stain that would

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<sup>50</sup> James Bandinel, Memorandum on the Draft of Agreement proposed to be entered into with African Chiefs, 19 December 1840, TNA, FO84/337, ff.358-359.

<sup>51</sup> James Bandinel, Draft of Agreement proposed to be entered into with African Chiefs, FO84/337, TNA, ff.368-369.

<sup>52</sup> James Bandinel, 'Draft Instructions for the Commissioners', TNA, FO84/337, ff.360-367.

<sup>53</sup> Palmerston, Minute on Bandinel's Memorandum on the Draft of Agreement proposed to be entered into with African Chiefs, 19 December 1840, TNA, FO84/337, f.359.

<sup>54</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.56; Mason, 'Keeping up Appearances', p.826.

permanently besmirch the national honour of those nations, and established Britain's view that 'the only measure' which could 'put an end to this disgraceful traffic' was the mutual right-of-search.<sup>55</sup> In many of his dispatches, therefore, Palmerston enclosed lengthy reports of slave-trading underneath the flag of the country he was negotiating with and emphasised that nation's urgent need to sign a right-of-search agreement with Britain.<sup>56</sup> In what might be deemed a representative example, Palmerston wrote to Russia in June 1834 that the protection of their flag was imperative to maintain their 'honour as a Great Power.' Presently, he lamented, it was being 'prostituted to bad purposes, in a way that cannot be conducive to her honour.' Invoking the memory of Emperor Alexander, Palmerston reminded Count Nesselrode of how the 'principles of humanity' had once 'strongly influenced the policy of the Imperial Cabinet on this subject.'<sup>57</sup> In September, moreover, Palmerston stated that unless Russia conceded the right-of-search swiftly then 'pirates and outlaw adventurers of other countries' would cast 'dishonour upon the Russian name, which it does not deserve.'<sup>58</sup>

To try and elicit emotional responses of shame or embarrassment, moreover, Palmerston commonly identified and exploited specific areas of sensitivity or insecurity for each 'advanced' country. For example, playing on the fact the July Monarchy was under pressure to prove its liberal credentials at the beginning of the 1830s, Palmerston's dispatches to Paris commonly framed anti-slavery as an issue upon which French

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<sup>55</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 14 January 1831, PP, GC/GR/1327A. See also Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 4 February 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.9-12. An agreement would be 'so honourable' to both nations, Palmerston wrote in his official dispatch, and 'so advantageous to the cause of humanity.'

<sup>56</sup> See, for examples, the reports of the French slave trade which Palmerston sent to France in 1831, enclosed in Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 14 January, 4 February, 4 February, 9 April, 19 April 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.1-2, 3-4, 9-12, 13-18, 19-21. See also the reports of the Russian-flagged slave trade which Palmerston sent to Russia between 1835 and 1839, enclosed in Palmerston to John Bligh, 25 November 1835, TNA, FO84/181, ff.146-147; Palmerston to John Milbanke, 13 July 1838, TNA, FO84/256, ff.124-125; Palmerston to Marquess of Clanricarde, 16 May, 11 June 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.239-240, 241-242. See also the report of the Austrian-flagged slave trade which Palmerston sent to Austria in 1839, in Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, 11 June 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.96-97. Although no reports were sent to Prussia showing that their flag had been abused by slave traders, Palmerston warned them of this on multiple occasions. See, for example, Palmerston to Lord Minto, 8 September 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.27-32. For reports of the U.S. flag being abused by slave traders, see pp.116-118.

<sup>57</sup> Palmerston to John Bligh, 6 June 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.72-75.

<sup>58</sup> Palmerston to John Bligh, 30 September 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.78-90. For an example of Palmerston's use of this technique with Prussia, see Palmerston to Lord Minto, 8 September 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.27-32. By agreeing to the right-of-search, the Prussian Government would show 'the world an additional and honourable proof of those enlightened and humane sentiments by which His Prussian Majesty is well known to be animated.' For an example of Palmerston's use of this technique with France, see Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 9 April 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.13-18. For an example of Palmerston's use of this technique with the U.S., see Palmerston to Sir Charles Vaughan, 7 July 1834, TNA, FO84/157, ff.98-103.

liberalism would be judged. In February 1831, for instance, Palmerston expressed his confidence that an Anglo-French accord would give 'proof' of France's 'liberal feelings and enlightened views,'<sup>59</sup> and 'demonstrate to the world' their 'good faith.'<sup>60</sup> Since the new regime had come into existence 'from a sense of the value of civil and political liberty,' he wrote, Britain could expect 'the hearty co-operation of England and France' to deal with that flagrantly illiberal crime.<sup>61</sup> After his first proposal was rejected in April 1831, furthermore, Palmerston expressed 'great regret' in his second representation, for it was widely believed that anti-slavery was 'repugnant to the principles of freedom upon which the existing state of society in France is founded' and to 'the instinctive feelings of a humane and enlightened people.'<sup>62</sup> By turning anti-slavery into an issue that would either confirm France's liberal proclamations or betray their insincerity, therefore, Palmerston tried to provoke feelings of embarrassment in the French Government without needing to resort to vigorous language.<sup>63</sup>

Palmerston did something similar to the Holy Alliance in March 1840, after the Eastern powers announced their collective decision to sign a 'limited' treaty with Britain and France that would expire after ten years. 'It would be surprising,' he wrote in a joint address to Russia, Prussia and Austria, if the Holy Alliance, 'possessing all the means to secure justice for their subjects and to attain redress for them when wrong had been committed, should be more fearful of vexation & abuse... than many of the smaller powers.' 'Surely,' he added, 'if Denmark, Sardinia, Naples, Tuscany and the Hanse Towns have not been deterred' from making a permanent treaty, it was 'impossible that three such powers as Austria, Prussia & Russia' could be 'more timid' and 'held back by fears which smaller states have not entertained?'<sup>64</sup> By contrasting the 'timid' position of the Holy Alliance to the courageous one of smaller European states, therefore, Palmerston

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<sup>59</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 4 February 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.9-12.

<sup>60</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 9 April 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.13-18.

<sup>61</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 4 February 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.9-12. See also Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 14 January 1831, PP, GC/GR/1327A. 'It is to be hoped,' Palmerston wrote privately to Granville, 'that the present Government of France would find such an object so conjoined with their sentiment and so conformable with the principle from which their every existence has sprung that they may be disposed to waive the objections formerly made to this reciprocal right of search.'

<sup>62</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 19 April 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.19-21.

<sup>63</sup> After the Anglo-French Convention was signed and ratified in December 1831, Palmerston congratulated the French Government by implying that they had passed his test of their liberal credentials. France had 'furnished to the world a signal proof' of the liberal nature of the Orléanist regime. See Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 20 December 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.49-51.

<sup>64</sup> Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, Lord George Russell, Marquess of Clanricarde, 4 March 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.202-213, 263-272, 313-322.

turned anti-slavery into something that would either confirm the Eastern powers' status and reputation or else undermine it by showing up their cowardice and fear of Britain's superior naval power. Moreover, Palmerston manipulated Austria in another careful yet provocative way during the 1830s by tapping into that nation's strong Catholic identity. In his official despatches, Palmerston occasionally presented abolition to Prince Metternich as a religious duty, reminding him that abolition could only be achieved by the united efforts of 'the maritime powers of Christendom.'<sup>65</sup> When Metternich expressed doubts over the five-power Treaty in October 1839,<sup>66</sup> for instance, Palmerston persuaded him to continue negotiations by stressing the 'very great...moral effect' which would be produced throughout the Christian world by Austria establishing itself as an anti-slavery nation, and becoming a member of his 'Christian League.'<sup>67</sup>

Palmerston also tried to evoke feelings of shame and embarrassment from the U.S., moreover, this time by playing on that country's deep-rooted patriotism and national pride.<sup>68</sup> During the 1830s, for example, Palmerston's rhetoric increasingly emphasised the damaging effect the slave trade was having on the reputation of the American flag; a treasured symbol of the nation. In 1836, Palmerston informed Washington of his hope that the U.S. would take 'prompt and effectual measures' to prevent 'the Flag of the Union' from being 'used' for the protection of the nefarious slave trade.<sup>69</sup> Over time, however, the American flag went from being 'used' to being under 'reproach,'<sup>70</sup> and then to being 'abused'<sup>71</sup> by pirates of other nations. In 1839, following years of diplomatic idleness, Palmerston urged Washington to 'rescue the flag of the nation' from 'the disgrace which it now lies under,'<sup>72</sup> whilst in 1841 Palmerston wrote that unless the U.S. agreed to some form of stop and search procedure then 'every slave-trading pirate' would sail under 'a piece of bunting' with the U.S. emblem upon it.<sup>73</sup> So insulting was Palmerston's language on that occasion, it was censored by the *Morning*

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<sup>65</sup> Palmerston to John Milbanke, 2 April 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.93-95.

<sup>66</sup> Prince Metternich to Prince Esterházy, 21 October 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.169-173, enclosed in Baron Hummelauer to Palmerston, 12 November 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.167-168.

<sup>67</sup> Palmerston to Baron Hummelauer, 11 December 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.145-160.

<sup>68</sup> For more on the deep-rooted patriotism and national pride of the U.S., see Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, p.10.

<sup>69</sup> Palmerston to Andrew Stevenson, 17 December 1836, TNA, FO84/206, ff.339-40.

<sup>70</sup> Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 14 August 1837, TNA, FO84/225, ff.312-315.

<sup>71</sup> Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 31 May 1838, TNA, FO84/259, ff.214-215.

<sup>72</sup> Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 5 February 1839, TNA, FO84/296, ff.1-2; Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 25 June 1839, TNA, FO84/296, ff.23-24.

<sup>73</sup> Palmerston to Andrew Stevenson, 27 August 1841, TNA, FO84/376, ff.203-212.

*Post* upon the release of the Parliamentary Papers. ‘This is not the language of a statesman,’ it cried, ‘it is not even the *étourderie* of a polite and accomplished gentleman exhilarated by an excess of champagne. It is the mere coarseness of a coal-porter much bemused in beer.’<sup>74</sup>

Although Palmerston’s carefully formed discourse evidently frustrated the Great Powers of Europe and the U.S. during this period, however, it was not necessarily an effective instrument of coercion. In 1831, for instance, Horace Sébastiani, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, swiftly rejected Palmerston’s proposal and made sure to state that France had already proven its liberal credentials via the passage of a new French domestic law against the slave trade in February. The French Government ‘entirely deserved the approbation of the cabinet in London,’ he wrote, for it had already rendered ‘full justice to the generous intentions which we entertain.’<sup>75</sup> Similarly, despite Palmerston’s efforts to shame Washington being received by the Federal Government, with Henry Wheaton, a U.S. lawyer and diplomat, feeling it necessary to ‘take up his pen in order to vindicate the character of his country’ from the ‘foul stigma’ that Palmerston was attaching to it,<sup>76</sup> this did not prevent Washington from repeatedly rejecting his proposals and angrily denouncing his description of their flag as ‘bunting.’<sup>77</sup> Conversely, Palmerston’s provocative rhetoric arguably paid dividends with Prussia and Russia, as both countries immediately signalled their desire to come to an arrangement with him in 1834 after receiving his official dispatches; the former stressing its desire to deal with the

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<sup>74</sup> *Morning Post*, 11 January 1842.

<sup>75</sup> Horace Sébastiani to Viscount Granville, 9 April 1831, TNA,, FO84/123, ff.103-106, enclosed in Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 11 April 1831, TNA,, FO84/123, f.101. See also Horace Sébastiani to Viscount Granville, 5 May 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.121-123, enclosed in Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 9 May 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.119-120. The French Government had already ‘proved *bona fide* how much it abhors the criminal slave trade and how desirous it is to contribute towards putting a period to it by every means afforded by the French laws,’ Sébastiani wrote.

<sup>76</sup> Henry Wheaton, *Enquiry into the validity of the British claim to a right of visitation and search of American vessels suspected to be engaged in the African slave trade* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1842), p.5.

<sup>77</sup> For Washington’s repeated refusals to accept an anti-slavery treaty with Britain, see Sir Charles Vaughan to Palmerston, 28 March 1834, TNA, FO84/157, ff.106-108; Sir Charles Vaughan to Palmerston, 14 October 1834, TNA, FO84/157, ff.131-133. Palmerston’s letter describing the U.S. flag as a ‘piece of bunting’ apparently produced ‘great excitement’ in the U.S. It was ‘described as being insulting to the American flag, and calculated to create ill feelings on the part of the American nation.’ Palmerston denied this was the case. ‘He had not called the American flag a piece of bunting,’ he said, but was merely ‘describing that which was not the American flag, but the ensign hoisted by those who had no right to use it.’ And, in any case, ‘he altogether repudiated the notion that the use of it could be a cause of irritation.’ See Palmerston, ‘Treaty of Washington’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxviii, 1225-1239 (2 May 1843), c.1231.

'pirates' who had 'assumed the Prussian colours,'<sup>78</sup> and the latter its determination to honour the 'glorious memory' of Emperor Alexander.<sup>79</sup> Even with these countries, however, Palmerston's attempts to incite feelings of insecurity or shame did not work out on every occasion. Russia in particular ignored Palmerston's jibe about their timidity in March 1840, for instance, and continued to demand concessions from him before accepting a permanent treaty.<sup>80</sup>

It was not only through rhetoric that Palmerston exerted diplomatic pressure on 'advanced' countries, however, but through the sheer volume of dispatches he sent to try and impel these nations to join Britain's anti-slavery mission. During the 1830s, for example, Palmerston instructed Granville to take 'every opportunity' to press upon France the need for a right-of-search treaty, leading Granville to claim that he 'scarcely ever' saw Sébastiani without doing so.<sup>81</sup> After the U.S. rejected the opportunity to accede to the Anglo-French Conventions in 1833, moreover, Palmerston went one step further with that country; transmitting an unprecedented barrage of dispatches to Washington protesting the American-flagged slave trade, many of which contained reports from the Admiralty about how that flag was now the chief haunt of slave traders. Initially, for instance, Palmerston sent around one dispatch a year to Washington.<sup>82</sup> As the American flag became more prominently abused, however, the rate of his dispatches increased phenomenally. In 1837 and 1838, Palmerston sent complaints almost every other month.<sup>83</sup> By 1839, they became once a month, sometimes even twice daily, and frequently contained a proposal for a right-of-search agreement.<sup>84</sup> Palmerston's

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<sup>78</sup> Lord Minto to Palmerston, 24 September 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.57-59.

<sup>79</sup> Count Nesselrode to John Bligh, 27 August 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.99-109, enclosed in John Bligh to Palmerston, 10 September 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.97-98.

<sup>80</sup> Count Nesselrode to Marquess of Clanricarde, 18 May 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.347-349, enclosed in Marquess of Clanricarde to Palmerston, 23 May 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.345-346.

<sup>81</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 15 October 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.32-34; Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 4 November, FO84/123, ff.144-147. See also Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 31 October 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.140-142. Granville claimed to have 'sought opportunities of pressing upon different members of the Kings council... the expediency of adopting some effectual measures' to suppress the slave trade.

<sup>82</sup> Palmerston only sent one such dispatch in 1836, see Palmerston to Andrew Stevenson, 17 December 1836, TNA, FO84/206, ff.339-340.

<sup>83</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 20 January, 21 January, 28 February, 14 August, 9 December 1837, TNA, FO84/225, ff.304-305, 306-310, 311-312, 312-315, 316-317. See also Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 20 January, 13 February, 31 May, 12 October, 9 November 1838, TNA, FO84/259, ff.206-207, 208-209, 214-215, 221-222, 223-225.

<sup>84</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 5 February, 23 February, 1 April, 16 May, 11 June, 11 June, 25 June, 3 August, 15 August, 15 August, 15 August, 6 September, 11 December, 31 December 1839, TNA, FO84/296, ff.1-2, 5-6, 9-10, 13-15, 19-20, 21-22, 23-24, 33-35, 37-38, 39-42, 43-46, 56-58, 63, 71-72.

dispatches culminated in a fifty-page report being given to the U.S. Government in October 1839, which compiled all the evidence against the American slave trade from the previous three years.<sup>85</sup> Thereafter, Palmerston periodically attempted such diplomatic bombardments to try and force through a right-of-search treaty. Between 1856 and 1860, for instance, Palmerston's Government again sent an extraordinary array of dispatches on this topic, many of which contained demands for a right-of-search treaty,<sup>86</sup> and at the end of 1857 filed another comprehensive report on this issue to the Federal Government.<sup>87</sup> This tactic was once again deeply frustrating for the U.S., but did not alter their objections to an Anglo-American right-of-search treaty. In July 1859, for example, Lewis Cass, the Secretary of State, bemoaned Britain's constant protestations over the American-flagged slave trade, declaring that 'of all the subjects... he had to treat' with this question was 'the most annoying.'<sup>88</sup> By March 1860, his patience wore thinner, reproaching the Royal Navy for overstepping their authority on the African coast in a sixty-page report.<sup>89</sup> And, by the end of the year, Cass remonstrated bitterly at Britain's dispatches, which he felt were

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<sup>85</sup> Sir Henry Fox to John Forsyth, 29 October 1839, TNA, FO84/296, ff.232-282, and schedule, ff.284-287, enclosed in Sir Henry Fox to Palmerston, 29 October 1839, FO84/296, ff.229-231. Palmerston's diplomatic bombardment continued into 1840, see Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 13 January, 22 February, 24 March, 6 June, 12 June, 29 June, 9 July, 21 July, 31 July, 7 August, 8 August, 8 August, 10 August, 22 August, 29 September, 30 September, 3 December 1840, TNA, FO84/332, ff.1, 5-7, 10-11, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24, 25-27, 29-30, 31-32, 33-34, 35-37, 43-45, 47-48, 49-50, 51-52. See also Palmerston to Andrew Stevenson, 24 February, 21 July, 31 July, 10 September 1840, TNA, FO84/332, ff.102-103, 117-118, 119-120, 125-126.

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Lord Clarendon to Sir John Crampton, 8 June, 22 June, 17 August, 26 October 1855, TNA, FO84/973, ff.5, 7-8, 9, 11; Lord Clarendon to Sir John Crampton, 25 January, 25 January, 13 February, 20 March, 25 March, 28 April, 2 May, 16 May 1856, TNA, FO84/999, ff.1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12, 15, 17-18; Lord Clarendon to Lord Napier, 19 February 6 May, 8 May, 17 July, 31 July, 13 August, 14 August, 17 August, 31 August, 10 September, 25 September, 25 September, 28 September, 28 September, 29 September, 5 October, 16 October, 16 October, 16 October, 16 October, 23 October, 29 October, 20 November, 27 November, 4 December, 11 December, 18 December, 18 December, 18 December 1857, TNA, FO84/1026, ff.4-6, 11-12, 13-14, 23-24, 25-27, 28-29, 30-31, 32-33, 36-37, 40-41, 42-43, 44-45, 50-52, 52-53, 54-55, 72-73, 109-110, 111-112, 113-114, 115-116, 117-118, 121-122, 142-143, 146-147, 148-150, 152-153, 158-159, 160-161, 162; Lord Clarendon to Lord Napier, 15 January, 20 January, 30 January, 12 February, 25 February 1858, TNA, FO84/1057, ff.10-11, 14-15, 20-21, 30-31, 38; Lord John Russell to Lord Lyons, 8 July, 15 July, 15 July, 15 July, 22 July, 29 July, 29 July, 26 August, 29 August, 9 September, 9 September, 9 September, 19 October, 19 October, 19 October, 4 November, 5 November, 16 November, 18 November, 18 November, 19 November, 19 November, 19 November, 2 December, 17 December, 23 December, 29 December 1859, TNA, FO84/1083, ff.82-84, 99, 101-102, 103, 105-106, 107, 111-115, 130, 132-133, 136-137, 138-139, 140-141, 142-143, 152, 154, 156-157, 158, 162, 164-166, 168-169, 170-171, 172-173, 174, 176-179, 184, 190-191, 192-193, 194-195; Lord John Russell to Lord Lyons, 4 January, 14 January, 31 January, 9 March, 16 March, 31 March, 7 April, 14 April, 21 April, 19 May, 9 June, 14 June, 30 June, 6 July, 17 August, 29 September, 19 October, 24 October, 17 November 1860, TNA, FO84/1110, ff.158-159, 160, 162-164, 175-176, 177, 179-181, 183, 187-188, 189-190, 205, 209, 211, 216, 218, 224, 248-249, 250, 253, 254-255.

<sup>87</sup> Lord Napier to Lewis Cass, 24 December 1857, TNA, FO84/1026, ff.288-303, enclosed in Lord Napier to Lord Clarendon, 25 December 1857, TNA, FO84/1026, ff.231-234.

<sup>88</sup> Lord Lyons to Lord John Russell, 25 July 1859, TNA, FO84/1084, ff.187-192.

<sup>89</sup> Lewis Cass to Dallas, 31 March 1860, TNA, FO84/1110, ff.289-319. See also Palmerston, Minute, 21 June 1860, TNA, FO84/1110, ff.279-280; Russell to Dallas, 23 July 1860, TNA, FO84/1110, ff.270-272. At Palmerston's behest, Russell replied by dismissing this complaint in two pages.

'pressed too often' upon Washington. Calling Russell's 'special attention' to the matter, he fumed that 'these diplomatic suggestions are as unnecessary as they are unacceptable,' and demanded that 'similar appeals will not again be repeated.' Britain was either 'ignorant' or 'indifferent' to U.S. sovereignty, he concluded, and was 'threatening the peace of the principal commercial powers.'<sup>90</sup>

Palmerston employed a different kind of quantitative pressure against the Holy Alliance during the 1830s, as part of his attempts to negotiate the five-power treaty. Indeed, he restricted the amount of time they were given to consider his dispatches and hurried them to agreement as soon as possible. For example, after deciding to host a multilateral conference in December 1838 to discuss a treaty, Palmerston invited the ambassadors of Russia, Prussia, Austria and France to meet at the Foreign Office at one day's notice; ignoring the objections of Pozzo de Borgo, the Russian ambassador, that this was too soon.<sup>91</sup> At the conference the next day, Palmerston then rushed them to agree a joint protocol which condemned the slave trade as a 'criminal enterprise' conducted by 'pirates' and declared their intention to negotiate a convention.<sup>92</sup> Thereafter, Palmerston acted bullishly to keep anti-slavery on the international agenda. In April 1839, for instance, he told Britain's ambassadors to Vienna, St Petersburg and Berlin to convey the 'anxious desire' of the Government that 'an early & favourable answer' be given to the proposed negotiations.<sup>93</sup> Whilst in June and September, he sent a similar request directly to those Governments, 'urgently' demanding they issue instructions to their plenipotentiaries which would allow negotiations to proceed.<sup>94</sup> After Russia became the

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<sup>90</sup> Lewis Cass to Dallas, 27 October 1860, TNA, FO84/1110, ff.325-332. See also Lord John Russell to Lord Lyons, 15 December 1860, TNA, FO84/1110, ff.256-260. The British Government replied that it 'cannot consent to the condition of perpetual silence,' and would continue making representations 'whenever... they think it necessary.'

<sup>91</sup> For Palmerston's invitation, see Palmerston to the Representatives of France, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, 11 December 1838, in 'Correspondence with Foreign Powers, not Parties to Conventions giving Mutual Right of Search of Vessels suspected of Slave Trade, 1838-39 (Class D)', *Parliamentary Papers*, xlix, 39 (1839), p.1. Palmerston sent the invitation on 11 December 1838, with the proposed conference due to take place on 12 December 1838 at 2pm. Initially, the Russian ambassador declined the invitation. He claimed to be indisposed and could not attend, see Pozzo de Borgo to Palmerston, 12 December 1838, TNA, FO84/256, f.141. However, Palmerston sent an 'immediate' reply urging him to attend, see Palmerston, Memorandum, TNA, FO84/256, ff.136-138. Subsequently, Pozzo de Borgo changed his mind. Palmerston scribbled 'he came' on the original rejection letter, see Palmerston, Minute, 12 December 1838, TNA, FO84/256, f.141.

<sup>92</sup> Protocol of the Conference held at the Foreign Office in London on the 12 December 1838, PP, SLT/13.

<sup>93</sup> Palmerston to John Milbanke, Lord George Russell, Marquess of Clanricarde, 2 April 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.93-95, 178-179, 237-238.

<sup>94</sup> Palmerston to Prince Esterházy, Baron Werther, Pozzo de Borgo, 28 June, 13 September 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.120-121, 207-208, 278-279; 134-136, 209-212, 290-292.



first country to accept a treaty, moreover, authorising Nikolai Kisséleff to enter negotiations in late-September,<sup>95</sup> Palmerston immediately instructed Britain's diplomats in Berlin and Vienna to use their 'utmost endeavours' to acquire similar agreements.<sup>96</sup> And, after instructions finally came through from Austria and Prussia in February 1840,<sup>97</sup> Palmerston again rushed things forward by holding another multilateral conference within a week.<sup>98</sup> Desirous to forge an anti-slavery agreement, Palmerston therefore harried the Great Powers of Europe around the negotiating table during the 1830s, pressuring them into agreement in as short a timescale as possible.

Whenever Palmerston's rhetorical techniques or quantitative forms of pressure failed, however, and an 'advanced' power rejected his official representations, it is notable that Palmerston never intensified his language by deploying threats or ultimatums. On the contrary, to try and conclude an anti-slavery treaty Palmerston was often conciliating and open to compromise with 'advanced' powers. During his negotiations with France in the autumn of 1831, for example, Palmerston worked hard to overcome the anxieties of the French Government over the mutual right-of-search. Conceding permanent maritime powers to the Royal Navy could lead to the abuse of French vessels, Paris feared, and undermine France's sovereign rights in the high seas.<sup>99</sup> On multiple occasions then, Palmerston reassured Casimir Périer, the French Prime Minister, that he was willing to accept a 'partial and temporary' agreement rather than 'a general and permanent' one,<sup>100</sup> and even derived a way that France could retain authority over the right-of-search 'in their own hands' through a system of warrants.<sup>101</sup> For it was decided that both nations would issue 'warrants' to the cruisers of the opposite nation, empowering them to stop and search merchant vessels found navigating under the flag of either country in certain degrees of latitude and longitude. These warrants

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<sup>95</sup> Nikolai Kisséleff to Palmerston, 25 September 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.330-331.

<sup>96</sup> Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, Lord George Russell, 10 October 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.105-107, 186-187.

<sup>97</sup> Baron Werther, Baron Hummelauer to Palmerston, 18 February 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.305-306, 251-252.

<sup>98</sup> Palmerston invited the Great Powers to another conference at the Foreign Office four days after Austria and Prussia gave authority to their representatives to negotiate a treaty. This time, he gave two days' notice before the conference. See Palmerston to Baron Hummelauer, Baron Werther, Nikolai Kisséleff, 22 February 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.245-246, 298-299, 359.

<sup>99</sup> See, for example, Horace Sébastiani to Viscount Granville, 9 April 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.103-106, enclosed in Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 11 April 1831, TNA, FO84/123, f.101.

<sup>100</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 7 November 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.37-40. See also Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 19 April 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.19-21.

<sup>101</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 8 November 1831, PP, GC/GR/1366.

would only be valid for three years. They could be renewed at any time after expiring but, if France wanted, they could also be severed prematurely. This system, Palmerston argued, established the principle that neither country had 'any pretence of jurisdiction... over the flag of the other,' and ensured that the question was left 'at all times within the control of the two governments.'<sup>102</sup> It would be 'an act of French, and not of English authority [to exercise the right-of-search],' he told Granville in November 1831, 'although the constables who executed the warrant might be English.'<sup>103</sup> Satisfied by the limited and restricted nature of the treaty that Palmerston devised, Casimir P erier was therefore ready to sign the Anglo-French Convention later that month.<sup>104</sup>

Palmerston was just as concessionary during his negotiations with the Holy Alliance. In 1840, for example, Palmerston worked hard to persuade Austria and Russia to accept a permanent treaty after both nations suddenly became wary of granting Britain invasive maritime powers and demanded one limited to a set number of years. As he explained to them, his object had always been 'the entire... and perpetual extinction' of the slave trade, 'not for a limited time, but for ever.' As such, it made sense for the duration of the treaty to reflect this objective. Until the day when there was no longer a temptation to carry on the slave trade, he asserted, such as when slavery was abolished all across the globe, an unlimited right-of-search would be 'indispensable.'<sup>105</sup> When Palmerston's representation was unavailing, however, Palmerston was open-minded and willing to make concessions in order to get his treaty completed. After yet another multilateral conference in July 1840,<sup>106</sup> an agreement was finally struck whereby Russia accepted a permanent treaty in exchange for a reduction to the geographical scope of the search area.<sup>107</sup>

In contrast, Palmerston's official representations to 'civilised' countries were very different. Domineering, arrogant and dictatorial, Palmerston was less respectful to these

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<sup>102</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 7 November 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.37-40.

<sup>103</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 8 November 1831, PP, GC/GR/1366.

<sup>104</sup> Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 30 November 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.174-176.

<sup>105</sup> Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, Lord George Russell, Marquess of Clanricarde, 4 March 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.202-213, 263-272, 313-322.

<sup>106</sup> Palmerston again arranged this conference at one days' notice, see Palmerston to Baron Hummelauer, Bulow, Brunow, 25 July 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.247, 300, 364. The conference took place on 26 July 1840.

<sup>107</sup> For Russia's offer of a permanent treaty on the condition that the search area be narrowed, see Count Nesselrode to Marquess of Clanricarde, 18 May 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.347-349, enclosed in Marquess of Clanricarde to Palmerston, 23 May 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.345-346. For Palmerston's acceptance, see Palmerston to John Bloomfield, 4 August 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.329-334.

states and also willing to 'cajole, push and bully' them into making anti-slavery commitments.<sup>108</sup> To begin with, for example, Palmerston pressed hard for the exact form of treaty he desired in his negotiations with 'civilised' states, demanding all the stipulations he felt were necessary to ensure Britain's 'maritime police' was effectual.<sup>109</sup> If a 'civilised' state tried to exclude one of his major stipulations, for example, such as by demanding an alternative to the right-of-search,<sup>110</sup> a 'limited' treaty,<sup>111</sup> a relaxation of the equipment clause,<sup>112</sup> or the right for slavers to be tried in European law courts, Palmerston indubitably required that the most stringent conditions be included. In Sardinia, Palmerston even refused to ratify a signed treaty; instructing his envoy to renegotiate it because it wrongly stipulated that Sardinian-flagged slave traders could be tried in Genoa, which would have meant forcing rescued Africans to endure yet another long and deadly voyage in the hold of a slave ship.<sup>113</sup> If 'civilised' states tried to include new terms that were odious, moreover, Palmerston consistently blocked them.<sup>114</sup> Palmerston was willing to compromise on smaller points if this would enable a treaty to

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<sup>108</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.58.

<sup>109</sup> Palmerston frequently described Britain's anti-slavery squadrons as Britain's 'maritime police' or 'naval police.' See, for example, Palmerston, 'Treaty of Washington', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxviii, 1225-1239 (2 May 1843), c.1233. See also Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.8.

<sup>110</sup> See, for example, Palmerston's negotiations with Mexico. Mexico demanded an alternative to the right-of-search, but Palmerston pressed them to accept this was the only measure which could succeed. See Lord Ashbarnham to Palmerston, 6 March 1838, TNA, FO84/259, ff.158-163; Richard Pakenham to Palmerston, 3 January 3, 1840, TNA, FO84/330, ff.223-226; Palmerston to Richard Pakenham, 10 June 1840, TNA, FO84/330, ff.207-212.

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, Palmerston's negotiations with Portugal. Portugal demanded a limited agreement in November 1835, December 1838, and again in February 1840, but Palmerston strongly objected on every occasion. See Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 25 November 1835, TNA, FO84/178, ff.120-124; Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 19 January 1839, TNA, FO84/281, ff.6-19; Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 23 May 1840, TNA, FO84/321, ff.4-12. Palmerston justified his hard line to Howard de Walden in December 1838, see Palmerston to Howard de Walden, 24 December 1838, PP, GC/HO/829/1-3. For another example see Palmerston's negotiations with Mexico. Mexico also demanded a limited treaty in March 1840, but Palmerston rejected this demand. See Palmerston to Richard Pakenham, 10 June 1840, TNA, FO84/330, ff.207-212.

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, Palmerston's negotiations with the Hanse Towns. Palmerston dismissed as 'inadmissible' a stipulation inserted by the Hanse Towns into their treaty with Britain in 1836, which would have exempted their merchant ships from the equipment clause if their papers could prove that they were employed to carry 'free emigrants.' See Palmerston to Canning, 3 September 1836, TNA, FO84/207, ff.167-172. The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies also wanted a more relaxed equipment clause, but Palmerston would not allow this. See Palmerston to William Temple, 15 March, 12 May 1837, TNA, FO84/224, ff.275-280, 290-294.

<sup>113</sup> Palmerston to Fox, 24 October 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.146-153. Eventually, it was agreed that a separate article would be able to correct this mistake. See Palmerston to Fox, 10 November 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.168-169.

<sup>114</sup> See, for example, Palmerston's negotiations with Mexico. Mexico wanted to give every African liberated in Mexico a certificate of emancipation. Palmerston opposed this measure because he felt it was pointless and could be misinterpreted. See Palmerston to Lord Ashbarnham, 15 February 1838, TNA, FO84/259, ff.146-149.

be completed, such as over the geographical size of the search area, the issuing of a declaration of piracy, or the awarding of compensation to vessels incorrectly seized.<sup>115</sup>

For certain countries, he was even willing to grant important concessions, such as allowing them to retain full control over the arbitration of their own subjects.<sup>116</sup> However, if Palmerston suspected a 'civilised' country was insincere and merely looking for a way to evade or dilute their obligations, as he did with Portugal, he invariably held out for the strictest terms.<sup>117</sup>

If 'civilised' states continually rejected his overtures and tried to avoid negotiating an anti-slavery treaty, moreover, either by employing delaying tactics or simply ignoring his representations, Palmerston was indefatigable; prepared to press and harangue smaller countries relentlessly until they conceded to his demands. Negotiations for a revised Anglo-Spanish Treaty lasted five years, for example, with the Spanish Government finally giving way in June 1835 after ignoring Palmerston's dispatches on this topic since 1830.<sup>118</sup> Likewise, in South America Palmerston pressed Venezuela, Chile and Argentina for five years before they agreed to sign a treaty,<sup>119</sup> whilst he harried Mexico and

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<sup>115</sup> See, for example, Palmerston's negotiations with Venezuela. Palmerston consented to narrow the search area permitted under the right-of-search and to grant compensation to vessels seized unfairly. See Sir R.K. Porter to Palmerston, 5 April 1839, TNA, FO84/293, ff.72-74; Palmerston to Sir R.K. Porter, 10 July 1839, TNA, FO84/293, ff.7-10. See also Palmerston's negotiations with Mexico. Palmerston was prepared to narrow the search area permitted under the right-of-search with Mexico and to allow them not to declare the slave trade piracy, see Palmerston to Lord Ashbarnham, 15 February 1838, TNA, FO84/259, ff.146-149; Palmerston to Richard Pakenham, 10 June 1840, TNA, FO84/330, ff.207-212.

<sup>116</sup> See, for example, Palmerston's negotiations with Venezuela and Mexico. Wary of being treated like second-class powers, both countries managed to retain full control over the arbitration of their subjects by defiantly refusing Mixed Commission Courts. For Mexico, see Palmerston to Lord Ashbarnham, 15 February 1838, TNA, FO84/259, ff.146-149; Palmerston to Richard Pakenham, 26 May 1841, TNA, FO84/374, ff.9-10. For Venezuela, see Palmerston to Sir R.K. Porter, 15 December 1836, TNA, FO84/206, ff.294-297.

<sup>117</sup> In spite of Portugal's repeated demands to be treated in the same manner as France, Palmerston never allowed Portugal to arbitrate vessels in their own national courts. He always insisted that they agree to a Mixed Commission Court. See, for example, Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 25 August 1835, TNA, FO84/178, ff.21-29; Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 28 April 1838, PP, GC/HO/825; Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 5 May 1838, TNA, FO84/249, ff.1-10. Furthermore, Palmerston never allowed Portugal the right to claim compensation for vessels unfairly seized, nor did he allow rescued Africans to be relocated in a Portuguese colony. See Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 22 October 1835, TNA, FO84/178, ff.32-45, and enclosure, ff.46-95. Portugal also wanted to narrow the search area covered by their right-of-search agreement, which Palmerston refused to do. See Palmerston, 'Draft of note to be presented by Lord Howard de Walden to the Portuguese Government', TNA, FO84/281, ff.56-124, enclosed in Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 20 April 1839, TNA, FO84/281, ff.54-56.

<sup>118</sup> Palmerston's first representation to Spain was sent in December 1830, see Palmerston to Henry Addington, 24 December 1830, TNA, FO84/110, ff.15-18. The Spanish Government did not respond officially, nor to any of Palmerston's following representations until April 1835. See Martinez de la Rosa to George Villiers, 14 April 1835, TNA, FO84/177, ff.92-96, enclosed in George Villiers to Duke of Wellington, 18 April 1835, TNA, FO84/177, ff.90-91.

<sup>119</sup> Palmerston's initial representations to Venezuela and Chile were sent in November 1835, see Palmerston to Sir R.K. Porter, J. Walpole, 13 November 1835, in 'Correspondence with Foreign Powers on

Montevideo for six years before they abandoned their opposition to him.<sup>120</sup> During these lengthy periods of time, Palmerston's diplomatic response was always the same. Persistently, he would send out representations and remonstrance's containing pointed demands, and would instruct his legations to bring up anti-slavery at regular intervals.<sup>121</sup> 'You will, upon every occasion, bring this point prominently forward in your discussions with the Spanish Government,' he asserted to Henry Addington in 1831.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, Palmerston would occasionally instruct his envoys to employ their 'strongest manner' with these countries, by which he meant they should press 'forcibly' upon their hosts 'the necessity of immediately adopting such measures.'<sup>123</sup>

As with 'advanced' powers, moreover, Palmerston would often seek to elicit emotive responses such as shame and embarrassment in his official representations to 'civilised' states. Not only was his language more hyperbolic with these countries, however, for instance he scolded Uruguay for allowing slave traders to bring 'deep disgrace' to that nation and also Portugal for waging a 'war upon the human race,'<sup>124</sup> but his attacks became personal. Instead of emphasising how the 'flag' of a resistant nation

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Slave Trade, 1835 (Class B)', *Parliamentary Papers*, I, 329 (1836), p.82. Neither the Anglo-Venezuelan nor the Anglo-Chilean Treaty were completed until 1839. Palmerston's initial representation to Argentina was sent in September 1834, see Palmerston to Hamilton Charles Hamilton, 8 September 1834, TNA, FO84/160, ff.10-12. An Anglo-Argentine Treaty was not concluded until August 1839.

<sup>120</sup> Palmerston's initial representation to Mexico was sent in November 1835, see Palmerston to Richard Pakenham, 13 November 1835, TNA, FO84/157, ff.152-154. An Anglo-Mexican Treaty was not concluded until May 1841. Palmerston's initial representation to Uruguay was sent in September 1834, see Palmerston to Hamilton Charles Hamilton, 8 September 1834, TNA, FO84/160, ff.10-12, 163-167. An Anglo-Uruguayan Treaty was not concluded until April 1840.

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, Palmerston's negotiations with Spain. After his initial representation, Palmerston sent numerous representations to Spain. See Palmerston to Henry Addington, 23 February, 20 March, 8 October 1831, TNA, FO84/121, ff.1-6, 7-9, 31-33; Palmerston to Henry Addington, 13 March, 20 April, 8 May, 4 June, 26 December 1832, TNA, FO84/130, ff.4-5, 6-7, 10, 12-13, 18-19. After two years, his representations began to include a strong remonstrance. See Palmerston to Henry Addington, 6 June, 9 September, 22 November 1833, TNA, FO84/140, ff.1-6, 11-14, 15-18; Palmerston to George Villiers, 17 March, 8 September 1834, TNA, FO84/155, ff.9-14, 20-21.

<sup>122</sup> Palmerston to Henry Addington, 13 February 1831, TNA, FO84/121, ff.1-6. For another example see Palmerston to John Mandeville, 10 February 1836, TNA, FO84/206, ff.64-65. Palmerston instructed Britain's Minister to Argentina and Uruguay to 'let pass no opportunity and omit no efforts which may afford you a chance of concluding the conventions in question.'

<sup>123</sup> Palmerston to George Villiers, 8 September 1834, TNA, FO84/155, ff.20-21. See also Palmerston to Henry Addington, 23 February 1831, TNA, FO84/121, ff.1-6. For another example, see Palmerston to Richard Pakenham, 1 April 1839, TNA, FO84/293, ff.213-214. See also Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 7 April 1838, PP, GC/HO/823; Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 5 May 1838, PP, GC/HO/518. Howard de Walden felt that his 'peremptory manner' had 'done much harm' to Britain's cause.

<sup>124</sup> Palmerston to Hamilton Charles Hamilton, 8 September 1834, TNA, FO84/160, ff.163-167; Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 12 May 1838, TNA, FO84/249, ff.27-33. See also Palmerston, 'Draft of note to be presented by Lord Howard de Walden to the Portuguese Government', TNA, FO84/281, ff.56-124, enclosed in Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 20 April 1839, TNA, FO84/281, ff.54-56; Palmerston to John Mandeville, 9 June 1836, TNA, FO84/206, ff.66-71.

was being abused, for instance, Palmerston stressed how the honour of the Government itself and even the country was being stained with guilt. During negotiations with Madrid, for instance, Palmerston specified that 'the Spanish Government' should vindicate its 'honour' by abolishing the slave trade,<sup>125</sup> and pointed out how 'the honour of this country' and 'the national character of Spain' was at stake.<sup>126</sup>

In addition, Palmerston also deployed provocative new forms of argument against 'civilised' states to try and persuade them to sign anti-slavery treaties. In 1833, for instance, Palmerston warned Spain that unless swift measures were taken to end the Spanish slave trade the dangers of slave revolts in Cuba would increase. The number of enslaved Africans living on one small island, he argued, was unsustainable.<sup>127</sup> Not only did this argument play on existing Spanish fears of 'Africanisation,' agitating a known sensitivity, but it was only tenuously connected to Britain's negotiations with Spain for a right-of-search treaty.<sup>128</sup> Crucially, Palmerston never used this argument with the U.S. despite that country having a large population of enslaved Africans and harbouring the same fears of 'Africanisation' as Cuba.<sup>129</sup> In 1839, moreover, Palmerston managed to extract an apostolic letter from the Pope denouncing the slave trade after delivering a forceful protest to the Vatican which accused Catholic countries of being the most energetic slavers.<sup>130</sup> This argument was quite different, in other words, from the one he deployed against Prince Metternich in the same year - of Christian nations being a force for good and morality in the world. Whereas positive and inclusive messages of a

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<sup>125</sup> Palmerston to Henry Addington, 23 February 1831, TNA, FO84/121, ff.1-6.

<sup>126</sup> Palmerston to Henry Addington, 20 March 1831, TNA, FO84/121, ff.7-9; Palmerston to George Villiers, 22 November 1833, TNA, FO84/140, ff.15-18. See also Palmerston's use of this tactic with the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Palmerston to William Temple, 31 December 1836, TNA, FO84/207, ff.303-315. An anti-slavery with Britain would prevent 'the Neapolitan name being connected with the crime of slave-trading.'

<sup>127</sup> Palmerston to George Villiers, 22 November 1833, TNA, FO84/140, ff.15-18.

<sup>128</sup> For more on Cuban fears of 'Africanisation', see David R. Murray, *Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain, and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp.232-235. Spain were sensitive about Britain interfering with its domestic affairs in Cuba. A few years later, Spain admonished Palmerston for proposing that it enforce its anti-slavery laws more actively. See Palmerston to Arthur Ingram Aston, 25 May 1840, TNA, FO84/318, ff.41-43. See also Antonio González to Arthur Ingram Aston, 20 December 1841, TNA, FO84/355, ff.434-457, enclosed in Arthur Ingram Aston to Lord Aberdeen, 22 December 1841, TNA, FO84/355, ff.414-415.

<sup>129</sup> For more on American fears of 'Africanisation', see C. Stanley Urban, 'The Africanisation of Cuba Scare, 1853-1855', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 37, 1 (1957), 29-45.

<sup>130</sup> Palmerston, Memorandum on the Slave Trade, TNA, FO84/292, ff.131-141. See also Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression*, pp.198, 98-99. For more on Anglo-Papal relations between 1831 and 1846, see Matthias Buschkühl, *Great Britain and the Holy See, 1746-1870* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1982), pp.71-82; J. Derek Holmes, *The Triumph of the Holy See: A Short History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century* (London, Burnes & Oates, 1978), pp.1, 83.

'Christian League' were propagated with 'advanced' powers, therefore, emphasising communality and shared purpose, with 'civilised' states Palmerston's representations were far more belligerent; focusing on the negative consequences that would befall a country (or the reputation of an entire religion in this case) if anti-slavery was rejected.

Palmerston's arguments with 'civilised' states were not always combative, however, for on occasion Palmerston tried to cajole 'civilised' states into signing anti-slavery treaties. For example, Palmerston commonly presented anti-slavery to the 'new states' of South America as a pathway to being recognised by the rest of the world as 'civilised.' During the 1830s, for instance, Palmerston told Mexico that by concluding a treaty with Britain they 'would become a party to the confederation of humane and civilised nations,'<sup>131</sup> and Venezuela that it would 'raise the country still higher as a distinguished transatlantic Nation in the eyes of... Europe.'<sup>132</sup> Likewise, when Argentina demurred Palmerston claimed their adhesion to his treaty network would give 'proof' to 'the civilised world' of their 'good faith,' and enable them to be 'classed with those great powers of the old world.'<sup>133</sup> Finally, Palmerston asserted to Uruguay that unless they concluded a treaty with Britain they would stand no chance of obtaining 'the good opinion of the rest of the world.'<sup>134</sup> It was deeply 'unbecoming,' he wrote on another occasion, for a nation which had only recently 'obtained [its] own freedom' to 'prostitute its flag' and 'disgrace its name' by conniving in the slave trade.<sup>135</sup>

Nevertheless, once Palmerston decided that a 'civilised' nation was being insincere with regards to anti-slavery and felt no hope of a treaty being negotiated through civil diplomacy, he was willing to intensify his rhetoric to try and force an agreement. For example, when negotiations with Lisbon reached a nadir in the spring of 1837 Palmerston began to deploy menacing language. In May, he threatened Sá da Bandeira, the Portuguese Minister for Foreign Affairs, that the flag of Portugal would

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<sup>131</sup> Richard Pakenham to Palmerston, 22 June 1839, TNA, FO84/293, ff.227-230. See also Palmerston to Richard Pakenham, 25 August 1839, TNA, FO84/293, ff.217-218.

<sup>132</sup> Sir R.K. Porter to Guillermo Smith, 22 March 1838, TNA, FO84/260, ff.128-132.

<sup>133</sup> Palmerston to Hamilton Charles Hamilton, 8 September 1834, TNA, FO84/160, ff.10-12; Hamilton Charles Hamilton to Felipe de Arana, 20 December 1835, TNA, FO84/206, ff.78-84, enclosed in Hamilton Charles Hamilton to Palmerston, 9 January 1836, TNA, FO84/206, ff.74-76. See also Palmerston, 'Note to be presented by Mr Mandeville to the Buenos Ayres Minister', TNA, FO84/225, ff.65-72, enclosed in Palmerston to John Mandeville, 10 June 1837, TNA, FO84/225, ff.62-64.

<sup>134</sup> Palmerston to Hamilton Charles Hamilton, 8 September 1834, TNA, FO84/160, ff.163-167.

<sup>135</sup> Palmerston to Hamilton Charles Hamilton, 27 June 1835, TNA, FO84/182, ff.10-14.

soon cease to be 'respected' by the Royal Navy.<sup>136</sup> Not long afterwards, in February 1838, his language became even more barbed. 'If Portugal will not give us our fresh Treaty or our additional articles,' he wrote, 'we shall really be obliged at last to seize her slave ships & treat them as pirates, set the crews on shore on the African coast to be dealt with by the [Africans], land the slaves at Sierra Leone, & scuttle the ships.'<sup>137</sup> A month afterwards, Palmerston intensified his language further by issuing Lisbon with an ultimatum. This was a very strong measure, Palmerston admitted later, for he considered ultimatums to be 'dictatorial and offensive' to the other party. It was 'the way a very strong power treats with a very weak one,' he told Parliament in 1845, or 'a conqueror with the vanquished.'<sup>138</sup> Yet, with Portugal, there was seemingly no other way to bring their negotiations to a decisive conclusion than to exercise 'the influence of fear.'<sup>139</sup> Thus, sending an amended treaty to Sá da Bandeira in March containing all of the provisions they had previously agreed, Palmerston demanded the Portuguese minister sign it immediately, word-for-word as it stood.<sup>140</sup> To drive this point home, Palmerston assured Sá da Bandeira in private that the British Government would not yield 'an inch' over the treaty, and would be 'backed by Parliament & the country in any measures, however strong, which may be necessary.'<sup>141</sup> 'We have given the Portuguese full warning & every indulgence,' he asserted, 'but our mind is now made up and if Portugal will not do her duty, we shall do ours.'<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 10 May 1837, TNA, FO84/215, ff.12-13.

<sup>137</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 10 February 1838, PP, GC/HO/816. This was not the only threat that Palmerston sent to Portugal in 1838. See also Palmerston, 'Draft of note to be presented by Lord Howard de Walden to the Portuguese Government', TNA, FO84/248, ff.10-25, enclosed in Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 3 March 1838, TNA, FO84/248, ff.8-9. See also Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 12 May 1838, TNA, FO84/249, ff.27-33.

<sup>138</sup> Palmerston, 'Treaty of Washington', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxvii, 1162-1219 (21 March 1843), c.1188. The Portuguese press certainly considered it 'tyrannical,' see *O Nacional*, 7 August 1839, in TNA, FO84/282, ff.210-211.

<sup>139</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 25 February 1838, TNA, FO84/248, ff.60-64.

<sup>140</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 24 March 1838, TNA, FO84/248, ff.30-34. See also Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 21 March 1838, PP, GC/HO/821. In private, Palmerston told Howard de Walden the same thing: 'I send you a fresh draft of slave trade treaty such as the Portuguese ought to sign; & we can stand no further alterations or delays – If they will not sign this treaty we shall begin to deal unceremoniously with their flag. They may depend upon that, & you may so hint to the Minister wherever he may be when this letter reaches you.' Palmerston renewed this ultimatum in May and July. See Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 12 May 1838, PP, GC/HO/827; Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 19 May 1838, TNA, FO84/249, ff.39-41; Palmerston to George William Jermy, 23 July 1838, TNA, FO84/250, ff.4-11.

<sup>141</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 5 May 1838, PP, GC/HO/826.

<sup>142</sup> Palmerston to Howard de Walden, 12 May, 19 May 1838, PP, GC/HO/827, 828. For another example of Palmerston employing 'menacing language' with a 'civilised' state, see his negotiations with Spain in 1834. In particular, see Palmerston to George Villiers, 17 March 1834, TNA, FO84/155, ff.9-14; George Villiers to Martinez de la Rosa, 12 April 1834, TNA, FO84/155, ff.120-129, enclosed in George Villiers to Palmerston,



Once again, Palmerston's diplomatic strategy with 'barbarous' nations was not initially dissimilar to how 'civilised' and 'advanced' powers were treated. In the instructions which the Foreign Office composed after 1838 and which were sent to the Admiralty in January 1841, Palmerston commanded Britain's naval officers to follow a standardised procedure in Africa described as 'the formula.'<sup>143</sup> Vitaly, 'the formula' specified exactly how officers were to act at every point in their official negotiations with African states, and prescribed a wholly pacific, courteous and respectful course of action. Upon arrival in the African state, for example, Britain's officers were instructed to ascertain the 'proper mode' of opening a communication with the king, which in practice meant finding out how to address him 'with the respect which is due to the rank which belong[ed] to him.'<sup>144</sup> In their first meeting, officers were to express the goodwill of Queen Victoria, announce their mission as one of peace and prosperity, and begin cultivating friendly relations. Only after winning the African monarch's trust, crucially, were officers to proclaim their desire to end the slave trade, and to make a case for negotiating an anti-slavery agreement.

Furthermore, 'the formula' laid out exactly what arguments were to be deployed by Britain's naval officers to try and persuade the African monarch to end their involvement in the slave trade. Firstly, officers were told to state that the introduction of lawful commerce would make the ruler's subjects easier to govern; for by driving them to 'cultivate the soil' and 'value their habitations... grounds [and] produce,' they would be incentivised 'to behave well in order to keep the advantage which that produce [would] give to them.' Secondly, ending all participation in the slave trade would mean that African sovereigns no longer needed to 'keep up quarrels with his neighbours, ...undertake distant and dangerous wars, [or]... seek out causes of punishment to his own

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15 April 1834, TNA, FO84/155, ff.115-116. This threat had an immediate effect, see George Villiers to Palmerston, 13 May 1834, TNA, FO84/155, ff.131-135.

<sup>143</sup> For the first draft of 'the formula,' which is quoted extensively in this section, see 'Annex A: Expedition and Mission to Africa, Draft Instructions for the Negotiators', TNA, FO84/336, ff.63-70, enclosed in 'Africa: Expedition and Mission Proposed, some points for consideration', 1 February 1839, TNA, FO84/336, ff.59-62. For the final instructions sent out to Africa, see Lord John Russell, Instructions to Her Majesty's Niger Commissioners, 30 January 1841, in Newbury, *British Policy Towards West Africa*, pp.154-159. Palmerston signed off these instructions in September 1840, see Palmerston, Minute, 9 September 1840, TNA, FO84/337, f.38. He felt they were 'very well drawn up.' He reported to the Colonial Office in October that he 'entirely approved' of them, see Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 3 October 1840, TNA, FO84/337, ff.17-18.

<sup>144</sup> 'The formula' commonly used the royal appellation 'His Highness' to describe African rulers.

subjects,' all for the sake of acquiring slaves to sell to European slave-dealers, and thus to produce 'an income to himself.' Thirdly, officers were to argue that the cultivation of African produce derived from African labour, which could be sold abroad to willing parties, would bring far higher revenues to the sovereign than he was currently getting from the slave trade. And finally, to make the prospect of abolition even more appealing officers were to tempt the African sovereign with a handsome bribe in the form of a pre-determined cut (set at 5 percent) of 'every article of British merchandise brought by British ships and sold in his dominions.'

'The formula' did not end there, however, but also guided British officers on what to do in a variety of scenarios. If the African sovereign agreed straightaway to a treaty, for example, then the negotiator was to draw up the agreement at once, have it signed and then urge the ruler to proclaim the new law in front of all his subjects. Alternatively, if the African ruler was unconvinced, the negotiator was to urge him to 'assemble his elders or head-men,' 'consult with them,' and to 'reconsider this matter.' If they allowed the British officer to confer with them, he was to re-state his arguments and impress upon them how lawful commerce would be in their interests. This time, however, he could cajole further by offering bribes to each of the ruler's 'head-men.' In 'special cases,' additional terms could also be offered to African sovereigns to sweeten the deal, such as a 'promise of protection' against the attacks which neighbouring states might make upon them, or a 'yearly gift' of cash or whatever product the African ruler desired for a set number of years.<sup>145</sup> If this worked, an agreement was again to be signed immediately and the law proclaimed to the rest of the nation.

Critically, however, if this second round of negotiations failed then the British officer and all his men were to withdraw peaceably and to vow to return in future with a more convincing representation.<sup>146</sup> Moreover, 'the formula' stated explicitly that no threats were to be made nor intimidation applied to secure an agreement. In fact, it declared emphatically that 'on no account... excepting at the last extremity, and for the

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<sup>145</sup> These incentives were added into 'the formula' in April 1840, see James Bandinel to Sir James Stephen, 10 April 1840, TNA, FO84/336, ff.20-26.

<sup>146</sup> Although the first draft of 'the formula' commanded British officers to deliver a violent threat to African sovereigns at this stage, reminding them that the Queen of England was 'powerful enough not only to extinguish by force the slave trade proceeding from their country, but to destroy all their towns and take away their wealth,' such menacing language was entirely removed from the final draft of the instructions.

purpose of defending [their] lives and liberty,' were British officers to 'have recourse to arms.' Quite remarkably, considering what Britain's anti-slavery policy later became, 'the formula' required officers to treat Africans 'uniformly... with kindness,' 'patience' and 'forbearance.' They were to 'make allowance for the motives of fear, distrust, jealousy, [and] suspicion, by which native Africans, unaccustomed to treat with Europeans in this formal way,' were expected to view the overtures made to them, as well as for any 'misunderstanding either of language, of manner, or of conduct' that might take place, and even for 'any hardness of feeling' that was witnessed in them on the subject of slave trade. Even if the mission was a total failure, the document clarified, they were to leave that country 'in a friendly manner,' for the real mission was 'essentially one of peace, good will, kindness, [and] conciliation.' The final action that British officers were to perform, in this scenario, was to issue a grave but respectful warning to the African sovereign: that 'every European and other civilised power' had consented to put down the slave trade, meaning the demand for enslaved Africans would soon diminish and eventually stop, and when that fateful day came, and African states were compelled to seek new trading partners for their novel brand of legitimate commerce, British subjects would be advised not to do business with any African state that had refused to abolish the slave trade. All British trade would be directed to those countries which had consented to abolition and embraced 'innocent commerce' with open arms. In a sense, Britain was threatening to impose economic sanctions on pro-slavery states retrospectively.<sup>147</sup>

The reality of how Britain's naval officers treated African Governments and peoples during this period, however, was unfortunately very different from this prescription. In November 1840, for example (two months before the Admiralty even received Palmerston's instructions), Captain Joseph Denman of HMS *Wanderer* entered the Gallinas River accompanied by a naval force to secure the release of two British subjects held there in slavery.<sup>148</sup> For reasons of his own, however, once those subjects were safely released Denman compelled Prince Manna (son of King Siacca, who governed the Kingdom of the Gallinas) to sign an anti-slavery treaty under duress; securing his

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<sup>147</sup> For all the above quotes see 'Annex A: Expedition and Mission to Africa, Draft Instructions for the Negotiators', TNA, FO84/336, ff.63-70, enclosed in 'Africa: Expedition and Mission Proposed, some points for consideration', 1 February 1839, TNA, FO84/336, ff.59-62.

<sup>148</sup> Denman had been instructed to do this by the Governor of Sierra Leone, see Richard Doherty to Joseph Denman, 30 October 1840, TNA, FO84/380, ff.201-203.

signature by threatening to blockade the river indefinitely whilst holding a gun to the head of the African prince.<sup>149</sup> Immediately following that hostile exchange, Denman destroyed eight barracoons which resided in the territorial sovereignty of the African state as well as the equipment contained therein, which belonged to a European slave trader named John Buron. In the midst of this violence, Denman rescued over 800 enslaved Africans and transported them to safety in Sierra Leone.<sup>150</sup>

Whereas Palmerston might have disavowed Denman's actions, apologised to Prince Manna and offered redress to the Gallinas Kingdom, and thus made the navy stick rigidly to the letter and spirit of his original instructions, it is significant that Palmerston decided to sanction Denman's inflammatory and aggressive course of action retrospectively, legitimising and normalising the use of intimidation and threats in Britain's official diplomacy with African nations.<sup>151</sup> Denman's actions were 'highly meritorious' and 'best adapted for the attainment of the object in view,' Palmerston wrote,<sup>152</sup> for 'taking a wasp's nest... is more effective than catching the wasps one by one.'<sup>153</sup> To ensure the burning of barracoons was not a one-off incident, moreover, Palmerston recommended to the Admiralty that new orders be issued so that 'similar operations' could be executed 'against all the piratical slave trade establishments not belonging to any civilised power.' The only pre-requisite, he stated, was that naval officers obtain 'formal permission' from the African state which held jurisdiction over those buildings.<sup>154</sup> A month later, however, he relaxed even this limited proviso: 'If... an agreement should... be found impossible' with an African ruler, he wrote, Britain's cruisers would be 'perfectly justified' in 'landing and destroying the barracoons, and the

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<sup>149</sup> 'Agreement negotiated on the 21 November 1840 between Captain Denman and the Chiefs of Gallinas', TNA, FO84/380, ff.234-236.

<sup>150</sup> For Denman's account of this incident, see Joseph Denman to Richard Doherty, 28 November 1840, TNA, FO84/380, ff.200-219. This account was supported by the British Governor of Sierra Leone, see Richard Doherty to Lord John Russell, 7 December 1840, TNA, FO84/380, ff.187-193. Denman's official account of proceedings did not mention him making a threat at gunpoint, but Prince Manna's version of events maintained that this was what really happened. Denman apparently told Prince Manna: 'If you don't sign the Treaty, I will shoot you.' Prince Manna therefore wanted the agreement to be annulled on grounds that it was made under duress. See Law, 'Abolition and Imperialism', p.154.

<sup>151</sup> Palmerston agreed with Lord John Russell that Captain Denman's conduct was 'very spirited and able' and had been beneficial to 'the interests of humanity.' See Sir James Stephen to Foreign Office, 17 March 1841, TNA, FO84/380, ff.185-186; Lord Leveson to the Colonial Office, 27 March 1841, TNA, FO84/380, f.45.

<sup>152</sup> Lord Leveson to the Admiralty, 28 July 1841, TNA, FO84/384, ff.99-101; Backhouse to the Admiralty, 6 April 1841, TNA, FO84/383, ff.75-76.

<sup>153</sup> Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.183. Denman was initially promoted and paid £4,000 as a reward. However, he was then sued by John Buron. After a long trial, Denman was eventually cleared of any wrongdoing after an intervention by Palmerston. See Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.116.

<sup>154</sup> Backhouse to the Admiralty, 6 April 1841, TNA, FO84/383, ff.75-76.

goods contained in them, and in liberating... the slaves whom they might find therein.<sup>155</sup> Regretfully, then, Palmerston's original 'formula' was superseded even before it was sent out to the Admiralty and a disrespectful, threatening approach substituted for a respectful, conciliatory one. Following this turning point, Denman's precedent was quickly followed-up by the burning of barracoons at New Cestos and Shebar later in 1841, neither of which took place with formal permission from the African state.<sup>156</sup>

Furthermore, these were not the only hostile techniques that Palmerston allowed Britain's naval officers to use in their official negotiations with African rulers. For example, Palmerston also endorsed a brutal new policy that had initially begun under Lord Aberdeen, of allowing naval officers to revisit African sovereigns who had already signed anti-slavery agreements and, depending on whether the slave trade had been successfully ended in their demesne, either rewarding them for upholding their legal obligations or punishing them for breaking their commitment. Frequently, punishments involved the destruction of entire towns and villages by burning; actions which left African families homeless and desperate. As Huzzey explains, these acts of reprisal went one step further than destroying barracoons where slaves were kept for embarkation, for they were not meant simply to thwart the operations of European and American slave dealers. Rather, these actions were intended to punish African sovereigns for breaking their anti-slavery treaties and, more broadly, the entire African community.<sup>157</sup> 'We have evidently impressed [upon] these people a very wholesome terror, and they begin to think resistance to our power is useless,' Commodore Jones boasted in 1845 after one such attack on the African villages of Tindes, Taillah and Minnah in the Gallinas Kingdom.<sup>158</sup>

Palmerston sanctioned these acts of reprisal upon his return to Office in 1846, giving his full support to the updated standardised agreement (or 'engagement' as it was renamed) produced by Sidney Herbert and sent out to Africa in 1844, which included a

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<sup>155</sup> Lord Leveson to the Admiralty, 28 July 1841, TNA, FO84/384, ff.99-101.

<sup>156</sup> Law, 'Abolition and Imperialism', p.153. Further attacks took place at Cabinda and Ambriz in 1842 where HMS *Waterwitch* and *Madagascar* 'destroyed eight barracoons and liberated over 1,300 slaves destined for Brazil.' See Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.183.

<sup>157</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.142.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, pp.4, 1-4, 115-116. Huzzey's work has illuminated the chilling realities of this incident, and especially the merciless actions of the Royal Navy. For it was that attack on the banks of the Gallinas, captured in a harrowing painting by an anonymous artist, that adorns the jacket of his book and which informs his provocative title, *Freedom Burning*.

mechanism by which the navy could perform acts of 'terror' without risking a legal suit.<sup>159</sup>

'It would be very desirable,' he wrote, if Britain's naval officers could 'negotiate successfully with all the native Chiefs along the whole line of the African coast,' and for these treaties to be drafted 'in the same form & words' (as Herbert's 'engagement') and 'then printed... upon thin parchment ready for the signature of these Chiefs.'<sup>160</sup> As a result, acts of reprisal therefore continued to occur regularly throughout the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>161</sup> In the winter of 1853, for example, another horrendous attack took place fifty miles inland from Sherbro. Commander Phillips of HMS *Polyphemus* fired a rocket at an African town that was believed to have broken its anti-slavery agreement by harbouring the notorious slave trader Don Crispo. After an attack which razed the houses of the local people, there was no sign of Don Crispo; only another slave trader who it was claimed was Crispo's partner. Armed with the proof he needed, Phillips therefore compelled the African sovereign to sign another anti-slavery 'engagement,' despite accounts of their wrongdoing being almost certainly fabricated.<sup>162</sup>

### III) Non-official forms of pressure

Official dispatches, however, were only one way of applying pressure on foreign states. Commonly, Palmerston found that by subverting legitimate channels he could wield more convincing force. For in the non-public realm, where his actions were not scrutinised by Parliament or the press, he was able to act in ways that would have been politically impossible under normal circumstances. When it came to persuading France to accept a right-of-search treaty in 1831, for example, Palmerston took the unconventional step of sending John Irving, a Parliamentarian, to the French Court in October.<sup>163</sup> Irving had no

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<sup>159</sup> A new clause in the treaty declared that if an African ruler violated their agreement and allowed the slave trade to carry on in their territory, they would be subject to 'a severe act of displeasure' from the Queen of England. For a copy of the updated standardised 'engagement' that British naval officers were instructed to negotiate with African rulers, see 'Engagement with the Chiefs of \_ for the Abolition of the Traffic in Slaves', in Newbury, *British Policy Towards West Africa*, pp.164-165. New instructions were also sent out to Britain's naval officers, see *Instructions for the guidance of Her Majesty's naval officers employed in the suppression of the slave trade* (London: Harrison, 1844).

<sup>160</sup> Palmerston to the Admiralty, 8 November 1846, TNA, FO84/660, ff.112-113.

<sup>161</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.142.

<sup>162</sup> Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade*, p.151. For another example, see *Ibid*, pp.161-162. For an account of such an attack from the perspective of a British naval officer, see William Henry Giles Kingston, *Blue Jackets, or Chips of the Old Block: A Narrative of the Gallant Exploits of British Seamen, and of the Principal Events in the Naval Service During the Reign of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria* (London: Grant and Griffith, 1854), p.355.

<sup>163</sup> John Irving was an 'opposition member of Parliament belonging to a great Commercial House.' See Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 11 November 1831, PP, GC/GR/234.

prior connection to the Whig Ministry or to the anti-slavery movement, yet as an 'old acquaintance' of Casimir Périer, the French Prime Minister, he was seemingly well placed to ingratiate himself with the July Monarchy and to convince Périer that it was 'indispensably necessary' to conclude an anti-slavery treaty with Britain.<sup>164</sup> The key to Irving's success, however, lay not in his personal relationship with Périer (which was soon discovered to be a 'perfect humbug'),<sup>165</sup> but in how he could be used by Palmerston as an unofficial conduit to the French Government. For what Palmerston really needed was a means by which to threaten the French Government outside of his official dispatches. Before Irving's mission began, for instance, Palmerston wrote to Granville in private about how 'Irving would be able to explain that the feeling on this question is gaining strength every day,' and that Britain might soon 'be hard driven to take the question up in a more decided manner than it has even hitherto done.'<sup>166</sup>

Palmerston began to make use of Irving as an unofficial spokesman for the British Government in October 1831,<sup>167</sup> but it was from November that he began to fulfil his true purpose. After 'feeding' him the Cabinet's line via a secret memorandum,<sup>168</sup> Irving delivered a thinly veiled threat directly to Périer.<sup>169</sup> If an Anglo-French treaty was successfully completed, Irving's note stated, then Britain and France's relationship would be instantly improved. For there was 'no service' which would 'prove more grateful to the British Government and nation' than this one, or which would 'augment and cement the good understanding' between them.<sup>170</sup> Failure to reach an agreement, however, would make it very hard for Britain to maintain a friendly policy towards France. For the slave trade 'excited to the highest pitch of detestation and horror every class of the British people, not merely against the trade itself... but against all nations who permit and

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<sup>164</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 21 October 1831, PP, GC/GR/1360.

<sup>165</sup> Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 11 November 1831, PP, GC/GR/234. Irving's 'intimacy with Périer' was 'of that very distant sort,' Granville joked, 'as to require an introduction to him.'

<sup>166</sup> Palmerston to Granville, 21 October 1831, PP, GC/GR/1360.

<sup>167</sup> See, for example, John Irving to Palmerston, 27 October 1831, PP, GC/IR/2; John Irving to Casimir Périer, 28 October, TNA, FO84/123, ff.148-153.

<sup>168</sup> Irving admitted in November that he had 'presented to Mr Périer the note which he [Granville] desired me to deliver.' He asked Palmerston to send him 'detailed instructions' for the next part of 'the plan.' See John Irving to Palmerston, 4 November 1831, PP, GC/IR/3. Palmerston used this metaphor of 'feeding' Irving when discussing him with Granville. 'He is a vain coxcomb and likes flattery, and will swallow it in large lumps,' he wrote, 'but he may be of use to us in Paris... if we feed his favourite passion.' See Palmerston to Granville, 8 November 1831, PP, GC/GR/1366.

<sup>169</sup> 'Copy of John Irving's Memoir', TNA, FO84/123, ff.148-154. The title of this memorandum was a ruse, to avoid suspicion when published in the Parliamentary Papers. In reality, the note was written up by Palmerston, passed to Granville, who then passed it on to Irving.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

countenance it.<sup>171</sup> The impact of Palmerston's threat was immediate. Just days afterwards, both Irving and Granville alerted Palmerston in private to the fact the French Cabinet had had a change of heart and come around to the idea of signing a right-of-search treaty with Britain.<sup>172</sup> Although vain and conceited, Granville wrote, Irving had 'opened the eyes of the French ministers to the truth of my representations.'<sup>173</sup>

Palmerston also went outside of the usual government channels to put pressure on the U.S. in this period, attempting to shame Washington not just in his official representations but also in 'the court of Atlantic public opinion.'<sup>174</sup> In 1841, for instance, Palmerston used the House of Commons as an arena in which to project the U.S. as 'the only Christian nation' that refused to come to terms with him for an anti-slavery treaty, and to make public his belief that anti-slavery was 'not inconsistent with... [American] national honour.' It was one of his great regrets, he declared, that American statesmen were doing so little to suppress the slave trade; deterred by fear to accept a right they had previously fought to repel.<sup>175</sup> This was not the only occasion that Palmerston singled out America in public for their indifference to slave-trade suppression. In 1838, for instance, he did the same thing; underlining his hope that 'the people' of that country would soon 'rise to the rescue of their national flag from so great a degradation,' whilst their governors would consider it 'an honour to unite with the other powers of Christendom in putting down this abominable traffic.'<sup>176</sup> Following these somewhat incendiary speeches, prominent British and American newspapers began a new dialogue about the U.S. Government's refusal to accept the right-of-search, with commentators on both sides of the Atlantic arguing that Washington's position was untenable.<sup>177</sup> The *Morning Post*, for instance, felt that America's intransigence would lead to 'the universal

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> John Irving to Palmerston, 4 November 1831, PP, GC/IR/3; Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 31 October 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.140-142.

<sup>173</sup> Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 31 October 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.140-142. See also Palmerston to John Irving, 15 November 1831, PP, GC/IR/7. Palmerston thanked Irving for his 'valuable and continued assistance in the slave trade questions.' For more on this episode, see Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, pp.155-156.

<sup>174</sup> Mason argues this was the main way that Britain tried to persuade the U.S. to accept an anti-slavery treaty, by exerting 'soft rather than hard power.' See Mason, 'Keeping up Appearances', p.827.

<sup>175</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), c.651.

<sup>176</sup> Palmerston, 'Foreign Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xlii, 1143-1152 (10 May 1838), cc.1152, 1149.

<sup>177</sup> For a sample of British newspaper opinion, see *The Times*, 25 September 1840; *Morning Post*, 29 December 1841; *Standard*, 31 December 1841; *Morning Chronicle*, 5 January 1842. For a sample of American newspaper opinion, see *New York Times* and *New York Evening Post*, in *The Times*, 1 April 1842, p.5; *Courier and Enquirer*, in *The Times*, 12 January 1842, p.4.



derision, contempt, and hatred' of American citizens by all the world,<sup>178</sup> whilst *The New York Times* admitted that a simple inspection would furnish 'no substantial injury' to American merchants.<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless, the U.S Government's view of events was unchanged by this public inquiry for it did not respond officially to Palmerston's parliamentary taunts.

Palmerston also utilised non-official, subversive methods of coercion against 'civilised' states during this period, and in comparison to 'advanced' powers was prepared to intervene more invasively with their domestic politics. Although his primary goal was still to negotiate anti-slavery treaties with Portugal and Brazil, for example, Palmerston recognised that to have any chance of doing this successfully he first needed to undermine the pro-slavery lobbying groups (or 'Clubs' as they were known) that had begun to operate within those countries. For it was clear to Palmerston that these formidable extra-governmental forces held not only a vested interest in the slave trade but their Governments hostage over its continued survival and prosperity.<sup>180</sup> The first challenge that Palmerston faced, then, was to discover the identity of these pro-slavery lobbyists. As it turned out, this was not too challenging since they were already well known to the British Ministers resident in Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro. In Portugal, for example, 'the principal people' connected with the slave trade were believed to be 'Scheffen, a German,' 'Perfumo, an Italian,' and 'Santos, the Portuguese Consul General for Denmark.' Alongside these 'influential members of the Clubs' were accessories such as 'Nantas, Fraça and Rio Trito.'<sup>181</sup> In Brazil, meanwhile, the head of the pro-slavery party was believed to be Manuel Pinto de Fonseca, whose fortune was apparently enormous and used to fund the actions of 'many smaller slave dealers.'<sup>182</sup> Alongside him was Joaquim Pinto, his brother, and a host of associates who went by the names of Pareto, Riveiroso, Vallencio and Breves.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> *Morning Post*, 11 January 1842.

<sup>179</sup> *New York Times*, in *The Times*, 1 April 1842, p.5.

<sup>180</sup> Palmerston, 'Treaties for the Abolition of Slavery', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xxxviii, 1827-1830 (6 July 1837), c.1828. 'Even supposing the governments of Portugal and Brazil to be as sincere as Great Britain was in a desire to suppress the trade,' Palmerston declared, 'they were on every occasion thwarted and opposed by great private interests, and also by the indisposition of their own authorities to carry into execution the laws and stipulations which they might make.'

<sup>181</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 2 March 1839, PP, GC/HO/554.

<sup>182</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 15 August 1849, PP, GC/HU/15. See also Hudson to Palmerston, 10 October 1849, GC/HU/17.

<sup>183</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 15 March 1851, PP, GC/HU/33.

Understanding how these men influenced Government policy, however, was a far more complex problem for Palmerston to resolve. To begin with, it was apparent to Britain's envoys that the national newspaper press in both Portugal and Brazil was corrupt; it being overwhelmingly influenced by the pro-slavery parties during the mid-Victorian period. The *Nacional*, *Diario de Governor* and *Procurador dos Povos*, for instance, were known to be under the guidance of the Clubs in Portugal,<sup>184</sup> whilst the *Brazil* and *Correio da Tarde* were likewise under the control of their counterparts in Brazil.<sup>185</sup> Newspaper editors were routinely bribed by slave traders with grants of money or land, Palmerston was informed, and promised 'favours' in return for their support.<sup>186</sup> The editor of the *Nacional*, Rio Trito, for example, was apparently 'a friend' of Perfumo,<sup>187</sup> whilst the editor of the *Brazil* was understood to be receiving a salary of £5,000 a year 'from the enemy.'<sup>188</sup> Crucially then, through the newspapers under their command, Portuguese and Brazilian slave traders could blackmail the allies of anti-slavery within their Governments, and force them to adopt their line by threatening either to uphold their fragile governmental position with favourable press or to tarnish their reputation by printing demeaning falsities about them. In 1837, for instance, Howard de Walden lamented to Palmerston that despite the fact he got on relatively well with Sá da Bandeira the chances of them negotiating a treaty together were slim because, 'the fact is[,] the Government have no power... They have but a small party & they are obliged... to court the Clubs continually.'<sup>189</sup> Sá da Bandeira was completely under the spell of the Clubs, he wrote, and not only 'afraid' of them but also of 'Rio Tinto, [the editor] of the *Nacional*.'<sup>190</sup> These words appeared to ring true in 1839, when Sá da Bandeira was removed from

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<sup>184</sup> Above all, the *Nacional* was considered to be the organ of the Clubs. See Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 7 February 1837, PP, GC/HO/373. For Howard de Walden's assessment of the Portuguese newspaper press, see Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 2 September 1839, TNA, FO84/282, ff.253-257.

<sup>185</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 3 August 1850, PP, GC/HU/25.

<sup>186</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 2 March 1839, PP, GC/HO/554. See also Lord Howden to Palmerston, 30 September 1847, PP, GC/HO/904.

<sup>187</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 7 February 1837, PP, GC/HO/373.

<sup>188</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 3 August 1850, PP, GC/HU/25. 'The "*Brazil*" is the cleverest paper printed in this country,' Hudson wrote. 'I have long wished to purchase the editor but he had received his "plant" of printing office tithes amounting to £5,000 on such favourable terms from the enemy that it was impracticable to approach him. He did us immense damage for a time.'

<sup>189</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 18 March 1837, PP, GC/HO/383. See also Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 21 January 1837, PP, GC/HO/367; Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 1 February 1838, PP, GC/HO/492.

<sup>190</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 15 February 1838, PP, GC/HO/498. See also Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 23 February, 8 May 1838, 2 July 1839, PP, GC/HO/500, 519, 581.

Office and Baron Sabroza promoted due to the influence of ‘the Club newspapers.’<sup>191</sup> In Brazil, meanwhile, the blackmail of politicians by slave traders was even more candid. For example, Hudson reported to Palmerston a speech that he attended given by the notorious slave trader Manuel Pinto de Fonseca in October 1849. Although that enemy of Britain made the surprise admission he intended to give up the slave trade in the near future since he could no longer fight back against an entire country who had made ‘war’ against him, he expressed his conviction that the Brazilian slave trade could only be put down by a sincere Government. ‘But when,’ he asked mockingly, ‘will there be an honest government in this country? I have them all here (slapping his breeches pocket) and here (holding up his finger and thumb).’<sup>192</sup>

To make this situation even more problematic, however, both Howard de Walden and Hudson reported to Palmerston that the respective Clubs in Portugal and Brazil had not only infiltrated the popular press but the Governments of their countries as well. Corrupt Government officials within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs were believed to be working clandestinely with the Clubs and ‘in constant intercourse’ with the editors of pro-slavery newspapers, making sure those publications took ‘a hostile tone’ against Britain.<sup>193</sup> In Portugal, for instance, Howard de Walden reported that Midosi, Sá da Bandeira’s Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was ‘entirely in the interests of [the slave trader] Santos – who avowed giving money to him’ – as well as the *Nacional*, for which he had written articles using his intimate knowledge of Portugal’s treaty negotiations with Britain.<sup>194</sup> Beneath Midosi, Howard de Walden was confident that the slave trade was ‘an illicit source of profit to numberless employees’ from ‘various departments.’<sup>195</sup> Even Sá da Bandeira was not clean of corruption, he suggested, having appointed friends to positions in Portuguese Africa where previous incumbents were

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<sup>191</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 22 April 1839, PP, GC/HO/565. See also Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 27 January, 5 February, 11 March 1839, PP, GC/HO/546, 548, 557. Howard de Walden had predicted that the Clubs would remove Sá da Bandeira at the beginning of 1839.

<sup>192</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 October 1849, PP, GC/HU/17.

<sup>193</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 2 July 1839, PP, GC/HO/581.

<sup>194</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 1 March, 2 March 1839, PP, GC/HO/552, 554. After Sá da Bandeira and Midosi left Government in April 1839, Howard de Walden reported that Signor Gomez d’Oliveira, the new Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was also a notorious advocate of the slave trade and held close links with the *Nacional*. See Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 2 September 1840, TNA, FO84/321, ff.238-242.

<sup>195</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 2 March 1839, PP, GC/HO/554.

known to have made huge profits on the back of the slave trade.<sup>196</sup> In Brazil, meanwhile, Hudson informed Palmerston of a similar state of affairs. The Brazilian Minister for Foreign Affairs, for instance, had declared frankly to him in September 1848 that he 'could not depend upon his subordinate officers.'<sup>197</sup> Whilst a month later, Hudson lamented how:

Corruption in this country is so general, morals are so lax, money is so entirely the Brazilian deity, the government and people are so accustomed to slave trade, to the evasion both of treaty stipulations and of the provisions of their own laws, that even the best-intentioned Brazilian Government is impotent against the corruption of their own officers and their systematic bribery by the slave dealers.<sup>198</sup>

To get the Portuguese and Brazilian Governments to sign an anti-slavery treaty, therefore, Palmerston realised that he had to diminish or preferably sever the connection between the slave trade lobby and the national press. For only then would Government officials be freed from the influence of the pro-slavery lobby and enabled to co-operate with Britain in pursuit of anti-slavery objectives. Crucially, Palmerston appears to have felt that the best way to do this was not to try and win over pro-slavery editors who were already in the pockets of slave-trading lobbyists, but instead to construct a new anti-slavery platform in each country to rival this group; one that could challenge the pro-slavery narrative being projected to the public. For if an anti-slavery platform was successfully established, Hudson reported, it was possible that public opinion in those countries would change and attach itself to Britain's anti-slavery agenda.<sup>199</sup> Gradually then, the Portuguese and Brazilian people might begin to put pressure on their governments; counter-balancing and eventually outweighing the influence of the slave trade parties.

Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, Palmerston therefore directed Lord Howard de Walden and James Hudson to cultivate relationships with likeminded newspaper editors who were favourable Britain and to get them to advocate and disperse 'anti-slavery

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid. Palmerston complained about Portuguese officials' connivance in the slave trade to Baron Moncorvo in April 1836. See Palmerston to Baron Moncorvo, 30 April 1836, TNA, FO84/202, ff.31-78.

<sup>197</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 12 September 1848, PP, GC/HU/5.

<sup>198</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 October 1848, PP, GC/HU/6.

<sup>199</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 27 July 1850, TNA, FO84/805, ff.219-246.

principles.<sup>200</sup> Impressively, both envoys managed to do just this; establishing secret agreements with multiple papers giving Britain considerable influence over their content and output. In Portugal, for instance, Howard de Walden managed to secure the services of the *Lisbon Mail* in September 1836 after Palmerston agreed to pay the editors £300 a year, drawing this money from the Secret Service Fund.<sup>201</sup> In May 1839, moreover, he added with relish the *Correio* at a rate of £150 a year. It was ‘the best written of the Portuguese newspapers’ and had a wide readership, Howard de Walden told Palmerston, making it ‘infinitely more valuable to us than the *Lisbon Mail*.’<sup>202</sup> Additionally, he cultivated relationships with the editors of the *Director* and the *Periodico dos Pobres no Porto*, and was confident of their support if required.<sup>203</sup> In Brazil, meanwhile, Hudson managed to obtain the support of the *Correio Mercantil* in July 1849 after he stepped in to pay off that paper’s debts ‘when their finances were at a low ebb.’ Although he claimed not to have imposed ‘conditions’ on them for this gesture, it is not insignificant that, very soon afterwards, the editor Nuniz Barreto approached him to ask ‘how they could serve the Legation.’<sup>204</sup> In August, moreover, Hudson officially secured the backing of the leading newspaper of the Brazilian Party in the country; agreeing to pay £500 annually to keep the *Correio Mercantil* afloat.<sup>205</sup> This was a significant scalp, and as such Hudson continued to subsidise that paper into 1850 at a further cost of £2,000.<sup>206</sup> In the same period, Hudson also managed to secure the services of the *Philanthropo*, a relatively new paper with only 200 subscribers - again, by purchasing that paper’s debts for £100 but this time on the pre-condition that it become ‘a pure anti-slavery newspaper.’<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Palmerston to James Hudson, 29 October 1849, TNA, FO84/766, ff.8-10.

<sup>201</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 24 September 1836, HWP, BL, Add Ms 45176, ff.36-37. In 1838, Howard de Walden ended Britain’s sponsorship of the *Lisbon Mail*, see Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 16 October 1838, PP, GC/HO/533. He did not think it was worth the expense. ‘It has already cost us more,’ he lamented, ‘than ought & than I intended it should have done.’

<sup>202</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 6 May 1839, PP, GC/HO/569.

<sup>203</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 18 June 1838, PP, GC/HO/524. See also Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 12 August, 8 September 1839, PP, GC/HO/586, 593.

<sup>204</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 July 1849, PP, GC/HU/14. See also James Hudson to Palmerston, 15 March 1851, PP, GC/HU/33. The slave dealers of Rio de Janeiro had attempted to buy control of the *Correio Mercantil*, offering the editor ‘carte blanche... to attack Paulino for injuring Brazilian interests.’ This offer was declined.

<sup>205</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 15 August 1849, PP, GC/HU/15.

<sup>206</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 12 May 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.178-182. Hudson was forced to pay a larger sum than usual to cover the losses of that paper – which amounted to £2,000 - due to loss of investment from people opposed to anti-slavery.

<sup>207</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 July 1849, PP, GC/HU/14.

Finally, Hudson also set up an entirely new paper under the direct control of the Brazilian Anti-Slavery Society, the *Monarchista* for just over £212.<sup>208</sup>

The importance of these newspaper connections should not be underestimated. Whenever injustice was done to Britain in these countries, for instance, they could promote Britain's view of events and expose things which the Portuguese and Brazilian Governments tried to conceal. In other words, they could 'throw light on the real state of the slave trade question' and 'undeceive the public.'<sup>209</sup> In Portugal, for example, Howard de Walden ensured that the *Correio* kept up 'a regular debate on the slave trade question' throughout 1839,<sup>210</sup> one that invariably endorsed Britain's line.<sup>211</sup> In addition, Howard de Walden managed to get the *Correio* to publish a huge selection of Britain's anti-slavery negotiations with the Portuguese Government.<sup>212</sup> This was especially significant because the Portuguese Chamber of Senators had tried to suppress the publication of these papers in April, judging that they would do more harm than good,<sup>213</sup> and had in fact successfully censored them in every other Lisbon newspaper.<sup>214</sup> Notably, Palmerston did the same thing in Brazil: sending across to Hudson additional copies of Parliamentary papers that related to the slave trade, 'for the use of certain Brazilian gentlemen who are engaged in publishing papers against slave trade.'<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 13 August 1849, TNA, FO84/767, ff.31-37. Palmerston had given the British Legation in Rio de Janeiro £500 to be dispersed 'for the promotion of anti-slave trade and anti-slavery principles in Brazil.'

<sup>209</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 5 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/583; Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 14 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/842.

<sup>210</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 5 February 1839, PP, GC/HO/548.

<sup>211</sup> Lord Howard de Walden sent across articles from the *Correio* that had been published supporting Britain's line. See, for example, Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 5 February, 22 September, 30 September 1839, PP, GC/HO/548, 595, 597. Howard de Walden also sent across articles from the pro-slavery press that had been published opposing Britain's anti-slavery policy. See, for example, Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 3 April, 2 July, 24 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/562, 581, 589.

<sup>212</sup> See, for example, Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 28 July 1839, PP, GC/HO/582. See also Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 24 August, 1 September 1839, PP, GC/HO/589, 592. *The Lisbon Mail* also published the Parliamentary Papers relating to the slave trade prior to 1839, see Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 16 October 1838, PP, GC/HO/533.

<sup>213</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 15 April 1839, PP, GC/HO/563.

<sup>214</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 5 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/583. See also Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 24 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/589. Besides the *Correio*, Howard de Walden reported that 'no other paper has yet published a single document (except the *Oporto* paper which I sent you).'

<sup>215</sup> Palmerston to James Hudson, 1 February 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.2-3. The *Correio Mercantil* began to publish material relating to British anti-slavery, such as the evidence taken from the 1848 House of Commons Select Committee on the Slave Trade. See James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 July 1849, PP, GC/HU/14. For more examples of articles published by this paper in favour of British anti-slavery, see James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 October, 13 November 1849, TNA, FO84/766, ff.121-122, 132-134.

Palmerston's newspaper connections allowed Britain to go one step further, moreover, and to reshape the narrative of domestic politics in these countries in ways that could be very conducive to Britain's anti-slavery objectives. In Brazil, for example, Hudson felt the Brazilian public's 'intense hatred of all [things] Portuguese' was a prejudice which could be exploited.<sup>216</sup> In September 1848, then, he told Palmerston of his plan to agitate this 'rising passion' by 'constantly urging upon the Brazilian public [through the press] that Brazil is still subject to Portugal – that they are the scapegoats of the Portuguese slave trader.' It was his hope that they would 'begin to feel the yoke, to be ashamed of it, and to desire to shake it off.'<sup>217</sup> This plan, he told Palmerston later, might even 'afford the means of securing to our side a large section of the "native Brazilian Party."' For this party apparently hated the Portuguese with a passion, and might even had led to further anti-slavery legislation if this group managed to get into power.<sup>218</sup>

The impact of Palmerston's newspaper manipulation on Portuguese and Brazilian public opinion was striking, according to Britain's Ministers. In Lisbon, for example, Howard de Walden wrote in February 1839 that the anti-slavery platform had given a new 'direction' and 'tone' to the debate, one that would be 'difficult for the *Nacional* to control.'<sup>219</sup> By the summer, he informed Palmerston that a dramatic change in public opinion had taken place; whereas the public had been largely ignorant of the Portuguese slave trade before 'the publication of our documents in the *Correio*,' he wrote, they were now opening their eyes to the role played by Portugal in sustaining that disgusting traffic.<sup>220</sup> By August, he reported triumphantly how the influence of the *Correio's* reporting had gone 'beyond all expectation.' Sá da Bandeira was considered to be 'completely done for & Sabroza is generally blamed for having allowed matters to come to such a pass as they have done,' he wrote.<sup>221</sup> In Brazil, meanwhile, Hudson described to Palmerston how the British backed *Correio Mercantil* and *Philanthropo* were having a demonstrable impact on public opinion, with the line that they propagated against the

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<sup>216</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 12 September 1848, PP, GC/HU/5.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 July 1849, PP, GC/HU/14.

<sup>219</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 5 February 1839, PP, GC/HO/548.

<sup>220</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 28 July 1839, PP, GC/HO/582.

<sup>221</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 12 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/585. By September, the pro-slavery press was losing subscribers and influence, see Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 30 September 1839, PP, GC/HO/597.

Portuguese contingent of slave traders in Rio de Janeiro being particularly effective. 'The Brazilian born of the lower-class will allow us to do anything against the slavers provided the Portuguese are the chief sufferers,' Hudson claimed in July 1849. Likewise, the Brazilian aristocratic classes were beginning to feel that the Portuguese were 'fraudulently ousting them from their estates by introducing that [African] swarm and threaten[ing] to Africanise the whole Empire.'<sup>222</sup>

This thesis supports the argument of David Brown, therefore, that during the nineteenth century 'the press remained simply a tool to be exploited' by politicians 'in order to advance their political agendas,' and that of all Victorian politicians Lord Palmerston was especially 'alert to the possibilities of press management and adept to its execution.'<sup>223</sup> Whereas Brown has examined Palmerston's relationship with the press in a British context,<sup>224</sup> however, and more widely the relationship between media-literate politicians and metropolitan journalism in Britain during the mid-nineteenth century,<sup>225</sup> this thesis shows that Palmerston was also willing to manipulate the press in foreign countries during this period, in this case in Portugal and Brazil, in order to advance his anti-slavery policy. Indeed, using some of the same press management techniques abroad as he did at home, it is clear that Palmerston was an able exploiter of the press in foreign countries. As has already been demonstrated, Palmerston primarily accumulated foreign papers under his banner by 'buying' foreign editors and journalists with money and favours, this being a method he commonly used domestically.<sup>226</sup> With the influence he attained, moreover, that Palmerston commanded these foreign papers to perform the same roles as the 'Palmerstonian journals' at home; utilising them to correct 'falsehoods and misrepresentations' about his foreign policy, to expose deceitful statements put out

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<sup>222</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 July 1849, PP, GC/HU/14. See also James Hudson to Palmerston, 27 July 1850, TNA, FO84/805, ff.219-246; James Hudson to Palmerston, 2 September 1850, TNA, FO84/806, ff.185-186. Hudson felt he had 'succeeded in bringing the merits of the question of slave trade fairly before the Brazilian people.' In September, a combination of Brazilian gentlemen had founded a society in Rio de Janeiro 'for the abolition of the slave trade and the promotion of colonisation and civilisation of the aborigines of Brazil.'

<sup>223</sup> David Brown, 'Morally Transforming the World or Spinning a Line? Politicians and the Newspaper Press in Mid Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Historical Research*, 83, 220 (2010), 321-342 (pp.321, 330). Brown argues that Palmerston might be regarded as 'the ablest manipulator of the press of his time' in 'Compelling but not Controlling?: Palmerston and the Press, 1846-1855', *History*, 86 (2001), 41-61 (p.54). For more on Palmerston's relationship with the press, see Roger Bullen, *Palmerston, Guizot and the Collapse of the Entente Cordiale* (London: Athlone Press, 1974), pp.33, 58.

<sup>224</sup> Brown, 'Compelling but not Controlling?: Palmerston and the Press, 1846-1855'.

<sup>225</sup> Brown, 'Morally Transforming the World or Spinning a Line? Politicians and the Newspaper Press in Mid Nineteenth-Century Britain'.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*, pp.331, 337.



by political rivals (in this sense the Portuguese and Brazilian Governments), to re-shape the narrative of domestic politics, and to promote his own political views and opinions.<sup>227</sup>

Although there are clear parallels to be drawn between Palmerston's manipulation of the press within Britain and externally in foreign countries, however, there are also several differences which can be identified. Unlike at home, for instance, where Palmerston regularly wrote and inserted articles into newspapers such as *The Globe*, there is no evidence that Palmerston had such a close and sustained interaction with the editors of foreign papers. As opposed to his copious letters to the editor of *The Globe*, in other words, where Palmerston commonly enclosed 'articles to be reproduced verbatim,' Palmerston had no such connection with either Portuguese or Brazilian editors.<sup>228</sup> Likewise, there is no evidence that Palmerston provided foreign editors with daily accounts containing 'useful political intelligence,' which could then form the basis of a paper's editorial output, as he did in Britain with John Easthope and Andrew Doyle in the 1840s or with Peter and Algernon Borthwick in the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>229</sup> Similarly, there is no evidence to suggest that Palmerston advised foreign editors on appointments to their paper's staff, as he apparently did with the *Morning Chronicle* in Britain.<sup>230</sup>

Perhaps the most notable difference, however, between Palmerston's manipulation of the press at home and abroad was that Palmerston did not cultivate a close personal and political relationship with foreign newspaper editors. At home, for instance, Brown shows that it was Palmerston's ability to command loyalty from editors and to 'win over admirers who later became adherents' that was most remarkable.<sup>231</sup> It was by meeting with journalists socially and inviting them to Lady Palmerston's soirées, paying close attention to their needs such as by re-arranging the times of his speeches to fit their schedules, or else by providing reporters with advance notice of the subjects he intended to speak about, that Palmerston could nurture 'the allegiance' of the Palmerstonian journals and ensure he was 'not subject to editorial whims and commercial considerations.'<sup>232</sup> At home, moreover, Palmerston managed to assemble a network of

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<sup>227</sup> Brown, 'Compelling but not Controlling?: Palmerston and the Press, 1846–1855', pp.55-60.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid, pp.55-56.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid, pp.52-53.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid, p.52.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid, p.54.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid, pp.47-48.

editors and journalists with complementary political viewpoints to his own; ties which strengthened his close personal relationships with these individuals. Both *The Globe* and the *Morning Chronicle*, for example, became Whig papers during the early 1830s, whilst the *Morning Post* supported Palmerston's foreign policy despite being at variance with him over the subject of free trade.<sup>233</sup> Without the opportunities to cultivate such personal affinities and political networks in foreign countries, however, it is apparent that Palmerston's relationships with foreign editors were more detached, and arguably based upon bonds of pecuniary reliance. To a great extent, one might argue, Palmerston's greatest bargaining chip with foreign editors was money, unlike domestic editors where the dissemination of the 'governing opinion' and of political news (or 'scoops') held more intrinsic value.<sup>234</sup> This was especially the case in Brazil, for instance, where Palmerston mainly cultivated the support of newspapers that were in financial difficulty, and therefore willing to support Palmerston's line in order to satisfy their own commercial interests.

Nevertheless, even if Portuguese and Brazilian newspapers were more dependent than domestic British papers upon pecuniary support from the Government, this does not necessarily mean they were more open to being controlled by Palmerston. Palmerston's relationships with foreign editors remained in line with their British equivalents, it seems, in that his influence was primarily 'positive not negative.' For whilst he could prevail upon the editor of a foreign paper 'to insert an article one day,' it was still the case that he could not prevent them 'from inserting a quite contrary one the next.'<sup>235</sup> Indeed, even if he paid foreign editors out of the Secret Service Fund to circulate anti-slavery views, there is evidence that Palmerston did not expect them to follow his dictation in every case. In August 1839, for example, Palmerston learned from his Minister in Lisbon that the editor of the *Correio* had received 'the most violent threats' from local slave traders for publishing pro-British articles, as well as from the Portuguese Government who directed him to end his publication of the Parliamentary Papers. For 'behaving extremely well' in standing up to these threats and continuing to circulate anti-slavery views, Palmerston granted the editor of that paper an additional gratuity of £25 in

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<sup>233</sup> *Ibid*, pp.51-53.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid*, pp.49, 57.

<sup>235</sup> Brown, 'Morally Transforming the World or Spinning a Line? Politicians and the Newspaper Press in Mid Nineteenth-Century Britain', p.324.

August and, in October, authorised Howard de Walden to give him even more money as a 'reward.'<sup>236</sup> 'I am very glad you have been able to keep the *Correio* & the *Oporto* paper right,' he wrote to his representative in Lisbon, 'and I authorise you to reward them according to your judgement of their deserts'; indicating that it was entirely plausible for the editor of the *Correio* to have reneged on his agreements with Britain.<sup>237</sup> As Brown summates pithily, then, Palmerston still felt that 'he could "impel" but not "control"' foreign papers.<sup>238</sup>

#### IV) The use of force

The final technique Palmerston used to exert pressure on countries who were reluctant to accept and/or comply with his terms for an anti-slavery treaty was to deploy means of physical coercion. As he expressed to the BFASS in 1842, it was his belief that 'the power and influence' of Britain was great, but to crown its ambitions with success that clout needed to be 'strongly and vigorously' exerted. Britain 'must not care for giving offence to the guilty parties,' he declared, but unite measures of 'political influence and...physical coercion.'<sup>239</sup> Once more, however, the extent to which Palmerston was prepared to sanction the use of force differed markedly depending on whether he perceived the recalcitrant nation to be 'advanced,' 'civilised' or 'barbarous.'

Firstly, Palmerston was willing to sanction the use of force against 'advanced' powers, but not very much and only in situations where there was enough ambiguity for him to justify and underplay the extent of Britain's actions via a selective reading of international law. Eight months before Casimir Périer agreed to sign a right-of-search treaty in December 1831, for example, Palmerston made it clear to him that he was prepared to allow British cruisers to stop, search and seize French-flagged vessels on the high seas, even without the legal powers required to instigate such invasions of France's maritime sovereignty. In April, for instance, he informed the French Government that the

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<sup>236</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 5 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/583; Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 14 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/842; Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 4 October 1839, PP, GC/HO/844.

<sup>237</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 4 October 1839, PP, GC/HO/844.

<sup>238</sup> Brown, 'Morally Transforming the World or Spinning a Line? Politicians and the Newspaper Press in Mid Nineteenth-Century Britain', p.324.

<sup>239</sup> Palmerston, Address to the British and Foreign Anti-slavery Society, Broadlands, 18 October 1842, PP, SLT/19.

Royal Navy had detained the French slaver *La Caroline* before delivering that ship (and the 51 enslaved Africans found on board) to the French colony of Gorée for trial.<sup>240</sup>

Significantly, moreover, Palmerston did not conceal the fact that the Royal Navy had ignored the captain of that vessel when he claimed the protection of the French flag, nor the fact that this practice had become routine for the Royal Navy. In the last month, he wrote, no less than half a dozen French vessels had been forcibly boarded by British warships and sent for adjudication to Gorée, some carrying over 2,000 slaves.<sup>241</sup> Although Palmerston did not volunteer a justification for why the navy had boarded and seized the rest of these French cruisers without authorisation, in the case of *La Caroline* Palmerston claimed that Britain had the right to intervene considering that four of the 51 enslaved Africans on board were British citizens, having previously been liberated under the Mixed Commission Court at Sierra Leone.<sup>242</sup>

Considering that the War of 1812 originated from a desire to repel Britain's belligerent right-of-search,<sup>243</sup> Palmerston's decision to let the Royal Navy take similar liberties with American-flagged slavers in this period was perhaps even more inflammatory. Undermining Mason's claim that Palmerston's approach towards the U.S. was 'toothless, even hapless,'<sup>244</sup> it is apparent that American slave traders were frequently stopped and searched by the Royal Navy during the mid-nineteenth century, despite lacking any legal authority to do so until 1862. Incredibly, some U.S. merchants were even towed halfway across the Atlantic and into an American port for trial during this period.<sup>245</sup> In June 1839, for example, Commander Tucker of HMS *Wolverine* not only stopped and searched two American-flagged vessels on the high seas, the *Eagle* and

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<sup>240</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 9 April 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.13-18.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid. HMS *Black Joke* had lately boarded five French vessels containing upwards of 2,000 slaves. A few days before the capture of *La Caroline*, HMS *Conflict* met with another French brig, the *Amilie*, trading for slaves. In December 1830, HMS *Favourite* boarded the French brig *La Jeune Amiline* bound for Guadaloupe with 289 slaves on board.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid. For another example, see Palmerston to Prince Talleyrand, 6 June 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.187-188. In June 1831, Palmerston informed the French ambassador to London that the *Virginie* of Nantes had been delivered to Sierra Leone for trial. The enslaved Africans held prisoner on that vessel, he explained, had successfully revolted against their oppressors, taken possession of the vessel, and sailed it into the British colony. Thus, his implication was that when the *Virginie* arrived into Sierra Leone it no longer carried the protection of the French flag and was thus liable to be prosecuted and condemned by a British law court.

<sup>243</sup> Robert P. Watson, *America's First Crisis: The War of 1812* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2014), pp.4-6.

<sup>244</sup> Mason, 'Keeping up Appearances', p.826.

<sup>245</sup> Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, pp.162-163, 165, 184, 187. See also Soulsby, *The Right of Search and the Slave Trade in Anglo-American Relations*, pp.47-63; Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, p.37. Not since the American Revolution, Warren Howard stated, had a British warship 'brought captured American vessels into an American seaport for adjudication.'

*Clara*, but when it transpired these ships were sailing fraudulently under the American flag he organised for them to be hauled into the port of New York for trial.<sup>246</sup> To justify Britain's invasion of America's maritime sovereignty, Palmerston once again interpreted the Royal Navy's actions via a selective reading of international law. Vitaly, Palmerston accepted that British cruisers had no 'right' (without a treaty) to search and detain vessels which were 'the property of citizens of the United States.'<sup>247</sup> However, he argued that a vessel flying the American flag should not be treated as *bona fide* American until its papers could be verified. Thus, Palmerston made a crucial distinction between the right to 'visit' a foreign ship in order to verify its true nationality, which he argued was legal in peacetime, and the right to 'search' the contents of a ship's hold, which was only permissible by formal consent or in wartime.<sup>248</sup> Palmerston's interpretation of international law was supported by the Queen's Advocate as well as the Admiralty.<sup>249</sup> As a result, the 'right-of-visit' subsequently became an established part of the Royal Navy's protocol when policing the American-flagged slave trade.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 25 June 1839, TNA, FO84/296, ff.23-24. For Commander Tucker's account of this incident, see Commander Tucker to Admiral Elliott, 16 April 1839, in 'Correspondence with Foreign Powers, not Parties to Conventions giving Mutual Right of Search of Vessels suspected of Slave Trade, 1839-40 (Class D)', *Parliamentary Papers*, xlvii, 219 (1840), pp.123-124. Commander Tucker justified his actions via the precedent set by the capture of the *Mary Ann Cassard*, with a full cargo of enslaved Africans, by HMS *Brisk*. This was evidently not the first episode of an American-flagged vessel being captured by the Royal Navy, but it was the first to cause an international incident. Both the *Eagle* and *Clara* were transported to New York by Lieutenant Fitzgerald of HMS *Buzzard*, see Commander Tucker to Lieutenant Fitzgerald, 5 April 1839, in 'Correspondence with Foreign Powers, not Parties to Conventions giving Mutual Right of Search of Vessels suspected of Slave Trade, 1839-40 (Class D)', *Parliamentary Papers*, xlvii, 219 (1840), p.125.

<sup>247</sup> Palmerston to Andrew Stevenson, 5 August 1841, TNA, FO84/376, ff.193-200.

<sup>248</sup> For a clear expression of Palmerston's definition of the right-of-visit, see Palmerston to Andrew Stevenson, 27 August 1841, TNA, FO84/376, ff.203-212. In the cases of the *Eagle* and *Clara*, therefore, once Tucker had 'visited' the American-flagged ship and established that it was actually *bona fide* Spanish, he was liable to search it on account of Britain's anti-slavery treaty with Spain. On this occasion, therefore, Tucker should not have sailed the vessel into an American port but insisted upon the Anglo-Spanish Mixed Commission Court taking the case.

<sup>249</sup> For the approval of the Queen's Advocate, see William Fox-Strangways to the Secretary to the Admiralty, 25 June 1839, TNA, FO84/302, ff.14-16. For the approval of the Admiralty, see Lord Minto to Palmerston, 7 June 1839, PP, GC/MI/387. 'I hope you will be of opinion that commander Tucker has acted properly,' Minto stated.

<sup>250</sup> Palmerston worked out new instructions for the Royal Navy with the First Lord of the Admiralty, see Lord Minto to Palmerston, 31 August, 10 September 1839, PP, GC/MI/400, 402. Depending on the circumstances, U.S.-flagged vessels were either accepted by a Mixed Commission at Sierra Leone (if adequate evidence proved the vessel was not *bona fide* American), or hauled across the Atlantic to the port of New York. For another example, see the case of the *Wyoming*, which was sailed into New York in June 1839 under similar circumstances by HMS *Harlequin*. See Sir Henry Fox to Palmerston, 30 July 1839, TNA, FO84/296, ff.126-131.

Furthermore, Palmerston also permitted the Royal Navy to visit and examine the papers of Russian-flagged slave traders during the 1830s, before the completion of the Great Power treaty.<sup>251</sup> In 1839, for example, Palmerston retrospectively endorsed the actions of Lieutenant Hill of HMS *Bonetta*, who in January had detained and inspected the *Goloubtchik* sailing under the Trikolor on suspicion of being a *bona fide* Spanish slave trader. When Hill's suspicions were proved accurate, he towed that vessel back to England for trial in an Anglo-Spanish Mixed Commission Court.<sup>252</sup> Once again, moreover, Palmerston did not conceal this use of force but let it be known to the Russian Government in June 1839.<sup>253</sup> Crucially though, he also made sure to justify this seizure in the same way as he did American-flagged vessels; stating that upon a verification of the *Goloubtchik's* papers that vessel was in fact Spanish and merely pretending to be Russian, and therefore liable for detention due to Britain's treaties with Spain.<sup>254</sup>

Nevertheless, there was still a limit to how far Palmerston would allow the navy to forcibly suppress the American and Russian-flagged slave trades. In October 1840, for example, the *bona fide* American vessel *Tigris* was stopped and searched near Luanda under suspicious circumstances by HMS *Waterwitch*. Despite orders to respect American sovereignty if (after visitation) the ship was confirmed as American, however,<sup>255</sup> Commander Matson sent the *Tigris* to Salem for trial.<sup>256</sup> In this case, the *Tigris* should never have been searched once the ship's papers were examined and their authenticity declared, and certainly not hauled to a U.S. port for trial. As such, Palmerston de-escalated the situation rapidly. After referring the case to the Queen's Advocate, he sent a warning to the Admiralty clarifying their instructions: even if they were actively engaged in slave trade, he wrote, naval officers should 'abstain from capturing [authentic]

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<sup>251</sup> See, for example, Foreign Office to the Admiralty, 25 June 1839, TNA, FO84/302, ff.18-21. In this 'confidential' memorandum, Palmerston authorised the Royal Navy to stop and search any suspected slave traders flying the Russian flag.

<sup>252</sup> Palmerston to Marquess of Clanricarde, 16 May 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.239-240. Clanricarde was to entreat the Russian Government's 'serious attention' to this subject, and 'urge it to consent to' the Five Powers treaty.

<sup>253</sup> Marquess of Clanricarde to Count Nesselrode, 3 June 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.259-261, enclosed in Marquess of Clanricarde to Palmerston, 3 June 1839, TNA, FO84/291, f.257.

<sup>254</sup> Nikolai Kisséleff to Palmerston, 9 July 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.307-308. In this letter, Kisséleff set down in writing what occurred in a private interview between them at the Foreign Office.

<sup>255</sup> Palmerston to Andrew Stevenson, 15 February 1840, TNA, FO84/332, ff.98-101.

<sup>256</sup> For Commander Matson's account of this incident, see Commander Matson to the Secretary or Registrar of either of the Circuit Courts of the United States, 19 October 1840, TNA, FO84/376, ff.170-174.

American vessels.<sup>257</sup> In addition, Palmerston hastily informed the U.S. Government of what had occurred and of his swift censure of Matson's action.<sup>258</sup> Similarly, when Count Nesselrode complained to Palmerston that the *Goloubtchik* was a *bona fide* Russian vessel and demanded its restitution,<sup>259</sup> Palmerston did not argue the point but instead allowed the vessel to be transferred to Russian control 'without delay.'<sup>260</sup> Evidently, he did not want to get into a quarrel with St Petersburg if one could be avoided on this matter.<sup>261</sup>

Palmerston's use of force was arguably his most effective instrument of coercion with France and Russia. According to the duc de Broglie, for example, the French court was very embarrassed at how the Royal Navy was stopping and searching French merchant vessels on the high seas. Writing about this situation in his memoirs, he claimed it was well known in official circles that the only way to stop Britain from violating French sovereignty was either to contest their activities or to sign a right-of-search agreement to regulate them. At that moment in France's history, however, with the new regime in desperate need of allies in Europe, only the latter was deemed a feasible option. As Broglie stated, 'it was no time to tell London to stop.'<sup>262</sup> Palmerston's willingness to allow the Royal Navy's policing of Russian-flagged vessels had a similar impact upon Count Nesselrode in 1839. For shortly afterwards the *Goloubtchik* incident, Nesselrode became the first minister from the Holy Alliance to accept Palmerston's Great Power treaty;

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<sup>257</sup> Lord Leveson to Sir John Barrow, 8 February 1841, in 'Correspondence with Foreign Powers, not Parties to Conventions giving Mutual Right of Search of Vessels suspected of Slave Trade, 1841 (Class D)', *Parliamentary Papers*, xliv, 173 (1842), pp.167-168. See also Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 24 May 1841, TNA, FO84/376, ff.33-34, in which Palmerston described clearly the limits of his right-of-visit policy.

<sup>258</sup> Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 9 February 1841, TNA, FO84/376, ff.7-8. See also Palmerston to Sir Henry Fox, 16 July 1841, TNA, FO84/376, ff.39-40. Palmerston felt that Commander Matson 'ought not to have meddled with the Tigris when he found that she was really United States property.'

<sup>259</sup> Nikolai Kisséleff to Palmerston, 24 July 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.312-314.

<sup>260</sup> Palmerston to Nikolai Kisséleff, 15 August 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.286-289.

<sup>261</sup> This decision is perhaps even more significant given that, from the Admiralty's perspective, the vessel was not *bona fide* Russian but in fact Spanish. Lord Minto disagreed with the Russian Government's claim of ownership. See Lord Minto to Palmerston, 14 August 1839, PP, GC/MI/397. Furthermore, Lord Minto informed Palmerston with disgust that 'the captain of the Russian slaver to be released states that it is his intention to proceed directly to the coast of Africa where he will prosecute the slave trade with impunity.' See Lord Minto to Palmerston, 17 August 1839, PP, GC/MI/398.

<sup>262</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, pp.156-157. See also Ibid p.154. The French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Horace Sébastiani, evidently felt this way too, writing to the Minister of Marine that it was 'indispensable' to meet Palmerston's request for a treaty since it was 'the only way' to stop the abuse of French vessels. In June 1831, the French ambassador in London, Prince Talleyrand, did in fact issue a forceful complaint about these captures. Britain, he asserted, had 'in the most positive manner violated the right of sovereignty of France.' Hence, Talleyrand pressed for an apology and an assurance that these actions would not continue. Nevertheless, Palmerston ignored his letter. See Prince Talleyrand to Palmerston, 23 June 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.191-193.

authorising Nikolai Kisséleff, Russia's ambassador to London, to enter the next phase of negotiations.<sup>263</sup>

There is no doubt, however, that Palmerston's use of force against the U.S. had the opposite effect; provoking America's strident patriotism and making a right-of-search agreement far less likely.<sup>264</sup> The American Minister to London was livid, for instance, describing any interference with American merchants as 'piratical' and an 'outrage.'<sup>265</sup> In February 1840, he admonished Palmerston in an official protest that Britain had 'no right... to board and search the vessels of the U.S... however qualified or restricted the right claimed may be.'<sup>266</sup> A year later, he repeated this remonstrance, arguing that 'each nation must be left to judge for itself; each be the arbiter of its own justice.'<sup>267</sup> Not long afterwards, John Forsyth, the U.S. Secretary of State, angrily rejected Palmerston's latest proposal for a right-of-search treaty and denounced Britain's other treaties as 'dead letters in the criminal code.'<sup>268</sup> Furthermore, he deployed an American naval force to the West African coast 'to protect American vessels from improper molestation'<sup>269</sup> and, following the commotion over the *Tigris*, warned Palmerston ominously that any further intrusions would lead to war.<sup>270</sup> In response, however, Palmerston was far from 'timid and pliant' and often countered Forsyth's protests with equal vigour.<sup>271</sup> Armed with his selective reading of international law, for example, Palmerston invariably dismissed

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<sup>263</sup> The *Goloubtchik* incident was resolved in mid-August 1839. In mid-September, Nesselrode sent instructions to his ambassador to London to negotiate the five power treaty with Palmerston. See Nikolai Kisséleff to Palmerston, 25 September 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.330-331.

<sup>264</sup> It certainly did not encourage 'corroboration and support' between Britain and the U.S. as Sir Henry Fox envisaged. See Sir Henry Fox to Palmerston, 4 July 1839, TNA, FO84/296, ff.82-89. See also Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, pp.10-12; Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, pp.xi, 2, 203.

<sup>265</sup> Andrew Stevenson to Palmerston, 26 August 1839, TNA, FO84/296, ff.357-358, and enclosures, ff.361-366. This complaint was made following the visitation and search of the American merchant *Susan* by HMS *Grecian*.

<sup>266</sup> Andrew Stevenson to Palmerston, 17 February 1840, TNA, FO84/332, ff.154-156.

<sup>267</sup> Andrew Stevenson to Palmerston, 16 April 1841, TNA, FO84/376, ff.321-327.

<sup>268</sup> John Forsyth to Sir Henry Fox, 12 February 1840, TNA, FO84/332, ff.67-81, enclosed in Sir Henry Fox to Palmerston, 1 March 1840, TNA, FO84/332, ff.65-66.

<sup>269</sup> John Forsyth to Sir Henry Fox, 12 February 1840, TNA, FO84/332, ff.67-81, enclosed in Sir Henry Fox to Palmerston, 1 March 1840, TNA, FO84/332, ff.65-66. For an account of the U.S. West African Squadron, see Donald L. Canney, *Africa Squadron: The US Navy and the Slave Trade, 1842-1861* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2006).

<sup>270</sup> John Forsyth to Sir Henry Fox, 1 March 1841, TNA, FO84/376, ff.160-162, enclosed in Sir Henry Fox to Palmerston, 15 March 1841, TNA, FO84/376, ff.99-106. Fox warned Palmerston that 'considering the present state of the slave trade question between the two governments' as well as 'the present temper of men's minds in America with regard to England,' 'no good is likely to arise from the further detention and capture of American slave vessels by Her Majesty's cruisers.' Forsyth's warning was followed by a stinging rebuke from Stevenson, who castigated Palmerston for this 'open and unprovoked aggression.' See Andrew Stevenson to Palmerston, 16 April 1841, TNA, FO84/376, ff.321-327.

<sup>271</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.56



Andrew Stevenson's complaints as 'unfounded,' producing accounts of the same incident by British officers which contradicted his allegations and reaffirming his commitment to the right-of-visit.<sup>272</sup> In August 1841, following Stevenson's sixth remonstrance,<sup>273</sup> Palmerston declared angrily that 'Her Majesty's Government would fain hope that the day is not far distant when the Government of the United States will cease to confound two things which are in their nature entirely different... will join the Christian League and will no longer permit the ships & subjects of the Union to be engaged in undertakings which the law of the Union punishes as piracy.'<sup>274</sup> In private, moreover, Palmerston wrote to John Easthope, editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, that if the U.S. 'was prepared to enforce such a pretension by war, even by war it ought to be resisted.'<sup>275</sup>

In contrast, Palmerston's use of force with 'civilised' states was far less restrained. As he told the Governor of Hong Kong in an official dispatch in September 1850, the *argumentum ad baculum* was an essential instrument of policy when dealing with 'half-civilised Governments' such as Portugal and Brazil. These nations, Palmerston claimed, 'require a dressing down every eight or ten years to keep them in order,' for 'their minds' were 'too shallow to receive an impression' that would 'last longer than some such period.' They cared 'little for words and must not only see the stick but actually feel it on their shoulders before they yield.'<sup>276</sup> Palmerston certainly resorted to the *argumentum ad baculum* with both these nations as part of his efforts to suppress the slave trade; utilising methods that would have been utterly inconceivable towards 'advanced' powers. In 1839, for instance, Palmerston finally 'cut the knot' with Portugal after his ultimatum

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<sup>272</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to Andrew Stevenson, 23 April 1840, TNA, FO84/332, ff.110-112. For another example, see the case of the *Edwin*, in Andrew Stevenson to Palmerston, 5 February, 17 February 1840, TNA, FO84/332, ff.140-143, 154-156; Palmerston to Andrew Stevenson, 17 August 1840, TNA, FO84/332, ff.123-124.

<sup>273</sup> After the cases of the *Susan* and *Edwin*, Stevenson made four further complaints about the visitation of the American merchants *Douglas*, *Iago*, *Hero* and *Mary*. See Andrew Stevenson to Palmerston, 26 August 1839, TNA, FO84/296, ff.357-358; Andrew Stevenson to Palmerston, 5 February, 13 November 1840, TNA, FO84/332, ff.140-143, 191-199; Andrew Stevenson to Palmerston, 27 February, 15 May 1841, TNA, FO84/376, ff.272-279, 411-417.

<sup>274</sup> Palmerston to Andrew Stevenson, 27 August 1841, TNA, FO84/376, ff.203-212.

<sup>275</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.268. Nevertheless, Palmerston made clear that he did not expect the U.S. to go to war with Britain 'upon so unjust a ground.' Throughout the 1830s, Palmerston insisted that the U.S. and Britain would not go to war, largely on account of the cost it would entail. See, for example, Palmerston to Lady Cowper, 4 November 1831, PP, BR/23AA/5/13. See also Palmerston to William Temple, 20 April 1840, 9 February 1841, PP, GC/TE/285, 291; Palmerston to Lord Lansdowne, 25 April 1840, PP, GC/LA/109. Nevertheless, this did not stop rumours of war abounding of both sides of the Atlantic. See Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, p.168.

<sup>276</sup> Christopher John Bartlett, *Great Britain and Sea Power, 1815-1853* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), pp.261-262.

to Sá da Bandeira was ignored for nine months.<sup>277</sup> After passing a 'protecting Bill' to furnish the Admiralty with additional powers,<sup>278</sup> Palmerston instructed the Royal Navy to stop, search and seize all suspicious vessels flying the Portuguese flag in the high seas in August 1839, irrespective of existing treaty rights.<sup>279</sup> Regardless of whether slavers were captured north or south of the equator, found carrying slaves or merely equipped to do so, British cruisers were told to escort them to the nearest British port for trial in a British law court. Once the vessel had been prosecuted and condemned, any Portuguese subject on board was to be returned to Lisbon with the expectation that they meet the full force of their own country's anti-slavery laws, whilst the ships themselves were to be broken up and sold at auction if not purchased by the Admiralty.<sup>280</sup> Most importantly, any enslaved African rescued by the Royal Navy was to be liberated into the same British colony as the court which freed them – which was mostly Sierra Leone.<sup>281</sup>

Similarly, when Palmerston re-entered the Foreign Office in 1846 he was determined to suppress vigorously the revived Brazilian slave trade, since that nation had allowed its right-of-search treaty with Britain to expire a year earlier and was refusing to sign a new one.<sup>282</sup> In this instance, however, Palmerston was even more ruthless, allowing the Royal Navy to police that traffic inside Brazil's sovereign waters in what Lesley Bethell has described as an 'invasion.'<sup>283</sup> If suspected slave ships were captured but deemed unseaworthy, furthermore, and thus unable to make the voyage to a British law court, Palmerston authorised the navy to make a summary judgement of their case on the spot; even allowing them to destroy the vessel immediately.<sup>284</sup> To consolidate these

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<sup>277</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 24 December 1838, PP, GC/HO/829. The Portuguese Government eventually rejected Palmerston's proposed treaty in February 1839, see Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, [n.d.] February 1839, PP, GC/HO/550.

<sup>278</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 10 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/841. For more on the Act of Parliament that Palmerston passed to empower the Admiralty, see the discussion below, pp.160-161.

<sup>279</sup> For a copy of Palmerston's orders, see Palmerston to the Lords of the Admiralty, 15 August 1839, TNA, FO84/302, ff.91-92.

<sup>280</sup> Bethell, 'The Mixed Commissions for the Suppression of the Transatlantic Slave Trade', pp.89-90.

<sup>281</sup> Directions had been given to the Governors of Britain's settlements abroad 'to make necessary arrangements for the care and support of the negroes who may be landed and set free under these orders.' See Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 23 October 1839, TNA, FO84/283, ff.16-17.

<sup>282</sup> For more on the revived Brazilian slave trade of the early 1840s, see Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, chp.7. For more on the Brazilian Government's refusal to negotiate a new treaty and the expiration of the 1826 Anglo-Brazilian Treaty, see *Ibid*, chp.9.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid*, p.311. For Bethell's account of Palmerston's implementation of the Aberdeen Act, see *Ibid*, chp.11, 12.

<sup>284</sup> See, for example, the cases of the *Leonidas* and *Serea*, both of which were sunk by HMS *Cormorant* on 1 July 1850 because they were deemed unseaworthy and unable to make the voyage to Saint Helena for trial. See Commander Schomberg to Rear Admiral Reynolds, 5 July 1850, TNA, FO84/804, ff.181-196. See also

belligerent new measures as official policy, Palmerston deliberately overrode the decision of Rear Admiral Reynolds, who had initially scolded naval officers for giving Brazil 'just cause for offense.'<sup>285</sup> After praising the actions of seamen such as Commander Schomberg, who he felt had 'performed a highly meritorious service... against murderers and pirates,'<sup>286</sup> Palmerston wrote to the Admiralty clarifying their instructions in April. There were 'no restrictions' to where the navy could stop, search or capture slave traders under the Brazilian flag, he asserted. 'Such proceedings may be had at any place within the Brazilian waters as well as on the high seas.'<sup>287</sup> Subsequently, a new standing order was issued to the Royal Navy on 22 June 1850,<sup>288</sup> meaning that during the summer of that year the navy was routinely capturing slave traders within Brazilian rivers, waterways and ports.<sup>289</sup>

Unlike with 'advanced' powers, however, Palmerston was entirely unconcerned about the prospect of going to war with 'civilised' states. In 1839, for example, Palmerston's policy was angrily denounced by the Portuguese Government as a 'flagrant violation' of Portuguese sovereignty and a breach of international law.<sup>290</sup> Urged on by the

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'Documents and proofs taken by HMS *Cormorant*', TNA, FO84/804, ff.198-199. In these cases, naval officers were instructed to take evidence supporting their decision to the nearest British law court for their decision to be rubber stamped. The Brazilian Government objected strongly to this policy, arguing that British naval officers were playing judge, jury and executioner. See Paulino José Soares de Sousa to James Hudson, 12 February 1850, TNA, FO84/802, ff.163-167, enclosed in James Hudson to Palmerston, 20 February 1850, TNA, FO84/802, ff.128-144.

<sup>285</sup> Sir Francis Baring to Palmerston, [n.d.] April 1850, PP, GC/BA/281. See also Rear Admiral Reynolds to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 21 January 1850, TNA, FO84/825, ff.45-46, enclosed in W.A.B. Hamilton to Lord Eddisbury, 6 April 1850, TNA, FO84/825, ff.43-44. James Hudson had urged caution upon Rear Admiral Reynolds. 'Caution and prudence on our part,' he wrote, 'are... more than ever necessary in order to maintain the hold we now have acquired over them.' See James Hudson to Rear Admiral Reynolds, 3 February 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.164-175.

<sup>286</sup> This line was written by Hudson, but singled out for retrospective endorsement by Palmerston. See James Hudson to Paulino José Soares de Sousa, 9 May 1850, TNA, FO84/803, ff.122-140; Palmerston to James Hudson, 5 August 1840, TNA, FO84/801, ff.48-49.

<sup>287</sup> Lord Eddisbury to W.A.B. Hamilton, 22 April 1850, TNA, FO84/823, ff.95-97.

<sup>288</sup> Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.329.

<sup>289</sup> During the years 1846-1850, Bethell states that 350 captures were made, see Bethell, 'The Mixed Commissions for the Suppression of the Transatlantic Slave Trade', p.88. The Royal Navy had been capturing Brazilian slave traders within Brazilian rivers, waterways and ports for a few years before the summer of 1850. See, for example, James Hudson to Palmerston, 24 March 1849, TNA, FO84/765, ff.102-104; James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 October, 10 December 1849, TNA, FO84/766, ff.79-80, 350-351; James Hudson to Palmerston, 20 February 1850, TNA, FO84/802, ff.379-382. However, the rate of captures increased enormously after the new standing order. On one day in July, for instance, Hudson reported eight incidents that had occurred. See James Hudson to Palmerston, 27 July 1850, TNA, FO84/804, ff.168, 177-178, 216-217.

<sup>290</sup> Baron Sabroza to Lord Howard de Walden, [n.d.], TNA, FO84/282, ff.322-377, enclosed in Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 20 September 1839, TNA, FO84/282, ff.315-317; Baron Moncorvo to Palmerston, 1 August 1839, TNA, FO84/284, ff.62-69. Sá da Bandeira wrote a pamphlet denigrating Palmerston's Act as

vociferous pro-slavery press, the Portuguese Government considered how to respond and did not rule out military retaliation.<sup>291</sup> Previously, Sá da Bandeira had threatened 'to turn every Englishman out of Portugal & confiscate their property' if British cruisers took 'a single Portuguese vessel south of the line.'<sup>292</sup> As soon as Palmerston's policy was introduced, moreover, Baron Sabroza placed a frigate off Belém as a demonstration to Britain, whilst the Portuguese Government hinted it was going to recall its Minister to London and break off diplomatic relations with Britain.<sup>293</sup> Nevertheless, Palmerston was unfazed, joking in April 1839 that 'if they choose to retaliate or go to war with us, so much the worse for them,' for 'if like the wife in Molière they like & choose to be beat, so let it be.'<sup>294</sup> Just in case Portugal attempted 'to play us any trick,' however, Palmerston reinforced Britain's squadron on the Tagus – deploying an extra three ships-of-the-line by early autumn.<sup>295</sup> After Portugal eventually decided not to retaliate with armed force but instead to send a strongly worded protest to Europe's Great Powers pleading for assistance, furthermore, Palmerston was again unmoved.<sup>296</sup> Lisbon's plea for help was 'feeble,' he wrote, restating his desire to continue his forceful policy.<sup>297</sup> Sá da Bandeira and his countrymen could 'flood both the river Tagus and the Douzo with their tears of mutual sympathy,' he declared, without having 'the remotest effect upon our operations.'<sup>298</sup> As far as Palmerston was concerned, Britain was already 'morally at war' with Portugal and was no longer 'on terms of friendly alliance.'<sup>299</sup>

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illegal and explaining his role in the failure to negotiate a bilateral treaty. See Visconde de Sá da Bandeira, *O Tráfico da Escravatura, e o Bill de Lord Palmerston* (Lisbon: Morando, 1840).

<sup>291</sup> For examples of pro-slavery newspaper articles published in the Portuguese press, see Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 10 August, 2 September 1839, TNA, FO84/282, ff.194-195, 253-257, and enclosed extracts ff.200-211, 282-298.

<sup>292</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 2 February 1839, PP, GC/HO/547.

<sup>293</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 5 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/584.

<sup>294</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 28 April 1838, PP, GC/HO/825. See also Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 5 August 1839, GC/HO/584. Howard de Walden 'invariably treated all these alarming schemes as child's play & turned them into ridicule, as not calculated to produce the slightest effect upon us.'

<sup>295</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 20 July, 17 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/839, 843.

<sup>296</sup> For a copy of Portugal's circular note to the courts who partook in the treaties and conventions of Vienna in 1815, see Baron Moncorvo to Palmerston, 14 August 1839, TNA, FO84/284, ff.70-74. Portugal's appeal went unanswered, except for Belgium and France who both offered their services as mediators. Palmerston rejected any form of mediation. See Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 9 October 1839, PP, GC/HO/845.

<sup>297</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 17 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/843. Palmerston did, however, deem it expedient to respond to the same courts which the Portuguese note was addressed, enclosing copies of the negotiations between Britain and Portugal on this matter. See Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 5 October 1839, TNA, FO84/283, ff.4-6.

<sup>298</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 24 December 1838, PP, GC/HO/829.

<sup>299</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 24 January 1839, PP, GC/HO/831. See also Palmerston to Lord William Russell, 10 June 1839, GC/RU/1561 in which Palmerston again claimed Britain and Portugal were 'morally at war.'

Similarly, Palmerston's use of force was strongly opposed by Brazil in the 1840s, with Viscount Olinda, the Brazilian Minister for Foreign Affairs, describing Britain's actions in September 1849 as the 'most outrageous violation of those principles by which civilised nations now regulate their international relations.'<sup>300</sup> Palmerston's response, however, was again unbending. It would be 'impossible' for Britain to end its forcible proceedings, he stated, until Brazil took 'proper measures for fulfilling her treaty engagements.'<sup>301</sup> Arguably, though, there was an even greater prospect of war on this occasion given that after April 1850 Britain was routinely invading Brazil's territorial waters and getting into conflicts with local slave traders.<sup>302</sup> The most inflammatory incident that summer, for example, took place inside the River Paranaguá in July, when HMS *Cormorant* rushed three slavers out of a makeshift Brazilian port whilst under fire from slave traders who had assumed command of the nearby harbour fort. During the firefight which ensued, a British sailor was killed and another two wounded. Consequently, when out of range of the fort Commander Schomberg anchored the *Cormorant* and destroyed two of the three slavers in front of a crowd of Brazilian onlookers – purportedly after deciding that a voyage to Saint Helena was impossible for them.<sup>303</sup> Those vessels were 'drifting in flames on the reefs,' Schomberg reported to London, and 'soon dashed to pieces in sight of the fort and the people on shore.'<sup>304</sup>

The Paranaguá affair caused a sensation in Rio de Janeiro and could easily have led to a larger conflict. Gangs of slave traders began to mob the ports and Palace Square to demonstrate, intimidating British sailors and pelting them with stones. Some protestors even held up placards 'calling upon anybody... to kill the English.'<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Viscount Olinda to James Hudson, 3 September 1849, TNA, FO84/766, ff.81-83, enclosed in James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 October 1849, TNA, FO84/766, ff.79-80. See also Joaquim Tomás do Amaral to Palmerston, 17 April 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.236-242.

<sup>301</sup> Palmerston to James Hudson, 31 October 1849, TNA, FO84/766, ff.22-24. See also James Hudson to Paulino José Soares de Sousa, 9 March 1850, TNA, FO84/803, ff.8-10.

<sup>302</sup> A typical incident, for example, took place in June 1850 when HMS *Sharpshooter* successfully hauled the Brazilian slave trader *Polka* out from the port of Macaé. Before towing the vessel to Saint Helena for trial, however, *Sharpshooter* got caught up in a twenty-minute firefight with local slave traders, with Commander Bailey describing the scene as a 'perfect blaze of musketry and signal rockets.' For an account of this incident, see Lieutenant Commander Bailey to Rear Admiral Reynolds, 25 June 1850, TNA, FO84/804, ff.170-176, in James Hudson to Palmerston, 27 July 1850, TNA, FO84/804, f.168.

<sup>303</sup> The one remaining vessel, the *Lucy Ann*, was taken to Sierra Leone for trial.

<sup>304</sup> For Schomberg's account of this incident, see Commander Schomberg to Rear Admiral Reynolds, 5 July 1850, TNA, FO84/804, ff.181-196.

<sup>305</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 27 July 1850, TNA, FO84/804, ff.270-277.

Furthermore, British boarding houses were stormed by 'ruffians' and their residents injured, whilst fabricated rumours were spread that Britain was about to 'bombard the city of Rio,' 'destroy the constitution' and 'carry off the crown jewels.'<sup>306</sup> These 'riots' and 'outrages,' as the British Consul described them, continued for three days at the beginning of July,<sup>307</sup> whilst pro-slavery newspapers apparently abused Palmerston in language 'such as Billingsgate never heard and would blush to hear.'<sup>308</sup> Rather than de-escalating this situation by softening Britain's policy, however, Palmerston vigorously defended the navy's use of force against Brazilian slave traders upon learning of the Paranaguá affair. Angry and astonished, he described the incident as a 'scandalous outrage' and a 'piratical and murderous attack' upon HMS *Cormorant*. As such, he demanded the Brazilian Government institute an inquiry, apologise and give redress to the British Government,<sup>309</sup> and in November threatened that if any more attacks were made upon the Royal Navy then Britain would inflict a 'signal retributive calamity on any Brazilian town from which such attacks shall have been made.'<sup>310</sup> In private, moreover, Palmerston was delighted with the progress being made in Brazil, boasting to Sir Francis Baring in September how Britain's naval operations had 'accomplished in a few weeks what diplomatic notes and negotiations had failed for years to accomplish.' 'The fact is,' he explained, 'it rarely if ever happens that a foreign government gives up its selfish interests, passions or prejudices to the force of argument or persuasion, and the more such a government is in the wrong the more pig headed it usually is.' 'Persuasion seldom succeeds,' he concluded, 'unless there is compulsion of some sort, nearer or further off behind it.'<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Robert Hesketh to James Hudson, 9 July 1850, TNA, FO84/804, ff.273-283. See also William Wood to Robert Hesketh, 8 July 1850, TNA, FO84/804, ff.284-288.

<sup>308</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 3 August 1850, PP, GC/HU/25.

<sup>309</sup> Palmerston to James Hudson, 15 October 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.62-65. Although Paulino refused to give any satisfaction to Britain, for in his opinion 'the *Cormorant* had no right whatsoever to enter the port of Paranaguá' and therefore Brazil had every right 'to repel her,' he did open an inquiry into the incident shortly afterwards. Later, he reported to Palmerston that his Government had dismissed the Commandant of the Paranaguá fort because he had left his post once slave traders 'invaded the fortress.' See Paulino José Soares de Sousa to Hudson, 31 January 1851, TNA, FO84/843, ff.123-130, enclosed in James Hudson to Palmerston, 11 February 1851, TNA, FO84/843, ff.110-111. Since the Brazilian Government was taking steps to punish the persons responsible for the 'piratical outrage' committed upon HMS *Cormorant*, Palmerston replied that he would not press any further demands upon the Brazilian Government. See Palmerston to James Hudson, 29 March 1851, TNA, FO84/842, ff.47-50.

<sup>310</sup> Palmerston to James Hudson, 9 November 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.110-112.

<sup>311</sup> Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 3 September 1850, PP, GC/BA/310.

As with 'advanced' powers, however, there were limits to Palmerston's use of force against 'civilised' nations. Contrary to how Palmerston has been depicted by historians of British anti-slavery as something of a 'gunboat diplomat',<sup>312</sup> his policies towards Portugal and Brazil were neither reckless, hot-headed nor influenced by his 'temper' and 'confrontational' personality.<sup>313</sup> Quite the opposite, an analysis of Palmerston's policy-making on these occasions reveals that he was a serious politician seeking to pursue an intelligent and calculated anti-slavery policy. For example, although things were different with Brazil, since by the time Palmerston returned to office in 1846 the course of events had already turned Britain's anti-slavery policy there towards the 'unavoidable' and 'necessary' use of force,<sup>314</sup> it is clear that during the 1830s Palmerston pressed Portugal diplomatically for a long time before resorting to tough measures, and that throughout negotiations he strived to avoid conflict and to reach an amicable settlement. Indeed, Palmerston negotiated with Lisbon for six years between 1834 and 1839, engaging in three rounds of talks with four different Governments.<sup>315</sup> Palmerston was patient and resilient during this period, granting each new Foreign Minister time to acquaint themselves with the facts of the matter and accepting that they naturally held different assumptions and expectations from their predecessors.<sup>316</sup> Crucially, it was only

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<sup>312</sup> See, for example, Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade*, pp.139-140. See also Craton, *Sinews of Empire*, p.292. Craton argues that whenever his anti-slavery endeavours 'seemed unjustly blocked,' Palmerston swaggered 'into gunboat adventures and even the acquisition of colonies.' See also 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 D.J.B. Trim and Brendan Simms (eds.), *Humanitarian Intervention: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 231-255 (p.246). 'It is no accident,' Ryan claimed, 'that the term "gunboat diplomacy" is often preceded by the description "Palmerstonian".'

<sup>313</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.70-71.

<sup>314</sup> Palmerston to James Hudson, 31 October 1849, TNA, FO84/766, ff.22-24.

<sup>315</sup> The first round of negotiations took place between August and November 1835, with the Government of the Duke of Saldanha. The second round of negotiations took place between December 1835 and September 1836, with the new Government of José Jorge Loureiro and then that of the Duke of Terceira. The third round of negotiations took place after the September 1836 Revolution, with the new Septembrist Government of Sá da Bandeira. This negotiation lasted from November 1836 to April 1839. Negotiations were suspended between May and November 1837 during the Government of António Dias de Oliveira.

<sup>316</sup> After the Government of the Duke of Saldanha collapsed in November 1835, the Marquis of Soulé was given time to get to grips with the negotiations and to sort out the Government's business. Palmerston did not complain when he was informed by Howard de Walden of Soulé's excuses. See, for example, Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 23 January, 27 February 1836, TNA, FO84/202, ff.106-107, 110-111. After negotiations eventually began, a treaty was quickly agreed with the Marquis of Soulé. It was ready to be signed on 19 April 1836, only for Soulé to leave Office a day later. See Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 19 April 1836, TNA, FO84/202, f.152. Nevertheless, Palmerston was prepared to allow his successor, Count Villa Real, time to get to grips with the negotiations and to renegotiate his own treaty. Again, he did not complain about Villa Real taking time to sort out Portugal's business arrears. See Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 30 April 1836, TNA, FO84/202, ff.158-159. Moreover, Palmerston waited over a month before continuing negotiations. For his first dispatch on this topic in a month, see Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 3 June 1836, TNA, FO84/202, ff.81-83. After the Revolution of September 1836, Palmerston waited three months before instructing his Minister in Lisbon to recommence negotiations over

after all three rounds of negotiations had failed that Palmerston altered Britain's policy and began to act forcefully. Hence, in one of his final dispatches to Lisbon before seeking new powers for the Royal Navy, Palmerston argued he had done everything possible diplomatically to prevent the course of action he was about to take. He had laboured 'incessantly' to awaken the Portuguese Government's sense of obligation to repress that unlawful trade, yet despite all his efforts no Portuguese authority had 'ever taken any effectual steps to punish or even to interrupt' the trade.<sup>317</sup>

Moreover, it is evident that Palmerston increased the amount of pressure he exerted on Lisbon gradually, only moving on to force after all his other persuasive techniques had failed. In incremental steps, for example, he moved from sending Portugal representations outlining his plans for a treaty to remonstrances which criticised and exposed Portugal's connivance in the slave trade.<sup>318</sup> When these methods did not yield results, he moved on to making threats and ultimatums, before finally deploying the might of British sea-power when these too proved futile.<sup>319</sup> Furthermore, when Palmerston finally did escalate matters, his timing was evidently not impulsive but carefully planned. For example, Palmerston did not start issuing Portugal with threats straightaway, but waited until he had received the formal consent of the Cabinet as well as the explicit support of Parliament.<sup>320</sup> Similarly, after realising in December 1838 that

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an anti-slavery treaty. For his first dispatch in three months, see Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 26 November 1836, TNA, FO84/203, ff.31-32. Once more, Palmerston was sympathetic to Sá da Bandeira's demands for more time to get accustomed to the negotiations. He did not complain about his excuses. See, for example, Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 18 March 1837, TNA, FO84/215, ff.84-86. Finally, Palmerston was content to allow Sá da Bandeira to disagree with the propositions agreed by his predecessor. See Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 18 March 1837, TNA, FO84/215, ff.84-86.

<sup>317</sup> Palmerston, 'Draft of note to be presented by Lord Howard de Walden to the Portuguese Government', TNA, FO84/281, ff.56-124, enclosed in Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 20 April 1839, TNA, FO84/281, ff.54-56.

<sup>318</sup> For Palmerston's initial representation, see Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 8 September 1834, TNA, FO84/155, ff.174-179, and enclosed draft treaty, ff.180-328. Palmerston's remonstrances to the Portuguese Government between 1834 and 1839 are too numerous to list in their entirety. For a representative example from each year, see Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 7 October 1834, TNA, FO84/155, ff.330-342; Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 9 July 1835, TNA, FO84/178, ff.16-18; Palmerston to Baron Moncorvo, 30 April 1836, TNA, FO84/202, ff.31-78; Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 7 January 1837, TNA, FO84/215, ff.1-2; Palmerston, 'Note to be presented by Lord Howard de Walden to the Portuguese Minister', TNA, FO84/248, ff.48-52, enclosed in Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 30 April 1838, TNA, FO84/248, ff.46-47; Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 20 April 1839, TNA, FO84/281, ff.47-49. Palmerston occasionally sent Resolutions from Parliament to Lisbon. See, for example, Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 10 June 1835, TNA, FO84/178, ff.13-15. See also Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 12 May 1838, TNA, FO84/249, ff.27-33.

<sup>319</sup> For Palmerston's use of threats and ultimatums, see the discussion from this Chapter, pp.125-126. For his use of naval force, see again the discussion from this Chapter, p.149.

<sup>320</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 19 May 1838, PP, GC/HO/828. Although he would have preferred to threaten Lisbon sooner, Palmerston explained to Howard de Walden that it was



his threats were leaving no impression on Lisbon,<sup>321</sup> Palmerston did not spontaneously change the navy's orders and allow cruisers to police Portuguese vessels regardless of existing treaty rights. Instead, he announced his intention to invest Britain's cruisers with additional powers and waited a further nine months to obtain formal Parliamentary approval.<sup>322</sup> Even during this time, moreover, Palmerston waited as long as possible before announcing his plans to the House of Commons. He decided not to put anything about the Portuguese slave trade in the Queen's speech from the throne in 1839, for instance, to give the Portuguese Government 'every chance and opportunity' of sending across the treaty.<sup>323</sup> Thus, were it not for his strenuous efforts to use force only as a last resort, the events of 1839 might have happened much sooner.

Although Palmerston used what appeared to be an unlimited amount of force to coerce Portugal and Brazil during the 1830s and 1840s, furthermore, it would also be an exaggeration to claim that Britain's cruisers were totally unrestricted. For example, at no point did Palmerston countenance a military invasion of Portugal or a blockade of their coastline to extract an anti-slavery treaty. Conversely, Palmerston rejected Howard de Walden's proposal that Britain make 'some decisive blow against the slavers in the Portuguese ports' and ruled out a blockade,<sup>324</sup> telling Britain's Minister in Lisbon he would 'not be so foolish as to send a squadron to the Tagus to force the Portuguese Government to sign a treaty.'<sup>325</sup> As such, he purposefully kept the Royal Navy's actions confined to the Atlantic and far away from Europe. If Portugal had declared war on

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necessary to wait for others to 'come around to opinions which I myself have long entertained,' because if 'mere menace' was unavailing he had to know for certain that his threats would be followed through. For more on the support of the Cabinet to Palmerston's use of force against Portugal, see Palmerston, Memorandum on Portuguese Slave Trade Bill, [n.d.] August 1839, PP, CAB/30. Lord Melbourne, Lord Minto, Lord John Russell and Lord Denman (who was invited to Cabinet to discuss this issue) all supported the use of force. See Lord Denman to Palmerston, 3 August 1839, PP, CAB/31; Lord Melbourne to Palmerston, 5 August 1839, PP, CAB/33; Lord John Russell to Palmerston, 4 August 1839, PP, CAB/34; Lord Minto to Palmerston, [n.d.] August 1839, PP, CAB/35. For the support of both Houses of Parliament, see Buxton, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xxxii, 269-271 (14 March 1836); Inglis, 'Treaties for the Abolition of Slavery', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xxxviii, 1823-1828 (6 July 1837); Inglis, 'Foreign Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xlii, 1123-1137 (10 May 1838); Brougham, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xl, 596-609 (29 January 1838); Brougham, 'Negro Emancipation', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xl, 1284-1316 (20 February 1838).

<sup>321</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 24 December 1838, PP, GC/HO/829.

<sup>322</sup> Palmerston began preparing his Bill to coerce the Portuguese slave trade in December 1838, see Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 24 December 1838, PP, GC/HO/829. After an unintentional delay, the Bill was sent to the Treasury at the end of January. It took several months, however, before the Bill reached Parliament. The Bill was finally passed in August, nine months after it was first drafted. For more on the passage of Palmerston's Bill, see Bethell, 'Britain, Portugal and the Suppression of the Brazilian Slave Trade', esp. pp.776-781.

<sup>323</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 2 February 1839, PP, GC/HO/832.

<sup>324</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 1 March 1839, PP, GC/HO/552.

<sup>325</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 24 December 1838, PP, GC/HO/829.

Britain, moreover, Palmerston planned to attack their colonies rather than to invade the Iberian Peninsula. Discussing war plans with Howard de Walden in 1838, Palmerston claimed he would 'settle the question most effectively by taking possession of all her African settlements and colonies.'<sup>326</sup> This, he believed, would force Portugal to 'beg on her knees' to obtain a suppression treaty and avoid a larger conflict.<sup>327</sup>

Similarly, Palmerston did not allow the Royal Navy to invade the Brazilian mainland in the 1850s or to seize control over her island territories, as he was advised to do by the British Minister in Rio de Janeiro. For in October 1848, Hudson had suggested that Britain occupy Itaparica, Santa Catarina, Saint Sebastian, Ilha Grande and Cabo Frio, and use them as leverage to force the Brazilian Government into suppressing the slave trade. All of them could be given back after abolition was complete, he stressed, or else ceded permanently to the British Empire. Such a policy was 'absolutely necessary,' however, since 'nothing but terror of further dismemberment' would 'ever compel the Brazilian Government to relinquish' the slave trade.<sup>328</sup> In turning down Hudson's recommendations, Palmerston also rejected Hudson's plan to inspire a slave revolt in Bahia. Indeed, Hudson felt it 'almost certain' that by occupying Brazilian territories Britain could inspire a slave revolt in that region, since the enslaved Africans there were perceived to be combative and had already attempted 'to throw off their yoke and establish themselves in freedom.' An insurrection, Hudson proclaimed enthusiastically, would have far-ranging ramifications. Not only would the Brazilian slave trade be 'annihilated' at its 'chief seat,' but a successful 'revolution' in Bahia would affect 'the existence of slavery itself' in Brazil, for the enslaved Africans 'in other populous districts' might be tempted 'to follow their example.'<sup>329</sup> Lastly, Palmerston also rejected Hudson's plan to reduce the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Bahia 'to utter ruin and prostration.' For in the same letter, Hudson implored Palmerston to starve Brazil of both revenue and food supplies (most of which was imported from abroad) by blockading not just the slave trade

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<sup>326</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 10 March 1838, PP, GC/HO/819.

<sup>327</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 24 December 1838, PP, GC/HO/829.

<sup>328</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 October 1848, PP, GC/HU/6. These suggestions were in response to a private letter from Palmerston asking Hudson to think up 'some vigorous steps' that could be taken 'between this and the next session to put this Brazilian slave trade down.' See Palmerston to James Hudson, 4 August 1848, PP, GC/HU/45.

<sup>329</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 October 1848, PP, GC/HU/6.

but everything going into and out of Brazil's main ports.<sup>330</sup> Palmerston rejected all of these schemes, then, and did not even bother to send Hudson a formal response.<sup>331</sup>

Quite the opposite of what Hudson advised, Palmerston's instructions to the Admiralty suggest that he preferred Britain's cruisers to exercise the least amount of force necessary to secure Britain's objectives in Brazil. For within the orders he sent out in April 1850 enabling British cruisers to enter Brazilian territorial waters unrestricted, Palmerston included the clarification that it would 'of course be proper that such proceedings should not take place except in cases in which there can be no likelihood of successful resistance.'<sup>332</sup> In November, moreover, Palmerston sent across another significant qualification: that British officers make sure 'to avoid unnecessarily provoking the Brazilian authorities' and communicate with them before making a capture inside a Brazilian port.<sup>333</sup> In effect, then, Palmerston ensured there were safeguards in place to try and prevent conflicts between the Royal Navy and local slave traders. Reports sent back to the Admiralty indicate that Palmerston's qualification was heeded, and that Britain's cruisers did try and prevent tensions coming to fruition within Brazilian ports. In the Paranaguá affair, for example, Commander Schomberg claimed that he informed the fort commander of his intentions before seizing the three suspected slave traders.<sup>334</sup> Even when conflicts did erupt, therefore, this was arguably in spite of Palmerston's efforts to keep the peace. Palmerston was no doubt sincere, in other words, when he told the Brazilian Government in April 1850 that Britain's naval officers employed 'great moderation' in executing their orders on the Brazilian coast, and used force 'only in so limited a degree.'<sup>335</sup>

Finally, this thesis contends that the notion of international law was more important to Palmerston than contemporary historians have heretofore acknowledged, and his relationship with it more complex. It has commonly been argued, for instance, that Palmerston was untroubled by questions of legality when it came to

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<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Palmerston did share some of Hudson's ideas with Lord John Russell, who mocked them as absolutely unthinkable in February 1850 and suggested that Palmerston 'fling' them 'to the Cerberus.' See Lord John Russell to Palmerston, 9 February 1850, PP, GC/RU/317.

<sup>332</sup> Lord Eddisbury to W.A.B. Hamilton, 22 April 1850, TNA, FO84/823, ff.95-97.

<sup>333</sup> Lord Eddisbury to John Parker, 26 November 1850, TNA, FO84/823, ff.243-245.

<sup>334</sup> Commander Schomberg to Rear Admiral Reynolds, 5 July 1850, TNA, FO84/804, ff.181-196.

<sup>335</sup> Palmerston to James Hudson, 13 April 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.28-30.

suppressing the international slave trade, and in this sense was directly opposed to Lord Aberdeen for whom this issue was one of high significance. Maeve Ryan has put forward this argument most recently, claiming it was ‘no coincidence that the most legally dubious impositions of the British navy happened while Palmerston was Foreign Secretary.’<sup>336</sup> This line of thinking is not novel, however, and can be traced back as far as 1970, when Leslie Bethell wrote that whilst the legality of suppression ‘might have disturbed Aberdeen... it was of little concern to Lord Palmerston.’<sup>337</sup>

As opposed to viewing Palmerston as something of a reckless gunboat diplomat, however, and as a statesman who was either ignorant or disdainful of international law during the nineteenth century, this thesis supports the view of Jenny Martinez, who in 2012 singled out Palmerston in her work on *The Slave Trade and the Origins of International Human Rights Law* as someone who understood clearly how a ‘a mutually beneficial and reinforcing relationship between state power and international law’ could help Britain to annihilate the international slave trade. It was clear to Palmerston, Martinez states, that Britain’s overwhelming economic and military power was not enough on its own to secure slave-trade suppression, and that only ‘a combination of military force, international law, and moral persuasion’ could ever achieve this goal. Shrewdly, Palmerston understood that international law was a ‘vital tool’ in Britain’s diplomatic campaign against the slave trade, giving its treaty-making efforts ‘a legitimacy that it would have otherwise lacked’ and amplifying ‘Britain’s ability to influence other nations’ conduct with regard to the slave trade.’<sup>338</sup> By striving to act in accordance with international law, in other words, or at least in accordance with Britain’s interpretation of it, Palmerston made his use of force appear more acceptable and tolerable to other states; far more so than the exercise of unilateral British power.

There is little doubt, for example, that Palmerston was conscious of the need to showcase Britain’s anti-slavery policy against both Portugal and Brazil as being consistent with the Law of Nations. Commonly, Palmerston’s dispatches to these nations contained

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<sup>336</sup> Ryan, ‘The Price of Legitimacy in Humanitarian Intervention’, pp.245-246.

<sup>337</sup> Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.275. See also Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.70-71. Huzzey argues that Aberdeen had a ‘greater regard for international law and respectful diplomacy’ than Palmerston.

<sup>338</sup> Jenny S. Martinez, *The Slave Trade and the Origins of International Human Rights Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.165-166, 170.

minute expositions of every article they had ever broken from their former anti-slavery engagements, with some of his reports being over one-hundred pages long.<sup>339</sup> In addition, whilst there was invariably disagreement over what constituted the Law of Nations between Britain and the ‘great offenders,’<sup>340</sup> one might argue that Palmerston’s actions were always underpinned by a credible legal interpretation of international law, and that it is unfair to suggest he was purposefully ignoring it. On both occasions, for example, Palmerston made the case to Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro that Britain was ‘entitled’ to stop and search their vessels anywhere in the Atlantic and that it had ‘acquired’ the ‘right’ to do so because those countries had persistently breached their solemn treaty engagements.<sup>341</sup> For although in peacetime Palmerston accepted that ‘no nation had any right to enter another port to exercise therein acts of jurisdiction,’ he argued it was common parlance that when a nation flagrantly violated its treaty engagements the insulted nation obtained the right to take action to restore their dignity, and that the only way for these rights to be abrogated was for those Governments to ‘faithfully and energetically’ fulfil their treaty engagements.<sup>342</sup>

It is notable that Palmerston did not just accept any interpretation of international law that would enable him to justify his actions with these countries, but only readings of it that were endorsed by the Crown’s Law Officers. In 1837, for example, Howard de Walden asked Palmerston whether ‘special instructions’ might be issued to British

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<sup>339</sup> For Portugal, see for Palmerston, ‘Note to be presented by Lord Howard de Walden to the Portuguese Government’, [n.d.] April 1839, TNA, FO84/281, ff.56-124, enclosed in Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 20 April 1839, TNA, FO84/281, ff.54-56. For Brazil, see Palmerston, ‘Draft of note to be presented by James Hudson to the Brazilian Government’, [n.d.] January 1850, PP, GC/RU/317/enc 1, enclosed in Lord John Russell to Palmerston, 9 February 1850, PP, GC/RU/317. The latter was eventually sent to Hudson in February 1850, see Palmerston to James Hudson, 27 February 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.10-11, and enclosed note, ff.12-19.

<sup>340</sup> Portugal argued against Palmerston’s interpretation of international law, contending that ‘the failure of the consent on the part of a sovereign to a Treaty can never be substituted by the decision of the legislative body of a foreign nation.’ As such, Britain had violated ‘the most sacred right of the sovereignty and independence of Her Crown.’ See Baron Sabroza to Lord Howard de Walden, [n.d.], TNA, FO84/282, ff.322-377, enclosed in Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 20 September 1839, TNA, FO84/282, ff.315-317. Brazil also argued against Palmerston’s interpretation of the 1826 Anglo-Brazilian Treaty. Britain was extrapolating to a ridiculous degree the letter and spirit of that agreement, the Government of Rio de Janeiro posited. It was thus violating Brazilian sovereignty and the Law of Nations. See Paulino José Soares de Sousa to James Hudson, 16 April 1850, TNA, FO84/803, ff.109-121.

<sup>341</sup> Palmerston, ‘Draft of note to be presented by Lord Howard de Walden to the Portuguese Government’, TNA, FO84/281, ff.56-124, enclosed in Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 20 April 1839, TNA, FO84/281, ff.54-56; Palmerston to James Hudson, 13 April 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.28-30.

<sup>342</sup> Palmerston to James Hudson, 29 March 1851, TNA, FO84/842, ff.47-50; Palmerston to James Hudson, 13 April 1850, FO84/801, ff.34-36. See also Palmerston, ‘Draft of note to be presented by Lord Howard de Walden to the Portuguese Government’, TNA, FO84/248, ff.10-25, enclosed in Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 3 March 1838, TNA, FO84/248, ff.8-9.

cruisers in the Tagus. Hoping to take advantage of the new Portuguese decree against the slave trade that had been published in December 1836, he suggested that Britain begin to treat suspicious vessels leaving the Tagus as pirates.<sup>343</sup> Palmerston liked this suggestion, but after remitting the idea to the Queen's Advocate, who judged it to be illegal, dropped it at once.<sup>344</sup> Similarly, in July 1839 Palmerston ignored a private address sent to him by John Murray, the former Secretary of the Glasgow Abolition Society, imploring him to adopt an ancient principle of international law to suppress the slave trade. It was recognised by Grotius in his work on the Law of Nations, Murray wrote, that a strong nation had a 'right' to protect a weak one from 'the aggressions of its oppressors.' Britain could apply this 'principle of protection' to Africa, he suggested, and proclaim 'to all those powers' engaged in the slave trade that Britain would no longer allow that 'weak nation to be so harassed and her people carried away into slavery and murdered.' Although Murray's interpretation of international law may have been tempting to Palmerston, for it would have enabled him to justify an assertive policy against 'the Government of every state in the world,' it was not one he accepted or ever deployed.<sup>345</sup> Although Palmerston was not necessarily deferential to international law out of a profound respect for the rule of law in itself, therefore, contrary to the view of contemporary historians he was certainly aware of the pragmatic purpose it served in enabling Britain to add legitimacy to its anti-slavery policy and keen to exploit it to bolster Britain's influence over slave trading nations.

In addition to ensuring that his anti-slavery policy was underpinned by a credible interpretation of international law, Palmerston also made certain that his actions were justified by British municipal law. As aforementioned, before Palmerston issued the Royal Navy with increased powers to suppress the Portuguese slave trade in 1839 he sought to acquire an Act of Parliament to legalise his proceedings under British law.<sup>346</sup> Parliamentary sanction was necessary, he believed, to empower the Courts of Admiralty and Vice-Admiralty to 'adjudicate vessels so detained' and to 'indemnify all persons... concerned in such detentions.'<sup>347</sup> Despite the Duke of Wellington sensationally blocking

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<sup>343</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 5 May 1837, TNA, FO84/215, ff.130-131.

<sup>344</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 26 May 1837, TNA, FO84/215, ff.14-15.

<sup>345</sup> John Murray to Palmerston, 24 July 1839, PP, GC/MU/22.

<sup>346</sup> For an extensive analysis of the origins and making of this Act of Parliament, see Bethell, 'Britain, Portugal and the Suppression of the Brazilian Slave Trade'.

<sup>347</sup> Dodson, Campbell and Rolfe to Palmerston, 8 August 1839, PP, SLT/15. See also Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 10 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/841.

the second reading of his bill in the House of Lords, moreover,<sup>348</sup> prompting Palmerston to write furiously to Howard de Walden that if the Government could not 'get a Bill' it would 'proceed without one,'<sup>349</sup> it is important to note that Palmerston did not mean the British Government would simply proceed *illegally*. One of the main reasons why the Duke of Wellington objected to Palmerston's Bill was because he deemed it unconstitutional for the executive to request the backing of the legislature before going to war.<sup>350</sup> Thus, what Palmerston meant was, rather than getting Parliamentary approval beforehand he would issue the Royal Navy with their new orders at once, without an Act of Parliament, and 'run our chances as to [the] prosecution of [Britain's] officers.' However, as soon as the order was given to the navy he would seek 'a protecting Bill.'<sup>351</sup>

With Brazil in the 1840s, things were simpler for Palmerston because his predecessor, Lord Aberdeen, had already passed an Act of Parliament in 1845 which vested Britain's cruisers with identical powers to combat the Brazilian slave trade as he had furnished them with to suppress the Portuguese traffic a decade earlier.<sup>352</sup> Although he was not directly responsible for passing the Aberdeen Act, Palmerston strongly agreed with Aberdeen's decision to bring forward this bill and was adamant he would have passed it too 'if our predecessors had not done so for us.'<sup>353</sup> Specifically, Palmerston concurred with Aberdeen that Britain had a right to treat Brazilian-flagged slavers as pirates due the wording of the 1826 Anglo-Brazilian treaty, and was in fact responsible for

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<sup>348</sup> Wellington, 'Portuguese Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xlix, 1063-1068 (1 August 1839).

<sup>349</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 3 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/840.

<sup>350</sup> Wellington, 'Portuguese Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xlix, 1063-1068 (1 August 1839), c.1066. Lord Glenelg had anticipated this constitutional dilemma in June, but Palmerston did not act upon his advice, arguing that 'we give more solemnity & force to our proceedings by making it the act of the parliament instead of the act of the government.' See Lord Glenelg to Palmerston, 17 June 1839, PP, GC/GL/218; Palmerston to Lord Glenelg, 18 June 1839, PP, GC/GL/218/enc 1.

<sup>351</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 10 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/841. This was precisely what Palmerston did in late August 1839, transmitting new orders to the Admiralty an hour before Lord Melbourne moved his Bill in the Lords for a second time and thus obviating any objections to it upon constitutional grounds. See Palmerston to the Lords of the Admiralty, 15 August 1839, TNA, FO84/302, ff.91-92; Melbourne, 'Suppression of the Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, I, 300-305 (15 August 1839).

<sup>352</sup> Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, chp.9.

<sup>353</sup> Palmerston to James Hudson, 5 January 1847, PP, GC/HU/43. It was arguably Palmerston that persuaded the Conservative Government to legislate in 1845, delivering several blistering attacks in Parliament whilst in Opposition that pressed Aberdeen to take a tougher position on the slave trade. See, for example, Palmerston, 'Treaty of Washington', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, lxxvii, 1162-1219 (21 March 1843); Palmerston, 'Treaty of Washington', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxviii, 1225-1239 (2 May 1843); Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 969-974 (16 July 1844); Palmerston, 'Suppression of the Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxx, 466-481 (16 May 1845); Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845).

pointing this out to the Government as early as 16 May 1845.<sup>354</sup> It is apparent, however, that when Palmerston returned to Office in 1846 he did not simply administer the execution of the Aberdeen Act. Rather, he placed a generous new interpretation on to it so as to enable Britain's cruisers to stop and search suspicious vessels within Brazil's sovereign waters. Indeed, it is significant that the Act itself did not explicitly grant naval officers the right to invade the sovereignty of another country. As Palmerston's Act of 1839 did, it simply granted British law courts the right to indemnify all persons concerned in such detentions.<sup>355</sup> Interpreting the Aberdeen Act somewhat liberally, then, it was Palmerston who informed the Admiralty that the Act did not specify any limits whatsoever to Britain's policing powers. As far as he was concerned, this meant British cruisers were empowered to police the slave trade 'at any place within the Brazilian waters as well as on the high seas.'<sup>356</sup>

Palmerston's use of force against 'barbarous' nations was once more starkly different. Whereas blockades, invasions of coastal sovereignty and moral declarations of war were the most aggressive techniques Palmerston would employ to coerce 'civilised' countries, and even then only gradually and in the most prudent manner possible, these measures were just the start in Africa. Callous, violent and brutal, the Royal Navy was permitted to act virtually however it wanted on that continent to forcibly suppress the slave trade, whilst no safeguards were put in place by Palmerston to try and avoid conflict and to reach an amicable settlement, nor to escalate matters methodically when force was the only option remaining. Recognising the restrictions that were imposed on Britain elsewhere in the world, Palmerston revelled in the freedom he possessed in Africa. As he told Sir Francis Baring in 1851, it was only 'limited power and not limited right that has

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<sup>354</sup> Palmerston, 'Suppression of the Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxx, 466-481 (16 May 1845), c.484. Hence, during the Parliamentary debate on Aberdeen's Bill Palmerston took credit for it, claiming the idea to take unilateral action against Brazil originated from him. See Palmerston, 'Slave Trade (The Brazils)', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 1058-1063 (24 July 1845), c.1058.

<sup>355</sup> Palmerston, Memorandum on Aberdeen's Brazilian Slave Trade Bill, 3 July 1845, PP, SLT/24. See also Draft of the Aberdeen Act, 3 July 1845, PP, SLT/25.

<sup>356</sup> Lord Eddisbury to W.A.B. Hamilton, 22 April 1850, TNA, FO84/823, ff.95-97. Since it relied upon a narrow and ambiguous reading of the Aberdeen Act, this interpretation has since been deemed illegitimate by scholars. See, for example, Ryan, 'The Price of Legitimacy in Humanitarian Intervention', p.246; Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.59. It is possible, moreover, that the Law Officers changed their minds about the legality of the Aberdeen Act in October 1847, only for their revised opinion to be suppressed by Palmerston. See Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.275. The Brazilian Government certainly pointed out the legal limitations of the Aberdeen Act as well, see Paulino José Soares de Sousa to James Hudson, 16 April 1850, TNA, FO84/803, ff.109-121.



made us act, generally speaking, by persuasion and treaty in regard to other countries rather than by summary force.<sup>357</sup>

Since the early 1840s, for example, the British Government had tried to secure anti-slavery agreements with the Kingdoms of Dahomey and Lagos; two slave-trading countries routinely portrayed by British missionaries and naval officers as ‘hotbeds of war, savagery and slavery.’<sup>358</sup> Unlike the majority of West African states, however, who signed up quickly to an agreement with Britain, especially following the navy’s use of bribery, threats and intimidation, these powerful African nations resisted. King Gezo of Dahomey, for instance, accepted the benefits of legitimate commerce and was disposed to agree with Britain about the abhorrence of slave-trading, but was unprepared to accept a transition period which might be unpopular with his subjects. Until the slave trade was ended in ‘minor’ African states, therefore, Gezo asked Britain in 1850 to respect his wishes that slave traders retain unrestricted access to his port in Ouidah.<sup>359</sup> King Kosoko of Lagos was blunter about his desire to continue the slave trade, flatly rejecting Palmerston’s proposed treaty in November 1851 as well as his offer to ‘become friends’ with Britain.<sup>360</sup> Accepting that ‘nothing [could] be done... by persuasion,’<sup>361</sup> therefore, Palmerston authorised two aggressive and militant new methods of obtaining anti-slavery agreements with these countries the following year.

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<sup>357</sup> Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 31 July 1851, PP, GC/BA/313.

<sup>358</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.145. For the negotiations between the British Government and Dahomey prior to Palmerston re-entering the Foreign Office in 1846, see Captain Foote to Palmerston, 25 July 1846, PP, SLT/34. Foote had been stationed in West Africa from January 1842 to May 1844. He explained that a treaty had been signed with the King of Dahomey in 1843, but Lord Aberdeen refused to ratify it because he deemed the annual compensation granted to King Gezo too large.

<sup>359</sup> John Beecroft to Palmerston 22 July 1850, TNA, FO84/816, ff.148-151. See also the negotiations between Palmerston and the King of Dahomey leading up to this decision: Palmerston to King Gezo of Dahomey, 29 May 1849, TNA, FO84/775, ff.15-18, 27-29; King Gezo of Dahomey to Palmerston, 7 September 1849, TNA, FO84/775, ff.75-76. See also the ‘Draft of treaty to be proposed by Beecroft and Forbes to the King of Dahomey’, TNA, FO84/816, ff.23-28 and Palmerston’s observations on this draft treaty, in Palmerston to John Beecroft, 25 February 1850, TNA, FO84/816, ff.45-49. For an extensive account of these negotiations, see Robin Law, ‘An African Response to Abolition: Anglo-Dahomian Negotiations on Ending the Slave Trade, 1838–77’, *Slavery & Abolition*, 16, 3 (1995), 281-310. See also Lieutenant Frederick E. Forbes, *Dahomey and the Dahomans: Being the Journals of Two Missions to the King of Dahomey, and Residence at his Capital, in the Years 1849 and 1850* (London: Cass, 1851).

<sup>360</sup> John Beecroft to Palmerston, 26 November 1851, TNA, FO84/858, ff.333-336. For Palmerston’s proposed treaty to the King of Lagos, see Palmerston to John Beecroft, 20 February 1851, TNA, FO84/858, ff.7-8, and enclosed treaty, ff.9-10.

<sup>361</sup> Palmerston, Memorandum on Negotiations with the King of Dahomey, 30 September 1850, TNA, FO84/816, ff.146-147.

Firstly, to deal with the coastal Kingdom of Dahomey Palmerston followed the advice of Britain's Consul, John Beecroft,<sup>362</sup> and recommended to the Admiralty in September 1851 that it establish a 'strict blockade' of the entire region; not just of Ouidah but the entire 'Dahomean coast.'<sup>363</sup> To ensure maximum impact, Palmerston instructed Britain's cruisers not to lift this fearful measure until Gezo had taken effective measures to abolish the slave trade.<sup>364</sup> Although it took months to organise, when this blockade was finally instituted by Commodore Bruce in January 1852 it effectively suffocated all trade into and out of Dahomey.<sup>365</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, a simplified anti-slavery 'engagement' was signed by King Gezo less than two weeks later.<sup>366</sup> Secondly, to deal with of the Kingdom of Lagos Palmerston decided to act on the advice of British missionaries living in the nearby town of Abeokuta, and to take unprecedented action within the African state itself.<sup>367</sup> Palmerston agreed to forcibly overthrow the current ruler of Lagos, King Kosoko, and to replace him with the exiled former king Akitoye, who claimed to be an avid convert to British anti-slavery as well as the legitimate ruler of the

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<sup>362</sup> John Beecroft to Palmerston 22 July 1850, TNA, FO84/816, ff.148-151. Beecroft claimed 'the only effectual measure to bring [the King of Dahomey] to a full sense of his error... is to... blockade Ouidah.'

<sup>363</sup> Palmerston to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, 27 September 1851, in 'Papers relative to the Reduction of Lagos by H.M. Forces on the W. Coast of Africa', *Parliamentary Papers*, liv, 221 (1852), pp.135-136. See also Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 27 August 1851, PP, GC/BA/315. Palmerston told Baring of his plan to blockade Ouidah a month earlier in private.

<sup>364</sup> Palmerston to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, 27 September 1851, in 'Papers relative to the Reduction of Lagos by H.M. Forces on the W. Coast of Africa', *Parliamentary Papers*, liv, 221 (1852), pp.135-136.

<sup>365</sup> See, for example, Commodore Bruce to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 6 December 1851, in 'Papers relative to the Reduction of Lagos by H.M. Forces on the W. Coast of Africa', *Parliamentary Papers*, liv, 221 (1852), pp.161-162. See also Secretary of the Admiralty to Lord Stanley of Alderly, 7 January 1852, in *Ibid*, p.161.

<sup>366</sup> Law, 'Abolition and Imperialism', p.158. An engagement for the abolition of the slave trade was concluded on 13 January 1852, but King Gezo refused to sign the standardised version. He did not want to abolish human sacrifice, expel foreign slave traders, guarantee peace with Abeokuta, or guarantee protection of Christian missionaries. Naval officers pressed King Gezo in February 1852 to sign the full version of the treaty, but he refused. Hence, the navy continued to blockade the Dahomean coast until June 1852, when the new Conservative Government ended it before a revised treaty was agreed. For an extensive analysis of the blockade of Dahomey, see *Ibid*, pp.155-159.

<sup>367</sup> For the representations of the Church Missionary Society, see Palmerston to John Beecroft, 25 February, 28 February 1850, TNA, FO84/816, ff.33-42, 58-60. Abeokuta was a pro-British state located between the Kingdoms of Dahomey and Lagos. It was under constant threat from both these nations, since it was used as a venue for their 'slave hunts.' For more on the political and economic importance of Abeokuta, see Law, 'Abolition and Imperialism', pp.157-159; Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900*, pp.92-93.

nation.<sup>368</sup> In essence, then, Palmerston advocated and set in motion a policy which Robin Law has rightly described as ‘regime change.’<sup>369</sup>

In order to execute this policy in Lagos, Palmerston spent the summer of 1851 cultivating the ministerial support that was required to see it take place. Palmerston worked hard, for example, to change the mind of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Francis Baring, who strongly opposed the idea on the grounds that Britain had no legal ‘right’ to dethrone Kosoko. The Lagosian king had broken no treaty obligations, Baring argued, and therefore Britain had no ‘right of war.’<sup>370</sup> Palmerston countered that Lagos was the only seat of slave trade remaining north of the equator, meaning that if Kosoko was removed a death blow would be struck to the slave trade in that region. Moreover, that Kosoko sat illegally on a ‘blood stained throne’ which he had seized only by his ‘daring wickedness,’ and that Akitoye was the rightful ruler having been accepted by his people and coronated by the King of Benin.<sup>371</sup> Baring was apparently never persuaded that regime change was a viable or lawful policy and continued to assert that Britain had no ‘just cause of war.’<sup>372</sup> To outmanoeuvre him, therefore, Palmerston also strived to persuade Lord John Russell, the Prime Minister, that this was the right course of action. Although Russell had earlier stated his belief that the matter would depend above all on ‘the cost & effort required to expel [that] slave-trading chief,’<sup>373</sup> Palmerston did not try and convince him of the mission’s practicality but again focused on its moral necessity as the best way to suppress the slave trade.<sup>374</sup> Fortunately for Palmerston, Russell swiftly came around to his way of thinking.<sup>375</sup> With Russell on side and Baring’s objections

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<sup>368</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 12 June 1851, PP, GC/RU/1083. For more on Akitoye and his anti-slavery credentials, see Beecroft’s interview with him in John Beecroft to Palmerston, 24 February 1851, TNA, FO84/858, ff.95-97. For more on Kosoko and his position as the ‘rightful’ King of Lagos, see John B. Losi, *History of Lagos* (Lagos: African Education Press, 1967), pp.24, 29. See also Law, ‘Abolition and Imperialism’, p.161.

<sup>369</sup> Law, ‘Abolition and Imperialism’, p.159.

<sup>370</sup> Sir Francis Baring to Palmerston, 20 October 1850, PP, GC/BA/290.

<sup>371</sup> These quotes are taken from Akitoye’s representation to Britain for naval assistance, see John Beecroft to Palmerston, 24 February 1851, TNA, FO84/858, ff.97-98, and enclosed representation, ff.112-114. For some examples of Palmerston making this argument, see Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 31 July, 4 August, 27 August 1851, PP, GC/BA/313, 314, 315. See also Palmerston to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, 27 September 1851, in ‘Papers relative to the Reduction of Lagos by H.M. Forces on the W. Coast of Africa’, *Parliamentary Papers*, liv, 221 (1852), pp.135-136.

<sup>372</sup> Sir Francis Baring to Palmerston, 31 August 1851, PP, GC/BA/303. See also Sir Francis Baring to Palmerston, 1 August 1851, PP, GC/BA/301.

<sup>373</sup> Lord John Russell to Palmerston, 12 June 1851, PP, GC/RU/1083, encl. 1.

<sup>374</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 12 June 1851, PP, GC/RU/1083. See also Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 21 September 1851, PP, GC/RU/1087.

<sup>375</sup> Lord John Russell to Palmerston, 24 September 1851, PP, GC/RU/424.

overruled, Palmerston therefore gave the order to the Admiralty in September 1851 to 'consider the practicability' of implementing regime change. Britain's 'great purpose' could no longer be thwarted, he declared, by 'the criminal and piratical resistance of two barbarous African Chiefs.'<sup>376</sup>

Before Palmerston's orders to de-throne Kosoko were received in Africa, however, Britain's consul in the region took matters into his own hands. Believing that Palmerston had already authorised regime change at the beginning of the year following his strong yet elusive threat to Kosoko in February,<sup>377</sup> Beecroft applied to Commander Forbes of HMS *Bloodhound* in November for 'a sufficient force to... dethrone [Kosoko] and replace [him with] the rightful heir Akitoye.'<sup>378</sup> The navy's first attempt to stage a *coup d'état* in Lagos was unsuccessful, with Beecroft's arrogant plan of simply sailing up the Ogun river and overawing Kosoko with Britain's naval prowess defeated by the excellent marksmen of Lagos (who ran HMS *Bloodhound* into the ground).<sup>379</sup> The navy's second attempt succeeded in December 1851, but with terrible consequences. Encamped in the Ogun river, HMS *Teazer*, *Waterwitch* and *Bloodhound* fired ruthlessly upon the city for three days, causing a devastating blaze. 'Great explosions' destroyed nearly half the town and forced its inhabitants to flee their homes, whilst Kosoko and his followers escaped to Epe, a town on the north-eastern shore of the lagoon. At the end of the attack, Akitoye marched triumphantly back into Lagos and on 1 January 1852 signed an anti-slavery 'engagement.' Britain's 'conquest of Lagos,' Beecroft proclaimed, had been

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<sup>376</sup> Palmerston to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, 27 September 1851, in 'Papers relative to the Reduction of Lagos by H.M. Forces on the W. Coast of Africa', *Parliamentary Papers*, liv, 221 (1852), pp.135-136.

<sup>377</sup> Palmerston to John Beecroft, 21 February 1851, TNA, FO84/858, ff.11-13. If the Lagosian King should refuse an anti-slavery treaty, Palmerston wrote, 'you should beg him to remember that Lagos is near to the sea, and that on the sea are the ships and the cannon of England; and also to bear in mind that he does not hold his authority without a competition, and that the Chiefs of the African Tribes do not always retain their authority to the end of their lives.'

<sup>378</sup> John Beecroft to Commander Forbes, 22 November 1851, TNA, FO84/858, ff.341-342. Beecroft claimed explicitly that Palmerston's dispatches enabled him to do this: 'It is [the British Government's] earnest wish that decided and peremptory measures should be taken and if necessary by force of arms.'

<sup>379</sup> For Beecroft's plan, see John Beecroft to Commander Forbes, 22 November 1851, TNA, FO84/858, ff.341-342. For Beecroft's account of the failed intervention of November 1851, see John Beecroft to Palmerston, 26 November 1851, TNA, FO84/858, ff.333-336. This situation embarrassed the Admiralty so much that Commodore Bruce contrived a deceit to cover up its failure, reporting that Kosoko had instigated the fight dishonourably by firing upon the British party whilst they were flying a white flag. See Commodore Bruce to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 2 January 1852, in 'Papers relative to the Reduction of Lagos by H.M. Forces on the W. Coast of Africa', *Parliamentary Papers*, liv, 221 (1852), pp.193-194. See also Law, 'Abolition and Imperialism', p.162.

accomplished.<sup>380</sup> Despite his boasting, however, 15 marines were believed to have perished during the conflict and 75 seriously wounded, while the loss of African life was surely even more lamentable.<sup>381</sup> Although Palmerston had not authorised Beecroft's military operation, therefore, and due to his departure from the Foreign Office in December 1851 did not retrospectively approve the Royal Navy's destruction of Lagos either, it is demonstrable that throughout 1850 and 1851 the policy of regime change was strongly driven by Palmerston and given the chance he would have endorsed this action.<sup>382</sup> Moreover, if Beecroft had not executed Palmerston's policy independently, it would have happened anyway once Palmerston's orders arrived.

It is difficult to overstate how aggressive and violent Palmerston's use of force in Africa was at the beginning of the 1850s. The blockade of the Bight of Benin, for instance, was incomparable to any former blockade in West Africa since it covered a huge geographical area and even affected African states that had had no previous communications with Britain.<sup>383</sup> As Robin Law points out, furthermore, this act was especially provocative because Britain was blockading the territorial waters of a nation whose sovereignty was 'incontestably well-established locally' and which Europeans were 'expected to respect.'<sup>384</sup> The 'destruction of Lagos' and deposition of King Kosoko,

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<sup>380</sup> These quotes are taken from Beecroft's account of the bombardment, see John Beecroft to Palmerston, 3 January 1852, TNA, FO84/886, ff.28-33. For another contemporary account, see Kingston, *Blue Jackets*, pp.256-60. For an extensive analysis of Britain's policy of regime change in Lagos, see Law, 'Abolition and Imperialism', pp.159-164. See also Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900*, pp.91-96.

<sup>381</sup> Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade*, pp.160, 149-162 For more on the bombardment itself, see Ward, *The Royal Navy and the Slavers*, pp.205-215; Sir Alan Burns, *History of Nigeria* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978), pp.115-126; Robert S. Smith, *The Lagos Consulate, 1851-1861* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp.26-31.

<sup>382</sup> Palmerston's successor at the Foreign Office, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Granville, disapproved of Beecroft's conduct and reproached him. His actions were 'not borne out either by the circumstances... or by your instructions from Her Majesty's Government,' he wrote. See Earl Granville to John Beecroft, 24 January 1852, TNA, FO84/886, ff.2-5.

<sup>383</sup> The scale of the blockade was so large that it convinced several other African rulers to sign anti-slavery treaties with Britain. The rulers of the Egba Nation, Porto Novo, Little Popo, Adaffie, Elmina Chica and Grand Popo, for example, all signed treaties between 5 January and 2 February 1852. Consequently, the blockade was lifted in these places on 11 February 1852. See John Wodehouse to Benjamin Campbell, 28 February 1853, TNA, FO84/920, f.196-197. See also Law, 'Abolition and Imperialism', p.159.

<sup>384</sup> Law, 'Abolition and Imperialism', pp.155, 155-157. Since 1703, the authorities at Dahomey had continually upheld their territorial rights. See, for example, John M'Leod, *A Voyage to Africa: with some account of the manners and customs of the Dahomean people* (London: Murray, 1820), pp.113-114. See also John Duncan, *Travels in Western Africa, In 1845 & 1846, Comprising A Journey from Whydah, Through the Kingdom of Dahomey, to Adofoodia, in the Interior*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1847), II, p.263.

meanwhile,<sup>385</sup> entangled Britain in the domestic politics of an independent West African state, dismantled a monarchical dynasty and changed forever the line of succession. It is notable too that neither of these policies were anomalous. Another enormous blockade, stretching across the entire Dahomean coast, was instituted by the Foreign Office in 1864,<sup>386</sup> whilst the policy of regime change was used consistently during the 1850s - King Pepple of Bonny and King Mayu of Badagry, for instance, were both deposed by Britain in 1854.<sup>387</sup>

During the early 1860s, however, Palmerston's use of force in Africa reached its zenith when his Government responded to the challenging state of affairs in Lagos by turning that place from a 'quasi-Protectorate' into a formal Crown colony.<sup>388</sup> Since the installation of Akitoye in 1852, the exiled Kosoko had incited perpetual problems in the Bight of Benin. Hostilities on the Lagos lagoon became commonplace, not just between Kosoko's followers and those of Akitoye but also their regional allies, and rumours of an invasion left the country agitated and at risk of falling back into 'renewed civil war.'<sup>389</sup> On more than one occasion Kosoko's forces attempted a landing, whilst in 1853 chiefs loyal to Kosoko were believed to have been guilty of the murder of Akitoye by poisoning.<sup>390</sup> After attempts to mediate a settlement with Kosoko failed, however, and notorious slave traders began to reappear in Lagos, British intervention suddenly became unavoidable.<sup>391</sup> In the spring of 1861, then, Palmerston's Government became convinced that a British controlled Lagos was the only way to bring order and justice to that unruly region, as well as to guarantee the 'complete suppression of the slave trade in the Bight [of Benin].'<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> Britain's bombardment of Lagos in December 1851 came to be known by contemporaries as the 'destruction of Lagos.' See, for example, the anonymous pamphlet, since attributed to Lord Thomas Denman, *The Destruction of Lagos* (London: Ridgway, 1852).

<sup>386</sup> Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade*, p.156.

<sup>387</sup> For the deposition of King Pepple of Bonny, see John Beecroft to Lord Clarendon, 20 February 1854, TNA, FO84/950, ff.60-61, and enclosed 'Brief journal of proceedings in the River Bonny, New Calabar, Old Calabar and Cameroons', ff.62-67. See also K. Onwuka Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), pp.131-145. For the deposition of King Mayu of Badagry, see Lord Clarendon to Benjamin Campbell, 21 September 1854, TNA, FO84/950, ff.30-35; Benjamin Campbell to Lord Clarendon, 1 June, 11 June 1854, TNA, FO84/950, ff.265-273, 293-296, and enclosures, ff.274-292, 297-306.

<sup>388</sup> Lord John Russell to Duke of Newcastle, 7 February 1861, TNA, FO84/1151, ff.3-10.

<sup>389</sup> Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900*, pp.97, 97-100.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid*, p.97.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid*, pp.98-99.

<sup>392</sup> Lord John Russell to Captain Foote, 22 June 1861, TNA, FO84/1141, ff.45-51. See also Lord John Russell to Duke of Newcastle, 7 February 1861, TNA, FO84/1151, ff.3-10. This policy was recommended to the Government by Consul Brand who resided in Lagos in April 1860, see Consul Brand to Lord John Russell, 9 April 1860, TNA, FO84/1115, ff.127-132. There was opposition to this policy from within Palmerston's

A few months later, Lagos was annexed to the British Empire after King Dosunmu (the son of Akitoye) signed a treaty of cession whilst aboard HMS *Prometheus*. On 6 August 1861 the Union Jack was unfurled outside the Lagos Consulate, saluted by a guard of armed marines, and greeted with the National Anthem sung by children from a nearby school. Despite this romantic scene, however, as well as Lord John Russell's claims that Britain had no desire to do 'injustice to Dosunmu' and wished to deal with him in a 'liberal and friendly spirit',<sup>393</sup> it is clear that Britain's annexation of Lagos was neither 'liberal' nor 'friendly,' but nothing less than a military conquest and imperial land grab.<sup>394</sup> For only hours before this ceremony took place, Consul McCoskry and Commander Bedingfield threatened to fire rockets into the King's house and 'to destroy it in the twinkling of an eye' if he did not transfer sovereignty of Lagos over to Britain.<sup>395</sup> Despite having rejected their overtures the previous day, therefore, stating his unwillingness to become a puppet king or for Lagos to become an assemblage of the British Empire, Dosunmu was ultimately forced to sign a treaty relinquishing Lagos's independence due to Britain's gunboat diplomacy.<sup>396</sup>

Unlike with 'advanced' and 'civilised' states, however, where Palmerston was careful to ensure his policies were underpinned by tenable legal justifications, it is significant that Palmerston disregarded all concerns about international law when it came

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Government, especially from the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Duke of Somerset, and the Colonial Secretary, the Duke of Newcastle. See Duke of Somerset to Lord John Russell, 24 June 1861, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/24/34, ff.89-91; Secretary of the Colonial Office to John Wodehouse, 19 June 1861, TNA, FO84/1153, ff.81-83. However, Palmerston and Russell forced this policy through. Later, Palmerston expressed his disagreement with Somerset in particular, stating that the annexation of Lagos was an effective method of ending the slave trade. See Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 13 August 1862, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/22/28, ff.92-96.

<sup>393</sup> Lord John Russell to Captain Foote, 22 June 1861, TNA, FO84/1141, ff.45-51.

<sup>394</sup> Historians have long defined Britain's annexation of Lagos as a 'conquest.' See, for example, Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900*, p.2. Contemporaries also viewed it in this way. See, for example, the view of Sir Francis Baring, who described the annexation of Lagos as an imperial land grab in 1863, in 'Supply – Civil Service Estimates', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxxi, 1484-1485 (25 June 1863), c.1484.

<sup>395</sup> King Dosunmu of Lagos to Queen Victoria, 8 August 1861, quoted in Baring, 'Supply – Civil Service Estimates', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxvii, 502-507 (12 June 1862), c.506.

<sup>396</sup> Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900*, pp.100-102. This was not the only annexation considered by the British Government as a means of ending the slave trade in the mid-nineteenth century. For a scheme concocted by the Admiralty to purchase the Gallinas state, see Lord Auckland to Palmerston, 28 November 1848, PP, GC/AU/58. For the potential annexation of Dahomey, see Duke of Somerset to Palmerston, 3 October 1861, PP, GC/SO/62; Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 13 August 1862, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/22/28, ff.92-96; Commander Arthur Parry Eardley-Wilmot to Palmerston, 31 August 1863, PP, GC/NE/94.

to African nations, and even argued that it was acceptable for Britain to discriminate against them because their societies were rooted in 'barbarism.'<sup>397</sup> In a private letter to Francis Baring, for example, Palmerston argued that Britain had defined slave-trading as 'piracy' for a long time, and therefore had a 'right' to tell the King of Lagos, a piratical slave trader, 'you shall not capture and sell your fellow creatures,' and to end his involvement in the slave trade by 'summary force.'<sup>398</sup> Baring argued against this view, highlighting that Palmerston had not applied this principle to non-African countries and that 'in no one instance have you even considered to treat a European engaged in the slave trade as pirates except when there are special treaties.'<sup>399</sup> This seemed to get at the crux of Palmerston's argument. 'I conceive,' he wrote a few days earlier,

that any civilised nation has a perfect right to say to a barbarian chief, "you shall... abstain from piracy and you shall cease to be a *hostis humani generis* [an enemy of mankind], [because] if you won't, we shall shoot you as we should a mad dog."<sup>400</sup>

In other words, Palmerston felt that 'civilised' nations possessed an inherent right to impose their modes of thinking over 'barbarous' ones, and by the use of deadly force if necessary. That, due to African states being outside the family of 'civilised' nations, they were beyond the realms of international law, and thus the moral imperative to suppress the slave trade was able to outweigh all other considerations.<sup>401</sup>

In his private correspondence with Russell, moreover, Palmerston implied something more extreme: that even if Britain *did* consider it illegal to intervene in Lagos without a valid treaty it ought to so anyway because this was the most effective way to end the slave trade. To elaborate, in September 1851, at the same time as he was trying to obtain Russell's support for regime change in Lagos, Palmerston argued that deposing Kosoko and implanting Akitoye was the only way the slave trade in the Bight of Benin could effectively be crushed, stating bluntly, 'If we want to put down slave trade this is

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<sup>397</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.142. See also Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, p.121; Law, 'Abolition and Imperialism', pp.166-169.

<sup>398</sup> Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 31 July 1851, PP, GC/BA/313.

<sup>399</sup> Sir Francis Baring to Palmerston, 31 August 1851, PP, GC/BA/303.

<sup>400</sup> Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 27 August 1851, PP, GC/BA/315.

<sup>401</sup> For another example of Palmerston making his view on this subject perfectly clear, see Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 969-974 (16 July 1844), c.971. Palmerston argued it was ridiculous to contend that 'uncivilised tribes on the coast of Africa must observe the international laws which were consecrated by the usages of Europe.'



the way to do it[,] [but] if we do not care about slave trade then we may discuss Vattel with Kosoko.<sup>402</sup> On this occasion Russell evidently agreed, telling the Foreign Secretary soon afterwards that he was ready 'to wink at any violation of Vattel's rules in regard to a slave-trading Chief.'<sup>403</sup> Significantly, then, even if Palmerston and Russell did consider that international law should apply to 'barbarous' states, they were prepared to knowingly close their eyes to this fact in the 1850s and to violate international law. In other words, Palmerston disagreed entirely with the Queen's Advocate that, 'however desirable it may be to put an end to the slave trade, an eminent good should not be obtained otherwise than by lawful means.'<sup>404</sup>

When it came to the inviolability of international law, therefore, Palmerston's stance with 'barbarous' nations was clearly different to his stance with 'civilised' ones; something which requires explanation considering this thesis' attempt to revise the contemporary portrait of Palmerston as a statesman indifferent to or disdainful of questions of legality when it came to slave-trade suppression. What Palmerston's contradictory approach affirms, one might argue, is that his attachment to international law was fundamentally pragmatic rather than principled; based less upon a profound respect for the rule of law in itself and more upon how that concept could be exploited for Britain's advantage. Indeed, one might argue that Palmerston's eagerness to exploit the concept of international law in order to garner legitimacy for his anti-slavery policy made sense in a European and American context where retaliation from other countries, including Great Powers, was a genuine threat. However, that since there was significantly less danger of another Great Power wading into African politics and challenging Britain's forceful anti-slavery policy in that continent, he did not see the need to ensure his policy was underpinned by the sanction of the Law of Nations when targeting the slave trade of West African states. Rather than ignoring the concept of international law altogether

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<sup>402</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 21 September 1851, PP, GC/RU/1087. Emmerich de Vattel was an international lawyer renowned for his 1758 legal treatise on the Law of Nations. He denounced any interference in the domestic governance of another independent state, except in cases of civil war when it was acceptable to assist the party judged 'to have right on its side.' See Emmerich de Vattel, *The Law of Nations; or, Principles of the Law of Nature Applied to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns*, rev. ed. (London: Robinson, 1797), pp.155-158, 427. For more on Vattel and the foundations of Victorian international law, see Casper Sylvest, 'The Foundations of Victorian International Law', in *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth Century Political Thought*, ed. by Duncan Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 47-66.

<sup>403</sup> Lord John Russell to Palmerston, 24 September 1851, PP, GC/RU/424.

<sup>404</sup> Dodson to Lord Aberdeen, 8 April 1842, PP, SLT/18.

though, it is important to note that Palmerston still felt it necessary to justify the exemption of West African states from the international legal system that Britain was constructing, and thus created the argument that the Law of Nations was applicable only to 'civilised' countries. In short, therefore, Palmerston's use of international law as a 'vital tool' in British treaty-making was variable depending on the exact context and circumstance, but his commitment to this notion was consistent; it being an essential means for Britain to justify to domestic, European and American audiences the use of force.<sup>405</sup>

Thus, whether it was in his approach to treaty-making, his use of official and non-official forms of pressure, or the extent to which he was prepared to exercise force to achieve his goals, Palmerston invariably treated 'advanced' countries with the greatest dignity and respect in this period, 'civilised' ones far less generously but nevertheless in accordance with their rights under international law, and 'barbarous' ones with utter contempt and derision. It is clear, moreover, that the implementation of Palmerston's anti-slavery policy regularly pushed individual countries to the uppermost limits of their patience and tolerance, putting Britain in a tricky position on many occasions and severely testing Palmerston's diplomatic skill and dexterity. Having analysed how and in what ways Palmerston strived to suppress the international slave trade, this thesis will now move on to explore Palmerston's personal motivations for pursuing anti-slavery. Why exactly did Palmerston decide to pursue slave-trade suppression, one might ask, and why so vigorously? The next three chapters will each focus on a different aspect of this question, concentrating specifically on Palmerston as a key individual at the heart of the British anti-slavery state.

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<sup>405</sup> Martinez, *The Slave Trade and the Origins of International Human Rights Law*, p.170.

## Chapter 4 - Public opinion, moral duty, humanitarianism? Palmerston's motivations for ending the international slave trade

Palmerston's motivations for pursuing anti-slavery have yet to be fully explored and understood. Over time, historians have pinpointed a broad array of potential factors that might have caused or inspired him to act against the slave trade, including a need to placate the demands of a vociferous public opinion, a sense of obligation to fulfil one's duty as a patriotic statesman, an intrinsic feeling of compassion for suffering peoples living far away from Britain, and an urge to advance Britain's national interests. The extent to which Palmerston was moved to act by each of these different forces, however, has been difficult for historians to establish and, if anything, his motivations have so far been obscured.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will assess Palmerston's motivations in detail by analysing and contextualising his anti-slavery discourse in public and in private; examining his speeches to Parliament and on the mass platform, his private correspondence, and his Foreign Office dispatches. In particular, it will evaluate how far Palmerston was motivated to suppress the slave trade by the force of public opinion, and whether notions of duty and humanitarianism were key stimuli for him individually.

### 1) Extrinsic influences: The impact of anti-slavery public opinion

For many years, historians have sought to determine whether the British Government's anti-slavery policy during the nineteenth century was organic or merely an instinctive response to the strong abolitionist sentiment among the British public. Traditionally, historians such as Reginald Coupland, W.L. Mathieson, Bernard Nelson and Christopher Lloyd have argued that Britain's anti-slavery policy was influenced, even directed, by 'a great body of opinion among the British people.'<sup>2</sup> Conceiving the Government as a deferential servant of the people, this interpretation contends that public opinion exerted 'a continuous and formidable pressure' upon British statesmen 'which could not be ignored.'<sup>3</sup> That without pressure from the public, the Government would not have pursued the suppression of the slave trade vigorously if indeed at all.<sup>4</sup> There was simply

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<sup>1</sup> See Introduction, pp.9-14.

<sup>2</sup> Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*, p.250.

<sup>3</sup> Nelson, 'The Slave Trade as a Factor in British Foreign Policy', p.192.

<sup>4</sup> Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade*, p.ix.

no 'driving force' among the Whigs sufficient to account for such perseverance, Mathieson stated.<sup>5</sup> 'No one,' John Oldfield wrote, 'not even Palmerston, could afford to ignore the persistent demands of groups like the African Institution.'<sup>6</sup> There are problems with this interpretation which need to be confronted, not least the conceptual one of how terms such as 'the people' and 'public opinion' are to be defined. Nevertheless, to fully appreciate the problems of the traditional viewpoint it is first important to unpack it, and assess how exactly it has been put forward and substantiated.

In his acclaimed account of Franco-British anti-slavery politics between 1815 and 1848, P.M. Kielstra underlined the vital role played by public opinion in dictating the British Government's anti-slavery policy. To demonstrate this, he illuminated a number of occasions when Palmerston appeared to act directly upon the advice of his Cabinet colleagues, many of whom were desirous to exploit anti-slavery in order to conciliate and garner support from the West Indian and abolitionist groups inside-and-out of Parliament.<sup>7</sup> 'You cannot overrate the value of such an object as the means of disarming enemies[,] gaining neutrals & gratifying friends to the ministry,' Lord Holland informed Palmerston privately in November 1831, beseeching him to sign a right-of-search agreement with France as soon as possible. 'The West Indians are in bad humour & in yet worse condition,' he wrote, 'they want something to... relieve them[,] and this is the *only* measure which... cannot estrange others as much as it conciliates them.' Holland felt a treaty would be 'an equal boon' to the Saints, for it would 'at last stay their stomachs.'<sup>8</sup> In response, Palmerston wrote to Viscount Granville in Paris less than a fortnight later, informing him that it would be 'desirable' to settle negotiations with France for a right-of-search treaty 'before parliament meets.'<sup>9</sup> The next day, he instructed Granville to obtain a treaty before the end of the year, since he was 'extremely desirous' of having it mentioned in the King's Speech. To this end, he was even prepared for it to be signed incomplete; 'let us have the best thing you can get for us,' he told Granville, 'and [we will] take our chance of mending it afterwards as we can.'<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, a treaty was signed

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<sup>5</sup> Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade*, pp.187-188.

<sup>6</sup> Oldfield, 'Palmerston and Anti-Slavery', p.28.

<sup>7</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, pp.149-150, 160-165, 171-176, 185-197.

<sup>8</sup> Lord Holland to Palmerston, 11 November 1831, PP, GC/HO/77; Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p.149.

<sup>9</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 12 November 1831, PP, GC/GR/1369.

<sup>10</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 23 November 1831, PP, GC/GR/1370; Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p.158.

in November 1831 and inserted into the King's Speech in January 1832.<sup>11</sup> It was this decision, however, which ultimately forced the Government to negotiate another convention with France a year later, because the existing treaty was simply unworkable; 'we were in such a hurry... to get the convention signed before Parliament met,' Palmerston admitted to Granville, 'that we forgot several essential matters of regulation & detail which must be settled before the thing can work.'<sup>12</sup>

Another way that Kielstra tried to show empirically the connection between the Government's anti-slavery policy and public anti-slavery sentiment, moreover, was to highlight individual episodes when Palmerston appeared to act upon the demands of public opinion. For example, Kielstra argued that Palmerston's forcible suppression of the Portuguese slave trade in August 1839 was initiated as a direct result of parliamentary pressure from abolitionists, as well as national newspapers and members of the public.<sup>13</sup> To begin with, for example, Thomas Fowell Buxton urged the Government to use force against Portugal as early as May 1835. Declaring to the House of Commons in a lively speech that it was Britain's 'imperative duty' to compel Portugal to accept a revised anti-slavery treaty, he called upon Palmerston to act without fear of wrongdoing if Lisbon continually evaded his representations.<sup>14</sup> Palmerston was clearly moved by Buxton's address since he transmitted a copy of it to his envoy in Lisbon, instructing him to bring it to the attention of the Portuguese Government and to stress 'the unceasing and anxious desire of Parliament' that the Portuguese slave trade be abolished.<sup>15</sup> Buxton repeated his requests frequently to the Commons over the next few years, such as in March 1836 when he assured Palmerston that 'the country at large' would support him in 'any

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<sup>11</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 6 December 1831, PP, GC/GR/1372. Palmerston sent over a copy of the King's Speech. He hoped the French Government would 'like the way in which we have mentioned the slave trade convention.' See also Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 27 November 1831, PP, GC/GR/241. Granville was attentive to Palmerston's desire for the treaty to be signed quickly, assuring Palmerston in November that the convention would be signed 'in time to be mentioned in the King's speech.'

<sup>12</sup> Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 9 March 1832, PP, GC/GR/1397. See also Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 30 March 1832, PP, GC/GR/1403. In May 1833, Palmerston received a similar request to pursue an active anti-slavery policy from Sir James Graham, the First Lord of the Admiralty. He wanted Palmerston to sign anti-slavery treaties with the U.S. and Spain in order to conciliate the Saints and the West Indian lobby in Parliament. See Sir James Graham to Palmerston, 15 May 1833, PP, GC/GR/38. Palmerston again responded swiftly to this letter, making representations to both these countries within a month. See Palmerston to Sir Charles Vaughan, 31 May 1833, TNA, FO84/143, ff.1-4; Palmerston to Henry Addington, 6 June 1833, TNA, FO84/140, ff.1-6.

<sup>13</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, pp.164, 185-191.

<sup>14</sup> Buxton, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xxvi, 1039-1048 (12 May 1835), c.1044; Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, pp.188-189.

<sup>15</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 10 June 1835, TNA, FO84/178, ff.13-15; Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p.176.

attempt' to enforce the ratification of treaties for the suppression of the slave trade, and that the sooner and the more energetically he did so the 'more satisfied the people would be.'<sup>16</sup>

Buxton was supported in his calls for a more strident approach to ending the slave trade by the Tory abolitionist Robert Inglis, who in May 1838 introduced another motion into the House of Commons urging the Government to pursue 'a more vigorous' policy. Portugal should be 'compelled' into enforcing its anti-slavery treaties, he argued, and by force 'if necessary.'<sup>17</sup> This motion was supported on both sides of the House and carried without a division, leading Palmerston again to send a copy of it to the Portuguese Government. Since Parliament was in full voice, he wrote, Britain was 'now free to act as she pleases in this matter.'<sup>18</sup> In the House of Lords, moreover, Lord Brougham accused the Government of shrinking from its duty over the slave trade. In January 1838, for example, he asked Parliament sarcastically how long Britain would continue to 'pause and falter, and blanch and quail before the ancient and consecrated monarchy of Brazil, the awful might of Portugal, [and] the compact, consolidated, overwhelming power of Spain.' Those nations were 'the greatest of all the criminals engaged in these guilty crimes,' and simultaneously the ones over whom Britain's influence was 'the most commanding,' yet Britain did not take advantage of these facts. In emotive rhetoric, he asserted that Britain could either 'go on in lingering negotiation... while their crimes lay all Africa waste' or it could support 'the millions of Africa who look up to us for help' and end the Portuguese slave trade by force.<sup>19</sup>

Outside of Parliament some of Britain's national newspapers were also increasingly vocal throughout 1837 and 1838, demanding that Palmerston take a more forcible approach to end the Portuguese slave trade. On 3 April 1837, for example, *The*

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<sup>16</sup> Buxton, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xxxii, 269-271 (14 March 1836), cc.270-271. See also Buxton, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xxvii, 1233-1234 (19 May 1835); Buxton, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xxxiv, 1266 (5 July 1836).

<sup>17</sup> Inglis, 'Foreign Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xlii, 1123-1137 (10 May 1838), cc.1136, 1134; Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p.188.

<sup>18</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 12 May 1838, TNA, FO84/249, ff.27-33.

<sup>19</sup> Brougham, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xl, 596-609 (29 January 1838), c.608. This speech was subsequently published by the BFASS, see Henry Brougham, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Brougham, *Lord Brougham's speech in the House of Lords, Monday, January 29, 1838: upon the slave trade, with an abstract of the discussion which ensued* (London: Ridgeway, 1838). For another example, see Brougham, 'Negro Emancipation', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xl, 1284-1316 (20 February 1838).

*Times* asked sarcastically, 'Is this nation... to be scorned and baffled in its sublime enterprise by a *petty power*... who have hardly a frigate to bless themselves with?' Rather than trying to extort treaties with 'fine writing' and '*billets doux*,' it argued that Palmerston should exercise 'coercive measures.'<sup>20</sup> The *Morning Chronicle* also supported the use of force against Portugal, declaring that 'this question ought to be settled now, either by negotiation or without.'<sup>21</sup> Even the Tory-leaning *Standard* attacked Palmerston for not doing enough to combat the Portuguese slave trade. That traffic needed to be declared 'piracy' before any measures would be successful, it claimed. Legislation, engrossed with 'newly nibbed pens' and on the 'best dressed parchment,' would do little to 'to sweep the murderous slavers from the whole African coast.'<sup>22</sup>

Occasionally, 'letters to the editor' from members of the public also urged the Government to take coercive measures against Portugal. In March 1838, for example, the *Morning Chronicle* printed a letter from 'one who has witnessed its horrors' castigating Portugal for its failure to execute its treaty engagements and suggesting that if it refused to grant Britain a treaty then the Royal Navy might 'at least capture [Portugal's] slavers to the amount England has paid to indemnify [Portugal] for the abolition of the traffic?'<sup>23</sup> Likewise, in the *Standard* an anonymous member of the public urged the Government to declare boldly that 'Britain will permit no individual of the human family to be torn away from his country for the purpose of being made merchandise in a foreign land.' Let Palmerston say to Portugal, the individual declared, "You must... immediately put an end to the slave trade. We have temporised with you long enough... the people of Great Britain will not permit us to temporise you any longer."<sup>24</sup> According to historians of the traditional view, therefore, Palmerston escalated Britain's anti-slavery policy against Portugal in August 1839 in direct response to this growing cacophony of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary agitation. To do anything else would have risked the collapse of

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<sup>20</sup> *The Times*, 3 April 1837. For another example, see *The Times*, 27 January 1837.

<sup>21</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 19 June 1838. For more examples, see *Morning Chronicle*, 12 September, 25 September 1838; 3 April, 9 April, 1 July, 16 July, 31 July, 13 August, 20 August, 3 September 1839.

<sup>22</sup> *Standard*, 3 May 1839. Interestingly, both *The Times* and *Standard* changed their minds on the use of coercion against Portugal in August 1839, following the Duke of Wellington's decision to oppose the passage of Palmerston's Act of Parliament in the House of Lords. See, for example, *The Times*, 2 August, 28 August 1839; *Standard*, 2 August, 20 August 1839. The *Morning Post* also disagreed with Palmerston's Act of Parliament, see *Morning Post*, 3 August, 9 September 1839. The *Morning Chronicle* continued to support Palmerston's coercive measures, see *Morning Chronicle*, 3 August, 10 September 1839.

<sup>23</sup> 'One who has witnessed its horrors', in *Morning Chronicle*, 14 March 1838.

<sup>24</sup> 'Letter to the editor', in *Standard*, 17 July 1838.

the Whig Government, Kielstra argued, which 'increasingly relied on, indeed grew desperate for, abolitionist support.'<sup>25</sup>

Although this traditional view of British anti-slavery politics has many proponents, however, there are some problems with it which need to be confronted. On closer reflection, one might argue that this school of thought overstates the homogeneity, transparency and influence of mid-Victorian public opinion, and therefore its ability to redirect the Government's anti-slavery policy in this period. To begin with, for instance, one must address the conceptual problem of what exactly terms such as 'the people' and 'public opinion' meant in the context of mid-Victorian Britain, since it is not immediately obvious who constituted 'the people' or whether 'public opinion' on any issue was uniform enough to be adequately articulated.<sup>26</sup> Elusive and ambiguous, 'the people' might be taken to include a vast array of groups, classes and creeds within British society, ranging from members of the disenfranchised working classes to the newly enfranchised middle classes,<sup>27</sup> from Anglican Protestants and Dissenters to followers of Judaism and Roman Catholicism,<sup>28</sup> or from educated journalists, editors and newspaper readers to illiterate consumers of the popular press who often received information orally in a public house.<sup>29</sup> In addition, 'the people' might include representatives of British commerce such as traders, manufacturers, bankers, insurers and investors, as well as the consumers of those services within Britain. It is also unclear whether this term includes the aristocratic, property-owning elite in Britain and the planter-class of the British Caribbean as well as

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<sup>25</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p.172. For another example, see Drescher, *Abolition*, pp.275, 284-285. Drescher argues that Palmerston acted directly upon the wishes of the BFASS by appointing David Turnbull to the post of consul-general in Havana, and by sending a representation to the Ottoman Empire denouncing slavery.

<sup>26</sup> Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, p.21.

<sup>27</sup> As Hawkins states, for some politicians 'the people' was defined exclusively 'by the suffrage.' For others, it was equated with the 'middle classes.' See *Ibid*, pp.43, 74-75, 91, 94, 97, 229, 370-371. See also *Bagehot: The English Constitution*, ed. by Paul Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.116. Bagehot argued that the exclusion of the working classes from the political nation did not matter, since they added nothing 'to... public opinion.'

<sup>28</sup> One might argue these religious groups could not all constitute 'the people' since they held different aims and agendas, with some wishing to defend the Anglican constitution and others to diversify it. See Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, pp.68-69, 84-85, 370.

<sup>29</sup> Educated newspaper writers and readers were often invoked by politicians as constituting 'the people,' but it is unclear whether uneducated, illiterate Britons who consumed information via oral means were also included in this category. See *Ibid*, pp.73-74, 270. For more on how illiterate Britons accessed information from newspapers, see Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p.27.



their agricultural labourers and tenants,<sup>30</sup> or marginalised groups such as women, who were widely excluded from Victorian public life and confined to the ‘private sphere.’<sup>31</sup>

The term ‘public opinion’ is even harder to define and without proper consideration might be understood superficially. As Angus Hawkins suggests, a precise definition of this ‘fluid’ and ‘contested’ term lies in the specific historical context in which it was used by politicians, where it was ‘the currency of a continuing and dynamic polemical debate.’<sup>32</sup> After 1815, for example, some Radicals described it in terms of what it was *not* as opposed to what it was; it being that opinion ‘not subordinate to property, hierarchy, and inherited status.’<sup>33</sup> Conservatives, meanwhile, were far more contemptuous of public opinion in this era, with Robert Peel deriding it in 1820 as ‘a great compound of folly, weakness, prejudice, wrong feeling, right feeling, obstinacy and newspaper paragraphs.’<sup>34</sup> In other words, Peel equated public opinion with the prejudicial output of contemporary newspapers, and with views that were ill-informed and reductionist; following a tendency to simplify issues down to what was ‘right’ and ‘wrong.’ On the contrary, the Whigs defined ‘public opinion’ very differently to both Radicals and Tories, as ‘the respectable, rational, and sober “march of the mind,” evident among “the better sort of people”.’<sup>35</sup> In his 1828 work *On the Rise, Progress and Present State of Public Opinion in Great Britain and Other Parts of the World*, for example, W.A. Mackinnon wrote that public opinion was ‘that sentiment on any given subject which is entertained by the best informed, most intelligent, and most moral persons in the community’ – the opinion ‘adopted by nearly all persons of any education or proper feeling.’<sup>36</sup>

As Hawkins demonstrates, moreover, the meaning of the term ‘public opinion’ was not static during the nineteenth century. Whereas it was mainly associated by Whigs

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<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Russell, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, ii, 1061-1089 (1 March 1831), c.1086. Russell made a clear distinction between ‘the aristocracy’ and ‘public opinion’ at the beginning of the Parliamentary Reform debates. ‘Wherever the aristocracy reside,’ he said, ‘it is not in human nature that they should not possess a great influence upon public opinion.’

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain, 1815-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>32</sup> Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, p.21.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p.74.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p.74.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p.74.

<sup>36</sup> W.A. Mackinnon, *On the Rise, Progress and Present State of Public Opinion in Great Britain and Other Parts of the World* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1828), p.5.

in the 1830s with ‘the considered and reasonable judgement of the intelligent and responsible male portion of society,’ by the 1860s it had come to denote ‘literacy, the reading of newspapers, and an intelligent and informed *engagement* in public affairs.’ While it ‘remained male and largely urban,’ in other words, as opposed to a distinction being made between ‘the populace’ and ‘public opinion,’ or as Homersham Cox put it between the *communis sensus* and the *vulgi iudicio*,<sup>37</sup> it was now between the engaged and the disengaged.<sup>38</sup> By defining these terms more closely and monitoring their meanings over time, it is therefore apparent that neither ‘the people’ nor mid-Victorian ‘public opinion’ were homogenous entities within British society that could exercise control over the Government with a uniform voice. Instead, ‘the people’ denoted a heterogeneous range of individuals from different classes, creeds and communities, whilst ‘public opinion’ was equally diverse; its exact nature depending on whether one appropriated the Radical, Tory or Whig definition of the term.

Another problem that advocates of the traditional view must face is the methodological one concerning how exactly to identify an adequate expression of public opinion given its inherent ambiguity. As the abovementioned examples show, historians such as Kielstra have tried to articulate public anti-slavery sentiment by analysing the views of leading abolitionists and anti-slavery societies, or else by interpreting the output of national newspapers. While both these methods are valid and useful, however, they also have drawbacks. Firstly, it is apparent that neither individual abolitionists nor single-issue pressure groups like the African Civilisation Society (hereafter ACS) were able to straightforwardly encapsulate the views of the people. Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton was an aristocratic Quaker businessman with land in Norfolk, for instance, who descended from an East Anglican squire.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, although he wanted the ACS to contain a broad membership, in reality he created a group ‘so aristocratic that Prince Metternich became a foreign member.’ As Kielstra states, that society contained ‘five dukes, twenty-three marquises and earls, four archbishops and eighteen bishops.’ Furthermore, ‘the Executive

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<sup>37</sup> Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote in British Politics*, p.93.

<sup>38</sup> Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, p.270. See also James Thompson, *British Political Culture and the Idea of ‘Public Opinion’, 1867-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.73-78.

<sup>39</sup> Olwyn Mary Blouet, ‘Buxton, Sir Thomas Fowell, first baronet (1786-1845), politician and philanthropist’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2010) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4247>> [accessed 22 August 2019].

Committee, which Buxton chaired, had twenty MPs and thirteen Lords.<sup>40</sup> Like many other societies established in this period then, the ACS was somewhat elitist and exclusive; made up primarily of ‘professional men and those of the “middling orders.”’ As such, it was arguably a ‘manifestation of associational opinion,’ showing not the broader currents of opinion among the British public but merely ‘an aspect of popular feeling beyond formal institutions.’<sup>41</sup>

As David Brown demonstrates, furthermore, there are significant issues with using the Victorian press as an independent ‘guide and reflector of public opinion.’<sup>42</sup> In his study of the dynamic interrelationships between the press, the public and politicians, for instance, Brown argues against many of the underlying assumptions in the traditional, Whig view of newspaper history.<sup>43</sup> As he shows, even if contemporary editors aspired to become the voices of public opinion they also consciously manufactured and controlled that opinion wherever possible. James Montgomery, editor of the *Sheffield Iris*, for example, pointed out in 1820 how newspapers were ‘first what public opinion makes them,’ but ‘by a peculiar reaction they make public opinion what they please, so long as they act with discretion and seem to follow when in reality they lead.’<sup>44</sup> Increasingly, editors were keen to advance their own political views and interests, and did not passively accept the press’s ‘self-proclaimed policing mandate’ to hold Government to account.<sup>45</sup> In addition, many editors were ‘dependent’ on politicians for ‘news, information, patronage and influence,’ and thus published articles to satisfy their political patrons,<sup>46</sup> who in turn recognised the importance of securing newspaper support and ‘actively solicited, or if possible commanded, press support and endorsement.’<sup>47</sup> By the

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<sup>40</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p.195. For more on the membership of the BFASS, which was also elitist and led mainly by ‘businessmen, bankers, merchants, often Quakers and Methodists,’ see Heartfield, *The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society*, pp.26-40.

<sup>41</sup> Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, pp.73-74.

<sup>42</sup> Brown, ‘Morally transforming the world or spinning a line?’, p.321.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. For the traditional, Whig view of press history, see Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695-1855* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), p.83. Barker argues that ‘public opinion, not political influence, was the driving force behind newspaper politics.’ See also James Curran, ‘Part I: Press history’, in *Power Without Responsibility: Press, Broadcasting and the Internet in Britain*, ed. by James Curran and Jean Seaton, 7th edn (London: Routledge, 2010), 1-100.

<sup>44</sup> Brown, ‘Morally transforming the world or spinning a line?’, p.322.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p.342.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p.322.

mid-nineteenth century then, Brown argues that 'the major London papers had all established links with specific political interests.'<sup>48</sup>

One final problem with the traditional interpretation of British anti-slavery politics is that advocates of this view tend to treat Victorian politicians as deferential servants of the people, who held little agency over their own decision-making. One might argue, however, that during the nineteenth century parliamentarians held very particular and sincerely held beliefs about their duties and responsibilities to the people; beliefs which dictated far more than the extrinsic influence of public opinion how they should act and what decisions they should take. As Hawkins argues, Whig statesmen commonly understood it as their role to ensure the Constitution did not become 'unbalanced,' with the Royal prerogative of the Monarch constrained by the 'good faith' and 'shared principles' of political parties in Parliament and the views of the aristocracy and the country 'represented' in the House of Lords and Commons respectively.<sup>49</sup> By 'representation,' Whig MPs conceived it as their duty to stand up for the 'interests' of the constituency which elected them, and not just those of the electorate but of all the unenfranchised members of the community as well.<sup>50</sup> Although MPs owed their position to 'the consent of voters,' moreover, Whig statesmen did not believe their authority derived from the people.<sup>51</sup> They did not consider themselves to be subservient 'delegates' sent to Parliament as the agents of their constituents, bound 'to obey, to vote, and to argue for' the narrow views of their electors, but instead as 'representatives' or 'custodians' of their constituencies.<sup>52</sup> Essentially, statesmen felt invested with a 'public trust' to promote their independent judgement of the community's (and the country's) 'interests' in Parliament, and to ignore mandates issued by the electorate if they went against 'the clearest conviction of [their] judgement and conscience.'<sup>53</sup> As Edmund Burke famously advised the electors of Bristol in 1774, 'Your representative owes you not his industry only, but his judgement; and he betrays you, instead of serving you, if he

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p.322.

<sup>49</sup> Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, p.69. See also David Craig, 'Burke and the Constitution', in *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke*, ed. by David Dwan and Christopher J. Insole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 104-116 (pp.113-115).

<sup>50</sup> Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, p.69.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p.69.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, pp.69-70.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

sacrifices it to your opinion.’<sup>54</sup> ‘While power was held in the name of “the people,”’ Hawkins concludes, ‘it was not, beyond the periodic election of their representatives by propertied voters, exercised by “the people” themselves.’<sup>55</sup>

Vitally, Palmerston was no stranger to this Burkean view of a statesman’s political duties and responsibilities, having been exposed to such ideas during his Scottish Enlightenment education. In his classes on Political Economy, for example, Dugald Stewart taught that if political crises such as the French Revolution were to be avoided in Britain and the stability and influence of ‘established authority’ retained, then statesmen needed to forego any ‘bigoted attachment’ they held to ‘antiquated forms,’ and to give ‘appropriate weight to the views and interests of the governed as well as the governors.’<sup>56</sup> The growth of an enlightened public opinion, he declared, had forced statesmen to ‘borrow’ their tone ‘from the spirit of the times.’<sup>57</sup> However, although public opinion was ‘now to be counted as a vital element in the body politic,’ Stewart was adamant that it had to be mediated and harnessed, not blindly followed and obeyed.<sup>58</sup> One of the key elements of Stewart’s philosophy was that statesmen should not be ‘mere spectators of the progress and decline of society,’ but should ‘engage in what was essentially a patriotic (aristocratic) duty to shape legislation to the demands of enlightened political wisdom.’<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, Stewart believed that democracy was not a system of government that would lead to ‘the happiness of mankind,’ for it was ‘good laws’ rather than ‘political power’ that led to happiness, and good laws could only be made by a responsible, educated and informed elite, not by people who were ‘incompetent to judge.’<sup>60</sup> ‘The most wealthy states,’ he lectured, ‘are those where the people are the most industrious, humane, and enlightened, and where the liberty they

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<sup>54</sup> Edmund Burke, ‘Speech to the Electors of Bristol, 3 November 1774’, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. by Paul Langford, 9 vols (Oxford, 1981-2000), III, p.69.

<sup>55</sup> Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, p.71.

<sup>56</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.32; Winch, ‘The System of the North’, p.32. See also Dugald Stewart, ‘Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind: In Two Parts’, in *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, ed. by Sir William Hamilton and John Veitch, 11 vols (Edinburgh: Constable, 1854-1860), II, pp.228-229.

<sup>57</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.33. See also Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, II, pp.223, 229, 244-245.

<sup>58</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.32.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p.33. See also Dugald Stewart, ‘Dissertation Exhibiting the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical and Political Philosophy since the Revival of letters in Europe (1815-21)’, in *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, ed. by Sir William Hamilton and John Veitch, 11 vols (Edinburgh: Constable, 1854-1860), I, p.22.

<sup>60</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.34-35. See also Dugald Stewart, ‘Lectures on Political Economy Vol.I’, in *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, ed. by Sir William Hamilton and John Veitch, 11 vols (Edinburgh: Constable, 1854-1860), VIII, pp.21-24.

enjoy... rests on the most solid and durable basis.'<sup>61</sup> In time, Stewart argued, when the 'general populace gradually became better informed, it would become safe to move towards a more democratic system in which hereditary wealth and power were undermined, but in the meantime, a benevolent, paternalistic compact between the educated, governing elite and the uninformed general populace was a necessary precondition of society's improvement.'<sup>62</sup>

Rather than interpreting Palmerston as a deferential servant of the people, therefore, it is more accurate to view him as a statesman who acted in accordance with his independent judgement and conscience, who held a personal view of how best to represent the nation's hatred of slavery in international politics. For although Palmerston was 'aware that parliamentary champions of abolition were watching events carefully' in the 1830s and 'keen to be seen to be doing something' when it came to suppressing the Portuguese slave trade, abolitionists and colonial planters were evidently 'pushing at an open door.'<sup>63</sup> As he told Howard de Walden privately in May 1838, whilst he would have preferred to act against Portugal sooner, it was necessary to wait for the Cabinet and Parliament to 'come around to opinions which I myself have long entertained.'<sup>64</sup> Invariably, Palmerston told the House of Commons the same thing; explaining to Buxton in the summer of 1837 how the Government 'fully shared those sentiments of indignation... at the extent to which the traffic in slaves still continued under the flag of Portugal,' declaring that 'no effort had been spared to bring this "disgraceful trade" to an end.'<sup>65</sup> Crucially, then, Palmerston's was hardly following the line of Buxton, Inglis or Brougham, or the pressure heaped upon him by *The Times*, *Standard* and *Morning Chronicle* during the late-1830s, for it was only because their views aligned with his own judgement that they found expression in the Government's foreign policy.

As opposed to Palmerston being put under pressure to change his policy by Buxton, moreover, it is apparent that the two politicians developed a constructive working relationship in the 1830s, and co-ordinated their parliamentary tactics in private

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<sup>61</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.34. See also Stewart, 'Lectures on Political Economy Vol.I', p.35.

<sup>62</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.35. See also Stewart, 'Lectures on Political Economy Vol.II', pp.357-358, 362, 374, 376.

<sup>63</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.239.

<sup>64</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 19 May 1838, PP, GC/HO/828.

<sup>65</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.239. See also Palmerston, 'Treaties for the Abolition of Slavery', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xxxviii, 1827-1829 (6 July 1837), c.1827.

before sessions took place in the House of Commons. On one occasion in May 1837, for instance, Buxton communicated to Palmerston ‘the line’ he planned to take in a motion to Parliament, since he felt ‘it may be convenient to you to know.’ Although one cannot assume that Palmerston had frequent or regular meetings with Buxton, it appears this was not an isolated incident. In his letter, Buxton implied that he usually met face to face with Palmerston before a parliamentary session, but on this occasion he would not have ‘an opportunity of seeing you before I go to the House,’ hence why he decided to write to Palmerston instead. Notably, the information that Buxton gave to Palmerston was precise and succinct, rather than comprehensive, but more than enough to allow Palmerston to work out an effective and coherent response. For example, in his letter of May 1837, Buxton summarised his three lines of attack upon the Government’s anti-slavery strategy, stating:

1<sup>st</sup> I shall attack Portugal for violation of treaties; urge you to endure it no longer. 2<sup>nd</sup> I shall remark upon the defective geographical boundaries of the treaty with France, urge you to correct it. 3<sup>rd</sup> I shall show that all treaties must be nugatory till by a combination of the civilised nations it is declared piracy.

Furthermore, Buxton also drew Palmerston’s attention to ‘the argument on which I shall chiefly rely,’ which in this case was ‘that the slave trade cuts off the commercial nations of Europe & America from commerce with one quarter of the globe.’ Perhaps indicating the closeness of their relationship, Buxton even attempted to pre-empt and modify Palmerston’s official reply, asking him not to give a ‘peremptory negative’ on his chief argument, since he felt it was strong enough to resonate with Parliamentarians and ‘to carry the declaration of piracy.’<sup>66</sup>

It is clear that Palmerston made good use of Buxton’s letter since, three days after receiving it, he prepared a comprehensive private memorandum showing precisely ‘what has been done about slave trade since last year.’<sup>67</sup> In that memorandum, which Palmerston no doubt created in order to successfully rebut Buxton’s lines of attack, Palmerston noted the points which Buxton had raised as well as how he intended to

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<sup>66</sup> Thomas Fowell Buxton to Palmerston, 27 May 1837, PP, SLT/8.

<sup>67</sup> Palmerston, ‘Memorandum showing what has been done about slave trade since last year’, 30 May 1837, PP, SLT/9.

counter them. For example, Palmerston outlined the state of negotiations with Lisbon; narrating the collapse of negotiations after September 1836 but then the progress made thereafter. Since negotiations were now proceeding well, he wrote, it was possible that 'no necessity will exist for the strong measures hinted at by Mr Buxton.' Likewise, Palmerston highlighted how the proposed Great Power treaty sought to address the 'defective geographical limits of [the] French convention.' As opposed to being a thorn in the Government's side, then, forcing Palmerston to redirect his anti-slavery policy, Buxton worked congenially with Palmerston during the 1830s; sharing his plans and strategies with him and enabling the Foreign Secretary to produce coherent parliamentary responses.

Palmerston's relationship with Buxton, in other words, supports the argument of David Turley who suggests that prominent anti-slavery activists played a growing advisory role in the early post-abolition years as non-official 'partners of ministers and officials in overseeing the enforcement of British slave trade legislation.'<sup>68</sup> In particular, as opposed to seeking policy *change* through 'agitation,' Turley argues that by the early 1830s abolitionists had accepted the sincerity and direction of the Government's anti-slave-trade agenda and were more concerned with exercising their 'influence' over the Cabinet to monitor the implementation of Britain's policy and keep officials 'up to the mark.'<sup>69</sup> As Buxton's use of private memoranda, face-to-face meetings, and indirect lobbying of Palmerston shows, therefore, he had largely dispensed with 'agitation' and become what Turley describes as an 'insider' within the Government, utilising his expertise on the operations of the slave trade and his knowledge more widely of West African affairs to try and help Palmerston achieve his anti-slavery ambitions.<sup>70</sup>

Buxton was not the only abolitionist leader who communicated with Palmerston in private, however, or who co-ordinated tactics with him in advance of parliamentary sessions. In May 1838, for example, shortly after Inglis had passed a motion urging the Government to take decisive action against Portugal, he wrote to Palmerston to establish when would be the best time for the Government to respond formally to his address.

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<sup>68</sup> Turley David, 'Anti-Slavery Activists and Officials: "Influence", Lobbying and the Slave Trade, 1807-1850', in *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975*, ed. by Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), 81-92 (p.83).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, p.82.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p.83.



Since Sir Dudley Wilmot was due to speak on the subject of the Government's apprenticeship scheme, which might have pushed the Portuguese slave trade lower down the agenda, Inglis urged Palmerston to give the Crown's answer to his address before Wilmot spoke.<sup>71</sup> Palmerston agreed with Inglis, for he subsequently responded to Inglis' motion the next day, just before Wilmot's planned discussion on apprenticeship.<sup>72</sup> Likewise, it is apparent that Palmerston had a good working relationship with Lord Brougham, who also forewarned the Government of attacks he was planning to make on Palmerston's anti-slavery policy from the House of Lords. In February 1838, for example, Brougham informed Lord Melbourne of a speech he was about to give on the Government's suppression policy in Portugal. Subsequently, Palmerston sent an urgent summons to his Foreign Office clerks and worked throughout the night with them 'to arm Melbourne... to Palmerston's satisfaction.'<sup>73</sup> Once again, however, far from this being a source of frustration or embarrassment, Palmerston informed his envoy in Lisbon gleefully of Brougham's intentions. 'Brougham is going to bring the slave trade question before the House of Lord's on Tuesday [20 February],' he wrote, and 'Portugal will get her due from him in his speech & motion.'<sup>74</sup> Palmerston's relationships with some of the era's most distinguished abolitionists, therefore, were hardly comparable to those of a servant and master, with Palmerston dutifully obeying their orders. On the contrary, Palmerston evidently worked co-operatively alongside these 'insiders' during the early 1830s in pursuit of a common goal.<sup>75</sup>

Over time, however, and certainly by the early 1840s, it is clear that this developing 'insider' role for prominent abolitionists fell away, and that later activists such as Joseph Sturge, leader of the BFASS, had a more limited ability to influence Palmerston's suppression policy. As Turley demonstrates, this decline in abolitionists' advisory role was partly down to the changing 'social and religious character' of British abolitionism during this period.<sup>76</sup> Increasingly, abolitionists were drawn from provincial evangelical backgrounds as well as from other militant Dissenting groups, rather than the

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<sup>71</sup> Robert Inglis to Palmerston, 21 May 1838, PP, GC/IN/3.

<sup>72</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xliii, 87 (22 May 1838), c.87. See also Wilmot, 'Negro Apprenticeship', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xliii, 87-92 (22 May 1838).

<sup>73</sup> Bourne, *Palmerston*, p.419.

<sup>74</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 17 February 1838, PP, GC/HO/817. For more examples of Palmerston excitedly telling his Minister to Lisbon about Brougham's parliamentary speeches, see Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 10 February 1838, 17 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/816, 843.

<sup>75</sup> Turley, 'Anti-Slavery Activists and Officials', p.83.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p.86.

'upper echelons of the Anglican middle class.' This younger generation of anti-slavery activists therefore viewed their situation differently from 'the generation of Wilberforce, the elder Stephen and even Buxton.' As opposed to being 'insiders,' they identified as 'outsiders,' and were 'somewhat disdainful of the remnants of the older generation of parliamentary abolitionists.'<sup>77</sup> Although Sturge and his associates did not abandon face-to-face lobbying altogether, the BFASS became unconvinced that 'manoeuvring within' brought them influence, and thus resorted 'much more readily to... mass public meetings and public lectures.' Attributing the success of the emancipation and anti-apprenticeship movements to public pressure, they believed that 'influence' alone was ineffectual and 'agitation' was the 'necessary means of giving "influence" both due weight and legitimacy.'<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, as Turley demonstrates with reference to a case study of the British Government's response to Texan independence from Mexico in 1836, this tactic was far less effective at modifying government policy.<sup>79</sup> In spite of the BFASS's agitation over this issue, for instance, in particular their resolution at the first World Anti-Slavery Convention in the summer of 1839 that only the ending of Texan slavery would prevent the expansion of slavery into North America, Palmerston agreed to recognise Texas independently of the BFASS and ignored their demands for the Government to insist upon emancipation; instead following his long-standing policy of focusing on the abolition of the slave-trade. In short, Palmerston negotiated a commercial treaty with Texas in the autumn of 1840, which included a mutual right-of-search agreement with the Lone Star Republic. So limited was the influence of the BFASS, moreover, that 'the announcement of the conclusion of the agreements with Texas came as a surprise to the abolitionists who had not known that the negotiations were taking place.'<sup>80</sup>

In addition, however, it is the contention of this thesis that the diminishing role and 'influence' of anti-slavery activists in the mid-nineteenth century can also be attributed to the rising importance of Palmerston in shaping Britain's anti-slavery policy, and by understanding, as aforementioned, that he was no mere cipher of the BFASS or 'public opinion.' Palmerston's determination to act upon his independent judgement and conscience when directing foreign policy is indicative in episodes when he challenged and

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, pp.86-87.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, pp.86-87.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, pp.87-88.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p.88. For more on the inability of the BFASS to influence government policy after 1838, see Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.67-69.

argued against the views of those people and institutions claiming to represent ‘public opinion.’ Perhaps the most pertinent example of this occurred between June 1845 and March 1850, when Palmerston defended his anti-slavery policy against a growing movement of opinion convinced that a pacific, ‘anti-coercionist’ approach to ending the slave trade would be more effective, less cruel, and less expensive than the existing ‘coercive’ system.<sup>81</sup> To begin with, for example, the Government’s policy was attacked by a group of Radical free traders led by William Hutt but ably supported by Thomas Milner Gibson,<sup>82</sup> who were ‘interested in fostering trade with Brazil.’<sup>83</sup> Britain’s anti-slavery squadron had been a ‘miserable failure’ since its inception, this group argued, for it had merely transferred the slave trade from established ports to ‘new channels,’ rather than stopping it once and for all.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, by forcing slave traders to act covertly and quickly in order to avoid capture, they argued that the Royal Navy had aggravated the horrors of the middle passage. Slavers reportedly carried less water provisions than before, for instance, and made their hulls smaller to increase the speed of their vessels, thus making conditions even more intolerable for enslaved Africans.<sup>85</sup> In addition, this group claimed that upon the sight a British cruiser, slave traders in Africa ‘ruthlessly and deliberately murdered’ the slaves they kept in barracoons, preferring to slaughter those suffering peoples than to face the consequences of their actions.<sup>86</sup> This led to suggestions that a higher mortality rate ‘stimulated a greater consumption in slaves, meaning that suppression of the slave trade increased the number of enslaving wars within Africa.’<sup>87</sup> The reason for the failure of the coercive system, free traders argued, came down to the

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<sup>81</sup> The ‘cruiser debates’ of the 1840s and 1850s have been discussed by a number of anti-slavery scholars. See, for example, Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade*, pp.88-112; Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade*, pp.104-114; Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, pp.260-262, 296-309; Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.112-124.

<sup>82</sup> For Hutt’s key parliamentary attacks on Palmerston’s anti-slavery policy, see Hutt, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, lxxxi, 1156-1172 (24 June 1845); Hutt, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1091-1101 (22 February 1848); Hutt, ‘Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cix, 1093-1110 (19 March 1850).

<sup>83</sup> Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.261. William Hutt was MP for Gateshead and a radical advocate of free trade, whilst Thomas Milner Gibson was MP for Manchester and a ‘spokesman for the Northern manufacturing and commercial interests.’

<sup>84</sup> T.R.H. Thompson testimony, in Second Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 366 (30 May 1848), p.127. See also *The Times*, 11 July 1848, p.5.

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, Macgregor Laird testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.195. See also *The Times*, 27 April 1849, p.4.

<sup>86</sup> Hutt, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1091-1101 (22 February 1848), c.1098.

<sup>87</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.117. See, for example, Hutt, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1091-1101 (22 February 1848), c.1092. Hutt declared that ‘the shores and seas of Africa... were pouring forth human blood like water, for an object which it was impossible for us to attain.’

simple fact that it was impossible to 'dragoon' free and independent nations into suppressing a part of their economy which they deemed essential for their prosperity.<sup>88</sup> Not 'ten men out of Bedlam,' Hutt declared to the Commons in 1848, 'believed that laws, treaties and warships could suppress so profitable a trade.'<sup>89</sup>

Crucially though, for free traders the current system was not just a failure but a pointless waste of public money, one which was especially frustrating considering that Britain had a budget deficit and needed a period of retrenchment to restore financial stability.<sup>90</sup> Not only was the annual cost of Britain's anti-slavery squadron immense in blood and treasure, they contended,<sup>91</sup> but the Royal Navy's armed intervention overseas had led to resentment in other countries which had serious repercussions for British merchants and manufacturers, and might even have led to war.<sup>92</sup> In place of the cruiser system, this group advised the Whigs to remove restrictions on labour migration from West Africa to the sugar colonies, and thus to encourage the 'emancipation' of British commerce.<sup>93</sup> By setting a positive example to African rulers, showing how the employment of free-wage labour could outproduce slave labour, they argued that African states would soon take steps themselves to end the slave trade; enabling Britain to regenerate its anti-slavery crusade without the need for violence and without any cost to the British taxpayer.<sup>94</sup> As Richard Huzzey argues, this group essentially believed in 'the moral economy of *laissez faire*,' which trusted that 'moral outcomes would follow from the uninterrupted operation of markets.'<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Bright, 'Brazilian Treaty', *Hansard*, civ, 782-787 (24 April 1849), c.786.

<sup>89</sup> Hutt, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1091-1101 (22 February 1848), c.1092.

<sup>90</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.118. See also Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.298; Bartlett, *Great Britain and Sea Power*, pp.257-259, 268-269.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, Hutt, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1091-1101 (22 February 1848), cc.1099-1101. For more on the economic cost of suppression, see Chapter 6, pp.260-267.

<sup>92</sup> For more on concerns that Britain's coercive system might impact the country's merchants and manufacturers, see Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.299. For more on concerns that Britain's coercive system might hamper international peace and even lead to war, see Bright, 'Brazilian Treaty', *Hansard*, civ, 782-787 (24 April 1849), cc.784-787; Hume, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1091-1101 (22 February 1848), cc.1111-1112. See also Captain G. Mansel testimony, in Second Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 366 (30 May 1848), p.71. *The Times* argued many times between 1845 and 1850 that Britain's cruiser system irritated other nations and might lead to conflict. See, for example, *The Times*, 10 July 1845, 27 April, 24 May, 7 July, 27 December 1849.

<sup>93</sup> Jackson, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1101-1107 (22 February 1848), c.1107.

<sup>94</sup> Resolutions proposed by the Chairman, William Hutt, in Fourth Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 623 (10 August 1848), p.9.

<sup>95</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.119. *The Times* joined the free trade lobby in lamenting the cost of the cruiser system. See *The Times*, 29 August 1848; 27 April, 4 August, 27 December, 28 December 1849. By

By 1850 the Whig government was under significant pressure, since this anti-coercionist viewpoint was also endorsed by prominent abolitionists such as Stephen Lushington as well as the Quaker dominated BFASS.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, lining up besides free traders in Parliament were Protectionists, who also opposed Palmerston's anti-slavery policy.<sup>97</sup> Supported by *The Times*, this group was embittered about the passage of the recent Sugar Act, which removed the duty levied on non-colonial (slave-grown) sugar.<sup>98</sup> Hence, they argued that Britain's suppression policy was 'a philanthropic sham' led by 'hypocrites or fools,' for Britain was simultaneously encouraging slavery in the Americas (by the passage of the Sugar Act) whilst trying to forcibly suppress it on the West African coast; it was 'doing at one side of the Atlantic what we deliberately undo at the other.'<sup>99</sup> By defeating Palmerston's policy, then, Protectionists hoped to reintroduce colonial preference.<sup>100</sup> Even spokesmen for the West Indian interest, moreover, had made up their mind to alter Britain's anti-slavery policy by the late 1840s. Having formerly supported Palmerston's coercive approach as 'their best hope of economic prosperity,' since it promised to suppress the slave trade of their competitors and put them 'as far as possible on equal terms with their rivals,' this group began to champion the idea of encouraging 'free immigrant labour from Africa on a much bigger scale than ever before.' Some colonial planters even advocated a new, 'regulated slave trade under British control.'<sup>101</sup> Once again, *The Times* supported this line of argument, claiming in February 1848:

Were we to apply our money and ships in buying on the African coast 50,000 head[s] of [Africans] a year, and landing them free in our West Indian ports, it would tend far more to the prosperity of our Islands and to the suppression of the slave trade than all that our settlements and cruisers have done, with the balance of expense very much in our favour.<sup>102</sup>

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1850, this was the main reason why *The Times* objected to the cruiser system. See *The Times*, 20 March 1850.

<sup>96</sup> Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, pp.321, 260, see also pp.153-154, 296-297.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, pp.299-300.

<sup>98</sup> See Chapter 1, pp.43-46.

<sup>99</sup> *The Times*, 19 March 1850. For more on this apparent contradiction, see Chapter 5, pp.249-254.

<sup>100</sup> Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.321.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, pp.300.

<sup>102</sup> *The Times*, 5 February 1848, quoted in Rev. George Smith, *The Case of our West-African Cruisers and West-African settlements Fairly Considered* (London: Hatchard, 1848), p.4. See also *The Times*, 28 August 1849. *The Times* again proposed that Britain revive a form of slave-trading, and superintend that traffic 'to change slavery, by means of temporary bondage, into Christian freedom.'

In addition to *The Times*, a number of other national papers had also been won over to Hutt's viewpoint by 1850, with the now Peelite-owned *Morning Chronicle* labelling the anti-slavery squadron 'a cruel, hopeless and absurd experiment,'<sup>103</sup> and the ultra-Tory *Spectator* deriding 'this costly failure, this deadly farce.'<sup>104</sup> Others papers that came out in support of the anti-coercionist campaign included the Radical *Daily News* as well as the Tory-leaning *Economist*, *Quarterly Review* and *Westminster Review*.<sup>105</sup>

Significantly, this combination of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary pressure persuaded the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, to establish a Select Committee to examine how the slave trade 'might best be suppressed,'<sup>106</sup> and to consider changing the Government's anti-slavery policy in the summer of 1849. In mid-August, Russell wrote to Palmerston in private commanding him 'to study anew the slave trade question, with a view to its suppression.'<sup>107</sup> Attached to his letter, moreover, was a memorandum with 'notes on foreign affairs,' in which Russell discussed various foreign policy issues - many of which related to the 1848 revolutions in Europe. Of all these topics, though, Russell concluded that 'the question of most importance... is that of the slave trade, but it requires a separate & very mature consideration.'<sup>108</sup> Anxious that the Cabinet and the House of Commons were no longer in the right mood to adopt a bellicose anti-slavery policy, Russell went on to recommend, in November 1849, that Palmerston alter his anti-

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<sup>103</sup> Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade*, p.110. See also *Morning Chronicle*, 21 July 1848, which described Palmerston's anti-slavery policy as 'pernicious Quixotism.' For more examples of this paper attacking Palmerston's anti-slavery policy, see *Morning Chronicle* 25 July 1848; 19 March, 20 March 1850; 5 March 1852.

<sup>104</sup> Mathieson, *Great Britain and the Slave Trade*, p.110.

<sup>105</sup> Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.321. Not all groups inside-and-out of Parliament opposed Palmerston's anti-slavery policy. For example, colonial planters whose concern was the older West Indian sugar colonies of Jamaica and Barbados continued to support the existing policy of slave trade suppression. In addition, Buxtonite abolitionists such as Lord Denman, Lord Brougham, Samuel Wilberforce and Robert Inglis also supported Palmerston's anti-slavery policy. For more on these groups, see *Ibid*, pp.300-301. Furthermore, not all papers opposed Palmerston's anti-slavery policy. See, for example, *Morning Post*, 5 March 1850; 17 March, 21 March, 23 May, 19 July, 26 September 1851; 11 February 1852.

<sup>106</sup> Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, pp.303-304. The House of Commons produced four reports in 1848 and two in 1849. See Four Reports of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), 366 (30 May 1848), 536 (25 July 1848), 623 (10 August 1848); Two further reports of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1849, xix, 308 (24 May 1849), 410 (21 June 1849). William Hutt's Select Committee concluded that an anti-coercive approach was the best method of suppressing the slave trade and that Britain's treaty obligations should be severed. The House of Lords produced two reports in 1850, see Two Reports of the House of Lords Select Committee on the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1850, ix, 53 (15 February 1850), 590 (22 July 1850). Samuel Wilberforce concluded the opposite of Hutt: that the Government's coercive system was the most effective method of suppressing the slave trade and ought to be continued.

<sup>107</sup> Lord John Russell to Palmerston, 15 August 1849, PP, GC/RU/282.

<sup>108</sup> Lord John Russell, 'Notes on Foreign Affairs', 16 August 1849, PP, GC/RU/283.

slavery stance by threatening to re-establish differential duties on Brazilian and Cuban sugar instead of continuing with naval coercion. 'I do not suppose you are prepared to enter into communications for such an object,' Russell wrote to Palmerston, 'but neither can we go on without some further measures, if we wish to put down slave trade.'<sup>109</sup>

Despite this growing opposition to his anti-slavery policy, however, and the wavering of Russell within the Cabinet, Palmerston determinedly resisted all attempts to dismantle his coercive suppression system. Not only did he ignore Russell's advice to reconsider Britain's anti-slavery policy, but he spoke out regularly against anti-coercionist voices in Parliament.<sup>110</sup> In all of his speeches and in his testimony to the 1848 House of Commons Select Committee, Palmerston argued that his policy deserved to be retained and, controversially, that it ought to be enlarged and extended.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, Palmerston denied that the coercive system had failed, insisting that it had not been given a 'fair trial' since it was only in 1839 and 1845 when British cruisers gained the necessary powers to suppress the Portuguese and Brazilian slave trades.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, Palmerston accepted that the number of enslaved Africans transported across the Atlantic had not decreased dramatically since 1807 (and according to some estimates had in fact increased),<sup>113</sup> but he personally believed it was decreasing and contended that any assessment of the trade's vitality must take into consideration the fact that Britain was no longer a perpetrator of that crime.<sup>114</sup> It was false, he argued, to compare figures from the early nineteenth

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<sup>109</sup> Lord John Russell to Palmerston, 24 November 1849, PP, GC/RU/306. Russell dropped his proposal to re-establish differential duties in January, upon realising that the Whigs were now committed to free trade and such a proposal would be met with little support. Once again, he encouraged Palmerston to use force against Brazil, despite the fact it would be 'embarrassing' for the Government. See Lord John Russell to Palmerston, 22 January 1850, PP, GC/RU/312.

<sup>110</sup> See, for example, Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845); Palmerston, 'Captured Negroes', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 1267-1269 (17 July 1846); Palmerston, 'Supply – The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xciv, 129-138 (9 July 1847); Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1119-1126 (22 February 1848); Palmerston, 'Slave Trade' *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, 990-993 (24 March 1848); Palmerston, 'Brazilian Treaty', *Hansard*, civ, 796-802 (24 April 1849); Palmerston, 'Supply – Western Coast of Africa, and Danish Settlements on the Gold Coast', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cxiii, 62-67 (19 July 1850).

<sup>111</sup> Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.9. See also Chapter 2, pp.86-92.

<sup>112</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), cc.154, 151-155. See also Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.7.

<sup>113</sup> Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.1. Palmerston accepted the estimates put to him by the committee but did not like to make sweeping estimates about the precise number of slaves transported across the Atlantic.

<sup>114</sup> Palmerston, 'Captured Negroes', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 1267-1269 (17 July 1846), c.1267.

century with those of the present, for without Britain abolishing its own slave trade and putting pressure on other countries to abolish theirs, the slave trade would be far larger than was currently the case.<sup>115</sup>

Additionally, Palmerston denied that the Royal Navy exacerbated the suffering endured on the middle passage, and that it had increased the mortality rate of the crossing. 'The avarice and covetousness of man was about the same at all times,' he argued, meaning that slavers possessed 'the same disposition to crowd as many [people] as possible within the space' as there had ever been. Although they were transported across the ocean in smaller, faster vessels, they were 'proportionately just as crowded.'<sup>116</sup> If anything, Palmerston felt that slave traders had an added incentive to keep as many enslaved Africans alive as possible, on account of how their value had risen substantially because they were now harder than ever to procure.<sup>117</sup> Thus, far from Britain's naval operations aggravating the suffering experienced during the middle passage, for Palmerston they were an 'act of mercy.'<sup>118</sup> When it came to the cost of the anti-slavery squadron, therefore, Palmerston argued fiercely that as a well-functioning system it was worth the expense.<sup>119</sup>

Palmerston was so adamant to retain his anti-slavery policy that when these debates reached their apogee in March 1850 (with Hutt tabling his decisive motion to sever all British treaty obligations over the slave trade and thus to scrap the cruiser system)<sup>120</sup> he was ready to take 'drastic measures' to ensure it was defeated.<sup>121</sup> On the eve of that motion, Russell's Government sent out letters to Whig MPs disposed to support Hutt's motion containing 'five lines of a dry threat,' whilst other waverers received personal visits from leading ministers.<sup>122</sup> Vitally, moreover, both Palmerston and

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<sup>115</sup> Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.4.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, p.2.

<sup>117</sup> Palmerston, 'Captured Negroes', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 1267-1269 (17 July 1846), cc.1267-1268. See also Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.3. For the same reason, Palmerston also believed that slave-owners in the New World would treat enslaved Africans with more care. See Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), cc.150-151.

<sup>118</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), c.1336.

<sup>119</sup> Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.17.

<sup>120</sup> Hutt, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cix, 1093-1110 (19 March 1850).

<sup>121</sup> Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.321.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, p.321.



Russell threatened to resign from office if Hutt's motion was carried - a move which would effectively have brought down the Government.<sup>123</sup> Facing approximately 160 MPs at a meeting of the Whig party at Downing Street on the morning of the debate, both statesmen declared that they could not execute policies that went against their long-held beliefs and political principles.<sup>124</sup> According to the memoirs of Charles Greville, it was Palmerston in particular who drove this decision. 'They have determined,' Greville wrote, 'in obedience to Palmerston's will and pleasure[,] to stake their existence on it; and they have been moving heaven and earth to obtain support.'<sup>125</sup>

Palmerston's decision to stake his position on his anti-slavery policy was criticised by *The Times* in its coverage of this development, with that paper mocking him and Russell by using a slave metaphor: 'By the sounds of the Treasury whip,' it claimed, 'Massa Russell' had mustered 'the unfortunate captives... in the above-mentioned barracoon, and [were] there shortly and sharply instructed in the terms of their servitude.'<sup>126</sup> Similarly, Palmerston's decision was unpopular with his Whig colleagues, with numerous MPs coming away 'furious' from the meeting at Downing Street.<sup>127</sup> Mainly, Greville wrote, it had surprised backbenchers who could not understand why Palmerston had taken such a strong line on 'so unpopular a question and one so entirely fallen into disrepute.'<sup>128</sup> For Palmerston, however, it was undoubtedly a stance he felt compelled to make, and by the same sense of patriotic duty that had been instilled into him at Edinburgh. As Palmerston informed Georges de Klindworth in 1844, he would never let his anti-slavery policy be dictated to him if it ran counter to his own strongly held convictions:

If I was Guizot, and the Chamber insisted upon my doing a thing so entirely against my own conviction & so contrary to the honour of France, I should say to them, "I am delighted to be minister as long as I can govern consistently with my own opinions, with my honour & that of my country, but if you are determined to impress upon me

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<sup>123</sup> For an account of this incident, see Charles Greville, *The Greville Memoirs, 1814-1860*, ed. by Lytton Strachey and Roger Fulford, 8 vols (London: Macmillan, 1838), vi, pp.211-212.

<sup>124</sup> For an account of Russell's speech, see Lord John Russell's speech in Downing Street, 19 March 1850, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/8D, f.91.

<sup>125</sup> Greville, *The Greville Memoirs*, vi, p.211.

<sup>126</sup> *The Times*, 20 March 1850.

<sup>127</sup> Greville, *The Greville Memoirs*, vi, pp.211-212.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

conditions incompatible with all these considerations I wish you good morning, and beg you to find some other person to submit to the disgrace which you wish to inflict."<sup>129</sup>

Significantly, Palmerston's and Russell's gamble paid off as a majority of Whig MPs rejected Hutt's motion in order to guarantee the survival of the Government.<sup>130</sup> In private, Palmerston rejoiced at this parliamentary victory; describing to James Hudson 'our great majority... in the House of Commons,' and celebrating it as 'a signal triumph' that would secure the African squadron's future.<sup>131</sup> Considering the level of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition that was stacking itself against him, this was perhaps not mere hyperbole. As this example demonstrates, therefore, rather than considering Palmerston a delegate of the people, beholden to the anti-slavery views of the national press, the West Indian lobby and the BFASS, or those of free-traders and Protectionists, all of whom claimed to represent 'public opinion,' Palmerston invariably challenged those he disagreed with and only advanced the line of argument that chimed with his own judgement and conscience.

Palmerston's relationship with public opinion was evidently not as simple as that of a master and servant, yet one might contend that it was also more dynamic and complex than has so far been portrayed. In line with recent scholarship, there is evidence to suggest that Palmerston was more than just an independent arbiter of the nation's interests when it came to anti-slavery, and that he in fact sought to carefully manipulate and control public opinion throughout this period for his own personal and political ends. This view would be consistent with the research of David Brown and Jonathan Parry, both of whom argue that Palmerston's recognition of the 'growing role and use of public

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<sup>129</sup> Palmerston, 'Memorandum of conversations with George de Klindworth at Wiesbaden 1844', 30 August 1844, PP, GC/KL/4. Palmerston addressed George de Klindworth as 'the Head of a Department in Foreign Office, Paris,' although he was actually a German diplomat and 'secret agent' working for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He worked in the service of several European statesman, potentially as a double agent for Britain. See Pauline Pocknell, *Franz Liszt and Agnes Street - Klindworth: A Correspondence, 1854-1886* (New York: Pendragon Press, 2000).

<sup>130</sup> 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cix, 1093-1110 (19 March 1850). The number of MPs willing to scrap the cruiser system had doubled since 1848, but the Government won by 232 votes to 154. See Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, pp.323-324.

<sup>131</sup> Palmerston to James Hudson, 31 March 1850, PP, GC/HU/48. William Hutt's reaction was equally passionate. He claimed, in his next parliamentary speech, that Palmerston was 'one of the most practical promoters of the slave trade now existing.' See Hutt, 'Supply – Western Coast of Africa, and Danish Settlements on the Gold Coast', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cxiii, 65-66 (19 July 1850), c.66.

opinion' was critical in his ascension to the Premiership in 1855.<sup>132</sup> As opposed to seeing Palmerston's widespread popularity outside of Parliament as a 'spontaneous demonstration of popular approbation' or a by-product of his charm and jovial oratory,<sup>133</sup> these historians contend that Palmerston's rhetoric was deliberately crafted for the purpose of shaping public opinion, and that Palmerston succeeded in courting widespread popularity by consciously presenting himself to the nation in 'a virtuous and patriotic light.'<sup>134</sup>

Primarily, Brown and Parry argue that through his foreign policy Palmerston placed himself at the forefront of British political life. That by exhibiting his policy, at different times and to differing degrees, as something directed by notions of liberal-constitutionalism, commercial freedom and nationalist Protestantism, as well as by the concept of a divinely inspired Providential destiny, Palmerston was able to craft a broad-based, patriotic narrative that attracted various classes, creeds and communities simultaneously behind a shared vision of Britain's global exceptionalism and superiority.<sup>135</sup> Despite the tangible inconsistencies within his foreign policy, which were 'not always apparent to a population easily swayed by an emotive Palmerstonian rhetoric,'<sup>136</sup> Palmerston therefore managed to construct an 'uplifting vision' of Britain as 'a particular kind of regime'; as a 'beneficent national community' upholding desirable ethical values.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy*, pp.2, 14-15, passim. See also Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, pp.65-66, 70-73, 219-220.

<sup>133</sup> Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy*, p.15. Historians of British Radicalism accept Palmerston's popularity but prefer to emphasise his charm and put his success more down to his manner and jovial oratory. See, for example, Antony Taylor, 'Palmerston and Radicalism, 1847-1865', *Journal of British Studies*, 2, 33 (1994), 157-179 (p.177).

<sup>134</sup> Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, p.4. For more on Palmerston's widespread popularity, see James Birch to Palmerston, 13 June 1850, PP, MPC/1539. The editor of *The World* newspaper felt Palmerston was 'one of the most popular ministers that ever swayed the destiny of affairs in England.' it was 'impossible,' he wrote, to enter any circle – whether the 'aristocratic club,' the 'mart of commerce' or the 'humble free-and-easy' – without hearing his name 'warmly applauded.' For similar expressions of Palmerston's popularity, see James Aspinall to Palmerston, 26 June 1850, PP, MM/GR/47; Richard Andrews to Palmerston, 26 January 1852, PP, GMC/106; Henry Berkeley to Palmerston, 27 December 1851, PP, GMC/65; George Coles to Palmerston, 2 January 1852, PP, GMC/73; Edward Dawes to Palmerston, 13 January 1852, PP, GMC/77. See also Palmerston to William Temple, 8 July 1850, PP, GC/TE/334. Palmerston himself claimed to William Temple in 1850 that recent events had rendered him 'the most popular minister that for a very long course of time has held my office.'

<sup>135</sup> Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy*, pp.3-4, 12-17, 39-45, 215-216; Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, pp.4-11, 35-37, 195-202, 204, 387-389. See also Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain*, pp.16, 34-35, 153, 304, 178-194.

<sup>136</sup> Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy*, p.16.

<sup>137</sup> Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain*, p.191; Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, pp.2, 4.

At the same time, Brown argues that Palmerston presented the country's foreign policy as an inclusive 'national mission,' something which the entire populace could participate in.<sup>138</sup> 'Even the most oppressed inhabitants of a London slum,' Brown wrote, 'could share in the reflected "glory" of the pax Britannica.'<sup>139</sup> By playing on Britain's duty to spread these values across the world, Palmerston's foreign policy could therefore appeal to 'a sense of higher purpose, transcending domestic difficulties and offering a rallying point for national cohesion.'<sup>140</sup> Helping to propel him to the Premiership ahead of Russell, then, despite lacking influential political patrons, the strength of Palmerston's appeal beyond Westminster was highly significant; allowing him to reinforce his fragile ministerial position, challenge opposition from within the Government and the Queen, and to consolidate respect for himself in Parliament.<sup>141</sup>

As Brown argues, however, political ambition and personal popularity were not the only reasons that Palmerston courted public opinion during this period. By grounding his foreign policy in terms of 'the weight of popular approbation,' it is clear that Palmerston also sought to secure, as the custodians of the nation's affairs, 'the continued dominance of Parliament and the traditional governing elite.'<sup>142</sup> As previously stated, Palmerston sincerely believed that statesmen possessed an aristocratic duty 'to conduct affairs of state in the interests of the nation as a whole' - something which the people were utterly incapable of doing themselves.<sup>143</sup> In turn, he held that by giving a voice to the nation and including all of those people who were beyond the pale of the constitution *vicariously* in national politics, he could contain calls for further Parliamentary Reform, maintain the existing Constitution, and ensure that public opinion remained the 'instrument' rather than the guide of a benevolent, well-informed governing elite.<sup>144</sup>

One aspect of Palmerston's popular appeal that has yet to be given the attention it deserves, however, is Palmerston's projection of himself as something of an 'anti-

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<sup>138</sup> Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy*, p.216.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, p.215.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, p.216.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, *passim*, see pp.214-215. See also Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain*, p.192; Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, pp.72-73.

<sup>142</sup> Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy*, pp.3, 8.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid*, p.3.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*, pp.7-8. See also Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain*, pp.43-44, 48-49.

slavery minister.’ Although this is not to say that Palmerston was insincere over anti-slavery, it is apparent that he sought to cultivate a public persona in the mid-nineteenth century as someone deeply passionate about the suppression of the slave trade, doing everything feasibly possible to translate the public’s hatred of slavery into successful political action. On 18 October 1842, for example, Palmerston hosted a delegation of the BFASS at his country home in Broadlands. After receiving their flattering address, Palmerston rose to give what must be regarded as a political speech. Vitally, he used that platform to emphasise his diligent and hard-working approach to British anti-slavery, aiming his rhetoric not just to the members of that society but to a much wider audience. ‘You do me justice,’ he asserted to an assembly of delegates and journalists, ‘in believing that I take the deepest interest in everything that can tend finally to extinguish the slave trade and to abolish all over the world the condition of slavery.’ As Foreign Secretary, he had possessed ‘great means’ by which to promote these causes and had employed them ‘to the best of my ability.’ For despite being engaged in political transactions of great importance, which required ‘intense application’ and ‘the most assiduous devotion of time and attention,’ he claimed proudly never to have lost sight of those ‘important matters.’ Quite the opposite, during his time in Government anti-slavery had become ‘an object of [his] unceasing solicitude.’<sup>145</sup> Throughout his address, therefore, which was reproduced in full in the pages of *The Times* and *Morning Chronicle*,<sup>146</sup> Palmerston fashioned himself as the nation’s principal ‘anti-slavery minister,’ someone who not only cared about this issue deeply but prioritised it accordingly.

Significantly, this was not the only occasion when Palmerston addressed the public directly on the issue of anti-slavery or used his connections with the London newspaper press to communicate an anti-slavery public persona to the nation. During the 1850s and 1860s, for instance, Palmerston sought to cultivate such a reputation via the numerous platform addresses which he gave during his tours of the country. As Brown argues, these tours were primarily an exercise in consolidating Palmerston’s ‘relationship with the people’ and reaffirming his ‘liberal and popular reputation.’<sup>147</sup> As such,

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<sup>145</sup> Palmerston, Address to the British and Foreign Anti-slavery Society, Broadlands, 18 October 1842, PP, SLT/19.

<sup>146</sup> *The Times*, 21 October 1842; *Morning Chronicle*, 20 October 1842.

<sup>147</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.467, see also pp.463, 467-472. See also Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, pp.23-42; Joseph S. Meisel, ‘Palmerston as Public Speaker’, in *Palmerston Studies*, ed. by David Brown and Miles Taylor, 2 vols (Southampton: Hartley Institute, 2007), I, 39-68 (p.51, 55).

Palmerston's speeches were altogether very similar, highlighting his efforts to pursue 'liberal policies at home and abroad over the past thirty years.'<sup>148</sup> Two of the most common topics that he liked to bring up, however, and indeed which he rarely failed to mention, were Britain's efforts to abolish the international slave trade as well as its successful abolition of colonial slavery. Straining every sinew to end that 'detestable crime,'<sup>149</sup> Palmerston told audiences across the country of his anti-slavery credentials during his time as Foreign Minister, and once again ensured that all of his speeches were widely disseminated through print media.<sup>150</sup> In an address to Glasgow City Hall in September 1853, for instance, where he was awarded the freedom of the city, Palmerston confidently asserted Britain's successes in West Africa. Using evocative visual imagery, he declared that that coastline had been transformed from a 'nests of pirates,' in which slave traders routinely engaged in acts of 'plunder, murdering, burning, capturing, slaying' and 'destroying,' into 'the seat of peaceful commerce' and 'civilisation.'<sup>151</sup>

It was in these public settings, moreover, that Palmerston sought to foster the narrative that it was in fact the British people who were to thank for Britain's anti-slavery achievements. In his address to Glasgow City Hall, for instance, Palmerston congratulated the assembled crowd of 3,000 people for their role in helping to end the Brazilian slave trade. 'I congratulate you,' he declared, 'on the altered condition of things in regard to that abominable crime.' Brazil was already reforming its institutions, he said, and would soon 'thank the people of England for the necessity which has been imposed on her of abandoning the vicious practice of the slave trade.' 'I say your interference,' Palmerston clarified, 'because it was the good feeling of the people of this united empire which enabled the Government to achieve what they have done.' For it was the 'privilege' and 'good fortune' of Britain, he concluded, 'that public men are here enabled... to have as

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<sup>148</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.468.

<sup>149</sup> Palmerston, Address to City Hall, Perth, in *The Times*, 28 September 1853.

<sup>150</sup> See, for example, Palmerston, Address to the Tiverton Assembly Room, Tiverton, in *The Times*, 25 September 1851; Palmerston, Address to City Hall, Perth, in *The Times*, 28 September 1853; Palmerston, Address to City Hall, Glasgow, in *The Times*, 29 September 1853; Palmerston, Address to Manchester Town Hall, Manchester, in *The Times*, 7 November 1856; Palmerston, Address to Liverpool Town Hall, Liverpool, in *The Times*, 7 November 1856; Palmerston, Address to the Athenaeum, Tiverton, in *The Times*, 2 May 1859; Palmerston, Address to Leeds Mechanics Institute and Literary Society, Leeds, in *The Times*, 27 October 1860; Palmerston, Address to Leeds Town Hall, Leeds, in *The Times*, 27 October 1860.

<sup>151</sup> Palmerston, Address to City Hall, Glasgow, in *The Times*, 29 September 1853.

their guide the expression of public opinion.’<sup>152</sup> In fostering this inclusive narrative Palmerston was evidently attempting to consolidate public support for his particular line of anti-slavery policy, but also to remind the people that they already played an important, vicarious role in formulating and enforcing the Government’s anti-slavery policy, and thus required no further abdication of power from the country’s governing elite to engage in national politics.

In addition to these extra-parliamentary addresses, Palmerston also sought to cultivate a public persona as the country’s leading ‘anti-slavery minister’ in Parliament; a setting which was again widely reported in national and local newspapers. During the 1840s, for example, Palmerston delivered a series of blistering speeches on the anti-slavery policy of the new Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, criticising him for being ‘weak,’ ‘indifferent’ and ‘unworthy’ over the suppression of the slave trade,<sup>153</sup> and as such portraying himself to the House and the nation as the more determined advocate of anti-slavery.<sup>154</sup> In July 1844, for example, Palmerston lambasted Aberdeen’s decision to delay signing the Five Power Treaty until December 1841 (four months after coming into office), a delay which ultimately led to his failure to secure the ratification of that treaty by all the Great Powers.<sup>155</sup> A year earlier, his attack had focused on Aberdeen’s decision to sign the Webster-Ashburton Treaty with America, despite it containing no right-of-search agreement.<sup>156</sup> By 1845, moreover, he had moved on to criticising Aberdeen’s worst decision of all: to ‘surrender’ the mutual right-of-search treaties which he had negotiated with France between 1831 and 1833, which was tantamount to rejecting his whole strategy for ending the slave trade.<sup>157</sup> The underlying cause of Aberdeen’s erroneous approach was not incompetence or disingenuousness, Palmerston argued, but a lack of courage and commitment to the suppression of the slave trade. ‘There appears a

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Palmerston, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.172.

<sup>154</sup> See, for example, Palmerston, ‘Treaty of Washington’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, lxxvii, 1162-1219 (21 March 1843); Palmerston, ‘Treaty of Washington’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxviii, 1225-1239 (2 May 1843); Palmerston, ‘Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 969-974 (16 July 1844); Palmerston, ‘Sugar Duties’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvii, 1340-1346 (26 February 1845); Palmerston, ‘Suppression of the Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxx, 466-481 (16 May 1845); Palmerston, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845).

<sup>155</sup> Palmerston, ‘Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), cc.983-940.

<sup>156</sup> Palmerston, ‘Treaty of Washington’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxviii, 1225-1239 (2 May 1843), cc.1231-1235.

<sup>157</sup> Palmerston, ‘Sugar Duties’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvii, 1340-1346 (26 February 1845), cc.1344-1345.

great indifference on the part of the Government, and even a great apathy' towards anti-slavery, he told the House in July 1845.<sup>158</sup>

Furthermore, Palmerston also used his speeches in Parliament to set out a patriotic vision of Britain as the world's leading anti-slavery nation; something that would no doubt have appealed enormously to Britons living beyond the pale of the constitution who wished to play a vicarious role in the country's 'glorious' national mission.<sup>159</sup> 'I am sure there cannot be an Englishman who would not glory in the idea that his country had had the honour of taking a leading part in the accomplishment of so great a purpose,' Palmerston proclaimed in 1845.<sup>160</sup> Britain 'stood honourably forward among the nations of the world,' he said on another occasion, and when it eventually succeeded in extirpating the slave trade 'this country would have the satisfaction of knowing that its labours have not been thrown away, and that it has accomplished one of the noblest works in which any nation ever engaged.'<sup>161</sup> That achievement alone, moreover, 'would be sufficient to hand down her memory in undying brightness to the lapse of endless ages.'<sup>162</sup> Undoubtedly, though, the most famous example of this occurred in May 1841, when Palmerston was forced to defend the Government's new policy to reduce the tariff on slave-grown sugar. In an effort to persuade abolitionists to support the Government's free trade approach, Palmerston lionised, in high-flown rhetoric, Britain's unique identification with anti-slavery. 'It is only from England, and from the exertions of England,' he proclaimed, 'that any hopes can be entertained of the extinction of the slave trade and of the ultimate abolition of slavery throughout the world... because it is England alone that feels any deep and sincere interest in the matter.'

Those who desire to see the principles of liberty thrive and extend through the world should cherish with an almost religious veneration the prosperity and greatness of England. For as long as England shall ride pre-eminent on the ocean of human affairs there can be none whose fortunes shall be so shipwrecked, there can be none whose condition shall be so desperate and forlorn that they may not cast a look of hope towards the light that beams from hence... But if ever by the assault of overpowering enemies or

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<sup>158</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.173.

<sup>159</sup> Palmerston, 'Supply – Navy Estimates – The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxx, 199-209 (5 May 1845), c.209.

<sup>160</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.143.

<sup>161</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), cc.1339, 1341.

<sup>162</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave trade Portugal', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, l, 120-128 (8 August 1839), c.128.



by the errors of her misguided sons England should fall, and her star should lose its lustre... for a long period of time would... the hopes of the African... be buried in the darkness of despair. I know well that in such case Providence would, in due course of time, raise up some other nation to inherit our principles and to imitate our practice. But taking the world as it is... I do not know... any nation that is now ready... to supply our place.<sup>163</sup>

In this speech, then, Palmerston attempted to foster an image of Britain that he knew would be widely popular with the general populace; of a uniquely benevolent, morally upstanding and Providentially favoured nation, that was more powerful, liberal and humane than the rest of the world. To ensure it was widely read, moreover, Palmerston decided to publish his own speech by the end of the year.<sup>164</sup>

Palmerston's appeals to anti-slavery, therefore, both inside and out of Parliament, were arguably just as important as his deployment of ideas of liberal-constitutionalism, commercial freedom and Protestant duty in generating an image of British exceptionalism and superiority, as well as a sense of national mission in which everybody in the country could participate. Palmerston's use of anti-slavery discourse was thus vital to the construction of his uniquely popular reputation with the British public. Although identifying a valid expression of public opinion is very difficult to do, moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that Palmerston's attempts to manufacture a popular persona around anti-slavery were successful; that the British people sincerely viewed him as someone who cared deeply about this issue. To begin with, for instance, one might point to the glowing address given to Palmerston by the BFASS in October 1842. 'It is with unusual satisfaction,' the Secretary of that society declared, considering that they held vastly different opinions of how best to proceed with Britain's anti-slavery mission, 'that the committee... feel themselves called upon publicly to record their high sense of the eminent services you have rendered to the anti-slavery cause... and to tender to you...

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<sup>163</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), cc.654-655.

<sup>164</sup> Henry John Temple, 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Palmerston, *Speech of the Rt. Hon. Viscount Palmerston: in the House of Commons, on Tuesday, May 18, 1841, on Lord Sandon's resolution, "That considering the efforts and sacrifices which Parliament and the country have made for the abolition of the slave trade and slavery ... this House is not prepared (especially with the present prospects of the supply of sugar from British possessions) to adopt the measure proposed by Her Majesty's government for the reduction of the duties on foreign sugar."* (London: J. Ridgway, 1841).

their sincere respect and gratitude.<sup>165</sup> As Palmerston pointed out in his response, their approbation was even more valuable at a time when he was out of office, and thus unable to assist them in the attainment their 'great ends.' For Palmerston, this indicated that their address was genuine and heartfelt.<sup>166</sup>

An assessment of the press response to the BFASS's address, moreover, indicates that Palmerston's anti-slavery persona was well-received by the country's national newspapers. The *Morning Chronicle*, for example, used that occasion to applaud Palmerston's 'honest endeavours' to abolish the slave trade and to interpret the BFASS's stance as representative of 'a large portion of the people of this country.'<sup>167</sup> Although this praise from the *Chronicle* is in some ways unsurprising, given Palmerston's close connection to its editor, John Easthope,<sup>168</sup> it is perhaps more interesting that *The Times* chose not to rebut the claims of the BFASS in its response to the address. Notably, whilst *The Times* did not explicitly commend Palmerston for his anti-slavery zeal it could not bring itself to argue against the content of the BFASS's address, only to attack that institution for its 'impudent' pomposity - presumably, for implying that Palmerston's successor, Lord Aberdeen, was not living up to their expectations.<sup>169</sup> Significantly, *The Times'* position suggests that even newspapers who were critical of Palmerston and who supported his political rivals accepted that he was honest and zealous in his suppression of the slave trade, and thus deserving of the approbation of the country.

It was not only the Tory press, however, but Tory politicians who seem to have been persuaded of Palmerston's sincerity when it came to suppressing the slave trade. Palmerston's regular and impassioned speeches on this subject did not go unnoticed by Sir Robert Peel, for example, who joked in 1845 that Palmerston seemed 'to think that his merits in this respect have not been sufficiently admitted by this House and the public.'

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<sup>165</sup> John Scoble, Address to Lord Palmerston from the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Broadlands, 18 October 1842, quoted in *Morning Chronicle*, 20 October 1842.

<sup>166</sup> Palmerston, Address to the British and Foreign Anti-slavery Society, Broadlands, 18 October 1842, PP, SLT/19.

<sup>167</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 22 October 1842.

<sup>168</sup> See, for example, Brown, 'Compelling but not Controlling?', pp.51-52. Palmerston became known to other Whigs as 'Viscount Chronicle.'

<sup>169</sup> *The Times*, 21 October 1842, p.4. The BFASS was little more than a 'peculiar section of ostentatious and meddling philanthropists,' *The Times* stated, who were 'condescending,' 'patronising' and 'impudent' for thinking that 'charity begins anywhere but at home,' and that they were 'the very personification of all political wisdom, authority and power in everything that relates to freedom or bondage.'

About once in every month he takes an opportunity of calling our attention to them. Two or three times in the course of every Session he reminds us of all the Treaties which he made with African princes... and not only the original Treaty, but some addition to it, which was the means of conferring the greatest possible advantages on humanity and the civilized world in general.<sup>170</sup>

Nevertheless, Peel was convinced of Palmerston's sincerity on this question and told Parliament, on a more serious note, 'I never denied his merit. I believe his labours have been most assiduous and successful for the suppression of that traffic. I give him full credit for his exertions.'<sup>171</sup> In addition to Peel, Palmerston's sincerity on this issue was endorsed by political rivals of all creeds during the mid-nineteenth century. William Gladstone, for instance, never doubted Palmerston's sincerity over anti-slavery and wrote in his diary that it was one of the 'great objects always before him in life,'<sup>172</sup> whilst even John Bright, a constant critic of Palmerstonian foreign policy, believed that Palmerston had 'the notion of doing a great deal of good on the coast of Africa and Brazil,' and famously labelled anti-slavery his 'benevolent crotchet.'<sup>173</sup> Although one must treat these claims with caution, for both Peel's and Bright's were made in Parliament, an arena where it was not deemed appropriate to challenge an MP's integrity, it is significant that Palmerston was held in such high regard over anti-slavery by his political rivals. For whilst it would be expected of Palmerston's friends and family to vouch for anti-slavery credentials,<sup>174</sup> it would be in the political interests of his opponents to seek to undermine them.

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<sup>170</sup> Peel, 'Suppression of the Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxx, 481-490 (16 May 1845), c.482.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> William Gladstone, *The Gladstone Diaries*, ed. by M.R.D. Foot and H.C.G. Matthew, 14 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968-1994), v, p.495.

<sup>173</sup> Bright, 'Brazilian Treaty', *Hansard*, civ, 782-787 (24 April 1849), c.787. Palmerston took this as a compliment. He responded to Bright, 'For myself, I acknowledge a "crotchet." I believe it is shared by a very large proportion of the people of this country.' See Palmerston, 'Brazilian Treaty', *Hansard*, civ, 796-802 (24 April 1849), c.797. Notably, Palmerston did not feel the same about John Bright or Richard Cobden. In 1864, he wrote to Russell: 'Moral conviction of the iniquity of the slave trade exists strongly in England with the exception of the *atrocem animam*... of Bright and Cobden.' See Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, II, p.410.

<sup>174</sup> See, for example, Bulwer, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, II, p.324; III, pp.83-84. See also Ashley, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, II, p.228; Ashley, *The Life and Correspondence of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, I, p.436, 467. See also Lord Shaftesbury to Evelyn Ashley, 6 January 1876, printed in Ashley, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, II, pp.315-324, esp. pp.316-317.

Palmerston's success in courting public opinion is undoubtedly more difficult to ascertain if one looks beyond the BFASS, national newspapers, and rival politicians, but again there are signs that his attempts to cultivate a persona were successful. According to newspaper reports of the speeches that he gave during his tours of the country, for example, Palmerston's speeches were almost invariably well-received. *The Times* wrote in September 1853, following Palmerston's address to Glasgow City Hall in which he thanked the audience for their role in abolishing the Brazilian slave trade, that his speech 'was listened to with marked satisfaction' and 'drew forth most vociferous cheering from the assembly.'<sup>175</sup> The *Morning Post* and *Daily News* concurred, describing in their accounts how Palmerston had 'hit the Scotch... between wind and water.'<sup>176</sup> Furthermore, Palmerston was occasionally the recipient of letters sent directly from acclaimed abolitionists and members of the public, in which his anti-slavery endeavours were expressly praised. In 1843, for example, Palmerston received a personal letter from Thomas Clarkson, the veteran abolitionist, now 85 years old and President of the Anti-Slavery Society, commending him for having taken a 'deep interest' in the subject of slave-trade suppression.<sup>177</sup> Five years later, Palmerston received a similar letter from Ambrose Brewin, one his constituents, urging him to pursue 'religious liberty' on the continent with the same determination as he had sought 'to put down slavery.'<sup>178</sup> It is certainly not insignificant, finally, that shortly after Palmerston's death in 1865 David Livingstone dedicated his *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi* to Palmerston, 'as a tribute... to the great statesman who has ever had at heart the amelioration of the African race.'<sup>179</sup>

## II) Intrinsic motivations: Ideas of moral duty

Having concluded that Palmerston was not motivated to pursue anti-slavery by the extrinsic influence of public opinion, this chapter will now move on to consider potential

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<sup>175</sup> *The Times*, 29 September 1853.

<sup>176</sup> *Morning Post*, 29 September 1853; *Daily News*, 29 September 1853. This quote is from the *Daily News*' account of the event. The *Post* wrote that Palmerston received a 'cordial and gratifying reception.'

<sup>177</sup> Thomas Clarkson to Palmerston, 8 March 1843, PP, GC/CL/1386.

<sup>178</sup> Ambrose Brewin to Palmerston, 6 March 1848, PP, GC/BR/35. On occasion, Palmerston also received letters from abroad recognising him as someone who held a passionate hatred for slavery and the slave trade. See, for example, Extract of anonymous letter from Brazil to Palmerston, 2 March 1846, PP, SLT/33. This anonymous author from Brazil claimed that 'the slave traders here dread Lord Palmerston's return to power, as they both know & fear his abhorrence of their doings.'

<sup>179</sup> David Livingstone and Charles Livingston, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi and its Tributaries; and of the Discovery of the Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa: 1858-1864* (London: Murray, 1865), p.iii.

drivers of motivation that came from within Palmerston himself; analysing whether he was impelled to pursue anti-slavery by any deeply-held, intrinsic motivations. To begin with, it is notable that throughout his life Palmerston claimed to be inspired by a sense of moral duty (or sometimes moral obligation) to end the slave trade; occasionally proclaiming anti-slavery to be among his 'first duties' as a public statesman.<sup>180</sup> When asked by Richard Cobden in the 1848 Select Committee on the Slave Trade, for instance, whether he was motivated to end the slave trade by notions of 'interest' or 'duty,' Palmerston responded decisively: 'I do most distinctly and sincerely think that it is the duty of the British Government to persevere in its endeavours to put the slave trade down.'<sup>181</sup>

The concept of duty was integral to Victorian political culture, Angus Hawkins argues, it being an ancient idea that 'remained influential in how individuals defined their identity and purpose.'<sup>182</sup> For it was a deeply ingrained belief, he states, that being 'a member of society entailed obligations' (or 'social duties') towards others, and that politics was 'a practical moral activity born of these mutual social obligations.'<sup>183</sup> Though all members of society held different duties in relation to one another, it was considered to be the role of landed gentleman in particular – who as a result of their 'independence' were enabled to exercise 'manliness, patriotism and virtue' - to serve the community and nation.<sup>184</sup> 'Public duty,' in other words, was 'a facet of social engagement in which notions of hierarchy and obligation were implicit.'<sup>185</sup> As important as the notion of 'duty' to Victorian statesmen, therefore, was the notion of 'community,' which politicians held to be 'central to public debate' and the very thing from which politics derived its meaning and value.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> See, for example, Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvii, 1340-1346 (26 February 1845), c.1343. See also Palmerston, Address to the British and Foreign Anti-slavery Society, Broadlands, 18 October 1842, PP, SLT/19.

<sup>181</sup> Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.17. Palmerston did not deny that Britain's 'interests' were also involved. 'Generally speaking with regard to national concerns,' he believed 'that whatever is the duty of a country that is also its interest.'

<sup>182</sup> Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, p.18.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, p.5.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid*, pp.11-12.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, p.12.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid*, p.11.

Palmerston was no stranger to the concept of duty, furthermore, having been taught about the nobility's patriotic duty to lead a responsible, benevolent Government of the well-informed during his time at Edinburgh University. Brown highlights in his account, for instance, how Stewart worked hard to instil in his students the importance of a sense of *noblesse oblige*. 'As the leading object of these discussions has been to illustrate and enforce the great duties of life,' Stewart reminded the students under his charge at the end of his lecture series, 'so the duty of Patriotism, which, among those we owe to our fellow-creatures, certainly holds the most distinguished rank, is that which I [am] more particularly anxious at this moment to impress on your minds.'<sup>187</sup> For Stewart, moreover, the concept of duty was central to the study of moral philosophy, which in turn was vital to good statesmanship. 'If "understanding" and "will" framed the examination of man's intellectual and moral powers,' he taught, 'they were necessarily complemented by an investigation of the duties, or of the political responsibilities, by which happiness could best be promoted and/or guaranteed.'<sup>188</sup>

That Stewart's lessons marked the young Palmerston indelibly is evident from the passage of an essay (written originally by the *Edinburgh Review*) that Palmerston decided to copy out in a private note to himself in January 1843; presumably, because it contained a maxim that he agreed with strongly. This passage opens an important window into Palmerston's conception of good statesmanship, and demonstrates that the foundations of his political conscience were built upon the idea of *noblesse oblige*. 'The statesmen,' Palmerston wrote,

who looks in the simple performance of his duty for consolation and support amid all the toils and sufferings which that duty may call him to encounter... may steer a steady course through the shoals and breakers of the stormiest sea; and whether he meet with the hatred or gratitude of his countrymen is to him a consideration of minor moment, for his reward is otherwise sure. He has laboured with constancy for great objects; he has conferred signal benefits upon his fellow-men. Nobler occupation man cannot aspire to; greater reward it would be very difficult to obtain.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.35. See also Stewart, 'Lectures on Political Economy Vol.II', pp.359-360.

<sup>188</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.31.

<sup>189</sup> Passage of an essay from the *Edinburgh Review*, January 1843, transcribed in Palmerston's hand, PP, M/154, in Ashley, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, II, pp.313-314.

It is entirely plausible, then, based on our understanding of Victorian political culture and his Scottish Enlightenment education, that a sense of moral obligation inspired Palmerston's crusade against the slave trade during the nineteenth century. By analysing his spoken and written language in further detail, moreover, it is clear that Palmerston had a coherent, well-developed, yet also fluid and broad-based view of exactly what underpinned Britain's moral duty in relation to the slave trade. During two Parliamentary speeches in 1844 and 1845, for instance, Palmerston explained his understanding of it lucidly and in further detail to the House of Commons. Nations, he declared, had 'duties to perform' on the world stage, and not just in 'abstaining from evil' but 'in doing as much good as they can.'<sup>190</sup> These duties were not necessarily equal in size or significance, but differed accordingly in relation to the unique strengths and weaknesses of individual nations. With great power, essentially, came a great responsibility to advance global progress, whilst little was to be expected of smaller countries. As Palmerston put it, '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,'<sup>191</sup> yet where there was 'no power there ought to be no responsibility.'<sup>192</sup> Britain, he argued, had been blessed by God with the 'two great instruments by which the slave trade may be abolished'; those instruments being 'political influence and naval power.'<sup>193</sup> 'This country stands in a pre-eminent position,' he told Parliament solemnly, 'and great, therefore, is its responsibility on this subject.'<sup>194</sup>

Palmerston's conception of duty, then, was evidently defined by notions of individual responsibility but also the separate (albeit related) idea of destiny.<sup>195</sup> For it was God, Palmerston argued, who had ultimately determined Britain's fate by bequeathing the nation with the exact tools required to end the slave trade, and thus with the power that compelled it to assume this noble enterprise. In 1846, for instance, Palmerston framed Britain's anti-slavery crusade precisely in this way, declaring in response to slave-trading atrocities in Zanzibar that 'the nations of Europe are destined to put an end to the

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<sup>190</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.178.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> Palmerston, 'Review of the Session', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, 666-678 (14 June 1852), c.669.

<sup>193</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), c.931.

<sup>194</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.178.

<sup>195</sup> For more on ideas of destiny influencing British statesmen in the nineteenth century, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging The Nation 1707-1837*, rev. edn (London: Pimlico, 2003), pp.368-369, 380. Britons believed that their nation was 'the Protestant Israel,' entrusted by God with empire so as to further and spread the Gospel. See also Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture*, pp.90-92.

African slave trade, and... Great Britain is the main instrument in the hands of Providence for the accomplishment of that purpose.<sup>196</sup> Destiny was not the only religious idea influencing Palmerston's conception of moral duty, however, for he also invoked the notions of atonement and redemption on multiple occasions. Indeed, Palmerston asserted in 1848 that Britain was obligated to make amends for the historic wrongs it had committed; reminding MPs that it had been 'the most guilty both in originating and encouraging the slave trade.'<sup>197</sup> Britain was 'originally a culprit in introducing this abomination to the shores of that quarter of the world,' he had told the House of Commons a year earlier, and thus owed 'a great debt of reparation to Africa in regard to this matter.'<sup>198</sup>

Additionally, Palmerston made clear to Parliament over the course of the mid-century period that Britain's duty to atone was something the country owed to God, not just to Africa. For if Britain displeased God by its indifference or incompetence on this issue then it was Palmerston's understanding that Britain would be punished for its past sins and stripped of its 'high position' among the nations of the world.<sup>199</sup> As he explained in 1845, whilst 'the actions and fate of individual men' sometimes went unpunished during their lifetimes (although they would inevitably be held accountable for their deeds in 'another state of being'), for nation-states God's divine plan worked differently. 'The life of nations,' Palmerston warned, 'is mixed up with the arrangements and dispositions of *this* world; and history teaches us that the crimes of nations never fail to meet with their appropriate punishment.'<sup>200</sup> Thus, whilst 'shallow' and 'superficial' observers might conclude that the declining fortunes of a nation were the result of 'immediately preceding circumstances,' and that events such as 'tyranny from within, invasion from without, murders, massacres, the devastation of towns and the destruction of villages' were merely a result of 'cause and effect,' the 'more philosophical' onlooker would 'look

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<sup>196</sup> David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.xviii. See also Colley, *Britons*, p.380.

<sup>197</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1119-1126 (22 February 1848), c.1125. 'Let it not be forgotten,' Palmerston said, 'that we were the first to retrace our steps, and to make atonement for that enormous crime.'

<sup>198</sup> Palmerston, 'Supply – The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xciv, 129-138 (9 July 1847), c.129. See also Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.19. The slave trade was 'a crime of which England was one of the principal authors, and in regard to which this nation has some atonement to make.'

<sup>199</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), c.1340.

<sup>200</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.177.



at these things in another aspect.' They would 'trace out,' he said, 'in the calamities that befall a nation, the punishment of its former offences and the just visitation of its former crimes.'<sup>201</sup> Unless Britain successfully abolished the slave trade, therefore, it would not only be neglecting its moral duty but provoking God's wrath. At the same time, however, Palmerston highlighted that by doing God's will it was possible for Britain not just to avoid punishment but to be rewarded for its worthy endeavours. As he explained in 1852, if all the measures taken against the slave trade were systematically executed, then 'the people of this country' might soon 'look for their reward... to the dispensing hand of a just and retributive Providence.'<sup>202</sup> For it was 'a curious coincidence,' he said, 'that from the time when this country first began to... use its influence for the suppression of the slave trade, from that period this country has prospered in a degree which it never experienced before.'<sup>203</sup>

Palmerston's feeling of moral duty to end the slave trade was therefore based on a confluence of religious tenets, ranging from individual responsibility and destiny to atonement, redemption and divine Providence, and in this sense was entirely befitting of the political culture in which he lived. As Hawkins argues, religion was central to British public life in this era, and seen as 'intimately intertwined' with politics rather than being a 'separate sphere of thought and sentiment.'<sup>204</sup> Not only were Victorian public values formed on a 'moral and religious basis,' for example, but public debates were often 'suffused with religious language, iconography, and belief.'<sup>205</sup> Debates over Reform, education and church rates, for example, all revolved around the idea of 'moral struggle with the forces of Antichrist' and 'the moral subversion of society.'<sup>206</sup> Ideas of atonement

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid, cc.177-178.

<sup>202</sup> Palmerston, 'Address in Answer to the Queen's Speech', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcix, 104-116 (3 February 1852), cc.114-115. Palmerston maintained, however, that this was not the reason why the people of Britain supported abolition. 'I will not affront the people... by saying that they will gain thereby reputation and renown, because it is not to gain reputation and renown that those sacrifices have been made... They have desired the extinction of the slave traffic "not for fame, but virtue's better end".' See also Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1119-1126 (22 February 1848), c.1126. For if Providence could truly be understood as a 'matter of arithmetical computation,' Palmerston told Parliament, he was certain 'England would be no loser from the achievement of so great and good a deed.'

<sup>203</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), c.1340. See also Palmerston, 'Relations with Brazil', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cxlv, 938-946 (28 May 1857), cc.945-946.

<sup>204</sup> Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, p.8, see also pp.8-10. For an overview of religion and politics in Victorian Britain, see John Wolfe, *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland, 1843-1945* (London: Routledge, 1994). See also David Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland: From the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>205</sup> Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, pp.12, 8.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, pp.12, 13.

and Providence were not just widely held in this period, moreover, with Hawkins claiming that 'most Victorians' sustained 'a patriotic belief in the Providential blessings of Britain's Constitution,'<sup>207</sup> but vital to how politics and society was understood and interpreted by political leaders. Boyd Hilton, for instance, argues that a collection of values associated with 'evangelicalism' dominated the conduct of the Victorian age, leading him to characterise the years between 1785 and 1865 as 'the Age of Atonement.'<sup>208</sup> Palmerston was certainly not alone, then, in connecting ideas of atonement and Providence to Britain's historical engagement with the slave trade. As Kielstra points out, for many Quakers and evangelical Christians the slave trade had become 'the most popular candidate for the national vice which most angered the Almighty.'<sup>209</sup> Perhaps most significantly, for example, William Wilberforce argued that Britain's abolition of colonial slavery should be carried out as an act of atonement; one that would cleanse Britain of sin and ward off the calamitous retribution of God. 'I consider it my duty,' he wrote to Lord Bathurst in 1816, 'to deliver these poor creatures from their present darkness and degradation, not merely out of a direct regard for their well-being... but also from a firm persuasion that both the colonists and we ourselves shall be otherwise the sufferers.'<sup>210</sup>

Although Palmerston's self-professed moral duty to end the slave trade appears to fit neatly within the context of Victorian political culture, however, there remains a need to evaluate just how sincerely Palmerston felt this force of obligation. For whilst his adherence to some of the key religious tenets of Christianity makes sense when viewed in relation to Victorian society more generally, historians of Palmerston have long since questioned, even doubted, Palmerston's individual piety and religious devotion. Traditionally, for instance, Palmerston has been depicted as having 'no real interest or agenda of his own in church affairs,'<sup>211</sup> as being unaware of the religious feelings of the

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid, pp.1, 2, 46-47.

<sup>208</sup> Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

<sup>209</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p.7.

<sup>210</sup> Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, pp.209-210. The Clapham Sect made this argument during the fight to abolish the British slave trade. They drew a connection between the Napoleonic Wars, economic depression, pestilence and famine, all of which inflicted the nation in the 1790s, and Britain's continued perpetration of the slave trade. See Ibid, p.210. See also John Coffey, "'Tremble, Britannia!': Fear, Providence and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1756-1807", *The English Historical Review*, 127 (2012), 844-881.

<sup>211</sup> John Wolfe, 'Lord Palmerston and Religion: A Reappraisal', *The English Historical Review*, 488, 120 (2005), 907-936 (p.908). See, for example, Richard Brent, *Liberal Anglican Politics: Whiggery, Religion and Reform, 1830-1841* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). Palmerston is side-lined in Brent's account, often seen as the antithesis of Lord John Russell and the 'Foxite Whigs.'

country,<sup>212</sup> and as ‘a mere puppet’ when it came to ecclesiastical appointments, ‘manipulated by Lord Shaftesbury and an Evangelical clique.’<sup>213</sup> Before one takes these caricatures of Palmerston too seriously, however, it is important to note that more recent assessments of Palmerston’s religion have since argued that he did hold a sincere understanding of, and interest in, his religious faith. John Wolffe, for example, suggests that Palmerston’s faith was ‘easy-going and politically adaptable.’ That whilst he was indifferent to ‘theological niceties’ and lacked ‘spiritual fervour,’ Palmerston certainly possessed ‘consistently held attitudes’ and ‘religious principles.’<sup>214</sup> For one thing, Palmerston was a ‘firm advocate of the establishment of the Church of England,’ viewing it as a crucial dispensary of religious teaching and thus of tranquillity and happiness among the people of England.<sup>215</sup> In addition, Wolffe indicated that the defining feature of Palmerston’s religion was his devotion to the cause of religious tolerance, or ‘religious freedom’ as he called it.<sup>216</sup> Palmerston believed that ‘religious diversity was inevitable,’ he states, and that attempts to suppress it were bound to lead to division, persecution and misery.<sup>217</sup> In his recent biography, Brown concurs with this interpretation of Palmerston’s religiosity, arguing that it was ‘real and sincere, but it was also pragmatic.’ Palmerston was ‘not interested in the finer points of theology,’ he states, and though a broad Anglican churchman himself, ‘entertained no hostility to other denominations on doctrinal grounds.’ On the contrary, Palmerston’s ‘conception of religion was always framed by a conviction that faith should be a harmonising not fracturing agent in society,’ and that religion could be used as a political and social tool during the mid-nineteenth century to mitigate religious conflicts wherever they cropped up and to help maintain social and political order.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Many historians quote Lord Shaftesbury, Palmerston’s son-in-law, who claimed that in theology Palmerston did not know ‘Moses from Sydney Smith,’ that the vicar of Romsey was the ‘only clergyman he ever spoke to,’ and that the religious feelings of the country were ‘as strange to him as the interior of Japan.’ See Edwin Hodder, *The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury*, 3 vols, rev. edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), II, p.505.

<sup>213</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.416; Wolffe, ‘Lord Palmerston and Religion: A Reappraisal’, p.908. See, for example, Southgate, *The Most English Minister*, p.408; Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, pp.499-501; Nigel Scotland, *‘Good and Proper Men’: Lord Palmerston and the Bench of Bishops* (Cambridge: Clarke, 2000), passim, esp. chp.2.

<sup>214</sup> Wolffe, ‘Lord Palmerston and Religion: A Reappraisal’, pp.907, 910, 908.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid*, pp.910-911, 919-921.

<sup>216</sup> Palmerston, ‘Ecclesiastical Titles Assumption Bill’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series., cxv, 182-188 (18 March 1851), c.182.

<sup>217</sup> Wolffe, ‘Lord Palmerston and Religion: A Reappraisal’, p.914.

<sup>218</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.416, 416-420.

By properly understanding Palmerston's faith, therefore, one can better understand his sense of duty when it came to suppressing the slave trade. To begin with, it is apparent that Palmerston's feeling of obligation was real and sincere over this issue, like his faith, but not necessarily zealous; that he genuinely believed in the arguments he was making over the Christian tenets of responsibility, destiny, atonement, redemption and Providence, but did not exhibit the same level of religious fervour as other abolitionists. Palmerston was noticeably different to Zachary Macaulay, for example, who became 'obsessed' with abolishing slavery, believing that God had 'called him into being to wage war with this gigantic evil.' 'Ever burdened with this thought,' slavery was said by one of Macaulay's close friends to be 'the subject of his visions by day and of his dreams by night.'<sup>219</sup> Significantly, Palmerston never claimed to have been summoned into service by God to pursue abolition, nor did he express a commitment to fulfilling God's divine plan.<sup>220</sup>

Furthermore, Palmerston's sense of moral duty was seemingly indifferent to the finer points of theology, tending to eschew some of the doctrinal issues raised by more pious abolitionists. Quakers and evangelicals, for instance, held that 'biblical commandments to love one's neighbour and help the oppressed outweighed an apparently ambivalent attitude towards slavery in Scripture.'<sup>221</sup> More importantly, they believed that slave-trading hindered the spread of the gospel because it encouraged Africans to engage in acts of warfare and murder, and by 'making a mockery of the faith in African eyes as self-styled Christians openly committed the basest sins.'<sup>222</sup> It was for the sake of millions of non-Christian peoples whose souls were waiting to be saved, for example, that William Wilberforce took up the cause of abolition so passionately; describing Britain's anti-slavery crusade as 'preparing an entrance into Africa for the

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<sup>219</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, pp.7-8. The abolition of slavery and the slave trade were perhaps the most important causes to which the faithful heard God's summons. Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp both had similar experiences, see Turley, *The Culture of English Anti-Slavery*, pp.87-88, 19-20.

<sup>220</sup> For more on this idea, see Hilton, *Age of Atonement*, pp.18-19; Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition*, pp.164, 173-175, 199; Turley, *The Culture of English Anti-Slavery*, pp.111-116.

<sup>221</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p.7. See also Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition*, pp.186-192. For a contemporary perspective, see William Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade, addressed to the Freeholders of Yorkshire* (London: Hansard, 1807), pp.319-320.

<sup>222</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p.7.

gospel of Christ.<sup>223</sup> Thus, although Palmerston occasionally used biblical imagery when referring to the slave trade, describing it to Parliament as a ‘great evil’ and a ‘horrible sin’,<sup>224</sup> and slave traders as having fallen into alliance with Satan himself, as ‘the devils anointed’,<sup>225</sup> it is significant that he never used theologically driven arguments to denounce the slave trade, either in public or in private.

Finally, one might argue that Palmerston’s sense of moral duty was pragmatic, like his faith, and that he sought to use religious vocabulary and imagery when talking about the slave trade in public as something of a political tool to help advance his own, non-spiritual interests. Indeed, if one scrutinises Palmerston’s evocations of divine Providence during the mid-century period, it is clear that he voiced this particular argument carefully depending on the exact context and circumstance; deploying rhetoric that he knew would resonate with contemporary Christian audiences. In Parliament, for example, Palmerston’s sporadic references to Providence were invariably made at times when his anti-slavery policy was under attack by MPs seeking to challenge his approach. In this context, Palmerston’s use of it served not only as a warning to MPs of the dangers that would befall Britain if they did not succeed but as a rhetorical device capable of persuading the House to uphold the Government’s policy. Palmerston arguably brought up the notion of Providence for this reason in his oft-quoted speech of 12 July 1858, for instance. Nearly a decade after William Hutt’s anti-coercionist movement had come close to dismantling the ‘coercive’ cruiser system, Hutt saw fit to try again in that year; bringing forward a motion to withdraw Britain’s anti-slavery squadrons and to abolish the entire system of stop-and-search.<sup>226</sup> Although Hutt did not have the same momentum behind him in 1858 that he had built up in March 1850, however, Palmerston was quick to undercut this worrying development - utilising the argument of Providence to construct an argument that he knew Parliament would be unable to ignore. In his speech, Palmerston dealt first and foremost with the reasons why he disagreed with Hutt about the need to change Britain’s anti-slavery policy, repeating the arguments he had used in the late 1840s, before chiding Hutt for treating the religious aspect of this issue ‘rather

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<sup>223</sup> *The Life of William Wilberforce*, ed. by Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, 5 vols (London: Murray, 1838) iv, p.206.

<sup>224</sup> Palmerston, ‘Sugar Duties’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), cc.651, 657; Palmerston, ‘Supply – The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xciv, 129-138 (9 July 1847), c.131.

<sup>225</sup> Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 31 July 1851, PP, GC/BA/313.

<sup>226</sup> Hutt, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, cli, 1286-1294 (12 July 1858).

cavalierly and with something like a sneer.’ He then proceeded to grandstand about the dangers of provoking God’s wrath: ‘If the English nation were now to recede from its high position, and re-establish by its own example and its own sanction that abominable crime,’ he declared, he would not be ‘assuming too much of the functions of a prophet to say that the crime would be visited on the people of this country in a manner which would lend them to repent.’<sup>227</sup> Palmerston’s rhetoric was ultimately successful in winning over the House on this occasion, and in guaranteeing the survival of his anti-slavery policy once more. For when a vote was taken shortly afterwards, the Government won by a huge majority of 223 votes to 24.<sup>228</sup>

Similarly, in his private correspondence with foreign diplomats Palmerston again seemed to refer to the concept of Providence calculatingly, on occasions when his anti-slavery policy was in some way under threat. When François Guizot indicated to Britain that the French Government wished to abrogate the Anglo-French Conventions of 1831 and 1833, for instance, Palmerston wrote privately to Guizot beseeching him to preserve the treaties, and in this context again resorted to the vocabulary of Providence to try and persuade him to change his mind. ‘If there is a Providence which from time to time agrees... to watch over the Conduct of Men,’ Palmerston wrote, ‘it is possible that the two nations [of Britain and France] would not find themselves less well-off [by keeping the conventions], even with respect to their most worldly interests.’<sup>229</sup> After Guizot and Aberdeen finally terminated those conventions, moreover, and signed a new Anglo-French Treaty in 1845 that was devoid of the right-of-search, Palmerston again brought up the concept of Providence in his Parliamentary rebuttal to that decision; telling the House in July how ‘History teaches us that the crimes of nations never fail to meet with their appropriate punishment.’<sup>230</sup> In a private letter to Georges de Klindworth, a German

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<sup>227</sup> Palmerston, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), c.1340.

<sup>228</sup> For more examples of Palmerston bringing up the concept of Providence at times when his anti-slavery policy was under threat, see Palmerston, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.177. On this occasion, Palmerston believed his policy was being undermined by Lord Aberdeen. See also Palmerston, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1119-1126 (22 February 1848), c.1126; Palmerston, ‘Address in Answer to the Queen’s Speech’, *Hansard* 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcix, 104-116 (3 February 1852), cc.114-115. Palmerston used the concept of Providence in the original cruiser debates of the mid to late-1840s as well. Finally, see Palmerston, ‘Relations with Brazil’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cxlv, 938-946 (28 May 1857), cc.945-946. On this occasion, Palmerston was concerned that his anti-slavery policy towards Brazil was going to be watered down so much that the Brazilian slave trade would be revived.

<sup>229</sup> Palmerston, ‘Memorandum... for Guizot about Slave Trade’, 4 September 1844, PP, GC/KL/5. For an extensive analysis of France’s repudiation of the Anglo-French Conventions and the politics of renegotiating these agreements, see Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, chp.8.

<sup>230</sup> Palmerston, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.177.

diplomat in the employment of the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, furthermore, Palmerston asserted his disgust at the scrapping of the right-of-search, and again evoked the prospect of God showing his displeasure at Guizot's decision. 'Upon your head be the disgrace of such a recourse,' he wrote, 'and you must be responsible for all the evils which will arise therefore.'<sup>231</sup>

The final situation in which Palmerston referred to Britain's Providential duty was in his speeches outside of Parliament on the mass platform. It must be a 'great satisfaction to the people of England,' Palmerston told one such audience in September 1853, that God would reward them in their temporal interests 'for having so nobly acted in rescuing the whites from crime and the blacks from destruction.'<sup>232</sup> Ascribing Britain's anti-slavery successes to his popular audiences, Palmerston was adamant that it was 'the people' who would ultimately be the beneficiaries of the nation's anti-slavery crusade. Once again then, Palmerston's language appears to have been intended to serve an ulterior political purpose; in this case, a desire for personal approbation and popularity. As this chapter has already demonstrated, Palmerston actively sought to court a favourable reputation among the wider public during the mid-nineteenth century; utilising the notion that Britain had a divinely ordained world role to appeal to those desirous of playing a vicarious part in this 'national mission.'<sup>233</sup> By discussing the country's anti-slavery achievements alongside the Providential rewards they would soon experience, Palmerston was therefore combining two highly effective political strategies and continuing to manufacture his formidable reputation with the public.

### III) Intrinsic motivations: Humanitarianism

How far Palmerston was motivated intrinsically by any real or lasting concern for the welfare of enslaved Africans during the nineteenth century is one final, yet nonetheless highly significant, line of historical enquiry brought sharply into focus by Palmerston's sense of duty to end the transatlantic slave trade. Indeed, by arguing that a sense of moral obligation was the key factor inspiring Palmerston to lead this global crusade, one might infer that what really mattered to him was the purification of British society and

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<sup>231</sup> Palmerston, 'Memorandum of conversations with George de Klindworth at Wiesbaden 1844', 30 August 1844, PP, GC/KL/4.

<sup>232</sup> Palmerston, Address to City Hall, Glasgow, in *The Times*, 29 September 1853.

<sup>233</sup> Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy*, p.216.

the regeneration of British morality, rather than the urgent rescuing of faraway Africans subjugated by the European-stimulated crimes of slavery and the slave trade. In other words, that the perpetuation of the slave trade was more of an insular, nationalistic problem for the British Government to deal with, as opposed to a humanitarian and internationalist one.<sup>234</sup> In his acclaimed account of British anti-slavery politics, for instance, Christopher Brown interpreted the motivations of Britain's anti-slavery activists in precisely this way. Significantly, Brown argued that only 'a few' abolitionists in Britain were driven by 'a genuine interest in the welfare of the enslaved,' and even then 'to varying degrees,' with the great majority moved to act by 'self-regarding, self-concerned, and even self-validating impulses.'<sup>235</sup> It is this fundamental question, therefore, of how far Palmerston was motivated to pursue anti-slavery by feelings of sincere humanitarianism, which this chapter will now explore.

To begin with, it is important to state that historians of Palmerston have commonly – and rather surprisingly considering his reputation as a flamboyant, cavalier statesman - ascribed to him an honest feeling of compassion for the suffering of enslaved Africans, and viewed his anti-slavery endeavours as an act of 'generous humanity.'<sup>236</sup> In Palmerston's official *Life*, for example, Henry Bulwer and Evelyn Ashley argued that there was 'no subject' which he took up with 'so much zeal and earnestness as the suppression of the slave trade.' He 'never lost an occasion for advancing his humane object, nor pardoned an agent who overlooked it,' they claimed, for to him 'the cause of justice, the cause of liberty, the cause of humanity, he always thought the cause of his country.'<sup>237</sup> Likewise, in an essay on Palmerston's 'character' which Lord Shaftesbury contributed to the official *Life*, Palmerston's son-in-law claimed that 'the extinction of the slave trade' was one of the two 'great objects' which occupied Palmerston's life, and that his determination to succeed was founded upon 'his personal love of freedom (which was

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<sup>234</sup> See, for example, Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.19. 'Duty is a word of many interpretations,' Palmerston told the Committee. 'I do consider it to be the moral duty of this country [to end the slave trade]; a duty which this country owes to itself, certainly not to any other nation.'

<sup>235</sup> Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p.26. See also Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, pp.16, 20.

<sup>236</sup> Bulwer, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, III, p.84; Ashley, *The Life and Correspondence of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, I, p.436.

<sup>237</sup> Bulwer, *The Life of Henry John Temple*, pp.83-84; Ashley, *The Life and Correspondence of Henry John Temple*, p.436.



intense)' and 'on his deep and unalterable conviction that civil liberty all over the world would be good for the human race.'<sup>238</sup>

Although these kinds of statements are to be expected from members of Palmerston's own family, however, and especially from men who held immediate interests in protecting Palmerston's political legacy,<sup>239</sup> it is undoubtedly significant that humanitarianism has been also ascribed to Palmerston by many of his modern biographers. Herbert Bell, for instance, described Palmerston's attempts to end the slave trade as 'the great humanitarian enterprise of his life,' claiming in his account that 'no country in the nineteenth century was endowed by any of its statesmen with a finer achievement in national altruism.'<sup>240</sup> Jasper Ridley was altogether less convinced, arguing that Palmerston 'remained largely unaffected by the humanism of the nineteenth century,' yet even he felt that Palmerston held 'a theoretical belief in freedom' and 'sympathised sincerely... with the sufferings of the African slaves on the slave ships.'<sup>241</sup> Recalling Palmerston's 'deep and sincere' efforts to suppress the slave trade, furthermore, Muriel Chamberlain also accepted that Palmerston was 'capable of generous impulses of sympathy for the unfortunate or oppressed,'<sup>242</sup> whilst Kenneth Bourne too insisted that British anti-slavery was, for Palmerston, 'a happy coincidence of humanitarianism and expediency.'<sup>243</sup>

There are problems, however, with how Palmerston's biographers have treated this issue, not least that they do not define precisely what they mean by the term 'humanitarian,' which could lead to confusion since the word itself lacks clarity. As historians of humanitarianism point out, their subject has been approached from a wide

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<sup>238</sup> Lord Shaftesbury to Evelyn Ashley, 6 January 1876, printed in Ashley, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, II, pp.315-324, esp. pp.316.

<sup>239</sup> Both men hoped to use Palmerston's official *Life* to contribute towards ongoing debates about Victorian liberalism in the 1870s. Individually, Bulwer intended to use the official *Life* to clarify his own controversial actions in the Iberian Peninsula, whilst Ashley hoped to reinforce his family's humanitarian reputation. Moreover, it has been suggested that Ashley, who for many years had been Palmerston's private secretary, was too close to his subject to do it justice. For these reasons, the official *Life* has often been dismissed by historians as an act of myth-making. See James Gregory, 'Protecting the Legacy of Lord Palmerston', unpublished paper (2007), pp. 1-2, 6, 11, 15. See also Brown, *Palmerston*, p.483.

<sup>240</sup> Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, I, p.231; II, p.428.

<sup>241</sup> Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, pp.587, 79. Palmerston had 'no sympathy with the sufferings of Oliver Twist,' Ridley mused, whilst 'his reaction to the problems of Jean Valjean were not much more sympathetic than that of Inspector Javert himself.'

<sup>242</sup> Chamberlain, *Lord Palmerston*, pp.56, 1.

<sup>243</sup> Bourne, *Palmerston*, p.623.

range of perspectives – by scholars of ethics, philosophy, politics, international relations, international law, war studies and peace studies. These different perspectives are valuable but also lead to conceptual misunderstandings.<sup>244</sup> A historical definition of ‘humanitarian,’ moreover, is difficult to pinpoint for practical reasons. ‘Humanitarian intervention’ can include a host of responses, from ‘coercive diplomacy and gunboat diplomacy’ to ‘armed participation in foreign civil wars, revolts, revolutions and insurgencies,’ through to ‘peace-keeping, peace-enforcement and armed distribution of humanitarian aid.’<sup>245</sup> Finally, the term demands clarification because it has not been the same over time and, especially during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, was undergoing transformation. Significantly, it was at this time that the concept of who or what should be protected was fundamentally changing. Initially, for instance, it was the case that ‘humanitarians’ were only concerned with the suffering of those people abroad who held the same religion as themselves, in what was known as ‘confessional solidarity.’<sup>246</sup> Thanks to the enlightenment, however, people’s ethical concerns gradually became secularised, including not just religious persecution but also ‘tyranny,’ ‘slavery’ and ‘uncivilised governance,’<sup>247</sup> and also expanded dramatically to include ‘ever-broader groups,’ such as suffering people from other continents and of different nationalities and ethnicities.<sup>248</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, then, humanitarian concerns had grown to include a number of human atrocities as well as ‘all human beings.’<sup>249</sup>

Nevertheless, the definition created by D.J.B. Trim and Brendan Simms in their compelling edited volume, *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, is broad-based and readily applicable. To them, all ‘humanitarian interventions’ must include three common, definitional aspects, in relation to ‘the site, the subject, and the object of the action in question.’ Firstly, they must be ‘carried out in, or intended to affect events within, a foreign state or states.’ Hence, ‘it is an intervention.’ Secondly, they must be ‘aimed at the Government of the target state(s), or imposed on and only accepted reluctantly by

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<sup>244</sup> D.J.B. Trim and Brendan Simms, ‘Towards a History of Humanitarian Intervention’, in *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, ed. by Brendan Simms and D.J.B. Trim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-24 (p.2).

<sup>245</sup> Trim and Simms, ‘Towards a History of Humanitarian Intervention’, p.2.

<sup>246</sup> D.J.B. Trim, ‘Conclusion: Humanitarian Intervention in Historical Perspective’, in *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, ed. by Brendan Simms and D.J.B. Trim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 381-401 (p.386).

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid*, p.387.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid*, p.386.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid*, p.387.

it/them.’ It is, therefore, ‘coercive, albeit not necessarily involving use of force.’ And finally, they must be ‘intended at least nominally (and at least to some extent actually), to avert, halt, and/or prevent [the] recurrence of large-scale mortality, mass atrocities, egregious human rights abuses or other widespread suffering caused by the action or deliberate inaction of the de facto authorities in the target state(s).’<sup>250</sup> In other words, the intervention has to be justified at least in some way as a response to extraordinary human brutality and suffering, or what might now be called ‘crimes against humanity.’<sup>251</sup>

The final element of Trim and Simm’s definition is perhaps the most important for an action to be considered ‘humanitarian,’ and it is vital that they have defined it so broadly and not just as an intervention to protect ‘human rights.’<sup>252</sup> Significantly, Palmerston would probably not have seen himself engaged in a ‘crusade for human rights,’<sup>253</sup> since he lacked an intellectually robust philosophy of what ‘human rights’ were and how they should be understood. For although the concept of ‘rights’ was developing in this period - in Scotland, for instance, Dugald Stewart taught that slaves were people ‘deprived of their rights as men’ and that emancipation restored them ‘all at once to their natural rights’ – they were simply not something Palmerston ever discussed in relation to the suppression of the international slave trade.<sup>254</sup> Likewise, Palmerston never regarded the use of apprenticeship for liberated Africans in the West Indies as something which undermined their ‘rights’ as freed peoples, nor the use of indentured labour from India.<sup>255</sup> Palmerston was not alone in this regard, however, for ‘in the nineteenth century discussion of human rights was marginal and implementation of any human rights

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<sup>250</sup> Trim and Simms, ‘Towards a History of Humanitarian Intervention’, p.4.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid, p.3.

<sup>252</sup> See, for example, Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (London: Cornell University Press, 2011), p.16. Barnett argues that humanitarianism and human rights are not synonymous and ‘should not be conflated.’ ‘Human rights relies on a discourse of rights, humanitarianism a discourse of needs.’ ‘Human rights focuses on legal discourse and frameworks, whereas humanitarianism shifts attention to moral codes and sentiments.’ Human rights focuses on the long-term goal of eliminating the causes of suffering, whereas humanitarianism focuses on the ‘urgent goal of keeping people alive.’ For an alternative definition of humanitarianism which focuses on ‘human rights,’ see Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, p.5. See also Gary J. Bass, *Freedom’s Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), p.17. Bass interprets Britain’s anti-slavery campaign as ‘the root of all modern human rights activism.’

<sup>253</sup> Nelson, ‘The Slave Trade as a Factor in British Foreign Policy, p.209.

<sup>254</sup> Stewart, ‘Lectures on Political Economy Vol.II’, pp.404, 257.

<sup>255</sup> These issues are pertinent to establishing how or what Palmerston might have understood by a humanitarian policy. For more on Palmerston’s position over apprenticeship, see pp.251-255 of this thesis. For more on the attitudes of British abolitionists to indentured Indian labour and how this links to ideas of humanitarianism, see Major, *Abolitionism and Empire in India*, pp.326, 336-337.

negligible.<sup>256</sup> As Lynn Hunt concluded in her significant study, *Inventing Human Rights*, only a handful of benevolent societies 'kept the flame of universal human rights burning' in that century.<sup>257</sup> Angus Hawkins concurs, arguing that most Victorians were contemptuous of theoretical abstractions such as 'universal rights,' and preferred to think of politics as a '*practical* moral activity rather than a function of ideology or doctrine.'<sup>258</sup> On occasion, Palmerston did use the discourse of 'rights' in relation to other topics. Humans possessed 'personal rights,' he told Lord Heytesbury in 1831, by which he meant 'their freedom from arbitrary arrest, from banishment... from confiscation of property, and from many other abuses of power,'<sup>259</sup> and in 1847 he used this rhetoric to defend his record at the hustings under attack from the Chartist George Julian Harney.<sup>260</sup> Moreover, Palmerston certainly believed that humans were entitled to 'liberty,' a phrase, like 'rights,' which implied various things and was viewed as the birth-right of all humans.<sup>261</sup> Brendan Simms, for instance, defines the early nineteenth century Whiggish understanding of 'liberty' broadly, as encompassing 'opposition to tyranny,' 'support for limited government,' a 'passionate defence of property rights,' an insistence on 'consensual taxation' and, most importantly, a love of 'constitutional freedom.'<sup>262</sup> However, as much as nineteenth century 'liberties' were important to Palmerston, when it came to 'rights' he was perhaps more in line with the rest of the aristocracy in his suspicions of them, especially after the 'rights of men' were popularised by the French

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<sup>256</sup> William Mulligan, 'Introduction: The Global Reach of Abolitionism in the Nineteenth Century', in *A Global History of Anti-slavery Politics in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by William Mulligan and Maurice Bric (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1-16 (p.5).

<sup>257</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (London: Norton, 2007), p.205.

<sup>258</sup> Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, p.4, see also pp.4-8.

<sup>259</sup> Palmerston to Lord Heytesbury, 23 November 1831, Heytesbury Papers, British Library, Add Ms 41562, ff.164-170.

<sup>260</sup> At the hustings of July 1847 Harney tried to undermine Palmerston's position as a defender of popular rights. See George Julian Harney, *The Trial and Condemnation of Lord Viscount Palmerston at Tiverton, July 30, 1847, containing a verbatim report of the speech of George Julian Harney, the People's Member for Tiverton* (London: Northern Star, 1847). Palmerston launched into a strenuous defence of his actions and sought to remedy the 'gross misrepresentation' that he was not 'sincerely attached to the liberties and rights of the people.' See Palmerston, Address to the Tiverton Hustings, in *The Times*, 2 August 1847, p.3. See also *Speech of Lord Viscount Palmerston, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Electors of Tiverton, on the 31st July, 1847*, 2nd edn (London: Smith, Elder, 1847), 1-16.

<sup>261</sup> See, for example, Notebook containing newspaper cuttings, anecdotes, notes on Irish affairs, 1827-c.1832, Palmerston Papers, University of Southampton Special Collections, BR22(ii)/13. See also Palmerston, 'Portugal', *Hansard*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, xxi, 1643-1670 (1 June 1829), c.1669. Palmerston was taught about humans' civil 'liberties' at Edinburgh by Dugald Stewart. See, for example, Stewart, 'Lectures on Political Economy Vol.I', pp.21-24.

<sup>262</sup> Brendan Simms, "'A false principle in the Law of Nations": Burke, State Sovereignty, [German] Liberty, and Intervention in the Age of Westphalia', in *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, ed. by Brendan Simms and D.J.B. Trim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 89-110 (p.97).

Revolution.<sup>263</sup> In 1864, for instance, Palmerston composed a scathing memorandum on William Gladstone's recently announced doctrine that every man possessed a 'moral right' to the vote.<sup>264</sup> 'The fact is that a vote is not a *right* but a *trust*,' he wrote, for 'all the nation cannot by possibility be brought together to vote' and therefore a selected few were appointed by law to perform 'this *trust*' for the rest.<sup>265</sup> An understanding of 'humanitarianism' based on Trim and Simms's definition, and not one that privileges 'human rights,' therefore, was certainly one that Palmerston would have accepted and understood.

Another problem with how scholars have treated Palmerston's 'humanitarian' anti-slavery policy regards the evidence (or lack thereof) used to come to this conclusion, as well as the underlying assumptions made in the process. In his biography, for example, Herbert Bell stated Palmerston's humanitarianism almost as a matter of fact, not as something that required critical empirical substantiation. For Bell, an analysis of Palmerston's *actions* against the slave trade, in the form of a cursory run-through of the various anti-slavery treaties that he managed to negotiate over the course of his career, was enough to prove that Palmerston cared deeply about the welfare of enslaved people; for why else would Palmerston have acted so determinedly if not for reasons of 'personal feeling'?<sup>266</sup> Evidently, Bell's underlying assumption here must be confronted, for citing Palmerston's actions against the slave trade does not automatically demonstrate that he was motivated to help end the suffering of enslaved Africans, only that he was active in trying to end the slave trade. This problem, moreover, is one that persists in the work of recent anti-slavery scholarship. Maeve Ryan, for example, argued in her essay on humanitarian intervention in Africa that by the early nineteenth century 'the idea that the slave trade constituted a humanitarian outrage was not really in doubt.' After pointing out that dismantling this 'system of inhumanity' was the British Government's 'stated aim,' she then deferred from exploring this statement, continuing instead with the assumption that the Government was attempting to champion 'a humanitarian issue in international diplomacy.'<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, pp.5-8. See, for example, Edmund Burke's response to the French Revolution, analysed in Simms, "'A false principle in the Law of Nations'", pp.100-109.

<sup>264</sup> H.C.G. Matthew, *Gladstone, 1809-1898* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), p.139.

<sup>265</sup> Palmerston, Memorandum on Gladstone's views of Parliamentary Reform, 15 May 1864, PP, HA/N/13.

<sup>266</sup> Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, I, pp.231-242.

<sup>267</sup> Ryan, 'The Price of Legitimacy in Humanitarian Intervention', pp.231, 232, 243.

A critical, sustained analysis of Palmerston's spoken and written language in relation to the slave trade is thus sorely needed to put such claims to the test, and to demonstrate empirically whether humanitarianism really was one of Palmerston's sincere motivations. It is apparent, moreover, that an analysis of Palmerston's public speeches, private letters and official dispatches is eminently profitable, for there is a wealth of material to suggest that the life, security and welfare of African victims was of paramount importance to Palmerston during the mid-nineteenth century. That for him, a desire to halt large-scale mortality and avert mass atrocities, and ultimately to end widespread suffering caused by the inhuman actions of slave traders, was a genuine and deeply-held motivation for pursuing anti-slavery.

To begin with, for example, one might argue that from the moment Palmerston began to seriously pursue anti-slavery in 1830, following his arrival at the Foreign Office, his attitude towards the subject began to harden as he developed a 'growing moral revulsion against the slave trade.'<sup>268</sup> In all of his speeches and writings that related to this question, Palmerston condemned the traffic as a 'crime'<sup>269</sup> against humanity carried out by 'murderers,'<sup>270</sup> 'pirates,'<sup>271</sup> 'criminals,'<sup>272</sup> 'miscreants,'<sup>273</sup> 'outlaw adventurers,'<sup>274</sup> 'the scum of the earth in every country,'<sup>275</sup> and the 'enemies of mankind.'<sup>276</sup> It was an offence,

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<sup>268</sup> Oldfield, 'Palmerston and Anti-Slavery', p.28.

<sup>269</sup> For a representative sample, see Palmerston to Howard de Walden, 24 December 1838, PP, GC/HO/829; Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 19 April 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.19-21; Palmerston, 'Foreign Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xlii, 1144-1152 (10 May 1838), c.1144; Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.19; Palmerston, Address to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Broadlands, 18 October 1842, PP, SLT/19.

<sup>270</sup> For a representative sample, see Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 13 August 1862, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/22/28, ff.92-96; James Hudson to Paulino José Soares de Sousa, 9 May 1850, TNA, FO84/803, ff.122-140; Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), c.1335; Palmerston, Address to City Hall, Glasgow, in *The Times*, 29 September 1853.

<sup>271</sup> For a representative sample, see Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 31 July 1851, PP, GC/BA/313; Palmerston to Baron Moncorvo, 30 April 1836, TNA, FO84/202, ff.31-78; Palmerston, 'Supply – The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xciv, 129-138 (9 July 1847), c.133; Palmerston, Address to City Hall, Glasgow, in *The Times*, 29 September 1853.

<sup>272</sup> For a representative sample, see Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 24 December 1838, GC/HO/829; Palmerston, Address to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Broadlands, 18 October 1842, PP, SLT/19.

<sup>273</sup> Palmerston, 'Draft of note to be presented by Lord Howard', TNA, FO84/248, ff.10-25, enclosed in Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 3 March 1838, FO84/248, ff.8-9.

<sup>274</sup> Palmerston to John Bligh, 30 September 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.78-90.

<sup>275</sup> Palmerston, 'Brazil – Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxxvi, 1383-1835 (12 July 1864), c.1384.

<sup>276</sup> Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 31 July 1851, PP, GC/BA/313.

he said, that inflicted ‘suffering,’<sup>277</sup> ‘misery’<sup>278</sup> and ‘horror’<sup>279</sup> upon its innocent African victims. So regular were his condemnations of the trade, he almost ran out of ways to describe it and his hatred of it. He considered it a ‘traffic in flesh and blood,’<sup>280</sup> ‘of human beings,’<sup>281</sup> and of ‘men, women and children.’<sup>282</sup> Moreover, he called it a ‘cruel,’<sup>283</sup> ‘inhuman,’<sup>284</sup> ‘diabolical,’<sup>285</sup> ‘abominable’<sup>286</sup> and ‘detestable’ practice,<sup>287</sup> as well as a ‘disgusting atrocity,’<sup>288</sup> a ‘great disgrace of human nature,’<sup>289</sup> a ‘pollutant’ which

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<sup>277</sup> For a representative sample, see Palmerston to Sir R.K. Porter, 15 December 1836, TNA, FO84/206, ff.294-297; Palmerston, ‘Foreign Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xlii, 1144-1152 (10 May 1838), c.1145; Palmerston, Address to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Broadlands, 18 October 1842, PP, SLT/19; Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), pp.2, 4, 17.

<sup>278</sup> For a representative sample, see Palmerston to Sir Edward Disbrowe, 25 November 1836, TNA, FO84/205, ff.17-22; Palmerston, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), cc.1335, 1336, 1337; Palmerston, Address to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Broadlands, 18 October 1842, PP, SLT/19.

<sup>279</sup> For a representative sample, see Palmerston, ‘The Slave Trade in Mussulman Countries’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, ci, 178-181 (16 August 1848), c.178; Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.17.

<sup>280</sup> For a representative sample, see Palmerston, ‘Supply - The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xciv, 129-138 (9 July 1847), c.137; Palmerston, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), c.1339; Palmerston, ‘Ministerial Plan of Parliamentary Reform’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, ii, 1318-1330 (3 March 1831), c.1319.

<sup>281</sup> For a representative sample, see Palmerston to James Hudson, 8 September 1851, PP, GC/HU/52; Palmerston, ‘Suppression of the Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxx, 466-481 (16 May 1845), c.471; Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 11 June 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.41-44.

<sup>282</sup> Palmerston to King Gezo of Dahomey, 29 May 1849, TNA, FO84/775, ff.15-18.

<sup>283</sup> For a representative sample, see Palmerston, ‘Abstract of facts as to Portuguese slave trade since 1826’, 8 August 1839, PP, SLT/14; Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 2 April 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.19-20; Palmerston, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1119-1126 (22 February 1848), c.1125.

<sup>284</sup> For a representative sample, see Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 31 July 1851, PP, GC/BA/313; Palmerston to Sir Charles Vaughan, 7 July 1834, TNA, FO84/157, ff.98-103; Palmerston, ‘Slavery in Texas’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xxxv, 934-941 (5 August 1836), c.939.

<sup>285</sup> Palmerston, ‘Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), c.931; Palmerston, Address to the Athenaeum, Tiverton, in *The Times*, 2 May 1859.

<sup>286</sup> For a representative sample, see Palmerston to Lord Denman, 22 September 1840, PP, GC/DE/60; Palmerston to William Temple, 10 June 1835, TNA, FO84/181, ff.85-86; Palmerston, ‘Supply – The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xciv, 129-138 (9 July 1847), c.137; Palmerston, Address to City Hall, Glasgow, in *The Times*, 29 September 1853.

<sup>287</sup> For a representative sample, see Palmerston to James Hudson, 4 June 1850, PP, GC/HU/49; Palmerston to John Bligh, 30 September 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.78-90; Palmerston, ‘Relations with Brazil’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cxlv, 938-946 (28 May 1857), c.939; Palmerston, Address to City Hall, Perth, in *The Times*, 28 September 1853.

<sup>288</sup> Palmerston, ‘Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), c.923.

<sup>289</sup> Palmerston, Address to the Leeds Mechanics Institute and Literary Society, in *The Times*, 27 October 1860, p.12. Palmerston regularly called the slave trade a ‘disgrace.’ For a representative sample, see Palmerston to Viscount Granville, 14 January 1831, PP, GC/GR/1327A; Palmerston to Hamilton Charles Hamilton, 8 September 1834, TNA, FO84/160, ff.163-167; Palmerston, ‘Treaty of Washington’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, lxxvii, 1162-1219 (21 March 1843), c.1207.

'contaminated' every mind connected with it,<sup>290</sup> a 'foul stain,'<sup>291</sup> a 'cancer,'<sup>292</sup> a 'hideous deformity' upon the earth,<sup>293</sup> and a 'plague' which had 'swarmed' and 'ravaged' Africa.<sup>294</sup> By the mid-1830s, Palmerston began to describe it as not just a system of piracy but as a 'war against the human race,'<sup>295</sup> and from the mid-1840s as 'the greatest crime of which the human race was ever guilty.'<sup>296</sup> 'If all the other crimes which the human race has committed, from the creation down to the present day, were added together in one vast aggregate,' he remarked in 1844, 'they would scarcely equal, [for] I am sure they could not exceed, the amount of guilt which has been incurred by mankind in connection with this diabolical slave trade.'<sup>297</sup> It was a crime, he added, which had 'inflicted upon mankind more calamities than war, famine, pestilence or any of the other evils incident to humanity.'<sup>298</sup>

Palmerston was very clear in his parliamentary speeches, moreover, that the motivation of the British Government to end the slave trade was primarily humanitarian. In 1841, for instance, Palmerston declared to the House of Commons that he held a 'deep and sincere interest' in 'the extinction of the slave trade, and of the ultimate abolition of slavery throughout the world,' for he was motivated by 'the principles of humanity and justice.'<sup>299</sup> On many other occasions, Palmerston repeated this maxim; describing Britain's crusade as 'an act of humanity' carried on 'in the name of all that was good' and with the aim of 'preventing a great deal of human suffering.'<sup>300</sup> The Government sought

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<sup>290</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), c.923; Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.142.

<sup>291</sup> For a representative sample, see Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), c.922; Palmerston to Hamilton Charles Hamilton, 8 September 1834, TNA, FO84/160, ff.163-167; Palmerston, Address to City Hall, Glasgow, in *The Times*, 29 September 1853.

<sup>292</sup> Otte, "'A Course of Unceasing Remonstrance'", p.94.

<sup>293</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), c.923.

<sup>294</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxiv, 1653-1659 (26 July 1861), c.1659; Palmerston, 'Supply – The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xciv, 129-138 (9 July 1847), c.133; Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), c.931.

<sup>295</sup> Palmerston to John Mandeville, 9 June 1836, TNA, FO84/206, ff.66-71. See also Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 12 May 1838, TNA, FO84/249, ff.27-33; Palmerston, 'Draft of note to be presented by Lord Howard de Walden to the Portuguese Government', TNA, FO84/281, ff.56-124, enclosed in Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 20 April 1839, TNA, FO84/281, ff.54-56.

<sup>296</sup> Palmerston, 'Relations with Brazil', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cxlv, 938-946 (28 May 1857), c.945. See also Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.142; Palmerston, Address to City Hall, Glasgow, in *The Times*, 29 September 1853.

<sup>297</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), c.931.

<sup>298</sup> Palmerston, 'Relations with Brazil', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cxlv, 938-946 (28 May 1857), c.945.

<sup>299</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), c.654.

<sup>300</sup> Palmerston, 'Treaty of Washington', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, lxvii, 1162-1219 (21 March 1843), cc.1209, 1207; Palmerston, 'Slave Trade' *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, 990-993 (24 March 1848), c.992. See also Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.159; Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade',



‘to confer no advantage on Great Britain,’ he stated in March 1843, and ‘had no political objects in view’ other than ‘to promote the cause of humanity, and to put an end to a great crime.’<sup>301</sup> If Britain was to fail in its mission, then, it would be letting down ‘not merely one province or one nation, but... the whole of the human race.’<sup>302</sup>

Palmerston’s condemnation of the slave trade and his assertions of British humanitarianism were almost certainly more than mere superficial rhetorical constructions. Indeed, Palmerston’s detailed knowledge of both the slave trade and slavery was impressive, reflecting a conscious effort to learn and understand the subject in great detail.<sup>303</sup> From his comments in the House, for instance, it is apparent that Palmerston spent time researching Britain’s historic anti-slavery debates from the 1780s and 1790s, focusing on Charles James Fox and William Wilberforce’s efforts to put down the British slave trade.<sup>304</sup> From his private correspondence, moreover, it is apparent that Palmerston also read accounts by contemporary authors relating to the slave trade, such as Thomas Clarkson’s *History of the rise, progress and accomplishment of the abolition of the African slave trade by the British Parliament*,<sup>305</sup> Thomas Fowell Buxton’s *The African slave trade and its remedy*,<sup>306</sup> James Bandinel’s *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from*

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*Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxi, 982-988 (26 February 1861), c.988. See also Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.19.

<sup>301</sup> Palmerston, ‘Treaty of Washington’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, lxxvii, 1162-1219 (21 March 1843), c.1204. See also Palmerston, ‘Memorandum of conversations with George de Klindworth at Wiesbaden 1844’, 30 August 1844, PP, GC/KL/4.

<sup>302</sup> Palmerston, ‘Treaty of Washington’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, lxxvii, 1162-1219 (21 March 1843), c.1201.

<sup>303</sup> Whenever Palmerston wanted to learn more about a certain aspect of the slave trade or slavery, he researched it. In 1835, for instance, he looked into the Vienna conference of 1815 in an effort to understand what the Holy Alliance had formerly agreed to. See Palmerston, Memorandum, 25 July 1835, PP, SLT/7. For another example, see Palmerston, Memorandum ‘as to the laws which exist in the Southern States of the United States, with respect to free persons of colour’, 4 March 1841, PP, MM/US/6/3.

<sup>304</sup> Palmerston claimed on more than one occasion to have read back through the debates ‘before the slave trade was abolished... by this country, and to the period when Fox and Wilberforce urged this House to pass laws to put that traffic down.’ See, for example, Palmerston, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1119-1126 (22 February 1848), c.1121. See also Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.1.

<sup>305</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade*; Palmerston to Lord Holland, 20 February 1838, HP, BL, Add Ms 51599 B, f.108.

<sup>306</sup> Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy*; J.M. Trew, to Palmerston, 11 March 1840, PP, SLT/17. See also Palmerston’s minute on this letter from the Secretary of the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and for the Civilisation of Africa. Palmerston recorded that he had responded ‘with his compliments and thanks’ on 12 March 1840. Palmerston was also sent an open letter from Buxton in 1838 outlining his plans for Africa, see Thomas Fowell Buxton, *Letter on The Slave Trade to the Lord Viscount Melbourne, and the other Members of Her Majesty’s Cabinet Council* (London: Parker, 1838).

*Africa as Connected with Europe and America*,<sup>307</sup> and even Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>308</sup> The latter is even said to have been the only book that Palmerston ever read from cover to cover, and on three separate occasions.<sup>309</sup> Despite the fact Palmerston has not previously been considered an academic reader, moreover, there is evidence that Palmerston analysed these texts critically. Palmerston wrote to Lord Holland, for instance, that Clarkson had produced 'the best account' of the slave trade prior to 1807,<sup>310</sup> whilst after studying Buxton's plan he decried it as far less scholarly, even 'wild and crude' in parts.<sup>311</sup> After reading Bandinel's account in March 1838, lastly, Palmerston wrote that it was 'excellent... comprehending every branch of the subject.'<sup>312</sup> Recommending it to Parliament, he claimed it was 'able and valuable,' containing 'more useful and authentic information than almost any work that has yet been published.'<sup>313</sup>

On multiple occasions, furthermore, Palmerston's speeches to Parliament contained lengthy and graphic descriptions of the horrors of the slave trade, such as the process by which Africans were captured in the interior of the continent and marched to the coast to be sold to slave traders, the conditions of the middle passage, and the harrowing experience of being sold into slavery in the New World.<sup>314</sup> It is worth noting, moreover, that on these occasions Palmerston seemed to evince not just sympathy but real empathy for enslaved Africans; identifying himself with the horrendous suffering they endured on their journey from freedom to slavery. In his analysis of Palmerston's 'character,' for example, which he wrote for Evelyn Ashley's abridged *Life*, Lord Shaftesbury claimed that empathy was a quality Palmerston possessed. 'His ardour to

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<sup>307</sup> Bandinel, *Some Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa as connected with Europe and America*; Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.1.

<sup>308</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin: A tale of life among the lowly* (London: Bohn, 1852); Fladeland, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Anti-slavery Co-operation*, p.351. Palmerston was invited to meet Harriet Beecher Stowe when she visited England in May 1853, after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. He attended the Duchess of Sutherland's reception at Stafford House, along with Lord John Russell. See Charles Beecher, *Harriet Beecher Stowe in Europe: The Journal of Charles Beecher*, ed. by Joseph S. Van Why and Earl French (Hartford: Stowe-Day-Foundation, 1986), p.84.

<sup>309</sup> Fladeland, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Anti-slavery Co-operation*, p.351.

<sup>310</sup> Palmerston to Lord Holland, 20 February 1838, HP, BL, Add Ms 51599 B, f.108.

<sup>311</sup> J. Gallagher, 'Fowell Buxton and the New African Policy, 1838-1842', *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, 10, 1 (1950), 36-58 (p.44).

<sup>312</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p.191.

<sup>313</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 969-974 (16 July 1844), c.924.

<sup>314</sup> See, for example, Palmerston, 'Foreign Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xlii, 1144-1152 (10 May 1838); Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845); Palmerston, 'Supply – The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xciv, 129-138 (9 July 1847); Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858).

abolish the traffic in slaves was stimulated constantly by the atrocities of the system, he wrote, for he could feel very keenly the wrongs of others.<sup>315</sup> One must judge for himself whether it was possible for Palmerston to truly empathise with the suffering of enslaved Africans, but in any case it is useful to consider a selection of passages from some of his most vivid speeches on this topic. In particular, his address to Parliament of 16 July 1844, which was subsequently published as a pamphlet by the Anti-slavery Society.<sup>316</sup> In this speech, Palmerston summarised the process of the slave trade in close and harrowing detail; reminding the House of what was at stake when it came to Britain's anti-slavery policy. Arguably, his descriptions demonstrate more patently than anything else his knowledge, passion and feeling for this subject, as well as the reasons why he conceived it to be a crime against humanity.

First and foremost, Palmerston asserted, the way that free Africans were captured by slave hunters (or 'man stealers') in the interior of Africa was unbelievably brutal and violent. 'When the time of year comes around for sending down the slave caravan to the coast,' he said, 'at the dead of night some peaceful African village... is suddenly surrounded by... armed ruffians of some neighbouring chief. The huts of... the village... are set on fire. The inhabitants, roused from their sleep by the flames... rush forth, see their assailants and endeavour to escape capture; some by flight, others by resistance, but all equally in vain.' 'The fugitives are intercepted and caught,' he went on. 'Those who resist are over-powered and either slain or made prisoners... then comes the selection. The hale and healthy of either sex, and children above six or seven years old, are set apart for the slave caravan. The aged and the infirm, the infant torn from its mother's breast, [and] the child wrenched from its parent's grasp, are murdered. To march these down to the coast would be impossible, and if possible, profitless. To maintain them would be costly, and to leave them to die of hunger... would be too cruel even for slave-hunters. They are, therefore, at once despatched, and they are the least to be pitied. Their sufferings are over, those of their surviving friends and relations are only about to begin.'<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Lord Shaftesbury to Evelyn Ashley, 6 January 1876, printed in Ashley, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, II, p.p.317.

<sup>316</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844); Henry John Temple, 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Palmerston, *Speech of Viscount Palmerston in the House of Commons, on Tuesday, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1844: on the slave trade* (London: Hatchard, 1844).

<sup>317</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), cc.925-926.

After their capture, he went on, came the deadly march to the coast. 'Men, women [and] children, half-naked [and] barefooted... are driven hundreds and hundreds of miles across the burning sands of the plain and over the stony passes of the mountain to the place of embarkation.' 'The weak [were] urged on by the goad and the lash [whilst] the strong [were] restrained from escape by yokes and chains.' 'Hunger, thirst, fatigue, despair, disease of body and agony of mind make dreadful havoc in the caravan. Some drop down dead as they go. Others, unable to keep up, are left behind to die... or to become the prey of the wild beasts of the desert. Others... when sinking under their fatigue are knocked on the head and put out of their pain at once. Multitudes thus perish, and travellers who have visited the interior of the country tell you that you may trace the march of these slave caravans across the pathless desert and find your way to the wells that make their halting places, by the hundreds and thousands of human skeletons that lie bleaching and mouldering on the ground.'<sup>318</sup>

After these tortured people reached the point of embarkation, they shortly began their voyage across the Atlantic; an experience, Palmerston lamented, which caused 'the greatest possible amount of human suffering.' Palmerston did not try to conceal his ignorance on this account. The 'middle passage' was 'a scene of suffering and of horrors greater than anything that has gone before and greater than any man who has not been an eye-witness can either imagine or attempt to describe,' he said, before proceeding to explain his understanding of how it worked. 'Whatever the size of the slave ship... the slave captain takes on board a fourth or a third more than the vessel can properly contain,' to ensure he still had a 'full cargo' on arrival, since it was to be expected that many would die on the voyage. Each day, Africans slept naked on a splintery platform composed of 'rough unplanned boards laid loosely together.' 'The distance between this platform and the upper deck of the vessel varies according to the size of the ship; it is scarcely ever more than three feet and a half.' 'Into this black hole the [Africans] are thrust like... bales of goods, linked two by two with fetters to prevent them from crushing each other by moving about and so crowded together that... the [African]... has not as much room as a man... in his coffin.' This overcrowding led to the spread of disease. 'Sea-sickness, ophthalmia, fever, dysentery [and] small-pox make ravages among the [Africans], and hardly a day passes but that bodies are thrown overboard.' Wickedly,

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid, cc.926-927.

however, it was not just the dead thrown into the sea. Diseased Africans, for whom the captain saw no hope of recovery, were killed as well; it being deemed a needless waste of provisions to go on feeding someone who would either die before reaching port or be 'unsaleable in the market.'<sup>319</sup>

In this speech, Palmerston did not just focus on the operations of the slave trade but the staggering number of deaths it entailed. Diligently, Palmerston acknowledged the mortality of African victims at every point in their journey and claimed that the number of Africans landed on the coast of America was a figure which belied the true extent of the crime. For every African landed, he claimed, 'two others had perished in the preceding stages of the slave-making process.' Thus, he calculated that if 150,000 Africans were landed annually in America, 'the yearly ravage committed on the African nations must amount to something like 400,000.' If the slave trade had been in operation for centuries, he posed, 'how many millions must during that period have been swept away from the population of Africa?' Significantly, moreover, when Palmerston read out statistics of how many Africans had been stolen into slavery and how many had died, he did not just consider them as numbers on a page but as human beings. Whether the number of Africans landed annually in the New World was 120,000 or 150,000, he said, it was still 'an enormous amount of human misery and of human crime' for a 'single statement [to] involve.' 'When we look at an abstract statement on paper, conveyed in arithmetical figures, the mind is scarcely able to embrace within its grasp all the details and the full extent of the facts of which the knowledge may be so communicated. But let any man consider for a moment what an enormous mass of people 150,000 men amount to, and what an extent of ground they would cover. Many men have seen large armies, but few have seen an army of 150,000 men assembled in one spot, and at once within the reach of the eye.'<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid, cc.927-928, 930. See also Palmerston, 'Foreign Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xlii, 1144-1152 (10 May 1838), cc.1145-1146; Palmerston, 'Supply – The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xciv, 129-138 (9 July 1847), c.130; Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), c.1291.

<sup>320</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), cc.924-925, 927, 931. See also Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.142; Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), c.1335. The number of enslaved Africans transported into slavery was one of Palmerston's main ways of judging the success of Britain's anti-slavery squadron. Hence, he kept up a number of records in private about how many Africans each year were victim to the slave trade. See, for example, Palmerston, 'Memorandum of vessels reported as engaged in the slave trade at and near Rio de Janeiro', March 1837, PP, SLT/11; Palmerston, 'Memorandum showing the number of slaves imported into Brazil in each year since 1817', 4 August 1864, PP, SLT/36.

By the time enslaved Africans reached the New World and were 'at last consigned to hopeless and cruel captivity in a foreign land,' they had already endured their 'peaceful and thriving villages' being 'attacked in the dead of night,' their 'houses set on fire,' 'the aged and infants murdered,' 'the middle-aged and grown children carried off to the coast and subjected on the way to every kind of misery,' 'imprisonment in wretched barracoons' followed by 'the horrors of the middle passage.'<sup>321</sup> Yet, unbelievably, Palmerston stressed to the House that a worse fate lay before, rather than behind, these suffering people, in the form of lifelong, hereditary enslavement. Those people were 'doomed,' he said, 'to pass the remainder of their shortened lives in painful toil, under the lash of a foreign tyrant,'<sup>322</sup> some of them so scarred by the experience of the middle passage that they were 'completely paralysed, and never again recovered the use of their limbs.'<sup>323</sup> The institution of slavery, he concluded, was nothing less than a 'great waste of human life.'<sup>324</sup>

Palmerston ended his speech of July 1844, which one might argue was equal in fervour to any given by Wilberforce fifty years earlier, by urging the Commons to keep the issue of anti-slavery alive with the same devotion, energy and enthusiasm as former Governments. Interestingly, he strived to make MPs identify themselves with the slave trade's African victims, and to feel for themselves their pain and suffering. 'Though most men have a general knowledge that slave trade is a cruel thing,' he said, 'few can form to themselves any adequate conception how intense is the degree, and how extensive the range, of the cruelties of which the Slave trade is the cause.' As such, Palmerston asked MPs to 'imagine' that they were in Africa watching the scene of '150,000 human beings drawn up on a great plain,' all marching 'to the same doom,' or else to 'imagine' themselves in the hold of a slave ship breathing in 'the heat created by such an aggregation of living bodies in so small a space.' How would they react, he asked, 'and what would be the fervour with which he would call down the vengeance of Heaven, not

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<sup>321</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3rd series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), cc.1335-1336.

<sup>322</sup> Palmerston, 'Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), c.923.

<sup>323</sup> Palmerston, 'Foreign Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xlii, 1144-1152 (10 May 1838), c.1145.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid*, c.1146.

only upon the authors of such enormities, but upon those who, having the power to prevent such crimes, had culpably neglected to do so!<sup>325</sup>

Crucially, this was not the only occasion when Palmerston lectured the House on the horrors of the slave trade, but it demonstrates keenly how Palmerston sympathised with the plight of suffering Africans living faraway from Britain, and that he was able to empathise sincerely with their suffering. For it is hard to imagine anyone making such an impassioned address who did not themselves understand, or had not at least tried to understand, this kind of humanitarian tragedy. Like Isaac Milner told Wilberforce in 1806, Palmerston would have had to have been ‘a deceiver’ of a ‘very deep cast, if he deceives at all in this instance.’<sup>326</sup>

It was not just in public, however, that Palmerston evinced this level of compassion for distant strangers. In Palmerston’s private papers, for example, there is an interesting albeit somewhat elusive document which again suggests that Palmerston’s sense of compassion for enslaved Africans was sincerely felt and not simply a Parliamentary ruse. This document takes the form of a private autographed note, written in Palmerston’s own hand, and is believed to have been composed between the years 1843 and 1845.<sup>327</sup> Presumably, Palmerston wrote this note in preparation for a parliamentary speech he planned to give attacking the anti-slavery policy of his successor, Lord Aberdeen, for in the note Palmerston vented his frustrations about the line currently being pursued by Aberdeen. Furthermore, since the note follows a copy of the Aberdeen Act and refers frequently to Brazil, it would make sense that it was composed to help frame Palmerston’s response to the passing of that Bill, and was therefore written at some point in 1845. Although the origin and purpose of this document is contentious, however, its content and meaning is unequivocal. In the note, Palmerston raged:

My blood boils with indignation and my heart burns with shame as I read these papers.

The apathy of [this] Government, its indifference to the miseries of the [African], its ready

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<sup>325</sup> Palmerston, ‘Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 922-949 (16 July 1844), cc.923-924, 930, 925. See also Palmerston, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.145; Palmerston, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), c.1291.

<sup>326</sup> Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, 7 February 1806, in *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce*, ed. by Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, 2 vols (London: Murray, 1840), II, p.68.

<sup>327</sup> Palmerston, Private autographed note in preparation for a speech, 1843-1845, PP, SLT/26.

acquiescence in all the attempts of foreign governments to cause delay & assist evasion, its eagerness to catch at every pretext for refusing to interfere to preserve liberty for British subjects, or even fair & real inquiry into their cases.

What made Palmerston so angry, it seems, was the opinion of the Queen's Advocate, who felt that Britain had no legal right to demand the liberation of former British slaves who had been taken by their masters to Cuba or Brazil in the years immediately preceding emancipation. During his time in Office, Palmerston had defined these people as British subjects and following the passage of the Emancipation Act in 1833 demanded their manumission. As a result of this legal verdict, however, Peel's administration now seemed unlikely to follow his course. In the same note to himself, therefore, Palmerston disagreed wholeheartedly with the Crown's law officers and seemed to suggest that nothing, not even the rule of law, should stand in the way of Britain's anti-slavery crusade:

[The] Government ought not to act 'til every British subject now held in slavery is set free. I utterly repudiate [the] doctrine of [the] Queens Advocate. Every British subject ought to be free & those who detain them in slavery do so at their peril, & it is the duty of the British Government to set them free despite all the Queens Advocates in the world.

What makes this document so significant, moreover, is Palmerston's palpable sense of emotion; his feelings of 'indignation' and 'shame,' when confronted with the fact the Government was not doing everything possible to try and end the 'miseries of the African,' especially to help liberate Britain's own enslaved subjects. Evidently, Palmerston cared deeply about the suffering endured by fellow humans abroad and felt a sense of responsibility to liberate them from slavery. Palmerston's calls to forego the legal opinion of the Queen's Advocate, furthermore, perhaps indicates that this was not in fact a document Palmerston wished to share with Parliament or even with his own colleagues, for it would not be feasible politically for Palmerston to have taken such a position. It is possible, then, that it was a sincere, emotive response to an issue that genuinely pricked his conscience and which made his 'blood boil' and 'heart burn.'

Palmerston's intrinsic motivations for ending the international slave trade, therefore, appears to have balanced an earnest sense of moral duty with a deeply-held



feeling of compassion for enslaved Africans; both of which produced an overwhelming need to stop this large-scale atrocity, to avert mass mortality, and to end the widespread suffering caused by the 'enemies of mankind.'<sup>328</sup> Nevertheless, there is far more to be said about Palmerston's relationship with humanitarianism and some clear tensions to address before one can confidently declare him a 'humanitarian.' It is these ethical constraints and dilemmas, relating to Palmerston's unique understanding of humanitarianism, which this thesis will now move on to explore in chapter five.

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<sup>328</sup> Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 31 July 1851, PP, GC/BA/313.



## Chapter 5 – Ethical constraints and dilemmas: Palmerston’s unique understanding of mid-Victorian humanitarianism

In *Empire of Humanity*, Michael Barnett argues that ‘humanitarianism is a creature of the world it aspires to civilise.’ By this he means that humanitarians are a product of their particular time, place and culture. Ethical practices, in other words, are constructed in a particular historical context according to what is ‘imaginable, desirable and possible’ and limited by ‘culture and choice.’<sup>1</sup> Thus, as ‘moral sentiments’ and ‘global conditions’ have changed over time the ‘character, content, and intensity’ of humanitarianism has also changed. It has been ‘made and remade’ over centuries.<sup>2</sup> On this basis, Barnett identifies three distinct ‘ages of humanitarianism’ – an age of ‘Imperial Humanitarianism’ which lasted from the late eighteenth century to the end of World War II, an age of ‘Neo-Humanitarianism’ which lasted from then until the end of the Cold War, and an age of ‘Liberal Humanitarianism’ which began in 1991 and continues into the present-day – with each era defined according to changing global-cultural conditions and facing unique ethical constraints and dilemmas.<sup>3</sup> Barnett’s interpretation has important ramifications for Palmerston’s unique conception of humanitarianism. By understanding that it was fashioned in the mid-Victorian era according to his own cultural attitudes, one can begin to make sense of its complexities - especially those which might confound modern-day readers. For there are two important tensions within Palmerston’s anti-slavery policy that need to be addressed before one can declare that he was acting out of sincere humanitarian impulses when it came to anti-slavery, and not simply being inconsistent or paradoxical over this issue. One might question, for example, why Palmerston was ‘lukewarm’ over the abolition of British colonial slavery if he was so revulsed by it?<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, if Palmerston was sincere about wanting to end human suffering, why he did not advocate the radical policy of isolating Britain from the global trading and production system that had slave labour at its heart?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p.9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp.20-21, 32.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp.7, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Oldfield, ‘Palmerston and Anti-Slavery’, p.34.

<sup>5</sup> Sherwood, *After Abolition*.

l) Anti-slavery politics of moderation, balance and stability

In his recent biography, David Brown argues that Palmerston has often been misunderstood by historians as ‘a politician lacking principles’ who relied on cynical opportunism to get by, whereas it would in fact be more accurate to remember him as a sincerely liberal statesman who embodied the mid-century ‘equilibrium.’<sup>6</sup> Palmerston was formed of both ‘innate Whiggism’ and ‘very mid-Victorian conservatism,’ Brown asserts, although ‘only ever of the small “c” variety,’ and held a ‘genuine interest in a specific notion of progress.’<sup>7</sup> Neither reckless nor hasty, Palmerston disliked radical change as well as ‘innovation for its own sake,’ preferring moderate, gradual progress that was ‘safe and likely to last,’ and which balanced the competing interests of various factions as sensibly and carefully as possible.<sup>8</sup> Whilst this sometimes meant that progress was slow, it was not a prescription for inaction but rather ‘a commitment to stability and the preservation of a certain “equipoise”.’<sup>9</sup> Just like Palmerstonian politics more generally, then, one might argue that Palmerston’s approach to anti-slavery politics was not radical or overzealous but underpinned by a sincere commitment to these tenets of Whig enlightenment thought; of moderation, balance and stability.

That this is the case, moreover, is evident following an examination of Palmerston’s response to the parliamentary debates surrounding the abolition of British colonial slavery, which dominated British politics at the beginning of the 1830s.<sup>10</sup> A cursory reading of Palmerston’s attitudes towards the emancipation of over 750,000 enslaved Britons living in the country’s overseas colonies (though primarily in the British Caribbean), might lead one to suggest that he was ‘lukewarm’ and ‘curiously hesitant’ about this long fought for, momentous change, and therefore not as compassionate on this question as his anti-slavery discourse suggests.<sup>11</sup> One might point, for instance, to the fact that Palmerston ‘did not seek out emancipation as a political issue,’ and made very little effort in the 1832 general election (where he stood as a candidate in South Hampshire) to represent himself as a determined, passionate supporter of

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<sup>6</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.6, 480, see also pp.1-6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, pp.480, 431, 422.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, pp.480, 421.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p.480.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Gross, ‘The Abolition of Negro Slavery and British Parliamentary Politics’.

<sup>11</sup> Oldfield, ‘Palmerston and Anti-Slavery’, pp.34, 24.

emancipation.<sup>12</sup> For although he attended the nomination, poll and declaration in December 1832,<sup>13</sup> Palmerston boasted of not having canvassed ‘a single vote’ for himself during the election nor did he appear enthusiastic about the prospect of ending slavery.<sup>14</sup> At the nomination, Palmerston claimed afterwards that he made a ‘quiet, unprovoking speech,’ saying a few words about colonial slavery but only so as to appease the ‘Quakers at Ringwood’ who had ‘hinted that they should wish me to say something about [it].’<sup>15</sup> In his analysis of the election, furthermore, which he sent to Earl Grey immediately after the close of the poll, Palmerston barely mentioned emancipation and seemed pleased to have been voted in without committing himself to anything more than he would have wished: ‘everywhere the people were perfectly willing to take the past as an earnest [indication] of the future,’ he declared, and ‘thanked me for enabling them to keep out a Tory candidate.’<sup>16</sup>

In addition, one might draw attention to the fact that Palmerston supported the gradual rather than the immediate abolition of colonial slavery, and that he did not modify this view over time. Palmerston staked out his position on this matter in February 1826, for instance, presenting a petition to the House of Commons from his Cambridge electors demanding the gradual reform of colonial slavery.<sup>17</sup> Significantly, this position was entirely in keeping with that of Whig parliamentarians and most abolitionists in the 1820s, as is evident from the establishment three years earlier of the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions - whose modest aim was to push for an improvement in the condition of British slaves and then for their gradual emancipation, but not the immediate overthrow of colonial slavery.<sup>18</sup> This is not to say, however, that grassroots campaigners were not promoting immediate abolition before this date. In 1824, for instance, Elizabeth Heyrick wrote a powerful

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.31. For an extended account of the 1832 general election, see David Brown, *Palmerston, South Hampshire and Electoral Politics, 1832-1835. Hampshire Papers*, 26 (Winchester: Hampshire County Council, 2003). See also Bourne, *Palmerston*, pp.537-539.

<sup>13</sup> Bourne, *Palmerston*, p.537.

<sup>14</sup> Palmerston to Sir Henry Taylor, 23 December 1832, PP, BR195/55.

<sup>15</sup> Palmerston to Earl Grey, 23 October 1832, quoted in Bourne, *Palmerston*, p.538. Palmerston then made 6 more speeches as he rode from polling station to polling station. Nowhere, he reported, ‘was he asked to make a pledge of any sort or pressed to state any opinion more definitely than he wished.’

<sup>16</sup> Bourne, *Palmerston*, p.538.

<sup>17</sup> Palmerston, ‘Slavery’, *Hansard*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, xiv, 918-919 (28 February 1826), cc.918-919.

<sup>18</sup> Oldfield, ‘Palmerston and Anti-Slavery’, p.31. See also Temperley, *British Antislavery*, p.9-10.

polemic on this subject, arguing strongly for *Immediate, not Gradual Abolition*.<sup>19</sup> This polemic was widely popular, re-printed multiple times in its first year of publication including in America.<sup>20</sup> As Felicity James and Rebecca Shuttleworth demonstrate, though, this work was unusual not just because it was written by ‘the foremost female anti-slavery pamphleteer’ but because it went against the contemporary trend of advocating gradual abolition.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, although Palmerston’s gradualism was perhaps in keeping with contemporary thinking in the late 1820s, by the early 1830s he was arguably losing touch with the mood of the country and especially with abolitionists. Disappointed by the lack of progress on this issue, they had become more radical over time and were leading another successful public petitioning campaign in favour of the ‘immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery.’<sup>22</sup> Palmerston’s views, however, remained unchanged.<sup>23</sup>

It is notable, moreover, that despite the fact ‘it had become increasingly difficult to make the case for the gradual abolition of slavery’ in the 1832 general election, for the ‘real debate’ now revolved around the ‘practical implications of immediatism,’ Palmerston did not yield in his support for gradual abolition.<sup>24</sup> During the election, for instance, he resisted petitions and requests from his constituents trying to push him towards immediatism, including one he received from a group of twenty local electors from Fordingbridge and another from Dr Robert Lindoe, the chair of the Southampton Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>25</sup> No one could hold slavery ‘in greater detestation than I do,’ Palmerston replied to Lindoe, but he refused to commit himself to immediatism or to any ‘specific proposition,’ stating it was his duty to ‘give to this important matter all that

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<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Heyrick, *Immediate, not Gradual Abolition, or An Inquiry into the Shortest, Safest, and Most Effectual Means of Getting Rid of West Indian Slavery* (London: Hatchard et al., 1824).

<sup>20</sup> Felicity James and Rebecca Shuttleworth, ‘Susanna Watts and Elizabeth Heyrick: Collaborative Campaigning in the Midlands, 1820–34’, in *Women’s Literary Networks and Romanticism: “A Tribe of Authoresses”*, edited by Andrew O. Winckles and Angela Rehbein (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 47-72 (p.49).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p.49.

<sup>22</sup> Oldfield, ‘Palmerston and Anti-Slavery’, p.31.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, the other two petitions that Palmerston presented to Parliament in 1833, both of which were for gradual abolition. ‘Preamble’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xviii, 300 (3 June 1833), c.300; ‘Preamble’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xix, 2 (2 July 1833), c.2.

<sup>24</sup> Oldfield, ‘Palmerston and Anti-Slavery’, p.32.

<sup>25</sup> Petition of Moses Neave *et al.* to Palmerston, 21 November 1832, PP, BR195/46. The group of twenty voters from Fordingbridge offered to intensify their efforts on behalf of Palmerston in the election if he would support the immediate abolition of slavery. See also Dr Robert Lindoe to Palmerston, 28 November 1832, PP, BR195/50. Lindoe asked Palmerston, on behalf of the Southampton Anti-Slavery Society, ‘whether in the event of your becoming our representative in Parliament you will vote for the immediate and total abolition of British colonial slavery?’

deliberate attention which it deserves.<sup>26</sup> If Palmerston was truly revulsed by slavery, one might argue, then he would at the very least have committed himself to emancipation, and possibly even been willing to keep up with the changing views of abolitionists and support immediatism.

Finally, after the general election, one might also call attention to the fact that Palmerston supported the government's proposed apprenticeship scheme as well as its compensation plan for colonial slave-owners.<sup>27</sup> Both of these measures, unsurprisingly, were found 'obnoxious' by abolitionists and fiercely opposed. The apprenticeship scheme, for example, compelled freed slaves to work for their former masters for a set period of time as they made the transition from slavery to freedom, whilst the compensation plan provided a staggeringly high amount of compensation to former colonial planters 'in the form of an outright gift of £20 million.'<sup>28</sup> It is also significant, one might add, that neither Palmerston nor the British government remotely considered the possibility of giving Britain's newly freed subjects compensation, nor any special assistance or support to make up for the many years that they had experienced the physical and mental torture of slavery. Even after abolitionists began to argue that the apprenticeship scheme had been a miserable failure, leading to a decline in the living and working conditions of Britain's West Indian subjects,<sup>29</sup> Palmerston and the government did little to ameliorate their suffering. On the contrary, Palmerston voted against multiple resolutions in 1838 that tried to end the apprenticeship scheme and to make it harder for planters to flog their apprentices.<sup>30</sup> Although apprenticeships were finally abolished in August 1838 it was not done by the Government but the colonial legislatures themselves, who were forced to accept the demise of this scheme after a series of agitations took

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<sup>26</sup> Palmerston to Dr Robert Lindoe, 1 December 1832, PP, BR195/51. This stance seemed to satisfy some local abolitionists. See, for example, Captain Badcock to Palmerston, 3 December 1832, PP, BR195/52.

<sup>27</sup> For more on this topic, see Draper, *The Price of Emancipation*.

<sup>28</sup> Oldfield, 'Palmerston and Anti-Slavery', p.33. See also Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery*, pp.17-18. The Agency Committee saw no justification whatsoever for compensation. Sir George Stephen, for instance, wrote that it was 'an indirect participation in the crime,' and that 'compensating the slaveholder for the loss of his slaves was like compensating the criminal for the loss of his stolen property.'

<sup>29</sup> Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery*, pp.34, 34-41. Missionaries in the Caribbean claimed that, 'instead of being free... the apprentices remained "emancipated prisoners" liable to similar punishments and labouring under much the same incapacities as before.' See, for example, Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey, *The West Indies in 1837; being the Journal of a Visit to Antigua, Montserrat, Dominica, St. Lucia, Barbados, and Jamaica; undertaken for the purpose of ascertaining the actual condition of the negro population of those islands* (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1838). For a detailed account of how far the reality of apprenticeship corresponded with Parliament's intentions, see W.L. Burn, *Emancipation and Apprenticeship in the British West Indies* (London: Cape, 1937).

<sup>30</sup> Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, p.184.

place in the Caribbean.<sup>31</sup> If Palmerston was sincere about wanting to end human suffering, one might ask, why did he not consider the idea of compensating these newly freed people and why did he support the apprenticeship scheme so loyally?

There are, therefore, a number of tensions which need to be addressed surrounding Palmerston's response to the abolition of colonial slavery if we are to understand him as a humanitarian. Nevertheless, rather than seeing in these tensions evidence that Palmerston was dispassionate about this subject, or even unsympathetic to the plight of enslaved Britons, they are understandable if one considers Palmerston's mindset and how he invariably sought to ensure that change (especially that as momentous as emancipating 750,000 people) was enacted in a moderate, balanced and stable manner, and in a way that was 'safe and likely to last.'<sup>32</sup> Indeed, whilst his absence from campaigning in the 1832 general election is perhaps more a reflection of his workload at the Foreign Office,<sup>33</sup> his reasons for siding unequivocally with the supporters of gradualism in that election are a sincere testament to his Whig-liberal ethos, and might feasibly have come out of the lectures of Dugald Stewart himself.

To begin with, for example, Palmerston argued that the sudden and immediate abolition of colonial slavery would not necessarily bring about the happiness that was promised by abolitionists, and if mishandled might actually be 'injurious to the [enslaved Africans] themselves.'<sup>34</sup> To emancipate such a large number of people 'by the stroke of a wand [and] without many accompanying provisions,' Palmerston argued in a letter to his friend, Sir Herbert Taylor, shortly after the election, 'would be to deprive all but the able-bodied of their present means of existence.' The 'infants, infirm & the aged,' he went on, who were currently 'supported by the master,' would be left in a dire situation.<sup>35</sup> In addition, Palmerston was wary about forcing people who had been living under the management of a benevolent slave-owner, and who might even enjoy their current way of life, to suddenly become independent. In the same letter, he mocked those

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<sup>31</sup> Temperley, *British Anti-Slavery*, pp.40-41. Three colonies, Antigua, Bermuda and Montserrat, had already dispensed of apprenticeship before the summer of 1838. The remainder now decided to follow suit: Nevis in March; the Virgin Islands in April; Grenada, St Vincent, St Kitts and Barbados in May; British Guiana and Tobago in June; the Bahamas, Dominica, Jamaica, and finally Trinidad in July.

<sup>32</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.421.

<sup>33</sup> Bourne, *Palmerston*, p.537. Bourne claims that Palmerston 'resented the time these cost him away from London and according to Grey they did interfere with Foreign Office business.'

<sup>34</sup> Palmerston, 'Slavery', *Hansard*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, xiv, 918-919 (28 February 1826), c.919.

<sup>35</sup> Palmerston to Sir Henry Taylor, 23 December 1832, PP, BR195/55.



abolitionists who depicted slave-owners as man-eating monsters; ‘although there must be much abuse when arbitrary power is vested,’ he wrote, ‘planters do not always eat the young or salt the old for winter provision.’<sup>36</sup> On the contrary, Palmerston had received information from a recently returned diplomat ‘that in the West Indies... slaves were generally well-treated, often preferring to remain subject to a master, and that in “promoting there on *principle* the extinction of slavery, it was not necessary in *practice* to enforce it to the detriment of existing rights.”’<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, however, and with equal vigour, Palmerston argued that a policy of immediate abolition was undesirable because it would punish colonial planters unfairly. In the same letter to Taylor, Palmerston remarked that West Indian planters ‘had been induced by our laws to vest his capital in slaves, and that we are bound when we do justice to the slave, not to do injustice to the planter.’<sup>38</sup> The unwritten assumption made in this letter, then, was that no matter how repugnant slave-holding had since become to British society it had not been against the law when existing planters had invested their money in the ownership of human beings, and thus, no matter how disgraceful, if there was no crime there could be no punishment. Parliament had to guarantee, he went on, that ‘in curing an evil of one kind, it does not create an evil of another.’<sup>39</sup> Palmerston was aware this was not a particularly gratifying position from an abolitionist perspective, but as he wrote privately to Lindoe in December 1832, ‘I cannot forget that under a system of Laws, fundamentally vicious, Interests of various kinds have grown up, among which neither last nor least are the Interests of the Slaves themselves.’<sup>40</sup>

Palmerston’s position, therefore, was founded upon trying to find a constructive way forward which did not harm either of the key participants involved in the debate; be it the dispossessed West Indian planters or the emancipated Britons themselves. The worst-case scenario, he felt, was a measure which ‘might create a new evil to replace the old,’<sup>41</sup> whereas the best outcome was not necessarily the one which fully satisfied either of these groups. Instead, he believed the most advantageous solution would be a

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Woodbine Parish to Palmerston, 15 February 1833, PP, SLT/4.

<sup>38</sup> Palmerston to Sir Henry Taylor, 23 December 1832, PP, BR195/55.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. Repeating one of his oft-used maxims, Palmerston wrote that as an MP he had ‘to deal with things as they are,’ and not as abolitionists might wish them to be.

<sup>40</sup> Palmerston to Dr Robert Lindoe, 1 December 1832, PP, BR195/51.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

compromise settlement that would cause the least amount of suffering, confusion, and alarm for both parties. If planters and freed slaves ended up mildly content, or even mildly discontent, that was the best resolution that could be hoped for. As he reported happily to his brother in June 1833, the government's 'Slave Abolition measure' was 'nearly settled,' for a compromise looked within reach whereby 'both West Indians and Saints are moderately dissatisfied with our plan for the abolition of slavery.'<sup>42</sup>

Palmerston's support for the government's apprenticeship scheme is trickier to explain, since he did not write very much upon the subject in private. Intriguingly, moreover, he did not contribute to the parliamentary debates over apprenticeship in 1838 – only casting his votes in support of the scheme.<sup>43</sup> Kenneth Bourne argued that Palmerston had simply 'gone along with' the government on these occasions; citing a speech he gave to his Tiverton constituency 'about the obligations the Government owed to those owners.'<sup>44</sup> However, one might argue that Palmerston's devotion to this scheme was more than an act of towing the party line, and was again entirely in line with his Whiggish-enlightenment mindset. It is not insignificant, for instance, that the programme devised by the government and presented to Parliament on 14 May 1833 largely accommodated Palmerston's dual concerns 'to recognise planter interests and, at the same time, to offer slaves the sort of protection that Palmerston and others had envisaged.'<sup>45</sup> For it proposed that every freed Briton above the age of six on 1 August 1834 be required 'to devote 75 percent of their time to their masters in return for food and clothing.'<sup>46</sup> The length of apprenticeships, furthermore, were to be dependent on the type of work that slaves were employed to do, with the longest apprenticeship – as a field hand – lasting for up to six years.<sup>47</sup> Thus, although this settlement was perhaps less

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<sup>42</sup> Palmerston to William Temple, 25 June 1833, PP, GC/TE/214.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, 'Negro Apprenticeship', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xlii, 156-261 (30 March 1838), c.260. See also 'Negro Apprenticeship', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xliii, 376-433 (28 May 1838), c.431.

<sup>44</sup> Bourne, *Palmerston*, p.623. See also Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, pp.184-185.

<sup>45</sup> Oldfield, 'Palmerston and Anti-Slavery', p.33.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* Under this scheme, Britain's newly freed subjects would be free to use the remaining 25 percent of their time as they chose. Children under the age of 6 when the act came into force, or born subsequently, would be immediately freed.

<sup>47</sup> Temperley, *British Antislavery*, p.17, see also pp.17-18. The length of apprenticeships for domestic workers was shorter, lasting 4 years. Initially, the Government planned the scheme to last for 11 years for field workers and 6 years for domestic workers. Both were reduced in the House of Commons, during extensive debates over the scheme.

gradual than Palmerston would have preferred, it 'came close to meeting most, if not all, of his concerns about immediatism.'<sup>48</sup>

Finally, Palmerston's position on the giving of compensation to slave-owners (and critically, not to freed slaves) is again hard to establish because he did not contribute towards the emancipation debates in Parliament where this measure was extensively discussed.<sup>49</sup> Thanks to a private letter that he wrote to his brother, William Temple, in June 1833, however, in which he talked candidly about the government's proposed plan of compensation, it is possible to appreciate at least in part his view. Importantly, an examination of this letter suggests that Palmerston's position was based yet again on the politics of prudence and moderation. First of all, Palmerston reported to William his belief that the West Indians were not totally happy with the deal, but should feel grateful to the government for what was in reality 'a tolerably good compensation.' As he explained:

I really believe that the twenty million which [is] to be voted for them [is] about the whole value of all the[ir] estates at the present market price, so that they will receive nearly the [full] value of their estates and keep those estates into the bargain.<sup>50</sup>

When it came to Britain's freed slaves, moreover, Palmerston evidently did not see them as being disadvantaged or unfairly treated as a result of the settlement. Rather than looking at their lack of compensation as a national disgrace, it was his belief they would be satisfied with the very substantial gesture the British Government was making on their behalf to secure their freedom. As he boasted to William:

I must say it is a splendid instance of generosity & justice, unexampled in the history of the world, to see a nation... emancipate 750,000 slaves *and* pay £20 million to their owners as compensation for the loss they will sustain. People sometimes are greatly generous at the expense of others, but it is not often that men are found to pay so high a price for the luxury of doing a noble action.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Oldfield, 'Palmerston and Anti-Slavery', p.33.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Gross, 'The Abolition of Negro Slavery and British Parliamentary Politics'.

<sup>50</sup> Palmerston to William Temple, 25 June 1833, PP, GC/TE/214.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

Clearly then, Palmerston believed that the government's compensation settlement was a just measure that would help to secure the co-operation of slave-owners, a group whose support was essential if emancipation was to proceed safely, and also one that would pose no problem to the slaves themselves; it being an unprecedented act of generosity and nobility. It was, in other words, a prudent and sensible compromise that would assuage competing interest groups and guarantee the passage of the Abolition Bill through the House of Commons.

## II) Anti-slavery, *Laissez faire* and free trade

Another important tension surrounding Palmerston's anti-slavery policy, if we are to understand that he was motivated by humanitarian impulses, regards the fact that he did little to end Britain's indirect involvement in the slave trade after 1830. As Marika Sherwood argues, Britain continued to profit significantly from the slave trade and foreign slavery after abolition, because the 'principal industries of Britain were enmeshed in an international trading and production system which had slave labour at its heart.'<sup>52</sup> Thus, although few Britons profited directly from participation in the slave trade during the nineteenth century,<sup>53</sup> many more profited indirectly from it, and entirely legally, through insurance, investment, banking, the manufacture of trade goods used in the traffic and, above all, the trade in (and consumption of) slave-produced crops.<sup>54</sup> Arguably then, the thousands of British subjects employed in these industries and the millions more who consumed slave-grown crops were helping to increase the profits of slave traders and to sustain the institution of slavery, and it was not until slavery was finally abolished across the world that Britain was completely independent of the crime which its governors and people had denounced so loudly since the turn of the century.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Danny Reilly, review of *After Abolition: Britain and the slave trade since 1807*, by Marika Sherwood', *Race & Class*, 50, 3 (2009), 111-112 (p.111).

<sup>53</sup> Some Britons continued to own, manage and operate slave voyages illegally, purchase slaves in the Americas, and supply ships and equipment to slavers of other nationalities, all of which circumvented the Abolition Act. See Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, pp.83-84. It was disputed in the mid-nineteenth century how involved British merchants were in the slave trade. See, for example, Thomas Lloyd, *A letter to Viscount Palmerston. Containing a refutation of Mr Turnbull's statements that the British merchants are implicated in the slave trade* (London, 1850).

<sup>54</sup> Sherwood, *After Abolition*, pp.2-3.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid p.137. As Horatio Bridges, an officer in the U.S. Navy, noted in 1845, 'It is quite an interesting moral question... how far either Old or New England can be pronounced free of guilt and the odium of the Slave Trade, while, with so little indirectness, they both share the profits and contribute essential aid to its prosecutors.' Cuba and Brazil were the last countries to abolish slavery, in 1880 and 1888 respectively. See

Sherwood's overall conclusion, moreover, is quite shocking: that Britain 'made more money out of slavery and the slave trade *after* 1807 than before,' and that it did so wilfully, for the government understood keenly that 'the produce of slave labour in the Americas was indispensable for her own development' and that Britain 'needed the slave-worked economies to flourish.'<sup>56</sup> In this sense, then, Britain had a vested interest in the upkeep and growth of slavery, not in its abolition. Sherwood points out, for example, how Britain supported the slave-dependent economies of Brazil and Cuba with investment, capital, goods and credit, and by importing a significant amount of slave-grown produce (especially sugar and coffee).<sup>57</sup> Britain's involvement in Cuba and Brazil, she states, 'can only be interpreted as supporting and profiting from the slave trade and slavery.'<sup>58</sup> Or, in other words, as Britain's governing elite giving priority to the millions of people living in the United Kingdom, whose quality of life was dependent upon employment in industries connected with the global, slave-based trade, above that of enslaved people living in the Caribbean and the New World. Parliament knew that enslaved people were 'out there,' she writes, whilst British workers were 'in Britain.'

Extending the thesis of Eric Williams into the Victorian era, Sherwood concludes her study by arguing that 'much of the activism by the government and Parliament, the meaningless Acts, the almost annual Select Committees looking at various aspects of these issues, were just good publicity.' British abolitionism was little more than a 'myth,' based on carefully engineered government 'propaganda.'<sup>59</sup> Quite the opposite of being an 'anti-slavery nation,'<sup>60</sup> therefore, Sherwood posits that Victorian Britain was neither as 'generous' nor as 'selfless' as modern-day contemporaries 'have been led to believe.'<sup>61</sup> During the eighteenth century, Britain had become 'the foremost among industrialised nations' due to the 'profits from the trade in enslaved Africans and the profits derived from slavery,'<sup>62</sup> whilst during the nineteenth century it continued 'to turn a blind eye' to

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Arthur F. Corwin, *Spain and the Abolition of Slavery in Cuba* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967); Robert Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery, 1850-1888* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

<sup>56</sup> Sherwood, *After Abolition*, pp.175, 176-177.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, pp.83-84, 109.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p.4.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p.109-100, 177.

<sup>60</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.19.

<sup>61</sup> Sherwood, *After Abolition*, p.4.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p.177. See also Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery*.

foreign slavery and to maintain a charade of abolitionism in order to sustain its economic development.<sup>63</sup> If anything, then, Britain was therefore a passively pro-slavery nation.

This tension highlighted by Sherwood needs to be recognised and explored if we are to fully understand Palmerston's motivations for taking up Britain's anti-slavery crusade, although an analysis of Palmerston's personal view on this debate shows that it was perhaps more complex than Sherwood presents. To begin with, it is important to note that Palmerston never advocated a policy of abstaining from the global trade and production system which was intimately intertwined with slavery. Rather than supporting the removal of Britain from the international marketplace for slave-grown crops, or a policy of isolating Britain from slave-labour countries and economies, he endorsed Britain's continued interaction with them and invariably argued against the proponents of abstention whenever the subject entered parliamentary debate. One of his main arguments, for instance, was that Britain must continue to access American cotton, tobacco and rice, which were all the products of slave labour, because to abstain from them would 'deprive of employment some millions of their fellow-countrymen, and would bring them to utter ruin.'<sup>64</sup> Parliament, he went on, would cry out 'at the very idea of such a thing,' for the sad truth was that slave-grown crops were 'essential for us to have, and... it would be impossible for us to do without.'<sup>65</sup> This argument was commonly made by Whigs and Radical free traders, with Lord John Russell branding the idea of abstention 'insanity' and John Bright attacking it as 'irrational.'<sup>66</sup> Not only was abstention an economic and political impossibility, however, but for Palmerston this policy would also be to ignore the government's duty to promote the welfare and interests of British subjects. To abstain from slave-grown produce upon 'the principle of humanity,' he declared, would be to oppose the interests of 'the 25,000,000 people who inhabit these islands.' 'Humanity,' he went on, was 'an excellent principle,' but since 'charity is said to begin at home, why should not humanity also be a domestic virtue?'

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<sup>63</sup> Sherwood, *After Abolition*, p.3.

<sup>64</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), cc.645-646.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, cc.645, 659.

<sup>66</sup> Russell, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxvii, 1304-1325 (20 July 1846), c.1311; John Bright to Joseph Sturge, 1 January 1843, in Sturge Papers, British Library, Add Ms 43845, ff.13-14. See also Clarendon, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxviii, 467-488 (10 August 1846), c.482. The Earl of Clarendon observed in 1846 that 'for our necessities... of life, for the employment of our people, for our revenue, for our very position in the world as a nation, we are indebted to the production of slave labour.'

True it is there are millions of suffering [Africans] abroad. True also is it that we have millions of suffering fellow-countrymen at home. Why should our humanity bestow itself exclusively on the former, instead of giving a due share of its attention to the latter?<sup>67</sup>

Aside from these principled reasons against abstention, Palmerston argued it would be practically impossible to continue engaging with the global trade and production system without dirtying Britain's hands in some way. In May 1841, he used Britain's trading relationship with Brazil as a case study to demonstrate the difficulties that might come from a policy of abstention. At present, he explained, Britain sent out to Brazil every year 'vast quantities of our manufactures,' produced using American slave-grown cotton, and was paid for them 'by the sugar and coffee which is there produced by the labour of slaves.' In this transaction, Britain was therefore encouraging the employment of slave labour in both North and South America. Assuming that Britain could find a readily available source of free labour cotton from somewhere else in the world, perhaps India, then could Britain still sell its manufactured goods to Brazil for cash, he questioned, rather than in return for slave-produced crops? Ostensibly, this transaction might be more in line with Britain's anti-slavery principles. Yet, if one also took into consideration that the Brazilian cash would undoubtedly have been derived from the sale of their sugar and coffee to another country, such as Germany, who were presently the country that purchased Britain's surplus supply of Brazilian sugar and coffee, then was this any different in reality from Britain buying these crops directly? Would this 'alter the nature of the transaction?', Palmerston posed. Moreover, assuming that this new transaction was considered tolerable, for Brazil to trade its slave-produced crops with Germany it would require another nation to transport the goods across the Atlantic since the Brazilian government did not have enough ships to carry out this long journey on a regular basis. Britain could offer its services, he argued, but this would bring another ethical dilemma: was it acceptable for British ships to carry slave-grown produce to Germany? If these crops would 'contaminate our warehouses, our shops, and our tables,' he asked, why would it not contaminate British ships? In addition, he went on, Germany currently purchased from Britain only refined sugar. This process was one that Britain undertook itself in domestic factories. Thus, if Britain was to continue the role of refining Brazilian slave sugar as well as acting as its courier, would it not also be 'sinful' to

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<sup>67</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), c.645.

refine as well as to consume slave-grown sugar? Or, he continued, could it be argued that by refining slave-grown sugar Britain was somehow able to 'cleanse it from part of its original impurity'? Perhaps then, if all these things were accounted for, Anglo-Brazilian transactions could be justified, but since the whole system of global trade and production was currently entwined with the slave trade and slavery such acts of compromise would be 'constantly going on.' Thus, British global trade would be fraught with problems and difficulties, making it impracticable and challenging to maintain.<sup>68</sup>

Another explanation for Palmerston's opposition to the policy of abstention can be found in his support for a *laissez faire* approach to economics. Once again, Palmerston's view on free trade was borrowed from the ideas of Whiggish enlightenment thought. Protecting duties were unfair and objectionable he wrote in his 1829 political journal, being essentially 'taxes laid upon the bulk of the community' which benefited 'a few individuals for the loss they sustain[ed] in carrying on an unprofitable trade.' The 'industry of the country,' he elaborated, was being expended in paying for the 'interest of the debt' of these privileged, almost parasitic individuals. To enable commerce and manufacturing to reach 'the utmost of their power,' and therefore 'relieve the land from the pressure of the debt,' he argued, 'industry must have free scope given to it; [or] what is commonly called the system of free trade.'<sup>69</sup> This system was based upon one timeless and universal principle, Palmerston wrote to Lord Beauvale in 1841, perhaps the 'only sound principle' in economics, which was to 'let men sell where they can get the best price, & buy what they want, & where they can get it cheapest.'<sup>70</sup> For Palmerston, then, whilst protective duties were unfair taxes on the country's industry for the benefit of a few wealthy individuals, free trade was the solution that could benefit all parties; one that 'contributed so much to the comfort, welfare and happiness of the great mass of the nation.'<sup>71</sup>

It is notable, however, that this economic outlook frustrated abolitionists during the mid-nineteenth century. The BFASS, for example, increasingly came to advocate the more interventionist position of isolating Britain from slave-based economies, preferring

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<sup>68</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), cc.646-648.

<sup>69</sup> Notebook containing newspaper cuttings, anecdotes, notes on Irish affairs, 1827-c.1832, PP, BR22(ii)/13.

<sup>70</sup> Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, 15 September 1841, BP, BL, Add Ms 60467, ff.143-146. See also Palmerston, 'Relations with the Brazils', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxiii, 680-687 (7 March 1844), c.685.

<sup>71</sup> Palmerston, Address to the Electors of the Borough of Tiverton, 1 July 1852, PP, BR195/115.



to protect Britain's West Indian economy in order to give advantages to free-grown produce. The leader of this society, Joseph Sturge, 'held that the state should act against all slave produce consumed in Britain,' whilst Lord Brougham presented a petition from the BFASS in 1846 calling for the abstention of all slave goods.<sup>72</sup> During the early 1840s, moreover, the parliamentary sugar debates produced a direct clash between abolitionists and free traders over the protective duty that was currently being levied on West Indian sugar.<sup>73</sup> Since the cost of sugar in Britain was almost twice as expensive as it was abroad owing to the tariffs that protected West Indian sugar to the exclusion of cheaper, slave-grown sugar, the Whigs argued from 1841 onwards that the duty should be reduced (although not removed completely), to enable working class Britons the opportunity to purchase what had now become 'a necessary of life.'<sup>74</sup> Presently, it was argued, the people of Britain were being heavily taxed for the benefit of a small group of people living in the British Caribbean who, despite their status as Britain's newly freed subjects, should not be allowed to receive privileged treatment over the rest of the country.<sup>75</sup> As chapter one demonstrates, Palmerston aligned himself with the free trade interest in the debate,<sup>76</sup> claiming that the whole question was one 'between free trade... on the one side and monopoly on the other,' 'between reason and prejudice' and 'between the interests of the many and the profits of the few.' It was unjust, he proclaimed, 'to enable a comparatively small number of men to carry on a trade, in itself a losing one, at the expense of the rest of the community.'<sup>77</sup>

This stance was vigorously opposed by abolitionists, however, who argued that retaining the tariff on sugar was vital to prevent West Indian free-labour sugar from being thrust into unfair competition with Brazilian and Cuban sugar that was derived from

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<sup>72</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.102; Brougham, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxviii, 4-22 (27 July 1846).

<sup>73</sup> For an extended analysis of the parliamentary sugar debates, see Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.93-97, 99-113. See also Richard Huzzey, 'Free trade, Free labour and Slave Sugar in Victorian Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 53, 2 (2010), 359-379.

<sup>74</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.93. This phrase was common throughout the sugar debates. See, for example, Inglis, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxviii, 77-81 (27 July 1846), c.80. See also Lansdowne, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxviii, 22-27 (27 July 1846), c.26; Goulburn, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxviii, 54-77 (27 July 1846), c.54; Graham, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcix, 1234-1242 (26 June 1848), c.1242.

<sup>75</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.94-96. See, for example, G.R. Porter, *The Progress of the Nation: in its various social and economical relations, from the beginning of the nineteenth century* (London: Murray, 1847), p.430.

<sup>76</sup> See Chapter 1, pp.43-46.

<sup>77</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), cc.644, 655.

slave-labour. Unable to compete with slave-based economies that could push labourers to their physical and mortal limits, they contended that the economic prosperity of the West Indies would continue to decline whilst the profits of Brazilian and Cuban sugar would augment. In the long term, this would encourage the proliferation of both the international slave trade and the institution of slavery.<sup>78</sup> The abolitionist MP Stephen Lushington, for example, argued that the British people would 'prefer a dinner of herbs to the stalled ox of slavery,' whilst Samuel Wilberforce, the Bishop of Oxford, contended that 'one new slave would be needed for every additional ton [of sugar] consumed in Britain.'<sup>79</sup> The abolitionists were supported, surprisingly, by advocates of Protection, who endorsed the abolitionists' line of argument.<sup>80</sup> However, Palmerston always insisted that this was a mere political alliance and that the Tories were simply using anti-slavery as a 'delusive pretence' to advance their true interest of upholding monopolies and appeasing the West Indian lobby.<sup>81</sup> For if they truly opposed to encouraging the slave trade by trading with slave systems, why did they not object to trade in other slave produce, such as coffee, tobacco and cotton?<sup>82</sup>

For a period in the early 1840s, therefore, a widespread belief emerged that a free trade position over the duty levied on West Indian sugar was utterly incompatible with a humanitarian desire to end the slave trade, and that a *laissez faire* policy of abstaining from slave-grown produce was a valid and beneficial way to discourage the international slave trade as well as the institution of slavery. On this basis, one might question whether Palmerston truly was a devotee of humanitarianism, for he opposed both abstention and the retention of foreign tariffs and appears to have exemplified all that Sherwood was angry about when she criticised British statesmen for their passive endorsement of (and deceptive support for) the global trade and production which was dependent on slave labour. Explicitly and unapologetically, he seems to have privileged the welfare of

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<sup>78</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.93-94, 101.

<sup>79</sup> Lushington, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 79-88 (7 May 1841), c.88; Bishop of Oxford, 'Sugar Duties (No.3) Bill', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, 649-667 (13 August 1846), cc.652-653. See also Samuel Wilberforce, *Cheap Sugar Means Cheap Slaves* (London: Ridgway, 1848). For another prominent abolitionist supporting the sugar duty, see Brougham, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxviii, 529-536 (10 August 1846), c.534.

<sup>80</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.94, 105-106. See, for example, Colquhoun, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, 119-126 (10 May 1841), c.121.

<sup>81</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), c.644. See also Palmerston, 'Relations with the Brazils', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxiii, 680-687 (7 March 1844), c.685.

<sup>82</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvii, 1340-1346 (26 February 1845), c.1342.

working class people living 'in Britain' above those of freed Britons living 'out there' in the West Indies, and even more so above those of enslaved Africans living in the Americas.<sup>83</sup>

Although Palmerston's arguments against abstention and for reducing the sugar duty chime with Sherwood's logic, however, on closer examination it would be misrepresentative to cast Palmerston as a pragmatic advocate of passively pro-slavery politics trying to conceal the true nature of British anti-slavery. Vitally, this would be to misunderstand Palmerston's particular construction of mid-Victorian humanitarianism, which he saw as entirely compatible with *laissez faire* principles and thus consistent with a policy of continued engagement with the global (slave-based) economy as well as with the removal of the discriminating duty placed on colonial sugar. During the 1840s, for example, Palmerston made abundantly clear his belief that a policy of abstention would not discourage the international slave trade nor undermine foreign slavery. This idea, he insisted on numerous occasions, was a 'childish absurdity' and a 'total mistake' founded on an 'erroneous principle.'<sup>84</sup> 'What nonsense to tell us that if you take 20,000 tons of sugar [or any slave-produced crop] from the market of the world it makes the slightest difference whether these 20,000 tons consist of slave or of free-labour sugar,' he argued, explaining to Parliament in February 1845:

Whatever the production of the sugar, the void, when made, will impart an increased value to what remains. Whether you take slave-grown sugar or free-labour sugar, the result is the same: you increase the price of that left in the market of the world and if that sugar be sold, you will give increased encouragement to its production. Thus, indirectly, but certainly, [you will] aid and foster and assist in carrying on slavery and the slave trade. It is quite absurd to draw a distinction where there exists no difference.<sup>85</sup>

Palmerston repeated this argument multiple times in Parliament between 1841 and 1845, and with each occasion seemed to become more frustrated that this logical argument was not being given the attention it deserved. To make a distinction between 'sugar the produce of free-labour and sugar the produce of slave-labour,' he said in annoyance during a session in June 1844, was 'unfounded and untenable.' 'A ground more

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<sup>83</sup> Sherwood, *After Abolition*, p.176.

<sup>84</sup> Palmerston, 'Spanish Colonial Sugar', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxii, 530-554 (15 July 1845), c.533. See also Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxv, 1119-1121 (20 June 1844), cc.1120, 1121.

<sup>85</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvii, 1340-1346 (26 February 1845), c.1345.

irreconcilable to common sense [and] more untenable in practice than that distinction is founded upon, it [has] never yet [been] my lot to hear,' he cried.<sup>86</sup> For Palmerston, therefore, the debate over abstention was never one about encouraging or discouraging 'the real principles of humanity,' but simply 'the interests of consumers and of commerce.'<sup>87</sup>

Furthermore, during the sugar debates Palmerston argued that far from a system of free trade leading to the proliferation of the slave trade and the strengthening of slavery, it would do the exact opposite; ultimately discouraging slave labour and undermining the slave trade. For although at present it was the case that slave labour was outperforming wage labour, since the prosperity of the West Indies was undoubtedly declining whilst that of Rio de Janeiro and Havana was rising, Palmerston argued that this was only due to the evils of Protectionism. The protective duties put upon the sugar trade by the British state were insulating Britain's colonies from the 'economic reality' and preventing them from making the changes necessary to succeed, he argued.<sup>88</sup> Protection had effectively dulled the industry of Britain's colonial producers, in other words, and led them to become 'indolent and unskilful,' 'supine, unimproving, and probably labouring under perpetual embarrassment.'<sup>89</sup> However, when the trade in free labour sugar was opened up to 'fair competition,' he asserted, it would inevitably give rise to a trade carried on with 'intelligence, enterprise, and success.'<sup>90</sup> Thus, when free labour sugar was put into direct competition with the produce of slave labour sugar, it would certainly not be beaten by it but, due to the superior productivity of wage-over-slave labour, gradually (if not necessarily immediately) outperform and outcompete it.<sup>91</sup> As Palmerston said numerous times during the debate, it was his unshakable conviction that 'free labour is cheaper in the end than slave labour,' and that 'the cessation of the slave trade would be no injury [to Brazil or Cuba] but in fact a benefit,' whilst 'nothing' that had yet happened

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<sup>86</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxv, 1067-1075 (17 June 1844), cc.1067-1068.

<sup>87</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvii, 1340-1346 (26 February 1845), c.1345.

<sup>88</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.104.

<sup>89</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), c.656.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> See also Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, chp.2, esp. pp.18-23. Eltis argues this new conviction in the superiority of free-over-slave labour was what drove British abolitionism in the nineteenth century.

'in the working out of the great experiment which we are making in the West Indies' had led him 'in the slightest degree' to doubt that assertion.<sup>92</sup>

Finally, Palmerston concluded his argument in the sugar debates by asserting that the reduction of the sugar duty would benefit Britain's diplomatic campaign to end the slave trade, since it would uphold the reputation of the British 'character' abroad as one of 'sincerity,' 'plain dealing' and 'straightforwardness.'<sup>93</sup> At present, he claimed in May 1841, Britain was in the process of negotiating improved anti-slavery treaties with Brazil and Cuba but due to the existence of the sugar duties and Britain's anti-slavery squadron was having difficulty persuading those countries of the sincerity of Britain's professions. 'On the one hand we shut our markets against their produce,' he explained. 'On the other hand, we try to prevent them from getting what they erroneously consider a necessary accession of labourers.' The result of this, he said, was that instead of attributing Britain's anxiety to suppress the slave trade to its true motives of 'humanity and justice,' these countries now perceived Britain as little more than its 'commercial enemy,' acting under 'a spirit of narrow-minded commercial jealousy.' To them, Britain was petulantly excluding their produce so that it could 'not compete in our markets with the produce of our own colonies,' and simultaneously suppressing the slave trade as a means to drive up the price of their crops so that 'the sugar of our colonies may be better able to compete with their sugar in the market of Europe.' This viewpoint was ludicrous, he stated, but the outcome of their debate had the potential to confirm or allay this conspiracy. Indeed, during his negotiations with the Brazilian and Spanish governments, Palmerston claimed he had consistently made the argument that free-wage labour was more productive than slave labour, and therefore that it would be in Brazil's and Spain's economic interests to give up the slave trade. Maintaining the sugar duties, and explicitly upon the grounds that free-labour sugar could never compete successfully with slave labour sugar, would therefore entirely contradict this message and confirm all of Brazil's and Cuba's suspicions about British anti-slavery. 'What is this but declaring to the Brazilians and the Spaniards

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<sup>92</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), c.652. Palmerston's assumption that free wage labour was more productive than slave labour can be traced back to his time in Edinburgh. Dugald Stewart argued that the condition of slavery imposed 'a great and almost insurmountable barrier to the opulence and population of a country,' because it dampened individual industry. For it was 'not reasonable... to suppose that men deprived of their liberty will work with the same cheerful activity for others as they would do for themselves,' especially since it was 'hope' which sweetened 'all our labours.' See Stewart, 'Lectures on Political Economy Vol.II', pp.256, 302.

<sup>93</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), c.654.

that we have been telling them untruths all this while as to the comparative cheapness of free labour?’ Palmerston asked the House of Commons. ‘Will they not think that we have added to the odiousness of our commercial hostility the meanness of duplicity and falsehood, that we have been endeavouring to trepan them into an abolition of their slave trade upon false pretences, telling them that slave labour is the dearest and, therefore, the least advantageous to them, though we knew and were convinced all the while that it is the cheapest and most profitable.’ In a rousing end to his speech, therefore, Palmerston asserted:

Let us convince them by our conduct that in our doctrine we were sincere. Let us convince them that we do believe free labour to be, as it unquestionably is, cheaper than slave labour. Let us do so by admitting their slave-labour sugar into competition with free-labour sugar in our market... If this measure is carried I shall enter into negotiation with the Brazilians and Spaniards with better hopes of success... for they will listen to our remonstrances with a more willing ear when they shall believe them to be dictated by principle and when they shall no longer suspect them to be the offspring of commercial jealousy.<sup>94</sup>

Despite holding positions in various parliamentary debates which both contemporaries and historians have argued were devoid of compassion, therefore, over the timing of emancipation, the value of abstention, and the price of slave-grown sugar, one might argue that Palmerston was invariably acting out of sincere humanitarian impulses when it came to anti-slavery and was not inconsistent or paradoxical over this issue. One final tension which must be explored, however, before one can fully comprehend Palmerston’s motivations for seeking to end the slave trade, relates to the daunting issue of Britain’s national interests. To what extent, one might ask, does the entanglement of British interests with Palmerston’s anti-slavery policy shatter any illusions that he was a humanitarian? It is this tension which chapter six will now seek to illuminate.

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, cc.652-654.

## Chapter 6 – Economic sacrifice or instrument of Great Power politics? Palmerston's *realpolitik* motivations for ending the international slave trade

Looming large in the background of any history of humanitarianism is a conceptual problem which has proved to be a stumbling block for scholars attempting to ascertain the sincerity of an individual, community, or nation's humanitarian impulses. This problem is whether or not humanitarian endeavours are able to co-exist in harmony with a *realist* perception of international politics.<sup>1</sup> Naturally, acts of altruism which benefit the needs of the humanitarian actor(s) as well as those of distant strangers sit uncomfortably with some observers. Any humanitarian, for instance, whose intentions are not pure or wholly independent from selfish 'interests' risks being damned a hypocrite and any idealistic motivations they have written-off as superficial.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, it is this conceptual problem that shaped the field of humanitarian studies in its formative years. Michael Barnett summarises in *Empire of Humanity* how two opposing traditions have emerged, organised around the binary of 'ethics versus politics.'<sup>3</sup> On one hand, he states, advocates of a 'romantic' tradition have presented humanitarians as innocent, noble and virtuous; as people living in a world of ethics constantly fighting against the forces of evil and indifference. On the other, devotees of a 'cynical' tradition have gone the opposite way and reduced humanitarianism to 'the interests of the powerful,' seeing it as little more than an 'ideological prop' for Great Powers to hide behind.<sup>4</sup> Importantly then, any attempt to understand and interpret Palmerston's humanitarian conviction in the context of Britain's anti-slavery movement must confront this dilemma.

Fortunately, there is a solution. For it is apparent that both 'romantic' and 'cynical' readings of humanitarianism have been predicated upon a fundamentally unhelpful and constrictive definition of 'humanitarian,' as someone 'who seeks to promote human welfare and advocates action on this basis [alone] rather than for pragmatic or strategic

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<sup>1</sup> Trim, 'Conclusion: Humanitarian Intervention in Historical Perspective', p.398.

<sup>2</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p.15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p.6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*. See, for example, Noam Chomsky, 'Humanitarian Imperialism: The New Doctrine of Imperial Right', *Monthly Review*, 60, 4 (2008), 22-50.

reasons.<sup>5</sup> This reductive definition is often unwritten and assumed in many texts, yet it is also the one currently being put forward by the *Oxford English Dictionary*. In the last two decades, however, historians have attempted to redefine this term and to challenge the assumption that to be driven by one's interests was inherently at odds with the pursuit of humanitarian objectives. In the 2011 edited volume, *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, edited by Brendan Simms and D.J.B. Trim, all of the contributors agreed that 'the perceived dichotomy between *realpolitik* and humanitarian concerns has frequently been a false one.'<sup>6</sup> Notably, they contended that even if strategic and material considerations played a substantial or pre-eminent role in shaping a government's response to a crime against humanity, and even where a state stood to benefit directly from intervention, it could 'reasonably be regarded as "humanitarian"' so long as 'the rights of individuals were always *an issue*,' even if only nominally, and so long as the intervention was 'still protecting oppressed people groups.'<sup>7</sup> Echoing the arguments of Michael Ignatieff and Nicholas Wheeler, these scholars posit that 'humanitarian action is not unmasked if it is shown to be the instrument of imperial power,' and 'motives are not discredited just because they are shown to be mixed.'<sup>8</sup> For crucially, 'the existence of non-humanitarian motives undermines the humanitarian credentials of action *only if* these undermined a positive humanitarian outcome.'<sup>9</sup>

Simms and Trim conclude by signalling their endorsement for a new approach towards histories of humanitarianism; one which emphasises above all the interconnectedness of *ideal*-and *realpolitik* in humanitarian interventions. 'Statesmen have rarely had to choose between acting ethically or morally... and acting sensibly in the national interest,' Trim states. 'Very often these are the same option' and 'sometimes one is not possible without the other.'<sup>10</sup> In a practical sense, moreover, Trim agreed with Thomas G. Weiss that 'looking for parsimony in motives does not really advance the discussion, because not all political motivations are evil.'<sup>11</sup> It would be more useful, he

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<sup>5</sup> 'Humanitarian, n. and adj.', *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Oxford University Press, 2009) <[www.oed.com/view/Entry/89276](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/89276)> [accessed 28 August 2019].

<sup>6</sup> Trim, 'Conclusion: Humanitarian Intervention in Historical Perspective', p.401.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.400; Trim and Simms, 'Towards a History of Humanitarian Intervention', p.23.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite: Nation-building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan* (London: Vintage, 2003), p.23.

<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.133.

<sup>10</sup> Trim, 'Conclusion: Humanitarian Intervention in Historical Perspective', p.401.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas G. Weiss, *Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas in Action* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), p.7.



asserts, to acknowledge that in an 'interdependent world' it was virtually impossible for politicians to 'localise risk' or isolate one's self-interests from any particular context and circumstance. Hence, a more interesting line of enquiry would be to demonstrate how 'humanitarian and geopolitical concerns can merge' and were to some extent 'inseparable.'<sup>12</sup> By taking this approach, the rest of this chapter will consider the varied and complex ways that Palmerston used anti-slavery politics to advance Britain's national interests at the same time as he pursued humanitarian goals; in what was essentially 'a marriage of pragmatism and idealism.'<sup>13</sup>

### l) A pecuniary 'sacrifice': Britain's economic interests

Firstly, this chapter will explore the ways in which Palmerston's anti-slavery policy was influenced by his perception of Britain's economic interests. To begin with, it is important to acknowledge that Palmerston made a clear distinction between the abolition of slavery and the abolition of the international slave trade when it came to his assessment of Britain's economic interests. As chapter five demonstrates, it was Palmerston's opinion that the abolition of British colonial slavery was a measure that would enhance the economic prosperity of the British West Indies and, crucially, not one that would leave it in a catastrophic condition as the West Indian lobby feared.<sup>14</sup> For although he understood the intense 'anxiety' of West Indian proprietors and could even appreciate the logic behind their argument – that the quantity of sugar produced in the Caribbean would decline as a result of suppression at the same time as that produced in Brazil and Cuba would annually increase as a result of their continued engagement with the slave trade, exposing the West Indies to 'a ruinous competition in the markets of Europe' and eventually to economic collapse, as the price of British sugar was reduced so low from the abundance of supply that it could no longer attend the costs of its cultivation – it was his overriding belief that free-wage labour would outperform and outcompete slave labour.<sup>15</sup> So long as the West Indies was provided with an adequate supply of labour, he felt, emancipation would make Britain's sugar cheaper and more competitive than slave-

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<sup>12</sup> Trim, 'Conclusion: Humanitarian Intervention in Historical Perspective', pp.399-400. See also Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, pp.14-15. Barnett came to the same conclusion, arguing that humanitarianism is about meeting the needs of others *and* meeting our own needs.'

<sup>13</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.306.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 5, pp.252-253.

<sup>15</sup> Palmerston to King William IV, 16 June 1833, PP, RC/AA/80.

grown produce. And, even if the West Indies did not experience economic growth immediately, it was inevitable that the beneficial effects of abolition would be felt sooner or later. Significantly, these positive effects would also be felt at home, since the lower price of sugar would enable working class Britons to buy it, whereas at present this staple of life was expensive and unaffordable. Abolition, then, was not just in the interests of Britain's West Indian planters, but 'the 25,000,000 people who inhabit these islands.'<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, due to the universal applicability of the principle that free-wage labour would always outproduce slave labour, Palmerston held that the abolition of slavery was not just consistent with Britain's economic interests but with those of every slave-holding nation.<sup>17</sup> Thus, although the protestations of Brazil and Cuba were erroneous – that Britain's true motivation to end the slave trade was a desire to cut off their supply of labour, end their domination of the Atlantic plantation economy and restore the British Caribbean as the world's leading sugar producer – they did reflect the perceived economic outcomes of British anti-slavery. For until those countries decided to abolish slavery and embrace a free market economy they would be at a disadvantage to Britain, and certainly not maximising the potential of their abundant land and quality soil.<sup>18</sup> Britain was not their 'commercial enemies,' he argued, acting under 'a spirit of narrow-minded commercial jealousy,' but an exemplar of a more humane and rational system of labour that was in the best interests of everyone involved; from enslaved Africans and plantation owners to ordinary consumers and the state itself.<sup>19</sup>

When it came to the abolition of the international slave trade, however, and the extent to which Britain's policy of suppression was consistent with its economic interests, Palmerston's views are complex and harder to establish. For as chapter four demonstrates, he did not use pragmatic arguments about Britain's economic interests to try and convince Parliament to take his line of thinking, instead impressing upon MPs that 'higher considerations' than Britain's national interest were at stake when it came to the slave trade.<sup>20</sup> In July 1845, for example, he lambasted Peel's Government in the House of

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), cc.645, 652, 656.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Palmerston, Address to City Hall, Glasgow, in *The Times*, 29 September 1853.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.5.

<sup>19</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), cc.652-653.

<sup>20</sup> Palmerston frequently described Britain's policy being founded upon 'higher considerations.' See, for example, Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the

Commons for capitulating to French pressure and giving up Britain's right to search French vessels suspected of being slave traders. It was a right that ought to have been maintained, he argued, for as well as being essential to suppress the slave trade it was 'not liable to the invidious imputation that it was a pretence for securing any advantage, military or commercial, to this country.' There was, he said, 'no interest but the interest of humanity which led us to attach the slightest value' to that right.<sup>21</sup> Only a week prior to this, moreover, Palmerston had denied this allegation even more strenuously to the House, dismissing any suggestion that the country's anti-slavery crusade was 'conducive in any way to England's interest.' Such an assertion, he chided, 'is so palpably absurd, that I cannot give credit, even to a slave trader himself, who may affirm that we have been acting upon such a principle.'<sup>22</sup>

These statements are certainly thought-provoking and demonstrate that since the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, where the nation's 'interests' were integral to the debate and a topic that even abolitionists reluctantly engaged with,<sup>23</sup> by the mid-nineteenth century any mention of them was taboo for British politicians. It is ironic, for instance, that in a private letter which Thomas Fowell Buxton sent to Palmerston in May 1837, in which he revealed the arguments that he was about to make in the House of Commons in support of Palmerston's anti-slavery policy, he pleaded with the Foreign Secretary not to give a 'peremptory negative' on his point relating to Britain's commercial interests. This point, he felt, was strong enough to persuade Parliament to take up anti-slavery more energetically.<sup>24</sup> Curiously, then, by the 1830s it was abolitionists trying to persuade Ministers to use arguments based on Britain's national interests and not the other way around.

It is tempting to dismiss Palmerston's statements as mere 'humbug',<sup>25</sup> and to interpret him as conspiring to present an overly romantic, delusive image of British anti-slavery to domestic and international audiences that was opposed to the hard-headed

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Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.19. See also Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3rd series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), c.1340.

<sup>21</sup> Palmerston, 'Spanish Colonial Sugar', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 530-554 (15 July 1845), c.552.

<sup>22</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), c.159.

<sup>23</sup> Roger Anstey argues that abolitionists were able to project abolition as part of Britain's national interests. See Anstey, 'The Pattern of British Abolitionism in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', p.20.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Fowell Buxton to Palmerston, 27 May 1837, PP, SLT/8.

<sup>25</sup> This is how Boyd Hilton described William Pitt's use of evangelical language from 1792. See Hilton, '1807 and All That: Why Britain Outlawed Her Slave Trade', p.77.

reality of British politics. For it was evidently a strategic decision, on one hand, to avoid stating Britain's economic interests as a motivation for his anti-slavery campaign. As he told Parliament in February 1861, British politicians should 'abstain from any argument which might be misconstrued by other nations' as a desire to advance Britain's selfish interests at their expense. For if 'narrow commercial jealousy' was supposed to be their main object and not 'principles of humanity and of general benevolence,' then 'so far from other countries being willing to co-operate with us in our exertions against this foul abomination they will set themselves against us, and do everything in their power to thwart and defeat our policy.'<sup>26</sup> Although Palmerston undoubtedly had one eye on Britain's diplomatic position, however, it would be unhelpful to simply reject Palmerston's claim that 'higher considerations' were influencing his policy, for this would obscure an important aspect of his thinking. Indeed, it is apparent that Palmerston also perceived Britain's campaign to abolish the international slave trade as being at odds with the country's interests from a rational economic perspective.

It was commonly argued during the mid-nineteenth century, for instance, that Britain's global suppression system was expensive to maintain and difficult to justify from a pecuniary point of view, especially during times of retrenchment.<sup>27</sup> Between 1807 and 1865, for instance, the British Treasury routinely paid out for the fitting, victualling, crewing and maintaining of Royal Navy ships deployed to South America and West Africa as part of Britain's anti-slavery squadron, with between 1,000 and 4,000 seamen stationed on these coastlines every year.<sup>28</sup> 'At the peak of the British anti-slave trade effort, in the 1840s, about 15 percent of British warships in commission and nearly 10 percent of total naval manpower were assigned to the task of interrupting the flow of coerced labour to the Americas.'<sup>29</sup> For every successful capture, moreover, each one of these men received prize money, which was higher depending on the exact number of men, women and children rescued from slave ships.<sup>30</sup> This bounty was largely paid for from the proceeds drawn from the sale of the condemned slaver. Although the total

<sup>26</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxi, 982-988 (26 February 1861), c.988.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, chapter 4, pp.188-189. For another example, see Sir James Graham to Palmerston, 11 January 1831, GP, BL, Add Ms 79705, ff.9-12. See also Duke of Somerset, Memorandum on the slave trade, 1859, PP, GC/SO/22/enc 1, enclosed in Duke of Somerset to Palmerston, 11 January 1860, PP, GC/SO/22.

<sup>28</sup> Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, pp.91-92. See also Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.42.

<sup>29</sup> Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, p.94.

<sup>30</sup> Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade*, chp.xi. Lloyd calculates that between 1807 and 1846 over £1 million was spent on prize money (p.80).

profit was divided between the two governments concerned in the transaction, the British share was always handed to the captor.<sup>31</sup>

The operational costs of the anti-slavery squadron were sizeable, therefore, but they were certainly not the only charges the Government had to pay. Another 'major' expenditure, for instance, came in the form of 'inducements' given to foreign governments who were reluctant to abolish the slave trade.<sup>32</sup> Most notoriously, Britain gave one-off payments to Spain and Portugal in 1815 amounting to approximately £600,000 in return for an anti-slavery treaty.<sup>33</sup> After 1839, naval officers regularly granted annual payments to West African rulers, although usually for much smaller amounts and for a set number of years. An agreement was made with King Pepple of Bonny in 1841, for example, which stipulated that Britain provide that ruler with 'an annual present' of \$2,000 for five years.<sup>34</sup> Occasionally, moreover, the Government was also forced to pay compensation settlements to slave traders in cases of wrongful arrest on the high seas.<sup>35</sup> Over time, Palmerston tried to limit these payments by including 'no compensation clauses' in Britain's revised anti-slavery treaties.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, payments continued to be paid into the 1850s for nations who refused to accept this stipulation, and even in circumstances where 'the victim of the wrongful arrest was clearly an illicit slave trader.'<sup>37</sup> These costs were very high, averaging at approximately £181,000 per annum between 1815 and 1823.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, Britain invested significantly in the establishment and upkeep of Mixed Commission Courts on both sides of the Atlantic between 1819 and 1871, with

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<sup>31</sup> Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, p.96. See also Bethell, 'The Mixed Commissions for the Suppression of the Transatlantic Slave Trade', pp.88-89.

<sup>32</sup> Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, p.96.

<sup>33</sup> Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.19. Palmerston occasionally reminded Portugal of this fact during negotiations. See, for example, Palmerston, 'Draft of note to be presented by Lord Howard', TNA, FO84/258, ff.10-25, enclosed in Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 3 March 1838, TNA, FO84/248, ff.8-9.

<sup>34</sup> Commander Robert Craigie, 'Memorandum on negotiations with King Pepple of Bonny', 11 March 1841, TNA, FO84/302, ff.214-218. Palmerston had to press the Treasury to accept this annual present. See Palmerston, 'Memorandum on negotiations with the Chiefs of Bonny', 7 April 1841, TNA, FO84/383, ff.87-103.

<sup>35</sup> Bethell, 'The Mixed Commissions for the Suppression of the Transatlantic Slave Trade', p.88.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 8 September 1834, TNA, FO84/155, ff.174-179, and enclosed draft treaty, ff.180-328.

<sup>37</sup> Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, p.96.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

judges, arbitrators, secretaries and registrars continually employed on high salaries (even in high-mortality locations such as Sierra Leone) to adjudicate upon vessels seized under suspicion of being slave traders.<sup>39</sup> During this period, Leslie Bethell estimates that over 600 slave vessels were condemned and nearly 80,000 slaves liberated, at a considerable expense.<sup>40</sup> Finally, the Foreign Office's Secret Service Fund was also utilised to help pursue anti-slavery, albeit in more clandestine ways. As chapters two and three demonstrate, for instance, it was frequently used to purchase the support of pro-British, anti-slavery newspapers in foreign countries, as well as to access intelligence on the slave trade from local informants.<sup>41</sup> In addition, this fund was also used throughout the mid-century period to promote emerging anti-slavery parties in slave-holding countries,<sup>42</sup> repatriate freed Africans living in Brazil to West Africa,<sup>43</sup> and even to equip the West African state of Abeokuta (which had successfully ended the slave trade) with guns and ammunition in case it was attacked from its violent, pro-slavery neighbours.<sup>44</sup>

Suffice to say, therefore, Britain's anti-slavery system cost a significant amount of public money, with David Eltis estimating that Britain expended 'a minimum of £250,000 a year in terms of 1821-25 prices.'<sup>45</sup> In total, he claims, Britain spent approximately £11.7

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<sup>39</sup> Mixed Commission Courts sat in Freetown, Luanda (Angola), the Cape of Good Hope, Boa Vista (Cape Verde Islands), Rio de Janeiro, Surinam, Spanish Town, Havana and New York. See Bethell, 'The Mixed Commissions for the Suppression of the Transatlantic Slave Trade', pp.79-80, 87-88. See also Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, p.96.

<sup>40</sup> Bethell, 'The Mixed Commissions for the Suppression of the Transatlantic Slave Trade', p.79.

<sup>41</sup> See Chapter 2, pp.92-95; Chapter 3, pp.138-142.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to James Hudson, 29 October 1849, TNA, FO84/766, ff.8-10. In 1848, Palmerston gave the British legation in Rio de Janeiro £500 to be dispersed 'for the promotion of anti-slave trade and anti-slavery principles in Brazil.' After being impressed by how Hudson had spent that money, he gave another £500 in October 1849. See also James Hudson to Palmerston, 13 August 1849, TNA, FO84/767, ff.31-37. Hudson explained how he had spent the first instalment, which included giving £212 to the Brazilian anti-slavery society. For more on Hudson's promotion of the Brazilian anti-slavery society, see James Hudson to Palmerston, 27 July 1850, TNA, FO84/805, ff.219-246; James Hudson to Palmerston, 2 September, 10 October 1850, TNA, FO84/806, ff.185-186, 280-282.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, James Hudson to Palmerston, 11 February 1851, PP, GC/HU/30. Hudson appealed to Palmerston for money to repatriate between 400 and 500 Africans who currently resided in Brazil. This group was determined to form 'an agricultural and commercial settlement' in Ambriz, West Africa. Palmerston granted Hudson's request and arranged for the Admiralty to transport these people to West Africa. See Palmerston, Minute, 16 March 1851, TNA, FO84/843, ff.69-70. See also Palmerston to James Hudson, 3 April 1851, TNA, FO84/842, ff.71-72.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, John Beecroft to Palmerston, 20 March 1851, TNA, FO84/858, ff.140-141. Beecroft recounted a Dahomean raid on Abeokuta that had been repelled thanks to the guns and ammunition provided by Britain. Subsequently, Palmerston proposed sending even more weapons to Abeokuta. See Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 27 August 1851, PP, GC/BA/315. This measure was opposed by the Colonial Secretary, see 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl Grey to Palmerston, 5 September 1851, PP, GC/GR/2404. However, it was supported by the Admiralty, see Sir Francis Baring to Palmerston, 31 August 1851, PP, GC/BA/303.

<sup>45</sup> Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, p.96.

million on its campaign to end the international slave trade.<sup>46</sup> To put this into perspective, this ‘represented, in a typical year, a third of one percent of the expenditure of the central government, sometimes rising to as much as 1 percent.’<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, despite the size of these direct costs of suppression, Palmerston always maintained that it was imperative for Britain to continue its anti-slavery endeavours, because even if it was a painful price to pay it was a ‘pecuniary sacrifice’ worth making.<sup>48</sup> As chapter four demonstrates, Palmerston made this argument unequivocally during the parliamentary debates that took place between June 1845 and March 1850 over the best method of suppressing the international slave trade.<sup>49</sup> Denigrating William Hutt’s anti-coercionist stance, Palmerston declared to the 1848 Select Committee on the Slave Trade that it would be ‘utterly disgraceful to the country, from the mean calculation of a small temporary saving, to abandon the course which it has pursued.’ For it was a ‘fitting and proper application of public money,’ he declared, ‘to put an end to a great crime.’<sup>50</sup> A clear exposition of what Huzzey terms the ‘moral economy of sacrifice,’<sup>51</sup> Palmerston demanded that more money be invested in Britain’s coercive system and that the size of the anti-slavery squadron be increased at the points of departure and arrival.<sup>52</sup> This ‘expense’ would be ‘well incurred,’ he stated, if it were to ‘rescue annually 100,000 or more Africans from misery’ and end ‘the abominable traffic in human flesh and blood.’<sup>53</sup>

Palmerston did not just perceive his anti-slavery policy to be incompatible with Britain’s economic interests in terms of the direct costs of its suppression system, however, but also as a result of the indirect economic consequences of suppression. One important repercussion of Britain’s anti-slavery policy, for example, was how it imposed a

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p.97.

<sup>47</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.42. See also Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, p.96.

<sup>48</sup> Palmerston, ‘Draft of note to be presented by Lord Howard de Walden to the Portuguese Government’, TNA, FO84/248, ff.10-25, enclosed in Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 3 March 1838, TNA, FO84/248, ff.8-9. Palmerston frequently described Britain’s anti-slavery policy as one of ‘sacrifice.’ For another example, see Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), p.17. See also Palmerston to Andrew Stevenson, 10 September 1838, TNA, FO84/259, ff.231-241.

<sup>49</sup> See Chapter 4, pp.191-193.

<sup>50</sup> Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1847-1848, xxii, 272 (18 April 1848), pp.17, 19. Palmerston made this argument to the public in October 1860. ‘We have seen that great disgrace of human nature – negro slavery – abolished by a sacrifice nobly offered and nobly endured by the country,’ he told an audience at Leeds Town Hall. See Palmerston, Address to Leeds Town Hall, Leeds, in *The Times*, 27 October 1860.

<sup>51</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.119.

<sup>52</sup> See Chapter 2, pp.86-92.

<sup>53</sup> Palmerston, ‘Supply – The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xciv, 129-138 (9 July 1847), c.137.

'major obstacle' in the way of Britain's relationships with foreign countries.<sup>54</sup> As chapter three shows, one result of Palmerston's crusading abolitionism was that it brought Britain into constant disagreement with nations that were determined not to grant the right-of-search or else to renegotiate treaties that had already been made. Besides hampering diplomatic relations, however, this aspect of British foreign policy occasionally led to a more serious deterioration in British commerce with foreign nations. This was particularly the case, for instance, in terms of Anglo-Brazilian relations following Palmerston's forcible suppression of the Brazilian slave trade in the late 1840s.<sup>55</sup> As a result of their fraying diplomatic ties, British trade and investment in Brazil dropped noticeably, prompting the Manchester Commercial Association and the Liverpool Brazilian Association to petition Palmerston as early as September 1851 to have the Aberdeen Act repealed.<sup>56</sup> Throughout the 1850s and 1860s the Government was put under increasing pressure to repeal this Act, with William Hutt reviving his anti-coercionist movement in the Commons,<sup>57</sup> Lord Brougham taking up the cause in the Lords,<sup>58</sup> and representatives of England's northern industrial cities arguing that it would restore 'the good Anglo-Brazilian relations which manufacturers, merchants, bankers and investors believed were essential if Britain's economic pre-eminence there were to continue and be further consolidated.'<sup>59</sup>

Once again, however, Palmerston treated the decline in Anglo-Brazilian trade and investment as merely another painful price to be paid in return for the success of Britain's anti-slavery policy. For it was his belief that the Brazilian slave trade would revive immediately if British pressure eased, and therefore that the Aberdeen Act 'ought never to be repealed.'<sup>60</sup> Palmerston's insistence on this point was predicated on the view that Brazilian statesmen could not be trusted to uphold their country's nascent anti-slavery

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<sup>54</sup> Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.299. This was one of the main criticisms levelled at the coercive system from anti-coercionists, see Chapter 4, p.188.

<sup>55</sup> Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, chp.13.

<sup>56</sup> James Aspinall Turner to Palmerston, 18 September 1851, TNA, FO84/860, ff.382-384; William Bell to Palmerston, 3 October 1851, TNA, FO84/860, ff.393, and enclosed memorial from the Brazilian Association of Liverpool, ff.399-400. Both of these trading associations were granted meetings with the Foreign Office in November, but Palmerston made clear beforehand that he would not repeal the Aberdeen Act. See Palmerston, Memorandum on the Brazilian slave trade, 5 October 1851, TNA, FO84/860, ff.395-398. See also petition of British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society to Palmerston, 30 June 1865, PP, SLT/37.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Hutt, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3rd series, cli, 1286-1294 (12 July 1858). See also Cave, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3rd Series, clxi, 950-960 (26 February 1861).

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Brougham, 'Brazilian Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3rd Series, clxxvi, 411-413 (28 June 1864).

<sup>59</sup> Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, p.384. See, for example, Bright, 'Brazil – Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3rd Series, clxxvi, 1380-1382 (12 July 1864).

<sup>60</sup> Palmerston, Memorandum on the repeal of the Aberdeen Act, 30 April 1856, TNA, FO84/993, ff.54-55.



legislation; 'the sincerity of the Brazilian government against the slave trade,' he wrote in a Foreign Office memorandum in April 1856, 'is the sincerity with which a pickpocket keeps his hands from a bystander's coat flaps while he sees a policeman's eyes fixed upon him.'<sup>61</sup> Even if the Brazilian authorities were sincere, he argued, it would not be possible for them to succeed in a country which depended on slave labour. 'Will any reasoning man believe that if a landowner were offered two or three hundred additional slaves to increase the produce of his estate he would refuse them for the sake of an abstract principle of humanity,' Palmerton asked Russell in 1864, before giving his opinion that 'the scruples of the most humane Brazilian – if there be such a man – would be overcome and the slave traders[,] knowing that he would be sure of a good market[,] would go on bringing in his cargoes.'<sup>62</sup> Thus, in a parliamentary debate over the repeal of the Aberdeen Act in 1864, Palmerston claimed that if faced with a choice of improving Anglo-Brazilian relations and increasing trade with Brazil or the complete suppression of the Brazilian slave trade, he would always 'prefer the latter.'<sup>63</sup> Having 'laboured indefatigably all the time I was at the Foreign Office to put an end to the slave trade, and... with some considerable success,' he confided to Russell, 'nothing shall induce me to load my conscience with the guilt of having been a party to promoting its revival.'<sup>64</sup> Vitality, then, Palmerston was content to lose out on Brazilian commerce and to take a hit economically in order to advance Britain's anti-slavery endeavours. This hit was potentially significant, moreover, since Rory Miller has estimated that British exports to South America in the mid-century period constituted between 10.9 and 8.8 percent of all British exports, with Brazil the largest single importer of British goods in that region.<sup>65</sup> In addition, British merchants frequently acted as a courier service for Brazilian goods, handling 'almost 40 percent of their sugar exports, half their coffee, and over 60 percent of their cotton.'<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. Palmerston repeated this sentiment this on many occasions. For more examples, see Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, II, p.411. 'As to the notion that the Brazilian nation see the criminality of slave trade and have for ever abjured it,' Palmerston wrote, 'such a notion is too childish for a grown man really to entertain.'

<sup>62</sup> Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, p.544. Palmerston made this argument again in public in 1865, see Palmerston, 'Diplomatic Relations with Brazil', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxxvii, 1369-1370 (9 March 1865).

<sup>63</sup> Palmerston, 'Brazil – Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxxvi, 1383-1385 (12 July 1864), c.1385.

<sup>64</sup> Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*, p.544.

<sup>65</sup> Rory Miller, *Britain and Latin America in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp.73-76. Miller calculates that British exports to South America made up 10.9% of the entire country's export trade in 1834-36, 9.7% in 1844-46 and 8.8% in 1854-56. Of this total, Brazil took approximately one-third of British exports to South America. This was more than double the next country, Argentina.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p.78. See also Alan K. Manchester, *British Pre-Eminence in Brazil: Its Rise and Decline* (London: Milford, 1933), p.315.

Finally, besides the direct and indirect costs of Britain's suppression system, one might argue that even where there were economic benefits to be gained from Britain's anti-slavery policy they belied a substantial cost to the British Treasury, and that once more Palmerston was aware of these costs but accepted them as an economic sacrifice worth making for the sake of humanity. It is notable, for instance, that Britain's policy of suppression looked set to relieve the serious labour shortages that were being experienced in the British West Indies after the abolition of colonial slavery.<sup>67</sup> In May 1835, Palmerston was able to agree with the Spanish Government a modest emigration scheme from Cuba to the British Caribbean, which enabled Africans rescued by British cruisers and emancipated by the Mixed Commission Court in Havana to be relocated to Trinidad.<sup>68</sup> Technically, Britain's anti-slavery treaty with Spain of the same year had stipulated that these freed Africans be accommodated in Havana,<sup>69</sup> but Palmerston pushed for this arrangement because he felt it would regenerate the West Indies as well as ensure that rescued Africans enjoyed 'complete and permanent freedom.'<sup>70</sup> For the West Indies, and especially Trinidad, this gradual influx of free African labourers promised to be an essential lifeline.<sup>71</sup> It was so successful, moreover, that Caribbean planters from other islands appealed to the Government to enlarge the scheme and institute a 'systematic immigration of re-captives' from Rio de Janeiro and Sierra Leone in the 1840s, which Palmerston and the Colonial Office subsequently did.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> William A. Green, *British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment, 1830-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p.261.

<sup>68</sup> Palmerston to George Villiers, 22 May 1835, TNA, FO84/177, ff.19-21. See also Green, *British Slave Emancipation*, pp.262-263.

<sup>69</sup> Palmerston to George Villiers, 26 April 1836, TNA, FO84/201, ff.9-11.

<sup>70</sup> Palmerston to George William Jerningham, 21 December 1839, TNA, FO84/279, ff.71-74. After this agreement was made, Palmerston tried to enlarge this scheme to include Africans who had already been emancipated and apprenticed in Havana. See, for example, Palmerston to George Villiers, 8 August 1837, TNA, FO84/221, ff.52-58; Palmerston to Arthur Ingram Aston, 30 March 1840, TNA, FO84/318, ff.24-30; Palmerston to Arthur Ingram Aston, 14 July, 31 July, 19 August, 23 August 1841, TNA, FO84/353/1, ff.132-134 136-137, 157-158, 159-160.

<sup>71</sup> Green, *British Slave Emancipation*, p.261. By 1838, many plantations in the West Indies were 'destined to collapse' unless more labourers could be found.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p.262. For more on the emigration scheme set up between Rio de Janeiro and the British Caribbean, see James Hudson to Palmerston, 13 November 1849, TNA, FO84/766, ff.103-105; Palmerston, Minute, 1 January 1850, TNA, FO84/766, f.162; Henry Addington to John Parker, 17 January 1850, TNA, FO84/823, ff.6-7; Palmerston to James Hudson, 7 February 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.8-9. Once again, Palmerston tried to extend this scheme to include freed Africans who had already been emancipated and apprenticed in Brazil. See, for example, Palmerston to James Hudson, 27 February, 8 November, 4 December 1850, TNA, FO84/801, ff.10-19, 89-109, 129-130. See also Palmerston to James Hudson, 17 January, 23 January 1851, TNA, FO84/842, ff.7-10, 11-12. For more on the emigration scheme set up between Sierra Leone and the British Caribbean, see Johnson U.J. Asiegbu, *Slavery and the Politics of Liberation, 1787-1861: A Study of Liberated African Emigration and British Anti-Slavery Policy* (London: Longmans Green, 1969). See also Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.110-113.

Nevertheless, despite their long-term importance to the Caribbean economy, emancipated Africans relocated to Britain's colonies became something of a double-edged sword for the Government in the short-term. For whilst rescued Africans were undoubtedly helping to repopulate the West Indies, when they first arrived they were often weak and diseased as a result of the abominable conditions on board the slave ships which carried them to America. Having survived the journey across the Atlantic, many were malnourished and in desperate need of medical care and attention.<sup>73</sup> To start a new life in the Caribbean and become productive members of society, moreover, they also required shelter, food and clothing, at the very least until they had adapted to their new environment, and if they could not find employment themselves they also required some form of apprenticeship or training. To an extent, then, the British Government perceived these people not just as victims of the slave trade or as desperately needed labourers but as a financial burden. For example, it was common for Foreign Office dispatches sent back to London from Rio de Janeiro and Cuba to contain invoices for the Government, signed off by the Admiralty, demanding hundreds of pounds worth of supplies – such as medicines, washing buckets, scrubbing brushes, trousers, frocks, woollen shirts, bread, milk, oranges and bananas – to help these newly freed people recover from the physical and mental torture of the middle passage. In one such invoice, which might be taken as a representative example, James Hudson demanded £633, 11 shillings and 3 pence for rations, stores and clothing that had been supplied to Africans liberated from slave ships between September and December 1849.<sup>74</sup> This amount, whilst not enormous, was significant considering that it only covered a four-month period. If extrapolated, this additional expense therefore had the potential to offset (and perhaps even outweigh) the economic benefits that Britain's suppression policy could bring in in the form of additional labour for the West Indies.

Internationally, Palmerston's characterisation of anti-slavery as an economic sacrifice given for the benefit of humanity was routinely dismissed as little more than pretentious nonsense. In his political memoir, for instance, John Quincy Adams, the sixth

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<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to George Villiers, 22 December 1836, TNA, FO84/201, ff.51-56. Palmerston sent HMS *Romney* across to Havana to act as a 'floating depot.' Chiefly, it would be a hospital for sick Africans until they could make the crossing to the Caribbean.

<sup>74</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 17 January 1850, TNA, FO84/802, ff.7-8, and enclosed invoice, ff.10-12. For another example, see James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 October 1850, TNA, FO84/806, ff.413-414.

President of the U.S., wrote what might be taken as a representative view of American (and later French) policymakers: that Britain's 'professions of benevolence' were 'merely ostensible.'<sup>75</sup> One of the primary reasons why the U.S. Government refused to sign an anti-slavery treaty with Britain during the nineteenth century, and also why France was so determined to withdraw from the Anglo-French Conventions in the early 1840s, was because these governments tended to view Britain's anti-slavery campaign as something of a narrow-minded economic enterprise; one which would give Britain an unfair competitive advantage in world trade and paralyse the commerce of other nations.<sup>76</sup> The U.S. Minister to London, Andrew Stevenson, for instance, claimed Britain was using slave-trade suppression to undermine the 'liberty of the seas' and to cloak its true aspiration of maritime supremacy in a humanitarian guise.<sup>77</sup> Likewise, General Lewis Cass argued that by enlisting every nation in the world to a right-of-search treaty Britain was constructing a legal instrument by which it could arbitrarily harass the commerce of other nations, and subject foreign traders (legitimate or otherwise) to abusive visitations on a whim. With relative ease, he feared, Britain could disrupt foreign trade, take control over transatlantic commerce, and create a trading monopoly with Africa.<sup>78</sup>

Significantly, Palmerston denounced this view as a conspiracy theory in July 1845, declaring to Parliament 'that it is too much for any man to ask us to believe him serious when he says, as is said in France, that this right-of-search indicates a desire on the part of England to exercise undue authority on the seas, or that it is an instrument by which

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<sup>75</sup> John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of his Diary from 1785 to 1848*, ed. by Charles Francis Adams, 12 vols (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1875), v, p.217, see also pp.216-19.

<sup>76</sup> For the views of the U.S. Government, see Soulsby, *The Right of Search and the Slave trade in Anglo-American Relations*, pp.8, 10, 39-41, 62-63; Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law*, pp.9-12; Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*, pp.167-168. For the views of the French Government, see Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, pp.145, 147-148, 151, 207-208, 212-213, 223-225. See also Lawrence C. Jennings, 'France, Great Britain, and the Repression of the Slave Trade, 1841-45', *French Historical Studies*, 10, 1 (1977), 101-125 (pp.105-110). Other countries argued the same thing about British anti-slavery. See, for example, Baron Sabroza to Lord Howard de Walden, [n.d.], TNA, FO84/282, ff.322-377, enclosed in Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 20 September 1839, TNA, FO84/282, ff.315-317. According to the Portuguese Government, Britain was seeking 'to enrich both her navy and colonies with the spoils of the captured vessels, and with the slaves found on board of them.'

<sup>77</sup> Andrew Stevenson to Lord Aberdeen, 10 September 1841, TNA, FO84/376, ff.439-451. It is notable that Stevenson appropriated anti-slavery discourse to deny Britain the right-of-search.

<sup>78</sup> William T. Young, *Sketch of the Life and Public Services of General Lewis Cass* (Detroit: Markham & Elwood, 1852), p.142. Cass was influential in persuading the French Government of his views as well. See, for example, Soulsby, *The Right of Search and the Slave Trade in Anglo-American Relations*, p.109. See also the pamphlet Cass produced for the French Government upon this matter, *An examination of the question, now in discussion, between the American and British governments, concerning the right of search* (Paris: Fournier, 1842). Palmerston was aware of Cass's pamphlet and efforts to persuade France not to sign the Great Power treaty, see Palmerston to William Temple, 25 February 1842, PP, GC/TE/296.

we are to exercise some advantage over the commerce and over the maritime force of France.’ With evident frustration, he went on to explain that Britain was ‘no more desirous’ that British merchants should be ‘stopped, visited, searched and overhauled by French ships than the French were that their merchant[s] should be subject to the same interruption by our cruisers.’ However, this inconvenience ‘must have been..., anticipated on both sides,’ he said, and even if France could no longer abide it Britain was ready to endure that inconvenience because it was deemed ‘conducive to the great object which humanity had in view.’<sup>79</sup> It is vitally important, however, that although Palmerston rejected allegations that he was seeking to frustrate foreign merchants or to dominate transatlantic trade, he never denied that Britain’s anti-slavery policy was an opportunity to open up the continent of Africa to the commerce of the world. For whilst Palmerston considered the abolition of the slave trade to be a pecuniary sacrifice for Britain in the present, it was his belief that in the future, once it had been successfully put down, this sacrifice would yield economic benefits for Britain and indeed for the rest of the ‘civilised’ world.

In August 1842, for instance, Palmerston made an unusual but revealing declaration to the House of Commons, correcting the view that Britain’s anti-slavery treaties were ‘valuable only as being calculated to promote the great interests of humanity and as tending to rid mankind of a foul and detestable crime.’ ‘Let no man imagine,’ he said, that this was the case.

Such is their great object and their chief merit. But... virtue carries with it its own reward; and if the nations of the world could extirpate this abominable traffic, and if the vast population of Africa could... be left free to betake themselves to peaceful and innocent trade, the greatest commercial benefit would accrue not to England only, but to every civilised nation which engages in maritime commerce. These slave trade treaties therefore are indirectly treaties for the encouragement of commerce.<sup>80</sup>

In 1849, moreover, Palmerston made a similar declaration, announcing to William Hutt’s Select Committee that ‘if the slave trade could be entirely put down there would be a very great increase of legitimate trade with the coast of Africa.’ The inhabitants of that

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<sup>79</sup> Palmerston, ‘The Slave Trade’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxxii, 142-203 (8 July 1845), cc.158-159.

<sup>80</sup> Palmerston, ‘Public Bills’, *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxv, 1230-1268 (10 August 1842), cc.1251-1252.

continent, he stressed, were 'much in want of commodities with which we can furnish them, and they possess very ample means of paying for them in commodities which we require.'<sup>81</sup> Palmerston's enthusiasm, then, stemmed from his understanding that if Africa could be cleansed of the slave trade it could become a dynamic marketplace for British goods and a new supplier of raw materials for Britain's manufacturing industries.<sup>82</sup>

In particular, Palmerston foresaw Africa becoming a major producer of palm oil, coffee and above all cotton. For it was his belief that African cotton could become a feasible alternative to American and Indian cotton for British manufacturers. For one thing, he wrote in a private letter to Russell in 1862, Africa was closer to Britain geographically, meaning that it was less expensive to transport goods between the two places. In addition, labour there was 'cheaper than in India.' And, above all, Africa had been blessed with fertile soil and a favourable climate, which promised to yield an abundant supply of good quality cotton and to keep the price of it low. Therefore, Palmerston felt confident that this new source of cotton would be of superior or equal quality to what Britain could presently obtain.<sup>83</sup> Palmerston was not alone in thinking this way, moreover, as multiple English manufacturers announced to him at the beginning of 1850 that they were taking a 'new interest' in Africa.<sup>84</sup> In that year, for example, John Bright and Thomas Bazely, the Chairman of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, visited the Foreign Office and told Palmerston that an increase in the supply of cotton was 'not merely desirable' but a 'vital necessity,' and that its importance was even greater than 'a plentiful supply of food.'<sup>85</sup> Africa was particularly tempting to them, Palmerston mused, because of the current high price of U.S. cotton, which was expected to continue for some time due to the political instability within that country. Thus, he wrote to James Hudson in June 1850 that Britain's 'manufacturing men,' hitherto

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<sup>81</sup> Palmerston testimony, in First Report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Suppression of the Slave Trade, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1849, xix, 308 (24 May 1849), p.13.

<sup>82</sup> It is important to add that Palmerston insisted, on many occasions, that the slave trade would need to be abolished *before* legitimate commerce could be firmly established. See, for example, Palmerston, 'Supply – The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xciv, 129-138 (9 July 1847), cc.132-133. See also Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 1119-1126 (22 February 1848), cc.1123-1124.

<sup>83</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 21 July 1862, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/14C, ff.254-256. Palmerston assessed the relative value of Indian, American and African cotton and concluded that 'Indian cotton is in general inferior to the American, while African cotton is mostly equal in quality to the American.'

<sup>84</sup> Palmerston to Thomas Hudson, 4 June 1850, PP, GC/HU/49.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Bazely to Palmerston, 10 January 1850, TNA, FO84/818, ff.122-124. For Palmerston's reply, see Lord Eddisbury to Thomas Bazely, 19 January 1850, TNA, FO84/818, ff.88-89, 106-107. Palmerston insisted he would 'not fail to give his best attention to the important matter.'

‘favourable to the slave trade though not openly and avowedly,’ had taken on a ‘new feeling’ about this question. For having ‘cast about to see whence cotton can be produced’ they had fixed their gaze upon Africa, where ‘there seem[ed] good reason to expect that an ample supply might be obtained and of good quality,’ though only once the slave trade had been totally abolished.<sup>86</sup>

A closer analysis of the agreements which Palmerston authorised Britain’s naval officers to negotiate in West Africa shows not just the importance which Palmerston attached to them from an anti-slavery viewpoint, but how he planned to use them to encourage the future economic development and commercial penetration of West Africa.<sup>87</sup> Significantly, these treaties were not just intended to end the slave trade but to formalise Britain’s commercial relationships with West African states, and therefore outlined in detail the legal basis upon which Afro-British trade was to be carried on. For example, the treaties stipulated that British subjects were to possess the right to enter, reside in, trade with, and pass with their merchandise through, the dominions of African states. They would ‘be treated as friends while in it and allowed to ‘practice the Christian religion there.’<sup>88</sup> In addition, the trade between British and African subjects was declared to be ‘free,’ meaning that neither British nor African traders could be ‘forced to buy or to sell any article’ nor ‘prevented from buying or selling any article,’ that they possessed a right of barter and that the customs dues taken by the African ruler would never exceed one-fifth of the price of the goods sold.<sup>89</sup> When it came to protections for British subjects, moreover, the treaties established that British homes could not be entered without consent, that British goods could not be seized, and ‘if English people [were] wronged or ill-treated’ by local merchants then the offenders were to be ‘punished’ by the Chief.<sup>90</sup> For example, if an African subject resisted or evaded paying their debts to a British subject, the ruler of the African state was to ‘do all he can to make [his subjects]... pay the debt.’<sup>91</sup> And finally, as a ‘precaution,’ the treaties insisted that no British subject could be enslaved ‘under any pretence whatsoever,’ thus guaranteeing that merchants did not

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<sup>86</sup> Palmerston to James Hudson, 4 June 1850, PP, GC/HU/49.

<sup>87</sup> For more on the agreements that Palmerston authorised naval officers to negotiate, see Chapter 3, pp.107-111.

<sup>88</sup> Terms 4 and 6, James Bandinel, Memorandum on the Draft of Agreement proposed to be entered into with African Chiefs, 19 December 1840, TNA, FO84/337, ff.358-359.

<sup>89</sup> Term 5, *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Term 7, *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Term 9, *Ibid.*

become victims of the slave trade.<sup>92</sup> In the same treaty which ended African rulers' participation in the international slave trade, Palmerston therefore set down a legal framework that would enable legitimate Afro-British trade to flourish in a safe and secure environment.

In his instructions to the Admiralty, moreover, which Palmerston co-wrote with Russell between 1838 and 1841, Palmerston made clear that every effort was to be made by Britain's naval officers to transform West Africa from a slave-trading den into a hub of 'civilised' commerce, and to drum up interest in British goods. Britain's negotiators, for instance, were to take with them to Africa a plethora of 'articles of British produce or manufacture' to show off to their hosts. These articles were to be carefully selected 'from among those likely to prove articles of barter in the trade with Africa,' the instructions stated. It was thought that British military uniforms were 'objects of ambition with the Chiefs,' so they were invariably included, alongside 'goods of all kinds' from Manchester, Birmingham and Sheffield.<sup>93</sup> In addition, Britain's negotiators were instructed to discuss trade with African rulers before they broached the sensitive topic of anti-slavery. They were to ask directly, 'what articles he and his subjects are in want of,' which ones they wished 'to dispose of,' and without hesitation to 'express generally the readiness of this country' to supply the former and to purchase the latter.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, unlike in Europe and South America, where if the Foreign Office was negotiating a commercial agreement at the same time as an anti-slavery treaty Britain's Ministers were under strict orders to give priority to the latter and not to negotiate a commercial arrangement until an anti-slavery treaty was signed,<sup>95</sup> in West Africa, Britain's negotiators were given the flexibility

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<sup>92</sup> James Bandinel to Sir James Stephen, 10 April 1840, TNA, FO84/336, ff.20-26. See also Term 1, James Bandinel, Memorandum on the Draft of Agreement proposed to be entered into with African Chiefs, 19 December 1840, TNA, FO84/337, ff.358-359.

<sup>93</sup> Annex A: Expedition and Mission to Africa, Draft Instructions for the Negotiators', TNA, FO84/336, ff.63-70, enclosed in 'Africa: Expedition and Mission Proposed, some points for consideration', 1 February 1839, TNA, FO84/336, ff.59-62.

<sup>94</sup> Instruction 11, Lord John Russell, Instructions to Her Majesty's Niger Commissioners, 30 January 1841, in Newbury, *British Policy Towards West Africa*, p.155.

<sup>95</sup> For an example of Palmerston prioritising an anti-slavery treaty over a commercial one in Europe, see Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 18 December 1836, HWP, BL, Add Ms 45176, ff.50-51. 'Try to get us our slave trade treaty,' Palmerston told Britain's Minister to Portugal in 1836, 'the commercial one too if possible but the slave treaty first.' See also Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 10 February 1838, PP, GC/HO/816. For an example of Palmerston prioritising an anti-slavery treaty over a commercial one in South America, see Palmerston's negotiations with Argentina. The Government in Buenos Aires continually refused to negotiate an anti-slavery treaty until a new commercial one had been agreed, yet Palmerston insisted on anti-slavery coming first and eventually got his way. See Felipe de Arana to Hamilton Charles Hamilton, 19 January 1836, TNA, FO84/206, ff.104-111; Palmerston to John Mandeville, 9 June 1836, TNA, FO84/206, ff.66-71; Felipe de Arana to John Mandeville, [n.d.] January 1837, TNA, FO84/225, ff.93-96;



to treat commerce and anti-slavery as two quite separate though related objectives. In their instructions, for instance, Britain's naval officers were told not to conclude any treaty that did not include an article abolishing the slave trade yet,<sup>96</sup> at the same time, to 'make the commercial interests of Great Britain an object of your constant attention.'<sup>97</sup> As such, commercial treaties were occasionally agreed which did not contain any anti-slavery provisions,<sup>98</sup> and in one instance at least with a notorious 'slave-trading Chief.'<sup>99</sup>

Palmerston's commitment to the economic development and commercial penetration of Africa is also evident in how he took the unprecedented decision in the summer of 1849 to appoint a British Consul and Vice Consul to represent Britain in the Bights of Benin and Biafra, at the behest of British merchants therein engaged in legitimate commerce.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, Palmerston admitted in his instructions to John Beecroft, the new Consul, that his appointment had been demanded by British merchants who felt it would be desirable for a Government official to be made resident in Africa to regulate trade between the ports of Benin, Biafra, New and Old Calabar, Bonny, Bimbia, the Cameroons, and Ouidah. As such, he explained, his primary duties were not to encourage anti-slavery but to represent Britain's trading interests in those places. For example, he

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Palmerston, 'Note to be presented by Mr Mandeville to the Buenos Ayres Minister', [n.d.] June 1837, TNA, FO84/225, ff.65-72, enclosed in Palmerston to John Mandeville, 10 June 1837, TNA, FO84/225, ff.62-64; Felipe Arana to John Mandeville, 2 May 1838, TNA, FO84/259, ff.66-67; John Mandeville to William Fox-Strangways, 4 May 1838, TNA, FO84/259, ff.64-66.

<sup>96</sup> James Bandinel, 'Instructions to Accompany the Draft Agreement', [n.d.], TNA, FO84/337, ff.367-370. Any treaty had to include an article abolishing the slave trade. This was 'indispensable,' the instructions claimed. 'You will conclude no treaty without this.'

<sup>97</sup> 'Annex A: Expedition and Mission to Africa, Draft Instructions for the Negotiators', TNA, FO84/336, ff.63-70, enclosed in 'Africa: Expedition and Mission Proposed, some points for consideration', 1 February 1839, TNA, FO84/336, ff.59-62. Palmerston reaffirmed this message to Lord Auckland in January 1841. Since European competition was 'fast excluding our productions from the markets of Europe,' he wrote in private, 'we must unremittingly endeavour to find in other parts of the world new vents for the produce of our industry.' For it was 'the business of the Government to open and to secure the roads for the merchant.' See Mark C. Hunter, *Policing the Seas: Anglo-American Relations and the Equatorial Atlantic, 1819-1865* (Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2008), p.108.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, the Treaty of Amity and Commerce agreed with King William Town in the River Gaboon by Commander Tucker in 1841, and subsequently approved by Palmerston: Sir John Barrow to Lord Leveson, 18 February 1841, TNA, FO84/383, ff.257-258; Lord Leveson to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 5 March 1841, TNA, FO84/383, ff.51-52.

<sup>99</sup> A Treaty of Amity and Commerce was signed with King Gezo of Dahomey in 1849, who Russell described in 1851 as a 'slave trading Chief.' See 'Foreign Office Memorandum in answer to Lord Palmerston's minute of 29 March 1849', 31 March 1849, TNA, FO84/775, ff.32-37.

<sup>100</sup> Palmerston appointed John Duncan as Britain's Vice Consul to the Bights of Benin and Biafra, see Palmerston to John Duncan, 29 May 1849, TNA, FO84/775, ff.3-8. Duncan was appointed due to his extensive knowledge of West Africa. See Duncan, *Travels in Western Africa*. Palmerston appointed John Beecroft as Britain's Consul to the same region, see Palmerston to John Beecroft, 30 June 1849, TNA, FO84/775, ff.87-94. Palmerston explained in his instructions to Duncan and Beecroft how their appointments had been requested by British merchants.

was to 'prevent misunderstandings' between African Chiefs and British merchants, to 'encourage the Chiefs and people to till the soil and to produce available exports, take 'every available opportunity' to impress upon the Chiefs the 'great advantages which they will derive from the extension of legal commerce with the nations of Europe and America,' and to transmit information to the Foreign Office about how Afro-British commerce could be extended and improved. Conspicuously absent from his instructions was any guidance about how to encourage the suppression of the slave trade, with Palmerston stating simply that further information about this would be forthcoming.<sup>101</sup>

To what extent Britain's new representatives in Africa were successful in this mission is unclear, but it is evident from their interactions with the King of Dahomey that it was not an easy task. Shortly after his appointment as Britain's Vice Consul, John Duncan, in collaboration with the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, began to discuss with King Gezo of Dahomey the propriety of establishing a cotton plantation near Ouidah,<sup>102</sup> in what Palmerston excitedly believed would be a 'ready and profitable market' for Britain.<sup>103</sup> Initially, this 'experiment' appeared to be progressing well,<sup>104</sup> with Gezo expressing his desire to cultivate cotton in September 1849 and informing Palmerston directly that he had begun to plant cotton seeds.<sup>105</sup> By January 1850, Manchester's cotton-spinners had signalled to Palmerston their satisfaction with the tantalising sample of Dahomean cotton that Duncan had managed to send home.<sup>106</sup> However, following Duncan's untimely death in November 1849 the venture swiftly unravelled and it became obvious that the Vice Consul's personal relationship with Gezo had been vital in getting the project approved. In his absence, Palmerston tried to save the scheme by appointing Beecroft to take Duncan's place in the negotiations,<sup>107</sup> instructing him to give this mission 'every assistance in your power.'<sup>108</sup> Meanwhile, Palmerston became a mediator between Beecroft and the Manchester Chamber of Commerce; sending out letters from the society which explained the course they wished him to pursue.<sup>109</sup> However, without the personal ties forged between Duncan and Gezo

<sup>101</sup> Palmerston to John Beecroft, 30 June 1849, TNA, FO84/775, ff.87-94.

<sup>102</sup> John Duncan to Palmerston, 20 May 1849, TNA, FO84/775, ff.40-42.

<sup>103</sup> Palmerston to John Beecroft, 25 February 1850, TNA, FO84/816, ff.14-22.

<sup>104</sup> John Duncan to Palmerston, 20 May 1849, FO84/775, ff.40-42.

<sup>105</sup> King Gezo of Dahomey to Palmerston, 7 September 1849, TNA, FO84/775, ff.75-76.

<sup>106</sup> Thomas Bazely to Palmerston, 10 January 1850, TNA, FO84/818, ff.122-124.

<sup>107</sup> Palmerston to John Beecroft, 25 February 1850, TNA, FO84/816, ff.43-44.

<sup>108</sup> Palmerston to John Beecroft, 18 May 1850, TNA, FO84/816, ff.76-78.

<sup>109</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to John Beecroft, 28 February 1850, TNA, FO84/816, ff.63-64.

the negotiations collapsed. By July 1850, Beecroft informed Palmerston that the Dahomean King now rejected the idea, refusing to 'disgrace himself' by sending his warriors 'to plant and cultivate cotton.'<sup>110</sup> Despite Beecroft imploring him to reconsider, Gezo apparently had no desire 'to listen to any further discussions on agriculture.'<sup>111</sup>

Unfortunately for Palmerston, then, this project, which had promised both an end to the Dahomean slave trade and a 'valuable supply of excellent cotton for the use of the manufacturers of Great Britain,' ended in failure.<sup>112</sup> Yet, overall, Palmerston's passion for legitimate Afro-British trade remained undimmed. Throughout the mid-century period, he used the House of Commons as something of an 'economic development agency,'<sup>113</sup> encouraging British merchants to 'look again to Africa' and trying to stimulate interest in that region with speeches that emphasised Africa's economic potential.<sup>114</sup> In the 1850s, for example, Palmerston characterised Africa as a fertile land offering 'inexhaustible resources for commerce,'<sup>115</sup> though particularly cotton, which he said would soon be 'more valuable than that of any other portion of the world' except the U.S.<sup>116</sup> Pre-empting those who might disagree with his assessment of Africa's 'great national importance,'<sup>117</sup> Palmerston accepted that trade between Britain and Africa was presently 'less than that carried on with Brazil,' but stressed how it would 'greatly exceed it' if the slave trade could be expunged.<sup>118</sup> Later, he told the House that once that 'abominable crime' was extinguished the coast of Africa would become 'the source of such wealth to itself, to all Europe, and the rest of the world as the imagination of man can hardly compass.'<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> John Beecroft to Palmerston 22 July 1850, TNA, FO84/816, ff.148-151.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Palmerston to John Beecroft, 25 February 1850, TNA, FO84/816, ff.43-44.

<sup>113</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.138. See also P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688-2015*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (London: Routledge, 2016), p.99. Cain and Hopkins argue that 'the effort he [Palmerston] put into extending Britain's trade and influence in the extra-European world needs to be emphasised because it is still underplayed by diplomatic historians.' See also Gavin, 'Palmerston's Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865', pp.1-47; Braithwaite, *Palmerston and Africa*, pp.14, 60-61, 72, 76, 145, 261.

<sup>114</sup> Palmerston, 'Distress of the Country', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxiv, 1072-1079 (6 July 1842), c.1077.

<sup>115</sup> Palmerston, 'Supply – Western Coast of Africa, and Danish Settlements on the Gold Coast', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cxiii, 62-67 (19 July 1850), c.65.

<sup>116</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), c.1339.

<sup>117</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cxi, 588-593 (31 May 1850), cc.591-593.

<sup>118</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, cli, 1334-1341 (12 July 1858), c.1338.

<sup>119</sup> Palmerston, 'The Slave Trade', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, clxi, 982-988 (26 February 1861), c.987. For another example of Palmerston encouraging British merchants to look to Africa for trade, see Palmerston, 'Slave Trade (Persian Gulf) Bill', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, cvii, 1034-1035 (27 July 1849), c.1034.

In 1861, moreover, Palmerston attempted to go one step further. After circulating the Mayor of Sunderland's memorial around the Cabinet, which implored the Government to open up new sources of supply for British cotton manufactures and mentioned Abeokuta in particular as a viable trading partner,<sup>120</sup> Palmerston urged his colleagues to meet with 'capitalists engaged in cotton manufactures' and to encourage them to invest in Africa.<sup>121</sup> Unfortunately for Palmerston, however, Thomas Milner Gibson, the President of the Board of Trade, was unconvinced, for whilst he accepted the need for British capital investment in Africa to increase its productivity he could not see how the Government could take 'any direct part in procuring an additional supply of cotton beyond which the manufacturers and merchants can get for themselves.'<sup>122</sup> The people of Lancashire and Manchester were already in the process of creating European agencies that might have an 'active presence' in Africa, he told the Cabinet, and it was to them that this 'duty' could 'best be entrusted.'<sup>123</sup> Both in Parliament and in Cabinet, therefore, Palmerston strived to advance the economic development and commercial penetration of Africa, as something that would be vastly important to Britain's future once the international slave trade had finally been suppressed.

## II) A strategic device: Britain's political and imperial interests

The relationship between Britain's economic interests and its anti-slavery policy is one that has been thoroughly explored by scholars of abolition, yet it would be a mistake to assume this was the only British interest at stake when it came to suppressing the slave trade. It is significant that, for Palmerston, the issue of anti-slavery could be used as something of a strategic device. By this, one means that it could be brought up deliberately and deployed in Britain's international diplomacy in order to achieve a particular purpose, evoke a desired effect, or arouse a desired reaction, and expressly not one relating to anti-slavery. In essence, it could be used to solve an array of political and imperial problems, to give Britain a card to play in challenging foreign policy situations, and thus to advance Britain's overseas aims and agendas in a variety of ways. Due to the global reach of British anti-slavery, moreover, it being an issue that affected almost every

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<sup>120</sup> Samuel Alcock to Palmerston, 'Sunderland Memorial (Cultivation of Cotton in Africa)', 14 February 1861, PP, CAB/150/enc 1.

<sup>121</sup> Palmerston, Private autographed note, 18 February 1861, PP, CAB/150.

<sup>122</sup> Thomas Milner Gibson to Palmerston, 9 July 1861, PP, GC/GI/12.

<sup>123</sup> Thomas Milner Gibson, Private autographed note, 21 February 1861, PP, CAB/151.

nation in Europe and America with a maritime flag upon the ocean, this device was one that could be used flexibly in many different contexts and circumstances.

To begin with, for example, one might argue that Palmerston sought to use the issue of anti-slavery as a way of unearthing common ground, kindling trust, and laying the basis for a more workable accord between the Eastern and Western powers during the 1830s, at a time when their relationship had reached an historic nadir. To understand how this was possible, it is first vital to appreciate the wider context behind Palmerston's anti-slavery negotiations with the Holy Alliance; something that historians have not yet done owing to the flawed consensus that the Great Power treaty was somehow 'completely unrelated' to events occurring in Europe.<sup>124</sup> Notably, during the 1830s Europe was becoming increasingly divided, ideologically and geopolitically, into two discrete blocs. On one side, Austria, Prussia and Russia re-established the absolutist Holy Alliance in autumn 1833,<sup>125</sup> and on the other, Britain, France, Portugal and Spain harmonised under the liberal banner of the Quadruple Alliance in spring 1834.<sup>126</sup> As these rival camps engaged in implicit contests for power across the globe, such as in Belgium, Iberia, Persia and Afghanistan, Britain's relationship with the Holy Alliance became increasingly fractured. 'The folly & blindness of these despotic governments and their incapacity of seeing inevitable consequences,' Palmerston wrote to Emily Cowper, his future wife, in September 1832, 'would make one laugh at them.'<sup>127</sup> In particular 'Russia does not and cannot like us,' he asserted to John Bligh, Britain's Minister in St Petersburg, for not only was Britain 'constantly thwarting' her 'favourite objects' but its entire 'political system' was simply 'too different.'<sup>128</sup> By 1834, relations between East and West had reached a low point and were dominated by suspicion and doubt; 'there is the same principle of

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<sup>124</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, pp.205, 164. Similarly, historians of the Eastern Question have not studied the Great Power treaty despite the fact it was negotiated at the same time as the Straits Convention. There is, for example, no mention of anti-slavery in A.L. Macfie's *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923*, rev. edn (London: Longman, 1996) or Matthew Smith Anderson's *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1966).

<sup>125</sup> Harold N. Ingle, *Nesselrode and the Russian Rapprochement with Britain, 1836-1844* (London: University of California Press, 1976), chp.2, esp. p.33.

<sup>126</sup> Palmerston to William Temple, 12 May 1834, PP, GC/TE/221. For an extended analysis of the division of Europe during the 1830s, see Brown, *Palmerston*, pp.143-242. For a contemporary perspective, see Palmerston to Frederick Lamb, 14 November 1833, BP, BL, Add Ms 60464, ff.182-91. See also Palmerston to William Temple, 21 April 1834, PP, GC/TE/219; Palmerston to Lord Melbourne, 1 March 1836, PP, GC/ME/519.

<sup>127</sup> Palmerston to Emily Cowper, 27 September 1832, PP, BR 23AA/5/26. See also Palmerston to Frederick Lamb, 22 March 1833, BP, BL, Add Ms 60464, f.74.

<sup>128</sup> Palmerston to John Bligh, 28 February 1834, PP, GC/BL/111.

repulsion between... us,' Palmerston lamented, 'that there was between us and Bonaparte.'<sup>129</sup>

Crucially, then, it was in this context that Palmerston approached the Holy Alliance and asked them to accede to the 1831 and 1833 Anglo-French Conventions, and which seemingly led him to appropriate anti-slavery as a way of bridging the gap between these two rival camps. In his initial invitation to the Eastern powers, for example, Palmerston was keen to point out to Johann Ancillon, Prince Metternich and Count Nesselrode how their views on anti-slavery were closely aligned with his own, introducing his representation by framing anti-slavery as an issue upon which they were in ideological harmony. Referring back to the 1815 Congress of Vienna, Palmerston applauded their common declaration that the slave trade was 'a scourge which had long desolated Africa, degraded Europe, and afflicted humanity,' and used this to remind them of their joint desire to succeed in extirpating it completely.<sup>130</sup> After his initial invitation was dismissed, moreover, at no point did Palmerston seek to persuade the Holy Alliance of the evils of the slave trade, nor to present anti-slavery as a purely British phenomenon. On the contrary, Palmerston used his representations as a platform to demonstrate that no matter how much their political systems diverged and their overseas interests conflicted, the Quadruple Alliance and the Holy Alliance shared a common attachment to the same basic ethical values; they were, he wrote, animated by 'the same sentiments of glorious humanity.'<sup>131</sup> It is also significant, furthermore, that the Russian Government did the same thing in its response to Palmerston. For although he initially saw no point in a treaty, Nesselrode highlighted how London and St Petersburg shared a 'common understanding' on this subject, and claimed to be moved by identical 'sentiments of morality and humanity.'<sup>132</sup>

In addition, Britain's ambassadors to St Petersburg pointed out to Russia on multiple occasions how anti-slavery was an exceptional issue capable of extending the bonds of friendship between both countries. In 1835, for instance, John Bligh wrote to

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid. See also Palmerston to John Bligh, 27 June 1834, PP, GC/BL/112.

<sup>130</sup> Palmerston to Frederick Lamb, Lord Minto, John Bligh, 18 February 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.1-3, 21-23, 68-70.

<sup>131</sup> Palmerston to John Bligh, 30 September 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.78-90.

<sup>132</sup> Count Nesselrode to John Bligh, 27 August 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.99-109, enclosed in John Bligh to Palmerston, 10 September 1834, TNA, FO84/159, ff.97-98.

Prince Lieven that ‘nothing would tend more to increase the kind feeling of the British nation towards Russia’ than their prompt compliance to accept the Anglo-French Conventions,<sup>133</sup> whilst in 1840 the Marquess of Clanricarde assured Nesselrode that Russia’s anti-slavery sentiments were ‘highly esteemed by the British nation as well as by the Government.’<sup>134</sup> Once again, it is notable that the Russian ambassador to London did the same thing. In September 1839, in his note informing Palmerston that he had received instructions to negotiate an anti-slavery treaty, Nikolai Kisséleff expressed his hope that his Government’s acceptance would offer Britain ‘proof’ of Russia’s ‘sincere desire’ to suppress the slave trade, and ‘add a new bond to those which already unite’ the two countries.<sup>135</sup>

Although it is difficult to establish empirically whether these statements were anything more than diplomatic niceties, it seems as if they were made in earnest, since between 1835 and 1839 Britain and Russia maintained an active correspondence over the Russian-flagged slave trade, with the two powers co-operating effectively to help suppress it. After Palmerston alerted Nesselrode to reports that the *Trikolor* was being abused by slave traders in Cadiz during November 1835,<sup>136</sup> for example, the Russian Foreign Minister urgently directed his consul there to investigate.<sup>137</sup> Shortly afterwards, Nesselrode sent a circular dispatch around to all Russian consuls in foreign ports, instructing them to warn local merchants not to hoist the Russian flag without permission and to keep ‘a watchful eye’ on expeditions undertaken from their dockyards.<sup>138</sup> This action gratified Palmerston immensely, who swiftly thanked the Russian Government for their readiness to intervene.<sup>139</sup> Significantly, Nesselrode was ‘much pleased’ upon receiving Palmerston’s approbation, and requested a copy of his dispatch to show to the Emperor.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> John Bligh to Prince Lieven, 18 June 1835, TNA, FO84/181, ff.150-153, enclosed in John Bligh to Palmerston, 1 July 1835, TNA, FO84/181, ff.148-149.

<sup>134</sup> Marquess of Clanricarde to Palmerston, 7 April 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.343-344.

<sup>135</sup> Nikolai Kisséleff to Palmerston, 25 September 1839, TNA, FO84/291, ff.330-331.

<sup>136</sup> Palmerston to John Bligh, 25 November 1835, TNA, FO84/181, ff.146-147.

<sup>137</sup> Earl of Durham to Palmerston, 15 December 1835, TNA, FO84/181, ff.164-165.

<sup>138</sup> Count Nesselrode, ‘Circular addressed to the Consuls-General, Consuls, and other Consular Agents of Russia, in all Foreign Ports’, enclosed in Earl of Durham to Palmerston, 19 December 1835, TNA, FO84/181, ff.166-167.

<sup>139</sup> Palmerston to Earl of Durham, 19 January 1836, TNA, FO84/205, ff.222-223. Palmerston listed this as a significant achievement in his summary of the year’s progress, see Palmerston, ‘Memorandum showing what has been done about slave trade since last year’, 30 May 1837, PP, SLT/9.

<sup>140</sup> Earl of Durham to Palmerston, 6 February 1836, TNA, FO84/205, ff.227-228.

The revival of five-power conferences to discuss the suppression of the slave trade, four of which took place between December 1838 and August 1841, could also be interpreted as events of major significance in the coming together of the East and West during the late-1830s.<sup>141</sup> For although these types of Great Power conference had been common since the end of the Napoleonic Wars, becoming widely associated with the 'Congress system' of Lord Castlereagh, historians have usually agreed that they were discarded at the closing of the London Conference in 1834.<sup>142</sup> As a result, the historical importance of Britain's anti-slavery conferences with France and the Holy Alliance has been largely ignored, whilst even historians who have studied them have underplayed their meaning. P.M. Kielstra, for example, described the December 1838 conference as little more than a pompous display of moral triumph and self-righteousness; the Great Powers 'thoroughly condemned the trade and praised each other for their laudable intentions,' he wrote sarcastically.<sup>143</sup> One might argue, however, that those conferences were far from trivial, since they were in fact some of the only occasions during the late-1830s when the leaders of Britain, France and the Holy Alliance came together to talk positively about issues of joint concern and to equate their core values. Even if nothing had been decided, they would therefore have been incredibly important; providing an arena for the Great Powers to re-open communications, put aside their differences, and work together on an issue they all agreed upon. Whilst there may have been some mutual patting of one another on the back,<sup>144</sup> in other words, these conferences were a

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<sup>141</sup> The four conferences took place in December 1838, February 1840, July 1840 and August 1841. For Palmerston's invitations to these conferences, see Palmerston to the Representatives of France, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, 11 December 1838, in 'Correspondence with Foreign Powers, not Parties to Conventions giving Mutual Right of Search of Vessels suspected of Slave Trade, 1838-39 (Class D)', *Parliamentary Papers*, xlix, 39 (1839), p.1; Palmerston to Baron Hummelauer, Baron Werther, Nikolai Kisséleff, 22 February 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.245-246, 298-299, 359; Palmerston to Baron Hummelauer, Baron Bulow, Baron Brunow, 25 July 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.247, 300, 364; Palmerston to Baron Koller, Schleinity(?), Baron Brunow, 24 August 1841, TNA, FO84/372, ff.22-23, 171-172, 223-224. For a summary of proceedings at each one, see Protocol of the Conference held at the Foreign Office in London on the 12 December, 1838, PP, SLT/13; Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, Lord George Russell, Marquess of Clanricarde, 4 March 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.202-213, 263-272, 313-322; Palmerston to John Bloomfield, 4 August 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.329-334; Palmerston to Baron Koller, Schleinity(?), Baron Brunow, 27 August 1841, TNA, FO84/372, ff.24, 173, 225.

<sup>142</sup> See, for example, Richard B. Elrod, 'The Concert of Europe: A Fresh Look at an International System', *World Politics*, 28, 2 (1976), 159-174 (p.163).

<sup>143</sup> Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, p.202.

<sup>144</sup> See, for example, Protocol of the Conference held at the Foreign Office in London on the 12 December, 1838, PP, SLT/13. The ambassadors for the Holy Alliance declared that their Governments were 'as earnestly desirous as those of France and Great Britain' to put down the slave trade, while those for France and Britain declared their gratitude to 'the philanthropic and generous sentiments of the Governments of Austria, Prussia, and Russia.'



crucial break from the antagonism that had begun to envelop their relationship. As the Russian Ambassador to London put it during the conference of July 1840, the negotiations for a Great Power treaty were important simply to 'promote peace and to prevent violence.'<sup>145</sup>

The import and ramifications of these conferences require further scholarly attention, yet one might propose that by March 1840 Palmerston's anti-slavery negotiations with the Great Powers had already begun to unravel the European dichotomy growing up between East and West. Indeed, following the anti-slavery conference of March 1840 in which the Holy Alliance demanded a 'limited' anti-slavery treaty, Baron Werther informed Sir George Hamilton, Britain's chargé d'affaires to Berlin, that the Prussian Government had always concurred with Palmerston over the importance of a perpetual agreement, and promised to 'use his influence' with Austria and Russia to 'induce them to view the subject in the same light.'<sup>146</sup> A fortnight later, Werther reported to Hamilton that he had begun to do just this; urging upon those Governments 'in the strongest manner' the expediency of adopting a permanent treaty, and re-affirming his promise 'to exert his influence at St Petersburg and Vienna.'<sup>147</sup> Explaining the divisions that anti-slavery had created within the conservative bloc, moreover, he begged Hamilton tell Palmerston that the excruciating delay between the December 1838 conference and the second one in February 1840 was not down to 'any fault on his part.' He had 'done everything in his power,' he insisted, 'to induce the Russian and Austrian Governments' to enter negotiations 'without loss of time.'<sup>148</sup> Although it is unclear whether it was Prussian 'influence' that changed Metternich's mind on this question, it is noticeable that the Chancellor of the Austrian Empire made his volte-face on the length of the treaty ten days later,<sup>149</sup> and upon hearing the news Palmerston immediately expressed his thanks to Werther for his helpful 'language.'<sup>150</sup> While this intrigue is somewhat unexceptional on the face of it, considering that political manoeuvring played a large part in all Great Power conferences, one might argue it was

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<sup>145</sup> Palmerston to John Bloomfield, 4 August 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.329-334. In this letter, Palmerston informed the British Secretary to the Ambassador in St Petersburg of what happened during the conference of July 1840.

<sup>146</sup> Sir George Hamilton to Palmerston, 4 March 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.287-288.

<sup>147</sup> Sir George Hamilton to Palmerston, 18 March 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.289-290.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> Prince Metternich to Baron Hummelauer, 28 March 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.253-254.

<sup>150</sup> Palmerston to Sir George Hamilton, 27 March 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.273-274. See also Palmerston to Lord George Russell, 18 April 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.275-276.

potentially very significant. For not only was there common ground forming between London and Berlin over anti-slavery, but the formal ties of the Holy Alliance were evidently being eroded over this issue. Essentially, with Prussia acting covertly with Britain to 'influence' Metternich and Nesselrode,<sup>151</sup> the two discrete power blocs were beginning to blur. Prussia, in a sense, was abandoning its ideological and geopolitical union with Russia and Austria and subverting the very *raison d'être* of the Holy Alliance; that on any decision adopted by the cabinets of France and Britain, the Eastern powers would adopt 'a uniform course' and form 'a single, compact and indissoluble whole.'<sup>152</sup> To put this into perspective, the Earl of Durham, Britain's ambassador to St Petersburg, complained in 1836 that all of Britain's previous efforts 'to shake & weaken this alliance have been unsuccessful.'<sup>153</sup> Anti-slavery, therefore, was not just a subject which united the Eastern and Western powers in the 1830s, but also one which began to undermine the founding idea of the Holy Alliance, and perhaps even laid the groundwork for the thawing of Britain's relationship with the Northern Courts during the Eastern Question.<sup>154</sup>

Without doubt, however, this was not the only time when Palmerston deployed the issue of anti-slavery to advance Britain's political interests, nor even the only occasion in the 1830s. One might argue, for instance, that Palmerston also sought to exploit anti-slavery during this decade to advance the colonial ambitions of the British East India Company (hereafter EIC).<sup>155</sup> Once more, to appreciate how this was the case, it is imperative to understand the wider international context. Essentially, from 1835 and on multiple occasions thereafter the EIC had represented to Palmerston that it was losing significant amounts of revenue annually due to illegal smuggling between the Portuguese settlements of Goa, Diu and Deman and British India. The Company had become determined to end this illicit traffic and believed that the best way of doing so was to purchase the sovereignty of those colonies from the Portuguese Government and assimilate them into the Company Raj.<sup>156</sup> Although Palmerston was a little frustrated by

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<sup>151</sup> Sir George Hamilton to Palmerston, 18 March 1840, TNA, FO84/328, ff.289-290.

<sup>152</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.160.

<sup>153</sup> Earl of Durham to Palmerston, 22 March 1836, PP, GC/DU/50.

<sup>154</sup> It is perhaps not a coincidence, for example, that when the Eastern Question re-emerged Britain and France discussed using the Great Power treaty as a preface to the 1841 Straits Convention. See Baron Bourquenay to Palmerston, 7 May 1841, TNA, FO84/370, f.183. See also Ingle, *Nesselrode and the Russian Rapprochement with Britain*, p.160.

<sup>155</sup> For an overview of the history of the East India Company, see H.V. Bowden, John McAleer and Robert J. Blyth, *Monsoon Traders: The Maritime World of the East India Company* (London: Scala, 2011).

<sup>156</sup> See, for example, Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 25 November 1837, HWP, BL, Add Ms 45176, ff.93-94.

the EIC's constant pressing, he accepted their case and dutifully began to sound out Lisbon for a deal.<sup>157</sup> Two years later, in 1837, Palmerston offered the Portuguese Government £150,000 for the permanent right to cede control of 'all [that] Portugal possess on the coast of India.' Palmerston felt this was a generous offer and would be 'of immense service to the Portuguese government,' since those colonies were worth 'very little' and contained only 'factories with no territory of any extent attached to them.'<sup>158</sup> Underestimating how deeply Portugal valued these lands as a source of imperial pride, however, Palmerston's offer was rejected, with Sá da Bandeira, Portugal's Minister for Foreign Affairs, refusing to countenance even the proposition of a transfer of power.<sup>159</sup> Nevertheless, in January 1839 Palmerston tried again; tempting Sá to consider an agreement by informing him that the EIC was now willing to pay as much as £400,000 for Portugal's Indian settlements.<sup>160</sup> This offer was again refused, however, leading Howard de Walden to lament that there was not 'the slightest chance of obtaining Goa' in this way. If the EIC was truly decided upon obtaining those colonies, he wrote, then the only way of claiming them was through coercion. Britain should threaten to 'take possession of [Goa],' he advised in February 1839, unless Portugal settled Britain's long-standing claims.<sup>161</sup>

It was in this context, then, that Palmerston began to intensify his rhetoric to Portugal over their refusal to come to terms with him over a more comprehensive anti-slavery treaty, and it would appear that Palmerston sensed an opportunity to achieve both of his objectives with Lisbon – the abolition of the slave trade and the formal cession of Goa – in one clean stroke. For during 1839 Palmerston began to blur these two

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<sup>157</sup> Palmerston to John Hobhouse, 13 October 1835, Broughton Papers, BL, Add Ms 46915, ff.27-28. Palmerston asked Hobhouse what the EIC was willing to offer Portugal for the sale of Goa, Diu and Deman. He had already asked Baron Moncorvo to write to his government and ask them what terms they would expect. For more on Palmerston's frustration at the EIC's constant pressing, see Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 20 January 1839, PP, GC/HO/830. Palmerston wrote about how the EIC was chasing him endlessly over 'the Portuguese possessions in India[,] which they want excessively to buy.'

<sup>158</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 25 November 1837, HWP, BL, Add Ms 45176, ff.93-94. In reality, this was not a generous offer. Palmerston told Lord Howard de Walden in the same letter that the EIC was willing to pay £300,000 for Portugal's Indian settlements. This was double the offer that Palmerston made to Lisbon.

<sup>159</sup> Palmerston to John Hobhouse, 11 December 1837, Broughton Papers, BL, Add Ms 46915, ff.67-68. Since Portugal had made clear there was 'no chance' of the EIC being allowed to buy its Indian colonies, Palmerston suggested to the EIC that it consider renting them. 'If you could get a good long lease of the revenues of the three settlements with adequate powers you might put a stop to smuggling for the time, and it might hereafter be more easy to purchase.'

<sup>160</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 20 January 1839, PP, GC/HO/830.

<sup>161</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 2 February 1839, PP, GC/HO/547.

questions, which up until that point had been entirely distinct, in his official dispatches. In that year, for example, Palmerston threatened Sá da Bandeira that if Portugal was determined to drive Britain 'to extremities' over the slave trade, and undoubtedly if it went to war with Britain, then 'in return for the liberties' which Britain would 'take with the Portuguese flag and with Portuguese property' Britain would 'help ourselves' to Portugal's Indian settlements, and would 'keep them without payment.'<sup>162</sup> Defeat, humiliation and the loss of 'all their colonies,' he warned Baron Moncorvo, was 'all [Portugal] would get by... war.'<sup>163</sup> At the same time, moreover, Palmerston's letters to Howard de Walden indicate that he not only had his gaze fixed upon Portuguese India but Portugal's African colonies as well. In a private letter, for instance, Palmerston remarked to Britain's Minister in Lisbon that if Britain and Portugal did end up at war with one another it would be 'so much the better,' for there were 'several of her colonies which would suit us remarkably well,'<sup>164</sup> whilst in June he commented that Portugal's African islands of Bulama, Bissao and Cacheo would be particularly useful for Britain's anti-slavery crusade.<sup>165</sup>

After yet another offer for Goa was rejected in March 1839, equivalent to approximately £600,000,<sup>166</sup> Palmerston again used Britain's anti-slavery policy to give him leverage in his negotiations over Portuguese India. In what was a carefully planned manoeuvre, Palmerston and Howard de Walden plotted that Britain should give Portugal an ultimatum over Goa. Namely, that unless Lisbon settled Britain's historic claims by a given date, some of which went all the way back to the Napoleonic Wars, Britain would simply 'take possession of Goa and keep it till the claims are paid in full.'<sup>167</sup> Just in case Portugal satisfactorily settled these claims, moreover, and Britain was honour-bound to return Goa, Howard de Walden suggested giving Portugal exactly one month to agree

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<sup>162</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 20 January 1839, PP, GC/HO/830.

<sup>163</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 20 July 1839, PP, GC/HO/839.

<sup>164</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 24 December 1838, PP, GC/HO/829.

<sup>165</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 22 June 1839, PP, GC/HO/837.

<sup>166</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 1 April 1839, PP, GC/HO/561. The offer was not for a direct payment of £600,000. Instead, it was for £400,000 upfront and for Britain to write off all of Portugal's historic claims upon Portugal, estimated at £200,000. Howard de Walden felt this was very generous, and actually equivalent to £1 million. See Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 15 March 1839, PP, GC/HO/558. This was Palmerston's idea, see Palmerston to John Hobhouse, 12 February 1839, Broughton Papers, BL, Add Ms 46915, ff.155-156.

<sup>167</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 10 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/841. Howard de Walden first suggested this idea in March 1839, see Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 15 March 1839, PP, GC/HO/558.

terms with Britain's claimants' and to make the payments in full; what was evidently an impossible task. If this deadline was missed, however, then Britain would immediately take possession of Goa and make a second ultimatum. If the claims were not redeemed within one year, Britain would accredit Portugal with whatever balance was left from their latest offer 'but we should not have the colony returned after.'<sup>168</sup> Significantly, Palmerston agreed, and set in motion this devious scheme shortly after his Portuguese slave trade bill had passed the House of Commons in August, and at the same time as Britain's cruisers started to implement that Act by stopping and searching Portuguese-flagged vessels wherever they sailed in the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>169</sup> After first instructing Howard de Walden to advise the Portuguese Government in October that it should settle Britain's claims 'forthwith',<sup>170</sup> and then withholding money owed to Portugal (from the sale of slavers adjudicated at the Mixed Anglo-Portuguese court in Sierra Leone) to settle some of these claims,<sup>171</sup> Palmerston authorised Britain's Minister in Lisbon to make known his carefully conceived ultimatum in November; to 'quietly and confidentially let that idea find its way to the minds of those concerned.'<sup>172</sup>

Palmerston's ultimatum, therefore, was delivered at the very moment when Britain had followed through its threats about unilaterally suppressing the Portuguese slave trade, and when the Government in Portugal was weak as a result of this humiliation. Evidently, it had an immediate effect. For in November 1839 Howard de Walden reported having a 'stormy conversation' with the King of Portugal's chief advisor, a German named Dietz, about how Portugal would resist Britain's demands.<sup>173</sup> A week later, he wrote gleefully to Palmerston about how Dietz had 'commenced a tirade' against him in private, 'screaming out his assertions with the most violent gesticulation and striding about the room.' The upshot of this tirade, Howard reported, 'was that we had treated Portugal with the greatest treachery,' and that Britain 'had but one object' with

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<sup>168</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 18 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/587. In private, Palmerston and Howard de Walden debated the best way of permanently ceding Portugal's Indian colonies to the EIC. See Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 17 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/843; Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 25 August, 25 August 1839, PP, GC/HO/590, 591.

<sup>169</sup> See Chapter 3, p.149.

<sup>170</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 4 October 1839, PP, GC/HO/844. 'If any friends of Portugal wish to be of use between that power & England,' Palmerston wrote, 'the best service they can render Portugal is to advise it to pay forthwith what it owes to England & English subjects.'

<sup>171</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 6 October 1839, PP, GC/HO/598.

<sup>172</sup> Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 2 November 1839, PP, GC/HO/846.

<sup>173</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 17 November 1839, PP, GC/HO/608.

Portugal during the whole of the 1830s which was 'to obtain the Portuguese colonies.'<sup>174</sup>

This view was not held by Dietz alone, for several Portuguese statesmen were equally concerned about the scope of Britain's imperial ambitions. Sá da Bandeira, for example, told an enquiry in the Cortes that the 'real cause' of his failure to sign an anti-slavery treaty with Britain during the 1830s was because he was 'afraid of Lord Palmerston.' Throughout the whole affair, he said, he had been paranoid about Palmerston trying to occupy and dispossess Portugal of its overseas colonies. 'I was determined,' he proclaimed, 'not to sign any treaty for the abolition of the slave trade without obtaining a guarantee of the most complete and comprehensive nature for our African colonies.'<sup>175</sup> Baron Sabroza, likewise, reacted 'like a madman' when the subject came up in a private meeting with Howard de Walden. Frantically, he declared that the suppression of the Portuguese slave trade would 'ruin the Portuguese colonies,' and accused Britain of plotting to ensure 'their separation from the Mother Country.'<sup>176</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was not long afterwards that Palmerston's ultimatum was crowned with success. At the end of November, Howard de Walden managed to negotiate a compromise agreement which satisfied both parties and which Palmerston felt was 'a very good plan.'<sup>177</sup> The new Portuguese Foreign Minister, Silva Carvalho, flatly rejected 'the transfer of Goa' as an immediate solution to the claims dispute, arguing that 'although Goa was worth nothing to Portugal no minister could now venture to propose its alienation,' but he was prepared to let the EIC take 'active control' of the Custom House Revenues in Goa as well as 'the appointment of all the officers in that department' – so long as it paid 'a sum of money to Portugal.' In effect, he would let the EIC lease control of Goa and Portugal's other Indian settlements. For Britain, this arrangement would enable the EIC to 'put an end' to the system of smuggling into India, whilst for

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<sup>174</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 24 November 1839, PP, GC/HO/609.

<sup>175</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 24 January 1840, TNA, FO84/320, ff.93-97.

<sup>176</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 9 June 1839, PP, GC/HO/574. See also Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 20 July 1839, PP, GC/HO/839; Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 28 February 1840, TNA, FO84/320, ff.259-260. See also João Pedro Marques, *The Sounds of Silence: Nineteenth Century Portugal and The Abolition of the Slave Trade*, translated by Richard Wall (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), pp.128, 132. The argument that Britain wanted to dispossess Portugal of its empire became known as 'the British conspiracy.'

<sup>177</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 1 December 1839, PP, GC/HO/610; Palmerston to Lord Howard de Walden, 21 December 1839, PP, GC/HO/848. Although he agreed with the plan, Palmerston demanded that Britain's claims be settled immediately. If not, he threatened Portugal that Britain would 'settle the Goa question in our own way.'

Portugal it would allow the new Government to save face and prevent Portugal's honour being bruised for a second time.<sup>178</sup>

Thus, despite the fact Palmerston did not secure the formal secession of Goa, in reality the EIC would hold a predominant influence and control over it. As Howard de Walden noted, this arrangement did more than solve the problem of smuggling since it allowed the EIC to 'obtain a footing' in the region, and to 'secure the most important and influential branch of patronage in that colony.' As such, it would almost certainly 'lay the foundation for acquiring supreme influence hereafter without a struggle.'<sup>179</sup> Predictably, it did not take long for Palmerston to initiate such proceedings, for in late December he wrote to John Hobhouse, President of the Board of Control, asking him to manufacture a reason why the Indian Government 'may be obliged to take redress' against 'the Portuguese authorities in India,' one that would give him 'an opening to a negotiation for a purchase.'<sup>180</sup> During the 1830s, then, Palmerston's anti-slavery policy evidently went hand-in-hand with his determination to advance the territorial ambitions of the EIC. For not only did he turn Britain's anti-slavery policy into a pretext for justifying the British takeover of these settlements, but he intensified his negotiations with Portugal at the very moment when it was most vulnerable due to his coercive anti-slavery policy. If it were not for the issue of anti-slavery, therefore, this compromise agreement, which one might describe as nothing less than an imperial land grab, would arguably not have been resolved.<sup>181</sup>

### III) Constructing an image of power and prestige: anti-slavery and the balance of power

It is important to note, however, that these examples only scratch the surface of how Palmerston's anti-slavery policy was able to interact and meld with broader foreign policy concerns, and that there is far more to say about how British anti-slavery could be used to advance Britain's national interests during the mid-Victorian period. For as well as anti-

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<sup>178</sup> Lord Howard de Walden to Palmerston, 1 December 1839, PP, GC/HO/610.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Palmerston to John Hobhouse, 26 December 1839, Broughton Papers, BL, Add Ms 46915, ff.194-195. See also Palmerston to John Hobhouse, 12 April 1840, Broughton Papers, BL, Add Ms 46915, f.208.

<sup>181</sup> Notably, this was not the end of the matter. Negotiations proceeded into 1841 as to what the annual rent would be for the EIC, but ultimately the agreement broke down when Palmerston left Office. See Palmerston to John Hobhouse, 29 April 1841, Broughton Papers, BL, Add Ms 46915, f.255.

slavery helping to promote Britain's international aims and agendas in situations that were rooted in a specific historical context, to deal with transient political and imperial problems, it could also be used in a more general way throughout the era to preserve the all-important balance of power, both in Europe and North America. The balance of power is a 'notoriously slippery, vague, and protean term, repeatedly debated and variously defined.'<sup>182</sup> Traditionally, it has been understood from a *realist* historical perspective as a 'territorial balance established by the Vienna Settlement and designed to ensure that no Great Power became too great at the expense of its neighbours.'<sup>183</sup> By this interpretation, 'power' is therefore defined according to the possession of material, quantifiable resources, such as an amount of territory, wealth, population or number of men under arms, as well as the development of industrial and technological capabilities, whilst the 'balancing' of it comes from how these various resources were distributed among the Great Powers so that no single power could dominate. All of the major actors in a balance of power system, in other words, were necessarily subjected to checks and balances, and restrained by fear of 'the countervailing power... or other deterrent action by other states, should they upset the balance by aggression, threat, or an inordinate growth in capability.'<sup>184</sup>

This interpretation is undoubtedly useful and should be retained as a key way of understanding Great Power relations during the nineteenth century.<sup>185</sup> Nevertheless, there are some problems with it that must be explored. As Paul Schroeder points out, 'even if the literal meaning or denotation of the phrase were clear, that would not end the difficulty. For what the term connotes and involves in the form of necessary

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<sup>182</sup> Paul W. Schroeder, 'Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?', *The American Historical Review*, 97, 3 (1992), 683-706 (p.684). Schroeder finds 'eleven different meanings in the term, some contradictory to others, in the working language of nineteenth century diplomacy.' See also Paul W. Schroeder, 'The Nineteenth Century System: Balance of Power or Political Equilibrium?', *Review of International Studies*, 15, 2 (1989), 135-153 (pp.136-137); E.B. Haas, 'The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept, or Propaganda', *World Politics*, 5, 4 (1953), 442-477. Haas identifies nine different meanings of the phrase.

<sup>183</sup> Chamberlain, *Lord Palmerston*, p.51.

<sup>184</sup> Schroeder, 'Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?', p.685.

<sup>185</sup> For *realist* accounts of the balance of power, see Edward Vose Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power: A case history of the theory and practice of one of the great concepts of European statecraft* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1955); Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1957); Alan Sked (ed.), *Europe's Balance of Power, 1815-1848* (London: Macmillan, 1979), especially the essays by Douglas Dakin and Francis Roy Bridge; Robert Jervis, 'From Balance to Concert: A Study of International Security Cooperation', *World Politics*, 38, 1 (1985), 58-79 (pp.60-61); Richard Little, 'Deconstructing the Balance of Power: Two Traditions of Thought', *Review of International Studies*, 15, 2 (1989), 87-100.



conditions, component elements, and corollaries is also controversial.<sup>186</sup> It is unclear, for example, whether the traditional balance of power system requires an 'even distribution of power' or just the presence of 'blocking coalitions' that could restrain the most powerful states. If the latter, does it also demand an 'absence of dominant coalitions' and 'flexibility in alliances'? Similarly, one might question whether the balance of power system requires 'a holder or manager of the balance,' in essence a hegemonic power, or 'the existence of at least two or more actors of relatively equal power.'<sup>187</sup> By analysing the outcome of the Vienna settlement, moreover, Schroeder argues that the actual distribution of power after 1815 did not meet 'the minimal requirements for a working balance of power.'<sup>188</sup> Neither Prussia nor Austria possessed comparable resources with Britain and Russia, for instance, whilst France did but was far more vulnerable than the two flanking powers due to its weak geographical position at the centre of Europe and its inability to make lasting military alliances.<sup>189</sup> On the contrary, Schroeder demonstrates that Britain and Russia were far more powerful than the other Great Powers in the mid-nineteenth century, commanding 'more intrinsic resources,' enjoying 'virtual impregnability by virtue of geography,' being able to make useful alliances 'when they wished,' and playing an active role outside of Europe.<sup>190</sup> As a result, neither of these countries were necessarily subject to the countervailing influence of their counterparts, for it was highly unlikely that an alliance of the other three against them would 'seriously threaten the basic security of either.'<sup>191</sup> Thus, after 1815, one might argue that the balance of power in Europe 'consisted of a pentarchy composed of two superpowers, one authentic but vulnerable great power, one highly marginal and even more vulnerable

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<sup>186</sup> Schroeder, 'Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?', p.684.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid, pp.684-685. For an attempt to define the working rules of a balance of power system, see Morton A. Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: Wiley, 1957). For responses to this work, see Schroeder, 'The Nineteenth Century System: Balance of Power or Political Equilibrium?', pp.4-5; Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1983), passim, esp. pp.101-103.

<sup>188</sup> Schroeder, 'Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?', p.686.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, pp.686-688. Prussia's 'fifteen million people and limited resources in no way compared with those of Russia, the British empire, or France,' Schroeder states. 'Austria was somewhat better off than Prussia but not decisively so.' Indeed, Austria 'suffered from so many external and internal weaknesses and vulnerabilities that it could not possibly meet the most likely external threats it faced.' See also Francis Roy Bridge and Roger Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System, 1815-1914* (London: Longman, 1980), chp.2.

<sup>190</sup> Schroeder, 'Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?', pp.687-689. 'Russia had by far the largest territory, the greatest population, and the largest standing army; Britain dominated the seas while leading the world in industry, commerce, colonies, and financial power.' If one includes the Indian army in Britain's favour, then Britain was also a great power in terms of land forces, see Edward Ingram, *The Beginning of the Great Game in Asia, 1828-1834* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979).

<sup>191</sup> Schroeder, 'Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?', p.687.

great power, and one power called great by courtesy only.<sup>192</sup> Despite this stark imbalance, however, and what Schroeder goes on to describe as the ‘hegemony’ of Britain and Russia,<sup>193</sup> it is clear that the Vienna system continued to work for several decades, with the peace of Europe preserved and the other Great Powers choosing to accept and operate within this system. It is important to acknowledge, then, that one needs to look beyond a *realist* interpretation of international politics in order to fully comprehend the balance of power in the Victorian era, and to accept that power did not derive solely from ‘capability aggregation.’<sup>194</sup>

An alternative approach is to consider global politics in the nineteenth century from a *constructivist* perspective, one which understands the Victorian balance of power not in terms of fixed resources but as a series of dynamic, fluid relationships between the Great Powers which were affected by and dependent on constantly changing *perceptions* of one another’s strengths and weaknesses. By this interpretation, ‘power’ is thus defined not according to any quantity of land, revenue, population or armed force that a country possessed, nor by its industrial or technological achievements, but by the amount of ‘prestige’ it was perceived to have within the international community, whilst the ‘balancing’ of it came from how far these intangible images of power were upheld equally amongst the Great Powers. In his work on *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, for example, Kenneth Bourne appreciated that the balance of power was something more ethereal than simply the construction of fortifications, the accumulation of wealth, or the retention of territory that held military value, and was intricately connected to ideas of ‘national pride’ and ‘prestige.’ Unlike Richard Cobden, who called prestige ‘a false god... comparable in its evil effects only with that other “foul idol,” the balance of power,’ Bourne argued that Palmerston understood keenly how prestige was fundamental to the preservation of the balance of power. ‘To Palmerston,’ he wrote, ‘prestige was not a mere matter of self-respect but a factor of material value in the attitude of other powers.’ Hence, Bourne claimed that garnering international prestige was even more important for Palmerston than the maintenance of Britain’s tangible ‘interests.’ For although the latter were highly significant and Palmerston did seek to

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid, p.688.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, pp.689-690, 693. Rather than seeking to preserve the balance of power, Schroeder posits that Britain and Russia actually sought ‘hegemony’ in Europe ‘under the guise of balance of power.’

<sup>194</sup> Ibid, p.686.

expand British North America 'in wealth, in population, and in territory' throughout the century, prestige was something that he equated directly with the long-term power and success of Britain. Thus, while Palmerston would never have made a plausible case to go to war with America over Britain's desire for cotton, Bourne suggested that if war had ever become necessary Palmerston 'would have had more success' by arguing that it was vital to restore Britain's 'national pride.' It was always Palmerston's understanding, he concluded, that 'reputation is strength.'<sup>195</sup>

From a constructivist perspective, therefore, it is apparent that the issue of anti-slavery provided Palmerston with a uniquely significant means of constructing and projecting an image of British power and prestige to the rest of the world; one that could enhance its reputation with the Great Powers and ultimately help to maintain the equilibrium in international politics that was vital to the security of the United Kingdom. Anti-slavery politics was especially useful for this task, one might argue, because of the complexity and scale of Britain's international crusade against the slave trade. Significantly, this mission was comprised of multiple elements – diplomatic and naval – both of which could be used to prove, in their own ways, that Britain was still a mighty, powerful nation which possessed clout internationally and not one living off the record of its past glories.

First and foremost, it is important to acknowledge that Britain's anti-slavery mission during the Victorian era was primarily a diplomatic one. As chapter two demonstrates, Palmerston strived to negotiate anti-slavery treaties with every nation in Europe, America and Africa for the abolition of the slave trade, and crucially for the right to stop-and-search suspicious vessels sailing under the flag of an opposing nation.<sup>196</sup> If this was not tricky enough, Palmerston also had to ensure these treaties were properly enforced, which as chapter three shows was hardly straightforward.<sup>197</sup> Nevertheless, despite the many frustrations which accompanied this mission, one might argue that

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<sup>195</sup> Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, passim, quotes at pp.57, 263, 411. See also Malcolm E. Yapp, *The Making of The Modern Near East, 1792-1923* (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p.92. Yapp argues that the Great Powers were motivated above all by the need to preserve prestige. 'Neither the protection of the routes of empire nor economic interest nor even the balance of power in Europe weighed, in the end, against prestige,' he states. Essentially, 'in order that they might remain great, Great Powers demanded to be treated as great.'

<sup>196</sup> See Chapter 2, pp.65-86.

<sup>197</sup> See Chapter 3, passim, esp. pp.131-132, 148-153.

these diplomatic negotiations offered enormous strategic value for Palmerston by enabling him to perform and showcase Britain's leadership role in global politics. Indeed, by establishing Britain as the world's 'crusading abolitionist,'<sup>198</sup> signing every anti-slavery treaty ever negotiated between 1810 and 1867,<sup>199</sup> Palmerston skilfully presented Britain as a nation taking the initiative in and directing international affairs, persuading other countries to accede to its plans and overtures, and ultimately leading the world to follow its noble example. Cultivating these traits for Britain abroad was no doubt significant, as Palmerston made clear to his friend and brother-in-law, Frederick Lamb, in a series of revealing private letters during the 1830s. As a marker of Britain's Great Power status, Palmerston wrote that he considered leadership to be a vital attribute underpinning the nation's prestige and, therefore, a quality which should to be nurtured by British statesmen. In March 1838, for example, Palmerston explained to Lamb his 'doctrine' of foreign policy, stating that he considered it necessary for Britain to 'reckon *upon ourselves*, pursue a policy of our own, aim at objects of our own, and act upon principles of our own.' Britain, he argued, might 'use other governments as we can, when we want them, and [when we] find them willing to serve us,' but should 'never place ourselves in the wake of any of them.' For it was Britain's role and place in the world, he summed up, to 'lead when and where we can, but to follow, never.'<sup>200</sup> Two years later, Palmerston elaborated on this 'doctrine,' clarifying to Lamb during the second Mehemet Ali crisis and in response to pressure from the Cabinet to take a more conciliatory line with France, that it was essential for Britain to lead the Great Powers out of that crisis, and not to concede to France's dictation. For if Britain did not act autonomously in foreign affairs, and especially if it 'shrank from pursuing a course separate from that of France,' then in the future Britain would justly be considered 'as merely a second-rate power in Europe.'<sup>201</sup> As Palmerston made clear, then, it was his understanding that Britain's Great Power status depended on it directing international affairs and providing a 'manly and independent course of action,'<sup>202</sup> something which his anti-slavery policy could certainly help to project across the world.

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<sup>198</sup> Walvin, *England, Slaves and Freedom*, p.14. See also Mason, 'Keeping up Appearances', p.311.

<sup>199</sup> Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave trade*, p.90.

<sup>200</sup> Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, 21 March 1838, BP, BL, Add Ms 60466, ff.19-22.

<sup>201</sup> Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, 9 July 1840, BP, BL, Add Ms 60467, ff.1-4. For another example of Palmerston stressing the importance of Britain intervening abroad 'without any active assistance,' see Palmerston to Lord Melbourne, 26 October 1840, PP, GC/ME/544.

<sup>202</sup> Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, 9 July 1840, BP, BL, Add Ms 60467, ff.1-4.

Britain's diplomatic negotiations with foreign powers arguably did more than this, however, for on numerous occasions and especially with recalcitrant nations such as Spain, Portugal and Brazil who were bent on continuing their participation in the slave trade illegally, these negotiations provided a stage for Palmerston to exhibit Britain's diplomatic stamina and resilience. As chapter three shows, without exception Palmerston managed to exhaust his opponents on this issue, often in the face of strong opposition, prevarication and delay.<sup>203</sup> Once again, it was Palmerston's view that these facets of Britain's national character were vitally important, and if successfully projected to the rest of the world could help to maintain Britain's interests abroad. As he told Sir James Graham in 1833, 'the timely employment of a firm and steady but temperate language, and a fixed refusal to give way without reason upon small points which are put forward as skirmishes & feelers to try the mettle of parties concerned,' was under-rated as a means of preserving Britain's reputation internationally. 'I am convinced,' he wrote, that the qualities of resilience and fortitude 'have a more powerful effect in preventing serious differences between Governments than many people imagine.'<sup>204</sup> Likewise, Palmerston wrote to his brother in 1850, shortly after his decision to support David Pacifico in his dispute with the Greek Government, of his hope that 'other nations would see in Britain's steadfast demands for redress of grievances a warning not to 'turn a deaf ear to our demands & think to wear us out by refusals or evasions.'<sup>205</sup> The strategic value of Britain's diplomatic campaign to end the slave trade, therefore, has often been unrecognized but was nonetheless significant when it came to constructing an image of British power abroad.

As well as creating this beneficent general perception, however, it is also apparent that between 1834 and 1841 Palmerston believed the positive traits signified by his diplomatic crusade against the slave trade could impact advantageously upon a more specific, transient international situation; namely, Britain's territorial dispute with the U.S.

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<sup>203</sup> See Chapter 3, *passim*, esp. pp.111-126.

<sup>204</sup> Palmerston to Sir James Graham, 18 January 1833, GP, BL, Add Ms 79705, ff.188-193. See also Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 30 March 1845, PP, GC/RU/975. As he explained to Russell in 1845, 'a little firmness and spirit shown in time saves many quarrels.' For another example of Palmerston expressing the importance of resilience in international diplomacy, see Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, 28 March 1840, BP, BL, Add Ms 60466, ff.128-32. Great Powers would always pursue their schemes of ambition 'as far as [they] can and dare, whoever may be [their] ministers,' Palmerston wrote, 'and will stop only when stoutly and firmly opposed.'

<sup>205</sup> Palmerston to William Temple, 15 February 1850, PP, GC/TE/333.

over the boundary between Maine and New Brunswick.<sup>206</sup> As David Brown points out, Palmerston's private correspondence in those years suggests 'that he drew a clear link between firmness in the handling of the boundary question and Britain's ability to check the growing assertiveness of the American government in denying rights of search (for slave traders) of merchant vessels.'<sup>207</sup> As Palmerston explained privately to Lord John Russell in January 1841, for instance, it was his opinion that the best way to deal with the U.S. over both these issues was to take a strong and unbending line with Washington; to press them 'firmly and perseveringly.' For 'with such cunning fellows as these Yankees,' he explained, 'it never answers to give way, because they always keep pushing on their encroachments as far as they are permitted to do so; and what we dignify by the names of moderation and conciliation, they naturally enough call fear.'<sup>208</sup> It was mainly because he felt that Lord Ashburton had been weak in his negotiations with the U.S., moreover, and therefore undermined the strength of Britain's character abroad, that Palmerston was so disgusted by the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, which settled the boundary dispute in 1842 and ruled out any potential Anglo-American right-of-search agreement.<sup>209</sup> Indeed, although Palmerston viewed that treaty as a 'disgraceful surrender to American bully' which gave away too many concessions,<sup>210</sup> it was not the concessions themselves he felt were most damaging but the unwanted perception it would create abroad that Britain was a soft touch diplomatically. 'The result of the treaty,' he wrote to Lord Monteaule, will be 'the loss of character, of moral influence, and of military security.' It was an 'act of weakness,' he lamented, which would encourage the U.S. both 'morally & physically' towards its ultimate goal of expelling Britain from the American continent. Furthermore, Palmerston expected the effect of that treaty to be far-reaching and not confined to

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<sup>206</sup> For an overview of this territorial dispute, see Francis M. Carroll, *A Good and Wise Measure: The Search for the Canadian-American Boundary, 1783-1842* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2001). See also S. Kaufman and J.A. Soares, "'Sagacious Beyond Praise"? Winfield Scott and Anglo-American Border Diplomacy, 1837-1860', *Diplomatic History*, 30, 1 (2006) 57-82; Kenneth R. Stevens, *Border Diplomacy: The Caroline and McLeod Affairs in Anglo-American Relations, 1837-1842* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989); Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, Part 2.

<sup>207</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.268.

<sup>208</sup> Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 19 January 1841, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/4A, ff.63-66.

<sup>209</sup> For an overview of this treaty, see Howard Jones, *To the Webster-Ashburton Treaty: A Study in Anglo-American Relations 1783-1843* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977).

<sup>210</sup> Palmerston to William Temple, 30 September 1842, PP, GC/TE/304. In terms of the concessions, see George Brown Tindall, *America: A Narrative History* (New York: Norton, 1984), pp.533-535. The U.S. was awarded seven-twelfths of the disputed land along the Maine boundary, Oregon remained under dual occupation, and the U.S. agreed to hold joint naval patrols on the West African coast rather than consent to the right-of-search.

Washington. It 'lowers the position of England in the opinion of all foreign nations,' he bristled, 'and is a source of weakness to us in all our dealings with every other power.'<sup>211</sup>

In addition to the diplomatic element of Palmerston's anti-slavery crusade, operationally this mission was also a naval one of enormous size and scale. As chapter two explains, the chief purpose of Britain's anti-slavery treaties was to obtain the legal right to patrol the Atlantic Ocean, and thus to empower the Royal Navy to assume the role of a 'maritime police.'<sup>212</sup> Arguably then, Britain's anti-slavery squadron opened up an 'entirely new' strategic role for the Royal Navy. As Mary Wills suggests, it could help to extend 'the scope and expectations of Britain's maritime supremacy.'<sup>213</sup> For example, despite historians arguing that the actual number of cruisers assigned to the anti-slavery squadron was 'not a quantitatively or qualitatively significant portion of Britain's total naval forces,'<sup>214</sup> it is evident that, in contrast to the total number of ships other countries were capable of sending out to West Africa, Britain's squadron could be used to flaunt the impressive size of the Royal Navy. France rarely sent out more than 14 cruisers to the West African coast, for instance, and for most of this period actually sent between 2 and 6 ships. Likewise, neither Portugal nor the U.S. ever had more than 9 vessels on patrol in West Africa, with the latter tending to deploy between 3 and 8 vessels.<sup>215</sup> Britain, on the other hand, regularly posted between 20 and 30 vessels to the West African station.<sup>216</sup> During the late-1840s, moreover, when Britain's efforts against the slave trade reached their zenith, it had an average of 32 cruisers on the West African coast as well as another

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<sup>211</sup> Palmerston to Lord Monteagle, 28 October 1842, PP, GC/MO/131. See also Palmerston to William Temple, 30 September 1842, PP, GC/TE/304. 'Our foreign affairs are getting into the most miserable state & the country is fast falling from the position in which we had placed it,' Palmerston told his brother in 1842. For 'instead of finally closing our account with the U.S.' it would be 'looked upon by them as a first instalment.'

<sup>212</sup> See Chapter 2, pp.86-95.

<sup>213</sup> Mary Wills, 'At war with the "detestable traffic": The Royal Navy's anti-slavery cause in the Atlantic Ocean', in *The Royal Navy and the British Atlantic World, c.1750–1820*, ed. by John McAleer and Christer Petley (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 123-146 (p.124). How exactly the navy performed this strategic role will soon be fully explored, moreover, as Mary Will's work on the Royal Navy's suppression of the Atlantic slave trade is due to be published as a monograph shortly. For more on the navy as an 'instrument that could be used in many ways to advance... diplomatic aims,' see Andrew Lambert, 'Palmerston and Sea-Power', in *Palmerston Studies*, ed. by David Brown and Miles Taylor, 2 vols (Southampton: Hartley Institute, 2007), 39-65, quote at p.61.

<sup>214</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.42. See also Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* p.94.

<sup>215</sup> For an account of the anti-slave trade activities of France, Portugal and the U.S., see Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, pp.94-95.

<sup>216</sup> Britain had between 20 and 30 vessels on the West African station for 17 out of the 35 years between 1830 and 1865, which equates to nearly one half of this period (approximately 49 percent). This statistic have been calculated from data published in Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* pp.92-93.

squadron of half a dozen vessels on the Brazilian coast, in what was a significant show of its naval prowess.<sup>217</sup> For the whole period between 1830 and 1865, meanwhile, the average number of British cruisers on the West African station never fell below 20, whilst between 1846 and 1865 this figure rose to 24, meaning that Britain always had more vessels patrolling the Atlantic than any of its international rivals - and often more than double the number of France and the U.S. combined.<sup>218</sup>

The size of Britain's naval squadron was evidently a source of anxiety for the French Government, for during its negotiations with Palmerston for a right-of-search agreement in 1831 Horace Sébastiani, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, was so concerned about the prospect of Britain's anti-slavery squadron appearing to visibly overawe the size of France's that he demanded the insertion of a new clause into the treaty stating that the ratio of British to French ships empowered to carry out the right-of-search must not exceed 2:1.<sup>219</sup> Without that stipulation, he argued, British cruisers would be far more conspicuous on that station, which would signal to the French public (and presumably the wider world) an 'acknowledgement of the maritime superiority of Great Britain.'<sup>220</sup> Palmerston accepted Sébastiani's amendment on that occasion, and to help France save face made clear that Britain was simply 'grateful to France for all the assistance, *however large*, which it might suit her convenience to contribute for this desirable object.'<sup>221</sup> As a favour to Lord Holland, moreover, Palmerston even helped to keep this agreement out of the British press, in case it led to 'outrage on the other side of the water.'<sup>222</sup> Indeed, despite the vast importance of this treaty, considering France had rejected any form of right-of-search in the past, it was not covered by the *Morning*

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<sup>217</sup> The average number of cruisers on the West African coast has been calculated from data published in *Ibid*, pp.92-93. Britain had between 4 and 10 vessels off the Brazilian coast between 1849 and 1851, according to Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, pp.309, 310, 327, 351, 355.

<sup>218</sup> The average number of British cruisers on the West African coast for the period 1830-1865, and for the period 1846-1865, have been calculated from data published in Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* pp.92-93.

<sup>219</sup> Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 30 November 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.174-176.

<sup>220</sup> Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 31 October 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.140-142. See also Andrew D. Lambert, 'Politics, Technology and Policy-Making, 1859-1865: Palmerston, Gladstone and the Management of the Ironclad Naval Race', *The Northern Mariner*, 8, 3 (1998), 9-38. Lambert argues that naval relations were a key mechanism through which Britain and France clarified their relationship.

<sup>221</sup> 'Copy of John Irving's Memoir', TNA, FO84/123, ff.148-154, enclosed in Viscount Granville to Palmerston, 4 November 1831, TNA, FO84/123, ff.144-147. As Chapter 3, pp.133-134 shows, this memorandum was composed by Palmerston and given to Irving to present to the French Government.

<sup>222</sup> Lord Holland to Palmerston, 11 November 1831, PP, GC/HO/77.



*Chronicle or Morning Post*,<sup>223</sup> with the latter even publishing a letter to the editor in December 1831 which rebuked the Grey Administration for failing to do more to suppress the slave trade.<sup>224</sup>

From an analysis of one of Palmerston's private letters to Lord Melbourne in the mid-1830s, moreover, it is apparent that the strategic value of Britain's anti-slavery squadron was more complex than simply projecting the navy's size and strength to the rest of the world. Setting out his view of the navy's utility, Palmerston argued in October 1835 that a display of Britain's ubiquitous presence on the high seas, especially in 'places where matters of interest are going on,' would give the country increased clout internationally. For the Royal Navy could produce an influential 'moral effect' on those who witnessed it, he explained to Melbourne, one that would linger 'in the minds of others' for a long time after Britain's cruisers ceased to be present. It could act as a 'force,' he went on, enabling Britain to 'express opinions & wishes with some authority to all parties.' Acting almost as a form of military deterrent, he felt it could 'prevent the necessity of having to act.' However, this 'moral effect' was only possible, he stressed, so long as Britain kept up a 'respectable squadron' and its cruisers maintained a striking, eye-catching appearance throughout the globe; above all, the Royal Navy had to provide a '*visible means* of enforcing its objections or giving aid to those whom it may encourage.'<sup>225</sup> Once again then, Britain's anti-slavery mission provided an ideal opportunity to showcase the ubiquity of the Royal Navy. For not only did Britain's anti-slavery squadrons endlessly patrol the coastlines of West Africa and South America but, as chapter three demonstrates, frequently sailed into navigable rivers, waterways and ports on both sides of the Atlantic (including those of the U.S.), provoking anger locally and furore internationally.<sup>226</sup> It is reasonable, for instance, to believe this explains why Palmerston was so unconcerned about Portugal's 'feeble' plea for help to the

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<sup>223</sup> The *Morning Chronicle* published a copy of the convention on 24 January 1832, but without any accompanying comment or analysis. The *Morning Post* did not mention the treaty at all.

<sup>224</sup> 'The West Coast of Africa: to the editor of the *Morning Post*', in *Morning Post*, 9 December 1831. *The Times* reported the completion of the treaty but not until the following year. Furthermore, it did not devote a leader article to this measure, despite praising it in high-flown rhetoric as 'a great point... conceded.' See *The Times*, 23 January 1832.

<sup>225</sup> Palmerston to Lord Melbourne, 30 October 1835, PP, GC/ME/514. For another example of Palmerston highlighting the importance of Britain's naval strength being 'visible', see Palmerston to G.C. Lewis, 26 August 1861, PP, GC/LE/230. 'If we are known to be ready and prepared we shall not be attacked,' Palmerston claimed, yet 'if we are thought to be weak and imperfectly prepared we shall infallibly be brought to grief.'

<sup>226</sup> See Chapter 3, pp.129-132, 143-144, 149-153, 162-165.

international community in 1839.<sup>227</sup> For at the same time as he was confident Britain's rivals would not go to war with it upon 'so unjust a ground,'<sup>228</sup> he was perhaps pleased that Britain's maritime strength would be made visible for all of the Great Powers to see.

Most significantly of all, one might argue that Britain's anti-slavery crusade enabled Palmerston to project not just the size and ubiquity of Britain's naval power but its basic willingness to *use* it - and not just over the suppression of the slave trade. Indeed, by allowing British cruisers to stop, search and seize French, Russian and American-flagged slave traders during the 1830s despite lacking a right-of-search treaty with any of these nations and amid constant, vociferous protests from Washington, Palmerston was patently exhibiting to the Great Powers' the Royal Navy's boldness as well as his readiness to exercise naval power; something that would no doubt linger 'in the minds' of European and American statesmen in other contexts and circumstances too.<sup>229</sup> As well as maintaining a strong diplomatic stance with the U.S. over an Anglo-American right-of-search treaty, for example, to try and drive concessions out of Washington in the boundary dispute, it may have been the case that Palmerston's use of naval coercion against U.S.-flagged slave traders was also an action made with one eye on the U.S.-Canadian border. In other words, that Palmerston hoped his use of force against American slavers would instil a fear in Washington of him doing something similar over the boundary dispute, such as to 'strike at the populous and prosperous cities of the eastern and southern coasts of the U.S.'<sup>230</sup> As Rebecca Berens Matzke points out, this policy of 'making [Britain's] capabilities known to the U.S.' in order to deter conflict and ensure that Britain 'got its way' was a strategy Palmerston used consistently throughout this period, and what made the Pax Britannica 'a genuine power phenomenon.'<sup>231</sup>

It is eminently feasible, moreover, that Palmerston was hoping to achieve precisely the same effect internationally by taking forcible action to suppress the Portuguese and Brazilian slave trades in the late-1830s and 1840s. For by seizing

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<sup>227</sup> See Chapter 3, p.151.

<sup>228</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.268. Palmerston wrote this to John Easthope, editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, on 1 January 1841.

<sup>229</sup> See Chapter 3, pp.142-146. Palmerston to Lord Melbourne, 30 October 1835, PP, GC/ME/514.

<sup>230</sup> Rebecca Berens Matzke, 'Britain Gets Its Way: Power and Peace in Anglo-American Relations, 1838-1846', *War in History*, 8, 1 (2001) 19-46 (p.19). See also Palmerston to Lord John Russell, 27 September 1846, RP, TNA, PRO 30/22/5C, ff.344-345. Palmerston drew Russell's attention to the value which physical demonstrations of strength could have in diplomatic negotiations.

<sup>231</sup> Matzke, 'Britain Gets Its Way', pp.39, 20.

suspicious vessels from those nations on a large scale without consent and, in the latter case, inside Brazil's sovereign waters, then proceeding to have them adjudicated and condemned in British law courts, Palmerston was once again displaying to the world the formidable nature of British sea-power as well as his willingness to follow through his diplomatic threats.<sup>232</sup> It is reasonable to assume, in other words, that Palmerston felt he could use those occasions not only to fight the international slave trade but to prove to the Governments of the world that Britain was not a nation unafraid to fight, that Britain's national character remained as 'sincere,' 'straightforward' and 'plain-dealing' as ever,<sup>233</sup> and that if Britain promised to help an ally militarily or threatened to restrain a rival by force, these proclamations would be enforced. Fundamentally, then, anti-slavery could prove to foreign powers that Britain was still a Great Power in terms of its armed forces, and not, as the *Augsberg Gazette* derisively called it in 1838, 'a power known only by tradition.'<sup>234</sup>

In a private letter that Palmerston wrote to John Hobhouse, President of the Board of Control, in October 1838, moreover, it is clear that such a move would have been consistent with Palmerston's worldview. Discussing Britain's war in Afghanistan of that year, Palmerston explained that British intervention abroad, and especially the use of force, could have widespread positive effects – so long as it was successful. That war, he wrote, would 'do us the utmost service in India, in Europe and at home. We shall utterly defeat Russian schemes in the East. That will tell upon Persia and will probably re-establish our influence there. That again will tell in Turkey and give us a good footing there. That again will tell upon other European questions and American ones too.'<sup>235</sup> In essence, then, Palmerston's understanding was that the use of British power abroad would spark a chain-reaction across the globe. For 'the knowledge that Britain had the power and will to strike such blows would be remembered,' and Britain's influence very quickly augmented as 'the chanceries throughout the world began to revise their

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<sup>232</sup> See Chapter 3, pp.149-150.

<sup>233</sup> Palmerston, 'Sugar Duties', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lviii, 642-664 (18 May 1841), c.654.

<sup>234</sup> Palmerston to John Hobhouse, 29 October 1838, Broughton Papers, BL, Add Ms 46915, ff.133-134.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.* See also Palmerston to John Hobhouse, 29 September 1840, Broughton Papers, BL, Add Ms 46915, ff.221-222. In September, Palmerston explained what would happen if Britain was unsuccessful. Essentially, it would have an equal, opposite effect. 'If we give way now... when backed by all Europe,' he wrote, 'all Europe will treat us henceforward like a nation afraid to fight; France will take Morocco & Tunis in spite of our teeth & will settle every other matter her own way; Russia will do what she likes in Asia, and the disputed territory will be laid hold of by the United States.'

assessments of Britain's capabilities.<sup>236</sup> It was his hope, he explained to Parliament a few years later, that British intervention abroad would 'teach the weaker powers to hope that they will receive the support of this country in time of danger,' whilst it would teach the 'powerful countries... to fear that they will be resisted... in any unjust acts towards either ourselves or towards those who are bound in ties of amity with us.'<sup>237</sup>

Once more, however, Britain's anti-slavery squadron on the West African coast appears to have had another more specific, transient purpose during the 1850s and 1860s, aside from helping to construct a general perception of British power; notably, to prevent the expansion of the French Empire into the African continent. It was one of Palmerston's chief concerns in this period, R.J. Gavin and M.C. Hunter explain, that France was attempting to grow its overseas territory in Africa and to establish 'exclusive hegemony' over that continent, with the express intention of rekindling France's imperial spirit and rivalling Britain's colonial empire in Asia.<sup>238</sup> This scenario would have been very injurious to Britain's economic interests, Palmerston felt, suffocating British merchants' nascent trading relationships with emerging West African states and blocking off the manufacturers of Britain from a vibrant new supplier of raw materials and marketplace for their goods.<sup>239</sup> Moreover, if France established *points d'appui* along the African coast, with coal depots and staging posts for their steamers, Palmerston was certain it would improve their access 'to the East,' which in turn would enable Paris to compete with London for trade in Asia and to rival (potentially even to 'destroy') Britain's economic dominance of India.<sup>240</sup> France's encroachment into Africa, therefore, would ultimately

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<sup>236</sup> Gavin, 'Palmerston's Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865', pp.37, 36.

<sup>237</sup> Palmerston, 'Foreign Policy of Minister', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, lxxvi, 1870-1876 (7 August 1844), c.1873.

<sup>238</sup> Gavin, 'Palmerston's Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865', pp.362-363, see also p.147. Gavin quotes a letter that Palmerston received in August 1846 from Dr Beke, a self-appointed authority on Africa, that appears to have shaped this fear. 'Africa it is well known is regarded by that nation as their field of enterprise,' Dr Beke stated, 'in the same way as Asia is that of the English.' See also Hunter, *Policing the Seas*, pp.126, 151. Commodore Hotham perhaps reaffirmed Palmerston's concern, telling the Government that 'no one can entertain a moment's doubt of the burning desire of the French to increase their trade and form colonial establishments on this coast. In plain English – to turn their treaty [of 1845], which obliges them to keep up a large force in Africa, to a good account.'

<sup>239</sup> Gavin, 'Palmerston's Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865', pp.152-153.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid*, p.146; Hunter, *Policing the Seas*, pp.151-152. In March 1848, Commodore Hotham wrote to the Government that if France seized possession of St. Helena it would 'give them the command of our Indian trade and be a capital coal depot for their steamers.' 'Given their proclivity for the *guerre de course*, Hotham concluded that France made 'no secret of their intention to avoid combat, & destroy in every possible way our trade.'

harm Britain's trading interests in two continents and unsettle the balance of power in Europe.<sup>241</sup>

This anxiety was not imagined, moreover, since the French Government had in fact been making rapid efforts to prepare for imperial expansion into Africa during the 1840s.<sup>242</sup> In North Africa, for example, France had begun to tighten its grip on Algeria and was beginning to encroach more regularly on Morocco,<sup>243</sup> whilst in the east it procured a commercial treaty with the Kingdom of Shoa in 1843 and with the Sultan of Muscat a year later.<sup>244</sup> In West Africa, France already possessed a handful of colonial settlements, including St Louis on the Senegal River, the island of Gorée, and the contentious enclave of Albreda on the River Gambia,<sup>245</sup> yet in 1842 'the decision was taken to establish factories and exclusive French protectorates at Gabbon, Assinee and Grand Bassam.'<sup>246</sup> If France's desire for territorial expansion into Africa was not clear enough, however, it was also apparent from the Anglo-French Treaty of 1845 which François Guizot concluded with Lord Aberdeen. Worryingly, that treaty stated that British and French cruisers should divide the coastline into two discrete zones, and patrol their patches separately in order to best suppress the slave trade. For Palmerston, then, it was impossible to avoid the conclusion by the mid-1840s that France was 'bent upon the partition of the West African coast into exclusive British and French spheres of influence.'<sup>247</sup>

Upon his return to the Foreign Office in 1846, Gavin contends that it became one of Palmerston's principal objectives to stifle France's imperial ambitions in Africa.<sup>248</sup> One of his main tools of containment, moreover, was the Afro-British anti-slavery agreements

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<sup>241</sup> Gavin, 'Palmerston's Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865', pp.153, 353; Hunter, *Policing the Seas*, pp.126, 141. For more on the maritime gateway to Asia around the Cape of Good Hope, and its vital role in the establishment and consolidation of the British Empire in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, see John McAleer, *Britain's Maritime Empire: Southern Africa, the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, 1763-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>242</sup> Gavin, 'Palmerston's Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865', p.148. For more on France's plans to expand in Africa, see Braithwaite, *Palmerston and Africa*, pp.105-108.

<sup>243</sup> Gavin, 'Palmerston's Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865', p.148. For more on France's encroachments into Morocco, see F.R. Flournoy, *British Policy Towards Morocco in the Age of Palmerston (1830-1865)* (London: King, 1935).

<sup>244</sup> Gavin, 'Palmerston's Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865', p.148.

<sup>245</sup> Braithwaite, *Palmerston and Africa*, p.63.

<sup>246</sup> Gavin, 'Palmerston's Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865', p.149. This was not all, moreover. During the 1840s, the French Government enquired with the King of Dahomey about the prospect of purchasing his port of Ouidah, as well as with Denmark over buying their Gold Coast forts.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid*, p.152. For more on the 1845 Anglo-French Treaty, see Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, chp.8.

<sup>248</sup> Gavin, 'Palmerston's Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865', p.362.

which he had originally introduced in 1841.<sup>249</sup> Without doubt, Palmerston believed these agreements to be highly significant; promising not only to abolish the slave trade and to draw African communities ‘within the orbit of industrialised Britain by bonds of trade,’ but to enhance British influence and thus prevent the formal annexation of African states into the imperium of France.<sup>250</sup> After discovering that the number of anti-slavery agreements signed between Britain and West African rulers had declined alarmingly since 1841, then, especially in relation to the number agreed by France (leading him to lament how ‘the French seem to have got... the start on us in regard to these treaties’),<sup>251</sup> Palmerston immediately ordered the Admiralty to ‘remedy this state of affairs.’<sup>252</sup> Making clear that anti-slavery was not Britain’s only priority in West Africa, Lord Auckland told Commodore Hotham ‘to counter French activities that might give a foothold in Africa from which to harm British interests.’<sup>253</sup> Subsequently, Hotham instructed two of his officers, Captain Brisbane and Captain Murray, to ‘neutralise [France’s] schemes’ on that coast. They were to ‘investigate French activities,’ he explained, and to sign treaties with every African ruler who had already been visited by *La Royale*. Ideally, Hotham continued, these treaties should include a provision to suppress the slave trade, but at a minimum they should be ‘the same as those signed with the French.’<sup>254</sup> Accordingly, the number of Afro-British treaties increased dramatically over the next few years; from just one in 1846 to fifteen in 1847 and fourteen in 1848.<sup>255</sup>

One might add to Gavin’s interpretation, however, that Palmerston sought to use Britain’s anti-slavery squadron on the West African coast not just to spread British influence via the negotiation of Afro-British treaties, but by imposing a military deterrent on that coastline which could be used to dissuade France from future expansion.<sup>256</sup> By authorising the Royal Navy to take whatever military action was required in West Africa

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<sup>249</sup> See Chapter 2, pp.75-76, 78-79; Chapter 3, pp.108-111.

<sup>250</sup> Gavin, ‘Palmerston’s Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865’, p. 152, see also pp.152-154. Since 1845, moreover, these agreements had been bolstered by the Anglo-French Treaty of that year, which required *both* Britain and France to give consent before African states could be annexed to either empire. See Braithwaite, *Palmerston and Africa*, pp.107, 120.

<sup>251</sup> Gavin, ‘Palmerston’s Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865’, pp.154-155.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid*, p.155.

<sup>253</sup> Hunter, *Policing the Seas*, p.144.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid*, p.153.

<sup>255</sup> Gavin, ‘Palmerston’s Policy Towards East and West-Africa, 1830-1865’, p.155. See also Hunter, *Policing the Seas*, p.133. Hunter claims the Royal Navy ‘eagerly signed trade treaties with natives to match similar French activities and counter its traditional rival.’

<sup>256</sup> Hunter, *Policing the Seas*, p.152.

to suppress the slave trade, for example, including the use of blockades, the destruction of barracoons, the burning down of African towns and villages, regime change, and even the annexation of Lagos, it is entirely plausible that Palmerston had one eye fixed upon the slave trade whilst the other was focused intently upon France.<sup>257</sup> For significantly, all of these actions would have signalled to French statesmen the real capabilities of the Royal Navy as well as the willingness of the British Government to employ them, and without doubt placed fears 'in their minds' about the practicality of expanding the French empire without getting into a quarrel with Britain.<sup>258</sup> Furthermore, Palmerston made certain that France was aware of Britain's forceful policies in this region since the Royal Navy was always 'careful to advise Western nations, like France and the U.S., of impending actions.'<sup>259</sup> Ostensibly, this was to 'prevent misunderstandings,'<sup>260</sup> although in reality these warnings were almost certainly attempts to draw France's attention to the fact that Britain too had interests in West Africa, and was prepared to use naval power to secure them. As well as showcasing the size, ubiquity and willingness of the Royal Navy to exercise naval power, therefore, all of which helped to reinforce a global perception of Britain's maritime supremacy, Britain's anti-slavery squadrons played a key role during the mid-nineteenth century nullifying France's attempted expansion into Africa.

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<sup>257</sup> See Chapter 3, pp.129-132, 162-171.

<sup>258</sup> Palmerston to Lord Melbourne, 30 October 1835, PP, GC/ME/514.

<sup>259</sup> Hunter, *Policing the Seas*, pp.161-162.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*





## Conclusions

By uniting the history of Lord Palmerston with that of British anti-slavery, two fields that have been isolated from one another over time, it is clear that Palmerston had a vibrant relationship with anti-slavery politics during the mid-Victorian era, and that the suppression of the international slave trade was far closer to the heart of Palmerston's foreign policy and worldview than has formerly been understood. If one considers Palmerston's foreign policy first and foremost, then the suppression of the slave trade was demonstrably a major issue for Palmerston; one he pursued relentlessly over the entirety of his political career in high office. During this time, Palmerston refined and perfected the strategy passed on to him by his predecessors by tying up loopholes in Britain's existing network of anti-slavery treaties, extending those treaties to countries that had previously been excluded or unwilling to sign up to the right-of-search, and enlarging and upgrading Britain's anti-slavery squadrons on both sides of the Atlantic. Essentially, Palmerston's overarching policy was to attack that 'hydra' at all of its weakest points simultaneously and with a herculean effort: to extinguish the demand for enslaved Africans in Europe and America, sever the supply of them in Africa, and intercept the illegal trade between those two marketplaces on the Atlantic Ocean, all through the acquisition of anti-slavery treaties and the execution of maritime power. Combining a preventative approach with a pragmatic one, Palmerston aimed to protect the flags of maritime nations before they were abused by slave traders as well as to exploit advantageous situations across the globe wherever possible, such as changes in government, revolutions and even civil wars, to extort anti-slavery agreements.<sup>1</sup>

It is significant, however, that although Palmerston's anti-slavery strategy was consistent across the globe, when it came to the diplomatic challenge of negotiating with foreign nations for an anti-slavery treaty his policy differed subtly, sometimes markedly, depending on how highly individual countries ranked on his imagined 'scale of civilisation,' and in particular according to whether Palmerston considered them to be 'advanced,' 'civilised' or 'barbarous.' For Palmerston, this international hierarchy was determined not only according to a country's real military and economic prowess, even if

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 2, pp.65-100.

a nation's ability to give Britain a bloody nose was undeniably crucial, but according to his perception of them as 'civilised,' by which he meant how far their national 'character' conformed to certain British standards of morality, good faith and honour. Vitally, rather than distinguishing between countries based on ugly and offensive racial stereotypes, Palmerston judged and ranked nations according to their practices, customs and habits; such as how far they valued education or sought to improve their citizen's intellects and morals, how tolerant they were of religious minorities and benevolent to all classes of their societies, whether or not they kept their diplomatic promises, and how far they distanced themselves from (if not helped Britain to abolish) the international slave trade.<sup>2</sup>

Richard Huzzey's analysis in *Freedom Burning* is highly persuasive, notably, in that Palmerston's anti-slavery policy was indeed 'flexible, responsive, and opportunistic with different peoples in different circumstances,' seeking to push individual countries as far as possible 'without sparking war or permanent damage to Britain's local or global standing.'<sup>3</sup> Yet, this thesis might usefully build upon his excellent work by demonstrating that he also overgeneralises his assessment of Britain's 'anti-slavery world system' in a number of ways. In terms of how Palmerston approached nations for an anti-slavery treaty, for example, Palmerston's stance was evidently not 'the same' with 'civilised' and 'advanced' countries, since the former did not receive equal levels of respect nor equivalent diplomatic courtesies. Most significantly, 'civilised' countries were invariably 'acceded' to treaties that had already been negotiated by 'advanced' powers, denied an active role in policing the slave trade, and forced to adjudicate cases involving their own citizens in Mixed Commission Courts. When it came to the manner in which Palmerston conducted negotiations, moreover, 'civilised' states were again treated disdainfully in contrast to 'advanced' ones. Setting the agenda, dictating terms, and not allowing much room for manoeuvre, Palmerston dominated negotiations with 'civilised' countries whereas he was far more compromising, conciliatory and flexible with the Great Powers of Europe and America.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of what methods Palmerston used to persuade foreign states to accept and/or comply with his terms, furthermore, Huzzey overstates the timidity of

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 1, pp.37-64.

<sup>3</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.41, 63-64.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 3, pp.101-111.

Palmerston's anti-slavery policy with 'advanced' nations and understates the prudent nature of his policy with 'civilised' ones. For although Palmerston respected 'advanced' powers and was therefore unwilling to threaten them with violence or to issue ultimatums, and certainly not to go to war with them, he was ready to press these nations forcefully using less outwardly aggressive means which were nonetheless coercive in their own ways. As chapter three shows, Palmerston tried to provoke the Holy Alliance, France and the U.S. into making anti-slavery agreements by eliciting emotions such as dishonour, shame and embarrassment through his official dispatches, bombarding them with constant reports of their citizens' complicity in the slave trade, haranguing them into coming around the negotiating table, opening up clandestine conduits as a way of transmitting veiled threats, and above all, by allowing the Royal Navy to stop, search and seize their merchant ships on the high seas, regardless of whether Britain possessed a right-of-search agreement with them or not. Thus, rather than characterising Palmerston's anti-slavery policy towards 'advanced' powers as purely respectful and restrained, 'timid and pliant',<sup>5</sup> or 'toothless, even hapless',<sup>6</sup> Palmerston was able and willing to push them to the limits of their acceptance during the nineteenth century, and even to the precipice of war.<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, although Palmerston enforced Britain's anti-slavery treaties with 'civilised' nations using more forceful and imperialistic methods than he was prepared to sanction against 'advanced' ones, exercising the supreme might of the Royal Navy upon Portuguese and Brazilian ships and even in Brazil's national waters, upon closer examination his policies were not executed in a cavalier manner. In actual fact, Palmerston's aggressive use of sea power belied a policy that was carefully judged and confined within precise limits. As chapter three demonstrates, Palmerston strived to avoid conflict as far as possible, planned his escalations of power carefully, and employed the least amount of force necessary to secure Britain's objectives. In addition, he rejected policies that were too radical and always ensured his actions were underpinned by a semblance of legality. Wherever possible, moreover, Palmerston exercised subversive policies to combat the slave trade of 'civilised' states, seeking to undermine the pro-

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<sup>5</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.56.

<sup>6</sup> Mason, 'Keeping up Appearances', p.826.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 3, pp.111-120, 132-135, 142-148.

slavery lobbying groups which had infiltrated the Brazilian Government, for instance, via his management of the Brazilian newspaper press.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, this thesis contends that it is only by analysing Palmerston's anti-slavery policy towards nations perceived as 'barbarous' alongside his policy towards 'civilised' and 'advanced' powers that one can truly comprehend the shameful, insulting, and disparaging nature of Palmerston's approach towards African peoples and states in this period. For although Huzzey admits that Palmerston's approach towards them stood 'in stark contrast' to his stance with 'civilised' nations,<sup>9</sup> it would be more accurate to say that his approach with them was in fact entirely different. For whilst European and American countries were respected to varying degrees and their 'sovereign equality' emphasised or at least acknowledged, African nations were treated with contempt and derisively excluded from the 'family of civilised nations.' Regretfully, their societies were deemed to be rooted in 'barbarism,' considered nothing more than 'savage' 'tribes,' and thus unworthy of sovereign rights or protections under the Law of Nations. Consigned to making 'agreements' with British naval officers rather than 'treaties' with Palmerston himself, they were technically included in the fight to abolish the slave trade but legally excluded; their agency undervalued and their importance marginalised. Virtually nothing was ruled out when it came to imposing anti-slavery agreements on to 'barbarous' nations, critically, whether it was threats at gunpoint, blockades of navigable rivers, or the destruction of barracoons. Over time, vicious acts of reprisal, large-scale blockades, regime change, and even formal military conquest and annexation were endorsed by Palmerston and his Government.<sup>10</sup>

Palmerston's energy, determination and enthusiasm for suppressing the slave trade has never been in question, yet his intrinsic motivations have often been obscured and difficult to discern. It is the contention of this thesis, however, that whilst an earnest, fluid and well-developed sense of 'moral duty' was one of Palmerston's motivations when it came to him leading Britain's assault against the transatlantic slave trade – this being a confluence of various Christian tenets ranging from individual responsibility and destiny to atonement, redemption and divine Providence – this force of obligation did not

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<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 3, pp.120-126, 135-142, 148-162.

<sup>9</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p.52.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 3, pp.127-132, 162-171.

motivate Palmerston in quite the same way as his conscience. For although Palmerston's sense of duty was real and sincere, like his Christian faith more generally upon which these ideas rested, it was neither fervent nor informed by a serious contemplation of the theological issues surrounding abolition. Unlike William Wilberforce, Palmerston was not endeavouring to save the souls of non-Christians in Africa and the New World. On the contrary, one might argue that Palmerston deployed the vocabulary and imagery of religion strategically because he knew it would meet the needs of the particular audiences which he faced, and only on occasions when he needed his contemporaries – whether they were MPs in the House of Commons, statesmen from abroad, or members of the general populace – to support his particular line of argument.<sup>11</sup>

Since the late 1820s, moreover, but especially after entering the Foreign Office in 1830, Palmerston evinced a sincere moral revulsion towards slavery and a genuine feeling of compassion, perhaps even empathy, for suffering humans living faraway from Britain. As he expressed regularly in public and in private, it was his personal opinion that the slave trade was nothing less than a 'war against the human race,' and therefore something he felt compelled to abolish. So frequent were his condemnations of slave traders, he almost ran out of ways to describe his hatred of them. Among other things, he considered them to be 'murderers,' 'outlaw adventurers,' 'pirates,' 'the scum of the earth in every country' and 'the enemies of mankind.' His hatred of the slave trade was equally impassioned. It was a 'traffic in flesh and blood,' he declared, or else a 'cruel,' 'inhuman,' 'diabolical' and 'detestable' practice, a 'disgusting atrocity,' and a 'great disgrace of human nature.' These sentiments hardened over the course of Palmerston's life as he struggled to end the slave trade internationally. After more than a decade at the Foreign Office, Palmerston told the House of Commons that he considered the slave trade to be the worse crime the human race had ever committed, and that 'if all the other crimes... were added together in one vast aggregate, they would scarcely equal... the amount of guilt which has been incurred by mankind in connection with this diabolical slave trade.'<sup>12</sup> Based on the regularity, frequency and passion evident in Palmerston's public speeches, private letters and official dispatches on this topic, it seems improbable that Palmerston's condemnations of slavery and the slave trade were merely superficial rhetorical

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<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 4, pp.205-215.

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 4, pp.222-224.

constructions. Undeniably, Palmerston evinced real sympathy for the victims of the slave trade, and one might even posit that following a mature reflection of the journey which Africans faced from freedom into slavery he worked hard to empathise with their suffering. On numerous occasions, for instance, he challenged parliamentarians to put themselves into the position of enslaved Africans and to 'imagine' their torment first-hand. His speech to Parliament on 16 July 1844 was especially heartfelt, and it would be incredibly difficult to find another politician or abolitionist in this era capable of demonstrating such masterful command not just of how slave-trading was carried out in practice, down to the minutest detail, but how it impacted the communities and individuals caught up in it on a physical, mental and emotional level. It was his intrinsic compassion for enslaved Africans, therefore, that fuelled Palmerston's intense application and drive to stop this large-scale atrocity in his lifetime.<sup>13</sup>

By appreciating the ethical constraints and dilemmas that Palmerston faced when deciding his anti-slavery policy, moreover, one can begin to locate Palmerston's unique understanding of humanitarianism in its own particular time, place and culture, and thus to make sense of its complexities; especially those which might confound modern-day readers. As chapter five demonstrates, it was the intellectual environment of the Scottish Enlightenment and in particular a Whiggish commitment to the politics of moderation, balance and stability which led Palmerston to support the gradual rather than immediate abolition of colonial slavery in 1833. Palmerston was convinced that moderate, non-radical change would be the most advantageous and benevolent for all parties, or at least not harmful or unjust to either freed Britons or colonial planters. Similarly, it was due to the *laissez-faire* economic principles which he derived from Edinburgh that Palmerston perpetuated and endorsed Britain's continued involvement in the 'international trade and production system that had slave labour at its heart,'<sup>14</sup> vigorously opposing the BFASS's policy of abstention and supporting the reduction of the duty on slave-grown crops. Vitally, Palmerston did not believe that either stance was incompatible with the politics of compassion. Abstention, he argued, would make no difference whatsoever to the encouragement or discouragement of the international slave trade, this being an 'erroneous' distinction. Rather, he saw the matter in terms of preventing reckless and

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 4, pp.216-232.

<sup>14</sup> Reilly, review of *After Abolition: Britain and the slave trade since 1807*, by Marika Sherwood', p.111.

unsafe change that would cause widespread unemployment and misery in Britain whilst simultaneously impeding the nation's trading relationships and undermining its economic foundations. In a similar way, Palmerston did not accept that free trade and anti-slavery were opposing forces, but two systems in complete harmony with one another. It was far better not to interfere with the world's markets, he argued, because once 'the great springs' of British industry had been 'relieved from... those artificial obstructions which... retarded their development,' it would rapidly prove the superiority of free-wage over slave-labour, and thus contribute towards the advance of emancipation across the globe.<sup>15</sup>

By defining 'humanitarian' in a broader, more open-minded way than historians have previously done, as something that was able to co-exist in harmony with a *realist* perception of international politics, this thesis has also considered the varied and complex ways that Palmerston used anti-slavery politics to advance Britain's national interests in the nineteenth century at the same time as he pursued humanitarian goals.<sup>16</sup> In terms of Britain's economic interests, Palmerston believed that the abolition of colonial slavery would enrich Britain in the future because of the simple fact that free-wage labour would always outproduce and outcompete slave-labour. Moreover, Britain's suppression of the slave trade and the substitution of legitimate commerce in its place would deepen the Treasury's reserves by opening up of a vibrant new marketplace for British goods in Africa, and creating a new supplier of cheap, good quality raw materials for the country's manufacturing industries. Even if it meant accepting the short-term economic pain of financing such an expensive operation, Britain would ultimately be rewarded for its 'pecuniary sacrifice.'<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, it is apparent that Palmerston also used anti-slavery politics in this period as a 'strategic device,' one which could be deployed flexibly in an array of contexts and circumstances to serve Britain's national interests. As chapter six demonstrates, it could be used to unearth common ground and rekindle trust between Britain and the Holy Alliance as well as to advance the EIC's territorial ambitions in Portuguese India. These examples only scratch the surface of how anti-slavery politics could be used strategically, however, and further study might reveal

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<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 5, pp.235-254.

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 6, pp.255-257.

<sup>17</sup> See Chapter 6, pp.257-276.

many other ways that anti-slavery politics enabled Britain to pursue its international aims and agendas.<sup>18</sup>

Precisely how anti-slavery politics was used by Palmerston to promote Britain's national interests, then, was in some ways situational and depended on the specific historical context. Yet at the same time, there were also two 'eternal' and 'perpetual' interests which this issue could always be used to advance; namely, the power and prestige of the *Pax Britannica*.<sup>19</sup> Significantly, Britain's crusade against the international slave trade could be used in a rich variety of ways during this era to project an image of British power and prestige to rest of the world. Diplomatically, for instance, anti-slavery politics provided a stage for Britain to lead international negotiations and direct global politics, to showcase Britain's stamina, endurance and resilience in the face of constant delays and prevarication, as well as its firmness to stand up for its principles and unwillingness to compromise on them. In essence, it enabled Palmerston to cultivate a reputation for Britain as a leader in global politics and as a robust diplomatist – a reputation which could bolster Britain's interests in any negotiation that took place in this period, such as that over the Maine-New Brunswick boundary dispute with the U.S. in the 1830s. Furthermore, anti-slavery politics also created an opportunity for Palmerston to display and demonstrate Britain's maritime supremacy. Indeed, it ensured that Britain's naval forces were always 'visible' for the world to see, noticeably larger than Britain's Great Power rivals, and not just ready but willing to initiate change by naval force where necessary. As such, anti-slavery politics helped Palmerston to reinforce the perception that the Royal Navy was an omnipotent and omnipresent force in the high seas. Once again, this general impression of naval strength could also be used in more specific ways to advance Britain's transient aims and agendas, such as to deter France's imperial ambitions in Africa during the 1850s and 1860s. Most importantly though, it could help to maintain the balance of power in Europe and America. Above all, anti-slavery politics was thus a way to safeguard Britain's most vital interests, and ultimately to preserve the security of the United Kingdom.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See Chapter 6, pp.276-288.

<sup>19</sup> These quotes are taken out of context from one of Palmerston's most quoted speeches on the role of national interests in shaping British foreign policy. See Palmerston, 'Treaty of Adrianople – Charges Against Viscount Palmerston', *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, xcvi, 82-123 (1 March 1848), c.122. Palmerston declared that 'we have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.'

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 6, pp.288-303.



Since anti-slavery has not previously been considered an overly important aspect of Palmerston's life and career, and his interactions with extra-European affairs have largely been overlooked in assessments of him and his significance, Palmerston's relationship with anti-slavery can be used to shine a new light on Palmerston's political identity. Crucially, this thesis helps to undermine some of the more traditional portraits of Palmerston, which view him as either a sluggishly conservative English nationalist or a balance of power politician seeking to preserve the 'interests of England' above all else, as well as popular caricatures of him as a jovial, flamboyant and cavalier politician who got his way via swashbuckling 'gunboat diplomacy.'<sup>21</sup> On the contrary, Palmerston emerges throughout this thesis as a more complex statesman, who sought to pursue liberal ideals and progressive impulses abroad at the same time as protecting the country's national interests. Furthermore, as a statesman whose worldview was rooted in the coherent intellectual tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment and shaped by Dugald Stewart; with his anti-slavery policy a sincere expression of his commitment to the enlightenment values of freedom, liberty, progress, duty, honour and 'civilisation.' Although his actions can legitimately be defined as ruthless and aggressive, and his overall policy one of daring brinkmanship that pushed foreign nations to the uppermost limits of their tolerance and acceptance, Palmerston was undoubtedly a serious politician who exercised Britain's naval power responsibly; preferring to avoid conflict and to pursue diplomatic solutions wherever possible but also one ready to intervene where necessary in order to safeguard peace and to end crimes against humanity. Far from the crude caricature of him as a bullying 'gunboat diplomat,' then, swaggering into international crises with the imperial might of the *Pax Britannica*, Palmerston's bold approach belies a policy that was carefully planned, prudently judged, and skilfully executed. In short, this thesis supports the recent interpretation of Palmerston put forward by David Brown in 2010.<sup>22</sup>

Crucially, however, one might add to Brown's analysis that, perhaps more than any other single issue, anti-slavery illuminates a side of Palmerston's character that has often been neglected. Significantly, Palmerston emerges from this thesis as an

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<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Guedalla, *Palmerston*; Bell, *Lord Palmerston*; Southgate, *'The Most English Minister'*; Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*; Chamberlain, *Lord Palmerston*; Bourne, *Palmerston*. For more, see Introduction, pp.9-12.

<sup>22</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*. See also Introduction, pp.13-14.

internationalist and outward-looking statesman, as a caring, compassionate, sympathetic and even empathetic individual. As Roderick Braithwaite puts it in study of *Palmerston and Africa*, as an ‘unexpectedly warm and generous man, committed... to put his own time... into acts of kindness towards individuals in need.’<sup>23</sup> One must be cautious about attaching labels to historical actors, and perhaps especially Palmerston, who Brown recognises has frequently ‘suffered the vagaries of historical fad and fashion,’ as historians determine ‘to see him as “something.”’<sup>24</sup> Yet, nevertheless, this thesis supports the conclusion that Palmerston was, at least when it came to the suppression of the slave trade, a humanitarian statesman; one who felt keenly the suffering of enslaved Africans and was determined to translate his humane sentiments into an ethical foreign policy that would stop the large-scale atrocity of slavery, avert mass mortality, and end the widespread suffering caused by the ‘enemies of mankind.’<sup>25</sup> In line with Palmerston’s own admission, moreover, which he expressed at the end of his life within a private letter to Sir John Crampton in February 1864, that in all the country there was no greater enemy of the slave trade than himself, that the suppression of that traffic was the topic which occupied his mind and constituted the aim of his labours more ‘constantly’ and ‘intensely’ than any other, and that the abolition of the Brazilian slave trade was the ‘achievement’ he looked back on with ‘the greatest and purest pleasure,’ this thesis contends that Palmerston’s historical legacy ought to be redefined.<sup>26</sup> For although it is not necessary to remember Palmerston for one achievement in particular, one might suggest that Palmerston was as important to the abolition of the international slave trade as William Wilberforce was to the abolition of the British traffic in 1807, and therefore deserves some scholarly recognition. Vivaly, one might define Palmerston as one of Britain’s leading Victorian abolitionists, alongside his compatriots Thomas Fowell Buxton, Henry Brougham and Joseph Sturge, and perhaps even as Britain’s most eminent ‘anti-slavery minister.’

By taking a biographical approach to the history of British anti-slavery and using Lord Palmerston, the ‘defining political personality of his age,’<sup>27</sup> as a prism through which

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<sup>23</sup> Braithwaite, *Palmerston and Africa*, p.15.

<sup>24</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.2.

<sup>25</sup> Palmerston to Sir Francis Baring, 31 July 1851, PP, GC/BA/313.

<sup>26</sup> Palmerston to Sir John Crampton, 17 February 1864, in Evelyn Ashley, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, II, pp.263-264.

<sup>27</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.4; Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain*, p.194.

to analyse this field from a valuable new vantage point, moreover, it is not only the historiography of Palmerston that might be steered in a new direction but that of British anti-slavery as well. To begin with, by understanding the complexity of Palmerston's individual motivations for pursuing anti-slavery this thesis can build upon and support the recent work of Philip Morgan, Richard Huzzey, Christer Petley and Kristin Mann, all of whom contend that the binary polarisation which has been almost permanently entrenched in the field of British anti-slavery studies since 1944 is a false and misleading one.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Palmerston's motivations were evidently not dichotomous, underpinned by *either* selfless idealism *or* national self-interest, but delicately shaded. Throughout this period, he was attentive to both of these concerns at the same time, carefully balancing what was best for the long-term advancement of anti-slavery as well as Britain's national interests. By placing British anti-slavery within the context of Palmerstonian politics, one might argue, it is clear that Britain's campaign to suppress the international slave trade was subject to the same checks and balances which infused Palmerston's foreign policy across the world, mixing considerations of *real-and idealpolitik* simultaneously in 'a marriage of pragmatism and idealism.'<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, this thesis contends that it is inaccurate to conceive the role of the British Foreign Secretary, and Palmerston especially, as almost moribund when it came to suppressing the international slave trade; pressured into action by a vociferous public opinion and consumed within the 'official mind' of the Foreign Office, or else only a minor, inconsequential part of the British anti-slavery state.<sup>30</sup> As chapter four shows, whilst public opinion had a role in shaping the context of British politics, Palmerston did not regard himself as its servant in the nineteenth century. On the contrary, he held a coherent view of his own duties and responsibilities as a public statesman; a key part of which was to make decisions based on his independent judgement and conscience and not on the mandate of the people. Although he was prepared to go along with public opinion when it supported him, therefore, he would invariably challenge and oppose it when it did not. Rather than being a detached arbiter of the nation's affairs, moreover,

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<sup>28</sup> Morgan, 'Ending the Slave Trade: A Caribbean and Atlantic Context'; Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*; Petley, 'The Royal Navy, the British Atlantic Empire and the Abolition of the Slave Trade'; Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900*. For more on this long-running debate, see Introduction, pp.26-29.

<sup>29</sup> Brown, *Palmerston*, p.152.

<sup>30</sup> See Introduction, pp.18-21.

Palmerston's relationship with public opinion was clearly more dynamic than anti-slavery historians have previously described. Palmerston was determined to court, manipulate and control anti-slavery public opinion for his own personal and political ends during this period, and arguably succeeded in doing so; cultivating for himself a popular persona as the country's leading 'anti-slavery minister.'<sup>31</sup>

Whilst Huzzey has gone a long way to unravelling the nuances within 'the anti-slavery lobe of the official mind,' furthermore, showing that it was by no means monolithic or ossified since there were multiple and competing ideas about how anti-slavery should be pursued in practice,<sup>32</sup> it is hard to accept that individual statesmen could have no special role in shaping Britain's anti-slavery policy. As chapter two shows, it was Palmerston in particular who worked to refine and perfect the anti-slavery policy of his predecessors; transforming the basic blueprint he inherited into a complex strategy that targeted the slave trade at all of its weakest points.<sup>33</sup> Although Palmerston's policy was subsequently appropriated by successive Liberal foreign secretaries, moreover, Palmerston certainly believed there were substantial differences between his anti-slavery policy and that carried on by political rivals, especially Lord Aberdeen. Palmerston disagreed strongly, for instance, with Aberdeen's decision to withdraw Britain's anti-slavery squadrons from the coastlines of Brazil and the West Indies.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, chapter four demonstrates how Palmerston denounced Aberdeen's failure to get the Great Power treaty ratified by France, as well as his decision to abandon any hope of an Anglo-American right-of-search agreement and then to abrogate the existing Anglo-French one. For Palmerston, all these decisions were serious failures of Aberdeen's judgement and leadership, suggestive of an unacceptable lack of commitment to anti-slavery.<sup>35</sup> To dismiss Palmerston's exertions as predetermined or inherited, therefore, as merely the legacy of the institutionalised 'official mind' of the Foreign Office, undermines his important personal role in shaping Britain's anti-slavery policy around a coherent political doctrine and his own strongly-held humanitarian sentiments.

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 4, pp.173-205.

<sup>32</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, passim, esp. pp.5-20, 60-61, 203-213.

<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 2, pp.65-100.

<sup>34</sup> See Chapter 2, pp.90-92.

<sup>35</sup> See Chapter 4, pp.199-200, 231-232.

Huzzey's definition of the British 'anti-slavery state' as one of inter-departmental collaboration and global networks is undeniably sophisticated, moreover, showing that it required many different institutions and individuals communicating within and across one another to tackle a problem as large as the transatlantic slave trade.<sup>36</sup> Yet, it is again hard to believe that the British state would have been able to function effectively without clear leadership. On the contrary, this thesis shows that Palmerston played a very significant personal role in abolishing the international slave trade, and that his individual agency within the anti-slavery state ought to be underlined. Vitally, with all of the information received from the Admiralty, Royal Navy, Slave Trade Department and Consular Service filtered back to and through him, one might argue that Palmerston was the key individual who computed this vast quantity of data and decided policy accordingly; bringing the different institutions of state together, pulling them in one unified direction, and imposing his own vision on to them almost as if the anti-slavery state was his 'personal fiefdom.'<sup>37</sup> As chapters two and three demonstrate, wherever there were difficult decisions to be made about the overall strategy, limitations, scope, and even day-to-day implementation of Britain's anti-slavery policy, whether it was over the right to 'visit' U.S.-flagged slavers without a valid treaty, to stop and search vessels in Brazilian territorial waters, or to destroy barracoons in West Africa, it was always Palmerston who made the final decision (albeit sometimes retrospectively) and never the Admiralty, British officials on the spot or even the Cabinet.<sup>38</sup> As James Hudson explained to Palmerston in 1851 as he left Brazil, having successfully extinguished the Brazilian slave trade, 'Had I not been possessed with your ideas – certain of your support – encouraged by your example – and charmed by your approval, I [would have] done nothing; and Africans would at this moment have been poured into Brazil in shoals. Your Lordship showed me the road; I followed.'<sup>39</sup> Moreover, whenever Palmerston was challenged by Cabinet ministers over his decisions, like he was by Sir Francis Baring in 1851 over implementing regime change in Lagos, Palmerston's approach invariably triumphed.<sup>40</sup> Overall, then, Palmerston ought to be recognised and remembered for what he truly was: the fulcrum about which Britain's anti-slavery policy turned during the mid-nineteenth century, and the beating heart at the centre of Britain's anti-slavery state.

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<sup>36</sup> Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp.40-51. See Introduction, pp.20-21.

<sup>37</sup> Huzzey expressly denies this was the case, see *Freedom Burning*, p.70.

<sup>38</sup> For the specific incidents mentioned, see Chapter 3. pp.143-144, 149-150, 128-131.

<sup>39</sup> James Hudson to Palmerston, 10 October 1851, PP, GC/HU/39.

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 3, pp.165-166.

Finally, in addition to expanding the fields of Palmerston studies and British anti-slavery studies, this thesis might contribute to broader developments in the field of Victorian political history. Indeed, Palmerston's relationship with anti-slavery politics might be taken to affirm Angus Hawkins' excellent new interpretation of Victorian political culture, for it appears to fit neatly into his assessment that Victorian politics was underpinned by a reverence for the past, the pursuit of morality, and the primacy of local community.<sup>41</sup> As this thesis shows, Palmerston regularly evoked Britain's slave-trading past to give legitimacy to his anti-slavery aims, described abolition as a moral activity rooted in some of the most important tenets of Christianity, as well as something that would redeem and benefit the entire nation. Although he did not point to Britain's historical record with pride, for instance, Palmerston's argument that Britain needed to suppress the slave trade in order to atone for its former misdeeds, expiate its sins, and thus avoid the wrath of God was highly effective; combining all three of these conservative aspects of Victorian political culture. One might contend, however, that rather than seeing Palmerston's evocation of these points inflecting a 'sluggish conservatism' upon Liberal ideas in Victorian public life, as Hawkins suggests, and highlighting that it was a 'conservatism in the English character' which truly engaged 'the hearts and minds of society,'<sup>42</sup> the topic of anti-slavery shows how these crucial aspects of Victorian political culture could also incorporate inclusive, outward-looking and progressive ideals. For at the same time, Palmerston stressed that Britain needed to break with tradition, used secular, humanitarian arguments, and asserted that the community Britain served was a global one. It was Britain's role and place in the world, he argued, to end the slave trade because it was a crime against humanity and to prevent the suffering of distant strangers abroad. In a sense, then, when it came to evoking Britain's desire to suppress the international slave trade, Palmerston effectively combined his more conservative, religious, and insular arguments of 'moral duty' with the liberal, secular and globalist ones of humanitarianism. Angus Hawkins is right, therefore, that conservatism played a major role in defining public values and shaping 'party creeds, electoral behaviour, and public attitudes' during this era, and that Victorian Britain was

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<sup>41</sup> Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, passim, esp. pp.2-12. For more on Hawkins' interpretation, see Introduction, pp.34-35.

<sup>42</sup> Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, p.387.

not 'an exemplar of the liberal modern state.'<sup>43</sup> Yet, we potentially need to reconsider whether the inclusive, outward-looking, internationalist and humanitarian values evident in Palmerston's anti-slavery crusade were also at the heart of Victorian political culture. In other words, whether it is too early at this moment to re-evaluate this period as a 'conservative,' rather than a 'Liberal age.'<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p.387.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, the recent work of Catherine Shaw, *Britannia's Embrace: Modern Humanitarianism and the Imperial Origins of Refugee Relief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) and Joanna Lewis, *Empire of Sentiment: The Death of Livingstone and the Myth of Victorian Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) which also points the field of Victorian political history in this direction.





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