‘A Fine Subject to Expatiate Upon.’

British Foreign Policy and the Rhetoric of National Honour, 1830-1880.

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Supervised by Dr Robert Armstrong

Declaration

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30 September 2023

Abstract

This thesis analyses the rhetoric of national honour in British foreign policy, during the period 1830 to 1880. National honour's status as an understated, understudied subject will be addressed, yet this thesis will not attempt to position national honour as the cause of conflict. Instead, it will draw from material in the public sphere – including Parliamentary debates, public speeches, and Britain's expanding media industry – to demonstrate that contemporaries used national honour's extensive lexicon, both to explain policy decisions and to criticise their political opponents. This thesis will explicate national honour from British foreign policy by considering how this rhetoric was used by contemporaries during periods of foreign policy crisis. It will also measure the extent to which national honour's rhetoric constrained and facilitated foreign policy.

These tasks will be addressed through a case-study approach, with a focus on incidents which did not, generally, result in war, but did compel contemporaries to engage extensively with national honour's lexicon, and use the available rhetoric to frame their positions. This thesis is structured to provide analysis for national honour's main rhetorical themes, and is divided into two broad sections; the former is concerned with 'miniature' case studies up the period 1850, and the latter examines three individual cases over three remaining chapters.

Thus, Chapter One considers how this rhetoric was used by Palmerston during his stewardship of Whig foreign policy, from 1830 to 1841. Chapter Two addresses the concept of insult, and examines contemporary efforts by Whigs and Conservatives to vindicate national honour by acquiring satisfaction during the 1840s. Chapter Three focuses on Anglo-American relations during the contentious period of 1838-1846, wherein themes including insult, conciliation, and compromise were dealt with. Chapter Four concerns the 1861 Trent Affair, and the response to the American insult during the American Civil War. Chapter Five considers British policy during the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, and the conflicting themes of obligation, bluster, and influence. Chapter Six examines Benjamin Disraeli's policy during the Eastern Crisis of 1875 to 1878, wherein the Prime Minister recast prestige as a surrogate of national honour, and presided over a policy of tense confrontation with Russia.

It will be revealed that the rhetoric of national honour could justify policies of confrontation, magnanimity, and the maintenance of the status quo. National honour's rhetorical power was considerable, but it was not a panacea either for the government or the opposition. There were limits to its influence and effectiveness, which were exposed by complex negotiations

or debates on distant issues of scant interest to the British public. Notwithstanding its status as a belief system accepted by the majority, this thesis will demonstrate that national honour was, above all, a politically contested space.

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Conventions

This research project adheres to conventions prescribed by the *Irish Historical Studies*. There is one notable exception to this. As I accessed Parliamentary debates online via Hansard's Parliamentary Archives, I have dispensed with the conventions used in references to physical volumes of this material. Instead, references to Parliamentary debates are presented in the following format: Name of contributor, House of Parliament, date, volume, and column location. When referencing debates in the House of Commons or House of Lords, this will be indicated as HC Deb or HL Deb respectively. For purposes of illustration, this appears as Viscount Palmerston, HC Deb 23 July 1863 vol 172, cc. 1252-1253.

Introduction

> What is national honour? Wherein does it lie? When was it invented, and by what nation? How many aggressions amount to pulling the nose of a nation? What proceedings on the part of a foreign Court may be construed into treading on our toes without an apology?[1]

When the *Satirist* presented these questions in 1835, it was not searching for answers about national honour, but was instead challenging the *Morning Herald*'s claims that it had been damaged. 'If we are to believe the old lady,' the *Satirist* continued, referencing the *Herald*, 'our national honour has been insulted at least once a week, since the appointment of Lord Palmerston to the Foreign Office.'[2] Certainly, the 'old lady' was assured of its position. The *Herald* charged 'That the honour of England has been sullied,' and 'that her fame has declined among the nations and that foreign powers have aggrandised themselves at our expense during the last five years, is unfortunately as true as it is humiliating.'[3] The following week, an admiral's request to enter the Black Sea was presented as a disgrace,[4] and when the Russian Tsar declared his intention to exterminate all Polish opposition, the *Herald* wondered 'will the Government take any steps to vindicate the national honour and redeem the national faith?'[5]

These expressions were representative of a nineteenth century pattern to use the rhetoric of national honour in a public setting, and they were not exclusive to the press. When criticising the government for reneging both on its pledges to Denmark and its threats to the Germans in the 1864 Schleswig-Holstein crisis, Lord Salisbury urged Members to 'Look at the difficulty of your situation now. You cannot by any form of words you can use persuade Foreign Powers that you are in earnest.' Salisbury warned that 'In any future European complications that may arise, you may tell them that your interests are greatly concerned, that you are not indifferent to a question, that you view the matter in a very serious light,' and 'that the aggressors might be met by armed intervention; but until you have committed yourselves to irrevocable war, you will not be able to make those listen to whom you address

[1] *Satirist; or, the Censor of the Times*, 8 Nov 1835.
[2] *Ibid*.
[3] *Morning Herald*, 2 Oct 1835.
[4] 'Our correspondence from the East has recorded only Russian triumphs, Russian insolence, and disgraceful acts of submission on the part of those who out to assert the honour and protect the interests of Great Britain ever since the present Ministers first came into office.' *Morning Herald*, 7 Oct 1835.
[5] *Morning Herald*, 19 Nov 1835.

yourselves.' Salisbury believed that 'This loss of dignity and honour is not a sentiment; it is a loss of actual power. It is a loss of power which will have to be brought back at some future day by the blood and treasure of England.'[6] Salisbury could condemn the government by leveraging this loss of honour against them, drawing upon rhetoric which was understood and familiar in Parliamentary debate. This tactic was effective because of the value which the national honour was said to possess, to the extent that statesmen would do all they could to avoid being charged with its mismanagement.

Thus, while debating the merits of a commercial treaty with France in 1860, Earl Grey claimed it was impossible 'to sign that Treaty without inflicting a stain on the honour of England in the eyes of Europe.'[7] However, according to Lord Wodehouse, the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, 'That was scarcely called for,' because 'no one of their Lordships, to whatever political party he might belong,' would ever think 'of entertaining for a moment the idea of sacrificing the honour of the country in anyway.'[8] When in 1865 veteran Whig statesman Lord Elcho spoke to the House of Commons on 'the point of honour' involved in Canadian defences, recommending an attack on the United States rather than costly fortifications along the border, he assured other Members that 'the course he suggested was strictly consistent with national honour.'[9] But the Conservative former Secretary for the Colonies Sir John Pakington disagreed, and accused him of saying 'that we must not push the doctrine of honour too far,' language 'which is not acceptable either in this House or elsewhere.'[10]

This 'doctrine of honour' would be pushed very far indeed during the period 1830 to 1880, and beyond. In Parliament, Ministers underlined their care for national honour in the presentation of their foreign policy successes, while opposition figures contested these claims by bringing forth evidence of dishonourable behaviour. One is drawn to the rhetoric at play in these exchanges, which were presented to the public by an expanding newspaper press. The rhetoric of national honour could be a potent political weapon, applicable to numerous scenarios, both foreign and domestic, and dependent upon a pre-existing belief system which claimed to value British honour above all else. Despite its prevalence, however, national honour and its rhetoric has not been analysed in the nineteenth century. It

[6] Salisbury, HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 850-852.
[7] Earl Grey, HL Deb 15 March 1860 vol 157, cc. 578-579.
[8] Lord Wodehouse, *Ibid*, cc. 583-584.
[9] Lord Elcho, HC Deb 6 April 1865 vol 178, cc. 800-801.
[10] Sir John Pakington, *Ibid*, cc. 838-839.

is intended that this research project will rectify this shortcoming in Victorian historiography by explicating the belief system of national honour and assessing the rhetoric which accompanied it. To succeed in this formidable task, one is required to equip their research project with the best possible structure, and provide clear, actionable research goals.

I: Structure, Methodology, and Research Questions

'Honour', wrote the historian John A. Lynn, 'is a formidable concept. One of the most complex terms in the English language, it encompasses several levels of meaning, rich in moral connotations and emotional overtones.'[11] On another occasion, Lynn wrote that to try and understand the seventeenth century without weighing the influence of war and military institutions would be 'like trying to dance without listening to the music.'[12] It is possible to connect Lynn's two statements; national honour was part of the 'music' of the nineteenth century, which successive historians have failed to notice or appreciate, to the detriment of their studies. It will be suggested that contemporaries recognised the pleasing sound of this 'music,' and used it where possible to frame foreign incidents, mobilise support, and defend policy decisions. This presents significant implications for Victorian foreign policy studies, and such implications are best assessed by an analysis of contemporary rhetoric.

What was rhetoric in a mid-Victorian sense? It may be viewed as a system of expression; a language of intent which pressed for a certain outcome. According to Peter Munz, 'Rhetoric is the art of persuasion.'[13] Indeed, rhetoric could be a powerful persuasive tool, and when fused with an established ideology – such as national honour – it becomes possible to identify the tenets of a prevailing belief system and the contemporary cognisance of its political potency.[14] Victorian contemporaries presented national honour in Parliament, while the printed media reinforced or challenged their message. Scholars have assessed how these public sources reveal significant rhetorical patterns in domestic politics, the diffusion of

[11] John A. Lynn, 'Toward an Army of Honor: The Moral Evolution of the French Army, 1789-1815', *French Historical Studies*, 16, No. 1 (Spring, 1989), 152-173; 153.
[12] John A. Lynn, 'Tactical Evolution in the French Army, 1560-1660', *French Historical Studies*, 14, No. 2 (Autumn, 1985), 176-191; p. 176.
[13] Peter Munz, 'The Rhetoric of Rhetoric,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 51, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1990), 121-142; 121.
[14] Abbott contended that the rise in nationalism as an idea complimented the simultaneous rise in political rhetoric and eloquent speechmaking, and it may be argued that national honour enjoyed the fruits of these trends. See Don Paul Abbott, 'The Genius of the Nation: Rhetoric and Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century Britain,' *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 40, No. 2 (2010), 105-127.

scientific ideas, legal reform, and the abolitionist movement, thereby revealing lexicons understood and used by contemporaries.[15] These studies present models of analysis which may be followed, but a quantitative approach – such as that used by Amanda Goodrich when measuring the frequency of aristocracy in public language – is of less use than a qualitative approach which explicates national honour from the speeches and expressions of the period.[16]

With this goal in mind, it may be instructive to consider the main sources used in this research project. To begin with, it is clear that an assessment of political rhetoric necessitates a comprehensive analysis of Parliamentary speeches. These were obtained through the Parliamentary Archive, and include debates from the House of Commons and House of Lords. These discussions are contextualised with reference to newspapers and journals, within which London sources such as *The Times*, the *Globe*, the *London Evening Gazette*, the *Morning Post* and the *Morning Chronicle* are afforded priority. Due to the size of their reading base and the resulting influence these organs had, it is important to consider the rhetoric deployed when national honour was perceived at stake. Where possible, an assessment of regional papers will supplement this analysis, to provide as broad a study as possible of the prevailing themes and imperatives which underpinned national honour's rhetoric. These varied public sources affirm the significant difference in interpretations of honour which contemporaries from different political backgrounds and different regions had, while also highlighting to extent to which national honour was politicised.

It will be contended here that national honour was a familiar concept, and that contemporaries used national honour's rhetorical power as a political tool to attain their ends, with varying degrees of success. Such ends could be as insignificant as deploying the language of honour to criticise the shortcomings of Ministerial policy, or as significant as Palmerston using the insult to British honour inflicted by Washington during the *Trent* Affair to push Anglo-American relations to the brink of war. Moreover, just as honour was a popular policy imperative, so too was national honour a popular idea among public

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[15] Jan-Melissa Schramm, '"The Anatomy of a Barrister's Tongue": Rhetoric, Satire, and the Victorian Bar in England,' *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32, No. 2 (2004), 285-303. Seymour Drescher, 'People and Parliament: The Rhetoric of the British Slave Trade,' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 20, No. 4 (Spring, 1990), 561-580. Anna Clark, 'The Rhetoric of Chartist Domesticity: Gender, Language, and Class in the 1830s and 1840s,' *Journal of British Studies*, 31, No. 1 (Jan., 1992), 62-88. Ed Block, Jr, 'T. H. Huxley's Rhetoric and the Popularization of Victorian Scientific Ideas: 1854-1874,' *Victorian Studies*, 29, No. 3 (Spring, 1986), 363-386.

[16] Goodrich, Understanding A Language Of 'Aristocracy', 1700–1850,' *Historical Journal*, 56, No. 2 (June 2013), 369-398.

opinion.[17] This did not necessarily mean contemporaries acted cynically; using honour merely because it resonated with the public, rather than because they believed in it. It is certainly possible for both to be true, and as Allen Hertz contended, 'Compelling linguistic evidence shows that, at least until 1914-18, honour was one of the key categories for British thinking about foreign policy.' Hertz also perceived that honour was frequently associated with imperatives such as interest, security, or other advantages, what he referred to as a 'duplex'.[18] Through this linkage, contemporaries could argue that a failure to defend national honour would jeopardise Britain's expanding interests, providing additional legitimacy to the ethic.

What emerges from this study is honour's rhetorical potency, and its frequent deployment in a political setting. Parliamentary debates, where national honour's principles, pitfalls and contradictions were expressed, are thus an essential source of evidence. The expansion of print media must also be considered, because as Kathryn Rix demonstrated, parliamentary debates were regularly printed and distributed, and some even worked to have more pivotal debates published as standalone pamphlets.[19] However, newspapers also had an agency of their own, and it was common for editors, columnists, and speakers to urge their audience to value national honour; criticising those that would damage it, while lauding those that would defend it, if necessary, through war. One may thus question whether such sources were compelled to engage with national honour because of its popularity, or whether the ethic became more popular because of their material.[21] Questions like these will be considered, but they are not the focus of this research project. Nor is it the intention to present national honour as a primary cause of major international incidents, as other scholars have attempted. Rather, the focus will be on the deployment of rhetoric, and the implications of these tactics for British foreign policy.

National honour was said to be prioritised above material interests, and contemporaries appeared to take inspiration from their predecessors. Charles James Fox's (1749-1806)

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[17] José Carlos Del Ama, 'Honor and Public Opinion,' *Human Studies*, 32, No. 4 (Dec 2009), 441-460.
[18] Allen Z. Hertz. 'Honour's Role in the International States' System', *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy*, 31, No. 2 (Winter 2002), 127.
[19] Rix, ''Whatever Passed in Parliament Ought to be Communicated to the Public': Reporting the Proceedings of the Reformed Commons, 1833–50,' *Parliamentary History*, 33, pt. 3 (2014), 453–474.
[21] As Palmerston observed on newspapers, 'Though they look to the government for news, they look to their readers for money, and they never can resist flying out upon popular topics when they think that by a flourish they shall gain a little éclat among club and coffee house politicians, and have their paper talked of for four and twenty hours.' Palmerston to Lady Cowper, 12 Sept 1831 in Kenneth Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England 1830-1902* (Oxford, 1970), Doc. 11, p. 221.

rejection of war 'on a calculation of interest or advantage,' could be contrasted with his insistence that war would be necessary when 'the honour of a country is concerned,' which 'every independent powerful country, unconquered and unconquerable like this, must preserve untouched and pure,' because 'it is to preserve that honour unassailed, and that name untarnished, that alone the dreadful extremity of war should be had recourse to.'[22] It was thus established that statesmen would prioritise the vindication of national honour above peace; this was articulated as a preference for war over dishonour. In practice, the possibility of acquiring satisfaction through peaceful means meant that the government rarely had to make war, even if war was often threatened.[23] Nonetheless, national honour was invoked to press for war, whether it was Lord John Russell informing the Commons of war with Russia in 1854,[24] or Sir Edward Grey asserting the necessity of war with Germany to his contemporaries in 1914.[25]

Although these instances are arguably more famous examples, the lexicon of honour remained largely consistent whether a crisis concluded in war or not, and it is in those understudied, lesser-known incidents that some of the most striking examples of this rhetoric can be found. Confrontations with Russia, France, and the United States produced anxious discussions of honour. Both sides of the political aisle launched rhetorical attacks against opponents who were perceived to have mishandled the national honour through excessive concession or improper reactions to received insults. Contemporaries were amenable to invoking honour if they sensed an opportunity to weaken their opponents, yet those they criticised could deploy honour in their defence, and charge them with cynicism.

Due to this focus on what may be considered 'peaceful crises' this research project will not assess the Crimean War, or contemporary efforts to leverage national honour within it. The volume of newspapers, Parliamentary debates, and public speeches delivered during the conflict represent a well too deep for this research project to explore. Indeed, so vast is the Crimean War historiography, one could argue it deserves a research project of its own. However, while that conflict is excluded, its long shadow is inescapable. The decision to separate this research project into two distinct sections facilitates a broader survey of honour

[22] Quoted in Brougham, HL Deb 22 Jan 1846 vol 83, cc. 29-31.
[23] Arguably the most prescient example of this language is seen during the Trent Affair (1861), see Chapter Four.
[24] Russell, HC Deb 31 March 1854 vol 132, cc. 217-218. See also Benjamin Disraeli, *Ibid*, cc. 282-283.
[25] See by the author *A Matter of Honour: Great Britain in the First World War* (Wicklow, 2022), pp. 79-83. This study was repurposed from the author's M.A. dissertation.

across what might be deemed pre- and post-Crimean War periods. Considering national honour both before and after the Crimean War reveals developments and cleavages which were significant in themselves. The 1856 Treaty of Paris had outlawed privateering and affirmed standards of international law among the signees, but national honour was not supplanted.[26] In fact the ethic arguably experienced a rejuvenation, as the increased importance of prestige fused national honour to imperialist policies, which compelled Britons to think and speak more widely of their Empire and its requirements.

To examine the rhetoric of national honour in the mid-Victorian period, one must present the necessary structure to best accommodate these ends. A case-study methodology recommends itself, as this facilitates an examination of national honour's rhetoric across a fifty-year spectrum. The case-study method has been utilised by other scholars of honour,[27] but it can present problems of detail and analysis if chronology is ignored.[28] The solution is to combine a chronological approach with case-studies, and to divide this research project into two sections, with three chapters in each. The first section considers the period 1830-1850, consisting of what may be called 'miniature case-studies.'[29] The second section devotes chapter-sized case-studies to the Trent Affair, the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, and the Russo-Turkish War.

Specifically, Chapter One examines Whig foreign policy between 1830 and 1841, focusing on the rhetoric of national honour therein. Chapter Two considers the concept of insult, and

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[26] Harold Temperley, 'The Treaty of Paris of 1856 and Its Execution Part 1,' *The Journal of Modern History*, 4, No. 3 (Sep., 1932), 387-414; Temperley, 'The Treaty of Paris of 1856 and Its Execution Part 2,' *The Journal of Modern History*, 4, No. 4 (Dec., 1932), 523-543. The Treaty of Paris also preceded a diplomatic revolution which suspended the Holy Alliance, see W. E. Mosse, 'The Triple Treaty of 15 April 1856,' *The English Historical Review*, 67, No. 263 (Apr., 1952), 203-229. The Treaty transformed maritime belligerent rights, see C. I. Hamilton, 'Anglo-French Seapower and the Declaration of Paris,' *The International History Review*, 4, No. 2 (May, 1982), 166-190.

[27] Kwame Antony Appiah used a case-study approach when assessing honour's use in affecting moral revolutions. See Appiah, *The Honour Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (New York, 2010). This has been contested, as honour's emotional imperatives were emphasised in another case-study approach by Victor Kumar and Richmond Campbell, 'Honor and Moral Revolution,' *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Special Issue: Dimensions of Consequentialism (February 2016), pp. 147-159.

[28] In his review of Sir Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, 1830-1841: Britain, The Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Question*, 2 vols (London, 1851), W. T. Laprade complained of Webster's case-based approach, while conceding 'It is easier, however, to point out this defect than it is to suggest a remedial literary device.' W. T. Laprade, '(Review): The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, 1830-1841: Britain, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Question by Charles Webster,' *The American Historical Review*, 58, No. 1 (Oct., 1952), 107-109; 109.

[29] Chapter One includes the Polish Uprising, the Russian Dutch Loan, the Portuguese and Spanish Civil Wars, and the origins of the Eastern Question. Chapter Two includes the First Anglo-Afghan War, the First Opium War, the expulsion of the British ambassador from Madrid, and the Don Pacifico Affair. Chapter Three includes the Alexander McLeod controversy, the Maine boundary negotiations, and negotiations over the fate of Oregon.

how contemporaries responded to it during the 1840s. Chapter Three assesses Anglo-American relations from 1838 to 1846, drawing on insult, negotiation, and the idea of compromise to judge how honour was used by contemporaries. Chapter Four analyses Washington's insult in the 1861 Trent Affair, and how Palmerston made striking use of honour to demand satisfaction from President Lincoln. Chapter Five assesses the failure of Palmerston's administration in the 1864 Schleswig-Holstein crisis, which attempted to fulfil its Danish obligations, but undermined its mission with a shameful policy of bluff. Chapter Six presents Benjamin Disraeli's premiership and his attempt to deploy prestige to justify greater British involvement in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, with dramatic consequences for British status, albeit tempered by imperial failure in Afghanistan and South Africa.

It is also important to consider existing methodologies which provide honour with a coherent structure, and explain its inner logic. Of note is the work of Frank Henderson Stewart, who conceived of honour as a tripartite concept, possessing inner, outer, and claim-right aspects.[30] Stewart posited that the individual had expectations of a certain treatment based on their social position, which he understood as an 'honour-group.'[31] Contemporary views of honour certainly reflected this sense of entitlement, as the *Saturday Review* argued, 'The honourable man will act as honourably when his actions are known to himself alone as he does when all the world is looking out. He acts not to win the applause of others, but to satisfy a sense of honour in his own breast.'[32] Although Stewart intended his methodology for personal honour only and did not conceive of its use in national honour, this has not stopped an admittedly limited number of scholars from applying his findings to both spheres,[33] and it may be useful to follow this example in Victorian foreign policy. Yet, if Stewart engaged with what honour looked like, others have attempted to explain how it worked, and whether the ethic was inherently logical.

In his study of British intervention in the First World War, Avner Offer suggested that honour adhered to a script which explained how contemporaries interacted with and deployed it.[34]

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[30] Frank Henderson Stewart, *Honor* (Chicago, 1994), p. 21.
[31] *Ibid*, 54.
[32] *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 20 Feb 1864, 218-219.
[33] Matthew T. Racine, 'Service and Honor in Sixteenth-Century Portuguese North Africa: Yahya-u-Tacfuft and
Portuguese Noble Culture,' *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 32, No. 1 (Spring, 2001), 67-90; Elizabeth Keating, 'Honor and Stratification in Pohnpei, Micronesia,' *American Ethnologist*, 25, No. 3 (Aug., 1998), 399-411.
[34] Avner Offer, 'Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honor?' *Politics & Society*, 23, No. 2 (1995), 223.

This is an important contention, as Stewart was criticised for failing to define the code of honour and what it prescribed.[35] Honour, as Offer contends, should not be considered as an irrational chivalric code, but as a formula which prescribed rewards for a nation which adhered to it, and penalties for those that violated it. This formula may be deemed an 'honour-script', which could legitimise policies that appeared otherwise reckless, and provided contemporaries with a narrative framework that was acceptable and understood.[36] But honour, as Offer argued, could also be a 'snare,' based on a 'flawed logic of belligerence and a misleading cognitive bias, on an optical illusion that blinded the actors to alternative scripts of honour, to other forms of courage and risk taking,' such as concession or conciliation.[37] Flawed or not, contemporaries identified with this script's imperatives, and they struggled under the weight of its tenets when more sensible alternatives – such as compromise – presented themselves.

Caught between the ideology of honour and the imperatives of statecraft, contemporaries defended their actions in Parliament and occasionally through the press, justifying those occasions when they could not fully commit to national honour's demands, while being unable to ignore them. Contemporaries were also coming under greater public scrutiny in the extra-Parliamentary sphere.[38] Their parliamentary speeches were increasingly linked to the burgeoning Victorian press, and as Kathryn Rix has argued 'MPs spoke as much to be reported by the press and read by their constituents as to influence their colleagues in the House.'[39] It may be debated whether national honour was leveraged to gain local popularity when one's speech was read, yet it should be noted that print media both regionally and in London engaged with the ethic. To ascertain as wide a survey of national honour as possible, the London press will be supplemented by these regional newspapers, accessed in their digitised form.[40]

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[35] For the critique see Jenefer Robinson, 'Review Honor. by Frank Henderson Stewart,' *Mind*, 106, No. 424 (Oct., 1997), 798-800; 798. Stewart presented the code of honour thus: 'The code of honour is a set of standards that has been picked out as having particular importance, that measures an individual's worth along some profoundly significant dimensions; and a member of the honour group who fails to meet these standards is viewed not just as inferior but often also as despicable.' Stewart, *Honor*, 55.
[36] *Ibid*, 223-224.
[37] *Ibid,* 235-236.
[38] David Brown, *Palmerston A Biography* (London, 2010), p. 208.
[39] Rix, ''Whatever Passed in Parliament Ought to be Communicated to the Public'', 457.
[40] Recent studies have also made use of digitised sources, see Thomas Smits, 'Making the News National: Using Digitized Newspapers to Study the Distribution of the Queen's Speech by W. H. Smith & Son, 1846–1858', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 49, No. 4 (Winter 2016), 598-625.

This research project will address deficits in the historiographies of honour, diplomatic history, and Victorian culture, through three distinct research questions. First, is it possible to explicate national honour from British foreign policy, and explain the ethic's pressures, contradictions, and overall themes? Second, how did contemporaries use the rhetoric of honour in the public sphere both to defend their policy decisions and to criticise their rivals? Third, to what extent did this rhetoric of national honour facilitate or constrain contemporaries in their pursuit of policy? While addressing these questions, this thesis will be informed by Stewart's tripartite methodology, and by the contributions of Avner Offer. It is intended that a more complete picture of national honour will be acquired from this approach; by assessing its rhetorical power, the broader impact of the ethic on Victorian foreign policy can also be ascertained. But what was national honour? How influential was it perceived to be, and what constraints did it place on contemporary policymakers? These questions will be addressed next.

II: A Survey of Two Spheres: Personal and National Honour

The student does not want for materials analysing honour in its interpersonal form. In recent decades scholars have explicated honour's tenets and developed new methods for interpreting its importance.[41] Some have assumed the challenge of reaching an agreed definition of honour,[42] yet despite the fact that honour has recently received more attention, the history of honour, as Frank Henderson Stewart recorded, 'has not been traced in any detail for even one of the languages, or the major countries, of Europe; the subject lies in a vast twilight, broken only by a few bright, but narrow, beams of light.'[43]

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[41] For instance, Peter French perceived that the gentleman had a private sense of his own honour, and a public sense of honour where that ethic could be judged: Peter A. French, 'Honor, Shame, and Identity,' *Public Affairs Quarterly*, 16, No. 1 (Jan., 2002), 1-15. Honour has also been conceived of by Montesquieu as a three-tiered belief system, composed of public honours, codes of honour and honour as a measure of one's quality of character. See Sharon Krause, 'The Politics of Distinction and Disobedience: Honor and the Defense of Liberty in Montesquieu', *Polity*, 31, No. 3 (Spring, 1999), 469-499; 471.

[42] Among those that have tried to define honour include William Lad Sessions, *Honor For Us: A Philosophical Analysis, Interpretation and Defence* (London, 2010); Robert L. Oprisko, *Honour: A Phenomenology* (London, 2012); Alexander Welsh, *What is Honour? A Question of Moral Imperatives* (London, 2008). Sidney Axinn defined military honour, emphasising the element of fear within respect, and linking soldierly behaviour to established military codes. Sidney Axinn, 'Military Honor and the Laws of Warfare: When Can I Lie to the Enemy?' in A Moral Military (Philadelphia, 2009), pp. 40-64.

[43] Stewart, *Honor*, p. 2.

Some have focused these 'narrow beams of light' upon nation-specific surveys of honour, assessing the ethic's position in European and American societies.[44] It has also been contended that honour is an ancient idea, and that it subsumed both the armies of Alexander the Great,[45] and the elite of Ancient Roman society.[46] Mediterranean models of honour were particularly noteworthy, as John G. Peristiany recognised in a groundbreaking comparative study published in 1965.[47] Nor has Britain been wholly neglected. Nigel Saul considered the origins of chivalry in the Middle Ages, and linked this belief system to the emergence of honour as a gentlemanly ideal in late Medieval England.[48] Mervyn James, among others, analysed English honour from the late medieval to the early modern period.[49] Authors such as Brendan Kane and Courtney Thomas examined honour in Irish and English society respectively,[50] while others have considered the role played by related ideas, such as credit,

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[44] For France: William M. Reddy, *The Invisible Code: Honor and Sentiment in Postrevolutionary France, 1814-1848* (Berkeley, 1997). For Russia: Nancy Shields Kollman, *By Honour Bound: State and Society in Early Modern Russia* (New York, 1999); Irina Reyfman, 'The Emergence of the Duel in Russia: Corporal Punishment and the Honor Code', *The Russian Review*, 54, No. 1 (Jan., 1995), 26-43; Paul Robinson, 'Courts of Honour in the Late Imperial Russian Army', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 84, No. 4 (Oct., 2006), 708-728. For the United States: Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New York, 2001); John Mayfield and Todd Hagstette eds, *The Field of Honor: Essays on Southern Character and American Identity* (Berkley, 2017); Robert Elder, 'A Twice Sacred Circle: Women, Evangelicalism, and Honor in the Deep South, 1784–1860', *The Journal of Southern History*, 78, No. 3 (Aug 2012), 579-614; Allan Dafoe and Devin Caughey, 'Honor and War: Southern US Presidents and the Effects of Concern for Reputation', *World Politics*, 68, No. 2 (April 2016), 341-381.

[45] Joseph Roisman (eds), 'Honour in Alexander's Campaign' in *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great* (Boston, 2003), pp. 179-321. John Atkinson, 'On Judging Alexander: A Matter Of Honour', *Acta Classica*, 50 (2007), 15-27; John Atkinson, 'Honour in the Ranks of Alexander the Great's Army', *Acta Classica*, 53 (2010), 1-20; Sarah B. Pomeroy et al., *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (New York, 1999); Paul Friedrich, 'Sanity and the Myth of Honor: The Problem of Achilles', *Ethos*, 5, No. 3 (Autumn, 1977), 281-305; Frank L. Holt, Alexander the Great and the Mystery of the Elephant Medallions (Berkeley, 2003), especially p. 134, 151, where Holt elaborates on a Homeric Code.

[46] J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World* (London, 2001); Elizabeth S. Cohen, 'Honor and Gender in the Streets of Early Modern Rome', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 22, No. 4 (Spring, 1992), 597-625; Carlin A. Barton, 'Savage Miracles: The Redemption of Lost Honor in Roman Society and the Sacrament of the Gladiator and the Martyr', *Representations,* No. 45 (Winter, 1994), 41-71.

[47] J. G. Peristiany, *Honour and Shame. The Values of the Mediterranean Society* (London, 1965). See also Anton Blok, 'Rams and Billy-Goats: A Key to the Mediterranean Code of Honour,' *Man*, 16, No. 3 (Sep., 1981), 427-440. This comparative model has been scrutinised, see Michael Herzfeld, 'Honour and Shame: Problems in the Comparative Analysis of Moral Systems,' *Man*, 15, No. 2 (Jun., 1980), 339-351; Rosemary J. Coombe, 'Barren Ground: Re-Conceiving Honour and Shame in the Field of Mediterranean Ethnography,' *Anthropologica*, 32, No. 2 (1990), 221-238.

[48] Nigel Saul, *For Honour and Fame: Chivalry in England, 1066-1500* (London, 2011).

[49] Mervyn James, *English Politics and the Concept of Honour 1485-1642 – Past and Present Supplements III* (London, 1978). See also William Palmer, 'Scenes from Provincial Life: History, Honor, and Meaning in the Tudor North,' *Renaissance Quarterly*, 53, No. 2 (Summer, 2000), 425-448; Felicity Heal, 'Reputation and Honour in Court and Country: Lady Elizabeth Russell and Sir Thomas Hoby,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1996), 161-178.

[50] Brendan Kane, *The Politics and Culture of Honour in Britain and Ireland, 1541-1641* (Cambridge, 2010). Courtney Erin Thomas, *If I Lose Mine Honour I Lose Myself: Honour among the Early Modern English Elite* (Toronto, 2017). Also by Kane: 'Making the Irish European: Gaelic Honor Politics and Its Continental Contexts,' *Renaissance Quarterly,* 61 (2008), 1139-1166; 'From Irish Eineach to British Honor? Noble

status, and reputation.[51] The gentlemanly ritual for acquiring satisfaction for wounded honour, the duel, has also been assessed.[52] James Kelly examined duelling in Ireland to 1860,[53] and important research by Stephen Banks traced the decline of the duel in England to a similar period.[54]

Although subject to much greater criticism in Britain than the continent,[55] the duel could not be erased overnight so long as statesmen had engaged with the practice within recent memory.[56] It has been suggested that as gentlemen replaced the illegal combat of the secluded space with the defamation trials of the courtroom, the equal dignity of the citizen also replaced the positional honour of the gentleman.[57] But this change in custom and tradition was not universally satisfactory; officers in particular still had honour to defend, and were still vulnerable to insult. Without the duel, how could the 'law of honour' be maintained? These issues moved *Fraser's Magazine* to remark in 1865, 'We are obviously not so far ahead of the rest of the civilised world as was vainly fancied,' urging that it was 'peculiarly incumbent on those who called so loudly for the virtual abolition of the point of honour, to prevent the triumph of their opinions from turning out premature and transitory.'[58]

Honor and High Politics in Early Modern Ireland, 1500–1650,' *History Compass,* 7, No. 2 (2009): 414–430.

[51] Faramerz Dabhoiwala, 'The Construction of Honour, Reputation and Status in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1996), 201-213. Alexandra Shepard, 'Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England c. 1580-1640', *Past & Present*, No. 167 (May, 2000), 75-106; Richard Cust, 'Honour and Politics in Early Stuart England: The Case of Beaumont v. Hastings', *Past & Present*, No. 149 (Nov., 1995), 57-94.

[52] A recent study into the primacy of the duel has concluded on its surprising rarity. See Linda A. Pollock, 'Honor, Gender, and Reconciliation in Elite Culture, 1570–1700', *Journal of British Studies*, 46, No. 1 (January 2007), 3-29. See also Donna T. Andrew, *Aristocratic Vice: The Attack on Duelling, Suicide, Adultery and Gambling in Eighteenth Century England* (New York, 2014) and 'The Code of Honour and Its Critics: The Opposition to Duelling in England, 1700-1850', *Social History*, 5, No. 3 (Oct., 1980), 409-434.

[53] James Kelly, '*That Damn'd Thing Called Honour', Duelling in Ireland 1570-1860* (Cork, 1995).

[54] Stephen Banks, *A Polite Exchange of Bullets: The Duel and the English Gentleman, 1750-1850* (Woodbridge, 2010); Banks, 'Killing with Courtesy: The English Duelist, 1785-1845,' *Journal of British Studies*, 47, No. 3 (Jul., 2008), 528-558.

[55] The anti-duelling campaign began in the early seventeenth century, see Markku Peltonen, 'Francis Bacon, the Earl of Northampton, and the Jacobean Anti-Duelling Campaign,' *Historical Journal*, 44, No. 1 (Mar., 2001), 1-28. Bacon's treaties were still referenced centuries later, see 'Duelling,' *Dublin Literary Gazette*, No. 14 (Apr. 3, 1830), 221.

[56] James N. McCord, Jr. 'Politics and Honor in Early-Nineteenth-Century England: The Dukes' Duel,' *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 62, No. 1/2 (1999), 88-114; C. K. Webster, H. Temperley and E. Cooke, 'The Duel between Castlereagh and Canning in 1809,' *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 3, No. 1 (1929), 83-95. It has been suggested that duelling had become a quest for social capital, see Douglas W. Allen and Clyde G. Reed, 'The Duel of Honor: Screening For Unobservable Social Capital,' *American Law and Economics Review*, 8, No. 1 (Spring 2006), 81-115

[57] Mika LaVaque-Manty,' Dueling for Equality: Masculine Honor and the Modern Politics of Dignity,' *Political Theory*, 34, No. 6 (Dec., 2006), 715-740.

[58] 'The Law of Honour,' *Fraser's magazine for town and country* (Mar 1865), 71; 423, 313-333; 333.

If gentlemen were less likely to fight for their honour, it did not follow that honour ceased to be a factor in gentlemanly relations.[59] As the Scottish writer, lawyer, and politician John Boyd Kinnear asserted in 1865, 'honour is an essential ingredient in the character of a gentleman.' Kinnear elaborated on the virtues of the ideal gentleman; above all, he must be honest, and 'the reproach of falsehood should be so abhorrent to him that he would almost give his life's blood to have it wiped out,' since honour was 'the delicate flower into which truth and justice expand, and which fades, and withers, and falls, the moment the stem is wounded or bruised.'[60] 'A gentleman', was expected to have 'a perfect control over his temper'. It was true that 'Society has undergone changes and modifications in this respect since duelling has gone out of fashion', yet it was also doubtful 'whether the most famous duellists were ever the truest gentlemen.'[61]

That both the gentleman and the nation shared an eagerness to defend their honour was frequently referenced through metaphorical devices in Parliament. An honourable gentleman would defend his friends, particular the weak. He would always be honest and truthful, increasing the power of his pledged word, and he would fight if necessary for his personal dignity and reputation.[62] He would always maintain his credit, by fulfilling his financial commitments and discharging his debts.[63] Statesmen moulded their conduct in office upon these standards, and applied them to their stewardship of the country, particularly in foreign policy. The gentleman thus identified his personal honour with the direction of British foreign policy, and it could be enhanced or damaged by his conduct.[64] The duelling

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[59] Robert Shoemaker, 'Male Honour and the Decline of Public Violence in Eighteenth-Century London,' *Social History*, 26, No. 2 (May, 2001), 190-208; 'The Taming of the Duel: Masculinity, Honour and Ritual Violence in London, 1660-1800,' *Historical Journal*, 45, No. 3 (Sep., 2002), 525-545.

[60] J. Boyd Kinnear, *On Gentlemen. A Lecture, Delivered in the Victoria Hall, Auchtermuchty, on Saturday Evening, 23 Sept., 1865* (Fife, 1865), pp. 7-9.

[61] Warne's Handy Books, *Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (London, 1876), p. 73.

[62] Weber noted the close linkage between honour and honesty, discerning that the two words share the same Latin root. Edgen Weber, 'The Ups and Downs of Honour,' *American Scholar*, 68, No. 1 (Winter 1999), 79-91; 87.

[63] The importance of credit has been examined extensively. See K. Tawny Paul, 'Credit, reputation, and masculinity in British urban commerce: Edinburgh, c. 1710-70', *The Economic History Review*, 66, No. 1 (Feb 2013), 226-248; Michael Zell, 'Credit in the Pre-Industrial English Woollen Industry,' *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 49, No. 4 (Nov. 1996), 667-691; Craig Muldrew, 'Interpreting the Market: The Ethics of Credit and Community Relations in Early Modern England,' *Social History*, 18, No. 2 (May, 1993), 163-183; John Smail, 'The Culture of Credit in Eighteenth-Century Commerce: The English Textile Industry,' *Enterprise & Society*, 4, No. 2 (June 2003), 299-325. Finn considered credit in a micro context: Margot Finn, 'Debt and credit in Bath's court of requests, 1829-39,' *Urban History*, 21, No. 2 (Oct 1994), 211-236.

[64] Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865-1914* (New York, 2011), pp. 24-26. Queen Victoria to Lord John Russell, 4 March 1854 in *The Letters of Queen Victoria. A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the years 1837 and 1861*. Arthur Christopher Benson and Viscount Esher ed. (3 Vols., London, 1908), Vol. II, p. 1443.

lexicon was also carried over, as Barry O'Neil perceived, 'Two national states treat each other as if they were persons, exchanging insults, issuing challenges, and retaliating against wrongs in the name of "national honour."'[65] Similarly did Ute Frevert discern that 'War thus resembled the duel, except that it was fought not between two men, but between millions.'[66]

If violence was less common among statesmen, it formed a key plank of national honour. This is not surprising, considering national honour's development in the patriotic soldier of the Napoleonic Wars, particularly for continental nations.[67] Britain's triumph in the national test against France could only encourage sentiments of nationhood, coloured by the sense of triumphant superiority.[68] Those scholars that have attempted to explain how personal honour developed into a collective or national honour identify this period of conflict as a watershed moment in the ethic's transformation.[69] As monarchs had identified their honour in the fortunes of their subjects, Karl-Ludwig Ay asserted that 'it was not a big step from the idea of the king's honour to the state's or the nation's honour.'[70] National honour had existed before the nineteenth century, yet it was after 1815 that the ethic truly blossomed, buoyed by a personification of the nation that lent itself to a democratisation of honour to which all, technically, could aspire.[71] As James Joll discerned, nationalism helped legitimise this idea because 'the nation, now regarded as a living organism, was justified in taking any measures whatsoever which were thought necessary for its survival or expansion.'[72] This watershed moment in the development of honour further recommends the mid-Victorian period as the focus of this research project.

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[65] Barry O'Neill, 'Mediating National Honour: Lessons from the Era of Dueling,' *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics*, 159, No. 1 (March 2003), 229.
[66] Ute Frevert, 'Honour, Gender, and Power: The Politics of Satisfaction in Pre-War Europe', in *An Improbable War? The Outbreak of World War 1 and European Political Culture Before 1914* eds. Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson (London, 2012), 238.
[67] Karen Hagemann, 'Of "Manly Valor" and "German Honor": Nation, War, and Masculinity in the Age of the
Prussian Uprising against Napoleon,' *Central European History*, 30, No. 2 (1997), 187-220.
[68] Stuart Semmel, 'British Uses for Napoleon,' *Modern Language Notes*, 120, No. 4, (Sept 2005), 733-746. The case was similar for American feelings of nation following the War of 1812: Norman K. Risjord, '1812: Conservatives, War Hawks and the Nation's Honour,' *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 18, No. 2 (Apr., 1961), 196-210.
[69] Geoffrey Best, *Honour Among Men and Nations: Transformations of an Idea* (Toronto, 2014); Norman Hampson, 'The French Revolution and the Nationalisation of Honour', in *War and Society: Historical Essays in Honour and Memory of J.R. Western* ed. M.R.D. Foot (London 1973); pp. 199-212.
[70] Karl-Ludwig Ay, 'The Meaning of Honour in Weber's Concept of the Nation,' *Max Weber Studies*, 4, No. 2, Max Weber's Relevance as a Theorist of Politics (July 2004), 221-233;
[71] Best, *Honour Among Nations*, p. 22; 44-45.
[72] Joll, 'The Ideal and the Real: Changing Concepts of the International System, 1815-1982,' *International Affairs*, 58, No. 2 (Spring, 1982), 210-224; 213.

In the British case especially, it is remarkable how few efforts have been made to assess this 'transfer' of honour from the person to the nation.[73] This may be explained by the imperfect and incomplete nature of this transfer. Soldiers were imbued both with a concern for their own honour, and for the honour of their country which they represented.[74] This developed into a vigorous culture of honour within the officer corps, which varied in intensity and custom across Europe.[75] However one conceives of the two spheres of honour, it is evident that more research is required to assess this pivotal shift in British culture and nationalism. It is not intended that this puzzle will be solved here, yet this research project will clarify some of the cleavages and commonalities of honour's personal and national spheres, and scholars may be encouraged by this analysis to explore such a complex question more extensively in the future.

But what did national honour truly mean? It may be interpreted as a 'right to respect' from other nations, but the ethic went much deeper than this.[76] Its depth of meaning provided national honour with a versatile rhetoric that could accommodate highly varied crises. An example is provided from Parliamentary debates on the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, when in 1864 the leader of the opposition the Earl of Derby told the Lords 'Dearly as I love peace, I love honour more.'[77] This looked very much like an argument in favour of a war policy towards Austria and Prussia, who were then invading Denmark. Having pledged to defend the Danes, Palmerston was criticised in Parliament for reneging on this commitment, and national honour was a favoured weapon.[78] However, neither Derby nor the Tories presented any policy alternative to that which the Prime Minister then followed. Derby was also mindful of the opposition to war with the German powers, from both the Queen and most of Parliament, and he had no intention of pursuing war himself.[79] Leveraging the rhetoric of

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[73] Ellis perceived a collective identity within the small town, a micro expression of the broader concept of national honour. Joyce M. Ellis, ''For the honour of the town': comparison, competition and civic identity in eighteenth-century England,' *Urban History*, 30, No. 3 (Dec 2003), 325-337.
[74] A. Forbes Sieveking, 'Duelling and Militarism,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 11 (1917), 165-184. Best, *Honour Among Nations*, p. 36.
[75] Karl Demeter, *The German Officer-Corps in Society and State 1650-1945* trans. Angus Malcolm. (London, 1965), pp. 111-117.
[76] Frevert, 'Honour, Gender, and Power,' 235. Hertz, 'Honour's Role in the International States' System,' 114. Interestingly, Barry O'Neill presented honour as 'the willingness to incur costs or risks to defend one's goods, religion, territory or group, as well as the desire for a reputation for the willingness to do that. The latter condition is typically shown by sensitivity to affronts against honour or to symbolic challenges, and readiness to take vengeance.' O'Neill, 'Mediating National Honour,' 229.
[77] Earl of Derby, HL Deb 17 June 1864 vol 175, cc. 1925-1926.
[78] See Chapter Five.
[79] In late January 1864, the Queen held a private meeting with the Earl of Derby. She was determined, she told Palmerston a few days after the meeting had taken place, 'that this unlucky and difficult question of Schleswig-Holstein should not be made a party one', and noted that Derby 'entirely agreed', even declaring

national honour against the government meant that Derby did not necessarily need to solve the Gordian Knot of Schleswig-Holstein, but the lack of substance behind his criticism was noted. He and his colleagues were accused of trying to discredit the Liberals, and facilitate a change in government. Thus, what seems on the surface like a call to war for the sake of national honour, was in fact an example of political opportunism and even cynicism, facilitated by the rhetoric of honour.

This pattern of behaviour was replicated when national honour was believed to have suffered an insult. Nothing, contemporaries maintained, should come before vindicating the national honour.[80] As Sir Robert Peel asserted, during a Commons debate on the Opium War, 'It is your duty to vindicate the honour of England where vindication is necessary, and to demand reparation wherever reparation is due.'[81] This vindication could be best acquired by confronting the insult, and wresting an apology.[82] However, in cases where diplomatic satisfaction was not forthcoming, Ministers were forced into an ideological corner where war was the sole escape.[83] This presented an opportunity for opposition figures to declare that, were they in power, they would have handled the wounded national honour more carefully.[84] They made this point by declaring their favour for honour, as the Earl of Derby did above, which could be contrasted with the lack of Ministerial passion for the ethic. They also emphasised the consequences of disgrace, dishonour, and the endangering of British interests which would follow.

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his belief that 'all parties should be extremely cautious in their language in Parliament on this subject.' Queen Victoria to Viscount Palmerston, 2 Feb 1864 in *The Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence and Journal between the Years 1862 and 1878.* George Earle Buckle ed (London, 1926) Vol. I, p. 154.

[80] Referencing Anglo-French relations, Russell believed recent disturbances did show 'how circumstances of a trivial character may affect our relations with foreign countries, and what sensitive pride, what susceptibility there may be on the part of nations which, like France and England, are nations of great power and of great strength, but yet extremely jealous of anything that may in the least trench upon their honour; I mention it here to show by what a slight accident, and with what little fault on the part of the Executive Government on the one side or the other, the peace of the world may be endangered.' Russell, HC Deb 18 Feb 1848 vol 96, cc. 910-911. It was a view echoed in this press: 'We earnestly trust that Lord Palmerston has for once shown the zeal and energy of an English Minister, and that he has taken the necessary steps to obtain immediate satisfaction for these insults, as well as to prevent a recurrence of those flagrant injuries to the subjects of Great Britain which, if repeated, must, in spite of all our unworthy concessions, eventually lead to a war between the two countries, for National Honour no Englishman will ever consent to compromise or compound.' *Naval & Military Gazette and Weekly Chronicle of the United Service*, 31 May 1834. Insult and satisfaction are explored in more depth in Chapter Two.

[81] Peel, HC Deb 9 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 924-925.

[82] *The Era*, 14 April 1839.

[83] See Chapter Four.

[84] This argument was made by the opposition in the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, though it was of limited effect. Keith Sandiford, *Great Britain and the Schleswig-Holstein Question 1848-64: a Study in Diplomacy, Politics and Public Opinion* (Toronto, 1975), p. 138.

But statesmen could also go too far if they committed excesses or pursued vengeance in place of vindication.[85] It was also dishonourable to offend foreign powers with rude or brisk language. Thus Queen Victoria could complain of Palmerston 'I thought that he often endangered the honour of England by taking a very prejudiced and one-sided view of a question,' adding that 'his writings were always as bitter as gall and did great harm.'[86] Where a policy was thought contrary to national honour in the first place – such as 'truckling' to a foreign power, or issuing the 'bluster' of empty threats – contemporaries were quick to use the established rhetoric for their own ends.[87] This suggests that national honour required two broad responses; it had either to be consistently maintained, or defended when attacked. Failure to do so invited both national ruin and condemnation from the political body.

National honour's preponderance of synonyms aided this use of rhetoric, as it provided a versality which sharpened the ethic's political utility. Concepts such as dignity, respect, credit, standing, influence, and prestige all acquired the trappings of honour, while being sufficiently different to distinguish them from national honour itself.[88] While Britain deserved respect from foreign powers, her dignity could be imperilled by contrary treatment, such as by disrespecting her flag.[89] British credit was linked to her honour, raising such questions as the payments of national debts above that of mere finance.[90] An honourable nation would discharge such debts even to rival nations, rather than have her credit or good faith implicated.[91] British honour was also affected by the reputation of her power, and the ability to project it, a concept referred to as prestige.[92] Prestige did not merely require proper maintenance of those armed forces, but, as Disraeli insisted,[93] an active foreign policy that

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[85] *Freeman's Journal*, 11 Nov 1842. Earl of Auckland, HL Deb 2 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 50-51.
[86] Memorandum by Queen Victoria, 19 Sept 1848 in *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, I, p. 1021.
[87] Roebuck, HC Deb 5 March 1860 vol 156, cc. 2249-2250. Palmerston used similar language in his defence with a speech printed in *London Evening Standard*, 9 Dec 1834. Russell was criticised for engaging with empty bluster during the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, see Chapter Five.
[88] Frevert, 'Honour, Gender, and Power,' p. 234.
[89] Sir Charles Wetherall, HC Deb 16 April 1832 vol 12 cc. 568-569. *London Evening Standard*, 11 Jan 1839. *The Times*, 19 Feb 1839.
[90] *Sheffield Iris*, 29 Dec 1835.
[91] See the Russian Dutch Loan in Chapter One.
[92] For an introduction to the theoretical importance of prestige see R. P. Dore, 'The Prestige Factor in International Affairs', *International Affairs*, 51, No.2 (Apr., 1975), 190-207. The debate on prestige's usefulness in a general sense has been debate by three scholars in depth, see first: Paul K. Huth, 'Reputations and deterrence: A theoretical and empirical Assessment', *Security Studies*, 7, No. 1 (1997), 72-99; Jonathan Mercer, 'Reputation and rational deterrence theory', *Security Studies*, 7, No. 1 (1997), 100-113; Dale C. Copeland, 'Do reputations matter?', *Security Studies*, 7, No. 1 (1997), 33-71. A useful contemporary view on the subject is provided by Harold Nicolson, *The Meaning of Prestige: The Rede Lecture Delivered Before the University of Cambridge on 23 April 1937* (Cambridge, 1937).
[93] Disraeli's search for prestige and a closer analysis of this idea is provided in Chapter Six. See also Bendor Grosvenor, 'Britain's Most Isolationist Foreign Secretary: The Fifteenth Earl of Derby and the Eastern Crisis

saw Britain involved and consulted on major international questions.[94] This is perhaps the most accurate appreciation of the concept that can be gleaned, though prestige's close linkage with honour did not prevent Lord John Russell from asserting that 'provided the honour, the character, and the reputation of this country were maintained, I cared very little what became of the prestige of the country.'[95] Russell was far from prestige's only critic.[96]

Prestige was not Britain's only source of honour; it was also measured by her influence, a concept boasting as many interpretations as honour itself. Palmerston saw influence as 'that respect which is felt in foreign countries for the English nation,' and 'that promptitude to give redress for injuries,' while also ascribing a moral element.[97] Disraeli emphasised moral influence, 'a possession held by a very delicate and refined tenure.' He warned that 'You cannot abuse it. You cannot increase its efficacy by Hudibrastic speeches and grotesque resolutions.' Only once well-informed statesmen addressed foreign nations with dignity could Britain 'retain and exercise that moral influence of which you may well be proud; but when you do exercise it, let it be for the benefit of Europe, and the glory and reputation of your country.'[98] Nor was this a Disraelian invention; Oded Löwenheim addressed moral influence and credit in his analysis of Britain's decision to destroy the power of Barbary Pirates.[99]

On another occasion, Palmerston clarified that influence could be maintained either by hope or by fear. Weak powers 'should be taught to hope that they will receive the support of this country in their time of danger,' while strong powers 'should be taught to fear that they will

1876-1878,' in Geoff Hicks, John Charmley, Bendor Grosvenor eds., *Conservatism and British Foreign Policy, 1820-1920* (London, 2012), pp. 167-168.

[94] This was pressed by Aberdeen in the Lords: 'Not a single ship of war belonging to this country was to be found in those seas; and, instead of attending to our own interests, the affairs of the East were left to be settled by the French and Russians. This was not as it should be, nor was it maintaining the honour and character of the English nation as they ought to have been upheld.' Aberdeen, HL Deb 3 June 1833 vol 18, cc. 274-175. Seymour Fitzgerald asserted that 'the Government which had the active military power, and put that policy into execution, would be the Power to lead, and it would only be for England to follow humbly in its wake. This was a position equally inconsistent with the honour and dignity and with the feelings of the people of this country.' Seymour Fitzgerald, HC Deb 25 Jan 1860 vol 156, cc. 135-136.

[95] Russell, HL Deb 12 June 1871 vol 206, cc. 1837-1838. He was echoed by Roundell Palmer, who noted that 'Her Majesty's present Government had taken care to maintain a reputation for truth and steadfastness, which I regarded as a more important matter than prestige, and that, while they had consulted the honour and dignity of the country, they had secured the respect of foreign nations by establishing peace and tranquillity at home on the basis of well-regulated legislation to satisfy the just wants of the people.' Palmer, *Ibid*, cc. 1893-1894.

[96] William Gladstone, HC Deb 23 March 1877 vol 233, cc. 424-425.

[97] Quoted in Brown, *Palmerston*, p. 204.

[98] Benjamin Disraeli, HC Deb 16 March 1847 vol 91, cc. 91-92.

[99] Oded Löwenheim, '"Do Ourselves Credit and Render a Lasting Service to Mankind": British Moral Prestige, Humanitarian Intervention, and the Barbary Pirates', *International Studies Quarterly*, 47, No. 1 (Mar., 2003), 23-48.

be resisted by England in any unjust acts either towards ourselves or towards those who are bound in ties of amity with us.'[100] Rejecting Palmerston's more interventionist interpretations, Lord Derby asserted that influence was 'best maintained and upheld by abstaining sedulously and carefully from interfering in any the slightest degree with the purely domestic concerns of other countries.'[101] When he attacked the government for its failures in the Schleswig-Holstein question, Disraeli insisted Britain's 'just influence' had been lowered and damaged in a Motion which facilitated a four-day debate.[102] Salisbury distinguished between influence 'of that material kind which our fathers were wont to value,' and 'that great moral influence with which we are flattering ourselves, and which means our never being able to induce others to do what we want,' while still insisting it should be carefully husbanded.[103] It was said that Britain's colonial possessions, above all in India, depended upon this prestige and the effective use of influence.[104]

Notwithstanding such disagreement, what contemporaries did agree on was that national honour was set on a pedestal uniquely its own.[105] It was prioritised above monetary questions.[106] It was to be defended regardless of the cost, and whether Britain enjoyed foreign support or acted alone.[107] Notwithstanding the establishment of new standards of international law under the Treaty of Paris, national honour both superseded international law, and informed the fulfilment of its tenets.[108] In 1874, Sir Edward Creasey's *First Platform of International Law* affirmed the national honour as central to this system.[109] Creasey made noteworthy observations on how the receipt of insults could be legally

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[100] Palmerston, HC Deb 7 Aug 1844 vol 76, cc. 1873-1874.
[101] Derby, HL Deb 5 May 1848 vol 98, cc. 672-673.
[102] Benjamin Disraeli, HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 745-746.
[103] Salisbury, HL Deb 6 March 1871 vol 204, cc. 1361-1362.
[104] Earl Granville, HL Deb 24 Jan 1860 vol 156, cc. 66-67. Sir Henry Rawlinson, HC Deb 26 July 1867 vol. 189, cc. 241-242.
[105] As the Earl of Clarendon declared, 'We are all equally concerned in advancing the interests, and, above everything, in upholding the dignity, and maintaining unsullied the honour and good faith of our country.' Clarendon, HL Deb 15 July 1845 vol 82, cc. 496-525.
[106] Irish MP Richard Sheil added to this pressure, reasoning that while the sum of five million pounds was 'a vast heap of gold,' he believed 'the character of England was above all price; better to lose every thing except our honour, than win the world without it.' HC Deb 16 July 1832 vol 14, cc. 458-459. Peel, *Ibid*, cc. 481-482; John Mills, HC Deb 20 July 1832 vol 14, cc. 566-567.
[107] Palmerston, HC Deb 26 Feb 1836 vol 31, cc. 1003-1004.
[108] Peel, HC Deb 26 Feb 1836 vol 31 cc. 1008-1009. Included in this idea was the letter versus the spirit of the law, the latter of which depended on an interpretation of national honour, see John Campbell, HC Deb 16 July 1832 vol 14, cc. 442-443. It has also been suggested that international law was itself rooted in chivalry, see Hertz. 'Honour's Role in the International States' System,' 120-121. That honour superseded international law see *Ibid*, 133.
[109] Creasey, *First Platform of International Law* (London, 1874), p. 41; 128; 355; 426-427; 464. Creasey viewed the protection of national honour as a national right established in law, see *Ibid*, pp. 147-148.

construed as a casus belli;[110] the practical utility of arbitration,[111] and the defence of the flag in language which mirrored that of Parliamentarians.[112] Creasey affirmed what contemporaries had already been insisting in Parliament: the code of honour was essential to ensure peace and stability across the world.[113] Some even argued that it had a greater hold on nations than Christian principles.[114] If it was jeopardised or ignored, the entire system could fall apart, a fear which may explain the heightened sensitivity which lent itself to language of angst and hyperbole. Twinned with nostalgia for a period of triumph during the Napoleonic Wars, this rhetoric could be a potent political weapon even if contemporaries may have been insincere in its deployment.[115]

Also palpable from this rhetoric is the close relationship between conceptions of Victorian masculinity and a manliness in foreign policy which statesmen were expected to emulate. Foremost among these statesmen was Palmerston, who, according to an obituary by contemporary journalist Peter Bayne, 'was at all points a man.' Palmerston had 'No sentimental egotism, no moral irritability, no sweet feminine cant about him.' He possessed 'A genial stoicism,' and 'an inestimable faculty of taking the good and leaving the bad alone, an invincible serenity and lightness and brightness of soul, distinguished him.' He was 'Hopeful in adversity, cool in prosperity, ready for any fate.'[116] Gentlemen were expected to conform to these expectations if they wished to be described as 'manly', and according to

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[110] 'A State has the right to repel and to exact redress for injuries to its honour. This also is a right of self-preservation. For, among Nations, as among Individuals, those, who tamely submit to insult, will be sure to have insults and outrages heaped upon them, until the sense of intolerable wrong drives them into physical contest under probably disadvantageous circumstances, and after they have deprived themselves of that general sympathy which manly and consistent conduct will always obtain for even the unsuccessful brave. Without doubt vainglory and bluster are as detestable in a nation as in a private person. True Honour consists in combining self-respect with respect for the feelings and rights of others.' Creasey, *Ibid*, p. 153.

[111] *Ibid*, pp. 397-398.

[112] 'The special symbol of a State's honour, power, and glory is its national flag. For any insult offered to the National Flag the most prompt and full apology and reparation should be required. Sir James Mackintosh has well said that "an insult offered to the British flag flying on the slightest skiff, is, if unrepaired, a dishonour to the British nation." And we must remember that other States are in this respect as justly sensitive as we ourselves can be.' *Ibid*, p. 154.

[113] When Britain failed to maintain this code by remaining silent as outrages were committed against it, George Bowyer asserted that 'by not protesting against such dishonourable proceedings they were abetting a system subversive, not only of all political security, but of the mere principles of honour between man and man, and without which they should all be picking each other's pockets, and cutting each other's throats.' HC Deb 28 Feb 1860 vol 156, cc. 1963-1964.

[114] 'In the earliest ages it was ascertained that even the divine maxims of the Christian religion were not sufficient to keep society together, and there was a code of honour established by man himself to assist the code of morality; and if nations deal with nations, and erect a code of honour, it is impossible, without its rules being properly observed, that official relations should be properly maintained, and if not, the whole state of society must become one of disruption.' Malmsbury, HL Deb 14 Feb 1860 vol 156, cc. 1021-1022.

[115] Sir Henry Hardinge, HC Deb 17 April 1837 vol 37, cc. 1359-1361.

[116] Quoted in Anthony Trollope, *Lord Palmerston* (London, 1882), p. 205.

John Tosh, the term even displaced more traditional ideas of courtesy and polite etiquette.[117] Conversely, a policy perceived as 'effeminate' was linked to dishonour, shame, or humiliation.[118] Thus, when criticising what he perceived as the government's 'truckling' to Russia, Thomas Attwood could declare 'the government has emasculated England.'[119] As *The Times* asserted, 'The honour of the English flag is like that of an Englishwoman – it must not be ever so lightly blown upon with impunity or without atonement.'[120]

Another common expression of honour was its abstract form as a privilege, reward, or tradition.[121] Statesmen were 'honoured' to serve the nation in positions of office, just as they had 'the honour' to correspond with the Queen.[122] The Queen rewarded accomplished gentlemen with honours, normally in the form of titles which enhanced their social status and reputation. But if the Queen was the 'fountain of honour,' Parliament served as its theatre.[123] It was in Parliament that the 'right honourable gentlemen' of both Houses openly contested one another's interpretation of what was due national honour, just as they disputed how it could be best maintained. Honour was the exclusive preserve of Members and Lords; interestingly, lawyers and religious figures were ridiculed if they attempted to speak in national honour's name.[124] Whether Whig, Tory, Radical, or Irish, all Members of Parliament had to contend with national honour, and it is significant that even as the British political

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[117] John Tosh suggested that the idea of 'manliness' had also replaced notions of the 'polite gentleman' in business: Tosh, 'Gentlemanly Politeness and Manly Simplicity in Victorian England,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), 455-472.
[118] Frevert, 'Honour, Gender, and Power,' p. 243.
[119] Thomas Attwood, HC Deb 9 July 1833 vol 19, cc. 420-421.
[120] *The Times*, 27 Feb 1839.
[121] An amusing example may be given of Palmerston's obituary in the *Edinburgh Review*: 'Since Cromwell's time no other British statesman has had the honour of having his name made a bugbear to frighten children and despot-ridden lands.' Quoted in Trollope, *Palmerston*, p. 205.
[122] As Palmerston explained, 'there cannot be any object of ambition more honourable, than the attainment of a position which enables him to carry into effect principles and views which he thinks will tend to the honour and advantage of his country, to the promotion and extension of civilisation, and to the happiness and well-being of mankind.' HC Deb 17 Sept 1841 vol 59, cc. 566-567.
[123] Lord Brougham stated that 'the House could not do anything more unconstitutional than to discuss the right of the Crown to confer honours. The Crown was the fountain of honour.' HL Deb 5 Feb 1844 vol 72, cc. 212-6
[124] 'If the Law Officers of the Crown had given an opinion upon what affected the honour and equity of the country, then their opinion was not worth the paper on which it was written.' Sir Charles Wetherall, HC Deb 16 Dec 1831 vol 9, cc. 340-343. 'Preachers and missionaries have other things to do than to be roaring about 'Britannia and the waves', and making tumultuous and vociferating appeals to 'British honour' and the like… A set of grave dissenting ministers, thinking that they have a particular call to attend to the honour of the national flag, is as ridiculous an image as we can well picture in our minds.' *The Times*, 16 Aug 1844. 'Christianity teaches us when smitten on one check, to turn the other also to the suitor; and to put up the sword; in no case does it enjoin men, and above all ministers of the gospel, to throw away the scabbard at the call of national honour.' *Western Courier, West of England Conservative, Plymouth and Devonport Advertiser*, 21 Aug 1844.

establishment experienced dramatic transformation,[125] its burgeoning parties deployed national honour in similar ways. Notably, however, these figures could also be inconsistent; opposing an interpretation of national honour in one instance, yet supporting that interpretation when they came into power.[126] That contemporaries were able to declare that 'black was white' and arrive at different conclusions to their opponents suggests not just an inherent cynicism, but also an elasticity in national honour's meaning.[127]

This elasticity was reinforced by the varied contemporary expressions on what national honour actually meant. In a letter to the Queen, Lord John Russell argued that 'The honour of England does not consist in defending every English officer or English subject, right or wrong, but in taking care that she does not infringe the rules of justice, and that they are not infringed against her.'[128] The radical Henry Warburton 'considered the best foundation of national honour was the obtaining a character for clemency and justice.'[129] This emphasis of justice speaks to contemporary literary influences on the concept, such as that of Wordsworth.[130] To William Gladstone, national honour 'meant neither more nor less than the faithful discharge of the duties of a government.'[131] Lord John Russell identified national honour as a 'jewel which we will not have tarnished,' an expression which was later held against him.[132] The Radical John Roebuck reflected that 'the people of England liked that Minister and held him to their hearts who maintained the national honour,' while warning against the 'low level of national morality,' that would 'bind up all our feelings in the interchange of commodities, or the sordid question of profit and loss.'[133]

Newspapers presented similar arguments, but added their own interpretations. National honour was a 'valuable abstraction,' according to the *Freeman's Journal*,[134] and 'a nice and delicate point,' according to the *Fife Herald*.[135] There was also room for criticism of the

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[125] Angus Hawkins, ''Parliamentary Government' and Victorian Political Parties, c. 1830-c. 1880,' *The English Historical Review*, 104, No. 412 (Jul., 1989), 638-669.
[126] A good example is Peel's change of mind over the Russian Dutch Loan, which he opposed when in opposition, and approved of when separate from the Tories, see Chapter One.
[127] George Pigott, HC Deb 20 July 1832 vol 14, cc. 568-569.
[128] Lord John Russell to Queen Victoria, 29 Dec 1851 in *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, I, p. 1249.
[129] Warburton, HC Deb 25 Jan 1838 vol 40, cc. 483-484.
[130] James Kantor, "Say, What is Honor?"' *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 71, No. 1 (June 2016), 1-36.
[131] Gladstone in *London Evening Standard*, 15 June 1849.
[132] Russell, HC Deb 4 March 1847 vol 90, cc. 894-895. Sir Robert Peel HC Deb 30 March 1860 vol 157, cc. 1659-1660.
[133] Roebuck, HC Deb 21 July 1849 vol 107, cc. 786-817
[134] *Freeman's Journal*, 24 Jan 1846.
[135] *Fife Herald*, 11 April 1839.

ethic. The *Sheffield Iris* condemned national honour as a 'meteor phantom,'[136] language which was occasionally echoed in Parliament.[137] According to the *Globe*'s estimation of national honour 'An orator may give what quantity and quality of signification he pleases to the abstract idea, for the purpose of fitting it to any given state of things.'[138] One regional paper believed that national honour 'is entirely founded on temporal expediency; and the use of a standard of national honour is to check national ambition, selfishness, and lawlessness.' Importantly, national honour was respected, 'not much for its intrinsic merits, as out of the fear of the consequence following its violation — war; and it is, of all inventions of earth, the most earthy.'[139] But were such varied perspectives representative of the national feeling? Peel perhaps captured the dilemma best when he reflected that 'However important newspapers might be as auxiliaries in supporting and vindicating the honour of their country, yet they were not at all times to be regarded as the exponents of a nation's feelings.'[140]

Peel's warning notwithstanding, it is true to say that a fear of national honour's tenets persisted, palpable in the anxiety which accompanied any suggestion of national dishonour or shame.[141] Any statesman guilty of this charge would not last long in office. As Unni Wikan argued, it was a fear of being shamed, rather than a reverence for their honour, that compelled men to act.[142] Indeed, just as 'the overriding demands of honour make a character do what he, or less often she, does not want to do, or would not do according to natural feeling, and yet feels obliged to do,' so could national honour place statesmen in a difficult position.[143] As Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe lamented on the eve of the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, Britain might be exposed 'to consequences of the most dangerous and hazardous kind, in which we might find our honour and our interest at variance.'[144] Facing this impossible choice, contemporaries were constrained to operate within honour's instructions.

It was also difficult to appease honour through more experimental processes such as arbitration. There was a concern that an arbitrating party would not treat the national honour

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[136] *Sheffield Iris*, 2 April 1839.
[137] Robert Lowe, HC Deb 23 March 1865 vol 178, cc. 152-153. See also Colonel Sykes, HC Deb 8 June 1869 vol 196, cc. 1435-1436.
[138] *The Globe*, 8 March 1847.
[139] *Western Courier, West of England Conservative, Plymouth and Devonport Advertiser*, 21 Aug 1844.
[140] Peel, HC Deb 24 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 1298-1299.
[141] Whitley Kaufman, 'Understanding Honor: Beyond the Shame/Guilt Dichotomy,' *Social Theory and Practice*, 37, No. 4 (Oct 2011), 557-573.
[142] Unni Wikan, 'Shame and Honour: A Contestable Pair,' *Man*, 19, No. 4 (Dec., 1984), 635-652
[143] Derek Brewer, 'The Compulsions of Honour,' in *From Arabye to Engelond: Medieval Studies in Honour of Mahmoud Manzalaoui* eds. A. E. Christa Canitz and Gernot R. Wieland (Ottawa, 1999), p. 75.
[144] Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe, HL Deb 27 July 1863 vol 172, cc. 1442-1443.

as carefully as Britain would, and were Britons not best equipped to care for their own honour? Some scholars maintain that international law's underdevelopment made arbitration impossible,[145] but it did happen.[146] Perhaps because the results of these efforts were not inspiring – and, as Creasey affirmed, loopholes existed when honour was at stake – opponents felt vindicated in insisting that arbitration should be done away with entirely.[147] As Geoffrey Best posited, although 'Arbitration was in the air,' it 'never got very far' because of 'nationalism's jealousy of its honour.'[148] In the context of regular foreign crisis, however, arbitration was a legitimate route for maintaining peace and acquiring a settlement honourable to all parties. After all – as one MP asserted – arbitration was no different to the practice of seconds preventing the duel.[149]

Paradoxically, while Britons were squeamish about this risk, they were eager to be seen as arbiters for other powers. Palmerston declared 'that the best test of whether countries or individuals were properly upholding their own honour was, when they found other countries or persons applying to them on matters in which their honour also was concerned.' When powerful nations accepted Britain's mediation 'on matters which concerned their honour,' this meant that the government 'had maintained peace without any dereliction of honour,' while 'the respect paid to England by the other nations of the world had gone on increasing

[145] This was considered by Hilda Walters, *The Policy of the United States with Regard to the Arbitration of Disputes Involving National Honour, Vital Interests, Independence, and interests of Third Parties* (PhD Thesis, University of Iowa, 1938).
[146] See particularly the case of the Alabama, constructed in Liverpool: Douglas H. Maynard, 'Union Efforts to Prevent the Escape of the Alabama', *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 41, No. 1 (Jun., 1954), 41-60. The vessel formed the basis for the contentious Alabama Claims, whereby Britain agreed in 1872 to compensate the US to the modern equivalent of £4 billion: Tom Bingham, 'The Alabama Claims Arbitration', *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 54, No. 1 (Jan., 2005), 1-25. Arbitration over the American-Canadian boundary was also undertaken by the King of Belgium in 1830, see Francis M. Carroll 'Kings and Crises: Arbitrating the Canadian-American Boundary Dispute and the Belgian Crisis of 1830-1831,' *The New England Quarterly*, 73, No. 2 (Jun., 2000), 179-201.
[147] In reference to the Alabama Claims decision, former Attorney General Roundell Palmer declared, 'I could never have been a willing party to any arbitration whatever of any point which seemed to me to involve the honour of this country or the good faith of the Government. There are matters fit for arbitration, but this is not one. Every country is answerable for its own honour, and no referee whatever ought to be called in to determine questions of that kind. Palmer, HC Deb 4 Aug 1871 vol 208, cc. 886-887. Palmer added: 'I would, as I have said, never have been a willing party to making any reference whatever to any form of international arbitration, which could possibly result in an award which might be regarded by the world at large, or by the other party, as affecting the honour and the good faith of this country.' *Ibid*, cc. 888-889. He was echoed by George Bentinck, who asserted: 'A great country like England ought to be the best judge of what concerned its own honour, and it ought not to lay its wealth and its dignity at the feet of arbitrators, however high they might be, for them to deal with at their good pleasure.' HC Deb 7 Feb 1872 vol 209, cc. 130-131.
[148] Best elaborated that this jealousy manifested in two main points: 'first, by insisting upon the exclusion from arbitration treaties of all disputes involving national interests and national honour; second, by finding to submission to arbitration even for minor matters a crawling, undignified proceeding, incompatible with the pride and self-respect a State of honour should have.' Best, *Honour Among Nations*, p. 46.
[149] Thomas Hughes, HC Deb 23 Feb 1866 vol 181, cc. 1053-1054.

instead of diminishing.'[150] Nor did Britons hesitate to recommend arbitration to third parties, as in 1866 the Earl of Clarendon believed 'it would reflect great credit upon Prussia,' if she accepted arbitration of her dispute with Austria, thus placing Berlin 'in the hands of seconds upon whose impartiality she could rely and with whom her honour would be in safe keeping.'[151]

National honour did contain terms and conditions which could mollify its severity. There were occasions where a war for honour's sake was impractical and pragmatism took hold, and rhetorical tools were available to justify this selective application of national honour. Forbearance could enable the country to withstand insults without flying to war, a loophole which the government used to its full effect in 1848 when grappling with the expulsion of its ambassador from Madrid.[152] Yet it was understood that 'there were limits beyond which magnanimity became folly, subjecting those who passed them to suspicion of want of proper spirit and self-respect.'[153] Some scenarios were too devoid of British interests to allow national honour to lead; in 1833 Derby dismissed as 'chivalrous feelings' Thomas Attwood's request for war with Russia in the name of violated treaties.[154] Britain might be obliged to aid its ally, but where that ally insulted a third party, that power had the right to acquire satisfaction without British interference.[155] Across such varied cases, national honour's value was taken for granted.[156] Only very rarely did contemporaries reflect on why or how the concept had acquired such a central precedence in Britain's foreign policy.[157]

The rhetoric of honour was thus incredibly varied. It was perhaps required to be so, if it was to be convincingly applied to such abstract questions as military strength, Parliamentary reform, or the defence of the flag, to take a few samples. This facilitated a flexibility in rhetoric, where contemporaries would not merely invoke national honour during debate, but would criticise or justify government policy with the ethic in mind. In this manner was the

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[150] Palmerston, HC Deb 4 Feb 1836 vol 31, cc. 83-85.
[151] Clarendon to Lord Augustus Loftus, 7 March 1866 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 85, p. 385.
[152] See Chapter Two.
[153] Charles Adderly, HC Deb 4 Aug 1871 vol 208, cc. 868-869.
[154] Derby, HC Deb 9 July 1833 vol 19, cc. 456-457.
[155] See Chapter One.
[156] The Baron of Oranmore and Browne thus told the Lords, 'They had always been ready when called on to give their lives and their money to protect their national honour, and when they perceived that honour had been sacrificed they would not only blame Ministers who made the Treaty, but would accept it as an evidence of the incapacity of our statesmen and of a break-down in our institutions—a result most unfortunate and dangerous.' HL Deb 29 June 1871 vol 207, cc. 735-736.
[157] Thomas Milner Gibson asserted that war was sought only for the sake of increased rents and returns for Tory figures, who were effectively betting on war to enhance their investments. Quoted in *John Bull*, 17 Aug 1844.

rhetoric of honour harnessed as a political tool, though its potency depended on the circumstances, as the following case-studies will demonstrate. Importantly, national honour resonated with the public, supposedly to the point of mobilising the population for war in its defence.[158] Mismanagement of the national honour could threaten the government's tenure in office, and Ministers were compelled to defend their record in this regard.[159]

Notwithstanding its pervasiveness and occasional utility, it will be contended here that national honour was not a panacea either for the government or the opposition. It might more accurately be described as a double-edged sword, as it facilitated the political attack and defence, while constraining those parties within a certain pattern of behaviour. But contemporary statesmen were not alone in making this case. The British press was also a key player, setting the tone of political conversation and providing additional pressure in times of foreign crisis. These sources helped clarify and impress what was at stake to its readership, and contributed to the discourse which upheld the ethic's tenets as closely linked to British security. However, if the scholar seeks further evidence from secondary sources, they are confronted with a striking gap in the Victorian historiography. This gap and its implications will be addressed next.

III: Historiography

In his analysis of the origins of the First World War, honour was identified by James Joll as an 'unspoken assumption' – a cultural or ideological phenomena which was so pervasive, it did not need to be discussed, thus relegating it to the background where it is easily missed.[160] However, in Parliament, national honour was firmly in the foreground. A survey of Parliamentary debates on Victorian foreign policy reveals a consistent and pressing concern for national honour, expressed in rhetoric which might do damage to the perceived guilty party, or enhance the standing of the figures that preserved it. Scholars have only recently

[158] Sir Francis Burdett, HC Deb 10 March 1830 vol 23, cc. 124-126. The press added to this impression: 'Certainly, we ought not to shrink even from war, when there is no other way of maintaining the national honour; but it should always be the last resort, and it is no disgrace to a brave nation that it should be very reluctant to go to war. The disgrace belongs to the opposite disposition.' *Morning Post*, 16 Jan 1845.
[159] *John Bull*, 14 Sept 1840.
[160] Joll, *Nineteen-fourteen: The Unspoken Assumptions; an Inaugural Lecture* (London, 1968). See also Hertz, 'Honour's Role in the International States' System,' 113.

begun to consider the extent of national honour's power, its relevance, and its function.[161] Although these studies do not address the rhetoric of national honour directly, they do suggest a burgeoning historiography to which this research project will contribute, and which is worth surveying here.

Allen Z. Hertz provided one of the more comprehensive assessments of the 'code of honour among nations,' by analysing national honour's development, its application in international relations, and its record over a wide variety of European nations.[162] Jorg Friedrichs elaborated that international relations were based upon a national sense of 'self-worth.'[163] In his consideration of the 'Foreign Office Mind', T. G. Otte presented national honour as a form of soft power, reflective of British financial and political power, and articulated through a wide range of synonyms such as prestige, dignity, and influence. Although he affirmed that Britain's honour and interests were frequently presented as indivisible, Otte dedicated only a few paragraphs to national honour in his conclusion, and did not interrogate how the ethic was used.[164] Other scholars provide a narrower focus. Glenn Melancon argued that national honour compelled Britain to declare war on China in his study on the First Opium War,[165] though his singular focus on the ethic has been criticised as reductionist.[166]

Analyses of the First World War have proved fruitful for measuring national honour's rhetoric and influence.[167] As seen above, Avner Offer also examined honour as a 'code of conduct' on the threshold of war in 1914, concluding on the ethic's understated importance, and presenting an important methodological tool which may be deemed an 'honour-

[161] For instance, Nair assessed the roles of sex and race in early 1920s' views of Indian national honour: Janaki Nair, ''Imperial Reason', National Honour and New Patriarchal Compacts in Early Twentieth- Century India,' *History Workshop Journal*, No. 66 (Autumn, 2008), 208-226.
[162] Hertz, 'Honour's Role in the International States' System', *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy*, 31, no. 2 (Winter 2002): 113-156.
[163] Jorg Friedrichs, 'An intercultural theory of international relations: How self-worth underlies politics among nations,' *International Theory*, 8 No. 1, (2015), 63-96.
[164] Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind*, pp. 409-411.
[165] See Melancon, *Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis: Balancing Drugs, Violence and National Honour, 1833-1840* (New York, 2017). Melancon, 'Honour in Opium? The British Declaration of War on China, 1839-1840', *The International History Review*, 21, No. 4 (Dec., 1999), 855-874.
[166] George L. Bernstein, Review: 'Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis: Balancing Drugs, Violence and National Honour, 1833-1840 by Glenn Melancon,' *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 36, No. 3 (Autumn, 2004), 538-539; 539.
[167] Douglas Newton, *The Darkest Days: The Truth Behind Britain's Rush to War, 1914* (London, 2014). Newton does not make honour his focus, but the ethic does appear consistently in the rhetoric of contemporaries. As Keith Wilson noted, the British argument for war was largely devoid of any mention of interests; intervention was a decision taken for her obligations, though this did not mean such interests were neglected. Keith M. Wilson, 'Imperial Interests in the British Decision for War, 1914: The Defence of India in Central Asia,' *Review of International Studies*, 10, No. 3 (Jul., 1984), 189-203

script.'[168] Although Ute Frevert assessed a similar period, her focus on gender and the language of honour among belligerent powers in 1914 is particularly prescient for this study. Frevert perceived 'the dominance of 'honour' in the language that was used to whip up national feelings,' remarking that 'one cannot help noticing how often contemporaries alluded to honour in order to justify what they were thinking and doing.'[169] If such observations ring true for 1914, they were equally true in the period before, where incessant crises and confrontations in the European or imperial spheres compelled contemporaries to express their views on what honour prescribed.

However, secondary literature on British foreign policy has unfortunately little to say on what national honour was, or how it was used. A brief survey of the sources consulted for this research project may reveal these shortcomings. Kenneth Bourne mentioned national honour only in passing, and did not attempt to interrogate the ethic any further than its surface appearances during his otherwise landmark study.[170] Keith Wilson discerned a tendency to use 'a certain, decided vocabulary of firm, determined language,' accompanied by 'heroic gestures' and an opposition to a policy of 'bounce and bluster' as a means of uniting the nation and diverting attention from social issues, yet he did not identify these tactics as arguably subsumed within the rhetoric of national honour.[171] In more specific cases, Wilbur Jones alluded to the ethic during moments of Anglo-American crisis, but did not interrogate the role which national honour played in their relations.[172] Keith Sandiford, in the only survey of its kind on British policy during the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, also referenced the ethic, but did not analyse national honour.[173] David Brown did provide minimal comments on Palmerston's use of national honour, but did not engage with any deeper analysis.[174] Although it is accepted that Disraeli's fondness for prestige influenced his policy, Palmerston's tactic of leveraging national honour in a public space – which he arguably drew inspiration from – has not been assessed in any meaningful way.[175]

Although scant attention has been paid to the role national honour played in the framing of foreign policy, scholars have assessed the rhetoric which accompanied other concepts, such

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[168] Offer, 'Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honor?', 223.
[169] Frevert, 'Honour, Gender, and Power,' p. 235.
[170] Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England 1830-1902* (Oxford, 1970).
[171] Keith M. Wilson (ed.), *British Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Policy: From Crimean War to First World War* (New Hampshire, 1987), p. 20
[172] Jones, *The American Problem in British Diplomacy, 1841-1861* (London, 1974).
[173] Sandiford, *Great Britain and the Schleswig-Holstein Question 1848-64* (Toronto, 1975).
[174] Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy 1846-55* (Manchester, 2002).
[175] See Chapter Six.

as patriotism, offering an example which may be useful. Jonathan Parry considered public debates on patriotism and how its meaning changed during the nineteenth century.[176] Mark Hampton examined how an editor of the *Manchester Guardian* attempted to challenge patriotism's meaning during the Second Boer War.[177] In *Arguing About Empire*, Martin Thomas and Richard Toye compared imperial policy rhetoric in a landmark study of Anglo-French relations.[178] The focus on public sources in these studies presents useful frameworks which this research project will emulate.

It may be contended that Victorian contemporaries regularly 'argued' about national honour, utilising their positions in Parliament or relationships with the media to articulate and press their case. Indeed, just as 'imperialism' and 'empire' were 'like empty boxes that were continuously being filled up and emptied of their meanings,' national honour was sufficiently versatile and ideologically flexible to apply to a wide range of scenarios.[179] Similarly, national honour was influenced by the culture and traditions in which contemporaries lived. Victorian society had inherited cultural ideas shaped by famed statesmen and Renaissance thought;[180] while influential literary works, including Shakespeare, had affirmed honour's position within Early Modern society.[181] This tradition

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[176] Jonathan Parry, 'Patriotism,' in David Craig and James Thompson eds., *Languages of Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke, 2013), 69-92. See also Hugh Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914,' *History Workshop*, No. 12 (Autumn, 1981), 8-33. This was distinguished from American definitions of the term, which was linked to republicanism. See Marc L. Harris, 'The Meaning of Patriot: The Canadian Rebellion and American Republicanism, 1837-1839,' *Michigan Historical Review*, 23, No. 1 (Spring, 1997), 33-69; Collin D. Barnes, Aaron Pomerantz and Larissa Yashko, 'Children Cover Your Eyes: Masculine Honor and the Role of Blind Patriotism in Teaching National Allegiance to Posterity,' *Political Psychology*, 37, No. 6 (Dec 2016), 817-834.

[177] Mark Hampton, 'The Press, Patriotism, and Public Discussion: C. P. Scott, the "Manchester Guardian", and the Boer War, 1899-1902', *The Historical Journal*, 44, No. 1 (Mar., 2001), 177-197.

[178] Thomas and Toye, *Arguing About Empire: Imperial Rhetoric in Britain and France, 1882-1956* (Oxford, 2017). Also Thomas and Toye, 'Arguing about Intervention: a Comparison of British and French Rhetoric Surrounding the 1882 and 1956 Invasions of Egypt,' *The Historical Journal*, 58, No. 4 (Dec 2015), 1081-1113.

[179] Andrew S. Thompson, 'The Language of Imperialism and the Meanings of Empire: Imperial Discourse in British Politics, 1895-1914,' *Journal of British Studies*, 36, No. 2 (Apr., 1997), 147-177; 147.

[180] J. F. R. Day, 'Primers of Honor: Heraldry, Heraldry Books, and English Renaissance Literature,' *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 21, No. 1 (Spring, 1990), 93-103. Foremost among these was Edmund Burke, and his reflections on honour: Jamison Kantor, 'Burke, Godwin, and the Politics of Honour,' *Studies in English Literature*, 1500-1900, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Summer 2014), 675-696. Abraham D. Kriegel, 'Edmund Burke and the Quality of Honour,' *Albion*, 12, No. 4 (Winter, 1980), 337-349. William C. Dowling, 'Burke and the Age of Chivalry,' *Yearbook of English Studies*, 12, (1982), 109-124. One scholar assessed the erection of memorials and its impact upon the nascent honour culture. Nigel Llewellyn, 'Honour in Life, Death and in the Memory: Funeral Monuments in Early Modern England,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1996), 179-200.

[181] Charles Barber, *The Theme of Honour's Tongue: A Study of Social Attitudes in the English Drama from Shakespeare to Dryden* (London, 1985). Curtis Brown Watson, *Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honor* (New Jersey, 1960). See also Alice Shalvi, '"Honor" in Troilus and Cressida,' *Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, 5, No. 2 (Spring, 1965), 283-302; Reta A. Terry, '"Vows to the Blackest Devil": Hamlet

continued in Sir Walter Scott's novels, which fused romantic notions of chivalry with Victorian standards of ethics and morality.[182]

The Victorian value system was influenced by other factors, including a persistent anxiety for the maintenance of the masculine ideal even as the duel declined.[183] Charlotte Hooper considered the implications of masculinity for what she described as 'manly states.'[184] Margery Masterson analysed public rhetoric in her study of a mid-Victorian masculinity, which was affected by the decline of the duel and interpersonal violence.[185] John Tosh, among others, explored this phenomena further in his analysis of the Victorian ideal of masculinity and its role in shaping domestic culture.[186] Angus Hawkins assessed Victorian political culture more broadly by examining the inherent values and public assumptions which underlined the era.[187] While this research project need not explore Victorian

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and the Evolving Code of Honor in Early Modern England,' *Renaissance Quarterly*, 52, No. 4 (Winter, 1999), 1070-1086. It may be compared to Edward Elgar's influence later in the century, see Aidan Thomson, 'Elgar and Chivalry,' *19th-Century Music*, 28, No. 3 (Spring 2005), 254-275.

[182] Alice Chandler, 'Sir Walter Scott and the Medieval Revival,' *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Mar., 1965), 315-332; P. D. Garside, 'Scott, the Romantic Past and the Nineteenth Century,' *Review of English Studies*, 23, No. 90 (May, 1972), 147-161l; Also by Chandler: 'Chivalry and Romance: Scott's Medieval Novels,' *Studies in Romanticism*, 14, No. 2 (Spring, 1975), 185-200. On Victorian morality see William A. Madden, 'Victorian Morality: Ethics Not Mysterious', *Review of Politics*, 23, No. 4 (Oct., 1961), 458-471.

[183] William Stafford, 'Gentlemanly Masculinities as Represented by the Late Georgian "Gentleman's Magazine",' *History*, 93, No. 1 (Jan 2008), 47-68.

[184] Charlotte Hooper, *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations, and Gender Politics* (New York, 2001).

[185] Masterson, 'Dueling, Conflicting Masculinities, and the Victorian Gentleman,' *Journal of British Studies*, 56, No. 3 (July 2017), 605-628. See also Lynn Abrams, 'The Taming of Highland Masculinity: Inter-personal Violence and Shifting Codes of Manhood, c.1760-1840,' *Scottish Historical Review*, 92, No. 233, Part 1 (April 2013), 100-122.

[186] John Tosh, 'What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain', *History Workshop*, No. 38 (1994), 179-202. Michael S. Reidy has provided a useful article on the extreme aspects of Victorian masculinity, see 'Mountaineering, Masculinity, and the Male Body in Mid-Victorian Britain', *Osiris*, 30, No. 1, Scientific Masculinities (Jan 2015), 158-181. Masculinity and what it meant to be a 'true' man was a somewhat elusive question for Victorian men, as the principles which underpinned it changed through the century, see Anne W. Windholz, 'An Emigrant and a Gentleman: Imperial Masculinity, British Magazines, and the Colony That Got Away', *Victorian Studies*, 42, No. 4 (Summer, 1999 - Summer, 2000), 631-658. The ideology surrounding masculinity invoked a range of expectations which were introduced to Victorian boys from an early age, see Claudia Nelson, 'Sex and the Single Boy: Ideals of Manliness and Sexuality in Victorian Literature for Boys', *Victorian Studies*, 32, No. 4 (Summer, 1989), 525-550. This was reinforced by novels, particularly the Tom Brown series, which emphasised the sporty, athletic masculine ideal. Andy Harvey, 'Tom Brown's Schooldays: 'Sportsex' in Victorian Britain,' *Critical Survey*, 24, No. 1, Sporting Victorians (2012), 17-29. Beard growing was even connected to this idea: Christopher Oldstone-Moore, 'The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain,' Victorian Studies, 48, No. 1 (Autumn, 2005), 7-34. Cohen considered the role of manners and etiquette in this phenomena: Michèle Cohen, '"Manners" Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750–1830,' *Journal of British Studies*, 44 (April 2005), 312–329.

[187] Hawkins elaborated further on the dangers of anachronism, the influence of religion in society, and the exaggerated nature of liberalism as a force on Britons. Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture: Habits of Heart and Mind* (Oxford, 2015).

masculinity in great detail, these studies help inform the gendered nature of national honour's rhetoric.

Although Parliamentary debates are essential to an analysis of this rhetoric, it is also important to recognise the contributions of the 'fourth estate,' Britain's print media industry. Scholars have devoted special attention to the Victorian newspaper press, discerning spectacular growth after the Crimean War, complemented by the abolition of several taxes that had limited the industry.[188] Services such as reading rooms increased accessibility, and foreign commentators marvelled at Britain's well-informed public.[189] A growing public sphere gave new opportunities for Britons to express themselves and absorb the language of politics.[190] This was accompanied by a stark rise in literacy, increasing accessibility to political debate.[191] Concepts such as liberalism matured in this space, subject to pressures and societal concerns, and enterprising writers introduced more radical ideas, including feminism, though not without controversy.[192] Journals such as the *Edinburgh Review*, *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* appealed to educated audiences with regular political commentaries, and enjoyed contributions from politicians.[193]

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[188] Rachel Teukolsky, 'Novels, Newspapers, and Global War: New Realisms in the 1850s,' *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 45, No. 1 (Spring 2012), pp. 31-55. Vann calculated *The Times* circulation at 1.2 million in 1840, which was publicly contested by the *Morning Chronicle*, its major competitor. J. Don Vann, 'The "Times," the "Morning Chronicle," and the Newspaper Stamp Tax,' *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 5, No. 4 (Dec., 1972), 36-41.

[189] A. Aspinall, 'The Circulation of Newspapers in the Early Nineteenth Century,' *Review of English Studies*, 22, No. 85 (Jan., 1946), 29-43.

[190] Craig Calhoun, 'The Public Sphere in the Field of Power', *Social Science History*, 34, No. 3 (Fall 2010), 301-335. Lynn M. Voskuil, 'Feeling Public: Sensation Theatre, Commodity Culture, and the Victorian Public Sphere,' *Victorian Studies*, 44, No. 2 (Winter, 2002), 245-274. Andry Croll, 'Street Disorder, Surveillance and Shame: Regulating Behaviour in the Public Spaces of the Late Victorian British Town,' *Social History*, 24, No. 3 (Oct., 1999), 250-268.

[191] David Vincent, 'The Progress of Literacy,' *Victorian Studies*, 45, No. 3 (Spring, 2003), 405-431. It has been contended that literacy rates were not determined by geography, but by cultural tradition: Gregory Clark and Rowena Gray, 'Geography is not destiny: geography, institutions and literacy in England, 1837-63,' *Oxford Economic Papers*, 66, No. 4 (Oct 2014), 1042-1069. With literacy came new demands for access to education, see Lawrence Stone, 'Literacy and Education in England 1640-1900,' *Past & Present*, No. 42 (Feb., 1969), 69-139. The debate over whether the industrial revolution facilitated this growth in literacy has been addressed: E. G. West, 'Literacy and the Industrial Revolution,' *Economic History Review*, 31, No. 3 (Aug.,1978), 369-383.

[192] Mark Hampton, 'Liberalism, the Press, and the Construction of the Public Sphere: Theories of the Press in Britain, 1830-1914,' *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 37, No. 1 (Spring, 2004), 72- 92. Janice Schroeder, '"Better Arguments": The "English Woman's Journal" and the Game of Public Opinion,' *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 35, No. 3 (Fall, 2002), 243-271.

[193] David Morphet, 'Political Comment in the "Quarterly Review" after Croker: Gladstone, Salisbury, and Jennings,' *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 36, No. 2 (Summer, 2003), 109-134. These journals also directed their ire towards perceived dangers, such as the threat of democracy in 1848. See Michael D. Lewis, '"The Edinburgh and Quarterly" Reviews in 1848: Allies against French Revolution and British Democracy,' *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 47, No. 2 (Summer 2014), 208-233.

A picture emerges of a readership hungry for news, receptive to advertisements, and amenable to political argument as press allegiances shifted.[194] Some papers were identified with politicians, as Laurence Fenton argued in his analysis of Palmerston's relationship with *The Times*.[195] Palmerston did not enjoy support from that paper until later in his career, and Fenton also assessed Palmerston's approach to newspapers during his earlier years in government.[196] Although *The Times*' precedence in London and abroad was clear, the market was sufficiently large to accommodate other papers which could boast a regional or class significance.[197] As he was most adept at leveraging newspapers to his own ends, Palmerston's long shadow over British media was palpable. David Brown perceived that Palmerston did 'frequently frame his public discussions of foreign policy in terms of national honour such as would resonate with a wide audience.'[198]

This strategy could both distract from domestic issues and reinforce national pride, while positioning Palmerston as the statesman – perhaps the *only* statesman – who could defend British interests and put British honour first. Palmerston also recognised the capacity of the press for stoking angst, patriotism, and xenophobia during periods of crisis or perceived decline, cultivating a profile as the defender of British prestige.[199] With this influence, Palmerston was well-placed to advise his contacts to use the rhetoric of honour in their pieces, and though his success may be debated, it certainly amplified his Parliamentary message. Palmerston's control was not absolute; as his famed quip explained, he could 'impel but not control,' but he nonetheless constructed an invaluable web of sympathetic

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[194] Lucy Brown, 'The Treatment of the News in Mid-Victorian Newspapers,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 27 (1977), 23-39; Ivon Asquith, 'Advertising and the Press in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: James Perry and the Morning Chronicle 1790-1821,' *The Historical Journal*, 18, No. 4 (Dec., 1975), 703-724. Edwin Jaggard, 'Small Town Politics in Mid-Victorian Britain', *History*, 89, No. 1 (Jan 2004), 3-29.
[195] Remarkably, Fenton does not mention national honour at all during his study. Fenton, *Palmerston and The Times: Foreign Policy, the Press and Public Opinion in Mid-Victorian Britain* (London, 2012).
[196] Laurence Fenton, 'Origins of Animosity: Palmerston and *The Times* 1830-1841,' *Media History*, 16: No. 4 (2010), 365-378. See also Laurence Guymer, 'Pressing the French and defending the Palmerstonian line: Lord William Hervey and The Times, 1846–8,' *Historical Research*, 87, No. 235 (Feb 2014) 116-133.
[197] Tom Morley, ''The arcana of that great machine': Politicians and "The Times" in the late 1840s,' *History*, 73, No. 237 (Feb 1988), 38-54. While Morley affirms *The Times*' precedence, it has been observed that readers were also motivated by class. Stephen Coltham, 'English Working-Class Newspapers in 1867,' *Victorian Studies*, 13, No. 2 (Dec., 1969), 159-180. Charles Dickens and his position in the *Daily News* serves as a good example of this growth in class-based papers. Gerald G. Grubb, 'Dickens and the "Daily News": The Early Issues,' *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 6, No. 4 (Mar., 1952), 234-246; 'Dickens and the "Daily News": Resignation,' *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 7, No. 1 (Jun., 1952), 19-38.
[198] Brown, 'Diplomacy and the Fourth Estate: The Role of the Press in British Foreign Policy in the Age of Palmerston,' in John Fisher and Antony Best eds., *On the Fringes of Diplomacy: Influences on British Foreign Policy, 1800-1945* (New York, 2016), p. 51.
[199] *Ibid*, pp. 37-38; 44.

editors and reporters by dispensing bribery, flattery, and patronage, wielding more control than his contemporaries over the press, and occasionally drawing their ire for it.[200]

Palmerston's death did not mean the death of this strategy, nor did it signal the obsolescence of national honour. When writing to an ambassador on Austrian tensions with Prussia in 1866, Foreign Secretary the Earl of Clarendon discerned that 'Austria will face war rather than the humiliation which Prussia seeks to inflict upon her, and in adopting that course I think she is exactly right.' Clarendon justified Vienna's stance on the basis that 'A disastrous war is better than voluntary disgrace.'[201] This reflected contemporary views of how national honour worked. No self-respecting nation could submit to impossible demands, but it was equally impossible for Britain to intervene in the Austro-Prussian struggle. Earl Russell explained that 'it would be an injustice to the people of England' to get involved 'in a quarrel in which neither English honour nor English interests are involved.'[202]

These views were also presented and debated in the media. A significant example may be taken from an 1871 discussion hosted in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. There, France's apparently hopeless struggle against Germany was seen in the context of national honour. The debate began thanks to the contributions of leading social and political commentator William Rathbone Greg, who insisted that the French government should have conceded defeat earlier, and that national honour could not be damaged since Emperor Napoleon III, rather than the French nation, was truly at fault.[203] His interpretation was bitterly contested just twenty-four hours later.[204] Then, in an official reply titled 'For Honour's Sake,' the *Pall Mall Gazette* mounted a spirited defence of national honour, while worrying that the ethic had somewhat declined in importance, and warning 'Present comfort may be purchased with

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[200] Brown, *Palmerston*, pp. 187-188. Brown, 'Compelling but not Controlling? Palmerston and the Press, 1846–1855,' *History*, 86, No. 281 (Jan 2001), 41-61.
[201] Clarendon to Lord Augustus Loftus, 7 March 1866 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 85, p. 384.
[202] There may have been an element of schadenfreude, as Russell added that 'Austria and Prussia undertook the war against Denmark in violation of their treaty with England and against the remonstrances of England. England has spoken in defence of right; she cannot interfere in the division of the spoil.' Russell to Clarendon, 30 March 1866 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 86, p. 386.
[203] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 Jan 1871.
[204] As one contributor Frederic Harrison wrote, 'It used to be the fashion to honour men who died or suffered to avert the shame and destruction of their nation, however little prospect there seemed of success. It is certainly a new doctrine that it is shameful in a people and infamous in their leaders to contend for national life against overwhelming odds…To die is a fearful thing – but shamed life a hateful thing.' It was declared that 'France, by continuing her struggle for independence against fearful odds, has recovered much of her national honour, and has earned the gratitude of every free people.' *Pall Mall Gazette*, 31 Jan 1871.

dishonour, but dishonour has its own penalties; and they have a tendency to accumulate and are generally irremediable.'[205]

Greg's response challenged the *Gazette*'s interpretation of honour,[206] prioritising a sense of duty. Greg contended that to fight to the end out of fear of what others would think of you was a 'false point of honour,' and that there was no shame in defeat.[207] Greg did reassure readers 'I suppose I should fight as resolutely in defence of the national honour as most men, and probably without calculating very closely the chances of success,' yet his point was that commentators had 'mistaken the point of honour,' because he could see 'no sense, no virtue, no notion of duty, no courage even, but mere criminal and childish folly, in bringing prolonged misery and ultimately worse evils on the country, merely that bystanders may clap their hands over our pluck.'[208]

In that same issue, the *Gazette* advised 'it is so important that false and misleading notions of national honour should be rebuked, and right and true notions established, that we take leave to answer the remarks made on that subject by WRG in another page.' The *Gazette* did this by focusing on honour's gendered nature, supposing that 'instead of illustrating the obligations of national honour by the personal honour of a man, we take the personal honour of a woman.' This was 'more than fair,' since 'there is greater likeness between the honour of a nation and of a woman.' The *Gazette* argued that 'the lady's proper course [according to WRG] would be to decline a contest with the superior forces which have already hurled her to the earth.' Yet clearly, 'a woman who, in the case we imagine, abandons all care for what her husband and sons may think, and decides whether she shall quietly surrender or not upon a judicious calculation of forces, does ill and not well.' Extreme though this example was, the *Gazette* equated this resistance to a duty, likening it to the behaviour of nations.[209]

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[205] It posed the questions: 'How comes it that even at a warlike time like this it is necessary to defend oneself for having recommended fighting 'for the sake of honour.'? How are we to explain the circumstances that a people which has fought and suffered for existence and for honour alike is sneered at in England for taking mere honour into account at all?' *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 Feb 1871.

[206] 'When a man speaks of being called upon to do this or that for honour's sake, if he means anything definite he means one of two things – he means that duty commands him to do it, or that he must do it out of consideration for what others will think of him if he does not do it.' *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6 Feb 1871, 4-5.

[207] 'There is no dishonour in defeat – all nations having been beaten in turn. There is no dishonour in surrendering territory, if you are so beaten that you cannot help yourself.' Gregg used the example of Britain's defeat in 1783, followed by her dramatic resurgence as a world power, as proof that dishonour was not a by-product of defeat when facing hopeless odds. *Ibid*, 4-5.

[208] *Ibid*.

[209] *Ibid*, 11-12.

The *Saturday Review* offered its own perspective on this debate, presenting honour as the reward for moral conduct, while defending its general record.[210] Honour, the *Review* argued, was an important step towards morality, had a civilising effect, and was vital among nations where the question of law had not been as developed as among individuals.[211] Indeed, the *Review* upheld that 'in a society like the society of nations, in which force is the ultimate appeal, honour, in the sense of reputation, especially the reputation of courage, is of more importance than it is in the case of individuals.' Needless 'pugnacity' it did not recommend, but a readiness to fight was a duty for nations, and this sense of duty 'is much more likely to have a practical influence on men's minds if it be put forth under the guise of honour.' The *Review* declared that it 'cannot fairly quarrel with the appeal to honour, so long as it is not perverted to sanction any course which would not be prescribed by duty as well as honour.' In the case of France, whose struggle appeared doomed, the *Review* prescribed that surrender was not dishonourable, but that a certain degree of resistance was required first.[212] By contrast, the woman's duty was more fatalistic, and could afford no such surrender.[213]

Following the *Pall Mall Gazette*'s response that day,[214] this public debate over what national honour required came to an end. The commonality between the statesman's private rejection of disgrace and the *Gazette*'s public emphasis on fatalistic resistance in the name of honour, could only reinforce the standards of the ethic among Britons. This leads to another question: the extent to which British newspapers merely educated its readers, or actively influenced their views and values. This important debate has been considered further, and was interrogated by contemporaries.[215] Brown has argued that statesmen had more control over

[210] 'It does not follow that the law of honour has been wholly useless. There are many minds which really cannot take in the idea of abstract duty; their whole bent is purely conventional, and they must have some external standard to follow. In such minds honour is a substitute for morality – a poor substitute indeed, but still very much better than nothing. Honour at least teaches that women should be chaste, and that men should be brave and truthful.' *Saturday review of politics, literature, science and art*, 11 Feb 1871, 169-170.
[211] 'Nations have no common superior; therefore their only way of settling irreconcilable differences is by the appeal to arms.' *Ibid*.
[212] 'The nation which shows the fitting amount of resistance discharges its duty, and therefore preserves its honour. The nation which shows a less amount of resistance fails to discharge its duty, and therefore loses its honour. But to yield at some stage – a stage which cannot be settled beforehand, but which circumstances will point out in each case – is not contrary to duty, and therefore not contrary to honour.' *Ibid*.
[213] 'There is no stage at which a woman ought to yield to a ravisher. She ought to die rather than yield. If she yields, she fails in her duty and loses her honour. If she is simply overcome by violence, she does not fail in her duty, and therefore does not lose her honour.' *Ibid*.
[214] 'Honour usually relates chiefly to the scrupulous fulfilment of the part in life which you have undertaken to play, and is derived not so much from the conscience as from the esprit de corps in the case of a class, and from the deep sense of a well-defined individuality in the case of an individual – the disregard of its claims being primarily rather a deep personal pain, than a sin.' *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 Feb 1871.
[215] In response to her letter complaining of criticism in the press, the King of Belgium assured the young Queen that 'One must not mind what the newspapers say. Their power is a fiction of the worst description,

newspapers than initially believed, and that Palmerston's example was not atypical for a ruling class eager for opportunities to spread their political message.[216]

The media could also pursue societal agendas disconnected from foreign policy. It has been contended that printed illustrations influenced British impressions of Ireland, engendering a sense of racial superiority.[217] Similarly, the press was instrumental in crafting the iconography of John Bull, the personification of the British Empire in the nineteenth century.[218] Hannah Barker has shown that the media could exert considerable domestic pressure when it adopted causes such as Catholic Emancipation, the Great Reform Bill, Repeal, and the abolition of the Corn Laws.[219] Such sources exerted a like influence in moments of foreign crisis, capturing the imagination of anxious readers in the process.[220] Considering this, it is no surprise that the Earl of Aberdeen co-opted *The Times* during his quest to pacify the Oregon Question. Following his intercession, *The Times* ceased its previously bombastic talk of national honour, presenting the issue instead as a matter of compromise, honourable to all.[221]

In terms of political biases, some newspapers, such as *The Times*, *Morning Post*, and *Morning Chronicle* adapted their message as their editors changed. Others, such as the *Manchester Guardian*, *London Evening Standard* or *Globe*[222] adhered to a largely consistent line on foreign policy. It may be argued that the fortunes of these newspapers changed alongside their political leanings. Although *The Times* dominated the media landscape, the depth of the London newspaper press alone meant Britons had several options, and thus several opportunities to engage with the rhetoric of national honour. In the main, Whig and

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and their efforts marked by the worst faith and greatest untruths. If all the Editors of the papers in the countries where the liberty of the press exists were to be assembled, we should have a crew to which you would not confide a dog that you would value, still less your honour and reputation.' King of the Belgians to Queen Victoria, 18 Nov 1836 in *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, I, p. 74.

[216] Brown, 'Morally Transforming the World or Spinning a Line? Politicians and the Newspaper Press in Mid Nineteenth-Century Britain,' *Historical Research*, 83, no. 220 (May 2010), 322-342; 323.

[217] Martin Forker, 'The use of the 'cartoonist's armoury' in manipulating public opinion: anti-Irish imagery in 19th century British and American periodicals,' *Journal of Irish Studies*, 27 (2012), 58-71.

[218] Miles Taylor, 'John Bull and the Iconography of Public Opinion in England c. 1712-1929,' *Past & Present*, No. 134 (Feb., 1992), 93-128.

[219] Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society 1695-1855* (London, 2000), pp. 207-222.

[220] Newspapers shaped foreign crises and provided British readers with occasionally anxious accounts of what was at stake. A good example is the 'media frenzy' caused by the Afghan War, which the author identified as preceding that of the Crimean War. Shane Malhotra, '"If She Escapes She Will Publish Everything": Lady Sale and the Media Frenzy of the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842),' *Book History*, 17 (2014), 272-297.

[221] See Chapter Three.

[222] Darwin F. Bostick and Guy M. Townsend, 'Palmerston and the "Globe"', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 5, No. 4 (Dec., 1972), 32-35.

Liberal papers tended to be more vocal on the subject, occasionally supplemented by Radical sources, while Tory papers – at least until Disraeli's premiership – were more restrained. This could be explained by the cooperation between Whig papers and Palmerston, which identified the party with the rhetoric of national honour, even if some of his colleagues were uncomfortable with this prospect.[223] The partnership was a lucrative one. The *Morning Chronicle* was considered a rival to *The Times* in the 1830s, before changing editors and supporting Peel's Conservatives in the following decade.[224] Thanks to Palmerston's relationship with the *Globe*, that paper enjoyed heavy representation on the continent during the same period. The *Morning Post*, once an opponent of Palmerston, effectively supplanted the *Chronicle* as his mouthpiece by the 1840s, thereafter enjoying a resurgence.[225]

By 1880, one perceives a general shift in tone, facilitated both by Disraeli's transformation of the Conservative party – encapsulated in his embrace of prestige – and Gladstone's simultaneous pursuit of a more pacific, moralising liberalism.[226] Despite the changing political times, the rhetoric of national honour remained a constant fixture of the press.[227] Where such rhetoric did change, it amalgamated the ideas of imperialism, prestige, and jingoism. This represented a wider shift in British consciousness, and Europe generally, towards the developing world.[228] Though it will be demonstrated that confrontation with non-European powers frequently provoked the rhetoric of honour, from the 1880s this rhetoric became more anxious as British imperial interests expanded. Henceforth, it would be easier for Britons to relate the rhetoric of national honour to their country's expanding interests.[229]

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[223] Brown, *Palmerston*, pp. 209-210.
[224] Mary S. Millar, '"Very like Assassination": George Smythe's Journalism in the Morning Chronicle,' *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 36, No. 3 (Fall, 2003), 242-260.
[225] Darwin F. Bostick, 'Sir John Easthope and the "Morning Chronicle", 1834-1848,' *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 12, No. 2 (Summer, 1979), 51-60.
[226] This is considered in John Charmley, *Splendid Isolation? Britain and the Balance of Power 1874-1914* (London, 1999), pp. 173-177.
[227] Thus the *Morning Post* commented that upon Disraeli's return from the Berlin Congress in July 1878, 'these great ends have been attained not only without loss of honour, but by raising the prestige of Great Britain to a point at least as high as it ever held before.' *Morning Post*, 16 July 1878. The term 'peace with honour' had now become common. *Morning Post*, 30 July 1878. One contemporary recorded Disraeli's reception from the cheering crowds, who accorded 'their fervent welcome to the main who had maintained their country's honour!' Montagu Corry to Queen Victoria, 29 July 1878 in George Earle Buckle ed, *Life of Benjamin Disraeli*, Vol. VI (London, 1920), p. 360.
[228] This is explored through the medium of art and illustration in the changing image of the heroic soldier opposed to the barbaric savage in the Zulu Wars. Catherine E. Anderson, 'Red Coats and Black Shields: Race and Masculinity in British Representations of the Anglo-Zulu War,' *Critical Survey*, 20, No. 3 (2008), 6-28.
[229] This may be seen in Salisbury's presentation of the 1898 Fashoda Crisis, wherein the Prime Minister risked war with Paris, as Palmerston had once done, this time with the caveat that influence over the African

But newspaper editors faced the same problems as the statesman; namely, the efficiency of their rhetoric was subject to the circumstances of the crisis itself. When confronted by a straightforward foreign incident – such as the *Trent* Affair – contemporary papers were united and defiant.[230] Yet when matters became complex, such as during the Schleswig-Holstein crisis three years later, it was tacitly recognised that readers were less amenable to mobilisation over such a confusing subject which did not directly impact their lives.[231] What emerges is the 'slippery' concept of public opinion, and its maturation in Victorian society.[232] This question of 'public opinion,' the quest to control it, and the fruits of this process, have also been addressed, albeit in limited scenarios.[233]

The historiography of Victorian print media, in short, is comprehensive and expanding, yet an analysis of national honour in these sources has not been provided. This research project lacks the space to provide a definitive account of national honour in Victorian newspapers, but a substantive survey of their comments and conclusions, inclusive of regional and London sources, represents a useful first step towards a proper explication of the ethic in the public record. This exercise begins in the first chapter of this research project, where the record of Whig foreign policy in 1830s is analysed, and the rhetoric of national honour is comprehensively assessed.

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continent was at stake. T. W. Riker, 'A Survey of British Policy in the Fashoda Crisis,' *Political Science Quarterly*, 44, No. 1 (Mar., 1929), 54-78; 65-68.

[230] See Chapter Four.

[231] See Chapter Five. Distance could also play a role – contemporaries of the Oregon negotiations struggled to make the crisis resonate with British audiences who could not place the region and knew little of its status. See Chapter Three.

[232] Daniel Hucker, 'International History and the Study of Public Opinion: Towards Methodological Clarity,' *International History Review*, 34, No. 4 (Dec 2012), 775-794.

[233] Two good examples from the 1860s are provided in Christopher Ewan, 'The Emancipation Proclamation and British Public Opinion,' *Historian*, 67, No. 1 (Spring 2005), 1-19; John F. Kutolowski, 'Mid-Victorian Public Opinion, Polish Propaganda, and the Uprising of 1863,' *Journal of British Studies*, 8, No. 2 (May, 1969), 86-110.

Chapter One

Whig Foreign Policy and the Rhetoric of National Honour: 1830-1841

Introduction

This chapter will assess how Whig governments under Earl Grey (1830-34) and Lord Melbourne (1835-41) utilised the rhetoric of honour, while considering how their political opponents leveraged the ethic against them. It will demonstrate how national honour was deployed in public discussions of foreign policy, both in Parliament and contemporary print media. This chapter will also introduce national honour's key ideological features, including ideas of obligation, good faith, insult, satisfaction, and forbearance. Ministers and opposition figures engaged extensively with the ethic in the public sphere, and while it certainly resonated with contemporaries, national honour was also a highly valuable political tool. Its value for foreign policy is revealed in an analysis of public sources in the 1830s; a pivotal decade, as policymakers considered such varied events as the Portuguese Civil War (1828-34), the Polish Uprising (1830-31), the Eastern Crisis (1833-40), and the Spanish Civil War (1834-40).[1]

As the Whig Foreign Secretary during most of this period, Viscount Palmerston arguably towers above both his peers and his opponents. The inspiration provided by George Canning's foreign policy, twinned with the influences of his early education, equipped Palmerston with the tools necessary for navigating an often-turbulent period of British foreign policy.[2] The tactical deployment of national honour was not the only weapon in his arsenal, but this chapter will posit that because the ethic resonated with his peers, rivals, and the public, Palmerston confirmed national honour's rhetorical power in debate, while providing a model which his successors sought to emulate. Conversely, Palmerston was held

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[1] Excluded from this study is the division of the Netherlands, a lengthy process which occupied much of Palmerston's attention until 1832. See G. W. T. Omond, 'The Question of the Netherlands in 1829-1830,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 2 (1919), 150-171. Brown, *Palmerston*, pp. 146-153. There was, in addition, revolt in the Papal States and an ill-fated five power agreement to restore order in 1831, which falls outside of the scope of this research project. Alan J. Reinerman, 'Metternich, the Powers, and the 1831 Italian Crisis,' *Central European History*, 10, No. 3 (Sep., 1977), 206-219; Reinerman, An Unnatural 'Natural Alliance': Metternich, Palmerston, and the Reform of the Papal States, 1831-1832,' *International History Review*, 10, No. 4 (Nov., 1988), 541-558.

[2] Brown, *Palmerston*, pp. 30-36. Brown discerns that Palmerston greatly expanded upon Canning's respect for popular acclaim, seeking to attain it through extensive extra-parliamentary activities. *Ibid*, pp. 164-165. Henderson presents a broader survey of Palmerston's two-decade tenure as Foreign Secretary which may also be useful. Gavin B. Henderson, 'Historical Revision: LXXXIV – The Foreign Policy of Lord Palmerston,' *History*, 22, No. 88 (March, 1938), 335-344

to account when his opponents perceived that he had failed to uphold the high standard of national honour he had sworn to maintain, necessitating spirited defences of his policy, and repeated declarations to the effect that the national honour had not been tarnished. This chapter thus presents an important principle for this research project: national honour could facilitate government success, but it could also constrain Ministerial policy.

It is also important to note the domestic context. In the major domestic debates, the rhetoric of honour could be deployed to reinforce commitments or defend intransigence.[3] 1832's Great Reform Bill presents a good example of these tactics.[4] Following forty non-consecutive days of debate,[5] the third iteration of this Reform Bill was rejected by the Lords, and Earl Grey announced his intention to resign on 9 May 1832.[6] Palmerston believed 'there was not a man in the country who thought that they could, with anything like honour, have remained in power,'[7] and the spectacle of an anti-Reform Tory government provoked widespread furore across the country.[8] The Duke of Wellington, the likely Tory candidate, was cautioned by his own son in the Commons that 'There was no man who had the blood of the Duke of Wellington in his veins who would not say that the Duke of Wellington would not stain his honour if he took office under present circumstances.'[9]

Wellington heeded these warnings, and refused to return to power.[10] King William IV 'tearfully' relented, the Lords capitulated, and Earl Grey's Whigs reassumed office. The December 1832 election granted the Whigs a 'thumping' victory, whereupon Boyd Hilton suggested that 'The Peelite regime seemed not only dead but buried.'[11] Peel did manage to briefly lead a new Tory government, but the Whigs returned to power in spring 1835 after

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[3] Earl Grey considered himself pledged 'by every tie of private honour,' and 'by every obligation of public duty to my sovereign and to my country,' to pass the Reform Bill, warning of his resignation if he failed. HL Deb 3 Oct 1831 vol 7, cc. 968-969. Following his resignation, Grey reflected that he had to 'consider whether it would be consistent with my duty to my Sovereign and to the public, and with the maintenance of my own character and honour, to continue the mere shadow of a Minister.' HL Deb 9 May 1832 vol 12, cc. 766-767.

[4] Criticising the unrepresentative status quo, Joseph Hume claimed that he would 'consider it no longer an honour to be a Briton, if my countrymen did not manifest their indignation at such a system, and resolve that it should be put an end to.' HC Deb 10 Oct 1831 vol 8, cc. 426-427.

[5] HC Deb 07 Sept 1831 vol 6, cc. 1223-9.

[6] HL Deb 09 May 1832 vol 12, cc. 758-60.

[7] Palmerston, HC Deb 14 May 1832 vol 12, cc. 936-937.

[8] HC Deb 15 May 1832 vol 12, cc. 984-90.

[9] HC Deb 14 May 1832 vol 12, cc. 979-980. It should also be noted that the future second Duke of Wellington owed his seat to a rotten borough.

[10] Thomas Macaulay advised that 'The Administration would be unable to preserve order at home, or to uphold the national honour abroad: and at length men who are now moderate, who now think of revolution with horror, would begin to wish that the lingering agony of the State might be terminated by one fierce, sharp, decisive crisis.' HC Deb 10 Oct 1831 vol 8, cc. 397-398.

[11] Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England, 1783-1846* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 421-422.

only six months in opposition.[12] This turbulent domestic context explains Ministerial distraction from foreign issues, but also the freedom which Earl Grey and later Lord Melbourne granted to Palmerston in foreign policy.[13]

This chapter will explicate the rhetoric of honour across several episodes of foreign policy, organised into three sections. The first considers British obligations to maintain the Russian Dutch Loan, a complex and largely forgotten arrangement, which invoked sentiments of 'good faith' and honour from contemporaries, notwithstanding Russia's violations of its obligations in Poland. The second assesses British obligations to Portugal and Spain during their civil wars, and how the Whig presentation of national honour aided the government's policy of limited intervention. The third section analyses the Turkish-Egyptian War, which elicited public concern for British prestige, identified the Eastern Question with national honour, and provoked similar language from the French when they were excluded from the final settlement. Also included are reflections on the nature of insult, the concept of forbearance, and the importance of seeking satisfaction from non-European states. This assessment of the Whig stewardship of foreign policy is intended to provide a useful introduction to the form and function of honour-based rhetoric, and its findings will be expanded upon in later chapters.

1.1: British Good Faith: Poland and the Russian Dutch Loan

In November 1830, Tsar Nicholas I's Polish subjects rose in revolt.[14] Since the Tsar held Congress Poland not by right of conquest, but by the provisions of the 1815 Treaty of Vienna, any violation of its integrity would activate British obligations.[15] This important principle

[12] *Ibid*, pp. 496-498.
[13] Brown, *Palmerston*, p. 167.
[14] The revolt spread across societal lines, including the peasantry. See Przemysław Milewicz, 'National Identification in Pre-Industrial Communities: Peasant Participation in the November Uprising in the Kingdom of Poland, 1830–1831,' *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 58, 3 (2010), 321-352.
Some Polish nobles were more moderate. See Charles Morley, 'Czartoryski as a Polish Statesman,' *Slavic Review*, 30, No. 3 (Sep., 1971), 606-614; Adam A. Hetnal, 'The Polish Right and the Question of National Independence in Russian Poland (1815–31). The Case of General Augustyn Słubicki,' *Polish Review*, 31, No. 1 (1986), 13-25. Leslie believed the revolt had been fanned by unrealistic expectations of leftist participants. See R. F. Leslie, 'Polish Political Divisions and the Struggle for Power at the Beginning of the Insurrection of November 1830,' *Slavonic and East European Review*, 31, No. 76 (Dec., 1952), 113-132.
[15] HC Deb 16 Aug 1831 vol 6, cc. 101-10. French sentiments towards Poland were more romantic, containing a measure of guilt for the 1815 settlement, and identification of the uprising as a second July revolution. Kenneth F. Lewalski, 'The French Medical Mission to Poland During the Insurrection of 1830-31,' *Polish Review*, 10, No. 2 (Spring, 1965), 44-58. It has been argued that sympathy for Poland was a key tenet of post-war French society. See Mark Brown, 'The Comité Franco-Polonais and the French Reaction to

was the basis for discussions on Poland, which long outlasted the failed uprising itself.[16] These sentiments were carried further once Russia crushed the Poles in autumn 1831, and the Tsar annexed Poland into the Russian Empire.[17] Polish exiles in Paris and London mobilised,[18] and tried to wrest commitments from those governments to defend Congress Poland.[19] In London, limited calls were made for more information or papers on Poland,[20] but domestic distractions delayed proper discussion of the conflict until 1832.[21]

The Tsar's *fait accompli* in Poland made direct British intervention unlikely, but it was certainly possible to express disgust at Russian behaviour, and attack the hypocrisy of the Tsar for violating the Treaty he had sworn to uphold. Members did so by utilising the rhetoric of honour, yet the parliamentary record reveals that these debates were often not well-attended, and that the Polish standard was largely carried by Radicals, Irish MPs, and independents. One such radical was Robert Cutlar Fergusson, a director of the East India Company, who consistently pressed the Polish cause in Parliament, using honour to make his case. In a Commons session of April 1832, trusting that Members 'would never suffer the national honour to be tarnished,'[22] Cutlar Fergusson criticised the Tsar's behaviour in Poland, being 'in direct opposition to the stipulation of a treaty, to which Great Britain was a party, and to the observance of which her faith was pledged.' Cutlar Fergusson pressed for a more active policy, and exclaimed that 'Not to feel for the treatment of Poland by Russia,

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the Polish Uprising of November 1830,' *English Historical Review*, 93, No. 369 (Oct., 1978), 774-793. Stanley has traced the growth of French influence in Poland during the Napoleonic Wars. See John Stanley, 'French Attitudes toward Poland in the Napoleonic Period,' *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 49, No. 3/4 (Sept-Dec 2007), 209-227.

[16] As Robert Cutlar Fergusson declared, 'the Emperor of Russia held the sovereignty of Poland on the terms and conditions on which he received it from the Congress at Vienna, and by no other title, and on no other right. The great question was not merely a Russian or a Polish question, but it was a question common to all Europe, and it was one in which the honour and good faith of every Power, and of none more than Great Britain, were directly involved.' HC Deb 18 April 1832 vol 12, cc. 637-638.

[17] Defeat did not crush the rebellious spirit of the Poles, and Metternich sought to leverage the Papacy to persuade them to cooperate. Alan J. Reinerman, 'Metternich, Pope Gregory XVI, and Revolutionary Poland, 1831-1842,' *Catholic Historical Review*, 86, No. 4 (Oct., 2000), 603-619

[18] Weisser connected British working-class enthusiasm for Polish statehood with Chartism, and believed Polish sympathy represented a driving force behind calls for British political reform. Henry G. Weisser, 'Polonophilism and the British Working Class, 1830 to 1845,' *Polish Review*, 12, No. 2 (Spring, 1967), 78-96.

[19] Adam Lewak, 'The Polish Rising of 1830,' *Slavonic and East European Review*, 9, No. 26 (Dec., 1930), 350-360

[20] HC Deb 8 Aug 1831 vol 5, cc. 930-3.

[21] HC Deb 13 Oct 1831 vol 8, cc. 696-7.

[22] HC Deb 18 April 1832 vol 12 cc. 652-653.

a man must be lost to every sense of honour and justice, and be utterly indifferent to the welfare of his fellow men.'[23]

However, aside from a brief debate in June,[24] Parliament paid scant attention to the defeated Poles until July 1833, when Cutlar Fergusson presented another Motion requesting that Britain refrain from recognising Poland's illegal annexation.[25] Birmingham Radical Thomas Attwood advocated measures beyond the limits of mere censure, and suggested that military coercion of Russia would be justified, since the government 'ought to have demanded of Russia that she should discharge her duty in the same honourable and upright manner that we had done ours—to fulfil her treaties in the same manner as we had kept our compacts.' Attwood 'could not think, without regret and disgust, upon the series of insults, which England had endured from that Power.' In a visibly empty Commons, Attwood challenged that 'Gentlemen were very ready to resent any thing which might be said in that House affecting their honour. Why were they not equally sensitive with regard to the honour of their country?'[26] Focusing on Wellington's policy towards Russia, where that Duke had 'pocketed' various insults to Britain, Attwood remarked how 'this was the man who went out to fight duels. Would to God that he were as much alive to insults offered to the honour of his country, as to those which affected his own honour as an individual.'[27]

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[23] *Ibid*, cc. 653-654. Privy Councillor Sir George Warrender also spoke for the Polish cause, believing that 'connected as we were with their cause, from having become a party to the treaties which guaranteed the independence of' Poland,' Britain 'could not abandon them, or suffer the conditions of the treaty to be evaded, if we had any regard to the maintenance of the national honour.' *Ibid*, cc. 654-655. Dr Stephen Lushington reminded Members that the Polish struggle was 'not merely a case of humanity, but a due regard for the national honour compels us to interfere.' *Ibid*, cc. 657-658. Sir Francis Vincent argued that 'The parties to the Treaty of Vienna would compromise their honour beyond all powers of redemption if they did not insist upon the maintenance of the nationality of Poland.' *Ibid*, cc. 660-661.

[24] Cutlar Fergusson was again the most prolific contributor, and he wished to ascertain 'whether the Government of this free country had kept that high ground of national honour and of public faith, from which he trusted she never would depart whilst she existed as a state.' HC Deb 28 June 1832 vol 13 cc. 116-117. He reminded Members that 'national rights, which were secured to them by a solemn treaty, had been violated by the emperor of Russia,' and that since 'those rights having been guaranteed to the Poles by a treaty, to which Great Britain was a party,' the country was obliged, 'in good faith and in honour, to see to the maintenance of that treaty, and of the provisions which it contained in favour of Poland.' *Ibid*, cc. 117-118. He added that 'It imported the honour and character of Great Britain that Poland should not be abandoned.' *Ibid*, cc. 130-31. Palmerston denied Britain was under any obligation to intervene, though she was entitled to an explanation. *Ibid*, cc. 132-133. Colonel Evans noted that 'if the explanations were not satisfactory, some other course would be adopted to vindicate the honour and consistency of this country.' *Ibid*, cc. 1138-1139. Henry Gally-Knight agreed force might be necessary, and since Britain had 'presided over the formation of the Treaty of Vienna,' she was bound 'by all the ties of honour and good faith to protest against the violation of that treaty, when its violation was an inroad upon the happiness and independence of a nation.' *Ibid*, cc. 1140-1141.

[25] HC Deb 9 July 1833 vol 19, cc. 416-417.

[26] *Ibid*, cc. 417-418.

[27] *Ibid*, cc. 418-419. Mindful that these measures could provoke war with Russia, Attwood declared 'if we could not preserve the honour and the political interests of England without war, let war come. We had never

Other Members linked British commitments to her honour,[28] warned of the dangers of insulting the Tsar,[29] declared that honour should come before all other concerns,[30] and advised the King on how best to proceed.[31] Palmerston had anticipated the desertion of Poland, lamenting in September 1831 that although he was sorry for the 'poor Poles', their cause 'had become for some time hopeless.'[32] Acknowledging this, the Foreign Secretary voted alongside both his colleagues and Tories to defeat Thomas Attwood's poorly attended Motion.[33] Although he had been defeated, Attwood had fulfilled his promise to Birmingham's electors the previous December where he had pledged that 'his grand object would be to protect the national honour,' while 'if any of the timid and servile party told him that they were not in a condition to go to war,' then 'he would endeavour to bring the guilty men to trial who had brought such a noble nation into such a fearful and degrading state as that.'[34]

The suppression of Congress Poland thus compromised the Treaty of Vienna, but another of its articles provoked even more impassioned debate than the fate of Poland. This was the so-

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shrunk from war before, why should we now?' *Ibid*, cc. 419-420. And he had no loyalty to the Whigs, declaring 'they were no Government for the people of England, unless they were prepared to go to war if necessary, or to protect the honour and interests of the country without war.' While 'The people did not want war for its own sake,' they did wish 'to protect the honour and the political interests of the country, and they would protect them under this Government, or under another.' *Ibid*, cc. 420-421. He believed Britons wished for Polish independence, and 'He hoped the House would not be behind the people in honour and liberality.' Concluding, Attwood hoped that Russia's 'repeated insults would not be submitted to. They could not be, without degrading England.' *Ibid*, cc. 422-423.

[28] The writer, traveller and reformer James Buckingham believed that 'If England were party to a treaty, and the national honour pledged to its observance, the greatest reliance was placed upon its fulfilment.' Buckingham explained that 'The word of an English gentleman was regarded as his bond; and whatsoever he had promised, the strongest belief was entertained, that he would, to the letter, as well as in the spirit, perform.' Buckingham insisted that it was through 'this general sentiment of her high superiority to other nations in unblemished honour, that England owed the moral force connected with her very name.' He asserted that 'the proud and exalted station which Great Britain enjoyed at the head of the nations of the world,' was attributable more to 'the moral influence exercised by her reputation for unsullied honour, and uncompromising integrity, than from all other causes combined.' *Ibid*, cc. 448-450.

[29] Lord Stanley thus warned that 'we were bound by every political motive, to abstain from rushing into any war, the chief recommendation of which would be, that it had been taken up from chivalrous feelings.' Addressing the readiness to insult the Tsar among some Members, Stanley asked whether it would be 'consistent with the honour of that House,' or 'consistent with the honour of the country,' if Britain 'should provoke a war, and afterwards flinch from it?' *Ibid*, cc. 456-458.

[30] Irish MP Richard Sheil reminded Members that while 'The hazard of a war had been urged upon one side as an argument against the Motion,' on the other hand, 'the certainty of the loss of national honour presented itself in opposition.'" *Ibid*, cc. 458-459.

[31] Sir Robert Peel spoke briefly, asking 'what language, consistently with the dignity and honour of England, would be used by the House?' The best approach, he believed, would be 'to say to his Majesty—"Your Majesty is a party to a treaty—that treaty has been violated—the national honour is implicated—and we, the House of Commons, demand redress." *Ibid*, cc. 460-461.

[32] Quoted in Brown, *Palmerston*, 164.

[33] It was defeated by a margin of 95 ayes and 177 noes, well below half of the Commons' full complement of Members. HC Deb 9 July 1833 vol 19, cc. 463-464.

[34] Thomas Attwood, Birmingham Hustings, *Evening Mail*, 17 Dec 1832.

called Russian-Dutch Loan, a complex Convention added to the 1815 Treaty. According to King William of the United Netherlands, this Convention was necessary as he wished to render 'a suitable return for the heavy expense incurred,' by Russia 'in delivering the said Territories from the power of the enemy,' in addition to great debts incurred from Russian lenders.[35] To discharge these obligations it was arranged that from 1816, the Netherlands would begin paying an annual sum of twenty-five million florins at 5% interest.[36] As compensation for Dutch colonies occupied during the war, Britain pledged to match these payments to Russia, thus incurring an annual financial obligation equating to five million pounds. Yet, with Congress Poland extinguished, Britons began to question the wisdom of this arrangement. Could Britain not renege on its Treaty obligation to the loan, just as Russia had reneged on its obligations to maintain Congress Poland? These were pressing questions, but the greatest threat to the loan's legitimacy came from Belgium. Article V of the Convention had prescribed that if Belgium seceded from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the repayments would cease, thus positioning Russia as a de facto guarantor of the Kingdom's integrity.[37] Thus, with Belgian independence affirmed in November 1831, contemporaries could now make a sound legal argument that Britain was no longer required to pay. Surprisingly, perhaps, Palmerston did not adopt this position.

Technically, the 1815 Convention had not accounted for the internal separation of the Netherlands which took place, only for the invasion, occupation, or temporary severance of Belgium.[38] This legally tenuous loophole may have facilitated Palmerston's effort to present a new Convention in 1831, which justified the continuation of the payments on the basis that while circumstances had changed, the Treaty's goals had not.[39] It is not immediately clear

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[35] Sir Edward Herstlet, *The Map of Europe by Treaty; Showing the Various Political and Territorial Changes Which Have Taken Place Since The General Peace Of 1814* (2 Vols. London, 1875), I, p. 150.
[36] 'Black Mail to Russia: A History of the Russo-Dutch Loan,' *Financial Reform Tracts* (Liverpool, 1859), 5.
[37] Specifically, the Convention read that 'the said payments on the part of their Majesties the King of the Netherlands and the King of Great Britain, as aforesaid, shall cease and determine, should the possession and Sovereignty (which God forbid) of the Belgic Provinces at any time pass or be severed from the dominions of His Majesty the King of the Netherlands previous to the complete liquidation of the same.' Herstlet, *The Map of Europe by Treaty*, I, p. 152..
[38] *Ibid*, p. 153.
[39] The 1831 Convention declared that close examination of the 1815 terms 'has led the two High Contracting Parties to the conclusion that complete agreement does not exist between the letter and the spirit of that Convention, when regarded in connection with the circumstances which have attended the Separation that has taken place between the two principal divisions of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands,' and that 'on referring to the object of the above-mentioned Convention of the 19th May, 1815, it appears that that object was to afford to Great Britain a guarantee that Russia would, on all questions concerning Belgium, identify her policy with that which the Court of London had deemed the best adapted for the maintenance of a just Balance of Power in Europe, and on the other hand to secure to Russia the payment of a portion of her Old Dutch Debt, in consideration of the general Arrangements of the Congress of Vienna, to which she had given her adhesion, Arrangements which remain in full force.' Sir Edward Herstlet, *The Map of Europe by Treaty;*

why the government was so determined to preserve the Russian Dutch Loan, and scholars have neglected to shed any light on the question. The 1831 Convention arguably suggests a belief that maintaining the payments would encourage Russia to protect Belgium from external threats. This included the French, who were then occupying Belgian fortresses along their border, and the Dutch King, who refused to accept the Belgian separation. Nonetheless, one could argue Britain was not legally obliged to continue the payments, and in recognition of this flawed legal position, it is contended here that Earl Grey's Ministers repeatedly pressed the importance of Britain's good faith and credit, both to excuse these legal contradictions and to obfuscate the questions at stake.[40] Remarkably, by deploying the rhetoric of honour in this fashion, Ministers succeeded in overcoming legal objections, effectively preserving the 1831 Convention which maintained the Russian Dutch Loan.

The episode thus highlights the potency of national honour's rhetoric, of which notions of good faith formed an integral part. In the national context, 'good faith' referred to the discharge of debts, but the concept was not a Palmerstonian invention. The high value placed on an unblemished record for paying debt – referred to as credit – emerges as a clear theme which was sustained into the future.[41] An honourable nation would not renege on its financial obligations, even towards creditors that had violated other commitments.[42] With regard to

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Showing The Various Political And Territorial Changes Which Have Taken Place Since The General Peace Of 1814 (London, 1875), II, p. 872.

[40] When the 1831 Convention was presented in December, Chancellor of the Exchequer Lord Althorp asked whether it would be 'consistent with the honour of this country to have taken advantage of the separation to refuse to Russia the payment of the interest on the loan.' HC Deb 16 Dec 1831 vol 9, cc. 335-336. Although he later emphasised honour to explain why the loan should continue, here Peel disagreed, establishing the opposition's position when he declared 'He was not considering whether it was consistent with the honour and good faith of the country to continue the payment, but whether it was consistent with the law.' *Ibid*, cc. 335-336. Applying some legal legitimacy, the Attorney General told Members 'neither in law nor equity, nor still less in honour,' could it be doubted that the treaty's original terms stipulated for the separation of the Netherlands by external force, and since such force had not materialised, 'the obligations of the treaty continued in full force.' *Ibid*, cc. 336-337.

[41] Lord Dalmeny, Deb 11 March 1847 vol 90, cc. 1176-1178.

[42] In a Commons session of 1835 Thomas Spring Rice connected Britain's liquidity to its character, reflecting that 'The loan which had just been effected, he would appeal to as an unanswerable proof that the credit of England now stood higher than it ever did before. If they compared the rate at which it was raised with the rate at which money was borrowed by foreign countries, it would show how much higher the character of this country was than that of any other nation.' HC Deb 14 Aug 1835 vol 30, cc. 544-545. The *Sheffield Iris* later opined that American insults to France did not absolve the latter of her debts: 'It is true the Government of Louis Philip, though withholding the payment of this just debt, in fact, does still make conditional promise of payment, the condition being that the President of the United States shall withdraw, or apologise for some expressions 'offensive to the dignity of France', which he used during the protracted negotiations on the claim, in consequence of the shuffling predicted by Louis Philippe's Cabinet. The legality of the debt being established, what right, it may be asked, has France to annex any conditions to the payment? Let her pay the debt first and then settle the point of 'national honour' afterwards. It is a strange way of vindicating the national honour to refuse the payment of a just debt. If a man in private life attempted to vindicate his honour, his conduct would be considered very shabby and dishonourable.' *Sheffield Iris*, 29 Dec 1835.

obligations incurred from diplomacy, even Machiavelli recognised the importance of 'good faith,'[43] and much could be made of the contaminating effect of reneging on commitments in one theatre, which would damage Britain's position in another. Ministers emphasised the 'spirit' of the agreement, concluding that only a mean, cynical, or dishonourable government would take advantage of the 'letter of the law' to renege on the loan.[44]

Conversely, opposition figures insisted that the government had confused the issues at stake in the loan question; Britain was not legally required to continue the payments, and it would in fact be illegal to do so. National honour was not a factor in such considerations, and the government's perceived motives were also scrutinised. Critics could view the payments as an inducement to 'keep Russia in good humour,' a situation chastised as blackmail.[45] The opposition also disputed the government's legal advice; it was said that the King's law officers approved of the Ministerial interpretation of their obligations, and had emphasised national honour in their deliberations. Interestingly, opposition figures responded that the Crown's law officers had exceeded their brief; if honour was at stake, that was for the Commons, not these officials, to decide.[46] When the 1831 Convention was presented to Parliament, they disputed its legitimacy on these grounds, though political interests also

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[43] G. R. Berridge, 'Machiavelli: Human Nature, Good Faith, and Diplomacy,' *Review of International Studies*, 27, No. 4 (Oct., 2001), 539-556; 543-548.

[44] The lawyer and liberal MP John Campbell distinguished between the letter and spirit of a treaty to reinforce the government's culpability: 'What frauds and crimes had not this doctrine of construing treaties by the literal meaning produced? One garrison it was known surrendered under a capitulation, stipulating that no blood should be shed; they were all buried alive. The inhabitants of Argos agreed to a truce for three days; they were massacred when asleep in their beds in the third night. Antiochus entered into a treaty, by which half his ships were to be restored to him: all his ships were cut in two, and he was offered the half of each. In these cases the spirit of the treaty was violated; and, although the letter was observed, the violators were guilty of the most atrocious perfidy, because they disregarded the sense in which they knew the language employed had been understood by their adversaries.' Campbell, HC Deb 16 July 1832 vol 14, cc. 442-443.

[45] 'Black Mail to Russia,' 6. *Blackwood's* reflected that although it was said 'we were bound in honour and equity,' Britain's role in asserting Belgian independence revealed the 'absurdity' of this position, and the loan was condemned as a 'bribe to Russia' to keep the peace. 'The Belgian Question,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 31, No. 192 (Mar 1832), 460-462. *The Times* clarified the loan as a 'retaining fee' for Russian support, which was designed to guard the Netherlands against French attack, and which was not invalidated by Belgian independence. *The Times*, 4 Feb 1832. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* portrayed Ministerial approval of the Russian Dutch loan as 'a piece of folly without parallel, and without the shadow of an excuse.' 'The Ministry and their Supporters,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 31, No. 192 (Mar 1832), 567.

[46] Former Attorney General Sir Charles Wetherell asserted that 'even if the honour of the country be implicated in its payment, was it not for the House of Commons to judge of that question of honour?' Wetherall believed 'the honour and equity of the country' was 'a province not belonging to the law officers of the Crown,' and 'If the Law Officers of the Crown had given an opinion upon what affected the honour and equity of the country, then their opinion was not worth the paper on which it was written.' Wetherall complained that legal officials 'have clothed themselves in a panoply of chivalry, and have volunteered an opinion as to the honour and equity of making payments, whilst they ought to have stuck to the mere question of law.' HC Deb 16 Dec 1831 vol 9, cc. 340-343.

played a role.[47] Indeed, when he had split from the Tories over a decade later, Sir Robert Peel used the rhetoric of honour to justify the continuation of the loan.[48] Once introduced into the debate, the rhetoric of honour could not be ignored; contemporaries were forced to provide their own interpretation of what was due to national honour, and where Britain's good faith truly resided.

In response to a Motion in the new year calling for greater information on the 1831 Convention, Chancellor of the Exchequer Lord Althorp affirmed the Ministerial defence. He emphasised honour with greater urgency, claiming that 'a careful examination of the spirit and provisions of that treaty convinced him that the honour of the country was pledged to the payments.'[49] He clarified that 'the simple question,' was whether, 'the honour of the Crown [was] pledged to the payment of a portion of a certain loan made between the king of the Netherlands and the emperor of Russia.'[50] Althorp underlined the government's legal defence: the 1815 Convention had not accounted for an internal division of the Netherlands, and he used the metaphor of gentlemanly relations to reinforce this point.[51] The Solicitor General alluded to the Treaty's spirit, rather than its letter, assuming 'that every nation was interested in preserving unsullied its public honour or faith,' and that 'if he should show that the public faith of this country was pledged to the fulfilment of the treaty of 1815, in its entire spirit,' then it followed 'by every principle of the law of nations, Ministers were not only justified in, but bound to act as they had done with respect to the debt due by Holland to Russia.'[52]

The Tory banking magnate Alexander Baring – later to negotiate Webster-Ashburton Treaty and settle the North American border[53] – sought more detail on how the obligation of honour

[47] The Tories were accused of feigning a concern for 'frugality' and 'preaching economy' while using Russia as a 'stalking horse,' behind which they 'skulk, and take a deliberate aim against the existence of the ministers.' *Figaro in London*, 34 (28 July 1832), 133. The *Leicester Chronicle* represented Tory tactics as 'insidious pranks,' and a 'false firing,' designed to divide the Ministry and delay reform. *Leicester Chronicle*, 4 Feb 1832.
[48] Peel declared 'upon the name and honour of England' that the payments must be continued. Peel, HC Deb 11 March 1847 vol 90, cc. 1214-1215.
[49] HC Deb 26 Jan 1832 vol 9, cc. 915-916
[50] *Ibid*, cc. 916-917.
[51] 'If a gentleman pledged himself to the payment of a debt, to which there was also a third party, he thought it would be highly dishonourable in that gentleman to take advantage of the circumstance of that third party having refused to fulfil his engagement, as a legal reason for also refusing to fulfil his engagement… And as between man and man, so it ought to obtain between nations; what would be dishonourable in the one, would be dishonourable in the other; and what was morally binding on the one was morally binding on the other.' *Ibid*, cc. 916-918.
[52] *Ibid*, cc. 920-921.
[53] See Chapter Four.

compelled the government to act. Asserting his prioritisation of honour, Baring insisted that 'if any case were made out to show that in good faith we were bound to pay this sum, or that in point of honour, though not in law, we ought to continue to pay what we had stipulated,' then he would support the government, but Ministers had a duty to justify such expenses to the public.[54] Ministers responded that Britain *was* bound in honour, and that to abandon such commitments would invite disgrace.[55] Lord John Russell used honour to bypass questions of legality, declaring 'It was not a question of economy or of dispensing with an Act of Parliament, but the question before them was, whether they should violate the national faith,' and 'He, for one, would not consent, for the sum of £5,000,000 to barter the honour and faith of England.'[56] Ministers 'never would, in pursuit of economy, recommend any measure which appeared to them calculated to disparage the public faith.'[57] Palmerston insisted that the question was simple: 'were the honour and character of England bound to continue the payments of the Russian loan?' 'As a gentleman, and a man of honour,' the Foreign Secretary thought 'that the reputation of England was involved,' in continuing the payments.[58]

The debate resumed on 12 July 1832, and Lord Althorp laid the Convention of 1831 before the House. Althorp insisted that Russia had upheld her side of the agreement, and he urged Members not to take such a minimalist view of their obligations. 'Would it now be just or honourable for Great Britain to stand upon the letter of the contract, and deprive Russia of the fair advantages of the contract, because it had complied with the wishes she had urged?' Such behaviour was 'so contrary to the honour, and so disgraceful to the character of the country, that he could not believe any Member of Parliament would be disposed to look upon this matter,' in such a cold and calculating manner.[59] In response, former Chancellor of the Exchequer John Herries introduced a Resolution, asserting that the continued payments were 'not warranted by law,' affirming the opposition's position as based in law, while avoiding more emotive questions of honour or good faith.[60]

[54] HC Deb 26 Jan 1832 vol 9, cc. 922-924.
[55] 'England would rue the day' the Attorney General warned, if it should 'depart from that principle of honour and good faith which caused it to respect itself, and ensured the respect of every other nation.' *Ibid*, cc. 938-939. Francis Vincent discerned that 'Ministers, in the course they had pursued, had acted according to the dictates of honour, justice, and equity, and he was determined to support them.' *Ibid*, cc. 940-941.
[56] *Ibid*, cc. 949-950.
[57] *Ibid*, cc. 951-952.
[58] *Ibid*, cc. 966-967
[59] HC Deb 12 July 1832 vol 14, cc. 261-262.
[60] John Herries, *Ibid*, cc. 277-278.

Russia's violation of Poland was no excuse for reneging on those obligations, as the accomplished lawyer and East India Company Director Dr Stephen Lushington confirmed when he qualified that he would never condescend 'to gratify the detestation I feel of [Russia's] political conduct, to violate the Treaties which Great Britain has made with her, and thus to put a stain upon the honour of the British name.' Lushington warned that if the loan was cancelled, then 'You are sure to suffer the consequences of your violation of faith,' because 'the powers of the world, remembering your disregard of former obligations, will shun entering into treaties with you,' and, more dangerously 'whatever may be the necessity that may oppress you, they will refuse to coalesce with you for any purposes of common advantage.'[61]

Had Britain not threatened Russia with similar consequences if she violated her faith towards Poland? 'With what sense of honour then,' Lushington challenged, 'with what sense of the sacredness of obligations, can it be argued that it is consistent with the dignity of Great Britain to refuse the payment of this loan?'[62] The British people were 'too honourable and well-principled,' to wish that the government should use such means to escape those expenses 'from which they could only be relieved at the expense of the dignity of the Crown and of the national honour.'[63] Lushington concluded that 'the construction which his Majesty's Ministers had put upon the Treaty of 1815 was the only sound one, and the only one consistent with the honour and the dignity of the country.'[64]

Former judge and Tory MP for Huntington Sir Jonathan Pollock scrutinised these claims, charging that although Ministers 'had talked a great deal of the national faith and the national honour,' in fact 'the national faith and honour had nothing to do with the question now before the House,' and 'it was only by mixing them up with that question that the advocates of the Government found a kind of apology for the course that had been pursued.'[65] Alexander Baring echoed Pollock in emphasising the primacy of the law,[66] though Wellington's former

[61] *Ibid*, cc. 279-280.
[62] *Ibid*, cc. 282-283.
[63] *Ibid*, cc. 285-286.
[64] *Ibid*, cc. 287-288. Lushington was consistent among other radicals, such as renowned reformer Thomas Babington Macaulay who asserted that 'it was of the deepest moment that the national honour should be preserved inviolate,' and that 'Considering, that upon this subject hung the national faith and honour of England, he confessed it did in the highest degree astonish him,' that Members 'should think of introducing topics which had not the slightest relation to such a subject,' such as the question of law or the character of the Tsar. It was well to speak of economy, yet Macaulay 'had not yet heard anybody rise in the House and say, that economy was to be preserved at the expense of national honour.' *Ibid*, cc. 293-294.
[65] Pollock, *Ibid*, cc. 312-313.
[66] Alexander Baring reiterated the centrality of the law to the question, yet conceding that if any Member 'thought the honour of the country pledged to the payment of the money,' then nothing 'could be more base,'

Lord Chancellor Sir Edward Sugden attacked the Whig conception of honour directly, noting that while Palmerston 'had talked of a breach of national faith if this money were not paid,' he denied 'that, by the national honour, we were bound to pay a single shilling.' Indeed, in continuing the payments, 'The present Ministry stood convicted of as gross a breach of national faith as ever was committed,' and 'Considering, therefore, this House as the guardian of the national honour and of the public peace, he never supported a motion with greater satisfaction than the present.'[67]

Palmerston reiterated that 'as the Government considered itself pledged in honour and good faith to continue the payments, it was its bounden duty to sign this subsequent Convention,'[68] and 'it would be to practise an imposition on the government of Russia,' if Britain attempted 'by a mean and paltry quibble, to relieve herself from obligations which she was bound to fulfil, not only by considerations of honour and good faith, but also by a regard for her true political interests.' The Foreign Secretary warned that if the payments were refused, then 'the honour and the good name of the country would be so tarnished, that he should despair of any useful or beneficial intercourse ever again taking place between her and the other states of Europe.'[69] Peel met this challenge, discerning that Palmerston 'had studiously confounded two questions, which were entirely distinct,' the first: 'whether this country was under an obligation, of honour and good faith, to continue these payments to Russia,' and the second: 'whether his Majesty's Government were warranted, by law, in advancing the money in January last? No two questions could be more distinct than these.'[70]

But why had the questions of law and honour been so confused? Peel believed that 'because the pressure of argument against the conduct of Government was so strong,' it 'became necessary to divert attention from it, by introducing a multitude of topics, with which that conduct had nothing to do.'[71] He urged that 'if the obligation be valid in honour and good faith, let Parliament authorise the payment.'[72] Russell leveraged honour once again, claiming that it was 'extraordinary,' that no opposition figures had 'expressed an opinion as to whether this country was or was not bound, in honour and good faith, to continue this

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than 'to resist the payment out of fear of anything that might be said on the hustings.' Baring, *Ibid*, cc. 288-289.

[67] Sugden, *Ibid*, cc. 320-321.
[68] Palmerston, *Ibid*, cc. 327-328.
[69] *Ibid*, cc. 329-330.
[70] Peel, *Ibid*, cc. 330-331.
[71] *Ibid*, cc. 330-331.
[72] *Ibid*, cc. 339-340.

payment to Russia.'[73] Russell concluded that 'If, as he believed, the hon. Members opposite really thought that this country was bound in honour to make these payments, there was an end of the most material question.'[74]

Four days later, Alexander Baring resumed the attack, calling for those papers which addressed the 'spirit' of the Convention, while alluding to the current naval intervention to coerce the King of the Netherlands to accept the secession of Belgium. Baring believed that if the government 'was sending out ships to blockade the [River] Scheldt, and at the same moment paying money to Russia to induce her to abstain from interfering in this honourable crusade,' then 'such a proceeding was as little consistent with his notions of honour as anything he could imagine.'[75] Henry Gally Knight observed this charge of hypocrisy, asking 'What right could we have to call on Russia to keep her part of the Treaty of 1815, relating to Poland, if we ourselves broke faith with her with respect to Belgium and Holland?'[76] Whig-aligned MPs were not united in pressing the point of honour,[77] though the ethic was consistently expressed.[78] Irish MP Richard Sheil encapsulated the Ministerial position, reasoning that while the sum of five million pounds was 'a vast heap of gold,' he believed

[73] Russell, *Ibid*, cc. 343-344.
[74] Russell charged that the opposition had 'availed themselves of the pretext of saving the public money, in order to attack Ministers; although they themselves would not venture to declare that this country was not bound, if she desired to retain her honour unsullied, to pay Russia the money to which she was entitled, by the spirit of the Treaty of 1815.' *Ibid*, cc. 344-345.
[75] Baring, HC Deb 16 July 1832 vol 14, cc. 434-435.
[76] Gally Knight, *Ibid*, cc. 438-439. In the same vein, Lord Morpeth challenged how the opposition could 'press upon Russia the strict and honourable fulfilment of her engagements towards Poland,' while at the same time, 'announce to her that we make our strict and honourable fulfilment of our engagements dependent upon hers, and would they have us accompany such an announcement by putting a sum of money, belonging to Russia, into our own pockets?' This 'would not add much moral weight to our remonstrances,' but would 'give to her resistance almost the semblance of virtue, when she refused to accept a paltry bribe.' Instead, Morpeth wished that for 'the strict discharge of our honourable engagements the only bribe which we would offer to other nations to fulfil theirs. Let us take the lead, and not wait for reciprocity.' *Ibid*, cc. 462-463. Morpeth was content 'to rest his explanation on this short, simple, and satisfactory statement, that on one side there was economy, and that on the other side there was honour; that his noble friend had preserved that honour, that he had paid our debts, and that he had kept us at peace.' *Ibid*, cc. 463-464.
[77] Joseph Hume claimed that his support of the Convention was contingent on keeping the Tories out of office. *Ibid*, cc. 439-441. The abolitionist Thomas Gisborne reminded Members of Russia's immense contribution to the defeat of France, which still entitled her to the proper compensation that a liberal interpretation of the treaty would allow. *Ibid*, cc. 447-448.
[78] Charles Forbes was 'favourable to the payment of the money, not from any partiality to Russia, whose policy he detested, but because he thought the honour of the country was involved.' *Ibid*, cc. 458-459. Lord Althorp seconded this, and reiterated that 'this country could not, consistently with the exact observance of faith, or without committing a breach of honour, refuse to pay the sums for which the treaty stipulated.' Althorp considered that 'he was not only justified in consenting to the payment, but that he should have been guilty of a dereliction of the honour of the country had he refused.' *Ibid*, cc. 465-466.

'the character of England was above all price; better to lose every thing except our honour, than win the world without it.'[79]

The staunch anti-reformer and former Attorney-General Sir Charles Wetherell maintained the challenge,[80] while qualifying that he was 'not asking the House to relax in the least from that sensitiveness for the public honour, which they were bound always to maintain, and which he hoped would never for a moment be forgotten.' He merely wished for the evidence 'that the House would not maintain the honour of the country nor its own character if it did not vote for the Convention.'[81] Palmerston did not provide this evidence, instead reflecting on the opposition's previous defeats on the issue, and asking directly whether 'there were any public men in this country who, if placed in office, would so tarnish the honour of the country as to refuse to pay this money?' The Foreign Secretary maintained that 'The true interests of all countries demanded the maintenance of good faith and honour,' and 'This was shown in the case of several nations, which had by their crooked policy fallen from the highest pitch of glory, whilst England, by her good faith and generosity, had risen to the first rank amongst nations.'[82] Peel replied that 'He had always said, that the money was a trifle, compared with the maintenance of public honour,' yet he also wished 'to make Ministers responsible for misconduct, and to vindicate the dignity of Parliament.'[83]

The government survived the vote by a majority of 36,[84] but the discussion continued in newspapers, where *The Times* echoed Ministerial tactics in its support for the loan. It condemned the Tories for searching for any means 'to throw overboard the whole equity of the obligation…to the utter disgrace of England,'[85] but reflected that following the government's triumph 'English integrity and honour are intact,' since the government had cherished 'their country's fame and character' above all other considerations.[86] It asked 'Did not every member feel it was a bound point of honour to make the payment to Russia?' while observing that no Tory MP 'had the hardihood to reply,' adding that since Britain had ensured Belgian independence – thus invalidating the 1815 Convention – this increased, rather than

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[79] *Ibid*, cc. 458-459.
[80] 'Gentlemen on the Ministerial side of the House called themselves conservatives of the national honour,' and 'Those who opposed them were also said to be opposed to the national honour,' he simply wished for sufficient information 'in order that they might see whether the national honour had been supported.' Wetherell, *Ibid*, cc. 472-473.
[81] *Ibid*, cc. 474-475.
[82] Palmerston, *Ibid*, cc. 480-481.
[83] Peel, *Ibid*, cc. 481-482.
[84] *Ibid*, cc. 493-494.
[85] *The Times*, 12 July 1832.
[86] *The Times*, 13 July 1832.

reduced, its obligation to Russia.[87] To renege on the loan would be 'an inconceivable breach of faith for this ministry,' and could even signal the approach of a 'long-deprecated war.'[88] Conversely, the *Morning Post* bypassed the issue of honour, observing that the letter of the 1815 Treaty absolved Britain from further payments.[89] The Whigs, it said, were 'anxious to purchase the good will of the autocrat,' by approving 'a serious evil,'[90] and had turned the Commons into a 'house of fools.'[91] Others condemned the wastefulness of the loan,[92] or attacked it as an 'indelible disgrace.'[93]

The final debate of consequence occurred on 20 July, with former soldier and Tory MP John Mills challenging Althorp's Motion which had pressed for the continuation of the payments. Mills 'thought England was, without the slightest breach either of honour or public faith, bona fide exempt from further payments.' He attempted to use honour against Ministers, reflecting that while they 'had said much of the necessity of preserving unsullied the national honour of England,' he 'had his own individual honour to preserve.' Since 'he had pledged himself to his constituents that no power on earth should induce him to consent to the expenditure of the public money, if he did not believe it to be due,' he would violate this good faith if he allowed the payments to continue.[94] London merchant and Whig MP for Lancaster Patrick Stewart upheld that the loan involved 'the principles of our good faith and national honour.' He warned that 'we could not get clear of the payments stipulated for, without incurring a stain which the Baltic itself could not wash away.'[95] Reflecting on the value of good faith in foreign relations, Stewart observed that the payments were 'the price of peace,' and asked Members to consider 'preferring honour to a full purse.'[96]

The aspiring philosopher and high Tory Sir Richard Vyvyan repelled this deployment of honour, believing it amounted to Ministerial trickery. He noted that 'Much was then said about national honour, with the view, perhaps, of hindering the House from forming a distinct judgment upon the subject immediately before it,' a recognition of honour's disruptive power in debate. Vyvyan lamented that in this case 'The delusion succeeded; the

[87] *The Times*, 16 July 1832.
[88] *The Times*, 28 July 1832.
[89] *Morning Post*, 12 July 1832.
[90] *Morning Post*, 14 July 1832.
[91] *Morning Post*, 21 July 1832.
[92] *Leeds Intelligencer*, 19 July 1832.
[93] *Leeds Intelligencer*, 26 July 1832.
[94] John Mills, HC Deb 20 July 1832 vol 14, cc. 562-563.
[95] *Ibid*, cc. 565-566.
[96] Even if he doubted the legal principle, he would 'give his vote to pay the money, in order to silence for ever the suspicion that might otherwise rest upon our character.' *Ibid*, cc. 566-567.

evidence was refused,' and Members would have to remain 'in the dark,' despite not being legally required 'to advance a farthing to Russia.'[97] Vyvyan was not alone in contesting Whig efforts to use honour, though the tone of defeat arguably reflected the effectiveness of this rhetoric.[98]

Lord Althorp believed reneging on the loan now would be 'dishonourable,'[99] arguing that 'it was impossible to say that this country was absolved in honour from the payment of this money,' and, 'considering the whole transaction as a question not between two countries, but as between men of honour,' he doubted there was a gentleman present who would vote alternatively.[100] Of course, such gentlemen did exist. Alexander Baring met Althorp's claims by reiterating the Tory favour for honour and asserting that 'If it was a question of national faith, or that the preservation of national honour depended on it,' then 'if it had been five times as great as it actually was, the Government would be bound to call upon Parliament to provide for the payment.' Yet, considering 'the present state of our finances,' Parliament had to be wary of approving 'any large payments, not justified by necessity, or by considerations of national honour.'[101]

Members also deployed private and national honour together to pressure their opponents. Thus, when Baring asked the Attorney General if he could pledge 'on his honour' that Britain was obliged to continue the payments, Lord Stanley replied that 'as it seemed the fashion to put questions in that way,' he 'put it to the honour' of Baring to declare that Britain was *not* obliged to continue the payments. Stanley challenged whether the opposition 'as men of honour' were prepared to collectively make such a declaration. He suspected that opposition figures 'must feel,' that 'the country was bound hand and foot by an honourable engagement,' which could not be broken 'without rendering it unsafe for other countries to deal with her,' and he thus invited them to 'disembarrass themselves of the pecuniary part of the question,' and meet instead the 'broad constitutional principle,' that being, 'that the

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[97] Sir Richard Vyvyan, *Ibid*, cc. 569-570.
[98] George Pigott condemned those Members who had 'indulged in exaggerated sentiments about our pledges in honour to Russia,' and hoped Britons would not be fooled by such 'miserable sophistry', even if Ministers voted that 'black was white.' 'Our national honour was in nowise concerned in this payment,' Pigott concluded, since the loan 'was only a penalty for the endless blunders of sixty-eight protocols.' *Ibid*, cc. 568-569. The *Bristol Mercury* complained that honesty had been sacrificed 'upon a false principle of honour,' and viewed with shame what it discerned as a fear of war with Russia. *Bristol Mercury*, 21 July 1832.
[99] Lord Althorp, *Ibid*, cc. 575-576.
[100] *Ibid*, cc. 576-577.
[101] Alexander Baring, *Ibid*, cc. 578-579.

faith of England was pledged, and we were bound to redeem it.'[102] The Solicitor General agreed, concluding that 'the good faith and the honour of the country required us to pay this money,' and 'under such circumstances, the House would support his Majesty's Ministers in discharging such a national obligation.'[103]

On this final occasion for debating the agreement, the government succeeded by an even larger margin of 79 votes, suggesting both that Members had tired of the third debate on the issue in less than a week, and that the Ministerial deployment of honour may have been sufficient to cast doubt upon the morality of the loan's cancellation.[104] It was an important victory, particularly since the vote on the loan had become 'nothing more nor less than a vote of confidence in his Majesty's Government.'[105] The *Morning Chronicle* discerned that the opposition had not committed to renege on the loan if they were in power, and condemned the Tory efforts as a waste of time.[106] It commended the desire of Ministers 'to sustain the plighted good faith of England,' and hoped that 'we shall hear no more of the Russian Dutch Loan,' following the majority of 79.[107] In fact, the Russo-Dutch loan proved remarkably durable, and though it came under additional scrutiny, it was not finally discharged until 1907.[108] Whatever their motives, Ministers had succeeded in deploying the rhetoric of honour to defend a legally dubious position. This highlighted the potency of honour in debate, but such rhetoric was also applicable to obligations incurred to Britain's allies, and this provided Palmerston with a dilemma when civil war spread across the Iberian Peninsula.

1.2: Obligation and Honour: Civil War in Portugal and Spain.

[102] Lord Stanley, *Ibid*, cc. 581-582.
[103] Solicitor General, *Ibid*, cc. 597-598.
[104] Political instincts also played a role. The *Freeman's Journal* reflected on the spectacle of Irish MPs saving the Whigs from defeat. *Freeman's Journal*, 2 Feb 1832. The *Examiner* believed Ministers used the 'phantom' threat of Tory government to their advantage in a reformed parliament. *Examiner*, 22 July 1832.
[105] George Pigott, HC Deb 20 July 1832 vol 14 cc. 567-568.
[106] *Morning Chronicle*, 13 July 1832, 17 July 1832.
[107] *Morning Chronicle*, 21 July 1832.
[108] Frank Whitson Fetter, 'The Russian Loan of 1855: A Postscript,' *Economica*, 28, No. 112 (Nov., 1961), 421-425; 422. Britons were forbidden from dealing in the Russian securities of new loans during the Crimean War, but the original loan was allowed to continue. See Olive Anderson, 'The Russian Loan of 1855: An Example of Economic Liberalism?' *Economica*, 27, No. 108 (Nov., 1960), 368-371.

In addition to the Treaty of Vienna, Britain had to defend allies gained through history and tradition, like the Anglo-Portuguese alliance,[109] and those formulated by contemporaries, such as the 1834 Quadruple Alliance between Britain, France, Portugal, and Spain. If a power attacked her ally, or violated a treaty Britain had signed, this would compel the government to fulfil these obligations. The Portuguese (1826-1834) and Spanish (1834-40) Civil Wars greatly complicated this picture. Where Whig statesmen emphasised British obligations, opposition figures suggested that a civil conflict did not fall within the remit of those obligations. Neutrality, the Tories insisted, had been publicly declared, and a violation of this commitment was averse to British honour and good faith. Conversely, when French naval forces sought redress for offences to its citizens in Portugal, the Tories declared that honour required the government to defend their ally from attack, while Ministers asserted that Britain was not obliged to defend Lisbon from the consequences of insulting France.

Clearly, obligations were more nuanced than such expressions suggest, but the gap between treaty stipulations and British action was frequently discussed with reference to what Britain was obliged in honour to do. Treaties may have been established in law, but a strand of thinking asserted that honour was a critical lever of pressure *within* that law, which may have usurped its letter.[110] The Portuguese conflict pitted Queen Maria against the absolutist faction led by her uncle Don Miguel. Miguel had promised to serve as Maria's regent, and support a liberal Portuguese constitution, but he betrayed these promises, and sought the Crown for himself. The war was initially a success for Miguel, notwithstanding limited British efforts to support his enemies, and by 1830, Portugal was effectively under his control. However, in 1831 Maria's father Don Pedro abdicated the throne of Brazil and sailed for Europe in support of his daughter's cause. Landing in 1832, Pedro's army were subjected to a year-long siege at Oporto, and the spectre of his total defeat moved Earl Grey's administration to authorise a second expedition. Admiral Charles Napier was hired by Pedro's allies to command the pro-Pedro fleet, and he achieved a significant victory at sea, effectively turning the tide of the civil war in the process.[111]

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[109] Edgar Prestage, 'The Anglo-Portuguese Alliance,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 17 (1934), 69-100.

[110] Speaking in the Commons of British obligations under the Quadruple Alliance, Sir Robert Peel asserted that 'No matter what party might hold the reins of Government in this country, they are bound by honour even more stringent than written law to adhere to the treaty.' HC Deb 26 Feb 1836 vol 31, cc. 1008-1009.

[111] Andrew Lambert, 'Napier, Palmerston and Palmella in 1833: The Unofficial Arm of British Diplomacy', In: Harding, R and Guimerá, A (eds.). *Naval Leadership in the Atlantic World* (London, 2017), pp. 141–156. The Commons was informed shortly after that Pedro's forces would blockade Lisbon: HC Deb 16 July 1833 vol 19, cc. 671-3; HL Deb 22 July 1833 vol 19, cc. 1041-3.

It has been contended that British economic interests both in Brazil and Portugal compelled her governments to intervene to secure beneficial political and trading arrangements.[112] However, while contemporaries publicly emphasised the importance of these considerations, they also used the language of honour both to press for action and to criticise interventionism. Britain's military record in Portugal – and the Duke of Wellington's in particular[113] – facilitated Whig attacks on Wellington's Tory administration in early 1830. Palmerston established his position from the opposition benches,[114] and his allies joined this campaign.[115] They were met by Tory Ministers who defended their husbanding of honour,[116] and insisted that the personality of a ruler should not affect Britain's relations with it.[117] It is significant that when the Whigs entered government in late 1830, the Tories returned these attacks on the government's dereliction of national honour,[118] while offering important principles in that ethic's constitution.[119] When disputing that honour was at stake, Ministers

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[112] Bruce Collins, 'The Limits of British Power: Intervention in Portugal, 1820–30,' *International History Review*, 35, No. 4 (Aug 2013), 744-765; 745-747.
[113] Leslie Bethell, *Brazil: Essays on History and Politics* (London, 2018), pp. 58-60.
[114] During a March 1830 Commons debate on Portugal, Palmerston argued that the destruction of Portuguese dreams for a liberal constitutional government, 'so committed the honour of England, as to leave us nothing to choose, but the means by which this right should be enforced.' HC Deb 10 March 1830 vol 23, cc. 87-88. He interpreted Miguel's usurpation as 'a gross indignity,' to the British Crown, and asserted 'that Parliament should know the nature and extent of that indignity, and the steps which have been taken by the advisers of the Crown, to assert the honour of the Crown.' Lamenting on the lack of official papers, Palmerston concluded that the Portuguese situation 'touches the honour of the country,' and Tory efforts at obfuscation 'must necessarily excite a suspicion, that that honour has been imperfectly guarded.' *Ibid*, cc. 90-91.
[115] Edward Davenport argued that 'If Ministers had taken care of our internal interest, which certainly the present state of the country did not prove, they had been unmindful of the national honour abroad.' *Ibid*, cc. 118-119. He added 'The country would not consent to acknowledge that usurper, however much the Ministers might recommend him, and he was sure that Ministers did not possess sufficient courage to fix such an indelible disgrace on our national honour, as, in spite of the country, to recognize that despotic tyrant.' *Ibid*, cc. 120-121. Sir Francis Burdett argued that 'whenever our honour was concerned, we should be always ready to stand forward in its defence, and that unless we did so, we should be no longer fit to hold, and we could not keep, our station in the eyes of the world,' and complained that Britain 'must be content to put her honour in her pocket, because the Minister declares that she could not go to war.' *Ibid*, cc. 124-125.
[116] John Herries asserted that 'The Government had, throughout the whole course of these transactions with Portugal, looked solely to the maintenance of the honour and dignity of this country.' *Ibid*, cc. 107-108.
[117] John Calcraft opined that 'Ministers, whose duty it was to consult the honour and true interests of the country, must not allow themselves to be induced to swerve from the direct path of their duty by any considerations having reference to the personal character of the princes with whom they had to treat.' *Ibid*, cc. 114-115. Peel insisted that 'there was nothing which pulled upon this country, in vindication of its honour, to go to war, or to pursue any other course than that which had been pursued.' *Ibid*, cc. 140-141. Peel was sure 'the House would bear him out in the assertion that the British Government had done nothing to disgrace the honour of England.' *Ibid*, cc. 141-142.
[118] Viscount Goderich affirmed that 'he could, with a firm and good conscience, vindicate his share in the advice given to the Crown on this occasion, as not likely to tarnish the honour of the Government, the honour of the Throne, or the honour of the Country.' HL Deb 21 Feb 1831 vol 2, cc. 756-757.
[119] Viscount Strangford thus declared that 'England had the means of redressing herself; but Portugal did not possess the same means of enforcing the treaty on her part; and, therefore, the violation would be more dishonourable on our part.' *Ibid*, cc. 746-747.

also emphasised their resolute determination to defend national honour at any cost.[120] It was also common for Ministers to express their commitment to peace, conditional on the preservation of national honour.[121]

When Miguel's regime committed offences against French subjects, and a French navy was sent to acquire redress in summer 1831, Earl Grey declared that 'it did not follow, because the French fleet had triumphantly taken possession of the Tagus, that therefore the honour of England was at all humbled.' He urged the Duke of Wellington 'who was so anxious for the honour of his country,' to 'concede to other countries that regard for national honour which he was so ready to assert for his own.'[122] Conversely, the Earl of Aberdeen insisted that it was the 'bounden duty of the noble Earl to interfere,' in Portugal, and 'he ought to have saved her from the recent catastrophe, so humiliating, not only to her national independence, but, he would repeat, to our honour.'[123] Earl Grey reiterated the French right to seek redress, and argued that 'the Portuguese government, by turning a deaf ear to our early-urged counsels, brought upon its own head all the subsequent consequences.'[124]

The following year in the Commons, the liberally-inclined reformer Lord Morpeth discerned that 'what seems most to be grudged by certain hon. Gentlemen on the other side of the House,' was that 'after our own honour has been vindicated,' Britain had 'allowed the subjects of the Citizen King to procure that protection from the insults of the absolute and holy Miguel, which we have afforded to the English residents in that country.'[125] Veteran Whig statesman and former Chancellor of the Exchequer the Marquess of Lansdowne affirmed the French right to redress, challenging whether it would 'not be not only absurd but unjust to say, that, because there existed between this country and Portugal certain treaties,' Britain was 'bound to defend Portugal from the consequences of outrages committed against other countries, or that the injured nation should not have a right to vindicate and protect its own honour and the interests of its subjects?'[126]

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[120] The Lord Chancellor declared 'he would sooner cut off his right hand than be a party to any measure which could be fairly construed as in the slightest degree committing the honour of the country, or of the Crown, the good faith of Government, or of Parliament.' *Ibid*, cc. 760-761.
[121] Lord Norfolk thus declared his favour for peace in a Lords session of June 1831 'so long as peace can be preserved consistently with the honour of the country and the dignity of the Crown; to avoid interfering with the concerns of other States, but to resist, with becoming spirit, any indignity offered to British subjects.' HL Deb 21 June 1831 vol 4, cc. 88-89.
[122] HL Deb 26 July 1831 vol 5 cc. 323-324.
[123] HL Deb 5 Aug 1831 vol 5, cc. 795-796.
[124] Earl Grey, *Ibid*, cc. 801-802.
[125] HC Deb 9 Feb 1832 vol 10, cc. 139-140.
[126] HL Deb 3 June 1833 vol 18, cc. 280-281.

Lansdowne's allusion to subjects was important, because the welfare of Britons overseas was closely linked to the national honour. An additional principle was the primacy of honour in the government's legitimacy; if they compromised it, they must be turned from office.[127] But were all offences inflicted upon British subjects of equal weight? According to one school of thought, the need to seek redress depended upon the power of the state which had offered the insult. This was referred to as 'forbearance,' and could be construed as a convenient excuse for enduring insults and bypassing the dictates of honour when the offender was sufficiently weak. Forbearance also tapped into notions of British exceptionalism; unlike other nations, it was claimed, Britain's unrivalled position meant that she did not have to exercise oversensitivity to insult, particularly from weaker powers.[128] Yet, this forbearance could be carried to a 'blameable excess' in Palmerston's view, and Portugal had only enjoyed British forbearance because Miguel ruled a weaker power.[129]

Significantly, it appears that non-European powers were not entitled to such forbearance. Thus, Earl Grey's government was lambasted for failing to acquire redress for British subjects in Brazil. Sir Charles Wetherall was 'at a loss to know why the British flag, with all its rights and all its attributes, should be treated in the South American seas with less respect than the flag of any other nation,' and he asked whether the government had 'fixed a period for the adjustment of these claims, beyond which other means would be called into action to vindicate the honour of the British flag.'[130] The Radical liberal for Liverpool William Ewart urged the Foreign Secretary to 'exact all he could from the Brazilian government, and vindicate the national honour,' and he warned of strong feelings among merchants, who felt that 'a great deal too much forbearance had already taken place'.[131] It was noted that lesser powers had already obtained redress, and Members warned that other Latin American powers were 'imitating' Brazil's conduct, while recommending 'the only way to put a stop to such outrages was, to repress them at the outset with a firm hand.'[132]

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[127] Earl Grey conceded in a Lords debate of March 1832 that opposition figures 'had a full right, if he found the King's Government acting on any question in a manner inconsistent with the honour and interests of the country, to stigmatise their conduct. While he admitted the right, he did not deny the consequences; if the honour and interest of the country had been sacrificed, there was no stigma too marked, no punishment too severe, for the guilty.' HL Deb 13 March 1832 vol 11, cc. 123-124.
[128] See the case of Spain in Chapter Two, and the United States in Chapter Three.
[129] He clarified that 'Had the government of Portugal been a strong government, the popular indignation would have been so highly excited by its misconduct, that no Minister would have been able to withstand the cry for war.' HC Deb 26 March 1832 vol 11, cc. 879-880.
[130] HC Deb 16 April 1832 vol 12, cc. 568-569.
[131] Ewart, *Ibid*, cc. 569-570.
[132] Lord Sandon, *Ibid*, cc. 569-570.

But this 'firm hand' had to be wielded within the bounds of legal propriety. The government had previously declared its neutrality in the contest, and the 1819 Foreign Enlistment Act technically forbade Britons from fighting for the Liberal cause.[133] Thus, when the opposition learned of a British fleet massing at Spithead funded by Portuguese Liberals, they challenged the government's professed neutrality in the Portuguese conflict.[134] Sir Henry Hardinge, formerly Peel's Chief Secretary for Ireland and veteran of the Napoleonic War, advised that 'if the necessity for war should arrive, let us act straightforward; let not the honour of the country and the good faith of the King be compromised by allowing acts which were an open breach of neutrality.'[135] National honour also depended upon the power of the fleet, and the ability to project naval power to guarantee British security. Britain depended on this power 'for her safety and honour,'[136] for 'her national character, and even her national existence,' and if it were lost 'she could no longer maintain her present high rank in the social system —she must necessarily fall into the place of a second-rate power.'[137] Members with military credentials advised the Prime Minister that if he maintained the royal navy, 'he would do more for the honour and independence of his country, as well as for the general peace of Europe,' than Palmerston could affect 'with all his diplomacy, backed by all his protocols.'[138]

The Portuguese struggle concluded with Don Miguel exiled, and Pedro's daughter crowned Queen Maria II in May 1834. It was a triumph of liberal constitutionalism, and a defeat for the absolutism of the Holy Alliance. Palmerston could not revel in the victory however, as Portugal was merely one Iberian theatre where British obligations and honour had been called into question. King Ferdinand VII of Spain (1784-1833) had presided over the destruction of several nascent liberal movements in the country, occasionally with the help

[133] Wentzell judged that by its record of inconsistent application, the Foreign Enlistment Acts of 1819 and 1870 were not particularly popular, and were rarely enforced. Tyler Wentzell, 'Mercenaries and Adventurers: Canada and the Foreign Enlistment Act in the Nineteenth Century,' *Canadian Military History*, 23, No. 2 (2014), 57-77. The Act was also criticised in Parliament. Scottish judge John Murray declared that 'never was an Act of the Legislature so little in accordance with the general opinions of the country.' HC Deb 6 Aug 1833 vol 20, cc. 381-382. Daniel O'Connell called it a 'clumsy contrivance,' adding that 'It was a statute which ought not to exist; it was wholly unwarranted, and it ought to be repealed.' *Ibid*, cc. 384-386. A Bill repealing the Act was postponed until 1834. HL Deb 23 Aug 1833 vol 20, c. 865
[134] Sir Henry Hardinge thus desired that 'If a war must come, let it come in the shape of satisfaction to be demanded for injuries, of rights to be asserted, of interests to be protected, of treaties to be fulfilled; but, in God's name, let it not come on in the paltry pettifogging way of fitting out ships in our harbours to cruise for gain.' HC Deb 6 June 1833 vol 18, cc. 405-406.
[135] *Ibid*, cc.406-407.
[136] James Graham, HC Deb 25 March 1833 vol 16, cc. 1021-1022.
[137] *Ibid*, cc. 1040-1041.
[138] Captain Charles Yorke, HC Deb 17 Feb 1834 vol 21, cc. 438-439.

of France.[139] Spain was subject to greater French influence than Portugal, but the ascension of a more constitutional French King in 1830 – and the Quadruple Alliance – suggested Anglo-French cooperation in the establishment of a liberal Spanish regime.[140] In many respects, the Spanish struggle between absolutist and constitutional movements mirrored that of Portugal, including the familial dynamics.[141] Upon the King's death, his brother Carlos usurped Ferdinand's daughter Maria Cristina and her daughter Isabella, proclaiming himself King Carlos V of an absolutist Spanish regime.[142]

In 1835, the Whig government controversially suspended the Foreign Enlistment Act for two years, overcoming a barrier to intervention in Spain.[143] This facilitated the timely deployment of a Foreign Legion to aid Maria Cristina's cause, and the British contingent was added to French and Portuguese legionnaires, constituting an army of 18,000 men.[144] This strategic act did not bring political popularity. Palmerston was criticised both for shamefully violating British neutrality in the conflict and – perhaps more significantly, when British auxiliaries suffered some defeats – for subjecting British military prestige to dishonour.[145] These attacks increased pressure on Palmerston to show some benefit for his

[139] Norihito Yamada, 'George Canning and the Spanish Question, September 1822 to March 1823,' *Historical Journal*, 52, No. 2 (Jun., 2009), 343-362.
[140] Alfonso Goizueta Alfaro, 'Forging liberal states: Palmerston's foreign policy and the rise of a constitutional monarchy in Spain, 1833–7,' *Historical Research*, 94, No. 266 (Nov 2021), 833-834.
[141] The most comprehensive account of this Carlist War is provided by Mark Lawrence, *Spain's First Carlist War 1833-1840* (Basingstoke, 2014).
[142] The intertwined dynamics of the Portuguese Braganza and Spanish Bourbon families are examined in Alexandra Wilhelmsen, 'Maria Teresa of Braganza: Portuguese Princess of Beira, Spanish Infanta, Wife of the
Pretender Carlos V,' *Mediterranean Studies*, 6 (1996), 79-106.
[143] Lord Melbourne noted that the Act had been suspended at the behest of the Spanish Queen. HL Deb 15 June 1835 vol 28, cc. 779-780.
[144] Philip E. Mosley, 'Intervention and Non-intervention in Spain, 1838-39,' *Journal of Modern History*, 13, No. 2 (Jun., 1941), 199-200. Britain also provided extensive financial assistance to the constitutional Spanish regime. *Ibid*, 201.
[145] Brown, *Palmerston*, pp. 201-202. In a February 1836 Commons session, Viscount Mahon urged 'do not let us enter into a crusade under the name of liberty, which might proceed in dishonour, and terminate in disgrace,' while asserting that 'the best course for the honour, the peace, and the security of England, would be to withdraw at once from the contest the men who were now engaged in it.' HC Deb 26 Feb 1836 vol 31 cc. 967-968. Colonel Thompson challenged this interpretation: 'That this was a practice not inconsistent with British notions of national honour there was abundant proof. Had the House never heard of Corsican, Hanoverian, Swiss, and other regiments in the service and pay of England? Had the national honour ever been questioned in consequence of such employment of foreign troops?' *Ibid*, cc. 986-987. Palmerston agreed with the danger in 'the dishonour of being force to retreat.' But he declared that 'If they did not show a determination to guard their own interests, to preserve their own honour, and to uphold their own character, the time would very soon come when other countries would interfere with their affairs.' *Ibid*, cc. 1003-1004. Peel did not criticise the Legion directly, but argued that its failure was 'a reflection upon those who have committed them unnecessarily in this struggle, and who have committed along with them the name of the British nation and the honour of the British character.' *Ibid*, cc. 1010-1011.

Spanish policy, while challenging its conception.[146] These sentiments, wedded to mistrust of French intentions,[147] were expressed in Parliament with greater force in spring 1837.[148]

Hardinge opened the three-day debate on Spain in mid-April 1837, combining the spectre of military dishonour with nostalgia for British glory in Spain.[149] He claimed that the act of raising the Legion had 'lowered the high character of this nation, and the military reputation of the country, which had been carried to such a high degree of renown at the close of the late war.' Hardinge asserted that 'It was the duty of the House to see that the national property – the national honour – was not tarnished by the course pursued by the noble Lord and his colleagues,'[150] and he urged 'if we made war, let us make it directly, and not indirectly; let us make it in a manner that was honourable.'[151] The veteran diplomat Sir Stratford Canning warned that the intervention had achieved 'no practical result,' but had resulted 'in the discredit of the country and the dishonour of her flag – on the same ground on which her greatest triumphs had been achieved.'[152] Britain had placed the Legion 'under every possible disadvantage in maintaining the honour of the standard of their country,'[153] and he reiterated that this 'was a question the determination of which involved our national honour.'[154]

To defend the intervention, Ministers invoked honour to emphasise the obligation Britain had towards Spain.[155] Now that British forces had fought and died in Spain, Ministers could

[146] As Lord Lyndhurst exclaimed in the Lords: 'What have they obtained in return? Disappointment, defeat, and disgrace. They have compromised the honour of their Sovereign, and tarnished the reputation and character of their country.' HL Deb 18 Aug 1836 vol 35, cc. 1293-1294.
[147] These expressions were not limited to Britain. Kelly has interpreted Talleyrand's view of the Quadruple Alliance as itself a matter of honour. See Linda Kelly, *Talleyrand in London: The Master Diplomat's Last Mission* (London, 2017), pp. 118-120.
[148] In a March 1837 Commons session, Viscount Mahon criticised Britain's vague status in the conflict as 'peace without tranquillity,' and 'war without honour.' HC Deb 10 March 1837 vol 37, cc. 223-224. The traveller and scholar of architecture Henry Gally Knight defended British prestige by recounting his travels in Paris where, he said, 'in the estimation of the French, the British arms had been anything but tarnished by the conduct of our countrymen,' while contending that 'up to the present moment the treasure of England had not been prodigally wasted, that the honour of the British army had not been stained.' *Ibid*, cc. 243-244. The banker and Tory MP John Fector declared that 'As a friend to our national honour, he was compelled to say that he considered that it had been compromised.' *Ibid*, cc. 244-245. Palmerston defended the suspension of the Foreign Enlistment Act as 'most wise and honourable to the country,' while portraying British Legion's conduct as 'proof of the most honourable zeal and exertion,' despite its defeats. *Ibid*, cc. 262-263.
[149] His Motion called for the reapplication of the Foreign Enlistment Act and an end to British involvement in Spain. HC Deb 17 April 1837 vol 37, cc. 1352-1353.
[150] *Ibid*, cc. 1330-1331.
[151] *Ibid*, cc. 1347-1348.
[152] Stratford Canning, *Ibid*, cc. 1359-1360.
[153] *Ibid*, cc. 1360-1361.
[154] *Ibid*, cc. 1366-1367.
[155] Lord Levenson thus 'begged leave to ask those who appeared to be so anxious about the national honour, whether that honour would not have been stained if we had deserted an ally at the very moment when she most required our aid.' While 'those who appeared to be so tender of our military reputation,' were asked

also assert that their abandonment would be akin to dishonour and disgrace.[156] Ministers also deployed honour to recast the Legion's defeats as brave, gallant efforts towards a noble end. The MP for Tipperary Robert Otway Cave argued that 'In seven out of the eight actions in which the Legion had been employed they had covered themselves with honour,' and that 'although in the eighth they had suffered a defeat, he thought he was justified in saying that they had not lost their honour.' He quoted from French contemporaries who had observed '"In my opinion, the honour of the British troops remains untarnished, and the noble conduct of the marines in covering the retreat proves that time and discipline only are wanting."'[157] The opposition were charged with seeking office,[158] while being told that British honour was at stake.[159]

Former Solicitor General Sir William Follett did not claim to have 'heard no argument to prove that the interests and the honour of England are connected with the present contest in Spain,' yet he did not believe 'that either the interests or honour of England demand the presence of the Legion.' British military intervention was a matter which 'touches the interests and the honour of the country too nearly,' to be called a party question.[160] Appealing to the glorious memory of British arms in Spain, Follett claimed that 'every man who hears me, has an interest in providing that the land which was historically connected with us by the most proud and glorious recollections shall no longer be the scene,' of 'the disgrace and

'whether that reputation would be maintained by withdrawing from Spain our brave Legion.' *Ibid*, cc. 1367-1368.

[156] Henry Bulwer accused an opponent of 'celebrating his countrymen's defeat,' suggesting that they 'had to prove a national disgrace, in order to obtain a political triumph.' Bulwer, HC Deb 18 April 1837 vol 37, cc. 1411-1412. Sir Henry Ward added to this effort by insisting that British intervention 'rested, as a national question, upon the nature of the obligations which we had entered into,' and 'whether we could with honour or consistency, at this most critical period of the contest withdraw from our pledge of co-operation?' *Ibid*, cc. 1422-1423. Richard Sheil spoke in grandiloquent terms of British bones 'bleaching on the Pyrenean snow—their blood cries out,' asking that since Britain was entrusted 'with the care of the dignity, the honour, and the just vengeance of our country,' whether it could facilitate Carlos' ascension? 'Never!' Sheil exclaimed; because 'The people of this country are averse to wanton and unnecessary war; but where the honour of England is at stake there is no consequence which they are not prepared to meet,' and 'no hazard which they will not be found prompt to encounter. *Ibid*, cc. 1456-1457.

[157] Otway Cave, HC Deb 19 April 1837 vol 38, cc. 9-10.

[158] John Roebuck underlined the hypocrisy of the opposition's attack against intervention in Spain, when Tory leader George Canning had undertaken such an intervention before, while suggesting that the Tories had 'made the thing a party question, in order to see whether they could not weaken the hold of their opponents in office, and so get into office themselves.' *Ibid*, 19-20.

[159] Robert Cutlar Fergusson insisted that at stake was not a mere Motion, but the charge that the government had 'disgraced and dishonoured the British name in the eyes of Europe and the world,' and that what mattered was 'whether their character and their honour, in the transactions respecting Spain, shall be vindicated, or shall be declared to be forfeited by a vote of the House of Commons?' This was a question of 'greater importance than a question of office,' and was instead a matter of 'whether an ally who, upon the faith of treaties, claims our assistance, shall be supported or abandoned.' *Ibid*, cc. 23-24.

[160] Follett, *Ibid*, cc. 48-49.

dishonour of the English name.'[161] Palmerston reflected that 'there is a feeling of honour in this House,' and 'a regard for national faith,' while reasoning that if the opposition had 'acted in a manly way,' and presented the Motion with its full implications, they would certainly court defeat.[162] If the opposition truly believed that the Quadruple Alliance truly was 'injurious' to Britain's honour, then 'Why have they not stretched forth their saving hand to rescue this country from injury, and to save it from dishonour?', instead of permitting that alliance to pass.[163] Regarding his policy in Spain, Palmerston insisted 'we have not done more for Spain, than Spain was entitled to demand at our hands; and I say further, that if we had done less, we should have been guilty of a breach of faith.'[164]

Addressing the opposition, Palmerston asked that since they upheld foreign service in continental armies was such a 'disgraceful thing,' and 'if it is dishonourable to the country, as has been alleged,' then why did Parliament 'give the Crown the power to disgrace itself, and to permit its subjects to dishonour their country?'[165] He portrayed the question as one of obligation, and 'whether England shall continue to fulfil her engagements with the Queen of Spain, or whether she shall disgracefully recede from the position she has taken up, and abandon an ally whom she has pledged herself to succour?'[166] It was because of British good faith, Palmerston concluded, that the reputation of its subjects abroad were held in such esteem, and her influence in Madrid had reached a new high.[167] The government won the debate by only 36 votes, suggesting a genuine division in opinion which the rhetoric of honour could not entirely obscure.[168]

Whig defence of military support for the liberal faction in Spain was articulated both as support for constitutional government, and for the maintenance of British honour in her obligations. Whatever might be said of Palmerston's sincerity in this regard, he and his colleagues deployed the rhetoric of honour to strengthen and rationalise this policy.[169] The Quadruple Alliance may be interpreted as a means of coopting French power and checking

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[161] *Ibid*, cc. 59-60.
[162] Palmerston, *Ibid*, cc. 66-67.
[163] *Ibid*, cc. 67-68.
[164] *Ibid*, cc. 81-82.
[165] *Ibid*, cc. 84-85.
[166] *Ibid*, cc. 91-92.
[167] *Ibid*, cc. 95-96.
[168] *Ibid*, cc. 120-121.
[169] Alfaro argued that 'It is a grave error in Palmerstonian historiography to consider that his speeches and proclamations are consistent with his policy. Words and actions seldom correlate when it comes to Palmerston: the factual difference between what he claimed and the policy he conducted in private is profound.' Alfaro, 'Forging liberal states,' 834.

the expansion of absolutism, but if this was Palmerston's true intention, he defended its spirit with reference to British honour and good faith, a more palatable justification than cold political strategy.[170] The spectacle of abandoning the legacy of the Peninsular War to dishonour and disgrace was a useful additional lever to counter opposition attacks on military defeat. The British Legion did not participate in the ultimate victory of Spain's liberal faction, though the Holy Alliance made scant effort to meet this Anglo-French military support, which may have proved the difference.[171]

Arming themselves with the rhetoric of honour and good faith, Ministers could push for greater involvement, and repel criticism by asserting that dishonour was the natural outcome of abandoning obligations. This position was consistent with later approaches to crisis, such as in Schleswig-Holstein, when obligations were less clear, but still closely linked to the rhetoric of national honour. However, foreign policy presented additional challenges both to Ministers and the conception of honour they articulated. If it was dishonourable to abandon obligations, it was also dangerous to absorb insults without acquiring satisfaction, and it was damaging to the nation's prestige to be excluded from pivotal negotiations. These ideas were palpable as the Ottoman Sultan's Egyptian vassal launched several campaigns for independence, thereby instigating a crisis which became known as the Eastern Question.

1.3: Insult and Satisfaction: The Origins of the Eastern Question

In the aftermath of defeat in the Greek war of independence, the Ottoman Empire was afflicted by a transformative crisis. In 1832, Mehmet Ali Pasha, Viceroy of Egypt, pursued a successful military rebellion, further exposing Ottoman weakness and suggesting partition might be imminent.[172] Fears that external powers, above all Russia, would take advantage of the Sultan's vulnerability peaked when in July 1833, the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi secured Russian access to the Dardanelle Straits.[173] Although it was a defensive arrangement on the surface, contemporaries speculated that Turkey had become little more than a Russian

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[170] *Ibid*, 838-839. Alfaro even argued that Palmerston's additional goal was to constitute a British client state in Madrid. *Ibid*, 839-840.

[171] Mosley, 'Intervention and Non-intervention in Spain,' 205-206.

[172] M. Vereté, 'Palmerston and the Levant Crisis, 1832,' *Journal of Modern History*, 24, No. 2 (Jun., 1952), 143-151.

[173] The Treaty particularly alarmed Metternich, who had not been informed of the negotiations or the Tsar's intentions regarding them, though he soon warmed to the arrangement. G. H. Bolsover, 'Palmerston and Metternich on the Eastern Question in 1834,' *English Historical Review*, 51, No. 202 (Apr., 1936), 237-256. 'Mohammed Ali,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 49, No. 303 (Jan 1841), 65-82.

satellite.[174] The sense that Britain had no answer to Russian expansion only increased when the October 1833 Münchengrätz agreement reaffirmed the union of interests between Austria, Prussia, and Russia.[175] The Quadruple Alliance was devised to meet this diplomatic coup, but French desires to exert influence over Egypt potentially threatened British links with India, and undermined its cohesion.[176]

Although this period of history has been examined extensively,[177] there is room to consider how the Whig government used the rhetoric of honour against their opponents, while meeting the challenges which were deployed against them. The well-documented and dramatic rise of Russophobia in the British press during the 1830s may be considered within these efforts,[178] particularly when contemporaries criticised Palmerston for his abandonment of France and cooperation with the Russian Tsar.[179] Striking discussions over French disrespect of the British flag in the Gulf of Mexico also highlights the importance of insult to the lexicon of honour – whether the outrage was manufactured or sincere – and how these sentiments could place the government in a difficult position. The terse public exchanges over these controversies add greater context to the French reaction upon their exclusion from the 1840 Treaty, while that settlement also provides an opportunity to assess how Britons

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[174] Bolsover interpreted the Tsar's intentions towards the Ottoman Empire as less inherently hostile, albeit doubting that empire's long-term longevity. See G. H. Bolsover, 'Nicholas I and the Partition of Turkey,' *Slavonic and East European Review*, 27, No. 68 (Dec., 1948), 115-145. On the other hand, Rendall argued that the Tsar was constrained more by the balance of power against him, than by his supposed moderation. Matthew Rendall, 'Restraint or Self-Restraint of Russia: Nicholas I, the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, and the Vienna System, 1832-1841,' *International History Review*, 24, No. 1 (Mar., 2002), 37-63.

[175] As Šedivý explained, this agreement was less a symbol of Russian expansion and more one of Austro-Russian cooperation. Miroslav Šedivý, 'From Adrianople to Münchengrätz: Metternich, Russia, and the Eastern Question 1829–33,' *International History Review*, 33, No. 2 (June 2011), 205-233. Conversely, Šedivý discerned that Metternich was not openly hostile to Mehmet Ali, and did not engage in a conspiracy to bring about his fall. See Miroslav Šedivý, Metternich and Mustafa Reshid Pasha's Fall in 1841,' *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 39, No. 2 (Aug 2012), 259-282.

[176] Ram Lakhan Shukla, 'British India and the Near East Crisis, 1833-41,' *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 29 (1967), 221-230.

[177] Frederick Stanley Rodkey, 'The Views of Palmerston and Metternich on the Eastern Question in 1834,' *English Historical Review*, 45, No. 180 (Oct., 1930), 627-640. Brown, *Palmerston*, pp. 176-181.

[178] Lamb's survey of British domestic and press opinion underlines Palmerston's understanding of these forces, though it suggests that the Foreign Secretary used this trend opportunistically, rather than as a converted anti-Russian actor. Margaret Lamb, 'Writing up the Eastern Question in 1835-1836,' *International History Review*, 15, No. 2 (May, 1993), 239-268. MacFie noted that anxiety over Russian intentions was not limited to Britain. A. L. MacFie, 'Opinions of the European Press on the Eastern Question, 1836,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, 27, No. 1 (Jan., 1991), 131-139.

[179] Foremost among these critics were David Urquhart, later to attack Palmerston in Parliament as a Russian agent, and Lord John Ponsonby, British ambassador at Constantinople since 1832. G. H. Bolsover, 'Lord Ponsonby and the Eastern Question (1833-1839),' *Slavonic and East European Review*, 13, No. 37 (Jul., 1934), 98-118; 'David Urquhart and the Eastern Question, 1833-37: A Study in Publicity and Diplomacy,' *Journal of Modern History*, 8, No. 4 (Dec., 1936), 444-467. See also Margaret Lamb, 'The Making of a Russophobe: David Urquhart: The Formative Years, 1825-1835,' *International History Review*, 3, No. 3 (Jul., 1981), 330-357.

responded to foreign complaints of damaged honour deployed against them. Such episodes highlight how the lexicon of honour was a useful tool in political strategy, yet, while the ethic facilitated policy, it could also constrain it.

The *Morning Herald*'s publication of the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi revealed the full extent of the Sultan's reliance on the Tsar, shortly after Palmerston had publicly lauded Russia's good faith and honourable intentions.[180] Baker's assessment that 'the swift succession of events in the Near East caught Palmerston preoccupied, unprepared, and belated,' appears justified in this respect.[181] Publicly exposed, Palmerston went to Parliament in 1834 to contest 'rumours of a treaty so injurious to the honour and interests of England.'[182] Richard Sheil asked him to 'give the English people the means of forming a judgment, of the policy which his Majesty's Ministers had adopted in a question where the national honour and interest were so deeply involved.' As Palmerston was the 'political proselyte of Canning, who considered the interests and the honour of England as closely blended,'[183] Sheil urged him to do more than 'remonstrate,' or base his position merely on the maintenance of the Treaty of Vienna. Instead, Palmerston should look to the British people because 'They were fond of peace, but they were not afraid of war,' and 'when the honour and dignity of England were to be maintained, he would find in them sympathy, and generous auxiliaries.'[184]

But Palmerston underplayed the importance of Unkiar Skelessi, and focused on the cultivation of improved Anglo-French relations which were later formalised into an alliance.[185] Meeting the implicit challenge in Sheil's point, Palmerston argued that 'if, in the present case, they were not willing to trust Ministers with the maintenance of the honour of the country,' then 'let the House declare it.'[186] Members including Sir Robert Peel,[187] Cutlar

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[180] As Richard Sheil related, when Palmerston gave those assurances, 'only three days before, on the 8th of July, a Treaty had been clandestinely signed at Constantinople between the Sultan and Count Orloff, who, while he appeared to be engaged in the reviews, shows, and illuminations of the seraglio, was secretly and silently conducting the Sultan to the ruin which had been prepared for him. Of this treaty our Government knew and heard nothing until it was announced in the Morning Herald of the 21st of August.' HC Deb 17 March 1834 vol 22, cc. 309-310.
[181] R. L. Baker, 'Palmerston on the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi,' *English Historical Review*, 43, No. 169 (Jan., 1928), 83-89; 85.
[182] HC Deb 17 March 1834 vol 22, cc. 310-311.
[183] *Ibid*, cc. 316-317.
[184] *Ibid*, cc. 317-318.
[185] The accord was founded on 'mutual honour and good faith,' and 'when two such States were bound together by the ties of interest, and the bonds of integrity, confidence, and honour,' then 'they must form in Europe a power of no mean importance.' *Ibid*, cc. 327-328.
[186] *Ibid*, cc. 329-330.
[187] *Ibid*, cc. 339-340.

Fergusson,[188] and Colonel Thomas Davies[189] referred to the language of honour to suggest that Unkiar Skelessi was detrimental both to the balance of power in the East, and to Britain influence within it. However, they could not move the government to produce the correspondence which included this treaty, and Palmerston used the parliamentary tools at his disposal to avoid further scrutiny. The exchanges which followed reveal a latent hostility towards Russian policy, and thus a pressure upon the government to maintain peace with the Tsar without being accused of sacrificing national honour. The Foreign Secretary was fortunate that the previous year's election had provided the Whigs with a comfortable majority, though Lord Melbourne was increasingly reliant on Irish and Radical MPs when passing legislation.[190]

In February 1836, Lord Dudley Stuart, a Tory MP with extensive connections to the community of Polish exiles then resident in London, pressed Palmerston for more information. The fractured Ottoman settlement, Stuart said, 'affected all our most essential interests—it affected our national honour—it affected our naval supremacy—it affected our commercial interests,' and 'our station, our influence in Europe, and the security of our possessions in India.'[191] Reflecting on Palmerston's failure either to support the Sultan or defend Polish statehood, Thomas Attwood argued that he 'ought to have pawned the crown jewels, rather than suffer the character of this great nation to fall, without an attempt to vindicate himself and his allies,' and Attwood 'could not help saying, that by the course which had been followed the honour of England had been sacrificed.'[192] Returning to the Polish controversy, Attwood reminded Members of Russia's insults, asserting that war with Russia would be popular among the people,[193] before appealing to 'English honour' to resent

[188] *Ibid*, cc. 348-349.
[189] *Ibid*, cc. 330-331.
[190] See Ian Newbould, 'Sir Robert Peel and the Conservative Party, 1832-1841: A Study in Failure?,' *English Historical Review*, 98, No. 388 (Jul., 1983), 529-557
[191] HC Deb 19 Feb 1836 vol 31, cc. 614-615.
[192] *Ibid*, cc. 641-642.
[193] Attwood made the striking declaration: 'In place of threats, let the noble Lord act. He need not fear; Russia is weak. She had been making preparations for the last three years. They allowed her to increase in strength, but had the noble Lord acted with the spirit of an Englishman or an Irishman, he might without difficulty have pushed Russia gradually from the Dardanelles and the Danube, and have humbled her in the dust. If the noble Lord were now to demand all at once, Russia would not submit. He was glad to find that so much was now to be asked, because he trusted Russia would refuse, and then by a war all that was desired from her might be secured. Great Britain had been grossly insulted by those barbarians. No Englishman, unless from interested motives, would deny this. Out of doors a war with Russia was most popular. ["No."] Yes it was. He did not say with the aristocracy – he spoke of the people. In the mercantile navy of this country, a deadly hatred prevailed against Russia, and plenty of volunteers might be had in the event of a war… Few would be opposed to a war with Russia, unless those connected with loans; and no man interested in loans and stock-jobbing should have a seat in that House.' *Ibid*, cc. 641-643.

Russia's treatment of Britain, while calling on Palmerston to '"show pluck,"' and 'to sweep the aggressors from Turkey.'[194]

The former naval officer and Napoleonic War veteran Sir Edward Codrington 'sincerely trusted we should be able to avoid war, provided, at the same time, we could avoid it with honour,' while urging Members to 'not be so careless as to injure that arm by which our honour must be preserved.' The navy – this arm of honour – had recently been reduced, yet Codrington was sure 'that the cheapest and most honourable way in which the interests of the country could be protected was to have a considerable force ready for any emergency.'[195] John Roebuck concluded the debate, objecting to Ministers 'who would make them believe that they were afraid to talk outright, or to take a bold and fearless part whenever it should be necessary to vindicate the honour, the pride, or the national greatness of England.'[196] He urged Ministers 'not to allow themselves to be so surrounded with the meshes of diplomacy, so that they might too late find themselves unable to retreat with honour.'

It was better, Roebuck believed, to take advantage of the Channel to keep separate from Europe, safe in the knowledge that none could compete with Britain's market share or naval power, and it was thus unnecessary to press for intervention in support of the Sultan.[197] Two months later, Codrington returned to criticise the unpreparedness of Ministers for a war with Russia, while not advocating war himself.[198] Codrington affirmed the principle that Britain could best prevent war by being prepared for it, but that the later this was realised, the more insults she would incur, and the more costly war would be.[199] He warned that 'At present we were in danger of seeing our commerce with the East destroyed, our allies lost, and our honour, as a powerful and leading nation of Europe, compromised and degraded.'[200] Palmerston provided the usual assurances,[201] and the subject was again dropped.

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[194] *Ibid*, cc. 643-644. Attwood also claimed that vested financial interests had prevented Ministers from vindicating British honour, and argued 'No man with large investments in Consols should be allowed to administer the law, or have a voice in vindicating the honour of England.' *Ibid*, cc. 642-643.

[195] *Ibid*, cc. 659-660.

[196] *Ibid*, cc. 661-662.

[197] *Ibid*, cc. 664-665.

[198] Codrington reflected that 'if we were to put forth our maritime force as we had done on former occasions, Russia would not have dared to have acted as she had done.' HC Deb 20 April 1836 vol 32, cc. 1280-1281.

[199] 'With respect to the aggressions now feared on the part of Russia, we had the means in our power to stop them completely, by arming and fit ting out a fleet, and holding it in readiness to act at the moment we might need it. If we still remained unprepared, advantage would be taken of our incapable position; we might expect insults if we intermeddled, and so be led on by insult and injury to commit ourselves in a war that we might avoid by being prepared to meet it.' *Ibid*, cc. 1281-1282.

[200] *Ibid*, cc. 1281-1282.

[201] 'We are desirous, in the first place, to maintain peace as long as peace can be maintained consistently with the honour and interests of the country,' and adding 'we do not deceive ourselves there in, that we shall be

The following year in March 1837, an incident involving Russia's detention of the *Vixen* merchant vessel in the Black Sea aroused controversy and outrage. John Roebuck urged that 'a straightforward, bold, open, and manly line of conduct,' be taken, so that Russia would discern British determination to acquire satisfaction.[202] Although not seeking war with Russia, Roebuck urged Ministers not to fear the possibility that it might arise from the controversy,[203] charging the Tsar with a violation of international law, sentiments seconded by other Members.[204] Dr Stephen Lushington urged a peaceful resolution, anticipating that the passage of time would clarify the controversy, yet feeling obliged to declare 'Let it not, however, be supposed that from his anxiety for this result he was one of those who would for a moment countenance an insult against the British flag, or against British honour.'[205] Channelling the nostalgia contemporaries may have felt for a bolder policy, Dudley Stuart reminded Members of Cromwell's rigorous adherence to the law, and his refusal to accept any violation of it by foreign powers, punishing such transgressions without hesitation. While 'He did not wish it to be understood, that it was exactly this mode of proceeding which he should advise the noble Minister for Foreign Affairs to pursue on the present occasion,' Stuart did opine 'that the want of vigour and alacrity to defend the honour of the country which the noble Lord had displayed, was most culpable.'[206]

The opposition tactic of using damaged honour against the government was plain. Having lauded these high standards, Palmerston could be held to account when he had failed to uphold them. Ministerial allies were eager to accompany any hint of caution with a declared aversion to violating the national honour, to the extent that such expressions appeared routine.[207] In their repetitive nature they also reveal a concern to be seen as defending that

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able to protect the interests, and to uphold the honour of the country, without being obliged to have recourse to war.' *Ibid*, cc. 1283-1284.

[202] HC Deb 17 March 1837 vol 37, cc. 622-623.

[203] He declared that 'a war with England would soon make the Emperor of all the Russias tremble on his throne; for there would then be no British merchants to whom the Russian people might sell their goods.' *Ibid*, cc. 623-624.

[204] As William Ewart said, 'To acquiesce in any demands that might be made by Russia was not the way to maintain peace. This country should neither commit nor submit to aggression. Turkey had no right to make any cession to Russia… The course pursued by Russia was extremely dangerous to our trade with Trebizond, and to our general commerce in that quarter. Was it to be permitted that the Autocrat should close up the Black Sea against us? Ought we not to have a fleet of British men-of-war there?' *Ibid*, cc. 628-629.

[205] *Ibid*, cc. 640-641.

[206] Dudley Stuart, *Ibid*, cc. 651-653.

[207] Thus, when Vice President of the Board of Trade Charles Poulett Thomson urged Members to reflect on Anglo-Russian commercial links before advocating confrontation, he prefaced this by establishing his priorities: 'Now, did he urge this consideration as a reason why weightier considerations, involving the interests or the honour of this country, were to be neglected? No such thing.' HC Deb 17 March 1834 vol 22, cc. 656-658

ethic from external threats. These exchanges underline the extent to which national honour had become a politically contested space, while remaining sufficiently pliable to permit multiple interpretations of the same ethic. Whether this concern for national honour was sincere or now part of the political rhetoric of Members may be debated, but Palmerston had to engage with it.

He did this by denying that the national honour had been in any way tarnished, such as when Thomas Attwood, in a lengthy speech on Russia in December 1837, urged that 'her Majesty might be graciously pleased to make such addition to the royal navy as the vindication of the national honour and the preservation of the national interest shall require under the present circumstances of the country.'[208] Palmerston assured Attwood that 'her Majesty's Government, the House, and the country fully participate in the anxiety for the safety and jealousy of the honour of this kingdom which he has expressed in the course of his speech.'[209] He observed in good humour on Attwood that 'Such is his zeal and devoted attachment to the institutions and honour of the country, that he would sacrifice the House of Commons, the House of Lords, and I understood him to say, even the throne itself.'[210] Yet the Foreign Secretary reverted to familiar ground when he denied 'most confidently that there has been anything in the conduct of the Ministers of England tending to prove them indifferent to the interests, or insensible to the honour, of their country.'[211] Attwood's desire for naval increases to defend the country's tarnished honour demanded Palmerston's assurances; to be accused of indifference or carelessness towards national honour was not a charge that he could ignore, notwithstanding the fact that Attwood returned with impressive tenacity to leverage virtually the same charges as in previous sessions, and would do so again.[212]

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[208] HC Deb 14 Dec 1837 vol 39, cc. 1102-1103.
[209] *Ibid*, cc. 1106-1107.
[210] *Ibid*, cc. 1107-1108.
[211] Palmerston denied further 'that through our policy the safety of the country has been diminished, or that its honour has been tarnished,' and he asserted 'that there never was a period when England was more secure from any aggression of a foreign enemy than at present, or when her honour stood higher than it does now.' *Ibid*, cc. 1110-1111.
[212] In a March 1839 session, Attwood lambasted the Whig government's failures: 'The Whigs had betrayed England as well as Poland; the *Vixen* cried out against them on one side of the world, and the Express packet which had been attacked by the French, on the other side. There was no sound of English vengeance—no vindication of English honour by the Whigs. One would cost us four-farthings, the other three-farthings, and the Whigs at once said, "Let English honour go to the winds, and let us save our farthings." But this was not a doctrine which the people of England would endure; the Whigs had already covered themselves with greater contumely than the Tories, and their day was drawing to a close.' HC Deb 25 March 1839 vol 46, cc. 1193-1194.

A new opportunity to criticise the government arose in early 1839. When the French boarded and seized a Mexican pilot from a British vessel off the Mexican coast, the incident aroused intense controversy and debate in London. It was covered first in the 11 January edition of the *London Evening Standard*, which declared that 'the British flag has been unpardonably insulted by the French squadron at Mexico,' where it was observed that only a single British vessel resided. The *Standard* anticipated a 'satisfactory explanation for the degradation offered to that flag,' which 'the French have hitherto been taught to fear and respect.'[213] Thereafter, this report was carried in several papers,[214] and indignation grew in the latter half of January 1839.

The *Morning Herald* derided the government, believing it 'not at all extraordinary' that the insult had been received, since in recent memory the Whigs 'took with meekness, and almost with thanks, repeated insults of that sort from Russia.' The *Herald* warned that 'the unavenged act of piracy on the *Vixen*…invites other acts of insult and aggression.' It complained that 'insult and aggression are heaped, one after another, upon England,' and yet the government 'has not spirit enough to demand from any of those powers a "satisfactory explanation."' The charges of a lack of energy and a lack of care for the national honour were all levelled against the government for its failure. Also present was the charge of a lack of manhood, affirming honour's gendered aspect and its function within accepted standards of masculinity.[215] To be 'manly' in this case was to behave boldly and fearlessly in the defence of national honour, while an effeminate policy swallowed these offences and cravenly failed to meet the challenge. Thus, a month later, when the issue had not been resolved, *The Times* asked 'Shall we dare to resent it?' while it wondered 'Where is the force to command respect?' It was 'mockery to complain – it is only one more insult,' and it blamed 'the effeminate creatures that degrade our government,' because since they took office 'the flag of Britain has experienced more insult in three years than she had previously brooked for three centuries.'[216]

These French offences meeting no clear Ministerial response, the opposition raised the issue in Parliament on 19 February, beginning a debate which continued intermittently for the next

[213] *London Evening Standard*, 11 Jan 1839.
[214] *Morning Advertiser*, 12 Jan 1839; *Morning Post*, 12 Jan 1839; *Freeman's Journal*, 14 Jan 1839.
[215] *Morning Herald*, 12 Jan 1839.
[216] *The Times*, 19 Feb 1839. The extract originally appeared in the *Falmouth Gazette*, and was also printed in the *Morning Herald*, 19 Feb 1839; *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 23 Feb 1839 and *Ipswich Journal*, 23 Feb 1839.

fortnight.[217] The opposition requested more information on the details of the insult and the government's plan for vindication, while Ministers argued that since the French apology was deemed satisfactory by the admiral in place, it should be satisfactory for the country, which was disputed.[218] The opposition pressed for more details. If the French had offered an apology, was it verbal or written?[219] *The Times* upheld that a written apology was 'the only satisfactory one,' since it 'could have been recorded and appealed to as precedent hereafter,' while verbal apologies were 'liable to an equivocal construction, and to revocation or denial, at the pleasure of the apologist.' These were matters of 'deep humiliation,' according to *The Times*, reaffirming honour's gendered nature by asserting: 'The honour of the English flag is like that of an Englishwoman – it must not be ever so lightly blown upon with impunity or without atonement.' It charged that the commander of the British squadron had 'forgot the obligation which he owed his country,' in surrendering the Mexican pilot to the French, and insisted that he should have replied in defiant terms: "You may fire into me, and sink me, but dishonour me you shall not. I shall be revenged by my country."' This, said *The Times*, would have been the obvious course to 'the least apt pupil of the school of Nelson.'[220]

That the French admiral responsible for the insult was the Prince of Joinville, son of King Louis Phillippe, added additional weight to the act, and may have prolonged the controversy.[221] *The Times* published a letter from 'A Sailor of Last War,' who lamented that Charles Wood, the Secretary of the Admiralty, 'will not let England show her teeth; she is to succumb to every aggression; a pitiful, disastrous, false economy has struck a deadly blow upon our navy and our country.' The lack of naval support and reductions in naval estimates were thus to blame.[222] Defending his record in Parliament, Charles Wood asserted that the incident had been confused, and blamed the 'Tory press,' for 'the grossest misstatements,' and 'wilful misrepresentation,' they had made, despite possessing accurate information on the subject. Since spreading such falsehoods, Wood was not surprised that 'opinions derogatory to the honour and power of Great Britain, should have been expressed by

[217] HL Deb 19 Feb 1839 vol 45, c. 587. See also HL Deb 21 Feb 1839 vol 45, cc. 700-703.
[218] As former naval commander Lord Ingestrie declared, he 'was not prepared to say that what might be satisfactory to Commodore Douglas would be satisfactory to the House of Commons. When so great an insult had been committed upon the flag of England it was only right that the House should be placed in possession of the fullest and most complete information on the subject.' HC Deb 22 Feb 1839 vol 45, cc. 811-812.
[219] HL Deb 22 Feb 1839 vol 45, cc. 761-762
[220] *The Times*, 27 Feb 1839.
[221] HC Deb 25 Feb 1839 vol 45, cc. 844-845.
[222] *The Times*, 28 Feb 1839.

individuals abroad.'[223] It was by politicising the incident, and misrepresenting its details to the public, that opposition figures could pressure the government and make political capital from an insult to British honour.

The Lords focused on the French callousness in leaving British vessels without their local pilots.[224] Was the insult not serious enough to warrant an official apology to London, rather than to Britain's accosted admiral?[225] It was also asserted that French hostility was the result of a lack of naval power.[226] Even generally pro-Whig Lords rejected the notion that no offence had been intended,[227] while asserting that the Prince of Joinville's 'strict and high sense of honour and justice,' meant that figure 'would be the first to give ample reparation for any injury that might be sustained.'[228] But why were Ministers so slow in seeking redress when national honour was at stake?[229] These representations contributed to the impression which the opposition were cultivating of the Whigs: they were feeble, even effeminate, and unable to acquire satisfaction when the British flag and the honour vested within it was insulted.

Fortunately for the Whigs, sympathetic newspapers did exist, and the London *Globe*'s established affinity with Palmerston now became pivotal.[230] The *Globe* remarked that 'The Tories have a marvellous regard for the national honour,' and they construed 'every breach

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[223] HC Deb 4 March 1839 vol 45, cc. 1219-1220.
[224] Lord Lyndhurst reiterated that 'It was of the utmost importance to the honour of this country, that every particular relating to the transaction should be clearly and distinctly known,' while describing the pilot's role in helping a crowded vessel navigate treacherous waters; by seizing him, France had left British sailors in peril. HL Deb 8 March 1839 vol 46, cc. 132-133. 'A more grave, a more serious insult and outrage never was committed towards this country,' Lyndhurst exclaimed, while arguing that the French admiral, the Prince of Joinville, had authorised the act, and trusting 'that we had not yet sunk so low, in spite of the system under which we had some time lived,' to 'suffer the hitherto unsullied purity of the English flag to be stained by any impetuosity or daring of this character.' *Ibid*, cc. 133-134.
[225] *Ibid*, cc. 134-135
[226] Lyndhurst argued that if a sizeable squadron had been present – as Wellington had recommended the previous year – then 'the French admiral would never have dared to commit this insult on the flag of England.' Lyndhurst 'felt deeply on this subject,' so deeply in fact that 'he should be ashamed to meet an Englishman in the streets of Paris if he had not mentioned it in his place in that House.' *Ibid*, cc. 135-136.
[227] Lord Brougham was dissatisfied with the claim that no offence had been intended, reflecting that 'if one man insulted another, and then said it was not his intention to insult, that would be a very unsatisfactory apology, unless indeed it happened to be an act of an equivocal nature,' and 'when everything depended on the intention.' Lord Brougham, *Ibid*, cc. 139-140.
[228] *Ibid*, cc. 140-141.
[229] Viscount Melville regretted that 'for the honour of the British flag,' this 'humiliating transaction had been allowed to remain in the state in which it had, for so long a period.' Viscount Melville, *Ibid*, cc. 140-141.
[230] Sir Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, 1830-1841* (2 vols. London, 1951), I, pp. 46-54. Borthwick and Townsend note that Palmerston wrote over a hundred articles for the *Globe*, and believe that throughout his three tenures as Foreign Secretary it 'remained his closest ally.' Darwin F. Bostick and Guy M. Townsend Palmerston and the "Globe",' *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 5, No. 4 (Dec., 1972), 32-35; 33.

of national etiquette,' whether the result 'of accident, mistake, or individual heedlessness,' as 'an open and unquestionable "insult to the British flag", and as a design to provoke hostilities; which this nation is bound to resent, at the price of being plunged into war.' The *Globe* perceived that war brought Tories employment and opportunities to 'excite the public mind,' and once the *Vixen* controversy had been dealt with, and 'the Tory war-cry against Russia has subsided,' then 'another "insult to the British flag" is presented to their patriotic indignation; to avenge which nothing less than a declaration of war against France can heal the wound inflicted on the nation's honour.' The *Globe* declared that it would 'employ every effort to restrain the impetuosity of fiery spirits who are stimulated by a false notion of what is called for by national honour,' castigating 'the yet more inexcusable endeavours of self-interested patriots, who advocate war from a regard to their individual aggrandisement.'[231]

National honour was thus recognised as a potential political weapon, subject to cynical deployment by the opposition. Conversely, opposition figures charged the Whigs with a lack of care for the national honour, and attempted to shame them for placing a higher value on trade and commerce. Thus, when Lord Brougham recommended compromise with the United States over the developing boundary question[232] 'in order that we might secure, he repeated, without blemish to our honour, the inestimable blessing of peace,'[233] he was criticised by the *Morning Herald*, which accused him of adhering to a 'modern philosophy' which classed any 'feeling of national honour amongst those prejudices which ought to have lost their influence.' The *Herald* warned that because 'the feeling of national honour is not a legitimate subject of discount,' Lord Brougham was content to view it as 'a superfluity, an extravagance — and a positive madness, when permitted to interfere with the smooth current of a traffic in cotton.' Yet, 'the maintenance of a high standard in regard to the feeling of national honour can never be "unprofitable"' because 'A true appreciation of what is due to national honour will prevent a country like England from offering outrage to other nations, or from submitting to outrage at their hands.' Foreign insults were always the precursor of 'injuries of a more weighty description,' and to repel insult, 'as promptly as possible, is to remove the contemplated injury to the greatest possible distance.'[234]

Lord Brougham's care in qualifying his advice with expressions of deference to the national honour did not satisfy the *Morning Herald*, but additional critics of this effort to deploy the

[231] The *Globe*, 11 March 1839.
[232] See Chapter Three.
[233] Lord Brougham, HL Deb 26 March 1839 vol 46, cc. 1218-9
[234] *Morning Herald*, 27 March 1839.

ethic against the Ministry did exist.[235] Conversely, advocates of national honour, such as liberal weekly the *Era*, asserted the central importance of the ethic for British security and respect, warning that a nation 'impressed with a due sense of dignity,' could demonstrate this 'by a watchful care of its rights, and the promptness with which it sustains or vindicates the national honour.' To do otherwise would ensure the nation's downfall because 'The national honour is not alone affected by insults, but also in a violation of right, or an infraction of treaty, by any one state against another without speedy reparation or adequate redress to the injured party.' It was thus clear 'that a strict regard to national honour is the best safeguard of our interests. Without it, no alliance can be stable, nothing is secure.'[236] These extracts confirmed the importance of national honour, while classifying the ethic as something distinctly rooted in the glorious past, as opposed to the 'modern philosophy' of pragmatism Brougham was charged with representing. This 'old cry of national honour' arguably sourced its legitimacy from its established position in international relations.[237] To act contrary to its tenets was to invite fierce criticism precisely because national honour's central importance was purported to speak for itself.

Thus, when the Earl of Minto defended the government's record towards France, denying that any sacrifice of honour had occurred and warning against excitement,[238] the *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* fumed that it was because 'the British people are "high-minded" and "above all things sensitive," as regards the national honour, that a feeling of indignation is roused within them when any outrage upon that honour is committed, or even supposed to be committed.' With reference to Joinville's act it urged Minto to 'bear in mind that it was no "unnecessary feeling" that excited the nation when the insult was offered to the national honour in the case of the [*Vixen*], the memory of which is still fresh in the public mind.'[239] It was also common for papers to lament 'that the English seamen are no longer impressed

[235] 'That meteor phantom, national honour, about which John Bull is so chary, and which has cost him so much money, and such a waste of human blood in defending, is not looked upon now as quite of so much importance as formerly, unless there is something to be got by fighting for it, in addition to the simple honour of having thrashed the foe.' *Sheffield Iris*, 2 April 1839. Remarking on the pending Anglo-American negotiations, the *Fife Herald* argued that 'Even that nice and delicate point, national honour, should be rigorously scanned, ere it admitted as an argument, to see if there be no false delicacy, no national jealousy helping to whet it. There is no way in which national honour can be so illustriously maintained as by a peaceful compromise of the matter in dispute.' *Fife Herald*, 11 April 1839.
[236] The *Era*, 14 April 1839. It provided a similar warning the next month: 'But the evil does not rest here; the consequences of this continual abandonment of our rights, and sacrifice of the national honour by the constituted authorities of the realm, must eventually prove fatal to the monarchy.' *The Era*, 14 May 1839.
[237] *London Evening Standard*, 13 June 1849.
[238] Earl of Minto, HL Deb 30 May 1839 vol 47, cc. 1076-8.
[239] *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, 31 May 1839.

with that instinct – call it blind and unreflecting if you will – of national honour, which made England the mistress of the seas.'[240] To be lacking in these attributes could be construed as a betrayal of English history. The *Morning Herald* regularly derided Palmerston's efforts to acquire satisfaction peacefully as insufficient,[241] while asserting that 'England wants a manly and a truly English government,' and 'until she has it, France, and Russia, and America, and even the paltry state of Portugal will insult her honour – defraud her subjects – attack her commerce, and set her power at defiance.'[242]

An example of the 'correct' mode of proceeding may be found a few months later, when *The Times* recounted a similar insult at Vera Cruz, where a Mexican citizen was again seized by the French, and the midshipman, 'burning with indignation at his country's dishonour,' immediately met the French act by raising the stakes and threatening war. This 'spirited and truly British expostulation,' forced the French to back down, and although this had involved disobeying his Admiral's orders, the midshipman's captain 'never would take on himself the office of reprimanding a man who had deserved the gratitude of his country for his determination in maintaining her honour unimpaired.'[243] It seemed the best means of maintaining national honour was to be highly sensitive, particularly at sea. Yet, contemporaries were also willing to criticise their rivals, for instance, when French efforts to acquire vindication from Mexico inconvenienced the resident British merchants there, moving Members to claim that 'the French had forgotten their honour, and far outstepped what was due from one nation to another, and especially from the stronger to the weaker.'[244] One discerns a degree of hypocrisy in this; had France not been permitted to vindicate its honour against Portugal?

If national honour permitted hypocrisy, it also prescribed limits to excessive zeal. When a minor incident concerning the display of flags occurred off Mauritius in September 1839, causing furore in *the Temps*, which called for Frenchmen to acquire 'a speedy vindication of the national honour,' the *Newcastle Courant* warned that 'the good understanding that exists between the cool-headed members of either cabinet, will not be affected by the indiscretions

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[240] *The Era*, 2 June 1839.
[241] 'His remonstrances must have been made in the gentlest, sweetest tones that the juvenile god of soft desires could command. If he demanded reparation for the outrage upon the national honour, it must have been "with 'bated breath and whispering gentleness." - Under his tender tuition the British lion, if it roared at all, must have "roared as gently as any sucking dove."' *Morning Herald*, 17 Aug 1839.
[242] *Ibid*.
[243] *The Times*, 2 June 1839,
[244] Mark Philips, HC Deb 19 March 1839 vol 46, cc. 940-941.

or the over-punctiliousness of subordinate naval officers.'[245] The *Morning Chronicle* added that it would not 'imitate *the Temps* in calling on our Ministry to be very defying and very spirited in its remonstrances on this subject,' because 'Each Government is sufficiently tied down to support national interest and national honour.' It discerned 'some obstinacy and mistakes on either side,' and pledged itself to 'not write a word which might awaken animosity between brave men.'[246] Despite the zeal for vindication then, Ministers simply could not afford to treat every insult equally. It might be argued that where the improper respect of flags could be navigated, the forcible naval boarding or mistreatment of a British subject demanded a response.[247] This latter species of insult, indeed, characterised the Trent Affair.[248]

Where national honour was insulted – either by improper respect shown to flags, or by the mistreatment of individuals under British protection – national excitement was liable to be fanned by opposition figures and newspapers. This furore could be leveraged against the government, and would require an explanation. It was also common to connect the possession of power with the maintenance of honour, while the absence of it would imperil British prestige and influence, and invite those insults from opportunistic rivals. This was a lesson inherited from the Napoleonic Wars, and Viscount Sandon, a Tory MP and political veteran of that era could thus argue that 'if they had really sent a British force within the contested waters of the river La Plata, or the Gulf of Mexico,' then she would have defended her financial interests there and 'above all, the honour of the British flag would not have been exposed to the insult it had recently received.'[249] The Whigs could never publicly admit that their distribution of force had been insufficient to defend national honour, but Palmerston did privately advocate for a strong naval presence to legitimise British policy.[250] Though it was damaging to improperly defend British honour through such mismanagement, it would be shameful and potentially ruinous to engage with empty threats, a lesson Palmerston later forgot to his detriment when grappling with the Schleswig-Holstein crisis.[251]

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[245] *Newcastle Courant*, 27 Dec 1839.
[246] *Morning Chronicle*, 26 Dec 1839.
[247] One such example is provided by the Trent Affair, assessed in Chapter Four.
[248] See Chapter Four.
[249] Viscount Sandon, HC Deb 19 March 1839 vol 46, cc. 902-903.
[250] Cited in Brown, *Palmerston*, p. 199.
[251] See Chapter Five.

As honour-based rhetoric was invoked to affect foreign policy, it may be of use to consider how Melbourne's administration reacted to French deployment of this language to apply pressure on Britain. After a truce of several years, Egyptian Viceroy Mehmet Ali renewed his war in 1839, seizing more territory in the Levant, and inflicting humiliating defeats upon his Sultan within the year.[252] Since Anglo-Russian relations remained tense,[253] Palmerston turned to France, and he reflected privately that it was impossible for London and Paris to have remained 'passive spectators,' in the partition of the Ottoman Empire without causing 'discredit to the governments of England and France.'[254] He had added that empowering the Sultan was akin to a British national interest, and warned Henry Bulwer – then serving as Embassy Secretary in Constantinople – that to establish Mehmet Ali in Syria would be 'to build on sand.'[255] The quest to assert influence in the Ottoman Empire, the importance of playing a part in its future, and the connection of these ideas with British prestige was a struggle which compelled Benjamin Disraeli to intervene with even greater force forty years later.[256]

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire appeared imminent, and Palmerston responded to the chaotic circumstances by signing a Collective Note with the five powers in late July 1839. The agreement committed Britain, France, Austria, Russia, and Prussia to maintain and defend the Sultan from further aggression, and to coerce Egypt to compromise.[257] Yet, the powers were not on the same page. France, particularly, seemed hesitant to abandon Mehmet Ali, who the French people had identified as 'a sort of Oriental Bonaparte,' while the potential advantages of a French-aligned Egypt pulled French opinion further from their erstwhile allies.[258] In September 1839, Palmerston warned Henry Bulwer – now Ambassador to France – of his fear that France would 'employ force to prevent us and those other powers who may join us from doing that which France herself is bound by every principle of honour,

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[252] Ali was also remarkably active in Iraq and the Holy Sites, seeking lordship over them in return for local support. J. B. Kelly, 'Mehemet 'Ali's Expedition to the Persian Gulf 1837-1840, Part I,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, 1, No. 4 (Jul., 1965), 350-381; 'Mehemet 'Ali's Expedition to the Persian Gulf 1837-1840, Part II,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2, No. 1 (Oct., 1965), 31-65.
[253] Frederick Stanley Rodkey, 'Conversations on Anglo-Russian Relations in 1838,' *English Historical Review*, 50, No. 197 (Jan., 1935), 120-123
[254] Palmerston to Granville, 6 July 1838 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 18, p. 231.
[255] Palmerston to Bulwer, 22 Sept 1838 in *Ibid*, Doc. 19, p. 233.
[256] See Chapter Six. This concern for prestige was twinned with a belief that a British-led reform of the Ottoman Empire was possible, particularly in the aftermath of the Crimean War. Allan Cunningham, 'The Sick Man and the British Physician,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, 17, No. 2 (Apr., 1981), 147-173.
[257] Brown, *Palmerston*, p. 223.
[258] P. E. Caquet, 'The Napoleonic Legend and the War Scare of 1840,' *International History Review*, 35, No. 4 (Aug 2013), 702-722; 718-719.

and very enlightened consideration of her real interests, to assist us in doing.'[259] Later in the month, it was evident to him that France 'have wishes and objects at bottom which they are ashamed of confessing,' that 'no French interest could be promoted,' by supporting Mehmet Ali, and that 'the character of France as a country which adheres to her word would thereby be greatly affected.'[260] This correspondence underlines the belief in the importance of good faith and the fulfilment of obligations, and suggest that similar sentiments expressed in public were not merely for show. Just as British good faith had been at stake in continuing the Russian Dutch Loan, French good faith was concerned in her obligation to the Collective Note.[261]

However, in March 1840, a more reactionary French government under Adolph Thiers assumed power, and support for Egypt became a key facet of French policy. By the summer, the Sultan's prospects had not improved, and it was clear foreign intervention was required if peace was to be restored. Palmerston had told Melbourne that 'the honour and dignity of the country, good faith toward the Sultan, and sound views of European policy,' all recommended British support for Turkish integrity.[262] However, with French support for Mehmet Ali affirmed, it was necessary to reconstitute a Treaty on the Ottoman Empire's future without her support, and this was accomplished in mid-July. The terms of this Treaty had been anticipated by Palmerston's conversations with the Russian ambassador,[263] and in a Commons session he prepared Members for this reconciliation by asserting that 'it was impossible for any government to have acted with more honour and good faith in any matter than the Russian government had acted with the other powers in respect to Turkey.'[264]

It was plain that French support for Mehmet Ali placed the entente in jeopardy. Palmerston believed French belligerence was to blame, and warned a colleague that 'incidents might at any time happen that might bring on a quarrel upon some point of honour.'[265] Palmerston could have pointed to the damage done to French good faith by Thiers' abandonment of previous obligations, yet he kept details of the settlement hidden even after it had been

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[259] Palmerston to Bulwer, 1 Sept 1839 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 20, p. 234.
[260] Palmerston to Bulwer, 24 Sept 1839 in *Ibid*, Doc. 21, p. 237.
[261] Palmerston had used similar expressions in 1831 when attempting to settle Belgian independence. He warned Granville then that France would find 'that a war with all the rest of the world, brought upon them by a violation of their word, will not return to their advantage, nor rebound to their honour.' Palmerston to Granville, 16 Aug 1831 in *Ibid*, Doc. 10, p. 220.
[262] Palmerston to Melbourne, 5 July 1840 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 23, p. 245.
[263] Palmerston to Bulwer, 24 Sept 1840 in *Ibid*, Doc. 21, p. 236.
[264] HC Deb 27 March 1840 vol 53, cc. 194-195.
[265] Cited in Brown, *Palmerston*, pp. 235-236.

concluded in July 1840.[266] French exclusion from the settlement was guaranteed to cause alarm, as the divisions within Cabinet revealed.[267] Contemporaries discerned that in these circumstances 'one of two opinions should be held by the French people, either that the grand nation had been grossly insulted by the grand nation's neighbours,' or 'that the national honour had been compromised by M. Thiers, through what may be esteemed a gross and unstatesmanlike blunder.'[268] Thiers was himself forced to choose between 'an unwinnable European war or a disastrous climbdown,' and King Louis Philippe effectively chose for him when Thiers' government was dismissed in September 1840.[269]

This change in government did not resolve the crisis, and reflecting on the mood in Paris *The Times* warned that 'a sentiment pervades the entire population of Paris, that the national honour has been insulted,'[270] adding a few days later that 'every brawler is sensitive about the national honour, too often in the ratio of his callousness about his own.' A contributor urged the Whigs to preserve the entente with France, asking 'In what, then, does our national honour consist, if not in the maintenance of what is most honourable to our nation?'[271] Although an Anglo-French war scare had intensified during the summer and autumn of 1840,[272] Palmerston's determination to hold his nerve and his willingness to cooperate with the Holy Alliance proved the difference.[273] The *Morning Post* asked whether French national honour might have been maintained 'at a cheaper rate,' than the twenty millions that had been wasted on needless war preparations.[274] Others interpreted Theirs' bluster as a search

[266] The Lords could only allude to a rumour of the Treaty on 30 July, whereupon Melbourne confirmed that France had not been among the signees. HL Deb 30 July 1840 vol 55, c. 1113.
[267] Both the Earl of Clarendon and Lord Holland were opposed to the four-power treaty of July 1840, but did not go as far as resigning. Clarendon had assured Palmerston in March that 'I look only to what may be most for the honour and advantage of England, and to what offers the fairest prospect of extending her commercial relations and the sphere of her influence and power.' Clarendon to Palmerston, 14 March 1840 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 22, p. 239. In the addendum to the memorandum on the July 1840 Treaty to which they were opposed, Clarendon and Holland urged the Queen to consider that such an agreement was 'neither necessary to the honour of Your Majesty's Crown in satisfaction of the Obligations contracted in the Collective Note of July 1839,' nor beneficial for British subjects. Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 8 July 1840 in *Ibid*, Doc. 24, pp. 247-248.
[268] The *Witness*, 28 Oct 1840.
[269] Caquet, 'The Napoleonic Legend and the War Scare of 1840,' 717-718.
[270] *The Times*, 6 Oct 1840.
[271] *The Times*, 10 Oct 1840.
[272] 'We are told that the French people consider their national honour to have been slighted, and are determined to go to war.' *The Statesman*, 25 Oct 1840. French war preparations were examined in *Londonderry Sentinel*, 28 Oct 1840.
[273] Palmerston thus implored Granville to remember that 'if we were to give way, the French nation would believe that we gave way to their menaces,' and 'the only possible way of keeping such persons in check is to make them clearly understand that one is not going to yield an inch, and that one is quite strong enough to repel force by force.' Palmerston to Granville, 29 Oct 1840 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 26, pp. 250-251.
[274] 'We belong to that school in politics which holds that national honour and national glory are to be accounted a substantial good, and therefore, if the outlay was necessary to the former, we admit the latter to

for domestic popularity, because 'Speeches, in which the national honour and nation's glory form prominent features, are always favourable for displays of eloquence.'[275]

Due to Palmerston's efforts to delay discussion, Parliament hosted only a single debate on the ongoing controversy in early August. Therein, the Radical MP with Chartist sympathies John Leader considered that among French papers 'there appeared to be a general feeling of bitterness and disappointment, and a belief, that their honour had been insulted, and that in these proceedings [Palmerston] had sacrificed them to the other great powers of Europe.' The French had cried foul at their exclusion, connecting it with their honour, and Leader reflected that while 'He might be told that this was a mere matter of form in the negotiations,' unfortunately 'the French were very nice and touchy on points of honour in matters of this kind,' though certainly 'they could not be blamed for having a nice sense of honour, and there was, in addition to this, a feeling that this country wished to act against them or over-reach them in this matter,' which Leader disputed.[276] Of course, the French response was not unique. A consideration of Disraeli's behaviour several decades later, when Britain was not consulted in the 1878 Treaty of San Stefano,[277] suggests that French statesmen behaved little differently from their British counterparts when they felt excluded from pivotal negotiations. Indeed, as Lord John Russell confessed in September 1840, 'if England were the party omitted, I do not think we should be satisfied with such professions,' as Britain and Russia had given to Paris.[278]

The *Morning Post* also highlighted French sensitivity to any perceived slight,[279] yet it blamed Thiers above all, since he 'raised the cry of wounded national honour,' and 'set his old engine, the press, at work to excite the people.' It was nonetheless fortunate that although Theirs 'put the match to the train with the eagerness of a madman, it still reflects great credit on the thinking part of the nation that they should, generally speaking, have shown so much more sanity than their leaders.'[280] The French people were being manipulated for the gain

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have been attained. But still the question of the necessity recurs.' *Morning Post*, 4 Nov 1840. See also The *Sun*, 5 Nov 1840.

[275] *John O' Groat Journal*, 6 Nov 1840.

[276] John Leader, HC Deb 6 Aug 1840 vol 55, cc. 1376-1377.

[277] See Chapter Six.

[278] Memorandum by Lord John Russell, 18 Sept 1840 in John Russell and G. P. Gooch, 'The Eastern Crisis of 1840. Extracts from the Unpublished Papers of Lord John Russell,' *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 1, No. 2 (1924), 170-177; 174.

[279] 'The French have a high sense of honour and of their own importance; they are jealously alive to the slightest insult or neglect, and easily exasperated; but they are not stubbornly opposed to conviction, and will never long indulge in rancour when they see no offense is intended.' *Morning Post*, 17 Aug 1840.

[280] *Ibid*.

of the government,[281] but sensitivity to the national honour was far from a uniquely French trait. As the *Morning Herald* articulated, 'When the national honour, or other interests are at issue, a warlike policy may be consistent with the most rigid prudence,' because 'for all possible accidents, dishonour is the most costly that may befall a great people.'[282] *The Times* also recognised the anguish of the French reaction, noting that it was felt 'by all the enlightened, by nearly all the civilised, world, that no consideration of merely a prudential nature could lead any humanised people to meet an insult by direct hostility,' except 'a moral certainty that the national honour, if left unvindicated in a single instance, would be offended and trampled on afterwards in many others, from the confidence of impunity that aggressors might thus be encouraged to entertain.' 'Self-defence,' *The Times* believed, was 'the only justifiable cause of hostilities.'[283]

There had been no aggression against France, and Palmerston had made efforts to include Paris in the final settlement, yet the French press had still roused the people into a frenzy,[284] directed primarily against London and Palmerston in particular.[285] The *Morning Herald* even commended the 'forbearance' of the London press in refusing to take this bait, particularly while Paris was 'under impressions, believed here to be erroneous, of national honour insulted,' because France was still entitled to respect. Although this forbearance among the press was praised, Palmerston's own speeches 'have tended, not to the vindication of national honour, not to national advantage – oh no – but to stop the panic and the fall of prices,' and 'to restore the spirits of the stock jobbers and raise the process of the funds.'[286] Having insulted France – unintentionally or not – Palmerston could then be criticised for attempting to mollify the insult's severity.[287] Even while it was recognised that 'England, on

[281] 'M. Thiers's Foreign Policy,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 49, No. 303 (Jan 1841), 127-141.
[282] *Morning Herald*, 20 Nov 1840.
[283] *The Times*, 29 Sept 1840.
[284] 'Every possible laudatory phrase is put in requisition to convey approval and admiration of the wise, firm, and temperate measures taken and contemplated by M. Thiers to vindicate the national honour.' *The Times*, 4 Aug 1840.
[285] 'In consequence of these [powers] not being able to induce France to join in measures to coerce the Pasha, they have, it seems, come to the determination of acting without her. The national honour of the French has taken fire at the insult, and the French Chambers, their press and some of the members of their government are loud in their denunciations.' *Cambridge Independent Press*, 8 Aug 1840.
[286] *Morning Herald*, 10 Aug 1840.
[287] As *John Bull* complained, Palmerston's 'assurance on his part that he intended no insult to France,' was 'like the school-boy who, having screwed up his courage to give blow, finds it immediately ooze out of his fingers, and protests that he did not mean to hurt his comrade.' It charged that 'Lord Palmerston should not have adopted any course inconsistent with the national honour, or at variance with the fair faith and honourable spirit of England towards another country; and having chosen the straightforward and only path, he was bound to pursue it without looking to the right or the left, and fearless of the consequence.' *John Bull*, 14 Sept 1840.

every reason of honour and of policy, is bound to maintain the integrity of the Turkish empire,' High Tory papers were reluctant to concede him a triumph.[288]

Although the moment was opportune for leveraging his strategic advantages against France, Palmerston rejected belligerency,[289] and remained hopeful of a peaceful outcome,[290] while urging his peers use 'firm and stout language.'[291] The successful naval campaign against Mehmet Ali's forces in Syria granted military weight to British policy which had been lacking, and it was largely lauded as proof of the country's continued supremacy at sea.[292] Palmerston's pursuit of Turkish sovereignty, and his flexibility in cooperating with adversaries in the name of this goal, facilitated his triumph, which Charles Webster regarded as 'perhaps the greatest which he ever won in his long connection with foreign affairs.'[293] Of additional note were Russian concessions; the controversial 1833 Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi had been replaced by a more moderate settlement, which granted Russia no exclusive privileges.[294] *The Times* reflected that 'nothing is wanting to convert this success into an honourable triumph but to make a wise and moderate use of it.'[295]

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[288] *John Bull* thus assured its readers that 'From the tone, too, which we, and we believe the entire Conservative press of this country, adopted on hearing of the menaces of France, and whilst it was believed that she had arrogantly and without provocation assumed an altitude of threat and of command insulting to our country, it must have been evident that we prized Britain's honour beyond all other considerations, and that throwing party feeling aside, we were ready to make common cause with the Government, and to support it this point, heart and soul.' It concluded that 'Even in the wrong, we could not bear to see Great Britain shrink from daring the utmost extent of danger which she might have courted or braved. Yet, sensibly alive to the honour and repute of our glorious country, we the more deplore the unfortunate steps which are but too likely to compromise both.' *Ibid*.

[289] 'England's Threatened War with the World,' *The Quarterly review*, 67, No. 133 (Dec 1840), 281-284.

[290] Palmerston also politely declined the Tsar's offer to enter a defensive arrangement of the four powers, directed against France. See Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 27, pp. 252-254. He reacted similarly to Austrian suggestions of a 'league' to preserve peace, believing the prospects for war less likely than his counterparts in Vienna. Frederick Stanley Rodkey, 'Suggestions during the Crisis of 1840 for a "League" to Preserve Peace,' *American Historical Review*, 35, No. 2 (Jan., 1930), 308-316. See also by Rodkey, 'Anglo-Russian Negotiations about a "Permanent" Quadruple Alliance, 1840-1841,' *American Historical Review*, 36, No. 2 (Jan., 1931), 343-349.

[291] Palmerston to Granville, 29 Oct 1840 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 26, p. 251.

[292] 'Syria,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 49, No. 304 (Feb 1841), 181-197.

[293] Not since Canning had a Foreign Secretary 'won such a diplomatic victory with a Cabinet so divided on the main issue.' Palmerston had used 'every weapon in the diplomatic armoury with unerring skill,' to the effect that 'At the end even his enemies recognised the greatness of the achievement.' Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston*, II, p. 621.

[294] Although, as Šedivýý demonstrated, the Tsar did acquire greater control over the Danubian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, in return for support of Metternich's Danube navigation plan. Miroslav Šedivýý, 'From Hostility to Cooperation? Austria, Russia and the Danubian Principalities 1829—40,' *Slavonic and East European Review*, 89, No. 4 (Oct 2011), 630-661; 658-659.

[295] It also recommended that France should be reconciled with the other powers: 'The only argument which is ever used to justify the refusal of timely concessions is, that we must not compromise our national honour by a surrender to fear. What fear was ever yet imputed to our nation, that we should rush into such evils for fear of fear?' If war was so destructive, then 'certainly all the precautions which can be taken not only to

Conclusion

The Whig stewardship of British foreign policy between 1830 and 1841 provides a useful introduction to the rhetoric of honour, and how it was used by Ministers and opposition figures in Parliament and the press. What emerges is the prevalence of the lexicon of honour, and it may be suggested existing surveys of the period have missed important nuances in contemporary belief and rhetoric by failing to interrogate the ethic. Such interrogations would face challenges posed by national honour's varied application to a wide range of concerns. National honour could be maintained by adhering to obligations, while reneging on them would constitute a violation which would be publicly lamented. Concepts such as good faith were considered precious enough to pursue even if it meant incurring greater expenses or combatting various interpretations of the law, as the Russian Dutch Loan debates suggest. Incurring insults from foreign powers – either through apparently trivial incidents concerning improper treatment of flags, or weightier controversies involving mistreatment of protected citizens – would always demand satisfaction, or at the very least, explanation, in a public space. The Portuguese case suggests that other nations possessed a similar regard for the ethic, to the extent that it was considered dishonourable to prevent them from vindicating it, no matter the target.

Importantly, it was possible to connect British interests with national honour, facilitating Palmerston's preservation of the Ottoman Empire's integrity, accompanied by efforts to enact meaningful reform.[296] When France declared itself insulted by its exclusion, Francophile critics did not persuade Palmerston to change course, though he was careful not to exacerbate the crisis. This was insufficient for his critics, who charged him with favouring economic interests even when the national honour was upheld. Palmerston resisted calls within Cabinet for greater concessions to France, and even offered his resignation, which Melbourne refused. He pursued an independent line, as the alternative was to 'place this

avoid, but to repel it – not to crouch to it, but to crush it – are claimed by the first laws of duty, honour, and reason.' *The Times*, 4 Nov 1840.

[296] As Rodkey demonstrated, Palmerston had been active in suggesting methods to modernise the Ottoman Empire, intervening directly with societal and above all military programs to reinforce Turkish power and less the demands on Turkey's allies. See F. S. Rodkey, 'Lord Palmerston's Policy for the Rejuvenation of Turkey, 1839-1841: Alexander Prize Essay,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (1929), 163-192; 'Lord Palmerston and the Rejuvenation of Turkey, 1830-41: Part II, 1839-41,' *Journal of Modern History*, 2, No. 2 (Jun., 1930), 193-225.

country in the degraded position of being held in leading-strings by France,' which would be unsuitable 'to the power and station of England.'[297]

As Webster reflected, 'everything depended on the energy and determination of Palmerston himself,' and that 'In the end all recognised that it was a personal as well as a national triumph.'[298] The French retreat and the resolution of the Eastern Question in his favour moved Palmerston to exclaim 'We shall have a capital story to tell about external affairs when Parliament meets,' regretting that his colleagues were not 'as much pleased as they ought to be.'[299] Yet, there was scant time to revel in these victories. While he contended with French feelings, British forces were engaging in war both in Afghanistan and China, and negotiations with Washington over disputed boundaries were soon to intensify following the imprisonment of Alexander McLeod.

National honour's depth of meaning and resonance with the public allowed contemporaries to argue for its defence in policies as dangerous as war with Russia for the liberation of Poland and the forceful repelling of French insults on the high seas, or as mundane as the withdrawal of a British legion fighting in the Spanish Civil War. Britons also experienced the sensation of such sentiments being used against them. Above all, national honour was an unignorable entity, even while contemporaries contested its meaning and relevance. One is struck by the primacy of national honour, repeatedly professed,[300] and the importance of being capable of defending it.[301] Statesmen and newspapers deployed the language of honour, and were compelled to frame their decisions according to its tenets. The constraint this placed upon Ministerial presentations of policy could only be overcome through substantive public explanation, such as the identification of forbearance. Yet, it could also

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[297] Palmerston to Melbourne, 5 July 1840 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 23, p. 245.
[298] Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston*, II, p. 624.
[299] Cited in Brown, *Palmerston*, p. 236.
[300] Addressing the critique of the Tory policy of non-intervention, Peel reflected 'that they were prepared to throw overboard their declarations, whenever the time came that the honour of the country was to be vindicated or its dignity sustained. He knew that they would not allow their declarations to stand between them and the honour of their country.' HC Deb 18 Feb 1831 vol 2, cc. 708-709.
[301] As Thomas Attwood declared in 1831, 'He agreed with the Ministers in their desire to maintain peace, and wished it to be preserved, if that could be done with honour; but it had not been yet discovered that the best way to maintain peace was to be unprepared for war. He trusted that the Ministers, in proclaiming their desire to preserve peace, and their readiness to preserve it at any reasonable sacrifice, would not forget what was due to the honour of the country. He trusted that the noble Lord would weigh well the difficulties of the country abroad, and prepare himself for war, and that the country would be exhibited to the world in such an attitude as to dread no hostility, and be prepared to meet it when it was necessary to maintain our honour and our security.' HC Deb 14 Feb 1831 vol 2, cc. 532-533. Addressing the principles of the Whigs, James Graham recorded 'that it was their policy to preserve peace by showing that, should the honour of the country be attacked, or the security of the nation endangered, they were prepared to repel the aggression.' HC Deb 18 Feb 1831 vol 2, cc. 716-717.

facilitate success, as seen in the use of good faith to excuse the continuation of the technically obsolete Russian Dutch Loan.

However, by publicly subsuming their policy decisions in the rhetoric of honour, this arguably added greater urgency to serious incidents, and placed greater pressure upon Palmerston. He was held to account and heavily censured when it appeared that the high standards he had lauded were not fulfilled. The rhetoric of honour, indeed, was at its most anxious when insults were received, while the penalty for improperly meeting them was severe, both in terms of political credit, and the perceived damage which could be inflicted on the nation. The next chapter will consider how Ministers grappled with several insults, while assessing whether the concept of the honour-script provides a useful measuring stick of the ethic's standards and expectations. Members in Parliament and the press which represented them proved tireless in the application – and occasional manipulation – of national honour's tenets, which could brook no compromise, and frequently demanded the highest price for satisfaction.

Chapter Two

Insult, Forbearance, and Satisfaction in British Foreign Policy 1838-1850

Introduction

In Avner Offer's 1995 article 'Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honour?' the author investigated 'honour as a code of conduct on the threshold of war.'[1] Offer maintained that honour 'can be seen as a script, which follows a prescribed sequence,' adding, 'Honour is a quality assumed to be in the possession of individuals and groups until it is challenged and questioned; some experience or episode is interpreted as a challenge to honour.' When this challenge is received by a nation, Offer determined, 'The remedy is violence…preceded by the polite manoeuvres and language of diplomacy. If "satisfaction" is denied, there is a loss of reputation, status, honour. The violence is then redirected and internalised as humiliation and shame.'[2] 'The code of honour,' Offer continued, 'is a cultural script, but it would be wrong to regard it as irrational.'[3] Offer concluded that the First World War 'was a chain of insults that no leader in a position of public visibility could afford to ignore.'[4] An honourable nation, much like an honourable man, must respond to insult or be perceived as weak; vulnerable to exploitation by opportunistic rivals.

This honour-script was not the central thesis of Offer's study, but it is worth bringing it under closer analysis for this chapter, which considers how Britain responded to insults in three distinct theatres. These include the First Opium War, the abrupt expulsion of Ambassador Bulwer from Madrid in 1848, and the Don Pacifico Affair. What does this honour-script reveal, or fail to reveal, about how insults were received? As the repelling of insult was central to the honour-script's logic, one suspects that it would place strict restrictions upon contemporaries, reducing the opportunities for compromise. In fact, this chapter demonstrates that in British foreign policy, the nature of insult was more nuanced, and heavily dependent upon circumstances. An analysis of public rhetoric aids this assessment, because it demonstrates how Ministers used the language of honour both to press – and to avoid – the demands which the honour-script prescribed. Furthermore, this chapter shows the extent to which opposition figures used this rhetoric against the government, covering

[1] Avner Offer, 'Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honor?', 214.
[2] *Ibid*, 222.
[3] *Ibid*, 223.
[4] *Ibid*, 234.

much of their criticism in the language of honour to make their case. In this sense, national honour was as much a tool of the politician as it was an ingrained belief system.

One could argue that the more anxious quests for redress were contained in the colonial sphere, where British interests in India compelled the government to act swiftly to repel insult from the Chinese (1839), or in Afghanistan (1842). In these theatres, insults in the form of mistreated citizens or military disaster necessitated a retributive campaign to recoup lost honour and demonstrate prestige to Britain's main rival, Russia. Although in the main, the search for satisfaction followed an insult, the honour-script's tenets were not law. Exceptions to the script did exist, most strikingly in the case of Spain (1848), where the insult of Ambassador Bulwer's abrupt expulsion from Madrid was presented by the government as an opportunity to exhibit forbearance. In addition, insult must be considered in the context of Britain's relationship with the offender; the Don Pacifico case (1850) was pursued with vigour due to Greece's recent history of offences towards the country, of which Don Pacifico's treatment was perceived as the final straw.

Insults could be incurred through a variety of mediums, but the most common was through the mistreatment of a British subject, whether they were imprisoned by a foreign government or not afforded proper respect according to traditional protocols. The previous chapter demonstrated how ideas such as good faith, obligation, and prestige were used as synonyms of national honour, and pressed by contemporary public rhetoric. Similarly, insult was a synonym for the national honour in danger, and rhetoric was most belligerent when it was incurred. To erase this insult, Britain had to rectify the situation, an outcome referred to invariably as reparation, redress, or satisfaction. As the duellist could acquire satisfaction if his opponent apologised, so could nations erase the insult through an official apology. However, as will be seen below, it was occasionally necessary, or even beneficial, to make a display of military power in a campaign to wrest this satisfaction by force.

2.1: Insult, Immorality, and Vindication in Asia (1839-1842)

In March 1839, years of deteriorating Sino-British relations culminated in the imprisonment of Captain Elliot, Britain's superintendent in Canton, and the seizure of two million pounds'

worth of opium.[5] The Chinese Emperor had charged Commissioner Lin with removing the drug, and Lin's single-minded focus towards this end proved pivotal.[6] Lin presided over Elliot's detention, and during the summer and autumn, several skirmishes increased tensions.[7] On 26 November, Lin announced his intention to permanently ban British trade from China, an intolerable prospect for British mercantile and free trade interests.[8] During the late 1830s, Elliot had warned London of Chinese anger at his inability[9] to halt the export of opium into Canton, mostly cultivated in India.[10] The Whig government led by Lord Melbourne hesitated to open another conflict in a distant theatre, but 'it now seemed fatal to back down,' before Chinese insult.[11] By seeking satisfaction through war, Britain could also force the restoration of stable trading relations, particularly involving tea.[12]

In his 2003 study, Glenn Melancon identified national honour as the primary cause of the First Opium War. This presents an opportunity to assess secondary literature which is unfortunately lacking from other chapters in this research project.[13] Innovative and important though it was, Melancon's approach did not escape scrutiny. George Bernstein believed that it was ultimately 'not clear' that Melancon was 'justified in making the jump that assigns honour as Palmerston's primary motive for action'.[14] Margaret Lamb perceived that Melancon 'muddied his own argument to some extent by a liberal use of the word

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[5] Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War, 1840-1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and the War by which They Forced Her Gates Ajar* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997), pp. 142-149.

[6] Lin's Edict outlawing the import of opium was printed in *The Times*, 7 Aug 1839. Chinese concerns regarding opium were twofold: the deleterious effect of the drug on Chinese society, and the exportation of silver from the country which undermined the economy. See Man-Houng Lin, 'Late Qing Perceptions of Native Opium,' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 64, No. 1 (Jun., 2004), 117-144

[7] Fay, *The Opium War*, pp. 187-194.

[8] *The Times*, 13 March 1840. The declaration was published in full in *The Times*, 7 April 1840.

[9] Elliot's responsibility was itself a subject for debate. The *Morning Post* charged that Elliot 'found he had got into a scrap, and was determined to force on a collision with the Chinese…to produce a war, and thus to lessen the chance of his own conduct being dispassionately and thoroughly investigated in this country.' *Morning Post*, 25 March 1840.

[10] Hans Derks, 'Ch 6: Tea For Opium Vice Versa,' in *History of the Opium Problem: The Assault on the East, ca. 1600-1950* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 49-86.

[11] Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, p. 44.

[12] Solomon Bard, 'Tea And Opium,' *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 40 (2000), 1-19. Fay, *The Opium War*, p. 195.

[13] Melancon, *Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis Balancing Drugs, Violence and National Honour, 1833-1840* (New York, 2017). Melancon summarised his findings on national honour in his article 'Honour in Opium? The British Declaration of War on China, 1839-1840,' *International History Review*, 21, No. 4 (Dec., 1999), 855-874.

[14] George L. Bernstein, Review: 'Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis: Balancing Drugs, Violence and National Honour, 1833-1840 by Glenn Melancon,' *Albion,* 36, No. 3 (Autumn, 2004), 538-539; 539. Bernstein recommended that Melancon would have done better in presenting his findings in an article – which he has since done – rather than in a book.

[honour] to cover a variety of meanings.'[15] It could be argued that Melancon did not sufficiently distinguish between honour as a motive and honour as a political tool, a tool which Ministers used to shield policy from the opposition, and which the opposition could leverage against the government. Indeed, this study departs from Melancon's effort to attribute the vindication of national honour as the primary cause of British participation in the First Opium War. Instead, it will consider how contemporaries used the rhetoric of honour in their framing, defence, and criticism of policy.

As will be demonstrated below, such tactics were not always sophisticated or consistent. Contemporaries were certainly distracted by the preponderance of several foreign policy challenges occurring simultaneously, including a crisis in Afghanistan, pivotal negotiations with Washington, and the resolution of the Eastern Question. This expansive workload[16] may have contributed to Palmerston's inability to keep pace with Captain Elliot's warnings in the first place, facilitating an administrative failure so blatant that only by leveraging the national honour could the Ministry be saved.[17] For supporters of the war and for its critics, the rhetoric of honour was sufficiently pliable to accommodate their positions. This included the awkward hypocrisy of advocating a war with China which would expand the opium trade, particularly as critics conceived of the trade as 'dishonourable and disgraceful in its character.'[18]

While private correspondence reveals anger over the insult to British honour,[19] it was also true that the government were under pressure to obtain compensation for influential opium traders in the mercantile lobby. This stemmed from Captain Elliot's written commitment that he would arrange reimbursement for the opium traders to compensate for their seized

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[15] Margaret Lamb, Review: 'Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis: Balancing Drugs, Violence, and National Honour, 1833-1840 by Glenn Melancon,' *International History Review*, 26, No. 4 (Dec., 2004), 859-861; 861.
[16] Brown, *Palmerston*, p. 241.
[17] Palmerston was similarly negligent of American affairs, ignoring American requests for compensation for the *Caroline* for over three years. See Wilbur Jones, *The American Problem in British Diplomacy, 1841-1861* (London, 1974), p. 7.
[18] Earl Stanhope, HL Deb 12 May 1840 vol 54, cc. 26-27. Philip Stanhope had spoken previously about the evils of the opium trade, and this unsuccessful Motion against it was the result of a promise he made during that speech to raise the issue in the House of Lords.
[19] John Hobhouse, President of the Board of Control and a firm supporter of Palmerston, complained that the question of reimbursement 'was distant from the main one of obtaining redress for the outrage on Elliot, which we all agree was indispensable for the national honour and character'. quoted in Melancon, *Britain's China Policy*, p. 156. Similar sentiments were expressed in a conversation between opium merchants: 'The question is very little understood here, and many people are for doing nothing; they, very foolishly, mix up the insult & violence with the illicit trade, & are for remaining quiet, pocketing the insult, and refusing to pay for the opium.' William Jardine to James Matheson, 25 Sept 1839, quoted in *Ibid*, p. 152.

opium,[20] provoking Parliamentary debates lasting longer than the war itself.[21] Melancon observed this pressure, but did not dwell on why failing to honour Elliot's vow would harm Lord Melbourne's administration.[22] Until the dilemma was resolved, it called the government's 'good faith' and 'honour' into question.[23] Members with Chinese interests leveraged the ethic against Peel's government from 1841, and even connected the reimbursement of opium traders with Britain's position in India, arguing that opium producers there would be ruined if they were not compensated immediately, while Britain's claim to rule would be damaged.[24] It is worth considering whether these individuals appreciated that the rhetorical power of honour would serve their case better than private lobbying, and made use of these tools at their disposal to press their case. It was certainly a more effective representation than pressing for compensation for purely financial reasons, in the name of a trade which was under scrutiny.

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[20] As John Abel Smith, an influential Canton opium merchant and MP, reflected in 1843, 'it was certain that no one person in Canton, in 1839, understood the engagement with Captain Elliot in any other sense than as an engagement with the British Government that they should receive a full compensation and indemnity against every loss that they might have sustained.' John Smith, HC Deb 4 Aug 1843 vol 71, cc. 268-269.

[21] Compensation was still discussed in August 1843: HC Deb 4 Aug 1843 vol 71, cc. 240-95. The reason given for the delay in compensation was that it depended upon the ratification of the peace treaty. The Treaty of Nanking was ratified in June 1843, and discussed in the Lords in February 1844: HL Deb 6 Feb 1844 vol 72, cc. 263-8. The subject disappeared from Parliament thereafter.

[22] Glenn Melancon, 'Honour in Opium?', 871-872. Melancon wrote that 'opium merchants, recognising the vulnerability of the ministry, continued to press their case,' and that they hoped 'the more public the debate the greater their chances for compensation.' Melancon believed that this pressure came from Radical MPs, who would unite to press these claims even to the extent of forcing the Whigs from power since they perceived that China 'could provide the largest market in the world,' and most Radicals hailed from manufacturing and mercantile constituencies. *Ibid*, 870. Melancon believed the secret negotiations between Palmerston and the opium traders 'tipped the balance in the Ministry's favour,' but he did not consider how the appeal to national honour dovetailed with this less popular mission of compensating opium traders, which would have been impossible without the rhetoric of honour providing the necessary excuse. *Ibid*, 873.

[23] In August 1843 a former chief administrator of Bengal and recently elected Whig Ross Mangles complained at the insufficient rate of compensation, and thus implored the government 'to take care, in their dealings with those persons as to opium, that they should maintain the honour and good faith of the British Government. He was sure that the House and the country would acknowledge the vital importance, for the sake of the interests of our empire in India, that our character for integrity and good faith should be maintained unimpeached, and he very much feared that if this rate of compensation for the losses of the opium merchants were passed by this House without previous inquiry as to what those losses amounted to, and what the sufferers were fairly entitled to, the Government of this country would fall materially in the estimation of all our Eastern dependencies and connections.' Ross Mangles, HC Deb 4 Aug 1843 vol 71, cc. 245-247. Mangles 'was quite sure that a great deal of its power in India depended on its character and good faith,' *Ibid*, cc. 244-245. To this Dr Bowring added that 'the greatest economy was to maintain good faith,' *Ibid*, cc. 294-295.

[24] Hugh Hamilton Lindsay, HC Deb 17 March 1842 vol 61, cc. 761-762; cc. 767-769. Captain Senhouse asserted that 'it was of the utmost importance that nothing should occur at the present moment to shake the confidence which the people of India reposed in our good faith. It should be recollected that a large number of the natives of India would be absolutely ruined if they did not obtain indemnification for the losses they sustained.' *Ibid*, cc. 774-775. John Abel Smith also believed that defraying the costs of the expedition before reimbursing the merchants 'would be a violation of the faith on which the expedition had been undertaken.' *Ibid*, cc. 787-788.

Interestingly, when Sir Robert Peel's administration addressed the compensation issue, it urged Members to wait until the end of the war, when the Chinese could be pressed to pay these costs in Britain's name.[25] Coercing the Chinese to compensate the opium traders was certainly an attractive prospect for a government repeatedly running a budget deficit.[26] The debate represents one example of how the rhetoric of honour was used during the crisis, and it could be argued that Melancon did not sufficiently explore the extent of the ethic's application.[27] James L. Hevia believed Melancon's singular focus upon honour was 'questionable', recommending a more in-depth examination of the honour ethic, adding that 'one can easily see the potential of such an analysis'.[28] Notwithstanding its flaws, Melancon's study was an important first step in contextualising national honour within British foreign policy. This task is complemented by an examination of contemporary rhetoric. Parliamentary debates during the First Opium War reveal several themes, including the vindication of honour by acquiring satisfaction for the Chinese insult; the dishonour involved in the opium trade; the need to defend British prestige and its reputation in India, and the idea that Whig mismanagement and complacency imperilled the national honour in China.

Initially, however, Melbourne's administration was slow to use national honour, and presided over a surprisingly secretive policy. The 1840 session began with a vote of confidence in the Ministry, which survived by twenty-one votes.[29] Parliamentary evidence reveals the extent to which the government obfuscated. As the session progressed, greater information was requested on the nature of trade relations with China,[30] on the fate of the

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[25] Chancellor of the Exchequer Henry Goulburn, HC Deb 17 March 1842 vol 61, cc. 777-780. Goulburn insisted that 'The engagement distinctly made to pay the merchants was one which was not to come into force till the termination of hostilities.' *Ibid*, cc. 781-782. Peel presented the case thus: 'should the money be applied to the promotion of the success of our arms, or should it be applied in the liquidation of the claims for opium?' *Ibid*, cc. 793-794. John Russell also supported this view, *Ibid*, cc. 794-795. Lindsay said he would settle for an 'advance', but Peel urged him to consider 'the sense of the House on the question.' The Motion was comfortably defeated. *Ibid*, cc. 795-796.
[26] Melancon, *Britain's China Policy*, p. 202.
[27] As Nicholas Clifford discerned, Melancon should have done more 'with the complexities of "honour", given the contradictions between the word's moral implications and the realities of drug trafficking,' while conceding his account placed a 'valuable gloss' on accounts of the conflict. Nicholas Clifford, Review: 'Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis: Balancing Drugs, Violence, and National Honour, 1833-1840 by Glenn Melancon,' *Victorian Studies*, 46, No. 3 (Spring, 2004), 547-549; 549.
[28] James L. Hevia, Review: 'Modern China and Opium: A Reader by Alan Baumler: Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952 by Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi; Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis: Balancing Drugs, Violence and National Honour, 1833-1840 by Glenn Melancon: Opium, Empire, and the Global Political Economy; A Study of the Asian Opium Trade 1750-1950 by Carl A. Trocki,' *China Review International*, 10, No. 2 (Fall 2003), 307-326; 310.
[29] HC Deb 31 Jan 1840 vol 51, cc. 1073-1074.
[30] HC Deb 13 Feb 1840 vol 52, cc. 178-179.

surrendered opium,[31] on rumours of an expedition against China,[32] and on the need for official papers.[33] When he finally addressed the situation in the House of Commons on 12 March, Lord John Russell clarified that there had been no declaration of war, but that preparations for an expedition were being made by the Governor-General of India.[34] Ironically, *The Times* interpreted Russell's explanation as a declaration of war, and this impression spread from mid-March 1840.[35]

The Times was inherently critical of British policy towards China from an early stage,[36] and had consistently argued that the government was responsible for the deterioration in Sino-British relations.[37] It blamed government incompetence for the war, and warned that Britain's rivals would take advantage of her distraction.[38] It attacked the provided blue books on Chinese correspondence as inadequate;[39] asserted that the war was unchristian;[40] and lamented that 'this country has been plunged into the most inglorious and dishonourable of wars by opium smugglers, and the influence which those who employ opium smugglers exercise upon the national councils.'[41] *The Times* also criticised the government's lack of detail,[42] and feared the war's financial implications.[43] A survey of newspaper opinion suggests some were unsure if Britain was at war or not, amid a general lack of enthusiasm for war.[44]

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[31] James Graham here noted reports of a Chinese blockade of Canton and attacks on British vessels, but his requests for more information were dismissed. HC Deb 18 Feb 1840 vol 52, cc. 344-345. HL Deb 20 Feb 1840 vol 52 c. 425; HC Deb 21 Feb 1840 vol 52, c.454.
[32] HL Deb 21 Feb 1840 vol 52, cc. 433-434.
[33] Graham complained that the papers did not provide 'any account of some most important transactions mentioned in the last accounts received in England as to the port of Canton being declared in a state of blockade by Captain Elliott,' or on 'an action said to have taken place between certain Chinese vessels of war and some of her Majesty's fleet.' HC Deb 6 March 1840 vol 52, c. 978
[34] HC Deb 12 March 1840 vol 52, cc. 1155-1156.
[35] *The Times*, 12 March 1840.
[36] Addressing early rumours of war, it lamented that the 'blind and stupid policy' of the government was to blame. It questioned Elliot's authority, challenged his belligerent actions, and charged the government with behaving like 'bullies.' Considering this, it challenged whether this was 'the mode in which the interests of Great Britain ought to be provided for and her national honour maintained?' *The Times*, 2 March 1840.
[37] *The Times* commended the 'great experiment of the annihilation of the opium trade,' *The Times*, 30 Aug 1839. It called opium a 'mortal poison,' and drew attention to critical literature on the subject; *The Times*, 19 Sept 1839. An analysis of the opium trade revealed that between 1832-38, 67,083 opium chests from over 79,000 exported from Calcutta were sent to China. *The Times*, 30 Sept 1839.
[38] *The Times*, 13 Sept 1839; *The Times*, 13 March 1840.
[39] *The Times*, 19 March 1840.
[40] *The Times*, 20 March 1840.
[41] *The Times*, 1 May 1840.
[42] *The Times*, 14 March 1840.
[43] The announcement of war with China 'produced a depression in the price of English stock.' *The Times*, 13 March 1840.
[44] The *Freeman's Journal* disputed that war had been declared. *Freeman's Journal*, 16 March 1840. The *Morning Chronicle* argued that the Governor General did not have the power to make war. *Morning*

Still, since it was known that an expedition was en route to China, on 19 March 1840, Russell clarified its goals. It was sent to 'obtain reparation for the insults and injuries offered to her Majesty's superintendent [Captain Elliot],' to 'obtain for the merchants trading with China an indemnification for the loss of their property,' and finally to 'obtain security that the persons and property of those trading with China, should in future be protected from insult or injury.'[45] This seemed to confirm that war with China was inevitable, if not already a fact.[46] Yet, the Cabinet's strategy remained defensive; it made no substantive effort to mobilise Parliamentary opinion towards war.[47] The opposition consistently requested more details; responsibility for the opium trade was debated,[48] and an opium committee was discussed, though concerns over composition delayed its creation.[49] When the official documents were finally provided, accusations that Palmerston had modified the blue book to protect himself added to the frustration,[50] as did the enormous size of the material itself.[51]

One advantage in the government's possession was the insult which had been inflicted upon Elliot's person, and thus upon Britain itself. If the government could emphasise this insult and press the need for vindication, the rhetoric of honour could legitimise their policy and

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Chronicle, 13 March 1840. A paper in Dorset appreciated that Britain, not the East India Company, would pay for the war. *Dorset County Chronicle*, 19 March 1840. The *Inverness Courier* believed that *The Times* had exaggerated the importance of the Governor General's orders, and that war was merely 'anticipated.' *Inverness Courier*, 18 March 1840. The *Blackburn Standard* expected an announcement on the state of war with China, but believed it would be 'the beginning of a struggle in every part of our Eastern dominions', encouraged by 'Russian intrigue.' *Blackburn Standard*, 18 March 1840. The *Sussex Advertiser* agreed that 'A "demonstration" is all that is required to bring these silly Chinamen to their senses.' *Sussex Advertiser*, 16 March 1840. The *Colonial Gazette* believed the blue books proved 'that the British merchants were in the wrong, and not only "originally," but during the progress of the quarrel.' *Colonial Gazette*, 21 March 1840. The *Examiner* was not optimistic peace would be maintained. *Examiner*, 15 March 1840.

[45] HC Deb 19 March 1840 vol 52, cc. 1223-1224.

[46] Melancon, *Britain's China Policy*, pp. 179-180.

[47] The lack of information moved the *London Evening Standard* to speculate 'that it is the Governor General's object rather to awe the Chinese' by its 'large armament' than 'employ it at once in actual hostilities against them.' *London Evening Standard*, 6 April 1840.

[48] HC Deb 24 March 1840 vol 53, cc. 6-12.

[49] HC Deb 02 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 431-432.

[50] Melancon wrote that 'Palmerston deleted almost all references to the conflict between Robinson and Elliot, Elliot's refusal to perform his duty and the latter's renegade foreign policy.' *Britain's China Policy*, p. 177. This book was presented to Parliament on 5 March: *Correspondence Relating to China* (London, 1840); *Additional Correspondence Relating to China* (London, 1840). *The Times* complained that 'Considering what it discloses and what it conceals, we do not believe that there ever was a more discreditable publication than the said blue book, nor a more sham compliance with an order of the House of Commons.' *The Times*, 19 March 1840.

[51] Gladstone complained 'The noble Lord has done all in his power to keep us in the dark with respect to them, certainly, and now, when at last he condescends to give us them, he gives us them in one vast, rude, and undigested chaos which the wit of man is incapable of comprehending.' HC Deb 8 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 819-820. James Graham added, 'If the clerks in the Foreign-office had been, as the noble Lord said, half killed in preparing them, they had their revenge, for he had been half killed by perusing them.' HC Deb 9 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 950-951.

shield it from substantial criticism. Unfortunately for Melbourne's administration, their opponents were already conceiving of methods where the rhetoric of honour could be deployed in their favour. Thus, the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* suggested that the Tories should attack the government for its policy failures, while also demanding 'satisfaction' from 'the Celestial Empire for insults offered to our Representative, and the barbarous and cruel outrages committed by the Chinese upon unoffending British subjects'. For those that might wonder how the opposition could balance these goals, the *Gazette* insisted:

> the justification of War for protection and the maintenance of the national honour and character, under present circumstances – and the necessity for this measure of self-defence having been brought about through the negligence and incapacity of Ministers – are two distinct questions.

It was this 'negligence and incapacity' that the opposition sought to use as their basis for attack, not the desire to redeem the national honour. As it would have been politically impossible to argue against vindication, the opposition would instead present their Motion as an attack 'upon the want of foresight and precaution on the part of Her Majesty's present advisers, in respect to our relations with China, and especially to their neglect in not furnishing the British Superintendent at Canton with proper instructions.'[52] Indeed, this was the approach which the High Tory and anti-reformer Sir James Graham adopted when he censured the government for its China policy during a significant three-day debate on 7 April 1840.

Bypassing the Cabinet's claims that war had not been declared, Graham charged them with 'the want of foresight and precaution' required to avoid war, and with a failure to provide 'powers and instructions calculated to provide against the growing evils connected with the contraband traffic in opium.'[53] Graham prefaced his attack by insisting that 'if he could believe that we were called upon to enter into this war, not only to punish those who slighted us, but in the necessary defence of our national honour,' then 'he was persuaded that the whole martial spirit of the country would gird itself up for the conflict, and meet the danger without fear or anxiety.' It was because the government had repeatedly failed to heed Elliot's warnings, prepare for Chinese countermeasures, or halt the production of opium, that

[52] *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 4 April 1840.
[53] HC Deb 7 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 704-705.

Britain's position in China had so markedly deteriorated, and Graham believed neither Parliament nor the public should have to suffer for these failures.[54]

Secretary for War Thomas Babington Macaulay – a popular radical recently brought into the Cabinet[55] – disagreed that the government were capable of halting the opium trade, reminding Members that tobacco and brandy were regularly smuggled into the British Isles.[56] Macaulay could have drawn from available papers to show that nearly 180,000 pounds of opium were imported into Britain in 1839, but he did not.[57] He presented a familiar principle – soon pursued in the McLeod controversy,[58] and reiterated in the Don Pacifico affair a decade later – that British citizens were under the government's protection wherever they resided, and that such protection was entwined with the national honour.[59] The independent Tory Sir George Staunton, a former resident of Canton and scholar in Chinese, rejoiced that the opposition's view – that 'the war about to be undertaken in China was most atrociously unjust and dishonourable to this country' – was not held by the majority.[60] Staunton warned that 'if we submitted to the degrading insults of China, the time would not be far distant when our political ascendancy in India would be at an end.'[61]

Still, the opium trade and its well-publicised evils were an awkward fit with a supposedly honourable administration.[62] Reverend A. S. Thelwall's pamphlet *The Iniquities of the Opium Trade*, published in 1839,[63] established a powerful moral argument against Britain's role in the drug's production and exportation, while making substantial use of the lexicon of

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[54] *Ibid*, cc. 703-704.
[55] Melancon, *Britain's China Policy*, p. 154.
[56] Macaulay, HC Deb 7 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 713-714.
[57] Virginia Berridge, 'Victorian Opium Eating: Responses to Opiate Use in Nineteenth-Century England,' *Victorian Studies*, 21, No. 4 (Summer, 1978), 437-461; 438. *The Times* recorded that 'opium-eating had increased in this country to such an extent as to have become nearly equal in its proportion with teetotalism.' *The Times*, 23 Dec 1839.
[58] See Chapter Three.
[59] As Macaulay expressed: 'They felt that although far from their native country, and then in danger in a part of the world remote from that to which they must look for protection, yet that they belonged to a state which would not suffer a hair of one of its members to be harmed with impunity. All were agreed upon this point of the question.' Macaulay added that in Graham's speech 'he had not detected in it one word which implied that he was not disposed to insist on a just reparation for the offence which had been committed against us.' HC Deb 7 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 719-720.
[60] Sir George Staunton, *Ibid*, cc. 739-740.
[61] *Ibid*, cc. 742-743.
[62] Horatio Montague, *A Voice for China: Which Must Be Heard. Demonstrating that the War with China Arises out of our British National Opium Smuggling, and Protesting Against Such War or Reprisals, as Bringing Upon this Nation the Guilt and Punishment of Robbery, Piracy, and Murder!* (London, 1840).
[63] Rev. A. S. Thelwall, *The Iniquities of the Opium Trade with China; Being a Development of the Main Causes which Exclude the Merchants of Great Britain from the Advantages of an Unrestricted Commercial Intercourse with that Vast Empire* (London, 1839).

honour to justify its opposition.[64] Despite his status as a prominent evangelical, Thelwall was not disqualified from commenting on the national honour, contradicting claims made to this effect during the Russian Dutch Loan debate. Indeed, Thelwall's pamphlet was widely referenced,[65] and affirmed the connection between national dishonour and the immoral opium trade. It could be used alongside accusations of mismanagement and inefficiency in recent Sino-British relations, to cast a damning picture of the government's real culpability for the crisis. In response, Ministers would attempt to simplify the conflict, pressing the necessity of vindicating the Chinese insult, and excusing all other circumstances as immaterial to this main aim.

John Hobhouse, President of the Board of Control, refocused the debate onto the Chinese insult, lamenting that 'he ought to have known that those who would not like to vote anything against the national honour, or anything against the opium trade in India, would nevertheless be very glad to give a vote against the [government].'[66] The opposition's speeches, he complained, contained 'no assertions that our honour had been sacrificed, or that the glory of our flag had been tarnished.' Hobhouse insisted that the expedition was inherently necessary because according to 'the united opinion of the British merchants at Canton…by truckling and yielding to the Chinese authorities, we should gain nothing but

[64] Thelwall described opium as 'a traffic which brought the greatest dishonour upon the British flag,' believing that 'the trade in opium is one of the most injurious and most shameful things which disgrace the present government of India.' Thelwall asserted that Britain was 'bound, in all honour and honesty,' to ban the production and export of opium from India, and he challenged whether it was not 'worthy of a great and mighty nation…to renounce and put down the evil,' which 'had so deeply disgraced our Christian character, and compromised our national honour, in the eyes of the Eastern world?' It was Parliament's responsibility to 'investigate a question, in which the honour and welfare of Great Britain is concerned.' Thelwall insisted that Asian nations knew of Britain's role in the opium trade, and that they judged Britain's 'Christian character and consistency, and our national honour and benevolence, by the facts and circumstances of the Opium Trade with China.' Could it be doubted, Thelwall warned, that Christianity was 'dishonoured' by such behaviour, or 'That our national character is degraded, and covered with infamy too well deserved, among the nations of the East?' *Ibid*, pp. 2; 118, 127, 160-161, 170-173.

[65] *The Times*, 20 June 1839. Remarking on the influence of Thelwall's pamphlet, a Bombay correspondent hoped that the public 'will suspend its judgement until it sees both sides of the question, when the great advantages derived by India and England from the trade will be made apparent, the outcry about immorality exposed, and the true secret of the Chinamen's proceedings shown to be neither more nor less' than a fear of losing silver. *The Times*, 16 Nov 1839. Thelwall's message was cited in public meetings, see *York Herald*, 29 Feb 1840; *Sheffield Independent*, 28 March 1840. It was cited in anti-war newspapers as well, see *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 19 March 1840. In its review of Thelwall's work, the *Bradford Observer* worried that the opium trade would impede British efforts to evangelise in China. *Bradford Observer*, 19 Sept 1839. Thelwall's calculation that opium claimed 100,000 Chinese lives annually was also regularly cited. *Freeman's Journal*, 4 Jan 1840; *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 14 Sept 1839; *Western Times*, 14 Sept 1839.

[66] Hobhouse, HC Deb 9 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 888-889.

disgrace.'[67] Hobhouse did not accept government responsibility for the traffic through India and China: 'It was an old sin, if it was a sin at all.'[68] He would never approve of a war unless 'from the conviction that he did so with just grounds on his side, and he only trusted that if we did enter upon this expedition, with honour and justice on our side,' then it should be done 'in a way to vindicate our own honour, and to improve the relations of this great empire with all others in the universe.'[69]

Peel's speech on the final day of the debate was arguably representative of the Conservative line of attack.[70] He asserted that 'The war itself might be politic, and yet the necessity of the war might have arisen from impolitic proceedings.' It was possible that 'an act of violence and outrage might have been committed, which left no alternative but a resort to war,'[71] but the necessity of the war could not disguise the 'gross negligence and misconduct of the Ministers.' Nor could it protect the government from the established norms of criticism in debate.[72] Although Melancon noted the 'simplicity' of Peel's speech, this was in fact an effective method for bypassing the rhetoric of honour, by reminding the House of the original errors which had made vindication necessary.[73]

As Peel could not critique the act of vindication itself, he highlighted how the government had left Captain Elliot in such a disadvantageous position.[74] Peel challenged why Elliot had not been given the sufficient powers and authority which 'the honour and the commercial interests of this country rendered absolutely necessary.'[75] The government's poor conduct

[67] *Ibid*, cc. 889-890. Hobhouse disputed that Elliot's orders left anything to be desired, but this was disingenuous. He had privately admitted that Palmerston's instructions to Elliot 'were not sufficiently full and delicate' – a key point in Graham's Motion. Quoted in Melancon, *Britain's China Policy*, p. 182.
[68] Hobhouse, HC Deb 9 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 892-893.
[69] *Ibid*, cc. 898-899.
[70] His core message that the government's negligence had caused the crisis was echoed by East India Company Director and Conservative MP Sir James Hogg, who 'arraigned their conduct, because their imprudence and neglect had led to the exigency.' Sir James Hogg, HC Deb 9 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 847-848.
[71] Sir Robert Peel, *Ibid*, cc. 901-902.
[72] *Ibid*, cc. 902-903.
[73] Melancon, *Britain's China Policy*, p. 185. Melancon's assessment was based on Hobhouse's critique, which was bound to be prejudicial, particularly as Peel criticised him heavily within his speech.
[74] Elliot was a figure 'without the powers which they might have given him, which it was their duty to have given him,' without 'instructions which he was competent to receive,' and without 'the moral influence of a naval force, the advantage of which was demonstrated by the papers before the House.' Peel upheld that 'the Government would have been without excuse,' if it had issued similarly vague instructions to its European representatives. Peel, HC Deb 9 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 903-904.
[75] *Ibid*, cc. 906-907.

had made war inevitable,[76] but Peel reminded Members of Britain's past insults to China,[77] while warning of the impact which excess might have on Sino-British trade, regardless of success in the looming war.[78] Peel concluded that 'It is your duty to vindicate the honour of England where vindication is necessary, and to demand reparation wherever reparation is due,' yet he did hope and pray that God would 'avert from them the calamities, and turn from us the evils, which, I must say, the neglect and incapacity of our rulers have most righteously deserved.'[79]

Palmerston accepted this principle,[80] and was glad to hear Peel's declaration, that 'it was necessary that measures should be taken to vindicate the honour of the British flag and the dignity of the British Crown.' Palmerston suggested 'that was the general opinion of the House, and of those parties in the country who were most interested in the question.'[81] Palmerston shared Peel's wish that vindication should not become vindictiveness, and that, essentially, the punishment should not exceed the Chinese crime of insult. He read letters from American and British merchants, which validated the government's decision to send an expedition.[82] Graham's Motion 'evaded all the real and substantial merits of the question,' and distracted the House with flawed criticisms of British officials dating back several years, who, Palmerston upheld, the blue books cleared of wrongdoing.[83]

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[76] 'He might think, as he had said before, that a violent outrage had been committed, for which the Government were responsible having failed to adopt the means that were in their power of preventing it, but which having been committed, none perhaps but the melancholy alternative of war might remain. It might be that after what had passed British honour and the British name would be disgraced, unless some measure were taken to procure reparation for the injuries and insults which had been committed on us.' *Ibid*, cc. 919-920.

[77] 'There had been outrages committed by the people of China, and he regretted it; but he might set against these outrages the testimonies which had been borne to the character of the people of that country; and though an individual act might have been committed which would admit of no defence, they should also recollect the provocations the Chinese had received.' *Ibid*, cc. 921-922.

[78] *Ibid*, cc. 922-924.

[79] *Ibid*, cc. 925-926.

[80] Palmerston conceded that 'one might approve of the vigorous manner in which hostile measures might be carried on, and at the same time disapprove of that course of policy which led to those hostilities.' Viscount Palmerston, *Ibid*, cc. 925-926.

[81] *Ibid*, cc. 942-943.

[82] The American merchants thus reasoned that 'if satisfaction is not yielded to the demand of the British government, blockade of the chief ports and rivers of China ought to be resorted to, and that the appearance of a naval force' from England, America or France would compel the Chinese to retreat. While the British merchants asserted that 'unless the measures of the Government are followed up with firmness and energy, the trade with China can no longer be conducted with security to life and property, or with credit or advantage to the British nation.' *Ibid*, cc. 945-946.

[83] *Ibid*, cc. 946-948.

But the press remained largely critical of the government's position.[84] The *London Evening Standard* encapsulated the opposition's position when it charged that 'Points of trade,' had been 'by the mismanagement of the government, inflamed into questions of national honour.'[85] *The Times* blamed Melbourne's administration for its 'tameness under injury, and slowness to resent,' reminding readers that it had long recommended 'a vigorous tone towards unfriendly governments,' but that instead 'we perceived so much inertness, and such manifest feebleness,' and 'everything to invite aggression by unfriendly Powers, and nothing to deter from it.'[86] This theme was arguably pressed more forcibly in the press than in Parliament. Weakness, in a military or prestige sense, would compel rivals to take advantage, a belief espoused by the Conservative *Blackwood*'s magazine.[87] Sympathetic organs continued their own campaigns; the *Globe* charged the opposition with cynicism,[88]

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[84] The defeat of Graham's Motion by nine votes compelled a writer to the *Morning Post* to lament the 'cool affrontery' with which the government survived it, believing their majority of nine constituted a 'narrow escape from defeat' rather than a 'glorious victory.' Zeta, *Morning Post*, 13 April 1840. Other contributors lamented that Britain was now 'doomed to break our inoffensive neighbour's cups and saucers to the indefinite injury of our own tea-set at home,' suggesting that 'John Bull' was now 'in the china-shop', and charging that 'our advisers appear to be acting under the direct influence of laudanum.' No-Hum, *Morning Post*, 22 April 1840. *The Times* believed the war illegal, and far from defensive, asserting 'we are the aggressors.' *The Times*, 11 April 1840. Rather than Britain insulted, it was the Chinese who were 'bullied and insulted, her laws set at naught within her own harbours.' *The Times*, 7 April 1840. London's High Tory John Bull meanwhile, agonised over 'war…to repel aggressions invited – to recover a national status and honour from which England has been made voluntarily to descend, and to whose degradation she has been forced to submit', a situation which, 'under better guidance', Britain could have advanced 'without recourse either to force or stratagem'. *John Bull*, 20 April 1840.

[85] *London Evening Standard*, 25 April 1840. It added later that Whig mismanagement had 'disgraced' the navy, which meant that 'the continental powers no longer fear or respect us, inasmuch as they know our incapability to enforce that respect which the laws of nations empower us to do.' *London Evening Standard*, 18 June 1840.

[86] *The Times*, 23 April 1840.

[87] 'So low had the reputation of the British name sunk in the East, that even the Chinese, the most unwarlike and least precipitate of the Asiatic empires, had ventured to offer a single injury to the British name, and insult to the British name; and so miserably deficient were Government in any previous preparation for danger, that it was only twelve months after the insult was offered, that British ships of war could be fitted out in the British harbours to attempt to seek for redress.' 'The Afghanistan Expedition,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 47, No. 292 (Feb 1840), 247.

[88] The Globe complained that 'the great Conservative party have no settlement of the question to propose on their own behalf, and mean to oppose whatever attempt at settlement the government may venture to make.' Although 'One day we hear a growl about "national honour," "insult to national flags", "the arrogance of the Chinese" etc.,' from which 'we may fairly conclude that the government is to be blamed for not having vindicated the national honour with great promptitude,' once the government pointed to national honour as the justification for its policy, there came 'a cold fit' from the opposition, and 'then we hear only of the horrors of war' or 'the injury to our commerce' or 'the immorality of the opium trade.' The Globe discerned in this an inconsistency which would lead one to conclude that 'any arrogance ought to be tolerated, any dishonour submitted to, rather than that the Whigs should plunge us into such a career of crime and danger.' *The Globe*, 21 March 1840.

and the *Morning Chronicle* reiterated the importance of redress in face of blatant Chinese insults.[89]

The importance of adhering to the honour-script by repelling insults and asserting Britain's position was thus plain – without this adherence, other lesser powers would take advantage of perceived weakness.[90] One could argue that another aspect of vindication was the act of reminding the Chinese of British power, so they would not underestimate or disrespect it in the future.[91] The Tories were attacked for their cynicism and inconsistency;[92] was it really credible to suggest that if the government absorbed the insult, they would have been satisfied?[93] Allied to the charge of dishonourable mismanagement was that of immorality, which reminded the public of the detestable opium trade. When independent peer Earl Stanhope chaired a London meeting, he attacked the war as 'one of the most flagitious,

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[89] The murder of British sailors, the maltreatment of British merchants, the violation of Chinese commitments to accept the opium trade – 'these are some of the insults under which the *Times* would have us acquiesce', complained the *Morning Chronicle*; these were 'the injuries for which it tells us that we have no right to demand redress.' Redress was an essential component of the honour-script, and it could not be avoided, even for the 'cant of affected humanity'. Thus, the *Chronicle* concluded that opposition figures and newspapers alike must 'choose between degrading and pusillanimous submission', or 'an honourable, just and necessary war, undertaken in defence of the national honour, and the interests of British commerce.' The *Chronicle* was thus confident that 'By identifying themselves with the former course, the Tories…have not done much to revive the sinking fortunes of their faction.' From *Morning Chronicle*, 3 April 1840. It was echoed by Exeter's *Western Times*, which upheld that the real question was 'whether or not we shall fawn and bite the dust before a government whose people are determined to trade with us,' or 'whether we shall vindicate the national honour by a vigorous remonstrance, backed by an imposing array of force, which, whilst it shows the power of taking satisfaction, will, we sincerely hope, avert the necessity for doing so.' The Western Times observed that 'even Sir Robert Peel admitted that satisfaction must be had.' *Western Times*, 18 April 1840.

[90] As Palmerston later reflected, 'Depend upon it, that the best way of keeping any men quiet is to let them see that you are able and determined to repel force by force; and the Chinese are not in the least different in this respect from the rest of mankind.' Palmerston to Sir John Davis, 9 Jan 1847 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, Doc. 41, p. 275.

[91] For example, the Marquess of Abercorn reflected in February 1842 that 'the justice of our claims upon that country having been universally recognized, and the success of our arms having proved that no effort on the part of China could for any long period resist those claims, there was every reason to expect, not only a satisfactory settlement of our dispute with that country, but that such an indication of our power would have been given, as would ultimately place our commerce with China on the most advantageous foundation.' Marquess of Abercorn, HL Deb 3 Feb 1842 vol 60, cc. 7-8.

[92] On 20 April the *Morning Chronicle* criticised the cynicism of the Tories, who agitated for war in the past 'not for the purpose of redressing wrong or vindicating national honour, but as a likely means of obtaining a party triumph in the House of Commons,' though no sooner did the Tories 'think that the Ministers are fairly committed' to said war, do they 'seek to visit them with a vote of Parliamentary censure'. The government could never satisfy the Tories in this political game, since any apathy for war with China would have 'the ground of a precisely similar attempt' at censure. *Morning Chronicle*, 20 April 1840.

[93] Edinburgh's *Caledonian Mercury* noted that as soon as war was made against the Chinese, 'the ensign of national honour was lowered, and the dirty yellow flag of faction, hoisted', while 'the bold warlike defiance of the Tories sank into a womanly treble for peace, peace, at all hazards.' It observed that 'if Lord Melbourne and his colleagues had been passive under all the insults of the Chinese', then 'the cry would have been, that the Government…was laying the country prostrate' before them, yet 'when the Cabinet remonstrates in defence of the nation's rights, then they are accused of thirsting for war.' *Caledonian Mercury*, 23 April 1840.

unjust, and disgraceful that had ever been entered into', insisting that if it continued 'we should have no ground of complaint against France' or any other nation 'for want of faith.'[94] According to this view, Britain would incur shame if she fought a war for opium, and such shame would damage national honour as severely as the perceived failure to respond to insult.

Other sources, particularly of Anglo-Indian origin, were more belligerent.[95] However, this pro-war position was undermined by those Ministers and their allies who contended that war was not declared, and would only occur if the Chinese did not peacefully submit to the demands of the military expedition.[96] However unlikely this possibility, Ministers could publicly cling to it while preparing for war. This façade was maintained into the summer, as Parliamentary questions pertaining to letters of marque;[97] the cost of the expedition;[98] its composition and leadership;[99] the role of opium in the war, and the possibility of banning it,[100] were all similarly disposed of by claiming that it depended on how the Chinese reacted. Even when an Order in Council permitted the seizure of all shipping on the Chinese coast, Palmerston asserted that the distance of the theatre excused the government for planning for every contingency.[101] In July, the Commons approved war credits of £173,000, despite the state of war not technically existing.[102] By then, British and Empire soldiers had begun their first campaign for the Chusan Archipelago.

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[94] *Morning Post*, 25 April 1840. It was also printed in *The Times*, 25 April 1840.

[95] The *Bombay Gazette* approved of the war 'for the protection of our trade and the vindication of our honour.' *Bombay Gazette*, 29 Jan 1840 in *West Kent Guardian*, 21 March 1840. The *Bombay Times* remarked on the 'moral lesson' which would have to be taught to the Chinese. *Bombay Times*, 25 Jan 1840 in *Caledonian Mercury*, 16 March 1840. The *Commercial Journal* described the composition of the flotilla sailing 'for the purpose of vindicating British honour on the coast of China.' *Commercial Journal* in *Dublin Morning Register*, 18 March 1840.
This position was maintained for the duration of the war. In 1842 the *Indian Sun* thus explained that 'National honour…becomes in some cases so entrammelled in adverse events, that recourse is as unavoidable as it is to be recommended; and when aggression proceeds from the opposing party, and violation of sacred and long-founded rights, persons, or institutions, attaches to their political conduct, the wounded sense of British authority and right cannot reasonably submit to the injury offered, nor the arm of vindication rest quiet.' *Indian Sun*, 18 April 1842.

[96] Responding to the question of prize money when Chinese ships were seized in war, the Attorney General declared that 'such proclamations were not issued, except in cases where war had been declared, and there had yet been no such declaration. All that had been done was no more than an attempt to obtain reparation for injuries sustained.' HC Deb 11 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 997-998.

[97] HL Deb 10 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 966-967.

[98] HC Deb 4 May 1840 vol 53, cc. 1183-1184.

[99] HL Deb 5 May 1840 vol 53, cc. 1208-1209.

[100] HL Deb 12 May 1840 vol 54, cc. 1-48.

[101] HC Deb 6 July 1840 vol 55, cc. 456-458. Also noteworthy was the Queen's Order in Council of 4 April, which permitted the seizure of Chinese ships as prizes in the conflict. *The Times*, 16 April 1840.

[102] HC Deb 24 July 1840 vol 55, cc. 973-4.

Indeed, after the initial controversy, the conflict with China moved to the background, and was rarely discussed in Parliament.[103] The government's survival of Graham's Motion granted de facto sanction to the war, and Peel's new administration (August 1841) pursued it to the end. Still, the claim that the war had been launched to vindicate British honour proved durable. Members later rejoiced in military victories,[104] and there was room even to commend the soldiery for not reverting to dishonourable excess in their quest for vindication.[105] Others, like the Duke of Wellington, maintained that they would always support a British government which fought for British rights and honour.[106] Furthermore, the opium trade, and the impossibility of suppressing it, was retroactively conceded by Peel's government.[107] Much was made of the need to demonstrate British power to the Chinese, and inculcate within them a respect for British prestige which their inherent barbarism made it otherwise impossible to comprehend.[108]

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[103] The subject was raised just four times in 1841 and four times again in 1842. The government never shared details of the military campaign throughout these sessions. See in 1841: HC Deb 22 April 1841 vol 57, c. 974; HL Deb 29 April 1841 vol 57, cc. 1243-4; HC Deb 6 May 1841 vol 57, cc. 1491-2; HL Deb 7 May 1841 vol 58, cc. 6-7. In 1842: HC Deb 15 March 1842 vol 61, c. 608; HC Deb 17 March 1842 vol 61, cc. 759-97; HC Deb 21 March 1842 vol 61, c. 936; HC Deb 7 April 1842 vol 62, cc. 4-5.

[104] As George Berkely declared: 'It must be a proud reflection in the breast of every Englishman, that a handful of men, schooled in forbearance, but determined on success, should in so short a space of time have humbled the bloated pride of an enormous—of a self-styled Celestial empire, the largest on the earth, and have taught its emperor, and his boastful and false commissioners for the future, to honour and respect the humblest merchant of this country who might hereafter trade to their distant shore.' HC Deb 26 Jan 1841 vol 56, cc. 44-45.

[105] Thus Mark Philips: 'it is matter of congratulation to this country, that in attempting to vindicate our honour we have not been driven into any act of violence or bloody hostility against a nation who have been distinguished for want of good faith in their relations with this country.' HC Deb 24 Aug 1841 vol 59, cc. 114-115.

[106] 'I said that the war was a just and necessary war; I will go farther, and say if it had been otherwise—if it had been a war solely on the score of the robbery of the opium—if her Majesty's government were engaged in that war, and if their interests and honour were involved in it, I should have considered it my duty to make every effort for carrying it on with success, and have asked Parliament for the assistance which would have enabled her Majesty's servants to bring it to an early and successful termination.' Duke of Wellington, HL Deb 2 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 30-31.

[107] Thus in 1844 Lord Derby asserted: 'the suppression of the Opium Trade by forcible measures, considering the determination on the part of the people of China to consume that drug, and on the part of the principal officers of the Chinese government to connive at its introduction, was hopeless; and…it was an object of considerable importance to induce the Chinese government, if possible, to consent to its introduction, and to legalise the trade, subject to such an amount of duty as they might feel inclined to propose.' Lord Derby, HC Deb 10 Feb 1844 vol 72, cc. 473-474. Further expansion in India has also been connected to the securing of trade routes which would protect the opium trade. See J. Y. Wong, 'British Annexation of Sind in 1843: An Economic Perspective,' *Modern Asian Studies*, 31, No. 2 (May, 1997), 225-244.

[108] *Blackwood*'s was assured that 'by whatever presents and explanatory letters we court the personal strength and favour of the Emperor, the strength of our impression will rest upon our visible demonstration of power contrasted with our extreme forbearance in using it. That *must* make a favourable impression.' 'The Opium and the China Question,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 47, No. 296 (Jun 1840), 737. It later predicted that within a decade, an army similar in composition and responsibility to that installed by the East India Company would be formed in China. Relying on the 'exquisite imbecility and exquisite profligacy of Chinese nature,' Blackwood's asserted the Chinese 'will acknowledge no ultimate restraint but that of physical force,' but that 'many times must the artillery score its dreadful lessons upon their carcasses,' before

Since it could conceivably be claimed that Britain did not desire a war of conquest with China, and sought only the vindication of its honour, Members were compelled to support this vindication.[109] The conflict subsequently developed into precisely such a war for conquest, as Chinese cities were bombarded, and land was seized, but the mission of vindication – possible only through a satisfactory treaty – remained in the forefront.[110] 'We are unfortunately still engaged in hostilities with the Chinese Empire,' said the Earl of March in early 1842, but such a war 'could not be avoided without compromising our national honour.'[111] The Sino-British relationship was in this sense a useful tool, as several decades of resentment could be drawn upon, where Captain Elliot's treatment was presented as the final straw in a litany of insults.[112] Public knowledge and outcry over the opium trade was palpable, yet even this moral dilemma could not intrude upon the necessity of vindication. The rhetoric of honour was thus a valuable tool in the government's arsenal, but it was one tool among many, featuring alongside the vagueness of the war's status, and the imperatives of secure commercial relations.

Thus, it may be argued that while Melancon's identification of national honour as the cause of the war was 'ultimately perhaps overstretched,'[113] the ethic did provide Ministerial unity, and granted access to a rhetorical well which did not necessarily have to resonate with the public to distract from governmental failure or obfuscation.[114] 'The appeal to national

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China would acknowledge British rights. 'Canton Expedition And Convention,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 50, No. 313 (Nov 1841), 688.

[109] The Attorney-General Sir Frederick Pollock thus declared in August 1843 that 'It might be a subordinate object to get the price of the opium and obtain the expenses of the war, but the primary, if not the sole object of that war, was to vindicate the honour of this country.' HC Deb 4 Aug 1843 vol 71, cc. 264-265.

[110] As Lord Lurgan explained, 'He trusted satisfaction would be demanded for all the insults and injuries that had been heaped upon them. He could not for a moment believe, although such rumours had reached him, that any stipulations or treaties would be uttered into, and that satisfaction for the insults offered to them by the Chinese government would be obtained through the medium of a piece of parchment.' HL Deb 26 Jan 1841 vol 56, cc. 13-15.

[111] Earl of March, HC Deb 3 Feb 1842 vol 60, cc. 41-42.

[112] For example, weekly liberal paper *The Era* asked 'How is it, that so long a period has not been sufficient to make the Chinese acknowledge our superiority?' The reason was plain: 'we have permitted them to treat us with insult and indignity – because in every disagreement, we have invariably submitted to their dictation, and bowed to their despotism. It is as true between nations as it is between individuals – that those will never obtain respect who do not respect themselves.' The Era considered that while the casus belli with the Chinese before 1839 was clear – 'our national honour demanded it, and all scruples of conscience would have been removed' – now, 'there is such a strange jumble of interests and wrongs, fair and illicit trading, that it has become a question on which the disputant on either side may alternately claim the victory.' Yet, concluding its case, 'if the grounds of the war are in the present instance trifling', this did not necessarily matter as 'it must not be forgotten that we had a long series of insult and indignity to strengthen it,' while the promised results would be 'very beneficial to the human race.' *The Era*, 13 Dec 1840.

[113] David Brown, Review: 'Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis: Balancing Drugs, Violence and National Honour, 1833-1840 by Glenn Melancon,' *English Historical Review*, 120, No. 489 (Dec., 2005), 1455-1457; 1456.

[114] Glenn Melancon, 'Honour in Opium?', 869.

honour,' Melancon discerned, 'neatly tied together the interests of state and the political interests of the cabinet.'[115] Conversely, it should be noted that this 'appeal to national honour' was underwhelming, particularly in comparison to other campaigns for vindication.[116] No Ministers made public speeches in support of the war during the critical months of spring and summer 1840[117] – save for those made in Parliament – and the general tone of the media suggests that the country had become resigned to the requirements of the honour-script, rather than jubilant about the prospects of a war of vindication. This may be explained by the murkiness of available documentation, and the widely publicised evils of opium which remained open to criticism.[118]

Still, the necessity of vindication in a region so close to India was never seriously challenged.[119] This may have been a pragmatic decision, since the punitive expedition to China amounted to a *fait accompli*, and could not be stopped once launched. It proved the first in a succession of reinforcements, which enabled British and Empire forces to inflict several crushing defeats.[120] This cloak of glory and the passage of time moved the conflict beyond its original parameters. To 'make the Chinese sensible of the extent of the outrage they had committed,' China was forced to pay compensation both for the seized opium, and for the expenses Britain incurred waging war against it.[121] The quest of vindication was brought to the forefront, refining the original casus belli,[122] while the commitment to seize

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[115] *Ibid*, 871.
[116] See Chapter Three.
[117] Speeches critiquing the opium trade were much more common. See *London Evening Standard*, 28 April 1840.
[118] For example, in August 1841 William Sharman-Crawford declared before the Commons that 'In his opinion, the war with China was one of the most unjust that ever was undertaken by a nation. It was a war to establish a contraband trade, and if any lives were lost a charge of murder might be preferred against those who were the instigators of it.' William Sharman-Crawford, HC Deb 25 Aug 1841 vol 59, cc. 232-233.
[119] As the radically inclined Whig Benjamin Hawes asserted in April 1840, if 'the national honour was not to be indicated from injury and insult – then he must say, that one of the greatest misfortunes which could befall would occur to this country,' as its 'very existence in Asia and Europe depended upon its conduct in this critical and difficult emergency.' Britain did not seek 'conquest or extent of dominion; her object was not aggression nor aggrandisement; all she sought was reparation from insult and injury.' Finally, Hawes asserted that 'the country and the merchants felt that insults to British subjects were not to be slightly committed, especially in India, where Britain was powerful more by her moral than her physical influence.' Benjamin Hawes, HC Deb 8 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 755-757.
[120] The first successful campaign for Chusan was reported in *London Evening Standard*, 8 Dec 1840.
[121] In an August 1843 session Palmerston argued that 'in order to make the Chinese sensible of the extent of the outrage they had committed, and that they might sufficiently feel the exercise of the power of Britain in vindication of their honour, it was thought expedient and proper to make them pay the expense of the war, in addition to compensating the injured parties.' HC Deb 4 Aug 1843 vol 71, cc. 285-286.
[122] In the same session, Palmerston reminded Members that 'It was entirely owing to the manner in which the opium had been extorted, that the late Government had felt that an outrage upon British subjects had been committed, which not only authorised but rendered necessary measures of hostility, should such be required. It had been said that what the late Government demanded was satisfaction for the injured honour of the country, and that one of the ways in which satisfaction was to be given was payment for the opium so

no territory was ignored, an inconsistency which Palmerston, by then in opposition, justified in the then jubilant mood.[123] Even from opposition, Russell could use the rhetoric of honour to reassert the necessity of seeking satisfaction, a task which had only led to war because of Chinese intransigence.[124] This necessity may have granted the government a degree of plausible deniability, though contemporaries arguably saw through such claims.

Significantly, this use of rhetoric was not confined to the Chinese example. A brief contrast with the concurrent crisis in Afghanistan (1838-1842) may be instructive. Although initially successful in establishing an Anglophile regime in Kabul, by early 1842, the situation collapsed, and Britain suffered a defeat equalled only by Isandlwana in 1879.[125] Britons were aghast at the perceived betrayal of their puppet regime, the imprisonment of civilians, and the destruction of a British regiment, which were presented through the lens of national honour.[126] Unlike the resignation which greeted news from China, Britons anxiously followed news of the Afghan debacle, to the extent that the Kabul campaign has been regarded as an early example of a 'media war.'[127] Upon learning of the catastrophe in spring

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extorted, and, from the commencement, in the instructions to Captain Elliot, and afterwards to Sir Henry Pottinger, the principle laid down was, that the compensation should be full.' *Ibid*, cc. 284-285.

[123] Later in the above session Palmerston declared 'this country had obtained the valuable possession of the island of Hong Kong, and had, at the same time, secured many commercial advantages as the result of a war which had been forced upon us, and which was not undertaken for the purpose of gaining any such advantages, but which was very reluctantly entered upon, and which a strong sense of duty made it incumbent upon the Government of Great Britain to engage in for the purpose of vindicating the honour of the Crown, and of obtaining satisfaction for injuries inflicted on its subjects.' *Ibid*, cc. 288-289.

[124] Lord Russell reminded Members that the purpose of the expedition had been 'to resent insults and injuries offered to her Majesty's officers, and her Majesty's subjects,' but that 'If the terms which were originally proposed by her Majesty's representative had been acceded to by the Chinese, full satisfaction would have been afforded us.' However, 'as that reparation was refused, instructions were given for the attack of the defences on the Chinese coast; the island of Chusan and several towns were taken by our troops, and a portion of the Chinese forces were destroyed.' Russell insisted that this was 'the course to which we had been compelled to resort to obtain reparation for the insults and injuries offered to us as a nation.' Lord John Russell, HC Deb 17 March 1842 vol 61, cc. 793-794.

[125] It was famously recorded that only a single soldier survived to inform the garrison of Jalalabad of the catastrophe, though there is some debate over how many survived, with more survivors later materialising in a 'distressed condition' outside the fortress. See William Trousdale, 'Dr Brydon's Report of the Kabul Disaster and the Documentation of History,' *Military Affairs*, 47, No. 1 (Feb., 1983), 26-30; 27.

[126] As one contemporary soldier argued, if Britain showed a determination to crush the Afghans 'and avenge our national honour with might and spirit,' then 'so long will they be quiet,' but demonstrating 'the least symptom of fear and backwardness,' would mean that 'every Mussulman in India will sharpen his sword to cut our throats, and risings and insurrections will be universal all over India.' *Dover Telegraph and Cinque Ports General Advertiser*, 19 March 1842. This soldier's perception of British power and prestige gelled with contemporary politicians and the assessments of historians of the Raj. See Chandra Mallampalli, '"A Fondness for Military Display"', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 77, No. 1 (Feb, 2018), 139-159.

[127] Shane Malhotra, '"If She Escapes She Will Publish Everything": Lady Sale and the Media Frenzy of the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842),' *Book History*, 17 (2014), 272-297; 273. Sir Robert Sale's wife was held in Kabul following the disaster, but her record of events earned plaudits from the Prime Minister, who later declared 'I never should excuse myself if, in mentioning the name of Sir Robert Sale, I did not record my admiration of the character of a woman who has shed lustre on her sex—Lady Sale, his wife. The names of Sir Robert, and of Lady Sale will be familiar words with the people of this country.' Sir Robert Peel, HC

1842, Peel's Conservatives emphasised the importance of responding to insult, in language not dissimilar to that used by the Whigs following news of Captain Elliot's detention. However, the Afghan insult was arguably more severe, since it contained the unprecedented destruction of a British column. British military honour necessitated a swift response, and it would have been politically impossible to abandon the theatre without acquiring the appropriate satisfaction.[128]

The honour-script demanded immediate satisfaction, and gelled with the necessity of vindication for reasons of prestige, Indian security, and imperial interests. If honour was not vindicated, the disaster could be viewed as a fatal symptom of British weakness, rather than a singular event. It was markedly more difficult to defy the honour-script when facing such a stark military defeat. Nor was there room for forbearance when facing offences from these 'uncivilised' powers. This intolerance towards insults from a non-European theatre was consistent with the general train of Victorian foreign policy.[129] Suffering an insult from an 'uncivilised' power was not merely unpalatable, it also threatened British presentations of its empire and world power status. The rhetoric of national honour associated colonial defeat with imperial instability through anxious, urgent language which contemporaries understood and professed to believe in. One discerns that insults from France, the United States, and even Spain (see below) were subject to negotiation, whereas regions susceptible to imperial expansion demanded immediate military retaliation.

In the Chinese case, Melancon argued that 'Economic interests…were only part of a larger, complex set of motivations in the decision-making process; the most important motive was

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Deb 20 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 967-968. *The Times* interpreted the defeat not as proof of 'Afghan prowess', but 'as demonstrations of the incapacity of the British generals,' while looking ahead to a campaign to 'uphold the reputation of British troops' in the country, wherein a 'brilliant exploit' was anticipated. *The Times*, 5 May 1842.

[128] According to Sir Henry Baillie – later the Undersecretary for India – Britain was 'now placed in such a position, that she had no other recourse but to take those steps which were best calculated to vindicate the honour of the British name.' If anyone present wished to 'preserve the British empire in India', Baillie declared, then they must approve of such a policy without a single 'dissentient voice'. J. H. Baillie, HC Deb 23 June 1842 vol 64, cc. 444-445. Tory MP and East India Company director James Hogg believed that 'the period of failure and defeat was the time when such a discussion could not take place without compromising the character and the honour of the country.' Surely this was a time 'when action, and energy, and retribution ought to engross every thought and nerve every arm'. Hogg was certain that 'Perfidy, without parallel, must be punished – murder, the most atrocious, must be avenged – and the national honour must be redeemed and asserted.' Hogg, *Ibid,* cc. 507-508. The Prime Minister assured his divided party members 'that in any course that her Majesty's Government may pursue, they will not forget to ensure that the honour of the British arms shall be fully maintained, and that no instances of gross treachery and perjury shall pass altogether unpunished.' Peel was confident that 'these disasters will be so far repaired that they will not, in the slightest degree, shake the confidence of the people of England in our supremacy.' Peel, *Ibid*, cc. 521-522.

[129] The sensitivity to insult and necessity of acquiring satisfaction was also discernible in the 1867 invasion of Abyssinia, and the second invasion of Afghanistan in 1878. See Chapter Six.

honour.'[130] Yet, one could argue that economic imperatives were aided by the appeal to honour, and that the prospect of stable trade relations, twinned with financial compensation, were incentives which informed the Cabinet's decision to deploy the ethic. The likelihood of victory may have influenced this policy, alongside an inherent racism and sense of entitlement which balked at placing Asian rights on a parity with Britain's.[131] Additionally, it may be argued that the goals of restoring of equal trading relations with China, or establishing a favourable buffer state in Afghanistan, were articulated through the rhetoric of honour to detract from criticism and cynicism. Such tactics did not shield Ministers from scrutiny, but they provided a viable rhetorical framework which excused any misgivings for the sake of national honour.

Like the Chinese case, critics condemned the immorality of the Afghan policy which had facilitated these disasters in the first place.[132] Parrying such charges, Ministers warned of the danger to India which would follow if national honour was not vindicated in Kabul, mirroring the concerns of the East India Company towards China.[133] Yet, some challenged, was it not ludicrous to claim that Britain's unrivalled position could be threatened by such middling powers?[134] Indeed, the inherent brittleness this suggested in Britain's Indian

[130] Melancon, *Britain's China Policy*, p. 147.
[131] As Morrison discerned, 'Certain patterns of behaviour were expected of these mutually identified 'Great Powers' in order to uphold that elusive quality, imperial prestige.' Alexander Morrison, 'Twin Imperial Disasters. The invasions of Khiva and Afghanistan in the Russian and British official mind, 1839–1842,' *Modern Asian Studies*, 48, No. 1 (Jan, 2014), 253-300; 255.
[132] Radical and free trader Dr John Bowring – later to serve as Consul of Canton – considered the Afghan war 'from first to last, anything but honourable to our national character' since 'We had little to be proud of in the invasion of a country of which we had nothing to complain'. HC Deb 2 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 161-162. John Roebuck challenged the House to show him 'anything so degrading to English honour and honesty as our conduct with respect to India?' He added 'You are afraid of the powerful, and therefore you generously and gallantly attack the weak. In the whole series of unjust wars, I defy you to show me anything so degrading as this to British honesty and honour.' He challenged the notion that because 'we have a strong enemy, are we to do injustice to a weak friend,' exclaiming that 'We fear Russia on the Caspian, and we crush Dost Mohammed in Kabul!' Roebuck, HC Deb 1 March 1843 vol 67, cc. 132-134.
[133] As the former Governor General for India and architect of the Afghan war the Earl of Auckland explained, he invaded Afghanistan: 'because he considered it essential to the safety of our empire in India; because he saw a danger approaching the Indian territory', which 'would have left us without power, without stability, without safety.' It was only after painful deliberation and close consultation with informed agents that he 'resolved at once to dispel the danger which was most imminent, and which danger, he firmly believed, could now be represented as no longer formidable, solely because that decisive step had been taken.' Auckland, HL Deb 2 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 49-50.
[134] Irish Tory Robert Jocelyn, a veteran of the concurrent Opium War, questioned the argument of 'the alleged necessity of supporting the prestige of British superiority, which it was said the native population of India believed to be on the wane.' He also questioned the logic 'that we held India by the sword and the bayonet'. If Britain's position depended upon the opinion of the natives, and the mere reputation of British arms, then 'where was the necessity of establishing a barrier on our frontier, or of entering on an unjust and sanguinary war to support a prestige allowed to be useless and of no importance?' Viscount Jocelyn, HC Deb 23 June 1842 vol 64, cc. 497-498. He argued against a punitive expedition, and instead declared that the

influence moved Benjamin Disraeli to challenge the logic of such a sensitive prestige[135] – a significant contribution considering his later behaviour during the Eastern Crisis.[136] When a successful Afghan campaign technically redeemed the previous defeat in late September 1842, there was still room to condemn the excess of soldiers on the ground in Kabul, who razed the site of the betrayal in the city's bazaar.[137] Critics maintained that immoral conduct, in both China and Afghanistan, undermined the claim to satisfaction. Afghans would remember Britain's character for excess, it was claimed, far more than the spectacle of triumph.[138] It was also argued that British immorality would make evangelising more difficult in these regions in the future.[139]

Yet, the Chinese and Afghan cases also show how the vindication of honour could overcome objections both to the policy's conception, and to the government's subsequent conduct. It seemed what mattered most was that because of these campaigns, 'Honour had been

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architects of the original expedition should be prosecuted, as their decisions did 'degrade the British name', reasoning that 'a want of confidence in our power' was 'to the last degree undignified.' *Ibid*, cc. 504-505.

[135] Benjamin Disraeli, a Tory excluded from Peel's government, discerned that the Afghan War had been launched to restore Indian confidence in British power, yet he 'really did hope that in these hard, dry, matter-of-fact, Income-tax days, statesmen would be prepared to offer some more substantial reasons for their policy, than the expediency of restoring "confidence in our star."' *Ibid*, cc. 448-449. He added 'If he believed that "confidence in our star" alone, or principally, constituted the tenure by which we held India, he should despair of holding that country for any considerable period,' and 'So far from being of opinion that our empire in India was one easily to be shaken, he believed on the contrary, it was one maintained by a power not inferior to that by which any existing authority maintained its rule.' *Ibid*, cc. 449-450. Disraeli presented the view that British influence in India could withstand a defeat which 'would, to a certain extent, perhaps, sully the character of our arms', adding that 'if our empire in India could be shaken, or even endangered, by such a defeat, he must conclude that we held our sway by a very feeble and fragile tenure.' Disraeli, *Ibid*, cc. 451-452.

[136] See Chapter Six.

[137] The son of former Prime Minister Earl Grey, Viscount Howick, questioned whether the conduct of soldiers in that campaign of reprisal was truly honourable, particularly 'whether any and what orders had been issued for the destruction of the bazaar at Cabool?' Who had ordered such a barbarous act? 'If some satisfactory explanation' was not given, 'a deeper stain would be cast upon the British arms and character than by any disasters however great and lamentable.' Howick, HC Deb 2 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 142-143. Joseph Hume, the Radical MP for Kilkenny, reflected that although 'He was not one that discredited the Afghan war', yet he 'could not say that the conduct of affairs there reflected any credit upon us.' Indeed, Hume regretted that as they withdrew, British soldiers 'had left indelible marks on our character which would last as long as many who then heard him lived.' Hume was certain that 'Having redeemed our military character, which was of much more importance than many supposed, we ought to have retired with magnanimity', and since the 'authors of the treachery' which had once facilitated the destruction of her army in Afghanistan could not be found, 'we ought to have left without revenging ourselves upon the innocent population.' The destruction of Kabul's bazaar, Hume declared, 'was an act so barbarous, that he could not find anything like it even in the conduct of the Goths.' Hume, *Ibid*, cc. 144-145.

[138] Former Lord High Chancellor and Radical Whig Lord Brougham condemned 'a fierce, a brutal, an unchristian spirit of vengeance' which compelled the British to return. Further, he determined it a 'weak, an empty, a self-repugnant, aye, and a self-destructive policy' that idea 'to impress a notion, to leave a recollection of your power upon the nations of the East, forgetting that at the same time you are impressing it you are also leaving on their minds an unquenchable abhorrence of the European name and character; or, at least, of the name and character of the British Europeans.' Brougham, HL Deb 2 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 39-41.

[139] Thomas Macaulay, HC Deb 9 March 1843 vol 67, 613-616; George Grey, *Ibid*, cc. 663-665. Joseph Hume disagreed, *Ibid*, cc. 650-651. As did Lord Stanley, *Ibid*, cc. 668-671.

retrieved.'[140] When news of the Afghan triumph reached London in December 1842, it was cause for satisfaction.[141] Peel insisted that it was 'impossible to contemplate these services without feeling proud of the British name.' The Prime Minister congratulated Members that 'while we were thus vindicating the honour of the British name in the north-west of India', a campaign of 'consummate skill' was underway in China. Considering such effective campaigning, Peel declared himself 'willing to believe that these unquestionable proofs of the military reputation of England…notwithstanding the long interval of peace, stands as high as it did during the excitement of the war.'[142]

Parliament voted its thanks for both triumphs in a dedicated session, and advocates of retributive justice turned to asserting the necessity of vindication. According to the standards of the honour-script, by its victory in Kabul, the government had 'restored the British name' – a synonym of prestige.[143] Even in opposition, Russell contended that favourable results would follow this vindication of honour.[144] Critics were required to focus on the finer details of the situation in their attacks. Indian Governor-General the Earl of Ellenborough may have been upheld as 'the successful vindicator of our honour,'[145] but Whig critics emphasised his

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[140] Louis Dupree, 'The First Anglo-Afghan War and the British Retreat of 1842: the Functions of History and Folklore,' *East and West*, 26, No. 3/4 (Sept-Dec 1976), 503-529; 526.
[141] *Chester Chronicle*, 9 Dec 1842. Correspondence dating from September were provided, detailing the release of British prisoners and the negotiations undertaken with Afghan chieftains.
[142] Sir Robert Peel, HC Deb 20 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 969-970.
[143] The Conservative Viscount Courtenay reflected that the Afghan war – 'a war maintained in a country of peculiar difficulty, against foes of unknown numbers and unascertained resources, against the machinations of unparalleled treachery' – could be a source of great satisfaction as Britons could see 'that the honour of the British name has been vindicated, and the superiority of the British arms established on the scenes of our former reverses.' Courtenay reasoned that if the government 'continue to show themselves ready and anxious to maintain peace at the risk of everything but national honour' then it would both receive and deserve 'the confidence of a portion of the country.' Viscount Courtenay, HC Deb 2 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 65-68. The Marquess of Lansdowne agreed with these sentiments, but focused on the delay in acquiring satisfaction, hoping 'no such hesitation was really entertained,' both 'as to the recovery of the prisoners and the recovery of their military honour—both objects most dear to them, and for which every means should have been employed, every nerve within their power should be strained.' Lansdowne, HL Deb 2 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 24-25.
[144] He felt 'the utmost confidence that these gallant exploits are a proof that every interest of England will be maintained, and that English honour will be vindicated, in whatever quarter of the globe it may be infringed or violated.' Russell, HC Deb 20 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 970-971. While rejoicing 'most sincerely in the success of our arms in Afghanistan', and being 'delighted that the honour of the British arms has been re-established.' Russell believed 'we are only beginning to see the good consequences of the invasion of Afghanistan', which would contrast British influence favourably with native princes. *Ibid*, cc. 976-977.
[145] Bickham Escott, HC Deb 9 March 1843 vol 67, cc. 647-648. James Hogg reminded Members that a second march on Kabul was never considered before Ellenborough arrived, but that shortly thereafter it was decided 'to obtain the release of the prisoners, and to retrieve our military reputation, by the infliction of some signal and decisive blow upon the Afghans.' Hogg, HC Deb 20 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 999-1000. Considering Ellenborough's record, Hogg asserted that 'no man could have shown a more anxious desire to retrieve the national honour'. *Ibid*, cc. 1003-1004.

personal negligence,[146] just as Tories had charged Melbourne's government with imperilling national honour in China through similar negligence. Explanation for the Opium War was reduced to a response to insult, and similarly Peel could declare that 'the insult has been avenged,' when reflecting on the campaign in Kabul.[147] Ultimately, the rhetoric of honour boasted a political resonance which added to its effectiveness.

One discerns that in Afghanistan and China, divisions existed among Tories, Whigs, Liberals, Radicals, and Irish MPs, rooted in the interpretation of what national honour required, and where it resided. Visible even within political parties, this manifested in a striking spectacle where Members criticised their own government, and used their understanding of national honour to do so. This illustrated not merely the magnitude of the task of persuasion, but also the inherent difficulty of gathering political support for a contentious policy. Governments struggled under scrutiny levelled from the opposition and backbenchers, but there were reasons for pushing through these obstacles and pursuing one's goals to fruition. Critics could impugn dishonourable conduct, but if said conduct brought a triumphant outcome, it was politically difficult to condemn an administration which had overseen the fulfilment of national honour's demands. After all, it was established that the government was dutybound to defend national honour wherever it was impugned.[148]

This, perhaps, was the key to honour's rhetorical and ideological power. It was difficult to educate the public on the nuances of the opium trade, or the strategic importance of erecting a buffer state in Afghanistan against Russian encroachment to India, but the rhetoric of honour provided a familiar language which, at its core, justified military intervention. As Palmerston understood, 'whenever events may call for the display of our military or naval power, to maintain the interests, or vindicate the honour of the country,' then 'the army and navy of Great Britain will be found as they have ever been, fully equal to the maintenance

[146] Ross Mangles, Secretary to Bengal and Whig MP for Guildford, asserted that while Ellenborough was 'entitled to thanks', he believed 'the margin of the noble Lord's merit very small', and that 'the national honour had been in much hazard in his hands.' Ellenborough, Mangles observed, had ordered a retreat from Afghanistan, had not planned a campaign of reprisal, and if his policy had been followed, 'we should have been mourning over a humiliating defeat, and our national honour, and the character of our troops unvindicated.' Mangles, HC Deb 20 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 1003-1004.

[147] 'We have vindicated the honour of the British arms, on the scene of their former disasters. Our relation with Afghanistan—our unfriendly relations with Afghanistan—are closed. We are not called upon, as in the year 1840, to take steps for the purpose to avenge our disasters. The insult has been avenged. The credit of our arms has been re-established.' HC Deb 1 March 1843 vol 67, cc. 190-191.

[148] As the Earl of Powis argued, 'Our duty in the first place was to redeem the honour of the British flag, which had been tarnished', and then to free her prisoners. 'Happily, both these results were accomplished.' Earl of Powis, HL Deb 2 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 8-9.

of those interests or the vindication of that honour.'[149] National honour was also a convenient tool in moments of crisis. One discerns that in comparison with other cases, the government's victories in China and Afghanistan amounted to making the best of a dangerous situation. In both instances Ministers were taken by surprise, and then driven to respond by the expectations established by the honour-script. British honour, British influence over India, and Britain's prestige across the world required a show of force. The ethic facilitated what would otherwise have been an impossible policy hastily adopted by a beleaguered government, presented to an unsympathetic Parliament, and followed by a mostly uninterested public.

2.2: Forbearance or Vindication? The Expulsion of Ambassador Bulwer from Madrid (1848)

As the campaigns against Afghanistan and China demonstrated, vindicating insults was a strong imperative of Victorian foreign policy. It was accepted that insults demanded satisfaction, yet, although apparently eager to pursue the honour-script, an incident involving Britain's ambassador to Spain proved that there were exceptions to its rules. During the tumultuous year of 1848,[150] Palmerston's attempt to advise Madrid on the composition of her government offended the Spanish court,[151] which reacted by abruptly expelling Sir Henry Bulwer, Britain's ambassador. On the surface, the Spanish reaction was an intolerable insult from a theatre where Britain had invested considerable energy and resources in recent years.[152] However, Lord John Russell's Whig administration declared its intention not to

[149] Viscount Palmerston, HC Deb 14 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 569-570.
[150] Dieter Dowe (ed), *Europe in 1848: Revolution and Reform* (New York, 2001). William Fortescue, *France and 1848: The End of Monarchy* (Oxford, 2005).
[151] Palmerston's letter to Bulwer read as follows: 'I have to recommend you to advise the Spanish Government to adopt a legal and constitutional system. The recent downfall of the King of the French, and of his family, and the expulsion of his Ministers, ought to indicate to the Spanish Court and Government the danger to which they expose themselves, in endeavouring to govern a country in a manner opposed to the sentiments and opinions of the nation; and the catastrophe which has just occurred in France is sufficient to show that even a numerous and well-disciplined army offers only an insufficient defence to the Crown when the system followed by the Crown is not in harmony with the general system of the country. The Queen of Spain would act wisely in the present critical state of affairs if she were to strengthen her Executive Government by widening the bases on which the administration reposes, and in calling to her councils some of the men in whom the liberal party places confidence.' Letter of Viscount Palmerston to Sir Henry Bulwer, 16 March 1848. Read by Lord Stanley, HL Deb 5 May 1848 vol 98, cc. 678-679.
[152] Brown, *Palmerston*, pp. 281-283. Ministers also upheld the view that Britain's alliance with Spain from 1834 entitled her to tender advice where Madrid was in danger. As Russell expressed: 'Considering, then, the obligations of this treaty, and considering the sums of money due by the Spanish Government to England for arms and for the munitions of war; remembering the treaty which obliges this country to make naval efforts for the maintenance of the Queen's Government in Spain; bearing in mind that if called upon we have

seek satisfaction from Spain, and they defended this decision by professing a determination to exercise forbearance.

Forbearance prescribed that magnanimity and even mercy be shown to weaker powers, because Britain's unrivalled position meant she did not need to be overly sensitive to all such slights. One is struck by the contrast with previous cases; forbearance was explicitly denied to China, yet it was permitted when insulted by a European power.[153] Critics noticed this inconsistency,[154] but focused mostly on Palmerston's meddling, which had facilitated the insult. Others presented the familiar argument that a failure to acquire satisfaction would confirm British humiliation. Yet, the opposition was not united, and with some exceptions, British media paid scant attention to the offence. This is reflected in the fact that only a single substantial Parliamentary debate was devoted to the incident,[155] before it faded into the background of such a momentous year.[156]

Notwithstanding its apparent insignificance, the incident is noteworthy because of what it suggests about the conditional application of the honour-script and its accompanying rhetoric. Palmerston was willing to leverage honour to justify policy, but where the Foreign

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engaged to make those efforts—it is, I conceive, our right thus to tender advice, and it is natural that we should desire that any danger of disturbing the Government of Spain should not be recklessly incurred; at least, we were entitled to give such friendly advice as appeared to us best calculated to avert civil war. Of this I feel perfectly assured, that that was all that my noble Friend intended; he did not intend any thing like dictation. But this country being in alliance with Spain, he did mean to offer such friendly advice as was consistent with the relative positions of both countries, with the interests of Spain, and with the engagements into which we had entered.' Lord John Russell, HC Deb 4 May 1848 vol 98, cc. 604-605.

[153] As Charles Babington Macaulay had declared: 'The place of this country among nations was not so mean or ill ascertained that we should trouble ourselves to resist every petty slight which we might receive. Conscious of her power, England could bear that her Sovereign could be called a barbarian, and her people described as savages, destitute of every useful art. When our Ambassadors were obliged to undergo a degrading prostration, in compliance with their regulations, conscious of our strength, we were more amused than irritated. But there was a limit to that forbearance.' HC Deb 7 April 1840 vol 53, cc. 718-720.

[154] Palmerston was accused of pursuing one policy for the weak and another for the strong. Thus Lord Stanley criticised him in the Lords: 'Why, then, I would ask, do Her Majesty's Government act so differently to France from what they do to Italy, Portugal, and Spain? Is it because France is great and powerful, and because Italy, Spain, and Portugal are weak? Is it because it was safe to interfere with the one, and not so safe to interfere with the other? I know not to what to attribute the inconsistency in the course the Government are pursuing, if not to that motive. I think the tone of Lord Palmerston's note was sufficiently offensive to the pride and dignity of Spaniards.' HL Deb 5 May 1848 vol 98, cc. 686-687.

[155] Questions were briefly raised about the necessary correspondence being made available: HC Deb 8 May 1848 vol 98, cc. 760-2; HC Deb 23 May 1848 vol 98, cc. 1259-60; HC Deb 29 May 1848 vol 99, cc. 1-2. Two Lords' debates in early May also considered the matter, but focused less upon the insult and more upon the error of Palmerston's style and intention.

[156] For instance, one regional Irish paper considered 'another week productive of revolutions and insurrections,' examining the tumult in Vienna and Berlin, and warning of a looming conflict over Schleswig-Holstein between the Germans and Danes. Ireland threatened to revolt, and the French situation dominated attention, but of additional concern was the Chartist movement, which 'has not yet been completely put down.' Finally, it cautioned that 'A very large deficiency in the revenue is expected by those, whose position may be taken as enabling them to form a good opinion of the subject.' *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, 6 June 1848. See also *Liverpool Mercury*, 6 June 1848.

Secretary did not desire confrontation, he could be remarkably lenient. With no public appetite for a war with Spain, and no strategic advantages to be gained from escalation which would likely push Spain closer to France,[157] Palmerston's stance was politically and strategically logical. However, by shrugging off the insult, Palmerston was clearly ignoring the honour-script. This suggests that the vindication of honour was affected by the nuances of stately relationships, and the perceived benefits to be accrued from pushing certain incidents to their more provocative conclusion.

On 5 June 1848, Sir George Bankes – a Protectionist, later to serve in Derby's minority government – presented the controversy to the House of Commons. Taking a traditional view of the incident, Bankes' Motion upheld that Palmerston's interference in Spain 'has placed the British Government and our Representative at the Court of Madrid, in a position humiliating in its character'.[158] Bankes was astonished that no Minister 'had thought fit to give any explanation upon the matter to those anxious for the maintenance of the honour and character of the country.' Cautioning the Spanish, Bankes observed that 'The Spanish Minister was greatly mistaken if he supposed that an outrage on the person of our Ambassador…would be regarded as of a trifling character by the people of this country.'

Bankes suggested that the government would be better equipped to demand satisfaction 'if they admitted that errors had been committed upon their own side; and the mode in which they had been committed had probably led to the subsequent transactions.'[159] Bankes asserted that 'while he was ready to vindicate the honour of this country, still he could not adopt that course without admitting that the noble Lord had placed them originally in the wrong.' Bankes advised that Palmerston's errors in judgement meant the Foreign Secretary should apologise before proceeding with vindication.[160] A similar expression had been used by Lord Stanley the previous month, where he advised Palmerston to admit wrongdoing towards Spain, since Spain would reciprocate with an apology for the offence to Bulwer.[161]

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[157] Roger Bullen, 'Anglo-French Rivalry and Spanish Politics, 1846-1848,' *English Historical Review*, 89, No. 350 (Jan., 1974), 25-47.
[158] Sir George Bankes, HC Deb 5 June 1848 vol 99, cc. 347-348.
[159] He also clarified that although 'the House and the country were prepared to go with him in the vindication of the honour of the country,' they must first 'receive full explanation upon the subject.' *Ibid*, cc. 348-349.
[160] Bankes 'did not think that it would be an honest course for this country to pursue if they were now to rise up with vehement denunciations against the Court of Spain, in accordance with what was no doubt the general feeling of this country, namely, the determination to vindicate its honour, unless they at the same time declared that, so far as they had been in error, they were ready to offer amends.' *Ibid*, cc. 361-362.
[161] Stanley told the Lords, that 'knowing what course a man of honour in private life would take under such circumstances,' he asserted that 'the course most worthy of a great nation to take would be a frank and fair admission that the interference was unwarrantable, the advice undeserved, and to at once withdraw the

Ministerial allies disagreed. Irish MP Richard Sheil believed that Spain had 'availed themselves of the occasion which they thought had presented itself of offering with impunity a gross insult to the benefactor of their Sovereign. We are told that the English Minister is humiliated.'[162] It would be 'strange', Sheil said, 'if the Minister of England were humiliated by the Minister of a Government that not many years ago fell down upon its knees before him.' Humiliation, Sheil declared, 'could never be allied with right, with truth, with justice or with honour' and 'it is the same with nations as with men,' a point he elaborated further with a familiar metaphor.[163] Would the insult disgrace Britain? No, Sheil insisted; 'the vile insult would recoil upon the heartless ingrate, who would pull down shame and humiliation upon himself.' Sheil referred to that Anglo-Spanish correspondence before the House which 'reflects so much real ignominy upon the thankless Ministers of Spain.'[164]

This theme of Spanish ingratitude was maintained by Viscount Mahon, who nonetheless regretted that Palmerston had overstepped in making his recommendations to the Spanish government.[165] At a moment 'when the national honour was at stake, and when there was a determination to suffer no affront from any foreign power,' he wished that 'they had not been invited to decide upon conjecture instead of certainty.' While the Foreign Secretary had erred, the Spanish reaction was unjustified, and Madrid 'should have borne in mind the not very remote time when we stepped forward to assist them with our blood, with our treasure, with our moral influence.'[166] Considering this, Mahon believed that 'no party differences in that House—no feeling of any kind—would prevent all the Members of that House from concurring in any course which the vindication of our national honour might call upon us to pursue.'[167]

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offensive expressions.' Should the government do this, they could 'safely trust to Castilian honour and Castilian generosity for an immediate and an unequivocal withdrawal of all that might be offensive,' in the Spanish insult. Lord Stanley, HL Deb 8 May 1848 vol 98, cc. 689-690.

[162] Richard Sheil, HC Deb 5 June 1848 vol 99, cc. 369-370.

[163] 'If a man, calling himself his friend, were in his direst need to fly to him for aid…and if after doing all this, or more than this, seeing that the man for whom he had done so much was rushing again to destruction, he were to interpose, and to exclaim, "For your own sake and for my sake, pause in your race to ruin" – and if instead of thanking him for the advice which he had every right to have given, the man whom he had saved were to turn contumeliously upon him, and strike him upon the cheek – does the hon. Gentleman think that he would be dishonoured?' *Ibid*, cc. 370-371.

[164] *Ibid*, cc. 370-371.

[165] Viscount Mahon, *Ibid*, cc. 373-374.

[166] He added that 'there never was an act so offensive in itself, and of such great consequence, undertaken upon such slight grounds.' *Ibid*, cc. 376-377.

[167] *Ibid*, cc. 377-378.

But Russell did not seek vindication, and he provided an interesting anecdote to explain how Britain could absorb the Spanish insult without the usual recourse. Russell spoke of Lord Archibald Hamilton, who was offended by a stranger while in the company of friends. Hamilton's choice was to either 'burst out laughing, or knock him down', and he was advised to do the former, which he did. This, Russell insisted, was the case with Palmerston towards Spain: 'He must either have taken this up as a great national quarrel, or have passed it by as a matter of no importance.'[168] In line with this, Russell explained that 'whilst they require that English honour should be maintained, they do at the same time require the exercise of a very great forbearance' in their relations with Spain, which were 'very peculiar' and 'very delicate'. Russell reflected that if British and Spanish power was on a more equal footing, then 'it would be more difficult or more liable to suspicion, if that forbearance were shown', however, 'seeing what is the power of England and what is now the power of Spain', the Prime Minister recommended 'that we are bound to show to utmost temper and forbearance in our dealings with that country.'[169] It was perhaps necessary for Russell to qualify this forbearance by insisting 'we shall take care that no stain shall fall upon the honour of England', but that anything short of this, he would be 'ready to submit to for the purpose of maintaining the most friendly relations with Spain.'[170]

The qualification notwithstanding, Russell would have known that this position left the government vulnerable to criticism.[171] Could forbearance truly suffice? Benjamin Disraeli reiterated this theme, demanding to know 'why a full and complete satisfaction has not long before this been exacted.' Satisfaction for the offence must precede any other considerations, and 'it is this primary condition which we ought to demand to be fulfilled, before we enter into the question of the policy of the Government, or of the conduct of the Minister.'[172] Disraeli insisted that 'Before they entered into negotiations on any point, the honour and character of the country ought to have been vindicated.' Whatever the Spanish justification, 'a gross outrage has been inflicted upon this country,' and on Bulwer himself, and Disraeli recommended the dismissal of the Spanish Ambassador in London 'as retaliation'. He reminded Members that 'It is one of the first duties of the House of Commons to be very

[168] Lord John Russell, *Ibid*, cc. 383-384.
[169] *Ibid*, cc. 384-385.
[170] Russell, HC Deb 5 June 1848 vol 99, cc. 384-385.
[171] The previous month in the Lords, Lord Stanley had asserted that Palmerston's policy of 'offensive proceedings' towards Spain, mixed with 'the most Christian principle of forbearance and forgiveness,' was one which 'appeared to him to be little consistent with the dignity of a great Power carrying on a diplomatic correspondence with another country.' Lord Stanley, HL Deb 8 May 1848 vol 98, cc. 749-750.
[172] Benjamin Disraeli, *Ibid*, cc. 385-386.

jealous of the honour of public Ministers intrusted in foreign countries to act on behalf of this.'[173]

Disraeli was told that negotiations with Spain were still 'going on.' 'Going on, for what?' he challenged, 'To receive fresh insults?' Disraeli declared that Bulwer's treatment constituted 'an insult to your Sovereign, an insult to yourselves, an insult to the nation at large', and he believed that 'The more you negotiate, the more certain you are to receive fresh insults.'[174] Parliament's first duty was 'to express our sense of the gross and unprecedented outrage against the dignity of the Sovereign and the honour of the country,' but Disraeli advised Members not to blame Palmerston alone, since the Foreign Secretary regularly rejected the Whigs' damaging liberal philosophy 'to vindicate the interests and the honour of our country.'[175] Sir Robert Inglis, Conservative MP for Oxford University, made a similar appeal, believing it 'unprecedented in the history of England that such an insult as the expulsion of Sir H. Bulwer from Madrid had been offered to the Crown of England in the person of one of its representatives' and 'almost unparalleled in the diplomatic history of Europe.'[176] One is struck by the hyperbolic tone of the opposition, and the claim that Spain's insult was unprecedented in British history.[177] By investing each new insult with this hyperbole, critics intended to place as much pressure as possible upon the government. The greater the sense of outrage from the opposition, the more effective their use of the rhetoric of honour would be.

Dismissing the Spanish insult as small in comparison to the treatment of Alexander McLeod in New York, the imprisonment of Captain Elliot in Canton, or the betrayal of British officers in Kabul would have undermined the opposition's line of attack. That Britain had endured far worse in the recent past did not deter the Earl of Aberdeen, who also embraced hyperbole in the House of Lords, claiming 'that this is the first time a British Minister ever suffered such an indignity,'[178] and concluding that 'The whole proceeding does, I must say, appear to me so utterly unsuited to the dignity of this country.' To receive even a form of satisfaction,

[173] *Ibid*, cc. 388-389.
[174] *Ibid*, cc. 392-393.
[175] *Ibid*, cc. 400-401.
[176] Sir Robert Inglis, *Ibid*, cc. 400-401. Inglis also challenged why 'so long an interval' was allowed to pass 'without an effort to restore his position, or vindicate the honour of the country by requiring an apology from the Spanish Government?' *Ibid*, cc. 401-402.
[177] Lord Stanley engaged with this rhetoric as well, asserting that Palmerston 'had had his despatch returned as unworthy to be received,' and 'he had such an insult put upon him as no one gentleman could receive from another, and such as he believed no other country had ever before suffered.' Lord Stanley, HL Deb 8 May 1848 vol 98, cc. 749-750.
[178] Earl of Aberdeen, HL Deb 8 May 1848 vol 98, cc. 753-754.

he recommended ‘some sort of understanding…with the Spanish Government,’ since ‘we are the parties who have received such an insult as I believe was never before inflicted upon the British Government.’[179]

Ministers would have to meet this hyperbole if they hoped to dismantle the opposition’s argument, but they were aided by an unlikely ally. Having divided from the Conservatives, Sir Robert Peel declared that he could not approve of the Protectionists’ Motion – which declared that the Government had been placed ‘in a position humiliating in its character’ – because of his perceived duty.[180] This duty was ‘to manifest, on the part of the House of Commons, a desire to support the Crown in vindicating the insulted honour of the nation.’ Peel cautioned that if the House voted that the Government had been placed ‘in a position humiliating to its character,’ then ‘so far from aiding the Government in vindicating the honour of England,’ it would instead have the effect of sending Ministers away…

> …with disgrace tied round their necks by a vote of the House of Commons; and, so far from enabling them to vindicate the insulted honour of the country, you would incapacitate them from taking that position and assuming that high tone in the discussion which you wish them to exhibit.

This affirmed that the national honour could be best vindicated with the aid of the Commons. Conversely, it suggested that the Commons could also constrain the nation’s ability to vindicate its honour. Elaborating further, Peel imagined that if Madrid saw British policy condemned as humiliating, they would conclude that “it is utterly impossible for us to attach any weight to the representations you may make."[181] These factors would complicate British efforts to obtain satisfaction, and would cast aspersions on Bulwer’s character. Some technical criticisms aside,[182] Peel refused to support a resolution which would weaken government authority in its Spanish relations, particularly as the full story of these negotiations had yet to be told. Above all, he proclaimed, ‘I cannot sanction a resolution

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[179] *Ibid*, cc. 754-755.
[180] Sir Robert Peel, *Ibid*, cc. 404-405.
[181] *Ibid*, cc. 405-406.
[182] Peel, did not necessarily object to the rationale underpinning Palmerston’s note to Bulwer – ‘I don't object to the thing, I do object to the manner in which it was done’ – he was instead convinced that the affair had been mishandled. Language was important, because the Spanish ‘are a gallant nation, peculiarly jealous of independence — sensitive upon the point of honour’. If Palmerston wished to achieve his goals, then ‘it would have been wiser to have held different language’, rather than what Peel perceived as ‘an abruptness in the original letter’ twinned with ‘expressions assuming a tone of superiority which are I think calculated to offend that gallant nation.’ *Ibid*, cc. 406-407.

which records that my country is in a humiliated state.'[183] If Parliament believed the country humiliated, Spain would discern that London had erred, and would be unlikely to grant even the smallest form of satisfaction.

Palmerston agreed with much of this interpretation, noting that Bankes intended the House of Commons 'to affirm a resolution that this country is in a state of humiliation. That is certainly not a mode in which, in my opinion, his object can be accomplished.'[184] Palmerston did defend both his own conduct and that of Bulwer, though he cast some doubt on the judgement of the latter, when he explained that his now infamous despatch to the ambassador was not meant to be read word-for-word to the Spanish Government.[185] Yet, Palmerston did insist that Bulwer had acted correctly, noting the difficulty, to that point, in getting the Spanish to heed British communiques. Palmerston observed that some believed 'I evinced a want of proper spirit on the occasion', others 'that I should have shown myself more offended by the conduct of the Spanish Government', while others still 'that I was too much offended, and that I exhibited in my communication too great an indication of a sense of offence.'[186] Palmerston clarified his own position on the matter, arguing 'this was not a case in which the British Government believed themselves offended.' He concluded by both accepting responsibility for Bulwer's conduct, and reiterating his approval of the ambassador's policy.[187]

Some newspapers presented the 5 June debate in grandiose terms, testifying to its immense importance.[188] Others argued the entire debate had been a waste of time.[189] Those that did

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[183] *Ibid*, cc. 408-409.
[184] Viscount Palmerston, *Ibid*, cc. 410-411.
[185] 'It was a text upon which Sir H. Bulwer was to speak; but it was not intended, when written, to be presented just in the shape in which it was given in.' *Ibid*, cc. 411-412. This position was also expressed by Whig allies in the Lords. Lord Brougham had thus explained that 'When Lord Palmerston recommended Mr. Bulwer, "if a fitting opportunity offers" to do so-and-so, he did not mean that it was to be when Mr. Bulwer should have the rare opportunity of being possessed of a clean sheet of white writing paper, and a tolerably good pen, and a spoonful of ink. That was not, certainly, what Lord Palmerston meant; but that his opportunity would be when a conversation might be conveniently and naturally introduced, whilst he should be in private interview with the Spanish Minister; that it should be when he had an opportunity of speaking with the Minister of Spain, and talking over the matter in that delicate and discreet way which was likely to effect his object without giving offence.' HL Deb 05 May 1848 vol 98, cc. 700-701.
[186] *Ibid*, cc. 416-417.
[187] *Ibid*, cc. 417-418.
[188] The *Sun* asked whether there had ever been such a debate 'which will have attracted an attention so universal and paramount' as that of 5 June. The *Sun* argued that 'It was a discussion, in several particulars, without any parallel whatever.' Yet, while noting the significance of the government taking responsibility for Bulwer's discretion, the fact that Bankes' Motion was withdrawn was 'quite expressive of the opinion entertained upon this quarrelsome correspondence throughout the country.' The *Sun*, 6 June 1848.
[189] 'Never was the public time more wantonly and fruitlessly wasted, nor patriotic indignation more heroically useless, in its virtuous hostility to Spain, since the days when Captain Jenkins was ordered down to the bar of the House of Commons, with one of his ears in his waistcoat pocket.' *Morning Chronicle*, 6

take more notice of the insult were thus significant in their exceptionalism.[190] The Tory *Morning Post* asserted that 'we shall demand ample satisfaction for the gross insult,' and 'in the event of a refusal we will take it by force.' The government must pursue satisfaction in this manner, the *Post* warned, 'unless they are prepared to render the British name a byword among nations, unless they wish to make the world believe that England is upon her last legs and unable to resent a gross affront.' If the Spanish insult went unanswered, this would 'mightily increase their prestige and lower the character of England.'[191] Liberal weekly the *Era* declared: 'the national honour has received a wound, and it must be redressed or somehow healed,' and it saw nothing 'to justify the insolence of the Spaniard, and no reason for tamely brooking his wanton and outrageous disregard of all the obligations he owes us.'[192]

The Conservative *Leeds Times* lamented that Russell 'strives to turn the whole affair into a joke – and a very sad joke it is.' The debate in the Commons was 'feeble and unsatisfactory' with 'no heartiness in the attack or the defence', and 'It is to the meddlesome spirit in which our foreign policy is conducted that we owe this humiliation, and the necessity of submitting to it without demanding reparation.' An editorial in the same paper catastrophised the incident in hyperbolic language, asserting that 'The outrage on the national honour, is such as England has not had to suffer for centuries,' while blaming 'pacific principles' for the government's timidity in provoking an insult and then shying away from its consequences. Russell's government 'are compelled to skulk out of the dilemma as well as they can – certainly with little credit to themselves.' It noted that Russell's proposal 'to laugh the affair off' does 'not accord very well with national dignity.' Russell could 'devise no means of

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June 1848. 'We were really very silly to have been in any pain for Lord Palmerston or Sir Henry Bulwer.' 'The fact is, the debate was not a serious one. And of those who joined in it no one seemed to have a higher or more serious object than to make a speech.' Regarding Disraeli's contribution, 'the house was more delighted with the malice than touched by the truth of what he said.' *Daily News*, 6 June 1848.

[190] The *Globe* interpreted the debate as evidence that 'no difference has existed between the political leaders of the two great parties in this country with regard to the general principles on which our foreign policy has been conducted towards Spain,' but made no mention of the insult at the heart of the incident. The *Globe*, 6 June 1848. The *Standard* described Bankes as 'the advocate of the honour of this country, which requires that the unprecedented affront that we have sustained be submitted to with a candid acknowledgement of its justice, if it have been justified by adequate provocation, or indignantly resented if it have been wrongful.' Yet, it spent greater attention on the 'curious' support given by Peel to the government's position, than on the Spanish insult itself. *London Evening Standard*, 6 June 1848. The *Caledonian Mercury* adopted a middle course, reasoning that 'it is well' that Britain had not taken 'high offence to the indignity offered to our Ambassador', and believing 'to go to war with Spain about the affair would be very ridiculous.' And yet, 'the national honour requires that the whole question should be investigated by Parliament', and what mattered now was whether British interference warranted the Spanish reaction, noting that if Palmerston's approach was in fact just, then Spain's behaviour 'is tenfold aggravated.' *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 June 1848.

[191] *Morning Post*, 6 June 1848.

[192] The *Era*, 4 June 1848.

resenting the insult, or obtaining reparation', and that therefore 'the Premier of England proposes to pocket the insult offered to the national dignity, and get up a laugh', but that such a laugh would not last.[193]

The Times complained that 'no one seriously grappled' with the insult, adding that Russell's comments were 'extremely unsatisfactory.' The onus was on the Prime Minister to make it clear that the 'deliberate insults on a British envoy' were 'not regarded by Her Majesty's Government or by the people of England as a light or indifferent matter.' But instead, Russell delivered 'a pointless and inappropriate anecdote'. *The Times* believed Russell's government were determined to take 'the lowest possible line in their conduct', and by relying upon Britain's 'unassailable dignity', the government were in fact emboldening the Spanish 'to pursue the same insolent course' in the future. This was surprising, *The Times* reflected, considering Palmerston's status as one 'who has always professed that the dignity and security of this country' were paramount. Considering the Ministerial tone of magnanimity, *The Times* warned that the Spanish 'will presume upon a forbearance they cannot understand', and there was 'no greater danger than that which arises from an apparent insensibility to foreign injuries.'[194]

Perhaps reflecting the theme of hyperbole, one contributor even asserted that the insult 'authorises' the government, 'without violation of moral right,' to seize Cuba and the Philippines as compensation for Spain's default on its foreign loans.[195] No such campaigns materialised, nor did Britain, or indeed Bulwer,[196] materially suffer from the incident. The sheer volume of activity in Europe may have shielded the government from such consequences, but one could argue that Russell's position of forbearance enabled Britain to avoid a costly campaign – this was strategically sensible in a time of European instability.[197] As *The Times* discerned, it was an objectively surprising position to take, given Palmerston's record of deploying his uncompromising rhetoric in recent memory. It might be expected that Palmerston would meet his critics by emphasising the Spanish insult, and fomenting

[193] *Leeds Times*, 10 June 1848.
[194] *The Times*, 7 June 1848.
[195] *The Times*, 8 June 1848.
[196] Bulwer's diplomatic career continued with the significant 1850 Clayton-Bulwer Treaty: Richard W. Van Alstyne, 'British Diplomacy and the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, 1850-60,' *Journal of Modern History*, 11, No. 2 (Jun., 1939), 149-183; G. F. Hickson, 'Palmerston and the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty,' *Cambridge Historical Journal,* 3, No. 3 (1931), 295-303. Bulwer also served as Russian ambassador following the Crimean War: Laurence Guymer, 'A Question Presenting a Host of Difficulties: Sir Henry Bulwer, Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe and the Danubian Principalities, 1856–1858,' *History*, 96, No. 321 (Jan 2011), 26-47.
[197] Helge Berger and Mark Spoerer, 'Economic Crises and the European Revolutions of 1848,' *Journal of Economic History*, 61, No. 2 (Jun., 2001), 293-326

public desire for vindication as he had towards China and the United States, or, indeed, as he did towards Greece two years later. Yet, the Foreign Secretary effectively stood down. He deactivated the traditional machinery of vindication, and stated explicitly that Britain took no offence. Perhaps the Foreign Secretary gambled that the steady flow of tumultuous foreign news, twinned with the divided state of the Conservatives, would provide the necessary political protection.[198] If so, his assessment proved correct, and Bulwer's predicament disappeared from the debate hereafter.

Yet these exchanges do shed significant light upon the honour-script. Was it a belief system which could be bypassed by specific circumstances, or were contemporaries constrained to justify their positions within its rhetorical framework? Notably, Ministers never discounted the importance or value of national honour; they instead positioned forbearance as a benefit of Britain's privileged position, and as an example of British virtue in the face of Spanish ingratitude. The traditional formula of demanding satisfaction was not pursued, yet Parliament did not confirm British humiliation, and Spain did not take advantage of a 'forbearance they cannot understand' by pressing for greater concessions. This suggests that the honour-script could be adapted to circumstances, and was not as rigid as Avner Offer claimed. Yet, it could be argued that in 1848, Britain engaged with the 'alternative scripts of honour' that Offer observed, which included those of 'timely concession, of conciliation, cooperation, and trust.'[199] This rare instance of moderation was facilitated by the rhetoric of honour, which emphasised forbearance and magnanimity above all.

While defending this magnanimity in Parliament, Palmerston had declared 'I should rather be blamed for being too tardy in taking offence, than for being too prone and prompt to pick a quarrel on such grounds with a foreign nation.'[200] This position was tested when in 1850, the Foreign Secretary seized upon an insult delivered to a British subject in Greece, thereby facilitating a new crisis. This Don Pacifico Affair featured the same familiar determination to vindicate insult as previous incidents. Where Bulwer's plight required no vindication, Greece was afforded no such forbearance. The case suggested that insult, much like national honour itself, was in the eye of the beholder.

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[198] Britain did not escape unaffected from 1848. See Miles Taylor, 'The 1848 Revolutions and the British Empire,' *Past & Present*, No. 166 (Feb., 2000), 146-180.
[199] Offer, 'Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honor?', 236.
[200] Viscount Palmerston, HC Deb 5 June 1848 vol 99, cc. 417-418.

2.3: Rhetoric and Redress in the Don Pacifico Affair (1850)

During the 1847 Orthodox Easter festivities in Athens, an anti-Semitic mob broke into the home of David Pacifico, attacking him and causing extensive damage to his property. Through his birth in Gibraltar, Pacifico claimed British citizenship, but failed to acquire compensation from local Greek authorities for several years, despite the British resident pressing his case on Palmerston.[201] Palmerston kept the quarrel alive, reminding the Greeks of their obligations, even as they requested assistance from Britain.[202] In April 1849, Sir Thomas Wyse was appointed as British ambassador to Athens, and Palmerston tasked him with acquiring redress, though the Greeks remained unhelpful.[203] By November Palmerston had lost patience, and he ordered the British Mediterranean fleet to sail for the Greek coast, where it anchored in January 1850. Its mission – as prescribed by Palmerston – was to coerce King Otho's regime into satisfying several British claims, with Don Pacifico's foremost among them.[204]

The fleet enacted a limited blockade of the country from mid-January, outraging Russia and France, who had signed an 1832 Treaty upholding Greek independence and territorial integrity. Otho's government continued to resist, and appealed to Russia and France, presenting Britain's demands as sudden and unreasonable, to Wyse's fury.[205] Having roused

[201] Dolphus Whitten, Jr., 'The Don Pacifico Affair,' *The Historian*, 48, No. 2 (Feb 1986), 255-258.
[202] When a Greek subject was attacked in Cairo in 1848, and Athens appealed to Britain for assistance, Palmerston levelled veiled accusations of hypocrisy, and did not hide his irritation 'Her Majesty's Government cannot refrain from expressing their surprise that the Greek Government should ask British assistance to obtain redress for wrongs sustained by Greek subjects, while the Greek Government is evading to grant redress for wrongs sustained in Greece by British subjects and Her Majesty's Government cannot but remark that there is as little of dignity in the application for aid made by the Greek Government as there is justice in the denial of redress.' Viscount Palmerston to Sir Edmund Lyons, 19 Feb 1848 in Albert M. Hyamson, 'Don Pacifico,' *Transactions (Jewish Historical Society of England)*, 18 (1953-55), 5.
[203] *Ibid*, 7
[204] Palmerston was consistent in his justification of the escalation, repeatedly insisting on redress in his correspondence to both British and foreign diplomats, and refusing to take Greek promises at face value. *Ibid*, 12-14; 15-16; 19. It is noteworthy that Palmerston did not seek the overdue payment of Greek debts, and this message was clarified by the Marquess of Lansdowne in the House of Lords, who explained that the current measures: 'had not been adopted for the purpose of procuring the repayment of the loan so long due from Greece to this country, but for the purpose of procuring redress of grievances founded on facts which were indisputable; and…our claim for redress was declared to be well founded by the best and highest legal authorities to which it had been referred.' Lansdowne, HL Deb 4 Feb 1850 vol 108, cc. 261-262. Palmerston stated this explicitly, insisting that 'the case of a loan was different from that of injuries sustained by British subjects.' HC Deb 4 June 1850 vol 111, cc. 719-720.
[205] Wyse complained that 'The British Government is still represented as having made a sudden and peremptory demand, within twenty hours, for compensation, to an enormous and unproved amount, to a Jew of doubtful nationality; all notice of previous remonstrances and continued indifferences on the part of the Greek Government continues to be suppressed, and the conclusion is drawn that these demands are mere pretexts set up to conceal a design to subvert (by fomenting discontent and embarrassing the public revenues) the present order of things, to dethrone the King and convert the Kingdom into a British dependency etc.' *Ibid*, 10.

much of Europe against him, Palmerston accepted French 'good offices' in mid-February. Negotiations between the British and Greeks began in London, mediated by the French ambassador, and by April the London Agreement appeared to settle the dilemma.[206] However, Ambassador Wyse had conducted parallel negotiations in Athens, and arrived at a more beneficial arrangement, bypassing those French efforts.[207] With French 'good offices' embarrassed,[208] its ambassador quit London in protest, adding to the sense of diplomatic crisis.[209] Albert Hyamson observed that the differences between the London and Athens agreements were 'in effect small, but these were also matters of prestige,' and 'amidst much talk of French honour,' Anglo-French relations reached a new low.[210]

Although it was understood that 'the honour of England required that efforts should be made by England herself to rescue her own countrymen,' the quest for redress was less politically straightforward.[211] Opposition figures expressed concern that the 'honour and good faith of England' had been imperilled by the Anglo-French confrontation, and recommended a full investigation.[212] Seeking resolution despite an escalating 'press war,' Palmerston conceded French requirements, and reverted in early June to the London Agreement as the basis for the settlement of Don Pacifico's claims.[213] This section will focus on the four-day House of Commons debate which began on 24 June. Geoffrey Hicks believed these debates provided 'an unusually detailed example of front- and back-bench Protectionist opinion on foreign affairs,'[214] but they also represent an ideal opportunity to gauge how the rhetoric of honour

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[206] *Ibid*, 21. Palmerston claimed before the Commons that the negotiations were 'entirely closed.' HC Deb 16 May 1850 vol 111, cc. 105-106.
[207] Wyse claimed that this was not deliberate, since Baron Gros had not kept him informed of developments in London and it was 'entirely and emphatically untrue' that the terms of the London Convention had been communicated to him. The *Daily News* also charged that *The Times* was to blame for the deterioration in Anglo-French relations, since it took Baron Gros' claims to have informed Wyse about the London Convention at face value. *Daily News*, 19 June 1850.
[208] The French Foreign Minister complained to the British ambassador in Paris that 'you have made us the laughing-stock of Europe,' Hyamson, 'Don Pacifico,' 22.
[209] The incident happened to fall on Queen Victoria's birthday, and the French ambassador in Berlin also refused to attend a ball marking this occasion, explaining that 'he would not remain a moment in the service of his Government unless such explanations were obtained from the British Government as would satisfy him that the honour of his country had been respected.' *Ibid*, 23. Ministers attempted to explain the French ambassador's sudden departure, but Disraeli insisted before the Commons that 'his recall was occasioned by conduct on the part of the British Government, supposed to be derogatory to the honour of the French Republic.' Benjamin Disraeli, HC Deb 17 May 1850 vol 111, cc. 161-162.
[210] Albert M. Hyamson, 'Don Pacifico,' 24.
[211] Sir Robert Inglis, HC Deb 5 Feb 1850 vol 108, cc. 388-389.
[212] Sir John Walsh, HC Deb 23 May 1850 vol 111, cc. 250-251.
[213] Hyamson, 'Don Pacifico,' 25-26.
[214] Geoffrey Hicks, 'Don Pacifico, Democracy, and Danger: The Protectionist Party Critique of British Foreign Policy, 1850-1852,' *International History Review*, 26, No. 3 (Sep., 2004), 519-520.

was used, and the extent to which the honour-script was adhered to by Palmerston and his allies.

This pivotal debate occurred in the context of a Parliamentary crisis in confidence, as Lord Stanley presented a Motion to the House of Lords on 17 June, which charged that 'various claims against the Greek Government, doubtful in point of justice or exaggerated in amount, have been enforced by coercive measures directed against the commerce and people of Greece,' which were 'calculated to endanger the continuance of our friendly relations with other Powers.'[215] When this Motion passed, it suggested that Palmerston's tenure as Foreign Secretary was in jeopardy. Yet his colleagues rallied to his side, and Lord Russell informed the Queen that the Cabinet was collectively responsible for the Foreign Secretary's policy.[216] Rather than resign, the Cabinet would fight in the Commons, where Palmerston's career and the Whig government's future was at stake.[217]

While Stanley's Motion provided a preview of the opposition's attack lines, these had also been anticipated in the preceding months. Stanley had criticised the exercise of forbearance towards Spain, yet this did not stop him requesting forbearance be granted to Greece, on the grounds of its weakness.[218] Palmerston was blamed for a heightened sensitivity, which led to the deterioration of British relations with the other major powers.[219] It was also common for those figures to criticise the legitimacy of Pacifico's claims as the cause of European

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[215] Lord Stanley, HL Deb 17 June 1850 vol 111, cc. 1232-1233.
[216] Lord John Russell to Viscount Palmerston, 22 May 1850 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 53, pp. 299-300.
[217] Chambers, *Palmerston,* pp. 319-320.
[218] Lord Stanley lamented that 'we had proceeded to acts of injustice and violence against a friendly foreign Power, or rather, he should say, a weak friendly foreign State, the very weakness of which State should have been the strongest inducement upon our part to exercise the greatest forbearance, whose peculiar position rendered any misunderstanding with regard to the affairs of Greece a matter of more importance than it might be from the importance of the State itself.' Lord Stanley, HL Deb 4 Feb 1850 vol 108, cc. 258-259. The Marquess of Lansdowne agreed that while 'no proceeding could be more unworthy of the Government of a great country than to exact from a weaker State that satisfaction which it would not require from a stronger,' it would have been 'disgraceful to the British character to have failed to insist upon the reparation required.' Marquess of Lansdowne, *Ibid*, cc. 262-263. Independent Conservative Henry Drummond argued that 'many cases may arise in which it would be impossible to put up altogether with an insult from a weaker Power,' while reasoning that 'Every one sides with the weaker party.' Henry Drummond, HC Deb 23 May 1850 vol 111, cc. 255-256.
[219] Earl of Aberdeen, HL Deb 4 Feb 1850 vol 108, cc. 266-267. Palmerston defended his policy, asserting that 'though we accepted the good offices of France, we accepted them for the purpose and in the hope of obtaining, by her friendly intervention, that satisfaction which we had begun to endeavour to obtain by the employment of our naval force,' and 'we could not abandon any of our demands.' HC Deb 23 May 1850 vol 111, cc. 242-243. Conservative Young Englander George Smythe believed that 'throughout his negotiations the noble Lord has marked his policy by jealousy and distrust, and insult towards that Government.' *Ibid*, cc. 253-254. Henry Drummond declared 'It is the honour of the Crown which is at stake—it is a question of peace or war,' and he condemned the 'pot valour,' which he believed had damaged Anglo-French relations. *Ibid*, cc. 256-257.

discord.[220] The typical delay in producing official documentation likely added to the opposition's frustration.[221] However, the government did enjoy support from unlikely sources, including the Radical Thomas Anstey who 'was satisfied that it would have been a national dishonour if the Government had remained inactive, and had not taken up the claims of those parties, and done their best to obtain redress.'[222]

His fellow Radical John Roebuck introduced the debate to the Commons on 24 June, referencing the government's ability to 'maintain the honour and dignity of this country,' while, during such difficult circumstances, it had also preserved peace.[223] This recast the Motion as a test of Palmerston's record in office, and ensured Members would not judge him solely on his performance in the Greek affair. Where opposition figures claimed Palmerston's behaviour ran contrary to international law, Roebuck challenged the validity of this concept,[224] while levelling a veiled charge of hypocrisy against France for its effort to block British vindication.[225] Had France not recently used its fleet to acquire redress for French subjects wronged in Senegal, Mexico, and San Salvador? Had she not also coerced Portugal, a European state comparable to Greece, in a similar manner?[226] The Portuguese case was particularly relevant, as British statesmen in the early 1830s had explicitly acknowledged France's right to vindicate her honour, the Anglo-Portuguese alliance notwithstanding.[227] Should France not reciprocate when Britain sought satisfaction against Greece? In the face of Greek recalcitrance, Roebuck declared, 'We forbore to take measures for enforcing satisfaction, knowing our own strength; but these successive demands remaining unanswered and unheeded, made us impatient.'[228]

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[220] Benjamin Disraeli discerned an ulterior motive in Palmerston's behaviour, suggesting that 'no sane man thinks the Greek claims are anything but a pretext—no one of sane mind can suppose that a powerful armament of Britain was suddenly brought into the waters of the Mediterranean to advocate the somewhat ludicrous and suspicious claims of Mr. Pacifico. Some cause, not stated, seems to have been at the bottom of this demonstration… It seems to have been necessary, in the opinion of the Government, that a great demonstration of the power of England last year should be made in the Mediterranean seas.' *Ibid*, cc. 258-259.
[221] Lord Stanley was dissuaded from tabling a Motion on Greek affairs several times. HL Deb 15 March 1850 vol 109, cc. 944-945; HL Deb 13 May 1850 vol 110, 1374-1375; HL Deb 6 June 1850 vol 111, cc. 796-799.
[222] Thomas Anstey, HC Deb 8 April 1850 vol 110, cc. 14-15.
[223] John Roebuck, HC Deb, 24 June 1850 vol 112, cc. 255-256.
[224] 'The law of nations, I take to be, accurately speaking, no law. It is a system of general morality in which the rules are of necessity vague, and depend rather on the discretion of the country than to be settled by any tribunal, for there is no tribunal competent.' *Ibid*, cc. 238-239.
[225] *Ibid*, cc. 239-240.
[226] Roebuck also made this argument with reference to American behaviour towards Portugal and Naples, demonstrating the common nature of this behaviour. *Ibid*, cc. 240-242.
[227] See Chapter One.
[228] Roebuck, HC Deb, 24 June 1850 vol 112, cc. 242-243.

Former Attorney General Frederick Thesiger replied by asserting 'there was no course of policy that ever had been pursued more likely to embroil us with all nations, or which had, he regretted to say, resulted in a deeper humiliation.'[229] Thesiger reiterated the point that Greece was 'a very humble Power indeed', and he wished 'that that very circumstance, considering the generosity we were always willing to attribute to ourselves, should have induced the noble Lord to abstain' from 'the threats, and the haughty and imperious language, and from the menaces,' which Palmerston 'would not have ventured to use to any strong Power.'[230] The Foreign Secretary had thus mixed cowardice with belligerence, and 'there was no ground for saying that the Greek Government should be called upon to make compensation, and which, if it was refused, should be forced by aggressive means.'[231] Thesiger concluded by claiming that Palmerston's policy, 'so far from adopting a course which was calculated to maintain the honour and dignity of this country, had compromised and degraded it', while Palmerston had 'done everything he possibly could to embroil us with other nations.'[232]

The *Daily News* wondered 'how the question ever recovered from his [Thesiger's] prosy stupidity.'[233] There was certainly room to criticise Thesiger for suggesting that no precedent existed for Palmerston's pursuit of redress, or that Greece should receive special treatment owing to its limited strength. Whig statesman Western Wood disputed the Lords' verdict 'that the honour of England was not in safe keeping,' that 'the Commons of England had been regardless of it,' or that 'the Government had impaired the honour and dignity of the Crown,' since in his view 'they would have detracted from the one and lessened the other if they had hesitated to vindicate the rights of British subjects, which had been so long and so grievously violated in Greece.'[234] Wood challenged whether the Commons would suggest 'that they upheld the honour and the dignity of England, by permitting British subjects to be treated in this lawless and barbarous manner?'[235]

He then attacked the idea that, with Greek behaviour 'amounting, as it did, almost to an insult to the British flag,' Britons were told 'that we were not to notice it, because the Power

[229] Sir Frederick Thesiger, *Ibid*, cc. 263-264.
[230] *Ibid*, cc. 264-265.
[231] *Ibid*, cc. 273-274.
[232] *Ibid*, cc. 282-283. Thesiger also noted that while Aberdeen had previously used belligerent language with regard to the Greek loan, this was secured by Treaty, whereas Palmerston's policy had no basis in Treaty.
[233] *Daily News*, 25 June 1850.
[234] Western Wood, HC Deb 24 June 1850 vol 112, cc. 286-287.
[235] *Ibid*, cc. 287-288.

which inflicted the injury was a smaller one than ours, and not able to compete with us upon equal terms.' Wood complained that 'we were told we ought to forgive and forget, and, unmindful of the Powers in the background, pass over the insults, in order that the honour and dignity of England might be maintained.' He charged that 'those who had arrived at the resolution in the other House, must have had a very singular idea of what honour and dignity really were, or they must have been grossly misled'.[236] This was no time for forbearance, because Greece had 'made use of her weakness in order to give her that factitious strength to insult that State which had been her original protector.' She would have to be shown that while Britain 'was long patient and forbearing, because she was powerful, and could afford to be so,' still 'that the time must come when she could no longer forbear from obtaining redress for injuries, wherever her aegis of protection extended.'[237] As Russell had established two years before, there were limits to British forbearance.

On the second day of the debate, Palmerston delivered 'one of the ablest speeches ever addressed to the representatives of the British people,' which was 'worthy of the greatest English Minister in the best days of our history.'[238] The Foreign Secretary contested the conclusions of the Lords, and asserted the justice of overseas Britons requesting their home country's assistance in acquiring redress.[239] In line with this, he reminded Members that Don Pacifico 'wanted redress, not revenge,' a credible stance with established precedents.[240] When satisfaction of any kind was thus denied, 'this was a case in which we were justified in calling on the Greek Government for compensation for the losses,' yet 'the Greek Government denied altogether the principle of the claim,' thus leaving him with no choice but to act.[241] Reverting to coercive measures when satisfaction was not forthcoming was certainly consistent with the honour-script. Palmerston also justified the use of blockade,

[236] *Ibid*, cc. 288-289. Wood was adamant that 'it could not be allowed, because another State was weak, that it should insult the English flag, and should do all that under the guardianship of Russia.' Insisting that a blockade was a merciful method of acquiring redress, Wood asserted that 'the right course therefore was to put forth the power and strength which she [Greece] believed we dare not exercise'. He reminded Members that this course had only been taken 'after our letters had remained unanswered for years', while 'everybody but ourselves had perceived that the time was come when it was impossible for England to delay any longer to take the only step that could vindicate the honour and dignity of the country, and preserve peace.' *Ibid*, cc. 300-301.
[237] *Ibid*, cc. 303-304.
[238] *Morning Post*, 26 June 1850.
[239] Viscount Palmerston, HC Deb 25 June 1850 vol 112, cc. 380-382.
[240] *Ibid*, cc. 395-396.
[241] *Ibid*, cc. 396-397.

believing that the disparity in naval force made capitulation less inherently humiliating to Athens.[242]

Palmerston made additional efforts to legitimise his policy, noting that Russian Foreign Minister Nesselrode 'admits that he was aware, as long ago as 1847, that our patience might be exhausted, and that we might have recourse to coercive measures against Greece to enforce our claims'. Even more significant, Palmerston underlined how Nesselrode 'would have endeavoured to persuade the Greek Government to come to an amicable settlement with us', and if these had been unsuccessful, Russia 'could not then have expected that we should indefinitely postpone coercive measures out of deference to her.'[243] With his audience sensing the apogee of his lengthy performance when the Foreign Secretary began speaking without notes,[244] Palmerston then challenged Members to determine whether…

> …as the Roman, in days of old, held himself free from indignity, when he could say Civis Romanus sum; so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England, will protect him against injustice and wrong.[245]

Government allies assumed this defence when the debate resumed on 27 June, reiterating the connection between British subjects and national honour, and criticising French intentions.[246] Sir George Grey commented on forbearance, reasoning that Greece had

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[242] The Foreign Secretary then addressed the controversy stemming from the optics of the Royal Navy overawing its smaller, weaker target. 'Does the smallness of a country justify the magnitude of its evil acts?' and when British subjects 'suffer violence, outrage, plunder in a country which is small and weak, you are to tell them when they apply for redress, that the country is so weak and so small that we cannot ask it for compensation?' Plainly, this could not stand, and Palmerston mocked the notion that 'We are to be generous to those who have been ungenerous to you; and we cannot give you redress because we have such ample and easy means of procuring it.' Considering this, was it not 'more consistent with the honour and dignity of the Government on whom we made those demands' that 'there should be placed before their eyes a force, which it would be vain to resist, and before which it would be no indignity to yield?' This use of overwhelming force also rebounded to Britain's dignity, since 'so far from thinking that the amount of the force which happened to be on the spot was any aggravation of what is called the indignity of our demand', the Greek government 'ought rather to have considered it as diminishing the humiliation, whatever it might be, of being obliged to give at last to compulsion, that which had been so long refused to entreaty.' *Ibid*, cc. 397-398.
[243] *Ibid*, cc. 404-405. Chambers wrote that Russia had persuaded the Greek government to capitulate when Wyse reimposed the blockade. Chambers, *Palmerston*, p. 318.
[244] Chambers, *Palmerston*, p. 321.
[245] Palmerston, HC Deb 25 June 1850 vol 112, cc. 444-445.
[246] Liberally inclined former soldier Sir Henry Verney asserted that 'every Englishman resident abroad will feel that over him the broad shield of British protection is cast, so long as he does that which is right' while 'every foreign Government will feel that its proceedings are observed by a vigilant eye, which watches especially any attempt that may encroach on British independence, or interfere with the safety, honour, or happiness of our countrymen.' Sir Harry Verney, HC Deb 27 June 1850 vol 112, cc. 489-490. Baron Gros, the French ambassador to Greece, 'prides himself on having reduced the pretentions of England', and 'appears rather desirous of affording the to the Government of France a triumph, than of accomplishing the object for which he was appointed.' *Ibid*, cc. 492-493. Sir George Grey linked the fate of British subjects

assumed upon British magnanimity, which it had then taken advantage of.[247] Grey also reminded his audience that while it was the 'interest and duty' of the Government to maintain friendly relations with its neighbours, 'those friendly relations ought not to be maintained at the sacrifice of the individual rights of a British subject, and still less of the national interest and honour.'[248] The rejection of Roebuck's Motion would mean 'a total change of policy', and Grey urged his audience to 'take heed how they impose on any future Government the obligation to adopt a policy fatal to the interests, the honour, and the character of this country', which a rejection of the Motion would entail. To do other than accede to Roebuck's Motion would mean the potential rejection of principles 'the maintenance of which we have hitherto deemed essential to the honour and character of the country.'[249]

Unlike the Spanish case, the Peelite faction was not now supportive.[250] Sir Robert Peel disagreed that 'the course which the Government has pursued is the course best calculated to maintain the honour and dignity of this country, or to maintain peace with foreign nations.'[251] 'I admit you may have had the right', Peel conceded, but he discerned that 'if

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with the national honour more explicitly, when he discerned that 'questions affecting the rights of individual British subjects, do frequently become questions which affect the interests, honour, and dignity of the country,' and thus they could not be treated 'in the way in which the claims of British subjects in Greece have been treated in this and the other House of Parliament, but must be regarded with reference to the important, because national, principle involved in them.' Sir George Grey, *Ibid*, cc. 536-538. On the final day of the debate, Lord John Russell's ally Sir Alexander Cockburn observed that British subjects were 'most unquestionably entitled to redress from the Government of the country in which they happened to be at the time they sustained such a wrong', and that if the native Government would not redress those wrongs, 'it was only the right and bounden duty of the Government of this country to interfere on behalf of its subjects, and to obtain redress for the wrongs which they had suffered.' Such a principle was neither unusual nor unprecedented, indeed Cockburn took it 'to be a fundamental principle in the policy of all nations, that it is the right and duty of a State to protect its subjects against injuries sustained at the hands of other States, or subjects of such States.' Furthermore, Cockburn insisted that 'This has been the principle upon which nations have acted in all ages.' Sir Alexander Cockburn, HC Deb 28 June 1850 vol 112, cc. 613-614.

[247] Grey underlined the documented instances 'in which other countries have shown much less forbearance than England under somewhat similar circumstances.' Reflecting perhaps on the dangers of forbearance, Grey claimed 'It really appears as if the forbearance of England has been carried so far as to have led to the supposition that force would never be resorted to in order to obtain redress for her subjects,' and that 'therefore the remonstrances of the British Government were disregarded.' *Ibid*, cc. 537-538.

[248] *Ibid*, cc. 542-543.

[249] *Ibid*, cc. 543-544.

[250] William Gladstone challenged whether Palmerston's job description really did require him to be the kind of Foreign Secretary who 'like some gallant knight at a tournament of old,' challenged 'all comers for the sake of his honour, and having no other duty than to lay as many as possible of his adversaries sprawling in the dust?' Palmerston's duty was to 'conciliate peace with dignity'. He was supposed to 'observe, and to exalt in honour among mankind, that great code of principles which is termed the law of nations', which Gladstone believed was the 'noble monument of human wisdom', and which was by its nature 'a precious inheritance bequeathed to us by the generations that have gone before us'. To violate such laws would create a situation 'unfavourable even to the security of British subjects resident abroad', and contrary to Palmerston's assertions, the logical conclusion of his interventionist policy would also be 'unfavourable to the dignity of the country' and the peace of the world. William Gladstone, *Ibid*, cc. 587-588.

[251] Sir Robert Peel, HC Deb 28 June 1850 vol 112, cc. 681-682.

every country will have recourse to force to obtain its rights, there is no guarantee for the peace of Europe for a single day.' Conciliation and cooperation – if not arbitration – could thus be pursued with Britain's rivals in its quest for satisfaction, without the compromise of national honour. Had they followed such a policy, 'you would have avoided those rebukes which were administered to you by Russia and France, and which I cannot read without pain', and thus Peel concluded that it was 'utterly impossible, with any regard for the truth,' for him to 'express any positive approbation of your policy, and declare that the course you have been taking is consistent with the maintenance of the honour and dignity of this country.'[252] This was consistent with Peelite support of the moderate reaction to the Spanish insult, yet it was somewhat disingenuous to call for conciliation now when the Greek government had proved so unwilling to engage with these incentives in the past.

Lord John Russell emphasised the extent of Greek insult to make this point, arguing that the opposition had lost sight of the main thrust of Palmerston's policy towards Pacifico. 'The first question with respect to all these claims, it appears to me, is, has the man suffered grievous injury and wrong?' Russell reasoned that Don Pacifico had. 'The second question is, can he obtain from the ordinary justice in the country in which he is a resident a remedy for that wrong?' Russell observed that he had not, yet 'These are the two important questions', while the wrong Pacifico suffered 'was a very grievous one', for which 'he did not procure redress.'[253] Even if Pacifico's claims had been exaggerated, 'by a principle of the law of nations he was entitled to redress through the intervention of his own Government.' What would be said abroad, Russell challenged, 'if we should entirely abandon the principle which the Foreign Secretary of State for this country from time immemorial has asserted…What would be the consequence?'[254]

Russell's support for the Motion was thus informed by precedents of international law and justice, in the interest of protecting British subjects abroad. Russell turned to the behaviour of the Greek Government itself, and Palmerston's reaction to that behaviour. 'I have stated already that we thought it our duty no longer to permit those insults to continue', Russell declared. He reflected on Greece's general unhelpfulness in the past, asserting 'that even on the ground of the common courtesy which nations pay to one another,' Athens 'ought at least to have answered our ambassador's letters. That they did not do so looks very like as if an

[252] *Ibid*, cc. 687-688.
[253] Lord John Russell, *Ibid*, cc. 700-701.
[254] *Ibid*, cc. 703-704.

insult must have been intended.'[255] Russell then focused on the government's record, and asserted that if it was found that his administration had 'for four years been sacrificing the honour and endangering the peace of the country', then that administration could not be allowed to continue in office. Of course, Russell was 'fully convinced that we have consulted the honour of the country, and during most difficult times have preserved to you the blessings of peace.'[256]

Considering the debate through the lens of the lexicon of honour, one perceives that the opposition's main Parliamentary thrust was to criticise the coercion of a weaker power as dishonourable,[257] while charging that Palmerston's behaviour increased the likelihood of war.[258] Conversely, the Ministerial riposte emphasised Greek responsibility for its errors;[259] insisting that it was established policy to view the national honour as contingent upon the fair treatment of British subjects, while nothing should divert the quest for vindication in those circumstances.[260] Where the opposition castigated Palmerston for violating the laws of nations, Ministers replied that these laws entitled the government to guarantee the protection of Britons abroad.[261] Indeed, Parliamentary debate had established the principle that the government was dutybound to acquire redress – particularly where the targeted government had been historically recalcitrant – and the government which failed the country in this regard should be cast from office.[262]

As Lord Eddisbury had claimed in the Lords' debate of 17 June: 'Every country must be the guardian of its own honour, and judge of the proper course which it is its duty to pursue in

[255] *Ibid*, cc. 711-713.
[256] *Ibid*, cc. 718-719.
[257] As Sir Stratford Canning commented in the Lords' debate of 17 June that, 'It is easy to trump up claims against a weak neighbour; it is easy to ask for redress in terms which make compliance impossible; then follow, in natural course, threats, reprisals, hostilities; and if, at last, our interests should compel us to interfere, or our support should be asked by other Powers, what answer could we make when our own example was referred to?' HL Deb 17 June 1850 vol 111, cc. 1386-1387.
[258] Spencer Walpole, HC Deb 28 June 1850 vol 112, cc. 645-646.
[259] Greece's inability to discharge its debts moved the Earl of Beaumont to argue in the same debate: 'Had the Government adopted his advice, they would, by acknowledging the claims, have raised the national character of Greece for honesty, and prevented the loss, both in honour and in wealth, their refusal to pay a just debt had entailed upon them.' HL Deb 17 June 1850 vol 111, cc. 1375-1376.
[260] Lord Eddisbury had thus insisted in the Lords: 'It had been said that England had no right to seek redress from Greece except in conjunction with the other Powers who were the parties to the creation of that kingdom. He denied that this was the case. England had a right to independent action whenever her rights and her honour were concerned.' *Ibid*, cc. 1394-1395.
[261] Hicks, 'Don Pacifico, Democracy, and Danger,' 524-525.
[262] Disraeli even called this principle 'self-evident.' HC Deb 28 June 1850 vol 112, cc. 727-728.

vindication of its own rights.'[263] Indeed, even a brief survey of developments post-Pacifico reveals that Whigs and Tories alike maintained this principle, and received political credit for doing so.[264] It was thus possible to discern a degree of cynicism, even hypocrisy, in the opposition's attack.[265] David Brown observed that opposition figures were criticised in newspapers 'for trying to turn a question of national honour into one of party intrigue' which 'simply highlighted the extent to which the issue had come to be seen in many quarters as about Palmerston as a patriotic hero.'[266]

Regarding British newspapers, *The Times* remained consistently anti-Palmerston throughout the affair,[267] though Laurence Fenton did discern a brief 'armistice' in the aftermath of the debate.[268] With the *Morning Chronicle*'s support faltering, Palmerston depended upon the *Globe,* the *Morning Post*, the *Morning Advertiser*, and the *Daily News* for support.[269] Significantly, however, while the skill of Palmerston's five-hour speech received praise, few efforts were made to interrogate the principle of *Civis Romanus Sum*. Nor did those papers – with some exceptions – consider the implications of this idea for British national honour. Palmerston's allies attacked the absolutist conspiracy levelled against him, and castigated the Peelites and Protectionists for attempting to use the moment to acquire power.[270] Among

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[263] He elaborated further that 'the continued refusal to grant redress made it the right and duty of England to resort to such measures as usage and the law of nations prescribed for the purpose of vindicating her honour, and seeing justice done to her injured subjects.' HL Deb 17 June 1850 vol 111, cc. 1397-1398.
[264] Palmerston's confrontation with the Union during the Trent Affair is a particularly prescient example; see Chapter Four. See also Disraeli's intervention in Abyssinia: Nini Rodgers, 'The Abyssinian Expedition of 1867-1868: Disraeli's Imperialism or James Murray's War?' *Historical Journal*, 27, No. 1 (Mar., 1984), 129-149. Sir Henry Rawlinson speech before the Commons in 1867 confirmed the importance of prestige and acquiring redress for insult: HC Deb 26 July 1867 vol 189, cc. 238-245.
[265] In the sardonic judgement of the *Morning Post*, 'Had [Palmerston] and his colleagues sacrificed the interests and honour of their country to those of foreign States – had they even got up an English revolution, they might not only have escaped censure, but ensured approbation… He ought, on the contrary, to consider the honour of every Crown but that of Victoria, and the interests of every people save of her Majesty's subjects.' *Morning Post*, 28 June 1850.
[266] Brown, *Palmerston*, p. 322.
[267] On 26 June, it wrote that the Whigs had substituted 'bold assertions for reasonable proof,' and that 'The whole of the pompous apology may be described as the hundredth power of a claptrap.' *The Times*, 26 June 1850. On 27 June, judging Palmerston's speech, it complained that the Foreign Secretary 'fails to point out any fruits of his policy, except the proclamation to the whole world of a British subject's indignities and immunities, in the worst and most inappropriate instance that could possibly be selected.' *The Times*, 27 June 1850. On 28 June, it argued that 'the interests and dignity of England have been sacrificed to an immoderate zeal in setting up or pulling down certain foreign parties in foreign States.' *The Times*, 28 June 1850. Judging the government's success in Parliament on 29 June, it argued that 'The division…cannot be considered a triumph to Government,' and that 'no Government will stand long, and work well, which keeps the country ever on the brink of a European war.' *The Times*, 29 June 1850.
[268] Fenton, *Palmerston and The Times*, 116.
[269] David Brown, 'Compelling but not Controlling?: Palmerston and the Press, 1846–1855,' *History*, 86, No. 281 (Jan 2001), 41-61; 47-48.
[270] As the *Morning Post* argued: 'The honest Conservatives who voted with their noble leader in the House of Peers fondly imagined that they were paving the way for a Protectionist government. For the most part, they

the journals, only *Blackwood*'s paid the affair any attention, in a piece highly critical of the Greek government, though reluctant to fully admit the justice of Palmerston's policy.[271]

The *London Evening Standard* presented 'a very different notion of national honour – always to confess and to repair a wrong,' whether it was 'inflicted upon the powerful or the weak, but more promptly, and, if possible, more liberally in the latter case.' It required the government 'Never to abet demands unsupported by justice, whatever claims the unjust demandant may have upon you. And always speak truth without favour and without fear.' This was 'the sum of national honour as understood by our forefathers; but Lord Palmerston's Greek negotiations and their consequences will ill bear an application to this test.'[272] In the aftermath of the Lords' defeat, the *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* had argued that Palmerston's policy 'was calculated to be alike disgraceful to the fair fame and character of the country,' but that 'Happily the fame and character of the country have been redeemed,' because 'A majority of thirty-seven of the peers of England have vindicated the national honour.'[273] A meeting of Quakers in Sheffield compared the readiness to fight France with the obsolete practice of duelling, and insisted that arbitration would be more consistent with national honour.[274] Yet such interpretations were heavily contested.[275] Critics attacked *The Times* in particular, and underlined the primacy of national honour in Britain's

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knew and cared very little about the dispute with Greece… Who shall answer to the country for so disastrous a consummation?' 27 June 1850.

[271] 'Greece Again,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 67, No. 415 (May 1850), 526-539. It was argued that '[King Otho] consequently acted in such a spirit towards England, that we acknowledge a collision became unavoidable, without a sacrifice of the dignity of the British Crown. The papers laid before Parliament show, that the communications of the English Government were left unanswered for years.' *Ibid*, 531.

[272] *London Evening Standard*, 24 May 1850.

[273] *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, 22 June 1850.

[274] 'A nation had rights like individuals, and…they should be protected; but was bloodshed the best way? As to national honour, there was no true honour unconnected with goodness, and there was no true goodness in calling forth angry passions, and letting loose bloodhounds to practice on mankind every species of brutality. If our honour was insulted, he was not the wisest man who was the most quick in resentment. Let them remember the time when it was the custom of all men to go about armed, when quarrels and bloodshed were in consequence of daily occurrence. And if men were now to go about armed with swords and pistols, ready, whenever they thought their honour touched, to fight, such men would be seized and punished as disturbers of the public peace… When two men were armed to the teeth, a slight occasion would suffice to provoke a contest. And when two nations had large armaments, a comparatively small cause might easily embroil them. This state of things was a stimulus to the angry feeling, which was likely to arise from supposed insults to the national honour.' *Sheffield Independent*, 27 April 1850.

[275] 'Our solemn obligations, our national honour, must, in all events, be preserved. With nations, as with individuals, where honour is in question, interest is not to be heard. But our true, solid, and well-understood interest speaks the same language. The certain consequence of disregarding national honour is a struggle a little procrastinated, but at greater disadvantage when it does come — a struggle, not with the help of allies, for they will have been deserted and disgusted, but alone and single-handed — a struggle, not for victory, but for existence.' *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 11 Feb 1850.

relations.[276] There were certainly grounds for criticising Greek good faith in its failure to pay its debts, and though the government maintained such debt was not the issue, it arguably reduced sympathy towards King Otho's regime.[277]

The Don Pacifico debate may be considered a continuation of the preceding years' discussions concerning the defence of British subjects abroad. It was influenced in 1850 both by Lord Stanley's determination to unite the Protectionist with the Peelites over their opposition to Whig foreign policy,[278] and by Palmerston's well-documented frustrations with the intransigence of King Otho's regime.[279] This context aside, the debate was nonetheless significant because the principle was so explicitly presented and justified – in this case by a majority of 310 to 264. The defeat in the Lords – as Ministers had hoped – was thus compensated by the Commons,[280] vindicating Palmerston's policy, while casting him as the true defender of the rights and honour of travelling Britons.[281]

Where Russell's forbearance had been criticised following Bulwer's expulsion from Madrid, critics now claimed that Palmerston should have exerted more forbearance in dealing with Greece. One could argue that in the context of the dishonour at Kabul, the vindication of Captain Elliot's position at Canton, and the controversy over Alexander McLeod,[282] the

[276] The *Morning Post* decried *The Times*' efforts 'to calculate the amount of English honour by weight and measure,', asserting that 'the people of England will not estimate national right, national honour, and British liberty at so low a value as they hold in the calculations of our panic-stricken — or panic-striking — contemporary.' *Morning Post*, 5 Feb 1850.
[277] As the *Morning Post* had complained 'When a representative of a country has been offended, or its colours insulted, the national honour insist that a satisfactory reparation be required; but the national honour together with the national material interest, requires that it be not quietly tolerated when such a Government laughs at the most sacred pecuniary engagements.' *Morning Post*, 26 July 1849.
[278] Hicks, 'Don Pacifico, Democracy, and Danger,' 526-528. Stanley had to overcome political resentments established since the division of the Tories over the Corn Laws, for which Sir Robert Peel was held responsible: 'Bad as the Whigs are, unconscious as they seem of their own incapacity, and indifferent to the national honour, we would much rather see them reposing on the treasury benches than that the treacherous Baronet should ever again be placed at the helm.' *Londonderry Sentinel*, 18 Nov 1848.
[279] Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy*, p. 102. Daniel Hannell also considered Palmerston's policy towards the Ionian Islands, where the Greek government was considered to have intervened. Hannell, 'Lord Palmerston and the 'Don Pacifico Affair' of 1850: The Ionian Connection,' *European History Quarterly*, 19 (1989), 495-507. See also Hannell, 'A Case of Bad Publicity: Britain and the Ionian Islands, 1848-51,' *European History Quarterly*, 17 (1987), 131-143. For further context on the Ionian Islands see Bruce Knox, 'British Policy and the Ionian Islands, 1847-1864: Nationalism and Imperial Administration,' *English Historical Review*, 99, No. 392 (Jul., 1984), 503-529; Eleni Calligas, 'Lord Seaton's Reforms in the Ionian Islands, 1843-8: A Race With Time,' *European History Quarterly*, 24 (1994), 7-29.
[280] 'The majority in the House of Commons is sufficient to give back to the liberal party the sceptre nearly wrested from its hands. We congratulate the country upon the result, and are the more rejoiced at it from feeling, that the House of Commons has spoken by its vote the great and growing sentiment of the nation.' *Daily News*, 29 June 1850.
[281] Enthusiastic crowds cheered Palmerston's arrival at the Commons the following day. The *Globe*, 28 June 1850.
[282] See Chapter Three.

coercion of Greece was consistent Palmerstonianism. It reaffirmed the political utility of pressing foreign governments in the name of British honour, thereby asserting the honour-script's primacy. By emphasising the Greek insult and the quest for redress, Palmerston did not merely preserve the Whig government, he also secured his position as the spokesman of patriotic Britons, an essential development in his acquisition of the Premiership five years later.

Conclusion

What emerges from this analysis is a surprising variation in reaction to insults, influenced by occasionally contentious circumstances. One observes that in the case of China – and the concurrent invasion of Afghanistan – there was no question of responding alternatively than a swift campaign for satisfaction. In stark contrast, the treatment of Spain's insult to Ambassador Bulwer in 1848 presented the theme of forbearance, by no means an unprecedented idea, but certainly striking in the context of Palmerston's response to foreign insults. Finally, when addressing the long record of Greek insults, Don Pacifico's foremost among them, the Foreign Secretary pushed not for war, but a stringently enforced blockade. During the debates which followed this controversial policy, Palmerston effectively codified the principles which had underpinned foreign policy for several decades. Insults to British subjects – whether in New York, Canton, Kabul, or Athens – had long been treated as insults to the nation, but in 1850 Palmerston asserted that this principle was at the core of British rights and honour.

As if to confirm their pre-existing acceptance and popularity, these declarations granted the Foreign Secretary a political triumph, while affirming his reputation as the primary defender of these interests. This arguably made the Spanish case more exceptional, as according to *Civis Romanus Sum*, Bulwer had been blatantly maltreated by his Spanish hosts. That Palmerston and the Prime Minister pressed forbearance instead of satisfaction highlighted the limitations of the honour-script. Spain's recent receipt of British assistance and sympathy meant that a quest for satisfaction was complicated, and politically undesirable. Where statesmen possessed sufficient strategic incentives, it appears, the honour-script could be ignored. This did not mean the rhetoric of honour was absent; nor did it shield the government from bypassing this familiar formula. In the end, however, the government

shrugged off the 'unparalleled' insult, and suffered no appreciable political or military consequences.

This could be contrasted with Greece, which had neglected to fulfil its financial obligations for years, and consistently failed to provide the redress legally due to British subjects. Don Pacifico's plight was essentially the final straw; the Greek government had assumed upon British magnanimity for too long, and had to be disabused of their offensive recalcitrance. Palmerston pursued the honour-script with a striking vigour, drawing the horror of MPs and the ire of Russia and France. Although he did not declare war, Palmerston authorised a tight blockade which fostered a crisis in the Mediterranean, and a political crisis in Parliament. Here, the crisis rebounded to Palmerston's political favour, but it was not without cost. If the public viewed him as the defender of British honour, his colleagues, political opponents, and the Queen saw him invariably as reactionary and dangerous. Palmerston, one could argue, pursued the honour-script too far.

Although some were discomforted, these cases reveal that Palmerston did enjoy political support which occasionally cut across party lines. Radical support for imperial campaigns was palpable, particularly where those Radicals possessed interests which connected them to the East India Company. In the comparatively fluid political circumstances of Lord Russell's premiership, Radicals like John Roebuck and Thomas Anstey spoke in support of satisfaction in Greece, yet sided with the forbearance policy towards Spain. Moreover, when Peel's government presented its Asian triumphs, Russell assured Members that these victories would rebound to British security and honour in the future, and even Palmerston reflected favourably on the success.[283] In 1848, Peel refused to support a Motion which would affirm British humiliation, aiding Russell's policy of forbearance. Thus, political identity did not guarantee one's political position when an insult had been incurred. Sir George Bankes' critique of forbearance, and his recommendation of a policy of vindication towards Spain, could be compared to the professed Protectionist and Peelite aversion towards these goals in Athens. These figures contended government policy with the rhetoric

[283] Palmerston 'gave them all the credit they deserved, for having conducted a war of which they originally disapproved to a termination, with as much vigour as though they had been the parties originally engaged in it… Every man must rejoice that the operations undertaken vindicating the honour of the British arms, and the maintenance of the British empire in Asia, should have been brought to so triumphant a result.' HC Deb 2 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 131-132. He did dispute the Governor General's role in the campaign, and spent most of his speech criticising the Webster Ashburton Treaty.

of honour, providing them a degree of flexibility, subject to their interpretations of what national honour required.

Thanks to the ethic's inherent flexibility, it was possible to challenge Palmerston's interpretation of honour, and deploy suitable rhetoric to make one's case. A common tactic was to profess sympathy with Palmerston's motives, but disagree with his methods. Occasionally, however, the challenges appeared nakedly political. Where in 1848 opponents lamented that Spain was being granted a forbearance she would misunderstand, in 1850, Palmerston was criticised for his determination to acquire satisfaction from a weaker power. Moreover, where he did refrain from following the honour-script in Spain, opposition figures were as quick to urge vindication for Bulwer as they were to insist on arbitration in Greece. The established precedents of third parties seeking satisfaction from a weaker power – including by the French against Portugal, Brazil, and Mexico – were ignored. One discerns a degree of inconsistency and hypocrisy in these attacks – also noted by Palmerston[284] – which highlights the extent to which contemporaries politicised and weaponised the rhetoric of national honour for their own purposes. This rhetoric is palpable in the opposition's more pressing objections; they underlined errors which damaged the country's prestige in China, and they lamented the shameful excesses at Kabul's bazaar, claiming such shame superseded the end triumph; opposition figures were also active in pressing the dishonourable immorality of the opium trade.

But why were insults treated so unequally? Here it is contended that this had less to do with the magnitude of the insult, and was influenced more by the context of the offending power, including its military capacity. Palmerston continued this trend into his final premiership, choosing to take advantage of American distraction to press for satisfaction in the Trent Affair, while neglecting to push for the realisation of the country's Danish obligations in a war with a united German opinion. The response to insult was necessarily tailored to the circumstances. Thus, when reacting to non-European insults, the response was consistently more belligerent, as the target was perceived to be weaker.[285] Contemporaries pressed for

[284] Palmerston addressed this in a response to Disraeli during an 1842 Commons debate, pouring scorn on Disraeli's tendency to criticise him for exhibiting 'at one time a blameable supineness, and at another what he had pleased to call a terrible energy.' Palmerston, HC Deb 23 June 1842 vol 64, cc. 524-525. While Disraeli could claim that his policy was 'at one time too servile and at another time too active', Palmerston defended his record in office, asserting that he had 'maintained a European peace without any sacrifice of British interests, without any derogation from British honour'. *Ibid*, cc. 531-532.

[285] One example is given of the British policy towards Burma, and the declaration of war in 1825: 'The Nation's honour requires atonement for wrongs wantonly inflicted, and insolently maintained; and the national interests equally demand that we should seek by an appeal to arms, that security from future

satisfaction, even vengeance, and rejoiced when British mercantile and imperial interests were firmly established in Hong Kong. Only a minority spoke of forbearance towards non-Europeans; the more popular approach was to emphasise a dishonourable mismanagement which necessitated vindication. Contemporaries hesitated to attack the acquisition of satisfaction, but they did maintain that the national honour would never have been imperilled in the first place had Ministers administered the situation more effectively.

The danger to British prestige in India was upheld as justification for a retributive campaign to Kabul, where soldiers liberated women and children, and thus the country's honour, from captivity. Britain had to demonstrate its military superiority, if Indians were to be deterred from challenging her supremacy at an inopportune moment.[286] In China, the East India Company's need for compensation was intertwined with the importance of acquiring political reparation. Years of Chinese insults were presented in evidence, and the opportunity to end the humiliating supplication of British representatives before the Qing Emperor gratified British pride. However, it is significant that neither Asian campaign saw the country united in its campaign for satisfaction. There was little enthusiasm in the media or Parliament for such conflicts, and although the rhetoric of honour arguably aided the implementation of these policies, the act of seeking and acquiring satisfaction did not bolster the Whig government's popularity or save Melbourne's administration from collapse. Still, Palmerston's recognition of honour's rhetorical power distinguishes his terms in office, even if the fruits of this approach – Don Pacifico notwithstanding – were either uninspiring, or inherited by Peel's Conservatives.

Such conclusions challenge Avner Offer's contention that Britons consistently adhered to a form of honour-script, or that they were unwilling to deviate from its tenets when convenient. However, the honour-script did constrain Ministers, forcing them to use

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aggression, which the arrogant and grasping spirit of the Burmese Government, has denied to friendly remonstrance. With this view, and for this purpose, the Governor-General in Council, deems it his indispensable duty to adopt measures to vindicate the honour of the British Government; to bring the Burmese Government to a just sense of its character and rights; and to obtain an adjustment of our Eastern Boundary, precluding the recurrence of similar insults and aggressions in future." Quoted in *East India Committee of the Colonial Society on the Causes and Consequences of the Afghan War* (Second Edition, London: 1842), p. 117.

[286] As Yapp perceived, the loss in Afghanistan was linked to British prestige in India, which was itself propped up by the bluff of British power in the subcontinent: 'If Indian enemies of British power believed that revolt was foredoomed to failure they would be less inclined to make the attempt. Accordingly, it was vital that the Raj should never be defied and never beaten but should always present an impression of confident, overbearing power. Essentially it was bluff, but it was a bluff which no one could be allowed to call and its maintenance was at the root of most of the wars of British India.' Malcolm E. Yapp, *Strategies of British India: Britain, Iran and Afghanistan* (Oxford, 1980), p. 12.

language which fitted their policies within honour's ideological imperatives, while defending against alternative interpretations of the ethic. Moreover, adherence to the honour-script did not shield the government from criticism, as opposition figures pivoted to material or administrative flaws in policy, and then subsumed these attacks within the rhetoric of honour. From this, one may conclude that honour was most effective in the hands of statesmen adept at wielding it. Palmerston was not the only expert in this sense. As confrontations with the United States demonstrated, Tory MPs could also withstand the rhetoric of honour, and manipulate its tenets to their advantage.

Chapter Three

Insult and Compromise in Anglo-American Relations: 1838-1846

Introduction

As Rebecca Matzke has noted, the period between 1838 and 1846 was one of constant crisis in Anglo-American relations,[1] exacerbated by the burning of the *Caroline* (1837), the detention of Alexander McLeod (1840-41), the *Creole* controversy (1841), the resolution of the North-East boundary between Canada and the United States (1842), and the Oregon Treaty (1844-46). Throughout this period of crisis, negotiation was the sole means of resolving disputes, though such negotiations would have to be conducted carefully, particularly when national honour was at stake. In fact, the rhetoric surrounding national honour made Anglo-American compromise more difficult, and compelled British governments to increase their military capacity.[2] The extent to which the ethic constrained each power's freedom of action was recognised by the *Globe*, which carried the *Boston Daily Advertiser*'s comments in April 1840:

> National honour…imposes an insuperable objection to an adjustment; it compels each party to be its own umpire, and to insist on the other party being governed by its decision. One party must yield, and by the same rule, this can be done only after the chances of war have been appealed to. If we cannot concede any part of our claim to the spirit of compromise and the love of peace, neither can Great Britain. The two parties, in this view of the matter, stand precisely in the same light. Great Britain can no more recede without dishonour, if there be anything in this idea, than we can.[3]

These sentiments encapsulate the recurring theme of this chapter. National honour placed immense pressure upon contemporaries, who understood that whenever they failed to adhere to its requirements, they could expect its accompanying rhetoric to be used against them. As demonstrated in previous chapters, national honour was a contested political space. Lord Melbourne's Whig government had enjoyed popular approval thanks in large part to Palmerston's fulfilment of its tenets. However, the Foreign Secretary faced immense

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[1] Rebecca Berens Matzke, 'Britain Gets Its Way: Power and Peace in Anglo-American Relations, 1838-1846,' *War in History*, 8, No. 1 (Jan 2001), 19-46; 22.

[2] Howard Jones discerned that 'Vital interests — matters of national honor — prevented Webster and Ashburton from considering a settlement of the *Caroline* matter by treaty provision.' Jones, 'The Caroline Affair,' *The Historian*, 38, No. 3 (May, 1976), 485-502; 500.

[3] *Boston Daily Advertiser* in *The Globe*, 27 April 1840.

challenges in applying these tenets when confronted by American intransigence, notwithstanding the treatment of Alexander McLeod, which constituted an insult. Similarly, when Sir Robert Peel's Conservatives assumed power (1841), the Earl of Aberdeen struggled to defend the Webster-Ashburton Treaty against critics such as Palmerston, who insisted that he had made excessive concessions to American bluster. Interestingly, when attempting to resolve the dispute over Oregon, Aberdeen proved more adept, and utilised his press and personal contacts to bypass the rhetoric of national honour, and present the eventual settlement as an honourable, favourable compromise.

This suggests further nuances inherent in the honour-script. Statesmen could fail to succeed in their efforts to press its principles, without much consequence, while they could also push national honour aside when the ethic proved inconvenient to political or strategic gain. Further, this chapter reveals further depths to the lexicon of honour, particularly in the realm of negotiation and compromise. What is clear is that contemporaries on both sides of the aisle could not ignore national honour. This section will assess the rhetoric of national honour in this crisis period of Anglo-American relations. It will also explore the relevant themes which the mutual antagonism of the two parties brought forward. It will be argued that national honour was used to unify British political sentiment and to attack political rivals, while the exclusion of the ethic complimented the resolution of disputes, by making compromise more acceptable.

It is worth highlighting that many of the studies used for this chapter are several decades old. While they provide valuable context and debates – including the use of the press to bypass outcry – these scholars never interrogated national honour or its rhetoric, despite referencing such concepts throughout their narratives. National honour exists in the background of their analyses, yet it will be argued here that the ethic provides a deeper explanation for the difficulties faced by Anglo-American negotiators. It constrained statesmen, and subjected them to uncomfortable rhetoric, both in Parliament and in the press. It should also be noted that *The Times* is prioritised above other newspapers, as it had 'an influence over public opinion in England,' described as 'proverbial,' while benefiting from its political independence, high-quality editorials, and unrivalled reporting.[4] It is therefore important to observe *The Times*' shift towards the Conservatives, and the pivotal role it played in aiding Aberdeen's resolution of the Oregon question. The rhetoric of national

[4] Thomas C. McClintock, 'British Newspapers and the Oregon Treaty of 1846,' *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 104, No. 1 (Spring, 2003), 96-109; 100-101.

honour was prevalent in these trends, and recommends greater analysis to comprehend this crisis period of Anglo-American relations.

3.1: Insult and Concession in the McLeod and Maine Boundary Disputes.

The eruption of revolt in Upper and Lower Canada in late 1837 represented the beginning of a crisis period in Anglo-American relations.[5] While officially neutral, some American citizens enlisted with the Canadian rebels, increasing cross-border tensions.[6] Although Britain supressed the revolt by December, one confrontation in the American portion of the Niagara River caused the destruction of a privately owned American vessel, the *Caroline*, and the death of Amos Durfee, an American citizen.[7] American President Martin van Buren protested,[8] but Palmerston effectively ignored this protest.[9] As shown in Chapter One, he concentrated on the deterioration of the Ottoman Empire and the resolution of the Eastern Question.[10] This resolved in Palmerston's favour, he expected the resounding approval of his peers when Parliament reconvened in spring 1841, but instead, Palmerston was confronted by the imprisonment of Alexander McLeod in New York. Arrested in November 1840, McLeod was held responsible for Durfee's murder and the burning of the *Caroline*, and the controversy continued into the following year.[11]

McLeod's detention was presented to Parliament on 8 February 1841.[12] His treatment was decried as an insult, and his fate was closely associated with the national honour.[13] The

[5] T. P. Dunning, 'The Canadian Rebellions Of 1837-38: an Episode in Northern Borderland History,' *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, 14, No. 2 (Dec, 1995), 31-47
[6] Marc L. Harris, 'The Meaning of Patriot: The Canadian Rebellion and American Republicanism, 1837-1839,' *Michigan Historical Review*, 23, No. 1 (Spring, 1997), 33-69.
[7] Jones, 'The Caroline Affair,' 491-492.
[8] Britons observed that Washington had prohibited its citizens from participating in the revolt, and that the *Caroline* had intervened illegally, forgoing her rights as a result. One contributor complained that British forbearance induced the American Government 'to deceive themselves into the idea that England was afraid of them, and nothing but the most straightforward and decided conduct on the part of Great Britain will undeceive them.' *Morning Chronicle*, 12 Feb 1841.
[9] Although the Foreign Office ignored the matter, Ambassador Fox in Washington did defend British actions, focusing on the 'piratical' nature of the vessel, and the British right to self-defence. R. Y Jennings, 'The Caroline and McLeod Cases,' *American Journal of International Law*, 32, No. 1 (Jan., 1938), 82-99; 88.
[10] See Chapter One.
[11] Milledge L. Bonham Jr., 'Alexander McLeod: Bone of Contention,' *New York History*, 18, No. 2 (April 1937), 189-217; 191.
[12] HC Deb 8 Feb 1841 vol 56 cc. 367-74; HL Deb 8 Feb 1841 vol 56 cc. 364-6.
[13] In the Lords, the Earl of Mountcashell explained that the McLeod case was, 'in a public point of view, a matter of more importance than some individuals might suppose,' because 'It was, in fact, very nearly connected with our honour as a nation; and he did hope and trust that the Government would take active and energetic steps to assert, maintain and uphold, the character of this great country.' HL Deb 8 Feb 1841 vol 56, cc. 364-6. The *New York Inquirer* noted the British press was 'loud in its denunciations of this country; and

constitutional complexities of the United States, and New York's freedom of action to deal with McLeod, caused additional irritation and confusion.[14] Shortly thereafter, Palmerston underlined his determination to demand McLeod's release upon threat of war with the United States, a course which amounted to an ultimatum.[15] There was nothing unfamiliar in Palmerston's position. Whether it was Captain Elliot in Canton or David Pacifico in Athens, contemporaries had used the rhetoric of national honour to impress the close connection of the ethic to the treatment of British subjects overseas. According to Avner Offer's honour-script, the insult which had been incurred had to be repelled, lest the nation be said to suffer dishonour, and a loss in security. In pragmatic political terms, this outcome was intolerable for Palmerston's presentation of himself and his foreign policy. He had no choice but to apply the same principles which had recently been applied to France and China. The Foreign Secretary's response would have to be sufficiently satisfactory to maintain his political consistency and meet the demands of national honour. If he failed, Palmerston could expect that the same rhetoric which he had used in moments of crisis would be deployed by his political and press adversaries against him.

The raw shock at the insult initially benefited Palmerston, and his stance was applauded by occasionally surprising allies. Speaking to the Commons on the McLeod issue in early March 1841, the Irish MP and later participant in the Young Ireland Rebellion William Smith O'Brien asserted that while Britain did not seek war, 'She could not, however, maintain her rank as the greatest nation of the world, if she allowed herself to be insulted,' and 'she could not be entitled to claim the allegiance of her colonial subjects if she did not extend to them adequate protection.' Recalling Palmerston's success in defying France and preserving Ottoman integrity, O'Brien urged him to display 'some portion of the vigour he had shown in connection with the affairs of the East.' This would involve the despatch of 'a strong fleet off the North American harbours, and a powerful army along the line of the British American

both parties in Parliament united in the opinion that it was a national affair, involving the honour of the British nation.' *New York Inquirer* in *Morning Chronicle*, 26 March 1841.

[14] 'The national honour', *The Times* complained, 'has been already and grossly outraged by the seizure and detention of McLeod', and it was 'notorious to all the world' that the Americans were now holding a single man responsible for the policy of the authorities in Canada that McLeod served. For Washington thus to argue that New York, and not the Federal Government, had jurisdiction in the matter, was to add 'levity and ridicule to insult and oppression.' *The Times*, 5 March 1841.

[15] Palmerston informed Ambassador Fox in Washington that he spoken with Ambassador Stevenson in London, and that he told him 'as a private friend that if McLeod is executed there must be war. He said he quite felt it; that he is aware that all parties have but one feeling on the subject, and he promised to write to the President as well as officially by today's post.' Viscount Palmerston to Henry Fox, 9 Feb 1841 in Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, Doc. 28, pp. 254-255.

boundary than by mere unsupported diplomacy.' Should the country require greater increases in defence spending, O'Brien felt assured 'that the House would support them in measures necessary for the maintenance of the honour and character of Great Britain in every part of the world.'[16] The solution, O'Brien declared, was to show Washington that Britain was in earnest via a demonstration of British power.[17]

During a debate on increased military estimates later in the month, Sir Robert Peel expressed approval of the increases. He qualified this by declaring his preference for peace, before reassuring Members that if 'the interests, the honour, the essential welfare of the country involved in war, he could forget that counsel' and 'standing by the ancient fame and reputation of this great people,' he would 'lend his voice for war, in order to prove to the world that our military fame stood now as high as ever.' Notably, in reference to the United States, Peel voiced his support for Palmerston's stance, arguing 'it would not be for the true policy of this country to purchase any settlement of the present difficulty by any unjust concessions.'[18] In his letter to the Queen, Lord John Russell commended this 'remarkable' speech, interpreting Peel to have said that 'much as he disliked war,' if 'the honour or interests of the country required it, he should sink all internal differences,' and support the government. Russell recalled the 'loud cheers' which accompanied these declarations, and believed the speech 'very creditable' to the Conservative leader.[19]

The Times echoed these sentiments, explaining that Britain could afford to dispense with 'a false sense of honour' because 'Our appetite for military glory, if ever it had a place in British policy, has been satiated to the full.' Yet, *The Times* asserted that 'the paramount necessity of preserving our dependencies from lawless aggression, and of protecting the life of a British subject who has done his country good service in that particular,' could 'never be permitted, consistently with our national honour, to give place to any other considerations whatever,' even if 'war with all its calamities should be the inevitable consequences.' The

[16] William Smith O'Brien, HC Deb 5 March 1841 vol 56, cc. 1354-6

[17] Though not all were convinced. William Ewart offered that 'When we were unopposed to any enemy, we should not be too anxious to vaunt of our power.' Joseph Hume underlined the complexity of law, insisting 'it was too soon for the hon. Member to appeal to war till he had seen whether these transactions had been in accordance with the law of the country in which they had taken place.' *Ibid*, cc. 1356-1357.

[18] HC Deb 5 March 1841 vol 56, cc. 1384-1387. Peel's calls for peace were echoed by others that lamented the sharp increase in military expenditure over the previous decade. Joseph Hume 'deeply regretted to see a war establishment imposed on the country, while it was said we were in a state of profound peace.' *Ibid*, cc. 1372-1373. Ministers disagreed, and Lord John Russell argued that 'considering the state of relations that had lately prevailed, and the dispositions manifested by various countries to increase their establishments, that it appeared to him our own force ought to be increased.' *Ibid*, cc. 1379-1380.

[19] Lord John Russell to Queen Victoria, 6 March 1841 in *The Letters of Queen Victoria. A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the years 1837 and 1861*, Vol I (London, 1908), p. 373.

release of McLeod would be 'as indispensable to British honour as it would be creditable to American justice', and the Americans were further cautioned that while Britain had won her glory and 'peacefully sheathed her sword' in recent years, 'She will brook much – everything except a compromise of her honour – rather than draw it again.'[20] McLeod pleaded not guilty that month, and New York's Governor, William Seward, attempted to assuage British fears by committing to McLeod's fair treatment, while also insisting on the maintenance of state rights.[21]

It did not seem to matter that the case against McLeod was not particularly strong. The evidence consisted of McLeod's drunken boasts,[22] and dubious statements from New York's officials, who appeared determined to acquire their own satisfaction for the *Caroline*'s destruction. There was some criticism of this tenuous evidence,[23] but McLeod's predicament may be viewed as a consequence of Palmerston's failure to resolve the *Caroline* controversy. The historian Kenneth Stevens noted that 'disagreement on the issues probably could have been narrowed if the British government had responded' in 1838 with a prompt 'expression of regret' about the *Caroline* in language which did not have to constitute an apology.[24]

Yet, this is to misunderstand Palmerston's true intentions, as it understates his political acumen. As Wilbur Jones discerned, Palmerston was willing to force the matter with America because he understood that while 'members in the Commons were lethargic and even bored when a foreign affairs issue involved some narrow political or economic interest,' an issue 'bearing on national honour would rally not only the Whig-Liberal coalition, but would bring the Conservatives to their feet en masse.'[25] As this research project has shown, the Foreign Secretary was adept in sensing such opportunities, not just in domestic politics, but also abroad. British naval force had been deployed to great effect in China and Syria, which demonstrated to Washington that Britain could project its military

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[20] *The Times*, 17 March 1841.
[21] Milledge L. Bonham Jr., 'Alexander McLeod: Bone of Contention,' 196-197.
[22] Chambers, *Palmerston*, p. 199. The *Morning Chronicle*'s Philadelphia correspondent criticised McLeod's conduct as 'very ridiculous', and urged him to remember the advice of King Solomon in the future, that 'a still tongue is the sign of a wise head.' *Morning Chronicle*, 6 April 1841.
[23] The Globe later reflected that 'No man will swear that he saw McLeod shoot Durfee,' and that the witness who attempted to claim otherwise 'proved to be a miserable wretch, who could not tell in what year the Caroline was destroyed, and he was advised by the state's attorney to take the first boat west.' *The Globe*, 20 Oct 1841.
[24] Kenneth Stevens, *Border Diplomacy: The Caroline and McLeod Affairs in Anglo-American-Canadian Relations, 1837-1842* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1989), pp. 19-20.
[25] Jones, *American Problem*, p. 4.

power wherever it was needed, while providing Palmerston with additional political capital.[26]

Important changes in American personnel also influenced the crisis. By April 1841, John Tyler had assumed the Presidency, while Daniel Webster became his Secretary of State. Webster was known in England, and had visited the country in 1839.[27] Of additional importance was the appointment of known Anglophile and abolitionist Andrew Everett as American ambassador to London during the summer.[28] As these appointments were learned of, London improved its North American military position. Canada received over 10,000 soldiers since the revolt, alongside four steamers and patrol boats on the Great Lakes.[29] British understanding of American vulnerabilities could also be leveraged; the discrepancy in naval power between the two powers, the inadequacy of American coastal defences, and the capabilities of steam technology informed Palmerston's defiance.[30] The American ambassador to France reported that Britain's Mediterranean fleet had moved to Gibraltar, and expected that these vessels were preparing to rush to Halifax, where they would prepare for war or, at the very least, back up Palmerston's diplomacy with a firm naval hand.[31]

Yet, this intensity of feeling on both sides of the Atlantic gave way, by April, to a kind of détente, and the subject largely disappeared from Parliament. Palmerston was then informed of Captain Elliot's preliminary peace treaty with China, which left him 'mortified and disappointed.'[32] Writing to the King of Belgium, the Queen believed that Elliot 'completely disobeyed his orders and *tried* to get the *lowest* terms he could,' for which he was replaced.[33] This unimpressive result recommended a focus on McLeod to distract the public and rally the government, but following the initial outcry, Palmerston did not use the insult as

[26] Matzke, 'Britain Gets its Way,' 25-26.
[27] Webster had provided legal advice to the House of Baring, a giant of British banking and finance circles, and had made a favourable impression during his stay. See Charles M. Wiltse, 'Daniel Webster and the British Experience', *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 85 (1973), 58-77.
[28] Everett's appointment also underlined the growing domestic conflict between southern slave states and northern abolitionists. Matthew Mason, 'The Local, National, and International Politics of Slavery: Edward Everett's Nomination as U.S. Minister to Great Britain,' *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 6, No. 1 (March 2016), 3-29; John O. Geiger, 'A Scholar Meets John Bull: Edward Everett as United States Minister to England, 1841-1845,' *New England Quarterly*, 49, No. 4 (Dec., 1976), 577-595.
[29] Jones, *American Problem*, p. 3.
[30] Matzke, 'Britain Gets Its Way,' 26-27.
[31] That American ambassador also gauged the mood of French newspapers, which appeared somewhat divided; opinions were printed in favour of American firmness, while others believed Washington was bent on war, a misreading of the situation that cannot have helped to encourage London. See Bonham Jr., 'Alexander McLeod: Bone of Contention,' 199-200.
[32] Palmerston to Queen Victoria, 10 April 1841 in *The Letters of Queen Victoria.* Vol. 1, p. 374.
[33] Queen Victoria to King Leopold of Belgium, 13 April 1841 in *Ibid*, p. 376.

energetically as he had in previous crises. In fact, McLeod's predicament had become increasingly complex. One issue was the government's opacity regarding responsibility for the *Caroline*, and a refusal to present public correspondence which had been made available to members of Congress.[34] Domestic politics had also become unfavourable. Facing defeat over the Sugar Duties bill and budget, Melbourne's Whig government appeared close to resignation.[35] In May, Palmerston pressed Melbourne for the dissolution of Parliament,[36] to which the Queen assented in June, and anticipation over the looming General Election occupied much of the summer.[37] This context is important, as it weakened Palmerston's position, thereby reducing his ability to leverage the insult for political gain.

Amid these Parliamentary and political distractions, the British press kept McLeod's predicament alive. *The Times* was key to this campaign; it identified the American constitution as a key obstacle to satisfaction, as it enabled Washington to declare 'with great solemnity that the entire affair belonged to a particular province of the federal republic, with whose internal rights no interference could be constitutionally exercised.' *The Times* lamented that 'Month after month was spent in this sort of fencing,' while 'A spirit of animosity between the two countries was rapidly and perilously engendered.' It observed with palpable frustration that 'the original pretext, that the central Government could not interfere with the legal jurisdiction of an independent state belonging to the Union' was rendered hollow by the Attorney General's presence at McLeod's trial. *The Times* thus believed that the 'discreditable shuffle' over McLeod would follow the course prescribed by American law, and Britain would be forced to wait until his trial in October. Because of these delays, 'the cauldron has boiled over, and exhausted itself in idle and contemptible vapour.'[38]

To some, Washington was not the only party responsible for this curious climbdown. The *Hull Packet* complained that 'This is a case upon which no compromise ought to have been permitted.' London should have insisted upon 'The instant discharge of Mr McLeod,' and if

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[34] This may have been caused by the government's own confusion over its legal culpability for the *Caroline*'s destruction, as John Campbell, later Lord Chancellor, reflected that while Lord Grey 'told me that he thought we were quite wrong in what we had done,' he was 'clearly of opinion that although she lay on the American side of the river when she was seized, we had a clear right to seize and destroy her, just as we might have taken a battery erected by the rebels on the American shore, the guns of which were fired against the Queen's troops on Navy Island.' Jones, *American Problem*, p. 3.
[35] Lord Melbourne to Queen Victoria, 7 May 1841 in *Letters of Queen Victoria*, I, p. 389.
[36] Lord Melbourne to Queen Victoria, 8 May 1841 in *Ibid*, I, p. 390.
[37] The government survived a vote of confidence by a single vote on 5 June. See John Russell to Queen Victoria, 5 June 1841 in *Ibid*, I, p. 417. Melbourne's government resigned in late August, see Viscount Melbourne to Queen Victoria, 28 Aug 1841 in *Ibid*, I, p. 437.
[38] *The Times*, 19 April 1841.

denied, 'New York should have been blockaded, and if necessary, bombarded.' It was understood that 'The Americans, like the Chinese, can only be dealt with through the medium of their fears; nor will they ascribe the forbearance of England to any other cause than an inability to vindicate her rights, and to protect her people.' With a hint of nostalgia, *The Hull Packet* concluded that in the past, 'Mr McLeod would not have been suffered to remain in prison an hour longer than an armament could have been sent from this country to release him,' yet now, 'we are fallen on evil times,' which it blamed on 'the incubus of liberalism' which 'seems to be freezing all our energies (except when we can bully minor states) and is gradually sinking us lower and lower in our own estimation, as well as that of our neighbours.'[39] Similarly, by early May 1841, *The Times* was blaming Melbourne's government for the crisis, arguing that if Ambassador Fox in Washington had been 'backed with suitable energy at home, McLeod would have been at large a considerable while ago, and the honour of Great Britain would have been proportionally unsullied.'[40]

In a Commons session of 7 May, Joseph Hume called for the publication of correspondence related to the incident.[41] Lord John Russell's response was unhelpful, as the Secretary for the Colonies claimed that 'the production of the correspondence in question would not enable the hon. Gentleman to attain the object he had in view.'[42] Sir Robert Peel did not support this request.[43] Conversely, Thomas Duncombe reminded Members that 'Whether that information were withheld or not,' it was McLeod's fate that truly mattered since 'the feeling throughout the country was this – that our national honour was compromised by the detention in prison of Mr. McLeod.'[44] Duncombe thus asked whether the government meant 'to allow Mr. McLeod's trial to proceed?' as 'He had been already imprisoned for six months, and the people of England had a right to know why.'[45] This was a prescient challenge; did Palmerston not wish to acquire redress for insult? If New York was permitted to continue their proceedings, would this not suggest McLeod had been abandoned?

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[39] *Hull Packet*, 23 April 1841.
[40] *Supplement to The Times*, 8 May 1841, p. 13.
[41] Hume complained that 'the House had been entirely misled and abused by the allegation of the noble Lord, that an answer had been given,' to American requests for reparation. Joseph Hume, HC Deb 6 May 1841 vol 57, cc. 1495-1496.
[42] Lord John Russell, *Ibid*, cc. 1495-1496.
[43] Peel insisted 'it would be most unwise to attempt to force a Minister of the Crown to produce a correspondence after such a declaration as the noble Lord had made.' Sir Robert Peel, *Ibid*, cc. 1496-1497. While he did request more information on McLeod's status, Peel feared that the correspondence 'might give a most unfavourable view of the case as regarded this country.' *Ibid*, cc. 1497-1498.
[44] Thomas Duncombe, *Ibid*.
[45] *Ibid*, cc. 1498-1499.

The Times maintained its criticism of Washington's 'endless shuffles and shirkings,' over its right to interfere in New York's actions, which were 'all tending to affront our national honour, and to inflict the grossest injustice upon a British subject.'[46] In fact, the question of who should have jurisdiction to try McLeod did affect Washington's ability to resolve the crisis, and the matter was delayed into the summer.[47] The 'complicated legal manoeuvres' between New York's Senate, the Presidency, Governor Seward, Congress, and the Supreme Court prevented the construction of a coherent American policy towards McLeod.[48] Domestic American disputes, twinned with delays caused by cross-Atlantic communications and the unavailability of essential documents, created a predictable void in information as Parliament was dissolved in late June.[49] Further, just as Britons perceived their honour at stake in McLeod's fate, Daniel Webster identified American honour with the *Caroline*. Washington's efforts to leverage one issue against the other were unsuccessful, but while the *Caroline* issue remained outstanding, London was unlikely to enjoy much American goodwill.[50]

Palmerston had waited several years before informing Washington that the *Caroline* had been destroyed on official orders, rather than on the initiative of Canadian locals, yet even then he refused to clarify whether the Americans were due reparation.[51] As McLeod would not be released until the *Caroline* issue was resolved, these delays could give the impression that the Foreign Secretary was merely waiting on events. In late June 1841 *The Times* criticised 'the abject manner in which Lord Melbourne's Government has digested, in the case of Mr McLeod, the most flagrant insult ever offered to a great nation,' which has 'brought the British name into general contempt, and destroyed that salutary fear of our power in the United States which was the surest guarantee for the continuance of peace.' A reduction in this fear meant a reduction in prestige, and Palmerston's 'vaunted foreign

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[46] It also hoped that 'The motion of Mr. Hume for the production of our American Minister's correspondence relative to the destruction of the Caroline' would recall public attention 'to the case of Mr. McLeod, whose grievous and protracted injuries have for some time been rather lost sight of, amidst the pressure of other engrossing questions which have lately agitated the country.' And it noted impatiently that the Queen's 'Crown and dignity are at this moment subjected to as much contumelious treatment in the person of McLeod as when the fussy instructions were first sent to Mr. Fox to insist on the prisoner's release, or else to demand his passports.' *The Times*, 8 May 1841.
[47] Milledge L. Bonham Jr., 'Alexander McLeod: Bone of Contention,' 202-203.
[48] Scott Kaufman and John A. Soares Jr., '"Sagacious Beyond Praise"? Winfield Scott and Anglo-American-Canadian Border Diplomacy, 1837–1860,' *Diplomatic History*, 30, No. 1 (Jan 2006), 57-82; 64.
[49] HL Deb 22 June 1841 vol 58, cc. 1594-6. Parliament was prorogued on that date, and did not convene again until 19 August.
[50] Jones wrote that Webster's approach 'was not illogical since both involved national honour more than any specific interest.' *American Problem*, p. 7.
[51] Howard Jones, 'The Caroline Affair,' 497.

policy' had 'entangled us in wars and intrigues throughout the world' and 'stained the national honour.'[52] Commenting on the damage done by a month of silence on the matter, *The Times* reflected in early August that French newspapers 'contend that the honour of Great Britain is compromised,' as 'the British Government would not move in the affair until the result should become known.'[53]

The following day, *The Times* returned to McLeod's fate by commenting on the 'diplomatic reserve' and 'legal quibbling' which obscured the questions Britons might have had. Yet, 'the people of England have not lost sight of the main fact that one of the Queen's subjects is rotting in a foreign gaol, under a charge of having done an act which the British Government acknowledges and applauds,' but which Washington intended to punish. Remarking on the pitiful state of the controversy, *The Times* concluded that 'If anything could add to the humiliation of allowing a British subject…to be tried as a felon for a gallant action performed against a band of outlaws and pirates,' it was 'that a demand for his release made by a British Minister should be followed by no result, and that the strong and united opinion of this country should be ineffectual even to accelerate the tardy formalities of the law.'[54] Evidently, no amount of public uproar would dissuade the Americans from proceeding as they had intended. Because of this, the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* feared 'that the detention of Mr McLeod as a prisoner in the United States, will ultimately lead to hostilities,' while noting that 'It remains to be seen whether our Ambassador will not be immediately recalled, or whether this country will submit to such outrage and insult.'[55] Other organs assigned blame to McLeod himself, whose decision to submit to American jurisdiction meant that he was 'either ignorant of his real position as the servant and accredited agent of a nation, or careless of the honour and respectability of the British government.'[56]

When Parliament reconvened in late August, John Roebuck discerned that if the *Caroline*'s destruction was viewed by Washington a national outrage, then McLeod's detention arising from that destruction could not remain a local affair.[57] Palmerston agreed, and emphasised

[52] *The Times*, 24 June 1841.
[53] *The Times*, 4 Aug 1841.
[54] *The Times*, 5 Aug 1841.
[55] *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 7 Aug 1841.
[56] *Dublin Morning Register*, 26 Aug 1841.
[57] Roebuck asked 'whether the government of the United States of America, had admitted that responsibility, and had demanded reparation for the outrage and injury done to the Caroline, being a vessel belonging to the United States?' The question was important because 'if they demanded reparation for the injury done by the

the need for redress notwithstanding the complexities of the Republic since 'If a wrong were done, redress must be given,' and 'if the laws and constitution of the country did not enable the Government to give that redress,' then Washington 'must either alter the laws and change their constitution, or submit to the alternative which every country, in such a case, was like a private individual, entitled to adopt.'[58] Washington could not obscure its responsibility to British demands by hiding behind its constitution which, as Palmerston also pointed out, did not allow for New York's independent line from the Federal Government in any case.[59]

Yet, compared to the traditional standards of activity directed against such insults, it was difficult to deny that Parliament was distracted by the looming change in government.[60] During a debate in late August which finally moved Melbourne's government to resign, one Member asserted that 'whatever was done to McLeod' was 'done to the British nation.'[61] Another reiterated the principle that the very trial of McLeod 'compromised our national honour,' since although 'we might save the shedding of his blood, we could not redeem our character in regard to the original question,' that question being, the inherent injustice of New York's decision to hold McLeod responsible for British policy.[62]

Significantly, *The Times* blamed Palmerston and his colleagues for their 'dilatory and apathetic forbearance' and for instructing Ambassador Fox in Washington 'to endure so long the interminable American shufflings which still postpone and peril the honourable adjustment of this dispute.' *The Times* challenged why McLeod was still to be brought to trial, and why New York was permitted to frustrate British rights and patience. Although 'the mere disrepute which this affair brings upon Whig statesmanship is comparatively of little consequence,' of far more importance was 'the very serious extent to which it compromises the honour of the British nation.' It opined that 'every hour of [McLeod's] detention is a

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attack, it did not lie in their mouth to turn round and say, that the state of New York was the only power which had jurisdiction.' John Roebuck, HC Deb 26 Aug 1841 vol 59, cc. 265-266.

[58] Palmerston, *Ibid*, cc. 266-267. The Foreign Secretary reiterated the inconsistency of Washington's stance, since its demand for reparation had been made 'upon the ground of an injury done to the United States,' and for this reason 'it was on that very account impossible for the United States to turn round and deny redress in the case of McLeod, on the ground that this was a question between Great Britain and the State of New York.' *Ibid*, cc. 269-270.

[59] Palmerston quoted from Article 10 of the constitution, which declared that 'No state shall enter into any treaty, alliance, or confederation, or grant letters of marque or reprisal; no state shall, without the consent of Congress, lay any duty of tonnage, keep troops or ships of war in time of peace, enter into any agreement or compact with another state, or with a foreign power, or engage in war, unless actually invaded, or in such imminent danger as will not admit of delay.' *Ibid*, cc. 269-270.

[60] Chambers, *Palmerston*, pp. 202-205.

[61] P. M. Stewart, HC Deb 25 Aug 1841 vol 59, cc. 228-229.

[62] Mr Christmas, HC Deb 27 Aug 1841 vol 59, cc. 369-370.

deliberate insult to the British realm,' and complained that 'The Americans have given us every thing our own way, but they will not give us Mr. McLeod. Now this, we say, is an unbearable impertinence, derogatory in the highest degree to our national honour and character.'

If Washington would not guarantee against New York's usurpation of British rights in the future, then 'the insulted honour of Great Britain must forthwith redress itself by adopting the last resource,' since 'Americans are alone responsible for the prompt and vigorous demonstrations which the vindication of British honour would seem to render inevitable.'[63] The Colonial Society concluded similarly that if McLeod was executed, the Queen would 'direct the energies and resources of the empire over which Her Majesty rules, in vindication of a national wrong,' which 'if suffered with impunity, would leave our numerous and widely-dispersed colonists at the mercy of every lawless and unprincipled aggressor, and thus endanger the safety, peace, welfare, and honour of Her Majesty's possessions.'[64]

In the mind of such editorials, an insult to a British subject was an insult to the British nation, and the inability to defend its citizens amounted to an admission of weakness which rivals would take advantage of. By mid-October, *The Times*' rhetoric intensified in the absence of any news, commenting that 'whatever the fate of McLeod, the day of reckoning with Great Britain remains,' because 'Her Majesty's Crown and dignity have sustained an aggravated assault in the person of McLeod. Reparation, in some shape or another, cannot be dispensed with.' *The Times* was clear that 'War we do not desire. Nay, short of sacrifice of national honour, we would adopt almost any alternative to avoid it.' *The Times* did not adjust its language for the benefit of a new Conservative government, though it continued to hold Palmerston responsible for the errors made in seeking reparation.[65]

Now in opposition, Palmerston had moved on from demanding satisfaction from Washington, and prepared to recast himself as a leading critic of any overly generous settlement with the United States, despite having done materially little to settle these controversies himself. There were ample opportunities for tension regarding the inflammatory practice known as the right of search,[66] which must be viewed in the context

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[63] *The Times*, 31 Aug 1841.
[64] *The Times*, 31 Aug 1841.
[65] *The Times*, 12 Oct 1841.
[66] Richard W. Van Alstyne, 'The British Right of Search and the African Slave Trade,' *Journal of Modern History*, 2, No. 1 (Mar., 1930), 37-47.

of slavery's role in British foreign policy.[67] Indeed, during his final weeks in office, Palmerston arguably inflamed tensions further by asserting British privileges in the right of search, ensuring that Sir Robert Peel's administration would have to expend political capital to resolve such a contentious issue.[68] It has been argued that this stance was not mere opportunism, and can be reconciled with Palmerston's consistent opposition to slavery itself.[69]

The controversy over McLeod's fate remained acute into the autumn, but impatience gave way to relief when his acquittal was confirmed during a week-long trial in mid-October, with news of his release reaching Britain in early November. Although London had warned that his execution would result in war, McLeod was not acquitted because of Palmerston's threats,[70] but from a lack of evidence.[71] President Tyler upheld that McLeod had been acquitted 'by the verdict of an impartial and intelligent jury,' affirming his relief at the somewhat stilted anti-climax.[72] Indeed, it may be argued that the McLeod episode, while containing many of the features in common with similar insults, lacked much of the fervour – at least among Ministers – which accompanied them. Facing defiance in such a distant theatre, Palmerston had little choice but to await the trial's outcome. The increasing likelihood of a Whig resignation certainly affected his ability to leverage the insult against his opponents for political gain. Parliament's inconsistent schedule, not to mention its distraction with pressing commercial matters, also meant that whatever the true extent of public outcry, the insult was not pressed as far as Palmerston later authorised during the Trent Affair, when he was in a much stabler political position.

McLeod's return to Canada suggested that Anglo-American relations could improve, particularly as a new Tory administration would now direct negotiations. However, the year-long confrontation over McLeod 'merely lifted the lid from a box filled with problems and points of conflict' between the two powers, and Conservative Foreign Secretary the Earl of Aberdeen believed that a dedicated mission to Washington would negotiate a resolution of

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[67] Bernard H. Nelson, 'The Slave Trade as a Factor in British Foreign Policy 1815-1862,' *Journal of Negro History*, 27, No. 2 (Apr., 1942), 192-209.
[68] Brown, *Palmerston*, p. 267.
[69] Palmerston arranged a five-power anti-slavery treaty, and established a precedent whereby Portuguese slaving vessels would be stopped and boarded to hamper the trade. Chambers, *Palmerston*, pp. 200-202.
[70] Matzke acknowledged this, writing that 'it is impossible to credit the jury's decision to Britain's show of force,' though adding that 'Britain's strong stance seems to have had an intimidating effect in Washington.' 'Britain Gets its Way,' 32.
[71] Milledge L. Bonham Jr., 'Alexander McLeod: Bone of Contention,' 209-217.
[72] Scott Kaufman and John A. Soares Jr., '"Sagacious Beyond Praise"?', 66.

these controversies.[73] Yet, he would have to be careful of not going too far in meeting American demands. Any suggestion that Aberdeen had agreed to excessive concessions could be linked to national dishonour, and would be politically disastrous for the Tories. Jones observed that Cabinet support for Aberdeen's American policy was only possible 'if his compromises did not involve British honour,' because 'if a question of honour was raised, the Duke of Wellington would lead the walkout, and the Prime Minister would fall in line behind him.'[74]

In December 1841, Lord Ashburton, a scion of the House of Baring who enjoyed extensive American connections, was appointed to the head of this special mission.[75] The Maine-Canada boundary and the right of search – of prime importance to tackle the continuing slave trade – were key priorities. Both issues were likely to rouse American emotion, but there was at least an appreciation of the fact that the status quo of Maine's unsettled border was unsustainable.[76] Both parties had attempted to support their claims through the acquisition of archival material, though the accuracy of such documents was heavily contested.[77] Aberdeen hoped Ashburton could overcome such difficulties, as his appointment would bypass Ambassador Fox in Washington, whom Aberdeen believed ineffectual.[78] Thomas Le Duc underlined the importance of Canadian defence in the government's considerations, highlighting prestige as a mostly Palmerstonian concern.[79] Kenneth Bourne added that Peel and Aberdeen prioritised the increase of Anglo-American trade above 'squabbles over frontiers or even national honour,' and believed Ashburton's American connections recommended him for the appointment.[80]

But the United States had their own list of subjects they were eager to resolve, and clarification over the slave trade was among the most prominent.[81] The right of search linked

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[73] Jones, *American Problem*, p. 13.
[74] *Ibid*, p. 17.
[75] Wilbur Devereux Jones, 'Lord Ashburton and the Maine Boundary Negotiations,' *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 40, No. 3 (Dec., 1953), 477-490;
[76] Efforts to resolve the border through arbitration a decade before had failed, but the appetite for compromise had not vanished. Francis M. Carroll, 'Kings and Crises: Arbitrating the Canadian-American Boundary Dispute and the Belgian Crisis of 1830-1831,' *New England Quarterly*, 73, No. 2 (Jun., 2000), 179-201.
[77] Derek Kane O'Leary, 'Archival Lines, Historical Practice, and the Atlantic Geopolitics behind the 1842 Webster-Ashburton Treaty,' *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 110, No. 4 (2021), 176-191.
[78] Jones, *American Problem*, pp. 17-18.
[79] Thomas Le Duc, 'The Maine Frontier and the Northeastern Boundary Controversy,' *American Historical Review*, 53, No. 1 (Oct., 1947), 30-41; 32-33.
[80] Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, p. 50.
[81] Parliament's 1833 Abolition Act greatly influenced American abolitionists, while exposing fissures within American politics in the decade that followed. See Joseph T. Murphy, 'The British Example: West Indian

American national honour to slavery, insofar as it highlighted the indignity of British interference with American ships.[82] In his article examining Webster's use of propaganda within the Treaty, Richard Current wrote that 'American war hawks were shrilly clamouring for redress of all their real and fancied wrongs.' These demands included:

> …an uncompromising settlement of the north eastern boundary controversy; outright title to all the Oregon country; apology and indemnity for the destruction of the ship *Caroline* in the Niagara River…and a clear renunciation of the alleged rights of search and impressment on the high seas.[83]

British newspapers were aware that McLeod's acquittal did not represent the end of the controversy. In early November 1841, *The Globe* observed that 'It is not consistent with national honour that the claims of either nation upon the other should continue unsettled,' while acknowledging that 'at any moment these disputed questions may be revived, and be converted into a casus belli between the two governments.'[84] The *Colonial Gazette* observed that 'Of the occasions of difference between the United States and Great Britain, two are proper subjects of negotiation.' The first was 'the boundary question; involving both the national point of honour and certain private interests,' adding that 'It seems impossible to dispose of the point of honour except by the arbitration of a third power.' The second point was the more general issue of America's frontier with Canada, which remained porous, and subject to complication so long as the 'defect' existed in America's constitution, which enabled her component States to take an individual line.[85]

Palmerston's failure to leverage the McLeod insult to his advantage did not deter him from seeking an opportunity to upset the new government. It was certainly easier to launch these attacks from opposition benches, but Palmerston saved the bulk of his rhetorical fury for the following year when the details of the settlement were revealed. Yet, as Brown noted, Palmerston's concern was not wholly for 'prestige,' but in displaying 'firmness' during the

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Emancipation, the Freedom Principle, and the Rise of Antislavery Politics in the United States, 1833–1843,' *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 8, No. 4 (Dec 2018), 621-646. Southern States were concerned at Britain's abolitionist mission, and some identified American honour with the right to continue the trade. See Howard Jones and Donald Allen Rakestraw, *Prologue to Manifest Destiny: Anglo-American Relations in the 1840s* (Wilmington, 1997), pp. 71-97.

[82] Howard Jones, 'The Peculiar Institution and National Honor: The Case of the Creole Slave Revolt,' *Civil War History*, 21 (1975), 28–33.

[83] Richard N. Current, 'Webster's Propaganda and the Ashburton Treaty', *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 34, No. 2 (Sep., 1947), 187-200; 187.

[84] *Globe*, 2 Nov 1841.

[85] *Colonial Gazette*, 4 Nov 1841.

boundary question, as the former Foreign Secretary also wished to enforce Britain's 'right of search' for American vessels involved in the slave trade.[86] Palmerston wanted Ashburton to include provisions to this end in the eventual Ashburton-Webster Treaty, but correspondence published in *The Times* on 1 January 1842 between Aberdeen and America's former Ambassador, Stevenson, confirmed that the United States viewed the right of search less as a moral issue or one of international law, and instead as a dispute 'involving high questions of national honour and interests, of public law, and individual rights.'[87]

Further controversies complicated the picture. In November 1841, the *Creole* sailed into Nassau under the command of a crew of rebellious slaves.[88] As slavery was illegal under British law, the slaves acquired British protection from local Americans who attempted to force them to return, and under threat of fire, the *Creole* returned to New Orleans without its human cargo.[89] Just as Britons saw the treatment of their citizens within the context of the national honour, American Senators interpreted American honour in the incident.[90] The details reached Washington in spring 1842, just before Ashburton arrived. American outrage at the *Creole* hampered Ashburton's progress, and by June, the *Creole* threatened to sink the negotiations altogether.[91] Ashburton persevered, depending on the good offices of Webster to formulate a compromise on a wide range of issues. The settlement was described by Wilbur Jones as 'a splendid example of burying an insoluble problem under a mass of acceptable verbiage.'[92] Anglo-American interpretations of the right of search were allowed to exist side by side, in recognition of the volatile nature of the controversy.

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[86] Brown, *Palmerston*, p. 268.
[87] Ambassador Stevenson believed that 'of all the principles' asserted in British naval superiority, 'few probably could be selected of a more offensive and objectionable character' than those Palmerston presented, and Stevenson added that: 'Such a power once submitted to…there would be no species of national degradation to which it might not lead.' Stevenson disclaimed any responsibility for slave ships who might falsely raise the American flag for its protection. Although apparently eager to supress the trade, Stevenson insisted that 'it cannot consent to do so by sacrificing the rights of its citizens or the honour of its flag.' *The Times*, 1 Jan 1842.
[88] Anita Rupprecht, '"All We Have Done, We Have Done for Freedom": The Creole Slave-Ship Revolt (1841)
and the Revolutionary Atlantic,' *International Review of Social History* (2013), 253-277; 259-261.
[89] Edward D. Jervey and C. Harold Huber, 'The Creole Affair,' *Journal of Negro History*, 65, No. 3 (Summer, 1980), 196-211; 203-204.
[90] John C. Calhoun demanded that President Tyler inform the Senate what steps had been taken for 'the punishment of the guilty, the redress of the wrong done to our citizens and the indignity offered to the American flag,' adding that the incident was 'most dangerous to the peace and quiet of the two countries.' Ambassador Everett in London decried the incident as 'a direct offense against the honor and independence of the country, the more dangerous as carrying in its very nature an inducement to multiply occasions for its recurrence.' John O Geiger, 'A Scholar Meets John Bull,' 587.
[91] Jones, *American Problem*, p. 22.
[92] *Ibid*, p. 22.

President Tyler proved amenable to compromise over the *Caroline*, accepting an apology for the delay in communications, while not demanding an apology for the act itself.[93] Webster reciprocated with an apology for the delay in releasing McLeod.[94] Regarding the Maine boundary, compromise was facilitated by the lack of any uniform military opinion in London, and Aberdeen granted Ashburton leeway to cede more territory around the St John River, while preserving Quebec's defensive advantages.[95] With the *Caroline*, *Creole*, right of search, and Maine Boundary resolved, the Webster-Ashburton Treaty was signed on 9 August, and ratified by the Senate three weeks later.[96] While not interpreting national honour in the issues then debated, Aberdeen appreciated that its rhetoric could be weaponised against him if Washington acquired excessive concessions. Similarly, Daniel Webster suffused the Treaty in propaganda and leveraged vague language to proclaim victory and guard against the potential weaponization of its articles against him.[97] In the long term, however, this search for a domestic political victory exacerbated Anglo-American suspicions, particularly over the right of search, and damaged trust in future negotiations. This included the most notable exclusion from the treaty – a settlement of Oregon.[98] It was maintained as a disputed territory jointly administered by London and Washington, despite rapidly filling with American settlers.[99]

But this omission did not reduce Aberdeen's optimism, as he reflected to Ashburton, 'The good temper in which you left them all, and the prospect of continued peace, with, I trust, improved friendly relations, far outweigh in my mind the value of any additional extent of Pine Swamp.' Aberdeen understood that any concessions to the Americans, however excessive they might appear on the surface, could be justified if the treaty ushered in a new era of peaceful cooperation. However, by omitting Oregon, Aberdeen placed his faith in an

[93] Jones highlighted the political danger for Ashburton if he made a full and frank apology, writing that 'Respect for America's honor required Great Britain to admit that the acts were wrong, but the new conciliatory ministry of Sir Robert Peel saw political danger in apologizing, especially since New York had tried a British subject who had obeyed government orders. Though the Caroline incident was no longer inflammatory, some American politicians hoped to capitalize on its emotional appeal, while others considered an apology essential to national honour.' Howard Jones, 'The Caroline Affair,' 499-500.
[94] *Ibid*, 501.
[95] Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, pp. 50-51.
[96] Lyon G. Tyler, 'President John Tyler and the Ashburton Treaty,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 25, No. 1 (Jul., 1916), 1-8; 7. A comprehensive account of these negotiations have been provided by Ephraim Douglass Adams, 'Lord Ashburton and the Treaty of Washington,' *American Historical Review*, 17, No. 4 (Jul., 1912), 764-782.
[97] Current, 'Webster's Propaganda and the Ashburton Treaty,' 188-189.
[98] Frederick Merk, 'The Oregon Question in the Webster-Ashburton Negotiations,' *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 43, No. 3 (Dec., 1956), 379-404.
[99] Kenneth E. Shewmaker, 'Daniel Webster and the Oregon Question,' *Pacific Historical Review*, 51, No. 2 (May, 1982), 195-201; 197-198.

uncertain future. If the Americans attempted to clarify Oregon's status in a hostile manner, critics could argue that Aberdeen had encouraged them by his concessions in this treaty.[100] Unfortunately for Aberdeen, this was precisely what happened, though he could not have anticipated the impact of James K Polk's Presidency.

3.2: The Oregon Boundary Dispute and the Danger of Concession.

Domestic criticism of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty intensified in the months following Lord Ashburton's return to London. In late October 1842, Palmerston castigated the treaty as 'an act of weakness and of pusillanimity,' which 'lowers the position of England in the opinion of all foreign nations,' and was 'a source of weakness to us in all our dealings with every other power.'[101] Here Palmerston presented what became a dominant rhetorical theme; concessions would reduce the estimation of Britain in foreign courts, undermine future British negotiations, and thus reduce the country's security. The rhetoric of national honour encapsulated these concerns, and Palmerston used his contacts with John Easthope, editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, to 'drive his message home to better effect than he could achieve by parliamentary speeches alone.'[102]

When *The Times* published the correspondence between Ashburton and Webster,[103] the *Morning Chronicle* criticised these exchanges in language which mirrored Palmerston's private complaints. It attacked the Treaty as a 'capitulation' for Britain which 'cannot possibly be lasting,' because 'to a dishonourable paction she never has consented, and she never ought to subject.'[104] Another writer offered that the world had never witnessed 'such a total want of sagacity, firmness, and tact of any kind, on the part of an ambassador extraordinary, as is revealed by this unfortunate correspondence.'[105] 'Our foreign affairs are getting into the most miserable state & the country is fast falling from the position in which we have placed it,' Palmerston wrote to his brother, calling the Treaty 'the most disgraceful surrender to American bully' which would 'only be looked upon by [Washington] as a first

[100] Jones, *American Problem*, p. 28.
[101] Palmerston to Lord Monteagle, 28 Oct 1842 in Kenneth Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, Doc. 31, pp. 256-258.
[102] Brown, *Palmerston*, p. 266.
[103] *The Times*, 3 Oct 1842; 5 Oct 1842.
[104] Vindex, 'To the Editor of the Morning Chronicle,' *Morning Chronicle*, 1 Oct 1842.
[105] A Conservative, 'To the Editor of the Morning Chronicle,' *Morning Chronicle*, 12 Oct 1842.

instalment.'[106] Washington, it was claimed, saw nothing generous in Britain's forbearance, and would only understand British force.

A key flaw in the Webster-Ashburton Treaty was its vagueness concerning issues such as the right of search. This vagueness had initially been helpful, as it enabled both parties to claim a kind of victory, but President Tyler's Annual Message in December 1842 asserted that Britain had abandoned the practice. This was contested, and British responses were reported in Congress, which appeared to inflame Anglo-American tensions. President Tyler also referenced the second extenuating issue from the Treaty: Oregon, which he described merely as 'Territory of the United States…to a portion of which Great Britain lays claim,' while insisting he would urge London not to delay resolution of the question.[107] Aberdeen privately described Tyler's claims as 'most uncandid,'[108] and 'scandalous,'[109] providing an early sign that the anticipated improvement in Anglo-American relations was not guaranteed. Tyler's language then became policy on 30 December when the Senate voted to implement American law and accelerate American settlement in the Oregon region.[110] In addition, Congress signalled its unwillingness to discharge its financial obligations to foreign bondholders.[111] Worse still, Anglo-American trade failed to increase as Aberdeen hoped, declining by 50%, and American tariffs were increased to 30%.[112]

That the Treaty manifestly failed to improve the Anglo-American relationship seemed to vindicate those that had warned against concessions to Washington, and in a three-hour Commons speech of 21 March 1843, Palmerston complained that Ashburton's conciliatory approach was 'not consistent with the dignity of a great country,' because a British plenipotentiary should never be seen to declare '"This is my proposal, and beyond this I will

[106] Quoted from Brown, *Palmerston*, pp. 268-269.
[107] Kenneth E. Shewmaker, 'Daniel Webster and the Oregon Question,' 199.
[108] *Ibid*, 200.
[109] Jones, *American Problem*, p. 30.
[110] Leslie M. Scott, 'Influence of American Settlement upon the Oregon Boundary Treaty of 1846,' *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 29, No. 1 (Mar., 1928), 1-19. Frederik Merk contested this, and noted that external factors, such as British disinterest, the distant location of Oregon and British difficulties in defending it contributed to the Treaty, while American pioneers largely migrated to uncontested land in the Williamite Valley. See Mark, 'The Oregon Pioneers and the Boundary,' *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 28, No. 4 (Dec., 1927), 366-388. Others have reinterpreted American settlement in Oregon and California in terms of the personal motives of the pioneers, who were not necessarily participating in a project of Manifest Destiny. Thomas Richards Jr., '"Farewell to America"', *Pacific Historical Review*, 86, No. 1, (Feb, 2017), 114-152. See also M. L. Wardell, 'Oregon Immigration Prior to 1846,' *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, 27, No. 1 (Mar., 1926), 41-64
[111] This caused some consternation. See *The Times*, 11 Nov 1845.
[112] Jones, *American Problem*, p. 31.

not go,"' only to 'give it up as readily as he had made it.'[113] Palmerston discerned that 'undue concessions, instead of securing peace, only increase the appetite for aggression,' and warned further that 'if we go on submitting to every pretension of every foreign power, and conceding every thing which may be sternly demanded of us,' then Britain would 'be driven at last to a point, at which war will become inevitable, but will be begun at a disadvantage.'[114]

Remarkably, Palmerston did express his hope the Treaty would be ratified, despite its flaws. Indeed, as Frederick Merk discerned, the Webster-Ashburton Treaty was more favourable to Britain than the proposed 1831 arbitration settlement which Palmerston had been willing to accept.[115] This suggests his attacks were not entirely sincere, and that his true intent was to damage the government's position by using national honour against them. By doing so Palmerston could reaffirm himself as the guardian of British national honour following the anticlimactic McLeod controversy. Although Merk discerned the political risk involved in those accusations, he neglected to recognise the potency of national honour's rhetoric which underpinned Palmerston's attacks. Palmerston's rhetoric benefited from the versatility of national honour, and he deployed it to highlight how the Treaty had encouraged Washington's defiance, while alluding to the damaging impact this had on future negotiations. These tactics constituted a warning to the Tories to avoid being accused of a similar 'capitulation' over Oregon.[116]

Palmerston's point that conciliation was inconsistent with a nation's dignity was reiterated by his opposition peers. Thomas Macaulay, the former Whig Secretary of War, expressed doubt that the Treaty would achieve the intended improvement in Anglo-American relations. While 'as to the question of national honour,' Macaulay claimed that when examining Ashburton's correspondence, he was 'struck with a certain, humble, caressing, wheedling tone which pervades them, and which seems to me utterly inconsistent with the dignity of the office which Lord Ashburton occupied.'[117] There was, Macaulay asserted, 'grave reason

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[113] Palmerston, HC Deb 21 March 1843 vol 67, cc. 1191-1192. He also claimed the negotiations were 'unskilfully conducted,' complaining Britain 'took too low a ground,' and that the 'interests, rights, and dignity of the country have been unnecessarily sacrificed.' *Ibid*, cc. 1200-1201.
[114] *Ibid*, cc. 1217-1218. Palmerston then reiterated that 'by inducing [Washington] to think that we shall yield whenever they hold out, it will encourage them to press upon us unjust demands,' and 'will afford them increased means of supporting such pretensions; and that thus, instead of securing peace, it will prove the source of new quarrels.' *Ibid*, cc. 1218-1219.
[115] Frederick Merk, 'British Party Politics and the Oregon Treaty,' *American Historical Review*, 37, No. 4 (Jul., 1932), 653-677; 655.
[116] *Ibid*, 656.
[117] Thomas Macaulay, HC Deb 21 March 1843 vol 67, cc. 1255-1256.

to doubt whether the dignity of the country has not been grievously compromised in this negotiation.'[118] If Britain 'cannot find safety in her firmness and her dignity,' then she 'can never find it in subserviency and shame.'[119]

This theme of undignified concessions was a useful line of attack for the opposition. Lord Brougham acknowledged the dangers associated with concessions, declaring that 'a man knows that if he did this in one case he would be liable to be gradually, and indeed very speedily, stripped of everything he possessed.' As it was with the relations of gentlemen, 'Such is also the case with nations, with regard to their disputes and their great trials, wars.' Thus, the cost of such a concession 'is heavier than any mere loss or gain can be worth.' Brougham nonetheless challenged what was meant 'by the magniloquent expressions about a stain on the honour of the country, if it was no question of right, but only a matter of arrangement?' Compromise was necessary in the meditation of rights, and Brougham added 'If, in such a case I should be of opinion that a man got less than another thought he was entitled to, could it be said that there was a stain upon his honour?'[120] The key issue was the difference between compromise and concession; although the two were often intertwined, it was the act of granting more to a rival than they were believed entitled, particularly when subject to menace, which characterised a policy of concession. Compromise, conversely, could be construed as an honourable policy, but as contemporaries asserted, the line between the two concepts was thin indeed.

Lord John Russell thus represented Ashburton's concessions as inherently dangerous during a Commons session in May 1843, believing 'the mode of negotiation adopted by Lord Ashburton, and the concessions afterwards made by him' had 'tended to lower the high reputation of this country,' and 'to induce foreign countries to suppose that if in negotiating with us they insist upon concessions being made to them, we either have not the means or the spirit to resist.'[121] But Russell also objected to Ashburton's negotiating style, which ran counter to the tactic where one either signalled a willingness to compromise, or would lay down the terms 'beyond which you will not go, and propose an ultimatum.' Ashburton, however, 'mixed up the two modes together in a manner that does affect the character of the country,' since 'he in the end gives up that which he at the outset professes to be the

[118] *Ibid*, cc. 1262-1263.
[119] *Ibid*, cc. 1266-1267.
[120] Lord Brougham, HL Deb 7 April 1843 vol 68, cc. 623-624.
[121] Lord Russell, HC Deb 2 May 1843 vol 68, cc. 1212-1213.

ultimatum, beyond which the country he represented ought not to concede.'[122] This retreat from British demands, palpable in the concessions to Washington, could be perceived as a sign of weakness which would invite the very disasters they were supposed to prevent.

These accusations were met by Peel, who insisted that 'satisfaction would not have been felt if any undue or discreditable concessions had been made by the Government.' This was because 'It is the character of the British people to be more ready to resent an affront than to tolerate undue acquiescence.'[123] While acknowledging this, Peel conceded that 'the people of this country had a right to ask, whether this matter could not, without any dishonourable concessions on the part of England, be brought to a satisfactory settlement?' Further, Peel recalled the views of British officials on the ground in America, who lamented that 'this territory had been gradually slipping away from you.' Turning the tables on his opponent, Peel asked 'Why did you allow this to take place? Is that the way of vindicating the honour of England and maintaining your own boundary?'[124]

Palmerston met this challenge, reflecting again on the danger of concessions.[125] In reference to the consequences of the vote of thanks for Ashburton's work, Palmerston chided: 'not only would the carrying of this motion lower the character of the House of Commons in the opinion of the country, it would lower the country in the eyes of the world.' This lowering was a synonym for a decline in prestige or reputation, aspects of national honour Palmerston fiercely guarded. He also complained that the Treaty gave 'no new possessions to the country,' nor extended its interests or improved its defence. 'What a lowering in the eyes of the world,' Palmerston declared, 'what a humiliation for the Parliament of Great Britain.' Those that welcomed a settlement founded on concessions gave, in fact, 'a confession of weakness which we never expected from the British House of Commons.' The vote, Palmerston concluded, 'would add no honour to the individual on whom it was conferred; and it would lower this country in the eyes of every other nation in the world.'[126]

This criticism of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty provides important context for the Oregon Question. If the Americans were considerate of British rights in the region, and open to compromise, this would prove the wisdom of the Foreign Secretary's concessions to

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[122] *Ibid*, cc. 1213-1214.
[123] Peel, *Ibid*, cc. 1216-1217.
[124] *Ibid*, cc. 1220-1221.
[125] 'If a country were always to act on the principle of cession to preserve peace, there would be no end to cession, because there would be no end to demands.' Palmerston, *Ibid*, cc. 1236-1237.
[126] *Ibid*, cc. 1238-1239.

Washington. Conversely, if the United States presented uncompromising demands to the territory, in a tone and form which offended Britain, then Palmerston's warnings would be vindicated. Much would depend upon the appointment of James Buchanan (1845-49) as Secretary of State, and on the Presidency of James K. Polk (1845-49), who inherited the issue from their predecessors, and might seek political capital at home by a belligerent policy abroad. Notwithstanding Richard Packenham's arrival in Washington in February 1844 to resolve the Oregon Question, he was not given a proper audience until the following year.[127]

American delays may be explained by the distance of the territory and a lack of information on its features, including updated maps, which were only provided in March 1845 by a new expedition.[128] American interest in Oregon had also grown as the region, along with California and Texas, was identified as potential launching points for American commercial interests in Asia.[129] In the interim, Packenham communicated his proposals on Oregon to Peel and Aberdeen in London, who discussed a form of compromise which would shield the government from the same controversy which surrounded the Webster-Ashburton Treaty.[130] It was also necessary to prepare for American intransigence. The Prime Minister perceptively anticipated 'a good deal of preliminary bluster on the part of the Americans,' recommending that a British vessel make a 'friendly visit' to the mouth of the Columbia River to assert British rights.[131]

A comprehensive history of the Anglo-American arrangement in Oregon need not detain this study, and has been examined elsewhere.[132] However, since the dispute over Oregon became less a question of national honour, and more a question of equal national rights, a survey of

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[127] John C. Calhoun was Buchanan's predecessor as Secretary of State, serving for only a year. Calhoun's predecessor was Abel Upshur, who also served for a single year in the position. This turnover in personnel did not help Richard Packenham, who arrived as British Ambassador in Washington in February 1844 to resolve the Oregon Question. See R. C. Clark, 'Letter of Aberdeen to Pakenham, March 4. 1844, concerning the Oregon Question,' *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 39, No. 1 (Mar., 1938), 74-76.
[128] Henry Putney Beers, 'The Army and the Oregon Trail to 1846,' *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 28, No. 4 (Oct., 1937), 339-362; 358.
[129] Norman A. Graebner, 'Maritime Factors in the Oregon Compromise,' *Pacific Historical Review*, 20, No. 4 (Nov., 1951), 331-345.
[130] Robert C. Clark, 'Aberdeen and Peel on Oregon, 1844,' *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 34, No. 3 (Sep., 1933), 236-240.
[131] Sir Robert Peel to the Earl of Aberdeen, 28 Sept 1844, *Ibid*, 238.
[132] John Galbraith discerned that 'Probably no other diplomatic negotiation of the United States has received more minute attention from American historians than has the Northwest boundary issue,' before urging a closer consideration of Anglo-French relations within the context of that controversy. John S. Galbraith, 'France as a Factor in the Oregon Negotiations,' *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 44, No. 2 (Apr., 1953), 69-73; 69. Concerning the actual history of the dispute, see Frederick Merk, 'The Genesis of the Oregon Question', *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 36, No. 4 (Mar., 1950), 583-612; Joseph R. Wilson, 'The Oregon Question. II,' *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, 1, No. 3 (Sep., 1900), 213-252.

Britain's legal claim to the territory may be instructive. British rights to Oregon had been established in 1818, and the sparsely populated region had been jointly administered by Anglo-American officials since that date.[133] British demands were thus predicated upon these rights, and consisted of a line following both the 49th parallel and a portion of the Columbia River, excluding Vancouver Island off the coast. Moderate American demands requested strict adherence to the 49th parallel, while more extreme positions advocated pushing to the 54th parallel further north.[134] Taking the moderate American and basic British demands together, the region in dispute consisted of a triangle of territory which composed 'the north-western two-thirds of the state of Washington.'[135] Such land was extremely distant from London, of dubious economic interest, and, as Aberdeen appreciated, not worth an Anglo-American war.[136] Yet in Washington, President Polk had been swept to victory on the more extreme American claim, reducing his freedom of action.[137] Aberdeen thus saw arbitration as the solution, and advised Peel that any settlement would have to be sufficiently satisfying to defend against the charge that America had been offered gratuitous concessions for the second time.[138]

Much like the McLeod and Maine boundary controversies, the Oregon question concerned politics and emotion, rather than purely territorial considerations.[139] Jones discerned that 'The Oregon issue by now did not so much involve acres, as national honour,' though he neglected to substantively assess how such rhetoric was used to frame or criticise British

[133] Joseph Schafer assessed how the Oregon Question began with this settlement in 1818, being briefly revisited in 1826, before returning to the background until 1842. See Schafer, 'The British Attitude Toward the Oregon Question, 1815-1846,' *American Historical Review*, 16, No. 2 (Jan., 1911), 273-299; 273-296.
[134] The claim that Polk was swept to power based on '54 Forty or Fight' has since been disputed. See Edwin A. Miles, '"Fifty-four Forty or Fight"- An American Political Legend,' *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 44, No. 2 (Sep., 1957), 291-309.
[135] Frederick Merk, 'British Party Politics and the Oregon Treaty,' 653.
[136] The factors which dissuaded British officials from pursuing its equal rights in Oregon were assessed by Henry Commager, 'England and Oregon Treaty of 1846,' *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 28, No. 1 (Mar., 1927), 18-38; 22-23.
[137] Thomas C. McClintock, 'British Newspapers and the Oregon Treaty of 1846,' 96.
[138] Aberdeen wrote to Peel that 'The Oregon question is principally or best suited for arbitration. Its real importance is insignificant; but the press of both countries, and public clamour, have given it a fictitious interest which renders it difficult for either government to act with moderation, or with common sense.' The Earl of Aberdeen to Sir Robert Peel, 22 Oct 1844 in Robert C. Clark, 'Aberdeen and Peel on Oregon, 1844,' 240.
[139] Merk discerned that 'Peel's strength in Parliament was mortgaged to an extensive program of domestic reform. That might be jeopardized if the government became exposed to the reproach of having abandoned in America the interests and honor of the nation. The British public to be sure was uninformed as to Oregon and even less interested. Unless the nation was roused it might not feel that its rights and honor were being betrayed.' The Whigs, and especially Palmerston, were in a position to leverage these claims against the Tories, and the Foreign Secretary would have to be prepared to defend against it. Merk, 'British Party Politics and the Oregon Treaty,' 655.

policy decisions.[140] Through this neglect, Jones arguably missed a substantive cause of the delayed negotiations, and failed to contextualise the political challenges which contemporaries recognised. Thus, in February 1845, Peel appreciated that 'The point of honour is now brought into the foreground,' which would 'render compromise and concession…ten times more difficult now.'[141] Whig weekly the *Examiner* also recognised that 'The only real point in dispute,' was 'the point of honour,' and 'the only real question is, what is the maximum which either party can honourably accept.'[142] As Washington had rejected arbitration, received wisdom stipulated that to concede British rights in Oregon represented a dishonourable surrender. This was reinforced by President Polk's confrontational stance, and the language of defiance which initially characterised the controversy in Britain. The press exacerbated the mood, as in March 1845, *The Times* maintained that 'in spite of [Polk's] marauders, and what he terms his constitutional rights, the territory of the Oregon will never be wrested from the British Crown, to which it belongs, but by WAR.'[143]

Opposition figures adopted this rhetoric, asserting their care for national security and honour in the region. 'I may be told,' Russell argued in an April 1845 Commons session, 'that it does not matter if this rocky and barren territory should be claimed, or occupied, or taken by the United States. Yes, Sir, but I must say it does matter.' The issue for Russell was the cession of 'a large territory to which we have a better and a juster title,' and he discouraged a policy of yielding Oregon 'to what I must call a blustering announcement on the part of the President of the United States.'[144] If Washington would not compromise, then London could not concede to this American bluster because 'above all, it cannot be a matter of indifference, that the tone or the character of England should be lowered in any transaction which we may have to carry on with the United States.' According to the honour-script, any lowering of Britain's tone or character could be interpreted as a sign of weakness, and an invitation by America and others to push for more. Russell was thus assured that the government 'will duly consult the interests of the country and the honour of the Crown which they serve' in any decisions they made.[145]

[140] Jones, *American Problem*, p. 42.
[141] Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 41.
[142] *Examiner*, 26 April 1845.
[143] *The Times*, 28 March 1845.
[144] Lord John Russell, HC Deb 4 April 1845 vol 79, cc. 192-193.
[145] *Ibid*, cc. 193-194.

In a Lords' session that day, the Earl of Clarendon asserted that while he did not wish for war, 'the people of this country will be determined not to yield their own undeniable rights to encroachment, or clamour, or menace,' and in the event that negotiation failed, he trusted that 'Her Majesty's Government will not shrink from adopting that course which may become necessary for vindicating the national honour and protecting the national interests.'[146] In response, Aberdeen publicly established his position on the question, which may be summarised as 'peace with honour,' conceding that 'there are limits which must not be passed; and I say that, without attaching too much weight to questions of national honour,' because 'fortunately for this country,' Britain 'need not be very sensitive on these matters.' In saying this, Aberdeen did not distance himself from the honour-script; he sought instead to remind his audience that 'our power, our character and position, are such as to enable us to look with indifference on that of which other countries might be, perhaps, more jealous.' The Foreign Secretary nonetheless conceded that 'our honour is a substantial property that we can certainly never neglect,' and this regard for the national honour could induce the government 'to adopt a course contrary to all our desires—to all our inclinations.'[147]

Aberdeen's use of British exceptionalism was consistent with Palmerston's treatment of Spain in 1848, where sensitivity was substituted for forbearance in a confrontation which provided no advantages to British interests in the event of war. Aberdeen was typically careful not to discount the 'substantial property,' of national honour, but he was also clearly willing to absorb Polk's occasionally offensive rhetoric in a quarrel which did not warrant the kind of escalation that crises over Egypt, China, or Afghanistan had required. Weaker non-European targets could illustrate British power and prestige in theatres which offered greater opportunities than that of an Anglo-American war. Notwithstanding the criticism directed at Palmerston for altering his rhetoric when dealing with stronger powers,[148] it could be argued that Aberdeen maintained this position as well, recognising that a stern warning, rather than belligerent bluster, served his intentions better than matching Polk's rhetoric with his own.

Indeed, Merk interpreted Aberdeen's language before the Lords as an 'impressive warning' to Washington regarding Britain's red lines, and in this stance, Aberdeen found the country

[146] Earl of Clarendon, HL Deb 4 April 1845 vol 79, cc. 120-121.
[147] Earl of Aberdeen, *Ibid*, cc. 123-124.
[148] Roebuck, HC Deb 1 March 1843 vol 67, cc. 132-134; Lord Stanley, HL Deb 5 May 1848 vol 98, cc. 686-687.

united.[149] The Foreign Secretary also expressed his confidence to Packenham that the country would support whatever policy was required.[150] The French ambassador to Washington reported on the impression these statements made, commenting that the 'sound and sensible portion of the country will be shaken' by such expressions of British determination.[151] Although the majority of Americans favoured peace, national honour made compromise more difficult, and Polk's administration understood as well as Peel that substantial concessions could jeopardise the government's position.[152] During this period of tension, Britain increased its preparedness for war, suggesting that Aberdeen agreed to some extent with Palmerston's principle of firmness in negotiation.[153] When Washington reinforced its position on the Great Lakes, this was interpreted as further evidence of their intransigence which, though Britain could not match, it could counteract with local fortifications.[154]

As he made these preparations, Aberdeen had to educate the British public on Oregon's status since, as Richard S. Cramer discerned, a 'lack of knowledge of local conditions led to misleading statements and to a moderate form of jingoism.'[155] Just as Palmerston acquired the moniker 'Viscount Chronicle' for his association with the *Morning Chronicle*,[156] so too did Aberdeen leverage his close connection to John Delane, editor of *The Times*, to facilitate this programme of education.[157] Thus, while asserting his reverence for the national honour in public, Aberdeen privately used *The Times* to recast Oregon as a question of rights; both

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[149] See Frederick Merk, 'British Government Propaganda and the Oregon Treaty,' *American Historical Review*, 40, No. 1 (Oct., 1934), 38-62; 39.
[150] Aberdeen wrote 'It is satisfying to see that there is a good spirit in Parliament and in the Public, & that we shall be supported in whatever course may be really just and necessary.' Earl of Aberdeen to Richard Packenham, 2 April 1845 in Wilbur D. Jones and J. Chal Vinson, 'British Preparedness and the Oregon Settlement,' *Pacific Historical Review*, 22, No. 4 (1953), 353-364; 357.
[151] Alphonse Pageot to Francois Guizot, 28 April 1845 in George Vern Blue, 'France and the Oregon Question (In Two Parts, Part I),' *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 34, No. 1 (Mar., 1933), 39-59; 53.
[152] George Vern Blue considered that 'the great majority of the country would, at bottom, approve a compromise, but that the administration accomplishing it would be sacrificed for doing so; the national *amour-propre* was so deeply affected that a victim would be demanded, and there was neither party nor individual in the United States that would consent to take this role.' *Ibid*, 54.
[153] Matzke, 'Britain gets its Way,' 32-33. Jones, *American Problem*, p. 42.
[154] Jones and Vinson, 'British Preparedness and the Oregon Settlement,' 358. See also Paul Knaplund, 'The Armaments on the Great Lakes, 1844,' *American Historical Review*, 40, No. 3 (Apr., 1935), 473-476.
[155] Cramer, 'British Magazines and the Oregon Question,' *Pacific Historical Review*, 32, No. 4 (Nov., 1963), 369-382; 370. In that Lords' session of 4 April 1845, furthermore, the Earl of Clarendon claimed that 'the great majority of the people of this country are ignorant of the circumstances' of the question. HL Deb 4 April 1845 vol 79, cc. 117-118.
[156] Merk, 'British Party Politics and the Oregon Treaty,' 661-662.
[157] Arthur Dasent, biographer of Delane, observed that 'hardly a day passed' without Aberdeen and Delane meeting. See McClintock, 'British Newspapers and the Oregon Treaty of 1846,' 98.

London and Washington claimed rights to the region, and this would be solved via negotiation, not conflict.[158]

This was central to Aberdeen's understanding of the situation, and his willingness to negotiate disputes perceived unworthy of a conflict, even to the point of concession, distinguished his term in office. Although Aberdeen's use of public sources to achieve his policy goals was not unique, his treatment of the rhetoric of national honour therein suggests engagement with an unprecedented exercise where the power of this language was recognised, and then outmanoeuvred. Aberdeen had the time to deploy these strategies, as in 1845 he faced a 'blank wall' in the negotiations over Oregon, and further complications in protocol delayed resolution during the summer.[159] The Cabinet also grappled with the possibility of a two-front war with Washington and Paris, and precautionary measures were authorised in August.[160] In fact, the scenario was highly improbable.[161] Still, Aberdeen was not yet privy to this information, and in the face of Peel's mistrust of France,[162] Aberdeen offered his resignation, which was refused.[163] Communications from Canada advised war preparations, and Aberdeen now regarded war over Oregon as 'not improbable.'[164]

By autumn 1845, negotiations over Oregon had now become a 'vicious circle' wherein British suggestions of arbitration were rejected, and Washington proposed no new avenues for resolution.[165] The French ambassador in Washington urged that 'the point of honour,' could 'only be avoided through a friendly power as intermediary, in other words, a mediation alone will be able to terminate the difference,' while conceding that American public opinion was not amenable to compromise in a question which had assumed 'too grave a character.'[166] Palmerston also continued the pressure through his usual medium, as the *Morning Chronicle* asserted that there was 'a principle at stake,' in Oregon namely 'a case of national honour opposed to the desires of an unjust and grasping ambition.'[167] However, the press was not

[158] This campaign was accelerated in 1846; see *The Times*, 30 March 1846; 15 April 1846; 8 May 1846; 13 May 1846; 15 June 1846.
[159] Jones, *American Problem*, pp. 44-45.
[160] *Ibid*, p. 45.
[161] The French ambassador in Washington expressed a desire to remain neutral in any contest, and French Minister Francois Guizot concurred, while also brusquely rejecting American presumptions of French support. See George Vern Blue, 'France and the Oregon Question,' 56-57.
[162] See Peel to Aberdeen, 17 Oct 1845 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 37, pp. 267-269.
[163] Aberdeen to Peel, 18 Sept 1845 in *Ibid*, Doc. 36, pp. 264-267. John S. Galbraith, 'France as a Factor in the Oregon Negotiations,' 71.
[164] Jones and Vinson, 'British Preparedness and the Oregon Settlement,' 359.
[165] George Vern Blue, 'France and the Oregon Question,' 57.
[166] *Ibid*, 59.
[167] *Morning Chronicle*, 22 Nov 1845.

united. Reflecting perhaps Aberdeen's growing influence with Delane, in November 1845 *The Times* cited American sources such as the *Charleston Mercury*, which asked:

> Shall we go to war for Oregon rather than refer our unquestionable rights to an impartial third party? There are only two arguments that can justify such an extreme course – if it is a question of overwhelming interest, or a question of national honour.

This was tempered by the *Mercury*'s assertion that 'everybody agrees that the value of the territory is infinitesimally small compared with the interests that would be sacrificed by a war.' As to national honour, 'it is important to note that if it is a point of honour, it is a very odd point,' adding that 'The honour that can suffer its redress to drag through such a tedious process of denial and affirmation, for half a century', was 'evidently not of the impatient sort, and need not get into a flurry.'[168] If Aberdeen could amplify this message, he could persuade Britons to reject excessive sensitivity, and embrace a 'true' sense of national honour which brooked compromise and did not needlessly escalate disagreements into unnecessary war.

This intention was interrupted in December, when the controversy over the Corn Laws toppled Peel's government, which was only returned when the Whigs were unable to form an administration.[169] Peel and Aberdeen were on borrowed time, and they now pursued Oregon with a new sense of determined fatalism.[170] By now, the arrival of Louis McLane as ambassador in London brought new grounds for optimism. Before Aberdeen could capitalise on the good offices of this new agent, however, he would have to work to defuse the increasingly bellicose national mood.[171] British emotions had been roused by Polk's annual address of December 1845, which was widely reported on, as the President asserted that 'The British position of compromise…can never for a moment be entertained by the United States, without an abandonment of their just and clear territorial rights, their own self-respect, and national honour.'[172] Similarly defiant pronouncements in the Senate effectively challenged Britons to defend Oregon to the point of war.[173] To overcome these passions,

[168] *Charleston Mercury*, in *The Times*, 22 Nov 1845.
[169] Merk concluded that the pressures of famine in Ireland and elsewhere did not influence the resolution of the Oregon question, which was moved by political imperatives. Merk, 'The British Corn Crisis of 1845-46 and the Oregon Treaty,' *Agricultural History*, 8, No. 3 (Jul., 1934), 95-123.
[170] Jones, *American Problem*, pp. 47-48.
[171] Jones and Vinson, 'British Preparedness and the Oregon Settlement,' 359-360.
[172] President Polk's Speech to Congress, *Morning Post*, 23 Dec 1845.
[173] As General Cass declared, 'To recede was not to be thought of at this stage of the question. There was nothing to be gained from a national pusillanimity – we cannot purchase present peace at the expense of national honour. It would "sowing the wind, and reaping the whirlwind."' *The Times*, 8 Jan 1846.

Aberdeen persisted with arbitration, a popular though unrefined mechanism for resolving disputes, as the *Leeds Mercury* explained:

> it is felt by each party as a point of honour not to abandon its right: but surely this is the very reason why it should be referred to arbitration, for then the honour of both parties is saved, and the interests of neither can be compromised.[174]

Merk discerned that conceding to American demands after Polk's fiery inauguration speech would 'expose the government to the charge of having abandoned national pride and honour,' adding 'This political fear was the chief barrier…to an Oregon peace.'[175] Aberdeen's key challenge was thus to navigate this barrier, maintaining British honour sufficiently to avoid the same accusations of mishandling it which had plagued the Webster-Ashburton Treaty. Charles Carey wrote that Aberdeen harnessed 'newspapers and periodicals, not only of his own party, but those of the opposition, to change sentiment to a more conciliatory attitude,' and 'point out the advantages in yielding sufficiently to get a settlement.'[176] It is contended here that Aberdeen achieved this by removing the rhetoric of national honour from the debate, a fact which Merk and Carey comment upon, but do not interrogate. Only by confronting sentiments of endangered national honour could Aberdeen hope to defuse the tensions which underpinned these negotiations. While he focused this campaign on *The Times*, Aberdeen also contacted Andrew Everett, the former American ambassador, who in turn appealed to Lord John Russell on the basis that if a compromise in Oregon was 'a point of public interest or honour' then it should be rejected, but not to reject it for the sake of 'ministerial consistency.'[177]

But not all were convinced. The *Freeman's Journal* commented that Oregon 'is, we perceive…being yielded up, under the semblance of regret and assurances that "no efforts that be wanted to maintain the national honour."' Surely, it said, this was 'nothing more or less than the total and unqualified concession of the entire territory to America. In what other manner is the question to receive a peaceful termination but by yielding to the full demands of the republic?' While the *Freeman's Journal* asserted that '"National honour" is of course a thing to be prized,' Ministers were evidently determined to 'act prudently in soothing John

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[174] *Leeds Mercury*, 3 Jan 1846.
[175] Merk, 'British Government Propaganda and the Oregon Treaty,' 40.
[176] Charles H. Carey, British Side of Oregon Question, 1846,' *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 36, No. 3 (Sep., 1935), 263-294; 263-264.
[177] Everett to Lord John Russell, 28 December 1845 in Merk, 'British Party Politics and the Oregon Treaty,' 657.

Bull into quietude as he swallows this revolting draught from the hands of American democracy. But so it is. John must submit to his fate – to be subdued by republican energy and firmness!'[178] One could argue that the *Freeman's Journal* tended to adopt a contrarian position, but there was palpable anxiety regarding the looming compromise, and, said the *Caledonian Mercury*:

> …the misfortune is that the national honour should be to a certain extent committed. But we are glad to say that in the meantime a strong feeling exists on either shore not to suffer this dispute to become the source of incalculable mischief.[179]

On 3 January 1846, Aberdeen sought to ease these concerns through a *Times* editorial, which argued for a partition of Oregon along the same lines eventually settled upon six months later.[180] Aberdeen clarified to Everett that *The Times*' suggestions of compromise reflected the opinion of the Cabinet, and its contents came under close American consideration.[181] It also served as a 'rallying point' for other British newspapers, both regional and based in London.[182] A week later, *The Times* argued 'It is not credible that the partisans of war are really impressed with a conviction that the national honour is involved in the present dispute between England and America.' This was justified by the fact that 'No man who regards the length of time – some forty years – it has been pending, can pretend for a moment to believe the honour of either country to be seriously at stake.'[183] By insisting that 'true' national honour was not at stake in such long-running negotiations, *The Times* aided Aberdeen's position and conformed with his private views on the Oregon question.

While cultivating the support of the opposition and press, Aberdeen awaited Polk's response to his final offer of arbitration, which was officially refused in late January 1846.[184] This rejection placed the responsibility on Polk to resolve the dispute, a point discerned by the French ambassador,[185] and complimented by François Guizot's declaration of neutrality.[186] Guizot publicly presented French dispositions thereafter as largely sympathetic to London's

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[178] *Freeman's Journal*, 24 Jan 1846.
[179] *Caledonian Mercury*, 1 Jan 1846.
[180] Thomas McClintock interpreted this editorial as further evidence of Aberdeen's close connection to and influence over Delane. McClintock, 'British Newspapers and the Oregon Treaty of 1846,' 98-99.
[181] Merk, 'British Government Propaganda and the Oregon Treaty,' 55-57.
[182] *Ibid*, 57-58.
[183] *The Times*, 9 Jan 1846.
[184] Jones, *American Problem*, p. 49.
[185] Pageot to Guizot, 12 Jan 1846 in George Vern Blue, 'France and the Oregon Question (In Two Parts, Part II)', *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 34, No. 2 (Jun., 1933), 144-163; 148; 155.
[186] Guizot to Pageot, 29 Jan 1846, *Ibid*, 150.

position.[187] *The Times* also carried suggestions from the *Journal des Debats,* which anticipated that Britain 'will comprehend that the immense interests engaged in commerce demand that silence should be imposed on the susceptibility of the national honour,' while hoping for the continuation of peace.[188] *The Globe* offered what may be viewed as the moderate position, believing the Parliamentary expressions of Peel and Russell on Oregon 'cannot fail to be satisfactory to men of all parties in the country,' because 'no sooner is a subject mooted which involves the national rights, or affects the national honour, than patriotism prevails over party.' Unanimity among the parties was a 'source of strength,' and while war was a calamity, there was the 'universal sentiment' that if the national rights cannot be preserved, and the national honour maintained, but by an appeal to arms, then 'the much-to-be-deprecated appeal must be made, rather than that the one should be surrendered or the other sullied.'[189]

If the government could acquire a just compromise in Oregon, should this not be pursued? Was it not clear that the government would defend national honour if it were truly endangered? Lord Russell may have reflected on these questions. Where only recently he had publicly claimed that British honour was concerned with Oregon's fate, Lord Russell now privately appealed to Palmerston to support Conservative policy. Palmerston recognised the stakes involved, but his response was noncommittal, even if it exposed his lack of knowledge on the Oregon question.[190] Merk discerned that Palmerston viewed Aberdeen's policy as one of 'utter feebleness and low spirit, prostrating the prestige and honour of England and entailing the ultimate defeat even of its own purposes by encouraging in foreign governments a spirit of encroachment.'[191] To overcome such opposition, Aberdeen resorted to an arguably Palmerstonian tactic. In early February he floated a veiled threat in a conversation with Ambassador McClane, to the effect that 'thirty sail of the line'

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[187] Guizot was quoted in the French Chamber: 'Nobody can doubt that the English government is desirous of peace with the United States. It desires peace sincerely, and for the best reasons; and I am convinced that it will do all that is compatible with national honour to maintain it. There is, therefore, no great necessity to impress upon the English government the claims of peace, since, as far as honour will allow, it is resolved to adhere to them. The case is not the same with the United States.' *The Times*, 5 Feb 1846.
[188] *The Times*, 5 Dec 1845.
[189] *The Globe*, 26 Jan 1846.
[190] Palmerston wrote to Russell: 'Their notion of the way of saving the honor of the party with whom they are dealing is as if the gentleman on the road after taking the traveller's purse should keep the sovereigns to satisfy his own claims and give back a shilling or two to save the wounded honor of the person with whom he was thus making an equitable distribution of the matter in dispute. I have not much studied this Oregon Question, but a look at the map, and Everett's admissions seem to shew that his proposed distribution is somewhat of this character.' Palmerston to Russell, 2 Feb 1846 in Merk, 'British Party Politics and the Oregon Treaty,' 658.
[191] *Ibid*, 661.

and other warships were en route to Halifax, and that he had personally waived his opposition to an Anglo-American war.[192] That Polk responded with more fulsome negotiations thereafter moved some to see this flurry of despatches as a 'turning point' in the question,[193] and as a successful use of British threats, though this has been disputed.[194]

However the Foreign Secretary managed to reopen negotiations, he was encouraged by gestures of unity and support from Parliament, though its Members were distracted by the Corn Laws debate.[195] The Queen's Speech of late January 1846 declared 'You may be assured that no Effort consistent with National Honour shall be wanting on My Part to bring this Question to an early and peaceful Termination.'[196] The Earl of Home was confident that 'in the hands of that noble Earl the country will suffer no loss of honour.'[197] Lansdowne also expressed his satisfaction that the Government would 'omit no efforts to maintain, what is of so much importance to the interests of the world, a peace between this country and the United States, without sacrificing any of the honour of this country,' and he concluded that 'if, with the maintenance of our honour, those efforts should be made, the Government will meet with the unanimous support of every party in England.'[198]

Lord Brougham added to this consensus, declaring that the Government would enjoy the 'universal and unanimous assent of a whole people,' in its pledges 'first to leave no effort untried to preserve peace with America; then to leave no effort untried to call forth all the resources of this country, if, consistently with her honour, that peace cannot be preserved.' However, to those that might critique a policy which prioritised 'mere honour,' Brougham reminded his audience what was at stake, by quoting Charles Fox's historic statement.[199]

[192] McClane to Aberdeen, 17 March 1846 in Jones and Vinson, 'British Preparedness,' 361.
[193] *Ibid*, 362. See also Julius W. Pratt, 'James K. Polk and John Bull,' *Canadian Historical Review*, 24 (1943), 341-349.
[194] Though rejecting the idea that British threats compelled Polk to back down, Anderson did concede that they forced him to show the terms on which he was willing to negotiate. Stuart Anderson, 'British Threats and the Settlement of the Oregon Boundary Dispute,' *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 66, No. 4 (Oct., 1975), 153- 160. R. L. Schuyler argued that Polk faced a split in the Democrat Party if he ignored the compromise, and believed that Peel's moderation facilitated compromise more so than fear of war with Britain and Mexico. Ultimately, the President passed responsibility to the Senate. See Schuyler, 'Polk and the Oregon Compromise of 1846,' *Political Science Quarterly*, 26, No. 3 (Sep., 1911), 443-461; 458-461.
[195] The debate over the Corn Laws lasted twelve nights, between February and March 1846, being finally repealed on 3 March. Further discussions on economic policy dominated the agenda. HC Deb 03 March 1846 vol 84, cc. 527-75. See also HC Deb 27 March 1846 vol 85, cc. 160-271
[196] HL Deb 22 Jan 1846 vol 83, cc. 1-5.
[197] *Ibid*, cc. 11-12.
[198] Lansdowne, *Ibid*, cc. 29-30.
[199] "Show me where a war with any people, on a calculation of interest or advantage, ever yet was justifiable in the eyes of rational men; but it is when the defence of a country is concerned; it is when the honour of a country is concerned; it is when that honour and that name, which every independent powerful country, unconquered and unconquerable like this, must preserve untouched and pure; it is to preserve that honour un-

Lord Frances Egerton echoed these sentiments in the Commons, insisting that no government 'could hold its place in the counsels of the country,' if it did not maintain, 'by every means consistent with the honour and the just rights of both nations, the most cordial terms of amity and friendship with that great confederation, the United States.'[200] This position of peace with honour was not new, but considering the hostile language of previous years, it was important for contemporaries to reiterate their commitment to an honourable resolution. Parliamentarians did draw attention to some questions relating to Oregon, such as the rumour that Louis McClane had purchased a globe depicting Oregon under wholly American control.[201]

Clarendon spoke to the Lords on 17 March 1846, remarking that: 'This country ought to guard itself against the idea that it would submit to concessions incompatible with the public honour.'[202] Notwithstanding Polk's rejection of arbitration, Clarendon approved of these efforts, and if the worst should occur, he reckoned on the 'unflinching support of all classes of the people in defence of the rights and validation of the honour of this country.'[203] Clarendon requested the publication of correspondence, but only if this could be done without 'injury' to Britain's position.[204] Aberdeen politely rejected this request, but reassured the House that while war was the 'greatest crime which nations can commit,' Members could 'depend upon it' that 'every effort, consistent with national honour, will be employed to avert it.' Aberdeen insisted that 'these great transactions' over Oregon would be 'forbearing, conciliatory, moderate and just,' yet that this would be accomplished without 'any sacrifice of the honour or material interests of this country.'[205] Lord Ashburton also intervened, believing 'that every precaution should be taken that the honour of the country shall in no respect be tarnished,' while remarking on the madness of an Anglo-American war 'for nothing but a mere question of honour.'[206]

Although a policy of public bluster was subject to criticism, according to the Conservative MP for Evesham Peter Borthwick, 'There were those who thought that the absence of bluster and bravado indicated the presence of timidity and fear,' among the American war party,

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assailed, and that name untarnished, that alone the dreadful extremity of war should be had recourse to." Brougham, *Ibid*, cc. 30-31.

[200] HC Deb 22 Jan 1846 vol 83 cc. 53-54.

[201] HL Deb 29 Jan 1846 vol 83, cc. 341-342

[202] Earl of Clarendon, HL Deb 17 March 1846 vol 84, cc. 113-114.

[203] *Ibid*, cc. 114-115.

[204] *Ibid*, cc. 116-117.

[205] Earl of Aberdeen, *Ibid*, cc. 118-119.

[206] Lord Ashburton, *Ibid*, cc. 119-120.

before again requesting the publication of papers relating to Oregon.[207] Peel rejected calls for these papers and, crucially, he was supported by Russell, perhaps suggesting the latter's commitment to resist an appeal to 'ministerial consistency,' as Everett had urged.[208] Aberdeen was fortunate that Parliament was too distracted by the Corn Laws to propose any substantial motions against him, but one could argue that his campaign to leverage British media was by now bearing fruit.[209] The termination of the old Oregon Convention did not rouse the war party in Washington, which had been reduced in influence.[210]

Although Richard Cramer discerned that British periodicals were more interested in domestic British politics than Oregon itself,[211] he did concede that Aberdeen enjoyed the support of the *Quarterly Review* and its editor J. W. Croker who, like Delane in *The Times*, articulated the Foreign Secretary's position in key articles.[212] In its March 1846 issue, the *Quarterly Review* evaluated the Oregon dispute, insisting that it was one 'which immediately and deeply and exclusively affects our own honour and interests, and from which we cannot recede.'[213] Britain, the *Review* asserted, 'has an indisputable title to all that she claims.'[214] Yet at the same time, acknowledging 'the ordinary rules of society and common sense,' Oregon was still a matter 'fit for compromise and partition.'[215] It insisted that Britain could not 'with honour or safety' submit to the notion that the United States possessed a 'peculiar

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[207] Peter Borthwick, HC Deb 20 March 1846 vol 84, cc. 1278-1279.
[208] Lord John Russell, *Ibid*, cc. 1279-1280.
[209] *The Times* was impressed with these Parliamentary exchanges, and expressed confidence 'That every exertion consistent with the national honour will be made to preserve the peace was the gracious declaration made by Her Majesty from the throne, and no one in this country has entertained the least doubt that it will be strictly adhered to. That assurance scarcely needed to be emphatically repeated, for no distrust has ever been expressed upon the subject.' To those Americans who interpreted British moderation for weakness, and believed Britain would accept lesser terms, *The Times* asserted 'They are grossly and dangerously mistaken. Whatever reserve may be imposed upon peers of Parliament by courtesy or by official prudence, we are confident that not one of the English statesman who spoke last night upon this subject, contemplates the abandonment of a territory in which are rights are equal to those of any Power… It would be foolish to overstate our just pretensions, but it is dangerous and unwise to allow them to be thought less than they are… the false construction which has been put upon the very guarded declarations of the English Ministers is one of the circumstances most calculated to mislead public opinion in the United States, and possibly to enhance the unwarrantable presumption of the American government.' *The Times*, 18 March 1846. See also *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 17 Jan 1846; *Naval & Military Gazette and Weekly Chronicle of the United Service*, 7 Feb 1846.
[210] *The Times*' Washington correspondent wrote: 'The war party are losing ground daily. The people are beginning to inquire why we should enter into a war, and whether it would not be better, admitting our title to be good, to make some sacrifice rather than enter upon a sanguinary and desolating conflict? These common-sense ideas are floating in the masses, and they are greatly promoted by the conciliatory and pacific movements of the British Government… The feeling in the Senate, at present, is highly favourable to a state of peace.' *The Times*, 30 March 1846.
[211] Richard S. Cramer, 'British Magazines and the Oregon Question,' 381-382.
[212] Thomas C. McClintock, 'British Newspapers and the Oregon Treaty of 1846,' 101-102.
[213] 'The Oregon Question,' *The Quarterly Review*, 77, No. 154 (Mar 1846), 563-602; 566.
[214] *Ibid*, 593.
[215] *Ibid*, 595.

right' to 'the whole North American continent.'[216] Interestingly, in relying on the 'superiority of good sense and good faith in the people and in Congress,' the *Review* did express the veiled warning that 'the British ultimatum may be found in this article.'[217] The territory of Oregon, it concluded, 'must be divided and appropriated between Great Britain and the United States,' adding, 'the dispute has gone too far to be solved by any other than international means – a treaty or the sword.'[218] The *Review* quoted Aberdeen's assertion that war was the 'greatest calamity that can befall nations,' yet it insisted that

> …in resistance to injustice or in repulsion of an insult, [Aberdeen] and every wise and honourable man must feel that war may be – however painful – the first and highest of national duties…if the United States…should drive us to that extremity, on them, and them alone, will rest the awful and odious responsibility, and on them we trust…will fall the heavier weight of the provoked calamities.[219]

Ambassador McClane discerned that the *Review*, like *The Times*, was being utilised by the Foreign Secretary both to communicate British red lines and to prepare the ground for peace, and he responded favourably.[220] Aberdeen could also have been encouraged by expressions of support for this policy among regional newspapers. Reflecting on the benefits of arbitration, the *Fife Herald* asserted that 'our sense of national honour will be tolerably well satisfied if both parties reach the winning-post simultaneously,' provided that 'the simultaneous triumph be total and immediate.'[221] A meeting in Leeds commended former ambassador Andrew Everett, who 'evinced his opinion that the present breach between the two nations could be settled amicably and consistently with national honour. National forbearance was the proudest position which this vast and glorious country could occupy.'[222] A Young Men's Society in Bristol condemned any suggestion of war, and the conventional understanding of national honour, insisting that true honour 'can be deserved only by those who practice justice, mercy, truth, and love.'[223]

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[216] *Ibid*, 597.
[217] *Ibid*, 601.
[218] *Ibid*, 602.
[219] *Ibid*, 602.
[220] Merk, 'British Government Propaganda and the Oregon Treaty,' 60.
[221] *Fife Herald*, 1 Jan 1846.
[222] *Leeds Intelligencer*, 7 Feb 1846.
[223] The full speech was delivered by the Chairman, E. W. Matthew, who declared: We believe in this equal brotherhood of all men, not only as a theoretical truth, but as a future fact in the world's history – a coming reality, and perhaps not very distant. Believing this in our hearts, we repudiate national honour (as hitherto understood) as national infamy. We know only of one kind of honour wherewith nations or individuals ought to be invested; and that can be deserved only by those who practice justice, mercy, truth, and love. Military

The *Bristol Mercury* accused Polk of trying simply to 'defy England' for 'political capital' until 'at last they find themselves in a position…from which they can neither retreat with dignity, nor maintain with honour and advantage to their country.' Compromise was of value, but to those that urged '"Give up Oregon, it is not worth fighting for"', the *Mercury* warned that 'As sure as ever it shall be tamely "given up", the next claim will be Canada,' and 'If we are not prepared…to sink in the estimation of the world to a beaten, second-rate power, shorn of our present great and glorious opportunities for good, by leading the van of civilisation,' then 'we must take our stand upon Oregon.'[224]

The *Preston Chronicle* also distinguished between British and American honour, believing the former to be 'a sacred and dignified thing,' in contrast to 'a mere question of parade for mob applause by electioneering hucksters,' noting with approval that 'the tone of both the Earl of Clarendon and the Earl of Aberdeen, was calm, cool, reasoning, and pacific.'[225] The *Morning Herald* urged that Polk's administration 'must recede from her monstrous pretensions,' while asserting that 'With the rule of Sir R. Peel vanishes all hope of cajoling or terrifying the English Government into the abandonment of the national honour.'[226] The *Worcestershire Chronicle* opined that the Tories would 'do all that is consistent with national honour and justice to preserve peace,' but 'when every reasonable offer and concession is rejected, there will be no other recourse but to resist force with force.'[227] The *Liverpool Mercury*, on the other hand, pondered whether 'after all, the whole business is but a bold experiment in the art of bullying,' which 'will not answer.' Noting that Britain had 'no excessive fondness for "national honour,"' it was hardly 'prudent' to 'surrender clear and unquestionable rights to the threats of any power on earth.'[228]

Palmerston maintained his opposition on this basis, and used the *Morning Chronicle* to again communicate his personal position in a series of articles which urged Britain not to be too fond of peace, since 'A nation "bound to keep the peace" will soon learn that she can keep nothing else,' claiming that 'if the diplomacy and menaces of Mr. Polk have brought us to this, they have brought us to a position of weakness and humility to which Napoleon could

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glory we abhor as unspeakable shame – we fell no patriotism but that which teaches us to regard the world as one country, and every human being as our neighbour, to be dealt with after the Samaritan example.' 10 April 1846 in *Bristol Mercury*, 18 April 1846.

[224] *Bristol Mercury*, 7 March 1846.

[225] *Preston Chronicle*, 21 March 1846.

[226] *Morning Herald*, 20 April 1846.

[227] *Worcestershire Chronicle and Provincial Railway Gazette*, 11 March 1846.

[228] *Liverpool Mercury*, 6 March 1846.

never bring us.' To those that might argue that such a compromise was necessary to preserve Britain's hold on Oregon, the *Chronicle* demanded

> Why, what is the value of Oregon to Great Britain more than the value of an equal number of acres of the Pacific that washes its shores? To vindicate the honour of the British empire, compromised by submission on the Oregon question, or by a failure to establish in arms our claims to the disputed territory? Alas! for such a vindication of national honour — a vindication of national honour, bought by the bribe of a betrayal of our colonies and by a social revolution at home. Such vindications of national honour are prolific — they will give birth to many of the same kind; for…they will only lead to a succession of new injuries and new aggressions.[229]

Yet, only days later the *Morning Chronicle* could reflect on the mood in Washington that although 'At first the impression was one of unmixed satisfaction,' at the trend of negotiations, once the Americans looked 'a little more critically' into Parliamentary debates, it was clear:

> Both the Queen and the Premier display a sensitiveness about the national honour which is supposed to be incompatible with any further concession on the part of England. That the national honour must not suffer is the sum and substance of the royal and of the parliamentary speech; and will England conceive it consistent with her honour to retire beyond the forty-ninth parallel of latitude, or to give up the whole of Oregon?[230]

This amounted to a challenge to Aberdeen to uphold national honour by adhering to British red lines. Palmerston's message had the potential to resonate with other publications, and thus reach a wider audience 'There is a point,' noted the *Blackburn Standard*, 'beyond which forbearance is no longer a virtue.' Although matters had not yet 'arrived at that point,' still it was asked: 'we have shown how the disputed territory could be fairly divided, and the plan has been rejected…What remains for us to do?'[231] Yet, the general aversion to war in Britain seems to have been strong. Merk portrayed Palmerston under immense pressure from his colleagues, relenting when he realised that his campaign could not return him to power; indeed, his campaign may even have reduced their confidence in his ability to keep the

[229] *Morning Chronicle*, 14 March 1846.
[230] *Morning Chronicle*, 17 March 1846.
[231] *Blackburn Standard*, 25 March 1846.

peace.[232] Absent of any insult, it was predictably difficult to mobilise British opinion for a war in the name of a mostly unknown territory. Even those papers that did call for firmness tended to regard war with the United States as a tragedy. Thus, the *Yorkshire Gazette* believed, even if she defeated America in a war 'After an awful loss of life and destruction of property,' Britain would be left with the unprofitable Oregon territory. And it therefore urged

> Let, then, the vain boastings of our trans-Atlantic friends cease – let England's determination to resist aggression, and to vindicate national honour, be passive for a season – and let the two, as kindred nations, in a spirit of amity, discuss well the question with which we preface these remarks – shall we have peace, or shall we wage war?[233]

Reflecting this clear consensus in favour of peace, on 8 April the *Morning Chronicle* presented a striking argument which mixed criticism of the *Quarterly Review*'s 'deficient' article with the position that 'loving England much, and peace over-much,' it was prepared, 'for the sake of avoiding war, to keep the national honour in the background, and to be on the lookout for reasons that may give plausibility to [Aberdeen's] conduct.' This remarkable climbdown was accompanied by a hope that such a 'nauseous' idea would facilitate the 'cure' of a lasting peace.[234] Indeed, the fruit of Aberdeen's campaign to separate British rights from British honour in Oregon included not merely the final settlement, but also the promise of improved Anglo-American trade, particularly in foodstuffs, which a famine-afflicted Ireland could benefit from.[235] Further grounds for optimism existed in tariffs, which were reduced to their previous rate of 20%, with further reductions for coal and iron.[236]

It could be argued that the prevailing consensus in favour of peace,[237] and the absence of a British war party once Polk's intransigence was removed from the equation, may have moved Palmerston to accept the need for compromise. He may also have been distracted by efforts to improve his relationship with France, in anticipation of his return to office.[238] Either way, *The Times* maintained its line of compromise to the end, quoting from agreeable

[232] Merk, 'British Party Politics and the Oregon Treaty,' 667-668.
[233] *Yorkshire Gazette*, 4 April 1846.
[234] *Morning Chronicle*, 8 April 1846.
[235] Henry Commager, 'England and Oregon Treaty of 1846,' 34-35.
[236] *Ibid*, 35-36.
[237] See for example H. McNamara, 'Address to The Americans on the Oregon Question,' *The Advocate of Peace and Universal Brotherhood*, 1, No. 4 (April, 1846), 84-89.
[238] Merk, 'British Party Politics and the Oregon Treaty,' 674-675.

American sources which criticised Polk's bluster,[239] and ridiculing rumours of an American desire for war as 'too wild to be credited.'[240] It was supported by regional newspapers which urged peace, yet reassured readers that if Washington pushed matters, Britain would defend its rights.[241] Aberdeen did not explicitly target national honour in his instructions, but if his influence over John Delane was as substantial as has been claimed, it may be argued that he leveraged this influence to remove reference to *any* bombastic rhetoric, to which national honour tended to belong. Although Britons did not abandon their regard for the ethic, they were taught instead to see it at stake in the maintenance of their rights, rights which could be satisfied by an Oregon compromise.

The above survey of regional press opinion compliments Merk's assessment of British propaganda during the Oregon confrontation. It also meets McClintock's justifiable criticism of Merk's study, who had based his conclusions only on *The Times*' turn towards peace.[242] It is contended here that the British press largely followed *The Times*' lead; this involved support for British red lines, while rejecting rhetoric which would make compromise more difficult. Outliers such as the *Morning Chronicle* succumbed to this pressure, and moderate organs could subscribe to the message that compromise was desired, but that Britain would fight if Washington pressed its rights to the entire territory – a scenario which became increasingly unlikely as tempers cooled in Polk's administration.

This transformation in rhetoric should not be understated. Where once *The Times* had matched Polk's belligerence, the palpable shift in tone now presented war as a regrettable, avoidable tragedy, which would be the fault of the United States. Moreover, by letting

[239] 'The eternal boasting without acting, and the intrigues of the President-makers at Washington, have lowered the American name immeasurably in the eyes of Europe, and defeated the settlement of the Oregon question.' *New York Herald* in *The Times*, 13 May 1846.

[240] 'The suggestion of some of the American journals, that since the President had got the power of giving the notice [abolishing convention of Oregon], he would keep it in his own hands for electioneering purposes, is too wild to be credited. A question involving the chances of peace and war, and the highest considerations of national honour and territorial right, is not thus to be trifled with. It has been trifled with too long already, and although these sham agitations may be tolerated in the United States, because they conduce to certain well-known party objects, they are intolerable when they are directed against the foreign relations of the Union.' *The Times*, 15 May 1846.

[241] 'If the Americans were resolved to eschew all dialectical agency, and to decide the question by an appeal to the sword and musket instead of the employment of the pen and tongue, it would be the patriotic duty of every man in the realm to uphold the government in its just defence of the national honour, nay, of our subject-rights; for our fellow-subjects in the remotest portions of the Oregon, have as sacred a claim on the protection of the British sovereignty, as the denizen within the shadow of Buckingham Palace.' *Hereford Times*, 23 May 1846.

[242] McClintock argued that 'Merk may have been correct, but the evidence he presented is hardly persuasive. Not only did he cite only one British newspaper, the London *Times*, but as Merk himself acknowledged elsewhere, no other British newspaper would have been expected to be as favourable to the Oregon Treaty as the *Times*.' Thomas C. McClintock, 'British Newspapers and the Oregon Treaty of 1846,' 98.

national honour 'be passive for a season,' and keeping it 'in the background,' the Foreign Secretary could capitalise upon the general disinterest and ignorance of Britons towards the territory. Kenneth Bourne perceived that Britons had only taken the matter up in the first place because Polk's blustering had recast Oregon as a question of national honour, and that Polk's intransigence had 'all inclined Peel to urge serious preparation for war, Wellington once again to raise his cry of universal war, and even Aberdeen to talk publicly of maintaining British honour.'[243] However, with Polk reconciled, the 49th parallel was adopted, and the Oregon settlement was finally accepted by the Senate on 12 June 1846.[244] Thus 'Britain lost territory but not in such a way as to tarnish national honour.'[245]

Aberdeen received no political reward for his initiatives. Indeed, Peel's government collapsed barely a fortnight after the treaty was ratified, and the Oregon question vanished from the public and political discourse, as attention turned to the new Whig government led by Russell.[246] Yet it may be argued that by leveraging his contacts with influential Americans, and harnessing relationships with important newspaper editors, Aberdeen managed to outmanoeuvre the rhetoric of national honour. Only by doing so could the Cabinet have been persuaded and the British public appeased, demonstrating the ethic's power for international and domestic politics. As one contemporary journal observed, 'if we had gone to war, it would not have been about Oregon, but about a point of honour.'[247] By removing national honour and its related rhetoric from the equation, Britons were significantly less likely to identify Oregon as a worthwhile cause of conflict. The Foreign Secretary had technically made concessions, but these had been granted through mutual compromise, rather than under pressure from American menace. This was satisfactory to British audiences – even to Palmerston – who neglected to publicly attack the Oregon Treaty when he returned to office.[248]

Conclusion

[243] Kenneth Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England,* p. 56.
[244] Schafer, 'The British Attitude Toward the Oregon Question, 1815-1846,' 298-299.
[245] Jones and Vinson, 'British Preparedness and the Oregon Settlement,' 364.
[246] News of the Senate's ratification coincidentally arrived on the final day of Peel's government. Merk, 'British Party Politics and the Oregon Treaty,' 676.
[247] *The Topic*, quoted in Charles H. Carey, 'British Side of Oregon Question, 1846,' 294.
[248] Jones, *American Problem*, p. 55.

The necessity of acquiring reparation for insult; the association of the safety of the subject with the honour of the nation; the political and strategic dangers of excessive concessions; the constraints which national honour placed on a nation's capacity to compromise; and the weaponization of honour for political ends were all relevant themes which the Anglo-American controversies of 1838-46 brought forward. One could argue that national honour resonated with the public and party to an occasionally inconvenient degree, but that these sentiments could also be leveraged by an opposition figure – in this case, Palmerston – to enhance their political profile. Contemporaries were sufficiently cognisant of the negative impact of national honour on their political goals, even if, as in the case of Aberdeen, they did not believe the ethic at risk.

In the *Caroline* and McLeod controversies, Aberdeen inherited the consequences of Palmerston's foreign policy towards the United States. He was forced to reckon with the complexities of an American political system which most Britons did not understand, and to settle contentious issues – such as the right of search and slavery – which had long frustrated attempts at resolution. American perceptions of wounded honour in the *Caroline* case poisoned relations even before McLeod's arrest, but Aberdeen was fortunate that New York justice was as fair as Governor Seward had promised. Having failed to secure McLeod's release, Palmerston could not criticise his successor for this, but he could effectively present himself as the guardian of British honour and interests by attacking the Webster-Ashburton Treaty.

In doing so, Palmerston articulated an important plank, both of the honour-script, and of national honour's ideological composition. The danger of concessions, indeed, may be considered the main rhetorical theme of this period. Palmerston's interpretation of these dangers was both strategic and ideological, and were intertwined with the premise of the honour-script. Undue concessions were politically unpalatable, but they were also dangerous insofar as they created an impression of weakness, and invited rivals to demand more. Palmerston's private reflections suggest that his stance was not entirely cynical, even if he surely recognised the political utility of his claims that the new Foreign Secretary had mishandled national honour and endangered British security by giving the Americans more than they were entitled to.

Aberdeen learned an important lesson from the fallout of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, and during the lengthy deliberations over Oregon, he strove to avoid accusations of mishandling

national honour via a public relations campaign of persuasion. Although publicly committing to no compromise of national honour, the Tory Foreign Secretary did desire a compromise on Anglo-American rights. By leveraging media sources and private contacts, Aberdeen changed how the British public perceived the Oregon question, stripping away its emotional aspects, and focusing on its practical value. Aberdeen was consistent in seeing Oregon as a question of rights, rather than of honour, and he perceived that once President Polk could be brought down from his blustering position, the general disinterest Britons had for the territory would facilitate compromise.

One could argue that Britons were less animated by the idea of concessions than by the insult presented by McLeod's detention. Military preparations were made despite Peel and Aberdeen's better judgement, to press the Americans to believe in British sincerity, while the manoeuvres undertaken by Palmerston over McLeod could be interpreted as an exercise in intimidation. In each case, the controversy was not resolved by military force. Britain was forced to await the outcome of McLeod's trial, but Aberdeen was arguably more proactive. Before Polk softened, sufficient work had been done to present the controversy as Washington's fault, as Aberdeen justified his opposition through the rights Britain possessed in legal treaties, rather than by means of military coercion. Oregon was only a matter of honour when Polk's flat denial of British rights to the territory made it so, and it may be argued that Polk would have achieved more had he recognised British disinterest in Oregon from the beginning.

Indeed, Polk's stance on Oregon was positively Palmerstonian in this sense, but Aberdeen weathered these concerning storms. He favoured compromise, even arbitration, but was realistic enough to accept the need for public declarations of firmness, reinforced by simultaneous displays of power projection. In this manner, Aberdeen capitalised both upon the Senate's generally pacific inclinations and the British public's apathy, to bypass national honour, thereby demonstrating how a British policymaker might grapple with contentious foreign policy questions in an age where the rhetoric of national honour dominated the discourse. It was an alternative method of foreign policymaking which Palmerston largely ignored. In fact, in his second premiership (1859-1865), Palmerston leveraged national honour with a new vigour, weaponizing it against the opposition to acquire new heights of fame, while recognising simultaneously that not all foreign controversies were ripe for such exploitation.

Chapter Four

Insult and Satisfaction in Trent Affair 1861-62

Introduction

On 8 November 1861 officers from the USS *San Jacinto* boarded the *Trent*, a British mail steamer, and seized John Slidell and James Mason, the two Confederate commissioners on board. Within an hour, the commissioners were transferred to the *San Jacinto*, and the *Trent* continued on its way.[1] Captain Wilkes, commanding the *San Jacinto*, may have believed that the usual protocols and customs had been adhered to, but in fact, Wilkes had violated international law and compromised the protections foreign dignitaries enjoyed while under the neutral British flag.[2] In his study of Palmerston's final Ministry, David Krein noted that 'It was not the law but honour and status that was at stake.'[3] Laurence Fenton also discerned that 'The closest Britain came to intervening in the [American Civil] war was during the winter of 1861- 62.'[4] The *Times* clarified the matter: 'People ask, "What does England care about Slidell and Mason?" and are astonished to be told in reply that she cares something about the law of nations and her national honour.'[5]

And England cared very deeply about her national honour. As Britain's Ambassador to Washington Lord Lyons anticipated, 'Turn out how it may, it [the Trent Affair] must I fear produce an effect on public opinion in both countries which will go far to disconcert all my peaceful plans and hopes.'[6] Lyons' assertion proved accurate. The Trent Affair soured Anglo-American relations, and propelled national honour to the forefront of the British public sphere. From late November 1861 to mid-January 1862, Britain's wounded national honour was the talk of the press, politicians, and the public. In the minds of the Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, and Foreign Secretary, Lord John Russell, Britain required satisfaction, which meant nothing less than an American apology and the unconditional release of the imprisoned Confederates. However, if President Lincoln's government failed to concede to these demands, the government indicated its intention to escalate the quest for

[1] Charles Francis Adams, 'The Trent Affair,' *American Historical Review*, 17, No. 3 (Apr., 1912), 540-562
[2] *Morning Post*, 5 Dec 1861.
[3] Krein, *The Last Palmerston Government* (Iowa, 1978), p. 52.
[4] Laurence Fenton, *Palmerston And The Times: Foreign Policy, the Press and Public Opinion in Mid-Victorian Britain* (London, 2012), p. 153.
[5] *The Times*, 10 Dec 1861.
[6] Lord Lyons to Earl Russell, 22 Nov 1861 in Thomas Wodehouse Legh Newton, *Lord Lyons*, Vol 1 (London, 1913), Chapter 3.

satisfaction into a third Anglo-American War.[7] Palmerston's Government behaved with striking forwardness throughout the crisis. They sent military and naval reinforcements to bolster the Canadian frontier; they developed a detailed war plan, involving a naval landing at Maine and the recognition of the Confederacy; and they issued an ultimatum to Washington with a seven-day time limit. Should the United States fail to meet Britain's demands within a week, Ambassador Lyons would depart from Washington, and Britain would initiate a war to recoup its honour.

This chapter will examine the rhetoric of national honour during the Trent Affair. As Parliament was not in session during the height of the crisis, a wide examination of public speakers and regional newspapers will be assessed, both to demonstrate the extent of the public anxiety over satisfaction, and to illustrate how far-reaching the rhetoric of national honour was. This exercise also provides a useful contrast to the next chapter, where Parliamentary debates provide the bulk of documentary evidence for the Schleswig-Holstein crisis.[8] As the Trent Affair controversy peaked, the debate became more anxious; editorials and MPs alike proclaimed that war with America would be preferable to national dishonour. British reinforcements in soldiers and ships supported this stance, and left no room for doubt that Britain was serious. Finally, as the new year dawned and Britons awaited the American response, the rhetoric emphasised satisfaction, and why it was so urgently required. This analysis will facilitate a greater appreciation of how Britons spoke of the honour ethic, how they were told to see it, and how they responded to these obligations.

It will be contended here that the British press embraced the quest for satisfaction. No organ argued that satisfaction did not matter; the most moderate messaging available was that arbitration could provide the satisfaction Britain required, yet even this perspective vanished once British legal officials clarified America's violation of international law. As Martin Forker has demonstrated, the British press could manipulate public opinion with a consistent messaging campaign; the effects were particularly impressive when the press played upon the preconceived notions or values of its readership.[9] During the Trent Affair, the press

[7] Kenneth Bourne, 'British Preparations for war with the North, 1861-1862,' *English Historical Review*, 76, No. 301 (Oct., 1961), 600- 632.
[8] See Chapter Five.
[9] Martin Forker, 'The use of the 'cartoonist's armoury' in manipulating public opinion: anti-Irish imagery in 19th century British and American periodicals,' *Journal of Irish Studies*, 27 (2012), 58-71.

certainly educated and informed its readers, but they also provoked debate which continued in Parliament and on the more public, regional stage.[10]

The message was similar across the political spectrum. Indeed, some Tories were more indignant than the government, and threatened to collapse the Ministry entirely 'if the government show the least wavering about this American outrage.'[11] They need not have worried; during the first Cabinet meeting to discuss the crisis on 29 November, Palmerston was said to have entered the room, hurled his hat onto the table, and declared 'I don't know whether you are going to stand this, but I'll be damned if I do.'[12] Fortunately, Europe was generally quiet; Britain warmly welcomed French support, while the Tsar hoped that his cooperation would prevent trouble in Poland.[13] The Prime Minister was also in a stronger domestic position compared to the last such confrontation over Alexander McLeod.[14] Wilbur Jones discerned that 'Relations between the government and opposition leaders were so warm and intimate that Lord Derby gave Palmerston almost carte blanche for his conduct of foreign affairs.'[15] Political unity at home complimented the government's policy, and even before the American reaction could be ascertained, Palmerston's peers generally anticipated war with the Union.[16] Significantly, there was no question of retreating from the prospect of such an expensive conflict, and certainly no possibility of doing nothing. Even those few Britons that might scoff at the outburst, such as John Bright, had to concede that the Trent Affair had caused a 'great sensation here, and the ignorant and passionate and 'Rule Britannia' class are angry and insolent as usual.'[17]

This was observed by foreign officials, such as America's ambassador to Britain, Charles Francis Adams, who anticipated the early recall of Parliament, when the war party would 'enjoy the advantage which they will not fail to use with effect against the Ministry of Lord Palmerston, especially if there be the smallest opportunity of reproaching it for any concession on a point of honor.' Adams added that in this course, 'the ground has already

[10] Mark Hampton, 'Liberalism, the Press, and the Construction of the Public Sphere: Theories of the Press in Britain, 1830-1914,' *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 37, No. 1 (Spring, 2004), 72-92.
[11] Lord Lyndhurst, quoted in Krein, *Last Palmerston Government*, p. 47.
[12] Palmerston, quoted in *Ibid*, p. 47.
[13] *Ibid*, pp. 202-203.
[14] See Chapter Three.
[15] Jones, *American Problem*, pp. 193-194.
[16] Russell's initial impression was that 'It all looks like war,' while Clarendon discerned that 'war is inevitable' and 'the sooner it comes the better, as we are not likely to have a better case to go to war about, nor shall we ever be better, or they worse, prepared for war.' See Krein, *Last Palmerston Government*, p. 50.
[17] Victor H. Cohen, 'Charles Sumner and the Trent Affair,' *Journal of Southern History*, 22, No. 2 (May, 1956), 205-219; 206.

been broken by the public press and particular members.'[18] Parliament was not recalled, but the British press more than sufficed to fill this public space. Adams would later criticise a particularly volatile article in the *Scotsman* as 'one of many instances which have come under my observation of the uses made of the press in Great Britain from central points and high sources in order to affect public opinion.'[19] Across the Atlantic, former Secretary for the Navy John P. Kennedy could observe that 'The Mason and Slidell affair now engrosses all discourse. The first rumbling from England has terrified many, and brought great joy to the sympathisers in the [Confederate] rebellion.'[20]

In Britain, the situation was similarly tense and emotional. Satisfaction was foremost among these concerns; the interrogation of this theme reveals much about national honour's 'honour-script', a cause-and-effect formula proposed by Avner Offer which underlined the contemporary belief that the consequences for failing to uphold honour's tenets would be both shameful and strategically dangerous.[21] However, one must also note Palmerston's consideration for domestic policy, and his understanding that a foreign triumph would reinforce his political position. In addition, the government was mindful of Washington's poor strategic position, which made concessions from that quarter more likely. Krein believed that Lincoln retreated not from a war with Britain, but from the European coalition which London appeared to be cultivating.[22] As Wilbur Jones perceived, Palmerston would only resort to war when two conditions were present 'first, that the war was necessary to sustain Britain's international position, and vital interests,' and second, 'that Britain had a good chance of winning it.'[23] Britain, Jones added, 'had her international honour and prestige to uphold, and she was forced by circumstances to react strongly.'[24]

As he had done in previous diplomatic episodes, whether over the Webster-Ashburton Treaty or the Don Pacifico Affair, the Prime Minister gauged that national honour provided opportunities to acquire political capital where it was successfully leveraged. The Prime Minister's quest for satisfaction was predicated upon the likelihood of success, which was

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[18] Charles Francis Adams to Secretary of State Seward, 27 Dec 1861, in 'November Meeting. A New England Primer; Isaac Hull to Nathaniel Silsbee; Payments to Provincial Officials; The Trent Affair; The Trent Affair, November, 1861; Letters of John Bright, 1861-1862; Letters of Daniel Webster, 1834-1851; Letters of Francis Baylies, 1827-1834,' *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 45 (Oct., 1911 – Jun., 1912), 27-184; 111. Henceforth 'Letters.'

[19] Charles Francis Adams to Edward Everett, 27 Dec 1861, 'Letters,' 113.

[20] John P. Kennedy to Robert Charles Winthrop, 16 Dec 1861, *Ibid*, 6.

[21] Avner Offer, 'Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honor?', 222-224.

[22] Krein, *Last Palmerston Government*, p. 48.

[23] Jones, *American Problem*, p. 204.

[24] *Ibid*, p. 205.

itself dependent upon the target of Britain's publicly expressed wrath. In the context of this research project, the Trent Affair provides an instance where national honour *was* prioritised over peace, though this may have had more to do with Palmerston's appreciation of Britain's advantageous position than in national honour's primacy. Conversely, it could be argued that the symbiotic relationship between these two factors encouraged the Prime Minister forward, into the popular quest for satisfaction.

4.1: The Quest for Satisfaction

According to *The Times*, the Union's insult was the talk of the nation, since 'Wherever two or three men met yesterday the single topic of conversation was the recent outrage that has been offered by the Federal Government of America to the British flag.' And *The Times* challenged its readership: 'the question remains – what steps must we take to remove the stain which has been cast upon our flag?'[25] This 'stain' could be removed by acquiring satisfaction, but what does satisfaction mean in the context of national honour? Satisfaction could be expressed in several ways, such as recourse, reparation, or the vindication of the national honour, but these were all commonly expressed synonyms which amounted to the same end. Lord Derby presented the case most succinctly in the House of Lords in February 1862, by which time the Trent Affair had been resolved. 'I believe that the maxims which regulate private society are not inapplicable among nations,' Derby said, reflecting that if any Lord present had been told 'that you had offended or injured any person with whom you had been on intimate relations,' then 'the most honourable course' was 'to tender on the instant a frank and manly apology.'

Interestingly, Derby believed that 'the more ample, the more, speedy, and the more frank was the apology the higher would he who made it stand in the estimation of all honourable men.'[26] Derby insisted that 'in making our demands we were only requiring that which, we could not have refrained from demanding without forfeiting our character as an independent Power and sacrificing the honour of the country.'[27] Derby's understanding of this national duty mirrored the responsibility the gentleman had to his own personal honour. Significantly, the rhetoric underpinning satisfaction was as applicable to the person as it was to the nation.

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[25] *The Times*, 29 Nov 1861.
[26] Earl of Derby, HL Deb 6 Feb 1862 vol 165, cc. 34-35.
[27] *Ibid*, cc. 33-34.

As the duel could satisfy the gentleman's honour, so could war recoup the insult to a nation. This was because warfare, 'like the duel and trial by combat, "is just an invention known to the majority of human societies by which they permit their young men either to accumulate prestige or avenge their honour."'[28]

Considering this inbuilt sensitivity to slights to their honour, it is unsurprising that when news of the outrage filtered back to Britain on 27 November 1861, 'it caused a storm of indignation equal in intensity to the enthusiastic approval of the Americans.'[29] It was also the subject of a popular clamour in the press. The *Morning Post* declared that there was no question of what should happen next: 'the Government will lose no time in seeking the prompt and complete reparation which it is its duty to require,' and the *Post* added that the Government would 'assuredly receive the unanimous approbation of public opinion.' 'In a question such as this,' the *Post* continued, 'where our feelings of hospitality and our national dignity are so wantonly attacked, men of all parties will unite to support the Government in the vindication of legal right and the honour of England.' Surely, the *Post* concluded, the Cabinet of Washington would not 'commit an act so madly suicidal as to reject our earnest and positive demands,' since in one month, Britain could 'sweep all the San Jacintos from the seas, blockade the Northern ports, and turn to a direct and speedy issue the war now raging.'[30]

The next day, the *Morning Herald* delivered both a demand and a warning to its readership, trusting 'that there will be no delay in avenging an outrage unprecedented, even in the annals of American lawlessness.' But what of those Britons that might hesitate rather than insist on such a firm course? The *Herald* stated its position more explicitly: 'Opposition to the vindication of the national honour will only consign to utter political insignificance the politician who ventures to attempt it.' It was thus the government's duty 'to demand the immediate return of the gentlemen stolen from under our flag, together with an ample apology for a lawless act of piratical aggression,' while the government should simultaneously 'prepare for the rejection of such a demand,' by 'dispatching forthwith to the American coast such a naval force as many ensure the total destruction of the Federal navy,

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[28] Quoted in Daniel Markey, 'Prestige and the origins of war: Returning to realism's roots', *Security Studies*, 8, No. 4 (1999), 126-172; 163.
[29] Cohen, 'Charles Sumner and the Trent Affair,' 206.
[30] *Morning Post*, 29 Nov 1861.

and the instant blockade of all the chief Northern ports, if due satisfaction be not given without delay.'[31]

Only by showing the Americans they were in earnest would Washington take British demands seriously. This stance was rooted in the clear injustice of the American act, as *The Times* explained, 'the act of the Captain of the *San Jacinto*,' was 'a clear violation of the law of nations, and one for which reparation must be at once demanded.'[32] But what role, if any, did this 'law of nations' really play in the dispute? The 1856 Treaty of Paris marked 'the beginning of international law,' which 'was also the first multi-lateral law-making treaty and marks the invention of the main instrument we use today to create international law.'[33] The Treaty codified the trade rights of neutrals during wartime, and abolished privateering. Significantly, it did not assign nations the right to seize enemy dignitaries from neutral vessels under the banner of contraband.[34] The *Saturday Review* thus observed that 'after adequate deliberation' the legal advisors to the Government determined 'we believe quite unanimously,' that 'international law had been doubly violated by the act of the San Jacinto.' The *Review* was clear that 'by this act both the honour of their country had been assailed, and an injury done to those whom she was under an obligation to protect.' Returning then to the familiar question of satisfaction, the *Review* asserted that 'The envoys torn by violence from the protection of our flag must be restored, and with due apology for the outrage.' The *Review* reminded its readers that 'To make reparation is humiliation only to a petty, mean-spirited State. America, like England, is too great to be afraid of admitting that she has been in the wrong.'[35]

However, in December 1861, before the matter of international law had been clarified, a degree of disagreement emerged between those that embraced the national honour, and those that did not see the national honour as so fragile or vulnerable to insult. The latter group presented a striking solution to the Trent Affair: arbitration. At a meeting of the Guildford Agricultural Society on 11 December, Liberal MP Guildford Onslow appeared to adopt this position, noting that if the controversy 'was not settled by the reply of the American Government, he trusted that it might be decided by arbitration. He hoped the duelling of the

[31] *Morning Herald*, 30 Nov 1861.
[32] *The Times*, 2 Dec 1861.
[33] Jan Martin Lemnitzer, 'That Moral League of Nations against the United States': The Origins of the 1856 Declaration of Paris,' *International History Review*, 35, No. 5, (2013), 1068-1088; 1068.
[34] Cohen, 'Charles Sumner and the Trent Affair,' 207.
[35] *Saturday Review*, 7 Dec 1861, pp. 578-580.

nations would soon become as obsolete as duelling between man and man.'[36] According to the *Daily News* – one of the few organs to advocate arbitration, albeit, temporarily – national honour was not the issue. Indeed, national honour's true meaning had been warped by the two extremes of the debate; the so-called 'peace at any price' and 'war at any price' parties. Yet, most Britons were in the centre: 'neither for peace at any price nor for war at any price, but whose main concern in the present crisis is to uphold the honour of the nation in the highest and truest sense.'

Upholding the national honour in the 'highest and truest sense' could be achieved not by waging a wanton war, or ignoring American concessions. Instead, the *Daily News* called for a policy of accommodation with the Union, by underlining the dangers which the war party posed to British interests and honour. It was posited that 'the notion of national honour entertained by the war party,' was 'of the most novel and peculiar kind.' This same war party – 'who modestly claim to be the exclusive guardians of the national honour' – had 'deemed it becoming to indulge in every species of deliberate insult and malignant calumny against the Americans and the American Government.' Such a belligerent policy was not merely dangerous to the ongoing Anglo-American relations, it was also plainly hypocritical.[37]

Thus, an overactive lobby for the national honour could jeopardise that honour, by undermining British negotiations to peacefully wrest satisfaction from the Union. Indeed, the war party's position 'is actively repudiated by the more reflective portion who understand what is really due to national honour,' and who, therefore, 'refuse to confound the dictates of patriotism with the malignant suggestions of irrational prejudice and disappointed passion.' It was also noted that 'right-thinking men' were capable of appreciating 'the distinction between the point of honour and the point of international law involved in the dispute,' concluding that 'while they refuse to yield anything which honour demands, they are quite ready to submit any disputed question of right to the decision of an international umpire.' Troublesome and disruptive though the war party's intervention has been, the *Daily News* concluded on a positive note that the controversy 'has effectually helped to silence the voice of reckless, malignant and unreasoning passion.' Instead it

[36] *Morning Post*, 12 Dec 1861.
[37] 'They think it honourable to bully and vilify the opponent from whom we have asked satisfaction, whilst we are still ignorant as to whether it will be granted or not. In other words, they commit the very offence of which they complain. They outrage and insult the Cabinet from which the British Government has demanded reparation, and thus do all in their power to prevent our receiving the honourable satisfaction we are entitled to.' *The Daily News*, 27 Dec 1861.

allowed 'the voice of reason and justice, which is coincident with the claims of national honour, to be heard.'[38]

According to the American Ambassador to Vienna Jonathan Lothrop Motley, this moderate voice was essential, and he criticised 'the noxious and misguiding exhalations of the London press,' in a letter to Ambassador Adams.[39] But Russell believed arbitration too risky, understanding that 'In case the decision of the supposed arbiter should be against them', this would mean 'virtually the defeat and degradation of Great Britain.'[40] Indeed, the *Daily News* proved to be the exception rather than the rule where arbitration was concerned. They were joined by minor organs like the *Newry Examiner*, which did not believe 'that the United States or the kingdom of Great Britain would lessen their standard of national honour by referring the cause of their difference to the consideration of equal and impartial powers.' This stance was based on the idea that 'National honour awaits on national prosperity, and as this prosperity is more likely to be assisted by arbitration, than rushing into the horrors of war, we shall never cease to be the advocates of the milder expedient.'[41]

Yet, while national honour might have been based upon national prosperity in the minds of some, the very vagueness of the term granted the British Government an ideal opportunity to leverage it to their own ends. As the *Morning Post* observed, 'The enthusiasm exhibited along the sea coast of the United Kingdom for the redress of our national honour will enable us to commission new ships at a very short notice.'[42] In her thesis examining arbitration and national honour, Hilda Walters commented that 'National honour is a vague but common term which has not been adequately defined except in so far as states have, in various circumstances, declared that the honour of the nation was involved.' Fortunately for the Prime Minister, his administration did not have to define national honour in late 1861. Walters discerned that Britons had been conditioned to embrace the ethic:

> The feeling of inspiration which is aroused by the resounding martial strains of the national anthem; the quickened heart beat at the sight of the flag unfurled; the pride

[38] *Ibid*.
[39] Jonathan Lothrop Motley to Charles Francis Adams, 20 Dec 1861, 'Letters,' 104-105.
[40] Earl Russell, quoted in Krein, *Last Palmerston Government*, p. 51.
[41] *Newry Examiner and Louth Advertiser*, 28 Dec 1861.
[42] *Morning Post*, 11 Dec 1861.

felt when cadets pass in review – these are the emotions which characterise national honour.[43]

Palmerston's government also enjoyed a degree of freedom in this exercise: 'No precise rules have been formulated as to what constitutes national honour: it is only possible to determine a particular nation's attitude as evidenced in the expressions of governmental policy.'[44] In the Trent case, the offence was too great, and the damage to national honour too severe, for arbitration to proceed. This supports Hilda Walters' conclusion, and in reference to the *Trent*, she perceived that 'While the act itself was of no particular consequence,' it represented 'a direct insult to the British flag and thus to British honour, restitution for which could only be made by disavowal and an apology, which were eventually offered.' Walters remarked further that 'Arbitration was not suggested by either party; it is possible that it would not have been suggested even if the United States had refused to disavow the insult.'[45]

In the context of other crises considered in this research project, the appearance of a moderate party which emphasised British exceptionalism and the lack of necessity for confrontation should not be surprising. One could argue that in 1861, this small party was overruled by the government, who embraced the quest for satisfaction and sought to lead public sentiment. But did the government truly possess such control, particularly when the print media took up the cause of the wounded national honour with such enthusiasm? An unprovoked outrage committed against the guests of a British vessel at sea seemed to strike at the heart of British national honour, thanks to many years of associating that honour with an unblemished record of naval prowess.[46] Yet, by 1861, British naval power had markedly declined, especially in comparison to the French, and in light of new innovations in ironclad,

[43] Hilda Mabelle Walters, *The Policy of the United States with Regard to the Arbitration of Disputes Involving National Honour, Vital Interests, Independence, and interests of Third Parties* (PhD Thesis, University of Iowa, 1938), p. 12.
[44] Walters elaborated 'Often the term "national honour" is not used at all, but is replaced by such expressions as "national good faith," "national self-respect," or "national dignity." These terms are synonymous and interchangeable, the connotation being always the same.' *Ibid*, p. 10.
[45] *Ibid*, p. 181.
[46] Stoll notes that a sense of reduced naval superiority may have made Britain more sensitive to the actions of foreign navies. Richard J. Stoll, 'Steaming in the Dark? Rules, Rivals, and the British Navy, 1860-1913,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 36, No. 2 (Jun., 1992), 266-279. Conversely, Hamilton observed that not until the 1880s was a concerted naval policy realised, by the Admiralty's understanding of financial controls. C. I. Hamilton, 'British Naval Policy, Policy-Makers and Financial Control, 1860–1945,' *History*, 12, No. 4 (Nov 2005), 371-395. Davey considered that Britain's standing as a nation had been connected to its naval capacity since the late eighteenth century. James Davey, 'Securing the Sinews of Sea Power: British Intervention in the Baltic 1780–1815,' *International History Review*, 33, No. 2 (June 2011), 161-184

steam powered ships.[47] These deficiencies were glaring even during Earl Russell's ministry (1846 – 1852), yet as Partridge has observed, little energy was then invested in reforming the fleet with steam power in mind, and Russell's Administration collapsed amidst a controversial militia bill.[48] A decade later, Britain's military position had barely changed, though an improvement in Anglo-French relations had reduced hysteria surrounding a supposedly imminent French invasion.[49]

Britain's relative weakness in comparison to previous decades did not necessarily render coercive diplomacy less effective, particularly considering the Union's total war with the Confederacy. War on two fronts would be plainly unsustainable for Washington, a sentiment echoed by Motley in Vienna, who exclaimed 'To accept war with England now if we can avoid it with honour, seems little short of madness.'[50] Henry Adams, son of the Ambassador to London, did not mince his words. 'What a bloody set of fools they are! How in the name of all that's conceivable could you suppose that England would sit quiet under such an insult?' Were the roles reversed, Adams believed, 'We should have jumped out of our boots at such a one.'[51] The *Preston Chronicle and Lincolnshire Advertiser* echoed this perspective, declaring that 'unless the members of that cabinet are actually insane, our hope and strong impression is that it [satisfaction] will be given.'[52]

An arguable turning point came early in the crisis, when Prince Albert drafted the response to the insult in late November. Albert's intervention on the eve of his death was decisive and influential; a fact recognised by Ambassador Adams, who counted Albert's loss 'among our misfortunes,' since 'his judgement and calmness were not without their direct effect on events.'[53] That the Prince of Wales had enjoyed a rapturous welcome in the US only the previous year may have influenced the Prince Consort's response.[54] In any case, Russell and

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[47] See Hugues Canuel, 'From A Prestige Fleet to The Jeune École: French Naval Policy and Strategy under the Second Empire and the Early Third Republic (1852–1914),' *Naval War College Review*, 71, No. 1 (Winter 2018), 93-118; 97-101; Colin F. Baxter, 'Lord Palmerston: Panic Monger or Naval Pacemaker?' *Social Science*, 47, No. 4 (Autumn, 1972), 203-211.
[48] M. S. Partridge, 'The Russell Cabinet and National Defence, 1846-1852,' *History*, 72, No. 235 (June 1987), 231-250.
[49] David Brown, 'Palmerston and Anglo-French Relations 1846–1865,' *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 17 (2006), 675-692.
[50] Jonathan Lothrop Motley to Charles Francis Adams, 20 Dec 1861, 'Letters,' 104-105.
[51] Quoted in Howard Jones, *Union in Peril: The Crisis over British Intervention in the Civil War* (E-book, Chapel Hill, 1992), Chapter 4.
[52] *Preston Chronicle and Lancashire Advertiser*, 7 Dec 1861.
[53] Charles Francis Adams to Edward Everett, 27 Dec 1861, 'Letters,' 113.
[54] Skye Montgomery, 'Reannealing of the Heart Ties: The Rhetoric of Anglo-American Kinship and the Politics

Palmerston thought Albert's letter 'excellent' and modelled their own official communique after it. This declared that Washington 'must be fully aware that the British Government could not allow such an afront to the national honour to pass without full reparation,' though London was 'unwilling to believe that it could be the deliberate intention of the Government of the United States unnecessarily to force into discussion between the two Governments a question of so grave a character,' which 'the whole British Nation would be sure to entertain such unanimity of feeling.' The generous tone notwithstanding, Russell informed Ambassador Lyons that a period 'not exceeding seven days' would be allowed from the moment the Americans received the ultimatum. 'If at the end of that time no answer is given,' Russell wrote, 'or if any other answer is given except that of a compliance with the demands of Her Majesty's Government,' then Lyons was instructed 'to leave Washington with all members of your legation, bringing with you the archives of the legation, and to repair immediately to London.'[55]

Notwithstanding Palmerston's supposed political 'eclipse' of the Foreign Secretary,[56] Earl Russell often shared the positions of his chief, particularly during moments of crisis.[57] Russell accepted there was ample room for politeness in Lyons' instructions, and he understood the importance of providing an honourable bridge which the United States could use to save face. Russell thus asked Lord Lyons that he 'abstain from anything like menace' when presenting the ultimatum, and that he behaved tactfully wherever possible.[58] Britain was prepared to be 'rather easy about the apology' Washington gave, Russell said, but Lincoln's government should not mistake this generosity for weakness. 'The feeling here is very quiet but very decided,' Russell said. 'There is no party about it: all are unanimous.' On 2 December 1861, the ultimatum officially left Britain's shores, and the Cabinet's policy was now set. Three days later, Palmerston wrote to the Queen explaining that if Washington complied, 'it will be honourable for England and humiliating for the United States.' Conversely, 'If the Federal Government refuse compliance, Great Britain is in a better state

of Reconciliation in the Prince of Wales's 1860 Tour,' *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 6, No. 2 (June 2016), 193-219.

[55] Quoted from David Paul Crook, *The North, the South, and the Powers, 1861-1865* (Sydney, 1974), p. 133.

[56] G. B. Henderson, 'The Eclipse of Lord John Russell,' *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 5, No. 1 (1935), 60-86.

[57] Paul H. Scherer, 'Partner or Puppet? Lord John Russell at the Foreign Office, 1859-1862,' *Albion*, 19, No. 3 (Autumn, 1987), 347-371.

[58] Crook, *Powers*, p. 133.

than at any former time to inflict a severe blow upon, and read a lesson to, the United States which will not soon be forgotten.'[59]

The British press were soon aware of this ultimatum. 'If these demands are not at once complied with,' observed the *Morning Post*, 'Lord Lyons will break off diplomatic relations with the Cabinet of Washington and return to this country.' The *Post* concluded: 'That we suffered a gross national affront, in the manner in which the act of Captain Wilkes was perpetrated, was patent even before the piratical nature of the act had been legally established.'[60] But should the public become anxious at the prospect of an insult left unanswered by Palmerston's administration, *The Globe* reassured its readers that 'the public may be fully confident that the instructions about to be sent to Lord Lyons provide for an atonement proportioned to the offence, and that everything requisite to the full vindication of the national honour has been provided for.' Nothing less than complete satisfaction and the redress of British grievances would be accepted. But Britons were also urged to remain patient, since 'We can scarcely expect to receive the answer of the Federal Government before Christmas,' thanks to the failed efforts to establish an Atlantic cable.[61]

The possibility of an Anglo-American war had been given serious consideration. Ambassador Adams seems to have detected this, writing on 29 November 'I fully expect now that my recall or my passports will be in my hands by the middle of January.'[62] A few days after Palmerston had approved the ultimatum, Adams added, 'If I remain here after New Year I shall be surprised. Nor yet do I feel as if I wanted very much to stay.'[63] David Brown depicted Palmerston accepting that 'it was important to avoid a real conflict,' while acknowledging that the Prime Minister 'thought war was quite likely,' a position which required extensive preparations.[64] Indeed, As Kenneth Bourne has demonstrated, Palmerston's administration developed multi-layered plans for the reinforcement of land and sea forces in Canada, and even for the invasion and annexation of the US State of Maine.[65] These plans were studiously followed; several thousand reinforcements had arrived in the Canadian and Maritime Provinces by early January 1862.[66] That these manoeuvres were

[59] *Ibid*, p. 134.
[60] *The Morning Post*, 2 Dec 1861.
[61] *The Globe*, 3 Dec 1861.
[62] Charles Francis Adams to Andrew Everett, 29 Nov 1861, 'Letters,' 88.
[63] Charles Francis Adams to Jonathan Lothrop Motley, 4 Dec 1861, *Ibid*, 93.
[64] Brown did not consider the role of British media, and provided only a brief summary of the crisis. See Brown, *Palmerston*, pp. 452-453.
[65] Kenneth Bourne, 'British Preparations for war with the North, 1861-1862,' 626-627.
[66] *Ibid*, 628-629.

witnessed by American citizens and widely reported on by the press helped to demonstrate how seriously the British took the Trent insult. 'I don't think it likely they will give in,' Lord Lyons wrote to Earl Russell on 19 December, 'but I do not think it impossible they may do so, particularly if the next news from England brings note of warlike preparations, and determination on the part of the Government and people.'[67] Unlike other crises examined later in this thesis – such as the Schleswig-Holstein crisis – this threat of British military intervention was not empty. Nor was Earl Russell bluffing in this instance, as he later bluffed with such ignominious results in 1864.

Planning for these contingencies meant confronting an uncomfortable fact: that a war for national honour would also place Britain on the same side as the Confederacy. The *Spectator* reasoned that the prospect of conflict with the Union did not make the Confederacy more sympathetic. 'We need not say with what keen regret we feel driven to this conclusion, for it involves steps tending directly to aid the worst cause Englishmen were ever asked to support.' Just as Wilkes' act was a humiliation, 'That we in such a contest should be on the side of the wrong, is a bitter humiliation, but our duty is none the less clear.' The *Spectator* lamented that 'Almost any other insult might have been borne for the sake of the cause at stake,' but notwithstanding the fact that the punishment of the Union 'will involve the triumph of evil men,' Britain had to proceed. After all, concluded the *Spectator*, 'there is something at stake as sacred as the national honour, and that is our right to receive all men not accused of civil crime,' which 'can be satisfied only by the release of the commissioners, with whom in themselves we sympathise much as we would with brigands.'[68]

Although the *Spectator* was an impassioned advocate of the Union's cause,[69] such comments still serve to draw attention to Britain's relationship with the civil war's two belligerents. The *Spectator* suggested a fractious Anglo-Confederate relationship, when this was far from the case. Pro-Confederate sympathies existed within Parliament, and among each distinct political class.[70] Whether a dyed in the wool Conservative,[71] a Liberal campaigner or an

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[67] Lord Lyons to Earl Russell, 19 Dec 1861, in Newton, *Lord Lyons,* Chapter 3.
[68] From *The Spectator*, quoted in *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 3 Dec 1861.
[69] See Ephraim Douglass Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War* (2 vols. New York, 1925), I, p. 39.
[70] David D. Joyce, 'Pro-Confederate Sympathy in the British Parliament,' *Social Science*, 44, No. 2 (April 1969), 95-100.
[71] Donald Bellows, 'A Study of British Conservative Reaction to the American Civil War,' *Journal of Southern History*, 51, No. 4 (Nov., 1985), 505-526.

industrial labourer, Britons found reasons to sympathise with the Confederate cause.[72] In particular – before abolitionist arguments were deployed to greater success – Confederates could portray their struggle as one of Northern protectionism versus Southern free trade.[73] From this position, Confederates pointed to their monopoly on cotton production, which supplied 80% of Britain's cotton needs,[74] and employed twenty million worldwide.[75]

Confederate supporters could also base their position on ideological concerns.[76] The Confederate cause was compared to other independence movements, such as the Polish, Hungarian or Italian, which added more context for British readers, however accurate the picture.[77] Among those that adhered to this position was Chancellor of the Exchequer William Gladstone, who infamously declared the Confederacy had 'made a nation.'[78] John Bright criticised the Chancellor of the Exchequer's stance, noting Gladstone was 'for union and freedom in Italy and for dissension and bondage in America.'[79] Still, Confederate diplomacy left much to be desired.[80] Though Palmerston strove to prohibit the supply of armaments to the north, he could not overcome British dependency on other American staples, such as wheat, where the Union had a monopoly of its own.[81] Notwithstanding the unpopularity of the Union blockade – which several British ships attempted to run – Washington did not close the enemy ports, which suggested an unwillingness to sever foreign trade links completely.[82]

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[72] It was originally considered that workers favoured the North; see Joseph H. Park, 'The English Workingmen and the American Civil War,' *Political Science Quarterly*, 39, No. 3 (Sep., 1924), 432-457. However, this has since been challenged, and a more complex picture of sympathies is now accepted. See Royden Harrison, 'British Labour And The Confederacy: A Note On The Southern Sympathies Of Some British Working Class Journals And Leaders During The American Civil War,' *International Review of Social History*, 2, No. 1 (1957), 78-105.

[73] Marc William-Palen, 'The Civil War's Forgotten Transatlantic Tariff Debate and the Confederacy's Free Trade Diplomacy,' *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 3, No. 1 (March, 2013), 35-61.

[74] Park, 'The English Workingmen and the American Civil War,' 432-433.

[75] Sven Beckert, 'Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War,' *American Historical Review*, 109, No. 5 (Dec 2004), 1405-1438; 1405.

[76] Michael J. Turner, 'British Sympathy for the South during the American Civil War and Reconstruction: A Religious Perspective,' *Church History and Religious Culture*, 97, No. 2 (2017), 195-219.

[77] Arnold Whitridge, 'British Liberals and the American Civil War,' *History Today*, XII (Oct 1962), 689-692.

[78] *The Times*, 9 Oct 1862.

[79] At the end of his life, Gladstone would renounce his comments as 'a mistake, but one of incredible grossness,' which 'justly exposed me to very severe blame.' See Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone* (London, 1995), p. 239.

[80] Henry Blumenthal, 'Confederate Diplomacy: Popular Notions and International Realities,' *The Journal of Southern History*, 32, No. 2 (May, 1966), 151-171.

[81] Brown, *Palmerston*, p. 453. Eli Ginzberg, 'The Economics of British Neutrality during the American Civil War,' *Agricultural History*, 10, No. 4 (Oct., 1936), 147-156; 149.

[82] Stuart Anderson, '1861: Blockade vs. Closing the Confederate Ports,' *Military Affairs*, 41, No. 4 (Dec., 1977), 190-194.

It was perhaps more accurate to describe British policy towards the two belligerents as 'a mixture of economic selfishness, legal obfuscation, and political expediency.'[83] Joseph Hernon Jr discerned that British aristocratic suspicion of American democracy, and Palmerstonian caution over intervention, served to balance one another out, facilitating a policy of watchful neutrality.[84] Only incidents such as the Trent Affair could jolt Palmerston from this neutrality; only the concerns for satisfaction would compel him to jeopardise the careful balance between the two belligerents. National honour had a way of cutting through the debate like few other concerns could. Indeed, as the *Preston Chronicler and Lancashire Advertiser* opined, 'we have come to the conclusion that the time has come when the ministers must uphold the national honour with a high hand. There never was a better case, there never was a fairer opportunity.' After all, 'the Yankees' had been 'insulting us for years,' and 'There need be no fear of war.' What was essential, instead, was that Britain 'insist on…having this insult atoned for.'[85]

This lack of choice when it came to the national honour was a common theme in early December. 'The great question is, War or Peace?' the *Banner of Ulster* claimed. 'Silence and submission under such an insult are impossible; there is a cry for redress, if not for vengeance, that must be satisfied.'[86] The crisis resonated with some surprising figures. On 6 December, William Smith O'Brien – once sentenced to be hung, drawn, and quartered for his role in the 1848 Irish rebellion – wrote what amounted to an open letter to the American Secretary of State, which was printed in the *Morning Chronicle*, reasoning that 'Unless England consent to forego all claims to manhood or national honour, she must resent this seizure.' If, in addition, 'the South be disposed to accept her cooperation, the successors of Washington must be prepared to encounter hazards more dangerous than have ever menaced the Western Republic.'[87] Timidity or hesitation by Britain at this moment would forfeit the national honour. Any display of weakness would not merely be a shameful spectacle, it could also invite unwelcome opportunists to take advantage of the perceived weakness. This was the functional element of the code of honour which contemporaries alluded to in their description of Britain's options. 'Is a war about to take place between England and the

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[83] Frank J. Merli and Thomas W. Green, 'Great Britain and the Confederate Navy, 1861-1865,' *History Today*, XIV (Oct 1964), 695.
[84] Hernon Jr. 'British Sympathies in the American Civil War: A Reconsideration,' *The Journal of Southern History*, 33, No. 3 (Aug, 1967), 356-367; 359.
[85] *Preston Chronicler and Lancashire Advertiser*, 4 Dec 1861.
[86] *Banner of Ulster* quoted in *Morning Post*, 5 Dec 1861.
[87] *Morning Chronicle*, 6 Dec 1861.

United States?' pondered Dorset's *Christchurch Times*. It noted that 'In fact, almost everybody says so. There is no help for it.' Either 'the Americans must make full reparations for the insult to the British flag, or the insult must be properly avenged.'[88]

Alongside these careful considerations of the case, there were bound to be outbursts of intense feeling among the British population. Yet, as the *Saturday Review* observed, even the calmest of men 'must have felt their breast throb with pride' when they noticed 'during the last ten days how every rank, every class, every party in the country has been touched to the quick by the bare notion of an insult to the English flag.' Such outbursts were not to be regretted, because 'We should cease to be a fighting, and therefore a powerful and a great people, if we were too phlegmatic to have these quick impulses of indignation.'[89] The message was reiterated: national honour was a vital part of a state's health, and a population that understood this would maintain that state's position. Palmerston's administration moved ahead with plans for war with the United States, shifting squadrons, soldiers, and materiel to the Canadian border. The British press connected these preparations to a fatalist philosophy: Palmerston's Government would seek satisfaction at all costs, even war with the Union.

4.2: Better War than Dishonour

As the British anxiously awaited news of Washington's response to their demands, in mid-December 1861, the rhetoric surrounding British policy moved into a striking new phase. In an emerging pattern, the prospect of war was held to be less inherently damaging than the consequences of national dishonour. Not only was war necessary in the event satisfaction was denied, but war would plainly be the fault of Lincoln's administration for playing fast and loose with British honour. As the *Leicester Journal* asserted:

> England desires war with no country – especially with America – but our character as a nation is at stake, and tremendous as the consequences of a rupture with the Federal Government might be, satisfaction we must have. This, no doubt, on calm

[88] *Christchurch Times and South Hants Advertiser*, 7 Dec 1861.
[89] *The Saturday Review*, 7 Dec 1861, 583-585.

> reflection, the Cabinet of President Lincoln will perceive the necessity of doing. If they refuse, let the blood be on their own heads.[90]

Thus, when Conservative MP and former Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Seymour Fitzgerald presided over a gathering of farmers and gentry in his constituency of Horsham, West Sussex on 12 December, Britain's choice was made explicit. War, in Fitzgerald's view, was a national calamity, all the more so because it would mean war with America. Yet, Fitzgerald was quick to note that this sense of calamity 'does not arise from any fear of war. Thank God!' because of a 'a still higher feeling,' the conviction 'that a war which is not necessary for the honour and for the interests of the country – a war instituted merely for ambition or for glory, is not only a political mistake, but is also a national crime.'

The only circumstances in which war would be acceptable, Fitzgerald suggested, was in the event that the national honour was at stake. 'We love peace,' Fitzgerald asserted, 'but there is something that we love even more, and that is the maintenance of the national honour.'[91] This rhetoric was remarkably similar to that used by the Earl of Derby three years later, during the peak of the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, wherein the leader of the Conservative Party stated: 'Dearly as I love peace, I love honour more.'[92] Expressing sentiments reminiscent of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, Fitzgerald believed that the best way to ensure peace was to refuse 'concessions that are not due concessions, and which are inconsistent with the honour and dignity of the country.' Fitzgerald asserted that peace could be maintained, but 'if that hope should be falsified then I feel there is that spirit in England that will ensure the full and ample vindication of our rights and honour.' These sentiments received the loud approval of those present, suggesting a commonality of views. Sir Walter Barttelot, the Conservative MP for West Sussex and a Colonel in the army reserve spoke next, insisting that 'if the Government had displayed a bold, determined front to the Emperor Nicholas as they had done in regard to the insult just offered to the national honour, the Crimean War would never have taken place.' When an insult was received, this was also the only honourable course to pursue. It was 'impossible, with any regard to the honour and dignity of the country, that we could tamely submit to so gross an insult to our flag, and unless the Southern Commissioners were immediately restored, we must inevitably drift into war.' Yet Barttelot asserted that 'If they confessed their fault England was strong enough to

[90] *Leicester Journal* quoted in *The Scotsman*, 2 Dec 1861.
[91] *Morning Chronicle*, 12 Dec 1861.
[92] Earl of Derby, HL Deb 17 June 1864 vol. 175, cc. 1925-1926.

say “I am sorry you did it, but I heartily forgive you now you have acknowledged your error.”’[93]

Statesmen like Fitzgerald and Barttelot claimed to prefer war to the dishonour wrought by a meek or hesitant policy. Yet, if the Americans confessed their crimes and sought Britain’s forgiveness, satisfaction could be obtained. Until Washington’s answer arrived in Britain, speakers continued to insist that if satisfaction was not provided, nothing less than war would do. Thus, on 11 December the Liberal MP for East Sussex Sir Henry Brand spoke in the town of Lewes, and told his audience ‘We hardly met a man who did not put the question, “Is there to be war with America?” Well, who could answer such a question as that?’ While an Anglo-American war would be a ‘calamity,’ Brand declared that ‘the greatest calamity of all would be national dishonour. That England could not submit to.’ ‘Peace,’ Sir Henry Brand claimed, ‘was the greatest blessing on the earth, and we ought to make great sacrifices for it; but forbearance had its limits. Peace, though a great blessing, may be bought too dear.’[94]

It is significant that the language changed very little even among members of different parties; this suggests a conformity of opinion, or at least a majority publicly in favour of honour’s primacy in international relations. These MPs emphasised the consequences of national dishonour, arguing that those consequences were worse than war with the Union. Speaking at the Guildford Agricultural Society, MP for Guildford William Bovill explained that ‘a wrong had been committed, an outrage and an insult to the British flag,’ and ‘we were bound, if it were intentional, to resent it, and the best way was to resent it immediately.’ On the other hand, if ‘the acts of Captain Wilkes were not repudiated, we were fortunately in a position to vindicate the honour of this country.’ If Britain had not been prepared to do so, ‘We should have been obliged to submit to insult; and would that prevent the evils of war?’ No, Bovill declared, ‘If this outrage was intentional, the inevitable result would have been greater insults, until we were forced into war.’[95]

By putting honour before peace, peace would thus be ensured. In reference to the above speeches, *The Times* could thus observe that ‘This is the language of men who are prepared to lose, if necessary, every son, every farthing, in the maintenance of our national honour.’ War with America would bring fearsome consequences, but *The Times* assured its readers that: ‘All this is felt by those who are most concerned to feel it; and yet there is no flinching,

[93] *Morning Chronicle*, 12 Dec 1861.
[94] *Ibid*.
[95] *Morning Post*, 12 Dec 1861.

but a steady confidence in statesmen who never yet flinched when the national honour was in question.'[96] With the people, the press and the politicians united behind this policy, it was little surprise that reinforcements for Canada were cheered by the citizens of Liverpool as they embarked.[97] Indeed, as Benjamin Disraeli observed 'The passions of the people are very high at the present moment, and if the Ministry chose to send 50,000 men to Canada they would be supported.'[98]

But was Palmerston truly willing to wage war? Laurence Fenton observed a disconnect between the sense of public indignation and the likelihood of Britain making war.[99] In his analysis of Liberal relations towards the Union, George Bernstein discerned that although the Trent Affair 'threatened war,' still 'Britain's Liberal government did not want a war,' and that Palmerston's Administration feared 'it was the American government that might be looking for a war.'[100] Chamberlain opined that war was only avoided because slow transatlantic communications gave tempers time to cool.[101] Denis Judd provided a more nuanced picture, noting that 'war was in the offing,' but despite some anti-Union prejudices, Palmerston 'had no wish to provoke war with the North, though it is evident that on several occasions he seemed prepared to be drawn into the conflict.'[102] James Chambers observed that Palmerston privately worked to defuse the crisis, but that 'In public,' Palmerston 'was just what the people and press expected.'[103]

Certainly, the Prime Minister had cultivated a strong bond with the British public, and had leveraged extra-parliamentary forces to enhance his own political position. David Brown noted that Palmerston's skill in handling popular, patriotic questions such as the national honour did not detract from his own belief in their practical importance.[104] While it can never be ruled out that Palmerston harnessed this anxiety over national honour for his own policy

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[96] *The Times*, 13 Dec 1861.
[97] *Morning Post*, 13 Dec 1861.
[98] Benjamin Disraeli to Charles Adderley, 26 Jan 1862 in W. Moneypenny, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield* (6 vols. New York, 1916), IV, 329. Moneypenny observed that Disraeli, unlike his peers, had opposed sending reinforcements to Canada to educate the Canadians on the need to provide for their own defence, yet he also accepted that the national mood desired firm action; *Ibid*, pp. 328-329. See also Philip Buckner, '"British North America and a Continent in Dissolution": The American Civil War in the Making of Canadian Confederation,' *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 7, No. 4 (Dec 2017), 512-540.
[99] Fenton, *Palmerston and The Times*, p. 153
[100] George L. Bernstein, 'Special Relationship and Appeasement: Liberal Policy towards America in the Age of
Palmerston,' *The Historical Journal*. 41, No. 3 (Sep., 1998), 725-750; 725.
[101] M. E. Chamberlain, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of Palmerston* (London, 1980), p. 82.
[102] Denis Judd, *Palmerston* (London, 2015), 194-195.
[103] James Chambers, *Palmerston* (London, 2004), pp. 486-487.
[104] Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy*, p. 5, 11, 15.

ends, his quest for satisfaction was consistently pursued and communicated by the Cabinet during this crisis. In line with this search for satisfaction, Amanda Foreman's account of Lord Lyons' activities in Washington reveals a more precarious balance between war and peace, and the limits to which Britain was determined to go to acquire satisfaction.[105] Britain's demands were non-negotiable, particularly on the matter of the imprisoned commissioners, and on this Lincoln's Cabinet eventually blinked.[106]

The government's stance was aided by the tenacity of the British press. In mid-December the *London Review* wrote that the Government had been, 'reluctantly compelled to take measures for the vindication of the insulted honour of the British people.'[107] The *Morning Post* was of the view that only two scenarios were possible: 'We must either assume that President Lincoln means to make the necessary reparation for the outrage committed on board the *Trent*, or that he is satisfied that we will seek none.' In the latter case, the *Post* was under no illusions, reflecting that while all were anxious for peace, 'the Cabinet at Washington knows by this time that we are resolved, at all hazards, to maintain the national honour, and that, if ample reparation is refused, we are prepared to uphold our just rights by force of arms.'[108]

If Washington was aware of how seriously Britons took the national honour, then surely Lincoln would shrink from war, and provide Britain with the satisfaction she requested. This was a comforting assurance for Britons; surely, no government could possibly risk its security by entering war with the world's foremost power while also fighting a civil war of its own? But what to do with those few who spoke against satisfaction? The *Dublin Evening Mail* agonised over 'a dozen or so of our fellow citizens, of respectable position,' who sympathise with those that wished 'to exhibit to the Americans, as though it really existed among us, a party which weighs the national honour as against pounds, shillings and pence.' Significantly, the *Mail* assured its readership that no alternatives could be considered. Nor could a grisly description of the looming war deter the government from its current policy of seeking satisfaction, since 'We feel the dread nature of the alternative we present to Washington as much as any nation could, but those of us to whom the national honour is dear feel also that we cannot escape from it.'[109]

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[105] Foreman, *A World On Fire*: *An Epic History of Two Nations Divided* (London, 2010), pp. 291-296.
[106] *Ibid*, pp. 296-299.
[107] *London Review*, 14 Dec 1861, 734-735.
[108] *Morning Post*, 19 Dec 1861.
[109] *Dublin Evening Mail*, 21 Dec 1861.

National honour's inescapable demands did not blind British citizens to the horrors of war. War would be a matter of duty, because the consequences for ignoring such a slight and leaving it unanswered were believed more severe than such a war. The national honour was sacred, and this was a lesson which statesmen echoed to their constituents. It was certainly the view of the Earl of Lincoln, Henry Pelham-Clinton, Liberal MP for Newark, who spoke on Christmas Eve to his constituents in Nottingham's Exchange Room. 'Englishmen,' the Earl of Lincoln declared, 'have been taught to look upon national honour as essential to England – they have been taught to look upon the right of asylum as essential, not only to national honour, but as essential to the civilisation of the world.' The Earl then challenged his audience whether 'for the sake of peace, for the sake of our commercial interests,' Britain should 'allow that to be trampled on which we have ever held sacred and inviolate? No, gentlemen,' the Earl declared, 'the honour of the British flag must be vindicated!'

The Earl insisted that while a fear of war would not stop the search for satisfaction, Britons had no love of war: 'Let us hope that it may yet be done without war.' But if it proved impossible to acquire satisfaction without such a weighted declaration, then the Earl of Lincoln was crystal clear about where he stood on the matter: 'let us show to the Americans and to the world that much as we value peace, we value national honour more.'[110] Having confirmed their ideological position, Britons were prepared to go to any lengths to acquire satisfaction and recoup the stained honour. Devoid of Parliamentary debates which might articulate these views, the rhetoric of newspapers filled this information gap, and buoyed British confidence. This quest for satisfaction continued into the new year, when the American response finally arrived in London.

4.3: The Triumph of Satisfaction

America's answer arrived in London on 9 January 1862, and the news spread shortly thereafter of a British triumph. The Prime Minister wrote to the Queen informing her that the government would accept 'the release of the prisoners, and the declaration in Mr Seward's note, that Captain Wilkes acted without any orders or authority, as a full satisfaction of the demands of the British Government.'[111] Palmerston could welcome the

[110] Quoted in *Nottingham and Midland Counties Daily Express*, 25 Dec 1861.
[111] Viscount Palmerston to Queen Victoria, 9 Jan 1862 in Victoria, *The Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence and Journal between the Years 1862 and 1878*, ed. George Earle Buckle, (3 vols, London, 1926), I, pp. 7-8.

news, but according to some, satisfaction was only half-won. The Americans had released the Confederate prisoners, but they had not apologised either for their arrest or for the insult done to Britain's flag. As only half the requested satisfaction had been received, there was space to criticise the American response as unsatisfactory. Yet, at the same time, calls for war to wrest an apology from the unrepentant Americans were non-existent. Although the quest for satisfaction had arguably been 'fudged,' enabling Washington to save face, the point which British contemporaries chose to dwell upon instead was that the Americans had released its prisoners under threat of British military reprisals.[112] By leveraging her military power and prestige against the beleaguered Americans to such great effect, British national honour could be declared satisfied, and the insult redressed.

British media presented this message to the reading public. In a January 1862 issue of *Punch*, the Colonel John Bull was depicted aiming his rifle at the American racoon, which bore Lincoln's face, and hid in a tree. 'Are you in earnest, Colonel?' the American racoon asked. 'I am,' Colonel Bull replied. 'Don't fire,' the American racoon urged, 'I'll come down.'[113] Gratifying though this may have been to British audiences, in the first week of January 1862 – before news of America's response had arrived in London – British statesmen and press were less certain of the outcome. Perhaps understanding that this was their final opportunity to communicate their uncompromising message, a flurry of speeches and editorials became available to the public. In a speech before his constituents on 2 January, MP Alexander Kinglake declared that 'As soon as the news was received in this country there was a firm determination to uphold the honour of the flag, and that that honour should be vindicated according to law.' While no one intended to stray outside these legal bounds, 'the country waited until the law officers of the Crown had given their decision, and as soon as it was given there was hardly a man who ventured to question it.'[114]

Adhering both to international law and to the script of national honour was not necessarily easy, but Britain's position was aided by the unanimous view across the country that she had been wronged according to both honour and the law. That same day, Edward Cardwell, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, spoke to his constituents at Oxford, reflecting similar sentiments. 'I believe,' Cardwell began, 'there never was a spectacle of which Englishmen might be less ashamed in the face of Europe and of the world than the demeanour England

[112] Brown, *Palmerston*, p. 453.
[113] See Foreman, *World on Fire*, p. 300.
[114] *Morning Post*, 2 Jan 1862.

has shown in this great trial of her fortunes.' In Cardwell's view, 'We have sustained an injury — one that has been such as we could not possibly pass by, if we meant to retain the name and the position which England has heretofore enjoyed among the nations of the world.' Cardwell also had a message for the American Government, to the effect that 'there has been no party feeling in the matter.' Instead, 'What has been done has been the act as it always is in circumstances where the honour of England is at stake – it has been the act of a united people, speaking and acting as one man.'[115]

When reporting on a gathering of 'working men' in Birmingham, the *Daily News* underlined that national honour was not an aristocratic obsession, reserved for the elite, as in France. Indeed, 'The working-man had no sympathy with those who held the national honour cheap, and for his own part he had confidence in the capacity of the Government to "vindicate our honour."' Such energetic language 'has the ring of the true metal', and there was 'nothing of clap-trap or bravado in it,' merely 'that happy mixture of firmness and moderation which befits a great people who have great interests at stake, but to whom honour is the dearest interest of all.' All allusions to arbitration had vanished from the *Daily News'* pages, and it adhered to the popular message of satisfaction. The national honour was a banner which all classes could rally behind, and these classes would never accept efforts to divide them or hide the true weight of the issue.

The *Daily News* here referred to 'all the sober-minded, serious and responsible members of the community, who prefer honour at any cost to peace at any price.' And the paper condemned 'the policy of dividing English opinion on the previous question of national honour, or representing it as divided.'[116] National honour was too important to brook divisions, and yet its central importance for the good of the British nation was apparently straightforward enough that all could understand it. This suggests that honour's script was understood by more than just Britain's governing class – or, at least, that the *Daily News* wished to suggest it was so. Certainly, British national honour mattered to those living outside of Britain's Home Islands, as the Nova Scotian Premier Joseph Howe exclaimed, during a speech before the citizens of Bristol on 8 January:

> While every man in British America wished for peace, and while there was not a man in the little province which he represented, and which might be taken as a

[115] *Morning Post*, 2 Jan 1862.
[116] *Daily News*, 4 Jan 1862.

> sample of the other provinces, that would embark on an aggressive and rebellious war, there was not a man that would not rather that the province should sink beneath the sea than that the flag of England should be violated. (Cheers).[117]

This could be considered a variation of the theme which favoured war to dishonour; here, Howe claimed to prefer utter ruin to dishonour. Howe would never have to make such a stark choice, but he would have to content himself with limited American concessions. In this context, the *Morning Post*'s editorial of 11 January serves as a remarkable interrogation of the national mood during the 'now happily settled Trent Affair.' Even if the Union's response was not wholly satisfactory, 'Our finance will feel the benefits of the national self-respect and resolution', due to 'the assurance, now rendered doubly sure, that the British flag cannot be unjustly assailed or contemptuously outraged.' Regarding security, it was noted that 'There is no species of English security, there is no kind of English investment, which has not had its value enhanced by the mingled prudence and firmness of Lord Palmerston's Administration.'

Across the world, the conviction had been reaffirmed that 'wherever the waves can bear, or the winds can waft, the flag of England,' this flag would be 'a shelter and a shield to all who, without having violated the acknowledged rules of public law, shall venture to sail beneath it.' Meanwhile, the acquisition of satisfaction had sent a message to 'The capitalists of New York', who were 'made clearly to understand that there are interests which England prizes even more highly than the gains of her vast American commerce.' Congress had itself 'been made distinctly to perceive that there are dangers which England is more anxious to avert than a sudden aggression on her Canadian frontier.' This danger was the loss of national honour, which would have followed any government that failed to acquire satisfaction for such a brazen insult on the high seas.

'The national honour is worth a hundred Canadas,' the *Post* declared, adding that the benefits of the Trent Affair 'as regards America' were 'far from being exclusively confined to the establishment of a better understanding with England.' Indeed, concluding on the cross European support which Britain's stance enjoyed, the *Post* relished the fact that Britain had not merely defended its national honour, it had also vindicated the principles inherent in international law, which all European nations could support.[118] In this context, it can be little

[117] *Morning Post*, 9 Jan 1862.
[118] *Morning Post*, 11 Jan 1862.

surprise that the national honour was considered to be worth ‘a hundred Canadas’ – nothing, indeed, was worth more than a policy which publicly and successfully defended the national honour from injury. The *Morning Post*’s consideration of how the policy of Palmerston’s Administration rebounded to so many quarters of domestic and foreign policy reflected the belief that such prosperity followed a healthy respect for the national honour.

At the same time, the opinion on Britain’s position was not universal, even if public reverence for the national honour was. It seems that while most viewed the conduct of the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary favourably, as the new Parliamentary session approached, and more time had elapsed, Conservative MPs were less certain. In the House of Lords on 6 February, Earl Russell referenced past Anglo-American negotiations over the Maine boundary and Oregon, clarifying that ‘although on other occasions, when questions of boundary had to be settled, the country was most willing to yield any reasonable advantage to the United States of America,’ when ‘our honour and reputation were concerned it was impossible that any compromise should be permitted, and it was incumbent on us to seek reparation, and not be satisfied till that reparation was obtained.’[119]

Russell’s belief in the need to seek reparation, and his insistence on not being satisfied ‘till that reparation was obtained’ was consistent with the uncompromising script of national honour. As much as the national honour demanded, however, it also had the positive effect of rallying all elements of party opinion behind a given policy. ‘No one could have expected otherwise from the warm and firm loyalty of the noble Earl,’ remarked Earl Granville, Leader of the House of Lords, and former Foreign Secretary, ‘who expresses the real feeling of this country when he says, that whenever the national honour or the national interests are concerned party spirit will be immediately discarded.’[120]

But the opposition was less convinced. The alternative view was taken up by Baron Kingsdown, a member of the judicial committee of the Privy Council. Kingsdown did not mince his words: ‘He thought it had been most unsatisfactory,’ though Kingsdown did allow some concessions, giving ‘full credit to Her Majesty's Government for their proceedings—for the promptness with which they had demanded reparation, for the temper with which they had made the demand, and the vigour with which they prepared to enforce it.’ ‘But,’ Kingsdown asked, ‘what had been the conduct of the United States?’ An officer of the United

[119] Earl Russell, HL Deb 6 Feb 1862 vol 165, cc. 46-47.
[120] Earl Granville, *Ibid*, cc. 39-40.

States had publicly offered 'A gross and scandalous insult…to the British Flag,' and while the Americans had surrendered the Confederates, the circumstances of this surrender was hardly satisfying since it had been done 'Without one word of apology, without the smallest expression of regret for what had happened, without one farthing of compensation to the victims of the outrage.'[121]

In his response, American Secretary of State William Seward had asserted 'in effect,' that Captain Wilkes' 'only fault was in not carrying the outrage further,' a reference to the norm of international law which upheld the *Trent* should have been taken to America's Prize Courts. Indeed, Kingsdown reflected bitterly that Seward 'concluded with an insulting declaration that right or wrong the United States Government would have kept the prisoners if they had been of any value, and gave them up only because they were worthless.' Considering these galling facts, Kingsdown felt compelled to ask whether this reparation 'was sufficient to remove the stain upon the honour of our flag?' Although Kingsdown 'was not prepared to say that after the surrender had been made we ought to have gone to war in order to enforce an apology,' still 'he could never think that a surrender made under such circumstances could be properly termed by their Lordships a satisfactory settlement of the dispute.'[122]

As Kingsdown reflected, there was no sense in going to war to enforce an apology. Yet, this did not mean Britain was not prepared for such an eventuality. That same day in the Commons, the MP for Dorset William Portman reflected on what had been a 'breach of international law and a direct insult to the British flag,' which the government resolved by pursuing a course which was 'best calculated to maintain peace, and at the same time to assert the dignity of this country in a manner worthy of the trust which was reposed in them by the nation.'[123] He believed that 'The people of this country were in the first instance anxious to ascertain the rights of the case,' but 'when that point was placed beyond all doubt,' Britons 'evinced their determination to seek reparation for the injury which had been done them, and, if necessary, to enforce that reparation by an appeal to arms.'[124] Portman was careful to assert that while Britain did not desire war, 'this country was determined, if

[121] Baron Kingsdown, *Ibid*, cc. 47-48.
[122] *Ibid*, cc. 48-49.
[123] William Portman, HC Deb 6 Feb 1862 vol 165, cc. 52-53.
[124] *Ibid*, cc. 53-54.

necessary, to carry it on until due and ample reparation had been obtained for the offence which had been committed.'[125]

Liberal MP Western Wood strove to delicately avoid the question of whether America could have done more, but he did 'content himself with saying that, as all were aware, an insult on our flag having been committed, redress was demanded, and that redress had been conceded.' Wood said he would not stop to inquire 'whether the manner in which it had been conceded was as prompt as was due to this country, and, he would add, as was consistent with the character and dignity of the United States.'[126] These reservations notwithstanding, Wood believed 'the Government of this country had every reason to be satisfied, for their claim had been admitted by the Power against whom it was made,' and 'we had obtained the concurrence of every great Power of Europe, both as to the justice of the claim we had put forward and in the temperate manner in which we had enforced it.'[127]

Wood was not exaggerating for effect; diplomatic correspondence from the European capitals testifies to American isolation during the Trent Affair.[128] In the short term at least, the resolution of the Trent Affair rebounded to Palmerston's reputation, and to Russell's benefit in the Foreign Office. The Union was perceived as a doomed nation, incapable of reconquering its rebellious provinces,[129] which could only contribute to the general sense of crisis in North America.[130] Notwithstanding an ill-advised effort at mediation late in 1862, the American Civil War became an accepted part of the international order.[131] Relations between Washington and London stabilised, but they also became less directly relevant to Palmerston's administration. British attention was redirected to Europe when two new crises, first in Poland, then in the duchies of Schleswig-Holstein, threatened to implicate national honour and transform the status quo.[132]

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[125] *Ibid*, cc. 53-54.
[126] Western Wood, *Ibid*, cc. 60-61.
[127] *Ibid*, cc. 60-61.
[128] 'Notes of Austria, France and Prussia to the United States Regarding the Trent Affair, 1861,' *American Journal of International Law,* 10, No. 2, (Apr., 1916), 67-72
[129] As Disraeli explained in September 1861, 'Our friend Jonathan seems in a pretty state, it's like the failure of some immense house, one can hardly realise the enormous results. It is a privilege to live in such a pantomimic age of glittering illusions and startling surprises.' Nor was Disraeli alone in interpreting the American division as permanent. See Moneypenny, *Life of Disraeli*, iv, p. 328.
[130] W. L. Morton, 'British North America and a Continent an Dissolution, 1861–71,' *History*, 47, No. 160 (1962), 139-156.
[131] Kinley J. Brauer, 'British Mediation and the American Civil War: A Reconsideration,' *Journal of Southern History*, 38, No. 1 (Feb., 1972), 49- 64
[132] John Kutolowski, 'The Effect of the Polish Insurrection of 1863 on American Civil War Diplomacy,' *Historian*, 27, No. 4 (August, 1965), 560-577.

Conclusion

> If the Northern States of America will make the reparation demanded, well and good; if not, there is nothing left but to draw the sword in defence of our flag and the right of nations.[133]

The Trent Affair was the final popular triumph of Palmerston's career – and arguably the final British victory in Anglo-American relations – before the *Alabama* claims dispute muddied the picture.[134] Moreover, the Trent Affair sheds invaluable light on how the rhetoric of national honour influenced British foreign policy. Indeed, the above analysis of public discourse reveals a determined, almost anxious belief in national honour's primacy, underpinned by a formula that stipulated which nations enjoyed peace, stability and respect, and which nations succumbed to ruin. National honour was taken for granted, and it could brook no excuses; fears of a terrible war, or warnings of an expensive, thankless conflict, did not deter British contemporaries from insisting on satisfaction. Instead, Britons were encouraged to believe that war was inherently *less* painful than dishonour; a theme which remained prescient into the Schleswig-Holstein crisis and beyond.

One could argue that the simplicity of the crisis aided the deployment of this fatalist rhetoric. In contrast to the uneasiness over opium in the war with China, concerns over the optics of coercing the smaller Greek state, or – as seen in the next chapter – disputes over the nature of British obligations and Danish complicity, the Union's insult was unequivocally illegal in law and deeply offensive to an establishment steeped in the legend of British naval power. The extent of the Union's tactical blunder is affirmed by the virtual absence of any difference in British political opinion. Palmerston recognised these advantages, and was quick to translate the outrage into a political victory. He cannot have been ignorant of the strategic advantages either. Indeed, it was easy to proclaim one's preference for war over dishonour when Washington was likely to prioritise its civil conflict over a third Anglo-American war. It cannot be known for certain if Palmerston leveraged the rhetoric of national honour because he sensed an opportunity; perhaps he understood that the prevailing expectations prescribed by the honour-script limited his freedom of action. The above survey of press

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[133] *London Evening Standard*, 4 Jan 1862.
[134] Adrian Cook, *The Alabama Claims: American Politics and Anglo-American Relations, 1865-1872* (London, 1975), pp. 244-246.

opinion suggests that the acquisition of satisfaction was the only acceptable outcome. Certainly, Palmerston was in an ideal strategic and political position to press this rhetoric, considering European cooperation and American isolation. He also stood to benefit from this rhetoric, as it aided his cause to be seen as the representative of a nation united in its outrage, who sought nothing less than the vindication of Britain's damaged honour.

However, notwithstanding the triumphant mood, Palmerston's quest was technically only partially successful. The press had been consistent in asserting that satisfaction must consist of an American apology and the return of the imprisoned Confederates. Yet, remarkably, both Russell and Palmerston declared themselves satisfied with only one of these outcomes. Indeed, the requirement of an apology was adjusted to one of mere 'explanation', providing Secretary of State William Seward with the opportunity to grasp a face-saving compromise. Ambassador Lord Lyons understood that this adjustment of demands would prove more amenable to the American public.[135] This was a lesser species of satisfaction than that originally demanded, yet satisfaction was declared upon the release of Commissioners Mason and Slidell, and no one seriously advocated wresting an apology from the Union through war. Because of this, it is arguably possible to see Palmerston's Administration as somewhat selective and pragmatic in its search for redress. Indeed, when one considers that Earl Russell was prepared to be 'rather easy about the apology', from an early stage, it could be argued that the press, rather than the statesmen, set the bar of satisfaction too high from the beginning.[136]

In the absence of Parliamentary scrutiny, the Trent Affair reveals the influence of mid-Victorian press contributions. These arguably set the tone of resilience, and benefited from the straightforward nature of the insult. In pushing for maximalist terms of satisfaction, the government risked disappointing press opinion, and thus rendering Ministers vulnerable to censure in the new Parliamentary session. Yet, Russell managed these expectations, and ensured that the country avoided a war for honour which few 'upon calm reflection, really wanted.'[137] In the end, the struggle appeared worth the effort, as joyful crowds in the West End cheered news of Britain's triumph, and Palmerston's political reputation reaped the rewards.[138] As David Krein concluded:

[135] Jones, *American Problem*, p. 206.
[136] See Crook, *Powers*, pp. 134-135.
[137] Krein, *Last Palmerston Government*, p. 52.
[138] Foreman, *A World on Fire*, pp. 303-304.

> John Bull had been challenged in his special domain; Palmerston had spent much of his career creating and playing upon an exaggerated sense of national honour and was equal to the challenge. The country and its politicians required redress, and there was almost universal approval in Britain of the result – and the way in which it was obtained. The ministers had maintained peace with honour.[139]

With few exceptions, the uncompromising honour-script and the necessity of satisfaction dominated the contemporary rhetoric, resonating with readers, statesmen, editorials, and speakers. The prescribed formula for achieving satisfaction – and the technical compromise which Palmerston accepted to acquire it – speaks to an ethic which could be manipulated and adjusted, but never ignored. But, contrary to the contemporary rhetoric, national honour was not always politically expedient; its tenets were occasionally unsuited to British interests, and the losses incurred from a war with a powerful neighbour were not always preferable to dishonour. The Union may have bowed to the pressure of war on multiple fronts, but better prepared nations would be less intimidated by British moves, and could even call Britain's bluff. Although a third Anglo-American war was avoided, the struggle with national honour was destined to continue.

[139] Krein, *Last Palmerston Government*, p. 53.

Chapter Five

Obligation, Bluff, and Influence in the Schleswig-Holstein Crisis 1863-64

Introduction

In one of the few studies examining Britain's role in the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, Keith Sandiford concluded that by the end of the episode 'It was painfully obvious that the national honour had been sullied by a number of European slights which themselves bore ample testimony to Britain's moral weakness in international politics at that stage,' adding that British influence 'had waned to such an extent that she could no longer exert any appreciable pressure upon the politics of any European state.'[1] Sandiford captured the two main features of the crisis – the perceived damage done to national honour, and the negative impact this had on Britain's ability to leverage its influence in Europe. With European support, Britain had temporarily resolved the Dano-German dispute via a Treaty in 1852, but this Treaty was abandoned by its European signees during the crisis, leaving Britain in the untenable position of enforcing it alone.[2] Unable to suggest a viable alternative to the Treaty; facing divisions within Cabinet and vigorous opposition by the Queen, both Palmerston and Russell vacillated, and were quickly outpaced by events.[3]

The failure was also a symptom of the changing times: 'There was no escaping the conclusion,' David Brown observed, 'that by the end of his life and career Palmerston's foreign policy had lost a good deal of its force.'[4] By the 1860s, Brown deduced, 'Bismarck's Prussia and Lincoln's United States both saw that Palmerston was trying to punch above Britain's weight and they called his bluff.'[5] Laurence Fenton wrote that in his Danish policy, the best Palmerston could manage was a 'belligerent façade,' which was quickly exposed, ending in 'a severe diplomatic humiliation' and palpable reduction in influence.[6] Thomas Otte was still more critical, interpreting British foreign policy during the Schleswig-Holstein

[1] Sandiford, *Great Britain and the Schleswig-Holstein Question 1848-64: a Study in Diplomacy, Politics and Public Opinion* (Toronto, 1975), p. 142.
[2] The German interest in the Duchies was a familiar problem to British policymakers, see William J. Orr, Jr., 'British Diplomacy and the German Problem, 1848-1850', *Albion*, 10, No. 3 (Autumn, 1978), 209-236. Sandiford notes the existence of thirty-four volumes of Foreign Office correspondence relating to the Schleswig-Holstein question between 1851-59; *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, 34.
[3] See W. E. Mosse, 'Queen Victoria and Her Ministers in the Schleswig-Holstein Crisis 1863-1864', *English Historical Review*, 78, No. 307 (Apr., 1963), 263-283.
[4] Brown, *Palmerston*, p. 458.
[5] *Ibid*, p. 459.
[6] Fenton, *Palmerston and The Times*, pp. 157-158.

crisis as 'hardly deserving of that name.' The government had followed 'a curious and incoherent amalgam of Palmerstonian blustering and anti-Palmerstonian pressures emanating from Windsor and amplified within the Cabinet,' which was 'presided over by Lord John Russell, who had somehow forgotten that it was all a bluff.' It was this failure to assert British influence in the Duchies, Otte continued, that represented 'a landmark in the history of nineteenth-century Great Power politics.'

The result may be viewed as the beginning of a general British withdrawal from European affairs for at least a decade, and the tacit acceptance thereafter that Bismarck had upset the balance of power to Britain's disadvantage.[7] It may be argued that this trend spurred Benjamin Disraeli to reassert Britain's role in Europe during the Eastern Crisis, though he could not reverse it entirely.[8] War with Denmark was the first of Otto von Bismarck's schemes,[9] and a vital step towards the establishment of a united German Empire under Prussian domination.[10] Notwithstanding Bismarck's agency, Danish statesmen were far from innocent.[11] Only Denmark rejected Russell's proposal of 1862 which would have granted equality to her kingdom's composite parts.[12] In 1863, Denmark then implemented both the March Patent and November Constitution, which deepened the country's relationship with the Duchies and violated the 1852 Treaty.[13]

These acts outraged the German Confederation, which first sought to reverse these policies, and then reimagine Schleswig-Holstein as an independent state, ruled by the Duke of

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[7] T. G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind*: *The making of British foreign policy, 1865–1914* (London, 2011), p. 37.

[8] See Chapter Six.

[9] Bucholz noted that ten days after becoming Chancellor in September 1862, the Chancellor ordered Moltke to plan for war with Denmark. Arden Bucholz, *Moltke and the German Wars 1864-1871* (New York, 2001), p. 77.

[10] Stacie E. Goddard, 'Chapter Four: Prussia's Rule-Bound Revolution: Europe and the Destruction of the Balance of Power, 1863–64,' in *When Right Makes Might: Rising Powers and World Order* (New York, 2018), pp. 84-117.

[11] The Danish Premier who presided over these developments was, Gladstone believed 'in act though not in intention, one of the worst enemies of Denmark', resigning without addressing the problematic November Constitution, which was itself only revoked 'when the gift had lost all value.' HC Deb 4 July 1864, cc. 762-763.

[12] Though Hans Brems notes that Russell's initiative was designed above all at maintaining relations with Prussia, and that Crown Princess Victoria's marriage to Prince Frederick provided the impetus behind this. Brems, 'The Collapse of the Binational Danish Monarchy In 1864: A Multinational Perspective,' *Scandinavian Studies*, 51, No. 4 (Autumn, 1979), 428-441; 435.

[13] This was part of a pattern, as Sandiford observed that the Danish King's hostility in particular meant that Denmark was 'obviously the more guilty party in this regard during the years immediately following the Treaty of London.' *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, 34.

Augustenburg.[14] Federal German soldiers invaded Holstein late in December 1863, pausing briefly as European powers considered their options. By February 1864, Bismarck had co-opted this tide of German nationalist sentiment, and an Austro-Prussian army invaded Schleswig. By mid-February, Jutland was invaded, a policy 'which was obviously contrary to all the laws of Europe as well as the earlier declarations of the Germans themselves.' Despite initial outrage at this blatant German duplicity, Britain remained neutral.[15] In late April 1864, successive Danish defeats facilitated a ceasefire to coincide with a London Conference, which collapsed without agreement in June. Palmerston and Russell became reconciled to a pacific policy, and the government 'finally washed its hands of the Duchies.'[16] Facing hopeless odds, Denmark was overwhelmed, and in October the final peace treaty severed Denmark's historic connection with the Duchies, which were occupied by Prussian and Austrian forces.[17]

Until late June 1864, Foreign Secretary Earl Russell and to a lesser extent the Prime Minister had consistently advocated intervention, but they were overruled by their pacific colleagues, and especially by Queen Victoria, who deplored the prospects of an Anglo-German war for the sake of Danish integrity.[18] Such a war never materialised, and instead Russell proceeded with a policy of 'pure bluff,' in Kenneth Bourne's analysis, drawing the ire of the press and his political opponents, not to mention the hostility of the Queen.[19] Notwithstanding Ministerial efforts 'to prove that Britain's influence had not suffered grievous harm as a result of the Schleswig-Holstein conflict,' and the Liberal government's subsequent electoral victory, the disaster 'heralded the decline of Britain in Europe.'[20] By early July 1864,

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[14] Augustenburg's candidacy was contentious, and some viewed his support as a consequence of the Queen's German connections and sympathies. See The New Duke of Schleswig-Holstein. *Bentley's miscellany*, 55 (Jan 1864), 215-220.

[15] See Sandiford, 'The British Cabinet and the Schleswig-Holstein Crisis, 1863–1864', *History*, 58, No. 194 (1973), 360-383; 373.

[16] Mosse, 'Queen Victoria and her Ministers', 281.

[17] C. C. Eckhardt, 'The North Slesvig or Dano-German Question,' *The Scientific Monthly*, 8, No. 1 (Jan., 1919), 49-57; 49.

[18] She wrote to Russell in October 1863 'The Queen *must* repeat the expression of *determination* not to consent to any measures which may involve her in the threatened rupture between Denmark and Germany.' Queen Victoria to Earl Russell, 4 Oct 1864, Victoria, *The Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series*, vol. I, p. 111. This proved a consistent theme. In November 1863 she was 'very anxious that the new King of Denmark should give no excuse, by any hasty proceeding…' which might compel the Germans to make war. Queen Victoria to Earl Russell, 16 Nov 1863, *Ibid*, pp. 114-115. She then urged neutrality, and warned Russell not to take too partisan an approach by blaming the German Powers for the crisis. Queen Victoria to Earl Russell, 24 Nov 1863, *Ibid,* pp. 121-122. On the first day of 1864 she wrote to Russell urging him to keep Britain out of the potential war, and insisted he provide her with all correspondence relating to the Duchies. Queen Victoria to Earl Russell, 1 Jan 1864, *Ibid*, pp. 138-140.

[19] Bourne, *Foreign Policy of Victorian England*, p. 108.

[20] Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein*, p. 142.

Palmerston's government confronted a Parliament which had been both starved of information and troubled by the spectacle of British powerlessness.

The Schleswig-Holstein crisis was representative of the dilemma identified by Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe the previous year, whereby Britain might be exposed 'to consequences of the most dangerous and hazardous kind, in which we might find our honour and our interest at variance.'[21] Six months later, William Forster claimed the choice was between humiliation and war, thanks to Russell's empty menaces which had since been exposed.[22] Similarly, the Earl of Derby asserted that government blunders now placed the country 'between the horns of a dilemma of a most formidable character,' arguing that the choice was between 'the sacrifice of the honour of the country on the one side, and engagement in a most perilous and sanguinary war on the other.'[23] Peace was in Britain's national interest, yet it was difficult to describe the final peace as honourable.[24]

Neither the Earl of Derby nor Benjamin Disraeli sought a policy of war, despite publicly insisting that the national honour had been tarnished. Indeed, the leader of the opposition might proclaim 'Dearly as I love peace, I love honour more,'[25] but Derby had privately reconciled his party to a policy of peace as early as January 1864,[26] though his Conservative peers were not initially convinced.[27] Since the opposition were unwilling to redeem lost

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[21] Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe, HL Deb 27 July 1863 vol 172, cc. 1442-1443.

[22] Forster declared that 'either that we must be humiliated, as we had been in the case of Europe in this Polish matter, by asking for that which we had not the power to enforce; or we should…in endeavouring to carry out threats, because we considered our honour involved, be dragged into another war not really our duty to undertake.' *The Times*; Jan 13 1864,

[23] Earl of Derby, HL Deb 4 Feb 1864 vol 173, cc. 38-39.

[24] Contemporaries tended to compare the peace with that of the Peace of Amiens. As Ralph Bernal Osborne thus observed on 8 July 1864, 'No man in or out of the House is able to deny that the failure of the Ministry to some extent involves the honour of the country,' observing that 'however we may rejoice that they have returned to the paths—if they really have—of peace…as was said of the Peace of Amiens, no one can be proud of the means by which it has been attained.' HC Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1200-1201.

[25] Earl of Derby, HL Deb 17 June 1864 vol 175, cc. 1925-1926.

[26] In late January, the Queen held a private meeting with the Earl of Derby. She was determined, she told Palmerston a few days after the meeting had taken place, 'that this unlucky and difficult question of Schleswig-Holstein should not be made a party one', and noted that Derby 'entirely agreed', even declaring his belief that 'all parties should be extremely cautious in their language in Parliament on this subject.' Queen Victoria to Viscount Palmerston, Feb 2 1864, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series*, I, p. 154.

[27] Cecil Roberts was accredited with lengthy articles in the January and April editions of the *Quarterly Review*, see Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, p. 121. This was also noted in Buckle, *Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield,* IV, p. 343. In fact, Roberts' January article appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, but his April article appeared in the *British Quarterly Review.* The January article was more significant, as Roberts observed that Russell's 'fierce notes and pacific measures furnish an endless theme for the taunts of those who would gladly see the influence of England in the councils of Europe destroyed.' He added that 'it will not consist with our honour to abandon Denmark', owing to Britain's advice which had reduced Danish security, and he concluded that if Denmark was 'abandoned by us', and 'crushed in the unequal conflict', then 'a stain, which time could not efface, would lie upon England's honour.' While it was 'base' to 'abandon the weak in the moment of their utmost need, and in the presence of a gigantic assailant', there was 'a deeper

honour through a policy of war, Ministers and their allies in British media could scorn the opposition stance as cynical opportunism. Thus, *The Times* challenged on 8 July, 'if it be true that England made this promise,' to support Denmark to the point of war, and 'if it be true that by not keeping this promise England has lost her old place among nations, what follows?' According to *The Times*, 'Every child can tell the necessary sequence. She must turn out the men who gave and broke that promise, and she must put in their places men who, by fulfilling the promise, will regain her lost honour.' And 'how is that promise to be fulfilled, and how is the old place of honour to be regained? How, but by war?'[28]

This 'necessary sequence' mirrored the logic of the honour-script, a cause-and-effect formula proposed by Avner Offer which dictated that the consequences for failing to uphold honour's tenets would be both shameful and strategically dangerous.[29] However, since the opposition did not call for war – instead pressing for the replacement of the government and the continuation of their policy under Conservative direction – could it not be argued that their claims were hollow? Indeed, the demands of the honour-script were ignored, and the weaponization of national honour by the opposition failed to unseat the government, while Ministers endured the criticism, basing their defence first on the opposition's unwillingness to fight, and then on the reputation of Palmerston and the success of Gladstone's budgets.[30]

This chapter will examine the rhetoric of national honour during the Schleswig-Holstein crisis. This rhetoric enabled Ministers to press British obligations towards Denmark, but opposition figures had more options; they attacked unfulfilled promises, empty threats, and lost influence as symptoms of a policy which had failed to uphold the national honour. The opposition's weaponization of national honour was most explicit in the tabling of a Motion on 4 July. An unprecedented analysis of these Parliamentary debates will also explicate the concept of influence, which was linked to the lexicon of honour, and could serve as a synonym for the larger ethic. The first section of this chapter will contextualise the

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baseness' in implying aid, without formally pledging it, which 'beguiles the weaker combatant into a fatal trust in his ally, and then deserts him.' Roberts warned that Britain would not escape the war which followed. 'ART. VIII.--1. Correspondence respecting the Affairs of the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein.' *The Quarterly review*, 115, No. 229 (Jan 1864), 236-287; 285-286. Reflecting the then established Conservative consensus, Roberts was less belligerent in his April article, and warned that 'Europe has entered upon a transition period certain to be fraught with momentous changes,' while hoping 'Europe will cast off the slough of selfishness which now deadens the heart of nations and paralyses the policy of Governments.' 'Art. X.-Parliamentary Papers: Denmark and Germany. Correspondence,' *The British quarterly review*, 78 (Apr 1864), 459-483; 482.

[28] *The Times*, 8 July 1864.

[29] Avner Offer, 'Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honor?', *Politics & Society* (June 1995) vol. 23, 222-224.

[30] Although, as Moneypenny observed, Palmerston had opposed these budgets consistently. See Buckle, *Life of Benjamin Disraeli,* IV, 347.

Schleswig-Holstein crisis, as the government searched for a viable policy while balancing the expectations set by British honour and interests. The second and third sections address the significant debate in Parliament during 4-8 July 1864, which included repeated rhetorical flourishes that asserted national honour's primacy, made even more striking by the prevailing unwillingness to wage war with all of Germany for its sake.

5.1: The Schleswig-Holstein Problem: July 1863 – June 1864

By 1863, the shine had worn off Palmerston's triumph from the Trent Affair.[31] Ill-fated attempts to intervene in the Civil War did not endear London to Washington,[32] notwithstanding encouragement from opposition figures to join with Napoleon III in mediating an end to the conflict.[33] French mediation was also unsuccessful,[34] while rumours of French designs on Texas,[35] and visible French intervention in Mexico, roused American hostility towards Britain's nominal ally.[36] The impact of the January 1863 Emancipation Proclamation did not foster an immediate reversal of British policy,[37] and the Union blockade of Confederate ports severed Britain's traditional source of cotton,[38] necessitating

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[31] Conservative MP and former Undersecretary of State for India Henry Baillie addressed this in a Commons' session of 4 February 1864, remarking that 'After their great exertions in the Trent case, they perhaps thought that they had done all that the national honour required of them, and that they could now afford to rest and be thankful. It was, however, unhappily too true that the flag of England no longer gave protection to the trade and commerce of the country, and that our merchant ships were illegally seized on the high seas… Peace was an inestimable blessing, but it might be purchased too dearly. The sacrifice of national honour was a high price to pay, more especially as it could, after all, secure peace for only a short time. Every concession would only augment the insolence of the aggressors, and tempt them to fresh outrages.' HC Deb 4 Feb 1864 vol 173, cc. 144-146. See also Brown, *Palmerston*, pp. 453-455.

[32] Kinley J. Brauer, 'British Mediation and the American Civil War: A Reconsideration,' *Journal of Southern History*, 38, No. 1 (Feb., 1972), 49-64.

[33] The Earl of Derby, Malmsbury, and others upheld Britain should have joined Napoleon in his mediation efforts whenever the topic was raised in Parliament through 1863. For one example see HL Deb 5 Feb 1863 vol 169, cc. 8-64. Opinions like these were based on the view, as Derby articulated, 'that the restoration of the Union as it formerly existed is the one conclusion which is absolutely impossible.' *Ibid*, cc. 25-26

[34] Warren F. Spencer, 'The Jewett-Greeley Affair: A Private Scheme for French Mediation in the American Civil War', *New York History*, 51, No. 3 (April 1970), 238-268.

[35] Carland Elaine Crook, 'Benjamin Théron and French Designs in Texas during the Civil War,' *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 68, No. 4 (Apr., 1965), 432-454.

[36] Patrick J. Kelly, 'The North American Crisis of the 1860s,' *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 2, No. 3 (Sept 2012), 337-368.

[37] Although there is evidence to suggest that the Proclamation convinced Palmerston that mediation was now impossible, see: Kinley J. Brauer, 'The Slavery Problem in the Diplomacy of the American Civil War', *Pacific Historical Review*, 46, No. 3 (Aug., 1977), 439-469; 465-467. Others have observed that while the Proclamation changed the meaning of the Civil War in some British minds, it did not necessarily lessen Anglo-American hostility. See Brent J. Steele, 'Ontological Security and the Power of Self-Identity: British Neutrality and the American Civil War', *Review of International Studies*, 31, No. 3 (Jul., 2005), 519-540.

[38] Joseph H. Park contended that 80% of British cotton was sourced from the Confederacy, see Park, 'The English Workingmen and the American Civil War,' *Political Science Quarterly*, 39, No. 3 (Sep., 1924), 432-457; 432-433. Confederates were also effective at contrasting their free trade policy with Union tariffs, see

expensive modifications of imperial policy.[39] The construction of British warships for sale to the Confederacy soured relations further – while fomenting costly legal disputes[40] – and it has even been suggested that Washington began to challenge British naval hegemony in the immediate aftermath of the Trent Affair by the construction of a powerful ironclad fleet.[41]

Still, it has been argued that British confidence peaked following the Trent Affair.[42] Kenneth Bourne argued that Britain's ability to influence the affairs of European nations was confirmed following the Crimean War and the partial unification of Italy.[43] Notwithstanding cooperation with France, a strand of Francophobia remained, accompanied by 'Alarms' which warned that 'a preference for taxpayer benefit over national virtue and honour had infected British public life in recent decades and weakened Britain's ability to cope with the autocratic continental threat.'[44] In Britain, a desire to reduce military budgets and increase worldwide trade encapsulated the beliefs of the Manchester School, whose adherents held positions within Palmerston's Cabinet.[45] These circumstances spoke to the existence of several factions within the Liberal government,[46] which, added to the danger of losing

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Marc William-Palen, 'The Civil War's Forgotten Transatlantic Tariff Debate and the Confederacy's Free Trade Diplomacy,' *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 3, No. 1 (March 2013), 35-61.

[39] Of greatest import was the transformation of India's native cotton growing industry to replace the loss of the Southern states. Peter Harnetty, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade: Lancashire, India, and the Cotton Supply Question, 1861-1865,' *Journal of British Studies*, 6, No. 1 (Nov., 1966), 70-96. Importantly, these Indian cotton producers were not permitted to grow into a cotton industry to rival that of Lancashire. See Rajib Lochan Sahoo, 'Indian Cotton Mills and the British Economic Policy, 1854-1894,' *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 76 (2015), 356-367.

[40] See particularly the case of the Alabama, constructed in Liverpool: Douglas H. Maynard, 'Union Efforts to Prevent the Escape of the Alabama', *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 41, No. 1 (Jun., 1954), 41-60. The vessel formed the basis for the contentious Alabama Claims, whereby Britain agreed in 1872 to compensate the US to the modern equivalent of £4 billion: Tom Bingham, 'The Alabama Claims Arbitration', *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 54, No. 1 (Jan., 2005), 1-25; 1. This controversy was preceded by a dangerous Union effort to prevent the *Alabama* leaving Liverpool's dockyards. See Douglas H. Maynard, 'Union Efforts to Prevent the Escape of the Alabama,' *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 41, No. 1 (Jun., 1954), 41-60.

[41] Peter J. Hugill, 'The American Challenge to British Hegemony, 1861-1947,' *Geographical Review*, 99, No. 3 (Jul., 2009), 403-425.

[42] This also coincided with a second British victory against China alongside French troops, see Melissa Mouat, 'The Establishment of the Tongwen Guan and the Fragile Sino-British Peace of the 1860s', *Journal of World History*, 26, No. 4 (Dec 2015), 733-755.

[43] Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, p. 105. Bourne wrote that the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy 'marked the virtual completion of the first stage of the post-Crimean transformation of Europe.' The policy in Italy was aided by France and Austria: See J. P. Parry, 'The Impact of Napoleon III on British Politics, 1851-1880', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 11 (2001), 147-175; 156-157.

[44] Parry, 'The Impact of Napoleon III,' 157.

[45] Foremost among these was the pacific Chancellor of the Exchequer, William Gladstone. See Brown, *Palmerston*, pp. 459-461.

[46] Sandiford denoted four broad camps; Palmerstonian disciples, Peelite loyalists, Court sympathisers, and adherents to the Manchester School. Among these, Palmerston and Russell constituted the leaders of the first faction, while Gladstone borrowed from the Peelite and Manchester Schools, and remained pacific throughout the crisis. See *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, pp. 77.

Napoleon III's support, could paralyse British initiatives if a sufficiently disruptive European crisis emerged. Just such a crisis materialised in Poland with the January Uprising of 1863.

Bourne described the Polish Uprising as the 'second stage' of the post-Crimean transformation of Europe which was characterised by 'the decline of British influence.'[47] Britain's position in the context of the Polish Uprising has been covered elsewhere,[48] but its implications were far-reaching, both in Europe and the wider world.[49] Palmerston had been Foreign Secretary when the Poles had risen in 1830,[50] and like that rebellion, that of 1863 was ultimately provoked by Russian efforts to conscript Polish rebels,[51] while censuring pro-Polish journals,[52] and repressing the Polish peasantry.[53] However, the consequences of the 1863 uprising were otherwise unprecedented. The post-Crimean accord between Britain, France, and Austria had fractured, both by Austria's pursuit of an independent policy,[54] and by Napoleon's sense that British timidity had undermined French efforts in Poland.[55]

Furthermore, considering the Danish announcement of its controversial March Patent just as Poland distracted European attentions, one could argue that contextualising the Schleswig-Holstein crisis necessitates a fuller understanding of Poland's January Uprising.[56] In both events, opposition figures consistently challenged Russell's non-interventionist stance, presenting the Treaties of 1815 and 1852 as pledges implicating British honour.[57] In

[47] Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, p. 105.
[48] J. H. Harley, 'Great Britain and the Polish Insurrection of 1863 (I)', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 16, No. 46 (Jul., 1937), 155-167; 'Great Britain and the Polish Insurrection of 1863 (II)', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 16, No. 47 (Jan., 1938), 425-438. For a study of Victorian opinion on Poland see John F. Kutolowski, 'Mid-Victorian Public Opinion, Polish Propaganda, and the Uprising of 1863', *Journal of British Studies*, 8, No. 2 (May, 1969), 86-110.
[49] Poland drew such attention from the European powers, that Confederate representatives were unable to secure the hoped-for recognition from France, for example. See John Kutolowski, 'The Effect of the Polish Insurrection of 1863 on American Civil War Diplomacy,' *Historian*, 27, No. 4 (Aug 1965), 560-577.
[50] See Chapter One.
[51] Although this had been preceded by some years of a more liberal Russian policy. See Stanley J. Zyzniewski, 'The Russo-Polish Crucible of the 1860's: A Review of Some Recent Literature,' *Polish Review*, 11, No. 2 (Spring, 1966), 23-46.
[52] Edyta M. Bojanowska, 'Empire by Consent: Strakhov, Dostoevskii, and the Polish Uprising of 1863,' *Slavic Review,* 71, No. 1 (Spring 2012), 1-24
[53] Stefan Kieniewicz, 'Polish Society and the Insurrection of 1863,' *Past & Present*, No. 37 (Jul., 1967), 130-148.
[54] Richard B. Elrod, 'Austria and the Polish Insurrection of 1863: Documents from the Austrian State Archives,' *International History Review*, 8, No. 3 (Aug., 1986), 416-437.
[55] Napoleon III was consistent in his support for European minorities, see Raoul Bossy, 'Napoleon III and the Submerged Nationalities,' *Polish Review*, 5, No. 2 (Spring 1960), 110-117. Napoleon was further vexed by Britain's abandonment of the Mexican scheme, see Nancy Nichols Barker, 'France, Austria, and the Mexican Venture, 1861-1864', *French Historical Studies*, 3, No. 2 (Autumn, 1963), 224- 245.
[56] The March Patent redefined Denmark's relationship with Holstein, and was seen as a violation of the 1852 Treaty. See Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, pp. 56-62.
[57] Some argued for war in response to Russia's violation of the 1815 Treaty, interpreting it as an insult to Britain, and using similar language to that used against the Germans a year later. Thus, in July 1863 Tory MP

a Commons' session of February 1863, Robert Cecil affirmed this, and though he had 'heard it remarked in the course of the discussion that the treaty had been too often broken to be of any value', this 'was a mode of arguing insulting to the honour and dignity of England', because 'We were bound by a covenant', and 'Our honour was concerned in the fulfilment of a certain promise to which we were parties, and on every occasion when it was in our power, we were bound to enforce that promise.'[58] But despite further debate,[59] such enforcement never materialised. Worse, Russo-Prussian cooperation, spearheaded by Bismarck,[60] guaranteed the Uprising's failure.

Emperor Napoleon III soured further on the Anglo-French accord when London rejected his efforts to establish a European Congress to renegotiate the 1815 Congress of Vienna in late 1863.[61] The subsequent resentment fuelled British fears that France wished to reassert its position along the Rhine, with dramatic implications for Anglo-French cooperation during the Schleswig-Holstein crisis.[62] Britain would have to resolve the crisis alone, and there was a sense that she was obliged to make firm efforts to this end. While the 1852 Treaty imposed an obligation shared by other powers, the Prime Minister added to Britain's sense of obligation through 'his celebrated if ambiguous' turn of phrase adopted during a Commons debate of July 1863,[63] wherein Palmerston declared that 'if any violent attempt were made to overthrow those rights and interfere with that independence, those who made the attempt

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Viscount Raynham opined 'If there were any cases in which a war would be justifiable, they were those in which our honour was involved, and he had never heard it disputed, that we were in honour bound to regard the interests of the Poles… It was clear that the Poles were now heroically striving for that liberty which was their birthright, and the honour of this country was involved in the policy of taking a most active part on their behalf, even to the extent of drawing the sword.' HC Deb 24 July 1863 vol 172, cc. 1419-1420. Raynham proved the exception, and the view provided by his Scottish colleague James Ferguson was more widely held: 'he did not see that we were to interfere as the police of the world, unless the interests and the honour of this country imperatively demanded it.' *Ibid*, cc. 1427-1428.

[58] HC Deb 27 Feb 1863 vol 169, cc. 920-921.

[59] Poland was discussed in the Lords on 13 July, in the Commons on 20 July, and in both Houses on 24 July. The Earl of Malmsbury urged that Britain's position recommended a policy of non-intervention: 'the conviction of this country now is that our safety, our dignity, and our happiness depend upon a policy of non-intervention…From our tower of strength we may look down without losing any dignity or any of our power, upon what takes place around us, without meddling with the affairs of others, or interfering with the most dangerous questions which can arise.' HL Deb 24 July 1863 vol 172 cc1338-55; cc. 1352-1353.

[60] A good account of this Alvensleben Convention is provided in Robert H. Lord, 'Bismarck and Russia in 1863', *American Historical Review*, 29, No. 1 (Oct., 1923), 24-48.

[61] Sandiford notes that it was also the method of Russell's rejection which did the damage; that Russell rejected the offer before any other European powers had had the opportunity to react. See Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, 69. For Palmerston's reasoning see Kenneth Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 78, pp. 370-372. See also *London Review*, 28 Nov 1863.

[62] Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, pp. 72-73.

[63] W. E. Mosse, 'Queen Victoria and Her Ministers in the Schleswig-Holstein Crisis 1863-1864,' 263-264.

would find in the result, that it would not be Denmark alone with which they would have to contend.'[64]

James Chambers noted that the Prime Minister alluded to the other guarantors of the 1852 Treaty in his claim that 'it would not be Denmark alone with which they would have to contend.' However, Chambers adds that Palmerston's turn of phrase was interpreted in Denmark as 'a clear signal that the British were ready to support them with force,' and the Danes 'acted accordingly thereafter.'[65] Indeed, Palmerston appeared in favour of defending the 1852 Treaty by force, and he communicated as much to the Queen.[66] In September 1863, Russell urged the Germans to pause and accept mediation, and received encouraging replies from Bismarck.[67] Yet, Denmark rejected the proposal, a development Russell later blamed on *The Times* and *Morning Post* which had 'inflamed the passions of the Danes, and induced them to think that they would be defended by the arms of England.'[68] As they had during the Trent Affair, British media raised the stakes, reducing the government's options. Shortly thereafter, Denmark presented its provocative November Constitution, which resolved none of the German objections, and signified a Danish intention to modify its relationship with the Duchies.[69]

Lord Wodehouse's mission to Copenhagen in late December 1863 revealed the full extent of Danish obstinacy, moving Russell to lament 'we cannot give active support to a Government which puts itself so manifestly in the wrong,' adding 'We must remain with our pockets buttoned and our arms piled till Germany puts herself still more in the wrong than Denmark.'[70] Russell's biographer Spencer Walpole – who later criticised Russell's policy of menace in Parliament – accepted that the Foreign Secretary strove to preserve peace and to mollify Danish stubbornness, only abandoning this course when the Germans did, indeed, put themselves 'more in the wrong.'[71] With the Diet's execution on Holstein now inevitable,

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[64] Viscount Palmerston, HC Deb 23 July 1863 vol 172, cc. 1252-1253.
[65] See Chambers, *Palmerston: The People's Darling*, p. 496.
[66] Mosse, 'Queen Victoria and Her Ministers', 264.
[67] The Prussian Chancellor gave little indication of his true intentions when he noted to Russell that 'if Denmark would declare to the Diet that she is ready to give them satisfaction as to the claim of Holstein and Lauenburg to control their own legislation and the expenditure of all moneys raised in the Duchies, and to accept the mediation of Great Britain for the settlement of the international question, Prussia will endeavour to prevent the execution.' Cited in Spencer Walpole, *Life of Lord John Russell* (2 Vols, London, 1889), II, pp. 383-384.
[68] Cited in *Ibid*, p. 384.
[69] *Ibid*, pp. 385-387.
[70] Cited in *Ibid*, p. 387.
[71] *Ibid*, p. 387. Walpole would speak on 8 July 1864, see below.

Britain advised the Danes to withdraw from that Duchy and effectively permit its occupation.

By the end of December 1863, noting the rapid occupation of Holstein by Federal German soldiers, the *Morning Post* believed that due to Britain's warning of 'serious complications' in the event that the River Eider was crossed, if Federal troops entered Schleswig 'it will be an act of war.'[72] This gelled with the Prime Minister's private view. 'Schleswig,' Palmerston wrote, 'is no part of Germany, and its invasion by German troops would be an act of war against Denmark, which would in my clear opinion entitle Denmark to our active military and naval support.' The Prime Minister then reflected tellingly that 'you and I could not announce such a determination without the concurrence of the Cabinet and the consent of the Queen.'[73] It was thus problematic for Palmerston and Russell that the Queen had signified her moral support for the German position from an early stage. The Queen complained that 'the shameful bad faith of the Danes may lead to serious mischief,'[74] but more significantly, she had lost confidence in the 'luckless Protocol of 52,' believing that Holstein should be given up to its 'lawful Duke,' Augustenburg.[75] Augustenburg's claim to Schleswig-Holstein dated back to the First Schleswig War, though his father had been compensated to renounce it. The Cabinet were thus legally justified in rejecting Augustenburg's claims, though this placed them at odds with the Queen from the beginning of the crisis.

Another factor which counted against a consistent British policy was the sense of public confusion. The famed quip attributed to the Prime Minister that 'only three people have ever understood the Schleswig-Holstein question. One is dead, one has gone mad and I have forgotten,' may have been dismissed as 'typically Palmerstonian exaggeration,' yet it does capture something of the difficulties involved in presenting the case to the public.[76] While speaking to his constituents on 4 February, the Liberal MP for Rochester Philip Wykeham-Martin declared that 'the quarrel between Denmark and Germany was very little understood by the peoples of this country,' confessing that 'he did not completely understand the subject, and therefore he would not attempt to explain it,' while hoping 'that the country would be

[72] *Morning Post*, 30 Dec 1863.
[73] Viscount Palmerston to Lord Russell, 26 Dec 1863 in Walpole, *Lord Russell*, II, p. 388.
[74] Queen Victorian to Viscount Palmerston, 11 Aug 1863, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series*, I, p. 102.
[75] Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians, 3 Dec 1863, *Ibid*, I, p. 130.
[76] See Steinburg, *Bismarck*, p. 210.

able to keep out of the contest without infringing any principle of national honour.'[77] The mood was probably closer to the sentiments expressed by the *Morning Post* in mid-December, when it wrote that all 'are heartily sick and tired of what is termed the Schleswig-Holstein question,' while claiming that in the event of Danish integrity being threatened, 'she will find in England an ally on whose assistance she can reckon in the day of need.' Much was made of Palmerston's verbal commitment of the previous July. Schleswig, it was intimated, would represent an unacceptable overreach of Federal German powers.[78]

However, the Cabinet were ill-equipped to deal with these German States. As Frank Müller has noted, by the late 1850s, 'a particular notion of war and associated issues such as military power, army organisation, national enmities, manly valour and physical strength' had 'assumed a central role in the way large sections of Germany's political public projected the future of the nation.'[79] In the context of the Crimean and Italian Wars, German nationalists were convinced of the increased violence of the international system.[80] Conflict with France, hostility to Russia, and a rejection of the 1815 settlements formed key planks of this philosophy, which viewed a national German war both as inevitable and welcome.[81] This militarisation was evidenced in the defiant mood of the Federal Diet, and as the 'open wound' of German nationalist memory, Denmark's binational monarchy provided an ideal outlet for its energies.[82] The Duchies of Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenburg constituted 38% of Denmark's population, yet 31% of Denmark's total population identified as German.[83]

Bismarck had initially viewed the cross-German liberal-national movements as a threat to Prussian authority, but 'he beat the national movement at its own game' by outmanoeuvring it politically and militarily, seizing victory in a manner which established a 'community of interest' between the native nationalist movements of Germany and the Prussian army.[84] This is evidenced by Bismarck's subsequent treatment of the Duke of Augustenburg, who he quietly removed from the succession in favour of joint Austro-Prussian occupation.[85]

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[77] *Morning Post*; Feb 4 1864. The meeting was also attended by Kinglake.
[78] *Morning Post*, 16 Dec 1863.
[79] Frank Lorenz Müller, 'The Spectre of a People in Arms: The Prussian Government and the Militarisation of
German Nationalism, 1859-1864', *English Historical Review*, 122, No. 495 (Feb., 2007), 82-104; 83.
[80] Müller wrote that 'the German nationalists of these years believed themselves to be living in an increasingly violent international scene in which a European war was inevitable and imminent.' *Ibid*, 84.
[81] *Ibid*, 85.
[82] *Ibid*, 101.
[83] Hans Brems, 'The Collapse of the Binational Danish Monarchy in 1864,' 428.
[84] Müller, 'The Spectre of a People in Arms', 101-102; 103.
[85] See Edward Crankshaw, *Bismarck* (London, 2011), pp. 152-153.

Bismarck's true intentions appear to have been the annexation of both Duchies into Prussia, yet it was also convenient to leverage the Duchies to resolve his domestic problems, and he thus adhered to Vienna's policy of joint occupation for the moment.[86] In the face of Bismarck's single-minded determination and this tide of militarised German nationalist sentiment, Russell's policy of bluff mixed with interested mediation could have no practical effect.[87]

Indeed, when Parliament convened for the first time on 4 February, Benjamin Disraeli lamented 'a confusion, an inconsistency of conduct, a contrariety of courses with regard to the same Powers, and a total want of system in their diplomacy.'[88] He criticised Palmerston's language of the previous July for encouraging 'the extreme Danish party.'[89] Reading between the lines of the divided Cabinet's response, Disraeli attacked the notion 'that when the Ministry has not a policy a Parliament may find one for them.'[90] Disraeli challenged 'Will the noble Lord [Palmerston] inform us what is his policy?'[91] Palmerston retorted that the government did have a policy, and it was 'to bring to a friendly settlement the differences which have arisen between Germany and Denmark, connected with the Treaty of 1852.'[92] Palmerston favoured 'a policy of peace—of laborious and unremitting endeavour to reconcile differences, to prevent quarrels and collisions between the States of Europe—a policy which is, I contend, a real policy,' which was 'in accordance with the wishes of the country,' and would 'receive the approbation of this House.'[93] While Disraeli criticised the Liberals for their lack of policy, the Prime Minister remarked that 'from the manner in which [Disraeli] dealt with the subject, I was every moment expecting that he would give us his policy,' and that Disraeli 'kept dangling before our eyes a sort of half expectation that he would offer some suggestion, but ultimately disappointed us.'[94] Here Palmerston discerned the opposition's difficulties in presenting an alternative policy, and this Ministerial defence would be heavily pressed later in the session.

Where Ministers attacked this lack of policy, opposition figures contended that Palmerston had raised impossible expectations in Denmark, and had undermined trust in British

[86] Bucholz, *Moltke and the German Wars,* pp. 80-81.
[87] *Ibid*, pp. 81-83.
[88] Disraeli, HC Deb 4 Feb 1864 vol 173, cc. 94-95.
[89] *Ibid*, cc. 95-96.
[90] *Ibid*, cc. 97-98.
[91] *Ibid*, cc. 99-100.
[92] Palmerston, *Ibid*, cc. 105-106.
[93] *Ibid*, cc. 112-113.
[94] *Ibid*, cc. 105-106.

commitments.[95] There was some criticism of Danish behaviour,[96] and of the 1852 Treaty itself, while one Irish MP even insisted that 'It was perfectly well known that England had been prevented by the Queen from getting into this war.'[97] Liberal MPs expressed fears that Britain could be obliged to intervene, while asserting that she would always fight if her honour was implicated.[98] The major obstacle remained the largely pacific Cabinet, and the Queen who lobbied its members. The invasion of Schleswig in February, followed by the invasion of Danish Jutland a fortnight later, did not substantively alter these sentiments. The Cabinet sought a diplomatic solution, settling on a London Conference, and when it convened in late April, Palmerston and Russell did become more belligerent. Palmerston suggested co-opting French and Swedish support and sending a fleet to the Baltic. 'Public opinion in this country would be much shocked,' Palmerston believed, 'if we were to stand by and see the Danish army taken prisoner, and Denmark thus laid prostrate at the feet of Germany.'

Russell agreed, but the Cabinet's timidity irritated the Prime Minister, so he took matters into his own hands.[99] In an episode which clearly demonstrated the extent of Cabinet divisions, Palmerston issued a stark warning to Apponyi, the Austrian ambassador in London, to the effect that 'If an Austrian squadron were to pass along our coasts and ports, and go into the Baltic to help in any way the German operations against Denmark,' then he 'should look upon it as an affront and insult to England.'[100] The impact on Apponyi was such that a week later Disraeli found the ambassador 'in much excitement, though more stupid than usual, if that be possible.'[101] The Queen was similarly upset when Russell adapted Palmerston's words into a communique to Vienna, claiming to have the assent of

[95] Seymour Fitzgerald concluded that 'if you say to your ally that the moment all concessions are granted that you will leave her to fight her own battle, then I say that is a policy that will be justly stigmatized in every country in Europe as humiliating and degrading', adding his belief that the country would agree with these sentiments. *Ibid*, cc. 118-119. Former Solicitor General of Ireland James Whiteside asserted that 'The territory of Denmark was now being invaded, and that certainly looked like an interference with the Danish kingdom, in a mode at once disagreeable and emphatic.' From this, Whiteside 'should have supposed, but for the declaration of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the noble Viscount's statement had some meaning, but he was now compelled to hold that it had none.' *Ibid*, cc. 148-149.
[96] Liberal MP Grant Duff asserted 'that because a Power is weak, is that a reason why we should sympathise with it, when it can be shown to have for years been presuming on its weakness, and acting with the most glaring disregard of justice?' He was relieved to note Palmerston's claim that 'there seems good reason to conclude that our honour is not so engaged as to oblige us to go to war.' *Ibid*, cc. 119-120; 122-123. The socially liberal Sir Harry Verney disputed that Britain should have any sympathy for Denmark at all, considering the role its King had played in the deterioration of German relations. *Ibid*, cc. 123-125.
[97] John Hennessy, *Ibid*, cc. 129-130.
[98] Alexander Kinglake, *Ibid*, cc. 153-154.
[99] Walpole, *Lord John Russell*, I, p. 391.
[100] *Ibid*, p. 392.
[101] Cited in Buckle, *Life of Disraeli*, IV, p. 344.

Cabinet. Earl Granville, loyal to the Queen to a fault,[102] protested to Russell on her behalf, contesting the Foreign Secretary's claim to have acted in the Cabinet's name.[103] Russell apologised for the misunderstanding, but urged the necessity of adopting 'some other policy,' and insisted that if Austria's fleet did sail, it 'must not find the Cabinet unprepared.'[104]

Russell may have intended to leverage this display of British naval power against the German negotiating position at the Conference, yet considering Clarendon's unsuccessful mission to Paris – which only confirmed French neutrality – it was a striking act.[105] The encounter with Apponyi might be added to the other menaces which the blue books revealed to the opposition, contributing to a dishonourable pattern of bluff which was later levelled against the Foreign Secretary. Russell was consistent in his search for a military solution, and late in the crisis, he was intrigued by France's representative at the Conference, who intimated that Napoleon III would join Britain in the war if British soldiers landed in Denmark, and that regarding French designs on the Rhine, 'there was much less eagerness in the emperor's mind than people were inclined to believe.' But the difficulties of such an uncertain campaign were now plain, and as Walpole understood, 'it became consequently in the highest degree impolitic for this country to move at all.'[106] Such initiatives might have been excused if the Conference had provided for a final settlement, but the Cabinet was denied such satisfaction.[107]

The failure to establish any consensus may explain the Conference's failure in late June, but the palpable decline in British influence did not help. As the *Sun* observed: 'It has fallen to our lot to be cast in the evil days when national honour is overcast, and national influence is at a discount'.[108] The *London Evening Standard* was in no doubt that the Government had

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[102] See Mosse, 'Queen Victoria and her Ministers', 370.
[103] Earl Granville to Earl Russell, 5 May 1864, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series*, I, pp. 180-182.
[104] Earl Russell to Earl Granville, 6 May 1864, *Ibid*, pp. 182-183.
[105] Walpole, *Lord John Russell*, I, pp. 390-391.
[106] *Ibid*, p. 395. Walpole interpreted Russell's unwillingness to intervene militarily as the preference of Danish defeat over a general war. Walpole concluded that 'Even the partition of Denmark seemed preferable to a war which would have involved the Continent from the Baltic to the Adriatic, and have perhaps shifted every landmark in the map of Europe. The price of success was so high that he preferred to incur the penalty of failure. The absorption of Schleswig-Holstein in Germany was a lesser evil than the incorporation of the Rhenish Provinces in France.' *Ibid*, p. 397.
[107] Before it had met, Liberal MP Ralph Bernal Osborne criticised the Conference as 'a political picnic given by the noble Lord, to which every country will be allowed to bring its basket of suggestions, with no *piece de resistance* provided in the shape of a basis, but with perfect freedom—and indeed agreement—on the part of each one present to differ upon every point from everybody else.' HC Deb 8 April 1864 vol 174, cc. 702-703.
[108] *The Sun*, May 12 1864.

managed to 'disgrace and scandalise before the world the name of Great Britain,'[109] and a few days later it scoffed that the Liberal Party 'pretend that the national honour is in their guardianship,' when it had been sacrificed many times over. This moved the paper to ask 'could there be worse or more perilous Foreign Secretary than Lord Russell?'[110] Some foreign observers perceived that Britain had lost its influence in the crisis. Thus, Jonathan Lothrop Motley, American ambassador to Austria, asked his friend Bismarck in late May, 'Now that you have nothing to do but amuse yourself and snap your fingers at old Pam and Johnny, are you going to any watering places?'[111]

Palmerston reflected on the shortcomings of their foreign policy on 11 June, writing that he would prefer 'appealing to the country, or retiring into the country for having taken a manly line consistent with our national engagements and consistent with our national honour and position in Europe,' rather than retiring after 'having abandoned everything and everybody we ought to have stood by.'[112] But if Ministers hoped for a last-minute breakthrough at the Conference, these illusions were rapidly set aside. The Danes proved even more obstinate than the Germans, and the Conference broke up in late June, as the ceasefire lapsed, and Denmark resumed its hopeless struggle.[113] By the Treaty of Vienna in October, Denmark surrendered the Duchies of Schleswig-Holstein and Lauenburg, losing 200,000 Danes in the process.[114] In the context of this succession of failures, Parliament gathered for what promised to be a pivotal debate.

5.2: Parliamentary Rhetoric and the Loss of Influence

On 27 June, Disraeli had announced his intention to table the long-delayed debate on the government's policy,[115] but as Palmerston noted in a letter to the Queen, it would 'require some dexterity to frame a censure on the government, without implying that they ought to

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[109] *London Evening Standard*, 9 May 1864.
[110] *London Evening Standard*, 14 May 1864.
[111] Jonathan Lothrop Motley to Bismarck, 28 May 1864 in James Pemberton Grund, 'Bismarck and Motley. With Correspondence till Now Unpublished. II,' *North American Review*, 167, No. 503 (Oct., 1898), 481-496; 483.
[112] Palmerston to Russell, 11 June 1864, quoted in Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, p. 115.
[113] Hans Brems noted that Denmark rejected dominion status for the Duchies; the partition of Schleswig to return its Danish population; several iterations of this partition line, and a plebiscite for the disputed area. Brems, 'The Collapse of the Binational Danish Monarchy in 1864,' 437-438.
[114] *Ibid*, 438.
[115] HC Deb 27 June 1864 vol 176, cc. 352-355.

have advised your Majesty to declare war.'[116] Here Palmerston discerned the opposition's main difficulty, and the Ministerial defence, since 'the remarkably peaceful feeling in the country,' meant few statesmen were willing to countenance war.[117] To resolve this flaw in their attack, the opposition concentrated on the government's record in the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, making particular use of the language of national honour. Foremost in this attack was the charge that the government had made promises to Denmark and threats to the German powers, and that neither had been fulfilled.

The Queen was unsympathetic towards such errors. Following a meeting with former Foreign Secretary Clarendon on 2 July, the Queen wrote in her diary of the 'deplorable tone of bullying,' which 'did us great harm everywhere and lowered the dignity of the country to such an extent.' Clarendon informed the Queen that he had prevented a warning being sent to the German powers not to move their fleets to the Baltic, and the Queen was relieved, since the 'indignant answer,' from Vienna and Berlin 'would only have lowered our prestige still more.'[118] That British prestige and dignity had been reduced by the government was thus privately accepted by the Queen, but the opposition determined to publicise such criticism, and to argue that their policy had also lowered British influence.

Members had good reason to be outraged – or simply perplexed – at the steady accumulation of failures by the government. Cabinet divisions, royal opposition, diplomatic isolation, and the practicalities of dealing with such vast German land forces all contributed to Britain's relative powerlessness by late June 1864.[119] The articulation of this shameful spectacle into a suitable Motion was a difficult task, and the elasticity of influence as a term arguably reflected its logical weakness. But what was meant by influence? In the narrowest sense, influence was the ability of one state to compel another state to act in its interests, and was affected by a multitude of variables. Understanding the looseness of the term, and the ease with which Ministers could contest their charge by pointing to the economic, technological, industrial, or financial species of influence, Disraeli's Motion focused on 'just influence.'[120] He believed that a country's just influence 'results from the conviction of foreign Powers

[116] Viscount Palmerston to Queen Victoria, 27 June 1864, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series*, I, p. 282.
[117] Extract from Queen's Journal, 2 July 1864, *Ibid*, p. 234.
[118] *Ibid*, p. 234.
[119] Mosse, 'Queen Victoria and Her Ministers,' 282.
[120] The Motion read: "To express to Her Majesty our great regret that, while the course pursued by Her Majesty's Government has failed to maintain their avowed policy of upholding the integrity and independence of Denmark, it has lowered the just influence of this country in the counsels of Europe, and thereby diminished the securities for peace." HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 750-752.

that our resources are great and that our policy is moderate and steadfast.'[121] By threatening the Germans and abandoning the Danes, Disraeli believed it was 'impossible to deny, under these circumstances, that the just influence of England in the councils of Europe is lowered.'

What were the consequences of this? Disraeli insisted that they were '"most serious," because in exact proportion as that influence is lowered the securities for peace are diminished.' In linking lost influence with reduced security, Disraeli sought to 'lay this down as a great principle which cannot be controverted in the management of our foreign affairs.'[122] Disraeli elaborated further that although Britain may have shrunk 'with the reserve of magnanimity from the responsibility of commencing war,' its statesmen were now 'sensitively smarting under the impression that her honour is stained, by pledges which ought not to have been given, and expectations which I maintain ought never to have been held out by wise and competent statesmen.' To those that asked what the Conservative policy was, Disraeli asserted that 'my policy is the honour of England and the peace of Europe, and the noble Lord has betrayed both.'[123] Disraeli's Motion expressed regret for the failure to defend Danish integrity, before reiterating that these failures 'lowered the just influence of this country in the counsels of Europe, and thereby diminished the securities for peace.'[124]

The difficulties presented by influence's broad meaning granted pro-government organs an opportunity to criticise the opposition's narrow definition of the idea. *The Times*, now more favourable to Palmerston, was particularly critical, and believed that 'The "just influence" of a nation is that which it ought to have, and which can never be "lowered". Actual influence admits of any amount of bathos, but just influence of none.' *The Times* insisted that 'it will always be our duty, for example, to have a word for the weak, and a word for the strong, and something more than a word on occasions. If we do this and succeed, we shall retain our just influence; if we fail, we may lose it, not lower it.' Yet, reflecting on the recent failures, *The Times* argued that Britain 'has also failed in great company. The failure is not hers alone, but that of the neutral powers, who can hardly be said all to have "lowered their just influence," supposing the words to have a meaning.' *The Times* thus concluded 'neither France, nor Russia, nor England has felt her "just influence lowered."'[125]

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[121] *Ibid*, cc. 745-746.
[122] *Ibid*, cc. 746-748. He repeated this idea shortly afterwards, saying 'It appears to me too painfully clear that to lower our influence is to diminish the securities of peace,' *Ibid*, cc. 748-749.
[123] *Ibid*, cc. 748-749.
[124] *Ibid*, cc. 751-752.
[125] *The Times*, 29 June 1864.

Disraeli's Motion was also hampered by political realities, including disagreement over German and Danish responsibility for the crisis, which contributed to a largely pacific sentiment within Parliament.[126] More importantly, the key question remained unanswered: did the Conservatives intend to replace the Ministry, while adhering to the same policy they now condemned? How would that solve the crisis? Since the debates were widely printed and disseminated,[127] critics could argue that in fact, the opposition's stance was purely performative, born of little more than cynical opportunism. Government defenders also reasoned that regardless of which party governed the country, the Austro-Prussian army would still have crossed into Jutland and forced the issue of the Duchies. Painful though it was to see a small nation overcome by the powerful, a solution was outside the limits of British capabilities. Indeed, as Sandiford stressed, the 'mid-Victorian mind was as yet incapable of conceiving of the ultimate triumph of flagrant injustice,' after the 'amoral Bismarck' had destroyed both 'moral right and public law.'[128]

Before engaging in a more comprehensive analysis of the key debates, it may be useful to survey the more important rhetorical threads. The common opposition claim was that Russell had issued empty threats to the Germans, which were subsequently exposed, causing disgrace, and reducing British influence.[129] Ministers retorted that Russell's warnings of

[126] These sentiments prevailed within the Conservative Party itself. During a party conference Derby could declare 'that this vacillating and inconsistent policy was discreditable to the government, and was calculated to lower the country immeasurably, to sink its renown, and lessen its influence in the eyes of Europe.' Disraeli's Motion was met with cheers, while one Amendment which proposed war for Denmark was greeted with 'marks of disapprobation' by those assembled. See *The Times*, 29 June 1864.
[127] The major London papers printed the debates in full over 5-9 July. These included *The Times*, *Morning Post*, *Daily News*, *Morning Herald*, and *London Evening Standard*.
[128] Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, p. 120.
[129] This policy was also referred to as blustering, empty menace, or bluff. Disraeli attacked this tactic from the beginning, noting that the Government's policy 'consisted of menaces never accomplished and promises never fulfilled.' Although burdened by the difficulties and complications of their newfound isolation, the government did 'never hesitate in their tone', and 'seemed at least to rejoice in the phantom of a proud courage.' He added: 'We have menaced Austria, and Austria has allowed our menaces to pass her like the idle wind', while 'Prussia has defied us.' Threats to Frankfurt 'rattled over the head of the German Diet, and the German Diet has treated them with contempt.' Disraeli, HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 746-747. Richard Cobden agreed, declaring that the 'great fault' of British policy was that 'we allow ourselves to be betrayed into something like threats, without duly measuring the powder we have to carry out our menaces. There is, I say, a policy of menace in this country.' HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 832-833. Robert Cecil insisted that 'If we did not mean to fight we ought not to interfere', and that 'If we did not intend to carry out by arms our threats and measures, we must abstain from the luxury of indulging in them.' *Ibid*, cc. 853-854. Henry Butler Johnstone claimed that Russell had threatened so often that 'these impotent menaces, which it was never intended to carry out, had left their sting with those who had dared to use them.' *Ibid*, cc. 866-867. Henry Liddell argued that by threatening the Germans, 'all that it had done had been to make Germany more aggressive than she would otherwise have been, for the Germans were a proud people and resented foreign interference with their affairs.' *Ibid*, cc. 875-876. Edward Horsman believed that British counsels 'have been slighted, her warnings disregarded, her menaces derided', while Prussia, 'flushed with impunity', had 'mocked, bearded, and almost threatened us with an insolence which has left us almost cowering from the shame of misleading and abandoning a small and kindred State', which Britain was 'bound by the most

grave consequences were a natural reaction to Powers that violated treaties and disturbed the peace.[130] They asserted that the Foreign Secretary had acted in concert with Russia and France, using strong language on the expectation that those powers would preserve the 1852 Treaty. That the Treaty's signees had abandoned it, they declared, was not Britain's fault, and the country could not act alone to maintain a Treaty signed by most of Europe.[131] This aspect of the debate occasionally veered into semantics, as Members debated what did or did not constitute a 'menace' in the strictest sense of the term.[132]

The other key opposition charge was that by their excessive interference in the Schleswig-Holstein question, the government had misled the Danes into expecting British aid, which had created an obligation, and made the Danes more stubborn in anticipation of British support.[133] Palmerston's speech of July 1863 was referenced, though its interpretation was

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solemn obligations to protect.' *Ibid*, cc. 895-897. On the 7 July, Sir Francis Goldsmid complained that 'without having assured themselves of the aid either of France or Russia', the government had 'held out to Germany distinct threats, which, unless with the help of one of those empires, they were not prepared to carry into effect.' HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1025-1026. Lord John Manners asserted that the recalling of the Channel Fleet was itself a threat to the Germans. *Ibid*, cc. 1070-1071. On the final day of the debate, James Whiteside asserted that the government, 'instead of pursuing a policy of wisdom and moderation, had recourse to menaces and threats, unaccompanied by corresponding action.' And 'From this inconsistent, capricious, and therefore mischievous policy, has sprung the present condition of affairs.' HC Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1223-1224.

[130] On 7 July Austen Layard stated that 'Earl Russell cannot be accused of using threats', that 'the language he has employed has invariably been approved and even adopted by France; that he has not been unnecessarily meddling', that Russell had 'supported the honour of his country, and that throughout these most difficult and delicate negotiations he has shown an ardent desire to maintain peace.' HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 984-985. That same day Roundell Palmer asserted that 'When the British Government say that we cannot look with indifference upon the invasion of Schleswig, hon. Gentlemen opposite regard it as a menace and a threat of going to war', yet 'when France says so, the declaration is regarded in a very different manner.' Such language meant 'that she is perfectly peaceable and by no means disposed to go to war,' and Palmer suggested that 'If you try by that test all the language in these documents which is called the language of menace', Members would soon find that 'every single expression was echoed, assented to, and repeated both by France and Russia.' *Ibid*, cc. 1055-1056. In the Lords on 8 July, the Duke of Argyll insisted 'it was our bounden duty to warn the German Powers of the danger they were incurring,' and he believed that 'we should have forfeited our duty as Ministers of the English Crown if we had not held out such intimations to the German Powers.' HL Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1100-1101.

[131] While acknowledging that Britain felt indignant 'that Denmark should be used as an outlet for the revolutionary passions of Germany, and that the Danes should be made experimental targets for needle guns', Lord Elcho insisted that 'we are not called upon, either by honour or by interest, to go to war for Denmark, any more than any of the other Powers that signed the Treaty of 1852.' HC Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1242-1243.

[132] What opposition called menaces, Roundell Palmer called 'merely enunciations of honest truth; merely timely warnings of mischief and danger—mischief and danger as much to those who receive the warning as to those in whose behalf it is given.' HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1049-1050.

[133] Robert Cecil insisted 'one disregarded promise casts upon the escutcheon of a country disgrace which is only increased in degree by multiplied repetitions.' He believed 'The [Danish] King parted with his Minister, adopted an unpopular policy, repealed the Constitution which had only just been passed, and submitted to the indignity of acting at the bidding of a foreign Power, all upon the faith of the promise that if that were done England would not leave Denmark to encounter Germany alone, and upon her own responsibility.' HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 852-853. Henry Liddell believed that by making promises to the Danes 'it had rendered Denmark from the beginning more obstinate, less willing to admit her obligations to Germany, and

contested.[134] Still, it was difficult for the government to deny the cumulative impact of advising the Danes on several occasions; advice which resulted in the revocation of its constitutional reforms,[135] the evacuation of Holstein and its Dannevirke defensive line, and strict instructions to give the Germans no pretext for hostilities.[136] When the German Powers crossed into Schleswig regardless on 1 February, was Britain not now obliged to aid Denmark, as British advice had placed her in a strategically disadvantageous position?

By her partisan behaviour and incautious representations, furthermore, critics lamented that Britain had compromised its role as a mediator.[137] Ministers countered by claiming that belligerent public speeches from both parties, general public sympathy, and the editorials of the press had raised Danish expectations, and that it was not the fault of the government.[138]

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had induced her to resist the efforts of Germany to obtain for German subjects those rights which unquestionably belonged to them.' *Ibid*, cc. 875-876. In addition, the Marquis of Clanricarde charged Russell not with holding out a straightforward promise to fight for the Danes, but asked whether it was not because of this indecision and inconsistency on the war question, and 'by your whole conduct,' that the government had 'given Denmark reason to suppose that you would go to war in her behalf, and afterwards abandoned her in her present unfortunate position? I assert that such is the case.' HL Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1114-1116.

[134] Palmerston clarified this himself on 8 July, 'The context shows, and it is quite plain, when I talked of every man in Europe—when I talked of France and Russia—I did not confine myself to this country,' and that in suggesting that Denmark would not fight alone, 'What I was pointing to was an European war, not a war between this country and the German Powers.' HC Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1274-1275. See also William Gladstone, HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 752-753; Austen Layard, HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 954-984; Roundell Palmer, *Ibid*, cc. 1053-1054.

[135] Though Gladstone did point out that the March Patent was only revoked in December 1863, once the new Constitution had come into effect, see Gladstone, HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 759-760.

[136] Butler Johnstone insisted 'The truth was that the people of Denmark had acted in a certain way upon the faith of implicit promises made to them by this country,' reminding Members that 'when a great Power like England stepped forward and took the matter out of the hands of a small Power like Denmark,' it entailed 'an implied obligation on the part of the Government not to leave Denmark in the lurch if she accepted the advice which was given her.' Butler Johnstone then listed these implied obligations, noting that 'Denmark withdrew her Patent of March at our suggestion', she 'took measures to revoke the Constitution of November,' she 'retired from Holstein and allowed the Federal Execution to take place as she would not otherwise have done,' and 'at last she consented to the cession of a large amount of territory.' HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 862-863.

[137] Cobden approved of Britain's mediation when these parties came into conflict over Schleswig-Holstein, but warned that in Russell's case 'there has been a tendency when assuming the office of mediator to pass the boundary line which separates the mediator from the partisan.' He believed that when mediating, 'you ought not to run the risk of being dragged into the position of principal.' HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 832-833. George Bentinck asserted that 'the diplomatic conduct of the Government had been most unfortunate,' and that 'by their vacillating policy they had lowered the country in the estimation of Europe, and thus decreased the power of England to mediate between other countries.' HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1033-1034.

[138] William Monsell made the point that while the government received censure for its unguarded speeches on Denmark, opposition figures had also engaged in similar rhetoric. 'Had that language no influence on the affairs of Denmark?', and 'Had the yet stronger language used by Lord Derby in another place no influence? The effect of their speeches was such as to create a false impression on the minds of the Danes.' Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1233-1234. The Duke of Argyll also singled out the Earl of Derby for his more belligerent speeches which raised Danish expectations, and he declared that 'Denmark, entertaining these expectations, has been betrayed, not by us, but by the language of noble Lords opposite.' HL Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1100-1101. See also Earl of Clarendon, *Ibid*, cc. 1129-1130.

Although Members now conceded the obsoletion of the 1852 Treaty, Ministers reflected that Denmark had repeatedly violated it the previous year, beginning with the March Patent and culminating in the November Constitution.[139] Were the Germans not entitled to seek redress from Denmark under these circumstances, notwithstanding the means through which this satisfaction was wrested?[140]

Some Radical and Liberal critics favoured a policy of non-intervention, while Tories insisted that if the government never intended to aid the Danes, it should have remained silent from the beginning.[141] Disraeli based much of his case on the premise that intervention in the Polish Uprising had worsened Britain's diplomatic position, and he was joined by others.[142] Ministers upheld that the public would have been appalled if the government had not so much as protested while clear violations of international law had occurred on their doorstep.[143] To have said or done nothing at all during such a crisis would have represented a true humiliation, which the British public could not have tolerated.[144] Further, Ministers

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[139] Gladstone noted that the position of the Danish King 'in the face of the populace of Copenhagen appears to have been such as to make it impossible for him to take a course' which 'international obligations strictly interpreted required.' The Danish Premier who presided over these developments was, Gladstone believed 'in act though not in intention, one of the worst enemies of Denmark', resigning without addressing the problematic November Constitution, which was itself only revoked 'when the gift had lost all value.' HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 762-763.

[140] Alexander Kinglake addressed the German case, *Ibid*, cc. 790-793.

[141] Robert Cecil insisted that 'If we did not mean to fight we ought not to interfere.' *Ibid*, cc. 853-854. William Forster believed that 'the time had arrived for effecting a change in our foreign policy, and for replacing that meddling, dishonest system of apparent intervention, but which was really non-intervention…by an honest, dignified, and plain spoken system of non-intervention.' *Ibid*, cc. 858-861. Lord Robert Montagu asserted that 'This whole crisis has sprung from that mistaken policy of intervention on both sides.' *Ibid*, cc. 880-881. Edward Horsman believed that 'The principle of non-intervention…is a sound, right, and just principle.' He criticised the government's late adoption of non-intervention, noting that a more consistent version of that principle was more honourable, and concluding that 'To the principle of non-intervention as so defined I am ready, and I believe every Gentleman in this House is ready, to give an unqualified acceptance.' *Ibid*, cc. 900-901.

[142] Disraeli, HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 724-726. Newdegate, *Ibid*, cc. 781-782. Butler-Johnstone, HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 866-867. Some contested this view, and argued that opposition figures had encouraged intervention in Poland, only to renege upon it, as Edward Horsman clarified, 'The intervention in Poland last year was a mistake—but that was forced on them by the other side of the House.' Horsman, *Ibid*, cc. 899-901; cc. 913-914.

[143] Newdegate, HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, 781-782. As James Clay noted, 'Would the country have permitted its Government to be silent while blood was poured forth like water, and might was over-riding defenceless right in Europe? Would they have been content that Government, with folded hands, should have stood by an unconcerned spectator, while the bloody drama of Poland was acted over again in Denmark? No. The country would have dismissed with contempt the Government which had been unmindful of the call of humanity…The feeling of the country was to use every possible means, short of war, to avert its horrors from Europe.' HC Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1262-1263. Earl of Clarendon, HL Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1131-1132.

[144] Lord Brougham thus declared 'Were we to stand by silent and see her butchery and pillage of a gallant people? We should then really be humbled. If we had not felt indignation, we should have been under a delusion. If we had not expressed indignation, we should have incurred everlasting disgrace. People talk of humiliation. There is nothing humbling in being unable to prevent wrong by staying the wrong-doer; but it is

noted that both France and Russia had issued similarly worded despatches, yet their decision to remain at peace had been described as pragmatic, rather than dishonourable. Was this not inconsistent?[145]

Members also insisted that Russell's repeated failings degraded British influence, and had become disgraceful, while connecting these ideas in the Motion.[146] Ministers responded that to fail in a noble quest was not dishonourable, and that Britain had used its best offices to preserve peace, only to be thwarted by German aggression.[147] If it was dishonourable to try, only to fail, then surely George Canning's record, which was held in such esteem, was dishonourable also?[148] One counter charge from Ministers was that the opposition had remained silent during the crisis. Surely, if the dishonour was so acute, they would have raised their voices sooner?[149] In fact, this was among the weakest government defences, since opposition figures had protested Russell's policy and complained of the lack of materials from the beginning.[150] It was by no means unusual to avoid scrutiny until a crisis

humiliating to stand by in silence.' HL Deb 8 July 1864 vol. 176, cc. 1110-1111. Brougham repeated these sentiments in the Lords and in a public speech, see *Caledonian Mercury*, 5 July 1864.

[145] Austen Layard, HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 984-985. Roundell Palmer, *Ibid*, cc. 1055-1056. The Duke of Argyll asserted that 'the language held by the English and by the French Government on this point are all but identical.' HL Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1109-1110. Russell appreciated this too, declaring that Britain was 'exactly acting in the case of Denmark as France acted in the case of Poland.' And yet, 'everybody is ready to say, and more especially the Opposition part of the community, "What grand conduct on the part of the Emperor of the French! How wise of him to refrain from making war in Poland when he could not obtain the assistance of his Allies!"' while claiming at the same time that '"in the case of the Government of Great Britain it is a base desertion by her of the country she hoped to befriend."' *Ibid*, cc. 1172-1173.

[146] Disraeli upheld this failure to be self-evident by the fact of Denmark's destruction: 'It…appears to me obvious that Her Majesty's Government have failed in their avowed policy of maintaining the independence and integrity of Denmark. It appears to me undeniable that the just influence of England is lowered in the councils of Europe.' HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 745-746; cc. 748-749. Lord Stanley noted that failure did not have to be dishonourable, but that the additional failure to clarify Britain's position to Denmark had been. *Ibid*, cc. 814-816.

[147] As Gladstone conceded, 'There may have been a failure—failure for the moment, but if that failure has been a failure of honest, upright, generous efforts to prevent great masses of mankind from injuring and destroying one another.' *Ibid*, cc. 774-775. Lord Harry Vane said that 'the Government had done all that under the circumstances they could fairly be called on to do', but 'although he regretted that they had failed in this object, he would not admit that there was any humiliation involved in that failure', and 'how it had lowered the influence of England in the councils of Europe he could not perceive.' HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 871-872. Lord Elcho admitted that 'this country stands in a disagreeable position. Failure in a just cause, and even in a bad cause, is always disagreeable', yet Elcho believed that 'because the negotiations have failed, I cannot see any justice in carrying a Vote of Censure against the Government; and if I had any doubt on this point in my mind, it would have been removed by the course of the present discussion.' HC Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1240-1241. Charles Buxton, *Ibid*, cc. 1252-1254. James Clay, *Ibid*, cc.1263-1264.

[148] Gladstone, HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 774-775.

[149] Horsman, HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 911-913. Layard, HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 991-993.

[150] On 9 February, Cecil declared that he 'wished to be told the exact or proximate day on which they might look for these Papers,' to which Layard responded that at least three weeks would be required. HC Deb 9 Feb 1864 vol 173, cc. 324. The Earl of Malmsbury complained similarly on 25 February; HL Deb 25 Feb 1864 vol 173, cc. 1061-1063. On 29 February Disraeli complained 'I cannot, I repeat, give an opinion as to what

was concluded, but the opposition had delayed tabling a full debate on the Schleswig-Holstein policy at the government's request. Moreover, the opposition did not receive the extensive blue books until late June, greatly reducing their capacity for analysis and comment.[151]

The main Ministerial defence was to assert that the opposition lacked a policy, and that they sought only to enter government, inheriting the policy they now attacked.[152] Just as they had at the opening of Parliament, opposition figures insisted it was not their responsibility to develop a policy, particularly since they lacked the materials, and they condemned the government's record on the basis that they would have done better.[153] Yet, because they lacked a true alternative, Conservatives found that even Members appalled by the government's record were unwilling to vote against it if the same course would be followed by a new administration.[154] Finally, Ministers attempted to claim that a vote affirming lost influence would represent a disgrace, and that it was impossible in this case to separate the reputation of the country from that of the Ministry.[155] Conversely, the opposition insisted

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should be the ultimate course of this country on this question, because Parliament is not, at the present moment, fully in possession of information upon the subject,' HC Deb 29 Feb 1864 vol 173, cc. 1066-1067. On 7 April Russell informed the Lords that the debate on Schleswig-Holstein would be delayed until the Conference concluded, HL Deb 7 April 1864 vol 174 cc. 533-534. Ministers gave conflicting reasons for the delays, frustrating the opposition further, see Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, pp. 125-126.

[151] Gathorne Hardy thus declared, 'What we did we did at the request of the Government,' and this is borne out by the parliamentary evidence, which testified to repeated efforts on the government's part to delay and avoid proper debate on its policy. Hardy also pointed out that this suppression of information still continued, since the government were 'in possession of information infinitely beyond what any one of us can have,' which meant that 'the Opposition, are therefore justified in declining to propound a policy for the future when we have not at our command the materials on which it can alone be based.' HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1108-1010. James Whiteside also reflected that Ministers had blocked efforts to debate Schleswig-Holstein until July, and that the essential correspondence had not been made available. 'What did I know of these despatches until they were laid on our table?' Whiteside asked, 'No more than if I had never been born.' HC Deb 8 July 1864, cc. 1228-1229.

[152] Gladstone, HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 765-768; cc. 773-774. Kinglake, *Ibid*, cc. 787-788. Layard, HC Deb 07 July 1864, cc. 990-991. Goldsmid, *Ibid*, cc. 1029-1031. Palmer, *Ibid*, cc. 1062-1063. William Monsell challenged, 'They absolutely refused to give any idea of the policy they would pursue; and we had to gather it from loose speeches and vague declarations made by noble Lords and hon. Members, and from articles in newspapers,' and that 'nothing could be more dangerous than to hand over the power of carrying on these negotiations where such tremendous interests were at stake to a party who declined to declare their policy.' HC Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1235-1236. Lord Elcho, *Ibid*, cc. 1242-1244.

[153] Gathorne Hardy declared 'Her Majesty's Ministers are in possession of information infinitely beyond what any one of us can have; and we, the Opposition, are therefore justified in declining to propound a policy for the future when we have not at our command the materials on which it can alone be based.' HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1009-1010. George Sandford asserted that the Liberals had been too long in office, and that this was proved by their recent failures. *Ibid*, cc. 1042-1044. Bernal Osborne, HC Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1217-1219.

[154] Cobden, HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 838-839. Roebuck, *Ibid*, cc. 893-895. A notable exception to this was the independent liberal William Cogan, who intended to approve the Motion to 'purify' the Liberal Party, HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1041-1042.

[155] Layard, HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 998-1000. Lord Elcho, HC Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1245-1246. John Henry Scourfield, *Ibid*, cc. 1247-1248.

that affirming the Motion was the best way to demonstrate to the world that the country did not support the Ministry's dishonourable policy.[156]

It is worth noting the use Members made of influence, since it was essentially recast as synonym which encapsulated the government's failure to defend national honour. The following debates assess in more detail the opposition's attempts to weaponize honour for political ends – a traditional tactic of opposition parties which Palmerston had also employed.[157] The evidence suggest that national honour was not a panacea for the opposition. It required a certain set of circumstances to be successfully leveraged against the government, circumstances which were largely absent from the turmoil of the Schleswig-Holstein question. One could thus argue that policy shortcomings, exacerbated by complex circumstances, appreciably reduced the effectiveness of national honour's weaponization. Also important was the genuine lack of desire of war.

5.3: The Rhetoric of Influence in Parliamentary Debate

The four-night Parliamentary debate between 4 and 8 July 1864 represented the rhetorical and political culmination of the Schleswig-Holstein crisis in Britain. Sandiford presented a limited assessment of these debates, but kept the rhetoric of national honour mostly in the background, detracting from his analysis somewhat, considering its prevalence.[158] In this section these tactics and their significance will be analysed, granting an unprecedented opportunity to explicate this rhetoric and assess its pervasive synonym, influence. Thus, in his reply to Disraeli's Motion, Gladstone disagreed 'that the just influence of England is lowered.' Addressing the claim that British isolation had alienated traditional allies to the detriment of this influence, he retorted 'That is not the language which is held by allied and friendly Governments.[159] He then accused Disraeli of drawing on 'nothing but the almost

[156] Lord Stanley parried this charge most effectively, stating 'Why, that doctrine would simply amount to this, that in foreign affairs no matter can be dealt with frankly, no error of the Government is to be exposed, but the opinion of the Foreign Office must be held to be the opinion of England without dispute; and if we think that the Foreign Office has mistaken the temper and feeling of the people of England, we are not to say so, for fear of the remarks that may be made abroad.' HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 811-812. Butler Johnstone, HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 867-869. Gathorne Hardy, HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1023-1024. Lord John Manners, *Ibid*, cc. 1069-1070. James Whiteside, HC Deb 08 July 1864 vol 176, cc.1231-1233. Baillie-Cochrane, *Ibid*, cc. 1240-1241. Earl Grey, HL Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1186-1187.
[157] Of particular note was Palmerston's criticism of the 1842 Webster-Ashburton Treaty with the United States as a dishonourable concession. See Chapter Three.
[158] Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, pp. 131-139.
[159] William Gladstone, HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 774-775.

ribald language of a few obscure journals of the Continent.'[160] If he consulted British newspapers, Gladstone may have been gratified that the press was heavily critical of Disraeli's Motion,[161] although regional papers could present a belligerent tone in the name of 'high principle and national honour.'[162]

The traveller, writer, and Liberal MP Alexander Kinglake contested charges of lost influence by emphasising British military power, insisting that Britain's influence 'depended on her actual strength, and the best way to maintain her influence was to hoard her resources,' and 'to avoid so preposterous a war as that into which they would have been plunged had the decision of the Government been other than it had been.'[163] Although critical of government failures, Kinglake refused 'to go to the length of saying that the mismanagement had been carried so far that the honour of England was affected as alleged.' Kinglake discerned that the true object of Disraeli's Motion was 'to show that by addressing encouragement and advice to Denmark and threats to the other Powers, England had placed herself in a situation which made it difficult, if not impossible, for her to recede with honour.'[164] Regarding the military species of influence, the *Exeter Flying Post* argued that although 'The just influence of England is founded upon her actual strength,' it charged that 'to parade that power against

[160] *Ibid*, cc. 775-776.
[161] *The Times* observed that while he attempted 'to grasp a mighty argument, he finds himself with a handful of straw,' suggesting that Disraeli's view was 'equivalent to an admission that England alone was faithful, true, courageous, and even wise; ready to act with the other Powers, and to advise on the supposition that they felt the sense of honour,' a position which only failed, 'as Denmark herself has failed, by the default of her Continental neighbours.' *The Times*, 5 July 1864. The *Morning Post* echoed this, believing that 'England has unquestionably been left alone; but that has been rather her misfortune than her fault.' *Morning Post*, 5 July 1864. The *Leeds Mercury* confessed that when assessing Disraeli's speech, 'we are lost in the labyrinth through which we are carried,' and noted that 'after a succession of sneers at every step taken by the government in the direction of peace, finding the tone of the country resolutely against war,' he had 'cast his lot in favour of non-intervention.' *Leeds Mercury*, 5 July 1864. Reflecting on the exchange between the two rivals, the *Daily News* believed that 'Mr Gladstone surpassed himself last evening,' and that 'by the naivete of his logic,' and 'the hollow melodramatic thunder of his peroration,' Disraeli had 'delivered himself into the hands of a speaker who on every great occasion reveals some new power of thought and some unexpected grace of art.' *Daily News*, 5 July 1864.
[162] 'Position after position was tamely surrendered after a show of resistance and idle threats. Humiliating as that pusillanimous policy is felt to be, the arguments advanced in support of peace— now that our diplomacy is in the dust—lie still more gravely open to condemnation. Many of these arguments are not only in themselves far-fetched, but they also ignore high principle and national honour, and display throughout an incomprehensible timidity.' *Orkney Herald Weekly Advertiser and Gazette for the Orkney & Shetland Islands*, 5 July 1864.
[163] Alexander Kinglake, *Ibid*, cc. 788-790.
[164] *Ibid*, cc. 789-790. He added that 'a refusal to fight did not reduce British influence, while 'our continued enjoyment of the blessings of peace was consistent with our national honour.' *Ibid*, cc. 793-794.

other nations without intending to call it into action, to adopt one policy for the weak and another for the strong, is to lower our influence and bring dishonour on the English name.'[165]

When her bluffs were thus exposed, this aroused sentiments of humiliation which General Jonathan Peel – younger brother of the late Prime Minister and a former Secretary for War – brought forward.[166] In Peel's view, Russell had brought the country to the brink of war, and he challenged whether 'if we have escaped, if it has not been solely owing to our having thrown our honour overboard?' Peel was certain that national honour would not be maintained by 'interfering with everybody on every occasion,' or by 'making use of overbearing language.'[167] 'Is it come to this,' Peel lamented, 'that the words of the Prime Minister of England, uttered in the Parliament of England, are to be regarded as mere idle menaces, to be laughed at and despised by Foreign Powers?' 'Women,' Peel declared, 'fight with words, Monks with curses, men with swords,' and although he had 'not the slightest wish to see this country engaged in a war of the latter description,' it was clear that 'the only way to prevent it with honour,' was to avoid 'those two other methods of warfare, in the exercise of which the noble Lords the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have become such adepts, that neither woman or monk would have the slightest chance with them.' And yet, 'this war of words is neither safe or honourable.'[168]

Russell might claim that British prosperity was such, that she did not need to fight, yet, Peel challenged, 'what would be said in private life of a man who refused to defend his honour on the ground that he was too rich to be shot at?'[169] Although desirous of preserving 'both the peace and the honour of the country,' Peel proclaimed that the Government had 'imperilled the one and tarnished the other. I say emphatically that you have tarnished the

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[165] Noting Britain's diplomatic isolation, the *Post* contrasted the country to France, since 'Conscious of her own strength, and knowing well how to maintain her national honour, France can throw immeasurably greater influence into the councils of Europe than England.' It also perceived it to be of the 'deepest importance,' that 'Great Britain should maintain her prestige abroad, and possess a power in foreign councils commensurate with her high position,' since 'The peace and honour of the country should be the first consideration of statesmen.' *The Exeter Flying Post*; 6 July 1864.
[166] Peel focused on 'those feelings of deep humiliation which I, in common, I believe, with a large majority of my countrymen, have felt for the position this country has been placed in.' General Peel, HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 793-794.
[167] *Ibid*, cc. 796-797.
[168] *Ibid*, cc. 798-799. Peel declared further that 'If you choose to set yourselves up as the champions of the world, and to constitute yourselves the arbiters of other people's affairs,' then 'you must be prepared to fight for your position.'
[169] Peel's appeal was also to a policy of non-intervention, insisting 'If you are not prepared to keep your word to your neighbours—if it be to your own hindrance—you had better not only shut your eyes, but your mouths also.' *Ibid*, cc. 799-800.

honour of the country.'[170] Absent from Peel's rhetoric was any suggestion of alternative policies. He likely discerned, in common with his colleagues, that the best method for impressing the government's failures upon the public was to use the familiar lexicon and logic of honour.

Lord Stanley clarified what the Motion meant,[171] labelled as 'insanity' the prospect of Britain fighting a war for Denmark alone,[172] and challenged the position 'that the estimation in which England is held just now can be considered as gratifying to English feeling.' Stanley could not recall a time when 'the policy and the position of England have been spoken of all over the Continent, as they are spoken of now.' That was not 'merely a question of newspapers,' as Gladstone had claimed. Instead, that a humiliation had been incurred was a sentiment also felt by Englishmen abroad.[173] Stanley explained these sentiments with reference to obligations incurred to Denmark, because 'when you take a man's or a nation's affairs out of their own hands,' and 'when you assume the duty of advising, managing, directing, and when that is done by a very strong Power to a very feeble one,' you must 'incur a moral responsibility towards those who take your advice, you are giving an implied guarantee that they shall not suffer by taking your advice.'[174] Stanley observed that it was 'possible for a nation to get into such a position that it has before it the alternative of war on the one hand, and on the other—I will not say of dishonour—but discredit.'[175]

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[170] Peel appealed 'to every Englishman, let his politics be what they may,' whether 'he has not felt a sense of the deepest humiliation,' at the spectacle of 'a small country whom we were bound by treaty to acknowledge, and by promises to defend, overwhelmed by odds, which, if a similar event had occurred in private life, the greatest coward in the world would have rushed forward to rescue the weak from the strong, without inquiring into the cause of the quarrel, but which in this case you have described to be an outrageous and infamous attack of the strong upon the weak *Ibid*, cc. 799-801.

[171] 'It means that we think you have blundered these foreign negotiations from beginning to end; and that we intend to call upon the House to say so.' Stanley, *Ibid*, cc. 811-812.

[172] *Ibid*, cc. 812-813. Stanley also returned to the idea of honourable neutrality, believing 'that a policy of neutrality and non-intervention may be not only a safe but a respected and an honourable position.' Stanley referred to the example set by France during the crisis, suggesting that 'no man now, even of those who are most bitterly hostile to the Emperor of the French, pretends that her position is lowered by the part she has taken.' Stanley upheld 'that not only might you have remained neutral with honour, but you might have offered advice and mediation,' and when this failed 'you still need not have been discredited, provided you had taken the one precaution of saying at first, at, least to Denmark, "So far we mean to go, and no farther."' *Ibid*, cc. 813-815

[173] *Ibid*, cc. 814-815.

[174] Stanley conceived 'that the Ministry took up the Danish cause with a sympathy which was strong, but which was not founded on very accurate knowledge,' and that 'they were not a little perplexed when they found how strong a case in point of reason and of law the Germans really had.' *Ibid*, cc. 815-816. Stanley observed that it was 'possible for a nation to get into such a position that it has before it the alternative of war on the one hand, and on the other—I will not say of dishonour—but discredit.' *Ibid*, cc. 816-817.

[175] *Ibid*, cc. 816-817.

The *London Evening Standard* continued to carry the banner for the opposition, asserting: 'If Whigs be capable of remorse or shame the colleagues of Lord Russell suffered last night almost as they deserved to suffer.' Britain was 'left without influence abroad or dignity at home, with ruined prestige and damaged self-respect; in a position of deep embarrassment, painful helplessness, and bitter humiliation.'[176] But Conservative claims that silence was better than any intervention at all also came under attack. In their 5 July issues, several regional newspapers carried an important speech made by Lord Brougham to the Social Science Association on 2 July,[177] wherein the Liberal peer challenged the opposition claim that it was better to remain entirely aloof, rather than intervene and receive snubs for its efforts. Disinterested silence, Brougham declared, would have been a true humiliation, and would have been anathema to English character.[178]

The Conservatives' lack of a policy alternative complicated their claims to rule in Palmerston's stead, a problem recognised by some of the party's backbenchers.[179] Similarly, Independent liberals were willing to criticise the failures of Palmerston's Danish policy, even if they, like the Conservatives, lacked any solutions.[180] Some Conservatives also

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[176] *London Evening Standard*, 5 July 1864.
[177] These included the *Dundee Courier*, *Glasgow Herald*, *Sussex Advertiser*, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, *Sherbourne Mercury*, *Western Daily Press*, *Manchester Courier* and *Bury and Norwich Post*, in addition to 5 July edition of *Caledonian Mercury*.
[178] Brougham addressed the 'too prevailing feeling' that 'this country had been humbled, if not disgraced, by its refusal to act.' Brougham argued that 'we should have been humbled and disgraced if we had not expressed what all of us felt, and had a right to feel,' about the Danish struggle, and he believed that 'it was rather a step in social progress,' that 'instead of having recourse to the sword on all occasions,' the government tried 'the effect of that moral influence upon them and the public at large.' 'It was honesty to protest,' Brougham concluded, because 'the Government would have been disgraced and dishonoured, and the country also, if they had not made such protestation, and if they had not given their advice,' even though they expected it would be rejected. *Caledonian Mercury*, 5 July 1864.
[179] The independent Conservative John Scourfield believed that 'Even if it were true that "the just influence of the country had been lowered," he did not see how the matter was to be made much better by the House declaring that fact.' Scourfield elaborated further that 'the influence of this House was likely to be lowered if they turn out the Government without expressing an opinion on their policy,' and he professed his unwillingness to vote alongside those Tories on his side of the House, since Disraeli's Motion 'simply referred to what was past without affording any practical indication of the course which ought to be pursued.' HC Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1247-1248.
[180] Liberal critics of the government included Edward Horsman, who warned 'We failed to rescue Poland from Russia, and our loss of influence has made another Poland of Denmark.' Horsman lamented that 'in Europe, in Asia, in the West, or in the East,' there was not 'one single Power, great or small, in which the lowered position and the lost influence of England…is not a cause of sorrow, derision, or contempt.' HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 902-904. The industrialist and philanthropist Liberal William Forster conceded that 'we had a great lesson taught us by the Schleswig-Holstein affair,' and that it now 'behoved them to consider very narrowly whether, in fulfilling their duty to other nations, it was not their business to make the principle of non-intervention their rule.' *Ibid*, cc. 858-859. Conversely, the moderate Irish Liberal William Monsell asserted that he 'could not deny that at the present moment this country had not the influence in Europe which fairly belonged to her,' but he attributed 'that altered condition to our conduct on the Polish Question,' which had been negatively affected by the interventions of opposition figures during the preceding debates. Monsell, HC Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1235-1236.

complicated the picture, requesting that for the sake of its influence, the government should adopt a more interventionist policy than the majority of Parliament wished.[181] The Tory defence that it was not the business of Parliament to propose an alternative policy was true to an extent, but as the *Daily News* argued, if a loss of influence had been caused by Liberal policy, it was hardly sensible to appoint a new Conservative government which maintained that policy.[182] The opposition could not meet this logical challenge, but they did benefit from the wide range of explanations for how influence had been lost. It had been lost thanks to

[181] For example, the protectionist Charles Newdegate proposed an Amendment to Disraeli's Motion which would have redeemed lost honour by guaranteeing the independence of Denmark, a step too far for a largely pacific Parliament. Newdegate justified this difficult step by explaining his fear 'that England had lost some of her influence with the Powers of Europe.' While he did not think 'that the nation was disgraced,' he did consider it 'of the deepest importance,' for the sake of peace and civic freedoms, 'that England should take some steps to regain that influence which he believed she had lost.' If possible, he did not wish to see Britain 'take this step alone,' yet even if left alone, Newdegate thought 'that she should take that step.' Charles Newdegate, HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 781-782.

[182] 'It may be no business of Parliament, but it is at least the urgent and immediate business of members of Parliament, who are proposing a vote of censure upon Ministers with a view to occupying their places, to "initiate" a policy different at least from that which, according to their most solemn testimony, has "lowered the just influence of England in Europe, and thereby diminished the securities for peace."' *Daily News*, 5 July 1864.

diplomatic isolation,[183] excessive interference,[184] Cabinet divisions,[185] unfulfilled threats,[186] and a succession of policy failures.[187] Lost influence was consistently portrayed as a consequence of the damage the government had done to the national honour.

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[183] Former Undersecretary for the Home Office Gathorne Hardy insisted that 'It is not only admitted by all the unofficial speakers who have taken part in this debate that England occupies an embarrassing position, but a similar impression prevails throughout the Continent of Europe.' Hardy demonstrated this by reference to several of Russell's despatches which the Frankfurt Diet, Vienna, Paris, and St Petersburg all ignored in their turn. Gathorne Hardy, HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1010-1011. Hardy cited a despatch from Sir Alexander Malet at Frankfurt, who wrote to Russell on 9 January 1864 that "I am bound to say that there is a wonderful indifference to our representations, while they are at the same time resented as interfering with a cherished project. There is an absolute persuasion that England will not interfere materially, and our counsels, regarded as unfriendly, have no weight." *Ibid*, cc. 1013-1014. He added 'You have lost all your alliances. You have dispersed, sent to the winds all the friendships England had in Europe.' England, Hardy noted, 'used to be the bulwark of peace,' but now 'only utters brave words, while she is ready to swallow the leek whenever any great Power turns round and demands it.' Considering this, 'as to loss of the influence of England, is it not true that that influence has been diminished?' *Ibid*, cc. 1020-1022.

[184] Opposition figures such as the independent Conservative Lord Robert Montagu presented lost influence as a consequence of excessive interference, relating the idea to the transactions of country gentlemen: 'If a landowner meddles, even if he be so rich and powerful that he can carry his lawsuit, by appeals, from one court to another, and so weary out his opponents, yet he is hated and shunned by the rest, and loses all his influence in the county. It is the same among nations.' Montagu asserted that 'we should live like neighbours with foreign States, and leave them to settle their affairs, and then our expenditure would speedily be reduced.' HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 883-884. *The Times* argued that 'the House of Commons and the public will not fail to recognise that such a result must always follow any diplomatic intervention in Continental affairs made by this country alone.' It explained further that Britain did possess a 'moral duty' to act in certain circumstances, but that 'when those who should be our allies see the wrong-doing with indifference, an insular and maritime nation like England is not bound to undertake the redress of the grievance.' *The Times*, 6 July 1864.

[185] Sir Stafford Northcote identified lost influence in the serious divisions within the Cabinet, noting that 'There had been a double mind,' and 'a desire, on the part of one part of the Cabinet, for strong measures, and a desire on the part of another, to remain quiet.' Had one side or the other succeeded, then 'the dispute between Denmark and Germany might have been brought to some conclusion,' but the government instead adopted 'both lines,' and 'the vacillation which ensued was to lower the influence of England.' HC Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1258-1260.

[186] The liberal Sir Francis Goldsmid was dissatisfied that the government, 'without having assurances of support from either France or Russia, uttered distinct and repeated threats to Germany, to which they were not prepared to give effect unless with the assistance of one of those powers.' Goldsmid could not deny 'that such a course must have lowered the influence of this country.' Sir Francis Goldsmid, HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1027-1028. He was echoed by the Irish Liberal MP for Kildare, William Cogan, charged that 'The disastrous policy of the Government would have plunged the country into war, from which it was only saved by being plunged into dishonour.' Reiterating the opposition criticism, Cogan believed that 'False hopes had been raised and vain threats had been used, and the consequence was that this country had been humiliated, had lost her just influence, and had become a bye-word among nations.' William Cogan, *Ibid*, cc. 1038-1040. Young Englander Alexander Baillie Cochrane declared that Russell 'had lowered the just influence of England, not only by holding out menaces that were not fulfilled,' but also 'by laying down general principles of conduct upon which foreign nations, believing in the Foreign Secretary, thought the English Government would act.' Cochrane recalled Russell's claim that 'when a weaker people were fighting for their homes it was the business of a greater Power to assist them,' and that this 'general principle' was 'quoted everywhere on the Continent as the guiding policy of the noble Earl, and this was one of the main causes of the embarrassments that had ensued.' HC Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1236-1237. See also Spencer Walpole, *Ibid*, cc. 1268-1272.

[187] Radical and Palmerstonian Ralph Bernal Osborne conceded that 'No man in or out of the House is able to deny that the failure of the Ministry to some extent involves the honour of the country.' *Ibid*, cc. 1200-1201. Reflecting on the Motion, and 'how far the honour and influence of this country has been lowered,' Osborne conceded 'that this country did not occupy quite the position it ought to hold among nations.' To Osborne, 'The want of success alone, independent of the way in which we have managed to bungle and botch, must of

To underline the danger these losses presented, Robert Cecil focused on influence's high value during his contribution on 5 July. Cecil warned that because the government had issued empty threats and failed to fulfil its promises, 'You cannot by any form of words you can use persuade Foreign Powers that you are in earnest.' He feared that 'in any future European complications that may arise,' Britain might declare its interest, but other powers would no longer take her at her word, and 'until you have committed yourselves to irrevocable war, you will not be able to make those listen to whom you address yourselves.' As Russell's bluff had been called so many times, Cecil explained the consequences: 'This loss of dignity and honour is not a sentiment; it is a loss of actual power. It is a loss of power which will have to be brought back at some future day by the blood and treasure of England.'[188]

This was a definitive warning of the consequences of lost influence, spelled out in terms which gelled with what the honour-script prescribed. The *Standard* agreed, asserting that so long as the 'present Ministry remains in power, England is dishonoured and paralysed,' and while Russell was Foreign Secretary, 'she can do nothing, because no one will listen to her proposals, no one will heed her threats, no one will join her in action or support her in council.' The *Standard* also reiterated the charge of excessive interference, asking: 'If Denmark might be sacrificed without dishonour, why create dishonour, gratuitously volunteering pledges which were not to be redeemed?' It was disingenuous to claim, as some Members did, that all neutrals must suffer some dishonour, the *Standard* reasoned, since France 'has remained neutral, and occupies the proudest position in Europe, while we have sunk for the hour to a second-rate rank.'[189]

The *Morning Post* repeated its critique of the opposition's stance, depicting it as cynical opportunism.[190] A contributor to the *Post* enunciated a similar theme, acknowledging a sense

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itself reduce the just influence of this country.' *Ibid*, cc. 1217-1218. Irish Conservative James Whiteside reiterated this connection between failure and lost influence, confirming that his party believed 'that the Foreign Minister has erred, and greatly erred; we believe that he has lowered the influence of England among the nations of the earth.' *Ibid*, cc. 1232-1233.

[188] Robert Cecil, HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 850-852.

[189] *London Evening Standard*, 6 July 1864.

[190] The *Morning Post* complained that the opposition 'would not – if their declarations are not void of meaning – have thrown the moral influence of England into the scale in favour of Denmark,' and in their pursuit of such purist non-intervention, 'they would not have aided Denmark on the one hand, and they would not have offended Austria and Prussia on the other.' The *Post* believed that it was 'this policy of doing nothing which they think entitles them to assume the language of the Pharisee, and declare that they are not as these occupants of the Treasury Bench.' *Morning Post*, 6 July 1864.

of humiliation while denying that this entitled the opposition to form a new government.[191] With the debate half finished, the opposition was no closer to changing the minds of Parliament, the press, or the country. Ministers met Disraeli's Motion by denying that influence had been lost, presenting different species of the concept, and unveiling evidence which suggested that little had materially changed. Yet, arguably their most effective weapon was to challenge the opposition to explain how they would restore this influence now. Shorn of a distinct policy to this end, the best the opposition could expect was to maintain its attack, in the hope that the succession of rhetorical blows would force the government's collapse.[192]

When Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Austen Layard opened the third night of debate on 7 July, he admitted some errors, while challenging whether such mistakes did in fact 'lower the influence of a great country in the councils of the world?' Could British influence be lowered by 'striving to maintain peace,' by 'inculcating moderation,' by 'declaring our respect for treaties,' or by 'warning those who are about to break them of the fatal results of violating solemn engagements' – no, Layard insisted, 'the influence of England could be lowered by no such means.' Layard's defence also utilised a secondary Ministerial tactic – to claim that a vote affirming Britain's lost influence would disgrace her abroad, and become a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby British influence would be reduced below the point it now actually stood.'[193] This was reminiscent of 1848, where Peel joined the Whigs in opposing a Motion which affirmed British humiliation, on the basis that it would exacerbate the country's problems.[194]

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[191] The contributor 'N' lamented that 'however much we may deprecate the vacillations of Lord Russell, we should simply get out of the frying-pan into the fire,' through a change in government since 'Instead of Lord Russell we should be blessed with Lord Malmesbury in his place, and following out the same policy!' This was a key critique of the opposition's position, since as 'N' elaborated, while 'One feels, on rising in the morning, as if one has a national disgrace hanging heavily round one's neck!' such sentiments would not be improved by the appointment of different custodians pursuing the same policy as before. Indeed, 'N' urged a more belligerent course, reasoning that while 'There is not a man in the United Kingdom who probably would advocate war for itself,' surely 'these considerations ought not to be put into the scale against national honour, in executing faithfully the spirit of our engagements; at least if we wish to preserve our honourable and influential position among the nations of Europe.' Britain must have become 'very degenerate,' 'N' concluded, 'if we allow Denmark to be quietly blotted out of the map of Europe in order to be merged into the kingdom of Prussia.' *Morning Post*; July 7 1864.

[192] See Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, pp. 121-122.

[193] Layard insisted that it was by 'proclaiming to the world that an English Minister and an English Ministry can be both dishonourable and cowardly,' that 'you can lower the character of England and destroy her just influence in the councils of Europe.' Layard thus explicitly denied that British influence had been lowered, and 'no man who holds dear the honour of his country, and knows the position she holds in the world, will venture to assert it.' Austen Layard, HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 998-1000.

[194] See Chapter Two.

Still, the *Standard* was unguarded in its warnings to those that might waver, and it asserted that if any Member 'aids the government, either by staying away or by voting,' then he was 'sanctioning a policy which has made the English name a byword and a butt in every European society,' while also 'acknowledging that he sees nothing inconsistent with honour in threatening where you dare not strike, and promising where you are too timid to perform.'[195] But like the opposition, the *Standard* failed to explain how Britain's position would be materially improved by a change in government.[196] *The Times* reflected this stalemate.[197] Since the Tories would not go to war for Denmark, their insistence that British honour had been pledged in Denmark's defence was surely a performative gesture, made for political purposes. Nor was it Palmerston's fault that the German Powers had conspired to launch an aggressive war against Denmark.[198]

This was affirmed by Roundell Palmer, the Attorney General, who provided one of the more rational defences of government policy, insisting that Britain could not remain silent in the face of treaty violations,[199] and disputing the suggestion that 'menaces' had been sent.[200]

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[195] *London Evening Standard*, 8 July 1864.
[196] Liberal critics of the government used these deficiencies in the opposition's position to justify their refusal to vote with Disraeli's Motion. Thus on 5 July Edward Horsman Horsman conceded that 'it was impossible to say that, during these transactions, they have not exhibited a weakness, blindness, and ill-success, that I do not think any one remembers to have seen surpassed.' The government had 'established no claim on our confidence, and not very much even on our forbearance.' Yet, Horsman would not support the Motion because of government failure, reasoning that while the government were charged with incapacity, 'where have the Opposition proved their intense capacity?' HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 915-916. He declared that while Parliament could not demand that the opposition present a policy, 'it does demand, and it has a right to demand, that you should exhibit the qualities by which a policy should be constructed—enunciation of principles, display of knowledge, proofs of earnestness, the acknowledgment and acceptance of responsibility.' *Ibid*, cc. 916-917. Horsman refused to accept that 'a Government which has laboured so earnestly and constitutionally, though unsuccessfully, to preserve peace in a manner compatible with the national honour,' should 'be displaced to make way for those who have shown more weakness and less courage during the prolonged and painful crisis.' *Ibid*, cc. 917-919. Horsman's position was heavily criticised, see *London Evening Standard*, 7 July 1864.
[197] Concerning British policy to this point, it asserted 'that part has been done as well by Her Majesty's Ministers as it would have been by the chiefs of the Conservative Party; and that is the sum and substance of the question now before Parliament.' *The Times*, 7 July 1864.
[198] The *Morning Post* presented the conflict over the Duchies as inevitable, writing that 'no Ministry could have prevented the Dano-German war.' While 'The results of the past six months are such as every one must deplore,' the *Post* concluded that 'they are also such as, so far as human judgement can serve us in forming an opinion, no English government could possibly have prevented.' It added that although 'Lord Malmesbury would not have written the identical despatches which proceeded from the pen of Earl Russell,' still 'an Austro-Prussian army would nevertheless have crossed the Eider, the Duchies would have been Germanised, Jutland would have been occupied, and Copenhagen would have been threatened.' *Morning Post*, 8 July 1864.
[199] Palmer challenged Members to consider that 'where a great wrong is perpetrated, where treaties are violated, where the peace of Europe is in danger, you are to dip your pen in rose water and veil your thoughts in some superfine language?' HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1049-1050.
[200] Palmer insisted that Russell had used no insulting language, and if it was menacing 'to remind Powers that they are bound by treaties—that they are bound by obligations,' to state that 'most serious consequences will or may result from a particular cause — if it is menacing to say the peace of Europe is endangered,' or

Palmer also challenged the opposition's inconsistency, discerning that 'because an effect may be produced upon the position of political parties in this House,' it was said that 'while Russia is justified, while France is praised, that the honour of England has been sacrificed, and the just influence of the country has been diminished.' Palmer provided a different reading of influence, arguing 'that the honour of the country does not stand upon so slender a foundation,' adding that 'the way to support the influence of the country is…to act rightly, to keep to our engagements, and not to enter upon useless and unnecessary wars.'[201]

Returning to the military version of influence on the 8 July, the Liberal Conservative Lord Elcho refused to believe 'that our honour has suffered in consequence of the failure of our negotiations, or that our influence in Europe is really lessened,' because 'a nation like England, strong in her armaments and known integrity of purpose, will always continue to possess her just influence in the councils of Europe.'[202] Britain was not now called upon to fight alone, though this did not mean she would never fight alone. 'We showed our readiness to fight, if it were necessary, in defence of our honour in the Trent case,' Elcho recalled, and 'one can easily conceive that questions might arise in regard to the independence of neighbouring States, in regard to our highway to India, and in regard to other matters, which might lead us to rise in arms in support of our honour or our interests.' Evidently, Denmark was not such a case, but the capacity for war – and the military influence which depended upon this capacity – had not been reduced by recent events.[203] Elcho lamented that 'It is sad to see wrong thus rampant and triumphant,' yet he insisted 'we are not to blame for this.'[204]

Having saved his contribution so late, Palmerston presented a firm riposte: 'I deny utterly that the influence of England has been lowered. There is no proof of it whatever. It is a mere assertion.' The charge of lost influence was 'a gratuitous libel on the country,' which he hoped the Commons would not condone. Taking advantage of the vagueness in Disraeli's Motion, Palmerston explained that 'the influence of a country depends upon other things than protocols and despatches,' which included 'its power to defend itself,' its 'wealth and prosperity,' its 'intelligence and cultivation of mind,' the 'development of the arts and

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that 'we and other great Powers cannot be indifferent,' and 'look upon this in a serious light,' then Palmer reasoned the definition of menaces was itself flawed. What opposition called menaces, Palmer called 'merely enunciations of honest truth; merely timely warnings of mischief and danger—mischief and danger as much to those who receive the warning as to those in whose behalf it is given.' *Ibid*, cc. 1049-1050.

[201] *Ibid*, cc. 1063-1064.

[202] Lord Elcho, *Ibid*, cc. 1242-1243.

[203] *Ibid*, cc. 1244-1245.

[204] *Ibid*, cc. 1243-1244.

sciences,' and 'all those things which make a nation truly great and powerful.' To the Prime Minister, influence concerned a wide umbrella of conditions, and 'As long as England retains these conditions, so long shall I deny that her influence has been diminished.'[205]

Palmerston's extension of influence to those spheres weakened the Motion, though Gladstone did describe his chief's speech as 'unequivocally weak in the mental and bodily sense.'[206] This may have had more to do with the late hour and the Premier's age, though Chambers noted how Palmerston 'bounded up the stairs to the Ladies' Gallery and fell into the arms of Lady Palmerston,' once the Motion was defeated, and the government acquired a majority of eighteen.[207] 'This was a much larger majority than was expected,' Palmerston admitted to the Queen, 'four was the calculation yesterday, and from six to eight today. Several Conservative Members went or stayed away.'[208] However, the government's victory in the Commons was likely to be tarnished by the hostile reception of the Lords.

Before the Lords convened, it had been public knowledge that an attack of gout earlier in the week would prevent the Earl of Derby from attending.[209] The Earl of Ellenborough was also absent, facilitating a curious spectacle where the signee of the 1852 Treaty, the Earl of Malmsbury, led the attack against a government which had struggled to deal with his Treaty's legacy.[210] Malmsbury bypassed this awkwardness and ignored military calculations, asserting that 'the just influence of this country has been lowered abroad,' with reference 'to the foreign newspapers to show to you what are the opinions of foreign nations with regard to this country now.' Malmsbury spoke specifically of French papers, which, 'never, in my recollection, saw England spoken of in those organs as England is spoken of now.' Where once there had been 'hostility, envy, and malice, but with a certain degree of respect and fear,' now Britain was spoken of 'as the betrayer of our friends, cowards, and expressions such as these. Well, my Lords, how then is it possible to say that we are not lowered in the eyes of Europe?'[211]

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[205] Viscount Palmerston, *Ibid*, cc. 1281-1282.
[206] Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, p. 136.
[207] Chambers, *Palmerston*, p. 500.
[208] Viscount Palmerston to Queen Victoria, 8 July 1864, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series*, I, p. 240.
[209] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5 July 1864. It noted that Derby has, 'since the great Conservative meeting last week, been confined to his bed by a severe attack of gout. It is stated, indeed, that his Lordship will not be able to take his place in the House of Lords for some days to come.'
[210] Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, pp. 28-29.
[211] Earl of Malmesbury, HL Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1093-1094.

Where Malmsbury perceived lost influence in the reduced foreign opinion of Britain's capacity, the Marquess of Clanricarde ignored the role which foreign opinion played in British influence, explaining that he did not think 'that the influence of England, properly exercised, is one jot lowered in the eyes of Europe,' because 'The influence of this country depends on her power, and never did the power of England stand higher than at the present moment.'[212] British influence could not be reduced by shortcomings in foreign policy, and it was thus a mistake to claim that 'the isolation of the English Cabinet implies a want of solid power on the part of England.' Typically, however, Clanricarde did not believe the government blameless, and he complained 'there is an isolation at the very moment when we require combined action,'[213] accusing Russell of a 'want of decision and determination,' and lamenting that it was 'impossible' to read the papers 'and not see that sometimes the Government were inclined for war.'[214] *The Times* echoed Clanricarde in its declaration that 'the influence of a country really depends on its power – on the strength which it is known to be able to put forth.' Although 'Germans may rail at it and Frenchmen may caricature it,' Britain retained 'the most powerful fleet in the world, a large army, unbounded financial resources, and a commerce which not even the convulsion of the American Republic has been able to impair.'[215]

Addressing the idea of military influence directly, Earl Grey reflected that 'the influence and power of a country do not depend merely upon physical power.' Grey reminded the Lords that 'our just influence and power depend not only upon fleets and armies, but upon the respect and goodwill borne towards us by other nations.' Thus, Grey challenged: 'Does this country at this moment enjoy the respect and goodwill of the other nations of the world to the same extent as formerly?' Grey conceded that 'the character of this country does stand so well with other nations as it used to do, and as it ought.'[216] That Britain was 'not regarded with goodwill and respect either by the Governments or by the people of other nations is too notorious to be disputed, and is proved by the very despatches which have been laid on your table.'[217] The opposition managed a majority of nine votes, and although Sandiford

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[212] He elaborated further that 'We have the finest fleet in the world; we have an army, which, although small, has never been found inadequate for any necessary purpose; we have financial resources which seem almost inexhaustible; and the commerce of the country, so far from being an impediment to our going to war, adds immense weight to us in any war.' Marquess of Clanricarde, *Ibid*, cc. 1113-1114.
[213] *Ibid*, cc. 1113-1114.
[214] *Ibid*, cc. 1114-1116.
[215] *The Times*, 9 July 1864.
[216] Earl Grey, *Ibid*, cc. 1179-1180.
[217] *Ibid*, cc. 1180-1181.

charitably interpreted the result as 'a moral triumph for the government, which nevertheless suffered the mortification of hearing its foreign policy maligned by friend as well as foe,' others were less convinced.[218] 'And the country will say heartily,' the anti-government *Morning Herald* considered, 'Thank God we have a House of Lords.'[219]

What emerges from these four nights of debate is the tactic of using the rhetoric of national honour against one's opponents. It was present in a striking variety of scenarios, but it appears that the versatility of national honour, and especially influence, ultimately undermined Disraeli's Motion. Ministers and their allies could contest the Conservative claims, pointing to influence rooted in military power, and presenting a vision of British exceptionalism which allowed the country to rise above ideas of damaged influence. The victory was not triumphant, but it did reflect the difficulties which the rhetoric of honour presented. Notwithstanding the evidence which pointed to a failed policy, Ministers managed to defend their positions. Yet, neither Russell nor Palmerston could leverage this rhetoric to the extent it had been used before. Danish obligations failed to resonate with Britons, and the public could not be made to view the Schleswig-Holstein crisis as connected with British honour. Paradoxically, this arguably worked in the government's favour, as opposition tactics did not resonate with Britons either; their initial horror had turned to confusion, before lapsing into disinterest. Without the public clamour for decision, much of the pressure upon the government evaporated, and contemporaries arguably recognised that it was unseemly to replace an administration with one that would not alter its policy in any meaningful way.[220]

Of course, the general lack of public enthusiasm did not dissuade critical voices in the press.[221] The *Standard* was typically cutting in its conclusions on 9 July. 'This is the present position of the country,' it wrote, 'and how is it possible to avoid the conclusion that, in landing us in this position, the Ministry has impaired the just influence of the country, and

[218] Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, p. 137.
[219] *Morning Herald*, 9 July 1864.
[220] See Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, p. 139.
[221] Critics could maintain that the government was itself on borrowed time; in its assessment of 'The Palmerston Company, Limited,' the *London Review* argued that 'Abroad, the credit of the concern…is dwindling,' while 'Outsiders are heard muttering that the Palmerston Company, Limited, does not meet its bills. But the promissory notes of England cannot thus continue to be dishonoured.' It was observed that 'Lord Russell's pen is unfortunately so hard and sharp, that every piece of correspondence sounds like a hostile message. The result is that the English Foreign Office, as regards other Foreign Offices, is undergoing a sort of political quarantine.' It charged that 'As for the general honour of the country, it is an argument that does not touch a body so constituted and so minded,' while predicting the collapse of the government. 'The Palmerston Company, Limited,' *London Review*, 9 July 1864, 30.

thereby diminished the securities of peace?' The *Standard* concluded that the Conservatives consistently 'preferred honour to peace, and in so doing they have pursued the only course which ever leads a great nation to permanent peace and satisfactory relations with its neighbours.'[222] These conclusions may have pleased the opposition, but the key dilemma remained, as expressed by the *Saturday Review*: 'It is very easy to answer the question whether the present government has needlessly lessened the influence of England on the continent,' however, 'it is not easy to answer the question whether this country would gain by a change of ministry.'[223]

Others anticipated that this change was fast approaching. 'The Ministry is as good as dead, and only waits to be buried,' claimed *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. 'It has lost its influence abroad, it has lost its character at home. It is an inert chrysalis, in which the soul of Lord Palmerston is expiring.' *Blackwood*'s considered that 'the debate has virtually killed the Ministry.'[224] But these predictions were premature. Voters did not punish the government for its failures the following year, and the charge of lost influence was not sufficient either to topple the Ministry, or to move the country towards war. The episode arguably serves as an example of national honour's conditional power; crucially, it was possible to subordinate it to a policy of peace, however unpalatable it seemed.

National honour's rhetoric was also significantly less effective when applied to a struggle as complex as Schleswig-Holstein. It neither shielded the government from attack, nor helped the opposition to wrest a political victory. It seemed that the more that was learned of the case, the murkier it became. As Lord Stanley conceived 'the Ministry took up the Danish cause with a sympathy which was strong, but which was not founded on very accurate knowledge,' and 'they were not a little perplexed when they found how strong a case in point of reason and of law the Germans really had.'[225] There was no outrageous insult or grave military defeat to avenge; there were only obligations, and making war for the sake of a Danish regime guilty of its own errors was a difficult policy to sell, particularly when that war would be directed against a united German opinion. Indeed, it may be argued that to succeed as Palmerston had done in the Trent Affair, national honour could only be applied to a straightforward case, where Britain possessed some degree of military advantage.

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[222] *London Evening Standard*; July 9 1864.
[223] *Saturday Review*, 9 July 1864.
[224] 'The Vote of Censure,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 96, No. 586 (Aug 1864), 243-254; 243.
[225] Lord Stanley, HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 816-817.

Conclusion

The public had heard how British influence could be reduced by several factors, including failure, the issuing of empty threats, unfulfilled promises, and excessive interference. Since influence worked similarly to honour in this respect, it could be argued that during the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, 'influence' served, however imperfectly, as a synonym for national honour. On the one hand, influence's depth of meaning facilitated the opposition's attack on Britain's reduced moral and diplomatic position. However, on the other hand, and much like honour, influence was arguably *too* pliable, and could also be interpreted in Britain's military, financial, or technological power. Through their deployment of alternative definitions of influence, Ministers nullified the opposition's monopolisation of the ethic, and undermined their argument. Furthermore, even while opposition figures could link Russell's failures to this lost influence, they consistently failed to explain how they would restore it. The Earl of Derby's promise not to politicise the Schleswig-Holstein crisis was a factor in the opposition's paralysis, but of greater importance was the striking decline in war fever, and the relative absence of a war party by summer 1864.

One could argue that Danish behaviour was at least partially responsible for this change. Initially portrayed as a straightforward instance of the strong assaulting the weak, the passage of time and availability of more information revealed the extent of Danish culpability. This did not excuse aggression, but it did complicate the question, and enabled the government to argue that its legal case for intervention was weaker than first assumed. Because the opposition came to agree with this perspective, their attacks were based on unfulfilled promises and empty threats, supported by bountiful evidence. These errors in judgement were a consequence of a divided Cabinet, but also of the changing European situation. Bismarck's role in manipulating the crisis to his own ends should not be understated. The Prussian Chancellor served as the perfect foil for Earl Russell, both in calling out his bluffs and in undermining his claims to control the development of the crisis. British hostility towards the German powers increased, thanks both to the spectacle of her aggression, and to the rumours of a recreation of the Holy Alliance.[226]

[226] Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, p. 113. For the rumoured resurrection of the Holy Alliance see *Morning Post*, 3 July 1864. The rumours were decried as a fiction in Berlin, but the *Morning Herald* reported that the French considered them 'a fiction founded on fact.' *Morning Herald*, 9 July 1864.

Sandiford judged that 'in the final analysis the Lords, like the Commons, blamed Russell not so much for maintaining peace as for failing to uphold the national honour while doing so.'[227] Opposition figures emphasised the emotional consequences of this, by focusing on the idea that Britain had been humiliated. Government allies contested this idea,[228] but Austen Layard addressed it most effectively, observing 'There was a great deal in it about "humiliation," "degradation," and every other kind of "ation,"' these may have been 'big words', yet Layard contended they were 'strung together without any very apparent connection or definite meaning.'[229] Gathorne Hardy responded by linking humiliation directly to Britain's lost influence in Europe, but few expressed this connection so explicitly.[230] Above all, humiliation was a convenient political weapon because, like influence, it was malleable, and the MPs that alluded to these sentiments included Disraeli,[231] General Peel,[232] Lord Stanley,[233] Fitzgerald,[234] Cogan,[235] Manners,[236] Bernal Osborne,[237] Whiteside,[238] Baillie-Cochrane,[239] Walpole,[240] Malmsbury,[241] Chelmsford,[242] and Caernarvon.[243]

However, humiliation and shame were not the only sentiments that bristled Britons. The opposition connected lost influence with a reduction in security, and thus provided an explanation for why the loss was practically important. The fear, founded in the logic of the honour-script, was that rivals might take advantage of Britain's demonstrated weakness. But such prophecies were not realised. Nor were the repeated claims that the government's

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[227] Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, p. 138.
[228] Lord Elcho, HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1242-1245; Duke of Argyll, HL Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1101-1102; Lord Brougham, *Ibid*, cc. 1110-1111.
[229] Austen Layard, HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 993-994.
[230] Gathorne Hardy, *Ibid*, cc. 1023-1024. Hardy declared 'The humiliation of the country consists in the opinions of those other countries with which she would have influence, and if we ascertain that in every part of Europe, I might almost say of the whole world, that influence is gone, and that, therefore, she is humiliated.'
[231] Disraeli, HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 747-748.
[232] General Peel, *Ibid*, cc. 793-795; cc. 800-801.
[233] Lord Stanley, *Ibid*, cc. 813-814.
[234] Seymour Fitzgerald, HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 921-922; cc. 927-928.
[235] William Cogan, HC Deb 7 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1039-1040.
[236] Lord John Manners, *Ibid*, cc. 1071-1072.
[237] Ralph Bernal Osborne, HC Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1200-1201.
[238] James Whiteside, *Ibid*, cc. 1225-1226. He noted that 'in his opinion England has been subjected to humiliation in every quarter of the globe.'
[239] Alexander Baillie-Cochrane, *Ibid*, cc. 1239-1241.
[240] Spencer Walpole, *Ibid*, cc. 1270-1272.
[241] Earl of Malmsbury, HL Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1093-1094. He claimed 'you must feel as I do, that our country is deeply humiliated in the eyes of foreign nations.'
[242] Lord Chelmsford, *Ibid*, cc. 1151-1152.
[243] Earl of Caernarvon, *Ibid*, cc. 1164-1165.

failing in the Duchies would erode its electoral support and cause its imminent collapse: 'Even the reputation of Lord Palmerston has vanished,' *Blackwood's* exclaimed. 'If he has not outlived his genius, he has outlived his age. He finds himself in a new epoch, which is unsuited for his old style of policy, and amid new forces which he cannot rightly appreciate.'[244] Indeed, as Mosse observed, 'It is hard to escape the conclusion that both Palmerston and Russell had outlived their time. The 'age of Palmerston' had passed.'[245]

Yet, one could argue that Palmerston's reputation – bolstered by decades of fighting for the national honour – was *not* substantially tarnished by this signal failure to fight for British honour in the Duchies. Britain did not suffer the advertised consequences of lost influence – its economic, financial, technological, and industrial capacity only expanded[246] – while the Liberals suffered merely a reduced Parliamentary majority the following year. Significantly, while Russell, Palmerston, and others interpreted British honour in Denmark's predicament, the ethic could not mobilise either their peers or the public for a warlike policy. The sheer complexity of Schleswig-Holstein's demographics frustrated both the German Powers and British diplomacy during the Conference, particularly when partition temporarily emerged as a solution,[247] and the British public were confused by the intricacy of the geography as much as the question of Danish culpability. It was a result which the Earl of Aberdeen might have recognised from his efforts to resolve the Oregon question – national honour was an awkward fit in a complicated case, particularly when the consequences for vindication conflicted with the interests of peace.

National honour thus did not provide the government with sufficient justification for British intervention in the Duchies, but it also failed to facilitate the Tory assumption of power. The supposedly sacred entity had been superseded by more pragmatic, tangible concerns, and one observes the growing consensus for non-intervention, which suggested that Britain was preparing for a new epoch in foreign policy.[248] Perhaps because of such an anticlimactic aftermath, the Schleswig-Holstein crisis has not received the attention which its significance deserves. Sandiford's near fifty-year old study remains the only book of its kind dedicated

[244] 'The Vote of Censure,' *Blackwood's*, 254.
[245] Mosse, 'Queen Victoria and Her Ministers,' 283.
[246] John Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 19-21.
[247] The King of Prussia asserted that the proposed partition of Schleswig would 'wound most deeply the national feeling in Germany', and he insisted instead on a victor's peace which would remove the Duchies entirely from Danish control. The King of Prussia to Queen Victoria, 4 June 1864 *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series*, I, p. 213.
[248] Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, p. 140.

to Britain's relationship with the Duchies, while the parliamentary debates of 4 to 8 July have been largely neglected. Here it is contended that the true significance of the crisis lay in the unsuccessful deployment of honour, notwithstanding its professed primacy. This research project has considered other such failures, but only in Schleswig-Holstein did the sheer complexity of a case overwhelm the rhetoric of honour, to the extent that what might be called a dishonourable peace was preferred over the costly discharge of obligations.

That the realities did not match the rhetoric did not prevent opposition figures from maintaining their message. Some did so by attacking Russell directly.[249] Ironically, the Foreign Secretary led his colleagues in seeing British honour at stake in Denmark's predicament. He privately declared British honour at stake, and even pressed the Queen to remember her honour when she condemned any escalation.[250] But neither Russell nor the Cabinet were really in control of events. Britain could only react to its constant escalation, as the German Powers first invaded Schleswig, then Jutland, and then appeared to threaten Copenhagen itself – a prospect the Queen dismissed, but could not guarantee against.[251] These factors led Russell to contradict himself; warning privately that to abandon Denmark to its fate would constitute a humiliation,[252] only to insist in public that no such humiliation had taken place, and that British honour was not concerned in Denmark's status.[253]

This proved essential for recasting the crisis in the months that followed, as Ministers repeated the claim that British honour was not concerned in the Schleswig-Holstein

[249] General Peel believed Earl Russell should shoulder the responsibility for the mishandling of British honour, and he had implored Earl Russell to mould his foreign policy on 'exactly the same principles that would govern his private life. I would have him jealous alike of his country's honour, and his own.' General Peel, HC Deb 4 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 800-801.

[250] Palmerston recorded Russell's views to the Austrian ambassador, that 'England could not consistently with her honour allow Denmark to perish without aiding in her defence.' In this, the Prime Minister told the Queen that he 'heartily concurs.' Viscount Palmerston to Queen Victoria, 8 Jan 1864, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series*, I, p. 146. In mid-February Russell argued 'Your Majesty is naturally averse to a war in which no English interest in concerned. But if English honour were to be concerned your Majesty would no doubt feel bound to defend it.' Earl Russell to Queen Victoria, 14 Feb 1864, *Ibid*, p. 158. The Queen rejected a policy of intervention for 'a supposed point of honour', and disputed the wisdom of exacerbating the crisis through military intervention. Queen Victoria to Earl Russell, 15 Feb 1864, *Ibid*, p. 158.

[251] See Queen Victoria to Earl Russell, 22 Feb 1864, *Ibid*, p. 161. Palmerston also upheld that an Austrian attack on Copenhagen would be a 'national disgrace to which Viscount Palmerston, at least, never would stoop to be a party,' believing it an 'affront' which 'made one's blood boil even to think of it', and this idea was repeated with greater passion in April when the scenario was rumoured possible again. Viscount Palmerston to Queen Victoria, 22 Feb 1864, *Ibid*, p. 163.

[252] The Queen noted in her journal on 16 June that 'Russell seemed to think this country would be humiliated if we suffered more to be done' to Denmark, yet he was by now more isolated than ever in a pacific Cabinet. Extract from the Queen's Journal, 16 June 1864, *Ibid*, p. 221.

[253] See Earl Russell, HL Deb 8 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 1167-1168.

question, despite the damage done to the ethic by Russell's blustering policy.[254] One could argue that Russell's behaviour in issuing threats and making promises was itself a symptom of the Foreign Secretary's belief that British honour was at stake in the Duchies. Russell's dogged pursuit of a so-called Palmerstonian policy is nonetheless remarkable; the Foreign Secretary was arguably more Palmerstonian than the Prime Minister during the crisis.[255] One discerns a striking contradiction between Russell's public excuses and his private campaign to rouse his peers towards a more active policy, a campaign he frequently waged alone.[256] He held this inconsistency in common with other contemporaries, for while the Queen refused to countenance war with Germany for Denmark's sake, she did appreciate 'we had given the impression of taking too active a part and encouraging Denmark, which we must never do again.'[257]

As de Redcliffe had feared, the government was forced to choose between the national interest of peace and the vindication of the national honour through war, and they made their choice accordingly. But this was a lesson painfully learned; the unflattering spectacle of repeated retreats and exposed empty threats remained in the political memory after the crisis faded from view.[258] It also influenced Gladstone's policy of 'treating European affairs with a certain cautious detachment,'[259] a still more unflattering situation which appears to have

[254] For example, in September the Earl Grey reiterated the Government's position that 'this country was not bound – by any treaty engagement which rendered it a point of honour with them to engage in the quarrel on the part of Denmark.' However, Grey insisted that if honour had been involved in Schleswig-Holstein, then the Government 'would not have hesitated for a moment – no Government that could exist in this country would have hesitated at once to draw the sword in any quarrel in which the honour and good faith of England were involved.' *The Sun*, 26 Sept 1864.
[255] The Foreign Secretary believed in the importance of a firm policy to dissuade the German Powers. Russell had argued that 'if Austria and Prussia are persuaded that your Majesty's Government feels a serious interest in the integrity of Denmark, peace may be preserved, but, if the question is allowed to linger, the result will be war.' Earl Russell to Queen Victoria, 23 Nov 1863, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series*, I, p. 210. On 26 December, he wrote that it would be 'impossible for your Majesty's Government to consent to a German occupation of Schleswig.' Earl Russell to Queen Victoria, 26 Dec 1863, *Ibid*, p. 132.
[256] By 21 June the Queen was relieved to find Palmerston 'very sensible, wonderfully clear-headed, and fully alive to the dangers of the situation.' By now Palmerston blamed Danish obstinacy for the crisis, and agreed with the Queen that Britain could do nothing in its position to aid Denmark, even if she had wanted to. Extract from the Queen's Journal, 21 June 1864, *Ibid*, pp. 223-224. Sandiford also noted that Russell remained belligerent and interventionist throughout June, even as Palmerston adhered to the peace party, and sought out the Danish Foreign Minister to inform him that British intervention would not be possible. The Foreign Secretary arguably conceded defeat only later in the month. Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, pp. 109-111.
[257] Extract from the Queen's Journal, June 16 1864, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series*, I, p. 221.
[258] As the Earl of Derby commented in a Lords' session of 1866, 'The ground of our complaint—and I take it to be a warning for all future Ministries—was that the noble Earl had held language which was not to be justified except upon the supposition that he was going to act upon it, and when those with regard to whom he held that language relied upon the performance of the implied engagement, he felt himself compelled to withdraw from that engagement.' HL Deb 9 July 1866 vol 184, cc. 737-738.
[259] Sandiford, *Schleswig-Holstein Question*, p. 139.

persuaded Disraeli that Britain was required to reassert itself on the world stage. A sense of gloom was also palpable. The King of Belgium advised the Queen to 'say something kind to your Ministers,' since it was now the task of the government 'finally to take upon themselves the present unpopularity of the decision.' This, as King Leopold recognised, was 'for an English Minister a most bitter draught to swallow.'[260] Bitter though it was, Palmerston's administration did swallow it, and while the disenchanted British public might lament that 'National honour has been tarnished,' they considered this a tolerable price for the preservation of peace.[261]

[260] King Leopold of the Belgians to Queen Victoria, 2 July 1864, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series*, I, p. 235.
[261] *The St James' Chronicle*, 31 Dec 1864.

Chapter Six

British Prestige and the Eastern Crisis 1876-1878.

Introduction

'That miserable and dastardly creature called prestige is too much in favour among us', William Gladstone claimed in a Commons' session of March 1877, adding 'Prestige I do not deny is power', though it was 'perhaps a very unsound and illegitimate description of it.'[1] Typically, Gladstone's political rival and political opponent Benjamin Disraeli was of a different view.[2] Disraeli recognised 'as few others did at the time, that the grand gesture was what mattered.' To the Prime Minister, it was essential that 'British prestige was asserted, honour satisfied, and the electorate entertained.'[3] In addition, John Charmley discerned that Disraeli 'recognised the importance of symbolism and rhetoric in winning public support,' viewing foreign policy and the pursuit of prestige 'as much a domestic political as it was a geopolitical imperative.'[4]

This was in stark contrast to the fifteenth Earl of Derby, the Foreign Secretary and friend of the Prime Minister. Derby's approach to foreign policy has been described as the 'antithesis' of Disraeli's, because 'where Derby strove for effectiveness, Disraeli wanted to win prestige.'[5] Disraeli was also sure 'that if peace and British honour became incompatible, the public would prefer to go to war for the latter,' and this may not have been entirely wishful thinking.[6] As they had during Palmerston's previous confrontations, the British public possessed strong opinions about the importance of honour and prestige to British security, and added significant pressure to Cabinet decision-making throughout the crisis.[7] Thus, even while Derby disdained prestige as a motive for policymaking, he conceded after his

[1] William Gladstone, HC Deb 23 March 1877 vol 233, cc. 424-425.
[2] For an assessment of their relationship see Roland Quinault, 'Gladstone and Disraeli: A Reappraisal of their Relationship,' *History*, 91, No. 304 (Oct 2006), 557-576.
[3] Quoted in Geoff Hicks, John Charmley, Bendor Grosvenor (eds), *Documents on Conservative Foreign Policy, 1852–1878* (London, 2012), p. 18. Henceforth *DCFP*.
[4] Charmley, *Splendid Isolation? Britain and the Balance of Power 1874-1914* (London, 1999), pp. 16-17
[5] Hicks et al (eds.), *DCFP*, p. 17.
[6] Charmley, *Splendid Isolation*, pp. 90-91.
[7] Geoffrey Hicks, 'Whose Foreign Policy? Britain's 'Inner Cabinet' and the Eastern Crisis, January–March 1878,' *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 7, No. 3 (2016), 399–419; 399-400.

resignation in March 1878 that 'the feeling in the country was strong against the loss of prestige and influence in the east consequent on Russian successes.'[8]

The 1909 *Oxford English Dictionary* defined prestige as the 'blinding or dazzling influence or reputation derived from previous character, achievements or associations or especially from past successes.'[9] Sir William Harcourt, Home Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer under Gladstone, viewed prestige as 'the consideration in which nations or individuals are held by their fellows.'[10] However, Max Weber's assertion that prestige 'means in practice the glory of power over other communities; it means expansion of power, though not always by way of incorporation or subjection', appears closer to the Victorian understanding of the ethic. This suggested that prestige was akin to a reputation of power, and that such a reputation could be leveraged against rivals to defend national interests at a cheaper price, but was also subject to diminution if improperly cared for. However, if this was how contemporaries understood prestige in previous chapters, Disraeli may be said to have had a significant impact on prestige. Under his second premiership, prestige became not merely a synonym of, but a surrogate *for* national honour, while also providing justification – as national honour had done – for policies of conflict and confrontation, particularly with non-European powers.

Yet, confusingly, national honour did not vanish from the rhetoric of the Eastern Crisis. It was deployed by opposition figures, who invoked familiar notions of obligation and moral government against the Conservatives. As will be seen below, figures within Disraeli's Cabinet, including the Earl of Derby, also clung to this example. It may be viewed as a reaction to the unprecedent prioritisation of a reformed rhetoric of prestige presided over by Disraeli, which hinged on direct British consultation and even involvement in the Russo-Turkish War.[11] As Max Weber appreciated, this should not be too surprising since 'Experience teaches that claims to prestige have always played into the origins of wars,' and though 'Their part is difficult to gauge; it cannot be determined in general, but it is very obvious.' Prestige existed within what Weber called 'The realm of "honour" which is

[8] See John Vincent (ed), *The Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby (1826-93). Between September 1869 and March 1878* (London, 1994), p. 534. Henceforth *DD*.
[9] *Oxford English Dictionary*, VIII (1909), p. 1322.
[10] *Ibid*, p. 1322.
[11] As John Charmley discerned, Derby 'could neither understand nor stomach Disraeli's anxiety never to be seen playing a "secondary part": as "long as our own interests are not touched, why should not foreigners settle their own affairs in their own way?" while Disraeli 'evidently thought that "for England to look at a war, without interfering, even for a limited time, is a humiliating position."' Charmley, *Splendid Isolation*, p. 79.

comparable to the "status order" within a political structure,' and thus it behaved according to the prescribed formula of that 'realm.'[12]

Notably, as secondary literature has assessed national honour within the context of the First World War, so has prestige also been examined in the same historiography. Anxiety over the reputation of British power in India, and within the Muslim world, moved David French to interpret British manoeuvres in Mesopotamia through the prism of a 'declining prestige.'[13] French noted that 'the significance of prestige in helping to shape British policy has been undervalued and it deserves a fuller treatment than it has received.'[14] Although it is important to note David French's warning that 'in trying to abstract one factor, a concern to maintain prestige', the researcher 'may fall prey to tunnel vision,' it is nonetheless possible to argue that during the Eastern Crisis, Disraeli's presentation of prestige provided powerful strategic and ideological imperatives, and a was popular motivating force.[15]

But just as researchers may overrate prestige's importance, Nikolas Gardner has argued that 'The British almost certainly overestimated the role of prestige in ensuring the stability of their empire.'[16] This reflection in hindsight does not detract from the premium which contemporaries attached to national honour and prestige, nor does it explain how statesmen like Disraeli used prestige for public and policy ends. Little detail has been provided on how or where Liberal and Conservative visions of prestige differed; such a comparative exercise may help affirm precisely how stark a departure from previous Conservative policy Disraeli's rhetorical campaign was. For, as the fourteenth Earl of Derby understood in 1866, the Conservatives 'are the party who are the least likely to be carried away by that popular enthusiasm and those popular impulses which may hurry even a prudent Government into the adoption of courses,' by which he meant 'the adoption of Quixotic enterprises,' which were 'inimical to the welfare of the country.'[17]

By 1874, the Earl of Derby's standard of old Conservatism was carried by his son and other traditionalists. The fifteenth Earl of Derby, as Foreign Secretary, clashed repeatedly with the Prime Minister, and intense disagreement not merely over the course of policy but the actual

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[12] Quoted in Hertz, 'Honour's Role in the International State System', 134.
[13] David French, 'The Dardanelles, Mecca and Kut: Prestige as a Factor in British Eastern Strategy, 1914–1916,' *War & Society*, 1, (1987), 45–61: 46–7; 54.
[14] *Ibid*, 45.
[15] French, 'Prestige as a Factor in British Eastern Strategy,' 45.
[16] Nikolas Gardner, 'British Prestige and the Mesopotamia Campaign, 1914-1916', *The Historian*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (Summer 2015), pp. 269-289; 270.
[17] Earl of Derby, HL Deb 9 July 1866 vol 184, cc. 736-737.

direction of the Conservative Party compelled him to resign at the height of the Eastern Crisis. Furthermore, Disraeli had transformed the Conservatives into a Party so unrecognisable from the previous decade, that the fifteenth Earl of Derby never returned.[18] Although there were several causes of this unhappy separation,[19] they were arguably most consistently and starkly expressed in Disraeli's persistent use of prestige and its accompanying rhetoric. Such tactics appeared more suited to that of Palmerston, whose foreign policy had represented the Whig and initially the Liberal Parties as the defenders of British national honour.[20] This rhetoric, it will be suggested here, required Disraeli to pursue an interventionist policy during the Russo-Turkish War, and while this initially provided him with fantastic success, it ultimately backed him into a political and geopolitical corner.[21]

Disraeli also mirrored Palmerston by presenting his policy in stark contrast to the opposition, in this case Gladstone's preceding Liberal Government (1869 – 1874),[22] which 'had resolutely adhered to the principle of non-intervention,' where 'the result had been gradually to lower the prestige of the country, and to expose its Government to the charge of insular selfishness, and indifference to the fate of old allies and treaty engagements.'[23] Gladstone, it was said, had 'alternated between a menace and a sigh' in his foreign policy, permitting Germany's unification, Russia's remilitarisation of the Black Sea, and the *Alabama* Claims.[24] Liberal defeat and the Conservative electoral victory in 1874 granted Disraeli the chance to rectify these shortcomings in foreign policy. He then secured immense political capital following his great success at the Berlin Congress (13 June – 13 July 1878).[25] Upon his return from Berlin amidst the 'great triumph of English policy,' in July 1878, Disraeli

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[18] This separation was anticipated in previous policy decisions, such as towards the Suez Canal. Hicks interpreted Disraeli's role as a minimal one, and noted that Derby did not oppose the venture largely because he believed it would reduce British entanglements. Geoffrey Hicks, 'Disraeli, Derby and the Suez Canal, 1875: Some Myths Reassessed,' *History*, 97, No. 2 (326) (April 2012), 82-203; 203.

[19] As John Charmley asserts, the two figures were increasingly drawn apart by several differences. Charmley, *Splendid Isolation?*, pp. 19-21; 53-54; 171-178.

[20] Brown denoted Disraeli's admiration for and likely inspiration from Palmerston particularly during the 1840s and 1850s, but advised against drawing too strong a line of continuity between the two. Brown, *Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy*, pp. 84-85.

[21] Gardner, 'British Prestige,' 270; 288-289.

[22] Though Parry does note that Disraeli 'took very few steps to cultivate a popular political reputation.' J. P. Parry, 'Disraeli and England,' *Historical Journal*, 43, No. 3 (Sep., 2000), 699-728; 702.

[23] 'The Congress of Berlin and Its Consequences,' *North American Review*, 127, No. 265 (Nov-Dec, 1878), 392-405; 392.

[24] Harvey Sicherman, 'Disraeli's Secret,' *National Interest*, No. 67 (Spring 2002), pp. 46-57; 47.

[25] 'The Congress of Berlin and Its Consequences,' 396. Though the *Review* did hold a more critical tone, predicting difficulties arising from Berlin's terms in the near future.

had reached the peak of his popularity.[26] 'Lord Beaconsfield,' remarked the Prussian Crown Princess to her mother, Queen Victoria…

> …has indeed won laurels, made himself a name, and before all restored to his country the prestige of honour and dignity it had lost on the continent, thanks to Lord Derby and Mr Gladstone; and you must feel intense gratification after all the anxiety and worry you went through![27]

The Queen was jubilant, and insisted Disraeli accept the Order of Garter.[28] Of particular significance was Disraeli's use of Indian soldiers to demonstrate British power, an act which *The Times* believed had excited 'a profound interest in the maintenance of English prestige,' whereby the Prime Minister had converted 'a source of perpetual danger' into 'a powerful weapon of protection.'[29] However, just as this rhetoric had facilitated Palmerston's triumph in the Trent Affair, only to damage his reputation in the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, so did Disraeli experience the consequences of raising these expectations beyond reasonable limits. The sense of national triumph did not outlast the year.[30] Indeed, the jingoistic culture which Disraeli co-opted encouraged the public's expectations of further success, and such expectations collided with the stark reality of imperial crisis after the post-Congress high point.[31]

With this came an awareness of national honour's mobilising power since, according to Joseph Chamberlain, 'English people were ready enough to resent any slight upon English honour, whether real or fancied, and to defend the interests and the security of the country' and this 'made it all the more incumbent on a Government which was responsible for the conduct of public affairs, that it should not give any stimulus to this feeling, without at least urgent necessity, and just and adequate cause.'[32] It may be debated whether Disraeli heeded this warning, or whether the Prime Minister believed that appeals to British prestige and honour increased the likelihood that his policies would be successful. Ascertaining the continuity, consistency, and methods of application for national honour recommends this

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[26] King Leopold to Queen Victoria, 14 July 1878, in G. E. Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, vol. VI (London, 1920), p. 344. Henceforth *Disraeli*, VI.
[27] Crown Princess Victoria to Queen Victoria, 16 July 1878, *Ibid*, p. 345.
[28] Queen Victoria to Earl Beaconsfield, 16 July 1878, *Ibid*, p. 347.
[29] *The Times*, 15 July 1878.
[30] Milos Kovic, *Disraeli and the Eastern Question*, trans. Milos Damnjanovic (Oxford, 2011), p. 269
[31] See Hugh Cunningham, 'Jingoism in 1877-78,' *Victorian Studies*, 14, No. 4 (Jun., 1971), 429-453.
[32] Joseph Chamberlain, HC Deb 9 April 1878 vol 239, cc. 983-984.

period removed from Palmerston's era, but still subsumed in the ideals he professed, and the values he held dear.

This chapter will assess the rhetoric of prestige. It will consider how prestige was used and the instances where it was invoked with varying degrees of success. Although according to Stewart's model of honour, prestige or 'reputation' was the external form of honour, under Disraeli's premiership, national honour was effectively recast as prestige, and this curious rhetorical trend also requires further analysis. Avner Offer's 'honour-script' can also be discerned in Disraeli's response to Afghanistan's insult, as the necessity of upholding a spotless prestige forced the Prime Minister into expensive, ultimately disastrous policies. Furthermore, contemporaries were not in agreement over what prestige was, or how it could be defended. Liberal figures contested Disraeli's prestige rhetoric by providing their own interpretations, which were arguably more akin to the traditional Conservative ethos.

6.1: British Prestige and the Russo-Turkish War

In summer 1876, when a British Governor on the Gambian River was defied by a regional chieftain, it was lamented that 'the prestige that has been gained during several years by the judicious use of the sixty armed police and the small gunboat has been lost.' The consequences of 'this indignity to a British governor by the boy chief of a den of rogues, will ring far and wide up and on each side of this river and larger towns.' Indeed, it was anticipated that 'More powerful chiefs will consider that the boasted British power is defunct, British protection a myth, and that rapine, plunder and murder may now with safety be practiced in open day.'[33] This incident, though a minor episode of British imperial policy, may be viewed as representative of a wider theme: prestige was powerful, yet it was also vulnerable, particularly when under attack from non-European powers.

The antidote to this vulnerability was to give the impression of power, and to be prepared to back this impression up with actual force.[34] Disraeli also pressed for an active foreign policy,

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[33] *Belfast Newsletter*, 26 Aug 1876.

[34] Youngho Kim observed that an 'important positive source of prestige is the successful use of power in war,' and this was because 'Prestige as reputation for strength may even forestall war.' Kim proceeded to distinguish between the substance of power and the mere appearance of power within prestige, the latter of which was characterised as a bluff. Kim, 'Does Prestige Matter in International Politics?' *Journal of International and Area Politics*, 11, No. 1 (June 2004), 39-55; 42.

insisting Britain must be 'firm and decided,'[35] and had to 'control and…create events.'[36] If prestige was to be maintained then it was not enough to possess military power; in the Imperial sphere especially, her subjects had to believe in Britain's capacity to *use* that power, and to use it effectively. It may be argued that Disraeli learned this lesson in his first premiership (1867-68), when a costly campaign to liberate her prisoners from a defiant Abyssinian Emperor rebounded to Britain's prestige.[37] As Sir Stafford Northcote reflected in the moment, 'This expedition will have effected as great an alteration in our position in the eyes of Europe as the battle of Sadowa effected in the position of Prussia.'[38] According to Sir Henry Rawlinson, prestige was akin to credit in finance, because 'It is a power which enables us to achieve very great results with very small means at our immediate disposal.' Recognising its imperial dimensions, Rawlinson conceded that while prestige 'may not be of paramount importance in Europe,' in the East, 'our whole position depends on it.'[39] Freda Harcourt interpreted the campaign as the beginning of Disraeli's association with imperialism, a policy of expansion and action which also gelled with the notion of prestige.[40]

The Prime Minister was the unquestioned head of the 'prestige party'. Milos Kovic wrote that Disraeli was 'consistent in his concern for Britain's prestige.'[41] Significantly, while Kovic allocated a central role to prestige within the Eastern Crisis, he did not engage in a thorough analysis of the concept. This is despite the fact that during each phase of the Eastern Crisis – be it in the rejection of the Andrassy Note,[42] the determination to send the fleet up the Straits, or the control over the peace terms which concluded the Russo-Turkish War[43] – Disraeli was driven by a quest to maintain British prestige, even if it led to war with Russia.[44] To Disraeli, prestige meant taking a leading role, but this role did not necessarily make war inevitable. If Britain secured the interests and recognition he desired, he would be content to seek a peaceful resolution to the Eastern Crisis.[45] As prestige could 'shrink or swell, be

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[35] Earl Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 27 Nov 1878, in Buckle, *Disraeli*, VI, p. 395.
[36] This phrase was used when writing to Lord Salisbury, 20 Sept 1878, *Ibid*, p. 376; to Lord Cranbrook, 22 Sept 1878, *Ibid*, p. 382.
[37] Nini Rodgers, 'The Abyssinian Expedition of 1867-1868: Disraeli's Imperialism or James Murray's War?', *Historical Journal,* 27, No. 1 (Mar., 1984), 129-149.
[38] Quoted in Wilson, *British Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Policy*, p. 7.
[39] Thus Sir Henry Rawlinson: 'I look on "prestige" in politics very much as I look on "credit" in finance. HC Deb 26 July 1867 vol. 189, cc. 241-242.
[40] Freda Harcourt, 'Disraeli's Imperialism, 1866-1868: A Question of Timing,' *Historical Journal*, 23, No. 1 (Mar., 1980), 87-109.
[41] Milos Kovic, *Disraeli and the Eastern Question*, p. 151.
[42] *Ibid*, pp. 100-101.
[43] *Ibid*, p. 247.
[44] *Ibid*, pp. 232-233.
[45] *Ibid*, p. 221.

augmented or depleted, gained or lost over time,' there was palpable anxiety among contemporaries whenever a new crisis loomed.[46] Certainly, having promised that 'the honour of England, so long neglected, was going to be effectually upheld,'[47] the Eastern Crisis presented a difficult set of challenges to Disraeli's Cabinet.

However, from the beginning of the Eastern Crisis, Britons were divided over the interpretations of prestige. In September 1876, a 'crowded public meeting at South Shields' implored the Government to take a stand against the reported Bulgarian atrocities. The speakers 'said England's prestige was at stake, and to maintain it she must act promptly and decisively in this matter.'[48] *The Times* reported on a 'second great demonstration of working men' held in St James' Hall, 'for the purpose of protesting against the temporising conduct of the Government'.[49] These individuals did not call for a strong military stand, but for a moral policy which would chastise the Turks for their reprisals against Bulgaria.[50] Although in Britain's interest to preserve Ottoman integrity, Russia's professed determination to defend Christians and hold the Turks to account for these crimes left Disraeli with a dilemma.[51]

Unquestionably, Gladstone's decision to craft *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* in September 1876 sharpened this dilemma.[52] Within a new volume for continental readers, Gladstone not only lambasted the Ottoman Empire, he also attacked Disraeli's policy as motivated by 'the increase of what is called our prestige, the bane, in my opinion, of all upright politics.'[53] Conservative politicians, including the Earl of Derby,[54] challenged Gladstone's stance, with Canterbury MP Butler-Johnstone, author of *The Eastern*

[46] McGinn, 'Prestige and the Logic of Political Argument,' *Monist*, 56, No. 1 (Jan 1972), 100-115, 106.
[47] Fitzmaurice, HC Deb 31 July 1876 vol 231, cc. 157-158.
[48] *Daily News*, 23 Sept 1876.
[49] *The Times*, 10 Oct 1876.
[50] These sentiments extended to Disraeli's Cabinet for a time. See Peter Marsh, 'Lord Salisbury and the Ottoman Massacres', *Journal of British Studies*, 11, No. 2 (May, 1972), 63-83
[51] Alexis Heraclides and Ada Dialla, 'Chapter Eight: The Bulgarian atrocities: a bird's eye view of intervention with emphasis on Britain, 1875–78' in *Humanitarian Intervention in the Long Nineteenth Century: Setting the Precedent* (Manchester, 2015), pp. 148-168. Paul Auchterlonie, 'From the Eastern Question to the Death of General Gordon: Representations of the Middle East in the Victorian Periodical Press, 1876-1885', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 28, No. 1 (May, 2001), 5-24; 11-12.
[52] W. E. Gladstone, *The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (London, 1876).
[53] W. E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and Russia in Turkestan with Other Tracts* (Leipzig, 1876), p. 43.
[54] Derby believed that *Horrors* was 'a fierce and violent denunciation of the Turks, the most violent, I think, that has been written,' though he did note that Gladstone's proposed solution to the current crisis was unimpressive: 'a simple recommendation of autonomy for the disturbed provinces... A tame conclusion for so vehement an invective.' Vincent (ed), 7 Sept 1876, *DD*, p. 324.

Question,[55] weighing in on Gladstone's record in office, particularly with regard to British prestige:

> The very mention of the word "prestige" has the effect on some people that a red flag has on a bull: it completely unhinges their minds. A ministry, therefore, that has promoted "narrow selfish British interests," and restored the "prestige" of the country, must be peculiarly odious to a party that for ten years never lost an opportunity of sacrificing the one and lowering the other.[56]

The sarcastic, biting tone of Butler-Johnstone's rebuttal intended to emphasise the present Government's protection of prestige, by contrasting the Liberal sacrifice of it. It was further designed to highlight prestige as a value worth fighting for. This rhetoric contributed towards the Conservative position, which upheld that Gladstone's Liberal administration had mishandled British prestige, and could not be trusted to husband it in the future.[57] Notwithstanding this criticism, Gladstone's original pamphlet was a massive commercial success which all but confirmed his return to politics.[58] Disraeli's Cabinet endured a hail of public censure, and the Prime Minister worsened the situation by dismissing the reports merely as 'coffee house babble.'[59] In September 1876, when the Cabinet learned that the Sultan had rejected the conditions for an armistice in its Balkan provinces,[60] the twin dangers of further Turkish atrocities mixed with Russian intervention provided a glimpse of what was to come. A Conference, convened in Constantinople, appeared the only solution to prevent an escalation of the conflict, and a repetition of the Crimean War.

That November, the Marquess of Salisbury arrived in the Turkish capital for the Constantinople Conference. Some optimism notwithstanding,[61] the Conference was a

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[55] H. A. Munro Butler-Johnstone, *The Eastern Question* (London: 1875), Reprinted from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, for private circulation only.

[56] H. A. Munro Butler-Johnstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East. A Letter Addressed to the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.* (London, 1876), pp. 26-27.

[57] The Liberal Party underwent a temporary decline in the period following 1870, which made criticism like this easier to deliver. See John P. Rossi, 'The Transformation of the British Liberal Party: A Study of the Tactics of the Liberal Opposition, 1874-1880,' *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 68, No. 8 (1978), 1-133; 5-8.

[58] Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone* (London, 1995), pp. 400-401.

[59] John P. Rossi, 'Catholic Opinion on the Eastern Question, 1876-1878,' *Church History*, 51, No. 1 (Mar., 1982), 54-70; 55.

[60] Vincent (ed), 12 Sept 1876, *DD*, p. 326.

[61] A noteworthy example is found in a regional Scottish newspaper, which declared that it could 'scarcely be doubted by the worst even of our political malcontents, that Great Britain has regained her old prestige in Europe by her attitude upon the Eastern Question.' It had long been claimed that Britain's armies were weak, and her navy no longer adequate for the task, yet, so the paper maintained, 'It is satisfactory…to find what an estimate is put upon our power by other nations.' Foreign estimates of British power formed a significant

failure.[62] When the Eastern Crisis truly began upon the Russian declaration of war on Turkey in April 1877,[63] Disraeli reimagined the crisis as one where prestige was at stake, but not in the manner that Gladstone had claimed. Russia, it was said, had only begun the war with the Ottomans in the first place 'to destroy England's prestige.'[64] From the beginning Britain warned Russia of the consequences of seizing Constantinople,[65] while Salisbury worried that 'the Turks will become a vassal state to Russia,'[66] but the war initially contained less spectacular results.[67] After three failed attempts and terrible losses, Russo-Romanian forces captured the fortress of Plevna on 10 December 1877, and continued their advance towards Constantinople.[68]

By spring 1878, contemporaries were blaming Disraeli for mishandling the crisis, and for presenting his policy as 'high-spirited' when in fact, 'the Tories know that their power was waning, and they desired to throw a sop to the army and navy and keep back the tide of social reforms for a generation or two.'[69] It was observed that the 'people of England' would no longer be 'cajoled' with cries of '"British interests," "National honour," unless it was shown plainly what the interests were and how the honour had been touched.'[70] Gladstone critiqued the immorality of Beaconsfieldism as degrading to the name of England.[71] Gladstone again expressed his disdain for prestige, considering it 'the sham production which I wish were banished from the language and the minds of men,' yet even he conceded that 'it has great power over the minds of men, and it may have over the minds of Russians as well as others.'[72]

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plank of British prestige, and it was therefore '…flattering to our national pride thus to see ourselves as others see us in this matter, and to be relieved from those despondent croakings which would reduce the importance of the country to a mere nullity in European politics…' Yet, the paper concluded, it was not 'the mere possession of millions of soldiers on paper that gives power,' but instead 'the pecuniary means to move an army to any required points, and to maintain it in the field… Such is our power, and we ought to feel gratified to see it so generally recognised in Europe.' *Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette*, 25 Nov 1876.

[62] Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, p. 130.

[63] Although Derby did note as early as 11 October 1876 that the current state of affairs 'really is…a diplomatic crisis,' Vincent (ed), 11 Oct 1876, *DD*, p. 333.

[64] *The Manchester Guardian*, 11 Feb 1878.

[65] Earl of Derby to Count Shuvalov, 6 May 1877 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, p. 407.

[66] Salisbury to Lord Lytton, 25 May 1877 in *Ibid*, p. 409. Fittingly, Salisbury mused that 'The causes which have brought us to this position will be a curious study to the historian.'

[67] Seton-Watson, *Eastern Question*, pp. 230-240.

[68] Quintin Barry, *War in the East: A Military History of the Russo-Turkish War 1877-78* (Solihull, 2012), pp. 351-354.

[69] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8 April 1878.

[70] *Ibid*.

[71] Roland Quinault, 'Gladstone and Disraeli,' 369-370. This position only hardened through 1879 during Gladstone's Midlothian campaign, see John Charmley, *Splendid Isolation?,* pp. 173-174.

[72] Gladstone, HC Deb 4 Feb 1878 vol 237, cc. 936-938.

Indeed, the British press also waved the flag of prestige. The *London Evening Standard* contended that British security and its Empire would collapse without it.[73] 'Who will protect your merchants and their cargoes from capture?' The *Standard* challenged, 'Would the Union Jack still be the sovereign of the Seas were it not protected in its most distant adventures by the consciousness that it represents a great and redoubtable Empire, that can assert its might on every shore?'[74] The value of prestige was also upheld by figures outside of Disraeli's party, such as Patrick James Smyth, a Home Rule MP for Westmeath, and a participant in the failed Young Ireland Rebellion of 1848. In a Commons session of February 1878, Smyth asserted that 'The highest interest of a great nation, with proud traditions, is not peace – it is prestige.' Prestige could be forfeited 'by a wicked or a disastrous war,' but also by 'an unprincipled neutrality, or an ignoble peace.' Smyth warned that 'the nation whose prestige is gone is an extinct volcano, unworthy of the notice even of the passing traveller.'[75]

Russia's unceasing advance towards Constantinople placed this prestige in jeopardy, and threatened to reduce Britain's aura of power among her subject peoples.[76] Disraeli spoke of that which he did 'most highly value' as 'the consciousness that in the Eastern nations there is confidence in this country,' and that, 'they know we can enforce our policy,' while 'at the same time they know that our Empire is an Empire of liberty, of truth, and of justice.'[77] The Conservative and Liberal interpretations of prestige may be distinguished along these lines. The Conservative emphasis on the importance of power within prestige contrasted with Liberal ideas of the ethic's moral imperatives, particularly in the initial phase of the Eastern Crisis. But this focus on morality did not mean the Liberal variant was weak. That prestige granted moral authority, and could be leveraged to acquire tangible power, is established in political theory.[78] As Oded Löwenheim appreciated, British policy established a historical precedent in its search for moral credibility when it crushed the Barbary Pirates in an 1816

[73] 'Are we to take it for granted that great nations that abandon themselves to adverse fate without a struggle, who allow their prestige to be scattered to the winds, nevertheless retain their claims to the respect of the world? … When no one shall any longer believe in your power, will not the safety of your commerce be imperilled?' *London Evening Standard*, 6 Feb 1878.
[74] *Ibid*.
[75] P. J. Smyth, HC Deb 1 Feb 1878 vol. 237, cc. 879-880.
[76] The debate continued in speeches printed in *London Evening Standard*, 28 Jan 1878.
[77] Quoted in Buckle, *Disraeli*, VI, p. 354.
[78] Rodney Bruce Hall, 'Moral Authority as a Power Resource,' *International Organisation*, 51, No. 4 (Autumn, 1997), 591-622.

naval campaign.[79] 'Moral prestige considerations,' Löwenheim noted, 'become important to humanitarian intervention when a humanitarian principle becomes strongly tied to a state's identity.'[80] Significantly, Disraeli spurned this opportunity to capitalise on the moral outrage against the Turk during late 1876 to early 1877. Instead he emphasised the negative impact of Russia's triumphs upon British prestige, and he was not alone in this position.

Salisbury had informed Waddington, the French Foreign Minister, that 'The prestige of [Russia's] victories, proclaimed by the conquest and retention of so well-known a fortress as Kars,' compelled Britain to contest any other Russian advances in the Asian theatre. Inaction would mean that Britain 'lost all hold' on the 'hopes and fears' of its colonial subjects, while the 'disintegration and practical absorption of countries lying between the sea and the Persian frontier must have inevitably followed.'[81] As early as July 1877, Waddington had commented on the developing Eastern Crisis, and recognised that since neither France nor Austria would cooperate with her, 'England was naturally led to act alone, and to seek means to restore her prestige in Asia, which had been weakened by the establishment of the Russians in a fortress so important as Kars.'

Waddington added that although he was respectful of Britain's position as 'a Great Asiatic Power,' he believed that France had, 'a right to claim a similar respect for our own country as a Great Mediterranean Power.'[82] The French claim-right in this instance – 'a right to claim a similar respect' – is here illustrated. The right to lay claim to such respect was sourced from French prestige, and its status as a world power.[83] Such expressions are reminiscent of Frank Henderson's Stewart's contention of honour as featuring 'claim-right' elements, but they also demonstrate that prestige was not the preserve of British statesmen alone. Prestige was a European interest, and both French and Austrian statesmen recorded their desire for the ethic at different periods.[84] However, Disraeli disagreed that France was entitled to claim

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[79] Oded Löwenheim, '"Do Ourselves Credit and Render a Lasting Service to Mankind": British Moral Prestige, Humanitarian Intervention, and the Barbary Pirates,' *International Studies Quarterly*, 47, No. 1 (Mar., 2003), 23- 48.
[80] *Ibid*, 28.
[81] Salisbury to Waddington, 7 July 1877, in *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Nov 1878.
[82] Waddington to Salisbury, 23 July 1877, in 'British and French Interests in the East. Important Diplomatic Correspondence,' *Manchester Guardian*, 6 Nov 1878.
[83] French power was sourced from the development of steam in shipbuilding. See Hugues Canuel, 'From a Prestige Fleet to the Jeune École: French Naval Policy and Strategy under the Second Empire and the Early Third Republic (1852–1914)', *Naval War College Review*, 71, No. 1 (Winter 2018), 93-118.
[84] For the French case in the colonial sphere see Emmanuelle Saada, 'The Empire of Law: Dignity, Prestige, and Domination in the "Colonial Situation",' *French Politics, Culture and Society*, 20, No. 2 (Summer 2002), 98-120. For an example of the Austrian Habsburg case earlier in the nineteenth century, see Peter H. Wilson,

this right; 'Waddington wants to convey to the world, that France is yet a great Power, tho' it can't, or won't, do great things.'[85]

Just like their British rivals, French citizens were watchful of scenarios where the prestige of their neighbours was reduced. The *Manchester Guardian*'s Paris correspondent observed the public mood in the French capital once the fleet returned from the Straits in late January 1878, having failed to force the Straits: 'It is said on all sides that British prestige received a severe blow from the refusal of Turkey to allow Admiral Hornby to pass the Dardanelles.' When it came to explaining 'This humiliating state of things,' Parisians attributed Britain's dulled prestige 'to the vague and wavering policy of the English Ministers since the outbreak of the war. The general belief and idea here is that England will not go to war.'[86] This view had been encouraged by public examples of pacifism within Disraeli's Cabinet, such as that provided by Earl Carnarvon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Carnarvon 'did not believe that the credit or the honour of England was suffering, or had suffered, in any way,' while insisting 'it was no loss of power to remain quiet,' because 'In a right or just cause, at the call of duty or honour, we should be perfectly competent to defend every interest we had, either in England or abroad.'[87] Carnarvon's position may be viewed as traditionally Conservative, and although it conflicted with Disraeli's, it had by then become evident that Carnarvon was not alone.

By the end of 1877, Derby warned Salisbury that Disraeli's views were 'different from mine, where such matters are concerned, not in detail but in principle. He believes strongly in 'prestige' – as all foreigners do,'[88] adding on another occasion that Disraeli took 'the foreign view, which treats prestige as the one thing needful in politics.'[89] It is possible Derby was referring to Disraeli's Jewish ancestry with these quips, but he was also clearly concerned at the high premium the Prime Minister placed on prestige.[90] Derby lamented that the Prime Minister 'sincerely and really believes that it will be better for us to risk a great war, & to spend £100,000,000 upon it, than not to appear to have had a large share in the decision

'Bolstering the Prestige of the Habsburgs: The End of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806,' *International History Review*, 28, No. 4 (Dec., 2006), 709-736

[85] Beaconsfield to Lord Salisbury, 3 Sept 1878, in Buckle, *Disraeli*, VI, p. 373.

[86] *Manchester Guardian*, 14 Feb 1878.

[87] *Manchester Guardian*, 26 Nov 1877.

[88] Earl of Derby to Lord Salisbury, quoted in Millman, *Eastern Question*, p. 347.

[89] Quoted in Charmley, *Splendid Isolation?*, p. 104.

[90] Kovic noted that 'It is clear that he referred to Beaconsfield's Jewish roots.' *Eastern Question*, pp. 232-233. The extent to which Disraeli's Jewish roots influenced his philosophy is considered in Gigliola Sacerdoti Mariani, 'On Disraeli's Political Philosophy,' *Il Politico*, 46, No. 4 (Dec 1981), 577-600.

come to when peace is made', conceding that 'most continental statesmen would agree with him, & a considerable section of the English public [but I did] not think prestige worth buying so dear.'[91] But Disraeli was buoyed by the prevalence of troubling rumours, such as the possibility that Russian troops might still enter Constantinople. London's *Daily Telegraph* explained that 'the government makes no secret that in its opinion such an event would be a severe blow to British prestige in the East.'[92]

Critics of this Conservative flavour of prestige emphasised British exceptionalism in this case. The *Daily News* thus critiqued the view 'that England is bound to fight someone, anyone, everyone, in order to prove that she can fight. Rubbish of this sort has little influence in the House of Commons, where its value is instantly and carefully examined.'[93] 'They have been saying,' *The Times* observed, 'that she has lost her old spirit, that she is pusillanimous, that she cares more for the profits of trade than for the national honour, and that she has consequently lost what is termed her prestige.' Yet this was untrue because 'the great mass of the English people did not trouble themselves about the prestige of the nation,' since 'they perfectly well knew how vast was its real strength, and how enthusiastically as well as easily that strength would be put forth at the impulse of a just cause.' Britain's capacity for projecting its power was self-evident, not requiring military intervention to prove itself, and 'It is not true that the war has in the slightest degree impaired either our offensive or defensive power.' To those that identified British prestige with the defence of the Ottoman Empire, *The Times* concluded that 'Our security and honour must be independent of systems which are fated to disappear.'[94]

Salisbury agreed in private, warning the Viceroy of India Lord Lytton that 'the commonest error in politics is sticking to the carcasses of dead policies,'[95] and disagreeing that 'any protection could have set the Turk upon his legs again.'[96] Disraeli's policy was then publicly tested when Parliament was recalled on 28 January 1878, and Members were urged to vote £6,000,000 to meet possible contingencies.[97] Throughout the fractious debate, Members frequently alluded to the 'honour and interests' of Britain,[98] while some included national

[91] Quoted in John Charmley, *Splendid Isolation?,* p. 90.
[92] *Daily Telegraph* in *Freeman's Journal*, 31 Jan 1878.
[93] *Daily News*, 16 Jan 1878.
[94] *The Times*, 29 Jan 1878.
[95] Salisbury to Lord Lytton, 25 May 1877 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 102, p. 409.
[96] Salisbury to Lord Lytton, 15 June 1877 in *Ibid*, Doc. 103, p. 410.
[97] Seton-Watson, *Eastern Question*, p. 303.
[98] See for instance; Charles Dilke: 'They were as deeply concerned for the interest and honour of their country, and as anxious to preserve them, as could be Members on the other side of the House.' HC Deb 5

honour within the scope of national interests.[99] Yet, while former Lord Privy Seal the Duke of Argyll might unapologetically proclaim that 'There is no sacrifice which this country will not make for the maintenance of our dominion in India, because it concerns our national pride and our honour,'[100] Argyll opposed the vote of credit. In explanation, Liberal MP for South Durham Joseph Pease claimed that while 'He was one of those who thought that money would be given ungrudgingly if the honour or the interest of the country were at stake,' on this occasion 'it would be given very grudgingly now, because it was believed that neither the one nor the other was in question.'[101]

In response, Tories questioned the patriotism and Russophile sympathies of their opponents, while appealing for unity. The serjeant-at-law and Conservative MP for Dewsbury John Simon thus hoped 'all there were Englishmen before they were Whigs or Tories, and that they would only be influenced by considerations which affected the national interests and the national honour.'[102] However, trust was lacking in Disraeli's administration, palpable in the expressions of Radical and academic Leonard Courtney's position who 'had no confidence in the people or the Government of England that they would not be led from one false step to another,' until 'they found themselves in some position from which they could

Feb 1878 vol 237, cc. 1109-1110. Sir William Harcourt said 'You know that we are, like you, English gentlemen, and that we are as much interested in the welfare and honour of our country as you are.' *Ibid*, cc. 1118-1119. Lord Elsington said: 'he hoped that…all petty Party considerations would be dropped, and that hon. Gentlemen opposite would place in the hands of the Government the means of doing that which was best for the interests and honour of the country.' HC Deb 7 Feb 1878 vol 237, cc. 1245-1246. William Grantham said: 'Taking this Vote of £6,000,000, it did not amount to more than 2s. per head of the population. He would ask if there was anyone in the country who did not value the honour and interests of England as worth more than 2s?' *Ibid*, cc. 1291-1292. Gladstone believed that: '…everything should be done for the best, and that the honour and interests of the country should be upheld; but we are by no means yet in full possession…of the views of the Government as to the means by which that honour and those interests should be upheld.' HC Deb 8 Feb 1878 vol 237, cc. 1376-1377. Sir Robert Peel claimed: '…if it were necessary to impose a burden on the country the working class, as well as all other classes, would willingly bear their share of the burden, in order to support the honour and the interests of the country.' *Ibid*, cc. 1401-1402. Henry Fawcett said: '…whether we were Tories, or Liberals, or Radicals, we were all alike fervent in the desire to maintain the honour and interests of the country.' *Ibid*, cc. 1402-1403. Disraeli, quoting Lord Augustus Loftus, said '…when it is found necessary to show our strength, certainly England should not be limited to one of her Services—that she should appeal to her Army to maintain her honour and her interests as well as to her Marine.' HL Deb 8 April 1878 vol 239, cc. 774-775. The Earl of Carnarvon said: There is…a much larger class in this country who, I apprehend, are doubtful and perplexed in mind at the present state of affairs, but who are perfectly ready to go to war if either the honour or the interests of the country require it.' *Ibid*, cc. 818-819.

[99] Thus John Hubbard expressed that 'Members would agree in supporting British interests if they were taken to mean the honour of our flag, the freedom of our commerce, the peace and security of our Colonial dependencies, or the right and liberties of British residents in foreign countries.' HC Deb 8 Feb 1878 vol 237, cc. 1376-1379.

[100] Duke of Argyll, HL Deb 17 Jan 1878 vol 237, cc. 44-45.

[101] Joseph Pease, HC Deb 4 Feb 1878 vol 237, cc. 983-984.

[102] Serjeant Simon, HC Deb 7 Feb 1878 vol 237, cc. 1278-1279.

not retreat without dishonour, or advance without great danger.'[103] This rhetoric is reminiscent of Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe's fear in 1863 that Britain would find her honour and interests at variance, and suggests a reversal of roles for the parties.[104]

The Marquis of Hartington, leader of the opposition, feared the positions of Ministers who believed 'that the changes which were going on in South-eastern Europe were so likely to be prejudicial to the honour and to the interests of this country,' and 'might think it right and necessary to take such steps as might lead us into war.' Hartington discerned that 'the Prime Minister and other Members of the Cabinet did take that view,' and 'were not unwilling that rather than leave the struggle to be fought out between Russia and Turkey, this country should take part in it.' But war, in Hartington's view, 'would have been an utterly mistaken policy.'[105] In response, the Conservative MP for East Gloucestershire John Yorke highlighted how Gladstone, 'in the course of his speech, had said that there was no word for which he had so great a dislike as for prestige.' Yet Yorke argued 'that prestige stood in the same relation to power that bank notes did to sovereigns, and that as long as a nation had prestige, it had an influence which might otherwise have to be asserted by armaments.'[106]

However, this view of prestige was not shared even by members of Disraeli's Cabinet. 'I should,' Derby wrote in his diary, 'always be willing to make personal sacrifices in order to support him: but I feared his love of prestige, which he would quite honestly think it worthwhile to make war to support.'[107] By February 1878, Derby found Disraeli 'excited and inclined to swagger,' claiming war with Russia was 'unavoidable,' and 'it would last three years: it would be a glorious and successful war for England.' Derby confessed himself 'disgusted with his reckless way of talking'[108] – a reasonable reaction, considering the clear break with Conservative tradition which the Premier was advocating.[109] Yet, Disraeli's perspective appeared increasingly justifiable as the extent of Russia's victory became known. An armistice on 31 January 1878 technically paused the war, but it did not halt the Russian advance towards Constantinople.[110] The royal navy was ordered to the Straits on 13 February, with or without Turkish approval,[111] and the Tsar ordered the occupation of

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[103] Mr Courtney, HC Deb 7 Feb 1878 vol 237, cc. 1288-1289.
[104] See Chapter Five.
[105] Marquis of Hartington, HC Deb 8 Feb 1878 vol 237, cc. 1349-1350.
[106] J. R. Yorke, *Ibid*, cc. 1283-1284.
[107] Vincent (ed), 23 Dec 1877, *DD*, p. 469.
[108] Vincent (ed), 11 Feb 1878, *DD*, p. 505.
[109] See Hicks et al (eds), *DCFP*, pp. 12-13.
[110] Seton-Watson, *Eastern Question*, p. 311.
[111] *Ibid*, p. 315.

Constantinople in response, an order which, his brother explained, was impossible owing to the poor state of Russian forces.[112] Preliminary negotiations followed, and the powers apparently teetered on the edge of war.

6.2: British Prestige and Russian Triumph

On 3 March 1878, Russia dictated the Treaty of San Stefano to the Ottoman Empire. Although its terms were kept secret until late March, Britain had clearly been excluded from its negotiation. *The Times* reported on a Russian fear that Britain would 'form a close alliance with Austria, and engage in a war for the humiliation of Russia and the recovery of British prestige in the East.' It warned that those who believed the Eastern Crisis could only be solved through war would 'find much in the present juncture to confirm their prejudices.'[113] Indeed, to Disraeli, Britain's exclusion from the secret treaty was intolerable, but his stance also boasted a precedent. The Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi from forty-five years before had roused similar anxiety and suspicion of Russian intentions and – as seen in the assessment of the 1840 Eastern Crisis in Chapter One – France objected to its exclusion from a multipower treaty which ended the conflict between the Ottoman Sultan and his Egyptian vassal. Contemporaries then feared that France might make war to recoup the prestige it had lost,[114] since 'unfortunately the French were very nice and touchy on points of honour in matters of this kind.'[115] Thirty-eight years later, Disraeli assumed the French position, espousing a similar determination to address British exclusion, particularly where Russia – like Egypt in the 1830s – undermined the status quo without British input.

It was also reminiscent of Britain's exclusion from the conclusion of the transformative Franco-Prussian War, for which Gladstone had been criticised.[116] If the British people 'could have been furnished with a backbone,' claimed one contemporary, Bismarck would never have managed such a transformation of the status quo.[117] Bourne assessed Disraeli's stance in the context of over a decade of British non-intervention, hidden under a cloak of 'timidity

[112] *Ibid*, p. 331.
[113] *Times* Telegram, in *Sunderland Daily Echo*, 2 March 1878,
[114] P.E. Caquet, 'The Napoleonic Legend and the War Scare of 1840,' *International History Review*, 35, No. 4 (Aug 2013), 702-722.
[115] John Leader, HC Deb 6 Aug 1840 vol 55, cc. 1376-1377
[116] W. E. Mosse, 'The End of the Crimean System: England, Russia and the Neutrality of the Black Sea, 1870-1', *Historical Journal*, 4, No. 2 (1961), 164-190.
[117] Quoted in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 123-124.

and inaction,' which arguably began following the collapse of British policy in the Schleswig-Holstein crisis.[118] For those that wished to rectify these errors, some Conservative colleagues believed that Derby's enthusiasm for non-intervention occasionally went too far. Clarendon urged that while 'the policy of not meddling is of course the right one,' it was not necessary 'that all mankind should be let into the secret twice a day.'[119] By consistently expressing an unwillingness to fight, how could Britain's rivals believe in her power?

In Derby's defence, Gladstone would later point out that 'from 1830 to the happy reign of Dizzy,' the Tories had traditionally been the '*the* pacific party,' and that it was the Prime Minister, not the Foreign Secretary, who had gone against established conventions.[120] In his assessment of Home Secretary Richard Cross' role in the Eastern Crisis, F. J. Dwyer opined that Disraeli's policy 'was one of opportunism based on considerations of prestige.'[121] Gorchakov, the Russian Chancellor, also understood that Britain 'would like to re-establish its prestige on the ruins of our consideration,' and on 6 March he wrote to Ambassador Shuvalov to the effect that: 'The hostility to us is growing; and it is no longer interests, but questions of *amour propre* [self-respect] and prestige that are at stake. We shall remain polite and conciliatory in form, but firm in substance.' Gorchakov reminded his ambassador that 'In 1871 we agreed to give London the satisfaction of saving its *amour propre*… Today after a bloody and victorious war we could not…debase the dignity of Russia before the prestige of England.'[122]

While San Stefano's terms were brought to the Tsar, rumours percolated that Russia had resumed its advance towards Constantinople.[123] It is difficult to ignore the Prime Minister's sense of the public mood, which may have made him more supportive of a 'prestige policy' than he otherwise would have been. Yet, it would also be reductionist to discount Disraeli's

[118] *Ibid*, p. 122.
[119] Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 119.
[120] Quoted in Charmley, *Splendid Isolation*, p. 173.
[121] F. J. Dwyer, 'R. A. Cross and the Eastern Crisis of 1875-8,' *Slavonic and East European Review*, 39, No. 93 (Jun., 1961), 440-458; 444.
[122] Quoted in Seton-Watson, *Eastern Question*, pp. 342-343.
[123] *Ibid*, p. 343.

ideological stance as mere window-dressing.[124] A committed imperialist,[125] Disraeli may have identified prestige as a mobilising force which could direct united British opinion against Russian expansionism – both to enhance the Empire's security in the East and restore Britain's reduced position in Europe. This gels with Bendor Grosvenor's view that 'Second only to Disraeli's yearning for prestige came his exaggerated fear of Russia.'[126] Yet it should be added that Disraeli's motives and ideology frequently left his colleagues mystified.[127]

These discussions on his sincerity notwithstanding, Disraeli was fortunate that British public opinion moved in his favour in spring 1878, as Liberal morale plummeted.[128] By mid-March, confusion and dissension over which stipulations Russia would submit to the proposed Berlin Congress moved *The Times* to discern that 'According to one account, the Russians are holding out for fear that a too complete assent to the proposals of Europe should injure their diplomatic prestige, or, in plain words, for fear of wounding their vanity.'[129] Of course, prestige was not considered a mere vanity project in Britain. By the end of March, *The Times* considered the victory of the Conservative candidate in the Worcestershire by-election as proof 'that the general position assumed by the Government is approved by the country,' and it added the claim that 'It is Russia who has trespassed upon the forbearance of England,' a claim which 'the English public' appeared to identify with.[130]

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[124] Disraeli's public image and the time he took to craft and guard it has been assessed by Parry, and underlines Disraeli's awareness of the public view. See J. P. Parry, 'Disraeli and England,' 699-728. Lewis has interpreted Disraeli's guiding principles as a protection of tradition and property, requiring any combination of alliances to protect them. See Clyde J. Lewis, 'Theory and Expediency in the Policy of Disraeli,' *Victorian Studies*, 4, No. 3 (Mar., 1961), 237-258.
[125] Disraeli's defining 1872 speech before the Crystal Palace has even been reinterpreted as less illustrative of his position as was initially believed. See Stanley R. Stembridge, 'Disraeli and the Millstones,' *Journal of British Studies*, 5, No. 1 (Nov., 1965), 122-139.
[126] Grosvenor, 'Britain's Most Isolationist Foreign Secretary,' 150.
[127] Derby wrote in March 1878 that he could not 'conjecture with any probability whether he wishes for a war, whether he talks in a warlike strain, and makes ostentatious preparations, with a view to avert the necessity of action', or whether the Prime Minister 'is merely ready to adopt any course which seems most likely to be popular.' It was possible Disraeli did not know what he wanted, yet Derby 'could feel no confidence of hearing his true thoughts, or that opposite assurances were not being given to some other person.' Vincent (ed), 10 March 1878, *DD*, p. 524. Lord John reflected in 1843 that if he could 'only satisfy myself that Disraeli believed all that he said, I should be more happy: his historical views are quite mine, but does he believe them?' This prompted Lord Blake, Disraeli's biographer, to opine that 'The question echoes emptily down the years. We can answer it no more certainly today than Lord John Manners could then.' See Paul Smith, 'Disraeli's Policies,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 37 (1987), 65-85; 65.
[128] See Cunningham, 'Jingoism,' 434-453.
[129] *The Times*, 18 March 1878.
[130] *The Times*, 30 March 1878.

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine declared it intolerable that Russia might be seen to resolve the Eastern Question in its favour without consulting Britain.[131] Yet, the silver lining for Disraeli was that San Stefano had undermined Derby's role as Cabinet peacemaker; by March 1878 Derby's stance had become an inconvenience for a Cabinet which wished to pursue a more confrontational policy.[132] On 22 March 1878, after several weeks of rumour, the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano were published in Russia's *Journal de St Petersburg*. The *Pall Mall Gazette* could observe that since the Treaty was now 'before the world,' it was open to critique and interpretation, notwithstanding Russia's unyielding stance.[133] These terms included an enlarged Bulgarian state, extending into the Balkans with access to the Aegean Sea, an independent Montenegro,[134] and provisions for such close Russo-Turkish cooperation that the *Morning Post* believed the Treaty 'strikes at the Ottoman Empire root and branch, and sets up the Czar in place of the Sultan.'[135] Nor was this merely an ungenerous British interpretation, as one Russian negotiator claimed to *Blackwood's* that 'at a more convenient season Russia may, by a single word or threat, without having recourse to arms, compel the Porte to grant the demands which will inevitably arise in the future.'[136] Foreign organs added to these unfavourable impressions, suggesting that British prestige had suffered a 'cruel wound,'[137] and that the Treaty had inflicted 'a blow to her own prestige in the East.'[138]

In response to the news that Disraeli would call up the reserves, Derby resigned as Foreign Secretary on 28 March.[139] Salisbury succeeded him, and within a few days had published his circular of 1 April 1878 'in language singularly clear, dignified and decisive,'[140] creating a sense within foreign courts that Britain was willing to go further than mere talk.[141] Derby's resignation was said to have made a 'profound impression,' as 'foreign exchanges fell to a point lower than they have at any moment since the Crimean War,' and 'war was regarded

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[131] See 'The Fall of Plevna: Peace or War?' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 123, No. 747 (Jan 1878), 97-108.
[132] See Geoffrey Hicks, 'Whose Foreign Policy?' 399-401.
[133] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 22 March 1878.
[134] The Treaty terms were printed in full in *Daily News*, 22 March 1878.
[135] *Morning Post*, 22 March 1878.
[136] 'England and the Treaty of San Stefano,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine*, 123, No. 751 (May 1878), 637.
[137] *Debats*, quoted in *London Evening Standard*, 6 March 1878.
[138] *Journal de St Petersburg*, quoted in *London Evening Standard*, 27 March 1878.
[139] Charmley, *Splendid Isolation*, p. 151.
[140] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 April 1878.
[141] Buckle, *Disraeli*, VI, p. 279.

as almost inevitable.'[142] According to *The Times*, the publication of Salisbury's memorandum[143] 'had the effect of completely transforming the aspect of the Eastern Question.'[144]

By 8 April, *The Times* reflected that 'the whole issue' had 'been shifted by the Treaty of San Stefano, and now that it has become a question, not of remedying Turkish oppression, but of tolerating Russian supremacy in the Ottoman Empire,' it believed 'the vast majority of the public adhere to the traditional policy of Great Britain.'[145] A striking claim, since the Conservatives' 'traditional policy' was clearly absent, and by the middle of April, *The Times* commented on 'a strong feeling in both countries that war has now become inevitable,' noting that Russian opinion believed 'England is determined upon a war or on inflicting on Russia what amounts to a grave national humiliation.'[146] This was a striking change both in public mood, and in the estimation of British intentions. By recasting his Cabinet as willing to make war, Disraeli could potentially capitalise upon Russian concerns, thereby leveraging prestige as he understood it.

The *London Evening Standard* carried reports from foreign papers which warned that a possible Conference over the Treaty's terms 'may be the last chance of that favourable circumstances will give her of retrieving her prestige and vindicating her power by uniting her cause with that of all other nations.'[147] A possible solution was to harness Indian manpower to enhance British prestige and military standing. This possibility appealed to Disraeli because as he explained to the Queen in mid-April 1878, 'After all the sneers of not having any great military force, the imagination of the Continent will be much affected by the first appearance of what they will believe to an inexhaustible supply of men.'[148] Indeed, the despatch of 7,000 Indian soldiers to Malta sent a clear message. Buckle wrote that the Prime Minister 'established the principle…that it is the right and duty of India to support, if necessary, by military force, even in Europe, an imperial policy undertaken for India's benefit.'[149] That Indian troops could be used to bolster British security and standing in Europe, while simultaneously boosting British prestige within the Empire, was an additional

[142] *The Times*, 1 April 1878.
[143] See Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 105, pp. 412-413.
[144] *The Times*, 3 April 1878.
[145] *The Times*, 8 April 1878.
[146] Yet The Times did believe that 'the paths of honour and of peace seem rather to coincide,' and that only 'stubborn ambition' would lead Russia away from either. *The Times*, 15 April 1878.
[147] *Debats* quoted in *London Evening Standard*, 18 April 1878.
[148] Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 12 April 1878, in Buckle, *Disraeli*, VI, pp. 285-286.
[149] *Ibid*, p. 288.

bonus, though not without controversy.[150] Moreover, employing India troops to protect British prestige arguably reinforced the idea that the latter could be affected by the diminution of the former, and this vulnerability would later be tested in Afghanistan.

For a time, though, the move bolstered domestic confidence. On 18 April, *The Times* addressed this movement of Indian soldiers to Malta, and warned that war with Britain would be 'an immense calamity' for Russia, and asked 'Have they attempted to consider what another war would mean?' It criticised Russia's 'obstinacy' and 'bad diplomacy,' urging her leaders to preserve peace by meaningfully submitting San Stefano's terms to a Congress.[151] Among the advocates for this scheme was the Anglo-Irish statesman and writer, later Undersecretary for the Colonies, the Earl of Dunraven, who claimed in the Lords that 'With regard to our prestige in India…that must necessarily suffer if the impression were created in the minds of the people there that Russia was stronger in the East than England.' Dunraven was echoed by the Earl of Aberdeen, who commented that when it came to the issue of Russian advances in Armenia, 'They could not help looking upon this question of Armenia in reference to our prestige in India.'[152] Fittingly, the *Aberdeen Journal* offered that 'English inaction,' had caused 'such a general belief in British cowardice that it was a common topic of serious conversation as to how long it will be before certain Powers appropriate among themselves the commanding positions of Malta, Gibraltar, Aden etc.' While it was acknowledged that such claims were 'ridiculous,' it was also conceded that 'the Bulgarian horror and neutrality agitation which has paralysed the efforts of Her Majesty's Ministers has also inflicted for the moment a disastrous blow to British prestige in Europe.'[153]

This interpretation of prestige would not have satisfied Disraeli's political opponents, including W. E. Forster, the Liberal MP, philanthropist, and later Chief Secretary for Ireland. Though Forster conceded the importance of preserving British power, he also insisted that the British Raj was itself contingent upon 'right and justice,' and not 'by the prejudices or fears of our Indian subjects.' If forced to depend upon its military power in India alone, 'What would become of our prestige?' Forster asked, adding that if 'shrewd Orientals'

[150] Peter J. Durrans, 'The House of Commons and India 1874-1880', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 2 (1982), 25-34; 30.
[151] *The Times*, 18 April 1878.
[152] *Manchester Guardian*; Feb 22, 1878.
[153] *Aberdeen Journal*, 1 March 1878.

learned that British power was based in fear, 'English prestige would be gone in India.'[154] Lord Hartington acknowledged that 'A large use has been made of the word prestige, and I fully admit its importance, particularly as far as Eastern countries are concerned,' while qualifying that 'when we speak of impressing the Natives of India with our power, a reservation should be made as a condition precedent that the power should be used for objects which all the world approves.'

This distinction speaks to a wider degree of difference between how Liberals and Conservatives interpreted and deployed the rhetoric of prestige. Hartington elaborated how he did not believe that 'in order to maintain our prestige among the Natives of India, we should make an exhibition of our power in connection with objects which we ourselves should not deem it necessary to go to war about.' Hartington insisted that 'the Native Princes are too clever to be misled by such a course of proceeding on our part,' and he believed that if Britain 'were to use our power for objects we ourselves did not consider worth contending for, but which an Asiatic Potentate might go to war to obtain,' then it could be expected that this reduced 'standard of statesmanship' would have a deleterious effect on Indian loyalties.[155] Conversely, Conservatives focused on prestige's power elements, pointing to grounds for anxiety over the impact a reduction of military force might have on Indian security.[156] Salisbury clarified that he was not necessarily concerned at Russia's threat to India, but 'about the damage to England's prestige which might be done among her Moslem subjects by an unsuccessful Turkish policy.'[157]

Some critics of the Conservative interpretation of prestige were willing even to risk election prospects to make their challenge heard. At a meeting to present the Liberal candidate for Northallerton, aspiring MP Albert Ruston professed himself 'against all wars for prestige' and, 'the theory that it was a good thing to fight now in order to show that you are strong, and in order to discourage people from attacking you in some imaginary circumstances of a remote future.' Ruston believed this 'a policy as foolish as it was abominably wicked.' 'When,' he asked, 'was our prestige higher than at the end of the Crimean War, when our

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[154] *Daily News*, 9 Oct 1876.
[155] HC Deb 29 July 1878 vol 242, cc. 541-542.
[156] This echoed claims Sir Henry Rawlinson had made in 1867: 'The foundation of our tenure, the talisman—so to speak—which enables 100,000 Englishmen to hold 150,000,000 of Natives in subjection, is the belief in our unassailable power, in our inexhaustible resources; and any circumstance therefore which impairs that belief, which leads the Nations of the East to mistrust our superiority and to regard us as more nearly on an equality with themselves, inflicts a grievous shock on our political position.' HC Deb 26 July 1867 vol. 189, cc. 241-242.
[157] Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, p. 132.

enemy was utterly exhausted, and our own resources still immense? Yet within eighteen months came the Indian Mutiny.' Ruston pointed to Prussia's triumphs after the Crimean War, asserting this showed 'that the strength of a nation depended not on prestige, but on its actual power to defend its interests when those interests were really attacked.' Prestige, according to Ruston, did not dictate a nation's strength the same way that pure military power could. 'Neither could he admit that England had reason to fear any increase of Russian strength, or in any respect or in any part of the world to fear Russia. We were unassailable by Russia.'[158]

This was an important addendum to the prestige ethic. Maintaining military power and engaging with responsible government, these Liberals asserted, was the true method for upholding prestige, rather than Disraeli's fondness for display and involvement in foreign crises. It may be argued that *The Times* had not bought into Disraeli's presentation of prestige, since on the same day Ruston's speech was delivered, it commented on 'a sort of angry feeling that English strength is not appreciated abroad,' that Britain must display its power 'in order to be feared; that Russia in particular has set us at defiance, and should be taught reason, or we shall lose our prestige in the world.' *The Times* insisted that 'our power is so great and manifest that we may abstain from mere display,' and that Britain could 'afford to suffer some loss of prestige, or some appearance of its loss, rather than incur the certain loss of a war, however successful it may be, if the war is otherwise without sufficient reason,' and that Britain 'as the foremost Power of the world,' should provide 'an example of forbearance and love of peace which will restrain the growth of the war spirit throughout the world.'[159]

Could Britain not show the same forbearance she had shown to the United States in 1845 or Spain in 1848? Contemporaries evidently disagreed, but as she had not drawn the sword, when Russia softened on the Congress issue it enabled both Liberal and Conservative to feel vindicated in presenting their version of prestige. Russia's climbdown was also aided by Salisbury's circular, a fact acknowledged by Joseph Chamberlain, who told the Commons that it 'constituted a new departure of the English Government,' because 'England had at last put forward European, in place of British, interests.'[160] By late May, indeed, this reorientation of interests enabled 'an exhausted Russia to give ground without too much loss

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[158] Albert Ruston, *Leeds Mercury*, 27 April 1878.
[159] 'English Policy and English Strength,' *The Times*, 26 April 1878.
[160] Chamberlain, HC Deb 9 April 1878 vol 239, cc. 980-981.

of face,' paving the way for a Congress two weeks later.[161] The diplomatic victory may have been less impressive than it seemed, as scholars have attested to the weakness of Russia's position before the Congress met, owing to its diplomatic and moral isolation.[162]

According to the terms of the Congress of Berlin (13 June – 13 July 1878), Britain ensured the temporary retreat of Russian influence from the Balkans, while gaining the island of Cyprus as a Mediterranean base. But Britain had also acquired new responsibilities, in the form of a guarantee of Turkish territory in Asia Minor.[163] It was, in effect, a secret Anglo-Turkish alliance, a commitment of the sort which British policymakers had traditionally balked at.[164] Leonard Courtney did not believe in the Convention's sustainability, and feared that 'the non-fulfilment of what we had undertaken would be a blemish on our honour.'[165] The opposition and even some former Tory Cabinet members – such as Carnarvon and Derby – prepared to attack on these grounds, while reserving some contempt for the claims of increased prestige. Derby added to this rhetoric, opposing the idea 'that we increase our power, our influence, and our prestige, just in proportion as we augment the number of our liabilities to foreign countries, and as we extend the area over which our available resources are spread.' Derby also doubted that the Anglo-Turkish Convention would be viewed as a positive contribution to British prestige.[166]

Others went further; former Indian Viceroy Lord Northbrook addressed the view that 'the prestige of Russia will be increased' by its Armenian acquisitions, while 'the prestige of England will be diminished, and this will be disastrous unless some means be taken to counteract it.'[167] Northbrook offered an antidote to Disraeli's version of prestige, reminding

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[161] Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, p. 133.
[162] Richard G. Weeks, Jr. 'Peter Shuvalov and the Congress of Berlin: A Reinterpretation', *Journal of Modern History*, 51, No. 1 (Mar., 1979), 1055-1070.
[163] Buckle, *Disraeli*, VI, pp. 364-368
[164] Rosebery complained that the arrangement was 'mysterious and mystifying', adding that 'It was a proceeding, moreover, which he would take the liberty of saying was not characterized by the qualities which generally marked the course of British diplomacy.' HL Deb 26 July 1878 vol 242, cc. 349-350. Carnarvon also did not believe that Rosebery 'was far wrong when he described them as at variance with the traditional policy and feeling of this country.' *Ibid*, cc. 360-361. Earl Morley believed the Convention had placed Britain 'in one of the most difficult positions ever occupied by this country. Not merely had we gained nothing, but we had gone in a precisely opposite direction.' He challenged further 'Could we, when the honour of the nation was pledged, withdraw from the pledge? Parliament and the nation would support the course to which in honour we were bound; but he ventured to think that these Treaties, agreed upon behind the back of our own and other nations, would…impair the character for candour and openness which had hitherto distinguished English diplomacy, and would create a precedent very dangerous in its results.' *Ibid*, cc. 369-371.
[165] Leonard Courtney, HC Deb 2 Aug 1878 vol 242, cc. 1060-1061.
[166] Earl of Derby, HL Deb 18 July 1878 vol 241, cc. 1803-1804.
[167] Lord Northbrook, *Ibid*, cc. 1819-1820.

the Lords that that rumours and fears of Russian power, 'are not new.' Instead, as past British statesmen understood it, the Indian people would be impressed by 'the good government,' the 'development of her resources' and the 'maintenance of friendly relations with our neighbours.' By improving the lot of Indians, British security would simultaneously be improved, and her prestige would be sustained.[168] Aiding this Liberal presentation of prestige, the former Colonial Secretary Carnarvon believed that once the 'glamour which now bewitches men's minds has passed away' Britons would 'find themselves confronted with this most terrible and painful dilemma — either to carry through an almost hopelessly impracticable obligation, or to retreat from it at the expense of national credit and honour.'[169] It may be argued that Liberals fought against Disraeli's rhetoric by reiterating the traditional foundations of British honour – its maintenance of obligations. By enlarging these, the Prime Minister threatened the national honour, even as he claimed to have British prestige at heart.

Meeting this rhetoric, Disraeli proclaimed 'Peace with Honour' after the Berlin Congress, and his colleagues echoed this sentiment.[170] Others lauded the expansion of Britain's writ into Cyprus as proof of British power.[171] Bismarck also concluded that British prestige had been restored by the act, following many years of decline,[172] though it damaged his own arrangements.[173] The acquisition of Cyprus had not been carefully planned in advance,[174]

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[168] *Ibid*, cc. 1820-1821.
[169] Carnarvon, HL Deb 26 July 1878 vol 242, cc. 366-367.
[170] Amusingly, MP William Cotton proclaimed 'Peace with honour used to be the incentive words for war. Now they were a sublime truth—an accomplished fact. Peace had now been restored, and he unhesitatingly said, a peace with honour, and he wanted to know why hon. Gentlemen opposite did not put the pipe of peace between their lips, and join us in the happy song.' HC Deb 1 Aug 1878 vol 242, cc. 915-916.
[171] This was even conceded by Evelyn Ashley, who said: 'The possession of the Island of Cyprus was in one view a matter of congratulation; for he did not hesitate to say that, as an Englishman and a patriot, he was always glad to see, if it could be done with justice, honour, and legality, the maritime bounds of the Empire extended.' HC Deb 29 July 1878 vol 242, cc. 579-580.
[172] Kovic, *Eastern Question*, pp. 269-270.
[173] Persuasive evidence suggests that 'Russian public opinion quite unjustly blamed Germany', rather than Britain, for the reduction of its Turkish triumphs, see Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question* (New York, 1972), p. 468. See also W. A. Gauld, 'The 'Dreikaiserbündnis' and the Eastern Question, 1877-8', *English Historical Review*, 42, No. 168 (Oct., 1927), 560-568; W. N. Medlicott, 'Diplomatic Relations after the Congress of Berlin', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 8, No. 22 (Jun., 1929), 66-79. James Stone considered Bismarck's policy towards Russia as part of his efforts to undermine Anglo-Russian relations in Asia: Stone, 'Bismarck and the Great Game: Germany and Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia, 1871-1890', *Central European History*, 48, No. 2 (June 2015), 151-175. Some also see the 1879 Dual Alliance with Austria in the context of deteriorating Russo-German relations, though this has been debated in Bruce Waller, 'Bismarck, the Dual Alliance and Economic Central Europe, 1877-1885', *VSWG: Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 63, No. 4 (1976), 454-467.
[174] Harold Temperley commented on the last-minute nature of the Cyprus acquisition, noting that the original plan had been for a minor Greek island in the Aegean to serve as a coaling station, see Harold Temperley, 'Disraeli and Cyprus', *English Historical Review*, 46, No. 182 (Apr., 1931), 274- 279; Harold Temperley, 'Further Evidence on Disraeli and Cyprus', *English Historical Review*, 46, No. 183 (Jul., 1931), 457-460.

but those that supported it did use the rhetoric of prestige as their justification.[175] Conservatives also used the poor Liberal record against them; Baillie-Cochrane declared that if Gladstone had been in power, 'it was tolerably clear' that 'the Russians would have been at Gallipoli and Constantinople, and we should have had to declare war in vindication of our honour.'[176] One could argue that the Prime Minister did not seek quarrels for prestige's sake, but that instead, he would endure a crisis if prestige was *perceived* to be at stake. Bendor Grosvenor noted that Disraeli, 'was driven by an artificially high concern for the effect of events on English power, which he measured largely in terms of short-term prestige and honour.'[177] Although it horrified Derby and more traditional Conservatives, prestige 'was one of the few consistent principles in Disraeli's "foreign policy", such as it was, throughout his career.'[178]

From the beginning of the crisis, Derby had lamented that 'To the Premier the main thing is to please and surprise the public by bold strokes and unexpected moves: he would rather run serious national risks than hear his policy called feeble or commonplace.'[179] A 'feeble' policy would never satisfy a Premier whose presentation of prestige placed such a heavy emphasis on power and intervention. Seton-Watson's 1972 study suggested that Disraeli's actual goal was to make war on Russia, for the purpose of bolstering British prestige in the triumphant aftermath.[180] This was disputed by Milos Kovic, however, who observed: 'The prime minister was fighting for prestige, fame and power. He was prepared to go to war, but he did not want it.' By deploying Indian soldiers to Malta, Disraeli's aim 'was not provocation, but deterrence. The threats were aimed at avoiding, not encouraging, war with Russia.'[181]

The distinction is important. Rather than seeking war to increase British prestige, Disraeli wished to use the threat of war to *demonstrate* British prestige, understanding that tangible military power had to be present for this to be effective. It was thus critical to have Derby removed, to reverse the impression that Britain would not make war under any circumstances. Seen in this light, one is again reminded of Palmerston, who had used the apparent threat of war – against France in 1840, Greece in 1850, or the United States in 1861

[175] As Denzil Onslow argued, 'it would have the advantage of enhancing the prestige of this great Empire, both in Europe and in India.' Denzil Onslow, HC Deb 2 Aug 1878 vol 242, cc. 1050-1051.
[176] Alexander Baillie-Cochrane, HC Deb 29 July 1878 vol 242, cc. 571-572.
[177] Bendor Grosvenor, 'Britain's Most Isolationist Foreign Secretary,', p. 167.
[178] *Ibid*, p. 142.
[179] Vincent (ed), 24 Oct 1876, *DD*, p. 337.
[180] Seton-Watson, *Eastern Question*, p. 219.
[181] Kovic, *Eastern Question*, p. 221.

– to acquire prestige without the cost of war. The pace of events aided Disraeli's position, because when the Russians retreated both before and during the Berlin Congress, British prestige was asserted before the world.[182] Like Palmerston, Disraeli's contemporaries were also concerned that his belligerent policy could lead to disaster. *Punch* captured these sentiments with a cartoon that depicted the Prime Minister leading 'Britannia' over a literal abyss and into war.[183]

But with the Russian war avoided, the prestige party was quick to rejoice in the aftermath of the diplomatic success at the Berlin Congress.[184] The *Morning Post* noted that 'these great ends have been attained not only without loss of honour, but by raising the prestige of Great Britain to a point at least as high as it ever held before.' Without 'firing a shot or shedding a single drop of blood,' Britain managed 'to compel Russia, even in the moment of victory, to acknowledge the supremacy of public law and to relinquish no inconsiderable portion of the spoil which she had wrested from her vanquished adversary.' This act of leveraging the mere reputation of British power, to affect a favourable outcome at minimal cost, could lead to only one conclusion: 'British interests have been thoroughly vindicated, the prestige of this country has been raised, and the storm clouds of war which threatened to burst have been dispersed.'[185]

But the alliance with Turkey was not as easy to defend. The former private secretary and biographer of Palmerston, Evelyn Ashley, insisted that by the Anglo-Turkish Convention the government 'had completely parted with freedom of action, and had handed over the national honour of England to Turkey.' In response to the furore which followed from government benches, Ashley clarified that 'Turkey had now the power to ask Great Britain at any moment, however inconvenient, to do that which she could not refuse to do without the loss of national honour.'[186] Disraeli's supporters responded that British prestige was strong enough to preserve peace and prevent that nightmarish scenario from occurring.[187]

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[182] *Ibid*, p. 269.
[183] *Punch*, 19 Jan 1878. See also Kovic, *Eastern Question*, p. 242.
[184] As were contemporaries. For a particularly triumphant example see 'The Congress,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 124, No. 753 (Jul 1878), 119-130. And the follow up article: 'The Treaties of Peace,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 124, No. 754 (Aug 1878), 238-258.
[185] *Morning Post*, 16 July 1878.
[186] HL Deb 29 July 1878 vol 242, cc. 578-579**.**
[187] Lord Napier reflected that the Earl of Aberdeen had signed a Treaty 'by which he engaged the honour of England in defence of the 49th parallel as the boundary of our North American possessions.' Mindful of these past agreements with Washington, Napier suggested that if 'that vast territory, extending across an entire Continent, was defended by anything, it was defended simply by the Guarantee and prestige of England.' *Ibid*, cc. 498-499.

But, as the Eastern Crisis had demonstrated, British prestige was only as strong as the Government was willing to make it. Fears that Britain would be dragged into another Turkish War by these obligations were palpable, but British attention was instead directed towards a different theatre, when the Indian Viceroy Lord Lytton facilitated a new crisis in Afghanistan. Although confrontation over Afghanistan was not what Disraeli wanted, he became convinced that the Ameer would have to be reminded of his place, and of British prestige.

6.3: The Afghan Epilogue to the Eastern Crisis

That an Anglo-Russian standoff in Afghanistan should immediately follow the Berlin Congress was a direct consequence of British opposition to Russian policy in the Eastern Crisis.[188] In his desperation, the Turkish Sultan requested help from the Afghan Ameer,[189] and Russian plans to march three armed columns into Afghanistan were abandoned only once the Berlin Congress concluded the war.[190] Indeed, it would be more appropriate to consider the standoff in Afghanistan as one of the 'happy fruits from the great settlement which has been effected' in the Berlin Congress.[191] Ambassador Shuvalov claimed as much to Salisbury in November 1878, adding that the Russian mission was 'perfectly justifiable,' since Indian troops had arrived in the Mediterranean, and 'it was but an elementary measure of self-defence to attempt to arrange a diversion by way of Afghanistan.' Interestingly, reflecting the Russian concern for its own prestige, Shuvalov explained that 'The mission would, however, have been withdrawn at once; only a good deal of strong writing about it commenced in the English newspapers,' and the Russians 'did not like to put it in the power of the English to say that their threats had driven them (the Russians) away.'[192]

Where once the deployment of Indian soldiers to Europe had seemed a masterstroke, the Afghan episode suggested that Liberal fears of greater foreign entanglements and threats to Indian security had been vindicated. It could also be argued that British policy on the Afghan

[188] Disraeli recognised this as well, see Buckle, *Disraeli*, VI, p. 376.
[189] S. Tanvir Wasti, 'The 1877 Ottoman Mission to Afghanistan,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, 30, No. 4 (Oct., 1994), 956-962.
[190] See Ram Lakhan Shukla, 'The Game of Diversion in Central Asia During the Near East Crisis, 1875-78,' *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Congress*, 30 (1968), 430-436; 434-435.
[191] Sir Stafford Northcote to Queen Victoria, 2 Aug 1878 in *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series*, II, p. 636.
[192] Memorandum by the Marquis of Salisbury, 25 Nov 1878, *Ibid*, p. 647.

frontier was directed by the personality of Lord Lytton, and his tendency to act ahead of orders,[193] though research by Maurice Cowling reveals a more moderate Viceroy in receipt of provocative orders.[194] But Lytton certainly did not defuse the situation. 'The Ameer,' he complained, 'who little more than a year ago flatly refused to receive at Kabul a British mission of any kind, has now been publicly entertaining at his court, with marked honour and distinction, a large Russian embassy of high rank.'[195] Lytton perceived that only a British mission which acquired its 'becoming honours' from the Ameer, to match those received by Russia, could suffice.[196] When this mission was halted at the border, Lytton's response amounted to an ultimatum, which the Ameer refused.[197] This step enabled 'this alarming Afghan affair' to escalate further. Even while the Queen acknowledged that Lytton 'should not have sent the mission,' she noted 'Of course, we must punish the insult, and support Lord Lytton.' The Queen was also anxious that 'there should be no repeat of the misfortunes of 1840,' where a British military mission to Kabul led to the destruction of a British force.[198]

Disraeli privately lauded the ideology underpinning Lord Lytton's belligerent Afghan policy, noting that the Indian Viceroy 'grapples with his subject, and grasps it like a man,' and adding that Lytton's behaviour 'elevates my estimate' of his abilities.[199] However, while Disraeli confessed that 'With Lytton's general policy, I entirely agree,' the Prime Minister also lamented that the standoff with Russia over the Afghan issue was unnecessary.[200] When British troops received a 'snub' after failing to pass the Khyber, Disraeli complained that by disobeying orders, Lytton 'has secured only insult and failure.'[201] John Duthie considered that this insult, 'would constitute an affront to imperial prestige and dignity, an affront which would need to be revenged.'[202] This is also consistent with the honour-script, as a heightened sense of prestige after the Berlin Congress made Britain more vulnerable to any perceived

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193 Salisbury warned Disraeli of the 'gaudy and theatrical ambition which is the Viceroy's leading passion.' Quoted in Charmley, *Splendid Isolation*, p. 166.
194 Maurice Cowling, 'Lytton, the Cabinet, and the Russians, August to November 1878', *English Historical Review*, 76, No. 298 (Jan., 1961), 59-79.
195 Lord Lytton to Queen Victoria, 31 Aug 1878, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series,* II, p. 637.
196 Buckle, *Disraeli,* VI, p. 380.
197 See John Lowe Duthie, 'Lord Lytton and the Second Afghan War: A Psychohistorical Study,' *Victorian Studies*, 27, No. 4 (Summer, 1984), 461-475, 464.
198 Extract from the Queen's Journal, 6 Oct 1878, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series,* II, p. 641.
199 Earl Beaconsfield to Lord Cranbrook, 13 Sept 1878, in Buckle, *Disraeli*, VI, p. 381.
200 Earl Beaconsfield to Lord Cranbrook, 17 Sept 1878, ***Ibid.***
201 Earl Beaconsfield to Lord Cranbrook, 26 Sept 1878, *Ibid*, p. 382.
202 John Lowe Duthie, 'Pragmatic Diplomacy or Imperial Encroachment?: British Policy Towards Afghanistan,
1874-1879', *International History Review*, 5, No. 4 (Nov., 1983), 475-495; 487-488.

insult, and Britons were more eager to repel them. The greater the sense of prestige, the greater the need to preserve its spotless state.

The Indian Viceroy had been appointed in the first place because the Cabinet wanted 'a man of ambition, imagination, some vanity, and much will,' but it seems Disraeli expected Lytton to show more sense.[203] Disraeli appreciated that if left alone, the Russians would have gradually withdrawn from Kabul, a course which Russian Chancellor Gorchakov had all but confirmed to him.[204] To Disraeli, Lytton's policy was 'perfectly suited to a state of affairs in which Russia was our assailant; but Russia is not our assailant.' Russia had 'sneaked out of her hostile position, with sincerity in my mind, but scarcely with any dignity.'[205] Unfortunately, matters had run ahead of Disraeli's prudence; 'we have received a coup, which was needlessly encouraged,' the Prime Minister complained.[206] Only at the end of October 1878 would Disraeli consent to the issuing of an ultimatum, which, being left unanswered, justified the following war.[207] Although Disraeli acknowledged Lytton's 'grave error,'[208] he believed the country 'requires we shall act with decision and firmness on this Afghan question.' In mid-September, he told the Indian Secretary that 'So far as I can judge, the feeling is strong, and rising, in the country. So long as they thought there was 'Peace with Honour' the conduct of the Government was popular,' but 'if they find there is no peace, they will soon be apt to conclude there is also no honour,' thus 'what we want, at this present moment, is to prove our ascendency in Afghanistan.'[209]

Having cultivated these sentiments in previous years, the imperative of prestige now forced Disraeli to intervene in a theatre of doubtful imperial interest, even as he recognised that the affair could have been quietly resolved.[210] It was perhaps the first warning sign that Disraeli's reinterpretation of prestige contained fatal inherent flaws, though initially, segments of British media adhered to Disraeli's rhetoric. Significantly, the distinction between Liberal and Conservative journals was becoming blurred. Thus, the Radical *Reynolds Newspaper* could observe that: 'The Ameer has undertaken to do the work with which we credited Russia – to destroy British prestige in India,' and because of this 'We

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[203] Earl Beaconsfield to Lord Salisbury, 1 April 1877, in Buckle, *Disraeli*, VI, p. 379.
[204] Prince Gorchakov to Earl Beaconsfield, 16 Sept 1878, *Ibid*, pp. 376-377.
[205] Earl Beaconsfield to Lord Salisbury, 3 Oct 1878, *Ibid*, p. 383.
[206] Though he was clear that 'it is not a casus belli… and if we had been quiet, we need have done nothing.' *Ibid*.
[207] *Ibid*, p. 388.
[208] Beaconsfield to Lord Cranbrook, 12 Sept 1878, in Buckle, *Disraeli*, VI, p. 381.
[209] Beaconsfield to Lord Cranbrook, 17 Sept 1878, *Ibid*, p. 381.
[210] Beaconsfield to Lady Bradford, 9 or 10 Oct, 1878, *Ibid*, p. 384.

cannot retreat from the position we have foolishly taken up, for every Indian prince is watching us.'[211] As the Tsar's Government closely watched the Indian Government, observed the *Manchester Guardian*, Russia did not need to 'make any change in her policy.' This was because 'the longer the British troops remain inactive on the Afghan frontier the more they deprive themselves of prestige in the eyes of their Indian subjects and shake the foundation of their rule in India.'[212]

Rob Johnson argued that Britain interpreted its Afghan position through the context of past crises, and was particularly sensitive to the spectacle of a second defeat in Afghanistan. 'To bring about the decisive result,' Johnson upheld, 'the exercise of bold leadership was thought to be the best method to ensure the continuation of military superiority and prestige, two components that would reinforce the idea of British governance.' This despite the fact that 'The British knew that military force had its limits,' and 'the risk of a temporary military setback had the potential to damage prestige profoundly and perhaps worsen an insurrection.'[213] The Afghan campaign must also be considered in the context of Queen Victoria's status as Empress of India, which can only have increased British sensitivity to any reduction in her status.[214] The Queen had encouraged a decisive policy during her regular correspondence with Disraeli during the Russo-Turkish War.[215] A new disaster in Afghanistan would damage Britain's prestige in India, tarnish the Queen's new position, and endanger the progressive naturalisation of India's native princes.[216]

For these reasons, the Afghan theatre arguably presented an even more acute danger to British prestige than had the Eastern Crisis. The *Morning Post* depicted the Russians urging the Ameer to inflict greater insults upon Britain. Although it had recently celebrated Britain's performance in the Berlin Congress as Disraeli's finest hour, now the *Post* remarked that Russia had emerged from that assembly 'with sufficient success to enable her to persuade the Ameer of Afghanistan that England may be insulted with impunity,' while 'whatever steps we may take to revenge that insult will have for their ultimate aim the maintenance of

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[211] *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 13 Oct. 1878.
[212] *Manchester Guardian*, 1 Nov 1878.
[213] Rob Johnson, 'General Roberts, the Occupation of Kabul, and the Problems of Transition, 1879–1880', *War in History*, 20, No. 3 (July 2013), 300-322; 302.
[214] L. A. Knight, 'The Royal Titles Act and India', *Historical Journal*, 11, No. 3 (1968), 488-507.
[215] Disraeli complained that the Queen 'writes every day, and telegraphs every hour'. See Walter L. Arnstein, 'The Warrior Queen: Reflections on Victoria and Her World', *Albion*, 30, No. 1 (Spring, 1998), 1-28; 23.
[216] See Charles V. Reed, *Royal Tourists, Colonial Subjects and the Making of a British World, 1860–1911* (Manchester, 2016), pp. 35-76.

our prestige in India against the subtle designs of the Russian Government to undermine it.'[217]

Twinned with this pressure to act decisively in Afghanistan were Liberal assertions of prestige which differed from Disraeli's own. Near the end of the Commons debate on the Russo-Turkish peace settlement, Samuel Laing, a former finance minister for the Indian Government, observed that 'We talked of our prestige; but prestige in India meant the consciousness on the part of the Natives that within the limits of that country we were all-powerful.'[218] Laing linked this power to Indian contentment, which was reduced by the crushing taxes needed to fund an army of 200,000 men. Reduced taxes would improve Indian sentiment, and thereby increase British power.[219] This was consistent with past Liberal expressions on the true sources of British power. W. E. Forster complained that 'we have had a great deal of controversy about prestige,' and presented himself as 'one of those who say—"Let facts be right, and opinion will take care of itself,"' as opposed to the idea that 'the facts will follow the opinion.'[220] He distinguished between British prestige, believing it distinct from that which Turkey held over its subjects, while warning against measuring the former against the latter.[221]

But Conservative interpretations of prestige had now swung too far in the opposite direction to be retrieved in a moment of imperial crisis. Indeed, some now lamented that Disraeli was *too* cautious, since notwithstanding the Ameer's 'discourteous and hostile,' replies and his refusal to permit the British mission into Kabul which suggested a 'national indignity,' it was lamented that 'a further ultimatum has been granted by the Government.' This, complained the *Portsmouth Evening News*, was wholly unacceptable, and 'Unless the public determination of England to resent the gross and contemptuous indignity offered so conspicuously, with every nation and India as spectators, be expressed in a tone of emphatic

[217] *Morning Post*, 27 Sept 1878.
[218] Laing, HC Deb 1 Aug 1878 vol 242 cc. 957-958.
[219] He added 'our policy in India ought to be to keep our military expenditure to a minimum, and to allow the old military spirit of the warlike tribes to die out,' and 'by husbanding our resources, and acting on the maxims of common sense, we should establish a power which would enable us to defy, not the might of Russia alone, but that of the whole world united.' *Ibid*, cc. 958-959.
[220] Forster, HC Deb 2 Aug 1878 vol 242 cc. 1020-1021.
[221] He declared: 'Remember this is not a direct prestige; it is an indirect prestige, a sort of second edition of it as it were. It is not the prestige of England; it is the prestige of Turkey over its own subjects; and our own prestige over India is to be injured because the prestige of Turkey over her subjects is injured, and perhaps it may be if we tie ourselves to a falling Power.' *Ibid*, cc. 1020-1021.

decision', then it was feared 'that the Indian Government will be rendered contemptible and British prestige in India will be degraded.'[222]

Britain had been 'deluded by the smooth words and glib promises of Russia,' and had 'neglected to take the active measures that were necessary to secure British prestige in Afghanistan.' A Russian organ, the *Rusaks Mir*, opined that when the mission sent by Lytton was denied entry, this 'defeat' would 'be severely felt by Lord Beaconsfield…having long inclined to competition with Russia for the recovering of British prestige and the protection of the road to India.' After months of Disraeli's rhetoric expounding the unshakeable nature of British prestige, a mere 'Asiatic Khan,' had managed to 'box the ears of the proud Englishman and to shake the authority and prestige of the Indian Empire.'[223] Just as it had been in the original Afghan campaign, Britain's performance in the Second Anglo-Afghan War was closely linked to India.

The fear that ambitious native Princes would take advantage of hesitation or weakness was foremost among contemporaries, including the Queen. She reminded Disraeli that 'Any doubt, want of firmness or delay now may be fatal to us,' since 'the whole of India will watch our conduct, and the assistance we may expect will depend on our energy.'[224] Three days later, the Queen wrote to her Prime Minister again, insisting 'If we waver and delay, our prestige will be fatally lost in India.'[225] Under such pressure, a Cabinet meeting in late October saw Disraeli argue that 'a demonstration of the power and determination of England was at this moment necessary'; insisting that such a 'reprisal' was 'sanctioned by public law.' An ultimatum was sent, and the Ameer was given until 20 November to offer an apology for the insult.[226] In the interim, Disraeli's Guildhall speech conceded 'I know there are some who think that the power of England is on the wane,' but he insisted that if the English people 'possess still the courage and determination of their forefathers, their honour will never be tarnished and their power will never diminish.'[227] From Berlin, Ambassador Odo Russell marvelled that Disraeli's speech had 'elevated England in the eyes of the Continent.'[228]

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[222] *Portsmouth Evening News*, 2 Nov 1878.
[223] *Nottingham and Midland Counties Daily Express*, 1 Oct 1878.
[224] Queen Victoria to Earl Beaconsfield, 23 Oct 1878, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series,* II, p. 642.
[225] Queen Victoria to Earl Beaconsfield, 26 Oct 1878, *Ibid*, p. 643.
[226] Beaconsfield to Queen Victoria, 26 Oct 1878, in Buckle, *Disraeli*, VI, p. 387.
[227] Quoted in *Ibid*, p. 393.
[228] Lord Odo Russell to Montagu Curry, 23 Nov 1878, *Ibid*, p. 394.

It was just as well that Disraeli had put steel into his audience, because the ultimatum went unanswered, and Disraeli's Cabinet declared this war for British prestige against the Ameer on 21 November 1878.[229] Interestingly, Disraeli sought to dress the conflict up as one fought for the 'scientific frontier' of India, and as a consequence his colleagues 'pulled very long faces.'[230] Northcote, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, concluded that 'it was no quest of a scientific frontier, but the intolerable conduct of Sher Ali…culminating in the insolent stoppage of [the British] Mission' which had brought war.[231] In the month that followed, the Queen continued to stress the now familiar point, to 'hold a very firm tone, and put our foot down,' on the expectation that Russia would then 'change her tone.' While lamenting that 'great civility and conciliatoriness will be set down as weakness,' the Queen also underlined the necessity in preventing 'any appearance of disapproval of Lord Lytton's conduct.' According to the Queen, Lytton's '*only* fault was precipitancy, and even this may likely have been necessary.'[232]

Salisbury agreed that Lytton had to be supported – 'No idea of holding any other language has ever been entertained' – and he also agreed that 'expressions of civility to Russia would be out of place at the present juncture.'[233] It was now essential to emphasise the Afghan threat to Indian prestige and security, and to insist that no other option but war with the Ameer was possible if these were to be sustained.[234] This message did not go unchallenged,[235] but rhetorical consistency compelled Disraeli's allies to weigh in on his side.[236] Their sentiments reflected the fear not necessarily of a Russian invasion of India, but

[229] Duthie, 'Lord Lytton and the Second Afghan War,' 465.
[230] Buckle, *Disraeli*, VI, pp. 390-391.
[231] Sir Stafford Northcote to Lady Northcote, *Ibid*, p. 301.
[232] Queen Victoria to Marquis of Salisbury, 3 Dec 1878, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series,* II, pp. 649-650. Emphasis in original.
[233] Marquis of Salisbury to Queen Victoria, 3 Dec 1878, *Ibid*, p. 650.
[234] Robert Bourke, Undersecretary of State, offered a remarkable defence of the Government's policy, claiming that the government 'had gone to war to wipe out an insult offered to the honour of England; and no British Minister could have avoided going to war for that purpose'. Bourke reminded Members that 'it behoved England to be careful not to do anything to discourage what was in the minds of the Indian Princes, or to tarnish in their eyes the honour of the Empire.' Only through the exercise of British military power could the insult be wiped out, and prestige be recouped. Bourke explained 'that English life in many portions of the world would not be safe if quick retribution did not follow upon outrage to English life.' HC Deb 12 Dec 1878 vol 243, cc. 681-682.
[235] Thus, the Home Rule MP for Limerick City, Richard O'Shaughnessy lamented that 'we have got into war, and I believe the result will be to lower the honour and prestige of this country.' *Ibid*, cc. 686-687.
[236] In a Lords' session of 6 December, the Earl of Ravensworth had challenged: 'whether any noble Lord who sits on the opposite benches will get up and say that after the insult which was offered to our Envoy any English Cabinet could have stood motionless, and tamely submitted to that insult?' To tamely submit to the insult of a lesser Afghan Ameer was another level of indignity. It was also gravely dangerous, as Ravensworth elaborated:

of a Russian incitement of an Indian rebellion or mutiny which a decline in prestige would facilitate.[237] Once established in a Russified Afghanistan, the Tsar's agents could 'provoke unrest,' 'impel Asiatic marauders onto the Hindustan plains,' and 'tie down valuable British troops in India.'[238] Some were convinced that such Russian incitement had already occurred in the 1857 Mutiny, as revenge for its defeat in the Crimean War.[239] This palpable fear of history repeating itself – particularly prescient for the 1842 disaster in Afghanistan – was a powerful incentive, and a major guard against this danger was the strength of British prestige in India, both as a foil to Russian intrusion and a deterrent against local rebellion.

The origins of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, and the question of prestige therein, remain subject to debate.[240] Government Ministers were consistent on the importance of the Afghan campaign, thus the Lord Chancellor Earl Cairns asserted that British troops were fighting a war 'which could not have been avoided for the honour, for the dignity, and for the safety of our Indian Empire.'[241] But Liberals continued to offer alternative interpretations of the Ameer's behaviour, challenging Conservative policy and charging it with inflicting the very consequences it was supposed to prevent.[242] Conservatives deployed important rhetorical devices in their explanations, articulating the principles of prestige without mentioning the ethic by name. Thus Lord Cranbrook, Salisbury's replacement as Secretary for India, underlined the idea that 'India was looking on.' Native Indians were portrayed as watchful spectators, who 'saw us at the gates of Afghanistan demanding admittance; they saw us repulsed; what would be, what was, the effect on the Indian mind and Indian feelings?' Both the Sepoys and the Indian people 'thought that we were hesitating too long, and that we were

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'Knowing that Russian influence was dominant in Afghanistan; feeling, as every English Cabinet must feel, that it was responsible for the honour of the Crown, the dignity of the nation, the tranquillity of the Frontier, and the tranquillity of a country numbering 200,000,000 of inhabitants within its Frontiers, will any noble Lord get up and say that an English Cabinet could, under such circumstances, have tamely submitted to that insult.' HL Deb 5 Dec 1878 vol 243, cc. 15-16.

[237] See M. A. Yapp, 'British Perceptions of the Russian Threat to India,' *Modern Asian Studies*, 21, No. 4 (1987), 647-665; 647-648.

[238] John Lowe Duthie, 'Pragmatic Diplomacy or Encroachment?,' 478-479.

[239] *Morning Post*, 7 Jan 1878.

[240] See Ira Klein, 'Who Made the Second Afghan War?' *Journal of Asian History*, 8, No. 2 (1974), 97-121.

[241] Earl Carins, HL Deb 10 Dec 1878 vol 243, cc. 449-450.

[242] Following a perusal of the provided documents, in a Lords' session of 10 December the Marquis of Bath reflected that 'the whining reply of the Ameer had been characterized as insulting to an extent not borne out by the text', accusing the government of manipulating the truth, 'and all to involve us in a war in which certain victory would bring little credit, and could only add embarrassments to an overburdened Indian Exchequer.' *Ibid*, cc. 467-468.

afraid; that there was something behind Afghanistan we durst not meet,' and 'if we had retired they would have been justified in supposing that such fears were entertained.'[243]

Palmerston's reflections that British influence had been based on hope and fear thus seem apt in this case for prestige.[244] With its emphasis on the reputation of power, the Disraelian version of prestige was not wildly removed from past conceptions, but it was arguably charged with a growing appreciation that Britain's rivals were better equipped to challenge her position.[245] The rising industrial and mercantile power of the United States and Germany may have drawn Disraeli closer to prestige in the first place, since it prescribed security in return for leveraging the advantages in naval power which he believed Gladstone had neglected, at the expense of British influence in Europe. As Parry observed, 'many others agreed that an important diplomatic initiative was needed between 1874 and 1880 to bring Britain back into the continental mainstream, and to help to uphold the European order.'[246] These considerations underline what made the triumph at Berlin so impressive, but by its very nature prestige was a fickle ethic. The reputation of British power was liable, like all reputations, to incur damage, if challenged directly.

Unlike national honour itself, which could be defended by exercising forbearance towards minor offensive powers, prestige as a reputational entity was more vulnerable to slights. Contemporaries would have to demonstrate that they believed in the potential of British power if the damage was to be fully dispelled, and Conservatives insisted that this could only be achieved by overcoming the initial hesitation, and concluding a successful Afghan campaign. Conversely, if Britain now shrank from the Ameer's challenge, Lord Napier believed, then 'we might in a year or two have been placed in a position where we should have to incur far greater expense and suffering.'[247] It should be noted that these public declarations contradicted Disraeli's own private reflections on the benefits of waiting and seeing in Afghanistan. To justify the necessary campaign, it was insisted – just as it had been when attacking Afghanistan in 1838, or China in 1839 – that British prestige in India afforded no other course. Having cultivated the rhetoric of prestige so consistently in public, these same imperatives presented the Prime Minister with no choice but to involve Britain in an undesirable Afghan war.

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[243] Lord Cranbrook, HL Deb 9 Dec 1878 vol 243, cc. 244-245.
[244] Palmerston, HC Deb 7 Aug 1844 vol 76, cc. 1873-1874.
[245] See K. M. Wilson (ed), *British Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Policy*, pp. 3-4.
[246] J. P. Parry, 'Disraeli and England,' 726.
[247] Lord Napier and Ettrick, *Ibid*, cc. 294-295.

Conclusion

Throughout these debates in the Commons and Lords, the familiar script was presented: costly action must be taken now, to avoid an even more expensive venture in the future. But the Earl of Derby contested this justification of the Government's Afghan policy on several grounds. Derby used the prestige ethic against the Government, noting that Lord Lytton 'appears bent, not merely on forcing the Mission on the Ameer, but on making all India see that he did so force it.' But what was the Ameer to do?

> If he admits him, he makes it plain to his own people that he is yielding to coercion. If he refuses, it is war. Surely it might have occurred to the Viceroy that a high-spirited Chief—the head of a warlike race—could not afford to be humiliated, and might prefer to die fighting.

This ethos of preferring a noble death to cowardly submission was certainly familiar to contemporaries.[248] By infringing on the Ameer's own prestige, the Government was committing the same crime which they attributed both to Ameer and, to a lesser extent, the Russians. Derby asked how it was that 'We, the rulers of the great Empire of India, could not afford to give an Afghan Potentate a little time for consideration,' lest 'the people of India should jump to the conclusion that we were actuated by fear of his military power!'[249] If this prestige was as considerable as the Prime Minister claimed, how had it become so brittle? One could argue that Derby captured the key problem in Disraeli's prestige rhetoric – it may have buoyed confidence in moments of triumph, but it also required constant defence against any and every slight to be preserved in this state. But Conservatives could not afford to pause. This was not a time for forbearance, simply because the Ameer was a lesser power.

While such paradoxes may have been an accepted feature of the prestige ethic, it did not follow that all were willing to accept its logic. Thus, Lord William Hay, speaking in the Commons on 12 December, launched a scathing attack not merely on the Government's policy, but upon the improper interpretation of prestige which it was based. Hay had served

[248] As the Earl of Clarendon had appreciated on the eve of the Austro-Prussian War, 'A disastrous war is better than voluntary disgrace.' Clarendon to Lord Augustus Loftus, 7 March 1866 in Bourne, *Foreign Policy*, Doc. 85, p. 384.
[249] Earl of Derby, HL Deb 9 Dec 1878 vol 243, cc. 284-286.

as Superintendent of India's northern border states, and now he observed 'that of all the other causes fruitful of mischievous and unnecessary war, this doctrine of prestige was one that exercised the greatest influence.' Hay returned to the metaphor which suggested 'that prestige was like the credit of a bank or a mercantile institution.' Hay agreed, but challenged 'what did the credit of a bank depend upon?'

> It depended upon its resources, and upon the knowledge that those resources were adequately, carefully, and prudently administered. The prestige of a country depended exactly on the same conditions; and what he had to complain of was that the administration of this country was not at present conducted on sound and prudent principles.

British prestige 'was badly managed, and not only that, but it was badly managed in secret. The innocent shareholders woke up one morning and found themselves on the brink of ruin.'[250] Hartington also scorned the notion that 'Not a movement could take place in any part of Europe or Asia, but that it was discovered by the Government that some harm was threatened, that some danger impended to English interests or English honour.'[251] 'Like most men who are deficient in true courage,' he added, 'they make great parade of their courage and of their power.' Hartington then anticipated the Ministerial riposte that 'that we are indifferent to the honour and the greatness of our Indian Empire,' yet it was the government's failure in Afghanistan 'which caused the only check that in recent times our arms have ever received in India, and the only blow which our power, and, if you like, our prestige, in India has ever received.'[252]

Conservatives reminded the Commons of Liberal mismanagement of prestige,[253] a fair tactic considering Gladstone's real failures in Afghanistan.[254] Yet, this claim was itself problematic, as it hinted at the ultimately shaky foundations of prestige which Disraeli had seemingly not accounted for. Furthermore, if British prestige was as high as the Prime Minister had claimed, should it not follow that Britain enjoyed all its rewards? And, if British

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[250] Sir John Hay, HC Deb 12 Dec 1878 vol 243, cc. 693-694.
[251] Hartington, HC Deb 13 Dec 1878 vol 243, cc. 827-828.
[252] *Ibid*, cc. 828-830.
[253] 'After the Crimean War the prestige of England was very great, not only in Europe, but in the East,' claimed Alexander Baillie Cochrane, before adding that 'during the long period of Liberal Government which had since elapsed that prestige diminished.' Baillie Cochrane believed that this 'diminution of prestige must have naturally had the effect on a country like Afghanistan, which, on the other hand, saw Russia advancing like an ever-advancing tide upon her.' Baillie-Cochrane, *Ibid*, cc. 785-786.
[254] A. P. Thornton, 'Afghanistan in Anglo-Russian Diplomacy, 1869-1873,' *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 11, No. 2 (1954), 204-218.

prestige was tarnished, was it correct to blame previous administrations? Whatever damage to prestige Liberals might have inflicted, the Conservatives had been in control of Afghan policy for four years. All the while, Russian strength had increased. Salisbury recognised that 'Russia, being unassailable by our arms, is deaf to our diplomacy and remonstrances upon the subject of her advance in Asia have become a trite and not very edifying Foreign Office form.'[255]

As Beryl Williams observed, Britain generally showed scant interest in Russia's absorption of its Central Asian neighbours,[256] though contemporaries did not reflect on this. Nor was Disraeli charged with opportunism in his application of outrage. Seen in the context of past decades of British foreign policy, Disraeli and his predecessors had understood that this bombastic rhetoric only resonated with the British public when applied to a familiar issue, such as India. Disraeli kept this secret, but he also neglected to share that by the very nature of his presentation of prestige, it was bound to be constantly in danger. Thanks to the innumerable frontiers of the British Empire, a new crisis was guaranteed to emerge, jeopardising Disraeli's carefully crafted position. The Liberal caution displayed towards Disraeli's sentiments may be seen as an antidote to this constant threat. Neither Gladstone nor his colleagues had raised expectations of British prestige, insisting that it spoke for itself. It was certainly less publicly popular to profess prestige in responsible stewardship, the maintenance of appropriate force, or the improvement of India, but this stance also provided a degree of protection when one or more crises converged to foster an atmosphere of disaster. This was in fact what happened to Disraeli's administration; the Afghan policy deteriorated, the Zulus inflicted Isandlwana (Jan 1879) upon British forces, and the Boers made war on British South Africa, all within a year.[257]

Opposition figures could attack these failures, and notably, they could do so through their own rhetoric of prestige, which emphasised steadfastness and morality, and refocused attention onto the national honour. Thus, in a lengthy peroration, the Radical and anti-imperialist Wilfrid Lawson delivered several scathing attacks on the immoral aspects of the Government's policy. He refused to approve of any funds for the purpose of the Afghanistan

[255] Quoted in Beryl Williams, 'Approach to the Second Afghan War: Central Asia during the Great Eastern Crisis, 1875-1878,' *International History Review*, 2, No. 2 (Apr., 1980), 216-238; 216.
[256] *Ibid*, 216-218.
[257] See Christopher Wallace, 'The Liberals and Afghanistan: 1878-1880,' *Historical Research*, 85, No. 228 (May 2012), 306-328.

expedition, and blamed Lord Lytton for the current crisis. Lawson also disputed the claim that it was too late to turn back from Afghanistan, and that the invasion must continue:

> But why not recall the troops also? There will be no more loss of prestige in the one case than in the other. You say you would lose prestige and glory; but surely the House ought to remember that honour is worth more than glory. I believe that your prestige would be increased, even among these savage tribes, by acting in a strictly honourable and honest way.[258]

A withdrawal from the Afghan frontier; direct negotiations with the Ameer; confidence in Britain's privileged prestigious position – these were policies which Liberals, and some Conservatives, were willing to advocate. Lord Halifax desired that 'We should be patient, forgiving, and generous, and require nothing but what is absolutely necessary for the honour of the country.' This was because 'We have, in truth, no cause of quarrel with the Afghans but what we have made ourselves.'[259] Others were content to criticise the Government, but were also willing to vote the necessary credits to pursue the war, lest it be claimed that they placed British security in danger and allowed British prestige to decline.[260] It would not have been difficult to discern evidence of this decline in the South African theatre. Although defeated at Isandlwana, the eventual British triumph in the war confirmed British power in South Africa.[261] Fortunately for Disraeli, humiliation could be contrasted with a valiant triumph – such as Roorke's Drift[262] – which would deaden the impact of defeat.[263] Still, as Charmley concluded, 'the blow to the government's prestige was immense, and not even Disraeli's mastery of the black arts of politics could make anything from the disaster.'[264]

From the beginning of the Zulu confrontation, the *Morning Post* had been typically defiant: 'we cannot submit tamely to encroachments even on the part of a savage.' The justification

[258] Lawson, HC Deb 17 Dec 1878 vol 243, cc. 1004-1005.
[259] Lord Halifax, HL Deb 9 Dec 1878 vol 243, cc. 261-262.
[260] As Earl Granville declared: 'once our soldiers are before the enemy, and the honour of the country is engaged, however illogical it may be, I will not consent to deprive our army of the necessary support, however desirous I may be that the war should be brought to a speedy termination, honourable to ourselves, and just to the foe.' HL Deb 5 Dec 1878 vol 243, cc. 81-82.
[261] Damien P. O'Connor, 'Imperial Strategy and the Anglo–Zulu War of 1879,' *Historian*, 68, No. 2 (Summer 2006), 285-304.
[262] Disraeli said on Roorke's Drift: 'Those who have fallen will be remembered, and will be mourned; but we must not forget the exhibition of heroic valour by those who have been spared. At this moment, I am sure, the recollection of those 80 men, who, for 12 hours in a forlorn hope, kept at bay 4,000 of the enemy, and ultimately repulsed them, will prove that the stamina and valour of the English soldiery have not diminished.' HL Deb 13 Feb 1879 vol 243, cc. 1042-1043.
[263] See Michael Lieven, 'Heroism, Heroics and the Making of Heroes: The Anglo-Zulu War of 1879,' *Albion,* 30, No. 3 (Autumn, 1998), 419-438.
[264] Charmley, *Splendid Isolation*, p. 169.

for this unyielding stance was simple: ‘Too little regard has been paid of late to the national prestige,’ and it was ‘quite time that we should be prepared to uphold it in every part of the globe where the interests or rights of our country and people are assailed.’ By doing so, ‘our power will be strengthened afresh, and the prestige of the Empire be once more enhanced.’[265] Michael Lieven has proposed that this Zulu policy was a symptom of imperial panic when faced with defeat by a black African kingdom, but it is also the case that defeat had grave implications for Disraeli’s presentation of prestige within and without its Empire.[266] Such colonial reversals – whether in Africa or Asia – were particularly noteworthy because of their connection to the Eastern Crisis, which should not be understated.[267] Political imperatives also played a role; the disasters of 1879 clearly broke the promise of prestige which Disraeli had pledged after the Berlin Congress, granting Liberals new opportunities to attack.

Thus, while the Duke of Argyll did not doubt that ‘the interests and honour of England were your objects,’ he asserted ‘we have our own opinions of what the interests and honour of England are; you have yours. It is fair that we should fight them out.’[268] The complications emerging from the aftermath of Berlin also compelled Argyll to comment ‘As regards the flourish of the Government, when they returned from Berlin saying that they brought back "Peace with Honour," it seems to me that it was "Retreat with Boasting."’[269] This gelled with the general Liberal view that ‘the main element in Lord Beaconsfield’s foreign policy was brag, bluster and strong jingoism,’ a kind of game ‘where the boldest adventurer will win.’[270] Success at Berlin had brought the Conservatives to new heights, but the defeats which followed, particularly through 1879, were more difficult to reconcile with prestige, and these failures ultimately contributed to the return of the Liberals under Gladstone, accompanied by the renunciation of Beaconsfieldism.[271]

What does this emphasis on prestige reveal about the rhetoric of national honour? In some respects, the focus on prestige was reminiscent of the attention given to influence during the

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[265] *Morning Post*, 21 Feb 1878.
[266] Michael Lieven, ‘“Butchering the Brutes All Over the Place”: Total War and Massacre in Zululand, 1879,’ *History*, 84, No. 276 (Oct 1999), 614-632.
[267] See Halford L. Hoskins, ‘British Policy in Africa 1873-1877: A Study in Geographical Politics,’ *Geographical Review*, 32, No. 1 (Jan., 1942), 140-149. Hoskins upholds that the British viewed Egypt as a de facto protectorate as early as 1877, and employed the navy in the region to defend the Canal during the peak of the Russo-Turkish War.
[268] HL Deb 16 May 1879 vol 246, cc. 514-515.
[269] *Ibid*, cc. 526-527.
[270] Quoted in Charmley, *Splendid Isolation*, p. 169.
[271] Kovic, *Eastern Question*, pp. 302-303.

Schleswig-Holstein crisis. Evidently, the lexicon of honour was sufficiently flexible to allow this preponderance of synonyms. Yet, the difference is where influence was perceived as the reward of maintaining national honour, Disraeli presented prestige as the respect given to British power. This respect had to be unquestionable, but the critical flaw in this model is revealed in Britain's extensive foreign commitments. The close connection between the triumph at Berlin and the pressure to act in Afghanistan suggests that prestige, as Disraeli understood it, could never be entirely satisfied. Palmerston's triumph in the Trent Affair, followed by the failure in Schleswig-Holstein provides an additional contrast. If it is true that Disraeli sought to emulate Palmerston's emphasis on the rhetoric of honour for political and policy purposes, then it is striking that both statesmen ultimately failed to fulfil the promises the ethic presented, thanks to unforeseen complications in foreign policy.

A wide range of Victorian opinion clearly existed on prestige. Prestige could be blunted by exclusion from transformative treaties, just as it could be threatened by both a petty Ameer or a great power. The flexibility of prestige rhetoric enabled contemporaries from several political groupings to present their own conception of what the ethic meant, and why their opponents had mishandled it. At the same time, it should not be ignored that Disraeli was, at least for a season, correct about the potential of prestige. Maintaining and enhancing the reputation of British power did facilitate a period of great triumph and political popularity. Yet, prestige was also incredibly costly. John Charmley priced Britain's response to the Eastern Crisis, South Africa, and Afghanistan at nearly £12 million, vindicating Derby's belief that prestige 'proved an expensive commodity to purchase.'[272] It had also served as a warning to contemporaries, not to mention the public, who became enthused at the prospect of a more moral foreign policy thereafter. Arguably only after a period in opposition and energised by a new phase of imperialism did the Conservatives return to an updated version of Beaconsfieldism.[273] This reflected Disraeli's failure to use the rhetoric of prestige to his political and strategic advantage. Prestige, rather than the Queen, was Disraeli's most demanding master, and he was ultimately defeated by the high expectations he had cultivated.

[272] Charmley, *Splendid Isolation*, p. 169.

[273] Penson interprets Salisbury's premierships as defined by the perception of British interests, particularly in India, and influenced by the mood of imperialism, though unfixed to a concrete policy goal. Lillian M. Penson, 'The Principles and Methods of Lord Salisbury's Foreign Policy,' *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 5, No. 1 (1935), 87-106. For a contemporary view see Alfred L. P. Dennis, 'Tendencies in British Foreign Policy Since Disraeli,' *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association*, 6 (1909), 109-120.

Conclusion

> National honour is a fine subject to expatiate upon: it is so conveniently indefinite. An orator may give what quantity and quality of signification he pleases to the abstract idea, for the purpose of fitting it to any given state of things. Facts and figures do not obstruct the torrent of eloquence, and a speaker may pitch his key as high as he pleases in the gamut of debate.[1]

This research project has confirmed that, as the *Globe* claimed, contemporaries regularly expatiated upon national honour in the 'gamut of debate.' Both the government and the opposition used the rhetoric of national honour as a political weapon during foreign policy debates; its lexical versatility meant it could be deployed both to attack these policies, and to defend them. Also significant was national honour's popularity with Britons, or at least a perceived popularity, which incentivised contemporaries to use this rhetoric for political advantage. It may never be clear how sincerely contemporaries believed in its tenets, but the evidence does suggest an acceptance of certain standards. One could argue that national honour was two things at once; both a belief system, and a rhetorical weapon. If national honour was not believed in or sought after, the rhetoric which referenced it would never have been so consistently drawn upon. This suggests that national honour could not be ignored, whether the ethic was used to justify policy, or to criticise it.

Importantly, national honour was not rigid. Like other political tools, it could be modified to meet specific circumstances. When this occurred, one discerns the appearance of themes which helped to empower, or in some cases mollify, the ethic's more demanding imperatives. For instance, the prevailing belief was that any insult would be immediately followed by the vindication of damaged honour. Yet, Ministers were adept at using national honour to explain the opposite policy course; Britain could afford to endure a certain degree of dishonour due to her unrivalled position as the world power. But forbearance, as this position was known, could be carried too far. This perspective was selectively applied. When Britain dealt with nations removed from the industrialised 'West', contemporaries did not apply this magnanimity in the search for satisfaction from African, Asian, or South American insults, which were vigorously pursued.

[1] The *Globe*, 8 March 1847.

Nonetheless, it is possible to observe a degree of consistency in contemporary behaviour when contending with national honour. Honourable nations sought satisfaction when insulted, but it was vital that vindication did not become vengeance, and exacting redress did not become excess. Britain's ability to influence other nations with its military or moral power was a function of national honour, and this influence could be lost through Britain's exclusion from important developments. The navy was the arm of British honour, and the ability to project its power across the world enhanced Britain's prestige. Prestige was the reputation of British power, a reputation established in the triumph against Napoleonic France in 1815, which was fiercely guarded against both European challenge and defeat in the colonial sphere.

Britain's position in India, it was insisted, depended upon British prestige, though this was contested by those who countered that Britain's reputation for justice and morality was equally important.[2] It was the government's duty to uphold national honour and defend it from attack, and any administration which failed to do so would be cast from office, spurned by the electorate for its impropriety. It was also insisted that a failure to repel insults now would result in greater insults in the future.[3] Furthermore, national honour was emphasised when considering British obligations. Only a dishonourable nation failed to uphold its treaty commitments, and reneging on them would endanger existing British agreements, compromising national security. Similarly, an honourable nation maintained its good faith, particularly in commerce and finance, since high credit rebounded to the nation's reputation.[4]

It was maintained that national honour complimented national security, and underpinned national interests. Keeping national honour pure and unstained provided an impression of strength, which could be leveraged against rival powers to acquire advantages at minimal

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[2] 'Do you believe, that if you destroy the English character in India, you can maintain your power there? Do you really imagine, that if you by your conduct produce a conviction and feeling throughout the public mind in those vast possessions, that this is not a country maintaining its institutions by honour and integrity, you can long maintain the extraordinary power which you possess in that vast empire? Why, it is absurd to suppose for one moment that you could do so.' Thomas Wakley, HC Deb 16 July 1847 vol 94, cc. 440-441.
[3] As Earl Grey explained, 'A great nation cannot forfeit her reputation for courage, and for a determination to maintain her rights and her honour – [she] cannot become suspected of irresolution and timidity, without provoking wrongs and insults which she cannot always continue to endure.' Grey, HL Deb 11 April 1864 vol 174, cc. 754-755. Russell agreed: 'It is clear that where your honour is attacked, and the representations you make are not listened to, you must defend your honour.' *Ibid*, cc. 757-758.
[4] This was also linked to the reputation of British merchants, as Earl Grey asserted: 'I think the high name for honour which the British merchants formerly bore, and the character for uprightness which they enjoyed all over the world, were one of the most precious possessions of the country.' HL Deb 19 Feb 1861 vol 161, cc. 557-558.

expense. Yet, if upholding national honour was motivated by a fear of failure, then it may be argued that such failures did not bring the advertised consequences of national ruin. Indeed, one could argue that the greatest penalty for failing to meet national honour's tenets was not the ruin of the country, but vulnerability to attack from political rivals. Policies which 'truckled' to foreign powers, issued empty threats, committed outrages, engaged in excessive meddling, or failed to acquire satisfaction for insults, were all condemned as dishonourable. Yet, charging opponents with these errors was not straightforward; such accusations were vigorously contested, and alternative interpretations of the ethic were provided to demonstrate that the national honour had been upheld after all. This highlights an important contention of this research project: national honour was a contested political space.

Across the five decades of cases, it may be argued that only two – the Don Pacifico and Trent Affairs – provided political triumphs. Public opinion played a key role in the efficacy of the rhetoric used during the Trent confrontation with the United States. Strong public support encouraged Palmerston to maintain his quest for satisfaction against Washington. However, just because Britons were roused by the circumstances of the case, this did not necessarily guarantee success. Disraeli leveraged a hypersensitive species of prestige to persevere through the Russo-Turkish War, and acquire 'Peace with Honour' in Berlin. Yet, in the triumphant aftermath, the Prime Minister discovered that maintaining such a demanding standard of prestige could be immensely costly. Indeed, it may be argued that his subsequent failings in Africa and Asia impeded Conservative chances in the 1880 election. On occasions where Britons were uninformed, such as during the Oregon controversy, this granted Aberdeen greater flexibility to adjust the language used, and reach a peaceful resolution. Although Palmerston leveraged British obligations and honour in his Iberian interventions, success in these ventures was not sufficiently popular to net him a political triumph. Even where the rhetoric was deployed, the record of Parliamentary votes attests to the reality of the government's narrow support.

Thus, it may be argued that incidents devoid of public enthusiasm were less likely to receive Parliamentary acclaim or gain a satisfactory result. Significantly, this did not deter contemporaries representing themselves with national honour's rhetoric in the forefront of their arguments. One is drawn to Thomas Attwood, who must have known that his third appeal for British intervention in Poland in 1839 would not succeed, yet he still deployed

the same rhetorical flourishes which had failed him in the past.[5] One is struck by the apparent futility of these appeals, yet Attwood's contemporaries were also undeterred from making similar cases against the government when there was little hope of success. The opposition's insistence on higher standards of satisfaction from Russia, Spain, the United States, or France were unlikely to influence the government's policy when a more pragmatic policy was available. Yet, since the opposition was expected to take government to task in foreign policy, the rhetoric of honour was the traditional means of making this case. Its constant presence in foreign policy debates – whether warranted or not – may have given the impression that the opposition were simply going through the motions, and may also have diluted the rhetoric's potency.

Clearly, there were limits to this rhetoric's power and influence. The two Polish cases illustrate how important context was when deploying this rhetoric, but the best case was also one which was free from complexity. Schleswig-Holstein was far too complicated for public opinion to embrace Palmerston's position with much zeal, while Danish culpability and the possibility of a disastrous Anglo-German war seems to have sobered British minds. Indeed, the episode was regarded as a tragedy, from which lessons should be learned in the future.[6] Nor would Britons be fooled by a technically successful outcome. Alexander McLeod's plight may have upset Britons, but his acquittal was the result of American legal procedure, and not of Palmerston's use of national honour's rhetoric. No one attempted to offer thanks for Palmerston's pressure campaign; attention turned to resolving Anglo-American border disputes, subjects generally of less interest to the public than the plight of a British subject. It was only once President James K. Polk denied Britain's equal rights to Oregon that public attention returned to the theatre. Aberdeen recognised the country's conditional interest, and he settled the matter by dispensing with the rhetoric of honour and pacifying American bluster.

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[5] Attwood, HC Deb 25 March 1839 vol 46, cc. 1186-98. Attwood's Motion was not seconded by any other Member.

[6] As Major Dickson asserted, 'England was a patriotic country. Englishmen cherished her honour, and had no wish to see the Danish policy repeated.' HC Deb 1 Aug 1870 vol 203, cc. 1338-1339. Salisbury also recognised this trend, 'We know that the military storms of this era do not give much notice. They burst upon us suddenly when we least expect them; and with our onerous obligations, and our minute military force, we may at any moment be put in the dilemma of either sacrificing our national honour or of rushing on to certain defeat. I do not think that defeat is likely to be the horn of the dilemma we should adopt. My fear is that when the extremity comes we shall look at the obligation, turn it round and round, talk very big, lecture one side or the other, and then when Europe cries shame on us, we shall congratulate ourselves at home upon the moral pinnacle on which we stand. That of late years has generally been our part when we have had inconvenient obligations to encounter, and it will increasingly be our part in the future.' HL Deb 6 March 1871 vol 204, cc. 1367-1368.

The conflicts with China and Afghanistan were somewhat different. Although the British public were confronted with details of an immoral opium trade, and questions of Captain Elliot's mishandling of the situation, Melbourne's administration proceeded to acquire redress well before assessing the Parliamentary mood. Ministers justified this behaviour when the expedition had already departed for China. When news of the disaster in Kabul reached London in 1842, Peel's government was similarly quick to act without considering either public sentiment or Parliamentary opinion. Due to concerns of prestige and Britain's role in India, an immediate campaign was excused, rather than pre-emptively explained, suggesting that different standards were applied to non-European powers than their European counterparts. Furthermore, when Palmerston did proceed against Greece with a similar vigour, the government was subject to intense censure, from which it only escaped because of the Foreign Secretary's dramatic identification with *Civis Romanus sum*. This also suggests an understanding that non-European exigencies required less explanation than those based in Europe. Economic motives, and the influence of East India Company men within Parliament and society, suggests that the government acted under ulterior motives, seeking security in imperial interests while cloaking their behaviour in the rhetoric of honour.

This behaviour was not tied to a political party or position. Indeed, whether Whig, Liberal, Tory, or Radical, there was arguably not much consistency at all, and opposition figures insisted instead that their opponent's interpretation of national honour was incorrect. This was possible in the first place because national honour boasted a deep lexicon which complimented the use of rhetoric in debate. Contemporaries used this rhetoric when pressing for the fulfilment of Britain's treaty obligations,[7] the maintenance of her armed forces,[8] the support of colonists,[9] the prompt payment of her debts,[10] the fulfilment of any threats she

[7] As the *Morning Post* declared, 'There is no test of national honour so unerring as that which is involved in the honest adherence to national obligations – no obligation so biding as a solemn treaty.' *Morning Post*, 2 June 1847. In Parliament: Lord Althorp, HC Deb 12 July 1832 vol 14, cc. 261-262; Clarendon, HL Deb 15 July 1845 vol 82, cc. 497-498; Sir John Walsh, HC Deb 10 Feb 1865 vol 177, cc. 146-147; Salisbury, HL Deb 6 March 1871 vol 204, cc. 1363-1364.

[8] Lord Brougham, HL Deb 26 March 1839 vol 46 cc. 1218-9. Lord Palmerston, HC Deb 14 Feb 1843 vol 66 cc. 569-570; Lawrence Palk, HC Deb 10 Feb 1871 vol 204, cc. 133-134

[9] Roebuck, HL Deb 5 Feb 1838 vol 40, cc. 754-755; Ellenborough, HL Deb 20 Feb 1865 vol. 177, cc. 4433-435; Sir Frederic Smith, *Ibid*, cc. 1596-1597.

[10] Lord Althorp, HC Deb 26 Jan 1832 vol 9, cc. 916-918; Lord Dalmeny, HC Deb 11 March 1847 vol 90, cc. 1176-1178. 'It is not merely to our colonies, our trade, or our wealth, that we derive our greatness and safety, but to the national honour – and what is national honour but the paying of all our just debts?' *Bradford Observer*, 24 Nov 1842.

made,[11] the abolition of the slave trade,[12] and the defence of mistreated subjects overseas.[13] But it was also perceived at stake closer to home; in an engagement with necessary reforms,[14] in the maintenance of pledges to electors,[15] and in the erection of local defences.[16] Remarkably, it was even claimed to be a 'point of honour' for the accession of Catholics into Trinity College Dublin.[17] Since national honour contained a lexicon sufficiently broad to encapsulate a wide range of questions, it is not surprising that it consistently appeared in discussions of foreign policy.

I: National Honour and British Foreign Policy

This leads to the first research question – explicating national honour from British foreign policy. This has been informed by an analysis of contemporary debates, which revealed significant lexical themes. Arguably the defining lexical theme of national honour was its frequent contrast to the relations between honourable gentlemen, as contemporaries justified their interpretations of national honour by asking, essentially, what a gentleman would do.[18]

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[11] This was particularly relevant to the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, see Chapter Five. In Parliament: Richard Cobden, HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 832-833; Salisbury, *Ibid*, cc. 853-854; Henry Liddell, *Ibid*, cc. 895-897. *The Exeter Flying Post*; July 6 1864.

[12] Earl Grey reflected 'If it was necessary to resist foreign encroachment, to defend the honour and interest of the country by war, was it less necessary to uphold the honour and the character of the country by abolishing from every portion of the British dominions the odious condition of slavery, so abhorrent to the principles of the Constitution, as well as to the breast of every Englishman.' Earl Grey, HL Deb 25 June 1833 vol 18 cc. 1210-1211. Palmerston asserted that 'it is as much for the national honour of France to put down the Slave Trade as for the national honour of England.' HC Deb 4 Feb 1845 vol 77, cc. 121-122.

[13] Earl of Mountcashell, HL Deb 8 Feb 1841 vol 56 cc. 364-6; J. H. Baillie, HC Deb 23 June 1842 vol 64, cc. 444-445. This was famously affirmed in the 1850 Don Pacifico Affair, see Chapter Two.

[14] Earl Grey, HL Deb 3 Oct 1831 vol 7, cc. 968-969; Thomas Macaulay, HC Deb 10 Oct 1831 vol 8, cc. 397-398.

[15] Sidney Herbert, HC Deb 9 Feb 1846 vol 83 cc. 629-631; Escott, HC Deb 27 Feb 1846 vol 84, cc. 263-265. The Prince Consort believed it was a point of honour for Aberdeen to fulfil his pledge to free trade, Memorandum by the Prince Albert, 23 Feb 1851 in *Letters of Queen Victoria*, II, p. 1162. Conversely, Derby insisted that it was a point of honour to stand for protectionism, at least until after the next election, Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians, 4 March 1851 in *Ibid*, 1194.

[16] Russell, HL Deb 20 Feb 1865 vol. 177, cc. 436-437; Seymour Fitzgerald, HC Deb 13 March 1865 vol 177, cc. 1546-1547.

[17] Richard Sheil, HC Deb 4 Feb 1845 vol 77, cc. 105-106. He added, 'It is not open. Is it right that exclusion should continue? It is a point of honour with us, and honour and interest are nearly identified.' *Ibid*, cc. 106-107.

[18] As Lord Althorp explained, in reference to the Russian Dutch Loan, 'as between one upright man in private life and another, so he thought it should be between two nations. If a gentleman pledged himself to the payment of a debt, to which there was also a third party, he thought it would be highly dishonourable in that gentleman to take advantage of the circumstance of that third party having refused to fulfil his engagement, as a legal reason for also refusing to fulfil his engagement. If the conditions on which a debt was contracted were altered or broken by circumstances over which the creditor had no control, did it follow that the moral obligation of the debt was also broken? And as between man and man, so it ought to obtain between nations; what would be dishonourable in the one, would be dishonourable in the other; and what

While national honour dominated the political discourse, the personal honour of the gentleman had not been superseded. The Queen, as both the fount and personification of national honour, upheld that her own honour was connected to the nation, and that she cared for it above all other considerations.[19]

When explaining military responses, the duel was commonly referenced, but the private relations of gentlemen could also excuse a less belligerent course. Lord John Russell justified forbearance towards Spain in 1848 by recalling the tale of Sir Archibald Hamilton, whose choice was either to laugh off an insult, or go on the attack.[20] That Hamilton chose to do the former was sufficient for Russell, but it was not satisfactory for his critics. Further investigation of this connection reveals additional cleavages between the personal and national spheres. The language of honour was gendered; a manly, masculine policy defended national honour and accepted no insults, while an effeminate policy gave way to foreign threats, to the detriment of Britain's reputation. When criticising what he perceived as a fear of Russia, Thomas Attwood accused the government of 'emasculating' England.[21] Yet, a feminine form of honour was also present. *The Times* could assert that 'The honour of the English flag is like that of an Englishwoman – it must not be ever so lightly blown upon with impunity or without atonement.'[22] The honour of the nation, like that of a woman, had to be preserved in its purest form. Queen Victoria's position as the fount of honour, and the connection between the honour of the nation and that of the Crown, provided additional complexity.

Further to this connection between the person and the nation, a key measurement of national honour was the country's ability to defend its citizens abroad. This emerges as a consistent theme whenever questions of insult were raised. How were Britons to believe in their nation's privileged position, if Alexander McLeod, Captain Elliot, or David Pacifico could be mistreated without consequence? Moreover, British captives in Canton, Kabul, and

was morally binding on the one was morally binding on the other.' Lord Althorp, HC Deb 26 Jan 1832 vol 9, cc. 916-918.

[19] In response to Russell's urging to remember her honour, the Queen replied: 'She must observe that she does not require to be reminded of the honour of England, which touches her nearly more than anyone else…she could never forgive herself if, for imaginary interests…or a supposed point of honour (for the honour of England is not engaged to maintain by arms an arrangement which we refused to guarantee, and which has unluckily led to consequences the very reverse of what was hoped for), she were to sanction measures which might lead to a European war.' Queen Victoria to Earl Russell, Feb 15 1864, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series*, I, pp. 158-159.

[20] Russell, HC Deb 5 June 1848 vol 99, cc. 383-384.

[21] Attwood, HC Deb 9 July 1833 vol 19, cc. 420-421.

[22] *The Times*, 27 Feb 1839.

Abyssinia were as imprisoned as the national honour itself, and the latter could only be vindicated if the former were liberated. This close connection between Britain's status and the fate of its citizens was arguably the defining theme of insult. It was also extended to individuals under British protection. The Trent Affair resonated with Britons because the Union violated British hospitality, and threatened her supremacy on the seas. Indeed, the straightforward nature of that insult aided Palmerston's efforts to press it to his political advantage.

On the other hand, the context of a crisis greatly influenced national honour's efficacy. On occasions where the crisis was more complicated, such as Schleswig-Holstein, the government struggled to make the case resonate with the public. This complexity could also work in the government's favour. It may be argued that Aberdeen's adept removal of national honour from the Oregon Question succeeded because Britons cared little for such a distant, unfamiliar territory, and were more animated by the prospect of Washington denying its equal rights in the dispute. From this, one could argue that there were limits to the power of national honour's rhetoric. Palmerston's critique of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty discomforted the Conservatives, but it did not turn the British public against Anglo-American peacemaking. Similarly, the Liberals were lambasted for abandoning Denmark in 1864, but no amount of pressure could have convinced the Queen or non-interventionists in the Cabinet to instigate a war against the Germans for national honour's sake.

As contrasts between the honour of the gentleman and the honour of a nation were so frequently made, it is worth reflecting on the methodology of Frank Henderson Stewart. In his analysis of personal honour, Stewart presented a tripartite concept, containing inner, outer, and claim-right aspects. He contended that inner honour corresponded with a person's dignity, while outer honour concerned their reputation, and the claim-right concerned the treatment they were entitled to depending on how they husbanded their honour in the honour-group they belonged. For conceptual purposes, it may be argued that Britain belonged to an honour-group of great powers, and was thus entitled to respect from lesser powers. That Britons perceived themselves as the premier world power certainly influenced the treatment they expected to receive from contemporary powers, and one discerns that on occasions where this expectation was not met, indignation or even outrage was the result.

Furthermore, as the above analysis has shown, contemporaries did distinguish between the three aspects of honour in their rhetoric, largely through synonyms. There were appreciable

differences between the nation's dignity, prestige, and influence, though these were contained under the ethic's wider lexical umbrella. In national terms, to speak of prestige was to speak of reputation, largely a reputation of power, but this reputation was also articulated in alternative ways, such as in reference to credit. Further, it may be argued that contemporaries understood influence as the ability to leverage the nation's honour to achieve policy goals at a cheaper rate than through military force alone. This included moral influence, which concerned the nation's reputation for just governance, particularly in relation to its colonial possessions. Prestige and moral influence were most fervently pressed in India, though it was disputed whether British prestige or Britain's moral influence was more important in that theatre.

However, as seen in Disraeli's reimagining of prestige, these synonyms could serve as a surrogate for national honour itself. This lexical development may have been affected by contextual factors, such as the increase in imperial activity which emphasised prestige's importance, placing it on par with national honour. Prestige was consistently associated with Britain's colonial possessions, and it may be argued that prestige increased in importance as Britain's imperial commitments increased. Prestige was also linked to Britain's naval power, and it was validated by the respect which states accrued to Britain's capacity to project this power against them. A good example is how American fears of Britain's capacity to bombard her coastal cities heaped pressure upon Washington to resolve Anglo-American confrontations.[23] Britain had also demonstrated its military capacity in 1840 by attacking Syria, defeating the Chinese in 1842, or engaging in a costly campaign to liberate prisoners from Abyssinian captivity in 1868. A naval blockade forced Greece to accede to British demands for redress. The Queen appreciated that these demonstrations of power increased foreign respect for British power and enhanced the country's security abroad.[24]

As seen during the Russo-Turkish War, however, contemporaries possessed their own interpretations of what prestige meant, and what it required. Was prestige not best husbanded by maintaining a reputation for justice and local improvement? Some maintained that if India was maintained by the sword alone, Britain's hold on the subcontinent was unsustainable. Nonetheless, Britain's military reputation was clearly an important factor in her prestige. It was common to highlight the role of Britain's armed forces in defending her

[23] Rebecca Berens Matzke, 'Britain Gets Its Way: Power and Peace in Anglo-American Relations, 1838-1846,' *War in History*, 8, No. 1 (Jan 2001), 19-46.
[24] Queen Victoria to Lord John Russell, 18 Oct 1847 in *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, II, p. 931.

national honour, and debates over military budgets testify to this close connection.[25] Maintaining this reputation was itself a source of power, and as the Marquess of Salisbury understood, for Britain to lose such a reputation was not merely a matter of sentiment, but constituted 'a loss of actual power.'[26]

When measuring the utility of the tripartite methodology for national honour, it may be argued that contemporaries recognised that a country which upheld its national honour would be entitled to respect, security, and influence. This validates the claim-right aspect of Stewart's thesis, yet, as noted, these synonyms could be used interchangeably. Contemporaries also spoke of Britain's character for justice, moral conduct, or magnanimity, which would rebound to her honour.[27] These rhetorical patterns complicate a straightforward classification of Stewart's methodology, yet for scholars in search of structure, it may be argued that Stewart does provide an important framework which aids closer analysis of national honour's lexicon. As Stewart did not account for his methodology being used in studies of national honour, it is not surprising that his tripartite model is not a perfect fit for the ethic. However, Stewart's model does help explain the reaction to foreign insults. It also suggests that national honour boasted a linguistic depth which fluctuated during these five decades, contributing to its complexity.

Contemporaries did not require Stewart's model to appreciate national honour's tenets, or to use the ethic's rhetoric in their political attacks. There was little room for contending that national honour did not matter, or that its requirements were unfamiliar. As *The Times* asserted in 1864, if Britain received an insult, then 'every child can tell the necessary sequence.'[28] This formula also applied to other countries, as France was permitted to acquire redress against Portugal, despite the Anglo-Portuguese alliance. The opposition were urged to allow France the same right to vindicate her honour as they demanded for Britain.[29] It was also deemed dishonourable to inflict insults upon lesser powers like Portugal, where those

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[25] 'We had been on the point of war with France, and although we might have escaped the difficulty now, we ought never to leave the country in the state it then was, but have in readiness a Navy adequate to maintain the honour of the country.' Charles Napier, HC Deb 16 May 1845 vol 80, cc. 462-463.
[26] Robert Cecil, HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 850-852.
[27] Charles Adderly, HC Deb 4 Aug 1871 vol 208, cc. 867-869. Adderly did warn that 'there were limits beyond which magnanimity became folly, subjecting those who passed them to suspicion of want of proper spirit and self-respect.' *Ibid*, cc. 868-869.
[28] *The Times*, 8 July 1864.
[29] 'What seems most to be grudged by certain hon. Gentlemen on the other side of the House is, that after our own honour has been vindicated, and after we have afforded to our subjects safety for their persons and their property, we have also suffered France to pursue the same course; that we have allowed the subjects of the Citizen King to procure that protection from the insults of the absolute and holy Miguel, which we have afforded to the English residents in that country.' Lord Morpeth, HC Deb 9 Feb 1832 vol 10, cc. 139-140.

powers were not capable of acquiring redress. France took offence at its exclusion from the settlement of the Eastern Crisis in 1840, due to a hypersensitivity which was supposedly uniquely French. Yet, when facing similar exclusion in 1878, Disraeli roused a sense of outrage not dissimilar from that presented by Adolphe Thiers almost forty years before, all without any semblance of self-reflection.

II: National Honour – A Political Weapon

This hypocrisy and inconsistency lead to the second research question – how contemporaries used national honour's rhetoric to defend policy and criticise their opponents. The evidence reveals that one's disposition towards a political party did not substantively affect contemporary views of national honour, at least initially. Palmerston's lengthy stewardship of the Foreign Office may suggest that Whigs were more determined to defend national honour, but this mission was also claimed by Conservatives. Radical MPs were more variable, but their broad church of political views makes any efforts to classify their general position towards national honour difficult. Some could be critical, such as Lord Brougham's rejection of the conventional interpretation of prestige.[30] Others could be more persistent, such as Thomas Attwood's Parliamentary campaign to present the abandonment of Poland as a stain on the national honour. John Bright consistently attacked an excessive interventionism, which he presented as detrimental to national honour.[31] Where Radicals coalesced around the Whig interpretation of foreign policy, they supported the government's defence of national honour. However, once the Conservatives enjoyed the support of Radical and Irish MPs, the picture became more complicated.

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[30] He rejected the idea that Britain was required to show her power to rivals, in order to receive respect. Brougham, HL Deb 2 Feb 1843 vol 66, cc. 39-41. Earlier in Brougham's career, however, he gave the following warning to the Commons in the event that Britain did not maintain her honour, cautioning that Britain's rivals '…will not assail us by any direct and immediate measures, but will accustom us, by degrees, to bear first, one thing, and then another, till at last, when they come to that point at which we necessarily must stop, we shall find that we have lost the golden opportunity of resisting them with success; and having lost with it that which, to individuals, is everything, and to nations almost everything, namely, our honour; we shall be driven at their good time, and not at our own, to wage a long. and sanguinary, and, perhaps, unsuccessful struggle, against those whom we could have resisted successfully, had we resisted them in the outset of their aggressions.' Lord Brougham HC Deb 3 Feb 1824 vol 10, cc. 60-61.

[31] 'I believe nothing more firmly and unchangeably than this, that the past policy of the English Government with regard to various matters connected with the continent of Europe has been a policy not tending to her honour, not good for her people, disastrous to her finances, and, I am sure, most needlessly meddling, and of no advantage whatever to Europe.' Bright, HC Deb, 26 March 1860 vol 157, cc. 1266-1267.

Nonetheless, in the five decades analysed here, it is possible to discern changes in how national honour was interpreted and expressed, during a period of shifting party identities. Before these adjustments were made in party disposition, however, one notes that Palmerston's focus on national honour increased his popularity and made him indispensable to the Whigs. That Peel's administration grappled with extensive domestic questions may have reduced his opportunities to present a truly Conservative conception of national honour in the 1840s. Yet, one could argue that Aberdeen's tenure as Foreign Secretary emphasised the same principles of compromise and forbearance which Disraeli's Conservatives later balked at. The Don Pacifico Affair confirmed Palmerston's status as the great defender of British interests and honour, but the establishment of the Liberal Party suggested that Palmerston would face challenges from old Peelites and Radicals within the new party if he pursued a confrontational policy.

In the aftermath of the Crimean War, there was a palpable desire to avoid foreign entanglements, and husband British resources. That Britain's lead in industry, finance, and military strength was increasingly challenged by the United States and Germany presented further obstacles. This shift in the balance of power was arguably confirmed in the failure of the Schleswig-Holstein policy, though Palmerston's durable reputation stunted Tory electoral aspirations thereafter. The post-Palmerston period reveals further alterations. Thus, William Gladstone's turn towards a more moralising species of honour was met by Benjamin Disraeli's reorientation of the Conservative Party, which was arguably Palmerstonian in its emphasis on national honour and prestige. These transformations did discomfort traditionalists, as shown in the Earl of Derby's rejection of prestige, and his defection to the Liberal Party in the 1880s. Popular dissatisfaction with Disraeli's brand of Conservativism arguably brought Gladstone his second premiership in 1880. Yet, it may be argued that Gladstone's unsuccessful emphasis on a moral species of national honour within a 'Concert of Europe' both horrified the imperialist members of the Liberal Party, and facilitated the Conservative domination of party politics in the late nineteenth century.[32]

These political developments were also reflected in the dramatic rise of the press. Palmerston's recognition of the importance of these extra-Parliamentary resources is well-documented. By cultivating close connections with sympathetic editors and journalists, Palmerston enhanced his profile as the defender of British honour. His legacy was arguably

[32] Charmley, *Splendid Isolation?*, pp. 174-182.

imitated by Aberdeen, who utilised *The Times* and *Quarterly Review* to great effect in his struggles with the United States. Political dispositions among newspapers could change with the appointment of new editors, as seen in the reorientation of the *Morning Chronicle* and *Morning Post*, which effectively switched sides by the end of Palmerston's career. *The Times*' predominance did not negate the potency of regional newspapers, which could apply appreciable pressure upon the government's conception of national honour. Some, like the *London Evening Standard*, *Daily News*, or *Manchester Guardian* adhered to a consistent political position. Nonetheless, as these organs represented the primary connection which Britons had to the public sphere, their contribution to the debate cannot be ignored. Indeed, the media's participation in these crises reveal further evidence of a dynamic rhetorical landscape which influenced public debate around national honour.

During the period under examination here, the scholar of national honour is denied a professedly Whig, Conservative, or Liberal species of the ethic, as the rhetoric was adapted to the changing political circumstances. Compounding this challenge of classification was the fact that MPs adopted inconsistent positions. Sir Robert Peel critiqued the logic of maintaining the Russo-Dutch Loan when in opposition, yet insisted that British good faith and honour required its maintenance a decade later. Conservatives complained of the forbearance policy adopted towards Spain in 1848, and demanded satisfaction, yet two years later urged forbearance and even arbitration in Palmerston's standoff with Greece. But Palmerston was guilty of this inconsistency too; he lambasted the Webster-Ashburton Treaty as a dishonourable submission, despite being prepared to accept a less favourable arbitrated settlement a decade before.[33] Further, while Palmerston pressed that British obligations justified intervention in the civil wars of Portugal and Spain, he ultimately retreated from similar obligations to Denmark thirty years later.

If national honour was as immovable and uncompromising as contemporaries claimed, one would expect greater consistency in its application. However, if one takes the position that national honour was also a political tool, then it is not surprising to see it leveraged by the government and the opposition, regardless of the circumstances. It was rare for the opposition to express satisfaction with the government's presentation of events, and even minor episodes could draw harsh rhetoric. In a debate over the 1860 Anglo-French commercial treaty, Conservatives pressed that the agreement would bring dishonour in

[33] See Chapter One.

addition to financial ruin.[34] Such positions were possible because of national honour's rhetorically pliable status; contemporaries presented the most demanding interpretation of national honour, or emphasised neglected elements of the ethic, to justify their opposition. Faced with these attacks, the government responded – as seen in the Schleswig-Holstein crisis – by reasoning that opposition figures refused to clarify whether they would follow a different policy.

Occasionally, this opposition descended into farce, particularly when referring to crises in hyperbolic language. Emphasising the comparatively minor Spanish expulsion of Ambassador Bulwer from Madrid as the greatest injury Britain ever suffered, or as 'unparalleled' in her history, may appear ridiculous. Yet, these claims were fused with a sense of nostalgia, and reminded Britons of their triumphant record of supremacy. Contemporaries even reflected fondly on Oliver Cromwell as an example of a British figure who once brooked no insult, and pressed for maximum satisfaction whatever the consequences.[35] Turning these sentiments against the government emphasised the damage which had been done to the country. In the Spanish case, critics claimed that the diffusion of ruinously pacific, liberal principles had reduced the willingness to engage in risk for the sake of national honour. It did not seem to matter that in 1848 the divided Conservatives had no intention of making war against Spain. In making these challenges to the Ministerial interpretation of national honour, opposition figures took advantage of the fact that they would not have to pursue the policy they recommended. This opened the opposition to a charge of cynicism, yet this contrarian behaviour was so common in political debate as to have become routine.

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[34] George Bentinck even declared 'a war would be less prejudicial both to the honour and the interests of the country than the final ratification of the Treaty… Although war might be disastrous, it could never be disgraceful to this country, which he considered the adoption of this Treaty would be; and war would be cheaper in every respect, for he believed that the financial ruin which this Treaty inevitably involved would be of a character to which the expense of all former wars—to use the expression sanctioned by high authority in that House—would be a mere fleabite in comparison… For these reasons he begged to express his cordial dissent to the ratification of the Treaty—a treaty which could only have been concocted by those who were alike indifferent to the honour and blind to the interests of the country.' HC Deb 9 March 1860 vol 157, cc.279-281. Earl Grey agreed, and claimed the Treaty inflicted 'a stain on the honour of England in the eyes of Europe.' Earl Grey, HL Deb 15 March 1860 vol 157, cc. 578-579.

[35] Lord Dudley Stuart, HC Deb 17 March 1837 vol 37, cc. 651-653. Stuart was careful to clarify that 'He did not wish it to be understood, that it was exactly this mode of proceeding which he should advise the noble Minister for Foreign Affairs to pursue on the present occasion; but he must state his opinion, that the want of vigour and alacrity to defend the honour of the country which the noble Lord had displayed, was most culpable.' *Ibid*, cc. 652-653.

Contemporaries could at least agree that an insulted national honour would have to be vindicated. Indeed, a high premium was placed upon this right to vindication. War with China might encourage opportunistic rivals to take advantage of British distraction, but Palmerston asserted that this unfavourable strategic position must not deter Britain from acquiring reparations. Similarly, although in 1861 some lamented that pressing for vindication might place Britain and the Confederacy on the same side, this regrettable outcome could not deter the government from its 'sacred' task of redeeming national honour.[36] This sense of damaged honour could rally political opinion behind a certain policy, but as the above evidence suggests, the scenario had to be relatively free from complexity or controversy to work. One is struck by the straightforward nature of the Trent Affair, which saw even the Conservatives united behind Palmerston's policy of seeking satisfaction. Of course, this did not prevent opposition figures from later criticising the degree of satisfaction as insufficient, considering the lack of an apology from Washington.[37]

If it is the case that opposition figures made their positions as obstinate as possible, then this obstinacy was aided by the rhetoric of national honour. The ethic's political value was not merely in its popular appeal or resonance, then, but also its versatility, which could be adapted to the circumstances. This did not mean opposition figures were consistently belligerent. When the government determined upon a military response against China, the opposition 'got a cold fit,' and pleaded for a peaceful solution.[38] Conversely, when pacific options were prioritised, it was claimed that offending powers would mistake British moderation for weakness, and seek to take advantage. Such was the contentious nature of nineteenth century opposition politics, yet it is striking how extensively the rhetoric of national honour featured in these debates.

Furthermore, although the ethic was publicly prioritised, and could facilitate political victory, it was also inherently demanding. One is struck by the constraints placed upon Benjamin Disraeli's policy during the Eastern Crisis, largely due to his reframing of prestige as an ethic which required that Britain be involved, or at least directly consulted, in any major foreign development. These claims were certainly aided by the prevailing sense of Russophobia and jingoism, which increased pressure on the Prime Minister. When he returned from the Berlin Congress after acquiring 'Peace with Honour,' it seemed Disraeli

[36] *The Spectator*, quoted in *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 3 Dec 1861.
[37] See Baron Kingsdown, HL Deb 6 Feb 1862 vol 165, cc. 47-49.
[38] *The Globe*, 21 March 1840.

had outmanoeuvred his critics and seized a popular triumph. Yet, these high expectations proved disastrous when Britain was challenged by Afghanistan, the Boers, and the Zulus all within the year. Facing defeat in these three theatres, Disraeli failed to meet the high standards in prestige he set for himself, yet it may be argued that such an uncompromising version of prestige was always unsustainable. Indeed, it is significant that thirty years before the Eastern Crisis, Disraeli criticised this species of hypersensitive prestige as insufficient, and overvalued.[39]

III: National Honour – Facilitating and Constraining

This highlights the third research aim – the extent to which national honour constrained or facilitated policy. Further to this aim, it is worth reflecting on the honour-script which Avner Offer presented. Offer described a code of honour which was inherently demanding and uncompromising. It established certain standards of behaviour, and consisted of a formula which was widely accepted. In the main, this formula consisted of acquiring redress for insult, upholding obligations, and avoiding policies which might be described as dishonourable. Although Offer considered the honour-script in the context of 1914,it may be argued that the concept does help explain foreign policy debates in the preceding period. The prevailing sensitivity to insult, and the commonly expressed determination to acquire satisfaction, appear to validate Offer's presentation of honour as inherently rigid. However, this research project has demonstrated that exceptions to this script did exist. Although the formula was familiar to contemporaries, it was not akin to law.

There were moments where the government either failed to adhere to this honour-script, or bypassed it entirely. Forbearance did not fit within the honour-script, yet such behaviour was regularly referenced, either by Ministers attempting to avoid conflict, such as towards Spain in 1848, or where opposition figures intended to pressure the government by insisting that alternative options existed, such as towards Greece in 1850. One could argue that Aberdeen's effort to reclassify the Oregon dispute as one of rights, rather than national honour, also violated the honour-script. Arbitration posed additional challenges, though it may be argued that arbitration was a developing concept in the nineteenth century, and that nations were hesitant to subject concerns of national honour to foreign judgement. Typically,

[39] Disraeli, HC Deb 23 June 1842 vol 64, cc. 498-499.

contemporaries were eager to be seen to mediate as a third party, and Palmerston highlighted this role as evidence of Britain's high esteem among contemporary powers.[40] If the honour-script was as inviolable as Offer described, there would be no political or ideological space for these exceptions in Britain or in any other nation. It is thus contended here that the decision to abide by the honour-script was influenced by the context and circumstances of foreign confrontations. A degree of pragmatism is palpable in these decisions, and one discerns that the potential for victory also influenced the decision either to press these ideas or to withdraw from them.

Yet, in defence of the honour-script, it may be argued that Disraeli in 1878 – like Melbourne in 1840, or Palmerston in 1861 – felt constrained to seek satisfaction because of it. Conversely, one could argue that it was not merely a fear of failure which motivated this behaviour, but also the fear of being criticised *for* those failures. In this sense, the honour-script may be viewed not merely as a policy guide, but also as a source of legitimacy for opposition attacks. As it was commonly asserted that the government was dutybound to uphold national honour, the government which failed to do so could expect to be expelled from office by a disgusted electorate. Perhaps the best way to avoid this outcome was to acquire a satisfactory result. Conflict with China and Afghanistan provoked extensive challenges against the immoral conception and mismanagement of these policies, yet the spectacle of triumph made direct criticism much more difficult thereafter, and greatly aided Sir Robert Peel's self-image as the Prime Minister who redeemed national honour no matter the cost.

British obligations may also be viewed as a constraint in this respect, since their linkage to the honour-script moved statesmen to pursue policies which would otherwise have been rejected. The obligation Britain incurred to defend Portugal and Spain forced Palmerston to expend energy and resources in campaigns which were not particularly popular, even when successful. Yet, the evidence reveals that contemporaries understood these obligations in conditional terms. According to the honour-script, Britain should have engaged in war with the Germans for the sake of its Danish obligations in 1864. That these obligations were

[40] Palmerston, HC Deb 4 Feb 1836 vol 31, cc. 84-85. As Samuel Laing discerned: 'The natural and humane desire participated in by all to stop the effusion of blood and a wish to keep up the influence of the country in Europe, combined with the traditions and pre-possessions of the Foreign Office, which taught that the honour of the country was lost if we did not exchange a certain amount of correspondence with other countries whenever a fresh settlement took place in Europe, rendered that office peculiarly inclined to offer the mediation of this country in cases of foreign disputes.' Samuel Laing, HC Deb 20 July 1866 vol 184, cc. 1219-1220.

undermined by a lack of enthusiasm for war, and by pointing to Danish violations of its own obligations, must count against the honour-script's accuracy. Further, Russia's repeated violations of the Treaty of Vienna provoked several debates on Poland, but Palmerston refused to countenance intervention in the name of British obligations in both 1830 and 1863.

The honour-script prescribed standards which could constrain contemporaries, and render them vulnerable to criticism. However, the honour-script was subject to the versatile nature of national honour itself. Due to its preponderance of synonyms, it was possible to argue that diametrically opposed policies were still consistent with national honour's tenets. Thus, when equipped with notions of good faith and credit, Ministers facilitated the maintenance of the Russian-Dutch Loan, a result which would otherwise have been as politically impossible as it was legally questionable.[41] To renege on these financial obligations would have been ruinous to Britain's reputation for liquidity, and contemporaries even claimed that Britain should set a higher standard for credit, regardless of what its rivals intended.[42] As Ministers covered this policy in the rhetoric of honour, the opposition criticised their obfuscation, but they could not impede the government's determination to continue the payments to Russia.[43] The honour-script was thus compromised by honour's lexicon, which blurred the lines between what was honourable and what was not. Furthermore, it may be argued that even where national honour constrained the government, this constraint was not always unwelcome.

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[41] As the Solicitor General Sir John Campbell asserted at the time, 'the good faith and the honour of the country required us to pay this money; and he was sure, he said, that, under such circumstances, the House would support his Majesty's Ministers in discharging such a national obligation.' HC Deb 20 July 1832 vol 14, cc. 597-599.

[42] Thus in a Commons session of 1847, Lord Dalmeny – father of Prime Minister Rosebery – 'Remember that our public credit, that fabric so vast and apparently so substantial, which has resisted, and can resist, external shocks and internal convulsion, would dissolve into air before the faintest breath of distrust. It can withstand the earthquake; it can defy the storm. Glance on it with suspicion, and it crumbles into dust. We are pre-eminent in this, that we alone of all nations, whether ancient or modern, have blended the vigour of commercial enterprise with the lofty virtues of chivalry. Other commercial States have trampled on the principles of public morality in their ardent pursuit of gain. We alone have combined, in an auspicious union, the energy of the merchant with the honour of the gentleman. For this we are indebted to that happy fusion, in our constitution, of aristocracy and democracy, by which the restless vigour of the one is ennobled by the exalted integrity of the other. Shall we then stoop from this proud pre-eminence, to sink ourselves to the level of States that are as bankrupt in honour as in purse? Foreign nations have sometimes disputed our justice—they never, as yet, have doubted our probity. Foreign nations have sometimes arraigned our ambition—they never have breathed a whisper against our honour.' HC Deb 11 March 1847 vol 90, cc. 1176-1178.

[43] As one opposition figure complained, 'Much was then said about national honour, with the view, perhaps, of hindering the House from forming a distinct judgment upon the subject immediately before it. The delusion succeeded; the evidence was refused; and since they had to remain in the dark, their vote of that night could only be based upon such documents as were already before the House.' Sir Richard Vyvyan, HC Deb 20 July 1832 vol 14, cc. 569-570

Even the receipt of insult could facilitate a convenient political victory. Palmerston's dogged pursuit of satisfaction in Greece may have discomforted friend and foe alike, but his (arguably controversial) triumph demonstrated that being seen to acquire redress was a popular imperative. It may be argued that Palmerston's skill was predicated on his ability to determine which insults were likely to accrue him a political victory. He also spurned confrontation with powers where the national honour was not at stake, and criticised his opponents for needlessly raising the temperature.[44] In contrast, rather than escalate the war of words over Oregon, Aberdeen reimagined the confrontation as one which was subject to the mutual compromise of Anglo-American rights. One could argue that Aberdeen was compelled to undertake this private campaign for the sake of his public reputation, and that high standards of national honour placed constraints upon him, which he avoided only by changing the nature of the dispute.

Ultimately, it should be noted that Avner Offer presented the honour-script in the context of the turbulent year of 1914. It is contended that the honour-script represents a useful formula which can explain contemporary decisions, but its narrow scope and inflexibility is exposed by the complexity of the period examined here. Although there is not space to assess the period 1880 to 1914, it may be the case that the honour-script became *more* rigid before the First World War. It is possible to argue that the contemporaries of 1914, unlike their Victorian predecessors, were less concerned with the implications of their decisions for the electorate, and were more animated by strategic concerns.[45] This suggests that a pursuit of national honour could compliment prevailing expectations; it was politically impossible for Britain to exit Afghanistan following the 1842 catastrophe in Kabul, despite the immense costs involved in a punitive campaign. That a damaged military reputation would contaminate opinions of British power in India was a powerful incentive, communicated through a rhetoric which emphasised disgrace, shame, and dishonour if the defeat was left unavenged.

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[44] As Palmerston asserted in an 1834 speech to his constituents: 'Without entering into any details on the system of policy pursued, which may be improper in this place, I may say that the principle pursued has been, to maintain the honour of the country, and to truckle to none. Though we have been accused of truckling to France, we have made France our friend instead of our enemy. And this remarkable circumstance ought never to be forgotten that while the Tories here have accused us of truckling to France, the Republicans of France have accused her of truckling to England. Thus the two parties, whose object it was to involve the two nations in war, have each accused its own government of sacrificing the national honour for the purpose of maintaining peace. The reproach is as unfounded in England as it is in France… Thus we have preserved peace, not only without any sacrifice of the national honour, but also by affording to liberty a progress that must be congenial to the feelings of every Englishman.' *London Evening Standard*, 9 Dec 1834.

[45] The author suggested this in *A Matter of Honour: Great Britain in the First World War*, pp. 111-114.

What emerges from this study is a prevailing belief system, expressed through a rhetoric which could both inflict political damage, and facilitate striking political triumph. National honour was difficult to define, and due to its preponderance of synonyms, it could mean different things to different actors. It was sufficiently malleable to facilitate a policy of belligerent confrontation, or to justify magnanimous conciliation. National honour's extensive lexicon was familiar and popular among Britons, but this placed immense pressure on statesmen to uphold and satisfy it. The language of honour could be hyperbolic, inconsistent, intolerant, impatient, cynical, and opportunistic, but it could also be moulded to circumstances with sufficient political skill. Whenever it could be claimed that British honour was at stake, Ministers, their opponents, and the press leveraged the ethic's rhetoric to make their case to the public and political establishment.

However successful they were in these campaigns, no statesmen of the period could afford to ignore national honour, whether they sat in Cabinet or on the opposition benches. This rhetoric of honour existed in the forefront of British foreign policy, and was inseparable from the numerable crises which characterised the fifty-year period under examination. Contemporaries commonly articulated that a threat to national honour would rally the country behind the government, regardless of their political disposition, but these figures were also more than willing to use its rhetoric if they sensed an opportunity. This is the 'compelling linguistic evidence' which Allen Hertz noted in his assessment of honour's role in international affairs.[46] But if national honour's rhetorical power was rooted in its status as a widely accepted belief system, then contemporaries clearly recognised this power, and sought to use it for their own purposes.

The rhetoric produced by the subsequent debates represent an unparalleled opportunity both to ascertain the function of national honour, and to measure its influence upon Victorian public discourse. Indeed, the rhetoric of national honour was so common, it may be argued that statesman who failed to develop their skills in leveraging it would be outmatched by their political opponents, or outpaced by events. Those that managed to master its inherent contradictions and pitfalls could succeed on the political stage. The more circumspect might have reflected that national honour was a difficult master to satisfy. Indeed, while the rhetoric of honour may be classed as a political weapon, it was less a silver bullet for policymakers, than a double-edged sword.

[46] Hertz. 'Honour's Role in the International States' System,' 127.

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