Abolitionism and the End of the Slave Trade in Spain's Empire (1800-1870)

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Spain was the last country in the Atlantic World to tolerate the traffic in slaves across the Ocean. For four centuries, millions of men, women and children were banished from their homelands and forced into a life of slavery in the Americas. Spanish abolitionist activists challenged this reality and contested the public legitimacy of the *odious commerce*. This thesis analyses how abolitionist ideas were shaped, transformed and developed in Spain's empire and the crucial role that British activists and diplomats played in advancing the abolitionist cause. It explores the complexity of abolitionist and anti-abolitionist ideas in Spain's public life from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the end of the Atlantic slave trade.

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Abbreviations

ACD	Archivo del Congreso de los Diputados, Madrid.
AHN	Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid.
AMAE	Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Madrid.
ANC	Archivo Nacional de la República de Cuba, Havana.
BL	Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.
BNC	Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba José Martí, Havana.
Exp.	File (*Expediente*).
Leg.	Bundle of documents (*Legajo*).
TASTD	Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database.
TNA	The National Archives, London.
HCPP	House of Commons Parliamentary Papers.
FO	Foreign Offices Archives, the National Archives, London**.**

Introduction

Spain officially abolished the slave trade in 1820, but its effective eradication only took place around fifty years later. Between 1800 and 1870, more than 700,000 African men, women and children were introduced into Cuba, the most important remaining colony of a shrinking empire. The slave trade in the Spanish territories was profitable until its very last day, and its abolition and much later eradication can only be comprehensibly explained as the consequence of a complex and fragmented process. Since the early abolitionist discourses advanced by Isidoro de Antillón, José María Blanco-White, Miguel Guridi and Agustín de Argüelles, in the 1800s and 1810s, to the anti-slavery poetry of Concepción Arenal in the second half of the 1860s, discourses against the slave trade and slavery adopted multiple forms and were advocated by liberal and absolutist, progressive and conservative, egalitarian and racist actors.

This thesis analyses the processes of reception, production, circulation and development of abolitionist ideas in Spain's empire from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the decade of the 1860s. It assesses British ideological, political and diplomatic influence on the construction and development of anti-slave trade discourses and policies in Spain and stresses the multiplicity of abolitionist and anti-abolitionist ideas between 1802 and 1867. It appraises the emergence and development of public and political expressions of abolitionism and anti-abolitionism, studying the ideological backgrounds, political pressures and motivations that operated during this process.

This thesis reconsiders Spanish abolitionism in the light of international scholarship on the slave trade, slavery and abolitionism in the Atlantic World and in so doing, contributes

to filling a significant gap in the Spanish and English-speaking historiographies. The results of this work provide a more consistent and comprehensive theory of the history of the abolition and eradication of the slave trade in Spain's empire.

1. Theoretical Background: Liberalism, Abolitionism and the Atlantic World.

Within the framework of intellectual and political history, this thesis is informed by ongoing theoretical debates on abolitionism, liberalism and the Atlantic World. The ultimate eradication of the slave trade responded to international political negotiations that excluded the Spanish authorities and ignored Spanish political actors. However, the contribution of Spanish anti-slave trade activists was crucial to debilitating the public legitimacy of the traffic and challenged the dominant rhetoric affirming the necessity of its continuation. Their writings, speeches, campaigns and political initiatives eventually succeeded in consolidating the idea that the slave trade was 'horrendous, atrocious and inhumane', as Agustín de Argüelles described it in 1810.[1] In the long term, they contributed to building the public consensus that the slave trade was unsuitable and condemned to disappear. This shift was informed by its relationship with liberalism, which has a particular meaning in the Spanish metropolitan and colonial contexts, and wider political and ideological debates in the Atlantic World.[2] Both dimensions —the domestic and the transatlantic— co-existed and informed each other.

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[1] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 2 April 1810, p. 812.

[2] Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 101.

The rise of political liberalism and the establishment of representative institutions were key in the reception and construction of anti-slave trade ideas in Spain. However, abolitionist ideas only became an essential part of liberal vindications in the context of the political radicalization of the 1860s. It was only in 1868 when the leaders of the *Revolución Gloriosa* proclaimed that 'without liberty there is no honour' and demanded the abolition of slavery in the Spanish colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico.[3] The ties between liberalism and abolitionism, which can be clearly established in the French and British historical contexts, cannot be directly translated into the Spanish case. This position distances us from attempts to define an 'ideological canon' for Spanish liberalism. As Javier Fernández Sebastián has argued, liberalism in the first decades of the nineteenth century 'far from being a stable and well-defined notion, was a variable bunch of vague and faltering concepts'.[4] To assume a teleological projection, in which the English and French cases constituted a canon, would therefore be ineffective. Such a teleological description was first proposed by the abolitionist leader Gabriel Rodríguez in 1887.[5] Rodríguez's chronology established three different periods in the development

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[3] Rafael María de Labra, *La Abolición de la Esclavitud en las Antillas Españolas* (Madrid: Imprenta de J. E. Morete, 1869), p. 111.

[4] Javier Fernández Sebastián, *La aurora de la libertad. Los primeros Liberalismos en el mundo iberoamericano* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2012), p. 14.

[5] José U. Martínez, 'La abolición de la esclavitud en España durante el siglo XIX'', in *Esclavitud y derechos humanos. La lucha por la libertad del negro en el siglo XIX,,* ed. by Francisco de Solano and Agustín Guimerá (Madrid: CSIC, 1990), pp. 63-77); Julia Moreno García, 'España y Gran Bretaña durante el siglo XIX: la abolición de la trata y la esclavitud', (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1984). And to a lesser extend Josep M. Fradera, when he defines abolitionist motions in the Cortes of Cádiz as 'tentative abolitionism'; Josep M. Fradera, 'Moments in a Postponed Abolition Fradera', in *Slavery and Antislavery in Spain's Atlantic Empire,* ed. by Josep M. Fradera and Chistopher Schmidt-Nowara (New York: Berghahn, 2013), pp. 256-283 (p. 268).

of Spanish anti-slave trade and anti-slavery discourse: the first period, from the beginning of the nineteenth century to 1864, was entitled the time of the *precursores* or pioneers; a second, from 1864 to 1870, in which the abolitionist movement was institutionalised and started to penetrate Spanish public opinion; and lastly, the phase between 1870 and 1886, in in which the anti-slavery movement succeeded and achieved the abolition of slavery in Cuba.[6] As Josep Fradera has argued, the particular social and political conditions in Spain's empire meant that abolitionism 'was never likely to unfold along similar lines' to the British process and only by adopting a transnational approach, and placing the study in dialogue with international historiography would we be able to build a comprehensive understanding of Spanish abolitionism.[7]

Fradera has also stressed that one of the questions that future researchers in the field should deal with is 'why, in a country dealing with major internal upheaval but with liberal institutions in place since the 1830s, the abolitionist movement failed to make headway until reformers on all sides realised, following the civil war in North America, that slavery was in its death throes'.[8] A tentative answer would be that to equate liberalism and abolitionism is a misinterpretation. So even if Spain had 'liberal institutions' or a 'liberal parliamentary system' there is no reason to assume that it was 'a contradiction' that Spanish political actors protected and even promoted the slave trade. In this regard, the ideological and political tension between Spanish liberalism and imperialism is crucial to

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[6] Gabriel Rodríguez, 'La idea y el movimiento anti-esclavita en España durante el siglo XIX', in *La España del siglo XIX. Conferencias Históricas,* ed. by Ateneo de Madrid (Madrid: Imprenta Antonio San Martín, 1887).

[7] Fradera (2013), p. 264.

[8] Fradera (2013), p. 277.

formulating a more comprehensive examination of the reasons for the failure of anti-slave trade initiatives from 1811 to the 1860s. Spanish liberalism and the metropolitan elites prioritised the preservation of territorial integrity and the maintenance of the *status quo* in the colonies in the context of the imperial crisis. It operated as a tacit agreement between the metropolitan and Cuban elites, only broken by the rise of pro-autonomy or pro-independence movements in 1868.

Duncan Bell has emphasised the importance of revisiting the concept of 'liberalism' in a critical way.[9] He analysed the conceptualization, origin, meanings and circulation of the term 'liberalism' in the Anglo-American context from the nineteenth century to the 1950s, focusing in particular on how the philosopher John Locke came to be characterised as a liberal. In a recent article, Bell tackled the question 'what is liberalism?' and presented three possible approaches to the answer: (1) *Prescriptive*, which 'delineates a particular conception of liberalism, branding it as more authentic than other claimants to the title'; (2) *Comprehensive*, which attempts to identify the 'range of usage, mapping the variegated topography of liberal ideology': and, (3) *Explanatory*, which tackles the 'development of liberalism'. Moreover, Bell defined two major methodological strategies to approaching the phenomenon: (1) *Stipulative*: the creation of normative political philosophies and the construction of ideal types; and, (2) a *Canonical* methodology, based on refining '"liberal" theoretical structures from exemplary writings'. Bell concludes that both methodological strategies are 'valuable, even essential' but 'neither [is] capable of underwriting plausible comprehensive or explanatory accounts'.[10] He problematised

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[9] Duncan Bell, 'What Is Liberalism?', *Political Theory*, 42:6 (2014), 682-715.

[10] Bell (2014), pp. 686-687.

the idea of [a liberal] canon given the internal diversity of liberalism and its national and regional variation. His proposal to break this methodological deadlock is to develop 'a comprehensive contextualised analysis of liberalism […] in which liberal languages emerge, evolve, and come into conflict with one another, rather than trying to distil an ahistorical set of liberal commitments from conceptual or canonical investigation'.[11]

In this regard, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra has stressed the need to abandon national approaches, which 'has proven genuinely liberating, and it has allowed historians to escape the traditional teleological narratives of the nation'.[12] According to Juan Luis Simal, slavery and the slave trade were 'the most intense and lasting cohesive activities in the Atlantic World […] for demographic, cultural, military, social and political reasons', and therefore, we will consider the production and circulation of abolitionist ideas in Spain in the wider context of intellectual debates in the Atlantic World at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[13] In this sense, the contribution of Gabriel Paquette to the field is key. He highlighted the importance of global circulation and transnational forms of intellectual production and alteration and the contribution of Spain and Portugal as

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[11] Bell (2014), pp. 688-689.

[12] Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, 'Some Caveats about the 'Atlantic' Paradigm', *History Compass*, 1 (2003), 1-4 (p. 1); Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write History of the New World. Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth Century Atlantic World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); See also: Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings. Social Politics in a Progressive Era* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000); Bailyn (2005).

[13] Juan Luis Simal Durán, 'La esclavitud como concepto político en el primer Liberalismo hispano', in *Ayeres en discusión: temas clave de Historia Contemporánea hoy,* ed. by María Encarna Nicolás Marín and Carmen González Martínez (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 2008), pp. 1-20 (p. 2).

producer agents of liberal discourses.[14] Paquette has praised the 'efforts to globalise intellectual history and to cast off older, disparaging accounts of the deficits (and sometimes debts) of intellectual life beyond Western and Central Europe' and to 'fomenting a dialogue between historians working in the Spanish and Portuguese languages and their Anglophone counterparts'. Among his goals, he emphasised the need to establish whether nineteenth-century liberalism was homogeneous or unitary; and, quoting Fernández Sebastián, Paquete concluded that 'to study Iberian liberalism from the viewpoint of this "presumed canonical liberalism" leads inexorably to a focus on the errors, imperfections, and [flawed] departures from that model'.[15]

In conclusion, this thesis re-evaluates the role of liberalism in the reception, production and dissemination of abolitionist ideas in Spain's empire, considering the role of imperialism and imperial rivalries within the wider framework of the history of ideas in the Atlantic World.

2. Methodology and Sources

By relying on diplomatic, parliamentary and political sources to shape the methodological framework, it is possible to consider history not just as a reconstruction of the past but also as a dialogue with the past. This requires a specific understanding of facts informed by an interrelated comprehension of the past from the present. We must, therefore, base

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[14] Gabriel Paquette, 'Introduction: Liberalism in the Early Nineteenth-century Iberian World', *History of European Ideas*, 41-2 (2015), 1-13.

[15] Paquette (2015), p. 9.

our analyses and conclusions on a consistent corpus of documentation while avoiding a 'purely documentary conception'.[16] As LaCapra has pointed out, any historical fact 'is a pertinent fact only with respect to a frame of reference involving questions that we pose to the past and it is the ability to pose the *right* questions that distinguished productive scholarship'.[17] In this sense, this thesis tackles significant questions that have not yet been asked or which have been given unsatisfactory answers in the existing historiography.

We study the process of construction and circulation of abolitionist ideas in Spain's empire through the critical examination of sources produced by politicians, authorities, intellectuals and activists. It is essential to be actively aware of the limits of intellectual history, and how discourses, ideas and concepts must be considered in relation to wider interpretative contexts.[18] As suggested by John Pocock, the role of historians is to understand and inhabit the gap between 'thinking' and 'experience' by analysing both the historical context in which the ideas or discourses take place and what he calls the 'languages, rhetoric, idioms, paradigms or modes of utterance'.[19] Both Pocock and Quentin Skinner, argue for a methodology based on context, intention and aims to understand the distance between historical facts and language.[20] On this point, the

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[16] Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 61.

[17] LaCapra (1990), p. 31.

[18] LaCapra (1990), pp. 36-61.

[19] John G. A. Pocock, *Political Thought and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 17.

[20] Pocock (2009), p. 110; Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory*, 8:1 (1969), 3-53 pp. 3-53); Quentin Skinner and J. Schneewind, *La filosofía de la historia* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1990), p. 237.

Foucauldian idea of 'discourse' becomes the centre of the paradigm represented by Pocock. He defines 'discourse' as 'a sequence of speech acts performed by agents within a context finished ultimately by social practices and historical situations, but also […] by the political languages by means of which the acts are to be performed'.[21] And he also defines three elements that need to be tackled when analysing political discourse: '(1) the hearers or readers to whom the speech is communicated, (2) the speaker or writer himself who is never unaffected by his own act, and (3) the language-structure which is confirmed or modified by the act of speech and by the conditions in which it is performed'.[22] In short, Pocock argues for a contextualising methodology based on the trinomial scheme sender-destination-form. This thesis uses this methodology to analyse political, diplomatic and parliamentary discourses, focusing on the context, intention and aims of the author(s).

Both LaCapra and Pocock-Skinner's methodological approaches agree on what Javier Fernández Sebastián and Juan Francisco Fuentes have identified as a 'problem of complexity': 'the past is too complex and problematic to simply accept a single description, or a single perspective, supposedly accurate, correct and definitive'.[23] Therefore, it is essential to link ideas and discourses with their chronological and historical contexts, or as Francisco Tomás y Valiente put it, 'there is no theory without history, or there should not be, because concepts and institutions are not born of a pure

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[21] Pocock (2009), p. 67.

[22] Pocock (2009), p. 67.

[23] Javier Fernández Sebastián and Juan Francisco Fuentes, 'A manera de introducción. Historia, lenguaje y política', *Ayer*, 53:1 (2004) (p. 15).

and timeless emptiness, but in a known place and date and as a consequence of historical processes that carry a burden perhaps invisible, but determinant'.[24]

3. Literature Review

Abolitionist ideas in Spain in the nineteenth century have received little attention from historians. The historiography focused on the analysis of the production of Spanish antislavery and anti-slave trade ideas has been scarce, fragmented, and has never constituted a historiographical line of research by itself. This significant vacuum contrasts with the attention that the study of slavery (and its abolition) in Britain and the United States has received in Anglophone academia. Cuban historiography has paid a great deal of attention to the field of slavery and the slave trade, focusing on its importance to the construction of Cuba's national identity, but has studied to a much lesser extent the construction of abolitionism in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The British influence on the development of anti-slave trade legislation was the main interest of the foundational works of Arthur Corwin and David Murray in this field.[25] More recently, however, the history of Spanish abolitionism and the history of slavery in Spain's empire have begun to emerge alongside a more comprehensive approach to the study of the nineteenth-century Atlantic World, in general, and the Spanish Empire, in particular. The contributions made by Emily Berquist, Josep Fradera, Ada Ferrer, Kate

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[24] Francisco Tomás y Valiente, 'Independencia judicial y garantía de los derechos fundamentales', in *Constitución: Escritos de introducción histórica,* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 1996), pp. 651-662 (p. 149).

[25] Arthur F. Corwin, *Spain and the abolition of Slavery in Cuba, 1817-1886* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967); David R. Murray, *Odious commerce. Britain, Spain and the abolition of the Cuban slave trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002 [1980]).

Ferris, Albert García Balañà, José Antonio Piqueras, Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, Rebecca Scott, Martín Rodrigo and Manuel Barcia, among others, have provided more innovative approaches to the construction and circulation of abolitionist ideas in the Spanish Empire during the nineteenth century.[26]

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[26] Emily Berquist, 'Early Anti-Slavery Sentiment in the Spanish Atlantic World, 1765–1817', *Slavery & Abolition*, 31:2 (2010), 181-205; Josep M. Fradera, 'La participació catalana en el tràfic d'esclaus (1789-1845)', *Recerques*, 16 (1984), 119-140; Josep M. Fradera, 'Why were Spain's Overseas Laws Never Enacted?', in *Spain, Europe and the Atlantic World. Essays in Honour of John H. Elliott* ed. by R. L. Kagan and G. Parker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 333-349; Josep M. Fradera, 'Raza y ciudadanía. El factor racial en la delimitación de los derechos de los Americanos', in *Gobernar colonias.,* ed. by Josep M. Fradera (Barcelona: Peninsula, 1999), pp. 51-70; Fradera (2013); Ada Ferrer, 'Cuban Slavery and Atlantic Antislavery', in *Slavery and Antislavery in Spain's Atlantic Empire,* ed. by Josep M. Fradera and Chistopher Schmidt-Nowara (New York: Berghahn, 2013), pp. 134-157; Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Kate Ferris, 'Modelos de abolición: Estados Unidos y la política cultural española y la abolición de la esclavitud en Cuba, 1868-1874', in *Visiones Del Liberalismo. Política, Identidad Y Cultura En La España Del Siglo XIX,* ed. by Alda Blanco and Guy Thomson (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2008), pp. 195-218; Albert García Balañà, 'Antislavery before Abolitionism. Networks and Motives in Early Liberal Barcelona, 1833-1844', in *Slavery and Antislavery in Spain's Atlantic Empire,* ed. by Josep M. Fradera and Chistopher Schmidt-Nowara (New York: Berghahn, 2013), pp. 229-255; José A. Piqueras, 'La política de los intereses en Cuba y la revolución (1810-1814)', in *Las guerras de independencia en la América española,* ed. by Marta Terán and José Antonio Serrano Ortega (Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2002), pp. 465-484; José A. Piqueras, 'Leales en época de insurrección. La élite criolla cubana entre 1810 y 1814', in *in Visiones y revisiones de la independencia americana,* ed. by Izaskun Álvarez y Julio Sánchez (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2014), pp. 183-206; Chistopher Schmidt-Nowara, *Empire and Antislavery: Spain, Cuba and Puerto Rico, 1833-1874* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1999); Chistopher Schmidt-Nowara, 'Wilberforce Spanished. Joseph Blanco White and Spanish Antislavery, 1808-1814', in *Slavery and Antislavery in Spain's Atlantic Empire,* ed. by Josep M. Fradera and Chistopher Schmidt-Nowara (New York: Berghahn, 2013), pp. 158-175; Rebecca Scott, *Slave emancipation in Cuba: the transition to free labor, 1860-1899* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Rebecca Scott, 'Explaining Abolition: Contradiction, Adaptation and Challenge in Cuban Slave Society, 1860-1886', in *Caribbean slavery in the Atlantic world: A student reader,* ed. by Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Oxford: Currey, 2000), pp. 1087-1104; Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla, 'Spanish Merchants and the Slave Trade. From Legality to Illegality, 1814-1870', in *Slavery and Antislavery in Spain's Atlantic Empire,* ed. by Josep M. Fradera and Chistopher Schmidt-Nowara (New York: Berghahn, 2013), pp. 176-199; Manuel Barcia, *The Great African*

The specialist literature that informs this thesis could be organised around three main themes: (1) Spanish abolitionism in the Atlantic World: networks and cultural transfers, (2) development and consolidation of liberalism in the Atlantic World, and (3) anti-slave trade and antislavery discourses in the Spanish historiography.

3.1. Spanish Abolitionism in the Atlantic World: Networks and Cultural Transfers

The contribution of English-speaking scholars to the study of abolitionist discourses in Spain within the Atlantic context is remarkable. The most important monograph in this field is the book *Odious Commerce. Britain, Spain and the abolition of the Cuban slave trade* by David Murray, published in 1980.[27] In this work, Murray concluded that British political, military and diplomatic pressure was the most powerful reason for the eradication of the slave trade in Cuba in the 1860s. His analysis rightly understands the abolition of slave trade as a historical process itself and not as a first step in the abolition of slavery, as has been the approach of later studies. His ground-breaking and comprehensive study, however, did not focus on the ideological or cultural shaping of anti-slave trade ideas in Spain.[28] His work is scrupulously documented and provides an excellent analysis of mainly British diplomatic correspondence. His study of British political pressure on the Spanish governments remains the most complete to date. This

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Slave Revolt of 1825 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012); Manuel Barcia, *Seeds of Insurrection. Domination and Resistance on Western Cuban Plantations, 1808-1848* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

[27] Murray (2002 [1980]).

[28] Robert Paquette, *Sugar is made with blood: the conspiracy of La Escalera and the conflict between empires over slavery in Cuba* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1988).

thesis aims to build on his contribution, considering a more innovative and comprehensive methodology and expanding his analysis by including more Spanish voices and hitherto unknown sources.

Another classic study of the influence of Britain in the drafting of legislation against the slave trade is the book of Arthur Corwin, *Spain and the Abolition of Slavery in Cuba (1817-1886)*. Corwin was a pioneer in the field and a widely-recognised reference in the study of the abolition of slavery in the Spanish Empire. Corwin's main conclusion is that for decades Spain feigned compliance with agreements to end the slave trade while actually protecting slaveholding interests as the best means of controlling Cuba.[29] He introduces key sources of great interest, such as the works of the Cuban historian José Antonio Saco, that Murray omitted. In particular, his reconstruction of the political negotiations in 1811 between British officials and Spanish deputies is exceptionally useful. While Murray focused on the abolition of the slave trade, Corwin examined the abolition of slavery in Cuba instead. He understands the abolition of the slave trade as part of the wider process of the abolition and eradication of slavery. We believe, however, that the construction of anti-slave trade and antislavery discourses coexisted and that the abolition of the trade was not simply a first chapter in the later abolition of slavery.

The contribution of Christopher Schmidt-Nowara is essential in the field of abolitionist movements and discourse in the Atlantic World and he was one of the leading authors in the field of the abolition of slavery in Hispanic America. In his book *Empire and Antislavery: Spain, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, 1833-1874,* he re-examined the role of antislavery movements in Spain's empire and dealt with the intricate relationship

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[29] Corwin (1967).

between the Spanish and colonial authorities and their international and domestic interests.[30] His research is divided into three periods: the 1830s, the late 1850s to the revolution of 1868, and the period prior to the restoration of the monarchy in 1874. The book concludes that slavery persisted in Cuba because of its economic profitability but also, fundamentally, as a consequence of the strong political will of the colonial authorities to protect it, following the contribution of Rebecca Scott, Robert Paquette, Manuel Moreno Fraginals and Levi Marrero, among others. However, his work did not explore a transnational dimension in the construction of antislavery movements and did not explore the episodes before 1830 which, we think, are essential for developing a more comprehensive study of abolitionist ideas in the Spanish Empire.

The study of the abolition of the slave trade in the Spanish Empire is linked to, and intersects with, essential topics that historians have been dealing with for a long time. Josep M. Fradera argued in 'Empires in Retreat. Spain and Portugal after the Napoleon Wars' that there were three main issues that both the Portuguese and the Spanish 'transoceanic constitutionals' of 1812 and 1822 faced: the nature of the electoral system, the promise of equality (the inclusion of the so-called *castas pardas*) and the conflictive tension between metropolitan and American Deputies. All three are directly or incidentally linked with the slave trade and slavery. In the 1830s the Spanish Empire 'reconsidered [its] early liberal constitutional premises', after it shrunk massively in 1824.[31] The result was that Spanish liberals 'dispensed with the single-nation-empire

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[30] Schmidt-Nowara (1999). See also: Scott (2000).

[31] Josep M. Fradera, 'Empires in Retreat. Spain and Portugal after the Napoleon Wars', in *Endless Empire: Spain's Retreat, Europe's Eclipse, America's Decline,* ed. by Josep M. Fradera Alfred W. McCoy, and Stephen Jacobson (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), pp. 55-73.

principle and excluded the colonies from metropolitan politics'. [32] Fradera concluded his analysis by pointing out that 'it is not possible to write a history of empires between 1780 and 1850 by referring exclusively to developments within the colonies themselves' and urging historians to assess 'the complex parallels and intersections among metropoles, colonies, and imperial rivals'.[33]

By exploring the ideological, cultural and political links between different actors that operated in the Atlantic World during the nineteenth century, the book *Slavery and Antislavery in Spain's Atlantic Empire* edited by Josep M. Fradera and Christopher Schmidt-Nowara studies the shaping of anti-slave trade ideas in Spain within a transnational context. This publication analyses, in eleven chapters, different aspects of the history of slavery and the process of its eradication in Spain. Fradera and Schmidt-Nowara pointed out that there is a historiographical isolation of the Spanish case and argued for an examination of slavery in the Spanish Empire from a wider Atlantic perspective. They urged scholars to reconsider 'the Spanish Empire in dialogue with the international scholarship on the slave trade, slavery and abolitionism'.[34]

In a similar vein, Ada Ferrer re-evaluated the isolation of the Spanish Empire in her chapter 'Cuban Slavery and Atlantic Antislavery' in which she describes a fluid connection between the Cuban context, the Saint Domingue Revolution and British

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[32] Fradera (2012).

[33] Fradera (2012).

[34] Josep M. Fradera and Chistopher Schmidt-Nowara, *Slavery and Antislavery in Spain's Atlantic Empire* (New York: Berghahn, 2013).

abolitionism.[35] Ferrer affirms that both the abolition of the slave trade in Britain and the Revolution in Haiti contributed to a simultaneous and linked process of the 'decline *and* expansion' of slavery in the Atlantic. Her analysis is very accurate and useful for our own research because it underscores the idea of historical complexity and interconnection. Ferrer's methodology, which will inform this thesis, is a good example of how to approach the Antillean context in relation not only to the Metropolis, but also to other significant geographical territories within the Atlantic World.

Schmidt-Nowara's chapter, entitled 'Wilberforce Spanished. Joseph Blanco White and Spanish Antislavery, 1808-1814',[36] explores the influence of Wilberforce's antislavery discourses on the work of Blanco White, a Spanish liberal exiled in London. Schmidt-Nowara argued, based on the works of Francisco Durán Lopez, Martín Murphy, and David Murray, that the work of Blanco White must be understood in the context of his relationship with British abolitionism and his experience of exile in London, but also that it needs to be situated in the debates about slavery and empire in Spain.[37] Schmidt-Nowara explored the personal background of Blanco White and his relationship with his brother, in order to offer a better-informed version of Blanco White's idea of 'slavery'. He also connected his work with that of Isidoro de Antillón, and attempted to explore the links between Blanco's work and Bartolomé de las Casas. Schmidt-Nowara highlights the importance of a political figure that has been scarcely studied by the historiography.

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[35] Ferrer (2013).

[36] Schmidt-Nowara (2013).

[37] Fernando Durán, *José María Blanco White o la conciencia errante* (Sevilla: Fundación Jose Manuel Lara, 2005); Martin Murphy, *Blanco White: Self-Banished Spaniard* (London: Yale University Press, 1989); Murray (2002 [1980]).

A very important risk when analysing political life in Spain is adopting a reductionist approach which assumes that Madrid was the sole representative of Spain's political, social, cultural or ideological reality. To include Barcelona's context is very important to undertaking more comprehensive research, because of the important links between the Catalan economic elite and the slave trade. In this sense, the work of Albert Garcia Balañà, 'Antislavery before abolitionism. Networks and motives in early liberal Barcelona, 1833-1844' constitutes a refreshing contribution to the study of antislavery ideas in a local context far from the Spanish Parliament and the official diplomatic network between Madrid, London and Havana.[38] By focusing on the figure of Antonio Bergnes, a Catalan editor, Garcia Balañà explores a complex network of Quakers, liberal (radical) politicians and antislavery activists that had hitherto been unknown in the historiography and which opens research lines that this thesis will examine.

Teleological approaches to the history of the Spanish abolitionist movement have traditionally been used in Spanish historiography. Josep M. Fradera problematizes the importance of slavery in the Spanish colonial dominions and criticises any attempt to compare the development of abolitionism in the British and Spanish contexts. His chapter 'Moments in a postponed abolition' is an excellent overview of abolitionism in Spain in which he explains the key elements that produced the very late abolition of the slave trade and slavery in the Spanish Empire. He argues that the first anti-slave trade political manifestations in Spain were a direct consequence of British political pressure and of what he called a 'liberal conscience'. Fradera claimed that Spanish abolitionism failed to become an important social movement because of its internal division, the

[38] García Balañà (2013).

strong political influence of Cuban slaveholders and imperial decline. He proposed that the Spanish experience of abolitionism, the contradictions of liberal actors in its development and popular backing for abolition in Spain must be studied and explained in greater depth. However, his analysis is not as forceful as his conclusions, which generates the idea of a very linear and 'simple' process that, in reality, was fragmented, complex and full of contradictions. Nevertheless, Fradera made an outstanding analysis of some well-known sources, and crucially posed some key questions that this thesis attempts to answer.

In a similar vein, Emily Berquist focused her analysis on the early construction of abolitionist ideas in Spain, aiming to provide a more comprehensive Atlantic approach. Her article 'Early Antislavery Sentiment in the Spanish Atlantic World, 1765–1817', is the most recent study of Spanish antislavery discourse in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.[39] Berquist provided a comprehensive reading of some of the best-known early antislavery and anti-slave trade discourses in Spain and argued for the existence, at this early stage, of a Spanish antislavery network. Although her work shed light on a historical episode that had been neglected by other historians in the field, it failed to convincingly demonstrate how this network of early Spanish abolitionists operated.

The links between Spain and Britain in the Atlantic context have been examined by a very significant number of scholars. For instance, Gabriel Paquette has studied the public opinion of the British political and cultural elites with regard to Spain from the second half of the eighteenth century to the First Carlist War in his article 'Visiones

[39] Berquist (2010).

británicas del Mundo Atlántico español, c. 1740-1830'.[40] Paquette pointed out that the image of Spain was prominent in and important to British political thought from the Middle Ages. It became more important and intense as a consequence of the many conflicts between the countries in Europe and the Americas, with a negative image predominating during this period in general terms. From the beginning of the reign of Carlos III this image started to change, and a more positive idea appeared, due to the reformist plans of the Spanish King. The Napoleonic Invasion of Spain in 1808 and the subsequent British support for the Spanish 'patriots' determined a turning point in the history of Anglo-Spanish relations, not only politically but also culturally and ideologically. The Cortes of Cadiz and the arrival of a number of Spanish exiles in London (1814-1820 and 1823-1833) are understood by Paquette to be two important milestones in Anglo-Spanish relations. The authoritarian policies of Fernando VII and his pro-French leanings resulted in a deterioration of the relationship with Britain. However, during these decades British Romanticism recreated an image of Spain as an exotic and wild country that attracted the attention of Anglophone writers, travellers and painters who contributed to the creation of a 'softened' image of Spain. Paquette concludes that Spain was important to the political debates of the British cultural elites and that its image, far from immovable, was subjected to the political changes that took place in Spain as well as in Britain.

An aspect of paramount importance for this thesis is the diplomatic negotiations between Madrid, Havana and London during the nineteenth century regarding the abolition of the slave trade. British political pressure and ideological influence was an essential factor in

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[40] Gabriel Paquette, 'Visiones británicas del Mundo Atlántico español, c. 1740-1830', *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea*, 10 (2011), 145-154.

the drafting of anti-slave trade legislation and it placed the issue of the slave trade on the Spanish political agenda. Julia Moreno has focused on the diplomatic activities and the Spanish government's policies regarding the slave trade during the nineteenth century.[41] Her analysis is very well-documented and constitutes a great contribution with regard to the location and transcription of primary sources. However, her research lacks a comprehensive study of the cultural and ideological implications of abolitionism in Spain. Her study of the Liberal Triennium, as well as the section on the Congress of Vienna, have been very useful for the contextualization of the diplomatic tensions existing during this period, and for the identification of some of the most important diplomats (Spanish and British) who played relevant roles in these bi-lateral negotiations. Moreno's doctoral dissertation has not been published, but some of its contents have appeared as articles.[42]

The analysis of British influence in Cuba, the major Spanish destination of the slave trade, is the goal of Alain Yacou, who tackled the importance of British diplomatic pressure on the Island.[43] In 'El impacto incierto del abolicionismo inglés y francés en la Isla de Cuba (1830-1850)' Yacou questioned the effectiveness of British abolitionist

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[41] Moreno García (1984).

[42] Julia Moreno García, 'España y la Conferencia antiesclavista de Bruselas, 1889-1890', *Cuadernos de historia moderna y contemporánea*, 3 (1982), 151-180; Julia Moreno García, 'El cambio de actitud de la administración española frente al contrabando negrero en Cuba (1860-1866)', *Estudios de historia social*, 44-47 (1988), 271-284; Julia Moreno García, 'Negreros y hacendados en Cuba: tras setenta años de lucha por mantener el comercio negrero, España logró ser el último país europeo en abolir la esclavitud', *Historia 16*, 203 (1993), 27-36. I thank Julia Moreno for providng me with a copy of the thesis.

[43] Alain Yacou, 'El impacto incierto del abolicionismo inglés y francés en la isla de Cuba (1830-1850)', in *Esclavitud y derechos humanos. La lucha por la libertad del negro en el siglo XIX,* ed. by Francisco de Solano and Agustín Guimerá (Madrid: CSIC, 1990), pp. 455-476.

activities in Cuba and problematised the importance attributed to these anti-slave trade campaigns. He argued that British abolitionist pressure also caused a reactivation of very powerful pro-slavery and racist groups that delayed the ultimate 'disintegration of the slave system'.

The links between the abolition of the slave trade in the Spanish Empire and Brazil are also relevant for this doctoral thesis. Our focus is on the Spanish Empire, but ignoring the Portuguese-Brazilian context would make it impossible to build a comprehensive study of the importance of British diplomatic efforts to abolish the slave trade in the Atlantic World. From the British diplomatic perspective, both political struggles were part of the same process. The book *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade* by Leslie Bethell constitutes a milestone in the historiography on the Brazilian context and a comparable work to that of Murray for the Cuban case.[44] His study focused on the diplomatic and military pressure exerted by the British governments on the Portuguese and Brazilian authorities from 1807 to the 1850s when the slave trade was eventually eradicated in Brazil. Bethell addressed three main questions: why was the Brazilian slave trade declared illegal? Why was it not actually suppressed for twenty years after it became illegal? and how was it finally abolished? His main contribution is that Lord Aberdeen's Act of 1845 (only enforced by the British navy in 1850) forced the Brazilian

[44] Leslie Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

authorities to capitulate. This book is still today, forty-eight years after its publication, a remarkable and essential study on the topic.[45]

3.2. Development and consolidation of liberalism in the Atlantic World

The processes of reception and adaption of international currents of thought played a central role in shaping the anti-slave trade and antislavery ideas in Spain. On this issue, the work of Gabriel Paquette is the most highly developed approach to the topic. The first chapter of his book, *Enlightenment, Governance and Reform in Spain and its Empire 1759-1808,*[46] analyses the reception of foreign ideas in Spain and explores the concept of 'emulation' as a form of cultural reproduction and assimilation of knowledge in the context of imperial rivalries. He affirmed that 'Spanish writers did not merely copy and servilely imitate, but rather engaged actively in criticizing, adapting, as well as rejecting, foreign ideas'.[47] Focusing on the influence of British publications in Spain (which represented 'roughly 7 per cent' of the total) he argued that strong Anglo-Spanish cultural relations went beyond the number of books that were translated directly from English, as very often, they were translated through a third language, normally French.[48] Paquette emphasised that 'assessing the Bourbon reformers from the perspective of rivals,

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[45] See also: Jennifer L. Nelson, 'Slavery, race, and conspiracy: The HMS Romney in nineteenth-century Cuba', *Atlantic Studies*, 14-2 (2017), 174-195; Jennifer L. Nelson, 'Liberated Africans in the Atlantic World: The Courts of Mixed Commission in Havana and Rio de Janeiro 1819-1871', (University of Leeds, 2015).

[46] Gabriel Paquette, 'The intellectual Impact of International Rivalry', in *Enlightenment, Governance and Reform in Spain and its Empire 1759-1808,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 29-55.

[47] Paquette (2008), p. 33.

[48] Paquette (2008), p. 34.

admirers, emulators, and critics of Britain hints at a new interpretation of Iberian reform ideology'.[49]

Especially useful for this research is his use of the concept of 'rejection' as a powerful form of influence: 'the phenomenon of eighteenth-century Anglomania in other national contexts is well established. Anglophilia often served as a guise for an unstated, and thus uncensurable, appraisal of French society, whereas Anglophobia was part of an effort to reawaken a sense of patriotism and pride'.[50] Paquette concludes his chapter by pointing out that Spain 'was neither insulated from wider European trends nor isolated from intellectual currents' from abroad. This thesis is related to the ambivalence of Agustín de Argüelles in 1811 when he presented his proposal to abolish the slave trade in the Cortes of Cádiz. On the one hand, Argüelles admired the political struggle and figure of William Wilberforce and his own discourse was mainly based on Wilberforce's speeches and rhetorical devices. On the other hand, however, he consistently aimed to present his initiative as 'autonomous' and independent from any foreign nation.

Furthermore, the weight of economic factors, in comparison with the role played by ideological and political changes in the abolition of the slave trade, has been discussed by the traditional historiography. Candelaria Saiz Pastor aimed to reproduce the historiographical debates of Anglophone academics for the Spanish context, by stressing the economic reasons for abolition in Cuba. Saiz Pastor, in her chapter 'La esclavitud como problema político en la España del siglo XIX (1833-1868). Liberalismo y Esclavismo' tackled the links between liberalism and abolitionism in Spain mainly from a

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[49] Paquette (2008), p. 38.

[50] Paquette (2008), pp. 37-38.

political perspective and affirmed that the economic decadence of slavery was a major factor in its eradication in Cuba.[51] Her analysis focused on the second half of the nineteenth century and, therefore, overlooked the links between Spanish anti-slave trade leaders and the British antislavery lobby in the contexts of the Cortes of Cadiz (1811-1814), the Liberal Triennium (1820-1823) and the exiles in London (1814-1820 and 1823-1834), which are essential for a comprehensive description of the transnational relationship connecting liberalism and abolitionism.

Sharing the goal of exploring the links between liberalism and anti-slave trade discourses, this thesis analyses the activities of Spanish liberal exiles in London as an important historical moment. Spanish exile activity in London during the first half of the nineteenth century (1814-1820 and 1823-1834) represents a little-known historical episode and there is a significant lack of secondary sources in this field. The book *Liberales y Románticos* by Vicente Lloréns published in 1954 remains the best study of the cultural and literary activity of the Spanish exiles in London during the second exile (1823-1834) as a framework for the emergence of literary Romanticism in Spain.[52] However, his research does not address the political work of the exiles in depth and makes no mention of slavery at all. Therefore, it provides the best context for the present research but no specific information on this matter. The publication of Joaquín Varela Suances-Carpegna's *La monarquía doceañista (1810-1837)* provides brief historical context for the first liberal exile, which constitutes one of the few references to this

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[51] Candelaria Saiz Pastor, 'La esclavitud como problema político en la España del siglo XIX (1833-1868). Liberalismo y esclavismo', in *Esclavitud y derechos humanos. La lucha por la libertad del negro en el siglo XIX,* ed. by Francisco de Solano and Agustín Guimerá (Madrid: CSIC, 1990), pp. 80-98.

[52] Vicente Llorens, *Liberales y románticos* (Madrid: Castalia, 1979 [1954]).

episode in the historiography.[53] It focuses on the constitutional debates held by the Spanish community in London, but does not analyse the issue of the slave trade. The biography *José María Blanco White o la conciencia errante*[54] by Fernando Durán contains a very informative approach to the life of Blanco White during his early exile in London but does not explore the links between Blanco White and the debates that were taking place in Madrid about the slave trade in sufficient detail.

Following the steps of Llorens, we find *Londres y el Liberalismo hispánico,*[55] edited by Daniel Muñoz and Gregorio Alonso, which investigates the political and cultural production of those liberals exiled in the capital of Britain and their contributions to British public life. More recently, *Emigrados. España y el exilio internacional, 1814-1834* by Juan Luis Simal constitutes a significant attempt to place the study of the 'émigré' on a transnational level, and to build a more comprehensive description of the Spanish exiles while avoiding national particularisms. His approach to the important role of the experiences of exile in shaping an idea of international liberalism will be followed in this thesis. However, Simal does not make the slightest reference to the debates about the slave trade or slavery. In conclusion, there is no publication that focuses on abolitionist discourses produced from the English exile in the first half of the nineteenth century. This lack of interest in the issue is consistent with the historiographical tradition, but it makes the existence of a very important historiographical vacuum clear.

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[53] Joaquín Varela Suanzes, *La Monarquía doceañista (1810-1837)* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2013).

[54] Durán (2005).

[55] Daniel Muñoz and Gregorio Alonso, *Londres y el Liberalismo hispánico* (Madrid and Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2011).

3.3. Anti-slave trade and Antislavery Discourses in the Spanish Historiography

The number of articles, chapters and monographs available that deal with the construction of anti-slave trade ideas written in Spain is surprisingly scarce. In the 1990s, Francisco de Solano and Agustín Guimerá led a productive attempt to put the issue of the slave trade in Spain on the agenda of Spanish historians. They published the book *Esclavitud y derechos humanos. La lucha por la libertad del negro del siglo XIX*, which constitutes an exceptional long-term analysis of abolitionist ideas and discourses in the Spanish Empire.[56] Especially relevant for this thesis, because of the time-frame that they deal with, are the chapters 'La abolición de la esclavitud en España durante el siglo XIX' by José U. Martínez Carreras and 'El abolicionismo en la Sociedad y Literaturas Españolas' by Belén Pozuelo.[57] Carreras offers a panoramic approach to the topic and builds a logical historical narrative about the origins and development of the Spanish antislavery movement. Although his contribution is relevant considering the absence of similar works, his analysis reinforces the teleological description of the development of the anti-slavery movement in Spain based on the traditional chronology of Gabriel Rodríguez.[58] In a similar vein, Belén Pozuelo's study of abolitionist discourses in the Spanish press during the nineteenth century constitutes one of the first works on this subject in the Spanish historiography. She also identifies (very broadly) three political or

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[56] Francisco de Solano and Agustín Guimerá, *Esclavitud y derechos humanos. La lucha por la libertad del negro en el siglo XIX* (Madrid: CSIC, 1990).

[57] Solano and Guimerá (1990).

[58] Rodríguez (1887).

cultural generations of abolitionist leaders in Spain, following the traditional chronology of Rodriguez. Both chapters, however, fail to problematize the differences between anti-slave trade and antislavery discourses and reinforce the notion of a teleological development in the history of Spanish abolitionism.

Another aspect that Spanish historians have focused on has been been the selection and compilation of abolitionist discourses that in many cases were previously unknown. In this sense, the book of Enriqueta Vila Vilar and Luisa Vila Vilar, *Los abolicionistas españoles. Siglo XIX*, offers an anthology of selected texts and speeches of some of the most prominent anti-slave trade and antislavery leaders in Spain from 1811 to 1886.[59] A similar perspective is followed by Eduardo Galván in his book *La abolición de la esclavitud en España. Debates Parlamentarios 1810-1886*, in which he compiles the parliamentary debates about slavery and the slave trade from the Cortes of Cadiz to the abolition of slavery in 1886.[60] The author focuses on the legal aspect of the debates and ignores the cultural, ideological, economic and religious factors that informed and motivated the discourses that he compiled. He effectively explains the complexity of the debates and avoids a pro- versus anti- approach that would have impoverished his study. This book is a significant contribution in the context of the Spanish historiography and constitutes a useful secondary source for this doctoral research, however it reveals the epistemological constraints of the Spanish speaking historiography in the field.

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[59] Enriqueta Vila and Lucia Vila, *Los Abolicionistas Españoles. Siglo XIX* (Madrid: Ediciones de Cultura Hispánica, 1996).

[60] Eduardo Galván, *La abolición de la esclavitud en España. Debates Parlamentarios 1810-1886* (Madrid: Dickinson, 2014).

More recently, some Spanish authors have started to develop more comprehensive approaches to the issue of the slave trade and slavery in the Spanish Empire. These publications are less interested in defining wide chronological structures or transcribing primary sources. On the contrary, they focus on more specific elements and aim to link their analysis with ongoing historiographical debates. A very good example of this new approach is the recent book *Mujeres esclavas y abolicionistas en la España de los siglos XVI al XIX*, edited by Aurelia Martín Casares and Rocio Periáñez Gómez.[61] The different chapters explore the literary anti-slave trade and antislavery production written by women and the role of women in the creation and dissemination of these ideas in the 1850s and 1860s.

In this regard, it is worth emphasizing here the chapters 'Zinda (1804), de María Rosa Gálvez de Cabrera, y las reflexiones sobre la esclavitud en la España finidieciochesca'[62] by Arturo Morgado and 'Un espacio social propio. El movimiento abolicionista español y las reformadoras románticas'[63] by Carmen de la Guardia. Morgado highlights the existence of anti-slave trade and antislavery opinions and concerns in Spain before Antillón's speech in 1802, and challenges the traditional chronology analysed previously. He examines the magazine *Espíritu de los mejores diarios literarios que se publican en*

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[61] Aurelia Martín Casares and Rocio Periáñez Gómez, *Mujeres esclavas y abolicionistas en la España de los siglos XVI al XIX* (Madrid and Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2014).

[62] Arturo Morgado, 'Zinda (1804), de María Rosa Gálvez de Cabrera, y las reflexiones sobre la esclavitud en la España finidieciochesca', in *Mujeres esclavas y abolicionistas en la España de los siglos XVI al XIX,* ed. by Aurelia Martín Casares and Rocio Periáñez Gómez (Madrid and Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2014), pp. 187-212.

[63] Carmen de la Guardia, 'Un espacio social propio', in *Mujeres esclavas y abolicionistas en la España de los siglos XVI al XIX,* ed. by Aurelia Martín Casares and Rocio Periáñez Gómez (Madrid - Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2014).

Europa and notes the frequent publication of abolitionist commentary in its pages, strongly influenced by the British abolitionist movement.

For her part, de la Guardia analyses the role of Spanish and foreign women living in Spain in the production of abolitionist ideas before and during the first stages of the *Sociedad Abolicionista Española*, founded in 1864. The most innovative aspect of her research is the study of the role of the American Embassy in Madrid, and more specifically of Horatio Perry (secretary of the U.S. diplomatic mission) and his wife Carolina Corona, in promoting antislavery ideas among Spanish political leaders in the 1850s. It is also worth mentioning her analysis of the international links of Julio Vizcarrondo (founder of the *Sociedad Abolicionista Española*) and his wife Harriet Brewster, who was born in Philadelphia, with the United States and France. Both developed a very intense abolitionist activism in Puerto Rico, the United States and Spain. This chapter constitutes a major contribution to the field.

In conclusion, the study of anti-slave trade and antislavery ideas in Spain has never constituted a major concern for Spanish or English-speaking historians. Building on the contributions of historians on both sides of the Atlantic, this thesis will help to fill this important gap and contribute to a more comprehensive history of Spanish abolitionism in the Atlantic world during the nineteenth century.

4. Chapter Outline

Chapter one explores the political, ideological and diplomatic influence of Britain in the development of early anti-slavery and anti-slave trade discourses in Spain between 1802 and 1814, and the centrality of Agustín de Argüelles' proposal at the Cortes of Cadiz in

1811. His proposal was vital in defining a new ideological stance within the Spanish political debate by adopting the moral condemnation elaborated by the British abolitionist movement and was the result of a coordinated strategy with the British authorities. This chapter also explores the early development and growth of the slave trade in the Spanish Caribbean, as a new economic activity, and the social rise of sugar producers and exporters.

The second chapter discusses the development of abolitionist discourses during two key historical periods: the restoration of Fernando VII and the short constitutional episode of 1820-1823. In the aftermath of the absolutist restoration, the British authorities forced Spain to define a new official discourse on the slave trade. This new line of argument was built upon a conservative tradition, but also on the ideological influence of British and early Spanish abolitionism. In practical terms, however, the Absolutist regime continued to protect and promote the continuity of the slave trade into the Spanish colonies. During the short constitutional period of 1820-1823, known as the Liberal Triennium, both abolitionist and pro-slavery discourses found in the re-established Cortes a prominent public platform. This chapter argues that both sides failed to achieve their main goals, and that by the end of the period the now illicit slave trade had became an ‘indispensable’ engine of the colonial economy.

Chapter three analyses the lack of continuity of abolitionist discourses produced by the Spanish exile community in Britain after the second restoration of 1823 and stresses the fragility of Spanish early abolitionist discourse. This chapter also explores how abolitionist and anti-abolitionist discourses continued to operate and change in the aftermath of the prohibition of the slave trade. It assesses the ideological consequences that arose from the British abolitionist strategy against the slave trade after the

establishment, in 1820, of the Mixed Commission Court in Havana in the context of a growing tension between the Spanish and British governments, and analyses the strategies of legitimization put in place by anti-abolitionist sectors to protect and promote the slave trade.

Chapter four studies the development of abolitionist discourses after the proclamation of the Constitution of 1837, and challenges the historiographical notion of the existence of a public 'anti-slave trade clamour' in the second half of the 1840s. It argues that anti-abolitionist discourses continued to operate successfully during this period and the diplomatic strategy put in place by the British authorities against the slave trade was used to legitimize these positions both in Cuba and Spain. In a context of gradual militarisation and the restriction of civil rights in the Spanish colonies, a new racist anti-slave trade discourse, advanced by key Cuban intellectuals, emerged as a political response to Spain's inaction. This position was to become the most successful abolitionist discourse to operate in Cuba during the 1840s.

Finally, the fifth chapter explores the impact of U.S. annexationism on the debates related to the continuation of the slave trade and how Spain managed to ignore British demands for more effective legislation against the slave trade and simultaneously stopped London's cabinet from adopting any unilateral action. This chapter also tackles how 'national dignity' and 'sense of honour' characterised a new anti-slave trade discourse that operated within the Spanish colonial administration during the 1850s and 1860s. Finally, this chapter focuses on the international and domestic factors that led to the end of the slave trade and how Spanish political actors built a new narrative that stressed the need for change in order to preserve the last remaining colonies of a moribund empire.

Chapter 1. Early Spanish Anti-Slave Trade Discourses, 1802-1814

The 1811 parliamentary proposal of Agustín de Argüelles to abolish the slave trade, which adopted and adapted the moral condemnation elaborated by the British abolitionist movement, was crucial in defining a new ideological stance within Spanish political discourse. His initiative was the result of a coordinated strategy with the British authorities and was key to the construction of early abolitionist discourses in Spain. This chapter explores the political, ideological and diplomatic influence of Britain in the development of early anti-slavery and anti-slave trade discourses in Spain, between 1802 and 1814, and demonstrates the centrality of Argüelles' proposal.

The economic reforms applied by the Bourbon monarchs in the previous four decades of the eighteenth century laid the foundations for a new political, social and economic order that brought crucial changes to Cuba.[64] The freedom to import African slaves, established by in the *Reales Cédulas* of 1789 and 1791, started an economic revolution in Cuba, which progressively changed the conditions of the Island from an economic model based on farming and livestock to a plantation system.[65]

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[64] Gabriel Paquette, 'The Dissolution Of The Spanish Atlantic Monarchy', *The Historical Journal*, 52 (2009), 175-212 (p. 177). Sherry Johnson, *The Social Transformation of Eighteenth-century Cuba* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001).

[65] Josep M. Fradera, *Colonias para después de un Imperio* (Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra, 2005), pp. 34-35; Fradera and Schmidt-Nowara (2013), p. 259; Schmidt-Nowara (2013), p. 158.

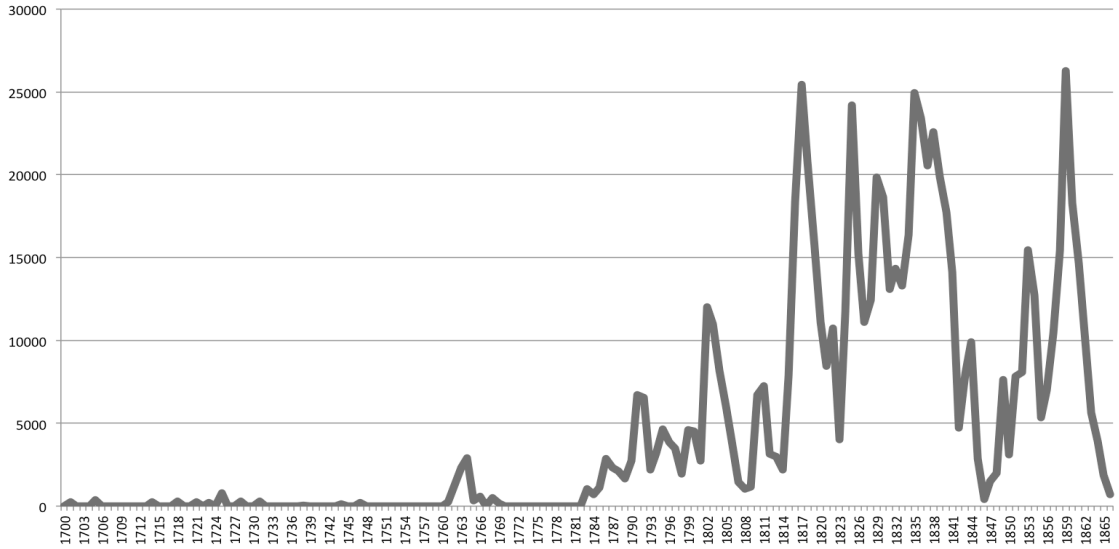

Chart 1: Number of Slaves Brought to Cuba (1700-1866)[66]

These developments altered the power balance between different social groups in the colony and led to the social rise of sugar producers and exporters, who became the most powerful colonial stakeholders and a counterweight to the metropolitan authorities. This economic group, labelled by Manuel Moreno Fraginals as the 'sacarocracy', was characterised by a strong defence of the introduction of a freer domestic market and, at the same time, the preservation and development of slavery and the slave trade as key factors for the prosperity of the colony.[67] Moreno Fraginals has argued that the powerful owners of the sugar mills in Cuba operated as 'one family in the feudal sense of the

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[66] TASTD <http://www.slavevoyages.org/> [Accessed: 09/01/2017]

[67] Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *The Sugarmill. The Socioeconomic Complex of Sugar in Cuba 1760-1860* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008 [1976]); Javier Alvarado, 'El régimen de legislación especial para ultramar y la cuestión abolicionista en España durante el siglo XIX', in *La supervivencia del derecho español en Hispanoamérica durante la época independiente,* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1998).

world', planning and arranging each marriage 'so that accumulated fortunes would not be dispersed'.[68]

This phenomenon was not limited to local individuals, as these networks included Spanish military and civil officials who had arrived in the Island 'to gain rapid promotion, personal wealth, and political power'.[69] Numerous peninsular military leaders, from across the political spectrum, served as military officials and captain generals in Cuba. In the words of Alfonso Quiroz, during the nineteenth century the Spanish colony 'became a strategic hub for corrupt networks of nepotism and favouritism plaguing the Spanish state bureaucracy and delaying much needed colonial reform in Cuba'. [70]

The relationship between liberalism and slave ownership was, according to Moreno Fraginals, 'a constant flight from reality' as 'the contradictions of the sugar regime […] formed a nucleus of negative ideas based not on what should be but on what [the sacarocrats] did not want to be.[71] Moreno Fraginals has also argued that this group had to deal with the 'tremendous contradiction of selling merchandise on the world market and at the same time having slaves', and concluded that this 'vacillating position' was 'painfully reflected in their ideological world.'[72] Candelaria Saiz Pastor has also emphasised that these 'slavery-related contradictions' represented the cornerstone of the relations between the Spanish colonies and the metropolis during the nineteenth

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[68] Moreno Fraginals (2008 [1976]), p. 16.

[69] Alfonso W. Quiroz, 'Implicit Costs of Empire: Bureaucratic Corruption in Nineteenth-Century Cuba', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 35 (2003), 473-511 (p. 474).

[70] Quiroz (2003), p. 474.

[71] Moreno Fraginals (2008 [1976]), p. 166 (n. 152).

[72] Moreno Fraginals (2008 [1976]), p. 60.

century. The terms 'liberalism' and 'pro-slavery', operated as a 'palpable conjunction', Saiz concluded.[73] Within this ideological framework 'the private ownership of the means of production, sanctioned by the liberal doctrine, applied to people' and this idea was embraced and implemented by slave-owners, officials and lawmakers alike.[74] Moreno Fraginals has concluded that this attitude explains the ideological world of the sacarocrat, which made him 'a champion of inviolable property in the means of production […adapting] a bourgeois judicial concept to a situation which corresponded to the most primitive form of labor'.[75]

However, as Domenico Losurdo has problematised, sheltered by the notion of 'property rights', slavery also became a synonym of prosperity, stability and progress.[76] 'The rise of liberalism and the spread of racial chattel slavery are the product of a twin birth' and 'slavery is not something that persisted despite the success of the three liberal revolutions. On the contrary, it experienced its maximum development following that success'.[77] For slave-owners, planters and investors, slavery and the slave trade, far from representing a contradiction of their ideas and economic principles, were rooted in the fundamental belief that property rights were inviolable and compatible with a 'liberal system of policy'.[78]

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[73] Candelaria Saiz Pastor, 'Liberales y esclavistas. El dominio colonial español en Cuba (1833-1868)', (Universidad de Alicante, 1990), pp. 227-230.

[74] Moreno Fraginals (2008 [1976]), p. 61.

[75] Moreno Fraginals (2008 [1976]), p. 61.

[76] Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History* (New York: Verso Books, 2011), pp. 35-65.

[77] Losurdo (2011), pp. 35-37.

[78] Losurdo (2011), pp. 58-61.

From the second half of the eighteenth century, key representatives of this Cuban *sacarocracy*, such as Ignacio Pedro Montalvo, Nicolas Calvo, Antonio del Valle Hernández, Tomás Romay, José de Ilincheta, Captain General Luis de las Casas and Francisco Arango y Parreño, defined a political strategy for the development and protection of a new colonial economy based on the plantation system. The establishment of this new economic system demanded the importation of large numbers of African slaves and thus led to the consolidation of pro-slave trade discourse within the new Cuban elite, which drew its wealth from the production of sugar, coffee and tobacco.[79] During the nineteenth century, the slave trade into Cuba became a very profitable economic activity, which gradually became crucial to the material viability of the Spanish Empire.[80] As Christopher Schmidt-Nowara has argued, the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire in 1807, far from stopping the trade to Cuba and Puerto Rico, 'consolidated dynamic slave economies and a political order that protected and encouraged these economies'.[81]

Condemning the slave trade meant not only having to confront the Cuban elites, but also very powerful domestic interests. Several aspects of the Cuban slave economy such as the slave trade, commodity production, investment in infrastructures and shipping represented enormous earnings for some of the biggest fortunes in Spain and were

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[79] Alvarado (1998), pp. 3-4.

[80] Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 88; Schmidt-Nowara (2013), p. 158.

[81] Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, 'National Economy and Atlantic Slavery: Protectionism and Resistance to Abolitionism in Spain and the Antilles, 1854-1874', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 78:4 (1998), 603-629 (p. 628).

'based on the vertical integration of all activities related to the colonial sugar economy'.[82] The ideological and political reaction against slavery and the slave trade in Spain, confronting both domestic and colonial interests, was a complex and fragmented historical process. However, during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, some voices started to publicly condemn those practices and to develop a Spanish abolitionist discourse.

As Emily Berquist has pointed out, abolitionist ideas in Spain in the early nineteenth century have received little attention from historians.[83] The foundational works in the field, such as those by Arthur Corwin and David Murray, focused on British influence on the development of anti-slave trade legislation.[84] More recently, however, works by Josep Fradera, Chistopher Schmidt-Nowara, José Antonio Piqueras, Manuel Barcia, Kate Ferris, Albert García Balañà, and Berquist herself, among others, have provided more innovative approaches to the construction and circulation of abolitionist ideas in the Spanish Empire during the nineteenth century.[85] As Fradera has stressed, the different social and political conditions in Spain meant that abolitionism 'was never likely to unfold along similar lines' to the British movement. Only by adopting a transnational approach, placing the study in conversation with the international historiography, will we

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[82] Schmidt-Nowara (1998), p. 609.

[83] Berquist (2010), pp. 181-182.

[84] Corwin (1967); Murray (2002 [1980]).

[85] Fradera (1984); Fradera (1995); Fradera (1999); Fradera (2013); Schmidt-Nowara (1999); Schmidt-Nowara (2013); Piqueras (2002); Piqueras (2014); Barcia (2012); Barcia (2008); Ferris (2008); Berquist (2010); García Balañà (2013).

be able to build a comprehensive understanding of Spanish anti-slave trade and anti-slavery discourses.[86]

1. Antillón and Blanco White: Translating 'Abolitionism'

Abolitionist ideas in Spain started to circulate at the beginning of the nineteenth century, strongly influenced by French and British forerunners. The decision of the British Parliament to abolish the slave trade in 1807 signalled the beginning of a diplomatic campaign that would eventually constitute the strongest stimulus for the emergence of anti-slave trade discourses in Spain.[87]

British and French thinkers strongly influenced early anti-slavery and anti-slave trade discourses in Spain, as is clear from the work of the doctor in law and geography expert, Isidoro de Antillón.[88] The first public speech that can be considered part of an abolitionist tradition in Spain was delivered by Antillón at the Real Academia Matritense de Derecho Español y Público, in 1802. However, as Josep Fradera (2013; 266) has convincingly argued, 'Antillon's text […] should not be considered as merely a distillation of British or French arguments', as he inscribed his abolitionist position within a wider discourse of

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[86] Fradera (2013), p. 264.

[87] Fradera (2013), p. 268.

[88] He had published in 1794 the work *Descripción orográfica, política y física de Albarracin*, which allowed him to became a member of the Academia de Ciencias. During the Napoleonic invasion of Spain in 1808, he participated in the defence of the city of Zaragoza. In 1809, he moved to Seville and started to contribute to the newspaper *Semario Patriótico*, a radical liberal publication directed by Manuel José Quintana. He became a deputy in the Cortes of Cadiz in 1812. After the dissolution of the Cortes he was the victim of a murder attempt by a group of Absolutists and died as result of the injuries in 1814, while being driven to Zaragoza where he was going to be executed after being sentenced to death. 'Los Diputados fracasan en las Cortes de Cadiz que promulgaron la Constitución de 1812' in Conmemoración del 120 Aniversario del a Abolición de la Esclavitud en España <http://www.cedt.org/perabol1.htm> [Accessed 24/09/2015].

Spanish imperial reform. His speech was entitled 'Disertación sobre el origen de la esclavitud de los negros, motivos que la han perpetuado, ventajas que se le atribuyen y medios que podrían adoptarse para hacer prosperar sin ella nuestras colonias'. In it Antillón argued in favour of 'ameliorating' the life conditions of the slaves in the Spanish dominions and contended that gradually 'European governments must, in all justice, free the African slaves in America'.[89] He clarified, however, that 'the time and circumstances in which freedom ought to be given to them and the preliminaries that must take place before granting them this just benefit, must be arranged wisely by governments'. [90]

Antillón 'focused on the politics, economics, and demography of colonial labour' to build his abolitionist position, in which humanitarian and religious arguments were secondary. [91] Antillón believed, as Schmidt-Nowara has pointed out, that Spain should not rely on the 'dangerous and unreliable enslaved African labour' (2013: 168), as the British and French had done. [92] He suggested encouraging traders to introduce a balanced gender ratio, to allow slaves to have more leisure time, and proposed the gradual replacement of slaves by free indigenous workers. Antillón argued in favour of Spain's colonial expansion in Africa as the best way to increase Spanish agricultural production and mitigate the metropolitan dependency on the American territories. He proposed establishing new settlements on African soil, where the habitants were 'industrious, quiet, sweet, and too cowardly to oppose the founding of a colony'. [93] He believed that

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[89] Isidoro de Antillón, *Disertación sobre el Origen de la Esclavitud de los Negros* (Madrid: 1811), p. 83.

[90] Antillón (1811), p. 83.

[91] Schmidt-Nowara (2013), p. 168.

[92] Schmidt-Nowara (2013), p. 168.

[93] Antillón (1811), p. 65.

the Spaniards would be welcome as 'good gods' by the Africans 'if those who came to occupy the land, teach them how to cultivate it instead of expatriating them forever'. [94] Antillón argued that those 'in favour of this infamous system, would only deserve […] the disregard of the philosopher and the dagger of the Negro'. [95] However, far from being grounded on emotion, his analysis aimed to prove that the slave trade was 'not only anomalous but also unnecessary'.[96]

Fradera has pointed out that Antillón's 'abolitionist stance is likely to have had a wide impact' during the Peninsula War, however, his speech was not published until 1811.[97] As the author himself admitted, he 'didn't believe or expect that, in 1802, when I read my speech on the slavery of the negroes […] it would become in some time more than just an outburst in front of friends'. [98] As he explained, his decision to publish his speech was encouraged by the recent abolition of the slave trade by Britain (which Antillón [1811: 104] wrongly described as 'the abolition of negro slavery') and the British diplomatic campaign to extend 'abolition to the whole of Europe'.[99] He optimistically predicted that 'Spain is going to take part in this glorious revolution of principles which is an honour to the enlightenment and the humaneness of modern peoples'.[100] British political and

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[94] Antillón (1811), p. 66.

[95] Antillón (1811), p. 84.

[96] Schmidt-Nowara (2013), p. 168.

[97] Fradera (2013), p. 266.

[98] Antillón (1811), p. 4.

[99] Antillón (1811), p. 104.

[100] Antillón (1811), p. 104.

diplomatic pressure would be, from this point forward, the primary driver of abolitionism in Spain.

In his political campaign against the slave trade, however, Antillón was not alone. José María Blanco y Crespo, better known asJoséMaría Blanco White, was a multifaceted thinker and writer in the history of early Spanish liberalism.[101] From April 1810 to June 1814, he published the newspaper *El Español* in London, written entirely in Spanish. The publication was sponsored by the Foreign Office from the outset and Henry Richard Vassall Fox, Lord Holland (1773-1840), a great expert in Spanish politics and a major Whig figure.[102] Before 1812, *El Español* featured translations of Jeremy Bentham, Francis Horner, John Allen, Samuel Romilly and Lord Holland. [103] He was keen to propagate the benefits of a political alliance with Britain and the British authorities saw his newspaper as useful tool in their diplomatic strategy in Spain. The British Embassy in Cadiz subscribed to one hundred copies, Lord Holland was also a major subscriber and the company Gordon and Murphy (with interests in Spain and Spanish America) transported the newspaper into the Spanish colonies for free, at the request of the British government. [104] Blanco's fascination with British society led him to believe, as Fernando

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[101] Murphy (1989); Roberto Breña, 'Jose María Blanco White y la independencia de América: ¿una postura proamericana?', *Historia Constitucional*, 3 (2002), 1-17; Durán (2005); Schmidt-Nowara (2013).

[102] Manuel Moreno Alonso, *La forja del Liberalismo en España. Los amigos españoles de Lord Holland 1793-1840* (Madrid: Congreso de los Diputados, 1997); Schmidt-Nowara (2013), p. 159.

[103] Durán (2005), pp. 159-160.

[104] Durán (2005), pp. 159-160.

Durán has pointed out, that '[learning from Britain] was the dreamed salvation for a country that seemed to have no solution'.[105]

After the abolition of the slave trade was first debated at the Cortes of Cadiz, Blanco elaborated his anti-slave trade position, which was strongly influenced by that of William Wilberforce. He adopted 'some aspects of the evangelical religion that animated the leading British abolitionist' and 'shared the […] enthusiasm of Wilberforce'.[106] In the issue of May 1811 (No. 14), only one month after Agustín de Argüelles had presented his proposal at the Cortes of Cadiz, Blanco White published the article 'Abolición de la Esclavitud' ('Abolition of Slavery'), in which he commented upon and supported Argüelles' ideas.[107] He described them as 'extremely glorious for the Spanish nation', but criticised the proposal made by Guridi y Alcocer on 26 March 1811 that proposed the abolition of slavery.[108] Blanco White believed that the abolition of slavery in the Spanish colonies would have negative consequences and pointed out that 'a good desire has led to the Cortes beyond the reasonable limits in this matter. They seem to have emancipated black slaves all at once; […] and this step is directly contrary to the good that is being attempted.' [109] To support his point, he raised the spectre of the Haitian Revolution and asked the Spanish deputies to follow the example of the British Parliament, and to consider this issue more carefully.[110]

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[105] Durán (2005), p. 168.

[106] Schmidt-Nowara (2013), p. 161.

[107] *El Español* (1811), vol. III, p. 149.

[108] *El Español* (1811), v. III, p. 150.

[109] *El Español* (1811), v. III, p. 150.

[110] *El Español* (1811), v. III, p. 150.

In September 1811, Blanco White published the translation of some excerpts of William Wilberforce's *Letter on the Abolition of the slave trade,* originally written in 1808, including some notes on the life of the African-American anti-slavery activist, Paul Cuffee. The translation was divided into three chapters, which were published between September and November 1811.[111] Blanco White thought that this translation would help to spread the anti-slave trade message in Spain and achieve the 'happy abolition of the barbaric traffic in slaves'.[112] For Blanco White, Britain and Wilberforce represented a moral and political example of moderation.

In March 1814, Blanco White published the book *Bosquexo del Comercio de Esclavos* in London, in which he advocated the abolition of the slave trade. He presented his work as a translation of William Wilberforce's Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade, but Blanco White made a great effort to adapt the core ideas of the British abolitionist movement to the Spanish cultural and political context. Schmidt-Nowara has convincingly suggested that Blanco White 'used the language of slavery' to compare the violence suffered by the Spanish people under the French occupation to that undergone by the African victims of the slave trade. In this way, Blanco White aimed to translate 'Wilberforce's evangelical outlook into an idiom more immediately comprehensible to Spanish readers struggling against the French'.[113] In December 1813, while Blanco White was working on his *Bosquexo*, he sent a letter to Wilberforce which has hitherto

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[111] *El Español* (1811), v. III, p. 466-479; *El Español* (1811), v. IV, pp. 3-25; *El Español* (1811), v. IV, p. 109-119.

[112] *El Español* (1811), v. III, p. 467.

[113] Schmidt-Nowara (2013), pp. 161-162.

remained unpublished. The Spanish author thanked Wilberforce for his comments on his work and for inspiring him to write it in the first place.

> It was your work, Sir, that first gave me a full insight of the abominable traffic: it was your work that brought my vague compassion for the slaves into action: it is your work that has led my pen throughout the sketch which the [African] Institution have been pleased to look upon [...] and grant me the blessing of being instrumental in doing away the stain which the continuation of the slave trade casts to this day, upon the character of my native country.[114]

The *Bosquexo* had the financial support of the African Institution, one of the most important British abolitionist lobbies, which was involved in the translation and publication of British abolitionist propaganda into other European languages. According to Wayne Ackerson, the African Institution sponsored 'the translation of one of Wilberforce's commentaries into Spanish' and planned to distribute the book 'among the Spanish clergy and throughout the Spanish government'.[115] Following the moderate position and strategic gradualism that Blanco White defended in *El Español*, he used a Christian rhetoric very similar to Wilberforce's. Blanco White, unlike Antillón, referred exclusively to the slave trade, and tacitly accepted the preservation of slavery. He believed that the end of the slave trade would improve the living conditions of the slaves but, unlike Antillón, Blanco White appealed to Christian feelings to support abolition.[116] Blanco White's book was published only two months before the end of the Cortes of

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[114] Blanco White to William Wilberforce, 15 December 1813, MS. Wilberforce, c. 51, ff. 84-85, Special Collections, BL.

[115] Wayne Ackerson, *The African Institution and the Antislavery Movement in Great Britain* (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), p. 97. *Eighth Report of the Directors of the African Institution, Read at the Annual General Meeting, on March 23, 1814* (London: Ellerton and Henderson, 1814).

[116] Blanco was a former Catholic priest and had converted to Anglicanism in 1812. José María Blanco White, *Bosquexo del comercio de esclavos* (Sevilla: Alfar, 1999 [1814]), pp. 184-194; Berquist (2010), p. 193; Schmidt-Nowara (2013), p. 159.

Cadiz and the restoration of Ferdinand VII as absolute king of Spain in May 1814. This fact made the immediate distribution of the book in Spain impossible and diminished its impact.[117]

Berquist has suggested that Antillón and Blanco White belonged to a 'broader network' of abolitionist thinkers, which fostered an 'early anti-slavery movement' in Spain.[118] Although she is right in suggesting that their contributions should not be seen as a 'sidelined anomaly', and must be understood in the wider context of abolitionism in the Atlantic world, there is no evidence to suggest that Blanco White and Antillón's works were part of a coordinated effort until 1811.[119] Their works have traditionally been analysed as the historical background to the debates on slavery and the slave trade at the Cortes of Cadiz, but they only became politically relevant in the context of the Cadiz debate. [120] As Schmidt-Nowara has argued, the *Bosquexo* was an articulate and passionate response to the pro-slave trade arguments advanced by the slaveholders at the Cortes, and it was 'congruent with other contemporary Spanish attacks on the Cuban slave trade'.[121] Both the *Disertación* and the *Bosquexo* came about in an attempt to support Argüelles' proposal to abolish the slave trade in a gradual, non-radical way. Blanco White's publications were used by British diplomats and the abolitionist lobby to

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[117] Schmidt-Nowara (2013), p. 170.

[118] Berquist (2010), pp. 189-190.

[119] Christine Benavides, 'Isidoro de Antillón y la abolición de la esclavitud', in *Las élites y la Revolución de España (1808-1814): Estudios en homenaje al Profesor Gérard Dufour,* (Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes [Publicaciones de la Universidad de Alicante], 2017 [2010]), pp. 89-103 (p. 95).

[120] Benavides (2017 [2010]), p. 90; Fradera (2013), p. 266; Berquist (2010), p. 193.

[121] Schmidt-Nowara (2013), pp. 170-171.

reinforce their position in Spain and proves the political determination of the British government to put the issue of the slave trade on the Spanish political agenda.

2. The Abolition of the Slave Trade in Spain as a British Political Initiative.

The abolition of the slave trade by Britain in 1807 marked the beginning of a new political strategy which had an almost immediate impact in Spain. In the context of the Peninsular War (1807-1814), Britain would become the main promoter of abolitionist ideas and a determined ally to many liberal Spanish politicians. The British Government, in close collaboration with the British abolitionist lobby headed by Wilberforce, was committed to achieving the international abolition of the slave trade. As Paula Dumas has suggested, British abolitionists campaigned to stop the slave trade all across the Atlantic, not only on humanitarian grounds, but also to respond to the anti-abolitionist position that argued 'that other nations would continue to trade in slaves regardless of Britain abolishing her role in the international trade'.[122] On this point, the importance of Spain as a main antagonist was key. After the British abolition of the slave trade, Cuba became the largest slave colony in the Caribbean, with 86 percent of the slaves introduced in the Island arriving after 1807. By the 1820s, Cuba had also become the world's largest sugar producer.[123]

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[122] Paula E. Dumas, *Proslavery Britain. Fighting for Slavery in an Era of Abolition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2016), pp. 10-11.

[123] Leví Marrero, *Cuba: economía y sociedad* (Madrid: Editorial Playor, 1984-1987) vol. 12, pp. 146-147. *Ferrer (2013); David Eltis, Economic growth and the ending of the transatlantic slave trade (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).* TASTD <http://www.slavevoyages.org/> [Accessed: 09/01/2017]

Spanish and Portuguese American territories had become the main destinations of the transatlantic slave trade and, therefore, lobbying the governments in Madrid and Lisbon was a priority for the British abolitionist lobby. As early as May 1806, the British Parliament passed legislation to prevent British traders from supplying foreign colonies with slaves. Shortly after, in June, Parliament passed an address asking the King to establish diplomatic negotiations with foreign countries to achieve the international abolition of the slave trade. As David Murray pointed out, 'Cuba had been completely dependent on the foreign slave trade, and the British slave trade had been responsible for supplying a large percentage of slaves to Cuba.'[124] In this context, many British slave traders began sailing under the Spanish flag to avoid British jurisdiction.[125]

Ever since 1806, British activists had been anxious to expand their anti-slave trade campaign to the rest of Europe and, that same year, the abolitionist campaigner Henry Brougham (1778-1868) wrote to William Wilberforce to stress the importance of raising the issue of the Spanish slave trade and mustering support from key political figures in Britain.

> I had written to Lord H. Petty very fully upon the subject of the Spanish slave trade, and I am happy to find, [...] that he is perfectly master of the subject which I had attempted to press upon his attention. He and I talked over a good part of it in presence of Mr. Fox, which I thought the best way of letting him take a share in the discussion or not, as he might choose. […] On the slave trade, in general, we talked a great deal –and you may believe all agreed. Lord H. Petty mentions

[124] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 26.

[125] Ferrer (2013), p. 149.

> that you had a wish to begin the campaign; […] I should add that the company present were Mr. Fox, Lord Holland, Lord H. Petty, and myself.[126]

The coordination between the British government and anti-slave trade activists with respect to Spain was apparent from this period and is demonstrative of how intertwined the strategies of the British anti-slave trade lobby and the British government were. In July 1808, the Prime Minister Spencer Perceval (1762-1812) wrote a letter to Wilberforce to assure his cabinet's commitment to the 'very interesting' question of the abolition of the slave trade in Spain.[127] He promised Wilberforce to do 'anything in power that I think likely to be practicable and availing to forward the views you have upon it' and let him know that the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, George Canning (1770-1827), was 'equally desirous to do the same'.[128]

In 1808, Canning sent instructions to the British Ambassador in Madrid 'to expound the British reasons for abolishing the slave trade without proposing any specific measure'.[129] British abolitionists saw the outbreak of the Peninsular War in 1808, the emergence of the Spanish *guerrilla* and the British military intervention as propitious factors to stir debate about the abolition of the slave trade. Following the popular rejection of the French occupation of Spain, and only three years after the Battle of Trafalgar in the context of the Anglo-Spanish War (1796-1808), Spain became an ally of Britain.

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[126] Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce* (London: John Murray, 1840) vol. 2, pp. 77-79.

[127] Wilberforce and Wilberforce (1840), vol. 2, pp. 134-135.

[128] Wilberforce and Wilberforce (1840), vol. 2, pp. 134-135.

[129] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 27; Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic slave trade and British abolition, 1760-1810* (London: Macmillan, 1975); Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and antislavery: British mobilization in a comparative perspective* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

Wilberforce praised the 'extraordinary spectacle' of the Spanish people fighting against Napoleon's troops and believed that the British military intervention in the peninsula put them in a good position to influence Spanish politics.[130]

In June 1808, a group of Spanish deputies from the northern region of Asturias, headed by Andrés de la Vega (1768-1813) and José María Queipo de Llano, Count of Toreno (1786-1843), travelled to London to meet Canning and to ask the British Government to support their fight against Napoleon in Spain. They were joined by Agustín de Argüelles, another Spanish politician who was already in London acting as a secret agent of the Spanish Government.[131] Wilberforce did not want to lose the opportunity to communicate his abolitionist ideas to these Spanish politicians, so he sent letters to Canning, Brougham and Lord Holland (at least) on the topic.

> Just at present the Spanish must necessarily be wholly engrossed by the exigencies of their own situation, but doubtless they are precisely in the circumstances in which, if it please God they succeed, […] that generous temper of mind be produced, which will abhor oppression and cruelty, consequently will abolish the slave trade. And surely we ought to be immediately taking all proper preparatory measures for diffusing information on the subject. [...] I will immediately write to Canning, desiring him to mention the subject to the Spanish deputies. Do you desire Perceval to do the same [?] I have an idea also of writing to Lord Holland, as well as to Brougham, who we ought here to carry along with us, for his knowledge of Portugal people, &c. render him capable of being a useful ally.[132]

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[130] Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* (London: John Murray, 1838) vol. 3, p. 369.

[131] Alicia Laspra Rodríguez, 'Andrés Ángel De La Vega Infanzón: Un Reformista Anglófilo', *Historia Constitucional* (2013), 45-75.

[132] Wilberforce and Wilberforce (1838), vol. 3, pp. 371-372.

Wilberforce believed that 'to get pretty well acquainted with the Spanish and Portuguese deputies' was essential as 'advantage should be taken of their being here, to make them acquainted with the real nature of the slave trade'. He invited 'Canning, and Perceval, and Brougham, and Lord Holland to attend to the deputies' and requested that anti-slave trade propaganda be translated into Spanish.[133] In July 1809, Canning sent a letter to Richard Colley Wesley, Marquis of Wellesley (1760-1842), British Ambassador in Madrid, in which he stressed the importance of persuading the Spanish government of the desirability of a gradual abolition of the slave trade, 'urging the adoption of a similar policy [as Brazil] by Spain, whenever a fit opportunity shall recur for bringing that discussion forward'.[134]

The war in Spain, however, blocked any immediate opportunity to debate it. As Canning explained in Parliament in March 1810, 'there was hardly time to enter into any stipulation with that government with respect to its colonial policy'.[135] The British authorities saw the Peninsula War both as an opportunity and a hurdle in establishing negotiations to abolish the Spanish slave trade. The French invasion made a rapprochement between Spain and Britain possible, but before the opening of the Cortes of Cadiz, in September 1810, this group of liberal Spanish politicians had no legislative power and were more concerned with winning the war against France than anything else.

The political rise of liberal figures such as Agustín de Argüelles and the opening of the Cortes created a new political atmosphere conducive to reform. José María Portillo has

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[133] Wilberforce and Wilberforce (1838), vol. 3, pp. 382-384.

[134] Canning to the Marquis of Wellesley, draft,No.13, 8 July 1809. FO 72/75, TNA.

[135] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 51.

stressed the importance of the new assembly's 'political audacity' to include in the definition of the Spanish nation all the territories under the Spanish monarchy, and to allow the political representation of the American territories. 'The idea of a general reform of the empire' characterised the main ambition of the Cortes.[136] But imperial reform did not necessarily include the abolition of the slave trade. As Fradera has suggested, it was certainly the 'perseverance and insistence' of the British authorities and activists in the context of the Peninsular War, that put the issue of the slave trade into Spanish political debate.[137]

3. Abolitionism at the Cortes of Cadiz: An Anti-Slave Trade Morality.

The opening of the Spanish Cortes in the city of Cadiz in September 1810 initiated the establishment of a new political system in Spain. For the first time a national assembly had the right to rule the country and a group of liberal politicians had the chance to challenge the power of traditional ruling elites. The British government and the abolitionist lobby saw the Cortes as a great platform to influence the future of Spain. However, the weight of French ideas in the construction of Spanish liberalism had been stronger than those of Britain. That said, after Napoleon's invasion the notion of 'rejecting' French ideas operated as a very powerful driving force in engendering an important rise of Anglophile sentiment that may contribute to explaining the susceptibility

[136] José María Portillo Valdés, 'Cuerpo de nación, pueblo soberano. La representación política en la crisis de la monarquía hispana', *Ayer*, 61 (2006), 47-76 (p. 51).

[137] Fradera (2013), p. 268.

to English ideas and discourses in Spain at the time.[138] Many Spanish deputies at the Cortes of Cadiz started to see Britain as not only an ally, but as a political example to follow.[139]

The abolition of the slave trade was first debated at the Cortes of Cadiz on 9 January 1811. Domingo García Quintana, liberal deputy for the province of Lugo, argued that the Assembly should 'ban forever even the memory of slavery'.[140] He also proposed that while abolition was being ratified, slaves should have 'a representative in Congress that would speak for them in those matters concerning slaves, and that this representation power should go to one of the European representatives'.[141] On 26 March 1811, a second resolution against slavery was introduced by the deputy from Tlaxcala (New Spain), Miguel Guridi y Alcocer (1763-1828). His proposal was the first formal project to abolish slavery in Spain. He defended the immediate abolition of the slave trade, the freedom of all children born to slave mothers, remunerations for the slaves, the right of the slaves to purchase their freedom, and better working conditions to establish parity with free labourers. He defended a gradual abolition of slavery that protected the property rights of slaveholders alongside the prohibition of the slave trade.[142] Neither proposal

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[138] C. W Crawley, 'French and English Influences in the Cortes of Cadiz, 1810-1814', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 6:2 (1939), 176-208.

[139] Joaquín Varela Suanzes-Carpegna, 'La Constitución de Cádiz y el primer liberalismo español', *Teoría y derecho: revista de pensamiento jurídico*, 10 (2011), 49-66; Laspra Rodríguez (2013).

[140] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 9 January 1811, p. 327. Domingo García Quintana should not be confused with Manuel José Quintana (1772-1857), radical writer and poet, a central figure in Antillón's circle of liberals, and who also worked on the radical newspaper *Semanario Patriotico.* See: Fernando Durán, *Crónicas de Cortes del Semanario Patriótico.* (Cadiz: Fundación Municipal de Cultura, 2003).

[141] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 9 January 1811, p. 327.

[142] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 2 April 1811, p. 810

generated a formal debate, although Guiridi y Alcocer's was brought before the Constitutional Commission for further consideration and later to a 'special commission'.[143]

Both anti-slavery proposals lacked enough support in the assembly and went beyond the political expectations of the British authorities. While the abolition of the slave trade had become a symbol of national pride in Britain and a top priority for the Foreign Office, the majority of MPs publicly opposed the abolition of slavery.[144] Following Fradera's contention that 'the ubiquitous and unequal distribution of *castas* prevented the idea of slavery from being the central issue to tackle in any hypothetical reform of the empire', it was unlikely to be undertaken in a similar way to the British debate.[145] Discussions on the slave trade followed a different track. As opposed to slavery, 'the backbone of Spain's largest American colonies', the transatlantic slave trade into Spanish territories was geographically very limited, chronologically recent compared to other American colonies, and only economically central after the collapse of slavery in Saint-Domingue (1791-1804).[146] Abolishing the slave trade was perceived, therefore, as a realistic possibility.

On 2 April 1811, Agustín de Argüelles presented his proposal to put an end to the slave trade. Argüelles was the political leader of the liberal faction in the Spanish assembly

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[143] 'Notas de los expedientes pasados a las comisiones de las Cortes desde 1811 a 1814', P-01-000001-0062-0001, f. 23, ACD. *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 2 April 1811, p. 810.

[144] Dumas (2016), p. 11.

[145] Fradera (2013), p. 262.

[146] Fradera (2013), p. 146; Ferrer (2014); María Dolores González-Ripoll and others, *El rumor de Haití en Cuba: temor, raza y rebeldía, 1789-1844* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2004); Jeremy D. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution. Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

and would go on to become the most influential abolitionist in the Cortes of Cadiz. In 1807 he had witnessed in Westminster the session of the House of Lords in which the slave trade was abolished and, during his stay in London, he had been in contact with Lord Holland. Relying on these initial contacts, he arguably became the main link between the Cortes, the British abolitionist movement, and the British diplomatic mission in Cadiz, led by the Marquis of Wellesley, British Ambassador, and Charles Vaughan (1774-1849), Secretary of the Embassy. Argüelles' proposal advocated the immediate abolition of the slave trade.

While García Quintana and Guridi y Alcocer had asked the Cortes for the immediate abolition of slavery, Argüelles' proposal was more limited, defending only the abolition of the slave trade.

> That without HM stopping over the claims of those who may be interested in continuing with the introduction in America of slaves from Africa, Congress should abolish such infamous traffic forever, and from the very day that this Decree be issued, by no means slaves from Africa must be bought or introduced in any of the possessions of the Crown on both hemispheres, not even if bought from any of the European or American powers.[147]

He concluded his short speech inviting the Cortes to inform 'His Britannic Majesty' of this 'philanthropic' decision in order to collaborate with Britain in its implementation, 'so that the great objective the English nation has put forward in the famous Bill of Abolition of the slave trade, may be fully achieved'. Argüelles' anti-slave trade discourse was strongly influenced by the rhetoric of both Wilberforce and the British abolitionist lobby. In his speech, the Spanish deputy referred to Willberforce as the 'dignified and indefatigable […] author of the Bill of Abolition' and recalled his presence in the British Parliament

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[147] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 2 April 1810, p. 810.

when the abolition bill was passed: 'The memorable night of February 5, 1807 in which I had the sweet joy of witnessing the triumph of Enlightenment and Philosophy in the House of Lords'.[148] In his speech, Argüelles introduced the notion of 'slaves as brothers' and the slave trade as both politically and religiously unacceptable, following the same strategy that Wilberforce had successfully adopted in the British Parliament:

> Trafficking [...] in slaves is not only contrary to the purity and liberality of feelings of the Spanish nation, but also to the spirit of its religion. Trading in the blood of our brothers is horrendous, atrocious and inhumane and the National Congress must not hesitate for a single moment between its high principles and the interest of certain individuals.[149]

According to José Antonio Saco (1797-1879), a nineteenth-century Cuban politician, Argüelles informed him, decades later, about the actual negotiation with the British government concerning the proposal to abolish the slave trade.[150] Saco argued that the British ambassador in Cadiz intended to hand a note to the *Regencia* (the Spanish government) requesting the abolition of the slave trade in the Spanish colonies. Argüelles dissuaded the British ambassador, 'promising to propose the same in the Cortes so that it would seem to have a national and spontaneous character free of foreign pressure'.[151] Two days after Argüelles' initiative was discussed at the Cortes, Henry Wellesley, British Ambassador in Spain, sent a note to the British Foreign Secretary, his brother Richard Wellesley, in which he informed him about the discreet conversations

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[148] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 2 April 1810, p. 812.

[149] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 2 April 1810, p. 812.

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[151] Corwin (1967), p. 23. William Wilberforce closely followed this negotiation. He was informed directly from the Foreign Office. See: Hamilton to Wilberforce, 2 May 1811. FO 72/121, TNA.

that he had held with different members of the Spanish parliament about the abolition of the slave trade:

> After fully considering what would be the best mode of carrying into effect the instruction [...] relative to impressing upon the Spanish Government the justice and policy of abolishing the slave trade within the Dominions of the Monarchy of Spain, I thought it might be advisable, previous to making any representation to the Council of Regency to ascertain what would be likely to be the feeling of the Cortes [...]
>
> I therefore had a communication with some of the Deputies to Cortes soon after the receipt of your Lordships despatches; and there seemed to be but one opinion among them of the propriety of the abolition as soon as it might be practicable. They however suggested the necessity of deferring its decision until the arrival of the deputies from Cuba and Porto Rico, whose Constituents had a greater personal interest in the question, than any other class of the subjects of His Catholic Majesty.
>
> The Deputies from these Islands arrived a short time ago, and no time has since been lost in bringing forward the subject for the consideration of the Cortes. A motion [...] was made by Mr. Argüelles on the 2nd of April, and was referred to a Committee. [...]
>
> Your Lordship will, I hope, approve my having deferred any representation to the Government upon this subject, perceiving, as I did, every disposition on the part of the Cortes to bring it forward of themselves.
>
> I was of opinion, that it would be more suitable to the character of independence, which the representatives of the people are so anxious to maintain, to leave this important and interesting question to be introduced and discussed in their own way, and at their own time, than to press it upon their consideration at a period, when they might perhaps be occupied in discussions, which might appear to them, to be of greater moment.
>
> As however the subject has now undergone a discussion, I have thought that it might not be improper to apprize the Council of Regency of the tenor of my instructions received from your Lordship.[152]

[152] Henry Wellesley to Richard Wellesley, Marquis of Wellesley, No. 38, 13 April 1811. FO 72/110, TNA.

The report of the British Ambassador in Madrid perfectly corresponds with the description made by Saco. Henry Wellesley had been in consultation with Argüelles since December 1810, and ultimately, Argüelles agreed to present a proposal under two conditions. First, he would need to wait until the arrival of the Cuban and Puerto Rican deputies to Madrid; and secondly, that the British ambassador would not put pressure on the *Regencia* until the proposal had been presented to the Cortes. This would also explain why Argüelles did not support, or even intervene, in the debates on the proposals made by García Quintana, and Guiridi y Alcocer.

The anti-abolitionist reaction to Guridi y Alcocer's and Argüelles' proposals was immediate, overwhelming and very effective. The Catalan deputy Felip Aner d'Esteve and the Cuban representative Andrés de Jáuregui pointed out that, even when 'humanity contemplates [the abolition of the slave trade]', the Spanish Nation was not ready for this decision, as 'even when fair and humane; it would be serious and dangerous'. Jauregui concluded that Cuba's 'public opinion is not ready to take a decision of this significance'.[153] On 20 July 1811 the *Ayuntamiento*, the *Sociedad Patriótica* and the *Consulado* of Havana submitted a joint statement to the Cortes explaining the ruinous and dangerous effects that the abolition of the slave trade would have on Cuba's economy and stability. The document was written by the Cuban aristocrat Francisco Arango y Parreño, who confronted Argüelles' proposal on the basis of two main ideas:

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[153] José Antonio Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud de la raza Africa en el Nuevo Mundo y en especial en los Paises Americo-Hispanos* (Havana: Cultural S. A., 1938 [1879]) vol. 4, p. 88.

Cuban slaveholders and traders had to be listened to by the Cortes, and Argüelles' proposal was a radical attack on property rights.[154]

Arango accused Argüelles of aiming to 'condemn' the Cuban planters 'without hearing us!', ignoring what slaveholders, merchants and investors had to say, and without considering normal parliamentary procedures.[155] In criticizing Argüelles, Arango referred to the British Bill of Abolition, highlighting that this man 'so much praises Anglican legislation […] but has proposed to adopt a conduct so diametrically opposed'. He rhetorically asked the chamber 'how has he [Argüelles] forgotten that the British Parliament never legislated precipitously about the interests of their provinces' and that while 'Mr Argüelles did not want to allow a day for the law to be published' the British parliament allowed ten months for the abolition law to come into effect.[156] Arango argued that the slave trade was so deeply rooted in Cuba's society and economy that it could not 'be removed easily and, even less, suddenly'. [157]

By characterising Argüelles' proposal as unplanned and radical, Arango aimed to avoid a debate on moral grounds, in order to move the discussion to when and how the abolition should take place, and to consider the complex network of interests at stake. The Cuban aristocrat defined the slave trade as 'infamous' and described abolition as 'the cause of humanity' but argued that a sudden abolition of the traffic would 'violate the

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[154] Schmidt-Nowara (2013), pp. 165-166.

[155] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, p. 98.

[156] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, pp. 99-102.

[157] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, p. 112.

rule of law, and the acquired rights according to the current laws'.[158] If property rights were ignored by the Spanish authorities, some important members of Cuban society would feel marginalised by the metropolis in the context of a growing threat from the United States.[159]

> We see growing in the northern part of this world a colossus that threatens to swallow, if not our entire America, at least the northern part; and instead of trying to give [to the landowners] the moral and physical force, and the will that is necessary to resist such combat; we continue idolizing the wrong principles that cause our indolence.[160]

Arango tacitly accepted the humanitarian case but countered that banning the slave trade was as unjust as slavery itself. He argued for a longer discussion about the issue and for the right of the Cuban planters to be heard. He maintained that the end of the slave trade would cause a collapse of the sugar economy and would lead to economic difficulties for the whole empire. He also affirmed that a sudden abolition of the slave trade, even its public debate at the Cortes, could spark a massive slave revolt that would destroy the colony.[161] On 7 July 1811, a letter from the Captain General of Cuba, the Marquis of Someruelos, was read at the Cortes, asking the deputies to deal with this issue with extreme care, 'so this important Island is not lost' and demanded that Cuban 'loyal habitants' should be listened to and reassured that a repetition of the 'catastrophic events occurred in the neighbouring Saint-Domingue, now controlled by former slaves'

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[158] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, pp. 101-102.

[159] Barcia (2012), pp. 26-28; Ferrer (2014); González-Ripoll and others (2004); David P. Geggus, *The impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

[160] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, pp. 105-110; Piqueras (2002); Piqueras (2014).

[161] Barcia (2012), pp. 26-28. On the influence of the Haitian Revolution in the development of anti-abolitionist discourses in Cuba see: Ferrer (2014); González-Ripoll and others (2004); Geggus (2001).

would never happen.[162] These ideas would become a very powerful and repeated anti-abolitionist notion in the years to come. As Manuel Barcia has argued, one of the 'the most frequently mentioned threats up to 1820 [was] a possible revolution of the slaves and/or the free coloured men living on the Island'.[163]

In March 1812, a conspiracy 'with ramifications in different parts of the Island, organised by free men of colour and slaves was discovered in Havana'.[164] Cuban slave-owners and colonial authorities blamed the Cortes for 'inciting slaves to disorder' and the letter from the Captain General to the Cortes was now seen as a premonition of the disastrous consequences that merely discussing the issue of slavery in Cadiz could produce in the Spanish colonies.[165] The Aponte Conspiracy of 1812 contributed to reinforcing anti-abolitionist positions at the Cortes and forced the British authorities and the Spanish abolitionist leaders to wait for a better moment to make their case.[166]

Both the proposal of Argüelles and Guiridi y Alcocer were relegated to a secret 'special commission' chaired by the deputy Muñoz Torrero, who appointed five more members,

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[162] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, pp. 89-90.

[163] Barcia (2012), p. 27.

[164] Manuel Barcia, ''Un coloso sobre la arena': Definiendo el camino hacia la plantación esclavista en Cuba, 1792-1825', *Revista de Indias*, 71:251 (2011), 53-76 pp. 65-66).

[165] Barcia (2011), pp. 65-66.

[166] Matt D. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle against Atlantic Slavery* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Barcia (2011), pp. 65-66; Ferrer (2014); Stephan Palmié, *Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); José Luciano Franco, 'La Conspiración de Aponte, 1812', in *Ensayos Históricos,* ed. by José Luciano Franco (1974), pp. 127-190.

including the Cuban representative Andrés de Jáuregui.[167] The anti-abolitionist pressure was effective and the commission never submitted a report.[168] After 1811, British diplomatic pressure to abolish the slave trade declined as a result of the several failed attempts at the Cortes and the prevalence of the position of Cuban planters. The last time the Cortes of Cadiz discussed an abolitionist proposal was on 23 November 1813. During a debate on a motion concerning the *alcabala* (a commercial tax), the deputy Antillón advocated the abolition of slavery.[169] This proposal did not have any support and the Cuban deputy Arango intervened to reject any debate on the matter.

In March 1814, British forces commanded by William Clinton forced the French army to yield the posts of Lleida and Mequinenza and to cross the Pyrenees into France. The Peninsula War was over, and, in May 1814, Fernando VII ordered the abolition of the Cadiz Constitution and the liberal leaders to be arrested. The King justified his actions by stressing that the Constitution of 1812 had been made by a Cortes illegally assembled in his absence, without his consent and without the traditional form. When Fernando VII returned to Spain, the vast dominions of the Spanish Monarchy in the Americas had started to collapse. In New Spain, two main guerrilla groups led by Guadalupe Victoria and Vicente Guerrero, controlled Puebla and Oaxaca. In northern South America, New Granadan and Venezuelan armies, under the command of Simón Bolívar, Francisco de Paula Santander, Santiago Mariño, Manuel Piar and José Antonio Páez, carried out campaigns along the Orinoco valleys and the Caribbean coast. Also, in Upper Peru,

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[167] Muñoz Torrero was also chair of the Constitution Committee at the Cortes. Fradera (2013), p. 269.

[168] José A. Piqueras, *Azúcar y esclavitud en el final del trabajo forzado* (Madrid: FCE de España, 2002), p. 474.

[169] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 23 November 1813, p. 279.

guerrilla bands controlled rural parts of the country. Gradually, during the following two decades, all the Spanish territories in the Americas became independent states, with the exception of Cuba and Puerto Rico.[170]

As Dumas has suggested for the British case, the distinction between pro-slave trade and anti-abolitionist arguments is key to comprehensively understanding the complexity of the arguments advanced by both sides.[171] Argüelles' proposal had the immediate effect of moving the debate from the nature and 'benefits' of the slave trade, to the 'negative' consequences that abolition would have. Arango briefly referred to the positive effect that the slave trade had had on the Africans, because of the 'unhappy destiny' they faced in their homeland; but as Schimidt-Nowara has argued, the Cuban author primarily 'emphasized the centrality of Cuba's booming plantation economy to the imperial regime's well-being'.[172] Jáuregui, Arango and Someruelos adopted a clear and consistent anti-abolitionist discourse, as the most effective way of stopping Argüelles' proposal.

Following this line of argument, it is important to stress that Agustín de Argüelles never advocated the abolition of slavery, and it is therefore inaccurate to label him an 'anti-

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[170] John Lynch, *The Spanish American Revolutions, 1808-1826* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1973); Jorge I. Domínguez, *Insurrection or Loyalty: The Breakdown of the Spanish American Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980); Michael P. Costeloe, *Response to Revolution: Imperial Spain and the Spanish American Revolutions, 1810-1840.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Jaime E. Rodríguez, *The Independence of Spanish America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998., 1998); John Charles Chasteen, *Americanos: Latin America's Struggle for Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[171] Dumas (2016), pp. 2-3, 6.

[172] Schmidt-Nowara (2013), pp. 165-166.

slavery advocate'.[173] The slave trade could have been stopped without the abolition of slavery even being considered. Berquist has questioned how 'Argüelles […] turned from impassioned speeches against the slave trade […] to deciding to exclude slaves from citizenship altogether?', and the answer lies in the fundamental differences between both: the slave trade was a relatively new and deregulated commercial activity, while slavery was a central social institution in the Spanish Americas.[174] Argüelles forced the pro-slave trade lobby to tacitly accept some moral condemnation and this was recognised and praised by the British abolitionist leaders, who identified Argüelles as an ally.

4. Conclusions

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Cuban slave trade became an essential economic activity for the Island, crucial to the material viability of the Spanish Empire. In this context, it is suggested that the critical examination of abolitionist ideas before 1811 should take into account two main elements: the influence of the British government and anti-slavery movement, and the centrality of Agustín de Argüelles anti-slave trade proposal of 1811.

On the one hand, British ideological influence and political pressure constituted the main driving forces of early Spanish abolitionist ideas. The beginning of the debates and the permanence of the issue of the slave trade in the Spanish political arena during the first

[173] Berquist (2010), p. 194.

[174] Berquist (2010), p. 195.

quarter of the nineteenth century can be accounted for as a direct consequence of the pressure exercised by the British government.

On the other hand, Argüelles, despite the support of the British authorities, failed to achieve his political goal of putting an immediate end to the traffic in slaves, but he succeeded in introducing to the Spanish political debate the moral grounds for characterizing the slave trade as 'horrendous, atrocious and inhumane'. [175] The strategy followed by the pro-slave trade representatives in Cadiz reflects the success of Argüelles' legacy.

In the aftermath of the Cortes of Cadiz, the Absolutist regime would be forced by the British authorities to adopt and define an anti-slave trade discourse, in which Argüelles' contribution was key. Although unsuccessful, anti-slave trade and anti-slavery proposals prior to 1814, are fundamental to understanding the construction and development of subsequent abolitionist discourse and legislation. They set up an ideological framing of the issue, strongly influenced by the British model, which would remain intact decades to come.

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[175] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 2 April 1810, p. 812.

Chapter 2. Defining a New Discourse on the Slave Trade: Absolutist Nuances, Toreno's Commitment and Varela's Utopia.

In the aftermath of the absolutist restoration, Fernando VII's government was forced by the British authorities to define a new official discourse on the slave trade and to assume some aspects of an anti-slave trade rhetoric. This new policy was built upon a conservative tradition, but also on the ideological influence of British and early Spanish abolitionism. In practical terms, however, the Absolutist regime continued to protect and even promote the continuity of the slave trade into the Spanish colonies. This chapter explores the characteristics of this new official discourse and the ideological inconsistences that arose within the Spanish administration as part of this process. Moreover, this chapter explores British interference and the ensuing inconsistencies in the construction of abolitionist discourses in Spain.

During the short constitutional period of 1820-1823, both abolitionist and pro-slavery discourses found in the re-established Cortes a prominent public platform. Some important liberal figures, such as José María Queipo de Llano, José María Calatrava and Francisco Martínez de la Rosa, argued against the slave trade and, in collaboration with the British authorities, proposed different measures to implement anti-slave trade legislation. The Cuban planters in the parliament advanced a consistent pro-slave trade discourse and advocated the abrogation of the abolitionist agreements signed by Spain in the previous years. This chapter suggests that both sides failed in achieving their main goals. The anti-slave trade discourse defined during the previous constitutional period (1810-1814) could not be undone or ignored, but a combination of factors stopped or

mitigated the passing of effective anti-slave trade legislation. By 1823, slavery and the illicit slave trade were 'indispensable' engines of the new colonial economic system.[176]

1. A New Absolutist Discourse on the Slave Trade. From the Declaration of 1814 to the Treaty of 1817.

1.1. The Treaty of Madrid of 1814

In May 1814, Fernando VII abolished the Constitution of 1812 and closed down the Cortes. Since 1811 British diplomatic pressure to abolish the slave trade had been foiled by failed attempts at the Cortes and the prevalence of the position of Cuban representatives.[177] As Manuel Barcia has argued, merchant and planter elites successfully projected the idea that the risk of losing the Island to 'the black slaves, the British, the Haitians, or whomever they considered the most credible threat at the time' was certain and imminent.[178] Securing the permanence of Cuba as part of the Spanish Empire, in the context of the Spanish American Wars for Independence, was seen by the metropolitan elites as a priority and British abolitionist pressure was described as a threat to the stability of Cuba's society and economy.

In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars an unprecedented social anti-slavery mobilization re-started in Britain. A petition to the Prince Regent requesting the complete abolition of the slave trade in France, Spain and Portugal garnered nearly one million

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[176] Fradera (2013), p. 270.

[177] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 50.

[178] Barcia (2012), p. 26.

signatures, putting the issue at the top of the agenda of the British government.[179] As Seymour Drescher has pointed out, this social mobilization was 'the most numerous petition in British history' and marked a point of no return for the British commitment to fighting against the slave trade in the Atlantic.[180] No other international negotiation with these three countries would take place without discussing the abolition of the slave trade.[181]

Negotiations between the Foreign Office and the Spanish government started in June 1814 and concluded on 28 August of the same year, with the signing in Madrid of a Treaty of Alliance between the two countries.[182] The Spanish authorities were worried

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[179] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 50; Paul Michael Kielstra, *The Politics of the Slave Trade in Britain and France, 1814-1848* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2000); Seymour Drescher, 'Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade', in *The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People,* ed. by Stephen Farrell, Melanie Unwin, and James Walvin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 42-65; Drescher (1987).

[180] Seymour Drescher, 'British Abolitionism and Imperialism', in *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic,* ed. by Derek R. Peterson (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), pp. 129-149 pp. 134-135).

[181] This policy was clearly stated by the Foreign Office to the British Ambassador in Spain in July 1814. Castlereagh to Wellesley, No. 27, draft, 30 July 1814, FO 72/158, TNA. 'In the present temper of the Parliament and of the Nation on the subject of the slave trade, any attempt on the part of Prince Regent's Ministers to prevail on Parliament to raise a Loan for State continuing to carry on a traffic in slaves would be utterly vain and hopeless.' Castlereagh to Wellesley, No. 27, draft, 30 July 1814, FO 72/158, TNA. And, Wellesley to Castlereagh. 25 August 1814, *British and Foreign State Papers (1815-1816)*, (London: James Ridgway and sons, 1838) vol. 3, p. 926.

[182] The 'Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Alliance' was signed in Madrid in July 1814 and ratified by the Spanish King in August 1814. It was part of various agreements that Spain subscribed with European powers at the end of the Peninsula War and Napoleonic Wars. In the treaty, both nations agreed to establish a close diplomatic and political collaboration, to draft as soon as possible a new trade agreement that would grant Britain preferential access to the Spanish American markets, and Spain promised not to establish any future agreements or secret negotiation with France that could be detrimental to the British interests. Alejandro del Cantillo Jovellanos, *Tratados, convenios y declaraciones de paz y de comercio que han hecho con las*

about the logistic assistance that the pro-independence armies were receiving from British merchants and about the possibility of the British Empire offering full support and international recognition to the independence of the Spanish colonies in the Americas. As Guadalupe Jiménez Codinach has argued with regard to the war of Independence in Mexico, the role that the British government played was always indirect, and after 1814, the main interest was the —always officially undeclared— will of the British economic elites and merchants to control the Spanish American markets.[183] The Spanish government had no better option than to negotiate with Britain a 'non-interventionist' policy in the Americas, in return for a relaxation of the Spanish position with respect to the slave trade.

By the terms of this agreement, Britain pledged not to provide arms, ammunition, or any other support to the 'dissidents of the Americas' and in return Spain prohibited any Spaniard from taking part in the slave trade, except to supply Spanish dominions.[184] The treaty also included a declaration of the Spanish King, in which he condemned the slave trade. Fernando VII declared that 'concurring in the fullest manner in the sentiment of His Britannic Majesty, with respect to the injustice and inhumanity of the Traffic in Slaves, [the King] will take into consideration, […] the means of acting in conformity with those

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potencias estranjeras los monarcas españoles de la Casa de Borbón (Madrid: Imp. de Alegría y Charlain, 1843), pp. 732-734.

[183] Guadalupe Jiménez Codinach, *La Gran Bretaña y la Independencia de México 1808-1821* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1991).

[184] 'Artículo Adicional III del Tratado entre Gran Bretaña y España del 4 de Julio de 1814, firmado en Madrid el 28 de Agosto de 1814' in Moreno García (1984), pp. 78-79.

sentiments'.[185] For the first time, a Spanish monarch publicly affirmed that the slave trade was unfair, cruel and wrong.

The importance of this statement has been diminished or overlooked by most historians in the field, following the British characterization of this declaration as 'unsatisfactory'.[186] As David Murray has pointed out, the King's statement had no immediate legal consequences, but it should be stressed that it constitutes a milestone in the construction of a new official discourse on the slave trade in Spain and the first official anti-slave trade statement by a Spanish king.[187] This declaration was seemingly the best deal that the British Ambassador in Madrid Henry Wellesley could obtain from the Spanish authorities, but contrary to Murray's belief, this was not a small concession from the Spanish Absolutist Regime.[188] On the contrary, Fernando VII was establishing a new official discourse that would operate until the eradication of the slave trade in the Spanish colonies in the 1860s.

For the first time, the Spanish government abandoned its long-held assumption that the slave trade had a positive impact on the enslaved Africans who were 'rescued' from their barbaric homeland, and who became Catholics 'from the moment [they] set [their] foot

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[185] 'Additional Article to the Treaty between Great Britain and Spain, of the 5th July, 1814. Signed at Madrid, the 28th August 1814', *British and Foreign State Papers (1815-1816)*, vol. 3, p. 923.

[186] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 50-51; Barcia (2011), pp. 66-67; Fradera (2013), p. 270.

[187] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 50-51.

[188] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 50-54.

in any of the Spanish Possessions'.[189] This declaration represented the most significant alteration of the Spanish official discourse on the slave trade since its establishment.

However, in practical terms, the Treaty's additional article did not imply any commitment on the Spanish side to abolishing the slave trade. Nor did it establish any form of further implementation and, moreover, the Spanish government would never attempt to coerce the subjects who engaged in the slave trade. The influence of 'all those who have any connection with South America, or with the Spanish West Indian Islands' was very important at the court of Fernando VII.[190] On the one hand, the preservation of Cuba as part of the Spanish Empire was a priority for the Spanish government and planters, merchants and investors, both Cuban and metropolitan, who had successfully projected the opinion that the abolition of the slave trade would encourage pro-independence sentiments in the Island.[191] On the other hand, the tax revenue extracted from the 'burgeoning export-led' sugar and coffee industries soon became indispensable to the crown in the context of the severe economic crisis that followed the devastating Peninsula War and the expensive Spanish-American Wars for Independence.[192] As Murray has argued, 'the main reason for the Spanish not to concede more was the risk of discontent in Cuba' and, as Wellesley reported to London in August 1814, the Spanish

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[189] Wellesley to Castlereagh, private, 26 August 1814, FO 72/160, TNA. On this regard, Pope Pius VII's decision to start lobbying for the abolition of the slave trade after his return to Rome in 1814 had a significant impact. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 52.

[190] Wellesley to Castlereagh. 31 August 1814, *British and Foreign State Papers (1815-1816)*, vol. 3, p. 929.

[191] Barcia (2012), pp. 26-28; Paquette (2009), p. 197.

[192] Piqueras (2002); Piqueras (2014); Luis Alonso Álvarez, 'Comercio exterior y formación de capital financiero: el tráfico de negros hispano-cubano, 1821-1868', *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 51:2 (1994), 75-92.

government was not even interested in entering into discussion about the economic compensation that the British government would pay for abolition; political stability in Cuba was a symbol of the King's authority in the Americas.[193]

1.2. The Anti-Slave Trade Declaration of the Congress of Vienna

British diplomatic pressure on the Spanish government continued after the signature of the Treaty of Alliance of 1814, in a context in which the Bourbon Restoration in France was seen by the Foreign Office as a threat to Spanish political and economic dependency on Britain. The British government wanted to strengthen this relationship by conceding to Spain the financial support that they desperately needed.[194] However, as a result of the abolitionist campaign, the British Parliament would not accept offering any support to Fernando VII without first tackling the issue of the abolition of the slave trade.

The Spanish Secretary of State from May to November 1814, José Miguel de Carvajal, Duke of San Carlos (1771-1828), had a very proactive disposition with regard to improving diplomatic relations with Britain, and therefore to securing the continuity of the British subsidy -worth two million pounds a year- and to achieving an extra ten million pound loan.[195] In October 1814, the Duke of San Carlos formally proposed to the British government that Spain would commit to abolishing the slave trade immediately ten

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[193] Wellesley to Castlereagh. 31 August 1814, *British and Foreign State Papers (1815-1816)*, vol. 3, p. 929; José A. Piqueras, 'La Siempre Fiel Isla de Cuba, o la lealtad interesada', *Historia Mexicana*, 229 (2008), 427-486.

[194] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 51.

[195] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 51, 53.

degrees north of the equator and in its entirety after eight years.[196] The British government rejected this proposal and affirmed that it would not accept anything less than the slave trade being 'immediately and entirely abolished'.[197] In its reply the Spanish government opposed an immediate abolition, and grounded their response on three main principles, which echoed the discourses advanced by the Cuban deputies at the Cortes de Cadiz. Firstly, the small ratio of slaves in Cuba compared to those in Jamaica in 1807; secondly, the excessive immediacy demanded by the British authorities, by contrast to the time that the British Parliament had dedicated to studying the issue; thirdly, the government argued that a sudden abolition of the slave traffic would endanger the safety and security of Cuba.[198]

The prevalence of these three ideas in Spanish political discourse is remarkable. They constitute, as Robert Paquette has demonstrated, the cornerstone of the official response of successive Spanish governments resisting the British anti-slave trade pressure until 1844.[199] Of the three, the reference to Cuba's security and stability was the most frequently invoked. This 'threat' had first been put forward by the Cuban planters and slave owners and, as Barcia put it, was instrumental in their attempts 'to lobby for privileges and concessions throughout the first half of the nineteenth century'.[200]

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[196] The Duke of San Carlos to Wellesley, 22 October 1814, *British and Foreign State Papers (1815-1816)*, vol. 3, p. 933.

[197] Earl Bathurst to Wellesley, 11 November 1814, *British and Foreign State Papers (1815-1816)*, vol. 3, p. 934.

[198] Wellesley to Castlereagh, No. 60, 6 July 1814. FO 72/160, TNA. Wellesley to Castlereagh, 26 January 1815, *British and Foreign State Papers (1815-1816)*, vol. 3, pp. 934-935. Barcia (2012), p. 27.

[199] Paquette (2015), p. 97.

[200] Barcia (2012), p. 27.

The colonial and metropolitan elites' argument was 'in essence, […] what might be called the "necessary evil" argument of the Southern slaveholders during the early stage of their ideological development'.[201] They demanded time, independence to rule their own territories and raised the spectre of a new Haiti's Revolution on Cuban soil. However, this new official discourse, developed from 1811 onwards, tended to avoid defending the slave trade on moral grounds and publicly accepted that the traffic would have to end eventually.

After 1814, negotiations for the abolition of the slave trade entered into deadlock due to the Spanish refusal to accept the British demands. In these circumstances, the debate moved from Madrid to the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815). This meeting of ambassadors of European states, chaired by the Austrian delegate, had the main goal of providing a long-term peace plan for the continent in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars.[202]

Following the popular anti-slavery campaign in Britain of 1814-1815, which produced 1,370 petitions, the British delegation pushed for a joint declaration from all the European powers regarding the immediate and global abolition of the slave trade.[203] This declaration was supported by Russia, Austria, Prussia and France, and subsequently approved. Spain and Portugal, which had secondary roles at the conference,

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[201] Paquette (1988), pp. 98-99.

[202] Barcia (2011), pp. 66-67; Betty Fladeland, 'Abolitionist Pressures on the Concert of Europe, 1814-1822', *The Journal of Modern History*, 38:4 (1966), 355-373; Jerome Reich, 'The Slave Trade at the Congress of Vienna - A Study in English Public Opinion', *The Journal of Negro History* (1968), 129-143; Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 50-56.

[203] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 50; Kielstra (2000); Drescher (2007); Drescher (1987).

demonstrated their strong opposition. The Spanish delegate, Pedro Gómez Labrador (1772-1850), followed the same line of argument used by the Spanish government during the previous negotiations with Britain. He accordingly stressed the right of all nations to decide their own colonial policies and presented the issue as a matter of imperial sovereignty.[204]

The Spanish authorities introduced the concept of the defence of imperial sovereignty, against the interference of Britain, as part of the strategy to protect the slave trade. This discourse frequently highlighted the existence of what Gabriel Paquette has defined as a powerful ideological tool 'to reawaken a sense of patriotism and pride' in the context of intense imperial rivalries.[205] The Cuban oligarch Francisco Arango y Parreño, who was living in Paris while the Congress of Vienna was taking place, openly condemned in the press any foreign interference in Spain's colonial policy. From Madrid, the representative of Havana's Cabildo, Claudio Martínez Pinillos (1782-1853), reported to his home institution that 'the constant determination and efforts of the English to stop this traffic, as the most direct way to destroy our agricultural industry' were welcomed at the international conference.[206] The colonial and metropolitan authorities denied British 'philanthropic goals' and argued that the real objective of the British government was simply to ruin Cuba's economy. The idea of defending the slave trade as a patriotic

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[204] Corwin, p. 25.

[205] Paquette (2008), pp. 37-38.

[206] Barcia (2011), p. 67. Claudio Martínez de Pinillos to the Consulate of Havana, No. 66, Madrid, 1 de November 1814, Gobierno Superior Civil, leg. 1099, exp. 40587, ANC.

struggle against the British Empire gained traction during the first half of the nineteenth century.[207]

Despite this opposition, an anti-slave trade declaration was passed at the Congress of Vienna, and the Foreign Office immediately requested that France, Spain and Portugal legislate in this regard. France agreed to abolish the slave trade north of Cape Formoso, 'in an attempt to gain British sympathies, during the Hundred Days'.[208] Portugal, for its part, entered into negotiations with Britain to prohibit this traffic north of the equator. Since December 1814, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Castlereagh (1769-1822), had encouraged the Spanish government, in different letters and conversations, to follow France and Portugal's examples and put into effect the declaration made by Fernando VII in the Treaty of Alliance of 1814.[209] In a letter to Castlereagh in July 1815, Labrador pointed out that any decision in this direction would be conditioned by the granting of a 'very significant loan' and British support to 'stop the rebellions in some of the Spanish American Provinces which had been promoted and protected by British merchants'.[210] In other words, the Spanish government would only stop the slave trade in exchange for a significant amount of money and political support in the American crisis.

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[207] Paquette (1988), pp. 98-99.

[208] David Todd, *Free Trade and its Enemies in France, 1814–1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 41; Kielstra (2000), pp. 22-55.

[209] *British and Foreign State Papers (1815-1816)*, vol. 3, pp. 944-945. Moreno García (1984), p. 153.

[210] Tratados siglo XIX, No. 35, despacho 419, 29 August 1815, AMAE. Moreno García (1984), p. 154.

In August of the same year, Charles Richard Vaughan (1774-1849), in charge of the British diplomatic mission in Madrid, sent a copy of the treaty with France to the Spanish government and affirmed his 'confident hope […] that this fresh instance of liberality on the part of a great European Power [...] will influence the Councils of his Catholic Majesty'. [211] In the letter he also tackled Spain's argument that this decision would neither be sudden or negative to Spanish interests:

> It has been urged in excuse for delaying the abolition of the slave trade, that that measure was not adopted in England until after many years had been spent in deliberation, but it should be recollected that all Europe was a party to those deliberations [...] and that the result of the experiment made by England is now before the world for the benefit of mankind in general.[212]

From the moment the agreement of Vienna was signed, the British government increased its naval activity against the slave traders operating along the African coasts and across the Atlantic, which became a major concern for the Spanish authorities. Days after the Congress declaration appeared in the British press, the Cuban *Junta Consular*, which represented the interests of Cuban merchant and planter elites, asked the Spanish King to demand that the British authorities 'not disturb' the Spanish slave traders and compensate the owners of the vessels that had already been detained.[213] Labrador complained about the 'tyrannical' British attitude that 'considers everything they want to be their right', along with the British propensity to 'fire' and 'board' Spanish and

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[211] Vaughan to Cevallos, 23 August 1815, enclosed in Vaughan to Castlereagh, No. 10, 30 August 1815, FO 71/176, TNA.

[212] Vaughan to Cevallos, 23 August 1815, enclosed in Vaughan to Castlereagh, No. 10, 30 August 1815, FO 71/176, TNA.

[213] *Acuerdo de la Junta Consular, en virtud de lo acordado en el Congreso de Viena acerca del comercio de negros.* July 27, 1815. Colección Vidal Morales y Morales, tomo 78, No. 52, BNC.

Portuguese slave trade vessels when, for Spain and Portugal, this traffic was perfectly legal.[214] Simultaneously, in Madrid, Wellesley presented several representations to no effect, and in July 1815, the Spanish Secretary of State replied that the whole issue had been forwarded to the Council of the Indies for further consideration. The Spanish Secretary of State needed time to define a new strategy agreed with Cuban and metropolitan planters, investors and merchants. In October 1815, Castlereagh ordered that tension with the Spanish government be defused and the issue remained unattended until mid-1816.[215] The deliberations of the Council of Indies, however, would have an unexpected outcome.

1.3. The Council of Indies' Anti-Slave Trade Reports of 1816

In February 1816, after a long process of information gathering from colonial and metropolitan authorities, the Council of Indies presented its report on the slave trade.[216] The majority of the Council recommended 'that your Majesty may be pleased to command that the slave trade be forthwith perpetually abolished throughout your Dominions'.[217] They mainly focused on moral and religious reasons to argue in favour of

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[214] Tratados siglo XIX, No. 35, despacho 419, 29 August 1815, AMAE. Moreno García (1984), pp. 155-156.

[215] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 57.

[216] The Council of the Indies (*Real y Supremo Consejo de Indias*) was founded in 1524, abolished by the Cortes of Cadiz in 1812, and re-established by Fernando VII in 1814. Its main role was to give advice to the King on political, judicial or spiritual issues related to the American colonies, but, as a council, it did not have a legislative role. At this time, the Council of Indies and the State Council (*Consejo de Estado*) were the most important advisory institutions in Spain.

[217] 'Proceedings of the Council of Indies of Spain, relative to the expediency of the Abolition, by His Catholic Majesty, of the Slave Trade carried on by Spanish Subjects. Madrid, February 1816', *British and Foreign*

the abolition of the slave trade and stressed the Christian character of the Spanish nation, and the evils of slavery itself:

> When we consider the question with reference to morality, every one must admit that the Christian maxims, and the mild character of the Spaniards, unite in condemning a Trade so execrable in itself, and by which a traffic is made in the blood of our Fellow Creatures […] In fact, how could a Traffic of this nature […] be looked upon any other light than with repugnance, by Spain, the centre of the Catholic Religion? Not, indeed, because we think that Slavery, in itself, is opposed to the principles of the Gospel […].[218]

In its report, the Council of the Indies highlighted the importance of 'illustrious' and 'pious' British abolitionists such as 'William Pitt' and 'William Wilberforce', who 'will be forever respected by all who feel and can appreciate the high dignity of man'. [219] They also tackled one of the main arguments of the pro-slave trade advocates, arguing that the abolition of the slave trade will create a safer and more secure society in the Spanish colonies: 'the longer that the People have lost their liberty, the stronger becomes in them their anxiety to recover it'.[220] Moreover, the characterization of the slave trade as a traffic made 'in the blood of our Fellow Creatures' recalls how Agustín de Argüelles described

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State Papers (1816-1817), (London: James Ridgway and sons, 1838) vol. 4, pp. 516-536. And also, F.O. 72/185, TNA.

[218] 'Proceedings of the Council of Indies of Spain, relative to the expediency of the Abolition, by His Catholic Majesty, of the Slave Trade carried on by Spanish Subjects. Madrid, February 1816', *British and Foreign State Papers (1816-1817)*, vol. 4, pp. 516-536.

[219] 'Proceedings of the Council of Indies of Spain, relative to the expediency of the Abolition, by His Catholic Majesty, of the Slave Trade carried on by Spanish Subjects. Madrid, February 1816', *British and Foreign State Papers (1816-1817)*, vol. 4, pp. 516-536.

[220] This sentence embodies a very strong and significant message considering the Wars for Independence in the Spanish American territories. 'Proceedings of the Council of Indies of Spain, relative to the expediency of the Abolition, by His Catholic Majesty, of the Slave Trade carried on by Spanish Subjects. Madrid, February 1816', *British and Foreign State Papers (1816-1817)*, vol. 4, pp. 516-536.

it, five years before at the Cortes of Cadiz, as a commerce 'in the blood of our brothers', and reinforces the notion of the centrality that Argüelles' proposal had in the construction of early abolitionist discourses in Spain.[221]

The councillors rejected the idea that the British government was pursuing the bankruptcy of the Cuban plantations. On the contrary, only 'the principles of morality and policy equally' have driven their pressure on the Spanish authorities: 'the ardent zeal and endeavours of the [British] Cabinet […] have formed their object, to satisfy the minds of the English People, who, must be naturally anxious for the abolition of the [slave trade].'[222] As a consequence, the majority of the council advocated an 'immediate' abolition of the slave trade and stressed that in no way would this be a sudden determination as 'sufficient time to provide themselves with the required number of Blacks' had been given to the planters.[223]

This powerful conclusion overtly contradicted the government's official position on the slave trade, discredited Labrador's discourse in Vienna and even opened a door that the Spanish administration and the British government was not willing to discuss: the abolition of slavery. Surprisingly, however, the report of the Council of Indies has been consistently overlooked by the historians who have studied this process. Arthur Corwin

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[221] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 2 April 1811, vol. 185, p. 812.

[222] 'Proceedings of the Council of Indies of Spain, relative to the expediency of the Abolition, by His Catholic Majesty, of the Slave Trade carried on by Spanish Subjects. Madrid, February 1816', *British and Foreign State Papers (1816-1817)*, vol. 4, pp. 516-536.

[223] 'Proceedings of the Council of Indies of Spain, relative to the expediency of the Abolition, by His Catholic Majesty, of the Slave Trade carried on by Spanish Subjects. Madrid, February 1816', *British and Foreign State Papers (1816-1817)*, vol. 4, pp. 516-536.

only pointed out that 'based on broad principles of humanity' the Council recommended abolishing the slave trade.[224] David Murray diminished the importance of the report based on its merely consultative character, and Julia Moreno, in her analysis of the Treaty of 1817, did not mention its existence.[225] For his part, Fernando Armario Sanchez misinterpreted the Council's Majority report and argued that it 'was not very favorably inclined towards the abolition of the slave trade' when it was exactly the opposite.[226] This report is extraordinarily important in political and ideological terms. It constitutes an unprecedented example of an anti-slave trade report produced from within the absolutist regime. The laudatory rhetoric towards the British authorities and the similarities with Argüelles' parliamentary speech, directly opposed the official line hitherto followed by the Spanish government, the colonial elites and the King himself.

A minority of the Council, consisting of seven members including Francisco Arango y Parreño, a representative of the Cuban planters, dissented and wrote a separate report.[227] In their statement, they acknowledged that Britain would eventually succeed in forcing Spain to abolish the slave trade, as had already happened in France. However, they aimed to secure a gradual abolition that would preserve the wealth of the colonial

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[224] Corwin (1967), p. 27.

[225] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 58; Moreno García (1984), pp. 152-156.

[226] Fernando Armario Sanchez, 'Esclavitud y Abolicionismo durante la Regencia de Espartero', in *Esclavitud y derechos humanos. La lucha por la libertad del negro en el siglo XIX,* ed. by Francisco de Solano and Agustín Guimerá (Madrid: CSIC, 1990), pp. 377-406 (p. 379).

[227] The report is signed by Francisco Requena, Francisco Ybañez Leyba, Francisco Arango y Parreño, Francisco Xavier Caro de Torquemada,JoséNavia y Bolaños, Bruno Vallarino, and Mariano Gonzalez de Merchante. 'Opinion of the Dissentient Members of the Council of the Indies, against the immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade, Madrid, February 1816' *British and Foreign State Papers (1816-1817)*, vol. 4, pp. 536-543.

elites: 'We admit that the Slave Trade ought to be prohibited […] but by no means agree in the opinion, that the Slave Trade should be prohibited all at once.' [228] The minority pointed out that a 'sudden' abolition of the slave trade would 'accelerate the injurious effects of the prohibition', and would 'condemn thousands of landowners to lose a considerable portion of their incomes [and] spread sorrow and misery in Countries, where now reign prosperity and abundance'.[229] The minority also asserted that abolition would have negative consequences for 'those unhappy persons who are already slaves', because of the small number of female slaves living in the colonies: 'without females whom they might marry, they would pass their sorrowful lives in forced and insupportable celibacy, and be forever deprived of the advantages and comforts which matrimony produces […] particularly to the unfortunate'.[230]

The opposing councillors proposed that Spain should claim an economic compensation from Britain, and that this money should be used 'as an indemnification for the losses' caused to be given to the slave-owners.[231] They pointed out that there was no current threat to the security of the Caribbean colonies, and that 'the insurrections which have been occasionally excited by our slaves have been partial and momentary' and that the slave trade was not fuelling in any way these slave revolts. But they warned the Spanish

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[228] 'Opinion of the Dissentient Members of the Council of the Indies, against the immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade, Madrid, February 1816'*British and Foreign State Papers (1816-1817)*, vol. 4, pp. 536-543.

[229] 'Opinion of the Dissentient Members of the Council of the Indies, against the immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade. Madrid, February 1816', *British and Foreign State Papers (1816-1817)*, vol. 4, pp. 536-543.

[230] 'Opinion of the Dissentient Members of the Council of the Indies, against the immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade. Madrid, February 1816', *British and Foreign State Papers (1816-1817)*, vol. 4, pp. 536-543.

[231] 'Opinion of the Dissentient Members of the Council of the Indies, against the immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade. Madrid, February 1816', *British and Foreign State Papers (1816-1817)*, vol. 4, pp. 536-543.

government that a sudden abolition 'would be highly dangerous to risk in our possessions a repetition of those scenes of destruction and horror that occurred in the French colony of St. Domingo [Saint-Domingue]'.[232] Finally, the minority of the Council argued for an immediate abolition of the slave trade north of the equator and totally 'after the 22nd of April 1821', accepting that ultimately abolition was unstoppable.[233]

The councillors who signed the majority report replied and submitted a short statement rejecting the ideas argued by the minority. They affirmed that there was no time to lose to put an end to this 'repugnant practice […] which has degraded the dignity of man': 'We should no longer waste our time in discussions, as these have been exhausted; […] We have only time sufficient left to us for putting an end to this traffic with a strong, firm and steady hand.' [234] The majority of the council urged the King, once again, to abolish the slave trade totally and immediately.

It is significant that the minority of the Council desisted in trying to defend the morality of the slave trade. As had happened at the Cortes of Cadiz, by characterizing the abolitionist report as hasty and radical, they aimed to avoid a debate on moral grounds, in order to move the discussion to when and how the abolition should take place, and to consider the complex network of interests at stake.[235] Argüelles' proposal of 1811 and

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[232] 'Opinion of the Dissentient Members of the Council of the Indies, against the immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade. Madrid, February 1816', *British and Foreign State Papers (1816-1817)*, vol. 4, pp. 536-543.

[233] 'Opinion of the Dissentient Members of the Council of the Indies, against the immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade. Madrid, February 1816', *British and Foreign State Papers (1816-1817)*, vol. 4, pp. 536-543.

[234] 'Reply of the Majority of the Council, to the Opinion of the Members who oppose the immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade', *British and Foreign State Papers (1816-1817)*, vol. 4, pp. 543-549.

[235] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, pp. 101-102.

British ideological and political influence had become central to defining the political ground on which the councillors on both sides of the argument were operating. Although these reports had an advisory character, and the Council of State and, ultimately, the Spanish government 'had the choice of accepting either the majority or the minority position', they constitute fundamental evidence of the successful penetration of the abolitionist discourse defined at the Cortes of Cadiz five years before.[236]

1.4. The Anglo-Spanish Treaty of 1817

The position of Spanish Absolutism with regard to the slave trade was not as monolithic as it appeared, and the British government hoped to take advantage of this scenario. In March 1816 the British Ambassador in Madrid, Charles Vaughan, managed to obtain copies of the reports of the Council of Indies after winning 'some confidence from the person appointed by the Council to draw [them] up', and he immediately forwarded them to London.[237] The connection between Vaughan and, at least, one of the councillors who subscribed to the majority report proves that the deliberations of the Council of Indies were not isolated from the political negotiations between Spain and Britain. Vaughan's subtle reference proves that the British diplomatic mission played an important role in the drafting of the majority's report and it is plausible to argue that they also circulated

[236] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 58.

[237] Vaughan to Castlereagh, No. 16, 14 March 1816, FO 72/185, TNA.

abolitionist publications among the councillors, as the African Institution had suggested in 1814.[238]

The reports of the Council of the Indies were sent to the Council of State on 15 February 1816 for further consideration. This upper council could accept any of the two proposals and Pedro Cevallos advised the Council that the abolition of the slave trade was a necessary concession to make to Britain, but only in return for very significant compensation.[239] Cevallos was willing to improve relations between the two countries, at a critical moment for the Spanish treasury, and endorsed the report signed by the minority of the Council of the Indies. As a result, the Spanish government circulated on 27 March 1816 a proposal to gradually abolish the slave trade in Spain. They agreed to prohibit the traffic immediately north of the equator and in its entirety after 5 years. In return, Spain would receive a compensation of £500,000 to cover the losses of Spanish slave vessels that had been captured by the British navy, and a second indemnity of £1,000,000 to finance the cost of sending a European workforce to Cuba to replace the African slaves. Additionally, Britain would support the Spanish efforts against the 'Barbary States' (or Berbers) in the Mediterranean.[240]

In July 1816, Vaughan replied that Britain was not going to purchase Spain's abolition of the slave trade and would not consider an alliance to fight the 'Barbary States', until

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[238] Ackerson (2005), p. 97. *Eighth Report of the Directors of the African Institution, Read at the Annual General Meeting, on March 23, 1814* (London: Ellerton and Henderson, 1814).

[239] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 60.

[240] Vaughan to Castlereagh, No. 26, 9 April 1816, FO 72/186, TNA. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 60.

Spain agreed to fully and immediately eradicate the slave trade.[241] Vaughan believed that the decision of the Council of State to support the report of the minority of the Council of the Indies was the result of the pressure put by the 'planters of the Island of Cuba' and the pro-slave trade position of the Cevallos.[242] Vaughan argued that the inconsistency shown by the Council of the Indies proved that it was possible to change views held with regard to the slave trade at the court of Fernando VII, and that to do so, Britain had to directly lobby the members of the Council of State and the King. In October 1816, the British Ambassador asked the Foreign Office for copies of Blanco White's *Bosquexo* to support his campaign in Madrid. Immediately, the African Institution provided 200 copies of the abolitionist publication to be sent to Spain.[243] The replacement of Cevallos by José García de León y Pizarro (1770-1835) as Spanish Secretary of State, opened a new perspective for the negotiations and was welcomed by the British authorities.

At the international level, the British government organised a conference in London between France, Austria, Prussia and Russia in the winter of 1816-1817. The main reason for this meeting was to develop and expand the slave trade agreement signed in Vienna in 1815, and to force Spain and Portugal to negotiate an immediate abolition. The historians who have examined the resulting Treaty of 1817 have, however, disregarded this international meeting, with the exception of Julia Moreno, who has analysed the Spanish diplomatic efforts to stop British aspirations.[244] The failure of the

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[241]Vaughan to Castlereagh, No. 61, 23 July 1816, FO 72/186, TNA. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 61.

[242] Murray, p. 61.

[243] Harrison to Hamilton, 26 October 1816, FO 72/195, TNA. Murray, p. 61.

[244] Murray (2002 [1980]); Corwin (1967); Jenny S. Martinez, *The Slave Trade and the Origins of International Human Rights Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Berquist (2010).

conference, and the perception of Britain's international isolation arising from this international meeting, explains Britain's subsequent strategy. From this point forward, the British government softened its initial demands and accepted payment of 'compensation' to Spain in return for an abolitionist agreement. [245]

The position of Russia had gradually changed since the end of the Congress of Vienna and, as Cea Bermudez, Spanish Ambassador in Saint Petersburg, reported to Madrid, the British government would 'not find an ally [in Russia] to its philanthropic plan'. [246] He informed the Spanish government that 'Alexander the Emperor will not assist Great Britain to force any other independent power to speed up the abolition of the trade in negroes, against their own interest'.[247] Russia was sceptical about the role of the British government in Latin America, and distrusted their motivations for encouraging other nations to abolish the slave trade. As has been shown, since 1815 the Russian authorities supported Spain in affirming that the abolition of the slave trade was a matter of 'imperial sovereignty'.[248] It can be argued, based on Cea Bermudez's report, that the negotiations that Murray dated in 1817, had actually started months before.[249] Russia thus became an important and closer international ally of Spain against British pressure.

The positions of Spain and Britain remained distant until 30 November 1816, when events speeded up and the negotiations, which had been virtually paralysed since 1815,

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[245] Murray, p. 69.

[246] Tratados siglo XIX, No. 35, despacho 11, 3-15 December 1816, AMAE. Moreno García (1984), p. 173.

[247] Tratados siglo XIX, No. 35, despacho 11, 3/15 December 1816, AMAE. Moreno García (1984), p. 173.

[248] Corwin, p. 25.

[249] Murray, p. 69.

were resumed. That day Vaughan sent three reports to London in which he explained the sudden eagerness of Spain to reach a deal on the slave trade as soon as possible. The negotiation revolved around monetary compensation and an additional loan that Britain would grant in exchange for abolition. These negotiations led to the signing of an international treaty on 23 September 1817.

With the Treaty of 1817 (and the subsequent *Real Célula* of 19 December 1817), the Spanish King prohibited Spanish subjects from being involved in the slave trade north of the equator immediately, and south of the equator after 20 May 1820.[250] Every vessel captain captured breaking the law would be imprisoned in the Philippine Islands, and the slaves on board would be declared free. Spain and Britain were authorised to search any vessels from both nations whenever there was a well-founded suspicion of them transporting slaves. The crews of the captured ships would be taken before special tribunals established for this purpose. Two mixed courts, composed of an equal number of judges named by each nation, would be created in Sierra Leone and Havana. In return, the British government agreed to pay Spain £400,000 (35,559,684 *reales* and 12 *monedas de vellón*).[251]

David Murray has highlighted two main reasons for Spain's sudden interest in signing the agreement.[252] The mediation of General Francisco Javier Castaños (1758-1852), in favour of a military alliance with Britain, and a parallel negotiation with the Russian

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[250] Estado, Esclavitud (Negros), leg. 8029 and 8030, AHN. And, *British and Foreign State Papers (1816-1817)*, vol. 4, pp. 33-74.

[251] Estado, Esclavitud (Negros), leg. 8029, AHN. And, Corwin, pp. 28-29.

[252] Murray, p. 69.

government.[253] The money that Spain received from Britain was immediately spent on the purchase of Russian warships to be used against the Mexican revolutionary armies. Vaughan suspected that these negotiations were taking place and reported to the Foreign Office that 'a close connection with Russia is justified upon the grounds that Spain cannot look for naval assistance or money from England'.[254] These secret negotiations with Russia show that the decision of the Spanish government to abolish the slave trade was only driven by economic interest. [255] After the treaty was signed, Wellesley affirmed that 'the pains, which have been taken to bring the details of the slave trade within the view of this government, it does not appear that any of the considerations of humanity'. And he concluded that 'the money, which they are to receive, is their principal motive for acceding to the abolition'.[256]

In addition to the two factors suggested by Murray, the failure of the international conference in London the year before should also be considered.[257] British international isolation on this issue and Russian public support for Spain's position motivated Britain to accept 'compensating' the Spanish Empire for the abolition of the slave trade. Murray was right to suggest that the signature of the Treaty of 1817 essentially responded to the precariousness of the Spanish treasury and the need to patch up relations with

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[253] David Murray defended that this second element was the crucial factor that motivated the agreement. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 69.

[254] Vaughan to Castlereagh, No. 128, 30 November 1816, FO 72/188, TNA.

[255] The correspondence between the Spanish King and the Russian Emperor during the negotiation of the treaty was published in December 1823 by the *Morning Chronicle* and months later by the Spanish newspaper published in London *El Español Contitucional*.

[256] Wellesley to Castlereagh, No. 107, 13 August 1817, FO 72/199, TNA.

[257] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 69.

Britain. However, Britain's decision to soften its demands should be interpreted as the result of the failure to build a unified continental abolitionist position and the growing pressure of its domestic anti-slavery movement.

In this regard, British abolitionist leaders welcomed the Treaty, hoping that it would restrain the slave trade due to the naval power of Britain. But they were aware of the real motives behind the position of the Spanish government. In October 1818 William Wilberforce wrote to Henri Christophe, King of Haiti, celebrating the signature of the treaty with Spain but also regretting that 'it is not without the payment of a large sum of money that we have brought the Spanish cabinet to such conditions'.[258] In a similar way, in 1819, the British member of parliament and abolitionist, James Mackintosh (1765-1832), recalled this negotiation in the House of Commons and countered the decision of the Spanish King with the political determination of Agustín de Argüelles in 1811.

> What Ferdinand had done for money, was spontaneously and gratuitously accorded by the insurgent colonies; that what Ferdinand reluctantly, and after long negotiation consented only partially to restrain, Argüelles prevailed on the Cortes instantly, universally, and forever to abolish.[259]

The Cuban elites tried in vain to stop the signature of the international agreement and one of its foremost representatives, Francisco de Arango y Parreño, offered 'a very significant amount of money' to the Spanish government as a counter-offer.[260] After the treaty was signed and introduced into Spanish Law, the Cuban elites did everything they could to avoid any British attempt to implement the measures established in the treaty.

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[258] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 69.

[259] Commons Sitting of 10 June 1819, HCPP <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpp&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:rec:CDS1V0040P0-0025> [Accessed: 06/07/2014].

[260] Moreno García (1984), p. 872. And also, Nelson (2015), p. 39.

They consolidated a strong Anglophobic view in which the Spanish King was presented as a victim of British pressure, and subsequently, to defend the continuity of the slave trade was portrayed as a patriotic duty.[261] This narrative, which had already operated at the Cortes of Cadiz and during the deliberations of the Council of the Indies in 1816, would become a keystone of Cuban and metropolitan pro-slave trade discourses in the following years.[262]

In terms of the ideological development of anti-slave trade discourse, the Treaty of 1817 was key however a pro-slavery rhetoric was also very present. The Royal Order of 19 December 1817, which put the treaty into effect, stated that 'the Negroes, far from suffering additional evils, [they] obtained the inestimable advantage of a knowledge of the true God, and of all the benefits attendant on civilization'.[263] The Spanish diplomatic missions abroad repeated this message and, in 1818, Luis de Onís (1762-1827), Spanish Ambassador in Washington, informed the American Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), about the Treaty of 1817. In his letter, de Onis translated the Royal Order of December 1817 and explained that the agreement responded to 'the desire entertained by His [Spanish] Majesty of co-operating with the Powers of Europe' but also, because the Spanish colonies did not need more slaves. The Ambassador argued that 'that the numbers of the Native and Free Negroes had prodigiously increased

[261] Paquette (2008), pp. 37-38.

[262] Barcia (2012), pp. 26-27.

[263] Alvarado (1998), p. 6.

under the mild regimen of the government, and the humane treatment of the Spanish Slave Owners.'[264]

As Murray has argued, the Spanish government did not pursue humanitarian or abolitionist ideas, and they did not even have the will or the necessary resources to implement the agreement. However, the Treaty of 1817 constituted an important political victory for the British government. Although it would not have an effective impact in stopping the slave trade in the Atlantic, it turned into law the ethical principle that the slave trade was immoral and inhumane. The signing of anti-slave trade treaties between Britain and Spain (1817), France (1814), Portugal (1815 and 1817), and later with Brazil (1826), established, in the opinion of Jenny Martinez, 'a collective statement of agreement on the immorality of slaving' and the creation of two Mixed Commissions in Havana and Rio de Janeiro made it explicit that the slave trade was not only 'contrary to the laws of nature' but also to 'the law of nations'.[265] The Treaty of 1817 ratified Fernando VII's declaration of 1814, but also the anti-slave trade discourses at the Cortes of Cadiz. The Foreign Office succeeded in forcing Spain to legally accept that the traffic of slaves was wrong and had to be abolished for the sake of humanity.

The implementation of the Treaty soon proved impossible due to the lack of commitment from the metropolitan and colonial authorities, and the lack of necessary resources to patrol the very intricate and difficult Cuban archipelago. The number of slaves introduced

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[264] Don Luis de Onis to Mr. Adams, Translation, Washington, 4 May 1818. *British and Foreign State Papers (1819-1820)*, (London: James Ridgway, 1834) vol. 7, pp. 374-375..

[265] Martinez (2012), p. 37. See also, Nelson (2015), p. 36.

into Cuba increased exponentially until 1839 and then again in the 1850s.[266] In 1817 alone, at least 25,448 slaves were introduced into Cuba.[267]

2. The Abolitionist debate in Spain during the Liberal Triennium

On 1 January 1820, the liberal general Rafael de Riego led a revolution against the Absolutist Regime that soon spread to the rest of Spain. Riego demanded the restoration of the Constitution of 1812, which Fernando VII was forced to accept on 9 March, thus restoring a parliamentary system. The liberal deputies that had been in exile or imprisoned since 1815 were granted amnesty in July 1820, and many of them had an important role to play in the new Cortes and liberal governments. Until the elections of 1822, these institutions were controlled by a moderate faction of liberals (*doceañistas*). After this date, parliament was controlled by a more radical sector of liberals, known as *exaltados*. The establishment of the first liberal government in 1820 was very welcome to the British antislavery lobby, which saw this situation as an opportunity to implement the Treaty signed with Spain three years before.

2.1. Wilberforce, Argüelles and Toreno.

As soon as the news of the formation of a new government reached London, William Wilberforce aimed to contact the new ministers and persuade them to implement the

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[266] TASTD <http://www.slavevoyages.org/> [Accessed: 07/12/2015]

[267] TASTD <http://www.slavevoyages.org/> [Accessed: 07/12/2015]

Treaty of 1817. He was keen to offer them advice and publications to strengthen their knowledge of the abolitionist cause. In April 1820, Wilberforce sent a letter to Lord Holland in which he acknowledged that 'doubtless [...] [Agustín de] Argüelles will be released from prison; and his influence cannot but be great with the new government'.[268] The communication between Wilberforce and Agustín de Argüelles and José María Queipo de Llano, Count of Toreno, constitutes the most significant attempt of the British abolitionist lobby to directly influence the Spanish political debate during the Liberal Triennium. This correspondence, hitherto partially unknown, has received no attention in the historiography and provides crucial clues to trace the continuity of anti-slave trade ideas in Spain in the years before 1823.

On 28 March 1820, Wilberforce wrote to Argüelles highlighting his role in the promotion of abolitionist ideas and praised him as 'dear to every lover of liberty, […] and every friend of the Abolition of the slave trade'. [269] Wilberforce expressed his relief concerning Argüelles' recent release from prison and congratulated him on his appointment as Secretary of State for the Interior in the new liberal government in August that year. Wilberforce did not hesitate to stress the remarkable importance of Argüelles' anti-slave trade commitment at the Cortes of Cadiz and linked his initiative to the abolitionist treaty signed between Spain and Britain in 1817:

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[268] William Wilberforce to Lord Holland. Kensington Gore, Monday, April 3, 1820. Wilberforce and Wilberforce (1840), vol. 2, pp. 324-326.

[269] William Wilberforce to Agustin de Arguelles, March 28, 1820. Wilberforce and Wilberforce (1840), vol. 2, p. 430.

> The disposition manifested by your country to join the other confederated powers in terminating the wrongs of Africa had probably been produced in no small degree by the force of your reasoning and the power of your eloquence. [270]

Wilberforce informed Argüelles about the details of the recent agreement between the two countries to totally abolish 'the 20th May next [1820] […] a system which, under the name of commerce, includes in it whatever injustice and cruelty could perpetrate for the misery of its victims'.[271] The British abolitionist concluded his letter asking Argüelles to be, once again, the voice of abolitionism in Spain:

> It is by a singular ordination of Providence that it should be reserved for you, their advocate in the season of their misery and degradation, to pronounce the ordinance which is to declare admission to the rank of human beings, and to recognise the right which as our fellow-creatures they posses to the common claims of justice and humanity.[272]

On 28 October 1820, Argüelles replied to Wilberforce from Madrid. This letter constitutes the last known private document in which Argüelles expressed his opinion on the abolition of the slave trade. He informed Wilberforce that he had no 'detailed knowledge of the status of the treaty […] because urgent business issues have absorbed all [his] attention' but committed himself to its actual implementation:

> The current Ministry will not, from this date onwards, hinder a convention aimed at the philanthropic relief of Africa, a convention that has benefited from your tireless efforts and determined policy over so many years. […] I believe the time

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[270] William Wilberforce to Agustin de Arguelles, March 28, 1820. Wilberforce and Wilberforce (1840), vol. 2, pp. 430-431.

[271] William Wilberforce to Agustin de Arguelles, March 28, 1820. Wilberforce and Wilberforce (1840), vol. 2, p. 431.

[272] William Wilberforce to Agustin de Arguelles, March 28, 1820. Wilberforce and Wilberforce (1840), vol. 2, pp. 431-432.

> when the states of Europe agree in good faith to give up the slave trade is very near. [273]

Argüelles was concerned about the political crisis in Spain and the fears of invasion by foreign absolutist powers and asked Wilberforce to give his support to the liberal government by comparing the struggle of the African slaves with the fight of the Spaniards 'who only aspire to be free and independent'. [274] He asked him to 'let your influence be no less powerful than it was in the cause of the Senegalese, who owe you so much, when you apply it to the Europeans'.[275] Argüelles concluded that the same 'philanthropic doctrine' that sustains abolitionism, 'upholds that the freedom of a nation is not incompatible with that of others'.[276]

The first communication with the leader of the British abolitionist movement and one of the best known political figures of the time coincided, however, with the distancing of Argüelles from the political fight for the abolition of the slave trade. This paradox can be explained as the outcome of multiple factors: the profound Spanish political crisis that forced him to concentrate on domestic issues; the difficulties of holding any debate about the slave trade; and the gradual conservative turn of his political opinion, which distanced him from the more radical factions of Spanish liberalism. As Fradera put it, 'many of the issues discussed in the Cadiz Cortes no longer made sense' and the big reforms

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[273] Agustin de Arguelles to William Wilberforce. Madrid, 28 October 1820. MS Wilberforce c. 44 f. 10, BL.

[274] Agustin de Arguelles to William Wilberforce. Madrid, 28 October 1820. MS Wilberforce c. 44 f. 10, BL.

[275] Agustin de Arguelles to William Wilberforce. Madrid, 28 October 1820. MS Wilberforce c. 44 f. 10, BL.

[276] Agustin de Arguelles to William Wilberforce. Madrid, 28 October 1820. MS Wilberforce c. 44 f. 10, BL. Jesús Sanjurjo, 'Negros o esclavos. La retórica de la esclavitud en la prensa española del exilio londinense (1818-1825)', *Anuario de Estudios Atlánticos*, 62 (2016), 1-14.

ambitioned a decade before had been replaced by a 'project adapted to more immediate needs and possibilities'.[277]

The liberal government formed in April 1820, headed by Evaristo Pérez de Castro, continued with the same approach to the slave trade that had been defined by Fernando VII's administration before Riego's Revolution. However, the pressure of the British diplomatic mission in Madrid motivated the official commitment of Pérez de Castro in relation to the implementation of the Treaty of 1817 and the establishment of the Mixed Commission courts in Havana and Sierra Leone.

On 30 May 1820, the period during which the slave trade into the Spanish colonies had been allowed to continue operating expired. Ten days before the deadline, the Spanish government formally requested of the British authorities 'an enlarged extension of the term of 5 months'.[278] They argued that the vessels that had departed from Cuba to Africa to bring slaves before the deadline should 'be allowed to return unmolested, and hoping that England will not insist rigorously on keeping to the very letter of the Treaty, which is evidently in contradiction with the spirit of the original Agreement'.[279] The period was not extended, but the slave trade continued with the consent and protection of the Spanish authorities in Cuba and Madrid. As Henry Theo Kilbee, British commissary judge,

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[277] Fradera (2013), p. 270.

[278] Don Santiago Usoz to Viscount Castlereagh, Translation, London, 20 May 1820. *British and Foreign State Papers (1820-1821)*, (London: James Ridgway and son, 1830) vol. 8, pp. 208-210. See also: *Documentos acerca de las representaciones de la Junta Consular al gobierno de España solicitando una prórroga para el tráfico de negros.* Havana, March 4 and 7, 1820. Colección Vidal Morales y Morales, tomo 78, No. 120, BNC.

[279] Evaristo Perez de Castro to Henry Wellesley, Translation, 27 July, 1820. *British and Foreign State Papers (1820-1821)*, vol. 8, pp. 224-225.

reported from Havana in November 1820 'on the 6th instant, the Brig *Tellus*, […] entered this Port [Havana] with 178 Negroes from the Coast of Africa, and was admitted, and allowed to land her cargo'. As Jennifer Nelson has recently studied, Kilbee's report was ignored by the Spanish authorities in Cuba, 'setting a precedent which was repeated throughout the court's existence'.[280] It was only in 1824 that the first slave vessel was tried in Havana's Mixed Commission Court, the *María da Glória* (which was acquitted). Later that year, the *Relampago*, with 151 slaves on-board, became the first ship to be condemned in the newly established tribunal.[281]

In ideological terms, the continuity of pro-slave trade and pro-slavery discourse is clear, and these ideas persisted under the new government. In a letter to the British Ambassador, Pérez de Castro declared that the abolition of the slave trade in Spain was only the result of British pressure against Spain's interests. He affirmed that Spain was willing to fulfil its international commitments, but also that it was 'a known fact' that 'the Spanish slave has ever enjoyed the immediate Protection of a tutelary and Philosophical code of Laws'.[282]

There were, however, significant exceptions to this consolidated pro-slave trade rhetoric. Between 1820 and 1821, Wilberforce and the Count of Toreno, who had been elected deputy in the new Cortes, exchanged at least two letters about the slave trade.[283] As

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[280] *British and Foreign State Papers (1820-1821)*, vol. 8, pp. 246-248; Nelson (2015), p. 46.

[281] Nelson (2015), pp. 46-47; 230.

[282] Evaristo Perez de Castro to Henry Wellesley, Translation, 27 February 1821, FO 72/244, TNA.

[283] Joaquín Varela Suanzes-Carpegna, *Historia Del Levantamiento, Guerra y Revolución de España por el Conde de Toreno* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2008), pp. VII-VIII.

Wilberforce had done with Argüelles moths before, he aimed to persuade Toreno to pass legislation in the Spanish parliament to effectively implement the Treaty of 1817 and to eventually abolish the slave trade into the Spanish Caribbean dominions. In his response to Wilberforce, Toreno declared himself overwhelmed by the compliments and kind words received from the British MP and committed himself to the anti-slave trade cause: 'Do not doubt that I will support you and that I will look for a way to become even more worthy of your admiration and among the friends of Africa in England'.[284]

He assured Wilberforce that he would speak up for the issue of abolition as soon as he was in Madrid and asked Wilberforce to send to him 'where I am [Paris] or to my country, the information that you want to share with me'. Toreno concluded his letter using a laudatory tone, asking Wilberforce to 'let his light shine before me'.[285] This correspondence, hitherto unknown, proves the direct involvement of the British antislavery lobby in influencing the Spanish MP and shows Toreno's commitment to ending the slave trade.

Soon after the Count of Toreno moved to Madrid, the British Ambassador approached him to express the concerns of his government 'upon the subject of the slave trade.'[286] In March 1821, Wellesley reported to the Foreign Office that Toreno 'assured me that he

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[284] José Maria Queipo de Llano y Ruiz de Saravia, Conde de Toreno to William Wilberforce. Paris, 27 January 1821. MS Wilberforce c. 50 f. 1, BL.

[285] José Maria Queipo de Llano y Ruiz de Saravia, Conde de Toreno to William Wilberforce. Paris, 27 January 1821. MS Wilberforce c. 50 f. 1, BL.

[286] Wellesley to Castlereagh, No. 40, 7 March 1821, FO 72/244, TNA. Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 82-83. See also, Corwin (1967), p. 36; Rafael Marquese, Márcia Berbel, and Tâmis Parron, *Slavery and Politics: Brazil and Cuba, 1790-1850* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), pp. 96-97.

would take an early opportunity of bringing the question under the consideration of the Cortes' and that he would focus on 'preventing by adequate penalties, the evasion of the treaty […] for the entire abolition of this traffic'.[287] Toreno requested from the British authorities more information about the Treaty of 1817 and other penal laws which had been enacted by the British Parliament. He expressed his 'greater alacrity since [defending the eradication of the slave trade] would afford him an occasion of testifying his admiration of the British Nation and government.'[288]

On 23 March 1821, Toreno fulfilled his promise and argued in the Cortes to stop 'this shameful and inhumane traffic'.[289] His proposal had the support of the chamber and a special commission, chaired by Toreno himself, was appointed. Together with the deputies La-Llave, Martínez de la Rosa, Calatrava and Ramos Arizpe, the commission drafted a law to stop the illegal slave traffic into Cuba and sent it to the Cortes.[290] The British Ambassador was highly pleased with the result of this commission and reported to Castlereagh 'that the Conde de Toreno has fulfilled in a most satisfactory manner the expectations which he had held out to me in the various communications which I had with him upon this subject'.[291]

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[287] Wellesley to Castlereagh, No. 40, 7 March 1821, FO 72/244, TNA.

[288] Wellesley to Castlereagh, No. 50, 26 March 1821, FO 72/244, TNA.

[289] 'That a special commission be formed so that, in accordance with Article 6 of the Treaty signed on the 23rd of September of 1817, between England and Spain, it may, as soon as possible, adopt the necessary measures in order to suppress the traffic of slaves from Africa, conveniently adapting the laws in order to end this shameful and inhumane traffic'. *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 23 March 1821, vol. 26, p. 640.

[290] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 23 March 1821, vol. 26, p. 640.

[291] Wellesley to Castlereagh, No. 50, 26 March 1821, FO 72/244, TNA.

Toreno's anti-slave trade bill proposed prison and economic penalties against any Spanish subject directly or indirectly involved in the illegal introduction of African slaves into the Spanish dominions. This included crew members, financial backers of the expeditions, slave buyers, and civil servants.[292] The project was sent to the Cortes in April 1821, but the proposal faced the strong opposition of the Cuban deputy Juan Bernardo O'Gavan, who successfully convinced the majority of the chamber to reject the proposal. As Barcia has convincingly suggested, O'Gavan's main goal was to encourage the restoration of the transatlantic slave trade, following the instructions of Havana's local authorities. The *Ayuntamiento* of Havana argued that the Spanish king had been tricked by the British authorities and warned about the 'dreadful consequences that this treaty has produced and will produce'.[293] The Cuban local representatives affirmed that if the Treaty was not withdrawn, 'the ruin of this island will be inevitable'.[294]

2.3. O'Gavan's Reaction and Bowring's Response.

In 1820 the *Diputación Provicial*, the *Ayuntamiento*, and the *Consulado* of Havana gave instructions to their representatives at the Cortes to formally propose the withdrawal of the Treaty of 1817, or at least to achieve an extension of 6 more years before the abolition of the slave trade. The *Diputación* repeated the same line of argument used in the Cortes of Cadiz in 1811, arguing that the decision to abolish the slave trade was hasty and against the 'sacred laws' that protect propriety rights. However, they also

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[292] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 2 April 1821, vol. 36, p. 831.

[293] Barcia (2012), pp. 36-38; Barcia (2008), pp. 80-85.

[294] Barcia (2012), pp. 36-38; Barcia (2008), pp. 80-85.

added one new idea: the disadvantage compared with the equivalent treaty signed with other countries. The Cuban representatives highlighted the more flexible approach that the British government had adopted with Portugal and Brazil and alleged that 'the damage [caused by the treaty] was incalculable' and the compensation agreed with the British authorities was 'very small and pretty much nothing'.[295]

As had occurred in 1811, the Cuban elites avoided defending the slave trade on moral grounds and tacitly accepted that abolition was inevitable. They aimed, however, to block its implementation for as long as possible and claimed, as they had done before, that the British only sought to provoke Cuba's bankruptcy: 'We should not discuss the continuity of the commerce in slaves. The times have changed, let's talk about the general and total abolition, but cautiously, properly understood, and considering the public and particular interests'.[296]

On March 1821, O'Gavan argued that his speech at the Cortes was not intended to justify slavery but it 'was the closest imaginable thing to it'.[297] He asserted that the slave trade had a positive impact on those brought to the Americas, as it allowed them to escape from a homeland of misery, barbarity and stupidity. O'Gavan stressed that 'our special laws highly favour the good treatment and the freedom of the blacks'.[298]

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[295] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, pp. 140-141.

[296] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, p. 142.

[297] Barcia (2008), p. 80.

[298] Barcia (2008), p. 80.

> These men, who would be indomitable wild beasts in Africa, learn and practice among us the precepts of the religion of peace, love, and sweetness, and become part of the great evangelical society.[299]

In ideological terms, the position of the Cuban deputy was deeply retrograde, repeating arguments that had already been abandoned even by those who defended the continuity of the slave trade, such as Arango. As Barcia has indicated, O'Gavan 'ignored what he knew was really happening just a few miles away from Havana' and 'abandoned the thousands of souls that were daily whipped and shackled on his beloved island'.[300] However, his opinion prevailed at the Cortes and Toreno's law proposal was rejected.

At the same time at which the debate on the slave trade was taken place at the Cortes, O'Gavan published a pamphlet entitled *Observaciones sobre la suerte de los negros del África, considerados en su propia patria y trasladados a las Antillas españolas: y reclamación contra el tratado firmado con los ingleses en el año 1817*. In his work, the Cuban deputy declared that the slave trade and slavery were essential for the 'security and existence' of the Island of Cuba and warned the Spanish deputies about the risks that the abolition of the slave trade would incur for the safety of the Island and the loyalty of the Cuban subjects to Spain.[301]

> On this serious business depends essentially the happiness and even the existence of the Island of Cuba. [...] Our interests have always been and are currently intimately intertwined with those of the Peninsula; and it would be painful if inappropriate laws were adopted. They would hinder the prosperity [of Cuba], make them join the general movement that is shaking the

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[299] Barcia (2008), p. 80.

[300] Barcia (2008), p. 80.

[301] González-Ripoll and others (2004), p. 158.

> American continent today, and adopt measures that are unfavourable to the union with the European provinces.[302]

As shown by Barcia, O'Gavan's 'strongest argument' in defence of the slave trade 'was Cuba's possible loss to the Spanish Crown', and that Cuban merchant and planter elites would contemplate the protection of the southern states of the United States should Spain dare to implement the Treaty of 1817.[303]

> There exists a wise government, liberal in principles, powerful and active, which contrives to extend above her [the Island of Cuba] a charitable hand and to attract her by all means possible to its system of liberty and splendour, lavishing upon her abundant resources for her agriculture and commerce.[304]

As Fradera argued, 'some of the Cuban representatives and institutions […] gave serious thought to breaking with the abolitionist treaty' of 1817 but did not have enough support at the Cortes to simply withdraw from the agreement.[305] However, they were powerful enough to stop any proposal aimed at its effective implementation.

The debate of March 1821 between Toreno and O'Gavan motivated the unexpected participation of John Bowring, a collaborator of Jeremy Bentham and future governor of Hong Kong. He had travelled to Madrid in the Autumn of that year and had a very active engagement with Spanish political debates. He had 'made many acquaintances among the distinguished men of the time' including writers, historians, and politicians such as

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[302] Juan Bernardo O'Gavan, *Observaciones sobre la suerte de los negros del África, considerados en su propia patria y trasladados a las Antillas españolas: y reclamación contra el tratado firmado con los ingleses en el año 1817* (Madrid: Imprenta del Universal, 1821), p. 11. In *Colección Facticia de Vidal Morales,* 082, Morales, tomo 92, No. 13, BNC.

[303] Barcia (2012), pp. 37-38.

[304] O'Gavan (1821), p. 12.

[305] Fradera (2013), p. 270.

'Argüelles, […] Isturiz, Alcala de Galiano […], Count Toreno, [and] Don Francisco Martínez de la Rosa'.[306] According to Gregorio Alonso, Bowring was a member of a wider 'group of political agents with personal links with leaders in the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic'. Led by Bentham, these agents 'played a leading role in the propagation of ideas in both directions of the Atlantic that can hardly be exaggerated'.[307]

In October 1821, Bowring presented himself to the British Ambassador in Madrid and expressed 'his intention to organise a society for securing the effectual suppression of the slave trade' and 'represented himself as a Plenipotentiary of the African Society, as having effected wonders at Paris'.[308] The British Ambassador was very concerned about Bowring's activism in Madrid and the negative consequences that it could cause to his diplomatic strategy.

> […] the measure Mr Bowring had in contemplation might succeed in France, as in any other country, but in Spain […] any attempt of the kind would certainly lead to a most unsatisfactory and most unpleasant Request […] For this reason, […] I have signified to Mr Bowring in the most unequivocal manner, my opinion that it will be highly expedient to desist at present from his purpose.[309]

Bowring, however, did not abandon his plan to influence Spanish public opinion and that same year published his *Contestación a las observaciones de D. Juan Bernardo O' Gavan, sobre la suerte de los negros de África y reclamación contra el tratado celebrado*

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[306] John Bowring, *Autobiographical recollections of Sir John Bowring* (London: Henry S. King and Co., 1877), pp. 99-100.

[307] Gregorio Alonso, ''A Great People Struggling for Their Liberties': Spain and the Mediterranean in the Eyes of the Benthamites', *History of European Ideas* (2014) pp. 3-4).

[308] Hervey to Castlereagh, No. 103, 3 October 1821, FO 72/248, TNA.

[309] Hervey to Castlereagh, No. 103, 3 October 1821, FO 72/248, TNA.

con los ingleses en 1817.[310] In this short book, written in Spanish, Bowring rejected the arguments put forward by O'Gavan and aimed to convince 'those willing to listen' that 'Philosophy cannot be twinned with the cruelty [...] [of those] who buy and sell human blood, who traffic in misery, tears and death'.[311] Bowring vehemently tackled the most repeated pro-slave trade ideas defended by the Cuban planters and appealed to the Christian feelings of the Spanish nation to abolish forever a trade so 'opposed to all the most obvious principles of our holy religion' and to follow 'the commandments of your religion, the feelings of your hearts'.[312] Bowring rejected O'Gavan's idea that Britain was only moved by economic interests. Conversely, he argued that the abolition in Britain was only moved by 'the most sincere, ardent, noble and disinterested philanthropy'.[313]

Bowring's pamphlet has been widely mentioned by historians that have examined this debate during the Liberal Triennium, including José Antonio Piqueras, Manuel Moreno Alonso, Jesús Navarro, Alberto Gil Novales and Enriqueta Vila Vilar.[314] However, its importance in terms of the involvement of the British abolitionist lobby operating directly in Spain has often been overlooked. It is difficult to measure the impact and circulation

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[310] Juan Bowring, *Contestación a las observaciones de D. Juan Bernardo O' Gavan, sobre la suerte de los negros de África y reclamación contra el tratado celebrado con los ingleses en 1817* (Madrid: Imprenta de D. León Amarita, 1821).

[311] Bowring (1821), pp. 3-4.

[312] Bowring (1821), pp. 18-19.

[313] Bowring (1821), pp. 20-21.

[314] José A. Piqueras, *Felix Varela y la prosperidad de la patria criolla* (Madrid: Fundación Mapfre and Doce Calles, 2007); Moreno Alonso (1997); Alberto Gil Novales, *Las Sociedades Patrióticas (1820-1823)* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1975) vol. 1; Jesús Raúl Navarro García, *Entre Esclavos y Constituciones (El colonialismo liberal de 1837 en Cuba)* (Sevilla: CSIC - Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos (EEHA), 1991); Vila and Vila (1996).

of Bowring's publication in the Spanish political sphere, but it is reasonable to think that his work was accessible to most deputies during the Liberal Triennium.

The *Contestación* constitutes a very rare and exceptional example of British abolitionist activism operating in Spain without the support (and even against the instructions) of the British government. As Alonso has argued, the successive Liberal governments did not always follow Bowring's or Bentham's advice 'but they and Spanish Parliament did indeed bear in mind his works when codifying trade and penal matters'.[315] In the context of the debate on the slave trade and the implementation of the Treaty of 1817, it can be argued that Bowring's publication contributed to a confrontation with the reactionary position of O'Gavan from a humanitarian perspective. A 'philanthropic discourse' that, in ideological terms, had successfully operated in the Spanish public sphere since the Cortes of Cadiz.

As part of the strategy of the British abolitionist lobby during the Liberal Triennium, at least two antislavery works were published in London in Spanish: *Consideraciones dirigidas a los habitantes de la Europa sobre la Iniquidad del Comercio de los Negros* and *Clamores de los Africanos contra los Europeos sus Opresores, o Exámen del Detestable Comercio llamado de Negros*. The first pamphlet, signed by 'Miembros de la sociedad de Amigos (llamados Cuakeros) de la Gran Bretaña e Irlanda' (Members of the Friend's Society [known as Quakers] of Great Britain and Ireland), was published in 1822, in London, by George Smallfield, and it is a canonical British anti-slavery manifesto

[315] Alonso (2014), pp. 10-11.

directly addressed to 'those who call yourselves Christians'.[316] According to Juan Vilar, this work was later re-printed in 1825 under the authorship of the Quaker Josiah Foster, in the London printing press of Harvey and Dalton.[317] The second pamphlet, published in 1823, was a translation of the book *Cries of Africa to the Inhabitants of Europe*, originally published one year before by Thomas Clarkson.

After the parliamentary defeat of Toreno's anti-slave trade law in March 1821, British diplomatic efforts focused on the drafting of the new Penal Code.[318] They wanted the Spanish deputies to include in the new code effective punishment for those involved in the slave trade, so they could have the necessary legal instruments —even without a specific law on slave trade— to fight against it. Lionel Harvey, Secretary of the Embassy in Madrid, and in charge of the diplomatic mission after the departure of Henry Wellesley, lobbied José María Calatrava and Francisco Martínez de la Rosa, who had been members of the commission that presented Toreno's anti-slave trade project to the Cortes. The three of them played a significant role in drafting the Penal Code and succeeded in including article 273, which referred specifically to the slave trade. This article prescribed ten years of forced labour and a fine for the 'captains, ship mates and

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[316] *Consideraciones dirigidas a los habitantes de la Europa sobre la Iniquidad del Comercio de los Negros* (London: George Smallfield, 1822); *Clamores de los Africanos contra los Europeos sus Opresores, o Exámen del Detestable Comercio llamado de Negros* (London: J. G. Barnard, 1823).

[317] Juan B. Vilar, *Intolerancia y Libertad en la España Contemporánea: Los Orígenes del Protestantismo Españo Actual* (Madrid: Istmo, 1994), p. 72.

[318] Julia Moreno García, 'La cuestión de la trata en el Trienio Liberal (1820-1823)', *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, extra 1 (2003), 157-167. On the Penal Code of 1822, see: Manuel Torres Aguilar, *Génesis parlamentaria del Código penal de 1822* (Messina: SICANIA University Press. Università degli Studi di Messina, 2008); Juan B. Cañizares Navarro, 'El Código Penal de 1822: sus fuentes inspiradoras. Balance historiográfico (desde el s. XX)', *Glossae: European Journal of Legal History* (2013), 108-136.

pilots of Spanish ships involved in the slave trade' and to free and compensate the slaves on board.[319] The British authorities did not request that the Spanish deputies declare the slave trade to be piracy, although the Foreign Office was starting to receive pressure from abolitionists and military authorities to do so. This was the case of Commodore George Collier, who in 1819 had already proposed to the Lords of the Admiralty that 'the North Slave-trade shall be declared Piracy, and every one found engaged therein subject to all the penalties of Piracy'.[320]

The article was more limited than the bill proposed by Toreno in 1821, but its incorporation into the Penal Code represented a success for the abolitionist ideas advanced by Calatrava, Martínez de la Rosa and Toreno himself. Fradera has downplayed the importance of the article and described it as a 'pointless gesture' because it was never enforced.[321] However, such an assessment fails to recognise the ideological importance of inserting, for the first time in Spanish legislation, not only moral condemnation but actual sanctions against the slave trade. Moreover, the main reason for its ineffectiveness did not lie in the article itself but the lack of will on the part of successive authorities to enforce it. The article, nevertheless, was welcomed by the British authorities and Lionel Harvey 'happily' reported that the British government should

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[319] *Código Penal Español decretado por las Cortes en 8 de junio y sancionado por el Rey y mandado promulgar el nueve de julio de 1822* (Madrid: Imprenta Nacional,1822), p. 55. [https://goo.gl/czXxLY Accessed: 16/12/2015]

[320] *British and Foreign State Papers (1820-1821)*, vol. 8, pp. 177-179. *Viscount Castlereagh to the Earl of Clancarty.* Foreign Office, 11th November, 1819. (Enclosure 2.) *Commodore Sir G. Collier to the Lords of the Admiralty. (Extract.)*

[321] Fradera (2013), p. 270.

be ‘chiefly indebted to Mr. M. Calatrava and Martínez de la Rosa for the insertion of this article in the Criminal Code’.[322]

With regard to slavery in the Iberian Spanish territories, the Penal Code of 1822 also provided that all slaves bought by Spanish subjects on the African coasts should be freed when introduced in peninsular Spain and the Balearic and Canary Islands. In March 1821, the slave María Flores, representing her fifteen-year-old daughter and herself, asked the Cortes to be freed from their master Bernando Guase. They were living in Ibiza and the Cortes accepted their request. The legislative commission of the Spanish chamber also dictated that ‘as a general rule, in the Peninsula and the Balearic and Canary Islands, there will be no slaves; and any slave will no longer be so as soon as they set a foot in any of these territories’. [323] The commission also dictated that the former slaves would have ‘the protection of the national authorities, so they will never be reclaimed or disturbed because of their former condition’.[324] Although significant in terms of the advance of abolitionist legislation during the Liberal Triennium, this was not a radical measure. As Eloy Martín has recently argued, ‘slavery had almost completely disappeared in the Spanish peninsular territories by this time’ and therefore the number of slaves who could benefit from this measure was very limited.[325] Moreover, similar legislation to abolish slavery in peninsular Spain was produced until 1836, which

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[322] Lionel Hervey to Castlereagh, No. 78, 30 June 1822, FO 72/256, TNA.

[323] Eloy Martín Corrales, 'La esclavitud negra en la cataluña entre los siglos XVI y XIX', in *Negros y esclavos. Barcelona y la esclavitud atlántica (siglos XVI-XIX),* ed. by Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla and Lizbeth Chaviano Pérez (Barcelona: Icaria, 2017), pp. 17-46 pp. 29-32); Galván (2014), pp. 52-56.

[324] Martín Corrales (2017), pp. 29-32.

[325] Martín Corrales (2017), pp. 29-32.

suggests that this decision by the Cortes was not fully enforced by regional and local authorities.[326]

2.4. Varela's Reconciliation Project.

After the elections of 1822, Cuba had three representatives in the Cortes during the Liberal Triennium: Félix Varela Morales (1788-1853), Tomás Gener Bohigas (1797-1835) and Leonardo Santos Suárez. Varela, a priest like O'Gavan, was also trusted by Havana's bishop, Juan José Díaz de Espada (1757-1832) and was elected deputy for the legislative period 1822-1823.[327] His parliamentary activity was characterised by its non-alignment with any group or party in the Cortes, and for his intense work on two issues: the slave trade and Cuban autonomy. As Olga Portuondo noted, in both cases his views differed from the Cuban elites who had given their vote to appoint him as deputy.[328] Varela drafted a law proposal to gradually abolish slavery in Spain entitled *Memoria y Proyecto de Ley que muestra la necesidad de extinguir la esclavitud de los negros en la Isla de Cuba, atendiendo a los intereses de sus propietarios*.[329] The fundamental thesis of his work was a critique of the consistent disregard for the human dignity of slaves and free men and women of colour (the so-called *libertos*) by the Cuban

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[326] Galván (2014), pp. 65-66.

[327] Barcia (2012), pp. 37-38. For a biographical study of Felix Varela see: Piqueras (2007); Manuel Maza, *Por la vida y el honor. El presbítero Félix Varela en las Cortes de España, 1882-1823* (Madrid: Editorial Nacional, 1987); Eduardo Torres-Cuevas, *Félix Varela. Ética y Anticipación del pensamiento de la emancipación cubana* (Havana: Imagen Contemporánea, 1991).

[328] Olga Portuondo, *Cuba. Constitución y Liberalismo* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2008), p. 143.

[329] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, pp. 5-17.

oligarchy. Varela argued that 'it is only natural that these people [the *libertos*] try, in every possible way, to remove this obstacle to their happiness by liberating their equals.'[330] He pointed out that it was unsustainable to keep a liberal/representative system that excludes its own free population:

> Their inferiority compared to the whites has never been so conspicuous for them or so deeply felt as the day when they are deprived by the Constitution of their political rights, when the door available to them, is then almost closed on account of their nature, and they are even cut off from what constitutes the basis of the represented population, consequently they are Spanish but they are not represented.[331]

Varela defended a utopian model of conciliation between the desire for freedom for the slaves, on the one hand, and the interests of the oligarchy, on the other, presaging a bloody and unpredictable outcome if an understanding was not reached soon, as 'frustration and despair will force them to choose between liberty or death'. In the context of the American Wars for independence in the continent and with Haiti's Revolution very present in Spanish public opinion, Varela concluded that 'the first one to give the cry for independence [in Cuba] will have all those of African origin on his side'.[332] The Cuban deputy thus reproduced the same ideas previously advanced by Arango and O'Gavan but with an opposite goal. Varela 'formally attacked Great Britain and cited the fears of an invasion from the neighbouring Republic of Haiti, and the risk of a major slave uprising in Cuba' to call the Cortes to gradually put an end to slavery.[333] Varela did not argue for a radical emancipation. He accepted the legitimate interests of the slaveholders and

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[330] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, p. 15.

[331] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, p. 15.

[332] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, p. 16.

[333] Barcia (2012), pp. 37-38.

aimed to achieve the abolition of slavery with full respect for private property. He advocated freeing 'the slaves in such a way that their owners do not lose the money invested in the purchase, […] nor the free slaves under the enthusiasm produced by their new situation, go beyond the limits that must be set for them'.[334]

In the *Proyecto de Ley* that Varela attached to the *Memoria*, he proposed a gradual abolition of slavery, emphasizing a model that reconciled the interests of the Cuban elites and the slaves. He presented himself as the representative of the will of the majority of Cubans and argued that by 'asking to free the African slaves made compatible with the interests of the landowners and with security and public order […], I am merely demanding what the people of Cuba want.'[335] However, nothing could be further from the truth: Varela's position on this debate was not representative of the interests and political position of the colonial merchant and planter elites.

Although Varela's project was fully drafted, he never submitted it to the Cortes. The sudden return of absolutism, and the subsequent shutdown of the Cortes, stifled any chance of moving his proposals forward. He was sentenced to death by Ferdinand VII and was forced into exile, first to Gibraltar and from there to the United States in 1823, from where we would later advocate Cuban independence.[336] In April 1823, the absolutist regime was restored, and the Constitution and civil liberties were once again outlawed. Until the death of Fernando VII in 1833, the official policy of the absolutist

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[334] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, p. 17; Jorge Castellanos and Isabel Castellanos, *Cultura Afrocubana* (Miami: Editorial Universal, 1988) vol. 1, p. 228.

[335] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, p. 9.

[336] Piqueras (2007); Maza (1987); Torres-Cuevas (1991).

regime on the slave trade remained the same. British political and diplomatic pressure focused on the implementation of the Treaty of 1817 in Cuba, with very little success. The Cuban authorities and economic elites, with the support of the metropolitan governments, ignored the international agreement and procured the continuity and development of the slave trade into the Spanish Caribbean dominions.

3. Conclusions

The fragmented development of abolitionist ideas in Spain becomes clear during this period. Between 1814 and 1823, anti-slave trade discourses were advanced both by a group of councillors from within the absolutist administration and some liberal deputies in an elected parliament. In both cases, the endurance of Argüelles' contribution in 1811 is clear, but Argüelles himself abandoned a prominent role. This chapter has emphasized the contradictions that arose from these varied positions against slavery and the slave trade. As has been stated, Spanish abolitionism 'was never likely to unfold along similar lines' to the British movement, among other reasons, because of the profound complexities and peculiarities of its political and institutional history.[337]

On the other side of the debate, abolitionist ideas and policies were effectively confronted by a well-organised opposition of Cuban planters and traders that linked the territorial integrity of the Empire and their own loyalty to the continuity of the slave trade and the promotion of slavery. When 'the empire was coming apart' and 'the idea of a general

[337] Fradera (2013), p. 264.

reform' had been abandoned, abolitionism was seen as a dangerous tendency by some, and unattainable by others.[338] A new colonial system was emerging that would define Spain's empire from that point on, to which slavery and the slave trade were essential. The idea, which was later taken on and repeated by Spain's elites, that 'Cuba was everything', started here.[339]

[338] Fradera (2013), p. 270.

[339] 20 September 1858, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2923, No. 279, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 770-771.

Chapter 3. Abolitionism, Exile and the 'Necessary Evil' Argument (1823-1835)

In April 1823, 95,000 French soldiers invaded Spain in response to the call for help made by Fernando VII to the Holly Alliance. The troops commanded by Louis Antoine of France, Duke of Angoulêm (1775-1844), controlled the country without significant opposition. The liberal government sought refuge in Cádiz but on 31 August the French army conquered the city. Ferdinand was restored as absolutist king and the liberal constitution of 1812, and the civil liberties attached to it, was abolished. Thousands of Spaniards sought refuge outside of their homeland and some pursued active cultural and political activism in exile. This chapter tackles the absence of abolitionist discourse produced by Spanish liberal exiles in London. It stresses the importance of analysing this community of refugees in order to provide a comprehensive study of the fragility of early Spanish abolitionist discourse. This chapter also explores the continuities and alterations in the construction of abolitionist and anti-abolitionist discourse in the aftermath of the prohibition of the slave trade in Spain. This chapter examines the reaction against the enforcement of the abolition and the ways in which pro-slave trade ideas were publicly expressed. In its last section the chapter focuses on the political processes that led to the drafting of the anti-slave trade treaty of 1835 and the long-lasting consequences that this international agreement would have in effectively protecting the slave traffic into Cuba and Puerto Rico.

1. Exiles, Press and Abolitionism: The Second Exile in the Context of the Imperial Crisis (1823-1833).

Early abolitionist discourses in Spain were characterized, both in their construction and their prevalence in the Spanish political debate, by the influence of the British government. The analysis of the exile community in London allows us to test the persistence of anti-slave trade and anti-slavery ideas in the absence of foreign diplomatic interference. Far from their homeland, without a seat in the Cortes or a role in government, the key figures of Spanish liberalism continued to vividly express their opinions in newspapers, social gatherings and private correspondence. This section will show, however, that abolitionist discourses disappeared from their political agenda and that the position that some of them had fiercely defended faded away. The reasons for this silence will be explained by looking into two complementary factors: the fragmentation of the Spanish liberal party and the absence, at this point, of an organized abolitionist movement. The experience of exile and the sense of political failure that followed the collapse of the Constitutional Regime fuelled polarisation within the liberal party and the conservative turn of some former abolitionist advocates.

Vicente Llorens has thoroughly studied the cultural and literary activity of the Spanish exiles in London between 1823 and 1834.[340] Tellingly, however, his research does not tackle the exiles' views on the slave trade or slavery. It provides the best analysis of the historical context for this study but no specific information on this matter. Following the steps of Llorens, Daniel Muñoz, Gregorio Alonso and Juan Luis Simal have studied the political and cultural production of the Spanish exiles in London, their contribution to

[340] Llorens (1979 [1954]).

British public life and the figure of the 'émigré' on a transnational level.[341] However, their works do not explore the (dis)continuities of abolitionist discourse within the exiles community.[342] As Fradera has emphasized, 'we need to explain the lengthy hiatus in open and effective abolitionist activity' between the earliest initiatives in the 1810s and the 'tangible results' achieved in the late 1860s; and by focusing on the community of liberal exiles in London between 1823 and 1836, we aim to do so.[343]

In September 1823 a new Spanish liberal exile started. One thousand Spanish families found refuge in in London and 400 in the Channel Islands during the 1820s.[344] In the English capital, most of them lived in the suburb of Somers Town, in the area of Euston-Saint Pancras, where they built a strong community. The majority of the refugees were military officers, but there were also noted intellectuals, politicians, and skilled workers. Many of them were highly educated and put their minds to writing, translating and publishing. Some of the most prominent liberal politicians and writers of the time, including José María Calatrava (1781-1846), José Canga Argüelles (1770-1843), Juan Álvarez Mendizábal (1790-1853), Francisco Javier Istúriz (1790-1871), Antonio Alcalá Galiano (1789-1865), Álvaro Flórez Estrada (1765-1853), and Agustín de Argüelles, developed an intense intellectual activity and engaged with London's political and cultural

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[341] Muñoz and Alonso (2011); Juan Luis Simal, *Emigrados. España y el exilio internacional, 1814-1834* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2013); Juan Francisco Fuentes Aragonés, '"Cherchez la femme": Exiliadas y liberales en la Década Ominosa (1823-1833)', *Historia Constitucional*, 13 (2012), 383-405.

[342] Sanjurjo (2016).

[343] Fradera (2013), p. 283.

[344] Llorens (1979 [1954]), p. 23.

life. During this time, London became a central hub for Spanish-speaking intellectuals from Spain and Latin America.[345]

Their presence attracted the attention of the British press. *The Times* reported on the situation of the refugees almost without interruption between 1824 and 1830, and some of them, particularly those that moved in the circles of Lord Holland and Jeremy Bentham, as Catherine Davies has studied, were well-known figures among the governing classes.[346] This was the case of Agustín de Argüelles, who was in touch with Lord Holland, but also, as has been shown in the previous chapters, with other relevant figures such as William Wilberforce. Argüelles' escape from Spain together with Galiano, Calatrava and Gil de la Quadra, via Gibraltar, was reported by the *The Times*.[347]

According to the British press, the Spanish exiles were warmly welcomed by the British public. *The Times* referred to them as 'the friends of constitutional government' and the British Government gave pensions to some of them in reward for their fight against Napoleon.[348] Nevertheless, the majority of the exiles became poor and depended on the charity of organizations like the Spanish Committee Fund, established in 1824.[349] The multiple attempts to ignite the spark of a new revolution in Spain, including the conspiracy

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[345] Llorens (1979 [1954]), p. 288.

[346] Catherine Davies, 'The Contemporary Response of the British Press to the 1812 Constitution', in *1812 Echoes: The Cadiz Constitution in Hispanic History, Culture and Politics,* ed. by Stephen G. H. Roberts and Adam Sharman (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp. 103-118 (p. 106); Llorens (1979 [1954]), p. 51.

[347] Davies (2013), p. 110.

[348] Davies (2013), p. 110.

[349] Davies (2013), p. 105.

led by José María Torrijos y Uriarte (1791-1831), in which he lost his life in December 1831, failed and the exile in London came to an end in 1830.[350] In this year, most of the exiles moved to France, after the July Revolution, and later returned to Spain in 1834 after the amnesty granted by the newly proclaimed Queen regent, María Cristina.

The Spanish exiles published seven newspapers between 1824 and 1829; but only two of them enjoyed some degree of continuity: *El Español Constitucional* –which had been initially established during the previous liberal exile in London (1814-1820)– and the new *Ocios de los Españoles Emigrados*.[351] *El Español Constitucional* restarted as a monthly publication from March 1824 until June 1825, under its previous editors Pedro Pascasio Fernández Sardino and Manuel María Acevedo (1769-1840). According to Lloréns, and in reference to this second period of the publication, *El Español Constitucional* was 'the most spirited of the Spanish publications in London' and came into conflict with *Ocios de los Españoles Emigrados*.[352]

The references to the slave trade in *El Español Constitucional* during the second exile were, as in the first exile, scarce and contingent. In 1824 the newspaper translated the speech of 3 February 1824 given by King George IV in the House of Lords, in which he called the Lords to act 'calmly and cautiously' on the issue of the 'amelioration' of the conditions of slaves in the West Indies. The King pointed out that slavery was 'an old

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[350] Irene Castells, *La utopía insurreccional del Liberalismo. Torrijos y las conspiraciones liberales de la década ominosa* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1989).

[351] *El Español Constitucional*, *El Telescopio, Los Ocios de los Españoles Emigrados*, *Museo Universal de Ciencias y Artes*, *Correo y Político de Londres*, *El Emigrado Observador*, and *Seminario de Agricultura*. *Llorens (1979 [1954]), p. 287.*

[352] Llorens (1979 [1954]), p. 300. Davies (2013), p. 110.

and complicated system in which the fortunes and security of many of H.M.'s subjects were involved'.[353] The editors made no comment on this speech.

In March 1824, *El Español Constitucional* published six letters between the Russian Emperor and Fernando VII, originally written between 1817 and 1818, in relation to the negotiation of the anti-slave trade treaty of 1817.[354] These letters, originally published by the *Morning Chronicle* in December 1823, exposed, in the eyes of the editor of *El Español Constitucional*, how untrustworthy the Spanish King had been. The correspondence documents a parallel negotiation between Fernando VII and the Russian Emperor for the hiring of Russian warships to fight in Mexico. The Spanish King stated his intention to use 400,000 pounds given by the British government 'for abolishing the slave trade' to pay for this operation.[355] The editors of *El Español Constitucional* criticised Ferdinand VII´s conduct but made no comment on how the King trivialized the negotiation on the abolition of slave trade.

Ocios de los Españoles Emigrados, for its part, was published monthly from April 1824 to October 1826, and then reappeared as a quarterly magazine from January to October 1827. The brothers Jaime (1765-1824) and Joaquín Lorenzo Villanueva (1757-1837), and José Canga Argüelles founded it some months after they arrived from Spain. After the death of Jaime Lorenzo in 1824, Pablo Mendíbil (1788-1832) replaced him.[356] *Ocios*

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[353] *El Español Constitucional* (March, 1824), p. 17.

[354] *El Español Constitucional* (March, 1824), pp. 16-20.

[355] *El Español Constitucional* (March, 1824), p. 16.

[356] Llorens (1979 [1954]), p. 302.

de los Españoles Emigrados represented the voices of moderate and conservative liberal refugees in London.

Ocios de los Españoles Emigrados was able to count on the collaboration of liberal politicians, including Agustin de Argüelles and Alcalá Galiano, among others. It was almost entirely written by Spanish immigrants in London and only incorporated foreign contributors in its quarterly stage (January to October 1827). The newspaper had extensive international circulation and was read and commented upon in Mexico, Colombia, the United States, France and Germany.[357] The Foreign Office and the Mexican Embassy in London financed the newspaper, which influenced the editorial line of the publication. Vicente Rocafuerte, secretary of the Mexican diplomatic mission in London from 1824, ordered a monthly subscription of two hundred copies on behalf of the Mexican government, and established a close relationship with Joaquín Lorenzo Villanueva.[358]

During the whole existence of the newspaper, there are almost no references to either the slave trade or slavery. This fact becomes especially relevant when considering the political and social agitation that preceded the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833 and the abolitionist ideas that some of the authors of *Ocios* had advanced in Spain in previous years. Its total absence from debates in which some of the most important liberal Spanish politicians participated constitutes a deafening silence.

Thinkers and political leaders who had openly defended the abolition of the slave trade

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[357] Llorens (1979 [1954]), pp. 323-324.

[358] Neptalí Zúñiga, *Rocafuerte y el periodismo en Inglaterra* (Quito: Imprenta del Ministerio del Tesoro, 1947), p. III.

had nothing to say about it in this period. Agustín de Argüelles' attitude is paradigmatic in this regard. In his works published in London, *Apéndice a la sentencia pronunciada en 11 de mayo de 1825 por la Audiencia de Sevilla contra los 63 diputados de las Cortes de 1822 y 1823,* written in 1827 and published in 1834, and *Examen histórico de la reforma constitucional* published in 1835, the Spanish politician does not even mention the topic.[359] Argüelles maintained a close relationship with Lord Holland while in London. In their correspondence and meetings they seemingly never discussed any aspect of the slave trade or the abolition of slavery that was being debated in the British Parliament.[360] It is thus reasonable to think that the abolition of the slave trade was part of the bunch of 'philanthropic theories' that Argüelles would later refer to in 1836, which he was no longer willing to advocate.[361] He became a more conservative thinker during and after exile as a result of a sense of failure of the Constitutional project in Spain. Argüelles' concerns reflected a new political discourse which would radically change the approach of the *doceañistas* to colonial policy. This new view would advocate the restriction of political and civil rights to the colonial population, a growing militarisation of colonial rule and the maintenance of the *status quo* in the colonies.[362]

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[359]Agustín Argüelles, *Apéndice a la sentencia pronunciada en 11 de mayo de 1825 por la Audiencia de Sevilla contra los 63 diputados de las Cortes de 1822 y 1823* (London: Imprenta de Carlos Wood e hijo, 1834); Agustín Argüelles, *Examen histórico de la reforma constitucional que hicieron las Cortes Generales y Estraordinarias*... (London: Imprenta de Carlos Wood e hijo, 1835).

[360] Manuel Moreno Alonso, 'Confesiones políticas de Don Agustín de Argüelles', *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, 54 (1986), 226-261 pp. 226-261).

[361] Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes, 10 March 1837, p. 2039.

[362] Fradera (2013), pp. 274-275; Fradera (2005), pp. 183-326.

The analysis of the Spanish liberal community in London is necessary to understand the eventual interruption of liberal abolitionist discourses after the Liberal Triennium. The editors of both *El Español Constitucional* and *Ocios* never defended in their pages the continuity of the slave trade or slavery, however. Never did Argüelles publicly change his mind or regret his previous advocacy of the abolition of the slave trade; but the abolition of slavery and the implementation of the anti-slave trade treaty of 1817 did not constitute political priorities for him. This absence further illustrates the fragility of early abolitionist discourses in Spain and the absence, at this point, of a committed Spanish abolitionist movement.

2. Absolutist Policies in the Aftermath of the Abolition of the Slave Trade (1823-1834).

This section will explore the ideological consequences that arose from the British abolitionist strategy against the slave trade after the restoration of the absolutist regime in Spain in 1823. It stresses the ideological and political consequences of the establishment in 1820 of the Mixed Commission Court in Havana in the context of growing tensions between the Spanish and British governments. This section also tackles the legitimization strategies developed by anti-abolitionist sectors in Spain and Cuba to protect and even promote the slave trade into the Spanish Caribbean dominions. A ‘necessary evil discourse’ and Anglophobic rhetoric informed these pro-slave trade discourses in the aftermath of the legal abolition of the trade. This new ideological ground operated as a keystone of the more complex idea of a colonial status quo.

2.1. 'Spain Is Only Yielding to Circumstances'. Havana's Mixed Commission Court and Anglophobic Discourses.

The establishment in 1820 of the Mixed Commission Court in Havana constituted a milestone in the process of implementation of the Treaty of 1817 as part of the British strategy to fight against the slave trade in the Spanish Empire. British judges operated as abolitionists on the ground and, more importantly, as a constant and persistent reminder of the legal obligation of the authorities with regard to the slave trade. The establishment of Havana's Mixed Court stirred a very powerful Anglophobic rhetoric among anti-abolitionist sectors in the context of intense imperial rivalry between the Spanish and British governments.[363] This outcome, together with the failure of the British authorities to promote anti-slave trade ideas in Spain, contributed to reinforcing Spanish victimization rhetoric and ultimately to consolidating the slave trade.

As Jennifer Nelson has demonstrated, 'despite their limitations, and a nominal ability to undermine slave traders' livelihoods, the courts represented an alternative abolitionist voice, which was considered potentially subversive'.[364] For Spain, however, the Mixed Commission Court undermined its imperial sovereignty and was described by the Cuban authorities as an 'inquisitorial tribunal of foreigners'.[365] David Murray has convincingly argued that the Court's 'unpopularity' among the Cuban public was the result of two factors: the 'belief that the prohibition of the slave trade was a measure which Britain forced on Spain under a cloak of philanthropy, but really as a means of hitting at Cuban

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[363] Paquette (2008); Paquette (2015).

[364] Nelson (2015), p. 206.

[365] Kilbee to Hamilton, 4 March 1822, FO 84/18; Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 76-77.

prosperity, and the extensive participation in slave-trading ventures by Cubans of all classes'. [366] In fact, the slave trade in Cuba was a very profitable business. Although illegal from 1820, it was tolerated (and even promoted) by the Spanish authorities.[367] Robert Jameson, the first British Commissioner in Cuba between 1819 and 1820 reported in August 1821 that shares in slave-trade expeditions were 'eagerly sought for by clerks in public and mercantile offices, petty *caballeros* or gentry […] and shopkeepers, overseers, etc.'[368] Involvement in the slave trade was transversal across a wide spectrum of the colonial population, including metropolitan economic and political elites alike, and according to the Cuban intellectual Domingo del Monte (1804-1853), it was only criticised 'by the poor', referring to the only ones that did not directly benefit from it.[369]

Even the British West Indian squadron showed some tolerance of the slave trade in the first months of the prohibition. No slave trade vessel was taken to Havana by the British Navy until 1823.[370] The British Judge in Havana's Mixed Commission Court, Henry Kilbee, reported that 'British naval commanders […] hesitated to risk unpopularity and

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[366] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 76-77.

[367] As Kilbee reported in 1825, 'I have good reasons for saying that with very few exceptions, all the employees under the Government are directly or indirectly engaged in the Traffic'. Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 76-77.

[368] Jameson to Clanwillian, 1 September 1821, FO 84/13; Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 76-77.

[369] Murray (2002 [1980]).

[370] Nelson (2015), p. 46.

loss of lucrative cargoes capturing Spanish slavers'.[371] The Commander of the West Indian Squadron, Admiral Halsted, rejected Kilbee's accusations and five slave trade Spanish vessels were captured between 1825 and 1826 alone. As highlighted by Nelson, following data offered by the *Voyages*: *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, 55 vessels were captured and tried by the Mixed Commission in Havana between 1824 to 1854, and 48 of them were condemned.[372]

The Spanish officials in the Mixed Commission did their best to obstruct the works of the Court, restrict their powers, and, ultimately, to protect the interests of the slave traders. The colonial authorities acknowledged that stopping the slave trade would deeply damage Cuba's prosperity and, therefore, that it was their duty to protect its continuity. In this regard, Captain General Francisco Vives reported to Madrid in 1825 that he 'concealed the existence of the slave trade and the introduction of slaves as much as is possible given the treaty obligations', as he was 'completely convinced that if the lack of slave labour continues the Island's wealth will undoubtedly disappear within a very few years'.[373]

The first Spanish representatives of the Mixed Commission in Havana were Alejandro Ramirez y Blanco (1777-1821), as a judge, and Francisco de Arango y Parreño, as arbitrator; later substituted by Claudio Martínez de Pinillos (1782-1853). Arango had

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[371] Kilbee to Planta, 22 January and 8 October 1825, FO 84/39; Kilbee to Planta, 2 February 1825, FO 72/304. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 78.

[372] Nelson (2015), pp. 230-231.

[373] Francisco Vives to Francisco Cea Bermudez, 6 January 1825; included in: Ezpeleta to Francisco Cea Bermudez, Estado, leg. 8036, AHN.

been the key ideologue and spokesperson of the slaveholders and slave traders at the Cortes of Cadiz and the Council of the Indies and, together with Martínez de Pinillos, played a front-line role in defending the continuity of the slave trade. However, as Nelson pointed out, 'the slave holding notoriety of the next two judges seems not to have caused consternation except privately amongst the British'.[374]

British commissioners knew that the abolitionist cause was a very complex task to fulfil in such a hostile context. They were aware that their work in the Spanish colony was seen from the beginning as a direct attack on Spanish imperial sovereignty and as a threat to the constituted power and economic *status quo* in Cuba. British Judge Henry Kilbee and his successors carried out an efficient and steady job of providing data about the slave trade in Cuba to the Foreign Office and demanding legal changes from the Spanish authorities. The British authorities failed, however, to undermine the dominance of pro-slave trade sentiment in Cuba or, as Kilbee later noted, to 'correct the public opinion of this Country upon the subject of the slave trade'.[375] Despite the work of the Mixed Commission Court, the number of slaves introduced in Cuba from 1820 to the late 1830s grew exponentially, together with the exportations of Cuban sugar.

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[374] Nelson (2015), p. 50.

[375] Kilbee to Canning, no 2, 1 January 1825, FO 84/39. Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 84-85.

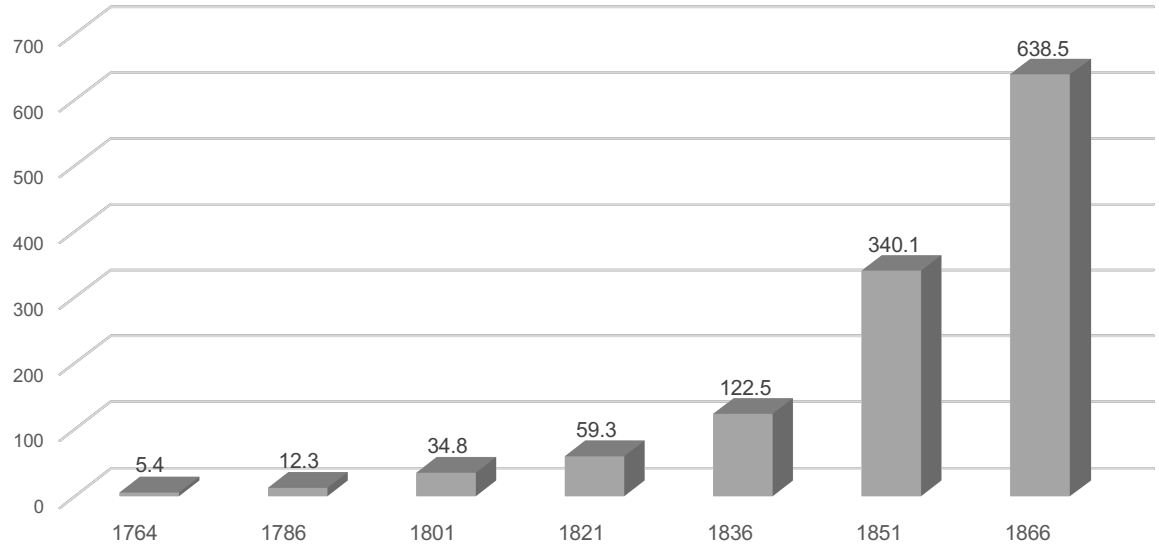

Chart 2: Cuba's Sugar Exports (1764-1866) in Millions of Metric Cubic Tones.[376]

The Council of State stated, in May 1822, that not only 'philanthropic sentiments' motivated British anti-slave trade policies.[377] Anglophobic messages operated as a recurrent argument within the Spanish administration to justify the steps that the Spanish King was taking 'against his real will' to prohibit the slave trade. The Spanish authorities openly doubted Britain's humanitarianism and believed that the British could jeopardize prosperity and peace in Cuba. These ideas had circulated in Cuba from the beginning of the nineteenth century and reinforced a mixed sentiment of victimhood and patriotism. As Nelson has rightly claimed in this regard, 'in such climate the Mixed Commission and its British representatives had become convenient scapegoats'.[378]

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[376] Marrero (1984-1987), vol. 12, p. 109.

[377] Council of State Report, 15 May 1822, Estado, leg. 8031, AHN.

[378] Nelson (2015), p. 47.

In January 1829, Commissioner William Sharp Macleay reported to the Foreign Office that the slave trade had drastically increased in Cuba in the past years in spite of the efforts of the Mixed Commission Court, and that the Spanish government was effectively promoting the slave trade by protecting the slave traders. Macleay protested that the traffickers knew that 'the Spanish laws will never be put in execution against them', and this had led to the consolidation of widespread Anglophobic discourse on the Island. [379]

> It is however easily seen, that, while it would be difficult for the Local Government to avoid carrying the Decrees of the Mixed Commission into effect, they need have no reluctance in executing them, since by letting the Spanish Laws relating to the prohibited traffic remain a complete nullity, they make the Slave traders believe that, with respect to the Mixed Commissions, Spain is only yielding to circumstances it cannot control; and thus contrive to throw all the popular odium on the British Government and its Agents.[380]

Anglophobic discourse was enhanced by the rumours that circulated in Cuba about the imminent sale of the Island to Britain by the Spanish government, or even a possible invasion of Cuba by British forces after encouraging the slaves to revolt against their masters. In some cases, these rumours were used by the Spanish authorities to justify authoritarian measures and to reinforce the message of Cuba's vulnerability against British machinations. The possibility, however, of a British takeover of Cuba was not entirely remote during the nineteenth century and the idea was contemplated by London's governments. One early example appeared in a report by Lionel Harvey, Secretary of the Embassy in Spain, to Castlereagh in June 1822, in which he stated that 'if it should ever enter into the contemplation of His Majesty's Government to give up Gibraltar, I apprehend that there would not be much difficulty in obtaining the Island of

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[379] *British and Foreign State Papers (1829-1830)*, (London: James Ridgway, 1834) vol. 12, p. 608.

[380] *British and Foreign State Papers (1829-1830)*, vol. 12, p. 608.

Cuba in exchange'.[381] This negotiation never took place, but the idea that Cuba could be a bargaining chip between the two states in the context of Spanish imperial disintegration was entertained.

Only a few months later, in March 1823, the Spanish Ambassador to the United States, Joaquín de Anduaga, informed Cuba's Intendant of the publication of an inflammatory proclamation to the Spanish and Cuban people in an American newspaper. The document urged, on the one hand, the Spanish people to rise against absolutism, and on the other, Cubans to claim independence from Spain. The text also propagated the idea that the Island could 'be ceded to the British', and called on the Spaniards and Cubans to 'resolve, and resolve quickly; liberty and independence, or submission to the British yoke'.[382]

> They may destroy the constitution, give unlimited power to King, and rivet chains on the people, but they never will subdue their brave spirit; neither will the descendants of *Pelayo*, the *Cid*, and of *Padilla* be unmindful of the glory and the chivalry of their ancestors. [383]

In a similar vein, in July 1827, the Spanish Ambassador in London reported that there were activists 'weakening the spirit of the people of Havana and rousing public opinion

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[381] Hervey to Castlereagh (Marquees of Londonderry), Private 2, 7 June 1822, FO 72/255, TNA.

[382] 'Comunicación del Encargado de negocios de S.M. en los Estados Unidos, al Intendente, fecha Filadelfia 31 de marzo de 1823, solicitando auxilio [por su situación económica] y acompañando el periódico titulado "Aurora General Advertiser" correspondiente al viernes 28 de marzo de 1823, con una proclama dirigida a españoles y cubanos sobre los rumores de cesión de la Isla a Inglaterra', Asuntos Políticos, leg. 113, exp. 67, AHC and Asuntos Político, leg. 50, exp. 30.

[383] 'Comunicación del Encargado de negocios de S.M. en los Estados Unidos, al Intendente, fecha Filadelfia 31 de marzo de 1823, solicitando auxilio [por su situación económica] y acompañando el periódico titulado "Aurora General Advertiser" correspondiente al viernes 28 de marzo de 1823, con una proclama dirigida a españoles y cubanos sobre los rumores de cesión de la Isla a Inglaterra', Asuntos Políticos, leg. 113, exp. 67, AHC and Asuntos Político, leg. 50, exp. 30.

in favour of England'.[384] According to the ambassador, a double process of liberal revolution in Spain and an uprising in Cuba would have the support of the British government:

> [The Cubans] would spontaneously call the English for help, who would intervene this way without colliding with the United States, and [...] after a new revolution in the Peninsula, […] a Spanish general would come to the Island of Cuba promising freedom but without independence from Spain.[385]

This political tension affected the United States and France; both countries also entertained the possibility of taking control of Cuba as a way of extending their influence in the Caribbean region.[386]

Britain's reaction to this political climate came in the shape of an offer to the Spanish government in May 1824, to support Spanish sovereignty of Cuba as long as Spain accepted the independence of its mainland territories in the Americas, an offer that Spain, however, declined. In 1825, the British government promoted an international agreement between the United States, France and Britain to guarantee that none would invade Cuba. As Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, George Canning very frankly stated in a letter to the United States Ambassador in London in 1825, 'you cannot allow that we should have Cuba; we cannot allow that you should have it; and we can neither

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[384] 'Real Orden de 12 de Julio de 1827. Da cuenta de las tramas que se urgen en Londres para estimular a los habitantes de esta Isla a que se subleven contra el Gobierno de SM', Asuntos Políticos, leg. 32, exp. 26, ANC.

[385] 'Real Orden de 12 de Julio de 1827. Da cuenta de las tramas que se urgen en Londres para estimular a los habitantes de esta Isla a que se subleven contra el Gobierno de SM', Asuntos Políticos, leg. 32, exp. 26, ANC.

[386] Lars Schoultz, *The infernal little Cuban republic: the United States and the Cuban Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), p. 19; Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 86; Robin Blackburn, *The overthrow of colonial slavery, 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 2011), p. 396.

of us allow that it should fall into the hands of France', and therefore the easiest solution was to defend a Spanish Cuba.[387]

Although it is impossible to determine how plausible a British annexation or invasion of Cuba would have been, it is undeniable that this possibility played a major role in the political and ideological context of the first half of the nineteenth century. It deepened and promoted an Anglophobic view within Cuban population and weakened British anti-slave trade discourse, which was seen by colonial elites and the Spanish administration as another destabilizing and subversive initiative.

In conclusion, it seems that Havana's Mixed Commission Court provided accurate information to the British government about the slave trade in Cuba and constantly pushed the colonial authorities to fulfil their legal commitments. However, the works of the Mixed Commission also fuelled Anglophobic sentiment among the Cuban population which consolidated pro-slave trade positions and depicted abolitionist ideas as a foreign threat to Cuba's political and economic stability in public discourse.[388] In a context of increasing polarization of the political debate around slavery, with the United States, France and Britain aiming to expand their influence in Latin America, and after the thwarted attempt to advance abolitionist ideas during the Liberal Triennium; the British authorities confined themselves to encouraging Spain to fulfil the provisions established in the Treaty of 1817. By 1830, British diplomacy and the British antislavery movement

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[387] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 86; Blackburn (2011), p. 396.

[388] On the development of Anglophobic discourses and 'conspiratorial views' with regard to British abolitionist efforts in the United States in the 1840s, see: Leonardo Marques, *The United States and the Transatlantic Slave Trade to the Americas, 1776-1867* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 158-160.

had failed to do in Spain what they had achieved in Britain: to persuade the public of the benefits of abolition and to define a positive post-abolition scenario.

2.2. 'A Matter of Self-Preservation'. The Equipment Article and 'Necessary Evil' Rhetoric.

In the aftermath of the second restoration of Fernando VII as absolutist king, British diplomatic pressure to effectively stop the slave trade into Cuba increased and the Spanish authorities gradually adopted a new anti-abolitionist rhetoric that defined the traffic as a 'necessary evil'. This section explores the British demand for new legal instruments to fight against the slave trade and how the Spanish government adopted a non-confrontational response aimed at protecting the trade and avoiding a diplomatic crisis.

Only a few days after the re-establishment of the Absolutist Regime, in May 1823, the Spanish Council of State sat to discuss the British proposal to add an article to the anti-slave treaty of 1817. This additional article would enforce the prosecution of any vessel that was ready and equipped to get involved in the slave trade by defining different technical elements that characterised slave trade ships. The British government would request them time and again, unsuccessfully, between 1823 to 1833, when the negotiation for a new slave trade treaty eventually started. 'Nothing short' of the additional equipment article, according to the British commissioners in Sierra Leone,

could effectively stop the 'arrival of Spanish vessels at […] the Rio Pongos, Rio Nunez, and Gallinas'.[389]

The Council of State argued in May 1823 that it would not be 'political or convenient to just reject the article proposed by the Minister of Her Britannic Majesty' and elaborated a legal analysis of the difficulties that the implementation of such new provisions would imply.[390] The Council was clearly not enthused by the idea, but was also aware of the difficult position adopted by the Spanish government, willing to ignore its own international commitments and legislation.

The former Secretary of State, Pedro Cevallos, submitted in May 1823 a dissenting vote to the Council's report based on economic and moral arguments. Cevallos relied on the traditional insistence that the British demand was too sudden and questioned Britain's humanitarianism. He argued that Jamaica was in a much better position than Cuba when the slave trade was abolished in the British Empire and affirmed that the 'superabundance' of slaves made the British colony more competitive in the production of sugar.[391] Cevallos elaborated a pro-slave trade argument on moral grounds, which echoed O'Gavan's discourse in 1821. He wrote that ending the slave trade would not have a positive impact in Africa as those people who were not captured by slave traders faced an even worse life in their homeland. Cevallos rejected any additional article to the 1817 Treaty and concluded that:

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[389] A. Findlay and W.M. Smith to Viscount Palmerston, Sierra Leone, 28 December 1831, *British and Foreign State Papers (1832-1833)*, (London: James Ridgway and Sons, 1836) vol. 20, pp. 147-148.

[390] Tratados siglo XIX, No. 64, Madrid, 21 May 1823, AMAE; Moreno García (1984), pp. 267-269.

[391] Tratados siglo XIX, No. 64, Madrid, 21 May 1823, AMAE; Moreno García (1984), p. 272.

> The powerful interest of humanity in the disappearance of the traffic in negroes is very equivocal, or at least it is not so positive, since it will cause the inevitable sacrifice of agriculture and trade in Cuba and Puerto Rico, without which its inhabitants will fall in the most disastrous misery; and Spain will be devoured by the pain of having sacrificed so many victims to a misunderstood virtue or the hypocrisy of humanity.[392]

Cevallos replicated O'Gavan's justification of the slave trade and reproduced his idea that the eradication of the trade in slaves 'would hinder the prosperity [of Cuba]' as upon the traffic depended 'essentially the happiness and even the existence of the Island of Cuba'.[393] Cevallos also reinforced Anglophobic rhetoric in his statement, which had successfully circulated in Cuba since 1811. In this regard, Macleay wrote that this idea had 'always in some degree prevailed in the Island of Cuba, that Great Britain, in her anxiety to extinguish the Slave-trade, has only been actuated by a desire to protect the interest of her own sugar Colonies'.[394] Cevallos' views, however, were not publicly shared by the Spanish government and moral justification of the slave trade would become more and more infrequent in official correspondence. The report of the Council of State had no immediate effect on Spanish policy and the British demand was not accepted.

The British diplomatic mission in Madrid continued to repeatedly request the introduction of the equipment article and to report on the exponential rise of the slave trade in Cuba. The establishment of Mixed Commission Courts in Havana and Sierra Leone allowed the British Foreign Office to obtain first-hand information on the number of slaves and

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[392] Tratados siglo XIX, No. 64, Madrid, 21 May 1823, AMAE; Moreno García (1984), pp. 272-273.

[393] O'Gavan (1821), p. 11. In *Colección Facticia de Vidal Morales,* 082, Morales, tomo 92, No. 13, BNC.

[394] W. S. Macleay to Viscount Palmerston, Havana, 2 January 1832, *British and Foreign State Papers (1832-1833)* (1836), vol. 20, pp. 147-148.

slave vessels that arrived in the Spanish colony and they used this information to gradually increase the pressure on Spain. In April 1828, George Bosanquet, British Ambassador in Madrid, expressed his concerns to the Spanish Secretary of State, Manuel González Salmón, on the growing number of slaves illegally introduced in Cuba. Based on the reports of the British Commissioners in Havana, Bosanquet denounced the fact that the slave trade was 'being carried out more notoriously, if possible, than ever before' and that it was 'morally impossible that the public authorities of the Island ignore what happens every day in front of their eyes.'[395]

After this communication, the Council of State was required to deliberate once again on the information presented by the British authorities. The Council affirmed two main ideas in its report: firstly, that slavery was essential to the prosperity of the colonial economy, and therefore, the slave trade had to continue as a 'necessary evil'; and secondly, the Council questioned the philanthropic motives of the British authorities, using Anglophobic rhetoric, and moving the debate from a legal or moral dispute into a conflict of imperial rivalries.

The Council pointed out that 'if the entry of new Negroes in the Island of Cuba was absolutely forbidden, the decline of its rural industry will be a certain and so visible consequence that it will be possible to point out the day in which crops would disappear […] because the introduction of European colonists [as a substitute workforce] is a chimera'. [396] The slave trade was presented as an economic necessity while Spain's

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[395] Tratados siglo XIX, No. 64, Madrid, 19 April 1828, AMAE. Moreno García (1984), pp. 277-278.

[396] Council of State Report, 19 January 1829, Estado, leg. 8022, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 279-281; Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 94-95.

coffers gradually became more dependent on Cuba's contribution. The Cuban market, which was fully dependent on the slave trade, was at the centre of a growing trading network between the peninsular ports of Santander, Cadiz, Malaga, Alicante and Barcelona, and Havana. The prosperity of the Cuban market determined the economic stability of the whole Spanish market. As Josep Fradera has argued, 'from the 1820s until 1837, the greatest arguments in favour of tolerating slavery [and the slave trade] in Cuba were unquestionably economic'.[397] Significantly, however, the Council did not justify the slave trade on moral grounds and concluded that slave owners in Cuba 'compelled by the strong need of self-preservation' have acted against 'their own opinion' and 'put in risk their own interests'.[398]

The 'necessary evil' doctrine, as defined by David Ericson for the United States' case, is articulated around the idea that 'the institution was evil on deontological grounds but contended that its continued existence was necessary on consequentialist grounds'.[399] To exemplify its meaning, Ericson quotes Thomas Jefferson when he expressed this position in the wake of the Missouri crisis: 'We have the wolf by the ears, and we can

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[397] Fradera (2013), pp. 273-274; Candelaria Saiz Pastor, 'Las finanzas públicas en Cuba: la etapa de las desviaciones de fondos a la península, 1823-1866', in *Las Haciendas públicas en el Caribe hispano durante el siglo XIX,* ed. by Inés Roldán de Montaud (Madrid: CSIC, 2008), pp. 68-108.

[398] Council of State Report, 19 January 1829, Estado, leg. 8022, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 279-281; Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 94-95.

[399] David F. Ericson, *The Debate Over Slavery: Antislavery and Proslavery Liberalism in Antebellum America* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 22-23. See also, Harold D. Tallant, *Evil Necessity: Slavery and Political Culture in Antebellum Kentucky* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentacky, 2003); John P. Kaminski, *Necessary Evil? Slavery and the Debate Over the Constitution* (Madison: Madison House Publishers, 1995); Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Ideology of Slavery. Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830–1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981); Losurdo (2011), pp. 35-65.

neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other'.[400] The absence of a moral defence of the slave trade, or even the attempt to argue for the 'mild conditions' of slavery in Cuba, as the Spanish authorities used to do, inaugurated a new anti-abolitionist discourse that focused on stressing the vital necessity of continuing the slave trade as a 'self-preservation' strategy, a 'necessary evil' that portrayed slave owners, traffickers and colonial authorities as 'victims' of a system they had not chosen, and 'patriots' against the machinations of a foreign nation that worked tirelessly against their prosperity.

The Council of State also defended its anti-abolitionist position on the basis of openly Anglophobic discourse, or as Murray put it, 'once again Britain was the villain'; following the trend explained in the previous section.[401] The members of the Council argued that the Treaty of 1817 was the result 'not so much of generosity and love of their fellowmen, but of the particular and commercial interest' and was only pursued by Britain to 'strengthen even more the monopoly of India'. According to the Council, it was Cuba's patriotism and their 'desire to keep their property acquired with great effort' that eventually turned the treaty into dead letter:

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[400] Ericson (2000), p. 23. The Missouri Compromise refers to the legislation passed by the 16th United States Congress on May 8, 1820. The measures provided for the admission of Maine as a free state along with Missouri as a slave state, thus maintaining the balance of power between North and South. As part of the compromise, slavery was prohibited north of the 36°30′ parallel, excluding Missouri. On the Missouri crisis, Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America* (Chapel Hill: Univerity of North Carolina Press, 2007).

[401] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 94-95.

> [The Cuban people] used first-class ships equipped as in wartime, avoiding English surveillance, and frustrating the plans of Great Britain, which cannot see without jealousy the amazing prosperity of Cuba.[402]

The Council opposed the addition of an equipment article because this would have allowed the British navy to become a 'sea-police, as they have always aspired to be' and 'then, under any pretext, they would stops the vessels, diverting them from their true destiny, and paralyzing the mercantile operations what would ruin their owners'.[403] They also blamed the British government for the rise of 'bloody piracy' in the Caribbean Sea because, the Council argued, the Treaty of 1817 forced 'four thousand sailors' into poverty who had then resorted to piracy as a means of survival.[404] Therefore, they recommended that the Spanish King 'dissemble without being unfaithful to the treaties. […] Since we cannot obtain what is desirable, the suspension of the damaging treaty of 1817, at the very least we will refuse any new restriction or addition to that convention' until Cuba could achieve the level of prosperity of Brazil.[405]

The Council of State tended to have a conservative and anti-abolitionist approach while the Council of the Indies had a record of openly upholding abolitionist principles and a more positive view of the British campaign against the slave trade across the Atlantic. This continued to be the trend after the restoration of Fernando VII in 1823. The proposal on the equipment article was also sent to the Council of the Indies for their consideration. The majority of this council agreed to propose, in January 1830, that all Spanish vessels

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[402] Council of State Report, 19 January 1829, Estado, leg. 8022, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 280, 282.

[403] Council of State Report, 19 January 1829, Estado, leg. 8022, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 280-281.

[404] Council of State Report, 19 January 1829, Estado, leg. 8022, AHN. Moreno García (1984), p. 282.

[405] Council of State Report, 19 January 1829, Estado, leg. 8022, AHN. Moreno García (1984), p. 281; Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 94-95.

travelling from Cuba or Puerto Rico to the African coast should be inspected before their departure and that any ships arriving without evidence of previous inspection would be seized and its officers imprisoned.[406]

The Spanish cabinet considered both reports and decided to reject Britain's proposal. Following the advice of the Council of State, the Spanish government insisted on their 'faithful' commitment to ending the slave trade. In the instructions sent to the Captain General of Cuba, Dionisio Vives, a few weeks later, the government reiterated its official position in a very dramatic and rhetorical way. They ordered Vives to

> Let the orders given to the effect be observed and comply with the greatest scrupulosity. H. M. wants to stop, by all possible means, a shameful and inhuman trade that disgusts the generous feelings of his magnanimous heart and avoid the impunity of those who dedicate themselves to it in contempt of the laws.[407]

The reality, however, was very different to these passionate instructions. The Spanish government, by insisting on the moral condemnation of the slave trade and reaffirming its commitment to fight against it, was adopting a tactical position that would prove successful in the long term. This simulation of a non-existent commitment avoided a diplomatic crisis with the British government and was supported by the colonial elites that felt protected by the metropolitan authorities. David Murray interpreted this situation as a consequence of 'lacking an essential policy decision from the higher authorities' but, in fact, the strategy of the Spanish government was consistent and successful in protecting the slave trade.[408] It was the deliberate response of a second-class empire

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[406] Tratados siglo XIX, No. 64, Madrid, 8 January 1830, AMAE. Moreno García (1984), pp. 283-284.

[407] Moreno García (1984), p. 285.

[408] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 93.

that could not openly defend the slave trade anymore but was doing everything to protect, promote and intensify the introduction of slaves into its colonies.

Between 1830 and 1833, British diplomatic pressure calling for more, and more effective, legislation against the slave trade increased. Even the tone of this pressure became gradually more hostile as the evidence gathered by the British Commissioners in Havana and Sierra Leone showed the continuity of the trade and the collusion, if not direct involvement, of the Spanish authorities. British diplomats repeated, 'time and time again', as Henry Unwin Addington, British Ambassador in Madrid, put it, their demand for new legal instruments against the slave traffic, 'until such time as a favourable combination of circumstances may arise for compelling attention to them [the Spaniards]'.[409]

In February 1831 Addington insisted on his government's request for the addition of the equipment article to the 1817 Treaty and denounced that 'open and barefaced violations of the Treaties […] are continually being practising' at Spanish ports. The British ambassador pointed out, based on information provided by the English Consul in Cadiz, that in this port it 'is publicly known' that Spanish vessels 'make preparations for [their] speedy departure from Cadiz , with the view of procuring a cargo of negroes'.[410] The

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[409] Henry U. Addington to Viscount Palmerston, Madrid, 9 February 1832, British and Foreign State Papers (1832-1833) (1836), vol. 20, pp. 187-188.

[410] Henry U. Addington to Chevalier de Salmon, Madrid, 5 February 1831, *British and Foreign State Papers (1831-1832)*, (London: James Ridgway, 1834) vol. 19, pp. 472-473.

Ambassador insisted that the slave trade into Cuba, far from stopping, has 'actually increased'.[411]

British pressure not only increased during this period, but also became more hostile against the passive attitude of the Spanish. In March 1831, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Palmerston, instructed the British Ambassador to intensify the pressure on the Spanish government and accused the Spanish authorities of acting in collusion with the slave trade and even of actively working to promote it.

> It is well known, that every river on the coast of Africa, where slaves are to be obtained, still swarms with slave-ships, bearing openly the flag of Spain; while vessel after vessel sails for that coast to the Havana, returns laden with these slaves, of whom even the number on board is publicly known, lands them unmolested at the back of the Island of Cuba, re-enters the port of the Havana in ballast, and is again fitted up, rapidly and without impediment, for a fresh expedition in this prohibited traffic.[412]

Palmerston directly pointed to the Spanish Navy, 'whose Commanders ought to have been instructed to detain slave-vessels, and send them to the Havana for condemnation, have actually sailed from that harbour in company with vessels fitted up for the slave-trade] expressly for the purpose of convoying such vessels on their way.' [413] The Secretary of State concluded that the Spanish cabinet had the 'evidence before them, not only that this traffic is carried on by Spanish Merchants, supported by

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[411] Henry U. Addington to Chevalier de Salmon, Madrid, 13 February 1831, *British and Foreign State Papers (1831-1832) (1834), vol. 19, pp. 478-479.* Moreno García (1984), pp. 289-290.

[412] Viscount Palmerston to Henry U. Addington, Foreign Office, 26 March 1831, *British and Foreign State Papers (1831-1832)* (1834), vol. 19, pp. 479-480.

[413] Viscount Palmerston to Henry U. Addington, Foreign Office, 26 March 1831, *British and Foreign State Papers (1831-1832)* (1834), vol. 19, pp. 479-480.

the Spanish Navy, and in the very presence of Spanish Authorities, but that it is conducted with all those aggravating circumstances of outrage and lawless violence'.[414]

In his letter, Palmerston proposed three main measures to the Spanish government and ordered his ambassador to lobby the Spanish authorities to such an end. First, to declare the slave trade piracy; second, the adoption of the equipment article; third, to create a regulation for the Spanish officials in Cuba so they observe its judicial and executive duties.[415] As Julia Moreno concludes, the Spanish government simply ignored Palmerston's proposals, and did not even give an official answer to the British ambassador's notes of August 1831 and January 1832.[416]

The British ambassador insisted at least two more times, in April and May 1832. In the latter communication, he introduced a new argument to try to convince the Spanish cabinet. Henry Addinton argued that the slave trade was not only immoral and illegal, but also increasingly dangerous for Cuba's own safety.

> I would also ask whether the Spanish Government, for the sake of a temporary, and rather apparent, than real advantage, are prepared to risk the eventual convulsion, or even loss, of their splendid Colony of Cuba, by the daily and most impolitic increase of the Negro Population; which, in the event of any foreign attack, or civil disturbance in that Island, would inevitably side with the Invaders or Insurgents, in order to overthrow all vestige of Government, and make themselves masters of the Colony.
>
> This is no ideal apprehension. The picture of the painful scenes which have lately passed in Jamaica, may well be held up to the Possessors of other Colonies, and to Spain in particular, as a warning of the danger to be apprehended from a disproportioned Negro Population, when once excited to acts of resistance, however strong and vigilant the Government, to which they are subject, may be.[417]

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[414] Viscount Palmerston to Henry U. Addington, Foreign Office, 26 March 1831, *British and Foreign State Papers (1831-1832)* (1834), vol. 19, pp. 479-480.

[415] Tratados siglo XIX, No. 64, Madrid, February 1831, AMAE. Moreno García (1984), pp. 293-294.

[416] Moreno García (1984), p. 294.

[417] Henry U. Addington, Esq. to the Count de la Alcudia. Aranjuez, 24 May 1832, *British and Foreign State Papers (1832-1833) (1836), vol. 20, pp. 192-193.*

Addington echoed in his letter an idea that was not new, but which had gradually become more widespread in Cuba. As early as 1802, Antillón had expressed that Spain should not rely on the 'dangerous and unreliable enslaved African labour' as the British and French had done.[418] In 1823, the Cuban deputy Felix Varela wrote that 'frustration and despair' would eventually force the slaves 'to choose between liberty or death', and that 'the first one to give the cry for independence [in Cuba] will have all those of African origin on his side'.[419] The British ambassador repeated this warning, which would become the cornerstone ofJoséAntonio Saco's anti-slavery doctrine in 1837. The idea of an imminent 'racial war' opened the door to racist anti-slave trade rhetoric, which will be analysed in the following chapter.

Increasingly, the only Spanish response to British pressure was to officially encourage its colonial authorities to fulfil its legal obligations. The British strategy of 'the exhibition of the whip', as later described by the British Ambassador in Madrid, kept the issue of the slave trade in the diplomatic correspondence between the two countries, but obtained no tangible results.[420]

In summer 1833, Prime Minister Francisco Cea Bermudez (1779-1850) decided to appoint a three-member commission to examine, once again, the British proposal for an equipment article, following the advice of the Secretary of State. Cea Bermudez's aim

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[418] Schmidt-Nowara (2013), p. 168.

[419] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, p. 16.

[420] Villiers to Palmerston, 8 March and 14 July 1834, Clarendon Mss., c. 451. Cited in: Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 99.

was to ease the growing diplomatic tension with Britain, on the eve of a civil war in Spain, and the commission gave him exactly that. In October 1833, days after the death of Fernando VII, the commission concluded that the end of the slave trade would cause the loss of Cuba and suggested giving to the British authorities 'a very diplomatic refusal'. As Murray has pointed out, the commission successfully recognized 'the intractable nature of the problem it was called on to solve', but more importantly, it delayed the controversy and reinforced Spain's strategy of doing nothing.[421]

In conclusion, the combination of an Anglophobic rhetoric and the introduction of the 'necessary evil' argument characterised a new anti-abolitionist strategy in the aftermath of the restoration of absolutism in 1823. The establishment of Havana's Mixed Commission Court reinforced and fuelled an already successful Anglophobic discourse, in colonial and metropolitan Spanish public opinion, that presented the continuity of the slave trade as a patriotic task against foreign interference. Simultaneously, together with a gradual disappearance from official rhetoric of any moral defence of the slave trade, the idea of the traffic as a 'necessary evil' in order to preserve Cuba's economic and political stability became a central piece of this new pro-slave trade discourse.

3. From 'A Very Diplomatic Refusal' to the Treaty of 1835

In the aftermath of the death of Fernando VII, the Spanish authorities continued to block any effective enforcement of the anti-slave trade treaty of 1817 and the subsequent

[421] Report of the Commission, 26 October 1833, Estado, leg. 8015, AHN. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 98.

legislation that had been approved by the absolutist administration.[422] The common belief among metropolitan and colonial authorities that the preservation of the slave trade was indispensable for the preservation of a Spanish Cuba brought together an effective response to the British political and diplomatic pressure, and deferred any real commitment on the Spanish side to effectively end the trade. The strategy of successive Spanish governments was put under major pressure in 1833, when important international and domestic factors forced the cabinet led by Martínez Rosa to concede, at least on paper, some of the demands that the British authorities had been advocating for a long time. The Anglo-French Convention of 22 March, the abolition of slavery by the British Parliament on 28 August, the outbreak of a civil war in Spain, and a widespread cholera epidemic in Cuba, crucially impacted the debate on the eradication of the slave trade in Spain's empire. [423]

The Revolution of July 1830 in France saw the ascension of Louis-Philippe I to the French throne and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. As part of a wider colonial reform policy, the new regime advocated the eradication of the slave trade and to gradually proceed toward the abolition of slavery in its colonies. In this regard, in March 1831, the French government introduced a more restrictive law against the slave trade and by the Anglo-French agreements of November 1831 and March 1833, France acceded to a mutual right of visit to those vessels suspected to be involved in the slave trade. British diplomatic success 'achieved […] what it has been pursuing since 1815', advanced its strategy of creating 'a collective statement of agreement on the immorality

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[422] Royal Orders of 28 November 1824; 2 January 1826; 30 June 1828; 4 March 1830; and, 2 August 1830.

[423] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 100-101.

of slaving', as Jenny Martinez described it, and contributed to presenting Spain as a rare anomaly among the 'civilized world'.[424]

Also in 1833, the British Parliament passed a law enforcing the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire.[425] This was the result of a long process that started in 1807 with the abolition of the slave trade and a complex political and social struggle led by key figures such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Fowell Buxton. The British Parliament decreed a gradual process of emancipation called 'apprenticeship' that lasted until 1838 and established an unprecedented economic compensation for slave owners.[426] From this time forward, British authorities not only continued to encourage other countries to abolish and eradicate the slave trade, but also slavery itself. Following the social agitation that accompanied the process of abolition of slavery in the British Empire, the British government strengthened its diplomatic pressure on Spain and a gradual process of distancing 'between the anti-slavery activists and the anti-slavery state' started to emerge.[427] From 1833 to 1844, 'the successive British governments were anxiously desirous to see the slave trade put down and the condition of slavery abolished in every part of the world', as Palmerston put it, to the point of gradually

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[424] Moreno García (1984), p. 318. Martinez (2012), pp. 37, 168.

[425] With the exceptions 'of the Territories in the Possession of the East India Company', the 'Island of Ceylon' and 'the Island of Saint Helena' (these exceptions were eliminated in 1843).

[426] Drescher (1987); Christopher L. Brown, *Moral capital: Foundations of British abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press,, 1966); Eltis (1987); Robin Blackburn, *The American crucible : slavery, emancipation and human rights* (London, New York: Verso, 2011).

[427] Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2012), p. 70.

distancing themselves from the traditional pacifist approach of the British abolitionist movement.[428]

In Spain, Fernando VII died in September 1833, aged 48, opening a succession crisis between his brother Carlos María Isidro and his daughter Isabel of Bourbon (born in 1830 and who would become Isabel II) that shortly turned into a civil war. Carlos María Isidro, who stood for the return of absolutism, had strong support from the rural and lower Catholic clergy, conservative sectors of the Spanish elites and vast sections of the rural population. On the other hand, Doña Isabel and her mother, María Cristina of Bourbon-Two Sicilies (1806-1878), who acted as Regent due to Isabel's age minority, defended the establishment of a moderate monarchy, and attracted the support of urban and economic elites as well as that of the liberal politicians and intellectuals.[429]

Each faction gathered significantly different international support. On the one side, Carlos María Isidro was supported by Russia, Prussia, Austria and the Portuguese Miguelists. On the other hand, Isabel of Bourbon relied on the help of Britain and France. It is because of the international impact of the conflict that this civil war was significant for the development of anti-slave trade policies in Spain. The alliance between Britain and the Spanish liberal government would enhance the influence that London's cabinet had in Madrid and reinforced its demands for more, and more effective, Spanish

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[428] Huzzey (2012), p. 65.

[429] Ana Guerrero Latorre, Sisinio Pérez Garzón, and Germán Rueda Hernanz, *Historia política* (Madrid: Istmo, 2013), pp. 185-191.

legislation and commitment against the slave trade. The war lasted until 1839, when the liberal army eventfully defeated the remaining forces loyal to Carlos María Isidro.[430]

Also in 1833, a cholera epidemic caused the death of thousands of inhabitants of Cuba, mainly slaves, and fuelled a sudden increase in the slave trade as a consequence of the growing demand to replace the victims of the pandemic disease.[431] As Kenneth Kiple rightly argued, the cholera epidemic that 'continued to flow into Havana until 1836', had important political consequences too. Mariano Ricafort Palacín y Abarca (1776–1846), Cuba's Captain General, exaggerated the number of slaves who had died, and reported in August 1833, that 55,000 had lost their lives as a direct consequence of the epidemic. According to Adrian López Denis, around 25,000 slaves (9% of the 1825 slave population) died from cholera during this period and, as Kiple and Franklin Knight have argued, the number was overstated 'to claim that most of the *emancipados* had died, whereupon they were 'hurried away into the interior' and re-enslaved'.[432] Cuban slave

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[430] Mark Lawrence, *Spain's First Carlist War, 1833-40* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[431] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 100-101.

[432] Kiple suggested that around 22,000 slaves died from cholera during the period 1833-1836. In a more recent work, Adrián López Denis has reinterpreted Kiple's data and clarified that, although the figure provided by Ricafort was undoubtedly exaggerated, the number of deaths was closer to 25,000 slaves. Kenneth F. Kiple, 'Cholera and Race in the Caribbean', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 17-1 (1985), 157-177 pp. 159-161); Franklin W. Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba During the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), pp. 34-35, 54-55; Adrián López Denis, 'Disease and society in colonial Cuba, 1790-1840', (UCLA, 2007). On the political and ideological response in Cuba to the cholera epidemic of 1833, see also: J. Selene Zander, 'Contagious Invasions: The 1833 Cholera Epidemic in Havana', *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, 49-1 (2005), 3-23.

owners 'hoped with news of massive slave mortality from cholera to tip Madrid on to their side', and hold back British pressure to stop the slave trade. [433]

All these factors co-determined a new political scenario, both domestically and internationally, which drastically impacted the negotiation of the anti-slavery treaty of 1835 and opened a new chapter in the development of abolitionist policies and anti-abolitionist ideas in Spain's empire until the 1860s.

3.1. The Abolitionist Treaty of 1835

After the decision of Cea Bermudez's appointed commission to suggest 'a very diplomatic refusal' of the British proposals in 1833, the Spanish government was determined to keep holding back British demands for additional legislation against the slave trade. In March 1834, George Villiers (1800-1870), recently appointed British ambassador in Madrid, bitterly complained to Palmerston about the Spanish attitude but the Foreign Secretary insisted on the importance of maintaining strong pressure in this regard.[434] David Murray has very positively described Palmerston's attitude during this process, and stressed his endurance and persistence.[435] However, if we look at the outcomes of the diplomatic campaign that started in 1823, the result was very frustrating for the British government and a relative success for the Spanish authorities, who managed to play their cards very effectively. As Villiers put it, British 'serious sacrifices'

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[433] Kiple (1985), pp. 159-161; Knight (1970), pp. 34-35, 54-55.

[434] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 99.

[435] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 96-99.

against the 'infamous traffic' were 'without the sincere co-operation of Spain, […] even worse than useless'.[436] Over twelve years after abolition, the slave trade to the Spanish colonies was profitable and vibrant as never before.

In the aftermath of the death of Fernando VII and the outbreak of a civil war in Spain, the Government of Francisco de Paula Martínez de la Rosa (1787-1862) managed to keep control of Madrid and was recognised as legitimate by Britain and France. The Spanish cabinet desperately needed the military and economic support of its international allies to win the war against the supporters of Carlos María Isidro. In this new context, the Spanish government could no longer ignore British demands for an equipment article. In July 1834, Villiers informed Palmerston that the Spanish government would eventually sign the equipment article, but stressed that it would be a mistake to assume that 'Spain is sincere in wishing to put down the slave trade'.[437] The negotiation, however, faced the direct opposition of Cuban elites and the hesitations of Martínez de la Rosa himself, who had to deal with a very complex balancing act. On the one hand he needed to secure British military support against the Carlistas, and, on the other, he needed to maintain Cuba's stability. Villiers toughened his language and, in April 1835, threatened the Spanish government with 'those measures that the public opinion would force the British

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[436] Villiers to Zea Bermudez, 31 December 1833. *British and Foreign State Papers (1834-1835)*, (London: James Ridgway and Sons, 1852) vol. 23, p. 56.

[437] Villiers to Palmerston, 18 July 1834. Cited in Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 99.

government to adopt as a consequence of the infraction by the Spanish authorities of a solemn agreement' if Spain did not show a real commitment to negotiate a new treaty.[438]

Finally, the negotiations started on 28 June 1835 and concluded with the signature of a new bilateral international agreement. The Spanish government, even during these negotiations, defined a strategy to distance itself from the content of the treaty and portrayed it as part of the war effort. The government hoped that, in this way, 'the people and settlers in Havana, who will be displeased by these stipulations' will understand 'that Spain has been requested [to accept these conditions...] in a critical moment, and will see the need to comply'.[439]

The treaty of 1835 was more comprehensive and politically ambitious than that of 1817. The agreement proclaimed that the slave trade was 'totally and finally abolished in all parts of the word' (art. 1).[440] The treaty included the demand of the British government for an equipment article, establishing the 'seizure and condemnation of vessels carrying specific equipment for the slave trade, even though slaves were not on board at the time of the capture' (art. 10).[441] It also ruled that Spain should approve, within two months, legal penalties against the slave trade (art. 2) and established the reciprocal right of visit

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[438] Villiers to Martínez de la Rosa, 14 April 1835, Tratados del siglo XIX, No. 64, AMAE. Moreno García (1984), p. 379.

[439] Proyecto de Tratado, 1 April 1825, Tratados del siglo XIX, No. 64, AMAE. Moreno García (1984), p. 386.

[440] Treaty between His Majesty and the Queen Regent of Spain, during the Minority of her Daughter, Donna Isabella the Second of Spain, for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. 28 June 1835. British and Foreign State Papers (1834-1835) (1852), vol. 23, p. 344.

[441] Treaty between His Majesty and the Queen Regent of Spain, during the Minority of her Daughter, Donna Isabella the Second of Spain, for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. 28 June 1835. British and Foreign State Papers (1834-1835) (1852), vol. 23, pp. 351-353. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 100.

by war vessels of suspected ships (art. 4).[442] The agreement also included a new regulation for the Mixed Commissions Courts and for 'the good treatment' of the *emancipados* (freed-slaves).[443]

In conclusion, the treaty of 1835 introduced new legal instruments to effectively fight against the slave trade and eventually eradicate it. The critical economic, political and social situation Spain was going through at the time largely explains this British diplomatic success. As had occurred in 1817, the Spanish government agreed to sign a treaty it had no intention to enforce. The British authorities were aware of this, but hoped that its military superiority and diplomatic capacity would be enough to eradicate the trade even without the active collaboration of the Spanish authorities. However, the Spanish cabinet had different plans, and even before the negotiations on the new treaty had begun, the appointment in June 1834 of Miguel Tacón as the Captain General of Cuba showed the unfailing support of Spain to the continuity and protection of the slave traffic. His appointment was a message of reassurance to the colonial and metropolitan elites involved in the slave trade that the commerce would continue as usual.[444]

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[442] Treaty between His Majesty and the Queen Regent of Spain, during the Minority of her Daughter, Donna Isabella the Second of Spain, for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. 28 June 1835. British and Foreign State Papers (1834-1835) (1852), vol. 23, pp. 344; 345-347. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 100. The Penal Law was only passed after ten years, in 1845.

[443] Treaty between His Majesty and the Queen Regent of Spain, during the Minority of her Daughter, Donna Isabella the Second of Spain, for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. 28 June 1835. British and Foreign State Papers (1834-1835) (1852), vol. 23, p. 355.

[444] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 106-107; Quiroz (2003), p. 484; Juan Pérez de la Riva, 'Introducción: el general don Miguel Tacón y su época', in *Correspondencia reservada del Capitan General don Miguel Tacon con el gobierno de Madrid, 1834-1836,* (Havana: Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, 1964), (p. 44).

The news about the new anti-slave trade treaty had a double effect in Cuba. On the one hand, some expeditions were cancelled and insurance companies showed hesitation in protecting the voyage of slave traders, accepting only to cover the return from Africa.[445] On the other hand, the idea that perhaps the slave trade was effectively going to be stopped this time, caused a drastic rise in the number of slaves introduced in 1835 (24,959) and 1836 (23,414). The abolition of slavery in the British colonies of Jamaica and Barbados, the rise in the price of sugar and the cholera epidemic of 1833 all fostered unprecedentedly high numbers since the delegalization of the slave trade in the Spanish dominions.[446]

Although the equipment article became an effective legal instrument for the British African Squadron to capture more slave trade vessels, the Treaty of 1835 soon proved to be fundamentally ineffective in stopping the slave trade into Cuba. Three main reasons explained this situation: (1) the support and involvement of the Spanish authorities in the slave trade; (2) the capacity of the slave trades to quickly adapt to the new legal framework and find loopholes in the new legislation; and (3) the failure of the British authorities and anti-slavery activists in successfully challenging the pro-slave trade consensus in Cuban public opinion.

Regarding the first factor, the appointment of Miguel Tacón as Captain General of Cuba, months before the signing of the new treaty, reflected the support and promotion of the slave trade by the Spanish government. He was close to Martínez de la Rosa's

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[445] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 102; Martinez (2012), pp. 83-84.

[446] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 100-102. TASTD <http://www.slavevoyages.org/> [Accessed: 15/08/2016]

administration and part of the new liberal elite that was supporting María Cristina's Regency against Carlos María Isidro. However, his political behavior in Cuba very soon became authoritarian, corrupt and conservative. Tacón strongly believed, as David Murray has shown, that the main reason for the Spanish Empire's collapse was due to having 'conceded political rights to her colonists which made them equal to Spaniards living in the peninsula', allowing them to get organized and revolt against Spanish rule.[447]

From the beginning of his mandate in Havana, Tacón aligned himself with the planter elite by defending their economic interests and, simultaneously, promoting the consistent repression of any kind of political dissent. Tacón defended the exclusion of colonial deputies from the new Parliament opened in Madrid in 1836 and opposed the acknowledgement of new political and civil rights, like freedom of press, established by the new regime to be applied to Cuba. Tacón, with the support of the Spanish crown and government, firmly supported the continuity of the slave trade and embraced a very strong imperialist and Anglophobic discourse to present abolitionist pressures as foreign aggressions or the outcome of imperial rivalries. According to the Cuban historian Juan Pérez de la Riva, the new Captain General was accused of receiving bribery payments for each slave illegally introduced into Cuba up to a total of 450,000 pesos. Tacón also relied on the money and political support provided by prominent slave traders such as Joaquín Gómez and Julián de Zulueta and slave trade investors like Francisco Marti y Torrens.[448] As Alfonso W. Quiroz pointed out, although this type of corruption 'did not cause loss of official revenues' since this was an illegal trade, the entry 'of slaves to

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[447] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 107.

[448] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 106-107; Quiroz (2003), p. 484; Riva (1964), p. 44.

Cuba, oiled by the bribing of authorities, caused social and human harm for the personal gain of a few, and it placed Spain's diplomatic prestige and foreign credit at stake' and, furthermore, it normalised and gave official sanction to an inhuman practice.[449] In 1844, Tacón openly recognised in a private latter his support, as Captain General, for the slave trade in the aftermath of the signature of the treaty of 1835:

> Being the general opinion positive about the importation of Africans, and a result of the big earnings that the traffic produced, […] no slave trade vessels were ever captured by the Spanish Navy and every time that the British commissioners denounced to the Captaincy General that any of these had arrived to the ports after disembarking the negroes […] instructions were given to build a case in favour of those that had been accused.[450]

The second reason for the ineffectiveness of the Treaty of 1835 was the capacity of the slave traders to quickly adapt to the new legal framework. The inexistence of equivalent agreements between Britain and Portugal and the United States with respect to the right of visit, opened a loophole that the Spanish slavers consistently used after 1835.[451] By sailing under the colours of the Portuguese, American, Austrian, French or Russian flag,

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[449] Quiroz (2003), p. 481.

[450] Miguel Tacón to [unknown], Barcelona, 27 June 1844, Estado, leg. 8035, AHN. Reference and original transcription provided by Prof Manuel Barcia.

[451] This practice continued until 1839, when the British Parliament passed the legislation known as Palmerston's Act which authorised British war vessels to capture all Portuguese ships suspected of being slavers and to try them at the British Vice-Admiralty courts. The use of the American flag to avoid the Treaty of 1835 ceased in 1842 with the signature of a bilateral agreement between Britain and the USA which ruled that a U.S. naval squadron would be based at the west coast of Africa to seize suspected slavers flying the American flag. Bethell (1970); João Pedro Marques, *The Sounds of Silence. Nineteenth-Century Portugal and the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006); Don Fehrenbacher, *The slaveholding republic: an account of the United States government's relations to slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 135-204; John A. E. Harris, 'Circuits of wealth, circuits of sorrow: financing the illegal transatlantic slave trade in the age of suppression, 1850-66', *Journal of Global History*, 11 (2016), 409-429 (p. 410).

among others, Spanish slave trade vessels avoided being inspected by the British Navy. According to British commissioners' annual reports, between 1835 and 1840, 42% of the suspected slave trade vessels leaving the port of Havana were Spanish, 40% were Portuguese, and 18% were American.[452] This practice was protected by the Portuguese, American and French diplomatic authorities in Havana. The appointment in the spring of 1837 of José Fernández, 'a notorious slave dealer' as Palmerston put in, as Portuguese consul in Havana proves the support for this illegal traffic and the power of the slave trade lobby in Lisbon's administration.[453] British Commissioners also denounced the collusion of Nicholas Trist (1800-1874), U.S. consul in Havana, with the Cuban slave traders. The U.S. government ordered an investigation and concluded that it was 'a matter of public notoriety' that the U.S. flag had been consistently used to avoid the Treaty of 1835 and imputed Trist as a facilitator of this fraud. The U.S. consul was dismissed from his post in Havana but never faced prosecution.[454] Likewise, in 1840 Gaspard Théodore Mollien (1796-1872), French consul in Havana between 1831 and 1848, was accused by the British abolitionist activist David Turnbull (1793-1851), of protecting a French slave trade vessel, which 're-entered the port, after landing no less than 500 negroes on the shores of the Island'.[455] Moreover, the involvement of British

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[452] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 104.

[453] Palmerston to Walden, 6 May 1837, *Accounts and Papers 1837-38,* vol. L, p. 39.

[454] Nicholas Trist accused the British authorities of blatant hypocrisy and argued that 'British struggle against Cuban slave trade was aimed at favouring Brazilian cotton production (which has British capital) to the detriment of its U.S. counterparts'; as Leonardo Marqués has shown, Trist's accusations 'that the British were as immersed in the slave trade as the Americans definitely had some truth to it'. Marques (2016), pp. 132-136; Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 106.

[455] David Turnbull, *Travels in the West, Cuba: with notices of Porto Rico and the Slave Trade* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1840), pp. 442-443.

subjects and capital in the slave trade continued long after 1833. This also arguably included British authorities, like Charles David Tolmé (1792-1865), British consul in Havana from 1833 to 1844, who was accused by James Kennedy, British Commissioner between 1837 and 1851, of 'being too entwined with slave trading interests'.[456] As David Eltis has pointed out, 'as long as the slave trade existed anywhere and as long as the British remained dedicated to the goals of laissez faire and civilizing the world through trade, it was impossible to prevent British involvement'.[457]

Together with the use of foreign flags, the collusion of foreign authorities and the support of international investors, Spanish slave traders also developed new strategies to avoid prosecution under the new legislation.[458] The British commissioners in Havana reported to London that in the years that followed the signature of the new treaty, Spanish traders established new factories in the west coast of Africa to facilitate the boarding and more reliable capture of slaves, started to use smaller and faster vessels, and organized the expeditions in groups of three or more ships so they could reduce the risk of being captured.[459] As Barcia and Kesidou have convincingly argued, Cuban slave traders were able to 'develop new skills and capabilities' by 'fostering an extensive and personalised network of agents', reducing 'their risks through diversification' and introducing

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[456] Martinez (2012), p. 106; Eltis (1987), p. 83.

[457] Eltis (1987), p. 83.

[458] Manuel Barcia and Effie Kesidou, 'Innovation and entrepreneurship as strategies for success among Cuban-based firms in the late years of the transatlantic slave trade', *Business History*, 60:4 (2017), 542-561 (p. 546); Harris (2016).

[459] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 103; Eltis (1987), pp. 142-143. Soon after, in October 1836, the British consul in Havana Charles Tolmé already predicted the new strategies that the slave traders would use to avoid the new legislation. Tolmé to Palmerston, 15 October 1836, FO 84/201, TNA.

'technological innovations into their business operations', all despite 'constant British surveillance'.[460]

David Murray pointed out that 'neither British diplomats nor British abolitionists had so far succeeded in eliminating the slave trade to Cuba' and that 'the main reason of course was Spain's refusal to co-operate'.[461] However, what Eltis has described as the 'self-congratulatory tone of the British authorities' also had the effect of undermining Britain's humanitarian stance, contributed to legitimizing Anglophobic rhetoric and, ultimately, consolidated a pro-slave trade consensus in Cuban public opinion.[462] British 'moral superiority', which gradually hardened into arrogance, was 'not likely to induce cooperation', and therefore Murray's disclaimer of British responsibility should be critically revised.[463]

Richard Huzzey has rightly stressed that it would be wrong to simply assume that Britain's 'humanitarian intentions' were simply false and that 'formal legal imperialism' was the tool that the successive British governments used 'to spread anti-slave trade laws around the globe'.[464] It is important, however, to also factor in the negative impact

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[460] Barcia and Kesidou (2017), pp. 554-555.

[461] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 112.

[462] Eltis (1987), pp. 84-85.

[463] Eltis (1987), pp. 84-85.

[464] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 112; Huzzey (2012), p. 64.

of Britain's 'whip strategy' in polarising the debate and consolidating anti-abolitionist and Anglophobic discourses in Spain and Cuba.[465]

British authorities were absolutely confident that they could put an end to the slave trade without the support of any government, its political and intellectual leaders or its public opinion. In 1831, Commodore John Hayes asked for permission to 'capture every vessel carrying slaves or fitted for the carrying of slaves without any regard to country or flag and I will answer with my commission that in three years there shall be no slave vessels to be found on this Coast'.[466] In a similar vein, Edward Villiers, brother of the British ambassador in Madrid, published in 1836 an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, following instructions from his brother, in which he highlighted the importance of the recently-signed treaty because 'it does not depend for its fulfilment upon Spanish co-operation. All is left to the regulations of the British Government, and the activity of British cruisers'.[467]

Hayes and Villiers' sense of imperial superiority made them believe that they could achieve the end of the slave trade without the involvement or the support of other incumbent political actors, and in so doing they further reinforced Anglophobic and anti-abolitionist discourse. Pro-slave trade sectors of Spanish public opinion depicted these ideas as foreign aggressions and linked the protection of, and even involvement in, the slave trade, to an idea of Spanish patriotism and national pride. The British 'whip

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[465] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 99.

[466] Commodore Hayes to Admiralty, 20 January 1831. Cited in: Eltis (1987), pp. 84-85.

[467] [Edward Villiers], 'Correspondence Relating to the slave trade; New Treaty with Spain', *Edinburgh Review*, 128, July 1836, p. 393. Cited in Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 99.

strategy' undoubtedly contributed to the continuity of the slave trade in the Spanish Empire.

4. Conclusions

This chapter has shown the discontinuities and fractures in the construction and development of abolitionist and anti-abolitionist ideas in Spain in the last decade of Fernando VII´s reign. The complexity of these process proves the ineffectiveness of adopting an evolutionary approach and stresses the need for a comprehensive understanding of all the actors involved. After 1823, the liberal thinkers and political leaders exiled in London who had openly defended the abolition of the slave trade changed their attitude. The anti-slave trade agenda was only advanced by the British authorities in Spain, who time and again demanded a true commitment to put an end to the flourishing slave trade to Cuba from the Spanish government. In this context, two ideas became central in the construction of anti-abolitionist discourses: the 'necessary evil discourse' and a sense of victimhood that justified an 'Anglophobic rhetoric'. The deep political changes that started in 1833, with the death of the monarch and the ensuing civil war, facilitated the signature of the anti-slave trade treaty of 1835. However, the support of the Spanish authorities for the continuity of the slave trade, the capacity of the slave traders to quickly adapt to the new legal framework, and Britain's failed 'whip strategy', consolidated and even strengthened the trade of enslaved Africans into the Spanish colonies.

Chapter 4. The Not So Loud 'Anti-Slave Trade Clamour' of the 1840s

This chapter explores the construction of abolitionist discourse in the aftermath of the proclamation of the Constitution of 1837 and aims to challenge the historiographical notion of a public 'anti-slave trade clamour' in the second half of the 1840s. It will argue that the period did not witness a structural change in Cuban elite opinion, but rather a temporary reaction linked to the social commotion caused by the the British government's actions against the Brazilian slave trade and the conspiracy of *La Escalera*.[468] Anti-abolitionist discourse continued to operate successfully during this period and the 'abrasive' diplomatic strategy put in place by the British authorities against the slave trade, made a crucial contribution to justifying these positions in both Cuba and Spain.[469]

In a context of gradual militarisation and restriction of civil rights in the Spanish colonies, a new anti-slave trade discourse, articulated by key Cuban intellectuals, emerged as a political response to Spain's inaction. José Antonio Saco publicly advocated the eradication of the slave trade in Cuba as a necessary first step to 'whitening' the Island, promoting its economy and advancing political rights for its white population. Saco's racist anti-slave trade ideas were to become the most successful abolitionist discourse to operate in Cuba during the 1840s.

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[468] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 193; María del Carmen Barcia, 'La abolición de la trata negrera en Cuba', in *IV Encuentro de Historiadores Latinoamericanos y del Caribe,* (Havana: Universidad de la Havana, 1983), pp. 15-16); Moreno García (1984), p. 452.

[469] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 141.

1. Cubans 'Stand atop A Volcano'. Exclusion and Slavery at the Cortes of 1836.

After the death of Fernando VII in 1833, his wife María Cristina became queen regent on behalf of their daughter Isabel with the support of reformist sectors of the court. In 1834, Francisco Martínez de la Rosa, who had been in exile in France since 1823, was appointed Prime Minister with the support of the Conservative and Moderate liberals. Under his presidency, the Regent sanctioned the *Estatuto Real* of 1834; a *charte octroyée* inspired by the French one proclaimed in 1814. The *Estatuto* was strongly contested by radical and progressive liberals who, in 1836, after the military uprising known as the 'Motín de la Granja', proclaimed the restoration of the 1812 Constitution of Cadiz. The difficulties in implementing it led the new Prime Minister, José María de Calatrava, to call for the formation of a Constituent Cortes to write a new constitution with the consensus of conservative and progressive parties.

The resulting Constitution of 1837 re-established a representative monarchy in Spain, but determined that Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines would be ruled by special laws, restricting the access of colonial subjects to civil rights proclaimed in the new constitution and withdrawing its political representation in the Cortes. The colonial territories would be ruled directly from Madrid, and their tax revenues would remain under the opaque control of the central *Hacienda*.[470]

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[470] Fradera (1999); Fradera (2005), p. 163; Fradera (2013); Josep M. Fradera, *La nación imperial (1750-1918). Derechos, representación y ciudadanía en los imperios de Gran Bretaña, Francia, España y Estados Unidos* (Barcelona: Edhasa, 2015); Alvarado (1998); José Antonio Piqueras, 'El gobierno de la población heterogénea en la segunda esclavitud', in *Orden político y gobierno de esclavos,* ed. by José Antonio Piqueras (Valencia: Centro Francisco Tomás y Valiente UNED Alzira-Valencia and Fundación Instituto de Historia Social, 2016), pp. 17-52.

In the aftermath of the severe territorial contraction of the Spanish Empire, the new constitution aimed to preserve the last remaining overseas dominions. The fear of pro-independence ideas being disseminated if political liberties were granted, combined with the demographic 'heterogeneity' of these colonies, justified, in the eyes of the peninsular deputies, the need for 'special treatment' by the government. The debate on this point took place between 7 and 11 March 1837 and brought the opinions of several deputies led by Vicente Sancho (1784-1860) and Agustín de Argüelles, on one side, and Domingo María Vila, on the other, into conflict.

As Josep M. Fradera has argued, the debate on the exclusion of the colonies from the constitutional provisions was based upon historical justifications, fiscal and tax control, and a renewed emphasis on the 'singularities' of the colonial territories.[471] The strategic importance of slavery in Cuba's economy and the fact that the slaves and free black population represented a majority of its total population (with possible electoral consequences), as José A. Piqueras has stressed, disinclined Cuban slave owners and planters to oppose constitutional exclusion. The report of the parliamentary commission that suggested the exclusion of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines from the constitutional provisions praised the 'carefulness' with which the absolutist governments had administered Cuba, the success of its thriving economy and concluded that it was 'not possible for a homogeneous law to rule upon such heterogeneous elements'.[472] The new colonial regime would have the support of the Cuban elites who, in return for a

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[471] Fradera (2005).

[472] 'Dictamen de las comisiones reunidas de Ultramar y Constitución, proponiendo que las provincias ultramarinas de América y Asía sean regidas y administradas por leyes especiales', *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 12 February 1837, pp. 1491-1493. Piqueras (2016), pp. 19-20, 23-24.

restriction of their direct representation in the metropolis, were reassured about Spain's role in protecting 'internal social order' as a 'necessary accomplice' in the protection of the illegal slave trade.[473] As Piqueras has concluded, this solution 'provided a nexus of strengthened colonial dependency' that was welcomed by both parties. [474]

Agustín de Argüelles argued passionately for the exclusion of the colonial deputies and the necessity of 'special laws', different from the constitutional provisions, for preserving the colonies as part of Spain's empire. As Fradera has pointed out, Argüelles' idea of 'American disloyalty' to the Constitution of 1812 characterized his parliamentary intervention.[475] He affirmed that the 'philanthropic theories' that he had advocated in 1811 had had a harmful effect in the Spanish colonies, and, therefore, he asked the deputies not to commit the same mistake again and to subordinate those maxims to the preservation of the remaining territories.[476] He argued that those 'special laws' would protect the prosperity of the colonies, and the security of the Cuban subjects who were not fully aware of the fragility of their own safety. Argüelles also emphasized that the colonies would enjoy the liberties of the Peninsula when 'it would be compatible with the circumstances of those countries'. However, the deputy believed that in the current demographic state such freedoms were 'a dangerous germ', as Cubans 'stood atop a volcano'.[477] He further argued that

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[473] Piqueras (2016), p. 32.

[474] Piqueras (2016), p. 32.

[475] Fradera (2005), p. 157.

[476] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 10 March 1837, p. 2039.

[477] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 10 March 1837, p. 2039-2024.

> There [in Cuba] gentlemen, there is a race that believes itself irreconcilable, and that aspires to the destruction of the other inhabitants, as the only way to obtain its freedom; however, the treatment that the negroes have in the Island of Cuba is the least bad that is given in any country. [478]

Argüelles was using the same arguments that Andrés de Jáuregui and Francisco de Arango y Parreño, representing the slave traders' interests, had used in the Cortes of Cadiz in 1811. The fear of sparking a racial war, which would replicate 'the horrors' of Haiti's Revolution, and the 'mild conditions' of the Spanish slavery regime justified this 'necessary evil'.[479]

The deputy Vicente Sancho, in a similar vein, defended the exclusion of the overseas deputies and the necessity of 'special laws' to rule those provinces. For Sancho, the Constitution of 1812 committed the mistake of according the same rights to 'the Spaniards of both hemispheres' when this was simply not possible. As Fradera has shown, Sancho perfectly understood the contradiction 'between universal rights (applied to the white population) and the heterogeneity of civil and racial status that such unlimited equality could hide'.[480] Sancho argued that a Constitution was a legal instrument to provide 'freedom and equality' to men, but 'in those countries [Cuba and Puerto Rico], those words, that sound so nice to our ears, are words of extermination and death'.[481] Sancho concluded that 'if the Island of Cuba is not Spanish, it will be black, necessarily black, and everybody knows that'.[482] Sancho, as Argüelles had done before, alluded to

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[478] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 10 March 1837, p. 2042.

[479] Saco (1938 [1879]), vol. 4, pp. 85-98.

[480] Fradera (2005), p. 160.

[481] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 5 April 1837, p. 2508.

[482] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 5 April 1837, p. 2508.

the 'black fear' to justify the political repression and militarisation of Cuba that would protect 'the whites, our brothers, from the dagger of the negroes'.[483]

It is enlightening to observe how the same rhetorical figure, 'our brothers', that Argüelles had adopted in 1811 to advocate the abolition of the slave trade, was now used by Sancho as a racist attack to protect slavery and defend the need for repressive policies in Cuba.[484] As Piqueras has noted, Sancho opened the door to 'the theory of racial superiority and inferiority to Spanish parliamentary rule' and championed the notion that political freedom should be subordinated to the preservation of imperial integrity. For Sancho and Argüelles, slavery was not up for debate, and even the continuity of the slave trade, which they both avoided mentioning, was not publicly condemned anymore. Without the support of the metropolis, Cuba's white male 'effeminate and corrupted' population, as Sancho described it, would be destroyed. Any change in the colonial *status quo*, they believed, would irreversibly lead to Cuba's ruin.[485]

The deputy Domingo María Vila rejected Argüelles' and Sancho's arguments and warned the Cortes about the potential consequences of depriving the colonial population of their political and electoral rights. Vila, a member of the Progressive party, had been in exile in Great Britain after the end of the Liberal Triennium.[486] During his exile, he established a close relationship with Quaker circles and, in 1833, when the scientist and

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[483] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 5 April 1837, p. 2508; and 25 March 1837, p.2317. Piqueras (2016), pp. 33-34.On the Haitian Revolution's impact in Cuba, see: Fradera (2013), p. 146; Ferrer (2014); González-Ripoll and others (2004); Popkin (2007).

[484] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 2 April 1810, p. 812.

[485] Piqueras (2016), pp. 35-36.

[486] García Balañà (2013), p. 234.

abolitionist leader William Allen (1770-1843) visited Madrid, Vila was his first contact in the Spanish capital. As Allen himself wrote, Vila has 'just returned from England, and is acquainted with Friends [Quakers]'.[487] As García Balañà has pointed out, Vila knew the Americas well and had travelled to Rio de la Plata and Brazil as a representative of the Spanish government in 1820. The Catalan deputy highlighted the complexity of Cuba's society and the existence of a 'separationist germ' among the *criollo* elite, but declared that:

> If the Cortes close the door […] to the deputies that have been elected by the Overseas provinces, the consequences in my view will be fatal; if these doors are closed, the interpretation will be malicious, the results disastrous, and all your good faith, gentlemen, will not be enough to convince anyone of the truth of your ideas. [488]

Vila also tacked the provocative assertion advanced by those in favour of exclusion that giving electoral rights to the Cuban population would eventually result in the election of a black deputy. Vila responded to this fear that 'in vain are my efforts to arouse any repugnance in myself at the thought that a man of colour might sit at my side on these benches' and proclaimed that 'intelligence also lays under a skin less white than ours'.[489] Vila's anti-racist discourse went beyond the demands of the Cuban liberal elites and advanced the idea that a liberal constitutional regime was not only capable of ruling over a 'heterogeneous' community, but that it could also strengthen its internal cohesion. Vila's speech relied on an implicit antislavery discourse because, as Balañà has suggested, he was perfectly conscious that 'the recognition of the free black's political

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[487] García Balañà (2013), p. 236.

[488] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 10 March 1837, p. 2036-2038.

[489] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 9 March 1837, p. 2037.

rights would announce the beginning of the end of slavery'.[490] In other words, slavery was fundamentally incompatible with Vila's notion of liberal constitutionalism.

Freedom and political rights were the answer, according to Vila, to the secessionist question. Granting political rights to the *criollos, pardos*, and liberated Africans was, for Vila, the antidote to the 'supreme command' and praetorianism of Cuba's Capitan Generals. Contrary to Argüelles' and Sancho's belief, Vila considered that political repression would only exacerbate pro-independence aspirations and ultimately fail to preserve Cuba as a Spanish territory.[491] Ultimately, on 16 April 1837, 150 deputies voted in favour, and two against, that the overseas provinces should be ruled by 'special laws' and excluded from the constitutional provisions. In a different vote, 90 deputies voted for the exclusion of the colonial deputies from the Chamber, and 65 opposed it.[492]

As Piqueras has argued, the exclusion of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines from the constitutional provisions 'followed the script' defined by the new liberal regime established in 1834. The increasing militarisation of Cuba's politics and the Criollo elite's restricted access to the enjoyment of political rights had characterized the peninsular agenda since the appointment of Miguel Tacón as Captain General.[493] In the following years, Domingo de Monte and José Antonio Saco were were to become the most

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[490] García Balañà (2013), p. 235.

[491] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 9 March 1837, p. 2022.

[492] Piqueras (2016), p. 38.

[493] On Saco's position in 1837 see: Fradera (2005), pp. 165-170; Piqueras (2016), pp. 39-45; Navarro García (1991), pp. 28-33.

important Cuban dissident voices against Imperial power. To their mind, the eradication of the slave trade was a fundamental first step in reclaiming their political rights.

2. A Third Anti-Slave Trade Voice: Racist Abolitionism from Cuba.

Cuban intellectual José Antonio Saco, one of the elected colonial representatives excluded from the Cortes in 1837, publicly protested against this decision in his pamphlet *Examen Analítico del Informe de la Comisión Especial nombrada por las Cortes* published in Madrid that very year.[494] Saco claimed that the demographic and economic reasons given by the parliamentary commission to exclude the overseas provinces from the constitutional provisions were imprecise or erroneous. The Cuban argued against the political suppression imposed by Madrid and asserted that only a liberal government would be able to tackle the political challenges that the Island faced, especially slavery.

> At all times we are reminded [...] of the formidable example of Santo Domingo. I did not participate in that terror [...] we are intimately persuaded that a liberal government in Cuba, far from reprising the calamities of Santo Domingo, will be the best method of avoiding such a catastrophe.[495]

Saco belonged to a new generation of Cuban thinkers and writers that pursued a new spectrum of political demands, using a more outspoken and radical public discourse. Saco, Domingo del Monte, José de la Luz y Caballero (1800-1862) and Félix Tanco (1797-1871), among others, led a generation of intellectuals characterised by the

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[494] José Antonio Saco, *Examen Analítico del Informe de la Comisión Especial nombrada por las Cortes* (Madrid: Oficina de Don Tomás Jordan 1837), p. 25.

[495] José Antonio Saco, *Obras*, ed. by Eduardo Torres-Cuevas. 5 vols (Havana: Imagen Contemporánea, 2001) vol. 2, p. 196.

vindication of political liberties and civil rights for the white population in Cuba, and the articulation of a nationalist Cuban discourse, strongly influenced by Francisco de Arango y Parreño and Felix Varela.[496]

For all of them, slavery and the slave trade constituted central issues in their analysis of Cuba's political and economic situation. All of them argued for the abolition of the slave trade but only Tanco advocated the radical abolition of slavery as well. Saco defined a new racist anti-slave trade discourse that was to become the most significant contestation of the slave traffic produced in Cuba. In 1832, Saco published an article in the journal *Revista Bimestre Cubana*, in which he condemned 'the horrendous traffic in human flesh' and accused all those involved in the trade of putting their homeland at risk: 'men who pretend to be patriotic when they are no more than *patricidae*, who flood our territory with chained victims [...]; We will not stop repeating: let us save our motherland, let us save the motherland'.[497] In this article, Saco presented the central idea which inspired his abolitionist discourse: the instrumental necessity of stopping the slave trade in order to obtain political and civil rights for the white Cuban population. For Saco, the Unites States represented a successful model, in which 'liberal principles are fully developed' but 'in some states, political rights are limited to the white race'.[498]

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[496] On race and national identity in Saco's work, see: Josef Opantrny, *José Antonio Saco y la búsqueda de la identidad cubana* (Prague: Univerzita Karlova, 2010).

[497] Saco (2001), vol. 2, pp. 73-74; Eduardo Torres Cuevas and Arturo Soregui, *José Antonio Saco, acerca de la esclavitud y su historia* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1982), pp. 202-205.

[498] Saco (1837), pp. 125-126.

In another work, *Memoria sobre la Vagancia en la Isla de Cuba*, published in 1832, Saco blamed the slaves for restraining Cuba's economic prosperity as they have 'turned our white population away from the arts [... and] in such a deplorable situation, it was no longer expected that any Cuban white man would devote himself to the arts, because if he does, he seems to have renounced the privileges of his class'.[499] Embracing an orthodox liberal discourse, Saco characterized the slave trade as an uneconomic activity and argued that the eradication of the slave trade into Cuba, far from having a negative impact, would create a more competitive environment, sugar production would increase and new settlers would 'be dedicated to the branch of industry that offers the most advantage to them'.[500]

For Saco, the slave trade and the repressive policies imposed by the Spanish governments were the true enemies of Cuba, and both of them were closely intertwined. In his opinion, however, slave owners were not to be blamed, as they represented the most dynamic, prosperous and entrepreneurial group on the Island. In his work *Paralelo entre la isla de Cuba y algunas colonias inglesas,* published in 1837, Saco commented on the economic advantages of following the British example in stopping the slave trade and praised the contribution of the slave holders and planters to Cuba's economy.[501]

> I will not blame the Cuban who buys them [the slaves]. His farm requires arms and not being able to find any others to use, will he have to lose his property? Should this sacrifice be demanded of a family man? I do blame and accuse the

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[499] José Antonio Saco, *Obras*, ed. by Eduardo Torres-Cuevas. 5 vols (Havana: Imagen Contemporánea, 2001) vol. 1, p. 296.

[500] Saco (2001), vol. 2, p. 102.

[501] José Antonio Saco, *Paralelo entre la isla de Cuba y algunas colonias inglesas* (Madrid: Oficina de Don Tomás Jordán, impresor de Cámara de S. M., 1837).

> government, which being being able to extinguish the infamous African contraband, tolerates, consents and authorises it in violation of treaties, with contempt of the laws and scandalizing public and private morals.[502]

The solution for Saco, as he wrote in 1837*,* was a white re-colonisation of Cuba and the gradual substitution of black slaves for free white workers.[503] He believed that white workers were 'more intelligent' and more productive than African slaves and consistently equated the black population with 'wild animals'.[504] Saco's 'racialist and racist' ideological framework, as Piqueras described it, constitutes the cornerstone of his political discourse.

> It is true that the African, in the manner of other savages, knows how to run and jump, and also to beat his fellows and wild beasts; but when the cries of hunger cease and the fury of their passions is extinguished, then they indulge in the deepest and stupid indolence.[505]

Saco stressed two main arguments, previously put forward by Cuban and Spanish pro-slave trade elites, to defend the eradication of the slave trade and the 'whitening' of the Island. First, the Cuban thinker argued that the security of the Island was in peril and that the preservation of the white population of Cuba was balanced on a knife edge. In his work *La supresión del tráfico de esclavos africanos en la isla de cuba, examinada con relación a su agricultura y a su seguridad,* published in Paris in 1845, Saco stressed that for the first time the number of white people was smaller than that of the 'African race'

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[502] José Antonio Saco, *Obras*, ed. by Eduardo Torres-Cuevas. 5 vols (Havana: Imagen Contemporánea, 2001) vol. 3, pp. 145-146.

[503] José Antonio Saco, *Mi primera pregunta ¿La abolición del comercio de esclavos africanos arruinará o atrasará la agricultura cubana?* (Madrid: Imprenta de don Marcilino Calero, 1837).

[504] Saco (2001), vol. 2, pp. 82-83.

[505] Saco (2001), vol. 2, pp. 82-83.

and both groups were 'essentially the opposite' and 'irreconcilable enemies'.[506] Secondly, Saco stated that Britain, 'the most powerful' and 'skilful' nation, would achieve its purpose of ending the slave trade one way or another and that it was in the interest of the Cuban people to stop the slave trade by its own means.[507]

José Antonio Saco was not alone in his analysis. In a similar vein, Domingo del Monte, a Cuban liberal intellectual, defended in his work *La Isla de Cuba tal cual está*, published in New York in 1836, that the slave trade and slavery represented the most important obstacle to Cuba's economic and moral prosperity.[508] Del Monte collaborated with the British officials Richard Madden and David Turnbull in the abolitionist cause during the late 1830s and early 1840s, and in the years before had publicly denounced Captain General Miguel Tacón's praetorianism and accused him of accepting bribes from slave-traders and planters.[509]

> It is public and notorious [...] that a slave ship does not disembark on the Island its cargo of beast-men, without being charged half an ounce of gold by His Excellency [Captain General Tacón] for each slave. In this past year of 1835, those who traffic in this infernal business calculate, that 19,000 negroes have entered through the ports of this province, which is to say, His Excellency has received 9,500 ounces, or 3,830,000 *reales.*[510]

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[506] Saco (2001), vol. 2, p. 117.

[507] Saco (2001), vol. 2, p. 125.

[508] Domingo del Monte, *La Isla de Cuba tal cual está* (New York: Whittaker, 1836).

[509] Quiroz (2003).

[510] Domingo del Monte, 'La Isla de Cuba tal cual está', in *Historia de la esclavitud de la raza Africa en el Nuevo Mundo y en especial en los Paises Americo-Hispanos,* ed. by Jose Antonio Saco (Havana: Cultural S. A., 1938), pp. 269-296 (p. 281).

Del Monte, as well as Saco, compared the 'negroes' with wild animals and consistently characterized them as 'vicious, stupid and immoral' and naturally inferior.[511] In 1848, Del Monte argued in a letter written from Paris to 'J. in Havana', that Cuban problems had their origin in 'the slavery of the black race' and, consequently, he exhorted all the Cubans 'of noble and healthy patriotism' to fight to end the slave trade first, 'then to suppress slavery, without shaking or violence; and finally, to cleanse Cuba of the African race'.[512]

Another member of this generation of Cuban liberal thinkers was José de la Luz y Caballero, philosopher and scholar, who also advocated the abolition of the slave trade. He agreed with Saco that the slave trade was negative for Cuba's prosperity and supported British action to achieve its eradication. For Luz, slavery was at the root of the problems that Cuba faced at the time.[513] On 30 May 1836, Luz wrote a long letter to Saco to congratulate him on his election as Cuban deputy and invited him to fight against the Cortes' decision to exclude the colonial deputies from the chamber. In this letter, Luz endorsed Saco's anti-slave trade position and advised him to be pragmatic and to do whatever was needed to convince the Cortes to stop the slave trade in Cuba, even blaming the British:

> Appeal to your own writings, and holding them, blame the English. This is the question; ignore if [the slave trade is] good or bad, disregard justice or injustice, and focus only upon the facts: the English, the Christian world, all at once, are

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[511] Domingo del Monte, *Escritos de Domingo del Monte* (Havana: Cultural, 1929) vol. 1, p. 231.

[512] del Monte (1929), vol. 1, p. 231.

[513] He is the author of the popular aphorism: 'En la cuestión de los negros, lo menos negro es el negro'. José de la Luz y Caballero, *Aforismos* (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1960).

> committed, and are interested in, abolishing slavery: what shall we do? [514]

Saco and Del Monte's racist abolitionism contrasted with the progressive view advanced by the Cuban writer Félix Tanco. In 1837, in the context of the debates about the exclusion of the Cuban deputies from the Cortes, Tanco argued in a letter to Del Monte that slavery should be abolished in Cuba, giving the Spanish deputies no excuses to limit civil and political rights on the Island: 'Destroying then this premise [slavery] and forming a new one properly, such should be the great goal of our legislators'.[515] For Tanco, everyone seemed to repeat 'that it is a necessary evil to own men as property to produce sugar', but he believed that 'this is the sophism that must be refuted'.[516] He affirmed that Cuban elites, represented by Saco in Madrid, only pursued political power for themselves, and 'to keep things as they are: power, gambling, slaves, trade, taxes, etcetera, etcetera',[517] and concluded:

> Stop it; patriotism is an exotic plant that currently doesn't grow in this land [...] The only thing that some or all would like would be for the Creoles, and not the Spaniards, to rule; reducing the issue to the people and nothing more.[518]

The opinions and works of Saco, Del Monte, Luz and Tanco are important in the development of anti-slave trade discourse, as they represented a third way between the Spanish political class and British abolitionists. However, the attempt to identify them as spokesmen for their generation, as David Murray put it, is problematic. First of all,

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[514] José Antonio Fernández de Castro, *Medio Siglo de Historia Colonial de Cuba* (Havana: Ricardo Veloso, 1923), pp. 52-56. Castellanos and Castellanos (1988), vol. 1, pp. 273-274.

[515] Castellanos and Castellanos (1988), vol. 1, p. 280.

[516] Castellanos and Castellanos (1988), vol. 1, p. 280.

[517] Castellanos and Castellanos (1988), vol. 1, p. 281.

[518] Castellanos and Castellanos (1988), vol. 1, p. 281.

because the ideological differences between them, as has been shown, are important and the political future they wanted for Cuba also varied. Secondly, because their actual capacity to influence a wider audience in Cuba and Spain was unclear.[519] As Tanco himself argued, in Madrid Saco primarily represented the interests of slave-owners and planters who, between 1820 and 1837, had illegally introduced more than 273,500 slaves into Cuba. As Jorge and Isabel Castellanos have argued, 'many historians insist on considering Saco as the main leader of the Creole bourgeoisie of his time [... but] with regard to the suppression of the slave trade, he never was'.[520] The reality is that Saco, Del Monte, Tanco and others failed to convince important sectors of the Cuban elites of the alleged dangers of the slave trade and the benefits of stopping it. With this in mind, what has been defined as the 'anti-slave trade clamour' of the 1840s by David Murray, María del Carmen Barcia, Julia Moreno, among others, is in need of revision.[521]

This historiographical analysis stems from the faulty interpretation of two elements. Firstly, the attempt byJoséAntonio Saco to present himself as the spokesman of Cuban economic and political elites and his pretence of having a great capacity to influence Cuban public opinion. Secondly, the fact that the most important Cuban institutions, such as the Junta de Fomento, the Sociedad Patriótica, the Ayuntamiento, the Tribunal de Comercio, the Junta de Población Blanca, the Superintendencia Delegada de Hacienda and the Audiencia Pretorial, which fiercely defended the interests of planters and slave-

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[519] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 129.

[520] Castellanos and Castellanos (1988), vol. 1, p. 246.

[521] Barcia (1983); Moreno García (1984); Murray (2002 [1980]).

owners, argued in an official report, in 1840, for the need to eradicate the slave trade using some of the key arguments that Saco had expressed in the past.[522]

Saco, always in need of financial backers, dedicated his work *Mi Primera Pregunta* to 'the landowners of the Island of Cuba', but this responded more to his yearning to attract the powerful Cuban planters to his side than to the fact that he was speaking in their name at the Cortes.[523] This misrepresentation was also linked to the credibility and importance that the Spanish authorities and British officials on the Island gave to Saco and his colleagues. They believed that they were capable of convincing a wider audience of the necessity of stopping the slave trade. William Sharp Macleay (1792-1865), British Mixed Commission judge in Havana, reported in 1834 to London 'that [Captain General] Tacón dreads the effect of Saco's writings against the Slave Trade and his influence on the opinion of the rising generation'.[524] In a similar vein, David Turnbull, British Consul in Havana, reported that 'many of the most enlightened Creole landowners […] express their genuine and sincere feelings, comparable to Wilberforce or Clarkson's ones, in wishing […] the immediate, total, and irrevocable suppression of the slave trade.'[525]

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[522] Barcia (1983), pp. 15-16.

[523] In fact, during his campaign to be elected as representative for the Cuban city of Santiago, Saco was accused by slave-owners of being an abolitionist with links to the British authorities: 'sold out to the interests of the British government with regard to [the abolition of] slavery'. His friend and supporter, Juan Bautista Segarra, aiming to tackle these allegations and to attract the votes of the planters, asked rhetorically: 'when has he [Saco] ever said anything of giving freedom to the negroes?'. Castellanos and Castellanos (1988), vol. 1, p. 274.

[524] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 129.

[525] Barcia (1983), p. 11.

In this last example, Turnbull strategically overestimates the reach of Saco's thesis among Cuban elites to convince the British government and the abolitionists that all the effort put into changing Cuban public opinion was starting to bear fruit, and that his role in Havana was more important than ever before. However, there was very little ideological confluence between Saco and Wilberforce, or del Monte and Clarkson. As Murray pointed out, 'their co-operation could never be close' and 'certainly there could not be any fusion into a unified abolitionist movement combining Cuban creoles and British abolitionists.'[526] The struggle of Saco and his colleagues for the eradication of the slave trade, built upon racist rhetoric, was merely instrumental.

As María del Carmen Barcia has rightly argued, although Madden and Turnbull obtained information from Cuban intellectuals their relationships were 'superficial' and Turnbull, out of personal interest, generalized the aspirations of only a few individuals to 'the whole class'.[527] Murray pointed out that 'to talk of a Cuban abolitionist movement as such in the Island in the 1830s and 1840s would be an exaggeration' and affirmed that Saco and his colleagues were the only ones brave enough to break a 'conspiracy of silence on the slave trade'.[528]

The second misinterpretation of Saco's impact on Cuba's anti-slave trade position arises from the fact that, in 1840, some of the most important Cuban institutions tacitly accepted the need to publicly advocate the eradication of the slave trade, and adopted Saco's

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[526] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 131.

[527] Barcia (1983), p. 11. Even Wenceslao de Villaurrutia, Saco's close collaborator, considered that Turnbull's words were hard to believe and a generalization. Barcia (1983), p. 22.

[528] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 129.

thesis about the dangers of the current 'racial balance' on the Island. Murray has suggested that 'the Cuban plantocracy had been aware [in 1841] of the fragility of their slave society […and] most of the proprietors and corporations […] stressed the need to abolish the slave trade and promote European immigration'.[529]

María del Carmen Barcia has similarly pointed out that in 1844 Cuban institutions eventually accepted that ending the slave trade was 'advisable'.[530] She argues that, contrary to previous decades, between 1845 and 1848 'the slave trade declined significantly' and she accepts the description of the Cuban aristocrat José Luis Alfonso (1810-1881), who in a letter to Saco in 1844, triumphantly stated that 'now [the slave trade] it's truly ending because public opinion is killing it; José María Calvo, Wencelao de Villaurrutia, Pepe Peñalver, Fernandina and many Europeans, and even some slave traders, agree today on the need to end trafficking'.[531] Similarly, Julia Moreno has argued that in 1844 'landowners and corporations [... eventually] contemplate[d] the need to end trafficking [in slaves]', and they embraced Saco's contention that continuing the slave trade 'would compromise the nation's dignity' and pose a 'threat to the security of the Island'.[532] In a similar vein, Murray has concluded that in 1846 the 'fear of further [slave]

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[529] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 151.

[530] Barcia (1983), pp. 15-16.

[531] José L. Alfonso to José Antonio Saco, 13 March 1844. Colección de Manuscritos Alfonso, Colección Cubana, BNC. Barcia (1983), p. 16.

[532] Moreno García (1984), p. 452.

uprisings and more British intervention moved the Cuban planters to ask for effective measures to stop the slave trade'.[533]

However, both María del Carmen Barcia and Moreno omit in their analysis that the main reasons for this temporary decline after 1845 was the so-called 'conspiracy of *La Escalera*' and the repercussions of Palmerston's and Aberdeen's acts against the Brazilian slave trade, and not, or at least not mainly, the influence of Saco's anti-slave trade discourse.[534] Barcia, Murray and Moreno have all overestimated the importance and influence of those Cuban institutions and simplified the much more complex network of economic and political interests around the slave trade in Spain's empire. If their thesis was correct, after 1846, when only 432 slaves were introduced into the Island, we would expect the slave trade to stop forever or at least to decline in subsequent years. Quite the opposite occurred, with numbers of slaves gradually increasing between 1847 and

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[533] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 178.

[534] The Palmerston Act of 1839 authorised British officers and courts to capture and adjudicate upon Portuguese ships and subjects engaged in the slave trade, and therefore the Portuguese flag could no longer protect vessels involved in the slave trade south of the equator. In 1845, the Aberdeen Act authorised the British Navy to search and capture any slave trade vessels under the Brazilian flag or without any nationality. Although these laws did not directly refer to Spain, they had an important impact as many Spanish slave traders sheltered under the, genuine or fraudulent, Portuguese and Brazilian flags. Bethell (1970); Leslie Bethell, 'Britain, Portugal and the Suppression of the Brazilian Slave Trade: The Origins of Lord Palmerston's Act of 1839', *The English Historical Review*, 80-317 (1965), 761-784; Martinez (2012). On the Conspiracy of 'La Escalera' see: Paquette (1988); Manuel Barcia, 'Entre amenazas y quejas: un acercamiento al papel jugado por los diplomáticos ingleses en Cuba durante la conspiración de La Escalera, 1844', *Colonial Latin American Historical Review*, 10 (2001), 1-25; Jonathan Curry-Machado, 'How Cuba burned with the ghosts of British slavery: Race, abolition and the Escalera', *Slavery and Abolition pp.71-93*, 25-1 (2004); Manuel Barcia, 'Exorcising the Storm: Revisiting the Origins of the Repression of the Conspiracy of La Escalera in Cuba', *Colonial Latin America Historical Review*, 15-3 (2006), 311-326; Aisha K. Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba: La Escalera and the Insurgencies of 1841-1844* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

1849 and rising to at least 26,290 in 1859, the highest number ever introduced in a single year.[535]

Murray has also argued that in 1844, the Spanish authorities could no longer ignore 'what had become a public clamour to stop the importation of African slaves'.[536] There are, however, multiple examples that reveal how problematic this notion of an 'anti-slave trade clamour' is, and the importance of adopting a more comprehensive approach. One example is the pro-slave trade position maintained in 1844 by Joaquín Gómez (1776-1860), one of the richest slave traders and slave-owners in Havana —and the entire Atlantic World— from the 1830s. He was the owner of the plantations Santa Teresa, San Ignacio and Neptuno, as well as other smaller properties around the Island.[537] He was a close adviser to most of the Captain Generals during the 1830s and 1840s, and his opinions were crucial in defining economic and social policies in Cuba. In 1844, as a member of the Commission which drafted the Penal Law for the repression of the slave trade of 1845, Gómez stated that Saco's project for the substitution of slaves for free

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[535] TASTD <http://www.slavevoyages.org/> [Accessed: 07/12/2015]. During the late 1840s, slave prices also significantly increased as a result of several factors: increasing demand; repeal of British sugar duties; uncertainty about the future of the slave trade; an increase in international sugar prices leading to increased production; and inequality in mechanization between agricultural and industrial phases of sugar production. Curry-Machado (2004); Laird W. Bergad, 'Slave Prices in Cuba, 1840-1875', in *Caribbean slavery in the Atlantic world: A student reader,* ed. by Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles (Oxford: Currey, 2000), pp. 527-242; Laird W. Bergad, Fé Iglesias, and María del Carmen Barcia, *The Cuban Slave Market (1790-1880)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[536] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 193.

[537] Joaquín F. Quintana, *La Saga de los Quintana* (Santander: Univeridad de Cantabria, 2007).

white workers would have negative consequences.[538] In a similar vein, the Spanish official Vicente Vázquez Queipo, who had been in charge of Havana's *Fiscalía de Hacienda* (Public Prosecutor of the Treasury's Office) in 1839-1842 and 1844-1846, drafted a pro-slave trade report in December 1844 rejecting Saco's ideas and denying that 'there were reasons to fear for the tranquillity of the Island'.[539]

Taking a similar line, Captain General Leopoldo O'Donnell (1809-1867) stated that the anti-slave trade comments made by some landowners were not reliable and were the result of 'the fear that England will [...] cause further damage to the export of colonial fruits or stir turbulence in the country'.[540] He argued that:

> If the majority of the owners and landowners of this country are required to express their opinion and in writing, or in meetings, or in any other legal manner, certainly they will oppose the introduction and increase of slavery; but if you observe individually and particularly the conduct of each and every one of these same men, they are the ones who encourage [slave] trafficking, because not a single one of them has stopped buying, either directly, or through intermediaries, the negroes who have been introduced in an illegal and clandestine way.[541]

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[538] Julia Moreno García, 'Actitudes de los nacionalistas cubanos ante la Ley Penal de abolición y represión del tráfico de esclavos (1845)', in *Esclavitud y derechos humanos. La lucha por la libertad del negro en el siglo XIX,* ed. by Francisco de Solano and Agustín Guimerá (Madrid: CSIC, 1990), pp. 478-498 (p. 493).

[539] Vicente Vázquez Queipo, *Informe fiscal sobre fomento de la población blanca en la isla de Cuba y emancipación progresiva de la esclava [...], presentado a la superintendencia general delegada de Real Hacienda en diciembre de 1844, por el fiscal de la misma.* (Madrid: Imp. de J. Martín Alegría, 1845), pp. 188-189; Inés Roldán de Montaud, 'La carrera de un alto funcionario moderado en Cuba: Vicente Vázquez Queipo (1804-1893)', in *L'État dans ses colonies. Les administrateurs de l'empire espagnol au XIXe siècle,* ed. by Jean -Philippe Luis (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2015).<http://books.openedition.org/cvz/1196> [Accessed: 27/04/2018].

[540] 10 August 1844. Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2911, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 532-533.

[541] 10 August 1844. Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2911, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 532-533.

O'Donnell openly concluded that 'the absolute prohibition of introducing slaves is contrary to prosperity' and would produce 'years of decline and the erosion of trade, with direct damage to the country and the interests of the metropolis'.[542]

Neither Gómez nor O'Donnell were isolated in their views. As Fradera has shown when analysing the initiatives of the anti-abolitionist lobby in Catalonia in the 1840s, they must be identified as 'one more piece' of a much wider 'colonial project […] that integrated at the same time the interests of the big and medium landowners in the Antilles and the complex trade, shipping and financial lobby, that were born and organised around the colonial nexus'.[543]

In conclusion, what Barcia, Moreno and Murray have perceived as a structural change in the opinion of Cuban elites regarding the slave trade, can in fact be seen as a temporary reaction linked to the social commotion caused by the conspiracy of '*La Escalera*' in 1844 and the British government's actions against the Brazilian and Portuguese slave trade during the 1840s. Saco's racist anti-slave trade public discourse had a very significant impact upon Cuban public opinion in the 1830s and 1840s. However, it has been shown that it is unlikely that those ideas amounted to 'a clamour', or that they reflected a political consensus among Cuba's elites, whereas it is crucial to acknowledge the continuity of a powerful pro-slave trade discourse until the late 1860s.

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[542] Saiz Pastor (1990), p. 85.

[543] Josep M. Fradera, 'Limitaciones históricas del abolicionismo catalán', in *Esclavitud y derechos humanos. La lucha por la libertad del negro en el siglo XIX,* ed. by Francisco de Solano and Agustín Guimerá (Madrid: CSIC, 1990), pp. 125-133 (p. 131).

3. Madden, Turnbull, and a New Abolitionist Strategy.

Between 1835 and 1843 six different Captain Generals governed Cuba: Miguel Tacón (1834-1838), Joaquín de Ezpeleta (1838-1840), Pedro Tellez Girón, Prince of Anglona (1840-1841), Jerónimo Valdés (1841-1843), Francisco Javier de Ulloa (1843) and Leopoldo O'Donnell (1843-1848). All of them faced growing diplomatic pressure from the British authorities, spread concern about the arrival of abolitionist activists and propaganda from the British West Indies and the United States, and the emergence of dissident voices, from Cuba and exile, in favour of more autonomy for the Island or its annexation to the United States.[544]

The Liberal uprising of Manuel Lorenzo in Santiago de Cuba in 1836 and the increased frequency of African armed movements throughout the western part of the Island during the 1830s contribute to explaining the decision to exclude the Cuban deputies from the Cortes of 1836.[545] The authoritarian response from the colonial authorities in the aftermath of this decision consolidated the gradual militarisation of Cuban society during Tacón's tenure. The Captain General surrounded himself with prominent slave traders and slave-owners such as Joaquín Gomez and the Catalan Francisco Martí y Torrens, who became his 'principal partners and advisers' in relation to the slave trade.[546] Not

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[544] Romy Sánchez, 'Quitter la Très Fidèle. Exilés et bannis au temps du séparatisme cubain, 1834-1879', (Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne, 2017); Blackburn (2011); Luis Martínez-Fernández, *Fighting Slavery in the Caribbean: Life and Times of a British Family in Nineteenth Century Havana* (London: Routledge, 1998); Charles Henry Brown, *Agents of Manifest Destiny: The Lives and Times of the Filibusters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

[545] Manuel Barcia, *West African Warfare in Bahia and Cuba. Soldier Slaves in the Atlantic World, 1807-1844* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 161-165.

[546] Moreno García (1984), p. 426.

surprisingly therefore, during his mandate Tacón advocated the protection and preservation of the slave trade as a strategic activity in Cuba.

For the Spanish colonial authorities, Cuba's stability and security was in jeopardy and, as Captain General Joaquín Ezpeleta, successor of Tacón, described it, the arrival in Cuba of abolitionist activists and propaganda put at risk the very foundations of Cuba's 'slavery architecture'.[547] The fear of abolitionist ideas making headway in Cuba was not a new phenomenon. Since the Haitian Revolution, the Spanish authorities had been concerned about the dissemination of anti-slavery propaganda, activists and even rumours on the Island.[548] However, during the 1830s and 1840s, the idea that this was the result of an international campaign led by Britain gained ground.[549] Since the beginning of Miguel Tacón's governorship, concerns about the circulation of abolitionist propaganda in Cuba had increased.

In November 1835, an abolitionist poster with a reproduction of the famous design by Josiah Wedgwood 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother?' published in London, was discovered on a road near Havana, alarming Tacón who reported the incident to Madrid.[550] The

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[547] Ezpeleta to the Secretary of State, February 1830. Estado, leg. 8023, AHN.

[548] Ferrer (2014); González-Ripoll and others (2004).

[549] In 1830, Captain General Vives referred to the 'ideas of freedom' that illegally introduced slaves from Jamaica could bring into Cuba. Similarly, in August 1833, Cuban intendant Claudio Martinez de Pinillos, Count of Villanueva (1782-1853), wrote about the risk of infection of 'pernicious ideas' in reference to abolitionist discourses. Vives to the Secretary of State, August 1833. Estado, leg. 8034, AHN.

[550] 'Diligencias que se han de practicar en averiguación del poseedor de un papel encontrado en el camino real que atraviesa el pueblo de Alquizar, el cual contiene una estampa de una negro aprisionado de una rodilla en tierra, y en el pie de la figura unos versos subversivos escritos en inglés', 15 November 1835, Comisión Militar, leg. 130, exp. 2, ANC.

proximity of Jamaica, Haiti, and the United States was seen by Tacón and the Captain Generals who preceded and followed him, as a constant and direct threat to Cuba's safety and tranquillity. In May 1836, Tacón sent his subordinate Captain José Ruiz de Apodaca to Jamaica 'with the purpose of infiltrating the [abolitionist] societies [... and] to gain an exact idea of the Methodist Society'.[551] One year later, Antonio Brosa, Spanish Consul on the British Island, informed Tacón that there was a serious risk of

> Suspicious people being introduced [into Cuba]; and as I have some news that the Methodists and Anabaptists are trying to send some agents to the province of Cuba (I am afraid some of them are introduced already) in order to see if they can induce the negroes to revolt.[552]

Some months later, in February 1838, Brosa warned Tacón that he had been informed of the economic support that abolitionist activists in Jamaica had received from England with the intention of 'sending from this island to that one [Cuba] commissioners with money and incendiary papers, to try to encourage the negroes to revolt and emancipate them'.[553]

In December 1836, the Spanish Ambassador in Washington, Ángel Calderón de la Barca, drew the attention of the Spanish Government to the 'alarming progress being made by societies that aim to abolish slavery [in the United States...] and the consequences that their success would have',[554] and some months later, in July 1837,

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[551] Tacón to the Secretary of State, 22 Mayo 1836. Estado, leg. 8035, AHN.

[552] Antonio Brosa to Tacón, 22 May 1837. Estado, leg. 8037, AHN.

[553] Antonio Brosa to Tacón, 20 February 1838, Estado, leg. 8037, AHN.

[554] De la Barca to the Secreatry of State, 8 December 1836, Estado, leg. 8036, AHN.

Calderón insisted on repeating his concern about the 'associations for the abolition of the negro slavery'.[555]

The arrival of abolitionist activists from different religious sects and institutions also worried the colonial authorities. In 1837, George Davison, a black British subject, was arrested for 'having disseminated pernicious doctrines among slaves on this Island'.[556] In April 1839, the presence of a 'subject of His Britannic Majesty' who was found 'spreading the maxims of the abolition of slavery' in Matanzas was also reported to the Captain General.[557] The following month, 'five Baptist individuals' arrived in Trinidad and were accused of belonging to the 'Anti-Slavery society of Jamaica'.[558] The presence of these agents was perceived as a direct attack on Cuba's sovereignty and was linked by the colonial authorities to an international attempt to instigate a massive slave revolt. As Murray states, this series of incidents 'had convinced both the colonial and metropolitan

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[555] *Comunicación dirigida por Miguel Tacón al Gobernador de la provincia de Cuba trascribiéndole otra del Ministro de España en EEUU referente a las actividades de las Asociaciones para la abolición de la esclavitud de los negros,* 14 de Julio de 1837, leg. 39, exp. 18, Asuntos Políticos, ANC.

[556] Among the seized documents were 'The War in Texas, investigated by Slaveholders, Land Speculators of Philadelphia', published in 1836; 'The Speech delivered at the Soiree in honour of George Thompson, Esq.' of 1837; 'Memoir of Phillips Wheasley' published in Boston in 1834; 'The tale of a New Yorker by a known author' published in New York in 1835; and different issues of the newspapers *New York Mirror*, *The Plain Dealer*, *The New Yorker*, *The Albion*, *The Daily Herald*, *The Sun*, *Morning Courier*, *New York Weekly Messenger*, *The Norfolk & Portsmouth Herald*, *Alexandria Gazzette*, *American & Commercial*, *Transcript* and *The Examiner*. Comisión Militar, leg. 17, exp. 1, ANC.

[557] Asuntos Políticos, leg. 40, exp. 1, ANC.

[558] Asuntos Políticos, leg. 40, exp. 7, ANC.

governments that British abolitionists, supported by the British government, were intent on destroying Cuban slavery'.[559]

The Foreign Office, headed by Henry John Temple, Lord Palmerston, developed a new diplomatic strategy to deal with Cuba between 1836 and 1842, which was more abrasive and direct, in which Richard Robert Madden and David Turnbull (c.1794-1851) played key roles. The British government adopted this approach, rightly convinced that the Spanish authorities were protecting the slave trade. The social and political mobilisation that preceded the abolition of the apprenticeship system in 1838 and the preparations of the Anti-Slavery Conference of 1840 in London, gave Palmerston the domestic support required to strain relations with Spain.[560]

As part of the bilateral agreement between Britain and Spain in 1835, a British official had to be appointed to arrange the transfer of Africans liberated by Havana's Mixed Court to British dominions. In 1836, the Foreign Office appointed Madden to this end, as the first Superintendent of Liberated Africans. Madden held this post until 1839, and his time in Cuba defined the beginning of a drastic deterioration in the diplomatic relationships between the two governments and a growing anti-British sentiment in Cuban public opinion. As Murray has argued, Madden was 'unwelcome […] to say the least' in Havana. His appointment represented an unprecedented decision to put an abolitionist activist at the heart of the most vibrant slave society in the Caribbean. Madden was an Irish doctor

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[559] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 120.

[560] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 132; Christine Bolt, *The anti-slavery movement and reconstruction: A study in Anglo-American co-operation, 1833-77* (London, New York: Oxford Univerity Press, 1969); James Heartfield, *The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1838-1956: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Huzzey (2012).

with experience in the region as a magistrate in Jamaica, where he had the mission of implementing the British Emancipation Act, facing great opposition from the planters. After his short stay in Jamaica, he returned to Britain where he published the book, *A Twelvemonth's Residence*, in which he criticised the newly-established apprenticeship system in the British West Indies and advocated its abolition.[561]

Tacón described Madden as 'a dangerous man from whatever point of view he is considered, and living on this Island he will have far too many opportunities to disseminate seditious ideas directly or indirectly, which not even my constant vigilance can prevent', and argued for the immediate withdrawal of his appointment.[562] The vagueness of the accusations of the Captain General, however, had no effect and Madden remained in his post until 1839, when he resigned. The appointment of Madden, 'a committed abolitionist', confirmed the worst fears of the Spanish officials and 'added to the credibility of the Cuban belief in a British abolitionist conspiracy […]'.[563] It fuelled anti-British sentiment, reinforced the victimization discourse of the Spanish government and Cuban elites, and consolidated the protection of slavery and slave trade as a matter of national sovereignty and security.[564]

In 1837, the British government requested Spain's authorisation to harbour a vessel, the HMS *Romney*, in Havana's port to accommodate the hundreds of Africans from slave

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[561] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 121.

[562] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 122. Tacón to the Secretary of State, 31 August 1837. Estado, leg. 8022, AHN.

[563] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 120.

[564] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 120. On the relation between national sovereignty, honour and the slave trade in Portugal see Marques (2006). For the Spanish case, this aspect will be discuss further in the following chapter.

ships condemned by the Mixed Commission Court, before they were sent to British territories. The presence of these liberated Africans, or *Emancipados,* was seen by the Spanish authorities as a threat to the city's safety, and therefore, the British proposal was quickly accepted.[565] As Jennifer Nelson has pointed out while discussing the *Romney* as well as the HMS *Crescent*, which was placed in the Bay of Guanabara in Rio de Janeiro for similar purposes, 'although the receiving ships were only bare "hulks" and were not in a position of being galvanised to carry out any sort of military attack, they had a symbolic relevance which seemed to go beyond the physical threat which they encapsulated.'[566] Some black soldiers were part of the contingent on the vessel, which contributed to reinforcing the idea in Cuba that the *HMS Romney* was not only a vivid symbol of imperial strength, but a direct provocation.

For Cuba's Captain General Ezpeleta, the presence of black British soldiers in Havana 'will just by their words and dress arouse in those of their race a strong desire for freedom at any cost and in defiance of all danger' and affirmed that its impact would be more psychological than diplomatic or political, as 'the very sight of those soldiers presents serious difficulties which are easier to perceive than to describe'.[567]

This growing diplomatic tension between the two countries was seen as unnecessary and even detrimental by James Kennedy, British judge of the Mixed Commission Court in Havana between 1837 and 1851. He believed that the decision to harbour the *HMS Romney* in Havana was 'an unnecessary incurring of dislike' and advocated its removal.

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[565] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 123.

[566] Nelson (2015), p. 106; Nelson (2017).

[567] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 125.

Kennedy represented a moderate figure in the escalating tension between the two governments.[568] He requested a more cautious approach, as he understood that adopting a position of superiority by Britain would contribute to anti-British sentiment and the victimization discourse on the Island. Palmerston, however, opposed withdrawing the *Romney*, and the vessel remained in Havana until 1851. As Murray has shown, its symbolism operated in two directions: it became an icon of British abolitionist commitment in Cuba and, at the same time, a blatant demonstration of imperial superiority.[569]

The impact of the *Romney* would have undoubtedly been less significant without the concurrence of a wider strategy to drive the Spanish government into a corner and force it to stop the slave trade. David Turnbull played a central role in this strategy. Turnbull was a Scottish journalist who worked as a correspondent for *The Times* covering continental Europe. In 1832 he was sent to Madrid, where, according to Manuel Llorca-Jaña, he collaborated with the British Ambassador George Villiers during the negotiations of the Treaty of 1835.[570] Between 1838 and 1839 he travelled to the Caribbean and visited Demerara, Barbados, Trinidad, Jamaica, Port au Prince, and Cuba. As a result of this trip, in 1840 he published the book *Travels in the West: Cuba; with Notices of Porto Rico and the Slave Trade*, in which he denounced the involvement of 'British capitalists' in the slave trade and directly accused the British consul in Havana,

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[568] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 127.

[569] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 126-127.

[570] Manuel Llorca-Jaña, 'Turnbull, David (1793?–1851)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

David Tolmé, of collusion with slave traders.[571] In August 1840, he became a member of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS), created one year before to achieve the worldwide abolition of slavery and the slave trade.

Soon after its creation, the BFASS became the most influential abolitionist institution in Great Britain. It was controlled mainly by Quakers, and the pacifist convictions of this religious group permeated the whole organisation and defined its political strategy. The abolition of the slave trade was seen as a moral crusade and its achievement would result from success in persuading other nations of the brutality and intrinsic evil of slavery.[572] It would thus require close collaboration with other abolitionist groups across the Atlantic and, to this end, the BFASS called for the celebration in London of the World Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840. Delegates, mainly from Britain and the U.S., gathered in the English capital to define and coordinate the political strategy of the abolitionist movement worldwide.[573]

In the absence of Spanish delegates, the information presented by David Turnbull about the Spanish Caribbean colonies and his opinion on how to fight against the slave trade in Cuba was highly influential at the convention.[574] Turnbull proposed a legalistic

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[571] James Kennedy had also accused Tolmé of collaborating with slave traders in the past. Turnbull (1840), p. 43.

[572] Huzzey (2012), p. 14.

[573] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 132; Bolt (1969); Heartfield (2016); Huzzey (2012).

[574] According to Albert Gacía Balañà, in January 1842 the BFASS suggested to the French Société pour l'Abolition de l'Esclavage, to invite the Spanish subjects José Antonio Saco, Santiago Usoz y Río and Antonio Bergnes de las Casas to a forthcoming anti-slavery convection. Bergnes, a Catalan publisher, also appears in the proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention of June 1843 in London. García Balañà (2013), p. 227.

approach that would discourage Cuban planters from buying new slaves and ultimately put an end to the slave trade. He argued that, if the Mixed Commission Courts were given the necessary capacities to challenge the legality of the propriety of the slaves introduced into Cuba after the prohibition of the slave trade in 1820, it would prevent the slave-owners from carrying on purchasing slaves in Africa. He believed that the 'simple extension of the powers of the court' could not be rejected by the Spanish government that so many times had expressed its 'earnest desire to abolish the traffic'.[575]

Turnbull pointed out that the main obstacle to his plan was that the Spanish government considered 'the maintenance of the traffic […] as a sort of political necessity'. However, Turnbull believed, in line with Saco's widespread message, that abolitionists could count on the support of the 'Creoles of Cuba', who had 'neither the wish nor the interest […] to continue the practice of the slave trade'.[576] He admitted that for many years abolitionist legislation had been passed in Spain with no effect, but he was confident that his proposal would face no 'serious opposition' and would eventually 'produce a radical and practical change in the legal condition of the imported Africans'.[577]

Turnbull's confidence in Britain's persuasive power was, however, challenged by members of the British government who had been dealing with the Spanish government on this issue for many years. Far from seeing his plan as 'easy, cheap and almost immediate',[578] as Turnbull presented it, James Bandinel, head of the slave trade division

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575 Turnbull (1840), pp. 342-343.

576 Turnbull (1840), p. 348.

577 Turnbull (1840), pp. 349-359, 343.

578 Turnbull (1840), p. viii.

in the Foreign Office, stressed the flaws of the initiative. Similarly, MacGregor Laird, a Scottish merchant who advocated West Africa's colonization as the best way of stopping the slave trade, argued that Turnbull's plan would 'shake to its foundations, if not destroy, the whole social fabric in Cuba'; and, as Murray put it, considered the notion that 'Spain would ever agree to such plan was utterly naïve'.[579]

Turnbull nevertheless achieved the decisive support of the BFASS and of Palmerston, who after two decades of ineffective diplomatic efforts, agreed to explore his proposal. In August 1840, he was appointed British Consul in Havana, replacing Tolmé; and, in December that year, Palmerston instructed Arthur Ingram Aston, British Ambassador in Madrid, to present to the Spanish government the proposal of a new treaty, by which all the all slaves illegally introduced into the Spanish dominions after 1820 would be declared free.[580]

The arrival of Turnbull in Havana was interpreted as 'characteristic disregard for Spain' on the part of Palmerston's Foreign Office and a direct threat to the Island's safety by the Cuban planters and Colonial authorities.[581] The long reviews of his *Travels in the west* published in the British press circulated in Cuba and contributed to the characterization of Turnbull as a radical abolitionist and a dangerous foreign agent. On 1 November 1840, Captain General Pedro Téllez Girón informed the Spanish government that Turnbull's appointment was contrary to 'every feeling in my soul' and

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[579] Memorandum by Bandiel, 3 April 1840, FO 84/318; *Westminster Review*, vol. XXXIV, June 1840, p. 151; Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 137-138.

[580] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 139-140.

[581] Huzzey (2012), p. 70.

that he would do everything in his power to preserve 'the peace of this country that is under my vigilance'.[582] In a similar vein, the Junta de Fomento de Agricultura y Comercio of Cuba reported to Madrid the feeling of 'sorrow' that the arrival of Turnbull had caused and the fear that 'our sons will be under the power of the negroes'.[583] Cuban economic and political elites energetically protested against Turnbull's appointment and the proposal of the British government to inspect the plantations and free the slaves introduced after 1820. They believed that this decision would be an abuse of power and a direct attack on Spanish national sovereignty, as it would give judicial jurisdiction to a foreign authority on Spanish soil. [584]

In December 1840, the publication of a letter from the Spanish thinker and politician Ramón de la Sagra, in the Spanish newspaper *El Corresponsal*, arguing for the eradication of the slave trade as the first necessary step in the abolition of slavery in Cuba, generated even more political tension in the colony. The Tribunal de Fomento and the Junta de Fomento, Agricultura y Comercio of Cuba condemned the article and argued that the Spanish press should not be allowed to discuss the issue of slavery or the slave trade. Sagra's publication was the result of the meeting that he had held with a delegation of the BFASS in Madrid.[585] Two members of the Society, George William Alexander and Benjamin Barron Wiffen, 'visited some of the principal towns in that

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[582] Girón to the Secretary of State, 1 November 1840, Estado, leg. 8498, AHN.

[583] Junta de Fomento de Agricultura y Comercio to the Secretary of State Estado, leg. 8053. 30 November 1840, AHN.

[584] Junta de Fomento de Agricultura y Comercio to the Secretary of State Estado, leg. 8053. 30 November 1840, AHN.

[585] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 145. On Antonio Bergnes see also, García Balañà (2013).

country', including 'Barcelona, Madrid, Valentia [sic], Seville, and Cadiz' in 1840. In Barcelona, they met with the publisher Antonio Bergnes, 'who was already acquainted with the question of negro slavery' and 'F. Delamere', 'another friend to our cause'. In Madrid, during the meeting with Sagra, the BFASS delegation also met the brothers Usoz y Rio, Luis and Santiago.[586] Luis Usoz y Rio was a Spanish religious scholar who had been in exile in Britain during the 1820s. Also in the Spanish capital they met Manuel Marliani, who they hoped would champion their 'views […] in the Spanish Cortes', and Agustín de Argüelles, who had 'years ago advocated the abolition of the slave-trade by Spain'.[587]

The abdication of María Cristina as Spanish regent in the summer of 1840 led to the political rise of General Baldomero Espartero supported by the Progressive party and a subsequent rapprochement between Britain and Spain.[588] The new Spanish government rejected the British proposal to investigate and liberate illegally introduced slaves but agreed to adopt a truly committed attitude against the slave trade. The appointment in 1840 of Jerónimo Valdés, a personal friend of Espartero, as Captain General of Cuba,

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[586] Benjamin Wiffen and Santiago Usoz continued a correspondent relationship after this meeting. Mar Vilar, 'La lengua y civilización inglesas en su relaciones con España a mediados del siglo XIX', *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* (1996), 137-176; Juan B. Vilar and Mar Vilar, *El primer hispanismo británico en la formación y contenidos de la más importante biblioteca española de libros prohibidos: correspondencia inédita de Luis de Usoz con Benjamin B. Wiffen (1840-1850)* (Sevilla: Editorial MAD, 2010).

[587] John Flude Johnson, *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention called by the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society* (London: John Snow, 1843), pp. 186-187.

[588] Armario Sanchez (1990); Lawrence (2014); Raúl Martín Arranz, 'Espartero: figuras de legitimidad', in *Populismo, caudillaje y discurso demagógico,* ed. by José Alvarez Junco (Madrid: CIS/Siglo XXI, 1987), pp. 101-128; María Cruz Romeo Mateo, 'Lenguaje y política del nuevo liberalismo: moderados y progresistas, 1834-1845', *Ayer*, 29 (1998), 37-62.

was seen as an attempt to ease the political tension with Britain and implement the anti-slave treaty of 1835. As Murray has argued, the selection of Valdés was the political response of the Spanish Government to the complex situation created by the appointment of David Turnbull, and more generally, by the new diplomatic strategy defined by Palmerston in 1836.[589]

In the years following his arrival in Cuba, Valdés was committed to the scrupulous observance of the existing anti-slave trade legislation. He conceded to the slave traders 'a six-month period to end the illegal slave traffic', after which he consistently opposed the introduction of new slaves and freed those captured.[590] In December 1841, Valdés reported to Madrid that he had liberated 78 individuals that year, and his stance persisted in 1842.[591] That year, the number of slaves introduced into Cuba was three times lower than the year before, and the lowest since 1823.[592] However, the new political attitude on the Spanish side, did not lead to an improvement in the relationship between the new Captain General and the British Consul.

Turnbull's political activity in Cuba was not limited to the persecution of the slave trade and the protection of the *emancipados,* but was also strongly committed to the promotion of abolitionist ideas and ultimately to the eradication of slavery on the Island. To this end, he started an energetic informal campaign, meeting important personalities within the

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[589] Murray (2002 [1980]).

[590] Armario Sanchez (1990), p. 392.

[591] Valdés to the Secretary of State, 31 December 1841, Estado, leg. 8565-1, AHN.

[592] TASTD <http://www.slavevoyages.org/> [Accessed: 07/12/2015]

Creole elite, such as Domingo del Monte, as well as free black Cubans and slaves.[593] His main purpose was to identify common goals that would bring together the interests of the black population and some young Creoles who advocated the extension of civil rights and political freedoms. Turnbull, however, as has been shown, failed to achieve his objective and the aspirations of both groups remained irreconcilable.

The relationship between Turnbull and the other members of the British diplomatic mission in Havana was also conflictual, particularly with James Kennedy, accused by Turnbull of keeping slaves.[594] 'Turnbull's abrasive approach', as described by Murray, caused a serious confrontation with Kennedy, who called for a more constructive relationship with the Spanish authorities, and made an effective collaboration between the Consul and the Commissioner impossible.[595] As Murray has argued, the charges and counter-charges between both officials 'provided ammunition for what became a Spanish campaign against Turnbull'.[596] But it also reinforced the notion, widespread among the Spanish authorities and landowners, that they were the victims of Britain's arbitrariness and radicalism. James Kennedy's approach, however, proved more

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[593] In November 1841, Turnbull was arrested in Matanzas accused of talking 'con algunos negros esclavos sobre la libertad y otros particulares concernientes a ello, que pueden muy bien alterar el estado de servidumbre de aquellos y por consiguiente la tranquilidad pública'. 12 November 1841, Estado, leg. 8566(I), AHN.

[594] Kennedy admitted he had hired slaves, but argued that he was opposed to owning them. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 141. Kennedy to Palmerston, 17 December 1840, FO 84/312, TNA.

[595] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 141.

[596] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 142.

effective in the long term, becoming a 'bitter opponent' of the repressive policies of the Spanish colonial authorities from the 1830s, as Manuel Barcia has suggested.[597]

Turnbull's public calls for the abolition of slavery also distanced him from those within the Cuban elite who agreed with him on the necessity of stopping the slave trade, like Saco or Del Monte, but believed that slavery was essential for the prosperity of the Island. His radical abolitionist position consolidated anti-British sentiments among the planters, for whom Turnbull's informal activities were putting at risk the security of the white population. In this regard, anti-British discourse also opened the door to a more positive representation of the United States and encouraged annexationist aspirations. In March 1841, Gaspar Betancourt Cisneros, who later became a passionate annexationist, advised his friend Domingo del Monte not to collaborate with the 'sinister designs' of the British, in reference to Turnbull's anti-slavery activities.[598]

The informal negotiations of the British Consul were seen by the Spanish authorities as illegal and a threat to Cuba's safety and security, and gradually led to a generalized feeling of fear, 'verging at times on hysteria'.[599] In July 1841, the Spanish government informed the British Ambassador in Madrid that 'the government knows that these [abolitionist] ideas have gained some ground, thanks to the constancy with which the secret agents in charge of promoting the revolution have been working for many years'.[600] In November Valdés informed the Spanish government of the fears that Cuban

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[597] Barcia (2001), p. 25.

[598] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 145.

[599] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 144, 155.

[600] Secretary of State to the British Ambassador in Madrid, 31 July 1841, Estado, leg. 8566-1, AHN.

landowners had about Turnbull's activities, the spread of abolitionist ideas and the way in which Spanish newspapers openly discussed slavery. He proposed the transfer of the Mixed Commission Court to Puerto Rico and the removal of David Turnbull from Cuba.[601]

The resignation of the British Prime Minister William Lamb, Lord Melbourne, and his cabinet led to the replacement of Palmerston by George Hamilton-Gordon, 4th Earl of Aberdeen, as new Foreign Secretary, in September 1841. Aberdeen was appalled at the aggressive Atlantic policies that had resulted from the Palmerston Act of 1839, and was determined to improve the diplomatic relationship with Spain, to which Turnbull presented a principal obstacle. The initial commitment of Valdés against the slave trade gave the Spanish government solid ground to denounce the activities of the British consul as illegal and contrary to the international agreements signed by both nations. In February 1842, Turnbull was removed as British Consul but kept his position as Superintendent of Liberated Africans. This decision was received with disappointment by the Spanish authorities who continued to argue for his complete removal from Cuba. Turnbull eventually left the Spanish colony in August 1842, following Aberdeen's decision to abolish the office of Superintendent of Liberated Africans.[602]

Turnbull's ideological and political legacy in Cuba's imaginary is remarkable. As the key actor in Palmerston's diplomatic strategy to put pressure on Spain and force it to stop the slave trade into Cuba, Turnbull's activities caused unprecedented political tension between the colonial authorities and the British diplomatic mission in Havana. The Spanish government's decision to appoint Valdés and to adopt a truly anti-slave trade

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[601] Valdés to the Secretary of State, Estado, 30 November 1841, Estado, leg. 8037, AHN.

[602] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 156-158.

policy was a directly influenced by Turnbull's appointment. However, in the long run, the work of the British Consul consolidated an anti-British sentiment among the Cuban elites that reinforced the victimization discourse of the Spanish authorities. As Murray has rightly argued, 'the panic engendered in Cuba in 1841 bedevilled future British attempts to suppress the Cuban slave trade'.[603] Ultimately, Turnbull's 'abrasive approach' failed to achieve its main goal, helped to justify the militarisation of Cuba's public life and the authoritarian practices of different Captain Generals and severely hampered the diplomatic work of his colleagues on the Island.

4. Jeronimo Valdés: From 'Fulfilling His Duty' to the *Escalera* Conspiracy

Captain General Valdés' political commitment against the slave trade during the first years of his mandate gave the Spanish government an unprecedented moral basis from which to argue against Turnbull's activities with the British Foreign Office. However, Valdés also faced a great deal of opposition to his political activity. Slave-owners and political authorities in the Peninsula argued in concert against Valdés' anti-slave trade policies. Some Spanish *diputaciones* (regional administrations), headed by the Diputación of Santander, accused Valdes of being manipulated by 'agents of a foreign nation' and adopting 'the unfair and unwise demands advanced by those who desire the ruin of those precious dominions'.[604] Valdés responded to these accusations by arguing that he was simply 'fulfilling his duty' and that no one should request that he violate the

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[603] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 151.

[604] Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 4614, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 484-486; Armario Sanchez (1990), pp. 397-398.

law.[605] He stressed that the slave trade 'that was done here in violation of the treaties was so poorly hidden, that in the very entrances of this capital [Havana] barracks destined to the sale of human flesh are located for all to see'.[606] The Spanish government backed Valdés' initial anti-slave trade commitment and stated that he had 'acted with the determination and energy' that the government and the nation demanded from him.[607]

Valdés' political legacy in Cuba could be seen in increasing interference from the colonial government in the Island's public life, gradual militarisation and an unprecedented commitment to stopping the slave trade and the promotion of better life conditions for the slave population. He strongly defended the government's censorship of the press and the control of every cultural, political and educational institution in order to prevent the circulation of ideas that could represent a threat to 'the security and tranquillity of the country'.[608] During his first year as Captain General on the Island, Valdés sent a questionnaire to some of the Island's most influential and richest planters requesting information regarding the life and working conditions of their slaves. As Manuel Barcia has argued, Valdés' 'questionnaire was not well-received by many planters, who once again complained that a new set of regulations would entitle slaves to rights that they would later want to exercise'.[609] Sebastián de Lasa, the count of Fernandina, José Manuel Carrillo, Wenceslao de Villaurrutia, and Domingo Aldama, among others,

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[605] Valdés to the Secretary of State, 13 September 1842, Estado, leg. 8038, AHN.

[606] Valdés to the Secretary of State, 13 September 1842, Estado, leg. 8038, AHN.

[607] Moreno García (1984), p. 491. September 1842. Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2910, AHN.

[608] 18 September 1842, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2810, AHN. Moreno García (1984), p. 514.

[609] Barcia (2008), pp. 91-92.

opposed ‘any direct intervention of the government’ that could undermine their authority and raise the aspirations of the slaves. [610]

Valdés, however, dismissed their claims and, in November 1842, published a new Black Code with which he intended to improve the conditions of the slave population with the double goal of increasing the reproductive rate and preventing slave revolts. According to Valdés, the abuses of some slave owners went ‘against the reproduction of the serf and [had] increased the need for new slaves, perpetuating the illicit trade in human flesh’.[611] In other words, consolidating the current slave population and promoting its natural reproduction, would eventually make the slave trade unnecessary. As Barcia has concluded, ‘the planters' premonitions and fears were proved right’ and just after the promulgation of the Code, ‘several slave uprisings broke out in the western part of the Island, culminating in the discovery of an extensive conspiracy in December 1843.’ [612]

During the first months of his mandate, Valdés developed a truly committed anti-slave trade policy to duly fulfil the agreements arrived at with Britain. Despite this, the actual prosecution of the slave trade did not constitute a top priority for his administration. As Jennifer Nelson has rightly argued, ‘it was unclear to the British whether he was genuinely against the slave trade, or willing to make concessions through anti-slave trade activity to protect against British intervention viewed as overzealous.’[613] Valdés

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[610] Barcia (2008), pp. 91-92.

[611] Valdés to the Secretary of State, 30 November 1842, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2909, AHN. Moreno García (1984), p. 509.

[612] Barcia (2008), p. 92.

[613] Nelson (2015), p. 49.

never elaborated an anti-slave trade discourse upon humanitarian grounds and his commitment was entirely legalistic and presented as public duty. As he admitted in 1849, he was aware of more slave ship arrivals than the British Commissioners reported to him, but that never constituted a priority for him.[614] However, the reality is that, compared with the three previous year of Valdes' tenure, the number of slaves introduced into Cuba was reduced by approximately 45%, and around 1215 liberated Africans were issued their final letters of emancipation, 'which was quite substantial in comparison to the 1367 freed in the preceding 15 years'.[615]

Valdés' policies did not emerge in isolation and it can be argued that the Palmerston Act of 1839 and the growing British pressure against the slave traders on the African coasts drastically reduced the number of slaves that arrived in Cuba. But it is undeniable that, at least for a few months in 1841, the Captain General of Cuba worked to stop the slave trade and ensure compliance with Spain's international agreements. For the first time, it became clear to slave traders and investors on both sides of the Atlantic that the slave trade was no longer permitted by the Spanish authorities.[616] However, Valdés' anti-slave trade commitment did not last long, and by October 1841, British commissioners

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[614] Kennedy to Viscount Palmerston, No. 9, Havana, 6 March 1849. HCPP, 1850 (1290) LV.111, p. 17. Nelson (2015), p. 208.

[615] TASTD <http://www.slavevoyages.org/> [Accessed: 07/12/2015]. Nelson (2015), p. 184.

[616] As Jennifer Nelson has pointed out, Valdés admitted in 1849 that 'he knew of more slave ship arrivals than Kennedy was aware of, but that he had too many other priorities to attend to'. Nelson (2015), p. 208. Kennedy to Viscount Palmerston, No. 9, Havana, 6 March 1849. HCPP, 1850 (1290) LV.111, p. 17.

reported that their hopes in Valdés had vanished, and that he was accepting bribes to turn a blind eye.[617]

In March 1843, slaves from the plantation Alcancía, in the region of Bemba, revolted and marched through the *Camino Real* after killing various white people. Some months later, in November 1843, 'the biggest slave revolt ever seen on the Island' took place on the plantations of Triumvirato and Ácana (Matanzas).[618] In December, the arrested slaves were brutally tortured and questioned by the colonial authorities, who discovered that they were faced with the 'biggest conspiracy in the history of Cuba', in which 'black, mixed race and white, men and women, slaves and free people' were involved.[619] The reaction of the colonial authorities was ferocious.

In Manuel Barcia's words, 'the subsequent repression of free coloured people and slaves who were involved in the plot was the bloodiest episode in nineteenth-century Cuba until the first war of independence in 1868'.[620] Hundreds of slaves and free black people were detained, tortured and killed. In March 1844, the attorneys of the Military Commission also started arresting white and foreign people accused of involvement in the conspiracy.[621] In April 1844, the Captain General ordered the expulsion of all foreign free black subjects from Cuba, and in June, the mixed race poet Gabriel de la Concepción

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[617] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 184. Commissioners to Palmerston, No. 60, 29 October 1841, FO 84/395, TNA.

[618] Barcia (2001), p. 4; On the Escalera Conspiracy see: José Luciano Franco, *Ensayos Históricos* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1974); Paquette (1988); Murray (2002 [1980]); Barcia (2006); Finch (2015).

[619] Barcia (2001).

[620] Barcia (2008), p. 42.

[621] On the repression against British subjects and the reaction of the British Diplomatic Mission in Havana, see: Barcia (2001).

Valdés, better known as Plácido, was executed, accused of being a leader of the conspiracy.[622] In his death sentence, published in the *Diario de la Habana*, the judges linked the Conspiracy with the activities of David Turnbull and the British diplomats, and pointed out that 'by himself or with others of his colleagues, he was the one who conceived the destructive idea'.[623]

These accusations, together with the arbitrary arrest of British subjects and the expulsion of all foreign free black people, led to unparalleled tension between the Captain General and the British diplomatic mission in Havana, led by Joseph T. Crawford, successor of David Turnbull. Contrary to Turnbull, Crawford pursued a very efficient strategy focused, during the repression that followed the *Escalera* Conspiracy, on protecting his fellow subjects and protesting against the authoritarian practices of the Spanish administration. According to Barcia, both Crawford and Kennedy 'were the firmest critics of O'Donnell's repressive policies [and] they questioned their decisions in a brave and almost reckless manner.'[624]

Nevertheless, the impact of the *Escalera* Conspiracy goes beyond the violent repression employed by the colonial authorities. It also had an extraordinary and long-lasting ideological effect on Cuba's population. For many whites on the Island, the conspiracy proved the fragility of their security and reinvigorated their oldest fear of 'a second Haiti'. Self-victimizing, anti-British and racist discourses found confirmation in the conspiracy. It uncovered 'the narrowness and racism inherent in the Creole definition of political

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[622] Gobierno Superior Civil, leg. 850, exp. 28634, ANC.

[623] Barcia (2001), pp. 17-18.

[624] Barcia (2001), p. 25.

liberty', as Murray put it, and significantly contributed to justifying and enhancing authoritarian practices on the part of the colonial authorities, and the restriction of civil rights.[625]

The political rise and fall of Valdés was linked to the tenure of General Espartero. In July 1843, the Regent was forced into exile in London by the military uprising of General Narváez. The new Moderate government dictated the destitution of Valdés in September of that year and decreed the appointment of Leopoldo O'Donnell.[626] The new Captain General protected the slave trade during his tenure and surrounded himself with some of the richest and most important slave traders on the Island. As Murray and Moreno have pointed out, O'Donnell, who openly believed 'that the slave trade was vital' for Cuba's prosperity, 'was more known as an accomplice than as an opponent of the traffic'.[627] Together with the reinstatement of the Count of Villanueva as Intendant of Hacienda of Cuba, the two most important authorities on the Island were now open supporters of the continuity and protection of the slave trade.

During the tenure of Valdés, British attempts to persuade the Spanish government to pass new legislation in accordance with the Treaty of 1835 had been consistently ignored. However, in the aftermath of the *Escalera* Conspiracy, the British government aimed to capitalize on Cuban elite fear and demanded from the Spanish authorities' new legal instruments to stop the trade. The appointment of O'Donnell, his overt support for the slave trade and the political repression carried out on his orders in the aftermath of

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[625] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 179.

[626] Armario Sanchez (1990), pp. 402-403.

[627] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 191; Moreno García (1990), p. 477.

the conspiracy, exasperated Aberdeen, the new British Foreign Secretary, and led him to demand 'in every proper manner' the removal of O'Donnell.[628] Aberdeen instructed the British Ambassador in Madrid, Henry Bulwer, to insinuate to the Spanish authorities that Britain was ready to break diplomatic relations with Spain if O'Donnell was kept in his post:

> I really can see no other result if they should preserve in maintaining O'Donnell at Havana. Let them make him Captain-General of Madrid or anything they please; but let them only send a man who is determined to execute the Treaty [of 1835], and who is able to resist the bribes of the slave dealers. [629]

British diplomatic pressure failed to achieve O'Donnell's removal, as he had the support of the Spanish Regent and the newly appointed Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Francisco Martínez de la Rosa. Aberdeen's pressure, however, was not totally ineffective and the Spanish government acceded to the negotiation of a penal law for the repression of the slave trade. This 'face-saving compromise for both countries' provided a solution to the diplomatic crisis and allowed Aberdeen to show some progress in negotiations with Spain to his own public.[630]

Martínez de la Rosa presented to the Spanish Cortes a draft bill on 22 December 1844 based on the recommendations made by a commission headed by former Captain General Jerónimo Valdés. The bill aimed 'to radically stop the introduction of slaves' into

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[628] Aberdeen to Bulwer, 9 May 1844. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 196.

[629] Aberdeen to Bulwer, 9 May 1844. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 196.

[630] The British Government headed by Robert Peel was facing strong opposition regarding its attitude to Cuba and the slave trade, and was accused of a lack of strength against the Spanish government in the British Parliament. Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 198-199; Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), p. 190.

the Spanish colonies, protect the property rights of the slave owners and and reassure the slave owners of Cuba against 'new threats and disturbances'.[631] The draft law proposed a maximum of six to eight years of imprisonment, fines and exile for senior officers, owners and investors involved in the illegal introduction of slaves into the Spanish colonies. The rest of the crew would be subjected to half of this punishment. The draft bill also determined the destruction of condemned vessels, specific punishments to be applied if the slaves had been tortured during the voyage, and gave the Spanish authorities the right to intervene in case they suspected any slave landing or the departure of a slave expedition.[632]

For Martínez de la Rosa, speaking on behalf of the government, the continuity of slavery was unquestionable, 'because this issue is on fire and no one would dare to touch it, much less the government'. He stated that stopping the slave trade was the best way 'to appease' the people in Cuba and 'to protect the right of property over slaves that currently exists.[633]

Opposition to the penal law proposal was headed by the deputy from Cadiz, Francisco Javier Istúriz, who argued that it would have disastrous economic consequences for his region and would ultimately lead to the abolition of slavery and the loss of the colonies. Cadiz was part of the trading network between Havana and some key peninsular ports, and the prosperity of the Cuban market determined the economic stability of the whole

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[631] Saiz Pastor (1990), p. 85.

[632] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 199-200.

[633] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Congreso de los Diputados*, 27 January 1845, p. 1390. Saiz Pastor (1990), p. 86.

Spanish market.[634] Istúriz proclaimed that 'the prosperity of the Island of Cuba […] is solely the result of the work of the negroes' and that, if the bill was passed, 'the region of Cadiz, and particularly the city of Cadiz, would suffer a lot'.[635] He demanded that the government 'find a way of reconciling the [humanitarian] principles with the salvation of the Antilles'.[636] Istúriz concluded that the abolition of the slave trade could not be separated from the abolition of slavery, and the first one would 'irretrievably' lead to the other one.[637]

This rehashing of pro-slave trade discourse in the Spanish Cortes had a big impact on *The Times* correspondent in Madrid who described it as 'intolerable [and…] even disgusting to hear men who talk so glibly and so fluently of the oppression under which they themselves groan, attempt to resist the effort now made to put a stop to the abominable traffic in human beings'.[638] During the Parliamentary discussions of the draft bill two amendments were included against the position of the government. These changes, in many ways, 'nullified its effect', as Murray has argued.[639] The first

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[634] Fradera (2013), pp. 273-274; Saiz Pastor (2008).

[635] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Congreso de los Diputados*, 27 January 1845, p. 1384. In these sentences, Istúriz referred to a quote popularized by Isidoro de Antillón in 1811:

> 'Si alguno se atreviese todavía, en medio del grito de la naturaleza y de las luces del siglo, a defender este infame sistema, no merecería más contestación, dice un escritor sensible, que el desprecio del filósofo y el puñal del negro.' Antillón (1811), pp. 19-20.

[636] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Congreso de los Diputados*, 27 January 1845, p. 1384.

[637] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes del Congreso de los Diputados*, 27 January 1845, p. 1390. Saiz Pastor (1990), p. 86.

[638] *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, vol. VI, No. 2, 22 January 1845. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 201.

[639] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 202.

amendment limited the investigative capacity of Spanish officials to occasions when the suspected slave expedition had come directly from Africa, while the second prohibited the colonial authorities from inspecting the plantations, and therefore precluded the possibility of investigating the origin of any slave who was already on the Island.

The Spanish Cortes passed the Penal Law on 27 February 1845. The new law failed to stop the slave trade into Cuba and after its adoption more than 180,000 slaves would be illegally introduced into the Island in violation of the international treaties with Britain.[640] The Penal Law would also be used from this point forward as 'unequivocal proof' of the Spanish government's commitment to ending the slave trade, and the strongest shield against British diplomatic pressure for more effective measures.

5. Conclusions

The constitutional debates of 1836 and 1837 represent a milestone in the way Spanish Liberal parties reflected on how the remaining colonial territories of a collapsing empire should be ruled. The consolidation of political liberalism and the re-establishment of representative institutions in Spain were not linked to the eradication of the slave trade or to the strengthening of abolitionist ideas and discourses. On the contrary, key ideological liberal actors, such as Agustín de Argüelles, started developing a discourse that contemplated the slave trade and slavery as a 'necessary evil' in order to preserve the control of Cuba.

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[640] TASTD <http://www.slavevoyages.org/> [Accessed: 07/12/2015].

This chapter has explored the importance of a new racist anti-slave trade discourse, pioneered by José Antonio Saco, who authored the most influential abolitionist ideas produced in Cuba until the 1860s. However, Saco's work failed to produce a 'public clamour' or a general abolitionist consensus, as has traditionally been proposed by historians. What allegedly constituted a structural change in the way Cuban elites perceived the slave trade was instead the political and military repression that followed the Conspiracy of *La Escalera*, on the one hand, and the British Atlantic policy that followed the Palmerston Act of 1839, on the other. Pro-slave trade discourse continued to bear fruit during this period both in Cuba and Spain.

Finally, this chapter has analysed the impact of the British government´s new 'abrasive approach' with regard to the Spanish slave trade and the role that Madden, Turnbull and the BFASS played until the publication of the Penal Law of 1845. This strategy also failed to achieve the eradication of the slave trade in Cuba and reinforced the victimization discourse of the Spanish authorities, deepening anti-British sentiment on the island and, ultimately, consolidated the protection of slavery and the slave trade as a matter of national sovereignty and security.

Chapter 5. The End of the Slave Trade in the Spanish Empire

During the first half of 1860s the end of the slave trade was perceived by slave-owners, abolitionists and authorities on both sides of the Atlantic as inevitable.[641] However, during the two decades that preceded this outcome, anti-abolitionist discourse remained prevalent and, during the second half of the 1850s, the slave trade was profitable and dynamic as never before. There was little hope in the abolitionist camp of seeing a sudden end to the 'odious commerce'.

This chapter will explore the impact of U.S. annexationism with regard to Cuba in the debates on the continuity of the slave trade and the construction of Spain's 'balancing-act strategy', by which the Spanish authorities managed to ignore British demands for more effective legislation against the slave trade and simultaneously stopped London's cabinet from adopting any unilateral action. This chapter also tackles how 'national dignity' and a 'sense of honour' characterized a new anti-slave trade discourse that operated within the Spanish colonial administration during the 1850s and 1860s. Finally, this chapter focuses on the international and domestic factors that led to the end of the slave trade and how the Spanish political actors reassessed their position and built a new narrative that stressed the need for change in order to preserve what was left of a wrecked empire.

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[641] Cánovas del Castillo, *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes de las Cortes*, 18 Abril 1866, p. 588ff.

1. 'Cuba Is Everything'. U.S. Annexationism and Spain's 'Balancing-Act Strategy'

Until 1865, the Penal Law for the repression of the slave trade of 1845 was the only legislation in place by which the Spanish authorities fought against the slave trade. As David Murray has argued, article nine of the law, which prohibited the colonial authorities from inspecting the plantations, made it fundamentally ineffective and contributed to protecting the slave trade in the Spanish colonies. By restricting the power of the Spanish authorities to search the plantations and identify recently introduced slaves, the law virtually legalized the status of all slaves as soon as they had set a foot on a plantation, no matter how or when these people had been introduced into the Island.[642]

The Penal Law of 1845 also played a central role in the political strategy put in place by Spanish governments until the 1860s in preventing Britain from adopting unilateral measures against the slave trade into Cuba. In the context of the growing resonance in the Spanish colony of the notion of annexation to the United States, the Penal Law represented for the Spanish authorities the 'unquestionable' Spanish commitment to ending the slave traffic. In this sense, it operated as a powerful argument against any possible 'warlike' actions by the British government, similar to the Palmerston Act of 1839 against the Portuguese slave trade, or the military pressure mounted against the Brazilian traffic in 1850.

Initially however, the Spanish government was truly concerned only with the negative effect that the implementation of the Penal Law could have on Cuba's economic prosperity and social stability. According to the Spanish cabinet, by no means should the new legislation produce any discomfort to the Cuban planters or cause the decline of

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[642] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 202.

sugar production on the Island.[643] To measure the possible impact of the law and suggest solutions to the lack of a workforce in Cuba, the Spanish government appointed a commission of experts in 1846, which included former captain generals Jerónimo Valdés and Joaquín Ezpeleta.[644] The conclusions of the commission insisted on the evil nature of the British diplomatic pressure against Spain and affirmed the special circumstances of Cuba's economy compared to the United States and Brazil. The commissioners agreed with Captain General O'Donnell about the disastrous consequences that ending the slave trade into Cuba would have for the Island's economy and unashamedly suggested that 'if some slaves were introduced there would be a hidden relief of the fear that now afflicts Cuba.'[645] The commission also stressed the importance of introducing new free workers from China to tackle the labour shortage in the growing economy and the importance of keeping a minimum ratio of 4 white people to every 6 black people, in order to prevent slave revolts.[646] To achieve this, they advocated either expulsion from

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[643] Corwin (1967), pp. 87-89.

[644] Corwin (1967), pp. 87-89.

[645] Moreno García (1984), p. 615.

[646] Between 1847 and 1874, there were different initiatives to attract white workers into Cuba as an alternative workforce to the African slaves. Immigration through contract and the indenture of settlers from China, the so-called coolies, reached 120,000 during this time. Moreover, some 2,000 Yucatan Indians were also transported under a similar system. Also, between 1854 and 1855, 1,700 Spanish unfree workers, from the region of Galicia, were introduced in the Island. At least 500 of them died, which caused a public controversy in Spain. Evelyn Hu-Dehart, 'Chinese Coolie Labor in Cuba in the Nineteenth Century: Free Labor of Neoslavery', *Contributions in Black Studies*, 12 (1994), 38-54; Consuelo Naranjo and Imilcy Balboa Navarro, 'Colonos asiáticos para una economía en expansión: Cuba, 1847– 1880', *Revista Mexicana del Caribe*, 8 (1999), 32-65; Benjamin N. Narvaez, 'Chinese Coolies in Cuba and Peru: Race, Labor, and Immigration, 1839-1886', (University of Texas, 2010); Izaskun Álvarez Cuartero, 'De Tihosuco a La Habana. La venta de indios yucatecos a Cuba durante la Guerra de Castas', *Studia historica. Historia antigua* (2007), 559-576; Saiz Pastor (1990), pp. 312-315; Fernando Mendiola, 'The Role of Unfree Labour in Capitalist Development: Spain and Its Empire, Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Centuries', *IRSH*, 61 (2016), 187-211;

the Island or forced labour on the plantations for every free black worker under the age of 50 years old.[647]

The conclusions of the commission provided a timely reminder of the continuity of anti-British sentiment and the pro-slave trade 'necessary evil' discourse within the highest ranks of the Spanish administration. Moreover, it showed the inexistence of any true commitment towards the effective implementation of the Penal Law of 1845. This fact was also confirmed by the Spanish intention to introduce slaves from other American territories, like Brazil, by adopting a very lax interpretation of the Treaty of 1835 and the Penal Law itself.

According to the Spanish authorities, this legislation would only refer to the slave trade from Africa and therefore the transportation of slaves from other territories, like Brazil, would be acceptable. The response of the British government was immediate and, as to be expected, against the Spanish position. They argued that Spain had agreed to stop the slave trade worldwide and that this was incompatible with setting up new regional routes of traffic. This issue, however, led to a diplomatic controversy between 1847 and 1848, when Spain interrupted diplomatic relations with Britain.[648]

The outbreak of the French Revolution of 1848 was watched with great concern by the government of General Narváez, who had been appointed President of the Council of Ministers for the second time in October 1847. Between March and October,

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Santiago Garrido Buj, '"Los otros esclavos": La sustitución de la mano de obra esclava africana en la Cuba colonial', *Revista de Derecho UNED*, 16 (2015), 963-987.

[647] Corwin (1967), pp. 87-89.

[648] Moreno García (1984), p. 633.

revolutionary riots that were brutally repressed by the authorities took place in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Seville. Simultaneously, in June 1848, the Carlist leader Ramón Cabrera entered Catalonia with the intention of reorganising the Carlist forces in the context of the Second Carlist War (1846-1849). The government accused Britain of giving support to the Carlists and broke diplomatic relations with London.[649]

Diplomatic relations were not resumed until 1851 and during this time, Federico Roncali, Count of Alcoy, who had been appointed Captain General of Cuba in February 1848, rejected all claims from the British authorities with regard to the slave trade and the diplomatic controversy regarding the introduction of slaves from other territories remained unresolved until relations were re-established. Between 1850 and 1851, while the diplomatic tension between Spain and Britain was ongoing, the British Foreign Office implemented a new diplomatic and military strategy against the Brazilian slave trade that would have important repercussions in the Spanish Empire.[650]

During Palmerston's second term at the head of the Foreign Office, beginning in 1846, diplomatic tensions between Brazil and Britain reached 'a new level', as Leonardo Marques put it.[651] On 22 April 1850, Britain adopted a new interpretation of the anti-slave trade Aberdeen Act of 1845. This legislation authorized the British Navy to search and capture any slave trade vessels under the Brazilian flag or without any nationality but, for the first time, the Foreign Office advised the Admiralty that these laws allowed for no restriction in terms of where these actions could take place, and therefore, authorized

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[649] Guerrero Latorre, Pérez Garzón, and Rueda Hernanz (2013), pp. 233-236.

[650] Marques (2016), p. 176; Bethell (1970), p. 326.

[651] Marques (2016), p. 176.

the British authorities to operate 'within the Brazilian waters as well as on the high seas'.[652] As Leslie Bethell has pointed out, this apparently minor change in the British interpretation of the law 'had far reaching consequences which at the time were perhaps not entirely foreseen'.[653] Exactly two months later, on 22 June, the British government ordered its warships to enter Brazilian territorial waters and ports to seize any vessels suspected of being involved in the slave trade. This unprecedented decision, more aggressive than any previous action against Brazilian territorial sovereignty, forced the Brazilian government to propose to the Chamber of Deputies a new anti-slave trade law that would eventually be passed on 13 August. Under this new legislation, the Brazilian government deployed all its military and police capacity against the slave traders and its supporters.[654] After the law of 1850, 'slave traders operating in Brazil did not abandon the business immediately', expecting the slave trade to restart, as Marques has shown.[655] Contrary to what the Brazilian government had expected, the British government maintained its 'warlike acts', as described by the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs Paulino Soares de Sousa, until 1852, when the slave trade virtually ceased in Brazil.[656]

In the aftermath of the end of the Brazilian slave trade some prominent traffickers from West Central Africa emigrated to New York, 'heralding a new era' in the history of the slave trade 'dominated by the United States, West Central Africa and Cuba', as John

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[652] Stanley to Hamilton, 22 April 1850, FO 84/823, TNA.

[653] Bethell (1970), p. 326.

[654] Marques (2016), pp. 176-177.

[655] Marques (2016), pp. 177-180.

[656] Bethell (1970), pp. 357-359.

Harris has shown.[657] As they had in 1835, slave traders adapted to the new realty by tailoring 'their investment patterns […] to limit risk' in an increasingly hostile environment against the slave traffic. Merchants, slave-owners and investors from Cuba, West Central Africa and New York 'reached across the Atlantic World, forging alliances, pooling capital and attempting to counter the risks from suppression'.[658]

The Brazilian government tried to present the eradication of the slave trade as the result 'solely and exclusively' of its own commitment and that Brazil could no longer, according to Paulino, 'resist the pressure of the ideas of the age in which we live'.[659] For the British authorities, however, 'nothing would or could have been done by the Brazilian government alone'[660]. As Bethell has concluded, both sides claimed credit for putting an end to the slave trade in Brazil, and both 'exaggerated the extent of their own responsibility'.[661]

For Palmerston, the decisive action of the British warships had achieved in a few months what forty years of diplomatic negotiations had not. According to the British Foreign Secretary, 'persuasion seldom succeeds unless there is [behind it] compulsion of some sort'.[662] Palmerston was willing to implement this form of a more aggressive strategy towards Spain and, as soon as diplomatic relations were re-established in 1851, he sent an ultimatum to the Spanish government demanding 'a faithful and honourable fulfilment

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[657] Harris (2016), p. 411; Marques (2016), pp. 181-182.

[658] Harris (2016), p. 247.

[659] Bethell (1970), p. 362.

[660] Southern, No. 47, 10 August 1852, FO 84/879, TNA. Bethell (1970), p. 360.

[661] Bethell (1970), p. 363.

[662] Palmerston to Baring, place, 3 September 1850; Quoted in Bethell (1970), p. 344.

of the Treaty engagements' and stating that they would be solely responsible for 'any consequences which may arise from a longer continuance of the breach of faith in this respect.'[663] The Foreign Secretary made clear that 'Great Britain will no longer consent to be baffled in regard to the Spanish slave trade as it has hitherto been' and accused the Spanish authorities in Cuba of 'systematically and notoriously […violating the] stipulations of the Treaty and […] the enactments of law.'[664] Palmerston concluded that 'this system of evasion should cease'.[665] The British government thus sharpened its tone, emboldened by its success in Brazil, but there were still two main obstacles that played to the advantage of Spain's 'balancing-act strategy': the notion that Spain was not comparable to a 'second-class' government like Brazil, and the rise of U.S. annexationism in Cuba and Puerto Rico.

For the British, Brazil, Portugal and the Spanish American Republics, among others, were 'half civilized governments', a second-class type of nations against which the British Empire could interfere in its own interest.[666] Palmerston believed that these governments 'require a dressing down every eight or ten years to keep them in order' as 'they care little for words and they must not only see the stick but actually feel it on their shoulders'.[667] Therefore, the general interest of ending the slave trade justified a certain degree of violence in the eyes of the Foreign Secretary. This stark display of 'legal imperialism', as Richard Huzzey put it, operated in a less obvious way in the case of

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[663] Moreno García (1984), p. 639.

[664] Moreno García (1984), p. 639.

[665] Moreno García (1984), p. 639; Corwin (1967), p. 97.

[666] Palmerston to Sir George Bonham, 29 September 1850, FO 17/173, TNA.

[667] Palmerston to Sir George Bonham, 29 September 1850, FO 17/173, TNA.

Spain.[668] Although its military capacity and political influence had dramatically decreased during the first half of the nineteenth century, the Spanish Empire was still among the group of 'civilized governments', and a military intervention against it, like the one against Brazil in 1850, was inconceivable. The activities of David Turnbull and the episode of the HMS *Romney* in Cuba were as far as the British government could go without openly declaring war on Spain.

The second main reason for the British government's avoidance of a more aggressive approach against Spain was the rise of U.S. expansionism and Cuban annexationism.[669] Palmerston believed, as did many others in Britain, in the inevitability of American Manifest Destiny, or as he put it in 1857, that:

> the Anglo-Saxon Race will in process of Time become the Masters of the whole American Continent, North and South, by the Reason of their superior Qualities as compared with the degenerate Spanish and Portuguese Americans.

However, Palmerston also believed that it was Britain's duty 'to delay [such a result] as long as possible'.[670] As Murray has argued, by 1850 British aggressive intervention in Cuba could lead to Cuba's independence, or even worse in the eyes of Britain, to 'the

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[668] Huzzey (2012), p. 64; On imperial rivalries and British imperialism and abolitionism, also see: Paquette (2008); Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon, *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975* (Brighton and London: Sussex Academic Press, 2009); Alfred W. McCoy, Josep M. Fradera, and Stephen Jacobson, 'Endless Empire: Spain's Retreat, Europe's Eclipse, America's Decline', (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012); Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

[669] Josef Opantrny, *US Expansionism and Cuban Annexationism in the 1850s* (Prague: Charles University, 1990).

[670] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 239, 381 (n. 120).

American annexation of the Island'.[671] This climate of increasing international tension fundamentally contributed to the success of Spain's political strategy to protect the slave trade. A situation that would only change with the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861 and the beginning of the second government of the Unión Liberal in Spain in 1863.

The interest of the United States in acquiring Cuba was not a new phenomenon. 'A presumption of ownership' over Cuba, as Lars Schoultz put it, had characterised the U.S. approach since John Quincy Adams stated that Cuba and Puerto Rico were 'natural appendages to the North American continent' and that 'annexation of Cuba to our federal republic will be indispensable to the continuance and integrity of the Union itself'.[672] Thomas Jefferson stated in 1809, in the context of Napoleon's invasion of Spain, that France would accept the U.S. annexation of Cuba 'to prevent our [U.S.] aid to Mexico and the other provinces', and that the United States should 'immediately erect a column on the Southernmost limit of Cuba and inscribe on it a "Ne plus ultra" as to us in that direction'.[673] In 1822, Jefferson suggested that Cuba's 'addition to our confederacy is exactly what is wanting to round our power as a nation', but in 1825 the British government promoted an international agreement between the United States, France and Britain to guarantee that none of them would invade Cuba.[674] Expansionism, however, continued to be a major driving force of American foreign policy and, in 1848,

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[671] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 208; Mark C. Hunter, *Policing the Seas: Anglo-American Relations and the Equatorial Atlantic* (St. John's: International Maritime Economic Histroy Association, 2008).

[672] Schoultz (2009), p. 19; Louis A. Pérez Jr, *Cuba between Empires, 1878-1902* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), p. 178.

[673] Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 27 April 1809, *Founders Online,* United States National Archives, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-01-02-0140. [Accessed: 05/03/2018]

[674] Schoultz (2009), p. 19; Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 86; Blackburn (2011), p. 396.

following the United States' victory against Mexico, President James K. Polk formally presented to Spain an offer of one hundred million dollars for the purchase of Cuba. The offer was rejected by Spain, for which Cuba represented much more than a mere colonial territory.[675] However, this was not an unprecedented practice as, in 1803, the Unites States had acquired the Louisiana territory (828,000 square miles) from France and, in 1819, Spain ceded Florida to the United States as a result of the Adams-Onís Treaty.

In the summer of 1848, Narciso López (1796-1851) led the annexationist conspiracy of *La Mina Rosa Cubana*, in the region of Manicaragua.[676] The plot was dismantled by the Spanish authorities in July 1848, but López managed to escape to New York and later to New Orleans. Between July and August 1849, the government of the United States gave support to the first unsuccessful military expedition of López in his attempt to free Cuba from Spain but, the newly elected President of the United States, Zachary Taylor, reoriented the country's expansionist policies and refused to provide further support to López during his presidency.[677] In 1850, López attempted a second expedition with the support of the governor of Mississippi, John A. Quitman, and six hundred (German and Hungarian) mercenaries from the states of Louisiana and Mississippi. This second attempt was also spurned by the Spanish colonial authorities, and López escaped to the United States once again. In 1851, Narciso López coordinated a third attempt with the support of 420 volunteers under the command of William J. Crittenden, nephew of the

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[675] Schoultz (2009), p. 19; Pérez Jr (1983), p. 178; Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973).

[676] Corwin (1967), p. 99.

[677] Tom Chaffin, *Fatal Glory: Narciso Lopez and the First Clandestine U.S. War against Cuba* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), pp. 67-69, 162-165.

incumbent President Millard Fillmore. This expedition also failed. López was captured, sentenced to death, and publicly executed in Havana on 31 August 1851.[678]

Under the presidency of Franklin Pierce (1853-1857), a pro-Southern Democrat, expansionist voices again called for the acquisition of Cuba as a new slave state for the Union. As Carmen de la Guardia has suggested, the appointment of Pierre Soulé (1801-1870), a pro-Southern and pro-slavery politician, as the U.S. Ambassador in Madrid, was interpreted as Pierce's strong commitment to Cuba's annexation.[679] Soulé (1801-1870) was born in France, the son of one of Napoleon's generals. Jailed during the Restoration for his radical politics, he emigrated to the United States, arriving in New Orleans in 1826. Starting virtually penniless, he married well and quickly built a career in the Democratic Party, serving as Senator for Louisiana in 1847 and 1849 to 1853 before President Franklin Pierce appointed him ambassador to Madrid. A consistent advocate of freedom for the peoples of Europe, Soulé was also an ardent expansionist with a particular interest in the acquisition of Cuba. Appointed ambassador to Madrid, his primary goal was to find a way to make Cuba American.[680]

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[678] Rodrigo Lazo, *Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Chaffin (2003); Tom Chaffin, '"Sons of Washington": Narciso Lopez, Filibustering, and U.S. Nationalism, 1848-1851', *Journal of Early American Republic*, 15-1 (1995), 79-108; Brown (1980); May (1973); Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

[679] de la Guardia (2014), pp. 216-217.

[680] Jennifer R. Green and Patricia Kirkwood, 'Reframing the Antebellum Democratic Mainstream Transatlantic Diplomacy and the Career of Pierre Soulé', *Civil War History*, 61-3 (2015), 212-251; Amos Ettinger, *The Mission to Spain of Pierre Soulé* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932). I thank Prof Adrian Shubert for passing me his notes on Pierre Soulé.

In 1854, Secretary of State William Marcy authorized Soulé and the U.S. ambassadors in Great Britain and France, James Buchanan and John Y. Mason, to draft a strategy to purchase Cuba from Spain. The ambassadors met secretly at the Belgian city of Ostend and wrote what was later named the Ostende Manifesto of 1854. They declared that *'*Cuba is as necessary to the North American Republic as any of its present members, and that it belongs naturally to that great family of states of which the Union is the Providential Nursery*'* and urged an American intervention to stop what they believed would be an imminent slave insurrection that would 'spread like wildfire' to the southern United States:[681]

> We should, however, be recreant to our duty, be unworthy of our gallant forefathers, and commit base treason against our posterity, should we permit Cuba to be Africanized and become a second St. Domingo, with all its attendant horrors to the white race, and suffer the flames to extend to our own neighbouring shores, seriously to endanger or actually to consume the fair fabric of our Union.[682]

The document was sent to Washington in October 1854, arguing for the American purchase of Cuba from Spain and that the United States 'shall be justified in wresting it from Spain' if the purchase was again denied.[683] Against the will of Pierce's administration, the minutes of the meeting were leaked to the press and, four months

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[681] May (1973), pp. 57-59. J. Preston Moore, 'Pierre Soule: Southern Expansionist and Promoter', *The Journal of Southern History*, 21-2 (1955), 203–223 (p. 392); Jay Sexton, 'Toward a synthesis of foreign relations in the Civil War era, 1848–77', *American Nineteenth Century History* (2004), 50-73; Sidney Webster, 'Mr. Marcy, the Cuban Question and the Ostend Manifesto', *Political Science Quarterly*, 8-1 (1893), 1-32; Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.–Latin American Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[682] *Ostend Manifesto*, 15 October 1854. <https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ostend_Manifesto> [Accessed: 24/04/2017]

[683] *Ostend Manifesto*, 15 October 1854. <https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ostend_Manifesto> [Accessed: 24/04/2017]

later, the opposition to the President in the House of Representatives forced the American government to publish the document in full.[684] The manifesto was strongly criticized. On the one hand, the Northern anti-slavery opposition saw it as an attempt to extend slavery in the United States. On the other, the Spanish, British and French governments presented the document as a threat to Spain's national sovereignty.[685] The publication of the Ostende Manisfesto debilitated the expansionist position and contributed to justifying Spain's self-victimizing rhetoric against the British government.

The expression of expansionist sentiment in the United States found a parallel response from Cuban intellectuals who developed an annexationist strategy both on the Island and in the United States.[686] As Leonardo Marques has argued, 'many Cuban Creoles saw annexation to the United States as the best way to keep slavery alive', and provided support to Narciso López's expeditions.[687] Annexationists, as Chaffin has rightly argued, 'called themselves soldiers of liberty and republicanism, yet they had no intension of extending liberties to Cuba's 436,000 enslaved blacks'.[688]

In December 1847, the Count of Alcoy reported to Madrid that 'inside the Island of Cuba some bad Spaniards join their efforts and their intrigues to the efforts and intrigues of the foreigners, to snatch the Island from their metropolis'.[689] The Count of Alcoy

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[684] Brown (1980), pp. 141-142, 255-256.

[685] David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis 1848–1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p. 195.

[686] Sánchez (2017), pp. 73-87; 484-498.

[687] Marques (2016), p. 218; Chaffin (2003), pp. 11-12. This perception changed in the early 1860s, when James Buchanan's administration saw the annexation of Cuba as 'one of the few possible ways to stop the traffic'. Marques (2016), p. 239.

[688] Chaffin (2003), pp. 3-4.

[689] 17 December 1847, Ultramar, Sección Cuba, leg. 2913, AHN.

characterised annexationist discourse as 'a false liberalism' which wrongly proclaims that:

> Cubans [live] oppressed under a despotic yoke, exposed in their businesses and properties to all the arbitrariness of absolute power, and overwhelmed by hateful taxes that have no other goal than to enrich their masters. [The Cuban people] look forward to the day when the Republic of the Union has to open its arms, inviting them to take a seat among the peoples of the American Confederation.[690]

This group of 'bad Spaniards' had the support of an important community of Cuban exiles living in New York, New Orleans and Florida. Gaspar Betancourt Cisneros, José Aniceto Iznaga, Cristóbal Madán, Domingo Goicuría and the Count of Pozos Dulces, among others, organized political opposition to Spanish control of Cuba, and actively defined and promoted annexationist discourse. Since its first manifestations at the beginning of the 1840s, the advocates of annexation generally argued in favour of slavery in Cuba.[691] Fully convinced that Britain would eventually force Spain to liberate all the slaves illegally introduced into the Island after 1820, Betancourt Cisneros told José Antonio Saco that 'the annexationist revolution was indispensable to save us'.[692] Saco, who was living in exile in France at that time, responded that the desire for annexation was the result of the Cuban planters' 'weakness', who 'unable to resist the seductive temptation to buy negroes [...] and to avoid the claims of England, seek the opportunity to break their oaths and covered with the American flag, […] they surrender without scruples and with debauchery to the traffic of human flesh'.[693]

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[690] Count of Alcoy to the Secretary of State, 17 December 1847, leg. 2913, Ultramar, AHN.

[691] Sánchez (2017), pp. 79-82.

[692] Raúl Cepero Bonilla, *Azúcar y Abolición* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1976), p. 49; Saco (2001), vol. 3, p. 349.

[693] Saco (2001), vol. 3, pp. 349-350.

In January 1848, a group of annexationists linked to Betancourt Cisneros founded the newspaper *La Verdad* in New York, as the main propagandistic platform for disseminating their political programme.[694] In their pages they advocated annexation to the United States as the best and only viable way to protect slavery against the British government, which promoted 'the freedom of all slaves and *emancipados'*.[695] The newspaper engaged in a public controversy withJoséAntonio Saco, for whom the preservation of slavery on the Island was also indispensable, but who believed that the annexationists were putting Cuba's safety and prosperity at risk. He predicted that an annexationist revolution would be followed by a general slave revolt. In 1848, Saco published *Ideas sobre la incorporación de Cuba a Estados Unidos* in which he appealed to Cubans' national pride and the fear of a massive slave uprising to reject the annexation to the United States.

> Once the war begins, [...] either of the two sides if they feel the need to, but above all the Spaniards, will they not call our most formidable enemy to their aid? Will they not raise the magical cry of freedom and reinforce their legions with our own slaves?
>
> Even if none of the two belligerent parties called for such dangerous support, they [the slaves] will not remain calm. [...] The day the thunder of the cannon separates them, that day the horrors of Santo Domingo could be repeated in Cuba.[696]

Saco argued that, with the outbreak of war, the slaves would have the support of 'the abolitionist groups, which will not miss the precious occasion' to put an end to slavery in

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[694] Sánchez (2017), pp. 73-87.

[695] *La Verdad*, issue 21, New York, 30 August 1853. Moreno García (1984), p. 684.

[696] José Antonio Saco, *Ideas sobre la incorporación de Cuba a Estados Unidos* (Paris: Impr. de Panckoucke, 1848), pp. 54-55.

Cuba. Saco believed that sparking a revolution against the Spanish authorities would have unpredictable and tragic results for the white population of the Island.[697]

The annexationists responded to Saco in the pages of *La Verdad* in June 1851. They argued that the preservation of slavery and the avoidance of a general slave revolt were a priority for the annexationist movement and that the Spanish authorities, even in the context of war, would never instigate a slave revolt, because 'although some *peninsulares* and part of the army are enemies of the annexation, they are not of the race to which they belong and they would never lend to the negroes such criminal and inhumane support'.[698] The authors of *La Verdad* concluded that ultimately the revolution would be supported by the United States, which 'will embrace the cause', and guarantee 'liberty and property' in Cuba.[699] Underlying this debate was the wider question of which 'white culture', the Anglo-Saxon or the Latin, was better equipped to rule the Island. Saco argued that the Spanish monarchical culture should prevail, while the annexationists believed that the American republican tradition would bring greater prosperity to Cuba.[700]

In spite of these arguments, the failed expeditions of Narciso López in 1850 and 1851 proved that the annexationists had overestimated their support within the Island and the will of the United States government to break the Neutrality Agreement of 1818 with

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[697] Saco (1848), pp. 54-55.

[698] *La Verdad*, issue 83, New York, 12 June 1851. Moreno García (1984), pp. 687-689.

[699] *La Verdad*, issue 83, New York, 12 June 1851. Moreno García (1984), pp. 687-689.

[700] Saco (2001), vol. 3, pp. 272-273; José A. Matos Arévalo, 'José Antonio Saco, pensamiento social. Apuntes sobre el padre Bartolomé de Las Casas', in *El pensamiento lascasiano en la conciencia de América y Europa,* ed. by Pablo González Casanova (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1994), pp. 57-68.

Spain.[701] The reassurance that Narváez's government gave to the Cuban slave owners, and the failure of the French Revolution of 1848, reduced the interest of the Cuban oligarchy in annexation to the United States; however, as Romy Sánchez has concluded, this was 'only a temporary appeasement of an explosive situation'.[702]

Annexationist discourse played a central role in the successful construction of Spain's rhetoric of victimhood, as it proved in the eyes of the international community how 'vulnerable' Spain's sovereignty over the Island was and how 'dangerous' any colonial reform would be in such volatile political context. Spanish officials frequently referred to annexationist fears to confront British demands and diplomatic pressure. In 1858, the First Secretary of the Spanish Embassy in London, Augusto Conte (1823-1902), wrote to the British government about this.[703] Stressing the difficulties that the Spanish government faced in implementing any reform in Cuba, he argued that 'in the case of a colony so close to the United States, the metropolitan government can not take there certain kind of measures that would produce discontent among its inhabitants'.[704] Conte affirmed that, despite the efforts of the Spanish colonial authorities, certain 'wealthy and important people had forged a horrific conspiracy for the emancipation of the Island'.[705] He also argued that the 'fanatic' recent declarations of Lord Brougham and the Bishop

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[701] Chaffin (2003), p. 219.

[702] Sánchez (2017), p. 79; Moreno García (1984), pp. 690-691.

[703] Brigitte Journeau, *Augusto Conte, memorialista y diplomático* (Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2016).

[704] Conte to Earl of Malmesbury, 20 September 1858, leg. 2923, No. 270, Ultramar, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 769-770.

[705] Conte to Earl of Malmesbury, 20 September 1858, leg. 2923, No. 270, Ultramar, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 769-770.

of Oxford, demanding a more aggressive strategy against Spain, would only result in 'the United States [becoming] the owners of our colony'.[706] Conte concluded his communication expressing the ideological importance that Cuba had for Spain, and the consequences of adopting a similar approach to the one taken with Brazil:

> What is Cuba for Spain? Cuba is everything; it is what remains of the shipwreck of our fortune, it is the future of our trade and navy [...] Do you want, as a result of pursuing at all costs and suddenly the suppression of the [slave] trade, to terrify the Island of Cuba? It would be the same as setting the Island on fire or abandoning it to the United States.[707]

In conclusion, annexationist and expansionist discourses, together with Spain's international stance, which dissuaded Britain from adopting unilateral measures, significantly contributed to the success of the Spanish strategy of protecting the continuation of the slave trade into Cuba. A 'balancing-act' was adopted, based on the false premises that the Spanish authorities were doing everything they could to put an end to the slave trade and were committed to its international obligations. The reality, however, was that the Spanish government consistently avoided the drafting of effective anti-slave trade legislation and dissuaded Britain from adopting a unilateral strategy against the slave trade into Cuba.

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[706] On 18 June 1858, the Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce (William's son), and Lord Brougham denounced the economic difficulties that the Jamaican sugar producers were facing to compete with the Cuban sugar produced by slaves. The British politicians accused the Spanish authorities of ignoring the international agreements signed with Britain and defended to adopt any possible measure to stop the slave trade into Cuba. 18 June 1858, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2922, No. 180, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 751-752.

[707] 20 September 1858, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2923, No. 279, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 770-771.

2. A Matter of 'national dignity'. Anti-Slave Trade Policies from Within

In a recent publication, Josep Fradera wondered 'what was the real significance of the Spanish abolitionism of the 1850s and 1860s after some decades of silence and conformity?'[708] Fradera argued that, for Granville Sharp and James Stephen in Britain, abolitionism represented 'Christian purification'; in France, for Alexis Tocqueville it was 'a possibility for simultaneous moral and political reform'; and for the Utilitarian School it constituted 'a formula for progress, […] waged labour and free trade'.[709] Abolitionism was for Juan de la Pezuela (1853-1853), José Gutierrez de la Concha (1854-1859) and Francisco Serrano y Domínguez (1859-1862), as captain generals of Cuba, an opportunity to vindicate 'national dignity' and Spaniards' 'honour'. They all shaped an anti-slave trade discourse that went beyond the traditional 'necessary evil' stance and presented abolitionism as the right thing to do.[710] The translation into political action of these discourses varied significantly: Pezuela implemented an abolitionist agenda in Cuba, while Concha and Serrano continued protecting and promoting the slave trade into the Island. However, they constituted a significant divergence and novelty in the construction of abolitionist ideas in Spain's empire. These discourses have important similarities with anti-slave trade expressions developed in Portugal and Brazil where the alleged need 'to salvage national honour' contributed to the development of a successful anti-slave trade narrative in the 1840s and 1850s.[711]

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[708] Fradera (2013), p. 277.

[709] Fradera (2013), p. 277.

[710] Pezuela to the Secretary of State, 7 February 1854, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2924, No. 80, AHN.

[711] Marques (2006), pp. 148-149; Bethell (1970), pp. 266, 338.

The appointment of Juan de la Pezuela as Captain General of Cuba in 1853 responded, fundamentally, to the Spanish government's decision to promote alternative forms of labour force that would gradually reduce the need for new African slaves in a 'slow and safe way', as the Spanish government later put it.[712] As Captain General of Puerto Rico between 1848 and 1851, Pezuela had been successful in dealing with slave owners' and planters' demands and avoiding the introduction of new slaves after the slave trade had been virtually eradicated in this colony from 1842.[713] Certainly, Cuba represented a much more challenging context considering the structural importance that slavery and the slave trade had on the Island. However, during his time as Captain General of Cuba, Pezuela issued orders liberating all slaves illegally imported since 1835, allowed marriage between black women and white men, authorized freedmen to serve in the militia and threatened anyone suspected of being involved in the slave trade with expulsion.[714]

By the time Pezuela was appointed as Captain General of Cuba, the Spanish government, headed by Luis José Sartorius, Count of San Luis, was particularly concerned about the role that Joseph Crawford, British Consul in Havana, was playing in the colony. The Spanish cabinet believed that he had established himself as 'an alternative authority to the Captain General with a navy at his service not smaller than

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[712] 25 October 1861, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2924, AHN. Corwin (1967), pp. 115-120; 182.

[713] TASTD <http://www.slavevoyages.org/> [Accessed: 07/12/2015]

[714] Corwin (1967), pp. 115-120; 182; Martínez-Fernández (1998); Robert Steven Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p. 294 (n. 242); José G. Cayuela Fernández, *Bahía de ultramar : España y Cuba en el siglo XIX : el control de las relaciones coloniales* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1993), pp. 228-231, 233-235.

ours'.[715] The appointment of Pezuela, and the fear among Cuban slave-owners that he would implement an anti-slave trade agenda, had the effect of temporally stimulating the slave trade and provoked the British consul to complain, once again and with much reason, that 'the slave trade [in Cuba] flourishes'.[716]

The Spanish cabinet perceived that this kind of statement, although perfectly accurate, was damaging the country's international image and believed that the Spanish authorities should be 'ready to defend our rights and our dignity. 'If Spain is afraid it will achieve nothing and will lose her honour'.[717] The government ordered more officials and troops to be deployed on the Island, to suppress any possible slave insurrection and to have all military forces in Cuba ready for any contingency.[718] The government also suggested the possibility of buying some space in a 'respectable French newspaper' to influence the international public opinion and make the case for the Spanish interest.[719]

As Corwin has pointed out, when Pezuela arrived in Havana, he was received with great scepticism by Cuban planters, slave-owners and bureaucrats.[720] He was an outsider to Cuban society and, as Cayuela has argued, 'he was opposed not only to the slave trade,

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[715] 'Memoria relativa al estado de nuestras relaciones con Inglaterra', 23 September 1853, Ultramar, Cuba, Legajo 2919, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 699-700.

[716] Crawford to Clarendon, 29 August 1853, No. 69, FO 84/906, TNA.

[717] 'Memoria relativa al estado de nuestras relaciones con Inglaterra', 23 September 1853, Ultramar, Cuba, Legajo 2919, AHN.

[718] 'Memoria relativa al estado de nuestras relaciones con Inglaterra', 23 September 1853, Ultramar, Cuba, Legajo 2919, AHN.

[719] 'Memoria relativa al estado de nuestras relaciones con Inglaterra', 23 September 1853, Ultramar, Cuba, Legajo 2919, AHN.

[720] Corwin (1967), pp. 114-115.

but also to the institution of slavery'.[721] Pezuela considered the eradication of the slave trade to be essential as, 'even if the insolent English try to confuse us all with their violent and exaggerated accusations, they are essentially right in their complaint'.[722] Similarly to Valdés in 1841, by acknowledging Spain's responsibility, Pezuela admitted that anti-slave trade policies had been fundamentally insufficient until then. The Captain General described a complex network of interests in which everyone on the Island was involved and concluded that Spain should take a final decision once and for all: to break the international agreements with Britain, and face the consequences, or to authorize the inspection of the slave plantations to effectively fight against the slave trade. Pezuela believed that this second option 'was hard, but was right' and requested that the Spanish government legislate in this regard.[723]

On 22 March 1854, the Spanish government passed three decrees with two alleged goals: to stop the slave trade, and to promote the introduction of free workers into the Island.[724] This new legislation instructed the colonial authorities to create a register of all slaves on the Island, so all new slaves found in Cuba 'won't be considered as such'.[725] The Spanish government clarified to the Captain General that these new orders did not repeal the Penal Law of 1845, and that article nine of this law was still in place, and therefore, 'by no means shall you proceed [...] to make inquiries within the plantations to

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[721] Cayuela Fernández (1993), p. 228.

[722] Pezuela to the Secretary of State, 7 February 1854, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2924, No. 80, AHN.

[723] Pezuela to the Secretary of State, 7 February 1854, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2924, No. 80, AHN.

[724] 'Reglamento sobre capitación de esclavos', 'Reglamento para la formación de los padrones y un registro civil de esclavos', and 'Reglamento para la introducción y régimen de los colonos en Cuba'.

[725] 'Decreto del Consejo de Ministros', 21 March 1854, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2912, AHN.

ascertain the origin of the slaves in them'.[726] This impossible balance between effectively fighting against the slave trade, as Madrid was demanding, on the one hand; and the impossibility of the authorities entering the plantations, on the other, was broken by the Captain General's decree of 3 May 1854. On that date, Pezuela partially authorized the colonial authorities to enter and inspect plantations. To do so, the Captain General of Cuba adopted a very lax interpretation of the Penal Law of 1845 and pointed out that these visits would not 'disturb […] the owners'.[727] Pezuela's decree established that in the period of one month from any known arrival of a slave vessel to Cuba, the authorities would be able to inspect the plantations and if any black person who had not been previously included in the slave register was to be found, they would be declared free.[728]

The reaction of the Cuban planters to Pezuela's decree of May 1854 was immediate and overwhelming, and only 3 months after publication, the Spanish government ordered its repeal.[729] As Luis Martínez-Fernández has argued, 'Pezuela managed to alienate virtually all the powerful elements of Cuban society and his actions helped spark a new wave of Cuba annexationism and United States filibusterism'.[730] A few days after the publication of Pezuela's decree authorizing the searching of the plantations, the U.S. consul in Havana reported to Washington that Cuba was 'on the eve of a fearful revolution'.[731] In August 1854, the government of one day's duration headed by

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[726] 'Decreto del Consejo de Ministros', 21 March 1854, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2912, AHN.

[727] 10 May 1854, No. 35, FO 313/26, TNA.

[728] 10 May 1854, No. 35, F.O. 313/26, TNA.

[729] Moreno García (1984), pp. 716-717.

[730] Martínez-Fernández (1998), p. 133.

[731] Martínez-Fernández (1998), pp. 133-134.

Fernando Fernández de Córdova determined that the decree was in clear violation of the Penal Law of 1845 and that a 'local authority' had no right to interpret or overwrite a law that had been passed by the Cortes.[732] One month later, in September 1854, Pezuela was dismissed and José Gutiérrez de la Concha was appointed as his successor. For Pezuela, the fulfilment of Spain's international agreements was the right thing to do and the inspection of the plantations the only way to effectively enforce the law. He overestimated Madrid's willing to adopt new measures to this end and, less than one year after his arrival in Cuba, the opposition of planters and slave-owners was enough to have him removed from his post.

The appointment of José Gutierrez de la Concha responded to the decision of the new Spanish government, led by Baldomero Espartero, to give reassurance to the Cuban slave owners and de-escalate the tension between the colonial elites and the Metropolis. As Cayuela has argued, the support that the Cuban elite gave to the military uprising and revolution of 1854, which put an end to the so-called *Decada Moderada* and brought the Progressive Party into power, crucially explains the 'planned laxity' that Concha adopted against the slave trade.[733] On paper, however, the Spanish government continued to order the new Captian General to enforce the law and to stop the slave trade.[734] The risk of losing British support in case of an American attempt to conquer Cuba, inclined the Spanish government to publicly stress the need to stop the slave trade into the Island, protect the institution of slavery, and find alternative forms of workforce. During his first mandate in Cuba (1850-1852), Gutiérrez de la Concha captured and executed Narciso

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[732] 20-21 August 1854, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2912, AHN.

[733] Cayuela Fernández (1993), pp. 230, 236.

[734] Cayuela Fernández (1993), pp. 230-233, 235-236, 238-257.

López in 1851 and adopted a permissive attitude toward the slave trade: during this time the number of slaves introduced each year rose from 3,098, in 1850, to 8,098, in 1852.[735]

Concha saw the slave trade as a 'political problem' that directly affected the international image and diplomatic stance of Spain.[736] During his second mandate in Cuba, he effectively developed Spain's 'balancing-act strategy' by publicly supporting anti-slave trade rhetoric, in line with Pezuela's stance, while protecting the slave trade and providing reassurance to the slave owners.[737] Concha repealed his predecessor's most controversial decrees, and opposed the inspection of plantations by officials.[738] In 1855, the slave trader Captain James Smith commented in an interview with the American magazine *De Bow's Review* that since Concha was back in Havana, the slave trade was 'flourishing as ever'. He described Concha as an abolitionist only 'in words' and compared his attitude with his predecessor's:

> He talks a great deal, but Pezuela acted. From time immemorial, the planter's estate has been sacred. But Pezuela respected nothing. He seized the negroes wherever he could find them, even on the plantations. By this he incurred the enmity of the planters; and he would probably have been assassinated if he had not been recalled.[739]

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[735] TASTD <http://www.slavevoyages.org/> [Accessed: 07/12/2015].

[736] Cayuela Fernández (1993), p. 245.

[737] Cayuela Fernández (1993), p. 236.

[738] During his mandate in Cuba, Concha established the so-called *Sistema de Cédulas*, by which every slave should have an identification certificate. The system soon proved completely ineffective in stopping the slave trade and was used to validate the status of slaves who had been illegally introduced into Cuba. Cayuela Fernández (1993), pp. 244-245.

[739] *De Bow's Review,* 18 (January to July 1855), p. 226 <https://goo.gl/bgMq5U> [Accessed: 03/5/2018]; Marques (2016), pp. 202-203, 229 (n. 227).

Nevertheless, Concha developed an anti-slave trade rhetoric that is relevant in the context of a new stage in the construction of abolitionist discourses in Spain, even though it did not translate into political action. It constituted a new position that went beyond the traditional humanitarian critique and the 'necessary evil' discourse. In one of his first instructions to his subordinates, Concha defined the slave trade as 'immoral and damaging' and praised the efforts made by Pezuela, promising to stop the slave trade 'and make it disappear'.[740] The reasons he gave focused on the preservation of Spain's 'honour':

> The frank, sincere, and absolute repression of this infamous traffic is a duty for the government in compliance with the Treaties. It is not less for the authorities of this Island; and it is a matter of honour for all of them. The trade in negroes, then, must disappear completely, and it will disappear.[741]

Concha later justified his inaction against the slave trade on the basis of the 'deeply contradictory' orders that he had received from the Spanish government, which aimed to eradicate a practice, deeply rooted in Cuban society, without altering or disturbing anyone on the Island.[742]

At the end of his mandate, the Captain General ruled that, under some extraordinary circumstances, the authorities would have the right to inspect the plantations; but these instructions were strongly rejected and withdrawn by the Spanish government.[743] Concha responded that denying the right of the colonial authorities to visit the plantations virtually nullified any attempt to stop the slave trade, and pointed out that it should be not

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[740] 10 May 1854, No. 35, F.O. 313/26, TNA. Moreno García (1984), p. 721.

[741] 10 May 1854, No. 35, F.O. 313/26, TNA.

[742] 12 June 1857, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2921, AHN.

[743] Real Orden, 6 January 1856, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2921, AHN.

just the government's 'right' but also its duty enforce the law.[744] Concha concluded that without the capacity to inspect the plantations, the slave trade and the 'violent and well-founded complaints of the British government' would continue no matter what he did.[745] After five years as Captain General, Concha believed that the position of the Spanish government was unsustainable and, in December 1859, he resigned. During his mandate, the number of slaves introduced into Cuba had drastically increased year after year, and in 1859, it was the highest ever: at least 26,290.[746]

The British authorities and anti-slave trade activists were astonished. In November 1859, Crawford reported that the Cuban slave trade had reached 'gigantic proportions'.[747] When Francisco Serrano y Domínguez arrived in Havana as the newly appointed Captain General in 1859, his orders were almost identical to those that Pezuela and Concha had received: to stop the slave trade, to comply with the international agreements to this effect, but also not to conduct any search in any plantation, as this could damage 'the moral strength that the owners so much need [and which could] stir in the minds of the negroes a desire for insubordination'.[748]

In terms of Serrano's political action against the slave trade, he proposed the creation of a new war fleet of steam vessels to patrol Cuba's coast and fight against the traffic before

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[744] Concha to the Secretary of State, 20 February 1856, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2921, AHN.

[745] Concha to the Secretary of State, 20 February 1856, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2921, AHN.

[746] TASTD <http://www.slavevoyages.org/> [Accessed: 07/12/2015].

[747] Crawford to Russell, No. 37, 19 November 1859, FO 84/1109, TNA. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 266.

[748] 'Instrucciones al Capitán General de Cuba D Fco. Serrano y Dominguez, Conde de S. Antonio.' Ministerio de la Guerra y Ultramar, 20 Octobre 1859, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2923, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 795-796; Cayuela Fernández (1993), p. 236.

the slaves were landed. This proposal was accepted by the Spanish government but not implemented until 1865.[749] Cayuela has pointed out that Serrano 'developed the same behaviour' as Concha, adopting a public rhetoric contrary to the slave trade but, at the same time, providing support and protection to slave owners and traders.[750] This is generally true as Serrano continued to develop an anti-slave trade discourse that focussed on 'national honour' and 'dignity', but there was also an important novelty: Serrano argued in favour of declaring the slave trade to be piracy.

In his instruction to his subordinates of July 1861, Serrano defined slave traders as 'speculators' who 'congratulate themselves in avoiding the law and increasingly compromise the dignity of the country'.[751] For Serrano, Spain's dignity was in danger as the slave trade 'demoralises and disturbs the administration of the country [...] and provides reasonable pretexts for the noble character of the Spanish nation to be denigrated'.[752] Preserving slavery in Cuba would be a much more difficulty task if Spain did not fulfil its international responsibilities, and eventually tackle 'the depressive and constant control of a foreign agent'.[753] For all these reasons, Serrano ordered all Spanish authorities in Cuba to fight against the slave trade and requested the Spanish government 'to declare piracy […] the slave trade', adding his voice to a traditional demand of the British Government. [754]

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[749] Moreno García (1984), p. 798.

[750] Cayuela Fernández (1993), p. 236.

[751] 'Circular del Capitán General Francisco Serrano', 25 July 1861, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2924, AHN.

[752] 'Circular del Capitán General Francisco Serrano', 25 July 1861, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2924, AHN.

[753] 'Circular del Capitán General Francisco Serrano', 25 July 1861, Ultramar, leg. 2924, AHN.

[754] 'Circular del Capitán General Francisco Serrano', 25 July 1861, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2924, AHN.

Successive Spanish governments had been extremely reluctant to declare the slave trade to be piracy, and the British Foreign Office had abandoned this demand as a top priority in its negotiations with Spain after 1855.[755] Captain General Concha had been consulted at that time about the possible consequences of adopting this measure and in his reply he predicted catastrophic consequences if such punishment was to be enforced:

> If, under the Criminal Code, this offence [the slave trade] is punishable with death; one of two things may happen: either the enormity of the punishment would make it illusory in most cases, or that if it were to become effective a lake of blood would open between Cuba and Spain that would not be possible to cover [...] it would compromise the security of the Island.[756]

The position of the Spanish Governments had not changed much since 1855, and Serrano's request was rejected.[757] They believed that punishing an activity that was not even openly condemned by the Cuban public with the death penalty would weaken the authority of the Spanish officials on the Island. The Spanish government suggested that the only sensible way to put an end to the slave trade was to provide an alternative workforce for Cuba that would make the slave trade unnecessary. This 'slow and safe way', as the Spanish government defined it, was in their opinion the only reasonable option left.[758]

Although very different in their commitment to ending the slave trade, Pezuela, Concha and Serrano's discourses converged in emphasizing the damage to Spain's 'national

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[755] On the slave trade as piracy see: Martinez (2012), pp. 49-50, 60-61, 64-65, 119–121, 143.

[756] 12 May 1855, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2925, AHN.

[757] Moreno García (1984), p. 807.

[758] 'Ordenes al Capitán General de Cuba Francisco Serrano', 25 October 1861, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2924, AHN.

dignity' that violation of the law was causing. These discourses, although innovative in the Cuban context, bore strong similarities to anti-slave trade ideas put forward by the Portuguese and Brazilian authorities from the 1830s up to the 1850s. In these cases, the protection of national honour against Britain's 'warlike acts' found a successful common ground that eventually mobilized public opinion toward anti-slave trade positions.[759]

As João Pedro Marques has argued for the Portuguese case, in the second half of the 1830s, Sá de Bandeira (1795-1876), Prime Minister of Portugal, responded to British diplomatic pressure by adopting a 'short and unsentimental' anti-slave trade discourse that stressed national honour and Anglophobic nationalism. This 'risky strategy' as Marques put it, aimed to 'involve the nation in a subject it viewed as foreign or with a certain amount of indifference'.[760] Gradually, this 'unsentimental' rhetoric gained ground in Portuguese society, and before 1840, deputies and journalists added to the British-imported humanitarian reasons, other ideas like 'political expediency or to salvage national honour'.[761]

From 1840 onwards, Portuguese public opinion steadily shifted to the idea that the slave trade had to cease because Portugal's international prestige was in danger. Politicians, both in government and in Parliament, who had traditionally advocated resisting British interference using nationalist rhetoric, came to see abolition, as Marques put it, 'as an unavoidable necessity, not only for humanitarian reasons or future economic interests,

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[759] Marques (2006); Bethell (1970).

[760] Marques (2006), pp. 106-108.

[761] Marques (2006), pp. 148-149.

but mainly because Portuguese respectability was at stake.'[762] Marques concluded that, 20 years after Palmerston's Act, which put Portugal's sovereignty on the ropes, the 'Portuguese ruling classes changed sides, not so much because the country had been take up in a wave of anti-slavery, but because the defence of sovereignty and national honour had forced them to match the pace set by Britain.'[763]

A similar phenomenon can be identified in the Brazilian case. Britain's unilateral and hostile approach to the Brazilian slave trade became law in 1845. The implementation of the Aberdeen Act and its later interpretation of 1850, which authorized the British Navy to capture any slave trade vessels, even in Brazilian waters and ports, was seen as an 'act of vandalism' and 'warlike' by large sectors of Brazilian society. As Leslie Bethell put it, this strategy was soon defined as 'an insult to our dignity as an independent people', even by anti-slavery activists like Joaquim Nabuco.[764] As in the Portuguese case, national dignity was seen to be jeopardized by British pressure and, in 1850, Paulino Soares de Sousa, Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared that the British strategy 'wounds deeply every feeling of dignity and national spirit in the country'.[765] In a further similarity to the Portuguese case, a true commitment to fighting against the slave trade by all means was seen as the only plausible solution to the crisis. In 1849, Brazilian priest and politician, Venâncio Henriques de Resende concluded that, 'if we are weak, we have still a force […] capable of making England lower her flag […] sincerity and good faith,

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[762] Marques (2006), p. 181.

[763] Marques (2006), p. 186.

[764] Bethell (1970), p. 266.

[765] Paulino to Hudson, 12 February, enclosed in Hudson No. 7, 20 February 1850, FO 84/802, TNA. Bethell (1970), p. 317.

reason and justice. Let the government take the lead and be the first to repress the traffic'.[766]

This approach was embraced by the vast majority of the Brazilian political class, who could not tolerate 'the number of insults which we shall have daily to suffer', as Soares de Sousa put it in his speech at the Chamber of Deputies in July 1852.[767] By this time, the slave trade had virtually ended in Brazil and 'both sides claimed the credit'. For the Brazilian authorities, the eradication of the slave trade was the consequence of their true commitment to persuading the Brazilian people. Eusebio de Quiroz (1812-1868), Minister of Justice between 1848 and 1852, defined it as 'a revolution in public opinion', which, by embracing 'the ideas of the age in which we live', reclaimed their sovereignty and national independence from Britain.[768]

Therefore, in Brazil and Portugal anti-slave trade discourses that appealed to a sense of 'national honour' or 'dignity' contributed to successfully transforming anti-British nationalism into anti-slave trade policies that were approved by large sections of the public. For the Spanish case, David Murray has suggested that 'under relentless pressure from Britain to modify or replace the law, Spanish politicians took to defending it in patriotic terms against what they termed unwarranted foreign interference', but these 'patriotic terms' also operated to justify the adoption of anti-slave trade policies.[769]

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[766] Paulino to Hudson, No. 7, 20 February 1850, FO 84/802, TNA. Bethell (1970), p. 319.

[767] Bethell (1970), p. 338.

[768] Bethell (1970), p. 362.

[769] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 270.

In Britain, Palmerston's government and abolitionist activists alike appealed to this rhetoric to highlight Spain's 'bad faith to those treaties contracted with England'.[770] Palmerston, who had become Prime Minister in June 1859, accused the Spanish authorities of lacking 'the slightest feeling of national honour and good faith', and the abolitionist conference gathered in London in June 1861, emphasized that 'remonstrance have been tried to the utmost extent compatible with the national honour and dignity'.[771]

Anti-slave trade discourses based on patriotic rhetoric were echoed in the Spanish context by central figures of Spain's colonial government like Pezuela, Concha and Serrano, but unlike in Portugal and Brazil, they failed to convince the Spanish government to alter its strategy. The 'safe and slow way' defended in Madrid was presented as the only possible solution without adopting drastic measures that would risk Spain's sovereignty over Cuba. Although they did not produce any tangible outcome, anti-slave trade discourses that appealed to 'national honour' are important to understanding the complex picture of abolitionist ideas in the second half of the nineteenth century in Spain, and to defining a more comprehensive description of the circulation of anti-slave trade discourses in the Atlantic world. Contrary to what has traditionally been stressed in the historiography, it was not only external demands that impacted and altered Spain's policies on the slave trade.[772] Internal dissension and

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[770] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 300.

[771] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 300-301.

[772] This historiographical analysis was shared, for example, by Mathew Mason. See, Matthew Mason, 'Keeping Up Appearances: The International Politics of Slave Trade Abolition in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 66-4 (2009), 809-832. David Murray and Taylor Milne adopted a more comprehensive approaches, but also stressed the prevalence of international and external

alternative discourses from within the Spanish administration also informed and tested the strength of Spain's 'balancing-act strategy'.

3. 'The Opinion Has Changed Here'. The End of the Slave Trade.

The second half of the 1860s saw the end of the slave trade in the Atlantic World as the arrival of African slaves to Cuba finally ceased after four centuries.[773] As Harris has rightly argued, 'the greatest challenge to the integrity of the slave trade was not the inequality of their financial arrangements but political action'.[774] A combination of international and domestic factors contributed to this outcome: the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, the signing of the Anglo-American Lyons-Seward Treaty of 1862, the abolition of slavery in the United States in 1865, the radicalization of important sectors of British abolitionism, and the institutionalization of the Spanish abolitionist movement marked a point of no return after which the slave trade gradually ended.

As David Murray has suggested, at the beginning of the 1860s the prospect of eradicating the slave trade in Cuba was remote, to say the least.[775] In 1860, the slave trade into Cuba was at a record level.[776] The demand for new slaves was high and the

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factors to explain the ending of the slave trade in the Spanish Empire, see: Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 299; A. Taylor Milne, 'The Lyons-Seward Treaty of 1862', *The American Historical Review*, 38 (1933).

[773] The last recorded arrival of a slave trade vessel took place in March 1866, disembarking 700 African slaves in Cuba. However, according to Fernando Ortiz, on 25 January 1870, 600 African slaves arrived to the province of Havana, in what he believed was the last slave vessel to reach the Cuban coast. TASTD <http://www.slavevoyages.org/> [Accessed: 01/05/2018]; Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 324; José Luciano Franco, *Comercio clandestino de esclavos* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1980), p. 389.

[774] Harris (2016), p. 418.

[775] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 298.

[776] TASTD <http://www.slavevoyages.org/> [Accessed: 07/12/2015].

price paid for them showed no signs of reduction.[777] The expansion of the rail network and the mechanisation of the sugar factories stimulated Cuba's agriculture production, which strongly relied on slave workers. Far from reducing the dependency on slavery, the industrialization and mechanization of Cuba's economy accelerated the need for more slaves.[778]

Joseph Crawford, British Consul in Havana, who by this time had been in his post for 17 years (and who was now also Judge of the Mixed Commission Court), saw the situation in Cuba with great pessimism, and recommended that the British 'abandon our efforts of persuasion with Spain […] and proceed to the immediate adoption of the most energetic measures to compel its observance'.[779] More aggressive postures gradually started to gain ground in Britain and belligerent rhetoric was openly used by Prime Minister Palmerston in Parliament. In February 1861, he defined Spain's attitude, at the House of Commons, as 'shameless' and 'disgraceful', to conclude, in an unprecedented statement, that 'Spain has given us good cause for war'.[780] After decades of consistent

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[777] By 1867, more than 40% of the world's cane sugar came from Cuba. Alan Dye, *Cuban Sugar in the Age of Mass Production: Technology and the Economics of the Sugar Central, 1899-1929* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 27; Manuel Moreno Fraginals, 'Plantations in the Caribbean: Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic in the late Nineteenth Century', in *Between Slavery and Free Labor: the Spanish-speaking Caribbean in the Nineteenth Century* ed. by Manuel Moreno Fraginals, Frank Moya Pons, and Stanley L. Engerman (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 3-21.

[778] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 298-299; Bergad (2000).

[779] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 299-300.

[780] With regard to this debate in the House of Commons, the British satirical weekly magazine, *Punch, or The London Charivari*, reported: 'Profligate, shameless, and disgraceful', these are not very palatable adjectives to swallow, especially when coupled with the substantive noun "liar", which is implied by the expression "violation of good faith". The Don can hardly be a man of such proud stomach as he was, if he digests without a qualm the hard words which are here hurled at him, but that we know he owes us far too

diplomatic and military struggle against the slave trade, Spain represented for Britain the epitome of political frustration.

The outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861 'buried American annexationism for the time being' and facilitated much more aggressive and confrontational rhetoric against Spain's 'balancing-act strategy'.[781] The unilateral actions against Portugal and Brazil were again presented as successful examples by British officials and abolitionist activists. The notion that 'a certain amount of coercion' was required to stop the slave trade became commonplace in Britain's political debate, with the support, for the first time, of traditional pacifist anti-slavery leaders.[782] By the beginning of 1860, important sectors within the BFASS had abandoned their pacifist stance and driven the abolitionist conference held in London in July 1861 to 'demand a more energetic course' from the British government against Spain's impassive attitude.[783]

On the other side of the Atlantic, the Union government of Abraham Lincoln, aimed to reaffirm its anti-slavery commitment, sign an international agreement with Britain authorizing a mutual right of search of suspected slave vessels. In 1862, the Lyons-Seward Treaty contemplated, as a war measure, this new policy, which had crucial consequences in isolating Spain's position and hindered, even further, the capacity of

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much to quarrel with us, we might really almost fear that our giving him the lie might be made a *casus belli*.' *Punch, or The London Charivari*, 40, 16 March 1861, p. 115. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 300.

[781] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 300; Chaffin (2003), p. 222. On the impact of the American Civil War in Spain, see: James W. Cortada, *Spain and the American Civil War: Relations at Mid-Century, 1855-1868* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1980).

[782] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 303.

[783] *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 9-7, 1 July 1861, pp. 152, 158.

slave traders to successfully transport slaves from the African coasts to Cuba.[784] The impact of the agreement was immediate and overwhelming. In 1862 more than 10,382 slaves arrived into Cuba, while in 1863, the number declined to 5,649. This trend continued until 1866 when only 722 slaves arrived in the Island. As Murray, and more recently Harris, have pointed out, the sudden effect of the Lyons-Seward Treaty responded to the central role that New York played in financing, supporting and organizing slave expeditions from the African coasts to Havana.[785] As Robert Shufeldt, U.S. consul in Havana, wrote in 1861, 'however humiliating may be the confession, the fact nevertheless is beyond question that nine tenths of vessels engaged in the Slave Trade are American'.[786] The Lyons-Seward Treaty stopped this forever.

As Mathew Mason concluded in a recent article 'the Lyons-Seward Treaty […] effectively ended the slave trade to Cuba', and this was also the perception of contemporary politicians, both in Britain and the United States, who considered the agreement decisive in stopping the Atlantic slave trade.[787] William Seward, U.S. Secretary of State, wrote that 'if I have done nothing else worthy of self-congratulation, I deem this treaty sufficient

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[784] Milne (1933); Kinley J. Brauer, 'The Slavery Problem in the Diplomacy of the American Civil War', *Pacific Historical Review*, 46-3 (1977), 439-469; Edward Keene, 'A Case Study of the Construction of International Hierarchy: British Treaty-Making against the Slave Trade in the Early Nineteenth Century', *International Organization*, 61-2 (2007), 311-399; Mason (2009); Harris (2016), pp. 418-420.

[785] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 306; Harris (2016), pp. 418-420.

[786] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 306; Frederick C. Drake and R. W. Shufeldt, 'Secret History of the Slave Trade to Cuba Written By an American Naval Officer, Robert Wilson Schufeldt, 1861', *The Journal of Negro History*, 55-3 (1970), 218-235 (p. 229); Franco (1980), pp. 385-386. On the 'post-1850 nexus' dominated by the United States, West Central Africa and Cuba, see: Harris (2016).

[787] Mason (2009), p. 830.

to have lived for',[788] and Senator Charles Sumner, Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, informed the British Ambassador Richard Lyons about its ratification 'with tears of joy in his eyes'.[789] In Britain, a similarly self-congratulatory analysis was shared by politicians and newspapers, conservative and liberal alike. Henry Brougham, an historical leader of the British antislavery movement, argued in the House of Lords that this international agreement was 'in many respects the most important event that had occurred during the period of his sixty years warfare against the African Slave Trade'.[790] Taylor Milne pointed out that the gradual reduction of slaves introduced into Cuba after 1862 'was not solely attributable to the disappearance of the American flag from the traffic' but, as Murray later put it, it was the *coup de grâce* to the Transatlantic slave trade.[791]

Between 1861 and the end of the decade, as New York's importance faded, the Spanish ports of Cadiz, Barcelona and Bilbao experienced 'growing importance' in the context of the final years of the slave trade in the Atlantic world.[792] As Harris has argued, the cause for the final decline should be located in the new 'potency of suppressions policies within the Spanish empire'.[793]

In Spain, the beginning of the 1860s saw the institutionalization of the Spanish antislavery movement around the Sociedad Abolicionista Española, founded in Madrid

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[788] Milne (1933), p. 514.

[789] Milne (1933), p. 514.

[790] Milne (1933), p. 514.

[791] Milne (1933), p. 516; Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 308; Fradera (2005), pp. 646-647.

[792] Harris (2016), p. 419.

[793] Harris (2016), p. 420; Marques (2016), p. 252.

in 1865. The role of the Puerto Rican Julio Vizcarrondo (1829-1889), a protestant priest and journalist, was essential in the creation of the Society and in defining its political strategy.[794] As Carmen de la Guardia has pointed out, Vizcarrondo was linked to progressive and reformist movements on both sides of the Atlantic and got in touch with the American abolitionist movement through his wife Harriet Brewster, a Quaker from Philadelphia. In 1850, Vizcarrondo was pushed into exile from Puerto Rico where he had started a career as a journalist. He moved to the United States where he married and started to build up a network of contacts linked to political reformism. In 1854 they moved to Puerto Rico and, in 1863, after manumitting their slaves, went to Spain. In Madrid, Vizcarrondo, together with the intellectuals Antonio Angulo and Félix Bona, founded the *Revista Hispano-Americana*, which became a hub for antislavery and progressive ideas in Spain. Vizacarondo and Brewster attended several international meetings of the antislavery movement, and Vizcarrondo later became correspondent member of the BFASS and Secretary of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Conference held in Paris in August 1867.[795]

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[794] Paloma Arroyo, 'La Sociedad Abolicionista Española, 1864-1886', *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea* (1982), 127-149; Corwin (1967), p. 154; Luis Martínez-Fernández, *Protestantism and Political Conflict in the Nineteenth-century Hispanic Caribbean* (New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 1960), p. 87; Luis A. Figueroa, *Sugar, Slavery & Freedom in Nineteenrh-Century Puerto Rico* (Chapel Hill: Univerity of North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 107-108; Caroline P. Boyd, 'A Man for All Seasons: Lincoln in Spain', in *The Global Lincoln,* ed. by Richard Carwardine and Jay Sexton (New York: Oxford Univerity Press, 2011).

[795] *Special Report of the Anti-Slavery Conference: Held in Paris in the Salle Herz, On the Twenty-sixth and Twenty-seventh August, 1867, Under the Presidency of Mons. Édouard Laboulaye*. London: Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-slavery Society, 1867; *The Anti-Slavery Reporter and Aborigines' Friends,* September-October 1889, pp. 234-235; de la Guardia (2014), p. 220.

In December 1864, Vizcarrondo organized a meeting at his house to discuss co-ordinated political initiatives against slavery in the Spanish Antilles with abolitionist politicians and intellectuals.[796] On 2 April 1865, on the occasion of the 54th anniversary of Agustín de Argüelles speech at the Cortes of Cádiz, the Sociedad Abolicionista Española was established. On July of the same year, the first issue of *El Abolicionista Español*, the newspaper of the Society was published and widely distributed among its members.

In its first years of operation, the Society acquired more than 700 members and organized two main public events: in December 1865 and June 1866.[797] The first one took place at the *Teatro de Variedades* in Madrid, where the stage was decorated with 'the names of Lincoln, Wilberforce, […] Enriqueta [Harriet] Stowe, Orense, and other supporters of the abolitionist cause'.[798] The second event was a poetry contest at the Madrid theatre of *Jovellanos*, whose first prize was won by the Spanish poet and social reformer Concepción Arenal.[799]

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[796] de la Guardia (2014), pp. 213-216.

[797] Arroyo (1982), pp. 129-130.

[798] de la Guardia (2014), p. 223.

[799] Enriqueta Vila Vilar, 'Concepción Arenal, Feminista y Abolicionista', *Minervae Baeticae. Boletín de la Real Academia Sevillana de Buenas Letras*, 42 (2014), 311-321 (p. 321). In her work 'La esclavitud de los negros', Arenal described the brutality of slavery and demanded, once for all, its abolition:

> […] ¡Horrible esclavitud! En tu presencia / ¿qué mano generosa, / suscribir quiere la sentencia odiosa / que entrega a la codicia la inocencia? / ¿Quién pone tu dogal, tu marca imprime? / ¿Quién en cólera justa no se inflama? / ¿Quién, angustiado el corazón, no gime / y a Dios y al mundo en su socorro llama? / ¡ESCLAVITUD! ¿Cómo este horrible nombre, / que es opresión, iniquidades, llanto, / fuerza brutal, depravación, espanto, / puede el hombre escuchar? ¡Qué digo el hombre! / Dijérase que aterra, que inspira el horror mismo / en el mar proceloso, en la ancha tierra, / de la región del sol, hasta el abismo.

The combination of these international and domestic factors contributed to making the continuation of the slave trade impossible and forced Spain's political actors to adapt to this new reality, reassess their position and build a new narrative to sustain it. The idea that the end of the slave trade had become inevitable established a new political consensus after 1862, and the Spanish authorities urgently tried to claim some agency over the process.

Six months after the Lyons-Seward Treaty was proclaimed by Abraham Lincoln in June 1862, General Domingo Dulce y Garay was appointed Captain General of Cuba. Like his predecessors, Dulce received clear instructions to eradicate the slave trade in Cuba, but this time, the Spanish government was compelled to adopt an ambitious anti-slave trade agenda.[800] In July 1863, Madrid gave Dulce extraordinary powers to prosecute and expel any officials involved in the slave trade, thus consolidating and extending the authoritarian model of Captain Generals in Cuba. Using these arbitrary powers, Dulce expelled Francisco Duramoña and Antonio Tuero in February 1863, on suspicion of being involved in at least two slave trade expeditions.[801] He prosecuted Julián Zulueta, 'the Island's most powerful slave trader' and former collaborator of most Captain Generals in Cuba during the nineteenth century[802] and, in June 1863, he suspended Pedro Navascues, Governor of Havana, when he was accused of corruption related to

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[800] Moreno García (1984), p. 823.

[801] Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 311-312; Marques (2016), p. 254.

[802] Harris (2016), p. 415; Marques (2016), p. 254. On Julián Zulueta, see: Franco (1980), pp. 246-249; José G. Cayuela Fernández, 'Transferencias de capitales antillanos a Europa. Los patrimonios de Pedro Juan de Zulueta y Ceballos y de Pedro José de Zulueta y Madariaga (1823-1877)', *Estudios de Historia Social*, 44-47 (1988), 191-211.

the slave trade.[803] As Murray has suggested, these decisions were 'a vivid public signal' of the new policy against the slave trade.[804]

Dulce established a strong and efficient collaboration with the British authorities in Cuba, with whom he coordinated a strategy to fight against the slave trade on the Island and put pressure on the Spanish government to extend his military and judicial powers. Britain recognized the effective work undertaken by Dulce following his appointment, and as Lord John Russell conceded in the summer of 1863, 'the good intentions of the Captain General' were beyond question.[805] For its part, the United States diplomatic mission in Madrid also urged the Spanish government to adopt legislative changes that would replace the inefficient Penal Law of 1845. In March 1864, the Ministry of State produced a report in response to the American Ambassador, endorsing his suggestions and stressing the need for political reforms:[806]

> It seems that the time has come for H.M.'s Government to devote its full attention to this matter, and in anticipation of any demands, it should seek to adopt a procedure that, without attacking the legitimate rights acquired in accordance with the law, shows that the Spanish government, which is not in favour of

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[803] 11 July 1863, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 2924, AHN; 12 April 1863, Ultramar, Cuba, leg. 3550, AHN; and Dulce to Minister of Ultramar, 28 June 1863, exp. 43, leg. 4648, AHN. Moreno García (1984), pp. 321-322; Murray (2002 [1980]), pp. 312-313; Corwin (1967), pp. 147-148; Quiroz (2003), pp. 490-491; Joaquín Buxó de Abaigar, *Domingo Dulce, general isabelino. Vida y época* (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1962), pp. 396-399.

[804] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 311.

[805] Russell to Edwardes, No. 8, 9 July 1863, FO 84/1196, TNA. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 312; Moreno García (1984), p. 826; Corwin (1967), p. 148.

[806] In April 1864, the government of Abraham Lincoln authorized the extradition of José Agustín Argüelles, former lieutenant governor of the district of Colón, who had been accused by Dulce of collaborating in the attempted disembarkation of more than one thousand African captives aboard a slave steamer owned by Julian Zulueta. Argüelles had escaped to New York, but the U.S. authorities, in an unprecedented decision to collaborate with the Spanish government, arrested him and sent him to Havana.

> emancipation, does not want to feed, however, slavery with the import of captivated negroes from the African coasts.[807]

Dulce's reformist agenda was more ambitious than what the Spanish government was prepared to accept. As Josep Fradera has argued, Dulce 'clearly advocated an English-like solution: immediate emancipation with compensation to the slave-owners and apprenticeship contracts for the former slaves.'[808] The Spanish cabinet, however, was committed to the protection of the institution of slavery.

In June 1865, the public outcry after the violent military repression of student protests in Madrid forced the conservative government of General Narváez to step down, and led to the subsequent return to power, for the third time, of General Leopoldo O'Donnell. The second government of the Unión Liberal party lasted less than a year, until June 1866, but it had significant consequences with regard to the slave trade.[809] In November 1865, the Spanish authorities acknowledged that 'the Law of 1845 cannot fulfil the aspirations of the government' and announced their intention to put a new bill to the Cortes as soon as possible.[810] The Spanish Overseas Minister, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo (1828-1897), presented at the Cortes in April 1866 the 'Law for the Repression and Punishment of the Slave Trade' with the support of the former Captain Generals Concha and Pezuela. In July 1866, the Senate voted in favour of the law, which was eventually introduced as a Royal Decree in September. In May of 1867, the newly elected Cortes that followed

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[807] Moreno García (1984), p. 823.

[808] Fradera (2005), p. 647.

[809] Fradera (2005), pp. 604-605, 649.

[810] Ultramar, Cuba, 6 November 1865, leg. 2927, AHN

the resignation of O'Donnell in July 1866, passed the law, which was finally proclaimed in Cuba in September 1867.[811]

The law established the death penalty for masters, pilots, pursers and petty officers if they attempted to resist arrest, either at sea or ashore. This decision finally complied with the long-held request of the British authorities to declare the slave trade to be piracy; as this law, without using the word, provided the same punishment.[812] The 1866 law contemplated life imprisonment for all the other members of the crew if an officer was killed during the arrest and seizure of the slave trade vessel. It also authorized, in some cases, the colonial authorities to inspect the plantations and ordered the creation of a new slave register to discourage planters from purchasing new slaves.[813] In practical terms, the new legislation was successful as no new landings were recorded by the Spanish or British authorities in Cuba, although they almost certainly continued, on a small scale, into the late 1860s. The Mixed Commission Court in Havana did not operate after 1867, and in 1871 the Mixed Commission Court in Sierra Leone was closed down too.

In February 1865, during the discussion of the bill in the Spanish Cortes, deputy Benito Posada Herrera called the government's attention to 'what will happen the day that in the Americas and all over the world there will not be more slaves than the Spanish ones

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[811] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 322; Moreno García (1984), p. 833.

[812] Fradera (2005), p. 647. On slave trade and piracy see: Martinez (2012), pp. 49-50, 60-61, 64-65, 119-121, 143.

[813] 'Disposiciones sobre la represión y castigo del tráfico negrero mandadas observar por Real Decreto de 29 de Septiembre de 1866, leg. 2928, Cuba, Ultramar, leg. 2928, AHN; 'Reglamento para la aplicación de la Ley sobre represión y castigo del tráfico de negros, n.d., leg. 2929, Cuba, Ultramar, AHN; Moreno García (1984), pp. 834-837.

on the Island of Cuba', and affirmed that stopping the slave trade was a matter of great urgency to prevent 'a revolution in that land'.[814] In January 1866, the government emphasized its commitment to eradicating the slave trade as the best way of preserving and protecting slavery in Cuba. They argued that 'public opinion in our overseas provinces has started to understand that slavery can be preserved without the traffic', but for many deputies it was obvious that stopping the slave trade would necessarily weaken slavery itself.[815] The parliamentary commission that was responsible for analysing the bill concluded, in June 1866, that slavery 'should be conceptualized […] as a crisis, whose future must be prepared adequately and gradually' and that 'it should and can […] last for a longer time, but limited to its current conditions and proportions'.[816] In a similar vein, Cánovas del Castillo, argued that the best way to protect slavery in Cuba was to stop the slave trade:

> It is possible that the world will still tolerate for some time the existence of slavery within Cuba, as a domestic issue; this will be possible, as long as it is an isolated issue that concerns only the internal organization of Spanish society; but if we allow it to become an international question; if we allow it to acquire a European character, I assure you one thing that you already know: that the world will not tolerate it.[817]

Even the slave owner and deputy José Luis Riquelme y Gómez, participated in this new rhetoric and publicly condemned the slave trade.[818] He believed, however, that the law

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[814] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes de las Cortes*, 10 and 17 February 1865, p. 410 and p. 548.

[815] Galván (2014), p. 108; Marques (2016), p. 254.

[816] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes de las Cortes*, 12 June 1866, 2nd appendix. Galván (2014), p. 118.

[817] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes de las Cortes*, 7 July 1866, p. 2499.

[818] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes de las Cortes*, 6 July 1866, p. 2487.

would be inefficient in stopping it and would only cause 'great terror to the owners'.[819] On the other side of the political spectrum, the Sociedad Abolicionista Española also believed that, without abolishing slavery, the eradication of the slave trade was impossible, and called for 'such an odious institution to be abolished once and for all'.[820] Similarly, senator Luís María Pastor Copo concluded that the complex network of corruption and profit behind the slave trade would cause the law to fail, and for this reason he also argued in favour of the abolition of slavery.[821]

Apart from these critical voices, the bill found broad support. All the political actors that had traditionally supported the 'necessity of the slave trade' and had presented it as a 'necessary evil', now celebrated a new era in which, as Cánovas argued, 'the opinion had changed':

> Today, gentlemen, the conditions are different, the opinion has changed here, as it has changed on the Island of Cuba, due to the outcome of the civil war in the United States. Since then there is not a person who fails to understand the absolute necessity of ending completely and absolutely the trade; this way, we will have on our side reason and justice and we will be able to sustain the great

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[819] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes de las Cortes*, 6 July 1866, p. 2487.

[820] The 'Sociedad Abolicionista Española' had an active role during the debates on the 'Law for the Repression and Punishment of the Slave Trade'. In collaboration with Senator Pastor, the Sociedad presented to the Cortes a statement in April 1866, denouncing the lack of determination of the Spanish government and demanding the abolition of slavery in Spanish Antillean provinces. The document was signed by prominent politicians and members of the Sociedad including Segismundo Morer, Joaquín María Sanromá and the Republican leader Emilio Castelar. In July 1866, following the fall of O'Donnell's government, the cabinet headed by General Narváez, as part of his repressive political programme, ordered the dissolution of the Society, the closure of *El Abolicionista Español,* and forced several of its leaders into exile, including Vizcarrondo. It was not until the Revolution of 1868 started, that the Society was re-established. By then, the slave trade had disappeared and its efforts would focus on achieving the abolition of slavery in the Spanish Empire. *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes de las Cortes*, 20 April 1866, p. 617ff. Galván (2014), pp. 114-115; Arroyo (1982), p. 130.

[821] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes de las Cortes*, 18 Abril 1866, p. 588ff.

> interests that in Cuba are linked to the question of slavery. [...] We have at this moment [... the] almost unanimous opinion [...] that the time has come for the slave trade to disappear.[822]

For the first time, British diplomatic influence in the drafting and approval of anti-slave trade legislation in Spain was very limited. As David Murray has pointed out, 'Britain was not inclined to push for any more concessions', ignoring the request of the BFASS and other abolitionist activists, to demand Spain's abolition of slavery too.[823] After all, the law generally responded to all the demands that Britain had been fighting for since 1807. The law was presented by the Spanish authorities as a symbol of Spain's final, united and determined commitment to ending the slave trade. Fifty-five years after Argüelles' speech at the Cortes of Cadiz, Spain approved a comprehensive and effective law against the slave trade which, crucially, it had no other option but to enforce.

4. Conclusions

Murray was right in arguing that 'no historian can say with any certainty when the last slave landing occurred in Cuba', but it is certain that during the first half of the 1860s the end of the slave trade was perceived by everyone on both sides of the Atlantic as inevitable. During the 1850s, however, there was no sign of such decline and the Spanish governments successfully protected and promoted the illicit traffic, in an increasingly complex political environment. It was thanks to this complexity of international actors and the upsurge of imperial rivalries that the Spanish authorities successfully performed a 'balancing-act' between the persistent demands of the British government for more

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[822] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes de las Cortes*, 18 Abril 1866, p. 588ff.

[823] Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 323.

effective measures and the threat of 'war-like acts' following the example of Portugal and Brazil. Neither happened, and the slave trade became 'gigantic' in 1859.[824]

However, it was also during the 1850s that a new abolitionist rhetoric, with clear similarities to Portuguese and Brazilian anti-slave trade discourses, was shaped in Cuba by three successive Captain Generals: Pezuela, Concha and Serrano. An abolitionist discourse that emphasized the need to 'salvage national honour' and that characterized the abolitionist cause as the right thing to do. This discourse added intricacy to the development of abolitionist ideas in Spain during the 19th century and provides a potential reason for the extension of the 'lengthy hiatus', as Fradera put it, between the early abolitionist discourses of the 1810s and the end of the slave trade.[825]

The outbreak of the American Civil War, the signature of the Lyons-Seward Treaty, the abolition of slavery in the United States, the radicalization of important sectors of British abolitionism and the institutionalization of the Spanish abolitionist movement contributed to putting an end to the slave trade in the Atlantic. In this context, the Spanish political actors were forced to build a new narrative to adapt to the reality that the slave trade would no longer exist, and desperately tried to claim some agency over this process. When Cánovas proclaimed in 1866 'that the time has come for the slave trade to disappear', it had already happened.[826] The end of the slave trade in Spanish Cuba, the only remaining destination of the Transatlantic slave trade, put an end to more than 400 years of human trafficking.

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[824] Crawford to Russell, No. 37, 19 November 1859, FO 84/1109, TNA. Murray (2002 [1980]), p. 266.

[825] Fradera (2013), p. 283.

[826] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes de las Cortes*, 18 Abril 1866, p. 588.

Conclusion

This thesis has set out to understand how abolitionist ideas were received, shaped, and transformed in Spain's empire and the central role that British activists and diplomats played in advancing the abolitionist cause. In doing so, it has revealed the complex development of abolitionist and anti-abolitionist discourses in Spain's public life from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the end of the transatlantic slave trade.

Starting from the premise that the Spanish abolitionist movement was never likely to develop along the same lines as the British, the French or the American versions, this study has rejected previously dominant teleological narratives in which antislavery ideas were presented as a natural development of pre-existing anti-slave trade discourses. We have shown that this traditional narrative, in which the British case is taken to be paradigmatic, is ineffective and fails to explain the process comprehensively. Moreover, the chronological analysis adopted in this thesis has allowed us to emphasize the disruptions, absences and contradictions in the development of abolitionist ideas in Spain's empire. This study has demonstrated that anti-slave trade and anti-slavery ideas co-existed, in both contradictory and complementary ways, and were advanced by a multiplicity of institutions and political actors: liberal and absolutist, progressive and conservative, egalitarian and racist.

The early history of Spanish abolitionism is a story of political failure, in which anti-slave trade and anti-slavery ideas remained marginal and limited to the endeavours of a few activists. The forerunners —Antillón, Blanco-White, Guridi and Argüelles— challenged the moral legitimacy of the slave trade for the first time, and defined the *odious commerce*

as 'horrendous, atrocious and inhumane'.[827] Anti-abolitionist actors, however, adapted to this challenge and successfully reshaped their claim to legitimacy based on racism, imperialism and prosperity. When 'the empire was coming apart' and 'the idea of a general reform' had been abandoned, abolitionism was seen by some as a dangerous tendency and by others as unattainable.[828]

British ideological, political and diplomatic influence was central, after 1807, to the shaping of abolitionist ideas and policies in Spain. The secret negotiations between Argüelles and the British ambassador in Cadiz, weeks before the former presented his proposal to the Cortes, and the correspondence between Toreno and Wilberforce in 1821, corroborate this. However, British pressure also operated in the opposite direction. The establishment and operation of Havana's Mixed Commission Court and the British Foreign Office's 'abrasive approach' fuelled Anglophobic sentiment among the Cuban and Spanish population which helped to consolidate anti-abolitionist positions and the depiction of anti-slave trade ideas as a foreign threat to Cuba's political and economic stability. Anti-abolitionist actors found in the 'necessary evil' argument a popular and strong platform from which to confront anti-slave trade policies.

After the death of Fernando VII and the re-opening of the Spanish Cortes in 1836, the idea that opposing British abolitionism was 'a matter of self-preservation' permeated wide sectors of Spanish and Cuban public opinion. In a context in which Britain's power was perceived as overwhelming and Spanish officials were forced to negotiate new anti-slave trade legislation, a discourse of victimhood further reinforced the protection of

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[827] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 2 April 1810, p. 812.

[828] Fradera (2013), p. 270.

slavery and the slave trade as a matter of national sovereignty and independence. The notion of 'self-preservation' operated in both a racist and imperialist way. As Sancho put it in the Cortes of 1836, freedom and equality for the slaves would mean 'extermination and death' for the white people in Cuba. Furthermore, the protection of slavery and the slave trade was presented as essential for the preservation of Spain's sovereignty over the Island. To protect the last remaining overseas dominions from independence or annexation to the United States was the paramount priority for most Spanish politicians on both sides of the chamber.

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, anti-abolitionist discourses remained as strong as the slave trade itself. As this study has shown, even in the aftermath of the Conspiracy of *La Escalera* (1844), no 'public clamour' or general abolitionist consensus operated in Cuba and Saco's racist anti-slave trade discourse remained marginal. In the 1850s, the slave trade was more profitable and dynamic than ever before and, after decades of diplomatic and military struggle, Spain's 'balancing-act strategy' represented a source of deep political frustration for Britain. The Spanish authorities managed to consistently ignore London's demands for more effective anti-slave trade legislation and, simultaneously, stopped the British cabinet from adopting any unilateral action. Annexationist tensions were running high, and a U.S. -controlled Cuba was a price Britain was unwilling to pay for abolition.

The signature of the Lyons-Seward Treaty in 1862 and the abolition of slavery in the United States put an end to the transatlantic slave trade. By then, the sense that the traffic was in its death throes had given rise to a new political consensus, and the Spanish authorities urgently tried to claim some agency over the process. New laws were passed, and the Spanish deputies congratulated themselves for having done the right thing as

well as achieving a strategic goal. The ultimate abolition of the slave trade in Spain was thus presented as the best way to preserve slavery and to protect the country's sovereignty over Cuba.

However, this narrative did not go unchallenged. From 1865, the Sociedad Abolicionista Española gradually changed the traditional premises of the debate and eventually became a truly counterhegemonic and subversive movement.[829] After 1868, the simultaneous and entangled Glorious Revolution in Spain and Ten Years' War in Cuba drastically transformed the political landscape and led to the emergence of new political actors on both sides of the Atlantic. Headed by Spanish and Puerto Rican activists, the Society mobilized against slavery 'because of its centrality to the imperial order' that had been founded in the 1830s; altering the very essence of abolitionist politics and challenging the gradualist laws put in place by subsequent Spanish governments until 1886, when slavery was ultimately abolished in Cuba, thirteen years after it had been banned in Puerto Rico.[830]

Throughout the nineteenth century, very few people in Spain believed in the need to stop the slave trade, still less in the importance of abolishing slavery. Even when that was the case, the reasons that moved them were not always humanitarian, liberal or egalitarian. This thesis has revealed a much more complex picture, in which abolitionist ideas intertwined with other —often appalling and often materialistic— interests and aspirations. But not always: when Domingo Vila confessed at the 1837 Revolutionary Cortes that he could not find 'any repugnance' in himself 'at the thought that a man of

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[829] Schmidt-Nowara (1999), pp. 122-123.

[830] Schmidt-Nowara (1999), pp. 125, 174.

colour might sit' next to him in Parliament, he was showing the way to a better society; one he thought was worth fighting for.[831]

[831] *Diario de las Sesiones de Cortes*, 9 March 1837, p. 2037.

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