PROJECT MUSE®

Rethinking Atlantic Historiography in a Postcolonial Era:

The Civil War in a Global Perspective

Douglas R. Egerton

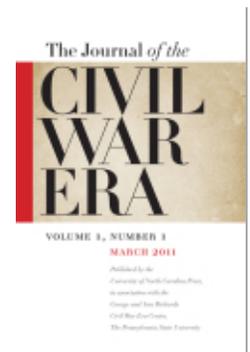➡ *For additional information about this article*
https://muse.jhu.edu/article/417313

Rethinking Atlantic Historiography in a Postcolonial Era The Civil War in a Global Perspective

DOUGLAS R. EGERTON

Even as they work in its realm, practitioners of Atlantic history debate its potential limitations and flaws as a method of conceptualizing the past. Some critics observe that almost from the time mariners first set sail, they wandered the globe and cruised far beyond Atlantic waters. Others worry that an emphasis on coastal peripheries slights far larger inland populations. Scholars who specialize in political history complain that Atlantic studies, which by definition tends to ignore borders and national narratives, obscures unique and very real state-centered sagas that existed solely within regional frameworks. A few senior scholars even claim that the relatively young field of Atlantic history is little more than older comparative studies with a shiny new label. Atlanticists concede many of these points but respond that transnational scholarship is simply one of many ways to conceptualize and understand the past, rather than the only method of bringing understanding to earlier periods to life.[1]

Virtually ignored in this debate is the question of when the Atlantic *ends* as a viable, self-contained form of analysis. When Atlantic history *began* is far simpler. Specialists point to the early 1400s, when Portuguese mariners began to inch down the coast of Africa, or to 1492, when Columbus washed ashore in the Caribbean. But the end date is less clear, and that itself provides critics of Atlantic studies with yet another point of disparagement. William O'Reilly, an advocate of the field, admits that too often Atlantic history is merely neocolonial imperial history writ large. Western European countries and their colonies often remain the central focus, with occasional nods to indigenous peoples, Africans, and South Americans. Even when adventurous historians push beyond traditional dating, self-styled Atlantic monographs and anthologies rarely extend much past the age of empire. With the independence of the British mainland colonies and, to a lesser extent, the liberation of Spanish South America, the Atlantic era invariably crashes upon rocky shoals.[2]

But the autonomy of one or more American colonies hardly ended former patterns of commerce and economic dependence. A historiography that ends with the Age of Revolution simply cannot fulfill the purpose of Atlantic history, which is to move beyond traditional national stories and earlier methods of comparative analysis and explore how larger ocean-based connections affected the lives of those who lived on the edges of the vast body of water. If, as April Lee Hatfield has argued in her study of seventeenth-century Virginia, an Atlantic focus is designed to illustrate how one portion of the globe developed within the context of a larger trading network, a more plausible end date would be the end of the nineteenth century. Quite possibly, it was only the end of slavery in Brazil, the shifting of power in the Caribbean resulting from the Spanish-American War, the dismantling of Chinese sovereignty, and the emergence of a truly worldwide economy that marked a gradual phasing of the Atlantic centuries as a coherent means of historical analysis into a global history.[3]

One of the best examples of how one edge of the postcolonial Atlantic world affected virtually all other corners of the basin is also, curiously, one of the least examined. Specialists in the age of revolution have observed how the death of fifty thousand British soldiers and sailors in London's ill-fated effort to capture French Saint Domingue played a key role in the rising campaign to abolish slavery.[4] But the loss of more than six hundred thousand American soldiers in the four years following 1861 has too often been regarded as little more than a national saga, indeed *the* national saga of the United States. Possibly more than any single event that shook the nineteenth-century Atlantic basin, the North American Civil War affected literally millions of people outside the United States. Elegantly crafted accounts of the rival nations' diplomacy exist enough, but studies of prime ministers and ambassadors and secretaries of state, as important as those men were to the shifting fates of the Confederacy, rarely engage the sorts of topics and issues examined by Atlanticists. Yet the Civil War era provides a link in the transition between Atlantic studies and a more globally focused history, which parallels the shift between earlier, formal Atlantic empires and later, informal African and Asian-focused empires. Around the world, economies faltered or flourished, patterns of trade shifted, the traffic in human bodies waned, and demands for reform and liberalization grew, all because of decisions made in Washington and Richmond. For national-minded scholars, the war began at Fort Sumter and it ended one afternoon at Appomattox. But for unemployed Manchester factory hands, Egyptian cotton farmers, Cuban and Brazilian abolitionists, and West Africans who feared enslavement, the turmoil of a far-off place altered their lives immeasurably and forever.[5]

Certainly the greatest impact the American conflict had on the Atlantic world and beyond lay in cotton production and manufacture. One economist has estimated that by spring 1861, perhaps 20 million people around the globe planted, cultivated, shipped, wove, and sold cotton. South Carolina senator James Henry Hammond famously boasted that nobody dared to wage war on "King Cotton," and Confederate diplomats prayed that the British demand for Hammond's commodity would force the hand of Prime Minister Henry John Temple, the Viscount Palmerston. In England alone, cotton employed nearly one-fourth of the population, and fully half of all British exports consisted of cotton cloth and yarn, according to historian Sven Beckert. British factories devoured 800 million pounds of cotton each year, and three-quarters of that arrived from the American South. Yet it was not merely the mills of Manchester, or even those in Massachusetts, that depended on cotton produced by Hammond's unwaged laborers, among others. By the eve of war, mill towns had sprung up in Alsace, Saxony, and even in the suburbs of Moscow.[6]

When discussing the role of cotton in Confederate diplomacy, historians invariably point to the bumper crop of 1860 and the glut of cotton sitting on British docks that year. Economist David G. Surdam demonstrated that in July of 1860, 1,298,093 bales of cotton were held at Liverpool, including 1,102,530 from America. Then, the number of bales arriving began to drop each month, and by the end of 1861, only 311,000 American bales reached Liverpool's docks. London's staid *Economist* fretted that by the next summer, "nearly every mill in England, Scotland, and Ireland will be stopped for actual want of the raw material." But from the other end of the ideological spectrum, Karl Marx reported that both prescient industrialists and the Foreign Office began to seek out new suppliers the moment South Carolina seceded. Surdam's figures support that claim. In November 1860, as northern voters flocked to the polls to elect Abraham Lincoln, just 156,098 bales stored in Liverpool came from non-American sources. Yet as early as September 1861, just after the first Battle of Bull Run, 332,000 bales of non-American cotton rested on Liverpool's docks. Some British industrialists even welcomed the drought, which they expected to raise prices and eventually decrease their dependence on American planters.[7]

By spring 1862, as the war dragged into its second year and the Union's naval blockade began to tighten, southern cotton shipments plummeted. Cotton imports from the United States fell by 96 percent. In Lancashire, a mill town of half a million people, at least 25 percent of the population received some sort of private or public relief. Young Henry Adams, traveling in Britain with his diplomat father, estimated that 75 percent of

Lancashire's already underpaid workers faced layoffs or at least reduced hours. William Gladstone, then chancellor of the exchequer, read of cotton shortage-fueled anger in Alsace, where workers posted signs demanding *"Du pain ou la mort"* (bread or death) and feared similar riots at home. As a member of Palmerston's Liberal government, Gladstone was inclined toward European mediation to put a stop to what he regarded as senseless slaughter in America. But as a politician in charge of the treasury he worried about the "frightful misery which this civil conflict has brought upon other countries" and regarded intervention as "an act of charity" toward the British poor.[8]

Gladstone, however, underestimated the extent of antislavery sentiment among Britain's workers. Factory hands proved willing to endure considerable privation if the sacrifice meant the liberation of 4 million black Americans. Any modern discussion of the war's impact on the Atlantic world must consider the hardships inflicted on British workers, just as it must note that the poorest of the islands' residents were more prepared to tolerate the downturn than were the men who owned the factories. In Halifax, Britain's second greatest producer of worsted linens, the Ladies Anti-Slavery Society sponsored forty meetings and lectures during the war years, including speeches by African American activists Isaac Davidson, Edward Irving, and Jacob Green. Historian Richard Blackett counted but four meetings held in Halifax by pro-Confederate orators. In Preston—the model for Charles Dickens's fictitious Coketown—mill owners occasionally closed the factories early so that their workers might attend pro-southern rallies, but in most mill towns "the American question" was never much in doubt.[9]

As British businessmen sought new sources, their gaze increasingly fell on East India, long dominated by England and the East India Company. With established trading partners already in place in both London and Calcutta, filling the southern void with Indian cotton took little time, and the 1861 imports to Britain were nearly double that of just the previous year, from 510,000 bales to 922,000. In just two years, the proportion of Britain's cotton supplied by Indian planters jumped 16 percent to 75 percent and from a mere 1.1 percent of France's to 70 percent. But even as this new source of cotton eased the suffering in British mill towns, it led to new distress among the Indian poor. Many wealthy planters responded to the market by replacing food crops with cotton, and urban residents saw the price of basic foodstuffs rise in the markets of Calcutta and Bombay (which witnessed explosive growth despite its western location). Manchester hands regarded their suffering as part of a larger Atlantic struggle for workers' rights, but thousands of working-class Indians who

had never heard of the Emancipation Proclamation saw their children go hungry while wealthy growers and merchants shipped commercial harvests to Britain.[10]

Although Indian growers could supply increased amounts of cotton, British industrialists judged the quality far inferior and the supply unreliable. Indian cotton, known in England as "surat," was short-staple and often arrived filthy with dirt, stones, and leaves. Lord John Russell, Britain's foreign secretary, joined Gladstone in agonizing over working-class unrest, albeit this time in India. The Sepoy Rebellion had taken place just four years prior, in 1857, and Russell worried that increased greater poverty than already existed might spark a second rebellion. Less concerned about Indian hunger itself than what it could do to British control, Russell was also aware that the withdrawal of some British regulars to fight in the Crimea had emboldened Sepoy rebels. Should Britain have to shift more forces to the West to deal with the American crisis, a subsequent uprising could ensue. Like modern scholars working in Atlantic studies, Russell and Palmerston understood that within the context of a far-flung empire, policies designed to deal with one corner of the realm inevitably affected—and also limited his government's range of options—in another.[11]

Due both to questions of quality and Indian political instability, Britain looked also to Brazil to keep its factories operating. Most enslaved Africans found themselves working coffee plantations in southeastern Brazil, but a growing number were sold to cotton planters in the northeast. In 1860 and 1861, only 43,000 bales of Brazilian cotton arrived in Britain each year, but that figure rose to 56,000 in 1863 and then mushroomed to 95,000 bales in 1864 and 138,000 by 1865. Brazilian industrialists and cotton planters joined forces, at least temporarily, in pushing for new tariffs and government subsidies to textile mills. Liberal Party leader Manuel Alves Branco of Bahia supported the effort, as did young Emperor Dom Pedro II, who hoped to fasten the northeast more securely into his empire. Even as Lincoln's administration shifted from a war for reunion to a war against slavery, his naval blockade of the Confederacy helped revitalize slave labor in one of its few remaining bastions.[12]

Brazil's flirtation with protectionism, however, convinced British industrialists that they needed yet a third fresh supply of white gold. As early as 1823, Egyptian growers opened a modest trade with Lancashire. On the eve of the war, the Egyptian government hired Salters Elliot, a Savannah-based cotton expert, to advise Egyptian planters on improving their plants and experimenting with Georgia sea island varieties. Despite this, as late as 1860 less than 5 percent of the cloth manufactured in Britain

came from the roughly 103,000 bales that sailed from Alexandria's docks, which was only twice Brazil's shipment during the same year.[13]

During the war years, however, Egypt's output increased 500 percent. By 1865, Egypt's peak export year for cotton, merchants shipped 510,000 bales to Britain. Gold flowed into the region, of course, as did European cotton experts, engineers, financiers, and expectant young entrepreneurs. From distant Washington, Secretary of State William Seward could see what this meant for his Confederate foes, even if he was less prophetic in grasping what this invasion of Europeans—as many as 79,900 in 1865 alone—meant for Egyptian autonomy. "The insurrectionary cotton states will be blind to their own welfare if they do not see how their prosperity and all their hopes are passing away," he wrote to the American consul in Alexandria, "when they find Egypt, Asia Minor, and India supplying the world with cotton, and California furnishing the gold for its purchase." The material relationship between California gold and Egyptian autonomy illustrates the connectedness of the emerging global economy. Gold dug from the ground near Sacramento found its way into the purses of Egyptian merchants and contributed to record-breaking tax revenues collected by Isma'il Pasha, the new khedive. Isma'il, in turn, used his cotton-based riches to arm slave-soldiers with guns from Massachusetts to crush an insurrection in the Sudan and finance his complete autonomy from the Ottoman Empire in 1873. James Henry Hammond, ironically, was proven right, but only to the extent that King Cotton supported the successful secession of Egypt rather than that of South Carolina.[14]

Yet the rise of a cotton kingdom along the Nile did not strengthen slavery in Egypt. Confederate masters had devoted decades and untold resources to controlling their enslaved labor force and expanding their political terrain, but in the cotton societies that emerged because of southern secession, as Beckert observes," states used their coercive powers to secure land, labor, and markets for cotton." Unhappily for Isma'il Pasha, his wars and building projects—especially the Suez Canal—spent his government into debt despite unprecedented taxes. Isma'il fell from power in 1879, replaced by his malleable, pro-western son, Tewfik Pasha. The growing influence of Britain and France offended the nationalist sensibilities of many army officers, who began to build defensive works around Alexandria. When the British demanded that the works be turned over to their control, nationalists forced Tewfik to refuse, and the Royal Navy opened fire on the port city. As historian Edward Mead Earle noted long ago, it is hard not to "conceive the Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter in 1861 as an indirect cause of a British bombardment of Alexandria in 1882." Now folded into the larger story of Europe's infamous

"scramble for Africa," Britain's invasion of Egypt might well have taken place eventually, but certainly decisions made in Montgomery, Alabama, in the spring of 1861 hastened events considerably.[15]

The war shifted patterns of ships bearing not only cotton but immigrants—forced and otherwise—across Atlantic waters. Just as cotton shipments *out* of southern ports slowed after 1861, so did the flow of foreign nationals *into* northern ports, and for the same reason. Wars, especially lengthy ones, disrupt the movements of people, since immigrants with a choice avoid a country embroiled in civil conflict. Military specialists invariably note the contribution of foreign-born troops to the U.S. Civil War; historian Edward Laxton, for example, writes of the roughly 144,000 Irish-born soldiers who served in the Union army. Less noticed by scholars was the drop in those arriving in New York after 1861. In the decade prior to the war, 914,119 Irish nationals entered the United States, but in the ten years after Lincoln's election, that figure fell by more than half, to 435,778. As part of the British Empire, Canadian authorities could not legally turn the Irish away, and for a brief time, the population of Toronto was nearly half Irish. Throughout the Atlantic world, cities had long risen or fallen in tandem with preferences for certain commodities, but rarely had the flow of immigrants shifted so quickly or altered the ethnicity of a single locale so decisively.[16]

The war had an even greater impact on the movement of enslaved Africans. Prior to 1808, by which time both the United States and Britain had ceased their involvement in the international traffic in humans, Charleston was the major center for importations, a gloomy Ellis Island for Africans. Only Liverpool's merchants financed more slavers. But as historian James McMillin adds, Charleston's commerce slumped in the decades after the ban took effect, and more than a few southern voices called for a return to Africa's shores. As early as 1839, the publisher of the *New Orleans Courier* advocated reopening the trade, and by the late antebellum period editors in Charleston had joined the chorus. By 1856, after North American slaveholders had won the right to carry their chattel into the new Kansas and Nebraska Territories, South Carolina governor James Hopkins Adams publicly demanded that the 1807 law be reversed. The Constitution, he correctly pointed out, simply allowed Congress to ban the traffic after twenty years, rather than requiring it to do so.[17]

Watching these rising calls was Lord John Russell. In hindsight, it appears unlikely that American fire-eaters could have overturned five decades of precedent. But from the draconian Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 to Kansas-Nebraska, southern reactionaries had scored impressive political victories over the course of the decade, and the Dred Scott decision

had erased a thirty-four year old ban on slave labor in the Midwest. Russell and Palmerston also faced angry remnants of the once-powerful Caribbean lobby, who continued to protest that landlords "could not successfully cultivate their estates" without fresh foreign laborers. Some even advocated acquiring Spanish Cuba. In response, in early 1860 Russell proposed an international conference in which Britain, the United States, France, Spain, Portugal, and Brazil would enforce a conclusive end to "an increasing traffic and finally to assure its complete abolition."[18] Then came the secession winter. In Montgomery, fire-eaters insisted that the time had arrived to create an empire of slavery, which would require not just land but also labor. Perhaps because New Orleans had become the southern hub for young bondpeople sold away from the Chesapeake, pro-slavery writers like Louisiana's James De Bow was one of the leaders in this drive. De Bow understood that condemnation of the international trade implied a moral denunciation of the internal sale of blacks. White southerners, De Bow charged, who objected "to the transfer of the rude, benighted, degraded native African to the soil of Louisiana on the score of humanity" implicitly took "the side of our Abolition enemies of the North." For their part, the Republicans in the White House and State Department promptly overturned the pro-southern policies of Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan by allowing the Royal Navy to stop and search American ships on the African coast that "gave reasonable grounds of suspicion." As Minister Charles Francis Adams informed a pleasantly surprised Russell in October 1861, "the fitting out of vessels designed for the Slave Trade will no longer be permitted in New York." In hopes of winning British support to their cause, Confederate founders overruled the fire-eaters and banned the Atlantic slave trade, but Lincoln's willingness to assist Russell in crushing the traffic trumped that decision.[19]

As ever the in the interconnected Atlantic world, decisions made in London and Washington changed the course of even Spanish holdings. With more than two hundred thousand Africans imported into Cuba in the four decades prior to 1860, the island's planters—backed, ironically, by British capital and machinery—emerged as the world's leading producer of sugar. Spanish Puerto Rico lay not far behind. But as historian Rebecca J. Scott notes, when the Lincoln administration agreed to support the British blockade of African ports, they strangled the supply of fresh bodies being supplied to reactionary Cuban planters. Only two years before, in 1859, as many as eighty-five slavers were fitted out in Manhattan to serve the Cuban market, but a Republican government, unfettered by the departure of southern politicians, choked off both the vessels and the bodies necessary

to the still-expanding Cuban sugar economy. Russell even contemplated the Union's acquisition of the island on the grounds the American annexation would mean the death of both slavery and the trade in Cuba.[20]

Formal annexation never occurred, but neither Cuba nor Puerto Rico imported many African captives after 1867. As Britain increased its patrols along the African coast and slavery died in the southern states, Cuban sugar production began a slow decline, well before being shaken by the nearly global depression of 1873. Cuban exports recovered somewhat in 1878 but then lost ground to Louisiana's fields and beet sugar production.[21]

Certainly, the tactics employed by Lincoln and his later generals inspired similar, if initially unsuccessful attempts, to arm and liberate slaves in Cuba. Shortly after the war's end, radical Cuban émigrés settled in New Orleans, using the port as a staging base for independence movements on the island. When, in July 1867, Cuban revolutionaries initiated what would become the Ten Years' War, wealthy sugar planter Carol Manuel de Céspedes freed his slaves, provided they bear arms in the name of independence. Other revolutionaries disagreed with his program of widespread emancipation and dissented from his calls for annexation to the recently restored United Stated, but the fighting on the island destroyed a number of plantations and led to the liberation of thousands of slaves on the eastern side of Cuba. In the end, the conflict freed only those bondmen who fought in the war, but the death toll—nearly as ghastly as that on the American mainland, with 200,000 Spanish casualties and 150,000 Cuban, together with $300 million in property damage—hastened the end of both slavery and Spanish control.[22]

Cuba was hardly the only region to be shaken by the conflict north of the Rio Grande River. The saga of European adventurism in Mexico, sparked by President Benito Juárez's July 1861 suspension of payments on his foreign debt, and brooked by an American government preoccupied with the Confederacy, has been often told, and never better than by historian Howard Jones. But an Atlantic perspective illuminates previously unexplored aspects of European adventurism in Mexico. The Anglo-French-Spanish invasion was inspired not merely by a desire to recover debts or, in the case of France's Emperor Napoleon III, to rebuild a lost American empire. Policymakers in both London and Paris hoped to stop, or at least slow, the southern expansion of the United States. Seward's Pan-American dreams were well known in Whitehall, and Palmerston thought that a monarchical puppet government in Mexico City would "stop the North Americans" from any future "absorption of Mexico." The prime minister attempted to disguise this hope by inviting Lincoln's

government to join the three European powers in their military expedition, but Minister Adams understood the pieces of the larger Atlantic puzzle, in part because the powerful *London Times* editorialized that a divided United States and a stronger Mexico could erase any emerging American threat to European hegemony.[23]

Nor was President Jefferson Davis's government a passive observer of events along its southern border. As Thomas Schoonover observes, the Confederates posted nearly half of their diplomatic personnel to the Caribbean and Central American area. With Lincoln's naval blockade tightening by the month, Davis regarded the Caribbean islands as potential smuggling bases, just as northern Mexico provided a route to ship European goods into Texas. In the same way that the war stimulated the economy of Egypt and depressed that of Cuba, the war years witnessed the growth and development of the port city of Matamoros. For his part, Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian, the French puppet ruler, so desired a Confederate victory that he allowed Davis's agents and soldiers to cross the border and take refuge on Mexican soil. Confederate diplomats, ignoring expansionist fire-eating interest in Cuba and Nicaragua, assured both Napoleon and Maximilian that "the future of the Mexican empire is inextricably bound to the safety and independence of the Confederacy." In Paris, the government mouthpiece *La France* surely spoke for Napoleon when it editorialized that the "cause of the Confederates gains new sympathies every day." In what emerged as a triangular Atlantic arrangement, the French government would profit from Maximilian's rule and, Davis prayed, recognize the independence of the Confederacy, which could then more effectively smuggle goods north from Matamoros, and that in turn served to develop the Mexican state of Tamaulipas and enrich the fraudulent Mexican monarch and French businessmen.[24]

Traditional accounts of Civil War–era diplomacy invariably highlight the growing distrust between Palmerston and Napoleon, as well as the effect of news of Antietam and the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in Britain. But even then, as historian David Brion Davis points out, influential cabinet members—and, most especially, William Gladstone, the son of a wealthy absentee Caribbean planter—continued to push for Anglo-French mediation in the conflict. Often overlooked today, but understood by Palmerston (like diplomat Charles Francis Adams) was the larger Atlantic picture. Hostilities with the United States could endanger British control of Canada, which increasingly was home to Irish nationals not much fond of English policies (as well as force the diversion of troops in India). When a small force of Confederates crossed the Canadian border into Vermont, Gen. John A. Dix cabled his commanders

in New England to "pursue" the raiders "into Canada, if necessary, and destroy them." An alarmed Russell assured Lincoln that his government would secure the border, and Lord Monck, the governor-general of Canada, wrote Seward that both he and Palmerston had "the most earnest desire" to halt and punish "outrages such as that." Specialists are surely correct in thinking that American emancipation made it harder for Palmerston to side with slaveholders, but as the prime minister of a far-flung empire, he instinctively grasped the geo-political realities increasingly clear to any Atlanticist.[25]

Most of all, ocean currents carried ideas. Specialists in earlier periods, particularly the Age of Revolution, note the way word of revolutions and revolts sparked uprisings along the four coasts of the Atlantic basin. Wim Klooster, for example, observes that both Chilean law of 1811 and the Venezuelan constitution of the same year lifted entire phrases from Thomas Jefferson's 1776 Declaration. Revolutionaries along the Río de la Plata early in the nineteenth century believed that North American Constitution-making provided them with a "reserve of experience." As much as news and ideas sailed alongside cotton and sugar, Atlanticists need to track regional peculiarities and the difficulty of transferring law and ideology intact from shore to shore. In Mexico, President Juárez undoubtedly had pragmatic reasons to favor the Union, since a victorious Confederacy would eventually covet portions of his nation. But as an indigenous American of peasant background, Juárez was also an anti-slavery radical and lifelong reformer who applauded Lincoln's shift toward emancipation. In 1864, even as his followers battled both Maximilian and French forces, he praised Lincoln's "inflexibility" in negotiating with the South, as more than a few northern "copperhead" Democrats wished. Juárez regarded the destruction of the Confederacy as part of a larger triumph of democracy on both sides of the Atlantic.[26]

The Emancipation Proclamation also found a distant champion in Russia's Tsar Alexander II. Like Juárez, the Russian monarch had sound geopolitical cause to favor the Union. Russia had fought and lost the Crimean War with France and Britain less than a decade before, and where Napoleon saw a dismembered continent as beneficial to Western European interests, Alexander regarded a unified republic as a bulwark against his more industrialized neighbors. Although a reformer, the tsar was also an autocrat who despised rebellions against established governments, and his longtime minister in Washington, Edouard de Stoeckl, denounced the Confederate government as a band of demagogues. But as the tsar who had freed his serfs in March 1861, an act that earned him the title of "Tsar Liberator," Alexander actually thought that Lincoln's decree

did not go far enough. The "time must come when many will question the manner of American emancipation of the Negro slaves," he counseled Stoeckl. Alexander's decree, though hardly radical, allowed serfs to purchase land on a long term basis. With some inaccuracy, Alexander lectured one American visitor that he "did more for the Russian serf in giving him land as well as personal liberty, than America did for the Negro slave." Although Alexander himself had a number of practical reasons for emancipation—not the least of which was the need to raise modern mass armies—few recent historians would disagree with his assertion that "without property of any kind" American freedmen could not "educate himself and his children."[27]

British workers' willingness to endure hardships in the name of a Union victory only increased with emancipation. Karl Marx huffed that while members of Palmerston's cabinet wished to weaken the United States by recognizing the Confederacy or toppling Juárez, the working classes stood with Lincoln. "There exists in England no people desirous of an intervention in Mexico save the Mexican bondholders," he insisted. William Howard Russell, an Irish reporter for the *London Times,* had little faith in Lincoln's early generals but enormous confidence in Atlantic reform. Speaking at a Saint Patrick's Day Dinner to intensely Democratic Irish New Yorkers in 1861, Russell warned that the success of the Confederacy could empower reaction in the old country. "For God's sakes," he shouted, "preserve those in Europe from that conclusion, and enable them with logical facts to strike a blow for the liberty of mankind on the other side of the world." With factory workers demanding franchise reform—which they would finally win in 1867—Palmerston, during his Confederate flirtation, found himself in the curious position of advocating progress at home while supporting reaction abroad, and as Juárez had always known, he at length realized that ideas do matter.[28]

Without question, the victory of emancipation in the United States hastened the end of slavery elsewhere in the Atlantic world. Even before the surrender at Appomattox, in 1864 a Puerto Rican reformer founded the Spanish Abolitionist Society in Madrid. Cuban slaves in the fields sang, "*Avanza, Lincoln, avanza. Tue eres nuestra esperanza*" ("Advance, Lincoln, advance. You are our only hope"). Some conservative Spaniards insisted that national honor required the rejection of the North American model, but as Rebecca Scott observes, the "outcome of the U.S. Civil War had sobered slaveholders elsewhere in the New World." Cuban planters regarded themselves as sugar manufacturers as well as growers, and some welcomed a capitalist, free-labor orientation. The result was the Moret Law of 1870, introduced into the Cortez by Segismundo Moret, the antislavery

minister of colonial affairs. Patterned after the "free womb" laws of Chili, Argentina, and Colombia—which were patterned after gradual emancipation acts in Pennsylvania and New York—the law required children born after 1870 to work for the masters of their mothers until the age of twenty-one, drawing wages only after reaching eighteen. Puerto Rico followed three years later. "We are brethren with the Americans in the cause of abolition," one Spanish reformed claimed, "while 14,000 men died in the battle of Fredericksburg, we said, forward, forward, triumph!"[29]

With the collapse of the Confederacy, a small number of dedicated planters fled to Brazil, taking with them what slaves they could. These reactionaries, known as *Confederados,* resisted to the last and were so suspect in the eyes of reformers that when in the 1880s a pro-emancipation senator was assassinated, the government promptly opened an investigation with them as the focus. Even indigenous proslavery forces cared little for the "bad elements from the North," whom they accused of selling off their troublesome and dangerous laborers. But with slavery abolished everywhere else in the Americas, Brazilian slaves simply took matters into their own hands and began to flee the plantations. Encouraged by the evangelical abolitionist Antônio Bento—described by David Brion Davis as the Brazilian John Brown—thousands of self-liberated bondpersons forced Brazil to pass an immediate, uncompensated emancipation act on May 13, 1888. As one Brazilian intellectual and reformer enthused, he rejoiced "to see Brazil receive so quickly the moral of the Civil War in the United States."[30]

It may be unrealistic to expect those who teach survey courses to either internationalize the Civil War era in strictly American classes or to emphasize the period in global courses. As David M. Potter admitted in 1966, the American conflict may not strike globalists as critical as the unification of Germany or Italy, the emergence of the industrial order, or the scramble for Africa. But he also warned that scholars should not forget how nationalism and liberalism appeared to be failing as worldwide forces after Waterloo. Lincoln's victory, Potter added, "forged a bond between nationalism and liberalism at a time when it appeared that the two might draw apart and move in opposite directions." And as Potter's half-century old admonition suggests, the various pieces of the Atlantic puzzle have long been there for Civil War specialists willing to move beyond North American shores. Just as Atlantic world studies remains a vital and fresh way to conceptualize past centuries, an Atlantic perspective reminds us—and our students—of the connections between localism and globalism, of how ideas spread, and of how the great national saga unexpectedly altered distant corners of the world. There is much yet to do.[31]

1. Editors Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan discuss many of these criticisms and responses in the introduction to their *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). The best statement of what Atlantic history is and how it functions as a field of study remains Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities," *American Historical Review* 111 (2006): 741–57; but see also special edition, "The Atlantic World," *Organization of American Historians Magazine of History* 18 (2004).

2. William O'Reilly, "Genealogies of Atlantic History," *Atlantic Studies* 1 (2004): 66–84. Important studies and anthologies that position themselves within the imperial context include J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492 to 1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Peter C. Mancall, ed., *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550–1624* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); and Jorge Cañizares and Erik R. Seeman, eds., *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500 to 1800* (Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2007); David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760 to 1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), delves into the nineteenth century enough to examine the rise of informal empires.

3. Participants in a *William and Mary Quarterly* forum, "Beyond the Atlantic," 63 (2006): 675–42, discussed expanding the Atlantic world as a concept. April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 2; one model example of the study of a single region both before and after independence is Donald R. Wright, *The World and a Very Small Place in Africa: A History of Globalization in Niumi, the Gambia,* 3d ed. (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2010).

4. Wim Klooster makes this point nicely in *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 174. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault, eds., *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), is typical of imperial-based studies that contain no mention of the Civil War.

5. Howard Jones's important list of works on Civil War diplomacy mark him as the leader in the field. His books include *Blue and Gray Diplomacy: A History of Union and Confederate Foreign Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); *Union in Peril: The Crisis over British Intervention in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), and *Abraham Lincoln and a New Birth of Freedom: The Union and Slavery in the Diplomacy of the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999). Older studies include Harold M. Hyman, ed., *Heard Round the World: The Impact Abroad of the Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 1969), and Philip Van Doren Stern, *When the Guns Roared: World Aspects of the American Civil War* (New York: Doubleday, 1965). C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 161–65, examines the impact of the war on the world, but in four pages only.

6. Sven Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War," *American Historical Review* 109 (2004), 1408; Drew Gilpin Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 364–65; Edward Mead Earle, "Egyptian Cotton and the American Civil War," *Political Science Quarterly* 41 (1926): 538, observes of Hammond's claim that had the Confederacy won its independence after several years of war, the nation would have been burdened with a large debt and the ongoing costs of maintaining an army and so would probably have to resort to a tax on cotton production, forcing the British to look elsewhere for the commodity. On February 28, 1861, the Confederate Congress did, in fact, pass a law levying an export duty of one-eighth of a cent per pound on all cotton shipped after August 1.

7. Eli N. Evans, *Judah Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate* (New York: Free Press, 1988), 116–17; David G. Surdam, "King Cotton: Monarch or Pretender? The State of the Market for Raw Cotton on the Eve of the American Civil War," *Economic History Review* 51 (1998): 120; Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels, *The Civil War in the United States* (1861; repr., New York: International Publishers, 1939), 16–17; Jones, *Union in Peril*, 158.

8. Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire," 1410; Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1997), 236; George W. Daniels, *The Early English Cotton Industry* (London: Longmans, 1920), 161; Jones, *Abraham Lincoln and a New Birth of Freedom*, 93; Jones, *Union in Peril*, 8.

9. Duncan Andrew Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2003), 212–19; Phillip E. Myers, *Caution and Cooperation: The American Civil War in British-American Relations* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2008), 204–5; Richard J. M. Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 198, 204.

10. Surdam, "King Cotton," 124; Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire," 1413.

11. Earle, "Egyptian Cotton," 527; Howard Jones, "History and Mythology: The Crisis Over British Intervention in the Civil War," in *The Union, the Confederacy, and the Atlantic Rim,* ed. by Robert E. May (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1995), 55.

12. Surdam, "King Cotton," 123; Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire," 1415, 1422; David Bushnell and Neill MacAulay, *The Emergence of Latin America in the Nineteenth Century,* 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 176.

13. Dean Mahin, *One War at a Time: The International Dimensions of the American Civil War* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 1999), 88; Earle, "Egyptian Cotton," 523, 535; Surdam, "King Cotton," 123.

14. Earle, "Egyptian Cotton," 535; Surdam, "King Cotton," 123.

15. Earle, "Egyptian Cotton," 520; Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire," 1428–30.

16. John Mahon, *New York's Fighting Sixty-Ninth: A Regimental History of Service in the Civil War's Irish Brigade and the Great War's Rainbow Division* (New York: McFarland, 2004); Edward Laxton, *The Famine Ships: The Irish Exodus to America* (New York: Holt, 1998), 70–71, 168.

17. James A. McMillin, *The Final Victims: Foreign Slave Trade to North America, 1783–1810* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 120; James Walvin, *Black Ivory: Slavery in the British Empire,* 2d ed. (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001), 267; Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin, 2007), 367n18; Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 765. The classic discussion of this effort remains Ronald T. Takaki, *A Pro-Slavery Crusade: The Agitation to Reopen the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Free Press, 1971).

18. Thomas, *Slave Trade,* 769; Edward Bartlett Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 26.

19. Martin Duberman, *Charles Francis Adams, 1807–1888* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1960), curiously, fails to mention this episode; see instead Thomas, *Slave Trade,* 775–77. On the desire of fire-eaters to reopen the trade in 1861, see Douglas R. Egerton, *Year of Meteors: Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, and the Election That Brought On the Civil War* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010), 36–37, 266; Emory Thomas, *The Confederate Nation, 1861–1865* (New York: Harper, 1979), 63.

20. Douglas R. Egerton Alison Games, Kris Lane, and Donald R. Wright, *The Atlantic World: A History, 1400–1888* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 2007), 476; Thomas, *Slave Trade,* 770–71; Rebecca J. Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 29.

21. Scott, *Degrees of Freedom,* 54; George Reid Andrews, *Afro-Latin America, 1800–2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 69.

22. Rebecca J. Scott, "The Atlantic World and the Road to *Plessy V. Ferguson,*" *Journal of American History* 94 (December 2007): 730; Rebecca J. Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860–1899* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 111; Robert L. Sheina, *Latin America's Wars: The Age of the Caudillo, 1791–1899* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2003), 358.

23. Jones, *Union in Peril,* 76–77; Thomas Schoonover, "Napoleon Is Coming! Maximilian Is Coming? The International History of the Civil War in the Caribbean Basin," in May, *Union,* 120; Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 347; Brian R. Hammett, *Juárez* (New York: Longman, 1993), 154–55; Mahin, *One War at a Time,* 220.

24. Jones, *Abraham Lincoln and a New Birth of Freedom,* 170–71; Schoonover, "Napoleon Is Coming," 112, 125; Hammett, *Juárez,* 156–57; Charles M. Hubbard, *The Burden of Confederate Diplomacy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 163.

25. David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 317; Jones, *Union in Peril,* 60; Mahin, *One War at a Time,* 246–47.

26. Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World,* 172; Beatriz Dávilo, "The Río de la Plata and Anglo-American Political and Social Models, 1810–1827," in Bailyn and Denault, *Soundings in Atlantic History,* 395; Hammett, *Juárez,* 152–53, 158.

27. Jones, *Union in Peril,* 152; James McPherson, "The Whole Family of Man: Lincoln and the Last Best Hope Abroad," in May, *Union,* 152–53; Albert A. Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians: The Story of the Russian-American Diplomatic Relations during the Civil War* (New York: World, 1952), 186–88.

28. Marx and Engels, *Civil War in the United States,* 27; Evan John, *Atlantic Impact: England vs. America in the Civil War* (London: Putnam, 1952), 162; E. D. Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism, 1855–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 304.

29. Davis, *Inhuman Bondage,* 323; Arthur F. Corwin, *Spain and the Abolition of Slavery in Cuba, 1817–1886* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967), 286–88; Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History,* 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 202; Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba,* 83; Andrews, *Afro-Latin America,* 225n88.

30. Eugene C. Harter, *The Lost Colony of the Confederacy* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 55; Davis, *Inhumane Bondage,* 326–27; Andrews, *Afro-Latin America,* 80–81; McPherson, "Whole Family of Man," 148.

31. David M. Potter, "The Civil War in the History of the Modern World: A Comparative View," in *The South and the Sectional Conflict,* ed. David M. Potter (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 290–93.