Hello and welcome history friends patrons all to our special series on my PhD thesis. Last time, we concluded the final chapter, wrapping up Disraeli’s ignominious end, after such a euphoric triumph in Berlin. While history would show that Disraeli effectively ended the EQ, contemporaries lacked this hindsight, and felt justified in criticising the PM for his gross miscalculations. This is the world we now leave behind, but our analysis is not yet finished. We now have to conclude on several important questions we asked in the introduction episodes. So if you’re ready for a satisfying, comprehensive conclusion, please look elsewhere. No, I’m kidding, if you’re ready to gather all we’ve learned so far and judge where the rhetoric of NH truly fit in all of this, then welcome to the series, and let’s get into this.

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**Conclusion**

National honour is a fine subject to expatiate upon: it is so conveniently indefinite. An orator may give what quantity and quality of signification he pleases to the abstract idea, for the purpose of fitting it to any given state of things. Facts and figures do not obstruct the torrent of eloquence, and a speaker may pitch his key as high as he pleases in the gamut of debate.[[1]](#footnote-1)

This research project has confirmed that, as the *Globe* claimed, contemporaries regularly expatiated upon national honour in the ‘gamut of debate.’ Both the government and the opposition used the rhetoric of national honour as a political weapon during foreign policy debates; its lexical versatility meant it could be deployed both to attack these policies, and to defend them. Also significant was national honour’s popularity with Britons, or at least a perceived popularity, which incentivised contemporaries to use this rhetoric for political advantage. It may never be clear how sincerely contemporaries believed in its tenets, but the evidence does suggest an acceptance of certain standards. One could argue that national honour was two things at once; both a belief system, and a rhetorical weapon. If national honour was not believed in or sought after, the rhetoric which referenced it would never have been so consistently drawn upon. This suggests that national honour could not be ignored, whether the ethic was used to justify policy, or to criticise it.

Importantly, national honour was not rigid. Like other political tools, it could be modified to meet specific circumstances. When this occurred, one discerns the appearance of themes which helped to empower, or in some cases mollify, the ethic’s more demanding imperatives. For instance, the prevailing belief was that any insult would be immediately followed by the vindication of damaged honour. Yet, Ministers were adept at using national honour to explain the opposite policy course; Britain could afford to endure a certain degree of dishonour due to her unrivalled position as the world power. But forbearance, as this position was known, could be carried too far. This perspective was selectively applied. When Britain dealt with nations removed from the industrialised ‘West’, contemporaries did not apply this magnanimity in the search for satisfaction from African, Asian, or South American insults, which were vigorously pursued.

Nonetheless, it is possible to observe a degree of consistency in contemporary behaviour when contending with national honour. Honourable nations sought satisfaction when insulted, but it was vital that vindication did not become vengeance, and exacting redress did not become excess. Britain’s ability to influence other nations with its military or moral power was a function of national honour, and this influence could be lost through Britain’s exclusion from important developments. The navy was the arm of British honour, and the ability to project its power across the world enhanced Britain’s prestige. Prestige was the reputation of British power, a reputation established in the triumph against Napoleonic France in 1815, which was fiercely guarded against both European challenge and defeat in the colonial sphere.

Britain’s position in India, it was insisted, depended upon British prestige, though this was contested by those who countered that Britain’s reputation for justice and morality was equally important.[[2]](#footnote-2) It was the government’s duty to uphold national honour and defend it from attack, and any administration which failed to do so would be cast from office, spurned by the electorate for its impropriety. It was also insisted that a failure to repel insults now would result in greater insults in the future.[[3]](#footnote-3) Furthermore, national honour was emphasised when considering British obligations. Only a dishonourable nation failed to uphold its treaty commitments, and reneging on them would endanger existing British agreements, compromising national security. Similarly, an honourable nation maintained its good faith, particularly in commerce and finance, since high credit rebounded to the nation’s reputation.[[4]](#footnote-4)

It was maintained that national honour complimented national security, and underpinned national interests. Keeping national honour pure and unstained provided an impression of strength, which could be leveraged against rival powers to acquire advantages at minimal expense. Yet, if upholding national honour was motivated by a fear of failure, then it may be argued that such failures did not bring the advertised consequences of national ruin. Indeed, one could argue that the greatest penalty for failing to meet national honour’s tenets was not the ruin of the country, but vulnerability to attack from political rivals. Policies which ‘truckled’ to foreign powers, issued empty threats, committed outrages, engaged in excessive meddling, or failed to acquire satisfaction for insults, were all condemned as dishonourable. Yet, charging opponents with these errors was not straightforward; such accusations were vigorously contested, and alternative interpretations of the ethic were provided to demonstrate that the national honour had been upheld after all. This highlights an important contention of this research project: national honour was a contested political space.

Across the five decades of cases, it may be argued that only two – the Don Pacifico and Trent Affairs – provided political triumphs. Public opinion played a key role in the efficacy of the rhetoric used during the Trent confrontation with the United States. Strong public support encouraged Palmerston to maintain his quest for satisfaction against Washington. However, just because Britons were roused by the circumstances of the case, this did not necessarily guarantee success. Disraeli leveraged a hypersensitive species of prestige to persevere through the Russo-Turkish War, and acquire ‘Peace with Honour’ in Berlin. Yet, in the triumphant aftermath, the Prime Minister discovered that maintaining such a demanding standard of prestige could be immensely costly. Indeed, it may be argued that his subsequent failings in Africa and Asia impeded Conservative chances in the 1880 election. On occasions where Britons were uninformed, such as during the Oregon controversy, this granted Aberdeen greater flexibility to adjust the language used, and reach a peaceful resolution. Although Palmerston leveraged British obligations and honour in his Iberian interventions, success in these ventures was not sufficiently popular to net him a political triumph. Even where the rhetoric was deployed, the record of Parliamentary votes attests to the reality of the government’s narrow support.

Thus, it may be argued that incidents devoid of public enthusiasm were less likely to receive Parliamentary acclaim or gain a satisfactory result. Significantly, this did not deter contemporaries representing themselves with national honour’s rhetoric in the forefront of their arguments. One is drawn to Thomas Attwood, who must have known that his third appeal for British intervention in Poland in 1839 would not succeed, yet he still deployed the same rhetorical flourishes which had failed him in the past.[[5]](#footnote-5) One is struck by the apparent futility of these appeals, yet Attwood’s contemporaries were also undeterred from making similar cases against the government when there was little hope of success. The opposition’s insistence on higher standards of satisfaction from Russia, Spain, the United States, or France were unlikely to influence the government’s policy when a more pragmatic policy was available. Yet, since the opposition was expected to take government to task in foreign policy, the rhetoric of honour was the traditional means of making this case. Its constant presence in foreign policy debates – whether warranted or not – may have given the impression that the opposition were simply going through the motions, and may also have diluted the rhetoric’s potency.

Clearly, there were limits to this rhetoric’s power and influence. The two Polish cases illustrate how important context was when deploying this rhetoric, but the best case was also one which was free from complexity. Schleswig-Holstein was far too complicated for public opinion to embrace Palmerston’s position with much zeal, while Danish culpability and the possibility of a disastrous Anglo-German war seems to have sobered British minds. Indeed, the episode was regarded as a tragedy, from which lessons should be learned in the future.[[6]](#footnote-6) Nor would Britons be fooled by a technically successful outcome. Alexander McLeod’s plight may have upset Britons, but his acquittal was the result of American legal procedure, and not of Palmerston’s use of national honour’s rhetoric. No one attempted to offer thanks for Palmerston’s pressure campaign; attention turned to resolving Anglo-American border disputes, subjects generally of less interest to the public than the plight of a British subject. It was only once President James K. Polk denied Britain’s equal rights to Oregon that public attentions returned to the theatre. Aberdeen recognised the country’s conditional interest, and he settled the matter by dispensing with the rhetoric of honour and pacifying American bluster.

The conflicts with China and Afghanistan were somewhat different. Although the British public were confronted with details of an immoral opium trade, and questions of Captain Elliot’s mishandling of the situation, Melbourne’s administration proceeded to acquire redress well before assessing the Parliamentary mood. Ministers justified this behaviour when the expedition had already departed for China. When news of the disaster in Kabul reached London in 1842, Peel’s government was similarly quick to act without considering either public sentiment or Parliamentary opinion. Due to concerns of prestige and Britain’s role in India, an immediate campaign was excused, rather than pre-emptively explained, suggesting that different standards were applied to non-European powers than their European counterparts. Furthermore, when Palmerston did proceed against Greece with a similar vigour, the government was subject to intense censure, from which it only escaped because of the Foreign Secretary’s dramatic identification with *Civis Romanus sum*. This also suggests an understanding that non-European exigencies required less explanation than those based in Europe. Economic motives, and the influence of East India Company men within Parliament and society, suggests that the government acted under ulterior motives, seeking security in imperial interests while cloaking their behaviour in the rhetoric of honour.

This behaviour was not tied to a political party or position. Indeed, whether Whig, Liberal, Tory, or Radical, there was arguably not much consistency at all, and opposition figures insisted instead that their opponent’s interpretation of national honour was incorrect. This was possible in the first place because national honour boasted a deep lexicon which complimented the use of rhetoric in debate. Contemporaries used this rhetoric when pressing for the fulfilment of Britain’s treaty obligations,[[7]](#footnote-7) the maintenance of her armed forces,[[8]](#footnote-8) the support of colonists,[[9]](#footnote-9) the prompt payment of her debts,[[10]](#footnote-10) the fulfilment of any threats she made,[[11]](#footnote-11) the abolition of the slave trade,[[12]](#footnote-12) and the defence of mistreated subjects overseas.[[13]](#footnote-13) But it was also perceived at stake closer to home; in an engagement with necessary reforms,[[14]](#footnote-14) in the maintenance of pledges to electors,[[15]](#footnote-15) and in the erection of local defences.[[16]](#footnote-16) Remarkably, it was even claimed to be a ‘point of honour’ for the accession of Catholics into Trinity College Dublin.[[17]](#footnote-17) Since national honour contained a lexicon sufficiently broad to encapsulate a wide range of questions, it is not surprising that it consistently appeared in discussions of foreign policy.

**I: National Honour and British Foreign Policy**

This leads to the first research question – explicating national honour from British foreign policy. This has been informed by an analysis of contemporary debates, which revealed significant lexical themes. Arguably the defining lexical theme of national honour was its frequent contrast to the relations between honourable gentlemen, as contemporaries justified their interpretations of national honour by asking, essentially, what a gentleman would do.[[18]](#footnote-18) While national honour dominated the political discourse, the personal honour of the gentleman had not been superseded. The Queen, as both the fount and personification of national honour, upheld that her own honour was connected to the nation, and that she cared for it above all other considerations.[[19]](#footnote-19)

When explaining military responses, the duel was commonly referenced, but the private relations of gentlemen could also excuse a less belligerent course. Lord John Russell justified forbearance towards Spain in 1848 by recalling the tale of Sir Archibald Hamilton, whose choice was either to laugh off an insult, or go on the attack.[[20]](#footnote-20) That Hamilton chose to do the former was sufficient for Russell, but it was not satisfactory for his critics. Further investigation of this connection reveals additional cleavages between the personal and national spheres. The language of honour was gendered; a manly, masculine policy defended national honour and accepted no insults, while an effeminate policy gave way to foreign threats, to the detriment of Britain’s reputation. When criticising what he perceived as a fear of Russia, Thomas Attwood accused the government of ‘emasculating’ England.[[21]](#footnote-21) Yet, a feminine form of honour was also present. *The Times* could assert that ‘The honour of the English flag is like that of an Englishwoman – it must not be ever so lightly blown upon with impunity or without atonement.’[[22]](#footnote-22) The honour of the nation, like that of a woman, had to be preserved in its purest form. Queen Victoria’s position as the fount of honour, and the connection between the honour of the nation and that of the Crown, provided additional complexity.

Further to this connection between the person and the nation, a key measurement of national honour was the country’s ability to defend its citizens abroad. This emerges as a consistent theme whenever questions of insult were raised. How were Britons to believe in their nation’s privileged position, if Alexander McLeod, Captain Elliot, or David Pacifico could be mistreated without consequence? Moreover, British captives in Canton, Kabul, and Abyssinia were as imprisoned as the national honour itself, and the latter could only be vindicated if the former were liberated. This close connection between Britain’s status and the fate of its citizens was arguably the defining theme of insult. It was also extended to individuals under British protection. The Trent Affair resonated with Britons because the Union violated British hospitality, and threatened her supremacy on the seas. Indeed, the straightforward nature of that insult aided Palmerston’s efforts to press it to his political advantage.

On the other hand, the context of a crisis greatly influenced national honour’s efficacy. On occasions where the crisis was more complicated, such as Schleswig-Holstein, the government struggled to make the case resonate with the public. This complexity could also work in the government’s favour. It may be argued that Aberdeen’s adept removal of national honour from the Oregon Question succeeded because Britons cared little for such a distant, unfamiliar territory, and were more animated by the prospect of Washington denying its equal rights in the dispute. From this, one could argue that there were limits to the power of national honour’s rhetoric. Palmerston’s critique of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty discomforted the Conservatives, but it did not turn the British public against Anglo-American peacemaking. Similarly, the Liberals were lambasted for abandoning Denmark in 1864, but no amount of pressure could have convinced the Queen or non-interventionists in the Cabinet to instigate a war against the Germans for national honour’s sake.

As contrasts between the honour of the gentleman and the honour of a nation were so frequently made, it is worth reflecting on the methodology of Frank Henderson Stewart. In his analysis of personal honour, Stewart presented a tripartite concept, containing inner, outer, and claim-right aspects. He contended that inner honour corresponded with a person’s dignity, while outer honour concerned their reputation, and the claim-right concerned the treatment they were entitled to depending on how they husbanded their honour in the honour-group they belonged. For conceptual purposes, it may be argued that Britain belonged to an honour-group of great powers, and was thus entitled to respect from lesser powers. That Britons perceived themselves as the premier world power certainly influenced the treatment they expected to receive from contemporary powers, and one discerns that on occasions where this expectation was not met, indignation or even outrage was the result.

Furthermore, as the above analysis has shown, contemporaries did distinguish between the three aspects of honour in their rhetoric, largely through synonyms. There were appreciable differences between the nation’s dignity, prestige, and influence, though these were contained under the ethic’s wider lexical umbrella. In national terms, to speak of prestige was to speak of reputation, largely a reputation of power, but this reputation was also articulated in alternative ways, such as in reference to credit. Further, it may be argued that contemporaries understood influence as the ability to leverage the nation’s honour to achieve policy goals at a cheaper rate than through military force alone. This included moral influence, which concerned the nation’s reputation for just governance, particularly in relation to its colonial possessions. Prestige and moral influence were most fervently pressed in India, though it was disputed whether British prestige or Britain’s moral influence was more important in that theatre.

However, as seen in Disraeli’s reimagining of prestige, these synonyms could serve as a surrogate for national honour itself. This lexical development may have been affected by contextual factors, such as the increase in imperial activity which emphasised prestige’s importance, placing it on par with national honour. Prestige was consistently associated with Britain’s colonial possessions, and it may be argued that prestige increased in importance as Britain’s imperial commitments increased. Prestige was also linked to Britain’s naval power, and it was validated by the respect which states accrued to Britain capacity to project this power against them. A good example is how American fears of Britain’s capacity to bombard her coastal cities heaped pressure upon Washington to resolve Anglo-American confrontations.[[23]](#footnote-23) Britain had also demonstrated its military capacity in 1840 by attacking Syria, defeating the Chinese in 1842, or engaging in a costly campaign to liberate prisoners from Abyssinian captivity in 1868. A naval blockade forced Greece to accede to British demands for redress. The Queen appreciated that these demonstrations of power increased foreign respect for British power and enhanced the country’s security abroad.[[24]](#footnote-24)

As seen during the Russo-Turkish War, however, contemporaries possessed their own interpretations of what prestige meant, and what it required. Was prestige not best husbanded by maintaining a reputation for justice and local improvement? Some maintained that if India was maintained by the sword alone, Britain’s hold on the subcontinent was unsustainable. Nonetheless, Britain’s military reputation was clearly an important factor in her prestige. It was common to highlight the role of Britain’s armed forces in defending her national honour, and debates over military budgets testify to this close connection.[[25]](#footnote-25) Maintaining this reputation was itself a source of power, and as the Marquess of Salisbury understood, for Britain to lose such a reputation was not merely a matter of sentiment, but constituted ‘a loss of actual power.’[[26]](#footnote-26)

When measuring the utility of the tripartite methodology for national honour, it may be argued that contemporaries recognised that a country which upheld its national honour would be entitled to respect, security, and influence. This validates the claim-right aspect of Stewart’s thesis, yet, as noted, these synonyms could be used interchangeably. Contemporaries also spoke of Britain’s character for justice, moral conduct, or magnanimity, which would rebound to her honour.[[27]](#footnote-27) These rhetorical patterns complicate a straightforward classification of Stewart’s methodology, yet for scholars in search of structure, it may be argued that Stewart does provide an important framework which aids closer analysis of national honour’s lexicon. As Stewart did not account for his methodology being used in studies of national honour, it is not surprising that his tripartite model is not a perfect fit for the ethic. However, Stewart’s model does help explain the reaction to foreign insults. It also suggests that national honour boasted a linguistic depth which fluctuated during these five decades, contributing to its complexity.

Contemporaries did not require Stewart’s model to appreciate national honour’s tenets, or to use the ethic’s rhetoric in their political attacks. There was little room for contending that national honour did not matter, or that its requirements were unfamiliar. As *The Times* asserted in 1864, if Britain received an insult, then ‘every child can tell the necessary sequence.’[[28]](#footnote-28) This formula also applied to other countries, as France was permitted to acquire redress against Portugal, despite the Anglo-Portuguese alliance. The opposition were urged to allow France the same right to vindicate her honour as they demanded for Britain.[[29]](#footnote-29) It was also deemed dishonourable to inflict insults upon lesser powers like Portugal, where those powers were not capable of acquiring redress. France took offence at its exclusion from the settlement of the Eastern Crisis in 1840, due to a hypersensitivity which was supposedly uniquely French. Yet, when facing similar exclusion in 1878, Disraeli roused a sense of outrage not dissimilar from that presented by Adolphe Thiers almost forty years before, all without any semblance of self-reflection.

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Clearly, NH was not merely a belief system or a political weapon used by disingenuous actors. It would be too simple to say that nobody believed in it, and only included it in their speeches to score political points. But it was also be reductionist to paint NH as a consistent, logical ethos which everyone sincerely believed in. Contemporaries were aware of NH’s mobilising power, as much as they were mindful of its importance to British security. If NH boasted no believers or adherents, surely its rhetoric would have been less powerful, and debates over its status would not have taken place. It may be reductionist to highlight NH as the cause of certain conflicts, but as seen in our series, NH was not well suited to compromise, and could inflame delicate situations. It could also compel political figures to embark on campaigns which they would otherwise have avoided. Conversely, the more enthusiastically NH was defended, the more defending it seemed to need. We see that when figures like Palmerston or Disraeli made NH the basis of their position, and encouraged zealotry among their supporters, they frequently ran into problems.

NH may have been a bottomless pit in this respect, but its rhetoric was sharp enough to do real damage to unprepared statesmen. Parliamentary debates demonstrate that NH was among the first cards used against one’s opponents. And if MPs didn’t press it, the actual press would do so, in language occasionally more demanding than that used by statesmen. It was possible to coopt these sources, and use newspapers or journals to the statesman’s advantage, as Palmerston, Aberdeen, and Disraeli all did in their own way. These tactics could mask otherwise unpopular policies, and even facilitate other choices which were politically difficult on their own. But these actors were just as liable to be burned by the incessant demands NH presented. Although on the surface easy to satisfy, NH was effectively never satisfied, because the world never sat still, and there was always somewhere to find insults, danger, or opportunity.

This is perhaps the lesson of NH, as much as the lesson of political rhetoric itself. It is recommended not to view NH in black and white terms. This is the mistake which many scholars have made, if they took the time to consider NH at all. A belief system which was supposedly in the background, underpinning everything contemporaries did, and anything they chose not to do, is a simplistic reading. NH did complicate the picture, and made policies like arbitration and even moderation incredibly difficult. This was also a consequence of the competitive international climate. If every major power possessed its own NH, then crises were guaranteed when these clashed with Britain’s own honour. Occasionally, there could be moments of give and take, but these largely occurred when further escalation was of no interest in the first place. In these moments of forbearance, such as in Madrid in 1848, or Oregon in 1846, the peaceful route was preferred, and NH was publicly revered, while being privately outmanoeuvred.

We are not quite finished this assessment of NH and its rhetoric, but we should reiterate that its major strength was in its flexibility, and the options it granted to contemporaries who could include in starkly different circumstances. NH could excuse the continued payment of the RDL, just as it justified the coercion of Greece, which had long avoided its financial obligations. It was incredibly rare for anyone to question what all of this meant, or whether NH was even truly worth it. As we have seen, views of NH did change as the decades progressed, and by the end of our analysis, we see what may be viewed as a turning point. The Conservatives embraced a recalcitrant, imperialist vision of the NH, while the Liberals emphasised the ethic’s moral elements, and embraced domestic improvement as the best means for increasing Britain’s reputation. This conflict was still present in 1914, but it shows the extent to which NH could change. It was not static, just as British political alignments changed, so too did the version of NH acceptable to the party which used it. This disagreement fostered further debate, and the continued use of rhetoric which maintained NH’s profile in foreign affairs. Next time, we’ll somehow wrap all of this in a satisfying bow, so I hope you'll join me. Until then my name is Zack, and this had been the penultimate episode of our PhD thesis.

1. The *Globe*, 8 March 1847. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ‘Do you believe, that if you destroy the English character in India, you can maintain your power there? Do you really imagine, that if you by your conduct produce a conviction and feeling throughout the public mind in those vast possessions, that this is not a country maintaining its institutions by honour and integrity, you can long maintain the extraordinary power which you possess in that vast empire? Why, it is absurd to suppose for one moment that you could do so.’ Thomas Wakley, HC Deb 16 July 1847 vol 94, cc. 440-441. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. As Earl Grey explained, ‘A great nation cannot forfeit her reputation for courage, and for a determination to maintain her rights and her honour – [she] cannot become suspected of irresolution and timidity, without provoking wrongs and insults which she cannot always continue to endure.’ Grey, HL Deb 11 April 1864 vol 174, cc. 754-755. Russell agreed: ‘It is clear that where your honour is attacked, and the representations you make are not listened to, you must defend your honour.’ *Ibid*, cc. 757-758. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This was also linked to the reputation of British merchants, as Earl Grey asserted: ‘I think the high name for honour which the British merchants formerly bore, and the character for uprightness which they enjoyed all over the world, were one of the most precious possessions of the country.’ HL Deb 19 Feb 1861 vol 161, cc. 557-558. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Attwood, HC Deb 25 March 1839 vol 46, cc. 1186-98. Attwood’s Motion was not seconded by any other Member. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. As Major Dickson asserted, ‘England was a patriotic country. Englishmen cherished her honour, and had no wish to see the Danish policy repeated.’ HC Deb 1 Aug 1870 vol 203, cc. 1338-1339.Salisbury also recognised this trend, ‘We know that the military storms of this era do not give much notice. They burst upon us suddenly when we least expect them; and with our onerous obligations, and our minute military force, we may at any moment be put in the dilemma of either sacrificing our national honour or of rushing on to certain defeat. I do not think that defeat is likely to be the horn of the dilemma we should adopt. My fear is that when the extremity comes we shall look at the obligation, turn it round and round, talk very big, lecture one side or the other, and then when Europe cries shame on us, we shall congratulate ourselves at home upon the moral pinnacle on which we stand. That of late years has generally been our part when we have had inconvenient obligations to encounter, and it will increasingly be our part in the future.’ HL Deb 6 March 1871 vol 204, cc. 1367-1368. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. As the *Morning Post* declared, ‘There is no test of national honour so unerring as that which is involved in the honest adherence to national obligations – no obligation so biding as a solemn treaty.’ *Morning Post*, 2 June 1847. In Parliament: Lord Althorp, HC Deb 12 July 1832 vol 14, cc. 261-262; Clarendon, HL Deb 15 July 1845 vol 82, cc. 497-498; Sir John Walsh, HC Deb 10 Feb 1865 vol 177, cc. 146-147; Salisbury, HL Deb 6 March 1871 vol 204, cc. 1363-1364. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Lord Brougham, HL Deb 26 March 1839 vol 46 cc. 1218-9. Lord Palmerston, HC Deb 14 Feb 1843 vol 66 cc. 569-570; Lawrence Palk, HC Deb 10 Feb 1871 vol 204, cc. 133-134 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Roebuck, HL Deb 5 Feb 1838 vol 40, cc. 754-755; Ellenborough, HL Deb 20 Feb 1865 vol. 177, cc. 4433-435; Sir Frederic Smith, *Ibid*, cc. 1596-1597. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Lord Althorp, HC Deb 26 Jan 1832 vol 9, cc. 916-918; Lord Dalmeny, HC Deb 11 March 1847 vol 90, cc. 1176-1178. ‘It is not merely to our colonies, our trade, or our wealth, that we derive our greatness and safety, but to the national honour – and what is national honour but the paying of all our just debts?’ *Bradford Observer*, 24 Nov 1842. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. This was particularly relevant to the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, see Chapter Five. In Parliament: Richard Cobden, HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 832-833; Salisbury, *Ibid*, cc. 853-854; Henry Liddell, *Ibid*, cc. 895-897. *The Exeter Flying Post*; July 6 1864. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Earl Grey reflected ‘If it was necessary to resist foreign encroachment, to defend the honour and interest of the country by war, was it less necessary to uphold the honour and the character of the country by abolishing from every portion of the British dominions the odious condition of slavery, so abhorrent to the principles of the Constitution, as well as to the breast of every Englishman.’ Earl Grey, HL Deb 25 June 1833 vol 18 cc. 1210-1211. Palmerston asserted that ‘it is as much for the national honour of France to put down the Slave Trade as for the national honour of England.’ HC Deb 4 Feb 1845 vol 77, cc. 121-122. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Earl of Mountcashell, HL Deb 8 Feb 1841 vol 56 cc. 364-6; J. H. Baillie, HC Deb 23 June 1842 vol 64, cc. 444-445. This was famously affirmed in the 1850 Don Pacifico Affair, see Chapter Two. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Earl Grey, HL Deb 3 Oct 1831 vol 7, cc. 968-969; Thomas Macaulay, HC Deb 10 Oct 1831 vol 8, cc. 397-398. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Sidney Herbert, HC Deb 9 Feb 1846 vol 83 cc. 629-631; Escott, HC Deb 27 Feb 1846 vol 84, cc. 263-265. The Prince Consort believed it was a point of honour for Aberdeen to fulfil his pledge to free trade, Memorandum by the Prince Albert, 23 Feb 1851 in *Letters of Queen Victoria*, II, p. 1162. Conversely, Derby insisted that it was a point of honour to stand for protectionism, at least until after the next election, Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians, 4 March 1851 in *Ibid*, 1194. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Russell, HL Deb 20 Feb 1865 vol. 177, cc. 436-437; Seymour Fitzgerald, HC Deb 13 March 1865 vol 177, cc. 1546-1547. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Richard Sheil, HC Deb 4 Feb 1845 vol 77, cc. 105-106. He added, ‘It is not open. Is it right that exclusion should continue? It is a point of honour with us, and honour and interest are nearly identified.’ *Ibid*, cc. 106-107. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. As Lord Althorp explained, in reference to the Russian Dutch Loan, ‘as between one upright man in private life and another, so he thought it should be between two nations. If a gentleman pledged himself to the payment of a debt, to which there was also a third party, he thought it would be highly dishonourable in that gentleman to take advantage of the circumstance of that third party having refused to fulfil his engagement, as a legal reason for also refusing to fulfil his engagement. If the conditions on which a debt was contracted were altered or broken by circumstances over which the creditor had no control, did it follow that the moral obligation of the debt was also broken? And as between man and man, so it ought to obtain between nations; what would be dishonourable in the one, would be dishonourable in the other; and what was morally binding on the one was morally binding on the other.’ Lord Althorp, HC Deb 26 Jan 1832 vol 9, cc. 916-918. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. In response to Russell’s urging to remember her honour, the Queen replied: ‘She must observe that she does not require to be reminded of the honour of England, which touches her nearly more than anyone else…she could never forgive herself if, for imaginary interests…or a supposed point of honour (for the honour of England is not engaged to maintain by arms an arrangement which we refused to guarantee, and which has unluckily led to consequences the very reverse of what was hoped for), she were to sanction measures which might lead to a European war.’ Queen Victoria to Earl Russell, Feb 15 1864, *Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series*, I, pp. 158-159. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Russell, HC Deb 5 June 1848 vol 99, cc. 383-384. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Attwood, HC Deb 9 July 1833 vol 19, cc. 420-421. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *The Times*, 27 Feb 1839. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Rebecca Berens Matzke, ‘Britain Gets Its Way: Power and Peace in Anglo-American Relations, 1838-1846,’ *War in History*, 8, No. 1 (Jan 2001), 19-46. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Queen Victoria to Lord John Russell, 18 Oct 1847 in *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, II, p. 931. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. ‘We had been on the point of war with France, and although we might have escaped the difficulty now, we ought never to leave the country in the state it then was, but have in readiness a Navy adequate to maintain the honour of the country.’ Charles Napier, HC Deb 16 May 1845 vol 80, cc. 462-463. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Robert Cecil, HC Deb 5 July 1864 vol 176, cc. 850-852. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Charles Adderly, HC Deb 4 Aug 1871 vol 208, cc. 867-869. Adderly did warn that ‘there were limits beyond which magnanimity became folly, subjecting those who passed them to suspicion of want of proper spirit and self-respect.’ *Ibid*, cc. 868-869. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. *The Times*, 8 July 1864. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. ‘What seems most to be grudged by certain hon. Gentlemen on the other side of the House is, that after our own honour has been vindicated, and after we have afforded to our subjects safety for their persons and their property, we have also suffered France to pursue the same course; that we have allowed the subjects of the Citizen King to procure that protection from the insults of the absolute and holy Miguel, which we have afforded to the English residents in that country.’ Lord Morpeth, HC Deb 9 Feb 1832 vol 10, cc. 139-140. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)