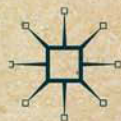


GROVER CLEVELAND'S NEW FOREIGN POLICY

*Arbitration, Neutrality, and the
Dawn of American Empire*



NICK CLEAVER



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ARBITRATION, NEUTRALITY, AND THE DAWN
OF AMERICAN EMPIRE

Nick Cleaver

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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2014 ISBN 978-1-137-44847-7

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First published in 2014 by PALGRAVE MACMILLAN® in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN 978-1-349-49646-4 ISBN 978-1-137-44849-1 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/9781137448491

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cleaver, Nick.

Grover Cleveland's new foreign policy : arbitration, neutrality, and the dawn of American empire / by Nick Cleaver.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-137-44847-7 (hardback : alk. paper)

1. United States—Foreign relations—1865-1898. 2. Cleveland, Grover, 1837-1908. I. Title.

E706.C59 2014

327.73009'034—dc23

2014018527

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Amnet.

First edition: October 2014

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To my parents

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would not have been possible without the help of a great many people. I am particularly indebted to my PhD supervisors, Richard Crockatt and John Charmley, who guided me through a large part of the process of researching and writing and provided constant encouragement and astute insight.

I must also thank the librarians, archivists, and staff at the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, the British Library, and the University of East Anglia Library, who facilitated much of the research behind this book.

I am indebted to everyone who read all or part of the manuscript in its various forms over the last six years. This includes Andrew Preston, Thomas Otte, Catherine Barter, and the anonymous reviewers; their feedback and suggestions on how to clarify my argument and improve the quality of my writing were gratefully received.

The research for this book was made possible by bursaries from the School of American Studies and the Arthur Miller Centre, both at the University of East Anglia. Beyond this financial support I would like to thank my friends and colleagues within the school, some of whom have now moved on to pastures new, for their advice and guidance throughout.

Finally, I have depended throughout this process on the support and encouragement of many friends and relatives. My parents, Richard and Janet Cleaver, have been the source of unceasing emotional, intellectual, and financial support, and my sister, Laura Cleaver, has provided both sound advice and a sympathetic ear. I am deeply grateful to them and to all the friends and colleagues who have helped make this book possible.

INTRODUCTION

In late April 1893, President Grover Cleveland and most of his cabinet—less than two months in office—left Washington D.C. and travelled by rail to Chicago. En route they made a detour to New York City, where they witnessed an international naval review from the deck of the modern, all-steel warship, USS *Dolphin*.¹ Arriving in Chicago, the party attended the opening ceremony of the World's Columbian Exposition where, shortly after midday on May 1, Cleveland delivered a brief speech to a cheering crowd estimated at 600,000. Expressing his wish that the hopes and aspirations of the American people would “awaken forces which in all time to come shall influence the welfare, the dignity, and freedom of mankind,” the president declared the Exposition open and pressed the button that signaled the unfurling of two thousand flags and banners.² A cacophony of cheers, steam whistles from the vessels along the waterfront, and a salute from the guns of the USS *Michigan* welcomed the opening of this grand display of national pride and technological prowess. Over the next six months more than 27 million people would pass through the gates to enjoy the spectacle of all that their nation had to offer them and the world at the close of the nineteenth century.³

Three years in the making and at a cost of \$33 million, the World's Columbian Exposition was simultaneously a celebration of the past and a vision of the future. Commissioned to mark four hundred years since Columbus's arrival in the Americas, it was a statement of the power and wealth of a rising nation. The “White City” and its environs were packed with exhibits from across the United States and around the world, all designed to display the incredible achievements of humanity at the end of the century. As host, the United States was determined to use the event to prove itself a global power. Even the White City, which mimicked the architectural styles of the great European capitals, was a dazzling display of opulence and a declaration for those who recognized the signs that the United States was no longer to be considered inferior to the Old World.⁴ A similar, less subtle, statement of American might was made by the U.S. Navy's

popular exhibition of its “Great White Fleet”: full-sized models of the powerful new battleships that would enter service as the decade progressed, revolutionizing the nation’s military standing.⁵ The diverse range of exhibits provided entertainment and fascination to suit all tastes with culture, high and low, educational lectures, technological demonstrations, and even the scandalously titillating Egyptian belly dancers. Besides the bombast of the Great White Fleet or the technological marvel of George Ferris’s eponymous Wheel, some of the more popular exhibits were the ethnological villages: working replicas that promised to recreate the way of life of peoples and races from around the globe and very alien to the citizens of Chicago. The curiosity of the public demonstrated the growing interest of Americans in the world beyond their borders, but the careful positioning of the sequence of the villages—from Germany to Ireland, Turkey, and China, before finally arriving at Dahomeyan Africa and Native America—made it clear that modern science perceived a distinct hierarchy of genetics, from the civilized to the barbarian, and white American visitors were left with no doubt that they belonged at the very pinnacle of that hierarchy.⁶

The day after the Exposition opened, the *New York Times* declared: “A new era had dawned, an era in which the principles which have had the most flourishing growth in the fertile soil of America, would be borne to the furthest quarter of the globe by the representatives of the nations here assembled.”⁷ The writer had caught the tone of the event and understood the monumental change in world affairs it heralded. In 1893 the United States of America was a rising nation: rich, powerful, and technologically advanced enough to rival any of the European powers and to exert its influence anywhere in the world. What remained to be answered was how—and where—that power would be wielded, and in what way those ephemeral national principles so lauded by the *New York Times* would be bestowed upon the world. It would be decades before those questions found a lasting answer, but the first attempt to define the U.S. place in the world as a great power was to be made by the man who had opened the World’s Columbian Exposition. In ways that he could not have suspected as he spoke to the crowds in Chicago, Grover Cleveland would find himself called upon to establish how America would interact with the world at the end of the nineteenth century. This book explores the grudging, fitful but increasingly coherent manner by which Cleveland approached the task, and it seeks to explain why, ultimately, his approach failed.

* * *

For more than a century the 1890s have been viewed as a crucial decade in the evolution of American foreign policy. In the three decades following the Civil War, the United States underwent dramatic changes—reconstructing the South, populating the West, building a transport and communications infrastructure, and creating a nation whose industrial and financial power rivalled that of any other. All of this combined to vastly increase the nation's influence—and also its involvement—in world affairs, a fact that was confirmed by the War of 1898: the moment when the United States conclusively took up the mantle of a global power, demonstrating its military might and acquiring overseas territories.⁸ The significance of this moment is undeniable, but it has also affected the way in which American foreign relations in the late nineteenth century have been studied. By creating a narrative in which changes taking place in the United States, and in its interactions with the world from the 1860s until 1898, all culminated in the Spanish–American War, historians have tended to use that event as a lens through which all of American foreign policy in the preceding years must be viewed. While explaining the origins of the war has been a vital area of historical study, this tendency to emphasize its position as the endpoint of foreign policy has led to other aspects of foreign policy during the period being ignored. One such aspect is the impact made on this evolution of foreign policy by those policymakers who did not play a direct role in bringing on the war. While the amount of attention given to late-nineteenth-century policymakers has varied widely—secretaries of state who are perceived as playing an active role in the development of U.S. foreign policy, such as William H. Seward or James G. Blaine, have been the subject of a great deal of study—some figures have undoubtedly received less than their fair share. Of these figures one of the most interesting is President Grover Cleveland, the only Democrat to occupy the Executive Mansion between the Civil War and 1912. This relative lack of scholarly interest is particularly noteworthy because Cleveland's second term of office immediately preceded the events of 1898 and contained numerous incidents in the realm of foreign policy, the effects of which would continue to be felt by his successor, William McKinley. Despite this, the role of the second Cleveland administration in the evolution of American foreign policy has been generally ignored, its own foreign policy largely forgotten. Confronted by similar conditions to those faced by his successor, Cleveland and his secretaries of state, Walter Q. Gresham and Richard Olney, held a different vision of how

the United States should conduct itself in the world, and this resulted in the proposition of a new American foreign policy in the years before the Spanish–American War.

By exploring the roles played by Cleveland, Gresham, and Olney in the evolution of foreign policy in this crucial period in American history it is possible to shed new light on how and why that policy eventually took the shape that it did, with repercussions lasting into the twentieth century and beyond. These lasting effects were made possible by the seismic changes that took place within the U.S. economy and society in the decades following the Civil War, as well as by the shifts that occurred in the field of international relations with the rise of new powers and the decline—to varying degrees—of older ones. These changes profoundly altered the U.S. position in global affairs and thus necessitated new approaches to foreign policy. We must understand these changes in order to understand how and why American foreign policy developed in this period, and the reasons why the Cleveland administration sought to direct that development in the way that it did. In this regard it is also useful to have an understanding of Cleveland's early life and political career from his election as sheriff of Erie County, New York, to his second inauguration as president of the United States.

* * *

Between the Civil War and the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States entered the modern age. In this period it underwent changes that fundamentally altered both domestic society and the nation's position in global affairs. This alteration was not, for the most part, a result of military power; the Civil War had demonstrated that the United States could recruit, equip and command military forces to rival any on the globe, but the rapid decline of those forces in the years following the war bore testimony to the nation's inherent dislike of maintaining such a military (for reasons both of principle and of economy). Military changes would have some bearing on the U.S. rise to the position of a world power—and would, of course, be vital to the nation's victory in the War of 1898—but they were generally secondary consequences of the much greater changes in American industry, agriculture, commerce, and communications. Gross national product rose from \$9.1 billion in the period 1869–1873 to \$37.1 billion in the period 1897–1901.⁹ This meteoric ascent was driven by both industry and agriculture. Gross farm product rose from just under \$1.5 billion in 1860 to \$3.8 billion in 1900, largely fueled by increased productivity, with wheat production rising from 254 million bushels to

599 million bushels between 1870 and 1900.¹⁰ Even these huge rises paled, however, in comparison to industrial growth. Manufacturing of all types soared after the war, none more so than steel production, which exploded from 77,000 tons annually to 11.2 million between 1870 and 1900.¹¹ Of this growth in steel manufacturing, nearly half of the increase took place in the 1890s.¹² Such rises were indicative of changes taking place across industry and agriculture. The consequences of these increases were numerous and far-reaching: greater food production improved the public health and lowered food prices at home, but it also brought the United States into greater collision with other major agricultural producers in the global marketplace, such as Canada, Russia, and Argentina. Lengthy diplomatic battles were waged between Washington and Paris and Berlin over the quality of American foodstuffs being shipped to European dinner tables. Similar confrontations occurred with Great Britain and Germany over industrial products. One result of these clashes was a change in the landscape of domestic politics: with regions the size of European nations owing their prosperity to agriculture, industry, mining or commerce, sectional divisions took on new dimensions. The issue of trade tariffs in particular became a key subject of domestic politics throughout the 1880s and 1890s and beyond. The rise in industrial and agricultural output also led to calls from some quarters for the U.S. government to actively seek out new overseas markets. This interest in potential markets would be a defining feature of the American foreign policy debate in the 1890s, but it is important to note that, regardless of the clamor for markets in Asia or South America, it was Europe that absorbed nearly 80 percent of American exports.¹³ Many of the changes were self-perpetuating, with new technologies made possible by the growth in industrial output helping to facilitate further increases in production. Where, in 1800, each acre had required 56 man hours of labor to produce a wheat crop, in 1900—thanks to mechanization—it required only 15 man hours.¹⁴ Changes in transport and communications infrastructure in particular had a profound effect on almost every aspect of American society. Between 1870 and 1890 the nation's railroad trackage nearly quadrupled.¹⁵ This increase allowed easier transportation of both agricultural and industrial produce, changing Americans' diets and lifestyles while also making it easier to export products to global markets. Much of the growth of the American steel industry was devoted to the expansion of this transport infrastructure, with 2,672,000 tons of rails produced in 1900 alone.¹⁶

These dramatic increases were themselves fueled, to a large extent, by demographic changes: the population of the United States nearly

doubled between 1870 and 1900, reaching nearly 76 million.¹⁷ Much of this growth was the result of new waves of immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe, with the result that the foreign-born population rose by 86 percent.¹⁸ These new arrivals fueled the growth of American industry: in 1870 52 percent of workers were employed in agriculture, by 1900 60 percent were employed in industry.¹⁹ Together, this rise in population, new waves of immigration, and growth of industry brought about rapid urbanization. Where in 1870 the United States had 25 cities with a population of 50,000 or more, in 1900 it had 78, including three with a population over one million.²⁰

The growing might of the United States was not the only factor to affect global affairs in the late nineteenth century. While European empires still dominated much of the globe, the balance of power within Europe itself was undergoing profound changes. The unification of Germany and its defeat of France in the 1870 Franco–Prussian War had marked the decline of one power and the rise of another. In Southern Europe the newly unified Italy at least held the potential to be a power, while in the East the Ottoman Empire faced challenges from both within and without, raising the prospect of the Russian Navy gaining access to the Mediterranean. The British Empire remained the dominant global power, but in terms of industrial output, commerce, and the control of colonies around the world, found itself increasingly challenged by both Russia and Germany—as well as by the United States. With most of Africa claimed by European powers, few areas of the globe remained outside the European sphere of influence. The independent republics of Central and South America were a major exception to this rule, raising fears in some quarters that a “Scramble for Latin America” might follow the one that had taken place in Africa. Finally, in East Asia, Japan was undergoing its own internal changes, developing into the major power in the region—a fact that was welcomed by many in both Britain and the United States. These changes in the global balance of power were unsettling to many, as were the potential changes to modern warfare as a result of new technologies. In his 1909 novel, *The War in the Air*, H. G. Wells depicted a global war in which armadas of airships fought one another for control of the sky, sinking fleets of battleships, and bombing New York, London, Berlin, and other great cities into submission. Tellingly, the major threats depicted by Wells were German militancy and a secret alliance between Japan and China aimed at the United States.

Beyond the world of fiction, however, none of the rising powers—Germany, Japan, Russia, and Italy—held the same potential as the United States. In the words of Paul Kennedy, “The United States seemed to have *all* the economic advantages which *some* of the others

possessed *in part*, but *none* of their disadvantages” [his italics].²¹ Clear evidence that this rise was widely recognized for what it was at the time is given by the decision in 1892 of the major European powers to upgrade their representatives in Washington to full ambassadors—a gesture that, a year later, Congress agreed to reciprocate without debate.²² The rise was not always a smooth process, nor was it consciously directed or preordained—it was the result of numerous factors at both a domestic and an international level feeding one another to produce an outcome that was at the same time both nearly accidental and almost inevitable. Blessed with abundant natural resources, almost limitless space to house and feed its growing population, and the security of 3,000 miles of ocean separating it from its European rivals, the United States was uniquely well-placed to succeed in the modern age. This fact has led one historian to suggest: “Some nations achieve greatness; the United States had greatness thrust upon it.”²³ This is perhaps an overstatement, given that from the nation’s inception there was no shortage of policymakers who both perceived a great future for it and worked hard to bring that future about, but if we accept that America’s rise to greatness in the last years of the nineteenth century was a result more of its peculiarly fortunate position than of any political master plan, then it was individual policymakers such as Grover Cleveland and his secretaries of state who were responsible for molding how that greatness took shape.

* * *

When the Civil War came to an end in 1865 the exhausted and bloodied nation was confronted with two immediate problems. The first was the presence in Mexico of the dictatorship of Emperor Maximilian I, which had been established by a French invasion in 1863. A clear violation of established U.S. policy under the Monroe Doctrine, the invasion would not likely have been attempted if American attention had not been distracted by the domestic crisis; the restoration of peace in the United States led to immediate calls to oust the European interlopers, by force if necessary. In the event, a judicious amount of saber-rattling combined with firm diplomacy was sufficient to end French support for Maximilian, and the misadventure would culminate with the emperor’s execution by a Mexican firing squad in June, 1867. This threat of force—including the movement of tens of thousands of troops to the Mexican border—was the last action of the vast Union Army that had been amassed during the Civil War before both it and the U.S. Navy were rapidly reduced in size. The second

problem facing the U.S. government in the years after the Civil War was a simmering tension with Great Britain, largely stemming from the occasionally fraught relationship between the two during the war. Coming to embody this tension were the *Alabama* claims: a collection of reparations claims for damage done to American shipping by Confederate commerce raiders (the most destructive of which was the CSS *Alabama*) built in Britain during the war. An emotive issue—American hardliners claimed that the actions of the raiders had indirectly lengthened the war by months or even years, leading to extreme demands for compensation such as the cession of Canada—the *Alabama* claims, along with the U.S. reluctance to curb the activities of the Fenians (Irish nationalists), who launched raids into Canada from New England in the 1860s, soured relations between the two nations for the rest of the decade. They were finally solved by the signing of the Treaty of Washington in 1871. This treaty would prove significant for the future of American foreign policy, restoring Anglo-American relations to an even keel (from which it would only rarely be shaken in subsequent decades) and allowing for the settlement of the *Alabama* claims by means of international arbitration. This method of settling disputes through the courts without resorting to force was championed by its supporters throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and would be a key element of the foreign policy of the Cleveland administration in the 1890s.

The years immediately following the Civil War also saw a renewal of the debate over national expansion. While schemes of varying levels of practicality to acquire new territories in Central America and the Caribbean were almost as old as the nation itself, in the decades leading up to the Civil War any such projects had been so bound up in the growing sectional crisis over slavery as to be impossible. With the sectional crisis now apparently at an end, some policymakers—led by William H. Seward, secretary of state to the Lincoln and Johnson administrations—began once again to campaign for the enlargement of the United States beyond its present borders. Many of the proposed plans centered on the strategic and commercial need—as emphasized by the war—for the construction and subsequent control of a canal across the Central American isthmus to link the Pacific with the Caribbean and thus the Atlantic. This ambition would lead to attempts to negotiate a treaty with Colombia to grant the United States permission to build such a canal across the Isthmus of Panama as well as other attempts to acquire rights to ports in Haiti and Santo Domingo and to purchase the Danish West Indies, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, among others. Ultimately, all of these projects would founder,

due either to unwillingness from the other nation to part with its territory or to a growing reluctance within Congress to appropriate funds for the deals. Much of this reluctance can be traced to a shortage of funds resulting from the debts run up by the Civil War, but there was also undoubtedly concern in some quarters at acquiring territory populated by a majority of non-whites, many of whom spoke Spanish and practiced Catholicism. In addition, the fractured nature of domestic politics in the United States during the Reconstruction period made it difficult to secure support for overseas adventures, as divisions within the Republican Party and then the resurgence of the Democrats, led to such plans becoming political footballs. Both racial concerns and partisan politics were to be recurring features of any debate over expansion in the late nineteenth century. Under these circumstances it is almost surprising that Seward was able to complete the acquisition of Alaska from Russia in 1868; that huge territory and the tiny (previously unclaimed) island of Midway in the Pacific would be the only results of the push to acquire new territory. These successes amid a plethora of failures were part of a short-lived campaign to push the nation's boundaries across the seas; there would not be another concerted effort to do so for the next quarter century. The debate over expansion in the 1860s was not as emotive as the *Alabama* claims or events in Mexico, but it set a tone for events later in the century that gave it a lasting significance beyond either of those issues.

After the flurry of activity in the late 1860s and early 1870s, the next 15 years saw something of a loss of interest in foreign affairs in Washington. While some policymakers still agitated for various overseas projects, government attention was mainly oriented toward domestic affairs. Running counter to this, however, was a growing public interest in the wider world, a curiosity catered to by newspapers and periodicals that aimed to entertain and inform the middle classes.²⁴ Undoubtedly, there were many reasons for this increased interest in global matters, not least the changing nature of the news media itself, which spawned many new publications in the years before and after the Civil War. The improvements in communications—railroads, steamships, and telegraph systems, including a permanent transatlantic telegraph cable between the United States and Great Britain after 1866—allowed much quicker and more accurate reporting of news from around the world, even if this coverage was still incomplete in less-developed regions, something that would cause problems for the State Department later in the century. Simultaneously fueling interest in and providing information about previously inaccessible parts of the world—particularly China, Africa, and the Middle East—was

a new surge in missionary activities sponsored by American church groups. Missionaries not only worked to convert the inhabitants of far-flung lands to Christianity, but they also sought to spread American notions of civilization and culture. These missionaries provided a ready source of information for families, politicians, and the news media back at home, but they also would prove to be a headache for American diplomats charged with ensuring their safety in times of local unrest.

Another facet of the work done by missionaries in Asia and elsewhere was their role as sales representatives for America's rapidly growing industry and agriculture. In many respects this enormous growth in production and the consequent increase in international exports and the prosperity of the American financial sector together constitute the single most-important factor in understanding U.S. foreign policy in the late nineteenth century. It is important, though, to draw the right conclusions from these facts and, for many years, historians have suggested that the primary aim of American foreign policy in this period was the acquisition and protection of new overseas markets for the nation's agricultural and industrial output.²⁵ While some politicians did actively seek to push such policies, for most policymakers any such efforts amounted to little more than rhetoric.²⁶ In particular the Republican Party, which drew much of its support from centers of industry and manufacturing, championed throughout the period a protectionist policy of high trade tariffs that defended the domestic market from cheap foreign imports at the expense of exports. While attempts were made to circumvent these high tariffs for Latin American nations that might provide important raw materials, the fact remains that, despite a great many speeches championing the potential markets of Asia and Africa, the vast majority of American trade was conducted with Europe: the target of the high tariff walls. Undoubtedly, many American businesses did attempt to actively seek out for themselves new markets across the world—with mixed, but largely positive, results—but aside from a gradual increase in the number of consuls and other State Department representatives stationed abroad, Washington did little to aid them directly. In fact, rather than actively engaging with global affairs in an attempt to secure new markets, the U.S. government found itself being sucked into foreign problems through a need to defend the rights and interests of American commercial enterprises overseas. This was true both of merchants and of investors who increasingly endeavored to put the profits of the industrial boom to work by buying plantations and building transport infrastructure throughout the Caribbean and Central America.

The protection of these existing assets would prove a far greater motivation for the foreign policy of Grover Cleveland's administration of 1893–1897 than any attempts to acquire new markets elsewhere.

Running parallel to the demands of commerce and finance were a variety of new cultural movements that arose in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Foremost among these are Social Darwinism and its offshoot, Anglo-Saxonism. Proponents of these theories, such as John Fiske, argued that the newly advanced ideas of Darwinian evolution could be applied not just to biology, but to human civilization. This thinking led to the inevitable conclusion that the dominant nations of the world had achieved their power due to an innate superiority of race or culture (or both). The Anglo-Saxonist branch of Social Darwinism emphasized the achievements of Great Britain—the world's greatest empire and dominant naval power—and the rising power of the United States as well as, to a lesser extent, Germany. Such ideas found a natural audience in a nation where racist sentiments were common, combining with home-grown theories of Manifest Destiny to suggest that America's rise was divinely ordained. The problem with such theories is that it is extremely difficult to prove the extent to which they influenced policymakers. Even keen advocates of America's "civilizing mission" abroad, such as Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, based their arguments more on practical concerns of national honor and prestige or strategic imperative, while the instinctively conservative President Grover Cleveland did little to suggest he was driven by a sense of the nation's genetic superiority or divine purpose. That said, Social Darwinism undoubtedly formed part of the pervasive culture of racism, which influenced the decisions of all policymakers in the period.

Perhaps more influential was the rise to maturity of a new generation of Americans for whom the carnage of the Civil War was at most a distant childhood memory, and who viewed the nation as a rising power in the world. This new generation helped to further stimulate interest in foreign affairs and raised an expectation that the United States should be an active participant in world politics. This would manifest itself in a renewed interest in expanding the nation's influence in the western hemisphere and the Pacific and, perhaps more significantly, in a new willingness to commit the United States—both through domestic charity and direct government intervention—to humanitarian causes overseas in places far removed from its traditional sphere of influence, such as Russia and the Ottoman Empire.²⁷ Ninkovich and Hoganson have explored the motivations of this new generation of Americans and set out persuasive arguments that cultural

factors are what inspired much of U.S. foreign policy at the end of the 1890s. Ninkovich has demonstrated the growing interest of the liberal middle and upper classes in the wider world in this period and the consequent interest in expanding the nation's role in global affairs.²⁸ Hoganson's study of gender and masculinity as a driving force for the Spanish–American War persuasively argues that deep-rooted anxieties about a perceived threat to American manhood provided a cultural impetus to war, an impetus that outweighed strategic or economic factors in the minds of many Americans, including policymakers.²⁹ While Grover Cleveland is largely unmentioned by Hoganson, the gender politics argument explains the rising jingoism Cleveland confronted in American politics during his second term and is inextricably linked to a debate over the concept of national honor, in which the Cleveland administration would be engaged for four years.

One significant figure discussed by Ninkovich and Hoganson—as well as many others—is the naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan who, although not himself of the postwar generation, would provide a focal point for one aspect of that generation's new agenda with his writings on the need for a large and powerful American navy to allow the nation to assert its will overseas. Like the Social Darwinists, Mahan's direct influence on policy may have been overstated, but his theories on sea power form a significant part of a larger debate over the U.S. ability to project military power—not least after it became apparent in the 1880s that the U.S. Navy was in danger of being outmatched, not just by European powers, but even by other nations in the Americas, such as Chile. Bound up in this desire to increase the nation's military might was a fundamental questioning in some quarters over the condition of the American people and a perceived weakening of American masculinity. While not apparent in the positions of all policymakers, it is clear that these concerns played a role in the thinking of members of the rising generation, such as Roosevelt. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, such was the state of flux surrounding American political thought as it related to foreign policy. Regardless of whether or not they themselves agreed with them all, Cleveland and his advisors would need to balance these changing expectations when they returned to office in March, 1893.

The domestic political system that produced men such as Cleveland, Gresham, and Olney was a deeply divisive one. The political landscape was divided along lines both partisan and sectional as well as by issues of wealth and race. The legacy of the Civil War still influenced events a quarter of a century after Appomattox, both in the sectional divides of electoral politics and in the unresolved problems

resulting from the conflict, which occasionally resurfaced in Congress, such as the ownership of captured Confederate battle flags and the payment of pensions to veterans.

For the Democratic Party that legacy had meant a long, slow return to power in Washington, with the party first regaining control of the House of Representatives in 1875 and of the Senate in 1879. While control of Congress remained largely equal over the following two decades—with the Democrats usually winning the House and the Republicans usually holding the Senate—Cleveland's victories in 1884 and 1892 marked the only Democratic presidential successes of the period. Partisan divisions were among the fiercest in the nation's history, but many of the issues at stake would be largely unrecognizable to modern voters. Two subjects that would become of key concern in Cleveland's second term were tariff reform and the question of whether the national currency should be based on gold or silver or some combination of the two—matters of little interest to the electorate of the twenty-first century, but of immense importance to those of the late nineteenth. Beyond the two main parties, the period saw strong showings for third parties, who fed off the sectional divisions in the country and placed a special focus on currency reform. The Greenback Labor Party sent 13 representatives to Congress in 1879 and 10 in 1881 and also had reasonable showings in the presidential elections of 1880 and 1884. More significantly, the People's Party had a brief, but impressive, existence in the 1890s, which saw them draw upon the dissatisfaction of farming communities of the South and the western plains and the mining communities of the Rocky Mountains to win seats in both the House and the Senate as well as take several state governorships. In the presidential election of 1892, populist James B. Weaver won over a million votes and may have helped to swing the election to Cleveland.³⁰ Four years later, with the Democrats positioning themselves behind William Jennings Bryan as supporters of silver currency, the People's Party also nominated Bryan as their presidential nominee, thus making the Democratic Party the political face of the populist movement.

Sectional issues played a major role in late-nineteenth-century politics, both nationally and within the two main parties. Presidential elections tended to show a clear North–South divide, with Republicans winning the Northeast and Midwest and Democrats sweeping the South. Elections were generally decided by swing states, such as Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Indiana, while both parties saw the western states as a potential future counterweight to their opponent's heartlands. This desire to capitalize on the growing

number of western states would see the Democrats repudiating their own president in 1896 in order to adopt a pro-silver platform designed to appeal to plains farmers and mining communities. Such economic divisions between sections—the industrial and mercantile Northeast, the agrarian South and plains, and the mining mountain states—also led to a variety of demands as to how the nation's foreign policy should best be directed, whether toward the industrial states of Europe, the raw materials of Central and South America, or the almost-mythical potential markets of Asia.

The late nineteenth century was also remarkable for the extremely high level of public interest in politics. The turnout for elections was enormous in terms of percentage, with the presidential election of 1896 seeing almost 80 percent of eligible white male voters cast their ballots.³¹ The U.S. global reputation for almost pathological enthusiasm for partisan democracy is demonstrated by the decision of French author, Jules Verne, in his 1873 novel, *Around the World in 80 Days*, to make a political rally—one that resembles a mass brawl—the first thing that Phileas Fogg encounters upon his arrival in San Francisco. This places politics in the United States on a par with national stereotypes, such as elephants and mystical religious ceremonies in India, and opium dens in Hong Kong. This enthusiasm went beyond mere party loyalty, however, with the late nineteenth century seeing a decline in party events such as picnics, parades, and bonfires, replaced by a genuine attempt to appeal to voters intellectually through speaking tours and pamphlets, which were published in their millions.³²

For many years this period of American political history has been portrayed as one of corruption and nepotism, but more recent scholarship has contested this view. This scholarship argues that too much emphasis has been placed on the concept of the “Gilded Age”—a term that suggests venality, fakery and fraud—and a too-ready acceptance of the exaggerations of Mark Twain and the partisan accounts of newspaper editors of the time.³³ Both parties accused each other of dirty tricks—most notably attempts to bribe voters in marginal states—and, undoubtedly, some fraud took place, but it seems that its impact was limited.³⁴ Undoubtedly, some late-nineteenth-century elections saw attempted smear campaigns against the candidates—Grover Cleveland's first presidential election being a particular example—but these were neither as ubiquitous nor as professionally executed as in modern elections. The power of the president to distribute government jobs as patronage to his followers certainly led to backroom dealing and helped to support the political powerbrokers in major cities such as New York and Philadelphia, but patronage was neither

illegal nor markedly different from internal party politics at any point in the nation's history, even if it was taken to an extreme in the 1890s, with approximately 200,000 federal jobs at stake. That said, it is clear that many members of the public were concerned about corruption and nepotism at all levels of American politics, and this concern would prove crucial in elevating Grover Cleveland to the presidency as a candidate trumpeted for his honesty.

The distribution of patronage (the spoils system) was a major strength of the presidency at a time when the position of chief executive was still recovering from the attacks against its authority during the Reconstruction era. This low ebb for the office of the president was well-illustrated by the dilapidated state of the White House at the time.³⁵ In the next decade, Theodore Roosevelt would preside over major repair, refurbishment, and redecoration of the Executive Mansion, but in the 1890s it was at best still reaping the results of President Chester A. Arthur's refurbishment of 1881 and the introduction of electricity under the presidency of Benjamin Harrison.³⁶ The president's staff numbered roughly a dozen people and the vast majority of political business had to be done in person, resulting in long working days for Cleveland, who was always reluctant to delegate tasks to others. The president was, however, still clearly recognized by the public and press of the time to be the national head of state. While this period saw numerous instances of the president and Congress clashing over a variety of issues, both foreign and domestic, the general movement was toward an increase of presidential power and authority, which would eventually culminate in Theodore Roosevelt's bully pulpit and the "Imperial Presidency" in the next century. Perhaps aiding in this was the ever-increasing workload being placed on Congress, which forced it to become less of a forum and more of an administrative center.³⁷

The late nineteenth century was a period of change in American government. Following the 1881 assassination of President James Garfield, supposedly by a disappointed office seeker, the campaign to reform the nation's civil service saw the passing of the Pendleton Act (1883), which sought to reduce the role of the spoils system in filling government jobs by making appointment and promotion a matter of competitive examination. Over the next decade this process placed thousands of jobs outside the patronage system—something Cleveland himself played a major role in achieving—but did little to dent the workload of an incoming president since the size of the government was also expanding.³⁸ While the federal bureaucracy was still tiny in comparison to what it would become over the next century

there were distinct signs that larger and more professional government departments were developing. In 1888 the gigantic new State, War and Navy Building was opened in Washington, providing new office space for three government departments. If anything these new offices outshone the departments they housed: the State Department was a relatively small affair, comprising only the secretary of state, the assistant secretaries and fewer than 100 assorted clerks, personal secretaries, and office workers.³⁹ Alvey A. Adee served the department for over 50 years under both Republican and Democratic administrations, the majority of that time as second assistant secretary, and thus became both a highly valued civil servant and also a key element of institutional memory.⁴⁰ The ability of the men representing the United States overseas was also distinctly variable. While the few prestige posts were filled with relative ease, the task of recruiting consuls and commercial agents was a more difficult one, prompting Cleveland and Olney to attempt in 1895 to increase the pay on offer.⁴¹ The promotion, when it came, of the key American representatives abroad, from ministers to ambassadors, was overdue and indicative of the nation's changing status and growing confidence—a rejection of the old trappings of republican thought (that saw the title of ambassador as troublingly monarchical) and embracing of equality with foreign powers. However, the slow growth of the State Department and the difficulties encountered in recruiting people for its work was evidence of the limited vision that many in Washington still had of the United States government and the nation's place in world affairs.

* * *

Grover Cleveland is hardly a well-known figure in United States history. Even to historians he is generally known for one of two reasons: He was the only president in American history to serve his two terms non-consecutively and he weighed, at his heaviest, over 300 pounds. Such trivia does not serve to throw much light on either the man or his policies. It seems almost obligatory for any biographer of Grover Cleveland in the last 30 years to include in the introduction some reference to the various polls that have been conducted among historians in order to rank the presidents of the United States by achievement or ability. In such exercises, we are told, Cleveland has consistently scored well (one biographer describes how a 1966 poll placed him as “High Average”), and yet he has not survived in the public consciousness because the events he oversaw were not significant enough to excite broad interest.⁴² Cleveland has shared the fate of almost all the chief

executives of the late nineteenth century and slipped into obscurity, but he has still maintained a better reputation among scholars than did many of his peers. Not helping to break through this obscurity—although by no means causing it—is the fact that Cleveland is not the easiest president for a historian to study. He does not appear to have ever devoted significant time to introspection, and he wrote no autobiography. The closest he came to producing such a work was in a series of lectures given to students at Princeton University in the early years of the twentieth century. These lectures, subsequently compiled in a single volume, titled *Presidential Problems*, give some insight into Cleveland and his advisors' thinking in four incidents he considered to be of the greatest significance in his two terms as president. Even these, however, do not give a complete record of exactly what the administration did and, more significantly, why they did it. Even when setting the record straight, Cleveland was somewhat reticent on the subject of motives. This problem is magnified in Cleveland's own records. The Cleveland Papers, kept by the Library of Congress, provide a significant archive of letters and telegrams received by him over the course of his life, but this archive is frustratingly lacking in material that he wrote himself, with letter books only covering his first term in office. The Index to the papers states that Cleveland had a "somewhat casual attitude" toward his papers—rarely keeping copies of letters that he wrote in longhand, and subsequently scattering drafts of messages, addresses, proclamations, and executive orders by using them to comply with requests for autographs.⁴³ The Index also describes his handwriting as "neat but not easily legible," which might be considered generous. More significantly, Cleveland preferred to conduct government business with members of Congress and his cabinet in face-to-face discussions, and the papers are replete with tantalizing references to conversations of which no written record has survived. The surprising result of this is that it is often easier to discern the motives and reasoning behind the administration's actions for events that took place during the summer months when Cleveland—in common with all members of Washington's political community—fled the stifling heat of the city for the cooler climes (and better fishing) of Grey Gables, his home on the Massachusetts coast. During these times, when Cleveland was handling at arm's length governmental matters that, with Congress out of session, were usually related to foreign affairs, the need for clarity of understanding meant that both Cleveland and his secretaries of state tended to express themselves much more fully (and also more frequently) in their letters than they would when both were in Washington. It is also these longer, more

open letters that tend to reveal a great deal more about Cleveland's character, his relationships with his subordinates, and his personal beliefs. This understanding of Cleveland—as well as Gresham and Olney—as individuals is vital to explaining the direction in which he attempted to steer American foreign policy in the years before the Spanish–American War.

Stephen Grover Cleveland was very much a product of the American political system of the late nineteenth century. Born in 1837 in Caldwell, New Jersey, he was the son of a Presbyterian minister, whose career was important in shaping Cleveland's life, first by moving the family to central New York State—with ministries in the towns of Fayetteville and Clinton—and later by compelling the young man (after his father's death when Grover was 16 years old) to abandon hopes of attending college because he had to support his mother and siblings.⁴⁴ After a year assisting one of his older brothers, who was teaching at a school for the blind in New York City, Cleveland headed west on his own, initially aiming for Cleveland, Ohio, but instead finding himself settling in Buffalo, New York. In Buffalo he began training for a career in the law and developed the habits of working diligently for long hours, which would be a defining characteristic for the rest of his life. His legal career was marked by dogged hard work rather than by intellectual brilliance, but these qualities were ideally suited to the legal work of a city like Buffalo, and his reputation grew. Despite identifying with the Democrats as early as 1856—Allan Nevins notes that not only were they the party of solidity and conservatism at the time, as Cleveland himself later stated, but his friends and superiors in Buffalo were also Democrats—Cleveland does not appear to have had political ambitions for himself, although from 1858 he worked as a volunteer for the party at the grassroots level.⁴⁵ Richard Welch cautions against assigning Cleveland a systematic political philosophy, suggesting that he was suspicious of deep thinkers, theory, and abstract ideas.⁴⁶ He believed in the principles of small government and the separation of powers, and at least paid lip service to states' rights, but his time as president would show all three to be negotiable in his own mind.⁴⁷ His conservatism was as much personal as political; he did not fear change, nor did he embrace it, preferring moderation and a respect for tradition. He believed in the power of the free market and that prosperity came from economic freedom and a minimum of both government interference and government favors. As such he espoused a classical liberalism that was in line with the thinking of most middle-class Americans of his time. He had a moralistic streak that also chimed with the late nineteenth-century

electorate, advocating traditional virtues of honesty and hard work while judging issues on their moral grounds as well as on economic or political grounds.⁴⁸ A traditionalist at heart, Cleveland held a deep respect for the Founding Fathers, particularly George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, as well as for his Democratic hero, Andrew Jackson. For this reason, he would later become a staunch defender of the Monroe Doctrine, despite admitting that he had little understanding of it.⁴⁹ While he did not serve in the Civil War—justly claiming that he was obligated to support his widowed mother and to hire a substitute when drafted—he appears to have been fully in favor of the Union cause.⁵⁰ His first political office came during the Civil War, when he was appointed assistant district attorney of New York's Erie County in 1863, and his first bid for election in his own right came in 1865, when he was defeated in the race for district attorney. In 1870 he was persuaded to run as the Democratic candidate for sheriff of Erie County, which he won, serving two years, but he declined to seek re-election. In 1881, therefore, Cleveland's experience in electoral politics was confined exclusively to legal roles, the last of which he had held eight years previously. Under such circumstances it is surprising that he was selected by the local Democratic Party to be their nominee for Buffalo's mayoral race. Welch explains this decision as the result of increasing public concern about the city's Republican leaders, resulting from corruption and complacency, and from the Democrats' wise decision to embrace this dissatisfaction by selecting a fresh face with a local reputation for hard work and honesty.⁵¹ In many ways this first election would define Cleveland's meteoric political ascent, with his reputation as a political outsider of high moral probity being seized upon repeatedly by Democratic leaders seeking a candidate capable of winning elections, first for mayor of Buffalo, then as governor of New York and, finally, as president of the United States. This reputation was only increased by his actions in office: both in Buffalo and in the State House in Albany, Cleveland exercised his power of the veto with a regularity bordering on enthusiasm, as he struck down legislation he believed to be corrupt, illegal or not in the public interest. His efforts at ensuring the efficient use of public funds by exposing graft within the Buffalo city government swiftly earned him the interest of state party leaders and, on January 1, 1883—exactly two years after taking the oath of office as mayor of Buffalo—Cleveland was inaugurated as governor of New York. The continuation of such anti-corruption efforts at a statewide level won him national attention as well as the support of disaffected independent Republicans, who proudly adopted the disparaging nickname,

Mugwumps, and were opposed to the corruption inherent in the spoils system. Mugwumps played a small role in helping Cleveland gain first the Democratic nomination and then the presidency itself. Running against James G. Blaine, a man who—rightly or wrongly—had a reputation for involvement in graft and corruption, Cleveland's image as a man of great honesty and probity was a major asset in helping him achieve victory in a close race, although Welch has concluded that Cleveland's victory was most likely the result of a schism within the Republican Party and, thus, "was perhaps less the result of his superior political morals than the result of the machinations of Roscoe Conkling, a man whose political ethics were far more suspect than those of James G. Blaine."⁵² Whatever the actual reason for Cleveland's victory in the presidential race, he entered office in 1885 with a reputation as the champion of honesty and good governance, a reputation that had, if anything, been bolstered by his reaction to a sex scandal that had broken during his election campaign. Confronted with allegations that he had fathered a child with a woman in Buffalo, Cleveland faced the accusations head-on, accepting the possibility that he was indeed the child's father and famously sending a telegram to his supporters instructing them to "Tell The Truth"—with proof of his developing political instincts being provided by the subsequent leaking of this telegram to the press.⁵³ By engaging openly with the issue and supporting an investigation that subsequently cleared him of any misconduct beyond the initial act of fathering the child, Cleveland was able to emerge from the scandal largely unscathed.

Cleveland's first term as president was relatively free of incident in regard to foreign policy, and he himself showed little inclination to actively seek to promote an agenda. That said, soon after entering office he made his position on foreign policy matters clear when he withdrew from Senate consideration the Frelinghuysen-Zavala Treaty, which would have granted the United States the right to construct a trans-isthmian canal in Nicaragua—withdrawing it on the grounds that it made Nicaragua a protectorate of the United States and threatened a clash with Great Britain over its violation of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850, which expressly forbade the independent construction of such a canal by either Britain or the United States.⁵⁴ He also refused to submit to Congress the Berlin Convention, which had been negotiated over the previous winter by the United States and several European powers and aimed to guarantee neutrality and free trade for the Congo Basin, doing so on the grounds that the United States had no business involving itself in European imperialism in Africa.⁵⁵ After this early assertiveness, however, the major incidents of Cleveland's

first term were long-running disputes with Great Britain over fishing rights off the coast of Canada and seal hunting in the Northern Pacific, and a standoff with Germany and Great Britain over the independence of Samoa that resulted in an unsatisfactory tripartite protectorate over the islands: This would resurface in Cleveland's second term. The first term was bookended by events relating to Latin America—a brief deployment in April 1885 of marines in Colombia to help restore order in the province of Panama, and the issuing of invitations for a pan-American conference in Washington to discuss matters of trade, a conference ultimately presided over by the Benjamin Harrison administration.⁵⁶ Overall, Cleveland's first term saw little action in terms of foreign policy, but it did demonstrate some important themes in terms of his personal vision on such matters: an adherence to Jefferson's strictures against entangling alliances and an instinctive dislike of colonialist expansion and foreign entanglements. These themes would provide a foundation for much of his administration's conduct of foreign policy during his second term.

Before that second term, however, Cleveland had the unique experience of a four-year period out of office. This time saw him living, for the most part, in New York City, and this may have had a bearing on his conduct upon returning to the Executive Mansion in 1893. During his time in New York, Cleveland spent much of his time in the company of wealthy, influential men such as journalist Richard Watson Gilder and the financier E. C. Benedict, both of whom would remain friends and confidants of Cleveland after his re-election. These friendships have prompted one biographer to suggest that his second term in office saw less sensitivity to the needs of the ordinary working men he had known in Buffalo and a greater interest in the needs of financiers.⁵⁷ This view is debatable on two counts: Firstly, because Cleveland's Buffalo friends were often members of the local legal profession, like himself, and so not quite the ordinary working men of America; and, secondly, because the accusation that Cleveland was beholden to eastern financiers was routinely levelled at him by his opponents on the subjects of tariff and currency reform, critics who recognized it as a means of appealing to western and southern farmers. That said, it is true that Cleveland's new social circle was undoubtedly loftier than his previous one and, with his second term dominated by the financial crash of 1893 and the recession that followed, he did indeed devote more time to financial issues, with most of his decisions clearly more likely to directly benefit bankers and investors than farmers and factory workers. Those decisions were almost certainly motivated by a genuine belief that they were best for the nation as a

whole but, with little financial expertise of his own, it is not surprising that Cleveland relied upon the advice of those whom he perceived to be better informed on such matters.

Cleveland returned to the White House on March 4, 1893. He had defeated Harrison by a majority of just under 400,000 votes out of a total of nearly 12,000,000 cast. In the Electoral College he received 277 votes to 145 for Harrison and 22 for the Populist candidate, James B. Weaver. In Congress, the Democrats followed up a crushing victory in the midterm elections of 1890 by gaining control of the Senate and maintaining a sizable majority in the House of Representatives. On paper, at least, Cleveland had a perfect opportunity to enact whatever agenda he saw fit. All that would change, however, with the economic crash that struck the country shortly after the inauguration—although it is debatable whether the fractured condition of the Democratic Party would have made for smooth relations between the executive and Congress if the crash had not occurred.

The Crash of 1893 was, to a large extent, the defining event of Cleveland's second term. It was triggered, less than three months after Cleveland's return to the White House, by the failure of the National Cordage Company, but the underlying weaknesses of the American economy had existed for many years. The short-term effects were catastrophic—the collapse of the stock market, failing businesses and banks, and drastic wage cuts for most workers—and the longer-term impact was felt throughout the next four years. Unemployment figures have been estimated at 2 or even 3 million with at least 20 percent of the industrial workforce unemployed in the winter of 1893–1894, and this sparked very real fears of popular unrest in the minds of government and the middle and upper classes.⁵⁸ With self-proclaimed 'armies' of jobless men moving around the country in 1894—the most famous, led by Jacob Coxey, announced its intention to march on Washington—Richard Olney, then attorney general, assigned government agents to infiltrate the movements and report back to him.⁵⁹ Olney's heavy-handed breaking of the Pullman Strike that had paralyzed much of the nation's railroad network that same year was a further indication of how seriously the administration viewed the threat of social upheaval. That threat may have been greater in the mind of Olney than it was in reality, but the economic depression that began in 1893 would have a lasting impact on American politics. The Populist movement gained huge support from suffering farmers, and efforts to solve the crisis forced to the forefront of politics the question of whether the nation's currency should be based on silver or gold. By doing so it reopened old divides between those who saw themselves as

producers in American society, such as farmers and industrial workers, and the corporations and financiers of the Northeast. The Democratic Party in particular found itself divided over the issue, and Cleveland's support for the gold standard and backing of the business community would ultimately place him on the wrong side of the schism.

In terms of foreign affairs, Cleveland returned to Washington without an agenda, but as George Herring has written about Bill Clinton: "[I]n foreign policy U.S. presidents do not have to seek trouble, it finds them."⁶⁰ For four years between March 1893, and March 1897, Grover Cleveland, Walter Q. Gresham, and Richard Olney would be the men most responsible for directing American foreign policy. In this time they would seek advice from friends, colleagues, and those they acknowledged to have a special expertise, and they would be relentlessly lobbied by senators, congressmen, and a variety of private citizens, but the buck always stopped with Cleveland and his secretaries of state. They did not enter office intending to set out a new direction for American foreign policy, but a series of events over the course of Cleveland's second term forced the administration to take a stance for the nation and, over time, this string of actions evolved into a coherent pattern. These actions were, however, always carried out in a reactive manner; Cleveland was no American Bismarck. What would instead emerge through the Cleveland administration's actions in Hawaii, Brazil, China, Nicaragua, Venezuela, the Ottoman Empire, and Cuba was a foreign policy framework that sought to place American actions on foreign relations within clear moral and legal bounds. In particular, a strict adherence to the rules of neutrality under international law would prove to be a dominant consideration (in some respects acting as a foundational ideology for the framework), as were a respect for the sovereignty of weaker nations and a growing interest in the possibilities of legal arbitration of international disputes. The new framework would draw on traditional elements of American foreign policy, and aspects of it would be taken up again in the future, but the framework was distinct from both past and future. It was a recognition that the nation could no longer hope to remain isolated from the wider world and its problems, but was also a statement that engaging with the world did not necessitate abandoning American traditions of non-interference and a belief in the moral superiority of republican government. This emphasis on legality and morality would not be welcomed by all interested parties in the government, and it is an open question whether the American public would have accepted a permanently passive, reactive stance on foreign affairs. As events transpired, it would be Cleveland's failure to maintain control of his

fractured party on domestic matters that ultimately doomed both his presidency and his foreign policy framework, but some of the moral and legal aspects would continue to find voice in American foreign relations even after his successors embarked the nation on a course toward global empire, regional hegemony, and the status of a great power.

CHAPTER 1



THE HAWAIIAN REVOLUTION, 1893

One of the most important diplomatic episodes of Grover Cleveland's second term was already well under way by the time of his inauguration on March 3, 1893. The revolution that had taken place in Hawaii in January of 1893 would prove to be the subject of some of Cleveland's first policy decisions upon reentering the White House and indeed caused him to take action more than a week before taking the oath of office. Allan Nevins has suggested that the revolution should be considered the most important issue of Cleveland's entire second term in regard to foreign policy. While this might be a debatable subject, it certainly cannot be denied that Hawaii set the tone for much of what was to come from Cleveland in the four years after his inauguration.¹

In many respects the term "revolution" is more convenient than accurate when applied to the events that took place in Hawaii in January 1893. The overthrow of the island nation's monarch, Queen Liliuokalani, had almost nothing to do with popular sentiment and was instead brought about at the behest of the islands' wealthy, land-owning elite. This upper class—which dominated Hawaiian politics and finance—was exclusively white: immigrants and the sons and grandsons of immigrants dating back to the first decades of the nineteenth century. The revolution was born out of the racial politics of the islands—where the native monarchy, the white elite, the indigenous majority, and large numbers of European and Asian laborers constituted a fractured and turbulent population—but the immediate trigger was probably economic in nature. Reciprocity treaties signed in 1876 and 1887 had seen the already American-oriented islands develop an economy dominated by the export of sugar to the United

States.² Beyond dominating Hawaii's trade, Americans—or those of American descent, along with some whites of European origin—also owned two-thirds of the islands' sugar plantations, and this granted them a wildly disproportionate share of the kingdom's wealth.³ This wealth came under threat in 1890 after the U.S. Congress passed the McKinley Tariff, which abolished duties on sugar imports and provided a subsidy of two cents per pound for domestic American sugar producers. Furthermore, a subsequent treaty granted Cuban sugar preferential entry to the United States. Practically at a stroke the Hawaiian sugar growers saw their position of strength demolished as their competitors in the United States and Cuba suddenly gained a huge commercial advantage. The Hawaiian economy suffered terribly, and the wealthy white minority saw the source of their prosperity disappear. As such they became some of the earliest victims of a new reality in global politics: the ability of the rising American giant to build or break the financial fortunes of other nations as an unintended consequence of its decisions.

Running parallel to the economic calamities, the wealthy American and European minority was experiencing political setbacks. On July 1, 1887, a minor uprising by the white elite against King Kalakaua led to the creation of a new constitution granting much greater powers to those members of the white minority who fulfilled certain property qualifications.⁴ In July 1889, the new white-dominated cabinet survived an abortive attempt by the monarchy's supporters to overturn the 1887 constitution but came under increasing pressure when Kalakaua died and was succeeded by his sister, Liliuokalani, in January 1891.⁵ Queen Liliuokalani hoped to restore Hawaii to the control of its native monarchy and remove white control of government. The economic turmoil created by the McKinley Tariff granted her the opportunity to do so, but initial gains were undone in November 1892, when the American-led legislature forced the creation of a new cabinet comprising some of Hawaii's wealthiest men, three of them of American descent.⁶ Queen Liliuokalani waited until January 1893 to respond: On January 12 she removed the white cabinet and two days later prorogued the legislature and proclaimed a new constitution that would grant the monarchy near-absolute power.⁷ The new regime lasted for two days. On January 16 Liliuokalani took the advice of her ministers and withdrew the new constitution, but her actions were too late to stop the planter community from moving against her.

In 1892 a small group of white Hawaiian planters had established the Annexation Club, a body that sought to bring about Hawaii's annexation by the United States, by force if necessary. The club maintained a

representative in Washington D.C., who consulted with senior members of Benjamin Harrison's cabinet, including Secretaries of State James G. Blaine and John W. Foster and Secretary of the Navy Benjamin F. Tracy.⁸ As tensions mounted in Honolulu, Secretary of State Foster informed the club's representatives that, should the monarchy be deposed that winter, there would be insufficient time left for the Harrison administration to confirm annexation.⁹ It is unclear whether this message arrived too late to change the Annexation Club's plans or whether the members simply chose to ignore it, but on January 16 they responded to Queen Liliuokalani's proroguing of the legislature by organizing a committee of safety and requesting military protection from the USS *Boston* stationed at Honolulu. American marines landed on the afternoon of January 16 with orders to protect American lives and property and to preserve public order. Instead, however, they took up positions near the government buildings in the city. On January 17 these buildings were occupied by the revolutionists, who proclaimed a provisional government and asked U.S. minister to Hawaii, John L. Stevens, for official recognition, which he provided the same day. Stevens's role in the Hawaiian revolution is open to a degree of debate, but it is certain that he was in close communication with the Annexation Club, and his official dispatches to Blaine and Foster at the State Department during 1891 and 1892 demonstrate his strong support for American annexation of the islands: Indeed, it is very possible that he was selected for the position because he shared such views with his friend, Blaine.¹⁰ On February 1, Stevens followed this recognition by declaring an American protectorate over the islands, once again at the provisional government's request. In the meantime the provisional government had sent commissioners to Washington to negotiate a treaty of annexation, which was drawn up, signed, and delivered to the Senate for approval by February 15.¹¹

It is at this point that Grover Cleveland first exerted his presidential authority—despite the fact that such authority would not officially be his for several more weeks. On February 22, Cleveland met with Walter Q. Gresham, the new secretary of state, and John G. Carlisle, the future secretary of the treasury at the president-elect's house in Lakewood, New Jersey. As a result of the meeting, Carlisle traveled to Washington in order to indicate to the Senate that Cleveland wished to study the Hawaiian situation in greater detail before acting.¹² The treaty was shelved until the inauguration, and Cleveland withdrew it from Senate consideration on March 9.¹³ It is unclear exactly what prompted Cleveland to intervene in this way, and it may simply have been a result of his instinctive opposition to overseas expansion. That

said, the existence in the Grover Cleveland Papers of an undated letter, apparently written by a representative of Liliuokalani and forwarded to Cleveland by Secretary of State Foster, may suggest another possibility. The letter described the events that had taken place and clearly stated that the revolution could not have succeeded without the complicity of Minister Stevens and the armed force of the USS *Boston* and its marines. Although it is unclear when this letter was received, a reasonable supposition would be mid-February, exactly the time Cleveland chose to intervene. This being the case, it is possible that reading the allegations made against American officials in the letter may have been sufficient to convince Cleveland to halt the annexation process until he entered office. At the very least, the subsequent emphasis placed on matters of legality and morality by the Cleveland administration give reason to speculate that hearing the allegations at this early stage affected his thinking in the months ahead.¹⁴

Two days after withdrawing the treaty, Cleveland named James H. Blount, a retired congressman from Georgia who had served as chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, as his special commissioner to investigate the circumstances of the revolution.¹⁵ Blount reached Hawaii on March 29 to discover American flags flying over the government buildings and American marines still deployed on the islands, and he immediately ordered both practices stopped.¹⁶ In an investigation lasting over three months, Blount conducted interviews with a cross section of Hawaiian society and examined a wide array of documents relating to the government, economy, and demographics of the islands.¹⁷ The final report that was received in Washington in early August was uncompromising in its conclusion that the Hawaiian revolution could not have succeeded but for the exercise of American military force and that Minister Stevens had been complicit in all that had occurred.¹⁸ It also stated Blount's belief that the majority of public opinion in Hawaii supported Queen Liliuokalani and opposed the provisional government.

It was not until October 18 that Secretary of State Gresham presented Cleveland and the cabinet with a plan of action. In a memorandum for a cabinet meeting, Gresham proposed that, since American military forces had been complicit in the revolution, the United States should repair the wrong that had been done to Liliuokalani, and he argued that the monarchy should be restored.¹⁹ Despite opposition from members of the cabinet the decision was made that the Gresham memorandum should become the basis for U.S. policy in Hawaii, and the new minister to Hawaii, Albert S. Willis, was dispatched to the islands with orders to begin negotiations with the queen and the

provisional government in order to bring such a restoration about. Perhaps unfortunately for the new policy's chances of success, the cabinet also decided that it was beyond the president's authority (and against the interests of the Hawaiian people) to use force to achieve its goals.

Almost immediately, the flaws in the new policy were exposed. In a letter to Gresham written on October 9, the attorney general (and future secretary of state), Richard Olney, had pointed out that if the United States held a responsibility to the queen for deposing her, then it also held a responsibility to the members of the provisional government for encouraging them to rebel; it would seem likely that Olney raised this objection again in the cabinet meeting.²⁰ The result was an order to Willis that he should not approach the provisional government to suggest its resignation without assurances from the queen that she would not seek to exact revenge upon them. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when Willis met with Liliuokalani for the first time on November 13, he found that the queen had no intention of showing clemency toward the men who had ousted her from power and, on the contrary, that she intended to follow the letter of Hawaiian law and have the rebels beheaded for treason.²¹ It took two further interviews with Liliuokalani before Willis was able to extract a written statement that the queen would grant an amnesty to the rebels and restore the constitution of 1887. With the first half of his mission accomplished at long last, Willis met with Sanford Dole, president of the provisional government, only to be told, with defiant hypocrisy, that the United States had no right to interfere in Hawaiian affairs and that Cleveland could either annex the islands or accept the provisional government as the rightful leaders of an independent state.

It is unclear whether Dole knew that Cleveland had resolved not to use force to restore the Hawaiian monarchy or whether his refusal to accede to American demands was a genuine gamble that Cleveland's conscience, the prospect of a bloody battle to overthrow the provisional government (which by then controlled the Hawaiian nation's admittedly meager arsenal), or public opinion in the United States would compel him to back down.²² The question is moot, though, since Cleveland had already changed his government's course before Willis met with Dole. Indeed, it appears that Willis's report of his first meeting with Queen Liliuokalani was sufficient to convince the American president that his plan for a restoration would not succeed, and that another approach was required. It was decided that the entire matter (with the exception of the proposed annexation treaty) should be placed in the hands of Congress. On December 18, Cleveland sent a special message to Congress accompanying Blount's report and all

other relevant documents. The islands would not again be the subject of active American foreign policy until after Cleveland left office in 1897. Through these events we can clearly see three key points of policy decision: the withdrawal in March of the treaty of annexation; the instruction to Willis in October to attempt negotiations aimed at restoring the Hawaiian monarchy; and the move in December to abandon restoration and pass the matter to Congress. As it addressed these moments of decision, the Cleveland administration set out the key precepts that would come to define the way it perceived American foreign policy at the end of the nineteenth century: respect for international law and the sovereignty of nations; the right of government by popular consent; and moral foundations for American actions.

* * *

As secretary of state, Walter Q. Gresham can be seen as the man most involved in the day-to-day running of administration policy, most importantly as the focal point of diplomatic correspondence, both from the U.S. representatives in Hawaii and from the provisional government. It is also clear that Gresham was largely responsible for the formulation of policy, most notably in his cabinet memorandum of October 18, 1893. This is not to say that Gresham had a free hand in the creation of policy, however. Richard Olney's letter of October 9 to Gresham demonstrates that the attorney general wished to have his opinion considered, and it is notable that several important policy decisions were presented for discussion in cabinet meetings, although it is not always possible to be sure to what extent the decisions were left open to debate rather than simply presented as a fixed intention. By taking these decisions to cabinet meetings, Grover Cleveland positioned himself as the final arbiter on foreign policy decisions. While in the Hawaiian matter he specifically sought advice from at least three members of his cabinet (Gresham, Olney, and Carlisle), Cleveland did not simply elect to follow in its entirety the advice of any one of these advisors, but instead formulated policy based on the advice of all. This would form the basis for the handling of future major foreign-policy decisions throughout the second term, with the secretary of state largely responsible for suggesting the policy direction—consulting, to a greater or lesser degree, with Cleveland. Cabinet meetings would play less of a role in policymaking as the term continued, but major decisions would usually be discussed before Cleveland gave his assent.

When discussing the relative power of Cleveland and Gresham in formulating policy relating to Hawaii in 1893, it is important to

remember that this was the first problem facing Cleveland when he returned to the White House. Under these circumstances it would appear certain that the Hawaiian situation would have been very much on his mind in January and February 1893 as he selected his cabinet, and particularly so in the case of his future secretary of state. Gresham was not Cleveland's first choice for the role; he initially offered it to Thomas F. Bayard, who had served in that capacity during Cleveland's first term, but Bayard preferred the position of ambassador to Great Britain.²³ Cleveland also offered the cabinet place, somewhat bizarrely, to Melville W. Fuller, whom Cleveland himself had appointed chief justice of the Supreme Court in 1888; perhaps unsurprisingly Fuller declined the offer.²⁴ There may have been other offers before the president-elect settled upon Judge Walter Quintin Gresham as secretary of state, but it would be a mistake to suggest that Cleveland was not convinced that Gresham was the right man for the job, and several factors suggest Cleveland's reasoning. As a lifelong Republican—one who had served as postmaster general and secretary of the treasury under Chester A. Arthur—Gresham was not an obvious choice for secretary of state in a Democratic cabinet, nor was he a popular one. Given that this was only the second time in three decades that the Democratic Party had been able to reward its members with the government jobs that came with the presidency, the decision to appoint a former Republican to one of the top jobs in government—regardless of the fact that he was a moderate who had supported Cleveland over Benjamin Harrison during the election—was bound to be unpopular among powerful Democrats. However, Cleveland was clearly convinced that he had found the right man, as demonstrated by the fact that Gresham originally turned the job down and only agreed to accept the post after Cleveland wrote to him a second time, asking him to reconsider.²⁵ Despite the cost to his political capital, Cleveland saw in Gresham a man whose views were well aligned with his own, and so was determined to convince him. Gresham himself informed the president: "We are in accord on political questions, our ideas of public duty are the same," and this accord—and the sense of duty underlying it—would be clearly apparent in their formulation of foreign policy.²⁶ This, in itself, suggests that the president-elect already had a clear vision for the course he wished his foreign policy to take—which Hawaii would inevitably lead—and was seeking for a fellow conservative who would work with him in that direction. Such logic does not necessarily apply with regard to other members of Cleveland's cabinet—there was no reason for him to select his secretary of the interior based upon the candidates' views regarding Hawaii—but

a man of Cleveland's character and convictions was sure to pick men who held similar views to himself on moral and ethical issues such as the ones raised in Hawaii.

The Cleveland administration's response to the revolution in Hawaii saw three moments of decision in 1893. The first of these moments was the decision upon entering office in February 1893 to withdraw the annexation treaty from the Senate and to commission an investigation into the role played by representatives of the United States in the revolution. The second, prompted by the findings of that investigation, came in October when it was decided that an attempt should be made to restore Queen Liliuokalani to power peacefully. Finally, in December 1893, the decision was made to pass the matter to Congress. Undoubtedly, the affair was under constant review throughout this period, particularly between April and July when Blount was sending regular reports of his progress to Gresham, but these three moments can be viewed as pivotal in the progress of the Cleveland administration's Hawaiian policy.

While often in disagreement about Cleveland's exact motivations for withdrawing the annexation treaty from the Senate, scholarly opinion has proved largely united in arguing that the incoming president approached the problem with an open mind. Supporting this viewpoint is the testimony of James H. Blount himself, as highlighted by Allan Nevins, who declared that the president held no preconceived ideas on the matter and only wished to ascertain the true facts relating to the revolution.²⁷ Similarly, Walter LaFeber declares that Cleveland "told close friends that he had not decided for or against annexation, but that 'we ought to stop, look and think.'"²⁸ Such words would suggest in particular that Cleveland was disconcerted by the speed with which the Harrison administration had brought the matter to the point of decision, and it seems that he was, indeed, deeply concerned by this haste. Undoubtedly, it would be very much in Cleveland's nature to approach the Hawaiian question cautiously and in such a way as to avoid unnecessarily closing off any course of action. However, given the new president's ideological instinct against imperialist expansionism, it might be argued that his open-mindedness may have been overstated. With this in mind, it is interesting to speculate whether Cleveland would have still opposed annexation on principle if Blount's investigation had revealed it to be the will of the Hawaiian people. By placing the right of popular sovereignty against the principle of non-interference, such an outcome would have presented the president with an ideological quandary. The evidence of later events in his second term would strongly suggest that he would have still

rejected annexation—both the injustice of the initial act of dethroning the queen and questions of racial integration would chime with his fundamental opposition to overseas expansion to form part of the foreign policy template that would eventually emerge—but at this early stage the direction of the Cleveland administration's foreign policy might have taken a very different turn.

The withdrawal of the treaty of annexation would set the tone for Cleveland's foreign policy and, as such, it was a repeat performance of his actions after his first inauguration in 1885. On that occasion Cleveland had reversed American policy on two issues by halting the progress of treaty legislation through the congressional process. The treaties in question were the general act of the Berlin Conference on international trade in the Congo, and the Frelinghuysen-Zavala Treaty aimed at bringing about the construction of a trans-isthmian canal in Nicaragua. Cleveland reversed government policy on both treaties, doing so with little or no concern for public opinion and on the grounds of what he believed to be the best foreign policy for the United States: a rejection of imperialism—be it physically expansionist or economic—and a limited isolationism. Cleveland's actions were based upon his understanding of the advice and precedents left by George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Monroe, as he himself set them out in his first inaugural address in March 1885, when he declared:

Maintaining, as I do, the tenets of a line of precedents from Washington's day, which proscribe entangling alliances with foreign states, I do not favor a policy of acquisition of new and distant territory or the incorporation of remote interests with our own.²⁹

With this in mind, there is every reason to believe that in March 1893 Cleveland was once again acting according to his ideological instinct in relation to Hawaii. That said, it is interesting that in 1893 Cleveland's second inaugural address made no reference to foreign policy and offered no comment upon the situation in Hawaii. This might indicate his genuine desire to learn more before passing comment, but a more likely explanation is a desire to avoid commenting on any specific matters of policy in his inaugural address, preferring to use the document to set out broader concepts of government. Why he chose not to once again define his position on how foreign affairs should be conducted—as he had in 1885—is open to speculation, but it is plausible that, with his attention largely focused on domestic matters, he did not see a need to restate his attitude to foreign affairs.

All this is speculative; as has already been stated, the changing nature of American foreign relations in the late nineteenth century and Cleveland's own broadened experience since his first inauguration mean direct comparisons should only be made cautiously. Certainly there are other signs that Cleveland was hostile to annexation, such as his letter of introduction for Blount to President Dole of Hawaii's provisional government, which made no reference whatsoever to annexation but spoke instead of cultivating friendship between the two nations: However, this could simply be an example of Cleveland maintaining a diplomatic neutrality.³⁰ Rather more solid evidence is provided by a statement that Cleveland made to the Associated Press in January 1898, after he had left the White House. In this statement—given to pass grudging comment on the new treaty of annexation proposed by his successor, William McKinley—Cleveland declared: "I regarded [in 1893], and still regard, the proposed annexation of these islands as not only opposed to our national policy, but as a perversion of our national mission. The mission of our nation is to build up and make a greater country out of what we have, instead of annexing islands."³¹ This clear statement would appear to undermine the argument that Cleveland approached the matter of Hawaiian annexation with a truly open mind. There is reason to view Cleveland's statement with an element of caution: Having left office and with little prospect of returning to the national stage, Cleveland was free to speak his mind, but he was also in the position of acting with the benefit of hindsight, knowing that Blount's investigation uncovered all the worst signs of American complicity in the revolution that he might have feared in March of 1893. That said, however, the statement to the Associated Press can be seen as nicely complementing Cleveland's statement in his first inaugural address that it was the president's duty to enact a foreign policy that sought to aid "the settlement and development of the resources of our vast territory," a statement that implicitly rejected overseas expansionism as unnecessary and perhaps even un-American.³² Further support can be found in his frank dismissal of theories that he was dissatisfied with the treaty itself, not with the concept of annexation: "I was opposed to annexation as such."³³ For Cleveland, annexation was non-negotiable as a point of principle.

The statement to the Associated Press, albeit written well after the events in question, gives a clear indication of Cleveland's approach to foreign affairs. The instinctive opposition to overseas expansion, expressed in his belief that the national mission was one of improving "what we have" rather than acquiring new overseas territories,

was matched with a profound belief that the nation must hold itself to a higher moral standard. In relation to Blount's final report, he declared:

This investigation satisfied me that our interference in the revolution of 1893 was disgraceful. I would gladly, therefore, for the sake of our national honor and our country's fair name, have repaired that wrong.³⁴

Thus we see the identification of the ideological tenets that would be the foundation for the Cleveland administration's approach to foreign policy. The methods in which these basic ideals would be applied would evolve over time, but the fundamental principles of legality, morality, and honor (as Cleveland perceived them) would persist. That said, not all matters fitted themselves easily to such high-minded principles. Having rejected the option of annexing Hawaii, Cleveland was still confronted by the problem of how to proceed, and the question of how to repair the wrong done to Hawaii and its people would invoke other principles dear to American hearts, such as popular sovereignty and republican government.

As with so much else in foreign policy, Grover Cleveland's views on popular sovereignty were founded in tradition. In his message to Congress of December 18, 1893, he declared that he sympathized with the establishment of a new republic in Hawaii, but that it was the "settled policy of the United States to concede to people of foreign countries the same freedom and independence in the management of their domestic affairs that we have always claimed for ourselves."³⁵ Tellingly, Cleveland also stated that it had been American practice to recognize new republican governments "as soon as it became apparent that they were supported by the people." It was this support that Cleveland clearly believed the provisional government in Hawaii was lacking, instead describing it as an "oligarchy" and stating that it had "not sought to find a permanent basis of popular support and given no evidence of an intention to do so."³⁶ What is particularly striking about these statements, besides the obvious dislike for the provisional government and its members, is that Cleveland's support for popular sovereignty was apparently not subject to racial discrimination. He took some pleasure in reminding his audience that the provisional government had asserted that "the people of Hawaii are unfit for popular government" and "can be best ruled by arbitrary or despotic power," but he did not pass any judgment on this assertion beyond using it to highlight the unrepresentative nature of the government.³⁷ This is not to say that Cleveland believed that the Hawaiian people were ready to

form a democracy of their own, but it is clear that he preferred a native Hawaiian monarchy to a white oligarchy that claimed to be republican in nature. It is this latter point that is most important: Cleveland was determined from the beginning to ascertain the wishes of the majority of the Hawaiian population.

This desire to acknowledge the will of the Hawaiian people is clear in Gresham's instructions to Blount on how he was to conduct his investigation. Here, public opinion received third billing behind the current condition of affairs in the islands and the true facts of the revolution, while all other aspects were simply covered in a general request for information that can "fully enlighten the President."³⁸ This would certainly suggest that the wishes of ordinary Hawaiians were of interest to Cleveland and his cabinet while, for his part, Blount was clearly keen to provide his masters in Washington with as much information on that subject as possible. Within days of arriving at Honolulu, Blount sent a dispatch to Gresham containing a variety of documents that the investigator deemed important for the understanding of Hawaii, chief among them being a government immigration report from 1892—an indication of the importance placed by Blount on the ethnic and racial demographics of the islands.³⁹ Hereafter Blount's dispatches consistently displayed his interest in the views of the native majority in Hawaii as well as in the racial mix in the islands. As early as May 4 Blount saw fit to report: "At this time the indications are unmistakable that a large majority of the people of the Islands are utterly opposed to annexation."⁴⁰

It seems clear that Cleveland's concerns in Hawaii were not simply limited to fears for American honor, but also included a genuine desire to see justice served to the Hawaiian people through a respect for popular sovereignty. This much is demonstrated by his instructions to Blount to both probe the causes of the revolution—a clear sign of Cleveland's suspicions about American actions—and ascertain the opinion of the majority of the Hawaiian population. Does this concern for the people of Hawaii also, however, indicate another factor of Cleveland's personality: a streak of paternalism for weaker nations and their inhabitants? Certainly, Cleveland's attitude toward Hawaii, perhaps unwittingly, was very much an imperialist one; his position from the start was that of an arbiter deciding the fate of a wronged people, a position that would only become more apparent after the delivery of Blount's final report. In many respects this can be seen as a natural response for any late-nineteenth-century American president—confirmed in the beliefs of a racist age that the Anglo-Saxon race was inherently superior to all others and well-used to a

paternal role by decades of experience in ruling the United States' Native American population. Cleveland himself advocated policies of education toward Native Americans, with an ultimate goal of independent citizenship, but he also described them as "responsibilities we cannot escape."⁴¹ Outside of the territorial jurisdiction of the United States, he saw no such responsibility to educate and civilize others, and the first two years of his second term would see determined efforts on his part to ensure that the nation did not acquire further responsibilities overseas. This would be true primarily in Hawaii, but his actions toward Samoa give a further insight into his views on self-determination for the inhabitants of weaker nations.

The United States' involvement in Samoa dated back to the presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes, but came to a head during Cleveland's first term when German interference in the islands' intricate tribal politics saw the invoking of American good offices by the Samoan king, Malietoa. Trapped by the treaty guarantees of earlier administrations, Cleveland's secretary of state, Thomas F. Bayard, had attempted to negotiate a compromise that would have maintained Samoan independence, but without success. American warships faced off against their German counterparts, with tensions only finally defused in March 1889 by a catastrophic hurricane that destroyed ships and killed many of their crewmen. The result had been a new treaty—negotiated and ratified during Cleveland's period out of office—which granted to Germany, Great Britain, and the United States a tri-partite protectorate over the islands.⁴² Upon his return to the White House, Cleveland seized upon unrest in the islands to make clear his disapproval of this protectorate arrangement. In his annual message of 1893 he used an abortive revolution against King Malietoa, now supported by the Western powers, as an example of "the impolicy of entangling alliances with foreign powers."⁴³ He also took care to state that the insurrection had demonstrated that the protectorate was failing in its aim of preventing such unrest. One year later, and with a lasting peace in the islands still not apparent, Cleveland railed against the failures of the Western-backed government in Samoa:

Our participation in its establishment against the wishes of the natives was in plain defiance of the conservative teachings and warnings of the wise and patriotic men who laid the foundations of our free institutions. . . .⁴⁴

Here we have further evidence of Cleveland's instinctive opposition to imperialist adventures as being counter to the central tenets of

American government as he perceived it and also a clear statement of his belief that the will of the native majority had been ignored, with disastrous consequences. Clearly Cleveland was not a believer in the racial philosophies that argued that it was the duty of the white races to provide leadership for their less civilized neighbors. Indeed, it may even be that the situation in Samoa played some role in Cleveland's later decision-making over Hawaii, or at the very least confirmed him in his instinctive beliefs. It is not possible to draw a conclusive link between the two events, but the fact that Cleveland was weighing up his options in Hawaii at the same time as a previous white protectorate in another Pacific island nation was experiencing difficulties with unrest in the native population will have done nothing to improve his disposition toward a protectorate. In these sentiments he was undoubtedly joined in July 1893 by Gresham, who wrote to his friend, the former Union general, senator, and secretary of the interior—now retired, but a well-regarded political independent—Carl Schurz, about the situation in Samoa, stating: "Our government should not undertake to maintain a protectorate, either alone or in conjunction with other Powers, in the South Sea Islands, or elsewhere."⁴⁵ This categorical statement of Gresham's beliefs was written only weeks before the arrival in Washington of Blount's report. Fundamentally, it would appear that almost nothing could have occurred that would have altered the stance of Cleveland and Gresham on the relationship between the United States and Hawaii. Cleveland may have held some paternalist and racist views with regards to those peoples already under his jurisdiction, but he did not believe that the United States had a duty to act as a "white father" to others. Cleveland clearly believed that Samoa and Hawaii had demonstrated themselves to be quite capable of self-rule without outside interference. All of this is entirely consistent with a policy based upon doing what he believed to be legally and morally right. For a Jacksonian Democrat like Cleveland, government had to be a product of popular will if it were to have legitimacy, and so the oligarchic rule of the white minority in Hawaii was equally as wrong as the illegal U.S. interference that had created it.

The second point of decision relating to Hawaii took place in the cabinet meeting of October 18, 1893. This is not to say that the matter had been left unattended between March and October; undoubtedly, Cleveland and his cabinet gave the matter a great deal of thought in the intervening period. Certainly, Gresham was receiving regular updates from Blount, and the latter's report was finally prepared on July 17, although it did not reach Washington for several weeks.⁴⁶ While the

summer recess—during which anyone who could do so took the earliest possible opportunity to escape the heat and humidity of Washington—delayed the Cleveland administration's action on Blount's report, the return to work in October saw a revival of interest from several members of the cabinet, particularly Gresham and Olney. The decision, when it came, was informed by three major documents: Blount's final report, Richard Olney's letter to Gresham of October 9, and Gresham's memorandum prepared for the cabinet meeting of October 18.

Blount's report can be dealt with briefly, but it is important because it provides the context upon which the other documents were based. The report itself is an extensive document that ranges over a broad range of information, from interviews to census reports to trade statistics. Its conclusions can be restated simply in three phases. Firstly, the Hawaiian revolution can be regarded as a criminal act. This crime was committed primarily against Queen Liliuokalani and thus also against the Hawaiian people, who were shown to be generally in favor of the monarchy. Finally, the United States was demonstrably complicit in the revolution, which would have failed without the assistance of American military might. Those were the facts as presented to Cleveland and his cabinet, thus forming the basis for the administration's actions.

The letter from Olney to Gresham and Gresham's memorandum are complementary documents. While Olney's letter is dated October 9 and the memorandum October 18, it seems clear that the letter was a response to either an early viewing of a draft of the memorandum or at least some discussion of the problem between the two men. With this in mind we can view the Olney letter as a pragmatic response to the somewhat idealistic vision presented by Gresham. Specifically, Gresham's memorandum opens by setting out a thorough grounding on the findings of Blount's investigation, presumably for any cabinet members who were not completely aware of the facts prior to the meeting. The memorandum shows Gresham to be in no doubt that the revolution was the action of a minority aided by Minister Stevens, who was both complicit in the plans and vital to their success. It also demonstrates Gresham's scorn for any suggestion that the provisional government might hold any legitimacy. His final verdict is damning:

The Government of Hawaii surrendered its authority under a threat of war, until such time only as the Government of the United States, upon the facts being present to it, should reinstate the constitutional sovereign, and the Provisional Government was created 'to exist until terms of union with the United States of America have been negotiated and agreed upon.'⁴⁷

Gresham's proposal of how the Cleveland administration should proceed is phrased in equally powerful and emotive language:

Should not the wrong done to a feeble but independent State by an abuse of the authority of the United States be undone by restoring the legitimate government? Anything short of that will not, I respectfully submit, satisfy the demands of justice.⁴⁸

Thus, we can see the Hawaiian matter being framed along legal and moral lines, just as Cleveland perceived it with the "demands of justice" and the threat to the national honor of the United States being paramount. Gresham's memorandum also presents the matter in precisely the same imperialist terms evident in the president's earlier decision to reject annexation, speaking of a "feeble but independent State" that requires American justice, but not American leadership.

It is here that the Olney letter presents a contrast. While Gresham portrays the matter as a simple question of right and wrong Olney is the first to inject a note of pragmatism that can be seen to play a significant role in the latter stages of the Cleveland administration's handling of the Hawaiian revolution. It is notable that Olney was included in the discussions of the Hawaiian problem at all—clear evidence of the stress Cleveland and Gresham would place on the role of the law in formulating foreign policy. In this case, it is the issue of future plans that is of greatest interest in the Olney letter. The attorney general himself agreed wholeheartedly with Gresham's interpretation "that a great wrong was done under the auspices of United States Minister Stevens when the regular constitutional government of the Queen was supplanted and the present, so-called, provisional government installed in its stead."⁴⁹ He also praised "the good sense, the statesmanship and the sound morality" of the secretary of state's proposal to attempt to rectify matters by returning them to the condition before the revolution took place. Further, Olney declared that the threat of force was justified to overthrow the provisional government—since that government came to power by the exact same threat and thus could not complain—despite the possibility that it might constitute an act of war. It is here, though, that Olney's view of the matter differed sharply from Gresham's. His concern was that the provisional government had been in power for so long, apparently with American acquiescence, that any action to displace it would require the use of actual force and not just threats. The use of this force, against a body that had exercised all the functions of legitimate government for months was, in Olney's opinion, an act of war and

thus outside the president's powers.⁵⁰ Moving on from questions of the feasibility and logistics of removing the provisional government, Olney came to the crux of the problem facing Cleveland and his cabinet: With American force having toppled one government to install another, the United States government now found itself responsible for the fortunes of both parties. Here we see the paradox of a foreign policy built on legal and moral foundations as the actions of a previous administration in interfering with the affairs of a weaker nation led to an inherited responsibility toward both the deposed monarch and the provisional government for the Cleveland administration due to that administration's paternalist sense of responsibility toward the wronged party. The practical result of this was Olney's suggestion that any offer of aid in restoring Queen Liliuokalani to power must include a proviso that she would both uphold the commitments entered into by the provisional government and, more problematically, agree to grant an amnesty to the members of the provisional government who had overthrown her. Throughout this discussion the matter of Liliuokalani's involvement is presented in largely paternal terms, with Olney stating that "the United States should require of the Queen . . . full power and authority to negotiate and bring about the restoration of her government on such reasonable terms and conditions as the United States may approve and find to be practicable."⁵¹ Whether for reasons of racial prejudice, the national interest, or simply practical considerations of negotiating with the queen's inveterate enemies, Olney was effectively demanding that the United States be granted complete control over the queen's future and, thus, the future of the Hawaiian government. Ultimately, Olney expressed confidence that these terms would be agreeable to both parties, but it may be that the difficulties he had anticipated in obtaining the provisional government's agreement to step aside peacefully were already weighing on Cleveland's decisions at the cabinet meeting on October 18.

One result of the deliberations that culminated in the cabinet meeting of October 18 was the instructions given to Albert S. Willis, Cleveland's choice to replace Blount as United States Minister to Hawaii. On the same day as that meeting took place, Gresham wrote to Willis with special instructions to supplement those regarding his new post. In a brief description of the history of the case, Gresham emphasized that Queen Liliuokalani had only yielded to the revolutionaries when it became clear that they had the backing of American forces and on the understanding "that if she surrendered under protest her case would afterward be fairly considered by the President of the United States."⁵² Describing the decision to yield as wise, Gresham declared

that the queen was “relying upon the good faith and honor of the President, when informed of what had occurred, to undo the action of the minister and reinstate her and the authority she claimed as the constitutional sovereign of the Hawaiian Islands.”⁵³ The secretary of state also ordered Willis to inform the queen of the president’s “sincere regret” over the actions of Minister Stevens. Clearly, for Gresham at least, the cabinet meeting had not seen a noticeable change in the belief that it was the duty of the Cleveland administration to right a wrong in Hawaii. By contrast to this effusive concern for the rights of the queen, the actual instructions to Willis are relatively brief with almost equal billing being granted to the need to apologize for American actions during the revolution and the real aim of Willis’s mission: securing a negotiated restoration of the Hawaiian monarchy.

It is in this regard that we see a return to a paternalist attitude by the Cleveland administration. Just as Olney had recommended in his letter of October 9, Willis was ordered to “inform the Queen that, when reinstated, the President expects that she will pursue a magnanimous course by granting full amnesty to all who participated in the movement against her,” as well as assuming any obligations entered into by the provisional government.⁵⁴ Her acquiescence in allowing Willis to negotiate her future for her was clearly assumed. Indeed, Gresham informed Willis that Liliuokalani’s agreement to the American terms was expected to be speedily obtained, allowing him to move on to the second phase of his instructions. Here we find a perfectly formed example of the high-handed—and even, perhaps, imperialist—attitude that appears to have rapidly come to dominate the Cleveland administration’s deliberations on Hawaii. Willis was instructed that, having obtained the queen’s agreement to the proposed plan of action, he should “advise the executive of the Provisional Government and his ministers of the President’s determination of the question which their action and that of the Queen devolved upon him, and that they are expected to promptly relinquish to her constitutional authority.” There could hardly be a better statement of how Gresham—and, perhaps to a lesser extent, Cleveland and the other cabinet members—had come to view the Hawaiian matter in October 1893. While Nevins’ claim that Gresham “seems to have felt . . . a romantic throb for the defenseless queen” is perhaps stretching the evidence somewhat, it is quite possible that the administration may have perceived Liliuokalani—and thus the nation of Hawaii generally—as symbolically innocent and in need of protection. This would be consistent with Hoganson’s argument that, two years later, the American press would use notions of chivalry to idolize the chaste virtue of Cuban women and thus render

the entire island of Cuba a victim of Spanish brutality.⁵⁵ It is clear that the secretary of state now perceived the entire issue as an American prerogative whereby the defenseless Hawaiians and the greedy planters would calmly accept the wisdom and justice dispensed from Washington.⁵⁶ The only indication that Willis' mission might not be as simple as it appeared on paper came from a brief final instruction: "Should the Queen decline to pursue the liberal course suggested, or should the Provisional Government refuse to abide by the President's decision, you will report the facts and await further instructions."⁵⁷ Once again we can note the implication that either action would be wrongheaded, but it is telling both that a rejection was anticipated to some extent—and clearly Olney, despite his expressions of confidence, had already played the role of devil's advocate in this regard—and that there was no immediate plan for how to respond in such a scenario. This could be the ultimate expression of confidence in the plan's success, but it is equally likely—especially when we consider the events of the following months—that there were no further options available to the president for Gresham to pass on to Willis. The legalist context within which Cleveland and Gresham were framing the Hawaiian situation had served them as a guide, but it also imposed limits on their actions. Thus we see the overriding imperialism that dominated the second point of decision on Hawaii being undermined by occasional hints of concern at the prospect of failure and by calls, led by Richard Olney, for a more pragmatic approach. It would appear that Olney's voice came to have an increasing influence on Cleveland's thinking during the months leading up to the third point of decision.

This final key point of decision is somewhat confused and is therefore hard to pin down exactly, but it is significant because it resulted in a declaration of the Cleveland administration's foreign policy vision in its first year in office. The decision in question was whether to pass control of the Hawaiian issue to Congress, and it culminated in Cleveland's special message to Congress on December 18, 1893. It has been claimed that the decision was taken at a cabinet meeting on December 7, but there is evidence to suggest that the move had been under consideration long before that meeting.⁵⁸

Albert S. Willis arrived in Honolulu on November 4, 1893, and immediately found himself immersed in a far more delicate situation than Gresham appears to have believed he would encounter. His first dispatch, informing the State Department of his arrival, noted the presence in the islands of shipments of rifles and ammunition while also reporting that the capital was a hotbed of political rumors.⁵⁹ In a dispatch of November 11, Willis reported his first meeting with

President Dole of the provisional government and explained that he would meet with the queen in the next few days, but had not believed faster action was advisable given the excitement surrounding his arrival.⁶⁰ Hawaii did not exist in an information vacuum, and the events there were widely reported, whether from rumors or official sources, in both the Hawaiian and American press. While Willis' mission may not have been officially declared it certainly was a matter of rumor and gossip with Cleveland's intention to restore the queen apparently becoming public knowledge in mid-November.⁶¹ It was in this highly charged atmosphere and not the calm of the State Department or the White House that Willis met Queen Liliuokalani, a meeting that resulted in a one-line telegram: "Views of first party so extreme as to require further instructions."⁶² This telegram arrived in Washington eight days later and provoked an angry response from Gresham, who replied "The brevity and uncertainty of your telegrams are embarrassing. You will insist upon amnesty and recognition of obligations of the Provisional Government as essential conditions of restoration."⁶³ A subsequent telegram of December 3 gave fuller instructions for how Willis should handle the queen's intransigence, but provided little advice beyond the original instructions given to Willis before his departure.⁶⁴ Willis did eventually convince the queen to acquiesce in Cleveland's demands, but when he put Cleveland's proposal to the provisional government in January, 1894, he was met by a flat rejection.⁶⁵ By this time, however, events in Washington demonstrated that Cleveland had long since abandoned hope in the plan.

The day after Gresham sent his telegram advising Willis on how to respond to the queen's rejection of his offer Cleveland sent his annual message to Congress. In this message Cleveland declared the affair to be a matter of national honor, which could only be assuaged by restoring the status of the islands to the condition existing when the original American intervention took place.⁶⁶ He reported that no definitive information had yet been received on the results of Willis' mission—perhaps being somewhat economical with the truth given that, even considering the brevity of Willis's telegram, it was clear that the first meeting with the queen had not gone well. Most interestingly, Cleveland ended his report on Hawaii with a brief paragraph setting out his intentions for the future:

Additional advices are soon expected. When received they will be promptly sent to the Congress, together with all other information at hand, accompanied by a special Executive message fully detailing all the

facts necessary to a complete understanding of the case and presenting a history of all the material events leading up to the present situation.

Three days before the cabinet meeting of December 7—and two weeks before the message of December 18—Cleveland had stated to Congress and the nation that he would be presenting the matter to them in full. This is not to say that he knew on December 4 that he would be effectively abandoning the Hawaiian matter—it is very possible that he still hoped that Willis' mission might prove a success—but it appears very likely that in the interval between Willis' departure and the annual message Cleveland had come to doubt his ability to broker a settlement in Hawaii within the bounds of his constitutional power. In this period the Blount report had been released to the public following a government leak and Willis' initial reports had shown both that the situation in Hawaii was potentially volatile and that the queen was not immediately amenable to American proposals. With these facts in mind, it is also possible that Olney's urge to follow a pragmatic course was influencing Cleveland's judgment. It was Olney who had warned that the use of military force might be necessary to unseat the provisional government and, for an administration that had already shown itself to be strongly influenced by the limitations of the law, this would necessitate the involvement of Congress. Since congressional support for military action was highly unlikely given the divisive nature of the problem, the logical next step was to pass the entire matter to them. Whether the passing of a fiercely partisan Senate resolution demanding that Cleveland submit all documents on the matter to Congress the day before the cabinet meeting of December 7 had a bearing on the decisions reached is impossible to know, but it is quite clear that the plan had been in Cleveland's thoughts for some time before either the resolution or the meeting.⁶⁷ Ultimately, the Cleveland administration's combination of respect for the law—both international law and constitutional law—and its paternalist sense of obligation toward all parties had dictated large elements of its response to the Hawaiian revolution and eventually forced it into a corner whereby only recourse was to pass the matter to Congress. The administration's chosen solution to the problem was undoubtedly noble and honorable, but it was not realistic. In the end a more pragmatic approach prevailed, accepting the situation as it was, but still refusing to submit to the demands for annexation.

President Cleveland's message to Congress of December 18, 1893, was the culmination of his involvement in the Hawaiian revolution. It is a fascinating document, both as the most definitive statement

of Cleveland's motives and reasoning in regard to Hawaii and as an indication of his perception of the president's role in government. In this message—which was compiled from drafts written by both Gresham and Olney, but was edited by the president—Cleveland gave his reasons for acting as he did, setting out the White House's case for rejecting annexation and attempting to restore Queen Liliuokalani to the Hawaiian throne.⁶⁸ As such it both set before the nation the ideological principles of the Cleveland administration and stands as a major act in the emergence of a coherent template upon which to base the foreign policy of an increasingly powerful American nation. Before examining the message in detail, though, it is perhaps best to consider the purpose it was designed to serve.

The message of December 18, 1893, was, to a large extent, an admission of defeat for the Grover Cleveland administration. The message was accompanied by hundreds of pages of other documents that had been previously used by the White House and the State Department as they attempted to achieve a satisfactory conclusion to the U.S. involvement in the Hawaiian revolution. It was, in effect, Grover Cleveland's passing of the entire matter into the hands of Congress. What is less clear is exactly what Cleveland expected Congress to do once it had control over the Hawaiian issue. It eventually transpired that Congress did very little and, in hindsight, it can be argued that the matter ceased to be of importance to the United States once Cleveland relinquished control, but whether Cleveland expected this to happen is open to debate. The documents passed did not include the annexation treaty, which would not be resubmitted for Senate consideration and, without that document, decisive action was always unlikely. Similarly, Cleveland was well aware that prevailing public sentiment would rule out the invocation of the war powers by Congress, a measure that he himself had shied away from. There may have been a slight risk of being presented with a congressional resolution requiring that he act in a way that he did not wish—a request that would be hard to ignore having asked Congress to manage the affair—but this was unlikely with both the House and the Senate under the control of the Democratic Party. Conversely, having already experienced one term in the White House, it would seem very unlikely that Cleveland truly believed that Democrats in Congress might be able to discover a method for settling the issue by themselves. In 1893 deep divisions were opening within the Democratic Party based on sectional and ideological lines that, in the next four years, would rip the party in two. Chief among these divisions was the question of whether the nation's currency should be based on silver or on gold, an issue that helped to widen the

traditional split between the party's southern and northern branches. Adding to these difficulties was the growing electoral significance of the western states, whose representatives increasingly sided with the southern faction against Cleveland's northeastern backers. These divisions in his own party, combined with the bitter partisanship of the period (which made gaining the support of Republicans in Congress highly unlikely), would be a defining feature of Cleveland's second term. With the unlikelihood of a coherent decision being within Congress' reach, perhaps the most interesting aspect to the decision to pass over the Hawaiian matter is that it represented an implied relinquishing of executive power by the president. By passing control of an issue concerning foreign relations to the legislature, Cleveland was undermining one of the powers of the executive, which traditionally claimed precedence in managing such affairs of state. This precedent may well have contributed, later in his second term, to Cleveland's dispute with the Senate over which branch of government controlled foreign relations. In 1896 and 1897 Cleveland and Olney would be steadfast in denying the right of the Senate to interfere in the executive's conduct of foreign affairs, but in 1894 the president was notably less ready to defend executive power. In a written statement given to the press in January, 1895, relating to accusations that a visit from a deputation of Hawaiian monarchists in the summer of 1894 had affected the administration's policy on stationing naval vessels at Hawaii, Cleveland quoted a speech he had prepared for the meeting with the queen's representatives but had only been able to pass to them in written form due to being confined to bed by illness.⁶⁹ This paper stressed the "constitutional limitations of . . . executive power" in comparison to the "abundant power and authority" held by the Senate, and it declared that the executive—its plans having failed—was thus discharged from responsibility on the matter. It is dangerous to speculate too much based on later positions, but it seems unlikely that Cleveland—who had caused a minor controversy in his first term by citing executive privilege when refusing to release documents requested by Congress—would have ceded authority to the Senate willingly. It is possible that he was oblivious to the possibility that longer-term problems might arise, but for a politician of Cleveland's experience this seems unlikely. In the context of the situation it seems clear that Cleveland recognized that he was confronted by an insolvable situation and so had reached the limits of his constitutional powers. Under these circumstances he was able to relinquish the matter to Congress without any expectation it would be able to succeed on Hawaii where he had failed, and thus the prestige of the presidency would not be endangered.

Whatever the extent of Cleveland's reasoning regarding the long-term implications of the president's passing a foreign relations matter to Congress, it would certainly appear that Cleveland's message was not expected to be a rallying cry to congressional action. It is tempting to view the entire message—which highlighted President Harrison's enthusiastic haste in endorsing annexation in the face of Queen Liliuokalani's protest—as political posturing with the congressional elections of 1894 in mind. With Cleveland himself suffering criticism for his handling of the economic troubles besetting the nation, it would not be particularly surprising for him to engage in some party-political jousting. Any such electioneering would appear unlikely, though, since Hawaii was an issue that divided the nation on lines that went beyond mere partisan politics and thus could not be relied upon as means of winning votes.⁷⁰ Instead it should be viewed as a personal explanation for his actions, a statement of principles, and perhaps even a warning to Congress that he would not accede to a decision that did not meet his standards. In this regard there are, in particular, two striking aspects about the message: the first is the extent to which Cleveland addresses the Hawaiian issue in moral terms, and the second is the way it is presented virtually as an argument in a court of law.

The moral aspect of Cleveland's message appears early in the text and thereafter provides a running theme throughout. After a brief reference to his recent annual message to Congress (in which he had promised imminent developments on Hawaii) and a short paragraph making clear his intention to pass the matter to Congress, Cleveland launched into the main body of his message with the declaration that he believed “that right and justice should determine the path to be followed in treating this subject.”⁷¹ This unequivocal statement that morality must overrule all other considerations in regard to Hawaii chimes with the sentiment he expressed in his statement to the Associated Press after leaving office and would, in many respects, define the rest of his term. It was also, however, a very public piece of rhetoric in which Cleveland was seeking to justify his decisions to the broader public, and such a motive could be well served by appealing to the public's sense of decency and honor. As the rest of his presidency would show, however, such statements were not simply playing to the gallery. Cleveland's subsequent move to place the issue in distinctively American terms by referring to “the mission and character of our Government,” arguing that the United States did not seek territorial expansion or the removal of monarchies at the expense of its national honor, is indicative of his vision of America's place in global affairs.⁷²

Such a statement, combined with Cleveland's assertion that the conscience of the public would demand better of their politicians, might be viewed today as old-fashioned or idealistic for the 1890s—particularly in light of the events of 1898—but it is a clear indication of his personal beliefs, repeatedly stated throughout his career. In particular, the reference to a “national mission”—a phrase also used in the Associated Press statement—demonstrates that, for Cleveland, these were not simply questions of policy, but of something much deeper in American national identity. The term “mission” combined with the emphasis on “right and justice” carries overtones of religious motivation and, while such emotional rhetoric would come and go over the remainder of the presidency, the desire to uphold such principles and the awareness of an American identity in the world would be key elements in the way his administration approached foreign relations.

The legalistic style of Cleveland's statement is itself an important indication of the president's approach to matters of foreign policy. It is by no means insignificant that the three men who had, by December 1893, become the major creators of U.S. policy in Hawaii (and who would continue to dominate foreign policymaking for the rest of Cleveland's term of office) all had legal backgrounds. Grover Cleveland himself and Richard Olney, the attorney general and future secretary of state, were both lawyers by trade before entering politics, and Walter Q. Gresham was not just a trained lawyer but also a judge of almost a decade's experience on the United States Seventh Circuit Court. This legal background for the three main figures in foreign-policy formulation during Grover Cleveland's second term is vital to the understanding of the way that foreign affairs were conducted by the administration. While the principles of right, justice, and national identity would provide the ideological underpinnings to the administration's foreign policy, it would be this legal style that defined the way in which it was enacted. In the case of Hawaii this was seen most clearly in the debate over the responsibilities incurred by the United States toward both Queen Liliuokalani and the provisional government as a result of American involvement in the revolution. In future events the legalist approach would be more marked. Its influence is displayed in the main body of Cleveland's message to Congress, which is set forth in the clear, methodical and reasoned manner of a barrister arguing for his client in front of a jury—a role played by Cleveland many times in the courtrooms of Buffalo.

This legal background may explain the style of the message, but it could also have a greater importance in understanding the policies put forward by the Cleveland administration. Frank Ninkovich has

demonstrated that the liberal elite in the United States in the late nineteenth century, of whom Cleveland can be seen as a member, took great interest in the development and codification of international law that was occurring at the time.⁷³ With this in mind it would hardly be surprising if such legally minded men as Cleveland, Gresham and Olney chose to enact U.S. foreign policy with a view not just to what they deemed to be morally justified, but also to what they considered to be legally proper. The message to Congress of December 18, 1893, argues that, in the case of Hawaii, the legally proper course was overturning the policies of the previous administration.

Briefly stated, the charge leveled by Cleveland at the Benjamin Harrison administration is the use of American force to depose the lawful ruler of Hawaii and replace her with a new government whose sole purpose was to bring about the annexation of the islands to the United States. The charge is mollified somewhat by Cleveland's decision to abstain from criticizing (or even examining) the actions of President Harrison or his secretaries of state beyond the early reference to Harrison's endorsement, despite the protest from Queen Liliuokalani, of the treaty of annexation: a document that Cleveland declares warranted a full investigation of the events surrounding the revolution in Hawaii.⁷⁴ Subsequently Cleveland's attention is focused purely on the actions of Minister to Hawaii John Stevens, although whether this was an attempt to save the reputation of his predecessor (and thus perhaps avoid upsetting the Republicans in Congress), preserve the dignity of the presidency, or simply a result of lack of evidence against Harrison or his administration is unclear.

The indictment against Stevens is long and detailed, and it is of interest because it demonstrates both Cleveland's personal view on the matter and his belief as to how the United States should interact with the world. It is particularly telling that Cleveland was not overly interested in the precise reasons for the revolution against Queen Liliuokalani's government; he was concerned with how American force was used to expedite that revolution. The suspected use of American force had been the underlying factor behind his decision to launch an investigation, but it would appear that his focus on that use of force in his message to Congress indicates an ideological opposition to annexation. After all, with Blount's final report categorically stating that the provisional government could not claim the support of the majority of the Hawaiian people, it would have been easily justifiable to simply discard the treaty of annexation. Cleveland's message to Congress was an attempt to justify his decision to go beyond withdrawing the treaty and to interfere with Hawaiian political affairs. His reasoning was

that, if the United States was pivotal in the overthrow of the queen, it would be justifiable (and perhaps even necessary) for the United States to repair the damage. Such reasoning might simply be the result of Cleveland's sense of justice and his belief that the United States should uphold international law, but it could also be argued to be the result of his innate anti-imperialism. In reality the two factors can be seen to be inextricably intertwined for Cleveland and his advisors, for whom imperialism was itself a violation of the moral principles upon which they desired international law to be based.

Bound up in Cleveland's sense of American identity and mission was a desire to position his policy within what he believed to be the traditional American ideology of anti-imperialism and isolationism. In his opening paragraphs he described the proposed annexation treaty as being "a departure from unbroken American tradition," while later he cited the example of President Andrew Jackson's refusal to accept the new Republic of Texas's application to become a state in 1837 due to a fear that it might be suggested that the United States had supported the revolution against Mexican rule in Texas in order to acquire the territory for itself. Such an example weighed heavily with Cleveland as a Democratic president who had been raised to see Andrew Jackson as an exemplar of popular democracy.⁷⁵ Thus, Cleveland set out a case in which American force had been used to accomplish an un-American act, and he placed the blame for this action squarely at the feet of "American and other foreign merchants and traders residing in Honolulu," and of Minister Stevens, who "zealously promoted" the project and "was not inconveniently scrupulous as to the means employed to that end."⁷⁶ The victims were, of course, the rightful ruler, Queen Liliuokalani, and the Hawaiian people. The motive for the planters was greed—revealed as such in a letter from Stevens to the secretary of state in November 1892, which highlighted the effects of the McKinley Tariff on the islands' sugar growers—but Stevens's motives were not spelled out so clearly, with letters quoted implying a desire for American empire in the Pacific (perhaps even a belief in the necessity of such an empire) and strong hints from Cleveland that personal aggrandizement also played a part. The accusations against Stevens climaxed with the declaration: "But for the notorious predilections of the United States Minister for annexation, the Committee of Safety, which should be called the Committee of Annexation, would never have existed." This statement was followed by repeated assertions that the committee would not have acted without the support of U.S. forces, and that the queen would not have yielded her authority to the provisional government had it not been

backed by those forces. Indeed, Cleveland's denunciation of Minister Stevens is so forceful that it is tempting to see it as an exaggeration or an attempt to find a scapegoat—and a Republican scapegoat at that—for the administration's embarrassing dilemma. The strength of feeling within the cabinet about this issue, however, demonstrated by the repeated references to the Hawaiian provisional government as “the Stevens government” in Olney's private letter to Gresham of October 9 indicates that the piling of blame on Stevens was neither a matter of convenience nor overtly party-political.⁷⁷

The true meaning of Cleveland's December 18 message to Congress is stated in the concluding paragraphs to his indictment of Stevens and bears quoting at length.

By an act of war, committed with the participation of a diplomatic representative of the United States and without authority of Congress, the Government of a feeble but friendly and confiding people has been overthrown. A substantial wrong has thus been done which a due regard for our national character as well as the rights of the injured people requires we should endeavor to repair. The provisional government has not assumed a republican or other constitutional form, but has remained a mere council or oligarchy, set up without the assent of the people. It has not sought to find a permanent basis of popular support and has given no evidence of an intention to do so.⁷⁸

Thus we see Cleveland summarizing his case: The revolution in Hawaii in January 1893, was in fact an act of war, perpetrated by a lone agent of the United States acting without authorization and even against the Constitution—a very great wrong. This wrong was committed not just against an innocent people on behalf of a corrupt and two-faced oligarchy, but also against the very character of the United States and must therefore be repaired. The decision to attempt to restore the Hawaiian monarchy was not a matter of partisan politics or diplomatic niceties; it was a battle for the nation's standing overseas and perhaps even for its soul. Cleveland's alternative vision for how foreign policy (and American foreign policy in particular) should be conducted provides a contrast:

The law of nations is founded upon reason and justice, and the rules of conduct governing individual relations between citizens or subjects of a civilized state are equally applicable as between enlightened nations. The considerations that international law is without a court for its enforcement, and that obedience to its commands practically depends upon good faith, instead of upon the mandate of a superior tribunal,

only give added sanction to the law itself and brand any deliberate infraction of it not merely as a wrong but as a disgrace. A man of true honor protects the unwritten word which binds his conscience more scrupulously, if possible, than he does the bond a breach of which subjects him to legal liabilities; and the United States in aiming to maintain itself as one of the most enlightened of nations would do its citizens gross injustice if it applied to its international relations any other than a high standard of honor and morality.⁷⁹

As a lawyer and a liberal, Cleveland believed in the ability of nations to conduct their affairs in good faith and with regard for the rights of the weak as well as the strong. The repeated stressing of honor and justice placed foreign policy in a moral context that superseded other factors. In the case of Hawaii, Cleveland saw it as a matter of national honor and decency to repair the damage to its government and institutions—damage done in the name of the United States and through its power. This argument of moral and legal duties would become a recurring factor in Cleveland's foreign policy, with the two aspects being inextricably linked. Cleveland's policies would generally focus around the nation's rights under its treaties, but there would be occasions when they were based upon a legal foundation that, itself, often had as much to do with concepts of fundamental morality as legal precedent. In this respect—as exemplified in Hawaii—Cleveland blended the still somewhat-diffuse concept of international law with a personal belief in a natural, moral justice. He would also, in the next four years, attempt at least partially to rectify the lack of structures designed to implement and enforce international law. This single paragraph of Cleveland's message carries three important themes for a study of the foreign policy of his second term. The first is the extent to which this moral, ethical and legal approach can be seen to be dictating U.S. foreign policy during the period. The second is the question of how broadly Cleveland's opinion was shared by other American politicians, by the American public, and also by foreign powers. The belief that the United States should hold itself to a higher standard than other nations is the final theme, combined with the implication that events in Hawaii might indicate that the nation was losing its claim to a superior enlightenment or morality. While there is little to directly suggest that Cleveland recognized the rising power of the United States, this paragraph demonstrates his clear vision of how the nation should conduct itself and his fears that others were driving it down a very different path. To a great extent, the rest of his term in office would be defined by this debate.

Both the House and the Senate considered the evidence provided by Cleveland and, in the subsequent months, they adopted resolutions on the matter. The House censured Minister Stevens and approved a policy of non-interference, which rejected both restoring the monarchy and annexation. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee issued a report that exonerated Stevens, but saw deep partisan divisions over Cleveland's actions. Like the House, the Senate adopted a resolution against American interference in Hawaiian affairs but, unlike their counterparts' resolution, the Senate resolution also warned that similar interference from other governments would be considered an act unfriendly to the United States.⁸⁰ With Congress predictably not sharing the administration's qualms about the American role in unseating the Hawaiian monarchy there was nothing more for Cleveland and Gresham to do but accept the resolutions. In May, 1894, a constitutional convention was organized by the Hawaiian provisional government consisting of the 19 members of the provisional government itself and 18 elected representatives. If the apportioning of delegates suggested a desire to overrule the native majority it was unnecessary—a requirement that voters sign an oath of loyalty to the Republic of Hawaii restricted the electorate to only 4,000, most of whom were foreigners. The resultant constitution saw the creation of a new government on July 4, 1894, an act that drew protests from Queen Liliuokalani and the native groups, such as the Women's Hawaiian Patriotic Association, which appealed to foreign representatives in Honolulu to recognize that the new constitution was designed to disenfranchise native Hawaiians and Asian immigrants, using tactics similar to those used by the American Deep South to disenfranchise African-Americans.⁸¹ While Gresham would maintain a scathing opinion of the Hawaiian government until his death, Cleveland accepted that his hands were tied and extended official recognition in August 1894.⁸² An abortive counter-coup in the winter of 1894–1895 was detected and easily brushed aside by the new government and, despite the continued efforts of pro-monarchy groups to petition Cleveland for assistance, the United States played little part in Hawaiian affairs until 1897, when the McKinley administration resurrected plans for annexation.⁸³

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The Cleveland administration's response to the Hawaiian revolution demonstrates a determination by the returning president and his advisors to enact American foreign policy upon lines fixed by ideological factors. These factors were delivered to the public as an interest in

legality, morality, and national honor, but these were also expressions of an overarching opposition to imperialist expansion (even if they were tempered by a profoundly paternalist attitude). The negotiations with the Senate to delay ratification of the treaty, the treaty's withdrawal, the interest shown in Blount's investigation into both the actions of American representatives and the sentiment of the local population, and the attempt to resolve the problem by restoring the Hawaiian monarchy to power all demonstrate this desire to enact a policy founded upon a legal and ethical basis that would actively attempt to change the course of American foreign relations. In time these concepts of legality and morality would come to define Cleveland's foreign policy during his second term and, while being primarily employed reactively, would eventually be put forward as a template for the U.S. interaction with a changing world. This would come later, however, and there is an undeniably pragmatic element to Cleveland's handling of the Hawaiian revolution. One possible demonstration of this is his decision to pass the matter to Congress once it became clear that the problem was unsolvable under the constitutional powers of the president. This may be a debatable point, since it can be argued that Cleveland placed himself in an untenable position by proposing a course of action that was largely unrealistic and thus was forced by events to retreat. Under this interpretation the decision to pass the matter to Congress is less an act of pragmatism than it is a capitulation. There are other incidents, however, which demonstrate that Cleveland was not so wedded to his ideological principles as to ignore the national interest entirely. Indeed, it is possible to argue that this concern for the national interest formed an underlying factor for almost all of Cleveland's decisions.

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It is clear that Cleveland's interpretation of what comprised the national interest was rather different from many other American politicians of the period—such as Minister Stevens—not least because the president was a staunch believer that overseas expansion itself was against the national interest. This is not to say, though, that he did not hold certain beliefs in common with his more expansionist opponents. Among these commonalities was concern at the aggressive imperialism of the European powers and a determination to ensure that the United States was not placed at a disadvantage, either economically or strategically, because of it. In the case of Hawaii this was demonstrated by the decision to balance the rejection of annexation (or even a protectorate) for the islands with an uncompromising stance in

opposition to interference from other powers. Blount's instructions from Gresham on how to conduct his investigation included a statement to the commissioner (obviously intended to succeed Stevens as the main U.S. representative in the islands) setting out the American position in relation to Hawaiian sovereignty:

While the United States claim no right to interfere in the political or domestic affairs or in the internal conflicts of the Hawaiian Islands[,] . . . this Government will adhere to its consistent and established policy in relation to them, and it will not acquiesce in domestic interference by other powers.⁸⁴

Clearly there was some concern that other powers might perceive the United States' rejection of annexation as an invitation to attempt to increase their own influence in the islands. This concern could only have been exacerbated by the repeated warnings received from Minister Stevens throughout March and April that the diplomatic and military representatives of both Great Britain and Japan, supported by private citizens of both nations, were considering precisely that interference Gresham had warned Blount about.⁸⁵ While it is unlikely that Gresham and Cleveland were, even at this early stage, placing any great faith in the impartiality of Stevens's reports, it may be telling that copies of his dispatches can be found in both the Grover Cleveland Papers and State Department records. The president might have distrusted the minister, but it would have been extreme negligence on his part to ignore the warnings. Certainly, there was sufficient concern to prompt a series of private meetings in Washington between Gresham and the British, Japanese, and Russian representatives in which the secretary of state made it clear that the United States would not tolerate outside interference in Hawaii.⁸⁶ Gresham and Secretary of the Navy Hilary Herbert were also careful to assure London that American warships would protect British lives and property and thus kept British forces away from the islands.⁸⁷ Here we see a clear demonstration of the Cleveland administration's stance on imperialism in general and Hawaii in particular: Simply through careful diplomacy, the nation could receive all the economic benefits of close relations with Hawaii without the burdens of annexation or a protectorate.

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So does this mean that Cleveland's rhetoric regarding a foreign policy governed by honor and justice was simply posturing that would

ultimately be consumed by the greater needs of pragmatism and the larger national interest? Not necessarily. While in the case of Hawaii Cleveland was forced to withdraw from his preferred strategy, he had nonetheless achieved a significant change in American policy between returning to office and the decision to pass the matter to Congress in December 1893. Gresham's efforts to ensure that the United States retained its position of commercial superiority in Hawaii can perhaps be seen as a betrayal of principle, but those efforts were not inconsistent with an honorable and legal approach to foreign affairs. After all, what would be the use of such a stance in Hawaii if, by showing restraint unilaterally, the United States allowed other powers to move in and declare a protectorate in America's place? As such, the events surrounding Hawaii can be seen as a demonstration of how the nation's growing power might be exerted: not as a means for acquiring empire physically, but as a means of asserting principles of a distinctively American ideology overseas. In this regard the response to the Hawaiian revolution—and potentially much else of late-nineteenth-century foreign policy—ceases to be merely a clash between imperialists and anti-imperialists and, instead, can be seen as a debate over the directions in which the growing strength of the United States should be applied. Specifically we see a clash between the enthusiastic expansionism of Minister Stevens and the cautious conservatism of President Cleveland and Secretary of State Gresham, but the debate is not limited simply to the question of whether the United States should annex an island chain in the Pacific Ocean—it is a debate over the *nature* of global politics and the way America should conduct itself in that environment. One of the most striking aspects of Stevens's official dispatches from Hawaii is that, for all that they can be accused of embellishment, rumor-mongering, and even outright paranoia, they never leave the reader with a sense that Stevens did not believe in the truth of what he was saying: That the United States was involved in a power struggle in Hawaii and if America did not annex the islands then another nation would undoubtedly do so, with potentially disastrous consequences for American commerce and security. In particular, Stevens's dispatches regularly expressed concern at what he perceived to be the machinations of the British minister, sometimes in conjunction with his Japanese counterpart, in an attempt to place Hawaii under a dual or even tripartite protectorate.⁸⁸ Indeed, Stevens's dispatch of March 15, 1893, even goes so far as to end with the warning: "[T]here is occasion for keeping a sharp eye on Tokyo and British and perhaps other foreign intrigues there against our plans of predominance in the North Pacific."⁸⁹ This final

statement perhaps explains the difference in opinion between Stevens and the Cleveland administration. While Cleveland and his advisors were concerned about the potential for foreign interference in Hawaii, they did not harbor plans for American predominance in the region (at least beyond the position that the United States already held), while Stevens clearly viewed the situation in much more active terms and thus perceived a much greater threat. In much the same way, Stevens wrote enthusiastically of the benefits of the protectorate, both to Hawaiian peace and security and to the annexationist sentiment in the islands—something that Blount would later cast great doubt on—a stark contrast to Cleveland's and Gresham's vision of protectorates as entangling alliances that simply burdened the United States with obligations.⁹⁰ Cleveland's lack of worry about the threats perceived by Stevens is, of course, amply demonstrated by his refusal to countenance annexation, but we have already seen that there was sufficient concern about the issue within the administration for Gresham to specifically warn Britain, Japan, and Russia not to interfere with Hawaii's sovereignty. The aim of the Cleveland administration was to use such diplomacy to advance their interests, something Gresham believed could best be achieved by employing the moral high ground granted to them by restraining any colonialist tendencies:

Can the United States consistently insist that other nations shall respect the independence of Hawaii while not respecting it themselves? Our Government was the first to recognize the independence of the Islands and it should be the last to acquire sovereignty over them by force and fraud.⁹¹

While it is doubtful that any European power would have protested the imposition of an American protectorate in Hawaii—or even outright annexation—this statement can be viewed as consistent with a new policy of employing American power overseas to enforce American ideology—or at least that of Cleveland and Gresham.

There is a final point that should be made regarding the role of Minister Stevens in the Hawaiian revolution of 1893. In a period of telegraphic communication and steamships, the independence of diplomatic representatives in foreign capitals was rapidly shrinking as the State Department was able to exercise more immediate control. Stevens's actions in Hawaii, however, prove that, for all the powers of the presidency, the actions of men on the ground, such as Minister Stevens and Captain G. C. Wiltse of the USS *Boston* could still exert a greater effect on foreign policy than could the president, at least in a limited

area. This spirit of independence in diplomatic representatives would prove to be a persistent problem for the Cleveland administration.

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The contradictions within the actions of the Cleveland administration demonstrate the complexity of the situation and the competing factors weighing on their decisions. This complexity was reflected in the reaction of American public opinion toward events in Hawaii and the administration's actions. The Grover Cleveland Papers contain numerous letters received by the president illustrating both the range of public opinion on the issue and a variety of motives behind such feelings. The San Francisco Chamber of Commerce supported annexation on the somewhat loose grounds that it was "of vital importance to the general interests of the Pacific Coast and will be to the political and commercial advantage of this whole country."⁹² Others shared the fear of Minister Stevens that, if the United States did not act while it had the chance, then Great Britain, or even Japan, would seize the opportunity to impose a protectorate of their own with potentially dire consequences for the security of the Pacific Coast.⁹³ When the intention to restore the queen became clear, one writer predicted that the original wrong could not be put right, denounced the plan as "the political mistake of the century" and "un American [sic]," and urged the president to request Gresham's resignation.⁹⁴ As would become a regular occurrence whenever the president seemed likely to find himself in possession of new jobs to be dispensed to his supporters, one woman attempted to put herself at the head of the queue by requesting a position as a teacher should the federal government decide to create a new school system in the islands after annexation.⁹⁵ Such letters were often the result of the wild speculation taking place in newspapers across the nation and in Hawaii itself, occasionally leading to misunderstandings such as the case of one unfortunate U.S.-raised Hawaiian who named his son Grover Cleveland after the chief magistrate of the nation that he loved in honor of the forthcoming annexation.⁹⁶ Some correspondents sought to advise the president on alternative courses of action, as one resident of San Francisco—claiming that the residents of California, if polled on the issue, would oppose annexation—suggested that the islands' neutrality be guaranteed so that they became "the Switzerland of the seas." This idea would be repeated nearly two years later by another correspondent, who suggested making Hawaii a neutral coal-ing station for all powers.⁹⁷ Interestingly, the letter likening Hawaii's situation to that of Switzerland based its proposal on a recognition of

the changing U.S. position in world affairs: "We have the power to compel the rest of the world to let them alone to work out their own destiny."⁹⁸ Undoubtedly, Cleveland also received some support in his stand against annexation—several speakers toured the country speaking out against the revolution and the American complicity in it, while historian Charles Francis Adams Jr. (grandson and great-grandson of presidents) praised his courage and reminded him that the United States could not protest the actions of others if it was guilty itself.⁹⁹ It is apparent from the correspondence, however, that there was a growing awareness among the president's supporters that public opinion was turning against them. Gresham himself declared:

I think the American people will respond to a frank appeal to their sense of right and justice, but whether they do or not, I have done my duty. When feeling that I am right I am not sensitive to abuse.¹⁰⁰

Sensitive or not, he shortly sought comfort in the belief that "the thoughtful and patriotic men of the country are with us in the position we have taken, and in the end they control public opinion."¹⁰¹ The truth of either assertion is debatable, and the winter of 1893 saw the administration's supporters resorting to hope that public opinion would eventually come around.¹⁰² Most worrying of all, the opposition to the policy spanned the partisan divide raising troubling questions as to the extent to which expansionist sentiment had permeated the population as a whole.¹⁰³ These last points are most significant. There is no evidence to suggest that the correspondence received by Cleveland—which, as has been established, presented a broad array of opinion anyway—played a material role in altering his stance on Hawaii, and the evidence suggests that neither he nor Gresham were unduly troubled by public opinion on the matter. However, the failure to unite the Democratic Party behind his policy was a worrying indicator of problems ahead for Cleveland as he sought to lead the party through a difficult period of domestic government while his inability to command the support of the public for his foreign policy would be a political liability and, more significantly, would eventually mean the failure of his legalist approach.

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Ultimately, Grover Cleveland experienced a rebuke in Hawaii: His preferred course of action proved to be unworkable in the domestic politics of the islands, and this check forced him to adopt a more

pragmatic approach. Similarly, the constraints of an era of rampant imperialism and highly competitive commerce required Cleveland and Gresham to balance their ideological opposition to interfering in the affairs of other nations with a recognition of what was in the national interest. In this case the creeping commercial empire of the United States had become the status quo and, while opposed to physical acquisitions of territory, Cleveland was not prepared to undermine America's commercial position by attacking that status quo. The Hawaiian revolution of 1893 presents us with numerous elements that made up Cleveland's policy: a desire to act honorably and in conjunction with international law, a pragmatic approach to insurmountable problems, a paternalist and even imperialist attitude that nevertheless abhorred outright expansionism, a determination to defend the national interest as Cleveland himself saw it, and the possibility of a new assertiveness in using America's increasing power to enact American ideological principles overseas. All these factors can be seen in the evolution of Cleveland's foreign policy across his second term of office, expanding and cohering to form the foundations of a clear and rational template for how the nation should conduct itself in the world.

CHAPTER 2



WALTER Q. GRESHAM, 1893–1895

Walter Quintin Gresham served as Grover Cleveland's secretary of state from the inauguration in March 1893 until his death on May 28, 1895. During his two years in office Gresham would be confronted by a variety of problems, large and small, which required his attention. While none would match the Hawaiian revolution in terms of complexity or direct significance to the United States, several posed important questions as to how the United States should conduct itself in the world, and these problems would play key roles in the evolution of the Cleveland administration's foreign policy. Two incidents in particular shed light on the legalistic approach to foreign policy and the inherent difficulties encountered by a growing power attempting to maintain its traditional posture of neutrality and friendly relations with all. These two incidents were the Brazilian Naval Revolt that occurred over the winter of 1893–1894 and the Sino–Japanese War of 1894–1895. Many of the themes that can be identified in Cleveland's and Gresham's management of the Hawaiian revolution can also be seen to be at work in these incidents from which it is possible to establish an understanding of not just how the men perceived the role of foreign policy, but also how they perceived the world and the U.S. position in it. In particular the desire for a foreign policy founded upon legal and moral values manifested itself repeatedly, while the determination to refrain from expansionist imperialism remained a constant. There were, though, significant differences in how these incidents were handled in comparison to the Hawaiian revolution. Foremost of these was a determination to use legal structures—most notably treaty rights and the international law relating to neutrality in wars—as a basis for policy and a means of maintaining distance from

events in foreign nations. Linked to this was a granting of greater autonomy to the State Department. The discussion of key decisions in cabinet meetings that had characterized the administration's Hawaiian policy was not repeated for incidents of less direct importance to the United States.¹ Furthermore, with President Cleveland increasingly distracted by the need to tackle the depression that struck the United States in May 1893, and the domestic unrest that followed it—most notably the Pullman Strike that came to a head in the summer of 1894—he had less time to directly supervise all aspects of his Secretary of State's work. Undoubtedly, Cleveland still maintained the role of final arbiter in foreign policy but, with domestic concerns of far greater importance for the future of the nation, Gresham naturally assumed greater responsibility for directing policy.

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The events taking place in domestic politics during Cleveland's second term had relatively little bearing upon foreign relations, but they are significant for the impact they would eventually have on the fate of his presidency—and with it his vision of foreign policy. The first two years of Cleveland's second term in office were notable for a series of skirmishes with Congress which, while in themselves successful to varying degrees, caused immense damage to the administration's relationship with Democrats in Congress and did not achieve the ultimate goal of curing the economic troubles that resulted from the crash of 1893. Twice in his first two years in office, Cleveland forced past a divided and reluctant Congress two measures designed to rally the struggling American economy. In the summer of 1893 he called a special session to repeal the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890. This act provided for the mandatory purchasing by the government of silver from American mines and had been opposed by Cleveland from its beginning. Blaming the act for draining the treasury's gold reserves and thus reducing investors' confidence in the government, Cleveland threatened to withhold patronage appointments until both the House and the Senate had passed the repeal bill.² These strong-arm tactics did not endear Cleveland to members of Congress and undoubtedly built up considerable ill-will toward the administration, but rather more alarming was the number of Democrats in both houses who openly opposed their president's plans. The disaffection of these men, who came largely from the South and the West—regions that either mined silver or hoped to benefit from inflation brought about by a switch to a bimetallic or all-silver currency base—and Cleveland's absolute

refusal to compromise raised fears of a split in the party and angered moderates. This legacy undoubtedly played a role in Cleveland's second major battle: tariff reform.

Tariff reform had been a favorite policy of Cleveland's for even longer than his opposition to the Silver Purchase law. In December 1887, he had devoted his entire annual message to a call for lower tariff rates, and his election campaign in 1892 had pledged to do away with the high duties on imports imposed by the McKinley Tariff Act of 1890. While recognizing the utility of tariffs to benefit American industry, Cleveland argued that the Republican system of high tariffs placed an unjust burden on the working classes, who were obliged to pay more for manufactured goods due to lack of foreign competition. Cleveland favored a tariff that gave some protection to industry from foreign imports, but lowered costs for all by allowing free entry of raw materials. To this end Cleveland himself jointly authored a tariff bill introduced to the House by Congressman William L. Wilson in December 1893.³ The bill passed the House, but thereafter it swiftly became a political football. In the face of strong Republican opposition in the Senate the bill needed united Democratic support, but sectional interests made such unity impossible. Having forced through the silver purchase repeal Cleveland had little goodwill left in the Senate to overcome such issues. When the bill finally emerged from months of debate it had been heavily amended, so much so that some observers thought it identical to the McKinley Tariff.⁴ While this was an overstatement, Cleveland refused to sign the bill, allowing it to become law without his signature as a small improvement on the McKinley Act. Like the silver purchase battle before it, the tariff fight had revealed worrying sectional and ideological splits in the Democratic Party while Cleveland's uncompromising style had done nothing to close the divisions.

* * *

Gresham was called to set out a position for the United States by events in South America in September, 1893. Politics in Brazil had been unstable for several years, ever since the revolution of 1889 that had deposed the nation's monarchy and installed a republic in its place. The first president of Brazil was forced to resign shortly after his election in 1891 in the face of opposition from the National Congress, and his successor, Vice President Floriano Vieira Peixoto faced questions over his rule for the remainder of his term. These questions were among the many factors cited by the leaders of a

multitude of small rebellions that broke out in the following years, culminating in the revolt of a large section of the Brazilian navy in September 1893. The various causes of the revolt have been summarized by Charles Calhoun as “personal animosities in the ruling elite, friction in federal–state relations and between the president and the congress, militarism, government extravagance, army–navy rivalry, and some lingering monarchical sentiments following the overthrow of the empire in 1889,” while Walter LaFeber suggests that one of the issues that had provoked friction between Peixoto and the National Congress was the reciprocal trade agreement signed between Brazil and the United States in 1891.⁵ The leaders of the revolt, meanwhile, made various claims to justify their actions. The first proclamation of Rear Admiral Custodio José de Mello, the commander of the initial revolt, accused Peixoto of misuse of presidential power and embezzlement of public funds, while the manifesto of Mello’s successor, Rear Admiral Saldanha da Gama, declared that the overthrow of the Brazilian monarchy had itself been an illegal act and was at the root of the nation’s troubles.⁶ Clearly there were many factors at work behind the decision to revolt against the Brazilian government, but it is notable that Secretary Gresham appears to have had no interest in the various justifications that were put forward. While the U.S. minister in Brazil, Thomas Larkin Thompson, kept his superior well-informed of the various proclamations and manifestos issued by the insurgents, Gresham displayed no obvious interest in their content and did not request further investigation by his minister of the charges made by the rebels. In the case of the Brazilian Naval Revolt the overriding determinant of policy would not be the questions of morality that had featured so strongly in Hawaii and would reappear in later incidents. Instead, American policy would be dictated purely by legal precedent. Regardless of the rights and wrongs of the government of Vice President Peixoto, that government was internationally acknowledged to be the legal authority in Brazil and was therefore entitled to manage its internal affairs as it saw fit.⁷ For Gresham, the affairs of the Brazilian government would be peripheral: It was to be the actions of the insurgents that formed the foundations of his policy.

* * *

The Brazilian Naval Revolt began on September 6, 1893, when several vessels of the Brazilian navy in Rio de Janeiro harbor rebelled against their government. Seizing control of all the Brazilian warships in the harbor, Admiral Mello threatened to bombard the city if Vice President

Peixoto did not resign. The insurgents found themselves to be in a delicate situation: they held the power to dominate Rio harbor and to bombard the city, but the government still held the shoreline and the coastal forts due to the continuing loyalty of the Brazilian army. They also found their freedom of action to be restricted by the presence of several foreign warships representing Great Britain, France, Italy, and Portugal.⁸ It swiftly became apparent that Mello's plan was to bombard the coastal forts and the military installations within the city in the hope that popular pressure would force Peixoto to resign.

Gresham had the choice of three basic options in his response to the revolt: back the Brazilian government, openly support the rebels, or adopt a position of neutrality. His decision can be seen as coming in two phases: the initial definition of the U.S. basic position in early September, and an elaborated statement of policy that was reached in response to the actions of the insurgents during October and was received by Minister Thompson on November 2. The initial course was not so much a statement of policy as it was an indication of the Cleveland administration's priorities. With information at a premium, and no sure knowledge of how events would unfold, Gresham simply was not in a position to set out a detailed course of action in the first weeks of the revolt. Under the circumstances he fell back on ideological first principles: caution, and an emphasis on what was legally correct. His first telegram to Thompson following the revolt came on September 8 and instructed the minister "to concert with other legations and make by separate note representations to the Brazilian government in regard to the suspension of telegraphic intercourse, by which, especially at this time, commerce suffers serious injury."⁹ This communication was followed the next day by a telegram informing the minister, who had requested the presence in Rio de Janeiro of an American warship after the declaration of martial law by the Brazilian government, that the USS *Charleston* and the USS *Detroit* had been ordered to the city.¹⁰ These messages clearly demonstrate Gresham's priorities: the protection of key interests of the United States and its citizens, namely communication, commerce and preservation of life and property. The availability of telegraphic communications permitted Gresham and others in Washington to stay abreast of the situation and was also an important tool for American merchants conducting trade in Brazil. The presence of American warships in Rio harbor would ensure direct protection to any American shipping that might be threatened by the rebel ships and to American interests on land that Thompson clearly feared might be endangered by the declaration of martial law. They also offered another means of information

gathering for Washington. A further benefit, although it is impossible to know whether this featured in Gresham's and Secretary of the Navy Hilary Herbert's thinking in dispatching the warships, was that the United States would be assured equal representation with the European powers that had warships stationed in Rio.

The actions and communications of Minister Thompson support the interpretation that Gresham's initial posture was based upon a belief that the American government's first responsibility was to protect its trade and ensure the safety of its citizens. These messages were largely divided between commercial matters and reports relating to the progress of the revolt and often focused on potential consequences of these events for American commerce.¹¹ Thompson's second message after the outbreak of the revolt stressed that he intended, in concert with the other foreign representatives in Rio, to conduct his diplomacy with strict neutrality, in this instance by declining an invitation to attend a meeting with the vice president to discuss measures to be adopted in the event of a bombardment by the fleet.¹² The fact that it was not until late in September that Gresham sent instructions to Thompson on how he was to conduct himself in relation to either the Brazilian government or the rebels strongly suggests that he approved of this posture of neutrality, a fact borne out by later events. While Thompson's actions and motives would come under a certain amount of scrutiny from Gresham in the later stages of the revolt, his early reactions to the revolt appear to have been accepted as right and proper by the secretary of state. This is not greatly surprising since Thompson had only been appointed by Gresham earlier that year and so was clearly in a position in which he knew his chief's mind and recognized his priorities. Furthermore, the stance adopted was a conservative one and not radically different from those adopted by the other large powers represented in Rio de Janeiro.

The development of a more detailed policy toward the revolt was facilitated by the arrival in Rio harbor of the USS *Charleston* on September 26 and resulted from the growing concerns of Minister Thompson regarding the danger to American life and property posed when the rebel fleet began its bombardment of the city. On September 28 Thompson telegraphed Washington to report that repeated bombardments had resulted in civilian deaths and the destruction of property and that "if approved by the Department he will advise that a decided stand be taken against allowing it against a defenseless city." The minister also reported that he had "advised the commanding officer of the *Charleston* to protect American goods on barges against seizure by the revolutionists, and to use force if necessary."¹³ The previous day

he had issued a proclamation to U.S. citizens in Rio that all ships and boats involved in landing American cargo or passengers at the port should fly the American flag to ensure their protection.¹⁴ Also, on September 28 Acting Secretary Strobel cabled Thompson directing him “to furnish the commanding officer of the USS *Charleston* with a copy of order to the effect that further destruction and bloodshed should be prevented by the exertion of all the moral force of the Government of the United States, by protest and otherwise, and that the protection of American persons and property should be made the object of every possible effort.”¹⁵ While not an enormous alteration from the initial position of neutrality, this order still marked a significant change in the U.S. posture toward the revolt, marking as it did a limitation to the freedom of the insurgents. This was certainly not a statement one way or the other on the rightness of the rebels’ cause, but it was a declaration that no harm to American interests would be tolerated. It was also a statement of two key principles that were at stake for the Cleveland administration: humanitarianism and trade. The indiscriminate shelling of civilians and the seizure of American property in the process of being landed at the port were both to be opposed. Once again, however, this shift was by no means a radical one, a fact that is demonstrated by Minister Thompson’s telegram of October 2 reporting that a meeting of the representatives of France, Britain, Portugal, Italy, and the United States had taken place in response to an announcement by Mello that he intended to bombard the city again—with the result that the representatives advised the commanders of foreign warships in the harbor to “take measures to prevent such bombardment.”¹⁶ On the same day, Thompson reported that the diplomatic corps had maintained their neutrality by delivering a verbal note to the Brazilian minister of foreign affairs requesting that no action be taken by his government that might grant the rebels an excuse for attempting another bombardment.¹⁷ Regardless of this display of neutrality, there may be some significance in the fact that the next message Thompson received from Gresham was a brief telegram instructing him to “exert himself in favor of the innocent trade of American vessels and of the legitimate inward and outward trade of merchandise belonging to the citizens of the United States.”¹⁸ It would appear that the protection of American trade was the secretary’s primary concern.

The first major change in the nature of the Brazilian Naval Revolt came on October 14 when the rebels established a government in Santa Catharina province and officially petitioned the United States and the European powers for recognition as belligerents. This was a significant step, since recognition of the rebels as belligerents would

legally transform the revolt into a civil war and therefore grant the insurgents numerous extra rights, not the least of which would be the power to declare a blockade of Brazilian ports, an action that clearly ran contrary to Gresham's concept of American interests. Under these circumstances—as reported to Gresham by Thompson in a telegram of October 24 and received the next day—Gresham naturally fell back on his legal training. Calhoun describes how Gresham drew heavily—and at times quoted verbatim—from Richard Henry Dana's 1866 edition of Henry Wharton's *Elements of International Law*, which clearly stated that such status should only be granted if the insurgents could demonstrate that their government and the territory it professed to control was sufficient in size and character to constitute a nation by itself.¹⁹ With no legal obligation to recognize the rebel government and nothing to gain from the move, Gresham was able to telegram Thompson and inform him that belligerent status would not be granted. Instead he instructed his minister to “observe, until further advised, the attitude of an indifferent spectator . . . and espouse the course of neither side.”²⁰ Once again there was nothing unusual about Gresham's decision: every other power petitioned by the insurgent government gave the same response. Finally, as it became clear that the rebels would not be receiving international sympathy, Gresham cabled Thompson once more to definitively state his preferred course of action. The telegram (dated November 1, but referred to thereafter by Thompson as the instructions of November 2) came as a response to a query from Thompson as to whether American protection would extend as far as Brazilian-owned barges being used to unload American goods from ships in the harbor—a necessary part of commerce in the port.²¹ Gresham's reply was unequivocal:

There having been no recognition by the United States of the insurgents as belligerents and there being no pretense that the port of Rio is blockaded, it is clear that if an American ship anchored in the harbor employs barges and lighters in transferring her cargo to the shore in the usual way and in doing so does not cross or otherwise interfere with Mello's line of fire and he seizes or attempts to seize the barges or lighters, he can and should be resisted.²²

The secretary of state was determined that commerce should continue as closely to normal as possible. He was also keen to ensure that the American position might not be misunderstood by the rebels, closing the message with the line: “You will deliver or send a copy of this instruction to the commander of the insurgents.”

The policy of neutrality was a natural one for Walter Q. Gresham to adopt: It was conservative, legalist and did not seek to push any ulterior agenda. It was not, however, simply a convenient escape for a man who sought to isolate his nation from world affairs. The seriousness with which Gresham approached the policy of neutrality is demonstrated by the care he and Secretary of the Navy Herbert displayed in maintaining it. The secretary was twice faced with situations in which he feared that neutrality had been compromised and on both occasions acted swiftly to ensure that this would not be the case. The more serious of these occasions took place almost simultaneously with Gresham's rejection of the rebels' request for belligerent status and involved the arrival at Rio of Rear Admiral Oscar M. Stanton aboard the USS *Newark* on October 19.²³ In the first few days after his arrival, Stanton exchanged visits with Admiral Mello and fired a salute to the rebel commander.²⁴ Surprised and embarrassed by this unauthorized and unprecedented act of hospitality, Gresham and Herbert instantly recalled Stanton. Minister Thompson was unwittingly present during Mello's visit to the *Newark*, having been unable to leave before the admiral arrived. His report of the meeting stressed its social character and that politics had not been discussed, but it is clear that Thompson had been surprised by the meeting and would have avoided it if he could.²⁵ Although written after Stanton's recall the minister's version of events would appear to be reliable since he was not reprimanded for his actions. Stanton would later claim that he was simply attempting to build a common foundation for communications with the rebel commander in anticipation of future disturbances, but this was of little consolation for Gresham and Herbert, who stoically ignored the messages of praise and thanks they received from the Brazilian government for their swift action in recalling the admiral.²⁶ The seriousness with which the incident was viewed by the administration is demonstrated by the decision to explain it in President Cleveland's annual message for 1893. In this message Cleveland specifically cited the swift removal of Admiral Stanton as evidence of the "fixed policy of impartial neutrality" that his administration had adopted.²⁷

The second occasion on which Gresham felt it necessary to reaffirm the policy of neutrality related to one of the few notable changes in the condition of the revolt. On December 9, 1893, Thompson reported that the previously unaligned Rear Admiral Saldanha da Gama had arrived in Rio harbor to take command of the rebel forces in the wake of the departure of Admiral Mello in the early hours of December 1.²⁸ During the intervening period the Brazilian government had ordered all foreign merchant ships to evacuate the waterfront area in order to

clear a line of fire that would allow its troops on the mainland to attack the rebel fleet. The flaw in this plan was quickly exposed as government troops found themselves under fire from the rebels, prompting the government to once again encourage merchant shipping to use the docks. As Calhoun describes, however, foreign commanders including Captain H. F. Picking of the USS *Charleston* had been ordered not to protect shipping that interfered with the line of fire and were concerned at what they perceived to be an attempt by the Brazilian government to use foreign shipping as a shield for its forces—a direct breach of neutrality.²⁹ From Thompson's reports it is clear that there was insufficient communication between the minister and the naval commander since on December 17 the former was unsure of whether Picking had withdrawn protection for shipping and was encouraging Washington to implement the instruction of November 1 to resist interference with commerce.³⁰ The disagreement between the two was summarized in Thompson's telegram of December 21 in which the minister reported Picking's refusal to protect shipping that entered the line of fire, but argued that such firing was so desultory and covered such a broad expanse of the bay that viewing it as a line of fire would cause serious damage to American commerce.³¹ Faced with conflicting advice over which policy to follow, it is interesting that Gresham chose not to order Picking to alter his stance. Despite having clearly defined commerce as the key American interest at stake, when pushed the secretary decided that the commitment to maintaining a legally sound position superseded the need to protect commercial interests.

A potential supporting factor in this decision, noted by Calhoun and given credence by several dispatches from Gresham to his minister, is the apparent concern the secretary held over Thompson's credibility and impartiality. In November, after Thompson passed on a request from the U.S. consul at Pernambuco for an American warship to protect U.S. civilians in the light of reported clashes between the Brazilian army and rebel troops in the region, Gresham had sent a brusque reply stating:

Mr. Gresham, remarking that Mr. Thompson's telegram of the 19th does not afford a sufficient basis for instructions, directs him to confer with the commander of the naval forces of the United States, and warns him that he should report facts and not rumors.³²

This was followed on December 25 by a similarly curt telegram stating: "You should remain in Rio unless danger is greater than reported."³³ Why Gresham felt the need to send this telegram is

unclear—and appears to have been a mystery to Thompson—but the minister strongly defended himself, claiming that he had been visiting Rio for extended periods several times a week, occasionally staying overnight, and had even been “several times exposed to the fire of the insurgents, and on one occasion that of the government troops while on official business at the foreign office.”³⁴ Thompson’s vociferous defense of his conduct suggests he was in little doubt of his chief’s low opinion of him.

The timing of these orders from Gresham suggests a broader lack of trust in his representatives. Within days of chastising Thompson for reporting rumors, he would send an equally scathing message to Minister Willis in Hawaii after his incomplete telegraphic report on the failure of his first meeting with Queen Liliuokalani.³⁵ Clearly, the secretary did not appreciate being asked to make a decision based upon anything less than full and detailed facts, although it must be noted that representatives in both Brazil and Hawaii did send general reports to Washington that noted local rumors and unconfirmed reports, particularly in Brazil where the government controlled the flow of information. The varying degrees of trust in his subordinates would be a feature of Gresham’s period in office and, indeed, of the entirety of Cleveland’s second term. One cannot help speculating about the likely effects of Gresham’s first major controversy in office—the Hawaiian revolution—and the significant part played in that event by a rogue American diplomat upon the secretary’s subsequent interaction with his representatives overseas.

Gresham’s mistrust of Thompson was, perhaps, somewhat unfair given that, from its beginnings, the minister had deftly handled the question of neutrality in the Brazilian Naval Revolt, and with little prompting from his chief. It was perhaps inevitable, however, that maintaining a consistent posture would become more difficult as the revolt continued. While Thompson can be viewed as overly supportive of the Brazilian government, part of his role as minister was to facilitate trade, and it is understandable that he would take a different view to Picking over the matter of what constituted a line of fire, given the two men’s respective roles. It is also clear from his reports that Minister Thompson very quickly became convinced that the naval revolt was doomed to failure. As early as September 19, he was reporting that the Brazilian people appeared disinterested in the whole affair, viewing it as a matter between the army and navy, while his report of the publication of a manifesto by Admiral Saldanha da Gama noted that it had resulted in protests against the admiral’s plans to restore the empire with support limited to the minority that had derived

status from the monarchy.³⁶ The intervening period had seen numerous reports reach Thompson of the perilous military position faced by the rebels away from Rio. Under such circumstances it would perhaps be understandable if Thompson's professionalism lapsed slightly, as he began to treat the revolt as already doomed to fail.

Certainly Thompson's stance was, to a large extent, vindicated by the final substantial twist in the Brazilian Naval Revolt. Shortly after his arrival in December, Admiral Saldanha da Gama began to pursue a more active course than his predecessor by releasing his new manifesto calling for the overthrow of the republic, demanding recognition as belligerents from the foreign powers—swiftly rejected by Gresham—and taking a tougher line against the foreign merchant shipping in Rio.³⁷ The announcement that da Gama planned to stop the landing of all merchandise in the port of Rio prompted the diplomatic corps to request that the foreign naval commanders prevent any such action and also to remind the commanders of the outstanding agreement to prevent the bombardment of the city, which was being violated.³⁸ This suggests that Thompson's opinion that the foreign warships should have been more active in providing protection for commerce was shared by his colleagues in the diplomatic community in Rio, but this view was undermined by the decision of the Brazilian government to fortify positions in the city, in breach of the agreement that had been made to deter bombardment. In consequence Gresham dispatched another instruction that did little to change the American position with the possible exception of making it less clear. Regarding the principal U.S. goals and interests, Gresham declared:

Our principal and obvious duty, apart from neutrality, is to guard against needless or illegitimate interference, by either hostile party, with the innocent and legitimate neutral interests of our citizens.³⁹

This suggests that Gresham placed the strictures of neutrality above the protection of trade, but his statement that "Vexatious interference with foreign merchant shipping . . . is as illegitimate as it is intolerable," and his subsequent assertion that the United States had the right to demand a safe anchorage in which to load and unload goods constitute a clear indication of his strong desire to maintain commerce. It can be argued that this emphasis on commerce as a matter of right marked a slight, but significant, change in policy from Gresham, perhaps as a result of concern at the possibility that through the indulgence of the foreign powers the rebels were imposing a blockade that their numbers did not warrant. Calhoun argues persuasively, however,

that this was not the case and that Gresham was simply seeking to better define the complicated situation that actually existed inside Rio harbor within the abstract concepts of international law.⁴⁰ Whatever the case, the events of the next few weeks would bring matters to a head.

On January 12, 1894, Admiral A. E. K. Benham arrived at Rio harbor aboard the USS *San Francisco*.⁴¹ Rather than a sign of dissatisfaction with Captain Picking's performance, the admiral's arrival was a swap with Admiral Stanton, who took over Benham's former duties as commander of the North Atlantic Station. Benham's arrival initially marked no change in the American position in Rio, but within two weeks he was forced to act definitively against the rebel fleet. An accusation on January 24 that a rebel ship had aimed rifle fire against an American merchant ship was met with the claim by da Gama that the shots had been blanks fired as a warning to a vessel entering the firing zone; but when the following day saw a report of live ammunition being fired at an American ship attempting to dock at the port, Benham was moved to demand an end to such interference from da Gama.⁴² It should be noted that Benham stressed to da Gama that his demand was not intended to contradict the previous position of neutrality relating to the armed conflict in the bay, but da Gama's refusal to reply prompted the U.S. commander to offer an armed escort for American merchant vessels approaching the docks. Interestingly, Minister Thompson was either not aware of the harassment of American ships or did not consider it significant, since he did not mention it in his report of January 26 and declared that American trade had not suffered "serious interference."⁴³ Thompson did note, however, that a conference of naval commanders had agreed to oppose the attempts of the insurgents to stop the landing of coal—a move that Thompson viewed as a return to the posture of early November and thus a vindication of his position in the difference of opinion with Captain Picking. It is therefore possible that when Admiral Benham ordered the USS *Detroit* to escort an American merchantman to the docks on January 29 he was acting in conjunction with a more general policy of assertiveness from the foreign naval commanders. What is unquestionable is that an exchange of fire between the *Detroit* and a rebel vessel marked the end of the more aggressive tactics used by the insurgents since Admiral da Gama's arrival. On that subject it is important to note, as Calhoun describes, that the tough stance adopted by Benham was a response to the actions of the insurgents rather than an active attempt by the American commander to change the situation in the harbor. It was also a measure that clearly fell within the bounds

of Gresham's instructions from the start of November and before.⁴⁴ Certainly Benham's actions were not part of a larger plan in Washington to influence the revolt, since Thompson received telegrams on January 29 and 30 urgently requesting further information on how and why Benham had acted.⁴⁵ Specifically, the secretary desired to know whether there had been a change in the admiral's relations with either the insurgents or the Brazilian government and whether the other foreign naval commanders agreed with the action; once again neutrality was at the forefront of Gresham's thinking.⁴⁶ Thompson's report, in which he gave his wholehearted approval to the admiral's orders, appeared to mollify his chief, who replied that the action was justified within his instructions and (somewhat unnecessarily given Thompson's enthusiastic reporting of the incident), expressed his hope that Thompson was in accord with the admiral—further evidence of Gresham's lack of trust in his minister.⁴⁷

Calhoun notes that many observers, both at the time and since, gave credit to the *Detroit* action for bringing the Brazilian Naval Revolt to an end, but rejects this on the grounds that the insurgency was not defeated at Rio until mid-March, and that the final mopping-up of forces elsewhere took another month after that.⁴⁸ While this analysis has merit, it might be suggested that it ignores one vital aspect of the American action: By using force to oppose the interference of rebel vessels with merchant shipping, the American commander forced his counterpart in the rebel fleet to abandon his aggressive tactics. This move, coming in the wake of the failure of the insurgents to inspire support—or even interest—among the Brazilian population marked a serious setback by ending the insurgents' slim hopes of acquiring belligerent status by imposing a blockade on Rio de Janeiro.⁴⁹ Without ever acting outside the bounds laid down by the policy of neutrality, Admiral Benham delivered a heavy blow to the insurgency's chances of success.

The fact that the *Detroit* action was able to inflict such a damaging blow without in itself breaching the rules of neutrality is indicative of how much that policy favored the Brazilian government. The rebels' failure to prove capable of either mounting a genuine blockade of Rio or establishing a viable state of their own robbed them of the benefits that they might have gained from the international community under the law. It is wrong, though, to suggest—as William Appleman Williams does—that Gresham was actually running an interventionist policy in support of the Brazilian government out of fear that the rebels posed a genuine threat to American commerce.⁵⁰ Likewise, Walter LaFeber's suggestion that pressure from American business

had persuaded Gresham to bring about a more aggressive policy, with the goal of ending the rebellion and perhaps increasing the U.S. share of the Brazilian market is false.⁵¹ Both theories are refuted by the consistent policy of neutrality maintained by the Cleveland administration throughout the revolt and by the simple fact that Cleveland and Gresham saw little to be gained from enacting any other policy. While the two men undoubtedly believed that it was the role of government to protect and facilitate overseas trade, it is clear that the policy of neutrality was uppermost in Gresham's thinking.

Another issue that figures prominently in the historiography is the question of whether Gresham was motivated by fear that the European powers might support the insurgents' cause if it led to a restoration of the Brazilian monarchy. This malign influence is usually attributed to Great Britain, either as a result of direct commercial interests or as an attempt to check the growth of U.S. power in Latin America, although at least one historian has attributed Cleveland's refusal to grant the rebels belligerent status to his concern that they were receiving support from Germany.⁵² Neither suggestion is borne out by the available evidence. In the latter case there appears to be little evidence to show undue concern from Gresham at potential German support for the rebels. On the contrary, Minister Thompson's reports in January, 1894, specifically mentioned the German vessels in Rio harbor as among the few that were willing to defy the rebel's attempted blockade, stating that only the German commander had maintained the stance taken against Admiral Mello after the arrival of Admiral da Gama.⁵³ This consistent stance from the German officers was confirmed in Thompson's replies to Gresham's querying of Admiral Benham's conduct in relation to the other foreign naval commanders.⁵⁴ The theory that Gresham was motivated by concern over British actions is better supported by Thompson's reports, but also more definitively refuted by Gresham's own words. The cable messages sent to Washington by Thompson after December 1893, gave a strong impression that it was the British representatives, both military and diplomatic, who were responsible for the change in attitude toward the insurgency and its attempts to frustrate international trade. On December 14 Thompson reported that the British naval officers had withdrawn protection for shipping, and on January 29 he informed Gresham that the British diplomatic representative had stated that all other alternatives would have to be exhausted before British vessels used force to restore a British merchant firm's coal trade.⁵⁵ This message also suggested that the British minister was considering recommending that his government should grant the rebels recognition. Perhaps most importantly, on

February 1, Thompson reported discussions between the diplomatic corps and the naval commanders on how to reopen the coal trade in Rio—with the commanders favoring the use of force while the British minister, Hugh Wyndham, had openly suggested that the foreign powers would be better served recognizing the rebels as belligerents rather than using force against them, since it was in fact the Brazilian government that was drawing out the siege of Rio.⁵⁶ In closing this message, Minister Thompson gave his view as to why the British minister would make such a suggestion—and why his European colleagues would silently approve of it—stating:

With no intention of examining into the merits of the commercial arrangement between the United States and Brazil, it can not be denied that it has given to our merchants a leverage of which all Europeans are extremely jealous.

This opinion has perhaps been given greater weight by historians than was given by Thompson's political masters. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that Minister Wyndham and his European counterparts should have viewed with some concern the improving commercial relationship between the newly republican Brazil and the United States—most clearly typified by the 1891 reciprocity treaty between the two nations. However, this is not to say that the British government was prepared to actively meddle in Brazilian internal affairs. It should be remembered that the United States was not alone in having diplomatic representatives who were capable of embarrassing their home government by acting without authorization. Indeed, Thompson himself was also promoting U.S. investment in Brazil with the same letters that warned of “unfriendly European foreign influences” also declaring that Brazil was “wonderfully endowed in natural resources, affording a prodigious field for profitable development through an intelligent outlay of capital.”⁵⁷ Most importantly, the February 1 report was written after the USS *Detroit* action had taken place and was only received in Washington on March 19, by which time the revolt in Rio had collapsed. The most substantial allegations from Thompson simply could not have influenced Gresham's actions.

What is certain is that Gresham was sufficiently concerned by the rumors of British support for the rebels to investigate the matter further, but was never moved to change American policy as a result. Calhoun describes a brief exchange between Gresham and Thomas F. Bayard, the American ambassador in London, shortly after Admiral da Gama took command of the rebel fleet, in which the secretary of

state instructed Bayard to inform him of any indication that Great Britain sought to interfere in matters in the Americas. The ambassador replied that the European powers were far too concerned with affairs on their own side of the Atlantic to be bothered by the situation in Brazil.⁵⁸ It is important to note too, as Calhoun does, that the Brazilian government, through its minister in Washington, was itself bringing the rumors of European interference to Gresham's attention.⁵⁹ Vice President Peixoto stood to gain from exploiting American suspicions of the European powers in order to end any chances of the United States recognizing the rebels as belligerents. Ultimately, Gresham's feelings about the possibility of British support for the insurgents are demonstrated by a brief reference to the matter in a letter he wrote to Bayard on January 21, 1894, declaring: "I do not believe Great Britain, or any other European Power, would attempt to re-establish the Monarchy in Brazil."⁶⁰ This definitive statement of Gresham's position came only days before Admiral Benham initiated the action that would severely damage the insurgency's chances of success.

The Brazilian Naval Revolt is a perfect example of Walter Q. Gresham's preferred approach to international diplomacy. Through a conservative and legally sound policy the secretary of state protected American interests in Brazil without unnecessarily involving the United States in Brazilian affairs. By doing so he helped generate good will with both the Brazilian government and its citizens.⁶¹ As such it forms a minor triumph for Gresham's vision of international relations. This being so, it is ironic that the revolt—and Admiral Benham's actions in particular—was seized upon by the Democratic press as an example of an assertive and energetic intervention by the Cleveland administration. The administration itself was not so embarrassed by this misinterpretation as to refuse to exploit the political capital it generated, and subsequently released to the press the correspondence covering the revolt.⁶² The true message of the Brazilian Naval Revolt for the United States was very different from that put forward by the newspapers, however. While Gresham's policy can be seen as a success, some limitations were still exposed. The mere fact that a conservative administration seeking to enact a minimalist foreign policy was forced to dispatch multiple warships to a foreign capital in order to protect the nation's interests demonstrated that the United States, while still not as deeply involved in world affairs as were powers such as Great Britain, could no longer hope to remain simply isolated from trouble overseas.⁶³ The Cleveland administration had felt obliged to involve itself, even if only in a conservative manner, in the naval revolt, and

American power played a role in ensuring the insurgency's defeat. Events had shown that, while a strict adherence to international law could be useful in shaping policy, it had limitations when it came to guiding matters to a desirable outcome. The revolt itself may have been a victory for Gresham's vision of a conservative and legal foreign policy, but it also hinted at greater problems that might be produced by growing U.S. power in the future. This would be demonstrated during the Sino-Japanese War.

* * *

The Brazilian Naval Revolt gave Walter Gresham the chance to implement a foreign policy founded upon international law and designed toward the conservative ends of protecting American commercial interests. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 would grant another opportunity to refine those techniques, but it would also present a new range of problems that the secretary of state was forced to overcome. In doing so he further defined the template by which the Cleveland administration believed American foreign policy should be guided, but also exposed its limitations and its flaws when used in the complex, fluctuating, and sometimes emotive environment of foreign relations.

The origins of the war are somewhat complex, involving three East Asian nations and a collection of foreign powers. Shortly after Grover Cleveland's second inauguration, the United States minister in Korea, Augustine Heard, began cabling Gresham that members of an illegal nationalist, xenophobic sect called Tong Hâk were openly protesting in Seoul.⁶⁴ The minister reported the concern among Korean officials that the sect's strength in the southern provinces of the country might place foreign missionaries and traders at risk, although he himself saw more danger from the "hordes of discontented and poverty stricken people" that had joined with the movement in the South.⁶⁵ Minister Heard's concerns would prove premature in 1893, but a year later the unrest in southern Korea came to be a catalyst in bringing about the Sino-Japanese War. In May 1894, Heard's replacement at the Seoul legation, John M. B. Sill, reported that uprisings in three southern provinces were sufficiently serious to prompt the Korean king to request the presence of an American warship at the port of Chemulpo.⁶⁶ When the first Korean forces sent to put down the insurrection met with defeat, King Kojong, pressured by the Chinese consul in Seoul, requested Chinese assistance.⁶⁷ The American chargé d'affaires in China, Charles Denby Jr.—son of the American minister

at Peking, Charles Sr.—reported to Gresham that the Chinese official responsible for dispatching the troops to Korea, Viceroy Li Hung-chang, had shown great reticence in agreeing to the request and had been careful to inform the Japanese and Russian governments that the deployment would only last for the duration of the insurrection.⁶⁸ The reason for this caution was swiftly demonstrated as the Japanese government invoked the Tsientsin Convention of 1885 (which forbade the sending of troops of either nation to Korea) and dispatched its own forces. Both nations refused to withdraw their forces while the other's remained. With tensions running high on the Korean peninsula and in the region as a whole, Cleveland and Gresham found themselves required to formulate a policy on the matter. Neither man had shown particular interest in the region, with events in Hawaii and Samoa demonstrating their lack of enthusiasm for further involvement in the Pacific. Once again they fell back on their fundamental approach to foreign affairs: the need to protect American commerce and American citizens in the region, and a desire to follow the precepts of international law. In the instance of the Sino-Japanese War, however, both aspects of this default posture would present the president and his secretary of state with unanticipated difficulties.

The concern for protecting America's commerce and the safety of its citizens in both Korea and China—it quickly became obvious that those resident in Japan would be at no risk from military action—was stressed by Cleveland in his annual message of 1894. In that message he stated that the war “deserves our gravest consideration by reason of its disturbance of our growing commercial interests in the two countries and the increased dangers which may result to our citizens domiciled or sojourning in the interior of China.”⁶⁹ He later reiterated the desire to preserve trade and not jeopardize American lives as key reasons why he was willing to offer friendly aid to both nations in the interests of bringing the war to an end. The message also made clear that the United States had no policy in Asia that was endangered by the war, and this was something that Gresham would also repeat in his dealings with foreign diplomats. In a dispatch to Minister Denby in November, 1894, Gresham described how he had reassured the Chinese and Japanese representatives in Washington of U.S. neutrality by stressing that the war between their nations did not affect any American policy in Asia.⁷⁰ These repeated declarations that the United States did not have a policy in Asia actually ran contrary to the general policy of protecting American commerce and citizens in the region. While it is true that Cleveland and Gresham were not engaged in an active policy designed to build trade, increase influence,

or annex territory in Asia—and Cleveland's reference to the growing U.S. trade in the region should not be viewed as anything more than an acknowledgement of the interest shown in China and Japan by private enterprise—the presence of American citizens in China and Korea, most of them missionaries, demonstrated that American society did hold an agenda toward the region and, while the government did not directly support that agenda, it would undoubtedly move to protect those engaged in those countries. This was not a major difficulty in theory—although events in Brazil had demonstrated how protecting commercial interests could result in fairly momentous actions. The presence in the Chinese interior, however, of American citizens engaged in a cause which, while universally viewed as humanitarian at home, might become the focus of hostility for the Chinese population meant that Cleveland's government was to some extent hostage to the situation. In the event, American missions escaped the worst of the anti-foreign attacks in China during and after the war, but they presented a cause for anxiety, and Cleveland was ultimately moved to respond to the attacks that did take place, through the formation of an investigatory commission.⁷¹ Once again the presence of American interests overseas made it impossible for the United States to remain aloof from a regional problem, although in this case other motivations led to greater involvement.

As with the Brazilian Naval Revolt, the lack of any specific American policy in the region, and the presence of small, but politically significant, U.S. interests in China, Japan, and Korea meant that adopting a neutral stance was a logical decision for Cleveland and Gresham. There were, however, several key differences from the situation in Brazil, which made simply maintaining neutrality insufficient as a policy and demanded greater American involvement. The first of these differences was in the humanitarian aspect. While a desire to prevent civilian bloodshed in Rio de Janeiro had prompted the American representatives in the city to support multilateral efforts by the diplomatic corps and naval commanders there, the Sino-Japanese War provoked a response on a larger scale. In particular, the fact that the war centered upon the independence of Korea, for which the United States held a historic affinity, made it far harder for the Cleveland administration to remain aloof.⁷² Furthermore, the fact that the Sino-Japanese War was a fully fledged conflict between powerful nations, rather than a local insurgency, created a moral dilemma for the president as to whether or not to use his influence to avert potentially large numbers of military and civilian casualties and serious destruction of property. While it would, at first glance, appear incongruous that an

administration that had defined its foreign policy by seeking to limit its involvement in events overseas should then be moved to interfere in a war taking place in an area considered to be of marginal interest to the United States, the importance to Cleveland and Gresham of the moral aspects of foreign policy should not be underestimated. This is demonstrated by the repeated references made by both men to the importance for the United States of friendship with both countries.⁷³ China and Japan had long been given almost mythical status as potential markets for American manufactured goods, but in reality trade with the region was relatively small, and most Americans had little knowledge of either nation.⁷⁴ Without a strong motive for wishing to build friendships and influence in the region, it would appear that for Cleveland and Gresham the desire to use American power to further the interests of peace and international goodwill was a genuine one. While moral factors were not the only motivation for American involvement in the Sino-Japanese War, it should be noted that a desire to employ the growing power of the United States in a manner that the administration viewed as morally correct, once again undermines the simplistic image of Grover Cleveland as an isolationist president.

Similar flexibility is seen in the second key reason why the Cleveland administration engaged in a more active policy than simple neutrality. Having railed against the imprudence of American treaty obligations in Samoa during their first 18 months in office, Cleveland and Gresham showed far less distaste for the U.S. obligations toward Korea. The first offers of American good offices to bring about a peaceful resolution to the crisis came in June 1894, and were a fulfilment of a promise made in the treaty between the two nations in 1882. Dorwart states that this offer was made by Cleveland alone—Gresham was on vacation—and did not represent a serious priority for the president, but the fact remains that the offer was made apparently without Korean pressure.⁷⁵ It might be argued that this situation differed significantly from Samoa, since it did not involve entangling the United States with European powers and undoubtedly this was a major factor—as would be demonstrated by later events—but the offer nevertheless involved entangling the United States, however peripherally, in the affairs of China and Japan as well as Korea. As such it is further evidence of the ways in which moral and legal factors—in this case the desire to fulfil a promise to a weaker nation—affected the formulation of foreign policy.

Complicating matters further for the administration was the level of public interest in the Sino-Japanese War. While the general population may have been largely ignorant of China's and Japan's cultures

and societies this is not to say there was no American interest in the two nations. This broader interest combined with the newsworthiness of a genuine international war—American newspapers gave it front-page status and dispatched special correspondents to the war zone—to create a general appetite for information on the conflict, as well as a readiness to take sides.⁷⁶ This readiness could take on sometimes alarming proportions; despite the accepted obligation under international law of a neutral state to prevent the recruitment of its own citizens to serve in the armed forces of the belligerents, a variety of groups and individuals volunteered their services to the Japanese legation in Washington—so much so that the legation was forced to issue a notice discouraging volunteers.⁷⁷ Just as problematic for the administration was the issue of preventing its citizens from supplying the belligerent nations with arms. Since the war provided an extremely tempting market for American arms manufacturers and exporters—including opportunists who seized the chance to become gunrunners—this obligation was openly criticized and routinely flouted.⁷⁸ While public interest never reached the level it had in Hawaii or would in relation to the revolution in Cuba in 1895, the Sino-Japanese War received considerably more attention than the Brazilian Naval Revolt, placing greater pressure on Cleveland to act. The fact that Japan was widely perceived to be the West's protégé in the region meant that public opinion largely favored Japan and thus raised questions of whether the United States was right to be maintaining neutrality at all.⁷⁹ Ultimately, the Sino-Japanese War was not of sufficient importance to most Americans to cause real problems for the administration, but it did raise troubling questions of how public opinion might react to a conflict closer to home.

One factor that might have been expected to influence the Cleveland administration's actions is the fear of European ambitions in the region, but it appears that this had surprisingly little impact on their decisions. While American representatives in both China and Japan made repeated efforts to improve their nation's chances in the battle for commercial advantage in China, the administration did not exert itself significantly in this regard. Most surprisingly, the administration displayed throughout an apparent lack of anxiety that European powers might seek to take advantage of the war to partition China for commercial gain. Having determined not to act in conjunction with any European powers in relation to the war, Cleveland and Gresham did little to guard against any move to seize commercial enclaves in China, restricting themselves to issuing warnings to Japan against provoking the Europeans into action.

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The Cleveland administration's actions toward the Sino-Japanese War would largely be defined by a well-intentioned desire to enact policy that was morally and legally "right," but those good intentions did not always achieve the anticipated results. Such was the case with the decision to grant American protection to the consular buildings and archives of both China and Japan on their opponent's soil and, consequently, providing diplomatic protection for both nations' citizens as well. In theory this did not represent any breach of neutrality, since the service was rendered equally to both parties and did not involve actively interfering with either nation's affairs. The move was undermined, however, by several factors, not least the disastrous failure of the Chinese war effort. This was an eventuality that Gresham may well not have anticipated—an indication of the State Department's paucity of knowledge and understanding of conditions in East Asia. Certainly, the sweeping success experienced by the Japanese military was not universally predicted before war was officially declared: On July 24, 1894, Minister Sill in Korea wrote to Gresham stating that "once [China's] hordes begin to press across the northern border no force here will be able to stay the tide. The Chinese merchants have all left here, fearing the looting by their own troops that they say will surely follow their first success."⁸⁰ No doubt the Japanese government would not have agreed with Sill's assessment at that time and Viceroy Li's reluctance to dispatch his troops to Korea would appear to suggest that he also was less than convinced of his nation's military superiority. The prospect, though, that Japanese operations would not simply prove victorious in Korea, but would quickly lead to an invasion of mainland China was clearly not widely countenanced outside Japan. The initial dissatisfaction in both Chinese and Japanese cities at what was often viewed as American partiality to the enemy predictably became more pronounced in China as the defeats mounted.⁸¹ In this way the administration's policy actively worked against Cleveland's declared aim of protecting American citizens in East Asia by increasing resentment toward them in the local populations. Even so, this was only a minor failure of diplomacy and one that could be seen to be offset by the goodwill created in the Chinese and Japanese governments, but more serious consequences came about as a result of another unanticipated difficulty: the unpreparedness of the American diplomats in the region to enact the policy, both in terms of legal knowledge and intensity of workload. This came to a head in the issue of Japanese spies in China.

The issue of the Chinese pursuit of suspected Japanese spies would prove to be perhaps the most important of the entire conflict for Cleveland and Gresham. Japan had spent the years preceding the Sino-Japanese War building networks of agents inside mainland China and gaining valuable intelligence on Chinese geography, infrastructure and military structures as a result. With the outbreak of war the Chinese government set about finding and destroying these networks, but their methods involved suspecting all Japanese nationals in China, which almost inevitably led to a collision with the American policy of providing diplomatic protection to Japanese citizens in the Chinese Empire.⁸² With the outbreak of hostilities, the American consul general at Shanghai, Thomas R. Jernigan, promised protection to Japanese citizens who chose to remain in the city rather than returning to their homeland. Controversy arose almost immediately when, on August 10, two Japanese male students accused of spying requested asylum in the American consulate, which Jernigan granted. When the Chinese government protested to Gresham in Washington, the secretary requested an explanation from Denby Jr., who defended Jernigan's actions, first on legal grounds, then on humanitarian ones. The legal picture was clouded by the existence in Shanghai of a system of international concessions that carried their own extraterritorial jurisdiction, a situation further confused by the strictures of international law relating to wars between nations. The two students had first been arrested in the French concession before being handed over to Jernigan by the French consul.⁸³ In the face of a legal situation that fell well outside his experience as a U.S. circuit judge, Gresham consulted his friend, the legal expert John Bassett Moore, who declared that in a time of war the Japanese fell under the jurisdiction of local courts.⁸⁴ Gresham would later write that, in his opinion, not delivering the two spies to China "would have been utterly inconsistent with our attitude of impartial neutrality," and that he had been left with no alternative but to order that the two men be handed over to the Chinese authorities.⁸⁵ He showed his concern for their fate by obtaining what he believed to be a promise from the Chinese minister in Washington, Yang Yu, that the men would not be tried until Charles Denby Sr.—the American minister to Peking—returned to China from his medical leave in the United States.⁸⁶ Consequently, the execution of the men two weeks before Denby Sr. arrived back in China was a matter of some consternation for Gresham, who complained to the Chinese minister that he had been placed in an awkward position by China's actions.⁸⁷ This was quickly proven to be the case, as the American press seized on the story, including details of torture that the State Department

denied. In the Senate, Henry Cabot Lodge turned the incident into a party-political cause célèbre and introduced a resolution requesting that the president transmit all diplomatic correspondence relating to the case, in the hopes of proving moral cowardice by Gresham.⁸⁸ Writing in *The North American Review*, Republican Senator Cushman K. Davis described the decision to hand over the students—he did not accept that the men were spies—as an “abominable transaction” and declared: “The blood of those youths is on our hands.”⁸⁹ Comparing the incident to the story of Cain and Abel, the senator blamed Gresham specifically and accused him of abandoning his own agreement to protect Japanese citizens in China. This aggressive querying of the administration’s foreign policy by Congress would prove to be a theme running through Cleveland’s remaining years in office. In December 1894, Gresham, seeking to avoid jeopardizing new treaties he had negotiated with China and Japan and perhaps hoping to calm the ferocity of the press attacks, was able to have the resolution delayed in committee until after the New Year’s recess by inviting Senators John T. Morgan and John Sherman—the ranking senators from both the Republicans and the Democrats on the Senate foreign relations committee—to the State Department to read the correspondence privately.⁹⁰ This cooled matters temporarily, but the eventual publication of the documents led to further criticism. All of this demonstrates the dangers of following a rigid legalist policy. While it might provide a useful template for action, help build a reputation for American honesty, and even build trust with appreciative European powers, such a policy was not flexible for the needs of public relations and not always comprehensible to the public. That said, it is interesting that Senator Davis’s article addressed Gresham’s actions in largely legal terms—questioning his legal responsibility to hand over the men and accusing him of setting a bad precedent for the future. An article published by the same magazine a month later by Democratic Senator George Gray defended the administration’s actions in an equally legalistic manner.⁹¹ This suggests that the legalist approach was not entirely out of step with Congress, but also that the vagaries of legal interpretation might prove to be a crucial flaw in this approach as a means of formulating policy. Beyond this, there remained the problem of convincing public opinion to back the legalist approach. The simple fact was that the American public was not likely to be won over by legal technicalities, and the impression had been set that the administration had tamely sent two young men to their deaths. At best, Gresham was seen as inflexible; at worst, he was a craven coward, bowing to the barbaric Chinese. In the case of the Japanese spies,

Gresham's actions were entirely consistent with good legal practice, but nevertheless left him open to charges of cowardice from his political opponents, such as Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt.⁹² This is an important point, and one worth a brief digression from the immediate study of the Sino-Japanese War.

As shown by the Hawaiian revolution, the dramatic growth of American power and influence in the late nineteenth century led to a national debate on how that power might best be used. While Cleveland's two terms in office were divided by the administration of Republican Benjamin Harrison and the foreign policy leadership of James G. Blaine, it would not be these two men who led the opposition to his foreign policy.⁹³ Instead, this role was taken by a new generation of men who would eventually do much to shape the role of the United States in global affairs, most famously Henry Cabot Lodge and Teddy Roosevelt. As Cleveland's second term continued, the debate over America's place in the world, its opportunities, and its responsibilities, was increasingly (although not exclusively) conducted between the administration and this new rank of younger Republicans. This debate itself contained numerous smaller questions, one of which concerned the nature of American honor. Significantly, the new generation of politicians who believed that the United States should be more active in world affairs, and who were largely untroubled by the prospect of war with European powers, had come of age since the Civil War, and at this time the generation that had fought the war—as represented by presidents Hayes, Garfield, and Harrison—was retiring from the political scene. The younger men had been too young to fight in the war, but had grown up surrounded by stories of the glory of battle and infused with notions of honor and masculinity that were largely based in warfare. As demonstrated by Hoganson, their concerns were heightened—perhaps unconsciously—by the perceived threats to American masculinity of rising industrialism, increased bureaucratization, and the growing calls for women's suffrage and the female influence on politics that would go with it.⁹⁴ Cleveland should be included with the older generation; even though he did not fight himself, two of his brothers served in the Union army and, having lived through the conflict as an adult, he would have undoubtedly seen the consequences of war, if only from a distance. He was undoubtedly just as cognizant of the “emasculating forces” supposedly affecting American society and politics, but was inclined to see war as a tragedy, not a panacea by which to reinvigorate American manhood and build national honor. As is often the case, those who had seen the horrors of warfare for themselves were less inclined to plunge recklessly into situations that might lead to war than

were the younger “jingo,” best represented by Roosevelt. While the often larger-than-life character of Roosevelt should not be viewed as entirely typical of his political class, he does provide an excellent contrast to the conservatism of Cleveland and Gresham (himself a Civil War veteran). Roosevelt’s views of Cleveland’s actions throughout his second term provide an interesting commentary on the administration’s foreign policy. Specifically, these views often focus on Roosevelt’s conception of national honor, which differed markedly from Cleveland’s. Where Cleveland’s vision of national honor—which formed the basis of much of his foreign policy—was one of justice, honesty, morality, and the open-handed and fair treatment of all nations regardless of size or power, Roosevelt’s emphasized strength and the necessity of earning and keeping the respect, and even the awe, of others. This vision, in common with many other jingoes, also had a flair for the romantic and chivalrous: a belief that men should prove themselves by defending the innocent and, consequently, that failure to act risked dishonor. One historian of Roosevelt’s effect on the evolution of American foreign policy has even suggested that he was convinced the United States was incapable of acting unjustly: an almost total contrast to Cleveland’s concern that the nation must diligently pursue a legally proper course.⁹⁵ The result of this differing conception of American honor was a tendency toward caution and passivity from Cleveland and a demand for action from Roosevelt and the jingoes.

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This sense of honor, combined with a humanitarian desire to promote peace, may have prompted Cleveland to proffer American good offices toward bringing about a peaceful resolution to the Sino-Japanese war. In making this offer, however, the administration displayed the contradictions inherent in its policy of simultaneous neutrality and humanitarianism. The offer was made twice, first in late July 1894, in response to Korea’s request under the 1882 treaty, and then on November 6 of that year. The second offer came as a result of weeks of lobbying by the Chinese government through the American legation in Peking and through its own minister in Washington. By chance it coincided with an official Chinese request for diplomatic intervention by the Western powers, news of which reached Gresham on the same day that he issued his instructions to both Denby and Minister Edwin Dun in Tokyo that they should proffer the good offices of the United States in the interest of making peace.⁹⁶ This coincidence of timing would prove somewhat embarrassing to both the United States and

China, since Cleveland and Gresham had steadfastly refused to act in concert with European powers in anything more important than an arbitration tribunal for determining the size of an indemnity.⁹⁷ This had been the consistent policy of the administration since the summer, when they had first rejected an approach from Great Britain to take part in a multilateral effort to defuse the crisis in Korea and then, shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, declined to take part in a similar multilateral intervention proposed by Lord Kimberley, the British foreign minister.⁹⁸ Most embarrassingly, President Cleveland had turned down a second proposal of international cooperation from Lord Kimberley less than a month before the offer of November 6.⁹⁹ In a telegram to Denby on November 24, Gresham explained the decision in terms strongly reminiscent of Cleveland's annual messages of 1893 and 1894 relating to Samoa:

With a few exceptions the record of our diplomatic history shows no departure from the wise policy of avoiding foreign alliances and embarrassing participation in guaranteeing the independence of distant states. The United States may, however, consistently with that policy, lend their aid to further the efforts of friendly powers unhappily at war to compose their differences whenever they concur in expressing a desire for our impartial mediation.¹⁰⁰

Once again Gresham displayed the administration's desire to stay true to the tenets of Washington, Jefferson, and Monroe, but the words did not match the reality. The first U.S. involvement in the Sino-Japanese War had been an attempt to protect the independence of Korea and, while Cleveland and Gresham steadfastly refused to join any multilateral intervention (perhaps from fear that to do so might force them to acquiesce in a subsequent partitioning of China by the European powers), the proffering of good offices to China and Japan led to the possibility of becoming entangled in the affairs of those nations. While this risk might have been acceptable, since the offer was intended to be of only minor involvement and short duration, in the event, American involvement would prove to be considerably more entangling than Cleveland and Gresham had wished.

The entanglement came about as a consequence of a series of incremental steps that ultimately culminated in embarrassment for the administration and in fears of damage to Japanese-American friendship. On November 17 the Japanese foreign minister informed Minister Dun in Tokyo that his government would not be taking up the U.S. offer of good offices on the grounds that the war had been

a universal success for Japan, and that there was no reason to believe that the victories would not continue.¹⁰¹ Dun was also informed, though, that the Japanese government would consider a request for peace negotiations if China made the first approach, with the American legation in Peking being suggested as the best channel for such an offer. This suggestion was in line with the first proposal to engage American good offices, and was a logical choice given the role that the United States had accepted in taking on the diplomatic assets and duties of the warring nations within the opponent's territories. Subsequently, American diplomats served as the only diplomatic conduit between China and Japan from November 1894 until the final peace settlement in April 1895.¹⁰² This innocent attempt to act as a good neighbor was undermined by the unauthorized and increasingly self-interested interference of Minister Denby. In the words of Jeffery Dorwart: "Minister Denby did not share Gresham's narrow, legalistic interpretation of messengerial good offices. From the outset, he saw his position as an opportunity to change the course of East Asian history and increase American influence in the area."¹⁰³ As a vital figure in the chain of communication between the Chinese and Japanese governments Denby quickly took on the role of advisor to the Chinese foreign office, the Tsungli-yamên. In this role he won praise from the Chinese emperor, but he also caused minor problems for his masters in Washington.¹⁰⁴ As the negotiations dragged on, delayed by seemingly endless technicalities and procrastination on both sides, this role gradually expanded from one of advising on how best China should respond to Japan's demands to the point where Denby specifically advised Viceroy Li that China should sell railroad, banking, and mining concessions in order to pay the indemnity that Japan demanded as one of the precursors of peace, with the implication that American companies would make the best purchasers.¹⁰⁵ This earned the minister a swift rebuke from Gresham, who warned that Denby would be beset with concession seekers, while a subsequent proposal to present the offer of a loan from an American syndicate to the Chinese government led to an admonition not to involve himself in the deal in any official capacity. Despite these warnings, Denby's attempts to persuade his political masters that they were missing a golden opportunity to expand American commerce and influence in East Asia persisted to the point that Gresham's successor, Richard Olney, was eventually forced to instruct him to desist.¹⁰⁶

Matters were yet further complicated by the arrival in China of John W. Foster, the former secretary of state during the last days of the Benjamin Harrison administration, who represented to Gresham

that he would be utilizing his good relations with a Chinese official to assist in bringing about peace.¹⁰⁷ While Foster was an old acquaintance of Gresham's and had served the Cleveland administration at the arbitration tribunal of the Bering Sea seal fishing dispute with Great Britain, the secretary was troubled by the prospect of an American private citizen interfering with negotiations and potentially threatening neutrality as a result. His suspicions about Foster's true motives were revealed in a letter to Ambassador Bayard in London in late December, shortly after learning that the former secretary of state was involved in a scheme to help China raise a \$400 million loan to pay the indemnity demanded by Japan. Gresham noted that Foster's "prospects for becoming a millionaire are flattering."¹⁰⁸ The machinations of Denby and Foster demonstrate once again the possibilities for influencing foreign policy that still existed for individuals—even private citizens—in the 1890s. This recurring issue—best illustrated by the actions of Minister Stevens in Hawaii—was drawing to a close, however, due to the availability of very rapid communication between the State Department in Washington and its representatives overseas thanks to the expanding network of telegraph cables and the increasing professionalization of the American diplomatic corps. In the event, the actions of neither Denby nor Foster had a significant impact on the peace negotiations, but the incident with Foster did lead to yet further trouble for Gresham in Congress. On January 4, 1895, the Senate passed a resolution directing Gresham to inform them of any official capacity held by Foster in regard to the Chinese peace negotiations.¹⁰⁹ Gresham was honestly able to reply that Foster held no such position (aided by similar refutations from Senator Morgan), but the matter was another minor embarrassment for the administration.¹¹⁰

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In terms of American interests at stake, the Sino-Japanese War was a relatively minor incident for the Cleveland administration by comparison with the revolutions in Hawaii and Cuba or the clash with Britain over Venezuela, but it may hold a far greater significance historically as an indicator of issues that were to gain importance in the remaining years of Cleveland's term. The administration's chosen policy of neutrality combined with a morally based desire to use American power and prestige to first preserve and then restore peace can be considered, for all its contradictions and minor failings, to have fulfilled its aims. Cleveland and Gresham succeeded in protecting American lives and property in East Asia, were influential in the peace process, generated

goodwill in China and Japan, and preserved the independence of Korea. This last point could be considered a major triumph, but it is hard to say exactly how far the administration would have been willing to go on Korea's behalf if Japan had sought to occupy the Korean peninsula permanently. Cleveland's annual message of 1894 stated that he had "felt constrained" under the terms of the 1882 treaty with Korea to lend his good offices to resolve the problems "growing out of the Japanese demands for administrative reforms in Korea."¹¹¹ These reforms were diligently reported to Gresham by Minister Sill throughout 1894 without prompting any change in American policy toward Japan—indeed Gresham declined a specific request from the Korean minister in Washington to organize international intervention against Japan's interference in Korean governmental affairs—and a pro-Japanese coup that occurred in Korea late in 1895 was also accepted without protest.¹¹² This lack of concern might be explained by the fact that Korea had been gradually extricating itself from Chinese suzerainty for several decades and therefore the growth of Japanese influence was seen as beneficial in completing this movement. Equally, it might be cynically suggested that Korea's independence was expected to always be reliant on the goodwill of one or other of its more powerful neighbors and thus not worth damaging Japanese relations. It is interesting that Cleveland chose to remain aloof when Russia, France, and Germany intervened after the peace settlement to force Japan to abandon its claim under the treaty to the Liao Tung peninsula. Gresham had demonstrated his concern about the prospect of such intervention if Japan were seen to be overreaching itself as a result of its military successes by warning the Japanese government that it risked having a peace settlement imposed by the foreign powers represented in China if they upset the balance of power too much. This friendly warning was the furthest the administration was prepared to go in restraining Japanese ambitions, but it is open to debate whether Cleveland would have joined a wider intervention if the fundamental independence of Korea had been challenged. When late in 1894 fears arose that Japanese forces threatened Peking itself, Gresham reluctantly arranged for a contingent of marines to be dispatched to Tientsin ready for deployment to the capital, but insisted that any such move would only take place in the event of other powers doing the same.¹¹³ Dorwart suggests that this indicates a desire to maintain equality with the other foreign powers in China and notes the difficulties of reconciling the deployment of marines without China's permission with the policy of neutrality.¹¹⁴ While the latter point is valid, one might argue that the question of deploying small numbers

of marines in China, even in the capital, was less a question of equality with other powers and more a matter of fulfilling the administration's aim of protecting American citizens and their substantial property in Peking. Finally, it should be noted that Cleveland's lack of opposition to European meddling in the Sino-Japanese peace settlement was in stark contrast to his reactions to British intervention in the affairs of Nicaragua and Venezuela in 1894 and 1895.

The administration's limited policy had achieved success, but there had also been failures that may have carried far greater significance than was immediately apparent. Cleveland's and Gresham's policy encountered considerably greater difficulties at home than in East Asia. The administration—and Gresham in particular—came under fierce criticism in the press and in Congress over several aspects of policy, particularly over the inflexibility of the legally minded policy relating to the Japanese spies and over the actions of John W. Foster. Undoubtedly, these attacks had much to do with partisan politics—the questions over the role played by the Republican Foster were undoubtedly related to his long acquaintance with Gresham—but it could be suggested that to a large extent Cleveland and Gresham brought extra trouble upon themselves through the narrowness of their policy. By not overtly siding with Japan or seeking to exploit the war—and the United States' privileged position in the peace process—for commercial or strategic gain, the administration opened itself to charges that it was failing the nation in foreign affairs. Their intentions may have been good, but the problems Cleveland and his administration encountered with their own diplomats, and the criticism their policy sustained, both in the press and in Congress, suggests that Cleveland was losing the debate over America's place in the world. The actions of Denby and Foster demonstrate a wider desire to cash in on China's weakened position, which Cleveland and Gresham staunchly resisted. LaFeber has noted that Denby was instructed in the summer of 1895 to exert himself on behalf of securing “equal and liberal trading advantages” in Korea and China, while newly appointed Secretary of State Olney changed State Department procedures to make it easier for Americans to invest in Chinese concessions, but both moves are indicative of Cleveland's belief that government should facilitate and protect private enterprise, not actively seek to promote it.¹¹⁵ With the potential carving up of China into zones of commercial interest by the European powers considered imminent by many observers, such instructions are far closer to the “Open Door” policies of Cleveland's successors and further indicate his belief in the rightness of commercial competition on a level playing field.

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Both in the Brazilian Naval Revolt and the Sino-Japanese War, Cleveland and Gresham attempted to follow a policy of legal neutrality. The former case came to be viewed as a minor triumph for the administration, but the latter should probably be viewed on balance as a failure. This failure was not due to the neutrality policy being wrong or ineffective—indeed for this reason it seems highly probable that Gresham and Cleveland would not have agreed that there had been a failure—but due to domestic factors and, in particular, to a failure to lead public opinion. Ironically, it might be argued that the success of the Brazilian Naval Revolt came about when the neutrality policy slipped and American force was applied against the rebels; this is not entirely true—the action was legally sound within the policy—but it is clear that Gresham was briefly concerned that the *Detroit* action might have been a breach of neutrality. In both cases the neutrality policy was an attempt to maintain the status quo while, at most, boosting goodwill toward the United States, and it is here that the problem arose for the Cleveland administration. The decision not to attempt to use the Brazilian Naval Revolt or the Sino-Japanese War for commercial gain was a natural one for Cleveland and Gresham, both because it was legally correct and because it was politically conservative, involving minimal government activity and no possibility of becoming entangled in the affairs of other nations. For Cleveland, in particular, actively using foreign policy to expand American commerce was anathema. In his opinion it was the role of businessmen and merchants to seek out new and larger markets overseas, and the role of government to facilitate this work and to protect legitimate American interests once they were established. Cleveland saw no merit in acquiring colonies when the continental United States contained seemingly limitless resources of its own that had been only partially tapped by industry; similarly he had no desire to open new markets using force—whether actual or threatened—preferring instead to allow the power of American industry to assert itself and win foreign markets through its own efficiency and strength. His preferred method for facilitating this—while achieving a variety of other benefits—was tariff reform. However, while President Cleveland and Secretary of State Gresham were content to adopt policies that were legally sound and presented the United States to the world as a paragon of virtue, an opposition was swiftly taking shape that believed the nation should be seeking to gain more from its foreign relations, and the Brazilian Naval Revolt and the Sino-Japanese War indicated that public opinion was moving

to follow this new vision of the United States in the world. In Brazil the conflict had been limited and in an area of only relatively minor interest for most Americans since it was outside the immediate Caribbean sphere (although Gresham still found himself being lobbied by some areas of industry and commerce). Supporting one side over the other would have seen little obvious benefit to the United States and, therefore, the media found little to criticize in neutrality. Finally, the *Detroit* action appeared to demonstrate greater aggression—and to carry greater weight in ending the revolt—than was actually the case, resulting in a public relations success that had little to do with policy. By comparison, the Sino-Japanese War was a major conflict between two nations with which American citizens were familiar and, more importantly, about which they already held opinions. For a variety of reasons, not least of them racial, the American people were predisposed to view Japan favorably over China as the nation of progress and enlightenment in a backward and superstitious region. It is no coincidence that the public relations difficulties encountered by the Cleveland administration occurred against a backdrop of heightened opposition to Chinese immigration and with racism against Chinese already resident in the United States. Dorwart notes how the Chinese were subject to similar levels of racism as experienced by African-Americans, even down to Sambo-like stereotypes. The Chinese government was viewed, perhaps not unfairly, as corrupt and inefficient while their soldiers were portrayed as tough, but essentially animal. By contrast the Japanese were seen as the West's protégé in Asia, embodying "Christian" virtues of piety, honesty, lawfulness, and loyalty, and with some aspects—such as the military field hospitals run by the Red Cross Society of Japan that dispensed treatment for soldiers of both sides—viewed in particular as matters from which the United States and Europe could draw lessons.¹¹⁶ More recently, Ninkovich has suggested that liberal opinion in the United States dismissed many of these racial arguments against the Chinese, but stresses that cultural issues stemming from the Chinese history of invention and education led to them still being widely viewed as a threat to white civilization.¹¹⁷ Either interpretation would explain a climate in which a policy of neutrality could be viewed as unnecessarily favoring a backward China over a progressive Japan; even though Gresham himself probably sympathized with those who viewed Japan more favorably, describing China as "a vast inert mass of humanity."¹¹⁸ Under such circumstances it was easy for the Republican press to build the story of the executed Japanese spies into a public furor.

Equally, the reluctance to exploit the situation for commercial gain met with greater opposition in the case of the Sino-Japanese War than in the Brazilian Naval Revolt. Unlike Brazil, the region of East Asia, and China in particular, had been portrayed for generations as an unlimited market for American manufactured goods. While it is open to debate how widely this vision was accepted by either American manufacturers or the American public in 1894, the region was undoubtedly the subject of popular interest. The efforts of Minister Denby to extract commercial gains without consulting his political masters demonstrates that at least some Americans believed there were opportunities to be taken in China. Overall, the picture of Cleveland's and Gresham's foreign policy that emerges from the Brazilian Naval Revolt and the Sino-Japanese War is one of principle, but also of stubbornness and even a refusal to work toward the nation's material interests due to a belief that policy should be governed by less-base motives. That said, many of the policies pioneered by Cleveland and Gresham—in particular relating to the Sino-Japanese War—would be reprised to a large extent by William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt in their handling of Chinese trade, the Boxer Rebellion and the Russo-Japanese War. The legal and moral template for creating foreign policy that emerged in China and Brazil in 1894 can certainly be viewed as laudable policy in a general sense, but the signs were already appearing to indicate that, in the partisan and racist atmosphere of the 1890s, it was not necessarily good politics.

CHAPTER 3



NICARAGUA, VENEZUELA, AND THE MONROE DOCTRINE

Of the various incidents in global affairs that confronted Grover Cleveland in his second presidential term, three in particular have acquired a prominent place in the historiography of the presidency. Two of these—the revolutions in Hawaii and Cuba—bookended this presidency, but the third reached its climax almost exactly at the midpoint of Cleveland’s term. The Venezuelan Border Dispute was a major event in the history of American foreign relations in the late nineteenth century and, while it has suffered in recent years from the same neglect that has seen the events in Hawaii and Cuba come to be overwhelmed by the War of 1898 in most textbooks, it has been credited as forming a turning point in U.S. foreign policy in a variety of ways. At different times it has been suggested that the Venezuelan dispute brought the United States close to war with Great Britain, that it can be seen as the beginning of the “special relationship” between the American and British governments, and that it reinvigorated—and even reinvented—the Monroe Doctrine.¹ Such claims, while sometimes overstated, are not without merit, and it can reasonably be argued that the Venezuelan Border Dispute is deserving of restoration to greater prominence in the larger narrative of American foreign relations.

It may be, however, that the Venezuelan incident is not the only such event that has been unfairly neglected by historians. For over a year before the United States became involved in the Venezuelan Border Dispute, events in Nicaragua had occupied much of the attention of the State Department. While often relegated, even in histories of late-nineteenth century foreign policy, to little more than a handful

of paragraphs, these events covered a full range of the largest issues facing American policymakers at the time. The situation in Nicaragua involved questions of the sovereignty of a Central American republic, the rights and responsibilities of a European power in the Americas, the U.S. relationship with its smaller brethren in the western hemisphere, a potential challenge to the Monroe Doctrine, and a threat to the commercial interests and investments of thousands of American citizens. As such, while the events in Nicaragua may not have held the long-term significance of the Venezuelan Border Dispute, they form something of a case study in the changing position of the United States in the world. Between them, Nicaragua and Venezuela would also see the further refinement of the Cleveland administration's foreign policy template, demonstrating a greater activism than had previously been seen and culminating in an attempt to establish a new structure that would, it was hoped, change the way international law was applied in global affairs.

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In itself, the Venezuelan Border Dispute would prove to be a significant—albeit short-lived—domestic political event, but in 1894 affairs in Nicaragua were always overshadowed by greater issues at home. Despite the Cleveland administration's best efforts in repealing the Sherman Silver Purchase Act and passing the Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act, the recession that plagued the country after 1893 did not improve. These difficult economic conditions resulted in working-class unrest, which raised fears in some areas of outright revolution. In areas of the West hit hardest by the recession, bands of unemployed men coalesced into "armies" that demanded measures to ease the financial suffering of farming communities—usually by creating currency inflation—and threatened social upheaval. The most significant of these "armies," led by Jacob Coxey, marched on Washington to demand the issue of \$500 million in paper money for highway construction. It was considered serious enough by Attorney General Richard Olney that government agents infiltrated the march to report on its progress.² Cleveland, however, was unconvinced of the threat, and he would eventually be proved right, as Coxey failed to gather support and ultimately arrived with only 300 followers at Capitol Hill, where he was immediately arrested for trespassing on the grass.³ Coxey's march had turned out to have more noise than substance, but considerably more troubling was an increase in worker unrest, with 1894 marked by a series of strikes—most notably the Pullman Strike,

which took place in June and July. A strike that began over wage cuts and rent increases at the Pullman railroad car works near Chicago spread to become a general railroad strike that eventually affected rail traffic in 27 states and crippled the transportation network in some areas.⁴ In early July, Olney intervened. Believing that if he could destroy the strike at its epicenter in Chicago it would fail everywhere, Olney demonstrated his skill as a former railroad lawyer—a connection that undoubtedly swayed his sympathies toward the railroad managers—by using the Sherman Anti-Trust Act (passed in 1890, ironically in an attempt to rein in the power of corporations, such as the railroads on whose behalf it was now being invoked) to draw up an injunction against the strikers interfering with railroad traffic in Chicago on the grounds that they were obstructing the federal mails.⁵ When the strikers ignored this injunction, Cleveland ordered federal troops to the city sparking rioting and clashes between unemployed workers and the soldiers, in which as many as 25 people were killed.⁶ In the course of the riot several buildings of the White City which, in housing the World's Columbian Exposition, had been intended to demonstrate U.S. prosperity and technological achievement, were destroyed by fire.⁷ In the wake of the bloodshed, the strike leaders were arrested, and the strike came to an end, but not without angering workers, who believed the Cleveland administration had acted as the tools of the railroad directors, and raising middle-class fears of social upheaval. These factors, coming on top of the continuing failure to restore the nation's economy and perhaps also some lingering dissatisfaction at the refusal to annex Hawaii in 1893, combined to cause a landslide in the congressional elections of November, 1894, in which the Democrats lost 113 seats in the House and 5 in the Senate, consequently losing control of both houses. Ominously, the Democratic Party struggled to put up a united front in the election, but their energies were devoted more to party infighting than to defeating the Republicans.⁸ Whether these events affected the Cleveland administration's foreign policy in 1894 and 1895 is debatable; what is certain is that they forecast further troubles for the administration in its final two years.

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As the domestic troubles of 1894 unfolded, the Cleveland administration found itself also responding to other problems several thousand miles away in the Central American republic of Nicaragua. The U.S. involvement in Nicaraguan affairs centered on a debate over the

sovereignty of the Mosquito Indians, who occupied a large reservation on the country's southeast coast.⁹ Guaranteed to the Indians since 1860, when Nicaragua signed the Treaty of Managua with Great Britain, the reservation had previously been a British protectorate and, while this status was officially relinquished under the treaty, a stipulation remained that the Indians should maintain a measure of self-government under Nicaraguan sovereignty. Complicating matters further was Britain's insistence that it was entitled to intercede on behalf of the Indians in any dispute with Nicaragua, a position that was reinforced in 1881 when the Emperor of Austria delivered an arbitration decision that practically rendered the Mosquito Reservation independent of Nicaraguan rule excepting for the appointment of a Nicaraguan commissioner to protect the republic's sovereign rights.¹⁰ Such potential for British involvement in Central American affairs in spite of the Monroe Doctrine was clearly unwelcome to the United States, and the Emperor of Austria's appointment as arbiter was never accepted by the American government (continuing to be a matter of discontent in 1894).¹¹ Ironically, however, the arbitration decision may have played a large part in increasing American influence in the region and, ultimately, bringing an end to the British pseudo-protectorate. The decision of 1881 granted the Mosquito Indians the right to exercise all the powers necessary to regulate trade in the reservation. This helped to encourage an increase in American investment in the region, and this freedom from Nicaraguan control came to be seen by merchants and investors at Bluefields, the reservation's capital, as vital to their economic welfare.

The increase in American investment and commerce in the Mosquito Reservation was dramatic. Beginning in the 1880s, American businessmen poured capital into the exploitation of the rich resources to be found in the territory. While bananas and other fruit were the largest exports, the investors also sought to capitalize on the reservation's natural wealth in minerals, timber, and hides.¹² By 1893 American investments in the Mosquito Reservation amounted to \$2 million, with overall trade with the United States totaling as much as \$4 million per year.¹³ More importantly, American firms had taken up a dominant position in the region's economy, conducting 90 percent of the commerce and holding 90–95 percent of the reservation's total wealth.¹⁴ By this standard, the Mosquito Reservation is indicative of the change taking place in the U.S. position in the world. Having built such strong commercial ties with this small corner of the Western Caribbean, and with such substantial investments at stake for American citizens, the U.S. government found itself more deeply involved in local affairs than it might have wished.

This American presence in Nicaragua became relevant to the State Department early in 1894, when the outbreak of hostilities between Nicaragua and Honduras led to B.B. Seat, the U.S. consular agent at Bluefields, requesting that a warship be sent to protect American citizens and their property in the reservation.¹⁵ Although Gresham arranged with the Navy to have the USS *Kearsage* dispatched to the region, there appeared to be little cause for concern since Bluefields was well-removed from the scene of the invasion, which had taken place at Cape Gracias á Dios. However, the crisis with Honduras exposed deep flaws in the relationship between the Nicaraguan government and the authorities on the Mosquito Reservation. The Indian government—which by 1894 was largely controlled by the foreign community and by black Jamaican immigrants in particular—disputed the right of Nicaragua to mobilize troops within the reservation without its permission and threatened to make an official protest to Great Britain. They also made moves to form their own defense militia.¹⁶ Under these circumstances, it is possible that Seat's request for a warship was as much motivated by concerns about Nicaragua's potential actions as by the possibility of an invasion by Honduran forces. Certainly the need for an American military presence at Bluefields became more urgent shortly afterward when Nicaraguan troops occupied the town on the night of February 10–11.¹⁷

This occupation would prove to be the first of many in 1894, with troops from Nicaragua and British and American marines all being deployed at various times in an attempt to maintain order in Bluefields and the surrounding reservation. In general this was the result of the failure of the leading figures on the reservation and of the Nicaraguan officials sent to work with them to create a workable settlement that would allow the reservation's diverse community to govern itself. As the failure to bring about a political settlement continued through the summer, Gresham was also forced to confront the issue of involvement by American citizens and even American diplomats, in local affairs. Ultimately he presided over the U.S. response to a British occupation of the port of Corinto on Nicaragua's Pacific Coast in 1895. Once again, much of his policy would be based upon a foundation of strict legality.

The existence of the Treaty of Managua and Britain's consequent assertion of a right to intervene on the behalf of the Mosquito Indians in any dispute with the Nicaraguan government meant that any unrest involving the Mosquito Reservation was always going to be a matter of concern for the United States. Under the Monroe Doctrine, opposition to European involvement in the affairs of the American

continents had been U.S. declared policy since 1823, but enforcement of the doctrine varied throughout the nineteenth century. This was specifically true in relation to Nicaragua, where a succession of diplomatic exchanges demonstrated the flexible interpretation of the doctrine. First, the Clayton–Bulwer Treaty of 1850 between Great Britain and the United States had attempted to ensure that neither nation could construct and own an inter-oceanic canal in Central America and also stipulated that there was to be no colonization of Central American nations, including Nicaragua and the Mosquito Coast. While a strong endorsement of the principles of the Monroe Doctrine, the Clayton–Bulwer Treaty was somewhat undermined by the differing interpretations placed upon it by the United States and Britain, with a particular source of controversy being the British protectorate then in existence over the Mosquito Coast. This area of dispute was supposedly removed by the Treaty of Managua in 1860, when Britain acknowledged Nicaraguan sovereignty over the Mosquito Reservation, but the issue was clouded by the subsequent British claim to intercede on the Indians' behalf. The dispute arose again in 1879, when Nicaragua agreed, without consulting the United States, to submit the question of the extent of its sovereignty over the Mosquito Reservation to the arbitration of the Emperor of Austria–Hungary. At the time the United States did not protest, but the arbitration decision handed down in 1881 was never acknowledged as binding by the American government, and the actions of both Britain and Nicaragua clearly still rankled with some members of the State Department in 1894.¹⁸ Finally, as recently as 1888 the Nicaraguan government had appealed to the United States for assistance after the British government had threatened to intervene against perceived infringements of Mosquito sovereignty. The secretary of state at the time, Thomas F. Bayard, who in 1894 was U.S. ambassador to Great Britain, stated:

The matter is one in which the Government of the United States feels at least an equal interest with that of Great Britain, inasmuch as a number of our citizens are now engaged in business within the reservation and by far the larger part of the foreign commerce of that region is at present carried on between the ports of Bluefields and New Orleans.¹⁹

In a lengthy instruction to the American minister in London, Bayard made plain that the United States would not tolerate any attempt to re-establish a British protectorate on the Mosquito Coast.²⁰ This led to a denial that the British government had any such intentions, but

at least one of Gresham's predecessors found this declaration to be rendered worthless by the continued British assertion of the right of intervention.²¹

It is clear from these events that during the later years of the nineteenth century the United States government became increasingly assertive of its declared position in Nicaragua under the Monroe Doctrine. It could be argued that this was simply the result of the increasing American commercial interest in the region, but the actions of Bayard and Gresham—both natural foreign policy conservatives—suggest that this growing assertiveness was more likely to be a consequence of expanding American power on the world stage. This argument would be supported by the events of 1894 and 1895 and thus forms an interesting counterpoint to the fundamental conservatism of Grover Cleveland's foreign policy with its generally limited aims and reluctance to involve the United States in the affairs of other nations. In Nicaragua, the Cleveland administration would still show itself to be fundamentally opposed to infringing on national sovereignties (something that would be less clear in its handling of Venezuela), but it also displayed a new assertiveness in its attitude toward European powers in the Americas. As such it began to move beyond the desire to base American foreign policy on legal and moral grounds toward an expectation that other nations should follow its example.

Gresham had shown little concern over the events taking place on the reservation in January and February of 1894, but he was moved to act when reports reached Washington of the landing of British marines at Bluefields on March 5. Within days, telegrams were sent to the American representatives in Nicaragua and Great Britain seeking more information on the landings and specifically querying the "alleged grounds" and "the occasion" for the British action.²² If doubt remained as to the reason for Gresham's questions—and apparently Minister Lewis Baker in Nicaragua did not fully comprehend his chief's thinking—it was decisively removed by his second telegram to Nicaragua, which stated: "Did Great Britain land troops under asserted right of sovereignty or only for protection? Prompt answer desired."²³ Clearly the State Department was troubled by the prospect that Britain had forcibly asserted its claim to intercede for the Mosquito Indians in direct opposition to the Nicaraguan government's attempt to assert its own sovereignty over the reservation.

This anxiety was only partially alleviated by Ambassador Bayard's replies from London. Bayard's cabled report on his meeting with the British foreign minister, Lord Kimberley, declared: "I believe landing of forces was to extend safety to residents and check violence," while his

more detailed written report of the same meeting stated his belief that the commander of the USS *Kearsage* would also have landed marines to protect American lives and property if that vessel had arrived at Bluefields before its British counterpart.²⁴ A subsequent dispatch based on an official memorandum from Lord Kimberley explaining the British actions at Bluefields also demonstrated Bayard's belief that the landing was intended to protect white traders rather than the Mosquito Indians, going further to suggest that the discussions taking place between the British consul and the Nicaraguan general in the town, aimed at restoring order, could be taken as proof that Britain recognized Nicaraguan sovereignty.²⁵ Gresham, however, clearly did not share Bayard's confidence in British intentions. In a lengthy dispatch on April 30, the secretary of state argued that the British government had been aware of an abortive agreement between its representatives in the reservation and the Nicaraguan commissioner there, concluded on March 4, but negotiated several days earlier, and had also been fully apprised of a second agreement that was announced on March 25, six days after it was negotiated.²⁶ He was supported in this belief by reports from Captain Watson of the USS *San Francisco* (the *Kearsage* having been wrecked en route to Nicaragua) and Mr. Braida, U.S. consul at San Juan del Norte, both of whom visited Bluefields in March and April and reported that the British consul was working directly with the Nicaraguan government to create a new authority for the reservation.²⁷ Gresham, it seems, was concerned that Britain was only withdrawing its support from the Mosquito Indians in order to enter into a partnership with the Nicaraguan government, which would contravene the Treaty of Managua still further. This is confirmed by a personal letter that Gresham wrote to Bayard on May 2, in which he said: "For some reason the Government of Nicaragua now appears to be unfriendly to the United States, and it is believed here (not without reason), that English interests have brought about this feeling."²⁸ In the close of the April 30 dispatch, Bayard was instructed "to express to Lord Kimberley the President's hope and expectation . . . that no foreign agency shall be permitted to dictate or participate in the administration of affairs in the Mosquito Reservation."²⁹

All of this combined to form a surprisingly aggressive opening stance from Gresham toward Great Britain over the Mosquito Reservation. In a region in which the United States held commercial interests that, while dominant, were not of any great significance, the cautious secretary of state was setting out a very active position that questioned the interaction of the British and Nicaraguan governments, and it appears clear that this opening was designed to forestall any British

attack on the Monroe Doctrine. No other convincing explanation has been put forward for Gresham's stance. Of the little that has been written on the subject, the most expansive is that of Walter LaFeber. In *The New Empire*, LaFeber states: "Gresham maneuvered England out of its strategic position in Nicaragua and led the United States into the newly created political vacuum to replace the British."³⁰ This argument credits Gresham with greater aggression than he actually applied. While the end result of the political maneuvering in Nicaragua would be Britain's renunciation of any right to intervene in the Mosquito Reservation, there is no evidence that Gresham actively sought to place the United States in a position from which to exert control over Nicaragua; furthermore, such a move would not have been in character with his actions in Hawaii and Brazil.³¹ A more convincing interpretation is that of Charles W. Calhoun, who suggests that, in formulating American policy toward the region, Gresham was forced to choose between American businesses that had flourished under the British pseudo-protectorate and the international standing of the Monroe Doctrine and, ultimately, chose the latter.³² This theory is in character with Gresham's legalistic approach to foreign policy and is borne out by his stance toward the governments of both Britain and Nicaragua. It also raises questions about the anti-imperialism of both Gresham and President Cleveland. While there was no attempt to influence Nicaragua's actions, the use of America's growing power to more actively assert the Monroe Doctrine potentially placed it in a position that can be viewed as imperialist. This raises an important contradiction in the Cleveland administration's foreign policy, a policy that occasionally demonstrated an assertiveness bordering on paternalism in Latin American affairs while simultaneously endeavoring to undermine European imperialism in the region. This complicated balance between the rights and interests of the United States, European powers, and American nations would be a recurring factor in the administration's dealings with Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba. The late nineteenth century had already seen Central American nations invoke the Monroe Doctrine while appealing to the United States for help in disputes with European powers (as illustrated by Nicaragua itself in 1888). By actively asserting the Monroe Doctrine, Gresham and Cleveland essentially placed the United States in the position of regional hegemon, if a benign and conservative one. Whether this constitutes imperialism is then a matter of definition, since a lack of desire to directly influence the actions of other governments in the Americas did not negate a paternalistic stance toward those governments. However one chooses to define the policy, once again it can clearly be seen

as an attempt by Cleveland and Gresham to set out their shared vision of how American power should be applied to defend the traditional U.S. sphere of influence in the western hemisphere. This would be even more starkly demonstrated in relation to Venezuela the next year.

Further evidence of Gresham's determination to defend—and perhaps even reinvigorate—the Monroe Doctrine can be seen in his next exchange with Bayard. In a meeting with Bayard on May 22, Lord Kimberley responded to Gresham's stern warning of April 30 in decidedly conciliatory terms, declaring once again that Great Britain had no intention or desire to impose a protectorate over the reservation regardless of the large foreign community that had grown up at Bluefields since the Treaty of Managua was signed.³³ Furthermore, the foreign minister had disavowed the actions of the British consul in involving himself with the negotiations to form a new government for the Mosquito Reservation. Most remarkable was Bayard's description of Kimberley's desire to follow the American lead in Nicaragua:

His lordship further expressed a strong desire to learn what the United States Government considered it advisable should be done in the present status of affairs at Bluefields.

He said the United States are, as it were, "on the spot," and could judge what line of action was necessary to produce requisite and reasonable security for persons and property in that region.

He appeared to be disposed to follow in the line which should be approved and adopted by the United States, so that a coincidence of view and action should be arrived at by the United States and Great Britain.³⁴

While it is notable that Bayard's third statement is considerably more conjectural than the two that preceded it, that such sentiments should be expressed by the British foreign secretary is quite remarkable. As such they may mark a recognition in the British government—or at least the Liberal government that Lord Kimberley represented—that the Americans were now sufficiently strong that competing with them in Central America would be a mistake. This could be seen as direct evidence of Walter Russell Mead's argument that growing threats to Britain's dominance in the late nineteenth century saw a reappraisal of British interests and relationships in the Americas and a new desire to placate the American government.³⁵ Whatever the case, Bayard was left convinced that: "They do not desire to have any but the most friendly and mutually accommodating relations with the United States," and that British intentions in Nicaragua were entirely benign.³⁶

All of this would appear to have been an impressive victory for Gresham's foreign policy, but the secretary of state was determined not to yield anything to his British counterpart. Indeed, he did not simply reject the British advances, but seized on the opportunity to make a forceful statement about American intentions. In a dispatch of July 19, Gresham instructed Bayard to reject the implied offer of working with Britain to create a new government for the Mosquito Reservation, doing so on the grounds that it "might imply a willingness on the part of this Administration to depart from the consistent policy pursued by previous Administrations in dealing with Central American questions."³⁷ This carried a dual significance: Firstly, Gresham was unwilling to compromise the Monroe Doctrine by granting legitimacy to the British interest in Nicaragua through joint action between the two nations. Secondly, the secretary of state specifically would not accept any governmental arrangement at Bluefields that did not conform to the traditional American interpretation of the Treaty of Managua. This is particularly significant since the previous, foreign-dominated government that had existed at Bluefields before February 1894, was not considered to have been in line with the initial intentions of the treaty and, thus, Gresham was in effect demanding a radical alteration in the political situation on the reservation. Denying that there was any major difficulty to be solved at Bluefields, Gresham insisted that the "alien administration" that had dominated the Indian population must be removed. He made no comment on what should take its place, but declared: "The sovereignty of Nicaragua over the whole of the national domain is unquestionable." In this case the strict interpretation of the Treaty of Managua—and by extension the Monroe Doctrine itself—precluded any alternative government, even one that might benefit the United States or its citizens:

No matter how conspicuous the American or other alien interests which have grown up under the fiction of Indian self-government, neither the United States nor Great Britain can fairly sanction or uphold this colorable abuse of the sovereignty of Nicaragua. . . . This being so, the United States could neither participate in nor sanction any device whereby the ultimate authority and international responsibility of Nicaragua in respect to American citizens in the reservation might be impaired or restricted.

All of this was a forceful declaration of American intent, and one that can be seen as a significant victory for Cleveland's administration, but it is not immediately clear as to why Gresham felt motivated to make

such a bold statement. Certainly the move conforms to LaFeber's suggestion that Gresham was seeking to maneuver the British out of Nicaragua in order to allow the United States to take their place, but both Gresham's rhetoric and subsequent events speak against this. It is possible that Gresham was specifically seeking to reinvigorate the Monroe Doctrine, but there is no readily apparent reason why he should wish to do this. A far more likely explanation is that Gresham was simply acting in accordance with his preferred policy earlier in the administration. Events in Hawaii, Brazil, and China had all demonstrated that a concern for legal probity was the secretary's preferred policy foundation and, this being the case, the declarations of his July 19 dispatch form a logical train. Gresham was correcting what he perceived to be a legal injustice under the terms of the Treaty of Managua because he deemed himself to have a legal and moral obligation to do so. Once again the growing might of the United States—and, perhaps more importantly, the rising threat to Great Britain of Germany and Russia—was granting the secretary of state the power to act, if not as a global policeman, then certainly as a hemispheric legal counsel.

On that subject, it should be noted that one reason why Gresham was able to enact his policy was that Britain had little material incentive to dispute the case with the United States; Americans dominated the local commerce, and Britain's interests in the region were limited to some black Jamaican immigrants and the historical protection of the Mosquito Indians, an arrangement that was of little obvious benefit to the British government in 1894, and one which Ambassador Bayard suggested the Foreign Office would be happy to relinquish.³⁸ It has been suggested that the potential construction of an inter-oceanic canal through Nicaragua meant that the region continued to be a matter of interest to Great Britain, but by the 1890s the only significant efforts to build any such canal were American in origin.³⁹ While it could be argued that a continued British presence in Nicaragua might have been useful in frustrating American plans to construct a canal, the strong position held by Britain, both strategically—in terms of its Caribbean possessions—and legally—under the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty that forbade either nation from constructing a Central American canal for its exclusive use—meant that physical control of Nicaraguan soil was an unnecessary burden. An argument can even be made that the deferential attitude shown by the British government over Nicaragua formed the first tentative stage of an Anglo-American cooperative movement that would eventually culminate in the “special relationship” of the twentieth century. While this might be overstating the case somewhat, it does appear clear that the British

government of the time was happy to abandon its historic obligations to the Mosquito Indians in order to improve relations with the United States. It is equally possible that Gresham's repeated assertions to Bayard that the United States would not support any of its own citizens who attempted to manipulate the situation in the reservation in order to set up a government more responsive to their needs were intended for British consumption and designed as reassurance that the American government was not seeking to profit directly from the British withdrawal.⁴⁰

Although British interest in constructing an inter-oceanic canal had declined, Nicaragua's promise as a possible location for such a project made it a nation of interest to some American politicians who hoped that a canal would facilitate the growth of American commerce with China and Japan. Cleveland, while not opposed to the concept of a trans-isthmian canal, does not appear to have shared their enthusiasm, and certainly his record in office showed little desire to encourage such a project.⁴¹ In 1885, Cleveland's first foreign policy decision as president had been to withdraw the Frelinghuysen–Zavala Treaty from Senate consideration on the grounds that it constituted an entangling alliance. The treaty had granted the United States the right to construct through Nicaragua a trans-isthmian canal that was to be jointly owned and operated by the two nations who would be thenceforth connected by an alliance and a promise of American protection of Nicaraguan territory.⁴² Undoubtedly, it was the proposal of an alliance and an open-ended commitment to defend Nicaraguan territory that prompted Cleveland to put an end to the proposed treaty, but he also did not believe that it was the role of government to take the lead in such projects. In this he was opposed, not simply by Republicans who held a broader vision of the rights and duties of government, but also by some in his own party. Most notably, Senator John T. Morgan of Alabama, who served in the Senate for 30 years and was chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations during the first two years of Cleveland's second term, was a keen Democratic supporter of a trans-isthmian canal in the belief that the economic development of the Caribbean would see an end to the South's status as an economic colony of the North.⁴³ Morgan and others saw the crisis in Nicaragua as an opportunity to push forward with the canal project but, despite repeated lobbying, he found the president and Gresham to be intransigent.⁴⁴ When Morgan attempted to secure a government guarantee for \$70 million worth of bonds for the Maritime Canal Company—an American firm that had begun operating in Nicaragua in 1889—Cleveland threatened to veto the bill.⁴⁵ Gresham would defend the

rights of the company when the Nicaraguan government threatened to terminate its concession in 1894, but only as a standard diplomatic procedure while he also ordered the American minister in Managua to disavow any intimation that the United States might guarantee the company's credit or assist in finishing its work.⁴⁶ Whatever its objectives in Nicaragua, the Cleveland administration was not seeking to facilitate the construction of a canal, considering the benefits to not be worth the entanglements of a protectorate and the additional government bureaucracy.

* * *

While Gresham's handling of American policy relating to events in the Mosquito Reservation held less long-term significance than did his dealings with Great Britain, it still serves as an example of many of the problems facing the secretary of state in the mid-1890s. Foremost among these are Gresham's basic approach to policy, the difficulties of communicating with, and controlling, diplomats across great distances, and the problems created by the personal agendas of local American residents. The first of these was relatively simple: consistent with his actions in Hawaii, Brazil, and China, Gresham sought to place his policy on a solid legal foundation. Under international law and the treaties recognized by the United States, the Nicaraguan government was indisputably, in Gresham's eyes, the sovereign power in the Mosquito Reservation. This being so, the secretary of state's policy can largely be viewed as an extension of his neutrality policy elsewhere. If the government of Nicaragua lived up to their treaty obligations toward American citizens residing in the country, then the United States government had no right to interfere in Nicaraguan internal affairs. This was a message that was emphasized repeatedly in his instructions to the State Department's representatives in the region.⁴⁷

If creating the policy was a relatively easy decision for Gresham, then enacting it proved to be a far more difficult proposition. This was due not so much to the opposition of either Nicaragua or Great Britain, but to the machinations and various agendas of the Americans in the region. Of these, perhaps the most problematic were the State Department's own representatives: Lewis Baker, the U.S. minister in Managua, A. C. Braida, the U.S. consul for the region, who was based at San Juan del Norte, and B. B. Seat, the U.S. consular agent at Bluefields. As in Hawaii and Brazil, Gresham found himself repeatedly having to restrain these representatives of the American government and to compensate for their actions. While none of them came close

to emulating Minister Stevens's efforts at creating U.S. foreign policy in Hawaii, all three frustrated Washington with their actions and served to illustrate the difficulties of enacting centralized policy at a distance in the late nineteenth century.

A major contributor to this problem was simply the matter of the distance between Washington and Nicaragua and the relative difficulties of communicating with the State Department's representatives there. By comparison with Hawaii and China, Gresham was actually able to communicate very easily with his minister in Nicaragua: Telegraph networks connected Washington to Managua, enabling the secretary of state to request and receive urgent messages from Minister Baker in a matter of hours. In this respect, Baker was as accessible as his counterparts in European capitals. Beyond the vicinity of Managua, however, the situation was very different. Internal communications within Nicaragua itself were slow and unreliable. During one crisis, Minister Baker reported that the sole telegraph line between Managua and the Mosquito Reservation was down, thus precluding any hopes of speedy communication between the capital and Bluefields.⁴⁸ He also noted that in times of crisis the Nicaraguan government would only convey letters or telegrams that were "entirely agreeable to them." Further to this, surface communications between Bluefields and Managua were extremely difficult. Baker described to Gresham how his journey to the Mosquito Reservation had involved "a most difficult trip, changing conveyances nine times in consequence of the low stage of water in the San Juan River," and only arriving in Bluefields courtesy of the USS *San Francisco*.⁴⁹ Surface communications between Nicaragua and Washington were little better, with diplomatic dispatches between Baker and the State Department taking anywhere from two to six weeks to reach their destinations—by contrast regular transatlantic shipping allowed America's ambassadors in Europe to deliver full written reports in less than two weeks. Indeed, due to the easy access to Caribbean shipping routes from Bluefields, it was often possible for Braida and Seat to communicate with Washington more swiftly than could their superior in Managua. This was highlighted in the summer of 1894, when Minister Baker informed Gresham that the presence of an American warship at Bluefields meant that Washington could now be in possession of reports from the reservation in as little as six or seven days, much faster than he himself could be.⁵⁰ All this combined to create a situation whereby it was practically impossible for the secretary of state, his minister in Managua, and the American consular representatives in the reservation to be in full possession of the same facts and instructions at any one time and, thus, effective

control of the situation from Washington was also an impossibility. Under such circumstances, the State Department was forced to place its trust in the good judgment of its officers overseas—judgment that Gresham would consider to be seriously lacking in Nicaragua.

All three American diplomats involved in the events surrounding the Mosquito Reservation opened themselves to criticism in some way and, in many respects, they are illustrative of the issues facing the State Department at the end of the nineteenth century. Consular Agent Seat was accused by the Nicaraguan foreign minister of sympathy toward the rebellion against Nicaraguan sovereignty that occurred in the first week of July 1894. The foreign minister cited comments by Seat, reported in the American press, as further evidence that he was prejudiced against the Nicaraguan government.⁵¹ Worse, from Gresham's point of view, were the actions of Seat and Consul Braidà in involving themselves in the attempts to form a provisional government for the reservation after the first landing of British marines in March. Braidà, in particular, had to be restrained by a cabled admonishment from Gresham after acquiescing in a system that saw Seat appoint two Americans to sit on the five-man council that would take up the task of municipal government. Gresham declared: "You are not authorized to perform diplomatic functions, and will not meddle in political affairs in Mosquito."⁵² Braidà, meanwhile, was also the subject of accusations from the Nicaraguan government that he was acting against them in collusion with the British consul, something he denied, claiming instead that it was the British who were colluding with Nicaraguan officials.⁵³ In this way the inadequacies of the communication system became obvious as telegrams gave only a partial picture of the true situation while the written reports that were designed to provide clarity took weeks to reach their destinations and often passed fresh instructions travelling from Washington on the way. Under such circumstances Gresham was reliant on his minister in Nicaragua to control matters on the State Department's behalf and provide him with regular reports.

Minister Baker failed to fulfil either of these tasks. During the confusion that followed the first landing of British marines in March 1894, Gresham was twice forced to cable his minister for information about the grounds under which the landing had taken place, and Gresham eventually had to directly order him to visit Bluefields personally in order to report on the situation first hand.⁵⁴ Having already requested a full report on the situation in the aftermath of Braidà's and Seat's involvement in the new municipal council, Gresham eventually lost patience with Baker's reluctance to take personal control of

the situation and, in words strongly reminiscent of the message sent to Minister Willis in Hawaii after the failure of his initial interview with Queen Liliuokalani, declared: "Your failure to send full information in regard to Bluefields incident has been embarrassing here. You should go there at once."⁵⁵ Thus, we see a powerful condemnation of Baker's failure to provide his chief with information and to manage his subordinates, but these were not his only failings. Baker clearly had little respect for Nicaragua's government or its people: He repeatedly argued to both Gresham and the Nicaraguan foreign minister, José Madriz, that Nicaraguan rule was damaging American businesses in the reservation, prompting Madriz to politely suggest that such feelings were inevitable in a community that was used to governing affairs for their own benefit.⁵⁶ Further to this, Baker angered Gresham, first by negotiating with the Nicaraguan commissioner at Bluefields to have Nicaraguan soldiers withdrawn from the town—a violation, as Gresham saw it, of Nicaraguan sovereignty—and then, when the troops were returned to the town after Baker's departure, by misrepresenting the facts of the agreement in his report to the State Department.⁵⁷ In this latter incident, it is interesting to note that the Nicaraguan government appealed directly to the State Department about Baker's interference with their affairs and that Gresham appeared to put more faith in the information he received from Nicaragua's minister in Washington than he did in that supplied by his own minister at Managua.⁵⁸ As early as May 2, 1894, Gresham's opinion of Baker was sufficiently low to lead him to write to Bayard: "Mr. Baker's appointment to Nicaragua was an unfortunate one. He is a vain, weak man, and it may become necessary to recall him."⁵⁹

Such fundamental failings of the State Department hierarchy as were seen in Nicaragua were characteristic of the difficulties faced by U.S. secretaries of state in the late nineteenth century. In particular, the staffing of diplomatic missions with untrained, underpaid appointees—a product of the spoils system—created a fertile situation for unauthorized actions based on personal agendas. Charles Calhoun has suggested that Gresham contributed to his own difficulties in Nicaragua by delegating the task of managing department patronage instead of superintending it himself, but the combination of poor communication and lack of either the financial incentive to attract good applicants to unglamorous posts such as Managua, or the training to professionalize the service, made such problems largely inevitable.⁶⁰ Certainly Gresham repeatedly showed more faith in the reports delivered by professional naval officers than in those delivered by diplomats.⁶¹ Contributing to this was the divergence between Gresham's

and Cleveland's conception of what constituted good American foreign policy and the views of more activist thinkers, among whom Baker, Braida, and Seat could be numbered. This difference of opinion is well-illustrated in a message from Baker to Gresham on June 7, 1894. On May 12, Gresham had instructed Baker to await instructions on how to proceed and that in the meantime he "should take care to say nothing tending to disparage Nicaragua's rightful claim to paramount sovereignty or to encourage pretensions to autonomous rights inconsistent therewith."⁶² In his June 7 reply Baker stated:

I will say that I have on all proper occasions affirmed Nicaragua's rightful claim to paramount sovereignty over the Mosquito territory; but, while conceding this, I have expressed the hope that the American citizens who have gone to that territory and invested money and labor and procured titles to property under certain treaty stipulations will be protected in the rights that they have acquired by proper arrangement between the two Governments.

This argument treads a fine line between protecting the property and livelihoods of American citizens and the creation of a *de facto* protectorate in which the U.S. government pressured Nicaragua into granting its citizens special status. Gresham's conception of foreign policy was that the fair and equitable treatment of foreign governments under the law, as set out in international treaty rights, was sufficient to guarantee American citizens their rights abroad, and that it was not the place of the government to give them an advantage. In Nicaragua, Baker, Braida, and Seat all expanded this conception and thus attempted to manipulate events for the benefit of American commerce: the formation of a new government on the reservation; the exercise of Nicaraguan authority and taxation; and the placement of Nicaraguan troops.

Gresham's defense of Nicaraguan sovereignty over the Mosquito Reservation inevitably placed him in opposition, not just to Baker, Braida, and Seat, but also to many of the Americans residing in the region. Among this expatriate community there was undoubtedly opposition to Nicaraguan rule due to a combination of reluctance to relinquish their privileged position under the previous administration in the reservation and concern over potential damage that new Nicaraguan taxes and regulations might do to their businesses.⁶³ There may also be evidence to suggest a genuine desire from the American community to see full representation on any ruling council of all the major groups in the reservation—American, British, native, and

Creole—although this may very well have been a convenient method of reducing the influence of the Nicaraguan commissioner and his chosen representatives.⁶⁴ As has already been noted, Secretary Gresham saw no merit to such ideas, arguing that the foreign community that had grown up in the reservation since the Treaty of Managua held no legal right to separate representation in government. By contrast, Gresham saw it as his duty to attempt to control the actions of the American community in and around Bluefields, ordering his representatives in the country to urge the expatriates not to become involved in the political instability in the region. This came to a head on July 5, 1894, when another insurrection broke out against Nicaraguan rule at Bluefields, prompting the USS *Marblehead* to land marines to protect life and property, and culminating in an attack by the insurgents on a detachment of Nicaraguan soldiers—killing two, wounding one and capturing a half dozen more and a large cache of weapons.⁶⁵ Rumors that American citizens had been involved in the insurrection were concerning to Gresham, who once again requested an immediate report from Minister Baker.⁶⁶ These rumors were clearly widespread since Seat's original report on the incident had sought to dismiss any such claims as inevitable Nicaraguan propaganda and had suggested that at most "two or three irresponsible parties" might have been involved.⁶⁷ While it is clear that Gresham was alarmed by the prospect that American citizens might seek to provoke an armed rebellion against Nicaraguan rule of the Mosquito Reservation—perhaps with the aim of creating a new independent state—the insurrection of July 5 did also lead him to toughen his stance toward the Nicaraguan government. This came as a result of Nicaragua's arrest—and subsequent deportation without trial—of two American citizens (named Lampton and Wiltbank) who had taken up positions in the provisional government that briefly ruled the reservation after the ousting of government forces.⁶⁸ Tellingly, Gresham's anger upon learning of the arrests from the naval commander at Bluefields was not confined simply to the "lawless proceeding" whereby the men were seized after being invited to visit the Nicaraguan commissioner, denied permission to speak to family or friends, and transported to Managua.⁶⁹ The secretary of state also noted that arrests in such fashion violated the treaty between the United States and Nicaragua signed in 1887 and constituted "an ungenerous response to the friendly disposition recently manifested by this Government respecting the sovereignty of Nicaragua over the Mosquito territory." Clearly Gresham was annoyed to have his dual policies of legal probity and respecting all nations as equals under the law treated so shabbily. The irritation of finding the evolving legalist

foreign policy under attack from one of the sources most likely to benefit from it was at least partially mitigated by the greater freedom that this rejection granted Gresham for assertive action. LaFeber has suggested that his attempt to convince the Nicaraguan government to allow Lampton and Wiltbank to return to Bluefields was a violation of his own policy of neutrality, but it seems likely that Gresham was motivated simply by his own conviction that international law should be paramount, and that the men's legal rights had not been respected.⁷⁰ This being so, it is interesting to note that when Minister Guzman explained the Nicaraguan government's actions to Gresham a month later, he did so by directly responding to Gresham's charge that the Treaty of 1887 had been violated, and explaining that the men in question had forfeited their treaty rights by engaging in armed rebellion against Nicaraguan rule.⁷¹ While making this defense, however, Guzman also informed Gresham that the two men would be allowed to return to Bluefields for a sufficient period necessary to settle up any outstanding business affairs—a period that was later extended indefinitely, possibly due to Gresham's continued probing into the events surrounding the men's arrests and the summary manner of their deportation.⁷² The Nicaraguan government, having made its point, did not wish to alienate the United States further.

One reason why the Nicaraguan government may have considered it prudent not to risk damaging relations with the United States became clear in November 1894. On November 20 the Mosquito Indians formally surrendered their special privileges under the Treaty of Managua and agreed to incorporate themselves and their reservation into Nicaragua. For Gresham, this was a very satisfactory conclusion to the events of 1894, bringing a permanent settlement of the matter and marking a success for his policy of supporting Nicaraguan sovereignty over the region. Almost immediately, however, another difficulty arose within days of the agreement being signed—and, indeed, several weeks before he received confirmation of the signing from Baker—as the Nicaraguan minister in Washington reported to Gresham that the British minister at Managua was refusing to recognize Nicaraguan sovereignty over the Mosquito Reservation and had requested that a British warship be sent to Bluefields.⁷³ At the same time that he reported these events, Minister Guzman also requested that the American government send a cruiser of its own to the port in response. What followed provides a fine illustration of Gresham's and Cleveland's perception of proper American foreign policy. The British refusal to accept Nicaraguan sovereignty was not, as Minister Guzman implied, a last-ditch attempt to save Britain's claims to

the Mosquito Reservation, but was actually a result of the arrests and deportations made after the July 5 insurrection. At the same time that the two Americans were arrested, 12 British subjects, including the British vice-consul, Edwin D. Hatch, were also taken into custody and summarily deported but, unlike the Americans, were not permitted to return.⁷⁴ It was for this reason that Britain refused to recognize Nicaragua's assumption of sovereignty until compensation had been agreed. As early as November 24, Ambassador Bayard was reporting that he had discussed the matter of the "rough treatment of Mr. Hatch" with Lord Kimberley and that the Foreign Secretary:

[desired] explicitly to have it understood that any action in the way of obtaining redress from Nicaragua which Her Majesty's Government may hereafter decide is necessary in the premises is wholly unconnected with any political or conventional question touching the Mosquito Reservation, but is simply a proceeding, on the grounds of international law, to obtain satisfaction for an affront.⁷⁵

This statement largely set the tone for the events of the next six months as British pressure increased for monetary compensation from Nicaragua, culminating in the seizure by British marines of the port of Corinto on April 27, 1895. During this time Gresham came under repeated attack from the Republican press, but it is clear that he always had confidence that Britain would honor the Monroe Doctrine.⁷⁶ Even as he instructed Bayard to investigate the Nicaraguan claims that a British warship was being sent to Bluefields in November 1894, Gresham declared that "this information is not fully credited here," and Bayard's subsequent report that the refusal to acknowledge Nicaraguan sovereignty was simply a caveat pending settlement of the Hatch incident seems to have satisfied the State Department.⁷⁷ Indeed, a telegram sent to Bayard on December 17 informing the ambassador that "[s]tatements in newspapers of to-day about action of United States, based upon what Great Britain has done or may do at Bluefields, pure fabrication," demonstrates that a greater concern was that miscommunication across the Atlantic might create a diplomatic controversy where none existed.⁷⁸ In general it appears that there was a strong mutual desire between the State Department and the Foreign Office not to allow the events in Nicaragua to create a rift between the two countries.⁷⁹

One manifestation of this fact was Gresham's refusal to intercede directly with Great Britain on Nicaragua's behalf over the matter of compensation. As British pressure increased, the poverty-stricken

Nicaraguan government—after some convincing by Gresham—belatedly granted the same amnesty to the British subjects arrested at Bluefields that had been given to Lampton and Wiltbank, but found the Foreign Office to be unmoved in its demand for compensation.⁸⁰ On April 13, 1895, Minister Baker cabled Washington: “The Nicaraguan Government begs me to ask intervention my Government in their behalf for the settlement of indemnity question with Great Britain.”⁸¹ This appeal was rejected by Gresham who saw no legal case for American involvement in the dispute, but he did instruct Bayard to informally suggest to Lord Kimberley that accepting a Nicaraguan request for two weeks’ clemency “would avoid embarrassment to commerce of this and other countries and be very satisfactory to the United States.”⁸² In the event, this request was not granted, but even the physical occupation of Nicaraguan territory prompted only a gentle warning, albeit one coming directly from President Cleveland, that Britain should give Nicaragua the chance to settle the demands on condition that British troops withdraw from Corinto.⁸³ It is significant that, as Calhoun notes, Corinto was “as far from Mosquito as possible”—a further indication of increased British respect for American sensibilities. While it is possible that a lengthy occupation might have led to greater difficulties between the United States and Great Britain, Cleveland’s remonstrance proved unnecessary when the following day the government of El Salvador agreed to guarantee the payment of an indemnity for its neighbor.⁸⁴

The events in Nicaragua between February 1894 and May 1895 are illustrative of many of the problems facing American policymakers in the late nineteenth century. The expansion of American trade and investment forced the State Department to take an interest in areas that previously were of little concern, while the difficulty of communicating with isolated regions left the State Department groping for information and struggling to control representatives who often acted according to their own perception of what was in the national interest. In particular, Nicaragua demonstrated the affect that growing American power and influence was having on the Monroe Doctrine. While the Sino-Japanese War may have suggested that American power was still developing on the global stage, the conciliatory attitude displayed by Great Britain suggested that the United States could be in a position to place greater emphasis on the enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine as international law closer to home. The Monroe Doctrine had always been rather convenient for Great Britain, as it formed a barrier to colonial acquisitions in the Americas by its European rivals, but the forcefulness with which Cleveland and Gresham

asserted the Doctrine in Nicaragua, and the willingness with which the Foreign Office acquiesced may be an indication of a significant change, not least because neither Cleveland nor Gresham desired to expand American authority in Central America. Finally, the dangers of this changing position were also demonstrated by the attempt of the Nicaraguan government to use the Monroe Doctrine to make the United States its shield against European demands. While this was not a new event—having occurred in Nicaragua itself only half a decade earlier—changing public opinion in the United States meant that such requests were guaranteed a more receptive audience. Gresham's and Cleveland's legalist policy may have allowed them to avoid becoming entangled in Nicaragua's problems in 1895, but there were signs that the United States was taking on a more active dimension in relation to incidents in the Americas. This move toward a new assertiveness would lead to a much greater controversy in Venezuela later that same year.

* * *

The Venezuelan Border Dispute has been one of the most keenly debated events in American foreign policy of the late nineteenth century but, in common with much of the field, it has drifted into obscurity in recent decades. Among historians of the period, opinion has been divided as to the dispute's significance in the evolution of American foreign policy. Assessments have varied, from Calhoun's claim that it formed "the most important incident in the foreign policy of the second Cleveland administration, with the possible exception of Hawaii, and one of the most important in all of the nineteenth century"; and LaFeber's declaration that only the 1893–1897 depression and the Battle of Manila Bay during the War of 1898 played a greater role in bringing about the creation of an American empire; to Richard Welch's suggestion that the dispute had comparatively little long-term impact beyond a possible reawakening of interest in the Monroe Doctrine among the American public.⁸⁵ Allan Nevins criticized the first historians to examine Cleveland's record on foreign policy for their tendency to focus on the dispute, suggesting instead that the administration's actions toward Hawaii were of greater significance.⁸⁶ This disagreement is the result of several factors, not least the dispute's somewhat sensational character, which made it headline news at the time and saw the development of a brief war scare with Great Britain. This sensationalism—and the war scare in particular—may have combined to suggest a greater significance for the Venezuelan

Border Dispute than it in fact merited. In many respects the dispute is characteristic of Grover Cleveland's foreign policy. It touched upon the rise of American power, the nation's growing commerce, and relations between the United States and Europe and Latin America, but its larger significance is a matter of interpretation. The successes of which Cleveland was most proud, such as the peaceful negotiation of the dispute and its final settlement by arbitration, would ultimately be forgotten when he left office, while the aspects that would be most remembered came from an uncharacteristic assertiveness that did not reflect his vision of how diplomacy should be conducted. Most notably, the crowning achievement of Cleveland's intervention in the Venezuela Border Dispute—the General Arbitration Treaty negotiated with Great Britain in 1896—would fail in the Senate, something Cleveland unhesitatingly blamed on the vindictiveness of his opponents in Congress.

A major reason why the dispute has been the subject of debate is simply the difficulty of accounting for the actions of Cleveland and his advisors. The key dispatches and declarations that make up the heart of the dispute appear, at first glance, to be utterly out of character with the rest of Cleveland's foreign policy, being assertive almost to the point of aggression, lacking the usual careful moderation and legal conservatism, and even somewhat risking the peace and well-being of the nation. Adding to this difficulty of comprehension is a record of contemporary correspondence that, while substantial, is far from conclusive in supporting any argument. Most tantalizing of all is the fact that the Venezuelan Border Dispute is the one foreign policy event of Cleveland's presidencies that he subsequently sought to explain himself. In a series of lectures at Princeton University that were subsequently published as the final—and lengthiest—chapter in his book, *Presidential Problems*, Cleveland set out his vision of the dispute and the U.S. part in it, but did so in such a way as to still leave many questions about his actions—and the reasoning behind them in particular—unanswered.

* * *

The U.S. involvement in the Venezuelan Border Dispute is easier to describe than it is to explain. The events forming the Cleveland administration's participation in the dispute are characterized by sporadic moments of action separated by months of inactivity. The dispute itself centered on the boundary between Venezuela and the colony of British Guiana, but ultimately it stemmed from the earliest

colonization of South America, with the competing claims of the governments of Venezuela and Great Britain being founded upon the boundaries of the first European colonies. These claims were ill-defined, at best, since neither Spain nor the Netherlands, the original colonizers, had found it necessary to delineate a precise border through unsettled jungle between their possessions. Even after sovereignty passed from Spain and the Netherlands in the early nineteenth century, little attempt was made to formalize the boundary. In its constitution of 1811, the new state of Venezuela claimed the Essequibo River as its eastern border—a line that was also claimed in 1822 by the short-lived Republic of Colombia, of which Venezuela formed a part between 1821 and 1830—but the newly independent republic was never in a position to assert this claim except on paper.⁸⁷ It was only in 1840 that the British government, which had come into possession of the territory that became British Guiana through the Convention of London in 1814, sought to firmly establish the extent of its possessions by commissioning Robert Schomburgk to produce a survey based upon the Dutch government's claims. The line proposed by Schomburgk in 1841 was immediately challenged by the Venezuelan government with the result that the British foreign secretary, Lord Aberdeen, ordered the removal of markers placed at Point Barima—a sensitive site due to its proximity to the mouth of the Orinoco River—and subsequently offered a concessionary agreement that would have seen a partition of the disputed territory between the Essequibo and the Orinoco. Venezuela's rejection of this offer led to half a century of increasingly bitter wrangling during which time the significantly swifter expansion of British settlement first reduced the willingness of Great Britain to concede territory and then led to a steady increase in the amount of land it claimed beyond the Schomburgk Line. Venezuela first brought the matter to the attention of the United States in 1876 and apparently received no reply, but from 1881 a steady stream of correspondence passed between the two nations on the subject, culminating in the formal February 1887 tendering to the British government of American good offices to end the dispute. Such offers and suggestions of arbitration were made several times between 1887 and the return of Grover Cleveland to the White House in 1893.

It is debatable whether, before his second inauguration, Cleveland had already determined to act upon the Venezuelan Border Dispute. Certainly he was acquainted with the dispute since his previous administration had been the first to offer American good offices to bring about a settlement. These low-key suggestions ultimately culminated in a dispatch of February 17, 1888, in which Thomas Bayard—then

Cleveland's secretary of state—informed Minister Phelps in London of a growing concern within the administration about the expansion of British claims.⁸⁸ This dispatch was, in Phelps's opinion, unlikely to help matters, and so he chose not to transmit it to Lord Salisbury, the foreign secretary.⁸⁹ That Cleveland maintained at least a passing interest in the dispute is demonstrated by the fact that he referred to it in his annual messages of both 1893 and 1894. The first such reference, however, is extremely brief—simply declaring the desirability that diplomatic relations between Britain and Venezuela, which had been broken off by the latter in 1887, be restored with a view to ending the dispute—and it gives no indication that the issue would become one of great importance for the president later in his term. This might not be the case regarding the 1894 Message in which Cleveland declared:

The boundary of British Guiana still remains in dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela. Believing that its early settlement on some just basis alike honorable to both parties is in the line of our established policy to remove from this hemisphere all causes of difference with powers beyond the sea, I shall renew the efforts heretofore made to bring about a restoration of diplomatic relations between the disputants and to induce a reference to arbitration. . . .⁹⁰

Certainly this was a more forceful statement, suggesting that the Monroe Doctrine might interest the United States in the dispute and raising the possibility that its involvement might go beyond merely facilitating a restoration of diplomatic relations and, instead, involve a push for arbitration of the dispute itself.

The period between Cleveland's second inauguration and his 1894 annual message appears little different from the previous decade in terms of American interest in the Venezuelan Border Dispute. In October, 1893, Secretary Gresham met with Dr. David Lobo, the interim *chargé d'affaires* at the Venezuelan legation in Washington, who subsequently presented him with a written summary of the dispute as Venezuela perceived it.⁹¹ Unfortunately, it seems it is no longer possible to identify who requested this meeting—and, indeed, what its primary purpose was, since it coincided with the Venezuelan government closing the Orinoco River to shipping—but it is perhaps telling that the meeting coincided with the Venezuelan government beginning to put pressure on the American minister in Caracas to have the United States once again tender its good offices in the interest of bringing the dispute to a conclusion.⁹² Whatever the case, Gresham did not respond to Venezuela's pressure with any

great urgency. On January 8, 1894, he met with Jose Andrade, the new Venezuelan minister in Washington, specifically to discuss the boundary dispute, at which time he requested clarification of Venezuela's position. This clarification came in the form of a 29-page memorandum delivered by Andrade on March 31 and accompanied by a note that once again requested American good offices in securing arbitration of the dispute. This lengthy history from Venezuela would form the basis for much of the Cleveland administration's argument in their exchanges with Great Britain, but it did not lead to an immediate change in the administration's stance. Once again, Gresham instructed Bayard to raise the matter of restoring diplomatic relations with the British government in the summer of 1894, a mission the ambassador pursued with so little alacrity that five months later Gresham reminded him to press the matter.⁹³

It is possible that this lack of action on Gresham's proposal was the reason for Cleveland's slightly more emphatic declaration of American interest in the dispute in his annual message of 1894. It may also have been the result of increasing pressure from Venezuela. The Venezuelan foreign minister, P. Ezequiel Rojas, seized on several opportunities to praise what he saw as American sympathy for his nation's plight. In January 1894 he wrote to Cleveland to thank him for his reference to the dispute in the annual message of 1893, and in that same month Gresham had to gently disabuse Rojas of the belief that a map published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture showing Venezuela's western border to be the Essequibo River could be construed as official recognition of his country's case.⁹⁴ Of rather greater significance was the work of a former U.S. minister to Venezuela who agreed to work for the Venezuelan government in promoting their cause in the United States.

In 1894 the Venezuelan government hired William L. Scruggs to work for them in Washington to raise the profile of the border dispute. Scruggs was familiar to the Venezuelan government, having served as the American minister in Caracas several years earlier, a position from which he was removed after he attempted to bribe the Venezuelan president.⁹⁵ He set to work energetically, writing a pamphlet entitled *British Aggressions in Venezuela, or the Monroe Doctrine on Trial*, which he distributed widely to congressmen, state governors, newspaper editors, and cabinet members, as well as arranging for it to be sold to the public on newsstands.⁹⁶ He also met many of these leading politicians and public figures in person, including both Gresham and Cleveland, himself.⁹⁷ Scruggs's most concrete achievement came in January 1895, when he successfully lobbied his congressional representative,

Leonidas Livingston of Georgia, to introduce a resolution (Scruggs's own composition) supporting Cleveland's call for arbitration of the dispute, as expressed in the annual message of 1894. The resolution passed both houses unanimously, with only minor changes, and received Cleveland's signature on February 20.⁹⁸

The combination of Venezuelan pressure and British disinterest combined to gradually increase Cleveland's interest in the dispute so that by March 1895 he called a cabinet meeting involving Gresham, Treasury Secretary John G. Carlisle, Secretary of War Daniel S. Lamont, and Attorney General Richard Olney, at which it was agreed that Gresham should compile a detailed report on the history and legality of the dispute and the best means for bringing it to an end.⁹⁹ The secretary of state began work on this report and also enlisted the help of his friend, the legal scholar John Bassett Moore, to prepare a new instruction to Bayard aimed at soliciting action from the British government. Apparently concerned at the extent to which Gresham was championing the Venezuelan cause, Moore succeeded in moderating the language, and the April 9 dispatch was only slightly more assertive than its predecessors.¹⁰⁰ This would prove to be Gresham's last act in the dispute. In early May he was incapacitated by illness—one of several that he had suffered during his time in Washington—and, on May 28, he died.

Gresham's replacement at the State Department was Richard Olney, the former attorney general, who went to work producing a new report on the dispute, which now took the form of a diplomatic dispatch that Bayard would pass to the British government. Olney's report was written in June and early July, slightly revised (but enthusiastically approved) by Cleveland and dispatched to London on July 20. While no draft exists of Gresham's planned report, it is generally agreed that Olney took a very different stance from his predecessor. In one move it altered the American position in the dispute from one of increasingly frustrated observer to outright involvement in all but name. In the course of 18 pages Olney endeavored to deliver a reasonable and measured argument for both arbitration and the right of the United States to intervene under the Monroe Doctrine.¹⁰¹ He succeeded in presenting an argument that was heavily biased toward Venezuela, seemingly designed to provoke outrage from its British audience, and loaded with high-handed rhetoric and sweeping claims of American power. The message ranged across a history of the dispute that was clearly drawn from the Venezuelan versions supplied by Lobo and Andrade earlier in Cleveland's second term, and a lengthy discussion of the origins and history of the Monroe Doctrine, before

finally discussing its applicability to the dispute. The early section contained numerous factual errors—such as the declaration that every presidential administration since Monroe had examined and approved the doctrine—but these paled into insignificance by comparison with the claims made later in the dispatch. Of these, the most notable are the statement that “distance and three thousand miles of intervening ocean make any permanent political union between an European and an American state unnatural and inexpedient,” and that “the United States is practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition.”¹⁰² To make such a suggestion to the government of an empire that still claimed sovereignty over a territory as vast as Canada or as diverse as the West Indies—not to mention British Guiana itself—was both insulting and nonsensical. The declaration that the United States was “practically sovereign” in the Americas only served to further the insult and extend it to the independent republics of the hemisphere. Beyond such rhetoric, however, Olney attempted to make two fundamental arguments: that the U.S. proximity and commercial and political ties to the other nations on the American continents meant that the subjugation of one of them by a European power harmed the United States and thus invoked the Monroe Doctrine, and should the United States once accept the expansion of European territory on the continent, it would result in numerous such expansions, bringing the United States into close proximity with all the European powers. This would force it to maintain an army and navy equivalent to its European rivals and thus undermine and fundamentally alter the nature of American society.¹⁰³

Having delivered this inflammatory dispatch—and it is apparent from the opening paragraph of the message, which stated the president was aware “of the serious responsibility in any action now to be taken,” that its nature was clear to everybody involved—Cleveland and Olney then found themselves in the faintly absurd position of waiting nearly five months for a reply.¹⁰⁴ This was the result of many factors, not least the explicit instruction to Bayard that the president desired an answer in time for his next annual message at the opening of Congress in early December.¹⁰⁵ This lengthy timeframe would seem to demonstrate that Cleveland and Olney were not seeking to provoke the British government any more than was necessary, although Olney’s two enquiries to Bayard in the intervening period indicate a degree of impatience. Matters were not helped by the fact that the new British prime minister—the experienced statesman, Lord Salisbury—who was also fulfilling the role of foreign secretary, found himself distracted by minor crises in Turkey and Russia, which further

delayed his giving attention to a question that was of comparatively little concern to Great Britain.¹⁰⁶ Despite this, the reply was written early enough to be cabled to Washington, either in part or in full, in ample time for the convening of Congress, but it was instead sent by ship and thus not delivered to Cleveland by the British ambassador, Sir Julian Pauncefote, until December 7. In the meantime Cleveland had been forced to content himself with a statement in his annual message of 1895 that informed Congress of the sending of the July 20 dispatch and briefly outlined its argument and aims before promising a full report to Congress when the awaited reply was received.¹⁰⁷

Salisbury's reply, when it arrived, was delivered in two parts. The first dealt specifically with the Monroe Doctrine as a concept, while the second discussed the border dispute. Neither dispatch made good reading for Cleveland and Olney. The first dismissed the Monroe Doctrine as a policy that had long since ceased to be relevant—despite its being at one time tacitly endorsed by Great Britain as sharing the common goal of protecting the fledgling American republics from European domination. Rejecting Olney's argument that American republics needed to be protected from predatory European powers, Salisbury declared: "The dangers which were apprehended by President Monroe have no relation to the state of things in which we live at the present day."¹⁰⁸ The prime minister depicted the doctrine as an American curio, understandably treasured, but of little weight in the real world of international politics.¹⁰⁹ Having so summarily dismissed both the validity and the applicability of the Monroe Doctrine, Lord Salisbury's decision to produce a second dispatch specifically dealing with the Venezuelan Border Dispute was a somewhat strange one.¹¹⁰ The first message had not explicitly denied that the United States might have a legitimate interest in Venezuelan affairs—simply that those interests could not derive purely from geography—but it had made clear that Great Britain considered the matter to be a private one.¹¹¹ It is possible that it was intended as a gesture of respect to the United States or, perhaps more likely, an attempt to correct Americans' misapprehensions in the hope that it would induce them to reconsider their position on the subject. The latter explanation would certainly be consistent with the form of the dispatch, which was given over almost entirely to setting out a British version of the history of the dispute, with Salisbury acknowledging that Great Britain's policy of treating the matter as a private dispute between two nations had inevitably led the United States to base its position on information provided by the Venezuelan government.¹¹² However, if the prime minister was seeking to convince Cleveland and his advisors

to moderate their support for Venezuela, he did so in a remarkably indelicate manner. His tone throughout both messages has been described as “that of the peremptory schoolmaster trying—with fading patience—to correct the ignorance of dullards in Washington” and everything about the messages—from timing to tone and style—suggested that Salisbury had badly misjudged the significance placed on the dispute by the American government.¹¹³

While the delay had been frustrating, it seems that Cleveland was not unduly concerned about the matter. Only days before Salisbury’s reply was delivered, the president had written to Olney informing him that he was leaving Washington for a weeklong hunting trip and that any message from London could be kept “in [Olney’s] pocket” until he returned, since he had no intention of being hurried on the matter.¹¹⁴ From this it would appear that Cleveland, like Salisbury, had misjudged the situation across the Atlantic and was not expecting the blunt rejection, not just of American involvement in the dispute, but of the Monroe Doctrine itself. That said, the possibility of outright rejection must have been seriously discussed in the months between July 20 and December 7 because Olney was able immediately to set to work preparing a response in the form of a special message to Congress, which rebutted Salisbury’s arguments relating to the Monroe Doctrine and, more significantly, proposed a commission of inquiry to be created by the United States in order to ascertain, once and for all, the true facts of the dispute.¹¹⁵ It has been suggested that Olney thus swayed Cleveland’s judgment as to the tone and content of the message, but this is unlikely: firstly, because the president had clearly had some time to consider a variety of possibilities during the autumn of 1895 and then subsequently spent many hours revising Olney’s work; and, secondly, because he was later quoted as saying, “I do not think that, in all my experience, I have ever had to deal with any official document, prepared by another, which so entirely satisfied my critical requirements.”¹¹⁶ The special message concluded with a declaration that it would be the duty of the United States to “resist by every means in its power as a wilful aggression upon its rights and interests the appropriation by Great Britain of any lands or the exercise of governmental jurisdiction over any territory which after investigation we have determined of right belongs to Venezuela.”¹¹⁷ The potential significance of this was underlined by the statement: “In making these recommendations I am fully alive to the responsibility incurred, and keenly realize all the consequences that may follow.”¹¹⁸

The December 17 special message brought the Venezuelan Border Dispute to a head and raised the specter of war between the United

States and Great Britain, but it also marked the first step in a movement toward a settlement. The solemn references to the potential consequences of the commission of inquiry caused a stir in the press on both sides of the Atlantic and led to a brief dip in the New York stock market, but the newspapers that reveled in the prospect of war were matched by those (including traditional supporters of the president) that expressed strong concern.¹¹⁹ Despite the simmering ill-will on both sides, Cleveland, Salisbury, and others most closely involved in the matter swiftly recognized that war was neither likely nor desirable for either nation. In *Presidential Problems* Cleveland makes no mention one way or the other as to whether he considered war to be a serious possibility, but two works published shortly after his death gave the recollections of those around him at the time: George F. Parker—Cleveland's friend and political promoter—quoted a letter sent to him in 1909 by Cleveland's secretary of the interior, Hoke Smith, who declared:

I heard him refer to this message, shortly after he sent it to Congress, as his "peace message," and as "the only way, in his judgment, to prevent a probable collision between the two nations." I have no doubt that he sent the message to Congress believing that with it the risk of trouble was far less than if diplomatic negotiations continued in the ordinary way.¹²⁰

A work of 1910 included a brief report of a meeting between the author and Cleveland's former private secretary, Henry Thurber, who told him that the president responded to the suggestion that the message was too strong with the words: "Thurber, this does not mean war; *it means arbitration.*"¹²¹

While such recollections—revisited more than a decade after the event—may have benefited somewhat from hindsight, it seems clear that Cleveland did not consider war to be a likely consequence of his special message. At the time, he made no attempt to prepare the nation or its military for war, and neither he nor Salisbury rushed to reopen diplomatic correspondence. War became even less likely a little over two weeks after the special message, when it was revealed that the German Kaiser had responded to a failed raid into the Transvaal by British colonial police by sending Paul Kruger, the Boer president, a congratulatory telegram that was widely regarded as meddling in a British sphere of influence and perhaps hinting that Germany would offer Kruger material support if asked. This provoked far greater indignation in the British public than had Cleveland's special message

and, while not completely soothing ruffled feathers, placed the Venezuelan Border Dispute in perspective. At a cabinet meeting in London on January 11, 1896, it was agreed that an amicable settlement of the dispute was desirable and that the first step in bringing this about would be to informally approach Ambassador Bayard through an unofficial third party.¹²² This contact went ahead on January 12 through the medium of Lord Playfair, a British chemist who had married an American. Playfair would prove to be the most important of several unofficial intermediaries who, while ultimately achieving little of substance themselves, did help to establish the form and structure of the deal that was eventually reached between Great Britain and the United States later that year. Official negotiations reopened in early March, when Lord Salisbury, encouraged by signs of American flexibility in the unofficial discussions, agreed to Olney's suggestion that direct negotiations take place between himself and Sir Julian Pauncefote in Washington.¹²³ Progress was slow, but with the brief wave of jingoist sentiment in the United States long subsided by the summer of 1896, there was little need for urgency.¹²⁴ This is not to say that Cleveland and Olney were willing to allow matters to drag on indefinitely; with Salisbury finally showing a willingness to negotiate and with the British government distracted by its problems in Turkey and South Africa, there was an incentive to press the matter in order to achieve a favorable settlement. Olney's primary tool for maintaining this pressure was the commission of enquiry announced by Cleveland in his message of December 17. Despite British requests to withdraw or suspend the commission, Olney insisted that it continue its work unless an agreement was signed.¹²⁵ Desiring to placate the United States as a kindred people who could ensure the neutrality of the Americas on its behalf, the British government showed a new willingness to retreat from its declared position. The negotiations swiftly developed into a discussion of the length of time any site had to have been occupied by either side before it could become ineligible for arbitration. With opening positions of ten years and 60 years for Great Britain and the United States, respectively, the final agreement of 50 years' occupation was an undoubted victory for American diplomacy. The result was an Anglo-American agreement concluded on November 12, 1896, which would form the basis of a treaty between Great Britain and Venezuela. The agreement provided for an arbitral tribunal that would investigate and define the new border. Areas that had been settled for over 50 years were to be exempt from arbitration with other settled regions given special consideration.¹²⁶ Venezuela, which had been utterly excluded from the negotiations, was presented

with the *fait accompli* to sign. The news that British settlements of 50 years were to be excluded from arbitration—a proposal that had been rejected many times by the Venezuelan government in its own negotiations with Britain in previous decades—sparked riots in Caracas, but the agreement was eventually signed, reluctantly, on February 2, 1897.¹²⁷ Bruised Venezuelan feelings were not assuaged by the eventual arbitration ruling in October, 1899, which granted most of the disputed territory to British Guiana, with the exception of the mouth of the Orinoco and 5,000 square miles in the interior.¹²⁸ Looking back on the incident in 1901, Cleveland expressed himself to be satisfied with the decision.¹²⁹

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During this process there were three moments of decision for the Cleveland administration. One came in 1893 or 1894 when the administration first chose to put pressure on the British government to bring the dispute to a conclusion. The second occurred in April, 1895, when it was decided that the United States would have to force the issue, ultimately resulting in the July 20 dispatch. Finally, the period between sending the July 20 dispatch and the delivery of Cleveland's special message of December 17—and especially the ten days following the receipt of Lord Salisbury's reply on December 7—also requires examination.

It is impossible to say exactly how much Venezuelan agitation served to provoke Cleveland's interest in the border dispute and to what extent his interest was a result of his previous work on the matter during his first presidency. Likewise, it is hard to judge whether the reference to the dispute in his annual message of 1893 was the result of the first applications of Venezuelan pressure in October of that year, or a decision taken by Cleveland himself. Since the reference showed no signs of presaging any greater action than that undertaken during his previous term—or by Benjamin Harrison's administration—it would seem that this pressure served as a reminder at most. Indeed, it is perhaps more likely that the annual message of 1893 was more significant in that it demonstrated to the Venezuelan government that they might have an audience in Washington that would be receptive to further pressure. Certainly the first months of 1894 showed a rise in American interest in the dispute. On January 8, Minister Andrade met with Gresham, resulting in the Venezuelan minister preparing a lengthy history of the dispute, which was delivered to the State Department on March 31. It was this document that Cleveland

himself took to be the starting point of his second administration's involvement in the dispute when he wrote *Presidential Problems*.¹³⁰ This version of events explains the renewed attempts to convince the British government to reach a settlement with Venezuela, but the slow pace of progress in 1894—with dispatches sent to Ambassador Bayard in July and December—does little to explain the dramatic increase in American urgency in 1895.

One potential reason for the change that took place in 1895 is the work of William Scruggs. Exactly how much influence Venezuela's propagandist had on the growing determination of the Cleveland administration to act is difficult to ascertain and has been the subject of some debate. Scruggs has been credited by some historians with raising the profile of the dispute in the United States and, directly or indirectly, altering the administration's stance as a result.¹³¹ Others, however, have played down Scruggs's importance and even suggested that his efforts may have been counter-productive as far as the administration was concerned.¹³² Correspondence between Cleveland and Olney shortly after the pair left office starkly illustrates the low opinion both men held of Scruggs, with Olney expressing concern over Scruggs's "lack of character" and Cleveland calling him "a high grade liar."¹³³ Gresham, too, disliked Scruggs and his efforts to manipulate public opinion in order to bring pressure to bear on the administration.¹³⁴ Such dislike does not necessarily rule out the possibility of Scruggs successfully influencing policymakers in the administration, but it seems strange that Cleveland and his secretaries of state so wholeheartedly accepted the Venezuelan version of history if they had such a low opinion of the man who was doing the most to promote that history. It could be argued that Scruggs's notable success in drafting the resolution passed by Congress on February 20, 1895, calling on Cleveland to recommend arbitration of the dispute to both Britain and Venezuela—something he had already been attempting for some time—was what forced the administration to act, but it seems unlikely that the resolution was anything more than a subsidiary motivation. Certainly, Cleveland was mindful of the pressure being exerted from Capitol Hill, but the Scruggs resolution was only one—and not the greatest—of many attempts by Congress to influence his actions during his second term. Later in the year, the president would inform Olney that he would not be hurried on the issue "even if the Congress should begin grinding again the resolution-of-inquiry mill."¹³⁵ Clearly he was aware of Congress's wishes, but he did not accept that they had a right to interfere with the executive's formulation of foreign policy. Furthermore, the 53rd Congress was a lame duck by the start of 1895

and went into recess in early March, granting Cleveland a full nine months before the opening of the 54th Congress on December 2. Under these circumstances there was no reason for Cleveland to fear congressional interference at any point in the most critical period of escalation in the Venezuelan Border Dispute. That said, having spent much of his second term battling with Congress—and the Senate in particular—over a variety of issues, both foreign and domestic, Cleveland may have been more willing to take the lead on the issue if it meant pre-empting yet another disagreement relating to an issue on which the White House and Congress were largely in accord. The fact that Henry Cabot Lodge had published a profoundly anti-British article in the *North American Review* in June 1895, stating that Congress would act to defend the Monroe Doctrine in Venezuela during its next session may also have weighed on the president's mind.¹³⁶

At best, it is possible to say that the influence of Scruggs and pressure from Congress may have played a part in prompting action from the Cleveland administration, but questions over Scruggs's character and Congress's power to influence the president's actions would suggest that this influence can have only been contributory. Clearly the escalation of the dispute resulted from at least one other influence. The timing of this escalation is particularly telling. Cleveland called his cabinet meeting to discuss the issue in March 1895, and this—and the resulting decision to have Gresham compile a report on the dispute—can be seen as the beginning of serious American interest in forcing a settlement. The date of the meeting would suggest that the congressional resolution played at least some part in prompting Cleveland to devote attention to the dispute. Further to this, it is clear that he was starting to become frustrated by the British government's cool responses to the offers of America's good offices the year before. In *Presidential Problems* Cleveland specifically refers to a dispatch from the British Foreign Office to Ambassador Pauncefote, dated February 23, 1895, which described recent meetings with Ambassador Bayard in London and reiterated Great Britain's insistence that any arbitration of the dispute should exclude the Schomburgk Line as well as complaining of Venezuelan violations in January, 1895, of British territory.¹³⁷ Cleveland, himself, states that this dispatch was a turning point, declaring: "It now became plainly apparent that a new stage had been reached in the progress of our intervention," and that national honor and duty now necessitated that the administration define its stance.¹³⁸ Finally, an incident that took place in the disputed territory on January 2, 1895, in which Venezuelan soldiers arrested two British policemen on the upper Cuyuni River, may also have played a part

in changing American attitudes. The Venezuelan government swiftly sought to disavow the arrests in the hopes of preventing a diplomatic incident, but Cleveland states in *Presidential Problems* that it was not the incident that concerned him so much as the fact that the British government was treating the Schomburgk Line as a de facto border.¹³⁹

The decision to have Gresham compile a report on the dispute can be seen as a turning point in American involvement, but one other factor played a major role in the evolution of the administration's policy. Gresham's death on May 28, 1895, prompted a reshuffle of Cleveland's cabinet and saw Richard Olney, the former attorney general, promoted to secretary of state. This change was significant, both in terms of the dispute itself and the Cleveland administration's approach to foreign policy more broadly. In many ways Olney was the logical choice to succeed Gresham at the State Department. Given the difficulties Cleveland had experienced in filling the post in 1893, and the extent to which domestic and foreign events had seen the administration subjected to criticism from Congress and the press in the intervening years, it made sense to promote a trusted member of the cabinet rather than appoint an outsider to such a senior position. Similarly, the growing interest in the Venezuelan Border Dispute and the outbreak of revolution in Cuba in the spring of 1895 meant that having a secretary of state who was already well acquainted with the administration's position on foreign affairs was desirable. Cleveland's and Gresham's preference for a foreign policy based on the rule of law meant that the attorney general was likely to be well acquainted with their actions and also the man best positioned to replace Gresham. Olney had already shown interest in foreign policy questions—most notably demonstrated by his October 9, 1893, letter to Gresham on the subject of the Hawaiian revolution—and was trusted and liked by Cleveland.

Despite this continuity the appointment of Olney to replace Gresham heralded a change in approach to foreign policy. The two men approached legal practice in differing ways, and this difference in style would be replicated in their diplomacy. Gresham had spent most of the previous 25 years as a federal judge, arbitrating the disputes of others. Olney, by contrast, had spent the majority of his career as a corporate lawyer—mostly for railroads—where he had shown a particular skill for finding and exploiting legal loopholes.¹⁴⁰ He was, however, a conservative intellectually, even if his methods might be more inventive than Gresham's. Under Cleveland's leadership—and with another legal mind running the State Department—the administration's foreign policy was to retain the foundation of legality and conservatism

that it had developed under Gresham, but Olney's personal influence opened the possibility of a more expansive interpretation of legal precedent if it was believed necessary to achieve that policy's objectives.

In terms of personality, too, Olney may not have been the ideal choice to manage the nation's foreign relations. Described by one historian as "a man who raised truculence to an art form," he was not suited to the delicate diplomacy at which Lord Salisbury was a master, and his frustration with European diplomacy was demonstrated in a letter to Cleveland in the summer of 1896—when progress on a treaty to settle the dispute seemed slow—in which he declared:

Undoubtedly all this backing and filling is true diplomacy. There may be something very profound in it. But my impression is that it is a sort of pettifogging which accomplishes nothing and which is in truth not in keeping with the serious character of the grave issues involved.¹⁴¹

Under such circumstances it was to be expected that the conduct of American foreign policy would take on a new directness and urgency, and this can certainly be seen to be the case with the July 20 dispatch. While no copy of Gresham's first drafts of his report on the dispute are known to still exist, historians and biographers are agreed that his version would have been neither as aggressive nor as assertive as Olney's dispatch.¹⁴² That said, it has also been argued that Gresham was equally as determined as Cleveland to have the dispute settled, but would simply have taken a more reserved approach that might still have yielded the desired results without insulting Great Britain.¹⁴³ Certainly his growing distrust of the Venezuelan position meant that, shortly before his death, he suggested an independent investigation, although whether Cleveland was made aware of the idea is unclear.¹⁴⁴

It would be an overstatement to suggest that Olney's appointment as secretary of state fundamentally altered the U.S. approach to the Venezuelan Border Dispute. Undoubtedly, Olney brought a different—and unorthodox—style of diplomacy to the State Department, but the aims of the Cleveland administration remained largely unchanged. Most importantly, Cleveland himself was heavily involved both in formulating the objectives of the administration and in supervising and approving the work of his subordinates. In particular, he gave his wholehearted endorsement to Olney's draft of the July 20 dispatch, describing it as "the best thing of the kind I have ever read" and praising Olney for placing the Monroe Doctrine "on better and more defensible ground than any of your predecessors—or *mine*."¹⁴⁵ The president may have suggested "a little more softened verbiage

here and there," but such strong praise can leave little doubt that he was an enthusiastic supporter of taking a strong stand on the matter. The question remains as to why the normally conservative Cleveland would endorse such a dramatic statement of American authority. Charles S. Campbell has suggested that Cleveland was more willing to approve Olney's work because "presumably he did not want to offend his new Secretary of State at the very beginning of the latter's duties."¹⁴⁶ Such an argument would seem unlikely for a man of Cleveland's character, even if his new secretary of state were a complete stranger, but by the summer of 1895 the correspondence between the two men reveals a very convivial relationship founded upon a mutual love of hunting and fishing, as well as a similarity of views that would see the men discussing political issues together for years after they left government. In the summer of 1895 Olney used his connections with New England railroads to arrange for a private carriage to take both his and the president's families to their summer residences on Cape Cod and, a month later, when Frances Cleveland gave birth to their third child, used those same contacts to arrange to have a private physician brought in from Boston, in case of an emergency, doing so without the Clevelands' knowledge.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, it can be further argued that, far from being surprised by Olney's aggressive tone in writing the July 20 dispatch, Cleveland was well aware of his new secretary of state's style and methods before appointing him. The Pullman Strike of 1894 had seen Cleveland and Olney adopt a working relationship similar to that seen in the Venezuelan Border Dispute, with the president supervising and approving the policy devised by his subordinate. In the case of the Pullman Strike, Olney had shown the same aggressive approach to a problem and an innovative interpretation of legal statutes (the Sherman Anti-trust Act of 1890) that he would demonstrate in the July 20 dispatch. Cleveland knew how Olney worked; he may even have considered this approach to have been exactly what was needed to induce movement in the dispute.

If the July 20 dispatch was a result of Olney's aggressive style and of a growing frustration with British intransigence, then the December 17 special message can be seen as an extension of these same causes, since nothing occurred between July and December 1895, to reduce the effect of either. Indeed, the result of the July 20 dispatch was an exacerbation of the original causes. The frustration Cleveland had experienced in the spring of 1895 was vastly increased, both by Lord Salisbury's categorical rejection of the dispatch's argument and by the slightly patronizing tone in which it was delivered. In particular, Salisbury's careful noting of the inherent problems with arbitrating

a dispute—the problem of finding a qualified and unbiased arbitrator, the difficulty in insuring compliance with any verdict—and his outright refusal to consent to the transferring of British citizens to Venezuelan rule, were direct snubs to the president's many requests that the dispute be submitted to arbitration.¹⁴⁸ Some evidence of this frustration can be seen still persisting many years after the event in his likening (in *Presidential Problems*) of Lord Salisbury to “the shrewd, sharp trader who demands exorbitant terms, and at the same time invites negotiation, looking for a result abundantly profitable in the large range for dicker which he has created.”¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, having set out such an aggressive stance in the dispatch, Cleveland and Olney found themselves in a position from which retreat was difficult. In the closing words of his special message, Cleveland declared that “national self-respect and honor” were now at stake beyond the issues of the dispute itself.¹⁵⁰ There is little to suggest, however, that Cleveland and Olney desired to back down. While the special message did not repeat the more outlandish claims of the July message—in particular the points relating to the practical U.S. sovereignty in South America or the unnatural relationships between European powers and their American colonies—it was still largely devoted to a defense of the Monroe Doctrine rather than a rationalization for American involvement in the border dispute. By December 17 the dispute itself had ceased to be the sole issue, and the Monroe Doctrine and the broader question of American authority within the western hemisphere had also become key points of debate. To some extent this was also true of the concept of arbitration that Cleveland had so repeatedly suggested to be the best means of settling the dispute, and which Lord Salisbury had called into question in his reply to the July 20 dispatch. Both the Monroe Doctrine and arbitration would be dealt with before the Venezuelan Border Dispute was finally settled by the treaty signed on February 2, 1897. Indeed, it was the British government that proposed an international conference on the subject of the Monroe Doctrine—a suggestion Olney was able to reject on the grounds that the United States, having made its point, only stood to lose by opening the subject to general debate when a successfully negotiated settlement of the dispute would vindicate the July 20 dispatch. International arbitration, meanwhile, was at least partially vindicated in the final settlement of the dispute itself, but the negotiations also spawned another agreement, one potentially far more significant: a separate general arbitration treaty between Great Britain and the United States.

Interest in international arbitration as a means of settling disputes without violence had been growing in both America and

Europe throughout the latter part of the century. The settlement of the *Alabama* claims by arbitration in 1872—while not without controversy—was lauded as an example of how two powerful nations could settle their problems peacefully and in good faith. In 1890 Congress passed a resolution asking the president, when he saw fit, to attempt negotiations for an agreement whereby disputes that could not be solved through diplomacy would be submitted to arbitration. In the summer of 1893, the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago drew up a memorial in support of international arbitration that was presented to Cleveland during the closing ceremonies for transmission to all participating nations.¹⁵¹ When the British Parliament passed its own resolution acknowledging their American counterparts and expressing hope that the British government would act toward such an agreement, Cleveland raised the subject in his annual message of 1893.¹⁵² The subject of international arbitration appealed to Cleveland and Gresham as a means of promoting international peace through application of the law, but subsequent discussions produced little of substance. The subject of a general arbitration agreement was reignited by the Venezuelan negotiations. An initial proposal by Lord Salisbury that the Venezuela dispute be included in the negotiations for a broader arbitration treaty was swiftly rejected so as not to delay the Venezuela agreement, but the two negotiations proceeded in parallel.¹⁵³ The negotiations for the arbitration agreement were concluded shortly before those for the Venezuelan treaty—perhaps due to the less emotive subject matter as well as to the good will felt toward the project by both sides. Unlike the Venezuelan treaty, however, the Olney–Pauncefote Treaty—as the general arbitration treaty was officially titled—found itself at the mercy of Senate ratification. A *Baltimore Sun* editorial of February 26, 1897, suggested that posterity would view the arbitration agreement as the Cleveland administration's “greatest and most beneficent accomplishment” in the field of foreign relations, but by this point the treaty was already in trouble.¹⁵⁴ Despite widespread support in the press and among the public—a *New York World* survey of 400 newspapers showed only 39 opposed ratification—it quickly became clear that the Senate was not widely in favor of it.¹⁵⁵ Almost immediately, Olney found himself defending the treaty against charges that it would see the arbitration of the Monroe Doctrine—a particularly galling accusation since the defense and vindication of the doctrine had been one of the administration's great successes in relation to the Venezuelan Border Dispute.¹⁵⁶ Worse was to follow as the administration's opponents in the Senate continued to question every aspect of the treaty to the point that Olney wrote

to a friend in New York suggesting that he organize public meetings in support of the treaty to ensure that it was not simply killed by Senate indifference.¹⁵⁷ While the treaty was not ultimately the victim of indifference, Olney's fears would be confirmed shortly after the Cleveland administration left office, when the severely amended treaty failed to be ratified by the Senate.¹⁵⁸ An article in the *New York Herald* the next day noted that "25 out of the 31 who voted or who were paired against the treaty were advocates of the free coinage of silver," and it placed the blame for the treaty's rejection on "the jingo spirit which characterizes the doings of the Senate, combined with fanatical opposition of silver men of all parties to anything emanating from Cleveland's administration."¹⁵⁹ For his part, Olney spread the blame a little wider, naming jingoism, "dislike of anything emanating from the Cleveland administration," and pressure from ship-building interests who feared the treaty would put an end to naval expansion. His chief target, however, was the Senate itself, which he accused of making a bid for control of foreign policy. Noting that the treaty had the support of the McKinley administration and of the public, Olney told a friend:

The Senate immediately assumed an hostile attitude. The Treaty, in getting itself made by the sole act of the executive, without leave of the Senate first had and obtained, had committed the unpardonable sin. It must be either altogether defeated or so altered as to bear an unmistakable Senate stamp—and thus be the means of both humiliating the executive and of showing to the world the greatness of the Senate.¹⁶⁰

Whether this bid for power was real—and a clash between the president and the Senate had played a major role in the evolution of American policy toward Cuba in the last years of the Cleveland administration (as discussed in the next chapter)—it seems clear that Cleveland's inability to maintain the support of his own party in Congress had helped to cause the defeat of the treaty. Ultimately, the Olney–Pauncefote Treaty was a failure, but it was still an important indicator of Cleveland's and Olney's approach to foreign policy. A general arbitration treaty had not been a priority of the administration when it came to power, but when the opportunity to create such an agreement had arisen, it was pursued seriously. In negotiations lasting nearly a year and Senate debates lasting several months, Olney showed his commitment to the treaty as a practical instrument designed to change the face of international relations. It was particularly significant as an attempt to create a lasting foreign policy legacy for the

Cleveland administration beyond the examples set in the handling of foreign incidents, and to promote a legalist approach to foreign affairs. As such, the treaty stands as the most significant effort by the administration—perhaps recognizing that its time in Washington was drawing to a close—to actively mold the future of American foreign relations. Most notably, both the British and American governments expressed their hopes that the treaty would not simply be an agreement unique to their relationship with each other, but would serve as a model for the handling of disputes with other nations as well.¹⁶¹ It is for this reason that Hoganson is right to describe the defeat of the treaty and the rush to war with Spain a year later as the triumph of the jingoes in American politics.¹⁶²

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It is reasonably clear how the Cleveland administration found itself becoming increasingly caught up in the Venezuelan Border Dispute, but it is less apparent why Cleveland was convinced in the first place that it was necessary to act. In *Presidential Problems* Cleveland was unequivocal in his declaration that the decision to intervene had come because the Monroe Doctrine was at stake. Writing specifically about his special message of December 17, 1895, he declared:

[I]t was necessary in order to assert and vindicate a principle distinctively American, and in the maintenance of which the American people and Government of the United States were profoundly concerned. It was because this principle was endangered, and because those charged with administrative responsibility would not abandon or neglect it, that our Government interposed to prevent any further colonization of American soil by a European nation.¹⁶³

This explanation, however, only suffices for the special message. Cleveland had not invoked the Monroe Doctrine during his first term in office and, indeed, he admitted to Bayard in a letter written shortly after his special message that he was largely ignorant of the differing opinions over the applicability of the doctrine to the dispute.¹⁶⁴ The Monroe Doctrine was invoked in the July 20 dispatch, but if Cleveland was freely admitting some five months later that he was not an expert on the subject, then it is likely that the doctrine itself was not always the primary issue. A more convincing explanation is that the president and his secretaries of state became alarmed at the expansion of British claims in the late 1880s and early 1890s and subsequently employed

the Monroe Doctrine as the best justification for American intervention. In a dispatch sent to Bayard on July 13, 1894, Gresham noted that between 1885 and 1886 the British claim had “silently increased by some 33,000 square miles” and had then expanded again in 1887 “to embrace the rich mining district of Yuruani.”¹⁶⁵ Such suspicions were encouraged by the Venezuelan government, which made a point of informing the State Department of any British proposals to develop the infrastructure within the disputed territory and, thus, in Venezuela’s opinion, further their claims.¹⁶⁶ Tellingly, this theme was picked up again in the July 20 dispatch with the crucial addition of two further British claims. In the dispatch, Olney highlighted the border line put forward by Lord Salisbury in 1890—which “fixed the starting point of the line in the mouth of the Amacuro west of the Punta Barima on the Orinoco”—as well as the most recent claim, made in 1893, which “carried the boundary from a point to the west of the Amacuro as far as the source of the Cumano River and the Sierra of Usupamo.”¹⁶⁷ It is clear from this that the administration was concerned not simply by the gradual expansion of the British claims, but by the significance of the territory those claims were beginning to encompass. In the July 20 dispatch Olney made no reference to the mineral-rich area around the Yuruan River, but he twice specifically noted that the last two British claims had expanded past the mouth of the Orinoco River, the tributary system of which dominated communications—and therefore commerce—in this northern section of South America.¹⁶⁸ This may provide the key to understanding why President Cleveland chose to intervene in the Venezuelan Border Dispute in 1895. The expansion of British claims to the Orinoco—as well, perhaps, as the Venezuelan reports that the colonial authorities in British Guiana were seeking to build a communications infrastructure in that territory—raised a genuine fear that a major change might come about in the strategic and commercial balance of South America. This change did not have to threaten existing American interests in order to justify action—there was, after all, nothing in America’s existing or even potential trade with Venezuela and the surrounding region to justify risking good relations with Great Britain, the nation’s biggest trading partner—because the potential ramifications of such a move in the long term were sufficient to require action. The European powers had recently portioned out among themselves the vast majority of the continent of Africa. To a man of Cleveland’s conservative temperament in foreign affairs this was outside the purview of the United States as defined by the Monroe Doctrine and of Washington’s Farewell Address. The transfer of control over the Orinoco, however, risked sparking a similar “scramble”

for Latin America, with European powers reacting to Britain's coup by seizing any other territory of potential significance. This was the scenario set out by Olney in the July 20 dispatch, and while Salisbury may have been correct to scoff at such a theory, the potential severity of such a course of events justified forcing a conclusion to the dispute. It is still possible—perhaps even probable—that Cleveland might have resisted the call to act if he had believed that Great Britain had a genuine case to support its claims, but his conviction that this European power was bullying a weaker opponent without justification provided a strong moral imperative to act—and perhaps even an obligation to the national interest—that went beyond the broader power politics.

Thus we see that the concerns over the potential consequences of Great Britain's expanding claims compelled Cleveland to act. This being so, he and his secretaries of state sought out a legal precedent that would allow them to intervene, and so invoked the Monroe Doctrine. They did so in such a way as to necessitate an elastic and expanded interpretation of the doctrine. LaFeber has gone so far as to suggest that if the Monroe Doctrine had not existed, the July 20 dispatch would have been written anyway, with the term "American Self-Interest" taking its place.¹⁶⁹ This is an over-simplification, since the history of Cleveland's diplomacy during his second term is one of following legal precedent in order to justify foreign policy decisions, but it is true that Olney brought a more flexible and aggressive approach to legal interpretation than had his predecessor. Once the Monroe Doctrine had been invoked it had to be defended against Lord Salisbury's attack. Eggert states that Olney wanted to drop all reference to the doctrine once it became apparent that Salisbury was willing to acknowledge the U.S. right to intervene to bring the dispute to a conclusion.¹⁷⁰ According to Eggert, it was Cleveland who recognized that Salisbury's challenge to the Monroe Doctrine could not go unanswered and so devoted much of his special message on December 17 to defending it.¹⁷¹ This is consistent with Cleveland's history of seeking to achieve his desired result through a dogged pursuit of his chosen method rather than simply accept a swift victory in the matter at hand. Such tactics had failed in Hawaii, where it proved impossible to arrive at a negotiated settlement to restore the Hawaiian monarchy but, in the case of the Monroe Doctrine, Cleveland was in a position to stand his ground. The result was, in some respects, an implicit victory for the Monroe Doctrine, since the Venezuelan Border Dispute was brought to a conclusion despite Salisbury's denouncement of the doctrine and with Cleveland's defense of it left unanswered. All of this demonstrates, once again, the growing might of the United States in world affairs.

If Grover Cleveland was willing to flex the nation's muscles—even if only very slightly—in defense of his conservative principles and was able to uphold those principles against the opposition of an experienced statesman of the caliber of Lord Salisbury, then the United States was clearly a powerful force, particularly within its own hemisphere.

* * *

The specific legacies of the Cleveland administration's actions in Nicaragua and Venezuela were fleeting at best. Olney's expanded interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine—what became known as the Olney Corollary to the doctrine—which declared the right of the United States to intervene in disputes anywhere in the Americas, was a radical change, but it was not intended to set the tone for the future development of either the doctrine or American relations with Latin America. The Olney Corollary was superseded in 1904 by the Roosevelt Corollary, which declared an American right to directly interfere in the internal affairs of American nations in order to stabilize their currencies and thus could be argued to have formed the foundation for a more assertive interpretation of the doctrine. As such, the Olney Corollary can be seen as a trailblazer for the more radical interpretation of its successor, but it is clear that this was not intended by either Olney or Cleveland in 1895. Indeed, as one historian has recently noted, Olney was very careful to qualify his interpretation of the doctrine—denying that it served as a protectorate, insisting that American nations still had to observe their obligations to other nations, and rejecting interference with American nations—in an attempt to ensure that men such as Lodge and Roosevelt would not be able to use the doctrine to propose a more aggressive approach to foreign policy.¹⁷² However radical its approach to the Monroe Doctrine may have been, the Olney Corollary only sought to protect American nations from European interference, and it certainly did not countenance direct interference in the internal affairs of those nations (although negotiating the Venezuelan treaty without consulting with Caracas stretched the interpretation of non-interference). This being so, it can be seen as another stage in the debate between Cleveland and the younger Republicans such as Roosevelt and Lodge over how to exercise the nation's newfound might.

Neither the events in Nicaragua nor the Venezuelan Border Dispute led to a greatly improved profile for the United States in Latin America, or an identifiable increase in trade with the region. The Venezuelan incident in particular seems to have been better designed to alienate South American nations than ingratiate the United States to

them. Dexter Perkins notes the mixed reaction in Central and South America to Cleveland's special message, with appreciation of the U.S. stand against a European power tempered by concern with Olney's claims of American sovereignty.¹⁷³ For Venezuela in particular, the positive reaction to the special message was quickly destroyed by the exclusion of the Venezuelan government from the treaty negotiations in London, which resulted in a settlement that was far removed from that government's original demands. All things considered, if Cleveland had hoped to use the dispute to improve the U.S. profile—and thus its commercial ties—in Central and South America he went about it in a remarkably ham-fisted way.

Ultimately, the most lasting legacy of the two Latin American incidents was the growth of American authority over the western hemisphere in European eyes and, in particular, the improvement of Anglo-British relations. While it still may be saying too much to suggest that the "special relationship" began in Nicaragua or in the Venezuelan Border Dispute, these events are indicative of a new understanding between the two governments, as both tried to comprehend the implications of the growth of American power. The Nicaragua situation indicated a willingness on the part of Lord Rosebery's Liberal government to work with the United States in Central America and a commensurate willingness of the Cleveland administration to acknowledge the right of Great Britain to insist upon payment of debts by American nations; the Venezuela dispute achieved the more difficult task of gaining the recognition from Lord Salisbury's Conservatives that the United States could interfere in the affairs of the British Empire, even if it could not dictate terms. The result, despite some occasional turbulence, both domestically and internationally, was a better understanding between the two nations at a time of international change. For the Cleveland administration, meanwhile, the Central American incidents further expanded the effort to place questions of legality and morality at the forefront of foreign policy. Most importantly, the events in Nicaragua and Venezuela displayed a more assertive method of applying this template and a greater expectation that other nations would follow it—at least in the Americas. This assertiveness would achieve its ultimate expression in an attempt to create a new framework for general international arbitration, which was to serve as an example for all nations. The rejection of that framework and of the Cleveland administration's new foreign policy, would be bound up in its greatest foreign challenge: the Cuban Revolution.

CHAPTER 4



THE CUBAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Of the three central foreign policy events of Grover Cleveland's second term—the Hawaiian revolution, the Venezuelan Border Dispute, and the Cuban War of Independence—the latter would have the most tangible impact on the evolution of U.S. foreign policy and the creation of an American empire. If the Venezuelan Border Dispute had demonstrated a new American assertiveness in foreign policy rhetoric and ideology, the Cuban rebellion, which began in 1895, would prove to be the trigger for actions that would fundamentally change the position of the United States in global affairs. As the central cause of the War of 1898, the Cuban War of Independence can safely be called a turning point in U.S. history. This being the case, it is easy to overlook the fact that the revolution in Cuba endured for more than three years before the United States finally intervened, with two of those three years coming under the leadership of Cleveland and Olney—a fact that has led one biographer to suggest that Cleveland's role has been “treated as an unimportant prologue to the Cuban policy of the McKinley administration.”¹ Indeed, it would be Cuba that formed the culmination of the Cleveland administration's foreign policy, both as the last problem they faced in office and as the final evolution of the administration's policy template. Between the outbreak of revolution in February 1895 and the inauguration of President McKinley on March 4, 1897, the Cleveland administration's response to the situation in Cuba saw it face a variety of challenges overseas. Clear parallels can be drawn between the answers to many of these challenges and the administration's actions in previous incidents as Cleveland and Olney employed the template for action they (and Gresham) had established elsewhere. Beyond this, however, the administration faced

further challenges from Congress—challenges that required new and radical responses, and which ultimately saw the propagation of a new interpretation of executive power, paving the way for the new American foreign policy of the next century.

* * *

The Cuban revolution against Spanish rule was sparked on February 24, 1895, by a rebellion in Santiago province. In April the arrival in Cuba of the political dissident José Martí and the military commanders Máximo Gómez and Antonio Maceo confirmed that the insurgency would be a serious one.² Both Maceo and Gómez had commanded rebel forces in the previous major insurrection in Cuba, which had lasted from 1868 until 1878, while Martí was one of the leading advocates of Cuban independence and an important figure in the exiled Cuban community in the United States. The rebellion of 1895 was, in many respects, a continuation of the conflict of 1868–1878. The problems of arbitrary colonial rule, racial divisions, and chronic debt (and the subsequent heavy taxation it caused) had all played a part in the development of that rebellion, and the passage of 17 years had done little to dissipate those problems. The Ten Years War had ended with promises of reform that swiftly proved to be illusory. Subsequent attempts in the winter of 1893–1894 by the Spanish foreign minister, Antonio Maura y Montaner, to implement autonomous rule for all Spanish overseas territories had received so little support in Spain that he had been forced to tender his resignation.³ The internal problems were exacerbated by the loss of Cuba's favored position as a sugar supplier to the United States under the Wilson–Gorman tariff of 1894. As had happened in Hawaii under the McKinley tariff of 1890, the blow to sugar producers in Cuba led to increased unemployment and further damaged the island's already weak economy.⁴ Meanwhile, activists such as Martí agitated for full Cuban independence, gaining significant financial backing in the United States. As a result, when open rebellion finally broke out in 1895, the rebels were supplied by shipments of arms and ammunition transported from the United States by filibustering expeditions.

The Cleveland administration's policy toward the Cuban War of Independence evolved gradually over the course of two years. The first response conformed to the precedents established in the Brazilian Naval Revolt and the Sino-Japanese War: placing the United States on a neutral course and dealing with any incidents that directly involved American interests as they occurred. There is little to suggest that

either Cleveland, Gresham, or Olney initially saw any great significance in the outbreak of revolution. Unrest was not unusual on the island, and the Spanish government had no desire to advertise the seriousness of its predicament as the insurrection grew in strength over the summer of 1895. Beyond this, neither Cleveland nor his secretaries of state had any preconceived designs on Cuba, any more than they had had on Brazil 18 months before, making their usual conservative stance a natural one. To the administration this was a Spanish internal matter, and it was the duty of the United States to simply mind its legal obligations. Observing these obligations, however, was easier said than done. Cuba had been the focus of interest for many Americans throughout the nineteenth century, and in the 1840s and 1850s the U.S. government had repeatedly sought to buy the island from Spain.⁵ While the Cleveland administration now stood opposed to any such acquisition, this position was not widely supported. The summer of 1895 saw a stream of messages pass between the Spanish minister in Washington and the State Department, calling the United States government's attention to a series of alleged breaches of neutrality by American citizens. While some allegations—such as that the Cuban rebels were openly recruiting volunteers in New Orleans—were found by investigators to be without foundation, it was clear that the rebels were receiving tangible support in the form of arms and ammunition from the United States.⁶ The extent of the problem was sufficient to encourage Cleveland to issue a proclamation of American neutrality on June 12, warning U.S. citizens against serving in, recruiting for, or attempting to supply the rebel forces.⁷

While the Spanish minister in Washington attempted to ensure that the United States government did everything it could to fulfil its legal obligations, the State Department increasingly found itself asserting the legal rights of American citizens in Cuba as the insurgency—and the efforts to control it—threatened to infringe on them. In this respect the administration was again essentially following the course that had been laid out in previous incidents, such as the Brazilian Naval Revolt and the incidents at Bluefields in Nicaragua. In the case of Cuba, however, both the number and the severity of the cases that the State Department found itself raising with the Spanish government and the Cuban authorities gave warning that the situation on the island was far more serious than either of the incidents in Brazil and Nicaragua.

The first major incident that required the State Department's intervention was the firing on the American mail steamer *Alliança* in international waters by a Spanish gunboat patrolling off the coast

of Cuba. Although the *Alliança* was not hit and steamed on to its destination without further interference, when news of the incident reached Washington, Gresham demanded an immediate apology and assurances that all Spanish commanders would be instructed to ensure that such events would not be repeated.⁸ The subsequent investigation revealed that the incident had been the result of an error by the Spanish commander in calculating the positions of the two vessels, resulting in the mistaken impression that the *Alliança* had entered Cuban waters.⁹ Gresham received his apology, while the officer in question was relieved of his command, but perhaps more important was the instruction issued to all Spanish commanders in Cuban waters not to interfere with legitimate American shipping. The strong wording of the normally placid Gresham's first telegram of protest demonstrated the seriousness with which he viewed any interference with American commerce as a result of the insurrection: "Forcible interferences with [regular American mail and commercial shipping], can not be claimed [by Spain] as a belligerent act, whether they pass within 3 miles of the Cuban coast or not, and can under no circumstances be tolerated when no state of war exists,"¹⁰ Once again, the needs of American commerce were a priority for the Cleveland administration and, once again, the matter was addressed in the language of international law by focusing on the rights of belligerent powers and neutral states. The fact that the captain of the Spanish gunboat had seen fit to go so far as to open fire on the *Alliança*, however, also demonstrated that the Cuban authorities saw filibustering expeditions as a very real threat, thus posing a conundrum that would be hard to solve: How could Spanish forces control the Cuban coast without interfering with neutral American commerce?

As well as the *Alliança* incident, the early months of the insurrection saw the first examples of what would be a recurring problem for the United States in its relations with Spain: the arrest of American citizens in Cuba on suspicion of aiding the rebels. Such arrests would prove to be a key concern for the State Department over the next three years, with the situation being confused by a variety of issues.¹¹ The first such problem was the dubious citizenship status of many of those arrested. Dual American-Spanish citizenship was not uncommon in Cuba, with many people born on the island living in the United States long enough to acquire American citizenship before returning to their homeland. As a result, the State Department was repeatedly forced to investigate the validity of such claims—often for men who had made no attempt to assert their citizenship before their arrest—in order to ascertain whether they were entitled to the protection of the United

States. The situation repeated itself so often in the first two years of the conflict that Cleveland, in his annual message of 1896, spoke out specifically against those who “though Cubans at heart and in all their feelings and interests, have taken out papers as naturalized citizens of the United States—a proceeding resorted to with a view to possible protection by this Government,” noting the indignation that this provoked from the Cuban authorities.¹² Even when American citizenship was clearly established, the legal situation in Cuba made the assertion of an individual’s treaty rights a difficult matter. Under their treaty of 1795, the United States and Spain agreed to guarantee the legal rights of each other’s citizens unless they were captured with arms in their hands. In Cuba in 1895, however, the Spanish government experienced repeated difficulties in controlling the local authorities, who were far more concerned with putting down the rebellion in any way possible than with the niceties of international diplomacy. Arrests were often made without charge and prisoners held for extended periods without trial. On one occasion, in September 1895, Olney was forced to complain to Minister Enrique Dupuy de Lôme that the governor-general of Cuba was refusing the right of the U.S. consul general in Havana to intervene on behalf of American citizens being held without trial, despite this being an established function of consular representatives under international law.¹³

Beyond the arrest and detention of American citizens, the State Department also worked to protect American property in Cuba. This became a key priority as it became clear that the rebels intended to operate a policy of deliberate destruction of the island’s agricultural and industrial infrastructure in order to increase pressure on the Spanish government. In the face of such attacks, however, there was little that the department could hope to achieve. From an early stage the message sent to property owners was that compensation could only be forthcoming if they could prove that the Spanish government had been in a position to protect their property, but had failed to do so.¹⁴ Undoubtedly, Cleveland and Olney were concerned by the prospect of widespread destruction of American-owned property and investment in Cuba, but a letter from Olney to the president demonstrated the extent to which they felt their hands were bound. Referring to documents sent to Olney by a man claiming to represent the Cuban Republic, the secretary wrote:

They are serious principally as they show how the insurrection is affecting American citizens and American property. At the same time, it being their misfortune to reside and have invested their capital in a

country in which a rebellion has broken out, it is not easy to see how this government can protect them from the inevitable consequences.¹⁵

Since this was the established position under international law in cases relating to the destruction of property of alien residents by insurgents beyond the control of the sovereign government, it was a logical position for the State Department to adopt, but the general policy of the administration was also one of putting only gentle pressure on the Spanish government. In December 1895, Olney forwarded to Dupuy de Lôme a detailed letter from an American sugar company whose plantations in Cuba had been harassed by the rebels. In his accompanying note Olney simply declared:

I send it for your information, as well as for any suggestions and recommendations you may see fit to make either to the Spanish Government or to the local authorities in Cuba for the protection of American properties in Cuba from destruction by the Cuban insurgents.¹⁶

Clearly, Olney believed that applying direct pressure for action from Spain would be unlikely to produce any concrete results, and that American interests would best be served by maintaining a cordial relationship with the Spanish government.

A potential reason for this reluctance to exert pressure on Spain is that by the winter of 1895 it had become clear that the insurrection was a very serious matter. On September 25, 1895, Olney had written to Cleveland expressing serious doubts about the administration's early interpretation of the situation in Cuba. Opening with the suggestion that the matter was "one calling for the careful consideration of the Executive"—a statement which suggests that up to that point the issue had not been the subject of serious discussion—Olney first set out the Spanish version of events. In this version the insurgents were a ragtag army comprised of Cuba's lowest orders "under the leadership of a few adventurers."¹⁷ These men "would be incapable of founding or maintaining a decent government if their revolution against Spain were to be successful," and any such triumph would lead to "anarchy and a repetition in Cuba of the worst experiences of other West India [sic] Islands." The latter point was primarily a reference to the racial violence that had characterized the Haitian revolution a century earlier and which, due to its capacity to terrorize white landowners in areas containing significant black populations, was regularly used as a means of reinforcing white support for the Spanish colonial government in Cuba. All this combined to form a vision of a conflict in which

“it would be quite impossible to withhold sympathy from Spain or to doubt that she must ultimately prevail.” This official Spanish portrayal of the situation in Cuba is exemplified by an article published in the September 1895 issue of *The North American Review*. In the article, the former mayor of Havana, Segundo Alvarez, attempted to depict the rebellion as anarchic and lacking in support from the majority of the Cuban population. He confidently predicted that the Spanish government would crush it after the end of the rainy season. Now, however, Olney was coming to question this view.¹⁸

As he explained to Cleveland, the secretary had recently been put in contact with a major Cuban landowner, “a man of great wealth, an employer on his estates of some eight hundred people,” an American who had served as a consular-agent for the United States, and who had little interest in any specific type of government so long as it provided peace and stability for commerce. Olney declared himself to be impressed “both with his intelligence and his honesty” and so was inclined to believe his informant’s very different interpretation of the situation in Cuba.¹⁹ Briefly stated, this interpretation was that, far from being “the scum of the earth,” the rebels had the sympathy of 90 percent of the Cuban population, including virtually all of the prominent families—simultaneously challenging the Spanish argument that the rebels were in the minority and would be incapable of forming a permanent government. In reality, Olney’s source claimed, the majority of Cuban landowners were

to a man disgusted with Spanish mis-rule, with a system which has burdened the Island with \$300,000,000 of debt, whose impositions in the way of annual taxes just stop short of prohibiting all industrial enterprise, and which yet does not fulfill the primary functions of government by insuring safety to life and security to property.²⁰

All this combined to form a serious problem for the Cleveland administration. In the space of a few lines Olney’s letter revealed a far greater strength to the rebellion, making U.S. recognition of the rebel cause a matter for serious consideration. Olney highlighted serious problems with Spanish rule, which undermined all of the qualities—investment, commerce, and the security of life and property—that the administration’s foreign policy was designed to protect and facilitate as a first priority. Further to this, Olney’s informant raised the genuine prospect of a Spanish defeat, arguing that the 1895 rebellion was more formidable than that of 1868–1878 and, unlike its predecessor, would not be placated by promises of reform, not least because the promises

made in 1878 were not kept. This contrasted with Spanish power, which “has visibly and greatly decreased.”

Having brought such concerns to Cleveland's attention—as well as stories of the brutal treatment being meted out to those suspected of aiding the rebels—Olney neatly summarized the plethora of difficulties the administration now faced:

The Representatives of the two parties . . . being wholly conflicting, and the true status being one of grave doubt—Cuba lying at our very door—the contest attracting the attention of all our people as well as enlisting their sympathies, if for no other reason, then [sic] because the insurgents are apparently the weaker party—politicians of all stripes, including Congressmen, either already setting their sails or preparing to set them so as to catch the popular breeze—it being not merely probable but almost certain that next winter Washington will swarm with emissaries of the insurgents demanding at least recognition of their belligerency—what duty has the Executive branch of the Government?²¹

The secretary was content that, as far as Spain was concerned, the United States was doing all that could be expected in terms of respecting and preserving neutrality. He was less sure, however, that all was being done for the insurgents that they might be entitled to.

They have a right, I think, that we inform ourselves upon the point, whether they are merely gangs of roving banditti, or are a substantial portion of the community revolting against intolerable political conditions and earnestly and in good faith seeking the establishment of a better form of government.²²

Such an investigation would be a typically measured approach to a complex problem from an administration that had made it a habit not to act swiftly if it could possibly be avoided, but Olney did at least raise the prospect of more dramatic action if his informant's claims turned out to be true. While not categorically declaring himself in favor of either possibility, he argued that the United States would be better placed to decide whether to recognize Cuban belligerency or even independence. A canny politician, Olney recognized that these were questions that were “sure to be raised and the decision of which sooner or later cannot be avoided.”

What made the need for accurate intelligence on the true situation in Cuba increasingly urgent was the rapidly growing popular sentiment in the United States in favor of intervention. Most troubling for Cleveland and Olney was that the major driving forces behind that

sentiment had little to do with the economic and legal arguments that they respected and were, instead, concerned with the emotional factors that they found deeply troubling. Only a comparative handful of Americans had a direct economic interest in Cuba, and few others were likely to be considerably swayed by the potential impact on the economy of the loss of the island's raw materials to American industry. Despite this, however, as the summer of 1895 passed with no sign of Spanish forces crushing the rebellion, popular support for the rebels soared in the United States. Undoubtedly, the agitation of the "yellow press"—the battling newspapers the *New York World* and *New York Journal*, owned by Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst respectively—would play a role in building public support for intervention, but it is now generally accepted that their influence on policymakers has been overstated and, in any case, the humanitarian crises that provided their most sensational material did not arise until 1896 and the arrival of General Valeriano Weyler from Spain. The work of expatriate groups in New York, Florida, and elsewhere dedicated to *Cuba libre* certainly helped to raise public awareness of the Cuban cause from the outset of the rebellion and caused the Cleveland administration many headaches by promoting filibustering expeditions to the island to supply the rebels with war materiel. This, however, does not explain why millions of Americans came to support Cuban independence—a struggle that went against the prevailing racism in American society by pitting a largely black or mixed race movement against the white Spanish forces. As Hoganson has described, violence against blacks was not the cause of great public protest within the United States—where public lynching was rife in the Deep South—nor were disenfranchisement or the existence of poverty exacerbated by corrupt or negligent government, which also affected the African-American community in huge numbers.²³ Similarly, concerns over the rights of American citizens in Cuba being abused, while seized upon by the press, were always a relatively minor issue in themselves. Opposition to European imperialism and a desire to uphold the Monroe Doctrine may have swayed some Americans, but neither of these factors had pushed the nation to war in the rebellion of 1868–1878 and, despite the brief war scare after Cleveland's special message to Congress over Venezuela, there had been no sustained call for war with Britain, either over Nicaragua or Venezuela. With this in mind, Hoganson's argument that rising jingoism—fueled by fears of declining American masculinity, a romantic chivalrous desire to defend the supposedly innocent Cuban people, and a desire to prove American honor and strength on the battlefield—provides the most convincing

explanation for changing attitudes behind the growing support for the rebels.²⁴ It was this spirit of masculinity and jingoism that pervaded the yellow press, both inspiring it and in turn being further fed by the competition for ever more dramatic stories of Spanish barbarism. For Cleveland and Olney, such jingoism was anathema: They desired a policy of reason and law, something with which the increasingly emotional clamor for intervention was completely incompatible.

The suggestion of sending an agent to Cuba appealed to Olney for a variety of reasons. As chief of the State Department, he recognized that his subordinates would be called upon to handle many claims relating to the destruction of property and disruption of commerce and thus would be well served by a definitive picture of the situation on the ground. Once again, for a legally minded administration the availability of clear evidence to guide actions was a high priority. Ultimately, however, the plan for sending a special envoy was not pursued. Olney and Cleveland certainly discussed the matter seriously and, after it was decided that a man with military experience would be best suited to the role, Olney even spoke with Secretary of War Daniel Lamont about suitable candidates. Lamont suggested General John M. Schofield, recently retired as commanding general of the U.S. Army, an appointment Olney favored as a means of removing the matter from the political arena, although he also expressed reservations that the Spanish government might see it as granting the rebels too much credibility.²⁵ In his September 25 letter, Olney had dismissed the possibility of the Spanish officials objecting to the arrival of an American investigator, on the grounds that, by their own interpretation of the situation, any such mission "could have but the one result of demonstrating that both right and might are on their side."²⁶ He presented the same argument in the letter of October 8, in which General Schofield's name was proposed, but he may have underestimated Spain's willingness to accept the suspicion that would come with rejecting the proposal. Olney's biographer, Gerald G. Eggert, claims that the Spanish government vetoed the plan, which would appear to be consistent with the recalcitrance of the Cuban authorities.²⁷ Certainly Cleveland was not entirely enthusiastic for the project, although his objections appear to have been more related to the choice of Schofield—on the basis that the president believed "he would not see all that he ought to see"—than to the idea in general.²⁸ In a letter of October 6, Cleveland had been sufficiently interested to name a candidate for the role—Major Davis, who had worked with Lamont on delicate matters before—but the president had also informed Olney that he would make a final decision on the matter

when he returned to Washington on October 15, so it is entirely plausible that Cleveland decided in the intervening period that the potential rift the project might cause with Spain was too great a risk to run.²⁹ Whatever the case, the plan for sending a special envoy to investigate Cuba's insurrection was dropped for the time being.

Despite prompting a dramatic reappraisal within the administration, both of the nature and strength of the rebellion and of its prospects for success, the exposure of the flawed view being presented by the Spanish authorities had no discernible impact on Cleveland's or Olney's actions in the short term. Even the cautious plan to send a special envoy to report on the situation on the ground was not followed up. Why this was the case is difficult to answer, not least because the correspondence between the two is very thin—presumably the president's return to Washington meant that such matters were discussed in person. The first—and most likely—reason for this lack of action is Cleveland's and Olney's instinctive tendency to stand pat when presented with a volatile situation beyond their control and understanding. This would conform to the cautious precedent set as far back as the withdrawal of the Hawaiian annexation treaty in 1893 and chimes well with Olney's suggestion that they urgently seek to acquire better information on the conflict. That said, the eventual decision not to send a special envoy to investigate the situation in Cuba suggests an alternative reason for not acting: the need to protect American property and commerce. The fact that such matters were at the forefront of the administration's thinking is demonstrated by Olney's direct references to "a large and important commerce" with Cuba, "large amounts of American capital in Cuba," and the likelihood that the U.S. government would be called upon to protect its citizens and property and to secure indemnities for damage done.³⁰ The secretary of state was primarily concerned with providing himself with sufficient information to make legal claims of the Spanish government, but it did not require a great leap of reasoning to recognize the potential damage to such cases that would be done by recognizing the rebels as belligerents. Under these circumstances the burden of protecting American lives and property in Cuba would fall upon the rebels, the same people waging a campaign of destruction against American-owned plantations. Granting recognition might have brought such attacks to a halt, but there was little guarantee of that, especially if the rebel government could not be sure to control the actions of its various armies. It would seem strange if Olney and Cleveland had not considered such questions as soon as the revolution broke out, but the letter of September 25 (with its suggestion

that recognition of either belligerency or independence might be feasible) could be construed as suggesting otherwise. Beyond the loss of protection for American property, any move deemed by Spain to be supporting the rebel cause risked creating a diplomatic rift and even raised the prospect of war between the two nations. With the experiences of the Brazilian Naval Revolt and the Sino-Japanese War behind them, the administration could not fail to realize this fact—indeed it was openly acknowledged by Cleveland later in the term—and once again the instinct to stand pat may well have taken control. Beyond this, it is possible that Cleveland and Olney believed that they did not need to act. In both Brazil and China the instinct to maintain a cautious neutrality had ultimately proved to be correct as both conflicts came to a natural conclusion of their own accord—although the role of the USS *Detroit* in bringing the Brazilian Naval Revolt to an end was a salutary lesson in the power of minor actions from the United States to effect major changes in conflicts—and, if Olney's source was to be believed, a similar natural resolution might occur in Cuba very soon. Indeed, the situation in Cuba in the winter of 1895 was such that if the administration received further accurate reports from the island, it would have been confirmed in this belief, since by January 1896 the rebels were in possession of most of the hinterland and had advanced to the outskirts of Havana.³¹ It was only the arrival from Spain in that same month of General Valeriano Weyler that brought the rebel advance to a halt and began the stalemate that characterized the next two years of the conflict.

Cleveland's annual message of 1895 illustrates the position taken by the administration after the first nine months of the rebellion as well as highlighting one of the key issues they were facing. Having informed the nation that an insurrection was raging in Cuba, "in some respects more active than the last preceding revolt"—that of 1868–1878—the president set out his vision of the U.S. position:

Besides deranging the commercial exchanges of the island, of which our country takes the predominant share, this flagrant condition of hostilities, by arousing sentimental sympathy and inciting adventurous support among our people, has entailed earnest effort on the part of this Government to enforce obedience to our neutrality laws and to prevent the territory of the United States from being abused as a vantage ground from which to aid those in arms against Spanish sovereignty.³²

In short, while recognizing that a very serious insurrection was taking place that was harming the economy of the United States, Cleveland

was still devoted to maintaining international obligations, a position he directly reiterated twice in the subsequent paragraph. His determination to maintain his non-interventionist stance was demonstrated by another passage worth quoting at length:

Though neither the warmth of our people's sympathy with the Cuban insurgents, nor our loss and material damage consequent upon the futile endeavors thus far made to restore peace and order, nor any shock our humane sensibilities may have received from the cruelties which appear to especially characterize this sanguinary and fiercely conducted war, have in the least shaken the determination of the Government to honestly fulfill every international obligation, yet it is to be earnestly hoped on every ground that the devastation of armed conflict may speedily be stayed and order and quiet restored to the distracted island, bringing in their train the activity and thrift of peaceful pursuits.³³

Beyond his desire to have the Spanish government solve its own problems, this passage illustrates Cleveland's awareness of the major problem that was facing his administration: that of public opinion. Where, in the early days of the second term, Cleveland and Gresham had expressed hopes of leading public opinion and building support for their position, it is clear from the annual message of 1895 and Olney's letter of September 25, 1895, that such hopes were not extended to the situation in Cuba. While the annual message did present a call to the American people not to breach their country's neutrality—going so far as to remind them of their duty as patriotic citizens to honor the obligations of their national government—this was in itself almost an admission that public opinion was overwhelmingly in favor of the rebels. Further proof of this attitude can be gained from the September 25 letter, in which Olney declared that the rebels were gaining the sympathy of the American people, "if for no other reason, then [sic] because the insurgents are apparently the weaker party."³⁴ If the secretary of state was resigned to the fact that public opinion was irreversible, despite admitting that much of it was based on the flimsiest of reasoning, then clearly the administration was seeking to manage the problem rather than to solve it. This latter point is crucial to the understanding of the administration's Cuba policy—or lack of one—at the end of 1895. Unlike in Hawaii—the previous incident to elicit strong public feeling over a lengthy period of time—Cleveland and his advisors did not have a set policy that they wished to sell to the electorate; they simply hoped to limit the extent to which the actions of American citizens forced their hand. Cleveland and Olney were well aware of

public opinion and the potential difficulties it could bring if influential members of Congress attempted to harness it, but in the wake of the crushing Republican victory in the 1894 congressional election—or perhaps after the death of Gresham—there appears to have been less concern that the administration should have a public mandate for its actions. The hope of leading informed opinion in the United States had gone, but there was no corresponding move to bow to public whim; Cleveland would continue to enact a foreign policy that he believed to be morally and legally right. As the insurrection in Cuba continued through 1896, this belief in the independence of executive power would come to be a major issue and one that would have far-reaching consequences for the evolution of American foreign policy.

The long period of inactivity came to an end in early April 1896, when in a matter of days Cleveland and Olney launched two new policies that had the potential to profoundly alter the U.S. stance on Cuba. On April 4 Olney wrote a letter to Minister de Lôme that ended the administration's policy of non-involvement in the Cuban crisis. After a lengthy exposition on the calamitous state of affairs on the island and the consequent damage being done to American commerce and investment, the secretary declared the need for a solution before the island was ruined or a Spanish defeat resulted in the outbreak of a race war.³⁵ What Olney proposed was a cooperative effort between the two nations, one that would see the United States extend its good offices to promote any reforms that the Spanish government proposed which, while maintaining Spanish sovereignty, "shall yet secure to the people of the island all such rights and powers of local self-government as they can reasonably ask."³⁶ This proposal, while vague in itself, revealed a great deal about the administration's thinking. It declared a preference, under the circumstances, for the continuation of Spanish rule over Cuba rather than the creation of an independent Cuban republic. In doing so it followed the line set out in Nicaragua and Venezuela whereby European rule of American colonies was acceptable so long as it guaranteed stability, which the administration considered unlikely under Cuban self-rule. While the Venezuelan Border Dispute had demonstrated U.S. dislike for the "unnatural" European control over American territory, that dislike only resulted in action when it appeared that a colony might be expanding at the expense of an American republic. As usual with the Cleveland administration, the status quo—defined by stability, uninterrupted commerce, and the rule of law—was preferable to potentially chaotic change. A well-governed European colony was preferable to a volatile revolutionary republic unless it was certain that the new government was legitimate and

viable. By taking such a stance the administration was demonstrating its willingness to ignore the calls of popular opinion in preference for a policy they believed to be better for the United States. It may also, however, have revealed a naivety in Cleveland's and Olney's reasoning and a failure to understand the nature of the rebel cause.

The decision to suggest reforms aimed at granting Cuba autonomy was a logical one for Cleveland and Olney, conforming with their stand-pat instincts. An autonomous Cuba still existing under Spanish sovereignty appeared, in many respects, to be an ideal solution from the position of the United States. Olney's note had spoken of his concern at the continuing destruction of the island's industry and the indiscriminate nature of these attacks, which saw American investors suffer equally with their Spanish counterparts. It had also raised the prospect of the island being engulfed in a civil war between the white and black communities. Both these issues could only be secured against by the existence of a sound governmental authority and, since by Olney's own admission the rebels seemed incapable of creating one for themselves, the continuation of Spanish rule was the most viable means of providing it. Olney was aware, however, that the continuation of Spanish rule in its current form was unlikely to be acceptable to the rebels, and so real political reform amounting to autonomy was the only potential means of bringing peace while maintaining Spanish sovereignty. In this case, though, it seems that Olney had misjudged the rebels. In his letter to de Lôme, the secretary had referred to the fact that the 1868–1878 insurrection had only been pacified by promises of political reforms that were subsequently not fulfilled, but his suggestions to the Spanish government were predicated on such a policy being successful for a second time, which was highly unlikely, given the greater strength of the 1895 insurrection and the sense of betrayal harbored by the rebels after the previous promises. This raises doubts about the seriousness of Olney's whole proposal, not least because his own note repeatedly emphasized the strength of the rebel forces and the inability of Spain to bring the insurrection to an end through military force. Given the vagueness of Olney's plan—lacking in any specific detail and placing the entire burden of creating a policy acceptable to the rebels on the Spanish government—it is tempting to question whether it was indeed a serious proposal or, rather, a thinly veiled hint that the United States desired that the situation be resolved quickly. On balance, though, Olney's proposal should be considered a serious one. Throughout their time in office, Cleveland and Olney had preached a reluctance to interfere in the internal affairs of other nations and, while their record had perhaps

not always perfectly conformed to this position, even in Hawaii—the most flagrant case of interference—they had only interfered to correct damage already done by the United States. Despite this rhetoric—and the genuine desire to respect national sovereignties that inspired it—in many respects the entire foreign policy history of the second Cleveland administration was defined by minor interference with the internal affairs of other nations, and a willingness to interfere with Spanish policy in Cuba would be demonstrated again only two weeks after Olney's letter to de Lôme. On April 18 he wrote a private letter to the Spanish minister questioning the wisdom of the arrest by the Spanish authorities of the Protestant Bishop Alberto Jesus Diaz, a naturalized American and open sympathizer with the Cuban rebels, even going so far as to state:

I venture to suggest the inexpediency of holding him. To hold him as a prisoner for any length of time will be certain to excite the religious sentiment of the country unless the reasons for so doing are very plain and are publicly manifested.³⁷

Two days later he was even more explicit declaring:

If you realize where your interests and mine lie, you will have Diaz and his brother landed in the United States within the next twenty-four hours. It makes little difference what they have done or what they have not done. A more troublesome and dangerous hornets' nest could not have been stirred up than has been by the arrest of Diaz.³⁸

These were not merely disinterested expressions of concern; they were powerful suggestions of the direction the American government desired Spanish policy to take and, thus, an indication of a new determination within the administration to make its feelings known on Cuban matters. Clearly, by April 1896 Olney was willing to bend the traditional rules of diplomacy a little in the interest of restoring order in Cuba. Suggesting to a European power such as Spain a fully formed policy aimed at solving the entire conflict was, however, still a step too far. As Olney himself declared in the April 4 note, "the United States has no designs upon Cuba and no designs against the sovereignty of Spain."³⁹ Undoubtedly, Cleveland and Olney were serious in their desire to see peace restored to Cuba, and the plan Olney suggested promised to fulfil all of their wishes: a restoration of peace, a stable government providing a safe market for trade and investment, the expansion of democratic rights within the American hemisphere, and

a resolution that avoided the prospect of racial violence. That Olney was not certain of success is demonstrated by his advice to Spain to act swiftly, before the rebels could attribute any such offer of negotiation to Spanish weakness or defeat; but the autonomy policy matched so well with the administration's conservative instincts that it seems he and Cleveland considered it worth proposing.⁴⁰

At the same time as Olney was preparing his note to Minister Dupuy de Lôme, he and Cleveland were also planning another move that demonstrated the increased interest the administration had in the Cuban conflict and its resolution. On the evening of April 7, Cleveland—with Olney probably in attendance—met with Fitzhugh Lee of Virginia, nephew of the legendary Civil War General Robert E. Lee, and himself once a Confederate cavalry commander in his own right. The purpose of the meeting was to offer Lee the position of consul general in Havana, and the correspondence between Cleveland and Olney leaves no doubt that the appointment was more than simply filling a vacant diplomatic post. On April 7 Cleveland expressed his hope that a private meeting might mean that “the matter may be settled without newspaper nonsense and he might return home without comment.”⁴¹ Two days later he wrote again, saying “I suppose the Havana matter must wait, now that we have entered upon it by way of Virginia.”⁴² While it appears that the exact nature of the “Havana matter”—or what alternative measures may have been considered relating to it—must remain tantalizingly unknowable, it is clear that Cleveland had a definite purpose in mind for Lee beyond normal consular duties. In light of the more assertive posture adopted with the April 4 letter to Minister Dupuy de Lôme, it is logical to assume that the appointment was a revival of the proposal to send a representative to directly investigate the true situation in Cuba. That could have been achieved simply by sending a special envoy as originally planned, but it is likely that Cleveland and Olney hoped to avoid the potential rift with the Spanish government that might have been created by sending an envoy with the sole remit of investigating whether Spain's own reports of the situation were reliable. The appointment of a new consul general would not cause such diplomatic issues, especially if his secondary purpose were kept secret. The fact that Lee was given the position of consul general might suggest another intention from the president, however. As the senior American diplomat in Cuba, Lee would become a key figure in the implementation of American policy. By placing in that position a man specially recruited for the role, it appears Cleveland and Olney were seeking to ensure greater control over events in Havana. This would be a logical reaction to growing

concern at the treatment of American citizens and property in Cuba, but would also be a sensible move if the administration anticipated implementing a more assertive policy in relation to Cuba. Indeed, the move may have been made in anticipation of a favorable response to Olney's suggestion of the United States providing its support to Spanish proposals of political reform.

In the event, neither the proposal to Spain nor the appointment of Lee would have the consequences Cleveland and Olney desired, but it is significant that they came about at all. A variety of causes, both foreign and domestic, can be identified that may have played a role in convincing the administration to change its stance on Cuba. The simplest of these relate to the situation in Cuba, and two of them derive from the letter to Minister Dupuy de Lôme on April 4. In it Olney reported that a "competent authority" had predicted to him that Cuba's usual annual product of \$80 million to \$100 million was likely to fall in 1896 to at most \$20 million, with that figure set to decline still further, as crops were not replanted and plantations and industries had been destroyed.⁴³ With capital fleeing the island and no indication of further investment replacing it, Olney was clearly concerned by the prospect of one of the vital U.S. trading partners suffering complete economic ruin. This prospect would be raised again in Cleveland's annual message of 1896, when he suggested that the damage to the Cuban sugar industry was in danger of becoming so great as to make it uneconomical to rebuild it in the future.⁴⁴ Clearly the preservation of American trade and investment was the central motivation for Cleveland and Olney, and it is possible that the continuing destruction of Cuba's agriculture and industry was what prompted them to act, but this alone does not explain the timing of the action. One possible explanation is revealed by an earlier section of Olney's April 4 letter. Having explained the purpose of the letter—the president's desire that the rebellion be settled—the secretary of state opened his summary of the administration's position by reminding de Lôme of their conversations the previous year:

It is now some nine or ten months since the nature and prospects of the insurrection were first discussed between us. In explanation of its rapid and, up to that time, quite unopposed growth and progress, you called attention to the rainy season which from May or June until November renders regular military operations impracticable. Spain was pouring such numbers of troops into Cuba that your theory and opinion that, when they could be used in an active campaign, the insurrection would be almost instantly suppressed, seemed reasonable and probable. . . .

It is impossible to deny that the expectations thus entertained by you in the summer and fall of 1895, and shared not merely by all Spaniards but by most disinterested observers as well, have been completely disappointed.⁴⁵

In Olney's own words, therefore, the United States had accepted Spain's assurances that the rebellion would be swiftly crushed once the rainy season ended, but with the dry season nearly over and a new rainy season in sight, the U.S. government was now disappointed to observe that nothing of the kind had happened. By itself, this failure would not justify interfering with Spanish policy, but the continuing destruction of property (both Cuban and American) and the subsequent damage to trade with the United States, was sufficient cause to intervene, at least in the limited manner that Olney proposed.

Olney's letter to Minister Dupuy de Lôme still does not fully explain why the administration chose to act in early April 1896 rather than waiting for the start of the next rainy season or acting a month earlier and thus giving Spain more time to consider the implications of the change while still being in a position to make decisive moves militarily. It can be argued that the timing was of no further significance than that outlined by Olney, but it appears likely that other factors also played a part. On a practical level, Lars Schoultz has argued that the change of stance coincided with the British agreement to negotiate over the Venezuelan Border Dispute, which freed the administration to adopt a more active stance toward the Cuban revolt.⁴⁶ Such a theory is difficult to either prove or disprove: The Venezuelan situation had only rarely taken up sizable portions of Cleveland's and Olney's time; this was due to the almost total lack of urgency with which it was treated by their British counterparts and, if anything, the opening of negotiations on the subject gave Olney considerably more work to do from April 1896 on. From a position of international politics, however, it is not impossible that Cleveland wished to be entirely certain that the Venezuelan matter would be settled in a manner agreeable to the United States before acting on Cuba. This would ensure that the British government was not granted a new opportunity to exert leverage over the United States. Beyond the logistics of the war and other calls on the State Department's time, one other development stands out as a potential reason for the administration's decision to develop a more active policy on Cuba. Beginning in December 1895, members of both houses of Congress began proposing resolutions that sought, in a variety of ways, to influence the policy of the United States toward the conflict. Through the winter of 1895–1896 a concerted effort

evolved aimed at securing recognition of the Cuban insurgents as belligerents, a movement that reached a shambolic climax in the early days of March 1896. On March 4 the *New York Times* reported that the mood in Congress had dramatically shifted after a flurry of activity so precipitous it had left Senators uncertain as to which chamber's resolutions were under consideration at any given moment. In the cold light of day, the paper reported, "Not one man in ten of those who voted in favor of recognition of the belligerency of the Cubans could tell why he voted to afford those rights, except that he sympathized with the people who were endeavoring to get rid of Spanish rule in Cuba."⁴⁷ The article closed by suggesting that public sentiment in favor of the resolutions was declining and that Cleveland, who had been rumored to support the resolutions, now wanted them shelved, with the result that any resolution passed would simply result in making the United States look foolish, since the president would not act on it. On these last points there is reason to believe that the *New York Times* was mistaken. While it is not possible at this distance to distinguish whether there truly was a change in American public opinion in early 1896, if there was it did not last long. More importantly there is no evidence that Cleveland ever welcomed the prospect of congressional resolutions that were intended to dictate his course of action. Equally, if congressional leaders really believed that passing resolutions would be rendered pointless by the president's refusal to act, then they had changed their minds by the time the next session of Congress opened in December when the question of congressional control of foreign policy would become one of the key debates of Cleveland's second term. Whatever the case, the debating of the resolutions continued throughout the spring, during which time it seems that Cleveland's feelings became clearer to both Congress and the media.⁴⁸ On May 21, the *New York Times* published another article that predicted Cleveland's supporters in Congress would be able to postpone action on any resolutions until the session was adjourned. Cleveland, the article declared, "does not care to be bullied or worried into the recognition of Cuban belligerency, or to appear to be influenced by Congress" and was instead awaiting reports from Lee and the coming of the rainy season, which would allow the rebels to demonstrate their capacity for self-government before acting.⁴⁹ This latter point was key, the *New York Times* reported, since "The President and Secretary Olney have never lacked sympathy with the insurgents; but they have not proposed to violate international law and the rules of neutrality before it appeared that the Cubans were capable of maintaining an independent government." This was a fine

definition of Cleveland's and Olney's position—and indeed of much of their foreign policy—but presumably the author was unaware of the proposal made by Olney to Minister Dupuy de Lôme in the letter of April 4. In light of the debates in Congress—and especially given the volatility of mood among members, as reported by the *New York Times*—the April 4 letter takes on further significance. It appears likely that Cleveland was not as unmoved by congressional pressure as was reported, and that the timing of the change of policy was no coincidence. It is probable that he and Olney were motivated to act by the fear that, if they did not, Congress might force their hand. This is borne out further by Olney's language in the April 4 letter, in which he described the continued failure to express the president's concern at the situation in Cuba as “a dereliction of duty to the Government of the United States,” before noting that the conflict had “led many good and honest persons to insist that intervention to terminate the conflict is the immediate and imperative duty of the United States.”⁵⁰ This implied that the president was feeling pressured to act, even if only by his own sense of duty to his government.

It is reasonable to assume that the agitation in Congress in the spring of 1896 played a significant part in motivating Cleveland and Olney to alter their stance on Cuba, but it is also fair to say that the policy change was not simply the result of domestic politics. In both Olney's April 4 letter and in Cleveland's annual message of 1896 a great deal was made of the permanent damage being caused to Cuba's economy by the war, while both messages also painted a similarly bleak picture of the long-term prospects of victory for either side. The April 4 letter in particular raised the possibility that the insurrection might become bogged down in another ten-year quagmire, as had happened in the 1868–1878 rebellion.⁵¹ Since the letter was not intended for public view, and the annual message came several months after Spain had rejected the offer of American good offices—and weeks after a decisive Republican victory in the presidential election of 1896—there was nothing to be gained politically from either statement. Cleveland and Olney were genuinely concerned by the prospect of Cuba being ruined by the war and the potential effects this might have on the American economy. Pressure from the discussions in Congress may have been a trigger for the change in administration policy, but it was events in Cuba—and concern for the future—that motivated it.

If the events of April 1896, had given Cleveland hope that progress might be made in Cuba, then the summer was to prove a disappointment. In a matter of weeks in June and July the administration had their proposal for reforms rejected by Spain and began to experience

trouble with Fitzhugh Lee in Havana. Compounding these problems, however, was a domestic political disaster for Cleveland that would have profound consequences for his policy in Cuba.

Minister Dupuy de Lôme's reply to Olney's offer of American good offices with the rebels in support of Spanish proposals of reform was dated June 4, exactly two months after Olney's letter.⁵² Given the delay in replying, it is reasonable to assume that the secretary of state must have been disappointed to discover that his suggestion was being rebuffed with a mixture of diplomatic courtesy and pointed advice as to American conduct. De Lôme himself put the delay down to the seriousness of the matter under discussion, then launched into a vindication of Spanish rule in Cuba, declaring it to be "one of the most liberal political systems in the world."⁵³ In brief, the Spanish reply was a reiteration of their long-standing policy that there would be no negotiation until the rebels laid down their arms, but the Spanish government also took the opportunity to lecture Olney on American actions and how best the United States could assist in bringing about peace. The reply declared that the American proposal could not succeed, since the rebels did not believe that the United States was genuinely neutral, but actually wanted to take possession of the island for itself. Spain went on to suggest that if the United States government really wished to help in bringing the insurrection to an end, then it should further step up its efforts to counter filibustering expeditions—offering to provide any intelligence that might possibly be of help in this endeavor. The reply closed with a declaration that came close to accusing the U.S. government of negligence in its support of Spain's legal rule and in its tacit support for the rebels:

When the Government of the United States shall at once be convinced of our being in the right, and when that honest conviction shall in some manner be made public, but little more will be required in order that all those in Cuba who are not merely striving to accomplish the total ruin of the beautiful country in which they were born, being then hopeless of outside help and powerless by themselves, will lay down their arms.⁵⁴

Minister de Lôme's reply thus combined to disappoint Olney's hopes, both for an immediate change in Spanish policy in Cuba and for any prospect of cooperation between the United States and Spain to bring about change in the future. Of more interest than a fairly predictable insistence on maintaining established policy by the Spanish regime, which had long since resorted to stubbornness in the face of a problem that could not be solved to its liking, is the fact that the June 4 reply

also made use of the Cleveland administration's own predilection for legality in its argument against offering the rebels reforms. In his letter of April 4 Olney had called "immaterial" the question of whether the rebels could be legally considered belligerents, doing so on the grounds that the only reason why they could not be was that they had not established a central government.⁵⁵ Olney's point had been that, even if the rebels were not legally belligerents, they were militarily powerful enough to warrant an outside attempt at a negotiated peace. De Lôme, however, insisted that the rebels' inability to form a central government was anything but immaterial, since it demonstrated that they were not in a position to negotiate political reforms and would not be capable of enacting any that they were offered.⁵⁶ Hammering his point home, he also noted that "their systematic campaign of destruction against all the industries on the island . . . keep them without the pale of the universally recognized rules of international law." Not only was Minister de Lôme rejecting Cleveland's and Olney's proposal, but to fundamentally question their actions he was employing the legal framework that had been such a vital part of their own foreign policymaking.

The hope of working with Spain to bring about a conclusion to the conflict in Cuba had been dashed, and the appointment of Fitzhugh Lee proved to be equally disappointing. The new consul general had taken to his work enthusiastically, but it quickly became apparent to Cleveland and Olney that their man in Havana was not working to their agenda. In June Lee's dispatches became increasingly enthusiastic in their advocacy of U.S. intervention in Cuba, with the ultimate goal of annexation. His reports to the War Department proved similarly lacking in useful detail, but enthusiastic in their suggestions of how the United States might seek to benefit from the conflict.⁵⁷ This prompted Olney to call the wayward consul back to his duties. In a lengthy instruction written on June 29, Olney called attention to the fact that Lee had not left the confines of Havana. Reminding him that the State Department required more from him than simple representation with the Spanish authorities, Olney wrote: "[I]t is quite material to ascertain what sort of civil government and administration, if any, prevail in that large part of the island which is under the control of the insurgents."⁵⁸ Any doubts that the secretary was unhappy with Lee's efforts to date were dispelled by the listing of 12 questions relating to the rebel government. These questions ranged widely, from simply establishing whether any *de facto* government existed—and, if so, where it met—to seeking to ascertain whether the government was enforcing and administering the law, collecting taxes, and delivering the mail. For Olney to not simply request more information,

but to painstakingly list all of the questions his subordinate was not answering was an unmistakable rebuke to Lee and an order to focus on the task in hand and leave policymaking to Washington. It may even be that Olney was seeking to force Lee to leave the confines of Havana in order to remove the temptation and opportunity to meddle in matters of policy. Whatever the secretary of state's exact objectives, they were not fulfilled; Lee's unwanted suggestions of intervention—perhaps in the form of the purchase of the island from Spain by the United States—continued to arrive. By the second week of July the consul was reporting that feelings were running high in Havana and recommended that the U.S. government offer to buy the island and, if refused, declare Cuban independence.⁵⁹ In preparation for this, Lee recommended stationing a warship at Key West, Florida, from where it could be rapidly deployed at his own request. As Eggert notes, this proposal raised troubling memories of Minister Stevens's actions in Hawaii in 1893, but even without that precedent it was never likely to prove popular with Cleveland or his advisors. On July 14, Olney reluctantly wrote to Secretary of the Navy Hilary A. Herbert asking for his views on Lee's proposal.⁶⁰ On the same date, Olney mentioned the matter in a letter to Cleveland, who had left Washington for his summer house at Buzzard's Bay, Massachusetts.⁶¹ Both letters informed their readers—in nearly identical phrases—that “at first blush” Olney was not in favor of the plan and, clearly, he did not require a great deal of convincing that his first blush was correct, since his reply to Lee was dispatched without waiting for the president to comment. In a reply that carefully avoided the subject of Lee's seeking to gain direct control over a warship, Olney was still pointed enough in his reasoning to leave little doubt as to his low opinion of the scheme. Informing the consul that the USS *Maine*—“which is far more powerful than any vessel the Spanish fleet have”—was already stationed at Key West, and that the navy could assemble a sufficient fleet to command the waters around Cuba in a matter of days, he closed with an observation that demonstrated the administration's position while also bordering on sarcasm by suggesting that the Spanish navy should have little trouble providing security, since the rebels had no navy of their own.⁶²

Although Olney did not wait to hear Cleveland's views before replying to Lee, they are still of interest for what they tell us of the president's thinking in the summer of 1896. On July 13, a letter to Olney ranging across a wide variety of subjects, both foreign and domestic, had included the statement: “I am thinking a great deal about Cuba but am as far as ever from seeing the place where we can get in.”⁶³ His reply to Olney's reporting of Lee's proposal demonstrated that

this search for options was genuine and that the president was indeed taking a variety of suggestions seriously:

I am a little surprised at Consul General Lee's dispatch. He seems to have fallen into the style of rolling intervention like a sweet morsel under his tongue. I do not think the purchase plan would suit at all though it is perhaps worth thinking of. Many of the fairest talkers in favor of intervening (Sherman for instance) are opposed to incorporating the country into the United States system and I am afraid it would be entering upon dangerous ground. It would seem absurd for us to buy the Island and present it to the people now inhabiting it, and put its government and management in their hands.⁶⁴

Clearly Cleveland was unimpressed by the consul-general's conduct, but he was not dismissing out of hand his ideas—all of which had been proposed before by others in Washington or the press. This brief extract, alone, demonstrates the plethora of competing voices Cleveland believed he had to satisfy; small wonder then that—with the president lacking a positive agenda of his own on Cuba—American policy reached stalemate. This dilemma was neatly illustrated by Cleveland's direct response to Lee's proposal:

I do not like the suggestion of a Man of War &c though of course prudent measures might well be taken to provide in good faith for the safety of our people and interests in case Spain failed in that behalf; but I do not want now anything of that kind made a convenient excuse for trouble with Spain.⁶⁵

Cleveland, with impressive foresight, was concerned about the potential consequences of introducing American warships into the volatile situation in Cuba, even if it seems that his concern was more related to the potential insult to Spain than to any specific fear that the warship might itself become a flashpoint for conflict.⁶⁶ That same volatility, however—coupled with the difficulty of obtaining reliable information from men like Lee, who clearly had agendas of their own—made him wary of the risk to the safety of Americans in Cuba and unsure of how best to proceed.

* * *

Lee's attempts to influence policy in the summer of 1896 had little long-term effect, but they are indicative of a larger problem facing the Cleveland administration. Throughout his second term Cleveland

and his advisors had put forward a new template for American foreign policy, one based on non-interference, international law, and moral probity. In Cuba it became clear that their attempts to convince the broader public to follow them had failed. Fitzhugh Lee is a prime example of a key difficulty they faced in enacting the new policy: the need for reliable subordinates who could be trusted to follow orders from Washington without seeking to expound their own agendas either for personal gain or for the perceived benefit of the nation or their party. Lee—like many members of Congress and leaders of the press—had his own opinions on how best the situation in Cuba might be managed for the U.S. benefit. This in itself made him an unfortunate choice for the role Cleveland and Olney desired him to perform, but a greater problem was his eventual revelation to Olney that his proposals had been made with a view to domestic political considerations.⁶⁷ Failure to convince the country to follow on matters of foreign policy was only a minor facet of a far-greater problem facing the administration. By the summer of 1896 the continuing struggle of the American economy and the ongoing controversy over the methods adopted by Cleveland to counter it were hotly debated topics. More importantly for the president, his actions in forcing through the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act and in insisting on the introduction of a new tariff bill—then allowing it to become law without his signature after the bill was savaged by amendments—had lost him support in Congress and opened damaging fissures in the Democratic Party. These fissures had only deepened as Cleveland's attempts to stabilize the economy and protect the position of gold as the basis for the currency continued in 1896. Since the economic disasters of 1893, commentators had been deeply concerned by the declining gold reserves in the U.S. Treasury, with a particular fear that if the reserves fell below \$100 million it would cause lasting damage to investor confidence. In a bid to rebuild that confidence, Cleveland authorized the sale of government bonds to investors. The first two bond sales were by open subscription, but their failure to stem the outflow of gold from the Treasury necessitated a change of tactics. With public subscribers largely exhausted by the first two sales, and a pressing need not just to restore the Treasury's holdings, but to curtail future withdrawals, Cleveland opted to negotiate directly with the nation's financial community in the hope of bringing in gold from overseas and gaining the bankers' support in stabilizing the Treasury. A third issue of \$65 million of bonds restored the gold reserve to above the \$100 million mark and ended gold exports to Europe, but when the financial syndicate that had bought the bonds almost instantly sold them

on for a profit there were howls of protest from the Republican and Populist press. When a fourth and final bond issue was made in February 1896, Cleveland and Secretary of the Treasury John G. Carlisle were determined not to repeat the public-relations disaster of a year earlier, and the bonds were again sold by public subscription, but the damage to the Democratic Party was already done. The bond issues saved the gold reserve, but in a party increasingly split between those dedicated to a currency based on silver and those still loyal to gold, Cleveland had opened himself to accusations that he was controlled by New York's financiers and had further alienated supporters of silver. The Democratic National Convention met in Chicago on July 7. By the time it closed on July 11 any lingering hopes that Cleveland might be called upon to serve a third term of office had been dashed. Far worse, the man who was chosen to be the Democratic candidate for the 1896 presidential election was the charismatic young exponent of silver currency, William Jennings Bryan. Any doubt that his nomination was anything but a repudiation of Cleveland's record was comprehensively dispelled by an election platform that "[damned] the administration and its works, virtually read Cleveland out of the party, condemned the administration's monetary policy, [and] denounced 'government by injunction.'"⁶⁸ Given the obvious fractures that had developed within the Democratic Party during Cleveland's term in office it is a little odd that he himself seems to have been surprised by the development.⁶⁹ He wrote to Olney that he was "so dazed on the political situation that I am in no condition for speech or thought on the subject."⁷⁰ Olney himself clearly suspected betrayal from within the administration, stating that "The culmination of events at Chicago shows us what Secretary [of Agriculture] Morton has been doing all this time in that city. Doubtless he was one of the enthusiastic individuals who helped carry Bryan about on their shoulders."⁷¹ In this sense of betrayal, if not the specific allegation of it, he may well have been joined by Cleveland. Certainly the president was clearly both hurt and angered by the rejection, adopting a fatalist satisfaction in the troubles ahead for those who had wronged him:

It is certainly an ill wind that blows no good to anyone. Has it occurred to you that in view of the outcome at Chicago no one can be fool enough to charge against this administration the disasters that await the Democratic party?⁷²

The 1896 Democratic National Convention was a pivotal moment in the history of the Democratic Party. When the dust settled,

Cleveland and his supporters had been sidelined and the Populist movement had been largely absorbed into the party. The center of power within the party shifted toward the South and West and away from the pro-business Democrats of the Northeast. Amid the drama it went unnoticed that the repudiation of Cleveland's record as president also resulted in the repudiation of his nascent plan for American foreign policy. In the summer of 1896—and, indeed, throughout his second presidency to varying degrees—Cleveland found himself in a position in which he was simultaneously losing out by attempting to implement a foreign policy that did not seek to garner him domestic political support and also by battling with members of his own party—exemplified by Fitzhugh Lee, but also including members of Congress such as John T. Morgan—who had their own ideas on how American foreign policy should be conducted, sometimes for the benefit of the Democratic Party, sometimes for the benefit of their regions or themselves. It would be dramatically overstating the case, however, to suggest that a more flexible approach to foreign policy might have saved Cleveland's position on other matters. The fractures within the Democratic Party—always a coalition subject to internal contradictions due to its powerbases in the Northeast, South, and Southwest—were far too serious, and the destabilizing influence of the arguments over monetary policy and the tariff too strong, to be overcome by the relatively cosmetic benefits that might have been gained through foreign policy. Only by openly seeking to annex Cuba, and thus prompting war with Spain, might Cleveland have united his party and the nation behind him, and neither prospect was guaranteed to win significant support from all sections of the party without alienating others (in particular the Eastern financiers, virtually the only remaining constituency whose support the president could rely on). In any case, such policies were anathema to Cleveland personally. Ultimately, the Democratic National Convention resulted in the rejection of Cleveland's template, but only as a secondary casualty to the rejection of his financial policies.

* * *

There have been few U.S. presidents, if any, who have found themselves in as weak a position politically as Grover Cleveland in the final nine months of his second term. His period as a lame duck president began nearly four months before the presidential election of November 1896, after the Democratic National Convention confirmed that, whatever the outcome of this election, the victor would not be seen as

Cleveland's political successor. It was only natural that this development affected the administration's actions for the remainder of the term. Cleveland was presented with a variety of options. If he had had any designs on Cuban independence or annexation, then he might have taken this lack of a successor as an opportunity to act decisively to secure it, in the knowledge that should it fail the next man in the White House would be left to pick up the pieces. Conversely, he might have washed his hands of the entire affair, knowing that there was nothing for him or his few remaining supporters to gain from any success, and glad to be rid of a vexing problem. In the event, he took neither option, but instead chose a middle course, even if it veered more toward inaction than action.

There is no evidence to suggest that Cleveland ever seriously contemplated intervention against Spanish rule in Cuba. For the most part this can be attributed to his fundamental opposition to American interference in the affairs of others, but the continued cost of policing the U.S. shores against filibusters and the ongoing destruction of the island's industry and agriculture meant that alternative solutions must have been open to consideration. One such solution—as presented by Fitzhugh Lee among others—was to purchase the island, but this option had been dismissed by Cleveland in July 1896—days after the Democratic Convention—on the grounds that it would be “dangerous” for the United States to seek to integrate Cuba into its political system and “absurd” to buy the island and then present it to its inhabitants.⁷³ Presumably the absurdity to which Cleveland referred was the notion of buying the island only to instantly give it away, but no less a reason for his reluctance to countenance such a move was the continuing failure of the Cuban rebels to establish a viable government. The lack of a stable governmental authority, which Olney had acknowledged in his April 4 letter to de Lôme—and which the Spanish minister had subsequently seized upon in his reply—was not rectified in 1896. Instead, the military commanders became even more dominant, ignoring the calls of civilian leaders and financial backers to end the campaign of destruction.⁷⁴ In his annual message to Congress of 1896, Cleveland—already aware that new attempts were being made in Congress to force him to recognize Cuba's independence—declared that the commander in chief of the rebel forces had demanded that the civilian government cease to make any attempt to exercise authority, leaving it “a government merely on paper.”⁷⁵ Outside the limited enclaves of Spanish rule, Cleveland declared, “the entire country is either given over to anarchy or is subject to the military occupation of one or the other party.” For Cleveland and Olney this was conclusive:

International law did not justify the recognition of a military insurrection that lacked a civil authority capable of upholding the rule of law, and any attempt at recognition would be recklessly irresponsible toward the Cuban population (and American investors), just as it had been in Brazil three years earlier. It may well be that, had Lee been able to categorically demonstrate that the rebels deserved American recognition, even Cleveland would have overcome his stand-pat conservatism and granted it, but with fresh reports suggesting that, if anything, the insurgency in Cuba was becoming less worthy of such recognition, that path was closed. Later in the annual message the president noted the various calls for recognition, first of Cuban belligerency, then of full Cuban independence, but directly rejected them on the grounds that "imperfect and restricted as the Spanish government of the island may be, no other exists there." In this instance the suggestion of buying the island was deemed "possibly worthy of consideration," but accompanied by the caveat that there was no evidence that Spain was willing to sell. Whether this constituted a greater openness to the idea than had been displayed in July, or simply a less-frank appraisal of the difficulties, is open to debate. Finally, Cleveland raised the possibility of an arbitrary intervention by the U.S. military to end the rebellion. He made no comment on the likelihood of an American victory if the intervention, as seemed likely, resulted in war with Spain, but instead made a declaration that might have characterized the foreign policy of his entire second term:

The United States has, nevertheless, a character to maintain as a nation, which plainly dictates that right and not might should be the rule of its conduct. Further, though the United States is not a nation to which peace is a necessity, it is in truth the most pacific of powers and desires nothing so much as to live in amity with all the world. Its own ample and diversified domains satisfy all possible longings for territory, preclude all dreams of conquest, and prevent any casting of covetous eyes upon neighboring regions, however attractive.

In their immediate context these words can be seen as Cleveland seeking to vindicate his position on Cuba, but in a larger sense they can also be viewed as a final attempt to present a vision for how the United States should utilize its new power. From a man who had often openly venerated the past in his formulation of foreign policy, there are unmistakable echoes of Washington's Farewell Address as, a century later, Cleveland sought to counsel the next generation of politicians on the direction the nation should take.

The combination of the perceived unworthiness of the Cuban rebels to receive independence, and the clear deficiencies in all of the obvious courses of action he might have taken, suggests that Cleveland was not so much unwilling to act as he was paralyzed by his own belief, best summed up by the statement from the letter of July 13, already quoted, that he could not see “the place where we can get in.”⁷⁶ This is almost certainly the dominant factor in his reasoning on Cuba, but it is very possible that two other factors supported him in his decision not to act. The first is the simple fact that, as a president without even a potential political heir, he saw little incentive to begin a course of action that almost certainly would not reach fruition before he left office and, therefore, would potentially serve to provide the next occupant of the White House with a victory for which the Cleveland administration was unlikely to be credited. It might also be more charitably argued that, with time for decisive action rapidly running out before the end of his term in office, Cleveland was seeking to avoid setting the United States on any course that might have created difficulties for the next president. Such an assumption might grant him too much credit, but the man known for his courageous honesty and probity may also have had personal reasons for not wishing to present the man who came after him with a situation from which he would wish to extract himself. In both of his presidencies Cleveland had found some of his first acts to be reversing foreign policy positions set by his predecessor. Upon taking office in 1885 he withdrew the Frelinghuysen–Zavala Treaty from Senate consideration because it formed an entangling alliance with Nicaragua, and he declined to send the Berlin Convention (which sought to maintain the Congo Basin as a neutral territory for international trade) to the Senate on the grounds that it bound the United States to uphold the neutrality of a “remote valley,” thus constituting “an alliance whose responsibilities we are not in a position to assume.”⁷⁷ Eight years later, Cleveland’s second term began with the decision to reverse the Harrison administration’s 1893 attempts to annex Hawaii. Both moves had forced Cleveland to begin his presidencies with a negative decision that was bound to alienate sections of Congress and the public and, in the case of Hawaii, left him with an unsolvable problem that lasted the better part of a year. It is quite possible that Cleveland considered that such a volatile issue as Cuba did not become a similar impediment to the next president. Ultimately, though, the fact that President McKinley took more than a year after his inauguration to act decisively on Cuba—during which time the sinking of the USS *Maine* in Havana

harbor introduced a powerful impetus to act—would suggest that the difficulty of choosing how best to act was the major reason for delay.

From this we might conclude that Cleveland must have been tempted not to act at all on Cuba after the summer of 1896, but the final months of his presidency still saw some efforts to bring about a resolution. In July Cleveland accepted a request by the Spanish government that he make a new, stronger proclamation against filibusters, although Olney's concern at what he perceived as Spain's suggesting policies to the U.S. president caused the request to be toned down before the final version was sent and, therefore, resulted in a proclamation that, while stronger than its predecessor of 1895, did not satisfy the Spanish government's wishes.⁷⁸ More significantly, the winter of 1896–1897 saw a new effort to convince Spain to grant reforms in Cuban rule. This effort had its clearest demonstration in the 1896 annual message to Congress, which Cleveland and Olney chose as the opportunity to apply fresh pressure to the Spanish government. It appears that the section of the message relating to Cuba was originally drafted by the secretary of state before being polished by Cleveland.

In the message's final form, direct pressure on Spain was limited to criticism of the Spanish government's insistence that any negotiations be contingent on the rebels first laying down their arms, and the revelation that the United States had offered to guarantee any offer of reforms leading to autonomy and awaited Spain's reply.⁷⁹ Also significant was the fact that the message laid the administration's chosen policy of reforms—aimed at granting Cuba autonomy under Spanish sovereignty—before the public and the press, simultaneously further increasing the pressure on Spain and forestalling the growing calls in Congress for the United States to directly intervene. Besides these revelations, the message contained a strange mix of flattery and warnings to the Spanish government. Having declared that the need to maintain America's high character as a nation prevented it from forcibly intervening to end the conflict, the message proceeded to inform readers that, given the provocation of the rebellions of 1868–1878 and 1895, "No other great power, it may safely be said, under circumstances of similar perplexity, would have manifested the same restraint and the same patient endurance." It is interesting to observe here the strong correlation between this statement and Cleveland's insistence that the United States showed restraint in its dealings with Hawaii in 1893. Once again Cleveland's policy was not simply based upon the assumption that resisting the temptation to intervene for American gain was the best policy, but that the simple act of resisting that temptation was in itself an admirable act. Having praised the noble

self-restraint of the United States, the annual message continued with a rather strange salute to Spain in the form of a declaration of the continuing respect and regard of the American people for Spain due to her role in the discovery of the western hemisphere and “the great qualities of the Spanish people,” including their patriotism and their chivalry. One can only assume that such flattery—which, considering the actions of Congress and the American press, not to mention the fact that the president had stated previously that the American people naturally supported any people who struggled for “better and freer government,” was clearly not well supported by fact—was hoped to make Spain more pliable to Cleveland’s request. This interpretation is supported by the president’s salute to “the cheerful resolution with which vast bodies of men are sent across thousands of miles of ocean and an enormous debt accumulated that the costly possession of the gem of the Antilles may still hold its place in the Spanish crown”—a pointed reminder that the war in Cuba was damaging Spain almost as much as it was damaging the island.

Presumably it was hoped that such flattery and reminders of the U.S. good faith would induce the Spanish government to see reason, but Cleveland and Olney also offered a more concrete incentive to seek to bring matters to a resolution. The message declared that, while the United States had shown restraint and was offering its good offices to help secure a settlement, there could be no guarantee that this would continue indefinitely. The bleak picture of destruction presented earlier in the message carried the obvious connotation that the United States was concerned for its trade and investments; that being the case, Spain had to show evidence that it could solve the conflict by its own means or the United States would feel obliged to intervene. From early drafts it appears that Olney wanted to make a bold statement of American intent, with one suggestion being that progress needed to be evidenced by the new year. Since this would have given Spain only three weeks to bring about a notable change, it was never a realistic proposal and, either due to this fact or simply due to an unwillingness to pressure the Spanish government unnecessarily, the ultimatum was replaced by the warning that American patience had its limits.⁸⁰

Also considered, but ultimately rejected, was a reference to the Monroe Doctrine. It is unclear who made the decision not to raise the subject of the Monroe Doctrine or why, but it would be consistent with Cleveland’s long-standing reluctance to invoke a topic he felt he did not completely understand. It is also indicative of a dilemma that confronted the administration after its aggressive handling of the Venezuelan Border Dispute: Having invoked the Monroe Doctrine

once in relation to a European power's actions in the Americas, were they now obliged to do so again? Some members of the public clearly believed that the forceful stand taken on Venezuela should be adopted again in relation to Cuba—an editor of a German-language newspaper wrote to Cleveland during Congress's first flurry of resolution drafting in the spring of 1896 declaring that "Your prompt and decisive course in the Venezuela matter which electrified this whole nation from sea to sea is undoubtedly the cause of this [pro-intervention] sentiment."⁸¹ For many of those similarly electrified—as well as politicians and newspaper editors who agreed with them—the Monroe Doctrine appeared to be a convenient tool for justifying American engagement in Cuba, while the conflict itself simultaneously formed an opportunity to confirm Washington's new assertive policy against interference in the affairs of the Americas. Cleveland, however, did not see either of these supposed benefits as desirable. For the legally minded president, the Monroe Doctrine conferred upon the United States no right to interfere, since the Spanish colony of Cuba predated the doctrine and, more importantly, Spain's actions there were clearly not designed to interfere with independent American states. Olney's corollary and the declaration that "the United States is practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition" did potentially raise the possibility that the United States would intervene in any matter it chose, but clearly Cleveland was not keen to do so in a situation from which he saw little potential benefit to the United States. Again, stability trumped any ideological opposition to European imperialism.

Invoking the Monroe Doctrine, therefore, was a step too far in December 1896, but the annual message still carried a warning to the Spanish government. While the president had decided against presenting Spain with an ultimatum, his annual message still made a firm declaration that this situation could not be counted on to continue indefinitely:

It should be added that it can not be reasonably assumed that the hitherto expectant attitude of the United States will be indefinitely maintained. While we are anxious to accord all due respect to the sovereignty of Spain, we can not view the pending conflict in all its features and properly apprehend our inevitably close relations to it and its possible results without considering that by the course of events we may be drawn into such an unusual and unprecedented condition as will fix a limit to our patient waiting for Spain to end the contest, either alone and in her own way or with our friendly cooperation.⁸²

The warning was clear, but it was not as direct as it first appeared. With less than three months remaining in Cleveland's term of office, the Spanish government was undoubtedly aware that the likelihood of the lame duck president making a dramatic late shift in his policy was negligible. The warning can be taken at face value as a fear that future events might drag the United States into events unwillingly—a scenario Cleveland obviously considered possible, as demonstrated by his prescient reluctance to make a warship available at the request of Fitzhugh Lee—but it might also be argued that it formed a message to Spain. With the presidential election of the previous month having confirmed the return of the Republicans to the White House—on the basis of a platform that promised to be considerably less patient regarding affairs in Cuba—Cleveland and Olney were reminding their Spanish counterparts that they might never have a better opportunity to exploit the good offices of a sympathetic U.S. government in order to bring about a peaceful settlement. The message had repeatedly declared the wisdom of a policy that would bestow autonomy and the blessings of democracy on the Cuban people under “the most favorable conditions”: Spanish rule. Now it offered a reminder that a time was fast approaching when the American government might demand a more radical solution. This interpretation is supported by the paragraph immediately following the warning that events might draw the United States into the conflict, which simultaneously warned Spain that if the situation degenerated to such a point that it “means nothing more than the useless sacrifice of human life and the utter destruction of the very subject-matter of the conflict,” then “the sovereignty of Spain will be superseded by higher obligations”; it also gave a thinly veiled message to the president's successor and members of Congress by suggesting that any action taken by the United States “should not be determined upon without giving careful heed to every consideration involving our honor and interest or the international duty we owe to Spain.” Once again Cleveland was attempting to balance the competing needs of national honor, international law, and human and economic loss.

On that note, one final aspect of the annual message of 1896 that deserves mention is the general lack of discussion of the humanitarian costs of the Cuban conflict. Cleveland's message contained almost no reference to the human suffering resulting from the destruction of property, with only brief mention of the *reconcentrado* policy that would famously become the focus of much press attention in the United States in the buildup to the War of 1898. What mention there was of the new policy focused exclusively on the extra damage the

removal of the rural population from the countryside would cause to the island's agricultural productivity and was followed by a paragraph relating the estimated level of financial investment by American capital in Cuba and the volume of trade between the two. Even when declaring the reason for the U.S. interest in the conflict, the key concern was for the destruction of the island and its resources, and financial concerns were at the root of the matter:

The spectacle of the utter ruin of an adjoining country, by nature one of the most fertile and charming on the globe, would engage the serious attention of the Government and people of the United States in any circumstances. In point of fact, they have a concern with it which is by no means of a wholly sentimental or philanthropic character. It lies so near to us as to be hardly separated from our territory. Our actual pecuniary interest in it is second only to that of the people and Government of Spain.⁸³

While Cleveland made numerous references to the wanton plunder and destruction of the island by forces loyal to both sides, it is clear that for him the U.S. involvement in the conflict was still firmly a financial matter.

In truth this interpretation is consistent with Cleveland's established tendency to place issues of law and the protection of personal property over more human questions, but an argument can be made for a more sympathetic interpretation. Writing nearly 15 years after the event, Richard Watson Gilder suggested that the president was deeply concerned by the humanitarian costs of the conflict. He described a discussion he had had with Cleveland, during a trip that took place between July 31 and August 4, 1896:

The President went on to tell me all the difficulties of the position. He was willing to go a great way in insisting upon humanity—in fact, he feared there were some outrages on both sides, if the truth were known. But in a general way he felt it incumbent upon him to be extremely careful, as the public mind seemed to be in an inflammable state and a spark might kindle a conflagration. He said there seemed to be an epidemic of insanity in the country just at this time.⁸⁴

While doing little to further his reputation for courageously doing what was right over what was politically expedient, the theory that Cleveland was afraid to truly speak his mind on the humanitarian cost of the war for fear of creating a public demand for intervention that he simply could not ignore is a plausible one.

This interpretation is supported by another foreign policy incident that saw Cleveland come under pressure from Congress and the press to intervene on humanitarian grounds. Between the autumn of 1894 and August 1896, the Armenian Christian community in the Ottoman Empire was subjected to a series of attacks from both regular troops and Kurdish militia acting with the support of the Ottoman government.⁸⁵ With American missionary societies active in the region, the incident was of great interest in the United States and was immediately raised in Congress. As news of the attacks trickled back to the United States, Republican Senator George Frisbie Hoar responded by introducing a resolution on the first day of the Senate's new session calling on the president to provide any information he had on the situation in Turkey and asking him whether he intended to protest or coordinate his actions with other Christian nations. Cleveland—struggling with confused reports from the diplomats in the region—replied that he only knew what he read in the newspapers.⁸⁶ Neither Cleveland nor secretary of state Gresham was keen to involve the United States in what they perceived to be a European matter, and when an invitation was received to have an American consul join a Turkish commission investigating the violence, it was initially rejected before being reluctantly accepted at the request of Great Britain, perhaps as a result of the evident concern of some in Congress. When the Ottoman sultan refused a proposal to have a consul accompany the commission without participating officially, a secretly relieved Gresham issued only a token complaint.⁸⁷ In a personal letter to Ambassador Thomas F. Bayard in London, Gresham declared that, with Britain, France, and Russia willing to conduct the investigation, the United States was “better out of the matter than in it.”⁸⁸

The reasoning behind Cleveland's and Gresham's reluctance to involve the United States in a European problem was explained in the president's annual messages of 1895 and 1896. In the former, Cleveland declared that his aim was the protection of American missionaries and their property while also seeking to reassure his audience that the offer to participate in the investigation was “in no sense meant as a gratuitous entanglement of the United States in the so-called Eastern question.”⁸⁹ A year later the focus was again placed on the possible danger to American citizens in the region, but the administration's hesitation in intervening directly was justified on the grounds that it might interrupt the plans of “the great nations” of Europe, which held the “exclusive right” to intervene in Turkey.⁹⁰ While the administration did consider sending warships to Constantinople—resulting in a strange inversion of gunship diplomacy whereby Olney mulled

over the legality of the United States dispatching naval vessels to the region—it seems clear that Cleveland's thinking was still dominated by the Monroe Doctrine's division of the world into separate European and American spheres of influence.⁹¹ The moral imperative of the administration's new foreign policy was clearly secondary to the determination to maintain a legally sound position at all times and to respect the tradition of non-intervention in European affairs. As evidence of this, throughout the crisis there was a marked willingness to rely on British vessels to defend American citizens in an emergency—a reversal of the position advocated by the Cleveland administration in Nicaragua.

Cleveland's caution was not widely shared in the United States. In an article in *Forum* magazine in March 1895, entitled "Our Blundering Foreign Policy," Henry Cabot Lodge declared the administration's half-hearted offer of participation to be "enough to be laughed at and too little to be effective."⁹² When the announcement of political reforms by the sultan as a result of the findings of the investigatory commission led to renewed attacks against Armenians in September, the *New York Times* ran the headline "Armenian Holocaust."⁹³ Much of the American press was united in calling for urgent action on behalf of the Armenians, joined by the Armenian immigrant community centered in New England and phil-Armenic societies across the nation.⁹⁴ Inspired by such rhetoric and a steady flow of stories of the atrocities being committed against Armenian civilians, the American public rallied to the cause, and charitable societies for relief of the victims sprang up in practically every major city, with the fledgling American Red Cross proving instrumental in the distribution of the aid received.⁹⁵ In a nation well-used to racial stereotypes, the situation quickly came to be viewed as a clash between brutal heathen Turks and oppressed Christian Armenians. In addition to the Armenian voices calling for action, the administration was also receiving pressure from missionary groups seeking protection, both for their activists overseas and for the Armenian Christians. These groups provided a double headache for the Cleveland administration because they were simultaneously the source of the most detailed accounts of the situation unfolding within the Ottoman Empire and also the American citizens most in need of protection—not least because they often employed Armenian Christians in mission schools, thus increasing the distrust of Muslim communities in the region. Much of Cleveland's information on conditions in the Empire came from his communications with John Stewart Kennedy, a wealthy New York philanthropist who was in direct contact with several missionary leaders in Anatolia.

While Kennedy himself was often remarkably restrained in his calls for American intervention, he forwarded several letters from missionaries on the scene and strongly supported their requests for American warships to be sent to the region. Understandably, given the weight of public interest, the crisis impacted on American domestic politics. With their state containing one of the largest concentrations of Armenian immigrants, the involvement of Senators Hoar and Lodge from Massachusetts was not coincidental, but the general level of interest in the situation was demonstrated by bipartisan calls for action in Congress. A sign of the attention gained by the matter was William McKinley's inclusion of saving the Armenians as one of three foreign policy priorities in his election platform of 1896—alongside annexing Hawaii and securing Cuban independence from Spain.⁹⁶ In his annual message of 1896, Cleveland abandoned the traditional alphabetical format to discuss the Turkish situation before any other, including the situation in Cuba.

Although Cleveland declined to bring direct American pressure to bear on the Turkish government, events in 1896 did conspire to bring the worst of the massacres to an end. When Armenian radicals, seeking to force European intervention, occupied the Imperial Ottoman Bank in Constantinople on August 26, organized mobs—apparently with the backing of the Turkish police—attacked the capital's Armenian community, killing between 5,000 and 6,000 people in 24 hours.⁹⁷ Once again the European governments pressured the sultan to restore order and the worst violence subsided, not to return for another two decades. Politically, however, damage had already been done for Cleveland. Faced by stories of atrocities carried out against Christians by an Islamic nation, he had resisted calls to act, falling back on older precedents like the Monroe Doctrine and deferring to the European powers. As would be the case in Cuba, Cleveland's policy was correct in a strictly legal sense, but it was considered insufficient by the majority in the more emotive press and was exploited in Congress. Ultimately, it was not the end of the violence that brought respite to the Cleveland administration over Armenia. By the summer of 1896, interest in the crisis had subsided, but it had only done so because the unfolding situation much closer to home, in Cuba, had taken its place.

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The annual message of 1896 demonstrated that President Cleveland did not believe that his lame-duck status meant that he could simply ignore the issue of Cuba, and that he still hoped Spain might be

convinced to accept his help in granting political reforms in order to bring the rebellion to an end. As the administration entered its final weeks in 1897, further initiatives were still being made. Olney dispatched to the island Oscar B. Stillman, former manager of the East Boston Sugar Refining Company, to gauge the opinion of the rebel leaders, receiving the promising news that the majority—with the notable exception of Maximo Gomez, the rebels' military commander and *de facto* leader by 1897—were in favor of autonomy guaranteed by the United States. Olney brokered meetings between Stillman and Minister de Lôme at the end of January and may well have used negotiations for a new commercial treaty between Spain and the United States as a further opportunity to apply pressure to the Spanish government. In February the reforms were finally announced, but despite satisfying the Cleveland administration, they proved insufficient to win the backing of the insurgents in Cuba.⁹⁸

Cleveland and Olney were not alone in hoping that the Cuban War of Independence might be settled before the end of their time in office. In February 1897, Fitzhugh Lee once again began agitating for American intervention. The initial cause was the death in Spanish custody of a naturalized American citizen named Ricardo Ruiz who, Lee reported, had been kept in solitary confinement for 315 hours before dying from a head injury that was either self-inflicted due to madness brought on by his incarceration or the result of a beating delivered by his captors. Declaring Ruiz to be innocent of the charges made against him or of any involvement in the insurrection, Lee suggested that the State Department should immediately demand that the Spanish authorities release all American citizens imprisoned in Cuba.⁹⁹ Olney was undoubtedly concerned by the case—instructing Lee to demand an official investigation from the governor-general while informing him the State Department would be applying pressure in Madrid—but then the consul general reported that he had discovered another American, Charles Scott, who had been held incommunicado for 264 hours, with the words, “Cannot stand another Ruiz murder and have demanded his release.” Lee followed with a query as to the number of American warships stationed at Key West, Florida, that might be dispatched to sustain the demand if it were refused, and the secretary of state's patience evaporated.¹⁰⁰ Olney first upbraided Lee for his failure to protect Ruiz before his death and then queried whether Ruiz's American citizenship was valid. Next he reminded the consul general that any protection from the United States was forfeited by the dead man's return to permanent residence in Cuba, the exact facts of which he requested Lee to provide.¹⁰¹ Lastly, Olney called Lee to task

directly with the questions: "Will you explain further what you mean by suggestion that demand be now made for release of all Americans imprisoned in Cuba? Is it the idea that such demand, which must be refused, can be made basis for hostile intervention or demonstration?" Once again the difference between the interpretation of Olney and Cleveland and that of Lee as to how American power should be deployed in foreign affairs was clearly displayed, as the secretary of state declared: "The United States makes demands only when prepared to enforce them and therefore only on assured grounds, and in the complete uncertainty as to the facts, the suggestion as to war-ships is most surprising." While one might question whether the Cleveland administration always was prepared to enforce the demands it made, the demand for assured grounds and certain facts neatly sums up the foundations of their foreign policy. Chastened, Lee responded by defending his actions in relation to Ruiz and denied that he wanted to provoke a war, declaring that he had "Seen too much of it."¹⁰² Two days later, the consul general went some way to admitting the reasons for his actions when he wrote, "Nothing can prevent Cuban matter very soon settling itself. I am deeply interested that Administration should participate."¹⁰³ Like Olney and Cleveland, Lee hoped that the revolution in Cuba might be concluded before the Democrats left the White House; unlike his political masters, he was happy for matters to be settled by conflict between the United States and Spain and was not overly concerned regarding how that conflict might come about. Somewhat strangely, given that they no longer needed to worry about losing friends in domestic politics, Cleveland and Olney chose not to recall Lee from Havana, despite at least one suggestion by the consul general himself that he might be withdrawn if he did not have their support.¹⁰⁴ Clearly, thought was given as to how Lee could best be brought into line: Nevins describes how the president met with the international lawyer, Frederic R. Coudert, and asked him to act as a special peace envoy to Spain in order to counteract the machinations of Americans in Cuba, led by Lee, whom he feared were seeking to bring about war.¹⁰⁵ Despite this, however, Cleveland contented himself with merely warning President McKinley at his inauguration that Lee was untrustworthy. Why he chose to do so is unclear; perhaps he did not wish to present his successor with a vacant post at a time of critical uncertainty, or perhaps he did not want to appear to be interfering with a personnel decision that rightly belonged to the incoming administration, but his pain that his advice was subsequently ignored is evident in a letter written to Olney in 1898, shortly after the declaration of war against Spain: Cleveland described the new

president as a victim of “amiable weakness,” who had surrendered to the Senate and “given his confidence” to Lee.¹⁰⁶ It was a bitter irony that a man whom Cleveland himself had appointed, through an error of judgment, and who had practically come to personify the sort of buccaneering approach to foreign affairs that he had spent four years counselling against as president, was still ensconced in a critical position when Cleveland’s vision of how the United States should conduct itself in relation to Cuba was categorically rejected by his successor in the spring of 1898.

* * *

While the administration’s attempts to broker a last-minute settlement in Cuba eventually amounted to nothing, events taking place in domestic politics during the winter of 1896–1897 held far greater long-term significance for the evolution of U.S. foreign policy. In the wake of Cleveland’s 1896 annual message members of both houses of Congress, disappointed that the message did not go further toward ending Spanish rule in Cuba, once again moved to apply pressure to the executive. Senate leaders introduced a new resolution in mid-December; unlike the resolutions of the previous session, the Cameron Resolution, as it became known, called directly for the recognition of Cuban independence by the United States. Also, unlike the situation 12 months previously, the resolution received the united backing of the administration’s opponents in both houses, raising a real concern that it might be not only passed, but also sustained over a presidential veto. Faced by this determined challenge to the executive’s authority, which risked unsettling foreign governments and provoking renewed anxieties on Wall Street, Olney made his response directly to the press. In a statement to newspapers, he made clear that if the resolution were passed it would “be regarded only as an expression of opinion by the eminent gentlemen who vote for it,” before going on to declare:

The power to recognize the so-called Republic of Cuba as an independent State rests exclusively with the Executive. A resolution on the subject by the Senate or by the House, by both bodies or by one, whether concurrent or joint, is inoperative as legislation, and is important only as advice of great weight, voluntarily tendered to the Executive, regarding the manner in which he shall exercise his Constitutional functions.¹⁰⁷

For all the respectful language, Olney was well aware of the gravity of this question. Despite the supporters of the Cameron Resolution

disingenuously calling for the simultaneous proffering of American good offices to achieve a peaceful settlement in Cuba as well as for the recognition of Cuban independence by the United States, they knew that any such recognition was highly likely to result in war between Spain and the United States.¹⁰⁸ Such a series of events would have profound consequences for the future of American foreign policy: If the Cameron Resolution passed, and the president were forced to act upon it, then control over the nation's foreign policy would be permanently altered, with the executive bowing to the will of Congress. The seriousness with which the secretary of state was treating this threat is evidenced by his decision to ask Assistant Attorney General E.B. Whitney to prepare a brief on the subject of the control of foreign policy and the separation of powers. On December 26, Olney wrote an eight-page letter to Whitney, setting out a detailed legal defense of executive control based on: the language of the Constitution, itself; the debates surrounding its framing and adoption; state constitutions of the same period; and a century of judicial support and historical precedent.¹⁰⁹ The fact that Olney had this defense prepared—obviously devoting substantial attention to it himself—and that his immediate response to the proposal of the resolution was directed at the press, demonstrates that he believed that a serious question was at stake, and that public opinion—which had not before been widely acknowledged in the administration's decision-making relating to Cuba—would potentially be decisive. In the event, despite Olney preparing an elaborate legal defense in readiness for a congressional assault on executive power, the administration's opponents in the Senate chose not to dispute the point, and the resolution did not come to a vote. With Cleveland's term rapidly drawing to a close, and with the prospect of a more agreeable occupant of the White House in William McKinley, calmer heads—perhaps heeding a surge of approval in the press for Olney's stance—once again prevailed to avoid a constitutional crisis.¹¹⁰ Thus, Olney asserted executive power in defense of a minimalist foreign policy from attacks by the legislature and, in doing so, somewhat ironically helped to secure for the president the power to lead policy, which would be so vital for the development and enacting of the activist foreign policies of Cleveland's twentieth-century successors.

This victory saved the administration from a final challenge to its authority, but it did not entirely end debate on the subject. One speech in the Senate is worth noting, simply for the illustration it provides of the contrast between the methods and rhetoric of the administration and of their opponents. The Cameron Resolution had cited

a great deal of historical precedent in Europe and the Americas to justify American interference in a war of independence—ignoring the fact that Cleveland had stated in his annual message that the lack of a viable rebel government meant that, legally, it could not be regarded as anything more than an insurrection. The resolution had also attempted to use the Monroe Doctrine as justification for the involvement of the United States in the affairs of an American republic, no matter how embryonic it may be. On January 26, 1897, the *New York Times* reported on a speech in support of the Cameron Resolution delivered on the Senate floor by Senator David Turpie, a Democrat from Indiana.¹¹¹ In this speech Turpie made a series of claims that far outdid the already inventive reasoning of the resolution itself, among them: because the 1821 treaty that ceded Florida to the United States contained a clause prohibiting Spain from selling Cuba to another European power, Spain's title to Cuba was not total, which meant the Spanish government could not now deny Cuba's people their claim of independence; further, Congress's power over commerce and control of the process whereby new states were admitted to the Union gave it the authority to recognize new nations; and that Spain herself had tacitly acknowledged the rebels as belligerents by fighting them—a claim which, while sound in a literal sense, was hardly well-founded in international law. With the Cameron Resolution already being gently pushed to one side by Senate leaders, Turpie's speech is of little significance in itself, but it is indicative of the kind of creative reasoning that Cleveland's and Olney's insistence on a foreign policy founded upon legality utterly rejected. The fact that these ideas were being voiced by a Democrat was a double blow; by the winter of 1896–1897 foreign affairs had become practically the only area of policy in which the administration could still be considered to be in sole control, but the inauguration of a new president on March 4, 1897, was likely to herald a new policy direction, and Cleveland's own party would not be defending his ideas in opposition.

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Among the various factors affecting the Cleveland administration's handling of the Cuban War of Independence of 1895–1898, one of the most significant was the disagreement it provoked with Congress over who controlled the direction of U.S. foreign policy. While a full constitutional crisis was avoided, the president's authority was challenged on several occasions, and the stubborn refusal to bow to the will of Congress undoubtedly played a part in the repudiation of

Cleveland by his own party in the Democratic National Convention of 1896. This being so, it is interesting to observe that, in one significant respect, Cleveland, Olney, and Gresham were not completely out of step with their congressional opponents. Despite an initial desire not to interfere with Spanish internal affairs, the course of events over two years showed an increasing willingness to do so. The administration was criticized, not for the actions it took, but for those it did not take, and the strong rhetoric of the annual message of 1896 was widely applauded, even if many in Congress did not believe it went far enough. Ultimately, the message of the Cuban War of Independence was that the United States considered itself entitled to meddle in Cuban affairs, and—as both the 1895 and 1896 annual messages demonstrated multiple times—even Cleveland and Olney were not immune from such a belief.

It is clear that the administration's policy was too passive to retain the support of many members of Congress, despite sharing many of the frustrations about Spain's conduct and sympathies with the rebels' cause that lay behind the more active stance demanded by much of the Senate. In this respect Cuba marks both the culmination of Grover Cleveland's foreign policy and also its point of collapse. Between February 1895 and March 1897, the Cleveland administration maintained a calm and steady posture in the face of an extremely volatile situation. In so doing, it has been suggested, it may have helped to preserve peace by "[damping] the jingoism raging about them."¹¹² Beyond this, however, the legalist framework that Cleveland, Gresham and Olney had attempted to apply throughout their time in office must be considered a failure in regard to Cuba. In the immediate case of the rebellion itself the legalist policy once again provided a convenient template for the initial American response to the insurrection. As in Brazil in 1893, the studious application of international law allowed the administration to categorically reject any claims to belligerent status held by the rebels; the gradual revelation that, far from establishing a functioning governmental apparatus, the rebels' civilian government was increasingly undermined by its military throughout 1896 proved that—at least within the U.S. administration's own legalist interpretation of foreign relations—rejecting the claims was correct. However, while in hindsight the administration's decisions may have been proven to be justified, the framework within which those decisions were taken offered no assistance in bringing about a resolution to the problem. This was the key flaw in the legalist template: If the situation demanded American neutrality, then the administration's options in bringing matters to a resolution were extremely limited. In both the

Brazilian Naval Revolt and the Sino-Japanese War, it had been possible to maintain a policy of neutrality since both conflicts resolved themselves relatively quickly and without impacting heavily on public opinion in the United States (even if popular support for Japan did cause the administration some discomfort in the latter case). In the Cuban insurrection, Cleveland and Olney were confronted with a conflict that was seemingly never-ending—since neither the rebels nor the Spanish government had the military might to defeat the other—and was also of enormous popular interest due to the island's proximity to the United States and the strong human and economic ties between the two. President McKinley would ultimately confront this issue by taking the nation to war, but even he did not rush into conflict and, in fact, for over a year followed a policy not dissimilar to Cleveland's. Indeed, his War Message of April 11, 1898, is notable for its expression of the exact dilemma that had faced Cleveland, caught between acting within the constraints of international law and an intervention in order to end the destruction and loss of life. It is notable, however, that McKinley's War Message placed a considerably greater emphasis on the humanitarian costs of the rebellion, while also directly arguing that "victory for either side seems impracticable."¹¹³ This difference would be crucial. Where Cleveland had repeatedly refused to intervene on the grounds that it constituted a breach of Spain's sovereign rights, McKinley used the humanitarian argument to justify intervention as beneficial to *both* Spain and Cuba by ending the violence.¹¹⁴ McKinley thus was willing to override the constraints of international law on behalf of a higher duty to humanity. This was by no means the only reason McKinley stated to justify war—not to mention those reasons that remained unstated—but it is an important difference between his stated policy and that of Cleveland, while its popularity indicates that public sentiment had clearly settled behind factors that transcended the bounds of the law.

Welch has argued that "Cleveland's Cuban policy was deeply flawed by an anti-Cuban bias."¹¹⁵ This is open to debate: Undoubtedly, Cleveland and Olney distrusted the rebels and were deeply troubled by their policy of destroying the island's agricultural and industrial infrastructure—indeed, in 1898, Cleveland described them as "the most inhuman and barbarous cut-throats in the world"—however, it might be fairer to suggest that both men were less biased against the rebels than distrustful of any situation that might result in widespread disorder.¹¹⁶ Olney, in particular, certainly contemplated the prospect of a civil war fought along racial lines in the wake of a Spanish withdrawal. Beyond this, however, the administration's methods may give

an unfair impression of bias against the rebel leadership. The decisions to concentrate efforts at achieving a settlement on negotiations with the Spanish government, and the refusal to acknowledge rebel belligerency, should not be taken as signs of anti-Cuban bias, but purely as the result of the legalist foreign policy that necessitated working with the sovereign power and did not allow for interaction with the rebels after their failure to establish a viable government. It could also be reasonably suggested that the rebels' inability to prove that they could restore order if Spain were defeated may have itself resulted in the ever-conservative president, who was never likely to look kindly upon those who attacked the existing social order without attempting to create one of their own, hardening his stance against them. Welch also states: "Neither Cleveland nor Secretary Olney understood the sources and strength of Cuban nationalism," and in this case he is undeniably correct.¹¹⁷ Having refused to intervene, either directly with American force or indirectly through the recognition of Cuban belligerency, Cleveland fell back on a plan for political reform aimed at granting autonomy, which was always unlikely to gain the approval of the rebels and became less likely to do so as the conflict continued. Thus, the administration found itself trapped by its own methods: unwilling to intervene and unable to play the honest broker between two irreconcilable opponents.

By comparison, the administration's domestic opponents were much freer in their approach to policymaking. For the most part they were far less concerned than the president with the niceties of international law and even by the prospect of war. The latter possibility was clearly a major concern for Cleveland and Olney—as shown by their efforts to rein in Fitzhugh Lee and quash his suggestions for stationing warships near Cuban waters—but the fear was considerably more complex than simple anxiety over the possibility of American defeat. As Cleveland stated in a letter to Olney at the outbreak of the War of 1898:

My only relief from the sick feeling which these thoughts induce consists . . . in the hope, almost amounting [to] expectation, that we shall find Spain so weak and inefficient that the war will be short and that the result may not be much worse than a depreciation of national standing before the world abroad, and at home—demoralization of our peoples [sic] character, much demagoguery and humbug, great additions to our public burdens and the exposure of scandalous operations.¹¹⁸

It can certainly be argued that this reluctance to go to war, even when victory seemed likely from the outset, was admirable, but popular

opinion of the 1890s did not necessarily agree. While the administration's policy gradually evolved to the extent that the annual message of December 1896 contained a warning that American neutrality could not be guaranteed to continue indefinitely, the wishes of Congress—as expressed in the resolutions debated in the House and Senate—were always for an entirely different level of action. Perhaps the most striking example of this difference is that, while the wisdom of Cleveland's refusal to acknowledge Cuban belligerency on the grounds that they had not proven their capacity for self-governance was borne out by the assumption of governmental functions by the rebel military, the Cameron Resolution sought in the winter of 1896–1897 to proclaim Cuban independence without regard to the legal niceties of such a move (or, for that matter, to the fate of the Cuban people, who would be left with a military dictatorship of dubious governmental capacity). Thus, Cuba marks not simply a failure of the legalist approach to foreign policy, but also its repudiation. As senators rejected such a constricted approach to policymaking, the Democratic Party rejected Cleveland and disowned his works. Foreign-policy issues played a relatively minor role in this decision, but the legalist approach to foreign policy was one of the resultant casualties, since its key supporters were largely removed from national politics. Some elements would remain. Most notably, the desire for a system of international arbitration would continue, particularly championed by Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft—although they too would find themselves frustrated by opposition within the Senate.¹¹⁹ Somewhat ironically, the greatest proponent of arbitration would be the man who ousted Cleveland from frontline politics, William Jennings Bryan who, as secretary of state between 1913 and 1915, negotiated dispute settlement treaties with over two dozen nations, of which 22 were ratified.¹²⁰ The legalist approach to foreign policy as a whole, however, would be overwhelmed by the rush to empire after 1898 and would only re-emerge in new forms, which emphasized isolationism and hegemony over the Caribbean.

The repudiation of Cleveland by the Democratic Party leaves unanswered the tantalizing question of whether he would have gone to war in 1898 had he still been president. The question is clouded by the complicated sequence of events that brought matters in Cuba to a head in 1898, any of which Cleveland might have avoided. For example, a major factor in the outbreak of war was the destruction of the USS *Maine* in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898, which a subsequent investigation blamed on a Spanish mine. This calamity was precisely what Cleveland had resolutely avoided by refusing to

send a warship to Cuba in the previous two years. Without that trigger it seems highly unlikely that Cleveland would have changed his resolute stance against what he considered to be illegal intervention, while there is little to suggest that the rebels would alter their policies sufficiently to justify recognition of their belligerency. However, even if we were to include the destruction of the *Maine* in such a scenario, it may not have been sufficient to bring about war, since Cleveland's personal correspondence shows that his opposition to war continued unabated as matters worsened after he left office. As late as March 27, 1898, Cleveland wrote "Notwithstanding warlike indications, I cannot rid myself of the belief that war will be averted. There would be infinitely more credit and political capital in avoiding war when so imminent than to carry it on even well."¹²¹ The president's hope that the insurgents might be convinced to accept political reforms as a basis for a peace settlement was naive in 1897, but there was little else that he could do within his own template for action. It is doubtful, therefore, that Cleveland would have taken the United States to war, but how the conflict would have been resolved under such circumstances is unknowable. By contrast, it is often forgotten that Cleveland's policy toward Cuba presented a useful foundation for President McKinley for his first year in office. It was not lost on Cleveland, who ruefully noted the irony in a letter to Olney: "How differently the present administration is treated though pursuing the same policy as the last."¹²² Similarly, on February 16, 1898, he wrote that "if the President's back bone holds out our Cuban policy will I believe be fully justified."¹²³ Ultimately, Cleveland's verdict on McKinley—a victim of "amiable weakness"—would place him as a critic of his successor's character in a debate that has continued among historians for over a century. Regardless of the truth of this assessment, McKinley was able to use his predecessor's policy as a base from which to take up his own course. Any pride that Cleveland may have taken from this, however, was undoubtedly marred by the subsequent course of events, which saw the declaration of war against Spain, the dispatching of American troops to Cuba, and the eventual claiming of control over the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico under the terms of the Treaty of Paris. The knowledge that many members of his own party were loudly applauding some, if not all, of these developments left a bitter taste.

CONCLUSION

Foreign policy was not a priority for Grover Cleveland when he returned to the Executive Mansion on March 4, 1893. Cleveland's first term in office had demonstrated that he was a domestic-minded president, and the unfolding financial calamity afflicting the United States in 1893 ensured that there would be no shortage of domestic problems that would require his attention. While Cleveland might have preferred to have devoted the entirety of his second term in office to dealing with these domestic problems, a series of incidents in global affairs provided constant distraction. The fact that Cleveland felt obliged to involve the United States in these incidents is indicative of the nation's growing stature as a world power and of the breadth of its interests and contacts overseas, but it also refutes any suggestion that Cleveland himself was purely an isolationist. Although his opposition to American imperialism would remain unwavering until his death, he was not simply in favor of isolation, and much of the administration's foreign policy would be decidedly internationalist in its attempts to formulate new frameworks by which international disputes might be resolved through methods short of war—most notably its advocacy of international arbitration agreements. Despite these views, however, the formulation of foreign policy was still a decidedly ad hoc affair and, while the same might be said for much of the administration's domestic policy as well, it is clear that domestic issues held priority. It is somewhat ironic, then, that Cleveland's domestic troubles would ultimately leave him so bereft of support that foreign relations became the only area in which executive authority remained largely undiminished, if not unchallenged. Perhaps as a result of this repudiation, or out of concern at the growing jingoism in American politics and the press evidenced during the Cuban War of Independence, it was only in his final months as president that Cleveland sought to put forward a definitive statement of his vision for the future of U.S. foreign policy. That said, his conduct of foreign policy during the preceding three years evidenced clear themes of legalism, morality, and even exceptionalism—in terms of the belief that the United States should hold itself to a

higher standard than the great powers of Europe—which were the central planks of this framework for the formulation of policy. In each of the series of foreign policy incidents that took place between March 1893 and February 1897, he attempted to put these ideas into practice and, in so doing, set out a template for policymakers in the future.

This template came about due to factors that have been identified and debated for decades—the growth of American industry and commerce, the rise of jingoist sentiment in the American public and the press—but Cleveland's policy itself has been largely overlooked. In a time of profound change it is easy to dismiss Cleveland as the last of the old guard of nineteenth-century presidents, men who enacted policy based on limited interaction with the rest of the world because the nation did not have the power or influence to enact any other. For Cleveland, the creation of a policy based around legality and moral justice was a matter of choice, as much rejecting the possibility of a more active policy as embracing a limited one. Cleveland and his secretaries of state came to recognize the changing place of the United States in global affairs and gradually evolved a new form of foreign policy that acknowledged and made use of that newfound power while still embracing what they perceived to be the nation's mission. Perhaps due to the failure of the legalist template to outlast Cleveland's presidency, that template's distinctiveness has not been previously acknowledged by historians, who have tended either to justify Cleveland's actions as part of a larger policy movement encompassing the entire late-nineteenth-century period, or to dismiss them entirely.

* * *

The second Cleveland administration's first involvement in foreign affairs began even before the inauguration, with the revolution against the native monarchy in Hawaii. The stance taken by the president and Secretary of State Gresham set the tone for all the events that followed: a principled insistence that the United States should not interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign nations, and that it should not seek to profit from such unauthorized actions even if they had proven successful. That insistence also, however, demonstrated the limits to which the administration was willing to go in order to uphold its principled stance and, ultimately, showed that pragmatism—in the form of recognition of the Hawaiian Republic—would be the final resort if confronted by an unyielding opponent. Similarly, the administration's tentative efforts to extricate the United States from its commitments in Samoa demonstrated a personal wish from Cleveland and Gresham

that they might reduce American entanglements abroad, but those efforts ultimately proved fruitless. In that instance, lack of political and popular support—and a somewhat half-hearted approach from the administration—meant the attempt to extricate the United States from its commitments in Samoa made little headway.

The Brazilian Naval Revolt set out a framework for how the administration would approach foreign conflicts that affected American interests, and do so without directly involving the United States itself. Specifically, this framework established that the United States would seek to remain neutral regardless of its interests (although in the case of Brazil the status quo appeared to favor those interests) and only operate within the limits of international law. This policy was confirmed during the Sino–Japanese War, in which the administration resisted the urgings of popular opinion to back Japan and the appeals of other powers to work with them to create a settlement that would be mutually beneficial. In both the Brazilian revolt and the Sino–Japanese War, the administration balanced the calls by American business to protect trade (and the temptation to exploit the situation for commercial gain) with its desire to act in a manner it considered to be both legally and morally right. That said, by seeking, in both conflicts, to maintain the status quo ante as far as was possible, Cleveland and Gresham were to a large extent still acting on behalf of American business, even if their scruples regarding direct intervention overseas meant that they rejected any opportunity to exploit the situations to actively seek to obtain new markets or more favorable trade deals. Similarly, while the administration's actions in offering American good offices in order to help bring about a peace treaty between China and Japan are evidence of the moral basis to their policy (previously seen in Hawaii), it might also be suggested that these efforts ensured that the situation in China remained stable enough to facilitate American trade while also generating good will with both powers—a policy that might subsequently generate commercial benefits that did not contradict the president's scruples over intervention in the affairs of another nation. While Cleveland resisted any suggestion of acquiring an area of influence in China, the U.S. actions were consistent with his belief in free trade and the power of American industry to compete effectively in the international marketplace.

Closer to home, the Brazilian Naval Revolt had already shown hints of U.S. concern at the prospect of European interference in the affairs of the nations of the Americas, and this played a role, firstly in Nicaragua and then, more forcefully, in the administration's actions over the Venezuelan Border Dispute. Events in Nicaragua demonstrated both

Cleveland's desire to limit direct U.S. involvement in the affairs of other nations and also his readiness to accept limited European intervention if it were justified by international law—possibly due to the recognition that any failure to uphold the law might lead to more damaging interference on a larger scale. By comparison, the Venezuelan Border Dispute saw the abandoning of cautious diplomacy, but this may have given a false impression of the Cleveland administration's intentions. Regardless of how the dispute came to a head, the real aim of American involvement was to protect Venezuela from European encroachment and, once it had been invoked, defend the Monroe Doctrine. While the dispute can be seen as evidence of an increased assertiveness in foreign affairs, the administration's intentions were to uphold the law and shield nations of the Americas from unjustified European interference, not to expand U.S. control in the region.

Finally, the Cuban War of Independence of 1895 exposed the limits of the administration's legal and moral framework for foreign policy-making to manage events or bring about a settlement to an intractable problem without directly interfering. In Cuba, an area of great interest to American business and the American public, the administration proved itself incapable of exerting the necessary influence to protect American interests or to end the suffering of the Cuban population. Similarly, the Cleveland administration's muted response to the attacks on Christians in the Ottoman Empire exposed the inconsistency of a policy that simultaneously sought to uphold the values of morality and legality while minimizing American involvement in the affairs of other nations, and the Old World in particular.

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While the failure to produce a satisfactory outcome to the crisis in the Ottoman Empire did not prove costly in material terms to the United States, it did prove costly to the Cleveland administration in terms of public opinion. While gauging public opinion in an age before reliable polling is extremely difficult, it is still possible to gain an understanding of the interest of the public in each of these events through various means. In particular, while the question of whether the press has the power to form public opinion or merely to reflect it is one that has been the subject of long debate, it is reasonable to assume that the events in which the American press showed the greatest interest were, in one form or another, also of interest to the general public. In this regard the reaction of the press to the administration's actions in Hawaii, China, the Ottoman Empire, and Cuba demonstrates that

Cleveland struggled to retain the support of the American people. This is reflected in the changing attitude of the administration toward the cultivation and manipulation of public opinion, from early optimism to final resignation. Cleveland and Gresham entered office with the belief that “public opinion [was] made and controlled by the thoughtful men of the country,” but over time this belief was challenged by the rise of both jingoism and the power of the press until the point was reached where the administration’s actions in Cuba were conducted in the hope that, at best, a silent majority would prove to be in favor and that, at worst, history would judge its course to have been the right one.¹ The strength of public interest varied, depending on the location of the foreign policy incident in question and the drama surrounding it. There was little press interest in the Brazilian Naval Revolt, since it involved relatively few American interests and, more importantly, occurred in a region of little interest to the majority of Americans. Brazil and the United States may have shared a hemisphere, but the revolt lacked the immediacy of events in Mexico or the Caribbean. By comparison, while the Sino–Japanese War was a conflict between alien peoples that took place in a distant land, the longstanding American fascination with East Asian culture and the decades-old dream of China’s markets combined with the excitement of an international war to provoke greater interest from both press and public. Although the administration’s approach to the Sino–Japanese War was little different from their approach to the Brazilian Naval Revolt—both being mainly characterized by an insistence on maintaining neutrality, even if China and Japan received the benefit of American good offices in achieving a peace settlement while the Brazilian rebels received nothing—the vast difference in public interest made it necessary to take steps to stop American businesses from selling arms to the warring parties, and even to discourage American citizens from volunteering to fight for Japan.

Cleveland demonstrated his ability to inspire popular enthusiasm during the Venezuelan Border Dispute, when his special message to Congress of December 17, 1895, produced a wave of support for his strong stance against Great Britain. If this was an attempt to play to the gallery, however, it was not one he would repeat during the remainder of his term; while it is impossible to judge Cleveland’s intentions, it seems likely that this unleashing of jingoistic opinion was an unintended—or at least underestimated—consequence of a momentary rashness born out of frustration with perceived British intransigence. If Cleveland did truly aim to use a public mood of which he himself deeply disapproved in order to achieve what he believed to be a just objective, then it

would appear that he was sufficiently unnerved by the forces unleashed to ever attempt it again, and his later actions were almost studious in their refusal to bow to popular pressure.

In his handling of the Armenian massacres between 1894 and 1896, Cleveland once again rejected the calls of the press and Congress—as well as missionary societies—to intervene in what he perceived to be a European matter. These events showed that the American press was becoming increasingly interested in humanitarian issues, but also demonstrated that, fundamentally, Cleveland still had sufficient support to justify his reluctance to involve the United States in affairs of the Old World. Any satisfaction he may have gained from this, however, must have been of little comfort when the Armenian crisis was subsumed by the unfolding situation in Cuba in 1895 and 1896. In their handling of Cuba, it is clear that Cleveland and Olney were fully prepared to act in the manner they believed to be correct in spite of public opinion. While to some extent admirable leadership, this refusal to intervene in events that combined both drama and immediacy left the administration isolated and besieged by the press and Congress, while not providing any concrete course of action that might have brought the conflict to an end. The administration may have been guilty of a failure to fully educate the public of its intentions and objectives, but it is highly unlikely that better information would have produced a swell of support. This is not to say that Cleveland was completely bereft of popular or media support in 1896—in a nation strongly divided along both partisan and regional lines, his policies would always find some element of support, a fact illustrated by the letters of support found in the Cleveland Papers, letters that appear after every major decision—but, with the Republican party and press implacably opposed to almost any move he made, the failure to carry significant support from his own party outside the Northeast eventually robbed him of political capital. Indeed, the administration's own actions in raising the Monroe Doctrine in the public consciousness may have helped to undermine its position in Cuba by creating popular sentiments strongly opposed to any move seen as facilitating the extension of European colonialism. Ultimately, however, Cleveland was able to maintain rigid adherence to his chosen position because, in the wake of his repudiation by his own party, he had nothing to lose. That said, there is little evidence that public opinion would have prompted him to change a position he believed to be mandated by international law, and it should be remembered that, in the end, it was domestic factors that played the deciding role in destroying Cleveland's standing in the Democratic Party, not his international policies.

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The increasing public interest in how the United States conducted itself in world affairs was bound up in a range of factors that stemmed from—and helped to fuel—the nation’s rise to the position of a world power. As a growing industrial economy devoured more raw materials and demanded new markets for its products, the United States found itself with commercial interests and citizens in an ever-increasing number of far-flung locations, all demanding some measure of protection by the government. The expansion of the navy in order to facilitate the protection of these commercial interests led to the problem of fueling and supplying warships around the world and raised the possibility—largely, but not entirely, rejected by Cleveland—of acquiring bases in strategic locations, bases that would themselves require protection. American economic power also served to create foreign-policy problems, with the insurrections in both Hawaii and Cuba being directly related to changes to U.S. tariffs: a clear sign that the nation was now incapable of remaining a passive observer of world affairs. Meanwhile, the century-old tradition of American missionary evangelism continued, placing more American men and women in situations of potential danger. All these factors combined to give the United States a direct stake in many more incidents—a few of which American interests played a direct role in creating—in a much more diverse variety of places. Public demand for action—fueled by the increasingly powerful press—ensured that problems could not simply be ignored. All things considered, Cleveland and his cabinet acquitted themselves well regarding the series of problems with which they were presented. Despite following a largely reactionary policy, the administration succeeded in its primary goals of protecting American lives overseas, avoiding unnecessary entanglements, preventing increased European interference in the Americas, and not being sucked into any conflict. Secondary efforts, such as the moral duty to help resolve the Sino–Japanese War, could also be seen as successes, although there were humanitarian failures in Turkey and Cuba. These latter two cases were the result of the administration’s successful efforts not to interfere in the internal affairs of other nations, but the correspondence of Cleveland and Olney suggests that neither man was entirely satisfied with upholding principle in the face of human suffering.

Cuba also marks the major failure of another of the administration’s key priorities: the protection of American property overseas. While rigid adherence to conservative principles served the administration well for the most part, it proved to be fundamentally flawed

when it came to protecting American property in Cuba; this was due to the inability of the Spanish government to fulfil its own obligations. Indeed, it could be argued that the Cleveland administration's greatest foreign policy successes came from its rare moments of activism: the actions of the U.S.S. *Detroit* in Rio de Janeiro harbor—which were not directly orchestrated by Washington—and the firm intervention in the Venezuelan Border Dispute. This raises a question as to whether the fundamental successes of the administration's policy were indeed a result of that policy or simply an inevitable consequence of the United States' circumstances as a new world power. While Gresham's minimalist handling of the incidents in Brazil and Nicaragua produced the desired result to such an extent that his actions might reasonably be called adroit, the failure to bring about his preferred solution in Hawaii, and the administration's inability to create any form of settlement in Cuba, suggest that more assertive action was necessary. In Brazil and Nicaragua, European powers were willing to acknowledge the United States' passive regional authority—at least to the extent of not attempting to interfere in New World affairs directly—while in the Venezuelan Border Dispute, Great Britain showed itself to be willing to acknowledge (at least tacitly) that same regional authority in order to allow it to focus on more pressing matters in Europe and Africa. Throughout the administration's time in office, a constant factor was the question of European interference, seen in Hawaii, Brazil, China, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba. In Hawaii, Venezuela, and Cuba direct warnings of varying degrees of hostility were given to European powers to make it clear that the United States would not look kindly upon any attempt to interfere in events perceived to be within American jurisdiction. Significantly, while little indication was given of the potential consequences of ignoring these warnings (with the partial exception of the Venezuelan Border Dispute), none of the European powers considered it wise to risk a challenge.

In this way Cleveland, placed in a strong position by burgeoning U.S. power and the increasingly complex situation in Europe, can be argued to have been playing with the deck stacked in his favor. That said, increased assertiveness in itself could not have been a magic bullet; the administration was also frustrated in its more activist efforts to alter American involvement with other world powers: firstly in the failure to extricate the nation from its agreements in Samoa and, secondly, in the failure to promote an internationalist system of legal resolution of disputes through the Olney-Pauncefote Treaty. In these cases a more active stance was not backed by public or political support at home. Overall, therefore, while the administration might be

accused of not fully exploiting a geopolitical and strategic situation that strongly favored the United States to achieve its aims, the fact that those aims did not always carry the support of either the American electorate or, perhaps more significantly, of Congress meant that any achievement was always going to be limited. In addition, it should be noted that this increased national power carried an unexpected price in the form of a growing willingness of other nations in the Americas to seek to court—and even to exploit—the United States’ support in their disputes with European powers. This issue, while not a new one in the 1890s, was particularly evident in the incidents in Nicaragua and Venezuela, and one of the administration’s minor successes came in establishing a clear policy that protected nations of the western hemisphere against arbitrary European interference while simultaneously insisting that those same nations lived up to their responsibilities. Cleveland, Gresham, and Olney had notable success in reaffirming U.S. authority over the Americas—even if that authority were exercised in a profoundly passive manner—and otherwise maintained a principled foreign policy that had limited goals that, for the most part, were achieved. As with other Cleveland policies, however, it is debatable whether this strong stance formed the basis for the more assertive Caribbean policies of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, or was simply subsumed by them.

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While it would be wrong to say that Cleveland had no interest in foreign affairs, it is clear his first priority throughout his second term was battling the nation’s economic troubles. While these efforts occasionally had a bearing on foreign relations—tariff reform in particular—there is no evidence to suggest that foreign policy was ever enlisted to attempt to combat the economic depression. Cleveland acted repeatedly to protect American commerce and its assets overseas, but efforts to expand trade were largely rhetorical. Despite this, by the summer of 1896 it was Cleveland’s failures in handling these domestic issues—and the severe loss of political capital involved in passing the Wilson–Gorman Tariff and the government bond issues—that had left him so bereft of political support that foreign policy was virtually the only area in which he had freedom of action. Indeed, one significant triumph in Cleveland’s second term was in maintaining presidential control of foreign policy. Olney’s actions in bluntly rejecting any notion of Congress’s right to dictate aspects of foreign policy to the president may have been something of a pyrrhic victory at the time—given that

one reason why Congress backed down was that Cleveland was entering his final months in office and had lost so much political credibility that there was little to be gained by attacking him—but it can be seen as a significant event in the creation of the imperial presidency. While Olney's defense of presidential authority did nothing to enlarge the powers of the office, it did confirm the primacy of the executive in foreign affairs, thus paving the way for the more expansive interpretations by Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson.

Given this disinterest in foreign policy matters, it is perhaps surprising that Cleveland could be said to have set out a template for the U.S. approach to foreign affairs in a changing world. In this vein, it is important to recognize the distinction between template and grand strategy. Cleveland undoubtedly held strong views about how, when, and where the United States should conduct itself in world affairs, but the template his administration created had little to do with specifics. The Cleveland template set out a foundation of legal rights and obligations—such as the observation of neutrality in foreign disputes, and a recognition (and defense) of certain key pseudo-legal principles, such as the Monroe Doctrine—while also going some way toward promoting peaceful methods of conflict resolution, most notably arbitration. It should be particularly noted that the template was not a coherent project throughout Cleveland's second term, but instead came together on an ad hoc basis as each new crisis was addressed. Indeed it might be argued that the template was only promoted to the public as the best course for American policy in the future—in Cleveland's annual message of 1896—after the repudiation of the administration at the Democratic National Convention the previous summer. Undoubtedly, some elements were intended to lay the foundations for future policy. The Olney-Pauncefote Treaty (or general arbitration treaty) was negotiated with a clear hope that it might be an example to other nations and, in February 1896, Olney persuaded Congress to appropriate the necessary funds to produce a new digest of international law for the nation.² It was only in regards to the Cuban problem, however, that Cleveland specifically suggested the direction American foreign policy should take after his departure from office.

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Of course, Cleveland's template did not form the foundation to American foreign policy for which he may have hoped. Having retired to Princeton, New Jersey, after leaving office, the former president

became something of a political outsider, expressing disappointment—often to Olney, who remained a close friend—with both his Republican successor and his former colleagues in the Democratic Party. It was a situation that frustrated him, at one point writing: “I have an idea that there are not many people who care to hear from me at this time. That’s why I stay at home and mope.”³ While in the immediate aftermath of leaving office Cleveland was able to inform Olney that he was “on the whole much gratified by the apparent conviction among the people, that the new administration after all could find but little to amend” in American policy toward Cuba, his battle between hope and skepticism is illustrated by a letter to Olney in the summer of 1897, which stated:

Did you ever see such a preposterous thing as the Hawaiian business? The papers I read are mostly strongly opposed to it and there ought to be soberness and decency enough in the Senate to save us from launching upon the dangerous policy which is foreshadowed by the pending treaty; but I am prepared for almost anything.⁴

Cleveland’s bitterness at the manner of his departure from office is similarly displayed by another letter to Olney two months later, in which he denounced “the silly exhibition our government is making in its conduct of foreign affairs,” before declaring,

I am willing however to confess to enough of the “old Adam,” to feel a little bit of satisfaction in a situation that crowds this bitter dose down the throats of the dirty liars who attempted so hard to decry and depreciate your dignified, decent and proper management of our foreign relations.

The present administration must soon find that the Executive Department cannot drift through public duty on a wave of applause and adulation and that the day comes when popular tickling and humbug will not do.⁵

By February 1898, Cleveland was happy to note that, in his opinion, “popular sentiment seems to be vindicating our ideas on certain unfinished public business,” such as Hawaii and even Cuba, but he also noted, rather mournfully, that “[a]s parties are now organized however neither side is inclined to even whisper approbation of our work.”⁶ Any good cheer was dashed by the declaration of war against Spain. While he did not accuse President McKinley of anything worse than “amiable weakness,” he declared it to be “the old story of good intentions and motives sacrificed to false considerations

of complaisance and party harmony.”⁷ He also specifically took issue with the “strut” of both Fitzhugh Lee and Theodore Roosevelt and feared the consequences of siding with the “inhuman and barbarous cut-throats” among the Cuban insurgents. Typically, he took refuge in the hope that

we shall find Spain so weak and inefficient that the war will be short and that the result may not be much worse than a depreciation of national standing before the world abroad, and at home—demoralization of our peoples [sic] character, much demagoguery and humbug, great additions to our public burdens and the exposure of scandalous operations.

In the event, he would be disappointed in this hope, being prompted by the U.S. acquisition of the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico to join the Anti-Imperialist League, referring to the annexation of Hawaii as an “outrage,” and bitterly bemoaning the actions of the American army against Filipino rebels before sarcastically noting “anybody who says this is not a Christian nation or that our President is not the very pink of perfection of a Christian, is a liar and an un-American knave.”⁸

Cleveland’s disappointment with the Democratic Party would, if anything, be greater than his disappointment with McKinley’s foreign policy—not least because he believed McKinley’s conduct of foreign affairs meant, among other things, that he could be beaten. Cleveland despaired of the still-divided party being able to put up a strong challenge, and his lingering anger at his treatment in 1896 is evident from his declaration almost three years later that “I am afraid [the Party] will never be in winning condition until we have had a regular knockdown fight among ourselves, and succeeded in putting the organization in democratic hands and reviving democratic principles in our platform.”⁹ Personally, though, he had little confidence of such an outcome, stating:

I don’t believe our people, notwithstanding the disgust the Administration is breeding, are ready to accept Bryan and the Chicago platform and if they are, what comfort is there in that for decent, sound, democrats?

He saw no reason to predict anything other than another Bryan candidacy in 1900, and he would be right. By the summer of 1900 his response to a suggestion that he should run for president again was bitter: “Let them that got into this scrape, get out of it.”¹⁰

* * *

The 1890s was the last time it could be said that the foreign policy of the United States was directed by only a handful of men. Subsequently, the spreading of American commerce and the acquisition of overseas territories necessitated an increase in both the size and the professionalism of the State Department and of the diplomatic corps as a whole. Having grown to become a great power, the United States needed a bureaucracy capable of handling its newfound responsibilities. This professional bureaucracy did produce for government the welcome effect of having more reliable and better-qualified representatives overseas and in greater numbers—an increasing number of whom could be contacted by telegraph—thus making flights of individualist foreign policymaking much less common than had been the case in the nineteenth century, and it also increased the complexity in foreign-policy formulation, making any final policy less clearly the work of any one person or group of people. American enthusiasm for international involvement would fluctuate over the next half century—when the Second World War and its aftermath would comprehensively change the manner in which foreign policy was created—but the machinery of government would always be larger and more complex than that of the 1890s. In many respects, however, the possibility for a political elite to control American foreign policy was already coming to an end in the 1890s as business interests and the press exerted an ever-increasing influence on policy. As events in Brazil in 1893–1894 and Nicaragua in 1894–1895 indicated, American business interests served to provide an extra dimension to U.S. involvement in foreign crises. Similarly, the response of American business to the Sino–Japanese War demonstrated that old dreams of Far Eastern markets were still very much alive, while the enthusiasm for a trans-isthmian canal confirmed the existence of a widespread belief that the Pacific offered a new marketplace to be exploited. Perhaps more importantly, events of Cleveland’s second term demonstrated the changing disposition of the public and the press. Whether the press is considered to reflect public opinion or to shape it—or some combination of the two—it is clear from the reaction to the administration’s policies in relation to Armenia and Cuba that the popular mood was increasingly in favor of an active American involvement in world affairs. In an early manifestation of what would a century later be termed the “CNN effect” the revolution in communications technology allowed the press to provide the public with daily coverage of events taking place thousands of miles away, thus generating greater interest both in the specific events

in question and in the wider world generally. With a domestic political arena divided by lines of both party and region—and including highly opinionated figures such as Senators John Tyler Morgan of Alabama and Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, both of whom pursued agendas beyond the limits of party loyalty—Congress too expressed a strong interest in foreign affairs. All this combined to place considerably greater pressure on the president and the secretary of state to alter their foreign policy. Cleveland may have bemoaned the decision to go to war with Spain as a failure for the nation, but it is debatable whether even he would have been able to withstand the pressure to act that emanated from Congress, the press, and the public after the destruction of the *Maine* in Havana harbor—although he himself clearly believed he would have done.

This growing power of non-governmental influences on foreign policy would undermine Cleveland's new template for American foreign policy, but it would not be the ultimate cause of its downfall. By comparison with the disastrous loss of support for the administration's domestic policies, even the refusal to act in Cuba was only charged as a secondary failing. That said, the failure to harness the power of the press and public opinion in support of the legalist template was a major reason why this template did not long survive under the McKinley administration. While it might be argued that Cleveland's basic approach to affairs in Cuba proved to be a useful foundation to McKinley's own policy, as events spiraled out of control there was little that could be done to avoid war. Just as damaging, the failure before leaving office to generate public support for the Olney-Pauncefote Treaty—the most concrete element of Cleveland's legacy—meant that there was little opposition to the Senate's rejection of the treaty.

In the final analysis, the effort by Cleveland, Gresham, and Olney to provide a new direction for U.S. foreign policy was a noble one, but doomed to failure from the beginning. While the template came into being through a series of ad hoc decisions, it developed in an essentially coherent manner throughout the term, and by 1896 had clearly become a matter of some importance to a president alarmed at the rising jingoist sentiment in Congress and the press. It would be this changing public opinion that ensured that the legalist approach to foreign policy did not survive the Cleveland administration's devastating eviction from office in March 1897, with the United States adopting a very different course of colonial acquisition and military intervention shortly afterward. While popular support for empire swiftly faded after the Spanish-American War, the precedents set by

the intervention in the Cuban War of Independence and the seizing of the Philippines and Puerto Rico meant that—as far as Cleveland’s framework of legalism, neutrality, and respect for national sovereignty was concerned—the genie was out of the bottle. Elements of the philosophy advocated by the Cleveland administration would continue. In particular, the following decades would see a clear emphasis on promoting international peace, both through American good offices and through renewed efforts to negotiate international arbitration treaties. Theodore Roosevelt would receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906 for his work in negotiating the peace settlement after the Russo–Japanese War the previous year, and his administration as well as those of successors William Howard Taft and Woodrow Wilson would submit numerous arbitration treaties for Senate ratification, with mixed results.¹¹ In terms of Cleveland’s desire to see the United States set an example of non-interference, however, the first decades of the twentieth century were to see a decisive change of direction, particularly in Latin America. The effective seizure of the Panama Canal route and creation of an American protectorate in the newly formed Republic of Panama, the formulation of the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine—which declared the right of the United States to intervene militarily in any American nation in order to assure payment of debts—and the subsequent rise of “Dollar Diplomacy,” which saw American banks taking on the debts of Central American countries, backed by the constant threat of military intervention, were all evidence of the strong-arm tactics and placing of American interests over legal and moral probity that Cleveland abhorred.¹² The goal of limiting European interference in the Americas, and the charitable intentions suggested by the title “benevolent supervision,” might have had some appeal for the former president, but the practice of using American economic and military power to control the affairs of other nations must have been a profound disappointment in the final months before his death on June 24, 1908. For a brief period, Grover Cleveland and his advisors had been able to formulate and enact a new approach to foreign policy, one which they hoped would set an example of how the United States could harness its growing power for its own good and for the good of the world. Ultimately, however, the same forces that had made that new approach necessary would combine to reject it.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Allan Nevins, *Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage* (1932, reprint New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1966), 521.
2. *New York Times*, May 2, 1893.
3. Ellen M. Litwicky, “The Influence of Commerce, Technology, and Race on Popular Culture in the Gilded Age,” in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America, 2nd Edition*, Ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Ltd., 2007), 187.
4. Richard H. Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt, Culture, Diplomacy, and Expansion: A New View of American Imperialism* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 29–30.
5. Walter LaFeber, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, vol. II: The American Search for Opportunity, 1865–1913* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 114.
6. Ruth C. Crocker, “Cultural and Intellectual Life in the Gilded Age,” in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America, 2nd Edition*, Ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Ltd., 2007), 211–212.
7. *New York Times*, May 2, 1893.
8. The War of 1898 has been known for most of the last century as the Spanish–American War. More recent historians have suggested that this is something of a misnomer since it ignores the vital roles played by large numbers of Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Filipinos. The two terms are used interchangeably in this work.
9. Charles S. Campbell, *The Transformation of American Foreign Policy: 1865–1900* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 84.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Charles W. Calhoun, “Introduction,” in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America, 2nd Edition*, Ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Ltd., 2007), 2.
12. Nell Irvin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: The United States, 1877–1919* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987, reprint, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), xiii.
13. George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 285.

14. W. Bernard Carlson, "Technology and America as a Consumer Society, 1870–1900," in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America, 2nd Edition*, Ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Ltd., 2007), 33.
15. Calhoun, "Introduction," *The Gilded Age*, 2.
16. Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, xiii.
17. Calhoun, "Introduction," *The Gilded Age*, 2.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 243.
22. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 300.
23. Ernest R. May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), 270.
24. For an excellent recent study of how the media catered to the public interest in foreign affairs in the late nineteenth century, see Frank Ninkovich, *Global Dawn: The Cultural Foundation of American Internationalism, 1865–1890* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
25. See Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963) and William Appleman Williams, *The Roots of the Modern American Empire* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970).
26. David M. Pletcher, "Rhetoric and Results: A Pragmatic View of American Economic Expansion, 1865–98," in *Diplomatic History*, vol. 5, No. 2 (1981) 93–105.
27. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 277, 284–285.
28. Ninkovich, *Global Dawn*.
29. Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish–American and Philippine–American Wars* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998).
30. Morton Keller, *Affairs of State: Public Life in Late Nineteenth Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 568.
31. Lewis L. Gould, "Party Conflict: Republicans versus Democrats, 1877–1901," in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America, 2nd Edition*, Ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Ltd., 2007), 268.
32. Charles W. Calhoun, "The Political Culture: Public Life and the Conduct of Politics," in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America, 2nd Edition*, Ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Ltd., 2007), 253.
33. Ibid., 241–242.
34. Ibid., 254.
35. In the 1890s the White House was still officially called the Executive Mansion, although both the press and the public referred to it as the White House. This book uses both terms.

36. Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt, Culture, Diplomacy, and Expansion*, 33–44; Allan Nevins, *Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage* (1932, reprint New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1966), 212–213.
37. Keller, *Affairs of State*, 300.
38. Richard E. Welch, *The Presidencies of Grover Cleveland* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 61.
39. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 279.
40. Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt, Culture, Diplomacy, and Expansion*, 102.
41. Grover Cleveland to Richard Olney, September 15, 1895, Reel 91, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Richard Olney to Grover Cleveland, September 17, 1895, Reel 91, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Grover Cleveland to Richard Olney, September 20, 1895, Reel 91, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
42. H. Paul Jeffers, *An Honest President: The Life and Presidencies of Grover Cleveland* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000) 10.
43. *Index to Grover Cleveland Papers* (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1965), v.
44. Welch, *The Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*, 22.
45. Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, 44–45.
46. Welch, *The Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*, 9.
47. *Ibid.*, 10.
48. *Ibid.*, 15.
49. Grover Cleveland to Thomas F. Bayard, December 29, 1895, *Letters of Grover Cleveland, 1850–1908*, Allan Nevins Ed. (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1933), 417.
50. Welch, *The Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*, 24.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*, 41.
53. *Ibid.*, 39.
54. *Ibid.*, 158–159; Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, 205.
55. Campbell, *The Transformation of American Foreign Policy*, 101–102.
56. Welch, *The Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*, 178–179.
57. Matthew Algeo, *The President is a Sick Man* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2011), 50.
58. Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, 116.
59. Gerald G. Eggert, *Richard Olney: Evolution of a Statesman* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1974), 119.
60. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 927.

CHAPTER 1

1. Allan Nevins, *Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage* (1932, reprint New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1966), 549.

2. Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), 142.
3. Walter LaFeber, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, vol. II: The American Search for Opportunity, 1865–1913* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 91. The white elite was made up of a mixture of men born in Hawaii of American or European parentage—sometimes marrying into the native ruling class—and those who had emigrated to the islands themselves. Americans and those of American descent made up the majority of this elite and were the dominant force behind the revolution.
4. Charles S. Campbell, *Transformation of American Foreign Policy: 1865–1900* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 178; LaFeber, *American Search for Opportunity*, 93.
5. Campbell, *Transformation of American Foreign Policy*, 179; LaFeber, *New Empire*, 143.
6. Campbell, *Transformation of American Foreign Policy*, 182.
7. *Ibid.*, 184.
8. LaFeber, *New Empire*, 144.
9. Campbell, *Transformation of American Foreign Policy*, 184. Campbell speculates that the impatient annexationists in Hawaii may have seen enough encouragement in Foster's tacit acknowledgment that the Harrison administration was open to annexation that they decided to act against the queen regardless.
10. *Ibid.*, 180–181.
11. Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, 551, 552.
12. Campbell, *Transformation of American Foreign Policy*, 186.
13. Richard E. Welch, *The Presidencies of Grover Cleveland* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 171.
14. John W. Foster to Grover Cleveland, January 18, 1893, Reel 72, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. Although subsequently dated by an archivist as January 18, 1893, the delay in communication between Hawaii and Washington means it is impossible that Foster forwarded the letter to Cleveland on this date. Even if the original letter to Foster was sent on January 18, the length of time necessary for it to reach Washington and for Foster to forward it to Cleveland would mean he could not have received it until early February.
15. LaFeber, *New Empire*, 204.
16. Campbell, *Transformation of American Foreign Policy*, 187. Foster had telegraphed Stevens soon after the latter declared the protectorate, informing him that the United States was not to impair Hawaiian independence, but Stevens had clearly chosen not to interpret this as an order to remove the U.S. flag from Hawaiian soil.
17. The Blount investigation is reproduced at Mr. Blount to Mr. Gresham, July 17, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 567–605. It is accompanied by an array of supporting documents including transcripts of interviews and affidavits.

18. Mr. Blount to Mr. Gresham, July 17, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 594.
19. Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, 556.
20. Richard Olney to Walter Q. Gresham, October 9, 1893, Reel 1, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. In an unfinished memorandum regarding Cleveland's second term and dictated by Olney in 1901, Olney stated that he and Carlisle had taken the position that the United States must bear some responsibility for the rebels' actions and thus must protect them. Extracts reproduced in Henry James, *Richard Olney and His Public Service* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923), 197–207.
21. Albert S. Willis to Walter Quintin Gresham, November 16, 1893, Reel 80, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
22. LaFeber, *New Empire*, 204; Campbell, *Transformation of American Foreign Policy*, 189.
23. Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, 511.
24. Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, 445–446; Welch, *Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*, 115.
25. Grover Cleveland to Walter Q. Gresham, January 25, 1893, Reel 1, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Walter Q. Gresham to Grover Cleveland, February 3, 1893, Reel 1, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Grover Cleveland to Walter Q. Gresham, February 6, 1893, Reel 1, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Walter Q. Gresham to Grover Cleveland, February 7, 1893, Reel 1, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
26. Gresham to Cleveland, February 3, 1893, Reel 1, Gresham Papers, MD, LC.
27. Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, 552–553.
28. LaFeber, *New Empire*, 204.
29. Grover Cleveland, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1885.
30. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Blount, March 11, 1893 [Insert 1, President Cleveland to President Dole], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 469. It should be noted that Gresham's letters to Minister Stevens and consul-general Severance—the United States' official representatives in Hawaii—also make no reference to annexation, simply stating that Blount's investigation is designed to obtain “the fullest possible information” about the condition of affairs in Hawaii—Mr. Gresham to Mr. Stevens, March 11, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 469–470, Mr. Gresham to Mr. Severance, March 11, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 470.
31. Grover Cleveland, “Statement to Associated Press,” January 24, 1898, in Allan Nevins Ed., *Letters of Grover Cleveland, 1850–1908* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1933), 491–492.

32. Grover Cleveland, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1885.
33. Cleveland, "Statement to Associated Press," January 24, 1898, *Letters of Grover Cleveland*, 492.
34. Ibid.
35. Cleveland, Message to Congress, December 18, 1893, *FRUS, 1894, Appendix II*, 455.
36. Ibid., 456.
37. Ibid.
38. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Blount, March 11, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 467–468.
39. Mr. Blount to Mr. Gresham, April 8, 1893 [No. 2], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 475; The documents enclosed by Blount are not reproduced in the *Foreign Relations* collection. It should be noted that a significant portion of Blount's final report was also given over to establishing the demographics of the islands in terms of race, national origin, and class.
40. Mr. Blount to Mr. Gresham, May 4, 1893 [No. 4], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 502.
41. Grover Cleveland, First Annual Message (second term), December 4, 1893.
42. For the most authoritative single account of the Samoan crises, see Paul Kennedy, *The Samoan Tangle: A Study in Anglo-German-American Relations, 1878–1900* (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1974).
43. Grover Cleveland, First Annual Message (second term), December 4, 1893.
44. Grover Cleveland, Second Annual Message (second term), December 3, 1894.
45. Walter Q. Gresham to Carl Schurz, July 11, 1893, Reel 1, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
46. Blount, having originally agreed only to conduct the investigation and prepare his report, found himself obliged to take over the post of Minister to Hawaii at Cleveland's and Gresham's request in May 1893. He clearly did not do so enthusiastically—even going so far as to enclose his letter of resignation in the official dispatch that confirmed he had officially taken up the office—but rather by necessity of replacing the unpredictable Minister Stevens as swiftly as possible. Blount's lack of desire to remain in Hawaii was demonstrated by his decision to leave the islands at the end of July for unstated personal reasons without asking the permission of the State Department. Mr. Blount to Mr. Gresham, May 24, 1893 [No. 1], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 421; Mr. Blount to Mr. Gresham, July 31, 1893 [Personal], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 630.
47. Walter Q. Gresham, Memorandum, October 18, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 462–463.

48. *Ibid.*, 463.
49. Olney to Gresham, October 9, 1893, Reel 1, Gresham Papers, MD, LC.
50. Olney also expressed concern that the use of military power was likely to devastate Hawaii, if it encountered resistance from the provisional government, thus restoring to the queen a nation very different from the one that she had relinquished. He also, perhaps over-cautiously given Blount's findings, questioned what would happen if it were discovered that the Hawaiian population had come to support the provisional government over the monarchy.
51. Olney to Gresham, October 9, 1893, Reel 1, Gresham Papers, MD, LC.
52. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Willis, October 18, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 463.
53. *Ibid.*, 463–464.
54. *Ibid.*, 464.
55. Hoganson, Kristin L., *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish–American and Philippine–American Wars* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 51–67.
56. Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, 553.
57. Gresham to Willis, October 18, 1893, *FRUS, 1894, Appendix II*, 463.
58. Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, 559; Nevins describes a perplexed Cleveland pacing the White House library in the days before December 7, but sadly fails to elaborate on his sources.
59. Mr. Willis to Mr. Gresham, November 6, 1893 [No. 1], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 430–431.
60. Mr. Willis to Mr. Gresham, November 11, 1893 [No. 2], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 432–433.
61. Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, 558.
62. Mr. Willis to Mr. Gresham, November 16, 1893 [Telegram], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 434.
63. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Willis, November 24, 1893 [Telegram], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 437.
64. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Willis, December 3, 1893 [Telegram], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 437.
65. Mr. Willis to Mr. Gresham, January 16, 1894, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
66. Grover Cleveland, First Annual Message (second term), December 4, 1893.
67. *New York Times*, December 7, 1893, 1.
68. Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, 560.
69. Grover Cleveland, Statement to Press, January 6, 1895, Reel 86, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

70. Felix A. Reeve to Grover Cleveland, December 20, 1893, Reel 81, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
71. Grover Cleveland, Message to Congress, December 18, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 445.
72. Ibid.
73. Frank Ninkovich, *Global Dawn: The Cultural Foundation of American Internationalism, 1865–1890* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 302–305.
74. Grover Cleveland, Message to Congress, December 18, 1893, *FRUS, 1894, Appendix II*, 445–447.
75. Welch, *Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*, 16.
76. Cleveland, Message to Congress, December 18, 1893, *FRUS, 1894, Appendix II*, 448.
77. Olney to Gresham, October 9, 1893, Reel 1, Gresham Papers, MD, LC.
78. Grover Cleveland, Message to Congress, December 18, 1893, *FRUS, 1894, Appendix II*, 456.
79. Ibid., 456–457.
80. Campbell, *Transformation of American Foreign Policy*, 191–192.
81. For a definitive account of the Hawaiian protest against the establishment of the Hawaiian Republic, see Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonization* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 136–137, 170–171.
82. Charles W. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato: The Life of Walter Q. Gresham* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 156.
83. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 138–139; J. Campbell to Grover Cleveland, December 8, 1896, Reel 96, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; David Kalauokalani to Grover Cleveland, December 8, 1896, Reel 96, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; James Keauiluna Kaulia to Grover Cleveland, December 8, 1896, Reel 96, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
84. Gresham to Blount, March 11, 1893, *FRUS Appendix II*, 468.
85. Mr. Stevens to Mr. Gresham, March 15, 1893 [No. 92], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 415–416; Mr. Stevens to Mr. Gresham, March 24, 1893 [No. 93], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 416–418.
86. LaFeber, *New Empire*, 207.
87. Ibid., 203–204.
88. Mr. Stevens to Mr. Foster, March 1, 1893 [No. 88], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 411–412.
89. Stevens to Gresham, March 15, 1893, *FRUS, 1894, Appendix II*, 416.

90. Mr. Stevens to Mr. Foster, February 27, 1893 [No. 86], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 409.
91. Gresham, Memorandum, October 18, 1893, *FRUS, 1894, Appendix II*, 463.
92. E. B. Pond to Grover Cleveland, June 1, 1893, Reel 76, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
93. T. F. Bourne to Grover Cleveland, April 25, 1893, Reel 75, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Willis D. Paine to Grover Cleveland, July 8, 1893, Reel 77, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
94. Jon H. Reall to Grover Cleveland, November 12, 1893, Reel 80, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
95. Mary Ida Eldredge to Grover Cleveland, June 7, 1893, Reel 76, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
96. John Stuppelheew to Grover Cleveland, April 22, 1893, Reel 75, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
97. John Rush to Grover Cleveland, April 15, 1893, Reel 75, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Edward Atkinson memorandum "In re Sandwich Islands," February 15, 1895, Reel 89, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
98. Rush to Cleveland, April 15, 1893, Reel 75, Cleveland Papers, MD, LC.
99. J. Snare Detwiler to Grover Cleveland, April 28, 1893, Reel 75, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Charles Francis Adams to Grover Cleveland, November 18, 1893, Reel 80, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
100. Walter Q. Gresham to Carl Schurz, November 21, 1893, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
101. Walter Q. Gresham to Carl Schurz, December 17, 1893, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
102. A. B. Farquhar to Grover Cleveland, November 13, 1893, Reel 80, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Thomas M. Rogers to Grover Cleveland, February 8, 1894, Reel 82, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
103. Felix A. Reeve to Grover Cleveland, December 20, 1893, Reel 81, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

CHAPTER 2

1. This relative lack of importance also meant that the events do not feature prominently in the personal papers of either Cleveland or Gresham. For this reason most of the sources for this chapter are drawn from the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series.
2. Richard E. Welch, *The Presidencies of Grover Cleveland* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 122–123.
3. *Ibid.*, 131–137.
4. *Ibid.*, 135.
5. Charles W. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato: The Life of Walter Q. Gresham* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 194; Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), 210.
6. *Admiral de Mello's proclamation to his fellow citizens*, reproduced in Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, September 11, 1893 [No. 4], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 47–49; *Manifesto of Rear-Admiral Saldanha da Gama, of the Brazilian navy*, reproduced in Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, December 18, 1893 [No. 107], 83–84.
7. Despite assuming the powers of the Brazilian presidency on November 23, 1891, when his predecessor Deodoro da Fonseca resigned his office, Floriano Peixoto retained the title of vice president. Official despatches, somewhat confusingly, use the titles of president and vice president interchangeably, while some historians have preferred to use the term acting president. The title of vice president, as the most widely used term in the official despatches, is used here.
8. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, September 7, 1893 [No. 3], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 46.
9. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Thompson, September 8, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 47.
10. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, September 9, 1893 [No. 3], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 46; Mr. Gresham to Mr. Thompson, September 9, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 47.
11. For Minister Thompson's communications from the first weeks of the Brazilian Naval Revolt, see *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893–1894*, 45–50.
12. Thompson to Gresham, September 7, 1893 [No. 3], *FRUS, 1893*, 45–46.
13. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, September 28, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 51.
14. Notice Published by Mr. Thompson, September 27, 1893, reproduced in Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, October 13, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 53.
15. Mr. Strobel to Mr. Thompson, September 28, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 51.

16. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, October 2, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 51.
17. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, October 2, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 51–52.
18. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Thompson, October 11, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 52.
19. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 196.
20. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Thompson, October 25, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 63.
21. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, October 30, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 63.
22. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Thompson, November 1, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 64.
23. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, November 10, 1893 [No. 70] *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 72–73.
24. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 196.
25. Thompson to Gresham, November 10, 1893 [No. 70] *FRUS, 1893*, 72–73.
26. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 196–197; Floriano Peixoto to Grover Cleveland, November 15, 1893, Reel 80, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
27. Grover Cleveland, First Annual Message (second term), December 4, 1893.
28. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, December 9, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 82; Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, December 1, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 77.
29. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 197.
30. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, December 17, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 83.
31. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, December 21, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 85.
32. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, November 18, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 75; Mr. Gresham to Mr. Thompson, November 20, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 75.
33. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Thompson, December 25, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 86.
34. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, December 28, 1893 [No. 114], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 87.
35. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Willis, November 24, 1893 [Telegram], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Affairs in Hawaii (Appendix II)*, 437.
36. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, September 19, 1893 [No. 17], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 50; Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, December 18, 1893 [No. 107], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 83.

37. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, December 27, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 86.
38. Enclosure 2 "Diplomatic Corps to the Naval Commanders," December 19, 1893, in Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, December 31, 1893 [No. 117], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 88.
39. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Thompson, January 11, 1894 [No. 78], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 99.
40. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 200–201.
41. *Ibid.*, 201.
42. *Ibid.*, 201–202.
43. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, January 26, 1894 [No. 141], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 115.
44. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 202.
45. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Thompson, January 29, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 116; Mr. Gresham to Mr. Thompson, January 30, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 116.
46. Gresham to Thomson, January 30, 1894, *FRUS*, 116.
47. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, January 31, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 116–117; Mr. Gresham to Mr. Thompson, February 1, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 117.
48. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 203.
49. One of Cleveland's correspondents reported that most Brazilians saw the republic as a fairer system that offered some hope of personal advancement, while the aristocracy also largely supported it, having survived the transition from monarchy to republic with their status largely unaffected. All sides reportedly saw the revolt as a clash between the army and the navy, with little interest to most civilians. E. A. Fuertes to Grover Cleveland, December 23, 1893, Reel 81, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
50. William Appleman Williams, *The Roots of American Empire* (New York: Random House, 1969), 366.
51. LaFeber, *New Empire*, 215–216.
52. Robert L. Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865–1900* (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell Company, 1975), 97.
53. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, January 12, 1894 [No. 134], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 105–106.
54. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, February 1, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 118.
55. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, December 14, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 82; Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, January 29, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 116.
56. Mr. Thompson to Mr. Gresham, February 1, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 119–120.
57. Thomas L. Thompson to Grover Cleveland, April 2, 1894, Reel 84, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

58. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 199.
59. *Ibid.*, 198–199.
60. Walter Q. Gresham to Thomas F. Bayard, January 21, 1894, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
61. David R. Burke to Grover Cleveland, June 11, 1894, Reel 85, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; R. P. M. Daniel to Grover Cleveland, July 12, 1894, Reel 85, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
62. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 202–203.
63. This fact was demonstrated by Gresham himself who reminded Thompson that, though British vessels at Rio outnumbered American ships by 9 to 1, the United States still held the right to protect its interests regardless of the British position. Gresham to Thomson, January 11, 1894 [No. 78], *FRUS*, 99.
64. Mr. Heard to Mr. Gresham, April 4, 1893 [No. 1], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894 (Appendix I)*, 5–8.
65. *Ibid.*, 7; Mr. Heard to Mr. Gresham, May 16, 1893 [No. 6], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894 (Appendix I)*, 16.
66. Mr. Sill to Mr. Gresham, May 17, 1894 [No. 9], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894 (Appendix I)*, 18.
67. Jeffery Dorwart, *The Pigtail War* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1975), 16.
68. Mr. Denby, chargé, to Mr. Gresham, June 9, 1894 [No. 12], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894 (Appendix I)*, 20. The now-defunct name, Peking, is used here in reference to the Chinese capital as it is the term used in the original sources. The same applies to all names of people and places referred to.
69. Grover Cleveland, Second Annual Message (second term), December 3, 1894.
70. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Denby, November 24, 1894 [No. 81], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894 (Appendix I)*, 82.
71. Grover Cleveland, Third Annual Message (second term), December 2, 1895.
72. In Cleveland's annual message of 1894 he specifically noted that the United States had been the first Western nation to sign a treaty with Korea.
73. Cleveland's annual message of 1895 showed obvious pride that American actions, which had had no selfish object, had received the gratitude of both China and Japan.
74. Frank Ninkovich, *Global Dawn: The Cultural Foundation of American Internationalism, 1865–1890* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 208–219.
75. Dorwart, *Pigtail War*, 21. The powerful influence exerted by Japan on the Korean government at this time made any request for intervention by the United States highly improbable unless Japan desired it but, if

- anything, this could be viewed as a convenient excuse for inaction by Cleveland.
76. Ernest R. May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), 25.
 77. Dorwart, *Pigtail War*, 37.
 78. *Ibid.*, 34–41.
 79. The September, 1894, edition of *The North American Review* carried a three-part discussion of the war, presenting pro-Japanese and pro-Chinese arguments along with a more general piece with a neutral standpoint. It is interesting to note that the pro-Chinese article argued that Americans were too willing to support Japan on the grounds that it had embraced elements of Western culture, while the neutral piece was sure of Japanese success. Augustine Heard, D. W. Stevens, and Howard Martin, “China and Japan in Korea,” *The North American Review*, vol. 159, Issue 454 (September, 1894), 300–321. It has also been suggested that Cleveland and Gresham themselves sympathized with Japan, but not so much as to bias the neutrality policy. Dorwart, *Pigtail War*, 122.
 80. Mr. Sill to Mr. Gresham, July 24, 1894 [No. 29], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894 (Appendix I)*, 40.
 81. Dorwart, *Pigtail War*, 45.
 82. *Ibid.*, 46.
 83. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 175.
 84. *Ibid.*, 176.
 85. Walter Q. Gresham to Charles Denby Sr., December 26, 1894, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
 86. Dorwart, *Pigtail War*, 50.
 87. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 176.
 88. *Ibid.*, 177.
 89. Cushman K. Davis, “Two Years of Democratic Diplomacy,” *The North American Review*, vol. 160, Issue 460 (March, 1895), 277.
 90. Walter Q. Gresham to John T. Morgan, December 6, 1894, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Walter Q. Gresham to John Sherman, December 6, 1894, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
 91. Davis, “Two Years of Democratic Diplomacy,” *The North American Review*, 277–284; George Gray, “Two Years of American Diplomacy,” *The North American Review*, vol. 160, Issue 461 (April, 1895), 409–424.
 92. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 177.
 93. Blaine died shortly before Cleveland’s inauguration, while Harrison’s involvement in politics declined after leaving office so that he offered only sporadic criticism.
 94. Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish–American and Philippine–American Wars* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 21–29.

95. Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956, reprint 1989), 25.
96. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Denby, November 6, 1894 [No. 67], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894 (Appendix I)*, 76.
97. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Denby, November 8, 1894 [No. 68], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894 (Appendix I)*, 77.
98. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 173; Sir Julian Pauncefote to Walter Q. Gresham, August 7, 1894, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. The Navy Department did not share the State Department's reluctance to work with its foreign counterparts, reaching agreements with British, French and German commanders for concerted action in defence of foreign citizens in China—although no such actions took place. Dorwart, *Pigtail War*, 61.
99. Mr. Goschen to Mr. Gresham, October 6, 1894 [No. 56], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894 (Appendix I)*, 70; Mr. Gresham to Mr. Goschen, October 12, 1894 [No. 58], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894 (Appendix I)*, 70. The weight carried by these decisions is illustrated by the fact that Gresham specifically requested Cleveland's decision on how to reply to the offer of October 6. Walter Q. Gresham to Grover Cleveland, October 12, 1894, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
100. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Denby, November 24, 1894 [No. 81], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894 (Appendix I)*, 81–82.
101. "Note Verbale," November 17, 1894 [No. 75], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894 (Appendix I)*, 79.
102. Dorwart, *Pigtail War*, 78.
103. Ibid.
104. The Emperor of the Chinese Empire to Grover Cleveland, February 16, 1895, Reel 88, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
105. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 174–175.
106. Walter Q. Gresham to Charles Denby Sr., April 12, 1895, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Charles Denby Sr. to Walter Q. Gresham, May 12, 1895, and Edwin F. Uhl to Charles Denby Sr., May 14, 1895, Reel 90, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 175.
107. Dorwart, *Pigtail War*, 82.
108. Walter Q. Gresham to Thomas F. Bayard, December 24, 1894, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
109. Senate Resolution, January 4, 1895, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

110. Walter Q. Gresham in reply to Senate Resolution of January 4, 1895, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Dorwart, *Pigtail War*, 83.
111. Grover Cleveland, Second Annual Message (second term), December 3, 1894.
112. Mr. Sill to Mr. Gresham, July 24, 1894 [No. 29], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894 (Appendix I)*, 40; Mr. Gresham to Mr. Bayard, July 20, 1894 [No. 28], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894 (Appendix I)*, 37; Walter LaFeber, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, vol. II: The American Search for Opportunity, 1865–1913* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 119.
113. Dorwart, *Pigtail War*, 69.
114. *Ibid.*
115. LaFeber, *New Empire*, 310.
116. Dorwart, *Pigtail War*, 92–95, 95, 112, 116, 117–118.
117. Ninkovich, *Global Dawn*, 175.
118. Walter Q. Gresham to Charles Denby, December 26, 1894, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

CHAPTER 3

1. Wilfrid Hardy Callcott, *The Caribbean Policy of the United States, 1890–1920* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966); Richard H. Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt, Culture, Diplomacy, and Expansion: A New View of American Imperialism* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 158; George B. Young, “Intervention Under the Monroe Doctrine: The Olney Corollary,” *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 57, No. 2 (June, 1942), 247.
2. Gerald G. Eggert, *Richard Olney: Evolution of a Statesman* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1974), 119.
3. Richard E. Welch, *The Presidencies of Grover Cleveland* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988), 150.
4. *Ibid.*, 141–142.
5. Almont Lindsey, *The Pullman Strike: The Story of a Unique Experiment and of a Great Labour Upheaval* (Chicago: Phoenix Books, 1964), 150; Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement of the United States, vol. II: From the Founding of the American Federation of Labor to the Emergence of American Imperialism, 2nd Edition* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 266–267.
6. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement, vol. II*, 269.
7. Worth Robert Miller, “Farmers and Third Party Politics,” *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America, 2nd Edition*, Ed. Charles W. Calhoun (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Ltd., 2007), 298–299.

8. Welch, *Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*, 202.
9. The Native Americans who occupy the region are more correctly known as Miskitos, but for the purpose of clarity the term *Mosquito* will be used here, as it was exclusively in the documents of the period.
10. Charles W. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato: The Life of Walter Q. Gresham* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 204.
11. Mr. Bayard to Mr. Gresham, March 16, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 251.
12. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 205.
13. Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), 220–221.
14. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 205; LaFeber, *New Empire*, 221.
15. Mr. Seat to Mr. Gresham, January 25, 1894 [Telegram], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 234.
16. Mr. Seat to Mr. Braidia, January 22, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 235–236.
17. Mr. Braidia to Mr. Uhl, February 13, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 237–238.
18. Bayard to Gresham, March 16, 1894, *FRUS*, 251–252. A recurring feature of dispatches between Ambassador Bayard and Secretary of State Gresham in 1894 would be the repeated declaration that the United States had only acquiesced in the Treaty of Managua under the impression that it formed a total renunciation of British interest in the Mosquito Reservation.
19. Mr. Bayard to Mr. Phelps, November 23, 1888 [No. 999], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1888*, 759.
20. *Ibid.*, 759–767.
21. Mr. Foster to Mr. Lincoln, February 8, 1893 [No. 1053], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1893*, 314.
22. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Baker, March 7, 1894 [Telegram], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 239; Mr. Gresham to Mr. Bayard, March 9, 1894 [Telegram], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 250.
23. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Baker, March 14, 1894 [Telegram], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 250.
24. Mr. Bayard to Mr. Gresham, March 15, 1894 [Telegram], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 250–251; Bayard to Gresham, March 16, 1894, *FRUS*, 251.
25. Mr. Bayard to Mr. Gresham, March 29, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 258–260.
26. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Bayard, April 30, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 271–273.
27. *Ibid.*; Mr. Braidia to Mr. Uhl, March 18, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 255; Mr. Braidia to Mr. Baker, March 21, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 256–258; Mr. Braidia to Mr. Uhl, March 26, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 258.

28. Walter Q. Gresham to Thomas F. Bayard, May 2, 1894, Reel 2, Walter Quintin Gresham Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
29. Gresham to Bayard, April 30, 1894, *FRUS*, 273.
30. LaFeber, *New Empire*, 218–219.
31. Walter LaFeber, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, vol. II: The American Search for Opportunity, 1865–1913* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 123.
32. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 204.
33. Mr. Bayard to Mr. Gresham, May 28, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 291–293.
34. *Ibid.*, 292.
35. Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 82–83.
36. Bayard to Gresham, May 28, 1894, *FRUS*, 292–293.
37. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Bayard, July 19, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 311–312.
38. Mr. Bayard to Mr. Gresham, August 10, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 322–323.
39. LaFeber, *American Search for Opportunity*, 123.
40. Gresham to Bayard, July 19, 1894, *FRUS*, 312; Mr. Gresham to Mr. Bayard, July 23, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 313.
41. Welch, *Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*, 178.
42. *Ibid.*, 158–159.
43. Joseph A. Fry, “John Tyler Morgan’s Southern Expansionism,” *Diplomatic History*, vol. 9, No. 4 (1985) 330.
44. John T. Morgan to Grover Cleveland, January 24, 1894, Reel 82, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; John T. Morgan to Grover Cleveland, April 17, 1894, Reel 84, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
45. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 209; Charles S. Campbell, *The Transformation of American Foreign Policy: 1865–1900* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 224–228. Campbell notes that Cleveland signed the bill that had incorporated the Maritime Canal Company in 1889, but suggests this was a matter of routine rather than an indication of support.
46. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 209.
47. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Baker, October 30, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 351–352; Mr. Gresham to Mr. Baker, November 15, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 353–354.
48. Mr. Baker to Mr. Gresham, July 14, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 309.
49. Mr. Baker to Mr. Gresham, May 2, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 273–275.

50. Baker to Gresham, July 14, 1894, *FRUS*, 309.
51. Mr. Madriz to Mr. Baker, July 28, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 325–326.
52. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Braidā, March 28, 1894 [Telegram], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 258.
53. Mr. Baker to Mr. Gresham, March 20, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 255.
54. Gresham to Baker, March 7, 1894 [Telegram], *FRUS*, 239; Gresham to Baker, March 14, 1894 [Telegram], *FRUS*, 250.
55. Mr. Baker to Mr. Gresham, April 17, 1894 [Telegram], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 271.
56. Baker to Gresham, May 2, 1894, *FRUS*, 273–275; Baker to Madriz, July 26, 1894, *FRUS*, 324–325; Madriz to Baker, July 28, 1894, *FRUS*, 325–326.
57. Mr. Baker to Mr. Gresham, May 10, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 287–290; Mr. Baker to Mr. Gresham, May 30, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 293; Mr. Gresham to Mr. Baker, June 13, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 296; Mr. Gresham to Mr. Baker, July 12, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 306–307.
58. Mr. Madriz to Mr. Guzman, June 4, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 296–300.
59. Gresham to Bayard, May 2, 1894, Reel 2, Gresham Papers, MD, LC.
60. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 208.
61. Gresham to Bayard, April 30, 1894, *FRUS*, 271–273.
62. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Baker, May 12, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 290.
63. Braidā to Uhl, March 18, 1894, *FRUS*, 255; Mr. Baker to Mr. Madriz, July 26, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 324–325; Madriz to Baker, July 28, 1894, *FRUS*, 325–326.
64. Mr. Seat to Mr. Braidā, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 253–254.
65. Mr. Seat to Mr. Braidā, July [Unknown date between 7th and 11th], 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 303–304.
66. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Baker, July 12, 1894 [Telegram], *FRUS*, 306.
67. Seat to Braidā, July, 1894, *FRUS*, 303–304.
68. Mr. Baker to Mr. Gresham, August 28, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 331–332.
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71. Mr. Guzman to Mr. Gresham, September 22, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Appendix I*, 343.
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83. Mr. Uhl to Mr. Bayard, May 1, 1895 [Telegram], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1895, Part 1*, 697; Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 212.
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85. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 214; LaFeber, *New Empire*, 242; Welch, *Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*, 190–191.
86. Allan Nevins, *Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage* (1932, reprint New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1966), 549.
87. Thorough histories of the dispute from the perspectives of both the Venezuelan and British governments can be found in *Prominent facts relating to the boundary question between Venezuela and Great Britain*, enclosed in Dr. Lobo to Mr. Gresham, October 26, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894*, 803–805; and Lord Salisbury to Sir Julian Pauncefote, November 26, 1895 [No. 190], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1895, Part 1*, 567–576.
88. Mr. Bayard to Mr. Phelps, February 17, 1888 [No. 791], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1888–89*, 698–699.
89. It has been suggested that Cleveland was unaware that this dispatch was not passed to the British government, and that this might go some way to explaining his frustration with British reluctance to accept American involvement in the dispute (see Callcott, *Caribbean Policy of the United States*, 57). This explanation is supported by the fact that Cleveland mentions the dispatch in *Presidential Problems*, but makes no reference to the fact it was not transmitted to Lord Salisbury. It would seem

- doubtful, however, that Cleveland's actions in 1895 were noticeably altered by his belief that a moderately stern declaration of American concern had been ignored more than seven years previously. Grover Cleveland, *Presidential Problems* (New York: The Century Company, 1904, reprint Boston: Elibron Classics, 2005), 243–244.
90. Grover Cleveland, Second Annual Message (second term), December 3, 1894.
 91. Lobo to Gresham, October 26, 1893, *FRUS, 1894*, 803–805.
 92. Mr. Partridge to Mr. Gresham, November 15, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894*, 805–806.
 93. Mr. Gresham to Mr. Bayard, July 13, 1894 [No. 442], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894*, 250–252; Mr. Gresham to Mr. Bayard, December 1, 1894 [No. 548], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894*, 252.
 94. Ezequiel Rojas to Grover Cleveland, January 15, 1894, Reel 82, Grover Cleveland Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Mr. Gresham to Mr. Rojas, January 21, 1894, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894*, 809–810.
 95. Campbell, *Transformation of American Foreign Policy*, 197.
 96. Dexter Perkins, *The Monroe Doctrine, 1867–1907* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1937, reprint Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1966), 143.
 97. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 217; Perkins, *Monroe Doctrine*, 147.
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 99. Welch, *Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*, 181.
 100. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 218.
 101. For full text of the dispatch see Richard Olney to Thomas F. Bayard, July 20, 1895 [No. 804], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1895, Part 1*, 545–562.
 102. *Ibid.*, 556, 558.
 103. *Ibid.*, 557, 558.
 104. *Ibid.*, 545.
 105. *Ibid.*, 562.
 106. Campbell, *Transformation of American Foreign Policy*, 206.
 107. Grover Cleveland, Third Annual Message (second term), December 2, 1895.
 108. Lord Salisbury to Sir Julian Pauncefote, November 26, 1895 [No. 189], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1895, Part 1*, 564.
 109. *Ibid.*
 110. Gerald G. Eggert suggests that Lord Salisbury's original intention was to only reply to the Monroe Doctrine, and that he was subsequently persuaded to write the dispatch after consultation with Queen Victoria and his cabinet. This might serve to explain why the second note could be seen as respectful in object, but disrespectful in tone. Eggert, *Richard Olney*, 216.

111. Salisbury to Pauncefote, November 26, 1895 [No. 189], *FRUS, 1895, Pt. 1*, 566, 563.
112. Lord Salisbury to Sir Julian Pauncefote, November 26, 1895 [No. 190], *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1895, Part 1*, 568.
113. Welch, *Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*, 184.
114. Grover Cleveland to Richard Olney, December 3, 1895, Reel 59, Richard Olney Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
115. Grover Cleveland, Special Message to Congress, December 17, 1895, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1895, Part 1*, 545.
116. Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, 640–641; Campbell, *Transformation of American Foreign Policy*, 208; George F. Parker, *Recollections of Grover Cleveland* (New York: The Century Co., 1909), 197.
117. Grover Cleveland, Special Message to Congress, December 17, 1895, *FRUS, 1895, Pt. 1*, 545.
118. *Ibid.*
119. Welch, *Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*, 185.
120. Parker, *Recollections*, 200–201.
121. Richard Watson Gilder, *Grover Cleveland: A Record of Friendship* (New York: The Century Co., 1910), 201–202.
122. Joseph J. Mathews, “Informal Diplomacy in the Venezuelan Crisis of 1896,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 52, No. 2 (1963), 197.
123. Mr. Bayard to the Marquis of Salisbury, February 27, 1896, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1896*, 240–241; Lord Salisbury to Mr. Bayard, March 3, 1896, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1896*, 241–242; Mathews, “Informal Diplomacy in the Venezuelan Crisis of 1896,” 207.
124. Mathews, “Informal Diplomacy in the Venezuelan Crisis of 1896,” 202. Olney did make several attempts—both official and unofficial—to keep negotiations moving through the spring and summer of 1896, including a month-long visit to Britain in July by his friend Henry White, who worked to raise the public profile of the dispute: see Mathews, “Informal Diplomacy in the Venezuelan Crisis of 1896,” 209–210.
125. Richard Olney to Sir Julian Pauncefote, April 10, 1896, Reel 51, Richard Olney Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
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127. Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 208–209.
128. Campbell, *Transformation of American Foreign Policy*, 219.
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130. Cleveland, *Presidential Problems*, 247–248.

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132. Calhoun, *Gilded Age Cato*, 217–218.
133. Richard Olney to Grover Cleveland, May 19, 1897, Reel 59, Richard Olney Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Grover Cleveland to Richard Olney, May 20, 1897, Reel 59, Richard Olney Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
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135. Cleveland to Olney, December 3, 1895, Reel 59, Olney Papers, MD, LC.
136. Henry Cabot Lodge, “England, Venezuela, and the Monroe Doctrine,” *The North American Review*, vol. 160, Issue 463 (June, 1895), 651–658.
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138. *Ibid.*, 252–253.
139. Mr. Pulido to Mr. Andrade, April 18, 1895, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1895, Part 2*, 1483–1484; Cleveland, *Presidential Problems*, 252.
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141. Welch, *Presidencies of Grover Cleveland*, 143; Richard Olney to Grover Cleveland, July 16, 1896, Reel 51, Richard Olney Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
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CHAPTER 4

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CONCLUSION

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