

# Victorian politics and politics overseas\*

ALEX MIDDLETON  
*Christ Church, Oxford*

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**ABSTRACT.** *This article reviews recent historiography on the international and imperial dimensions of nineteenth-century British politics. In particular, it charts historians' attempts to assess how British engagement with politics overseas – in Europe, the empire, and the 'rest of the world' – helped to shape domestic political structures, cultures, and ideologies. While concentrating mainly on studies produced during the last twenty years, the article also affirms the continued relevance of work from before the turn of the century, and suggests that some of the most compelling approaches to connecting 'domestic' and 'international' politics may lie in older historiography. It proposes also that political historians might engage more closely with relevant scholarship by intellectual historians and historians of political thought.*

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The historiography of Victorian politics has never been insular. Contemporary histories were studded with reflections on events overseas and their impacts in Britain, while historians working in the first half of the twentieth century were no less interested in these interactions. From the 1960s, however, examinations of the relationships between nineteenth-century British politics and the wider world took on new levels of scholarly sophistication, and expanded dramatically in quantity and scope.<sup>1</sup> Political biographers started to pay closer attention to their subjects' ideas about other parts of the globe; accounts of 'opinion' about foreign and imperial matters grew into a modestly thriving sub-genre; and increasingly detailed discussions of Victorian attitudes towards international issues began to be found in studies of foreign, imperial, and defence policy. By the turn of the twenty-first century, historians were well aware that external political developments of all kinds – revolutions, abolitions, conflicts, conquests, massacres, unifications, constitutions, imperial crises, policy experiments – bore at a fundamental level upon the theory and practice of Victorian politics.

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<sup>1</sup> Starting with Derek Beales, *England and Italy, 1859-60* (London, 1961); Richard Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian agitation, 1876* (London, 1963).

These issues have become far more prominent, however, in the last twenty years. No development in modern British historiography during the last two decades has been as conspicuous – or, arguably, as important – as the move towards emphasising the imperial, transnational, and global forces implicated in the making of modern Britain.<sup>2</sup> Studies of the relations between nineteenth-century politics and the wider world have gained accordingly in popularity, and the impact of international connections on Britain's domestic political structures, cultures, and ideologies seems likely to remain a focus of research for some time to come. Given that no existing discussion of the historiography of Victorian politics treats these issues at all systematically, it is a good time to reflect on the state of play.<sup>3</sup>

This article explores recent scholarship on the interactions between Victorian public politics and, in turn, Europe (especially France), the British Empire, and the most politically salient parts of the 'rest of the world'. It does not attempt to be exhaustive: the aim of the overview offered is to highlight historiographical tendencies, analogies, and gaps, which closer specialisation might obscure. As nineteenth-century British political history is nowadays a relatively compact field of research, the names of certain leading figures necessarily appear semi-regularly in the footnotes. Efforts have however been made to cast a wide net, and to

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<sup>2</sup> See Tehila Sasson et al., 'Britain and the world: a new field?', *Journal of British Studies*, 57 (2018), pp. 677-708; James Vernon, 'The history of Britain is dead; long live a global history of Britain', *History Australia*, 13 (2016), pp. 19-34.

<sup>3</sup> See Michael Bentley, 'Victorian politics and the linguistic turn', *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp. 883-902; Miles Taylor, 'British politics in the age of revolution and reform, 1789-1867', *Historical Journal*, 45 (2002), pp. 661-77; Philip Harling, 'Equipoise regained? Recent trends in British political history, 1790-1867', *Journal of Modern History*, 75 (2003), pp. 890-918; Jon Lawrence, 'Political history', in Stefan Berger, Heiko Feldner, and Kevin Passmore, eds., *Writing history: theory and practice* (London, 2003), pp. 183-202; Jonathan Parry, 'L'histoire politique de l'ère victorienne: nouvelles tendances', *Revue d'Histoire du XIXe siècle*, 37 (2008), pp. 71-86; David Craig and James Thompson, 'Introduction', in idem, *Languages of politics in nineteenth-century Britain* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 1-20; and now David Brown, Robert Crowcroft, and Gordon Pentland, eds., *The Oxford handbook of modern British political history, 1800-2000* (Oxford, 2018).

draw attention to the work of emerging and international scholars. The piece ends with some thoughts on possible agendas for the future.

The article has two main themes. The first is that older scholarship still has much to teach us. For all the heat generated by the ‘global turn’ in modern British history, recent work has not overturned earlier models of how international issues operated in Victorian political life. Here as elsewhere in the literature on nineteenth-century politics, the methodological continuities between historiographical generations are at least as striking as the new departures.<sup>4</sup> The article’s second theme is that political history might benefit from engaging more closely with the history of ideas. Intellectual historians have made huge strides in the last two decades in anatomising more highly elaborated nineteenth-century thought about empire, international relations, and political order overseas. Yet it remains rare to find their work used by political historians, even where the latter focus squarely on political actors’ ideas and attitudes.<sup>5</sup> It is possible to imagine closer dialogue between these branches of scholarship casting new light on an old conceptual problem: how to connect political action with its intellectual contexts.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. David Craig, ““High politics” and the “new political history””, *Historical Journal*, 53 (2010), pp. 453-76.

<sup>5</sup> This is in part because of the ambiguous disciplinary identity of the history of political thought: see David Craig, ‘Political ideas and languages’, in Brown et al., eds., *Oxford handbook*, pp. 13-31.

<sup>6</sup> It is now conventional for political historians to treat ideas and attitudes as meaningful objects of inquiry in themselves, but work on the ‘intellectual’ contexts of modern British politics was pioneered by historians who wanted to explain more concrete varieties of political change. See J.P. Parry, ‘The state of Victorian political history’, *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), pp. 469-84, esp. pp. 470-2; Michael Bentley, ‘Party, doctrine, and thought’, in Michael Bentley and John Stevenson, eds., *High and low politics in modern Britain* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 123-53; Peter Ghosh, ‘Towards the verdict of history: Mr Cowling’s doctrine’, in Michael Bentley, ed., *Public and private doctrine: essays in British history presented to Maurice Cowling* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 273-321, esp. p. 306.

Europe was the most important external context for Victorian politics.<sup>7</sup> It was the main object of British foreign policy, the main foil for claims about British identity, and the part of the world beyond Britain with which Victorian political actors forged the closest social, political, and intellectual links. Students of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras have spent recent decades exploring the connections between Continental issues and British domestic politics in painstaking detail, and with striking creativity.<sup>8</sup> Study of Europe's place in British politics after 1815 has been less exhaustive, and less well integrated into mainstream political historiography.<sup>9</sup> Work here has accumulated gradually over generations, responding to different methodological and conceptual imperatives at different points. This has left us with an impressively rich and varied literature, but also one which lacks a clear conceptual core. This probably helps to explain why historians have been so hesitant about synthesis. This section looks in turn at studies of France in British politics, at work on Britain and the rest of the Continent, and at recent scholarship on the 'politics of foreign policy'.

France demands separate treatment, since it was unquestionably the most significant

European country in the Victorian political imagination. As Britain's nearest neighbour, and

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<sup>7</sup> For a complementary discussion of this theme, focusing on foreign policy and the twentieth century, see Geoffrey Hicks, 'Britain and Europe', in Brown et al., eds., *Oxford handbook*, pp. 544-62.

<sup>8</sup> The literature here is endless, back to Philip Brown's *The French revolution in English history* (London, 1918) and beyond. More recently, see H.T. Dickinson, ed., *Britain and the French revolution, 1789-1815* (Basingstoke, 1989); Mark Philp, ed., *The French revolution and British popular politics* (Cambridge, 1991); Mark Philp, ed., *Resisting Napoleon: the British response to the threat of invasion, 1797-1815* (Aldershot, 2006); Mark Philp, *Reforming ideas in Britain: politics and language in the shadow of the French revolution* (Cambridge, 2014); Brendan Simms, 'Britain and Napoleon', *Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), pp. 885-94; Richard Whatmore, 'Treason and despotism: the impact of the French revolution upon Britain', *History of European Ideas*, 34 (2008), pp. 583-6; Emma Vincent Macleod, 'British attitudes to the French revolution', *Historical Journal*, 50 (2007), pp. 689-709; and more broadly Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> On European engagement with British politics see J.A.W. Gunn, *When the French tried to be British: party, opposition, and the quest for civil disagreement, 1814-1848* (Montreal, 2009) Gilbert Faccarello and Masashi Izumo, eds., *The reception of David Ricardo in Continental Europe and Japan* (London, 2014); Martin Fitzpatrick and Peter Jones, eds., *The reception of Edmund Burke in Europe* (London, 2017); Zdeněk V. David, 'John Bowring and British liberalism in the Czech national awakening', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 86 (2008), pp. 634-64; Eugenio Biagini, 'Liberty, class and nation-building: Ugo Foscolo's 'English' constitutional thought, 1816-1827', *European Journal of Political Theory*, 5 (2006), pp. 34-49.

by turns its most important ally and its greatest threat, connections between French and British politics and society were uniquely intimate.<sup>10</sup> They have generated their own historiographical subfield, in which French historians, having maintained the most substantial tradition of writing on modern British political history left in Continental academia, have been particularly prominent.<sup>11</sup> Strikingly, however, given the universally admitted political significance of the Anglo-French relationship, the literature on the subject remains poorly integrated, and there are few substantial studies of France in Victorian political culture.

Part of the problem, perhaps, is that historians have written such a huge amount about France incidentally. Monographs which touch on foreign relations in any degree cannot avoid doing so, while books on Victorian political ideas, assumptions, and worldviews can rarely omit the French connection entirely. This has been true since the 1950s, if not earlier, but the phenomenon has become increasingly pronounced as cultural and discursive approaches to politics have grown in popularity.<sup>12</sup> In other words, France is woven so tightly into the historiography of Victorian politics that its political effects are particularly hard to tease out.

Attempts to pin down France's impacts on British political life fall into three main categories. The first and largest covers accounts of attitudes towards specific phases in French politics. Here historians have been most interested in startling episodes of tumult and political experiment: mainly, revolutions. We have detailed studies of how the legacies of 1789 reached into the nineteenth century, and of how competing readings of the Revolution and its

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Tombs and Isabelle Tombs, *That sweet enemy: the French and the British from the Sun King to the present* (London, 2006); Angus Hawkins, *Victorian political culture: 'Habits of heart and mind'* (Oxford, 2015), esp. intro.

<sup>11</sup> There remains some interest from German scholars: see e.g. Jörg Neuheiser, *Crown, church, and constitution: popular Conservatism in England, 1815-1867* (New York, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian frame of mind, 1830-70* (New Haven, 1957); John Vincent, *The formation of the Liberal party, 1857-1868* (London, 1966).

aftermath affected early-nineteenth-century party identities.<sup>13</sup> There have been several attempts to assess the effects of France's 'constitutional' revolution of 1830 on the crisis surrounding the passage of the Great Reform Act, and of the revolution of 1848 on attitudes towards parliamentary reform and British national character.<sup>14</sup> Some of the most imaginative work in this area deals with partisan attitudes towards the Second Empire, governed by the Emperor Louis Napoleon between 1852 and 1870. Richard Koebner and H.D. Schmidt opened up the origins of the idea of 'imperialism' in this context in the 1960s, while Jonathan Parry's 2001 analysis of the impact of Napoleon III on mid-Victorian politics – primarily as a negative force promoting Liberal Party unity – highlighted how much more there was to say on this subject.<sup>15</sup> British arguments about the subsequent Franco-Prussian war and the Paris Commune are less well covered, though there is valuable work on public opinion and on the responses of certain eminent Victorians to these episodes.<sup>16</sup> Common themes emerge from

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<sup>13</sup> James Epstein, *Radical expression: political language, ritual, and symbol in England, 1790-1850* (Oxford, 1994); Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the middle class: the political representation of class in Britain, c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge, 1995); Bernard Semmel, *Napoleon and the British* (New Haven, 2004); Leslie Mitchell, *The Whig world, 1760-1837* (London, 2005), ch. 5; Philip Harling, 'The perils of "French philosophy": enlightenment and revolution in Tory journalism', in Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Jeremy Popkin, eds., *Enlightenment, revolution and the periodical press* (Oxford, 2004); Fabrice Bensimon, 'L'écho de la révolution française dans la Grande-Bretagne du XIXe siècle (1815-1870)', *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française* (2005), pp. 211-42. On the late Victorian period, see Emily Jones, *Edmund Burke and the invention of modern Conservatism: an intellectual history, 1830-1914* (Oxford, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Élie Halévy, 'English public opinion and the French revolutions of the nineteenth century', in Alfred Colville and Harold Temperley, eds., *Studies in Anglo-French history during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries* (Cambridge, 1935), pp. 51-60; Norman Gash, 'English reform and the French revolution in the general election of 1830', in Richard Pares and A.J.P. Taylor, eds., *Essays presented to Sir Lewis Namier* (London, 1956), pp. 258-88; Roland Quinault, 'The French revolution of 1830 and parliamentary reform', *History*, 79 (1994), pp. 377-93; Roland Quinault, '1848 and parliamentary reform', *Historical Journal*, 31 (1988), pp. 831-51; Fabrice Bensimon, *Les britanniques face à la révolution française de 1848* (2000); Fabrice Bensimon, 'Britain during the 1848 revolutions and the changing of "Britishness"', in Kay Boardman and Christine Kinealy, eds., *1848: the year the world turned?* (Newcastle, 2007), pp. 83-107.

<sup>15</sup> R. Koebner and H.D. Schmidt, *Imperialism: the story and significance of a political word* (Cambridge, 1964); J.P. Parry, 'The impact of Napoleon III on British politics, 1851-1880', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 11 (2001), pp. 147-75; Matthew Kelly, 'Languages of radicalism, race, and religion in Irish nationalism: the French affinity, 1848-1871', *Journal of British Studies*, 49 (2010), pp. 801-25.

<sup>16</sup> Dora Neill Raymond, *British policy and opinion during the Franco-Prussian war* (New York, 1921); Martyn Cornick, 'La vue britannique de Paris à l'époque de la Commune', in Marie-Christine Kok-Escalé, *Paris, de l'image à la mémoire: représentations artistiques, littéraires, socio-politiques* (Amsterdam, 1997), pp. 135-56; Catherine Heyrendt, '"A rain of balderdash": Thomas Carlyle and Victorian attitudes towards the Franco-Prussian war', *Carlyle Studies Annual*, 22 (2006), pp. 243-54; and imminently Laura C. Forster, 'The Paris Commune in the British socialist imagination', *History of European Ideas*, 46 (2020), pp. 614-32. On foreign policy, see William Mulligan, 'Britain, the "German revolution", and the fall of France, 1870/1', *Historical*

these studies, most prominently the significance of French political instability in underpinning belief in the virtues of British constitutionalism, and of French abstraction as a counterpoint to British political common sense. But even looking at all this research together, the overall trajectory of the Victorian encounter with French politics remains elusive.

The second kind of work on Britain and France emphasises material exchanges. English-language studies of British representations of Paris, and of critics' performative outrage at the immorality of France's imaginative literature, have helped us to understand how wider assessments of French political culture were formed and supported.<sup>17</sup> But the most important recent work on these exchanges has been produced by historians based in France. Fabrice Bensimon has been central to these studies, not least in his own research, but also in co-editing a massive, vital, and sorely under-cited 2006 collection on Anglo-French political and cultural exchanges.<sup>18</sup> Further comparable volumes have been published since.<sup>19</sup> Even over the other side of the Channel, however, historians have yet to make much progress with the study of France as a social context for Victorian politics. It is well known that a large proportion of the Victorian elite, both political and literary, had connections in France, and spent significant amounts of time in the country. This must surely, in some cases, have borne more strongly upon their political activities and ideas than existing work indicates.<sup>20</sup> Recent studies which

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*Research*, 84 (2011), pp. 310-27. For the end of the century, see Martyn Cornick, 'The impact of the Dreyfus affair in late-Victorian Britain', *Franco-British Studies*, 22 (1996), pp. 57-82.

<sup>17</sup> On Paris, see Kok-Escalante, *Paris*, and Elisabeth Jay, *British writers and Paris, 1830-1875* (Oxford, 2016); on fiction see Michael Ledger-Lomas, 'French novels in mid-Victorian England', in Rosalind Crone, David Gange, and Katy Jones, eds., *New perspectives in British cultural history* (Newcastle, 2007), pp. 214-31; Juliette Atkinson, *French novels and the Victorians* (Oxford, 2017). See also Martyn Cornick, 'Distorting mirrors: Franco-British perceptions in the fin-de-siècle', in Martyn Cornick and Ceri Crossley, eds., *Problems in French history* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 125-48.

<sup>18</sup> Bensimon, *Les britanniques*; Sylvie Aprile and Fabrice Bensimon, eds., *La France et L'Angleterre au XIXe siècle: échanges, représentations, comparaisons* (Paris, 2006). See also Fabrice Bensimon and Armelle Enders, eds., *Le siècle britannique: variations sur un suprématie globale au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Odile Boucher-Rivalain and Catherine Hajdenko-Marshall, eds., *Regards des Anglo-Saxons sur la France au cours du long XIXe siècle* (Paris, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> Though see Pieter François, 'Henry Addison's advice manuals for expatriates and the construction of identity in 19<sup>th</sup>-century British communities on the Continent', in Ann Katherine Isaacs, eds., *Citizenships and identities: inclusion, exclusion, participation* (Pisa, 2010), pp. 67-70; Pieter François, 'Lived spatiality, expectations and

look through the other end of telescope, at French exiles in Britain, certainly suggest that there must be important structural impacts to be uncovered.<sup>21</sup>

Finally there are intellectual-historical studies. Historians have written extensively on the ways in which British intellectuals, and ideologically-minded politicians, engaged with political ideas and philosophies expounded in nineteenth-century France, especially Saint-Simonianism and Comtean Positivism.<sup>22</sup> Comparisons between British and French texts are becoming increasingly common in a new wave of work on Victorian political and historical thought.<sup>23</sup> In a different register, historians of political ideas have started to build up a picture of how leading British thinkers theorised France's politics, character, and place in the world, and of how their visions of France informed their schemes of political thought. The principal work here is now Georgios Varouxakis' *Victorian political thought on France and the French* (2002), which centres on John Stuart Mill and Matthew Arnold, while also offering glimpses at a wider world of periodical and newspaper analysis.<sup>24</sup> Studies of reflective politicians' thinking on France, including that of the Tory J.W. Croker and the Liberal Richard Cobden, help fill out our picture of Victorian thinking about French politics.<sup>25</sup> The

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travel literature: the construction of a Protestant sphere in Belgium by British travellers (1830-70)', in Pieter François, Taina Syrjämaa, and Henri Terho, eds., *Power and culture: new perspectives on spatiality in European history* (Pisa, 2008), pp. 125-45.

<sup>21</sup> Tom Stammers, 'From the Tuileries to Twickenham: the Orléans, exile and Anglo-French Liberalism, c. 1848-1880', *English Historical Review*, 133 (2018), pp. 1120-54; Laura C. Forster, 'The Paris Commune in London and the spatial history of ideas, 1871-1900', *Historical Journal*, 62:4 (2019), pp. 1021-44.

<sup>22</sup> Anthony Howe, 'British liberalism and the legacy of Saint-Simon: the case of Richard Cobden', *History of Economic Ideas*, 17 (2009), pp. 107-20; Christopher Kent, *Brains and numbers: elitism, Comtism, and democracy in mid-Victorian Britain* (Toronto, 1978); Sydney Eisen, 'Herbert Spencer and the spectre of Comte', *Journal of British Studies*, 7 (1967), pp. 48-67.

<sup>23</sup> See James Kirby, *Historians and the Church of England: religion and historical scholarship, 1870-1920* (Oxford, 2016); Gregory Conti, *Parliament the mirror of the nation: representation, deliberation, and democracy in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Georgios Varouxakis, *Victorian political thought on France and the French* (Basingstoke, 2002); and idem, 'French radicalism through the eyes of John Stuart Mill', *History of European Ideas*, 30 (2004), pp. 433-61.

<sup>25</sup> David Morphet, 'John Wilson Croker's image of France in the *Quarterly Review*', *The Electronic British Library Journal* (2012); Anthony Howe, 'Re-forging Britons: Richard Cobden and France', in Aprile and Bensimon, eds., *La France et L'Angleterre*, pp. 89-104; see also the introduction in Miles Taylor, ed., *The European diaries of Richard Cobden, 1846-1849* (London, 1994), and Howe's introductions to the several volumes of his ed., *The letters of Richard Cobden* (Oxford, 2007-15).



exercise of conceptualising French politics drew in more British politicians and commentators than did similar efforts with regard to any other contemporary polity, including the United States.

The same rough tripartite division – attitudes, exchanges, ideas – could be used to carve up the literature on Victorian politics and other European countries. But given that no other European state has attracted such sustained attention, we can consider more broadly the historiography on the rest of the Continent.

Historians have examined Europe's role in the Victorian political imagination from numerous different angles. They have looked at how seemingly endless Continental upheavals cast a mood of fear and uncertainty across British politics during the early- and mid-nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup> They have explored general perceptions of Europe political order, demonstrating both the wide purchase and political impact of stereotypes of Europe as bureaucratic, militaristic, and ominously Catholic.<sup>27</sup> They have considered the attitudes of particular groups in British politics towards any number of specific European developments, nations, and politicians.<sup>28</sup> They have unfolded the ways in which Continental models and experiments were deployed in domestic policy debates, especially in the century's closing decades.<sup>29</sup> They are now becoming increasingly interested in the more concrete institutions and structures

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<sup>26</sup> Paul Pickering, "Peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must": political violence and insurrection in early-Victorian Britain', in Brett Bowden and Michael Davis, eds., *Terror: from tyrannicide to terrorism* (St Lucia, Queensland, 2008), pp. 114-33.

<sup>27</sup> Bernard Porter, "Bureau and barrack": early Victorian attitudes towards the Continent', *Victorian Studies*, 27 (1983-4), pp. 407-33; the literature on Victorian anti-Catholicism is vast, but see in particular Michael Wheeler, *The old enemies: Catholic and Protestant in nineteenth-century English culture* (Cambridge, 2006).

<sup>28</sup> For example, Pieter François, 'Belgium – country of liberals, Protestants and the free: British views on Belgium in the mid nineteenth century', *Historical Research*, 81 (2008), pp. 663-78.

<sup>29</sup> John R. Davis, 'Higher education reform and the German model: a Victorian discourse', in Heather Ellis and Ulrike Kirchberger, eds., *Anglo-German scholarly networks in the long nineteenth century* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 39-62; Edmund Rogers, 'A "small free trade oasis"? agriculture, tariff policy, and the Danish example in Great Britain and Ireland, c. 1885–1911', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 38 (2013), pp. 42-64.

which helped to shape British thinking about European problems, not least the foreign political press in London, and foreign agents' lobbying campaigns.<sup>30</sup> And they have thought to some extent about more reflective and highly theorised Victorian accounts of European politics, though Europe as a problem for intellectuals is considerably less well-served historiographically than is Europe as a problem for partisan argument and 'public opinion'.<sup>31</sup>

To a large extent, however, these studies exist in separate geographical and conceptual silos. 'Europe in Victorian politics' is not a distinct historical problem around which research arranges itself, in the way that it is for students of the era of the French Revolution. Rather, it is an issue which most historians encounter while looking at other questions, and the incidental character of much research means that there remain glaring gaps in our knowledge. Even having just come through a decade of wall-to-wall publication on World War I, we still know strikingly little about Victorian thinking on German unification, or Bismarck.<sup>32</sup> Iberian interactions, too, are underserved, even for the period when the peninsula was wracked by civil wars in which a substantial number of Britons fought, in the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Constance Bantman and Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva, eds., *The foreign political press in nineteenth-century London: politics from a distance* (London, 2017); Tibor Frank, *Picturing Austria-Hungary: the British perception of the Habsburg monarchy, 1865-1870* (Boulder, 2005); Lara Green, 'Russian revolutionary terrorism, British liberals, and the problem of empire (1884-1914)', *History of European Ideas*, 46 (2020), pp. 633-48.

<sup>31</sup> Michael J. Turner, "'Arraying minds against bodies": Benthamite radicals and revolutionary Europe during the 1820s and 1830s', *History*, 90 (2005), pp. 236-61; Georgios Varouxakis, "'Patriotism", "cosmopolitanism" and "humanity" in Victorian political thought', *European Journal of Political Theory*, 1 (2006), pp. 100-118; Georgios Varouxakis, *Mill on nationality* (Abingdon, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> See, however, Paul M. Kennedy, *The rise of the Anglo-German antagonism, 1860-1914* (London, 1980); John R. Davis, *The Victorians and Germany* (London, 2007), chs 7-8; D.M. Schreuder, 'The Gladstone-Max Müller debate on nationality and German unification: examining a Victorian "controversy"', *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 18 (1979), pp. 561-81; D.M. Schreuder, 'Gladstone as "troublemaker": Liberal foreign policy and the German annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, 1870-1871', *Journal of British Studies*, 17 (1978), pp. 106-35; Michael Pratt, 'A fallen idol: the impact of the Franco-Prussian War on the perception of Germany by British intellectuals', *International History Review*, 7/4 (1985), pp. 543-75. On the Edwardian era see G.R. Searle, *The quest for national efficiency: a study in British politics and political thought, 1899-1914* (London, 1990).

<sup>33</sup> See, however, Roger Bullen, 'Party politics and foreign policy: Whigs, Tories, and Iberian affairs, 1830-6', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 51 (1978), pp. 37-59.

Coverage of European questions across the Victorian era is also far from even. The historiography of late-nineteenth-century politics says comparatively little about European issues, probably because of the ingrained assumption that Ireland and the empire dominated the 1880s and 1890s. Much of the best literature, in fact, concentrates on the period between the 1840s and the 1860s. Europe took on unusual political significance in these decades, as domestic political conditions worked to amplify a series of Continental political struggles into an existential conflict between liberty and order. There is a large and still-growing historiography on British responses to the 1848 revolutions, in which work dating from the 1940s and 1950s remains relevant.<sup>34</sup> There is an even bulkier set of studies on the political aftermaths of 1848. Attitudes towards the proto-national leaders who challenged the structures of Continental autocracy – especially Lajos Kossuth, Giuseppe Mazzini, and Giuseppe Garibaldi – have been traced in some detail.<sup>35</sup> So too have the politics of European émigrés, and of the ‘refugee question’ in mid-Victorian Britain.<sup>36</sup> The place of Europe in Radical political argument and strategy after 1848 has attracted some particularly important

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<sup>34</sup> Alan Sked, ‘Great Britain and the Continental revolutions of 1848’, in Adolf M. Birke, Magnus Brechtken, and Alaric Searle, eds., *An Anglo-German dialogue: the Munich lectures on the history of international relations* (2000), pp. 43-55; Leslie Mitchell, ‘Britain’s reaction to the revolutions’, in R.J.W. Evans and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann, eds., *The revolutions in Europe 1848-1849: from reform to reaction* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 83-99; F. B. Smith, ‘Great Britain and the Revolutions of 1848,’ *Labour History*, 33 (1977), pp. 65-85. Further back, see E. De Groot, ‘Contemporary political opinion and the revolutions of 1848’, *History*, 38 (1953), pp. 134-54; B.G. Iványi, ‘The working classes of Britain and the Eastern European revolutions, 1848’, *Slavonic Review*, 26 (1947), pp. 107-25.

<sup>35</sup> Esp. Gregory Claeys, ‘Mazzini, Kossuth and British radicalism, 1848-1854’, *Journal of British Studies*, 28 (1989), pp. 225-61. See also Zsuzsanna Lada, ‘The invention of a hero: Lajos Kossuth in England (1851)’, *European History Quarterly*, 43 (2013), pp. 5-26; Zsuzsanna Larka, ‘Irish nationalist images of Lajos Kossuth and Hungary in the aftermath of the 1848-1849 revolution’, in Brian Heffernan, Marta Ramón, Pierre Ranger, and Zsuzsanna Larka, eds., *Life on the fringe? Ireland and Europe, 1800-1922* (Dublin, 2012), pp. 79-97; Joan Allen, ‘The ink of the wise: Mazzini, British radicalism and print culture, 1848-1855’, in Carter, ed., *Britain, Ireland, and the Risorgimento*, pp. 55-79; C.A. Bayly and E.F. Biagini, *Giuseppe Mazzini and the globalization of democratic nationalism* (Oxford, 2008); Derek Beales, ‘Gladstone and Garibaldi’, in Peter J. Jagger, ed., *Gladstone* (London, 2007), pp. 137-56; Derek Beales, ‘Garibaldi in England: the Politics of Italian Enthusiasm’, in John A. Davis and Paul Ginsborg, eds., *Society and Politics in the Age of the Risorgimento: Essays in Honour of Denis Mack Smith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 184-216.

<sup>36</sup> Debra Kelly and Martyn Cornick, eds., *A history of the French in London: liberty, equality, opportunity* (London, 2013); Sabine Freitag, ed., *Exiles from European revolutions: refugees in mid-Victorian England* (New York; Oxford, 2003); and from a different angle Bernard Porter, *The refugee question in mid-Victorian politics* (Cambridge, 1979). See also Stefan Manz, Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, and John R. Davis, eds., *Migration and transfer from Germany to Britain, 1660-1914*, (Munich, 2007); and idem, eds., *Transnational networks: German migrants in the British empire, 1670-1914* (Leiden, 2012).

and closely textured studies, among which Miles Taylor's *The decline of British radicalism* (1995) still stands out.<sup>37</sup> Politics and ideas around the 1859 unification of Italy, not least because of its catalytic role in the formal establishment of the Liberal party, is also the subject of a substantial amount of work.<sup>38</sup> Historians of Victorian political thought who deal with Europe, finally, focus much of their attention on the mid-century, treating it as the crucible for the concepts of 'nationality' and 'national character'.<sup>39</sup>

Europe was also at the core of debates about foreign policy and Britain's world role.<sup>40</sup> More imaginative histories of diplomacy and foreign relations have reflected on the interactions between domestic politics and the conduct of British international relations since the early twentieth century.<sup>41</sup> But it is only since the 1980s that scholars have started to study in real depth how politicians' conduct of Britain's foreign affairs, and their arguments about Britain's global responsibilities, were connected with their wider political agendas. Such studies of the 'politics of foreign policy' hold out the tantalising prospect of relating the

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<sup>37</sup> Miles Taylor, *The decline of British radicalism, 1847-1860* (Oxford, 1995); Margot Finn, *After Chartism: class and nation in English radical politics, 1848-1884* (Cambridge, 1993). See also Michael J. Turner, *Independent radicalism in early Victorian Britain* (Westport, 2004).

<sup>38</sup> Foundational work includes D.M. Schreuder, 'Gladstone and Italian unification, 1848-1870: the making of a Liberal?', *English Historical Review*, 85 (1970), pp. 475-501; Christopher Harvie, *The lights of Liberalism: university Liberals and the challenge of democracy* (London, 1976), pp. 97-105. More recently, see Marcella Pellegrino Sutcliffe, *Victorian radicals and Italian democrats* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2014); Danilo Raponi, *Religion and politics in the Risorgimento: Britain and the new Italy, 1861-1875* (Basingstoke, 2014); Elena Bacchin, *Italofilia. Opinione pubblica britannica e Risorgimento italiano 1847-1864* (Turin, 2014); O.J. Wright, *Great Britain and the unifying of Italy: a special relationship?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); and on Ireland, Paul Carter, ed., *Britain, Ireland, and the Italian Risorgimento* (Basingstoke, 2015); Colin Barr, Michele Finelli and Anne O'Connor, eds., *Nation-Nazione: Irish Nationalism and the Italian Risorgimento* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013).

<sup>39</sup> Timothy Lang, 'Lord Acton and the "insanity of nationality"', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 63 (2002), pp. 129-49; Douglas Moggach and Gareth Stedman Jones, eds., *The 1848 revolutions and European political thought* (Cambridge, 2018), esp. chs by Parry and Varouxakis; Richard Smittenaar, '"Feelings of alarm": Conservative criticism of the principle of nationality in mid-Victorian Britain', *Modern Intellectual History*, 14 (2017), pp. 365-91; Peter Mandler, *The English national character: the history of an idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (Oxford, 2006), ch. 3.

<sup>40</sup> The new cultural and intellectual history of diplomacy is not discussed here. See Markus Mösslang and Torsten Rott, eds., *The diplomats' world: a cultural history of diplomacy, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 2008); T.G. Otte, *The foreign office mind: the making of British foreign policy, 1865-1914* (Cambridge, 2011).

<sup>41</sup> See in particular Kingsley Martin, *The triumph of Lord Palmerston: a study of public opinion in England before the Crimean war* (London, 1924); D.C.M. Platt, *Finance, trade, and politics in British foreign policy, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1968).

currents of ideas and opinion discussed above to the practice of politics, and the formation of policy.<sup>42</sup> The majority of work in this area has so far focused on ‘high politics’: the world of ministers, ministries, and arguments about strategy between members of the front benches. Lord Palmerston’s political manoeuvrings have attracted considerable attention here, notably in the work of E.D. Steele and David Brown.<sup>43</sup> There is a larger industry dealing with the high politics of Conservative foreign policy, among which the work of Geoffrey Hicks, Angus Hawkins, and now Jennifer Davey stands out, as does Jeremy Black’s collection on the ‘deep history’ of the Tory foreign policy tradition.<sup>44</sup> Work on certain issues spans parties.<sup>45</sup> Other contributions to the literature on the ‘politics of foreign policy’ focus instead on public-facing arguments about how Britain should behave on the world stage, and on the role those arguments played in staking out political agendas and in the practice of political opposition: that is, they examine the intellectual contexts within which foreign policy was formulated, and the place of arguments about foreign policy within the wider firmament of political debate.<sup>46</sup> Most of this work has so far focused on Liberal and Radical ideas.

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<sup>42</sup> For this phrase see Marvin Swartz, *The politics of foreign policy in the era of Disraeli and Gladstone* (New York, 1985).

<sup>43</sup> See David F. Krein, *The last Palmerston government: foreign policy, domestic politics, and the genesis of splendid isolation* (Ames, 1978); and more recently, E.D. Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism, 1855-1865* (Cambridge, 1991); Antony Taylor, ‘Palmerston and radicalism, 1847-1865’, *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), pp. 157-79; David Brown, *Palmerston and the politics of foreign policy, 1846-55* (Manchester, 2006); David Brown, *Palmerston: a biography* (New Haven, 2010).

<sup>44</sup> Geoffrey Hicks, *Peace, war, and party politics: the Conservatives and Europe, 1846-59* (Manchester, 2007); Geoffrey Hicks, ed., *Conservatism and British foreign policy, 1820-1920: the Derbys and their world* (Farnham, 2011); Angus Hawkins, *Parliament, party and the art of politics in Britain, 1855-1859* (Stanford, 1987); Jennifer Davey, *Mary, Countess of Derby and the politics of Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 2019); Jeremy Black, ed., *The Tory world: deep history and the Tory theme in British foreign policy, 1769-2014* (Farnham, 2015). See also John Fisher and Anthony Best, *On the fringes of diplomacy: influences on British foreign policy, 1800-1945* (Farnham, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> Paul Michael Kielstra, *The politics of slave trade suppression in Britain and France, 1814-1848* (New York, 2000).

<sup>46</sup> William Mulligan and Brendan Simms, eds, *The primacy of foreign policy in British history, 1660-2000: how strategic concerns shaped modern Britain* (Basingstoke, 2010), esp. chs by Bew, Brett, Howe, and Mulligan. For the 1820s see Stephen M. Lee, *George Canning and Liberal Toryism, 1801-1827* (Woodbridge, 2008).

Easily the most important single contribution to this literature, not least because it is the most conceptually ambitious, is Jonathan Parry's *The politics of patriotism* (2006).<sup>47</sup> The book represents one of the few sustained attempts since the 1990s to find a new way of relating political ideas and political practice. It argues that Liberals understood ostensibly distinct areas of policy – domestic, Irish, foreign, imperial – in terms of the same basic political objectives and imperatives. The political success of the Liberal party in the early- and mid-Victorian period, as such, rested on the projection of an uplifting vision of political purpose, which linked Britain's activities on the world stage to generally attractive sets of values. This also, however, served to limit the options plausibly available to the framers of foreign policy. The book focuses on Europe, but another of its innovations is that it sprawls geographically as well as politically – to America, the Ottoman world, Canada and the other settler colonies. This holistic approach must be one of the best paths forward for Victorian political history.

## II

The British empire came to occupy an increasingly large proportion of the world over the course of the nineteenth century. It has taken up a comparable share of historians' energy in the last twenty years. The explosion of interest in manifestations of imperial power 'at home' means that there is now a huge literature probing the effects of empire on Victorian Britain. The vast majority of this work, however, has been cultural and social in emphasis.<sup>48</sup> The rise

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<sup>47</sup> Jonathan Parry, *The politics of patriotism: English Liberalism, national identity, and Europe, 1830-1886* (Cambridge, 2006). The book was anticipated in Jonathan Parry, *The rise and fall of Liberal government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, 1992), p. 18.

<sup>48</sup> It is still difficult to improve on the elegant analysis offered in Richard Price, 'One big thing: Britain, its empire, and their imperial culture', *Journal of British Studies*, 45 (2006), pp. 602-27. See also James Thompson, 'Modern Britain and the new imperial history', *History Compass*, 5 (2007), pp. 455-62; Simon J. Potter, 'Empire, cultures and identities in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain', *History Compass*, 5 (2007), pp. 51-71; Tony Ballantyne, 'The changing shape of the modern British empire and its historiography', *Historical Journal*, 53 (2010), pp. 429-52; Andrew S. Thompson, ed., *Writing Imperial Histories* (Manchester, 2013); and Dane Kennedy, *The imperial history wars: debating the British empire* (London, 2018).

of the ‘new imperial history’ has not significantly affected how most Victorian political historians write about imperial questions, and accounts which seek systematically to place domestic and imperial politics within the ‘same analytic field’ have been rare.<sup>49</sup> As a result, older studies retain much of their value. Twenty-first-century work has offered important correctives, and opened up new questions, but the liveliest branches of the literature relating Victorian politics and British imperialism in recent years have been those on imperial intellectual and legal history.

Mid-twentieth-century scholars did a huge amount to elucidate how imperial problems operated in nineteenth-century politics. Many of their insights are, however, buried in detailed studies of aspects of colonial and Indian policy, which are now all but forgotten. Political historians would benefit from dusting off these volumes, which are often brilliantly astute, not to mention comprehensive, on issues of parliamentary manoeuvre and ministerial calculation. The work of W.P. Morrell offers something like a complete index to colonial debate between the 1830s and the 1870s.<sup>50</sup> Domestic political crises surrounding major imperial developments, and the public controversies they inspired, are particularly well-served in this older literature. Students of the early- and mid-Victorian empire paid special attention to the crises around the Canadian rebellions, and the transition to self-government in the settler colonies.<sup>51</sup> Those who focused on the closing decades of the century, when empire

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<sup>49</sup> Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, ‘Between metropole and colony: rethinking a research agenda’, in idem, eds., *Tensions of empire: colonial cultures in a bourgeois world* (Berkeley, 1997), pp. 1-56. See now Miles Taylor, *Empress: Queen Victoria and India* (New Haven, 2018).

<sup>50</sup> W.P. Morrell, *British colonial policy in the age of Peel and Russell* (Oxford, 1930); W.P. Morrell, *British colonial policy in the mid-Victorian age: South Africa, New Zealand, the West Indies* (Oxford, 1969). See also J.M. Ward, *Colonial self-government: the British experience, 1759-1856* (London, 1976); Paul Knaplund, *James Stephen and the British colonial system, 1813-1847* (Madison, 1953).

<sup>51</sup> Peter Burroughs, *The Canadian crisis and British colonial policy, 1828-1841* (Toronto, 1972); Peter Burroughs, ‘The Canadian rebellions in British politics’, in John W. Flint and Glyndwr Williams, eds, *Perspectives of empire: essays presented to Gerald S. Graham* (New York, 1973), pp. 54-92; Ged Martin, ‘The Canadian rebellion losses bill of 1849 in British politics’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 6 (1977), pp. 3-22; P.A. Buckner, *The transition to responsible government: British policy in North America, 1815-1850* (Westport, 1985); and more recently, Michael J. Turner, ‘Radical agitation and the Canada question

was a more significant political issue, had more to deal with: not least Disraeli's 'imperialism', the 'scramble for Africa', and the Boer war.<sup>52</sup> In most of this literature India is treated as a problem for policymakers rather than as one for politicians, though there are studies of specific Indian issues in domestic politics.<sup>53</sup> Twentieth-century imperial history also offered in-depth excavations of public attitudes towards imperial expansion, economics, and government.<sup>54</sup> More elaborate ideologies of empire were not neglected.<sup>55</sup> There are few questions asked in recent scholarship which are not anticipated in this older literature.

Imperial historians, however, all but abandoned the study of domestic politics in the 1980s.<sup>56</sup> A comprehensive grasp of the subtleties of British parties and policy cut little ice in the culturalist world of the 'new imperial history', and remains similarly blunt in the new world of global-imperial studies.<sup>57</sup> The torch passed, as a result, to political historians. Recent work on the empire in Victorian politics has thus responded even more readily to general trends in

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in British politics, 1837-41', *Historical Research*, 79 (2006), pp. 90-114. See also the beautifully turned William Thomas, *The philosophic radicals: nine studies in theory and practice, 1817-1841* (Oxford, 1979), ch. 8.

<sup>52</sup> P.J. Durrans, 'A two-edged sword: the liberal attack on Disraelian imperialism', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 10 (1982), pp. 262-84; Richard Price, *An imperial war and the British working class: working class attitudes and reactions to the Boer War, 1899-1902* (London, 1972). Synthetic work on later Victorian politics has always been better at integrating imperial political problems: see Richard Shannon, *The crisis of imperialism, 1865-1915* (London, 1974).

<sup>53</sup> Peter J. Durrans, 'The house of commons and India, 1874-1880', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 2 (1982), pp. 25-34; Christopher Wallace, 'The Liberals and Afghanistan, 1878-80', *Historical Research*, 85:228 (2012), pp. 306-28.

<sup>54</sup> Paul Knaplund, 'Mr Over-secretary Stephen', *Journal of Modern History*, 1 (1929), pp. 40-66; A.G.L. Shaw, 'British attitudes to the colonies, ca. 1820-1850', *Journal of British Studies*, 9 (1969), pp. 71-95; Ronald Hyam and Ged Martin, *Reappraisals in British imperial history* (London, 1975); Ged Martin, 'Empire federalism and imperial parliamentary union, 1820-1870', *Historical Journal*, 16 (1973), pp. 65-92. For even broader samplings see Stanley R. Steinbridge, *Parliament, the press, and the colonies, 1846-1880* (New York, 1982); Eugenia Palmegiano, *The British empire in the Victorian press, 1832-1867: a bibliography* (New York, 1987).

<sup>55</sup> Klaus E. Knorr, *British colonial theories* (Toronto, 1944); A.P. Thornton, *Doctrines of imperialism* (New York, 1965); Bernard Porter, *Critics of empire: British radical attitudes to colonialism in Africa, 1895-1914* (London, 1968); Bernard Semmel, *The liberal idea and the demons of empire: theories of imperialism from Adam Smith to Lenin*, (Baltimore, 1993); Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the world: ideologies of empire in Spain, Britain and France, c. 1492- c. 1830* (New Haven, 1995). The one major exception here was in intellectual historians' treatment of imperial political economy, notably Donald Winch, *Classical political economy and colonies* (Cambridge, MA, 1965).

<sup>56</sup> See D.K. Fieldhouse, 'Can Humpty-Dumpty be put together again? Imperial history in the 1980s', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 13 (1985), pp. 9-23.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Drayton and David Motadel, 'Discussion: the futures of global history', *Journal of Global History*, 13 (2018), pp. 1-21.



modern British political history: above all the shift away from cabinets, ministries, and parliaments, and towards languages, arguments, and cultures.

Within this paradigm, twenty-first-century scholarship on imperial politics has added considerably to our stores of knowledge. The “four nations” dimension of the subject is now better understood.<sup>58</sup> We know much more about the imperial thinking of leading figures in domestic politics.<sup>59</sup> We are better informed about wider patterns of imperial argument within political parties, especially the Conservative party, in ways that help us understand why national leaders felt emboldened or compelled to adopt the positions they did.<sup>60</sup> Studies of the Irish Nationalist party have offered some of the most striking recent insights here.<sup>61</sup>

Increasing numbers of studies, however, have sought to think across or beyond partisan boundaries. Some deal with imperially-minded pressure groups, following a methodological trail blazed by Andrew Thompson’s 2000 monograph *Imperial Britain: the empire in British politics*.<sup>62</sup> Some examine the differences between ‘Liberal’, ‘Conservative’, and ‘Radical’

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<sup>58</sup> John MacKenzie, ‘Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English worlds? The historiography of a four nations approach to the history of the British empire’, in Catherine Hall and Keith McLelland, eds., *Race, nation, and empire: making histories, 1750 to the present* (Manchester, 2010), pp. 133-53.

<sup>59</sup> Miles Taylor, ‘Joseph Hume and the reformation of India, 1819-1833’, in Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein, eds., *English radicalism, 1550-1850* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 285-308; Simon Morgan, ‘Richard Cobden and British imperialism’, *Journal of Liberal History*, 45 (2004), pp. 16-21; Angus Hawkins, *The forgotten prime minister the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby: ascent, 1799-1851* (Oxford, 2007), ch. 5; Simone Beate Borgstede, *‘All is race’: Benjamin Disraeli on race, nation and empire* (Zürich, 2010). But this is not by any means a new genre: see e.g. James L. Sturgis, *John Bright and the empire* (London, 1969); H.C.G. Matthew, *The liberal imperialists: the ideas and politics of a post-Gladstonian elite* (Oxford, 1973).

<sup>60</sup> E.H.H. Green, *The crisis of Conservatism: the politics, economics, and ideology of British conservatism, 1880-1914* (London, 1994); Anna Gambles, *Protection and politics: Conservative economic discourse, 1815-1852* (Woodbridge, 1999); Michael Bentley, *Lord Salisbury’s world: Conservative environments in late-Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, 2001), ch. 8; Alex Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism in imperial London, 1868-1906* (Woodbridge, 2007), ch. 7; Paul Readman, ‘The Conservative party, patriotism, and British politics: the case of the general election of 1900’, *Journal of British Studies*, 40 (2001), pp. 107-45. On the Liberals and imperial free trade see Anthony Howe, *Free trade and liberal England, 1846-1946* (Oxford, 1998).

<sup>61</sup> Matthew Kelly, ‘Irish nationalist opinion and the British empire in the 1850s and 1860s’, *Past and Present*, 204 (2009), pp. 127-54; Paul A. Townend, *The road to home rule: anti-imperialism and the Irish national movement* (Madison, 2016); Paul A. Townend ‘Between two worlds: Irish nationalists and imperial crisis, 1878-1880’, *Past and Present*, 194 (2007), pp. 139-74. See also Michel De Nie, “‘Speed the Mahdi!’ The Irish press and empire during the Sudan conflict of 1883-1885”, *Journal of British Studies*, 51 (2012), pp. 883-909; Michael De Nie, ‘The comic press, Ireland, and empire, 1882-85’, *Éire-Ireland*, 52 (2017), pp. 216-51.

<sup>62</sup> Andrew Thompson, *Imperial Britain: the empire in British politics, c. 1880-1932* (Harlow, 2000). See also Edward Beasley, *Empire as the triumph of theory: imperialism, information and the colonial society of 1868*

attitudes towards particular imperial possessions and issues.<sup>63</sup> Yet others aim to think more broadly about imperial concepts and languages.<sup>64</sup> We might pick out here, in particular, the resurgent histories of slavery and anti-slavery, which have offered particularly valuable new perspectives. Catherine Hall's *Civilising Subjects* (2002) offers a study of the relationships between empire and civic politics of a depth that has yet to be emulated,<sup>65</sup> while Richard Huzzey has ably explored the worldviews of the antislavery movement, and the contribution made by antislavery ideas to the political culture of nineteenth-century Britain.<sup>66</sup> More original still is the work of historians who have started to explore pro-slavery arguments: Michael Taylor's articles here represent a powerful challenge to assumptions about the driving forces behind Conservative politics in the early Victorian era.<sup>67</sup>

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(Abingdon, 2005); Zoë Laidlaw, "'Justice to India – prosperity to England – freedom to the slave!'" Humanitarian and moral reform campaigns on India, aborigines, and American slavery', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 22 (2012), pp. 299-324.

<sup>63</sup> Jon Wilson, 'The silence of empire: imperialism and India', in Craig and Thompson, eds., *Languages of politics*, pp. 218-41,

<sup>64</sup> See Andrew Thompson, 'The language of imperialism and the meanings of empire: imperial discourse in British politics, 1895-1914', *Journal of British Studies*, 36 (1997), pp. 147-77. The Boer War remains a touchstone: see Simon Potter, 'Jingoism, public opinion, and the new imperialism: newspapers and imperial rivalries at the fin de siècle', *Media History*, 20 (2014), pp. 34-50; Luke Blaxill, 'The language of imperialism in British electoral politics, 1880-1910', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 45 (2017), pp. 416-48; Simon Mackley, 'Liberal party politics, the South African war, and the rhetoric of imperial governance', *Twentieth Century British History*, 29 (2018), pp. 1-24.

<sup>65</sup> Catherine Hall, *Civilising subjects: metropole and colony in the English imagination, 1830-1867* (Oxford, 2002).

<sup>66</sup> Richard Huzzey, *Freedom burning: anti-slavery and empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca, 2012); Robert Burroughs and Richard Huzzey, eds., *The suppression of the Atlantic slave trade: British policies, practices and representations of naval coercion* (Manchester, 2015). See also Catherine Hall et al., *Legacies of British slave-ownership: colonial slavery and the formation of Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, 2014); Andrea Major, *Slavery, abolitionism and empire in India, 1772-1843* (Liverpool, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> Michael Taylor, 'Conservative political economy and the problem of colonial slavery, 1823-1833', *Historical Journal*, 57 (2014), pp. 973-95; Michael Taylor, 'The British West India interest and its allies, 1823-1833', *English Historical Review*, 133 (2018), pp. 1478-1511. See also Paula E. Dumas, *Proslavery Britain: fighting for slavery in an era of abolition* (New York, 2016); Catherine Hall, "'The most unbending Conservative in Britain": Archibald Alison and pro-slavery discourse', in T.M. Devine, ed., *Recovering Scotland's slavery past: the Caribbean connection* (Edinburgh, 2015), pp. 206-24. For a French comparison see Naomi J. Andrews, "'How should slaves disappear?": defending slavery in France, 1834-1848', *Slavery and Abolition* (forthcoming).

The twenty-first century has also seen more energy devoted to assessing the empire's impacts on the British state.<sup>68</sup> Most such work is cast in a discursive mould, not least the repeated attempts to probe the role played by the empire in British constitutional and institutional reform, mainly in relation to the parliamentary Reform Acts of 1832 and 1867.<sup>69</sup> There have also, however, been efforts to get back to hard realities of politics, and to rethink the fundamental paradoxes and dilemmas which confronted the Victorian imperial state.<sup>70</sup> Among the most significant of these is Miles Taylor's article on 'The 1848 revolutions and the British empire', an exceptionally thought-provoking and carefully conceived attempt to connect in a concrete way the seemingly disparate global challenges facing imperial Britain.<sup>71</sup> Philip Harling's more recent articles on emigration and convict transportation represent similarly effective efforts to reinject institutional pressures and realities into the literature.<sup>72</sup> Work on the intra-imperial circulation of personnel, goods, and ideas, finally, has added importantly to our knowledge of the pressures involved in the formation of imperial policy.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> See more broadly Bernard Porter, *The absent-minded imperialists: empire, society, and culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004), esp. chs 5, 7-8; Andrew Thompson, *The empire strikes back? The impact of imperialism on Britain from the mid-nineteenth century* (Abingdon, 2005), ch. 6.

<sup>69</sup> Miles Taylor, 'Empire and parliamentary reform: the 1832 reform act revisited', in Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes, eds., *Rethinking the age of reform: Britain, 1780-1850* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 295-311; Catherine Hall, 'The rule of difference: gender, class, and empire in the making of the 1832 reform act', in Ida Blom, Karen Hagemann, and Catherine Hall, eds., *Gendered nations: nationalisms and the gender order in the long nineteenth century* (New York, 2000); Catherine Hall, 'Rethinking imperial histories: the reform act of 1867', *New Left Review*, 208 (1994), pp. 3-29; Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall, *Defining the Victorian nation: class, race, gender and the British reform act of 1867* (Cambridge, 2000); Alex Middleton, 'The second reform act and the politics of empire', *Parliamentary History*, 36 (2017), pp. 82-96.

<sup>70</sup> John Cell, 'The imperial conscience', in Peter Marsh, ed., *The conscience of the Victorian state* (Syracuse, 1979), pp. 173-214.

<sup>71</sup> Miles Taylor, 'The 1848 revolutions and the British empire', *Past and Present*, 166 (2000), pp. 146-80.

<sup>72</sup> Philip Harling, 'The trouble with convicts: from transportation to penal servitude, 1840-67', *Journal of British Studies*, 53 (2014), pp. 80-110; Philip Harling, 'Assisted emigration and the moral dilemmas of the mid-Victorian imperial state', *Historical Journal*, 59 (2016), pp. 1027-49.

<sup>73</sup> See Alan Lester, 'Imperial circuits and networks: geographies of the British empire', *History Compass*, 4 (2005), pp. 124-41; Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, *Colonization and the origins of humanitarian governance: protecting aborigines across the nineteenth-century British empire* (Cambridge, 2014); Michael Fisher, *Counterflows to colonialism: Indian travellers and settlers in Britain, 1600-1857* (Delhi, 2004); Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial connections, 1815-45: patronage, the information revolution and colonial government* (Manchester, 2005); Matthew Stubbings, 'Subverting Company Raj: dispossessed Indian princes' wealth and loyalism in 1850s Britain', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 35 (2017), pp. 2018-28.

So scholarship produced during the last twenty years has substantially improved our understanding of how political actors thought about empire and imperial policy, and our grasp of the ways in which imperial problems intersected ideologically with other concerns. The implications of all this work for our conceptualisation of empire as an issue in nineteenth-century public politics, however, have not been revolutionary. In many ways, not much has changed: long-standing chronologies of, and explanations for, the fluctuating significance of imperial issues in nineteenth-century politics remain largely untroubled. We still await fresh explanations for, say, the ‘imperialisation’ of political life after the 1870s.

One possible route forward may lie in more systematic engagement with the new historiography of Victorian imperial political thought. This field has changed beyond recognition over the last fifteen years, as Duncan Bell has traced in a number of elegant historiographical anatomies.<sup>74</sup> We now understand far better how nineteenth-century thinkers and scholars conceptualised imperial expansion and rule.<sup>75</sup> But the implications of their arguments and critiques for the practice of British politics, if any, have yet to be traced. Historians of ideas rarely make the case for the influence of political thought on party politics

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<sup>74</sup> Duncan Bell, ‘Empire and international relations in Victorian political thought’, *Historical Journal*, 49 (2006), pp. 281-98, at p. 298; Duncan Bell, *Reordering the world: essays on liberalism and empire* (Princeton, 2016), chs 1-2. See also Duncan Bell, *The idea of greater Britain: empire and future of world order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, 2007); Duncan Bell, ed., *Victorian visions of global order: empire and international relations in nineteenth-century political thought* (Cambridge, 2006). On the historiography see also Jennifer Pitts, ‘Political theory of empire and imperialism’, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 13 (2010), pp. 211-35.

<sup>75</sup> See Bart Schultz and Georgios Varouxakis, eds., *Utilitarianism and empire* (Lanham, 2005); Duncan Kelly, ed., *Lineages of empire: the historical roots of British imperial thought* (Oxford, 2009). On critics of empire see Gregory Claeys, *Imperial sceptics: British critics of empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge, 2010); Mira Matikkala, *Empire and imperial ambition: liberty, Englishness and anti-imperialism in late-Victorian Britain* (London, 2011); Eugenio F. Biagini, ‘The politics of Italianism: Reynolds’s *Newspaper*, the Indian Mutiny, and the radical critique of liberal imperialism in mid-Victorian Britain’, in Tom Crook, Rebecca Gill, and Bertrand Taithe, eds., *Evil, barbarism, and empire: Britain and abroad c. 1830-2000* (Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 99-125; Peter Cain, *Hobson and imperialism: radicalism, new Liberalism, and finance, 1887-1938* (Oxford, 2002). For the other side of the coin see e.g. David M. Craig, *Robert Southey and romantic apostasy: political argument in Britain, 1780-1840* (Woodbridge, 2007), ch. 7.

or policy.<sup>76</sup> Political historians, in turn, often treat more highly elaborated varieties of political argument as beyond their remit.<sup>77</sup> However gaping the methodological divides, historians of Victorian politics might still do more with the questions opened up in this work.

We might pick out two of the more significant of these. The first is about the study of liberalism. Much of the recent historiography of Victorian imperial thought revolves around the concepts of ‘liberal empire’ and ‘liberal imperialism’.<sup>78</sup> These can often appear somewhat free-floating, and to have only a limited amount in common with the versions of liberalism interrogated by historians of Liberal Party politics and ideas, even when talking about the management of imperial policy. It may be that there is a compromise to strike, in which imperial intellectual history is situated more robustly within the political environment of Victorian Britain, and pays more attention to the ‘conservative’ or ‘radical’ or ‘socialist’ alternatives that ‘liberal’ visions of empire were to some extent in dialogue with. Even the most explicitly ‘contextual’ accounts of ‘liberal imperial’ ideas have yet to achieve this goal.

Perhaps the most promising potential hinge between the intellectual and political histories of Victorian imperialism, however, can be found in the law. Studies of imperial and colonial legal thought are now being produced in ever greater numbers, just as historians of Victorian politics are starting to pay more attention to the role of legal training and ideas in shaping political decision-making and policy.<sup>79</sup> Work on imperial legal thought which remains focused on a restricted community of judges and scholars, as most still does, can probably

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<sup>76</sup> When attempted, the argument is often by analogy or assertion. See Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of empire: Henry Maine and the end of liberal imperialism* (Princeton, 2010), ch. 5; Amanda Behm, *Imperial history and the global politics of exclusion: Britain, 1880-1940* (Basingstoke, 2018), ch. 3.

<sup>77</sup> Craig, ‘Political ideas and languages’.

<sup>78</sup> Andrew Sartori, ‘The British empire and its liberal mission’, *Journal of Modern History*, 78 (2006), pp. 623-42.

<sup>79</sup> Ben Griffin, ‘Paternal rights, child welfare and the law in nineteenth-century Britain and Ireland’, *Past and Present*, 246 (2020), pp. 109-47.

only do so much for political historians.<sup>80</sup> But there have been a few pioneering attempts to bridge these divides. We might pick out Rande Kostal's brilliant *A jurisprudence of power* (2005), whose ground-breaking account of how legal structures and assumptions informed the debates over Governor Edward Eyre's suppression of the 1865 Jamaican Rebellion is unjustly under-cited in the historiography of Victorian politics.<sup>81</sup> The equally novel approach adopted in Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford's *Rage for order* (2017) may perhaps be more widely applicable, premised as it is on the ways in which an extraordinarily wide variety of historical actors participated in legal discourses ('law talk') in the early nineteenth century, thereby exercising tangible influence over processes of imperial reform.<sup>82</sup> Pinning down how popular assumptions about imperial law were constructed, and how they functioned in domestic politics, would be an important step forward.

### III

Europe and the empire dominate the literature on international issues in nineteenth-century British politics. Other parts of the world, however, also played significant roles in the Victorian imagination. Some of these have well-established historiographies, while some are just beginning to emerge as subjects of interest to political and intellectual historians. There are opportunities here to open up new questions about the Victorian mind: a number of the most innovative and challenging recent contributions to the literature covered in this article address British engagement with less familiar parts of the globe. This section examines work

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<sup>80</sup> Jennifer Pitts, *Boundaries of the international: law and empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2018).

<sup>81</sup> R.W. Kostal, *A jurisprudence of power: Victorian empire and the rule of law* (Oxford, 2005). See also R.W. Kostal, 'A jurisprudence of power: martial law and the Ceylon controversy of 1848-51', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 28 (2000), pp. 1-34.

<sup>82</sup> Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford, *Rage for order: the British empire and the origins of international law, 1800-1850* (Cambridge, MA, 2016).

on five countries, continents, and categories: the United States, Latin America, contemporary European colonial empires, the Ottoman empire, and East Asia.

Much the largest and deepest-rooted historiography here deals with the United States.<sup>83</sup> This relationship has been a subject of scholarly interest since the 1920s, and the literature has been discussed often enough that it can be covered in relatively summary fashion here.<sup>84</sup>

British policy towards America was not usually, after the war of 1812 and with the significant exception of the Civil War, a major political issue. Historians have concentrated instead on the roles the United States played in the Victorian political imagination, in which it appeared in the overlapping guises of a former colony, an advanced democratic state, an example of a (mostly) functioning federal polity, a slave power, an industrial competitor, and the site of one of the century's deadliest civil conflicts. Work since the 1960s has demonstrated America's significance as an ideal, a test, and a warning, within British political discourse at all levels. Historians continue to be fascinated above all by a question first prised open by D.P. Crook: how the United States affected Victorian conceptions of democracy and constitutionalism.<sup>85</sup> There are growing literatures also on attitudes towards more specific developments in American politics, and on America as a subject in the more rarefied realms of political thought.<sup>86</sup> British ideas on the Civil War remains an evergreen topic, and new

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<sup>83</sup> For a Continental perspective see Axel Körner, *America in Italy: the United States in the political thought and imagination of the Risorgimento, 1763-1865* (Princeton, 2017).

<sup>84</sup> E.D. Adams, *Great Britain and the American civil war* (New York, 1925).

<sup>85</sup> David Paul Crook, *American democracy in English politics, 1815-50* (Oxford, 1965); and see esp. H.A. Tulloch, 'Changing British attitudes towards the United States in the 1880s', *Historical Journal*, 20 (1977), pp. 825-40. More recently see Aurelian Craiutu and Jeffrey C. Isaac, eds., *America through European eyes: British and French reflections on the New World from the eighteenth century to the present* (University Park, 2009); Ella Dzelzainis and Ruth Livesey, *The American experiment and the idea of democracy in British culture, 1776-1914* (Ashgate, 2013); Michael J. Turner, *Liberty and libicide: the role of America in nineteenth-century British radicalism* (Lanham, 2014); Josh Gibson, 'The Chartists and the constitution: revisiting British popular constitutionalism', *Journal of British Studies*, 56 (2017), pp. 70-90.

<sup>86</sup> Murney Gerlach, *British liberalism and the United States: political and social thought in the late Victorian age* (Basingstoke, 2001); Patrick M. Kirkwood, 'Alexander Hamilton and the early republic in Edwardian imperial thought', *Britain and the World*, 12 (2019), pp. 28-50;

work continues to refine our understanding.<sup>87</sup> Lately, however, historians have started to pay closer attention to the workings of political movements, and movements of political ideas, between Britain and America. Studies of struggles over slavery and economic order, in particular, have underlined the significance of exchanges between British and American political actors.<sup>88</sup>

Latin America's place in British politics is far less well understood. Britain's commercial and diplomatic relationships with that continent have generated substantial literatures, which dwell on the nature of 'informal empire'.<sup>89</sup> As far as domestic politics and intellectual life are concerned, however, we hear virtually nothing about this part of the 'New World' after 1826, when George Canning 'called [it] into existence, to redress the balance of the Old', and when a significant proportion of the nation's capital (and Benjamin Disraeli's) was lost in doomed

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<sup>87</sup> Important recent contributions include Alfred Grant, *The American civil war and the British press* (Jefferson, N.C., 2000); R.J.M. Blackett, *Divided hearts: Britain and the American civil war* (Baton Rouge, 2001); Duncan Andrew Campbell, *English public opinion and the American civil war* (Woodbridge, 2003); Lawrence Goldman, "'A total misconception': Lincoln, the civil war, and the British", in Richard Carwardine and Jay Sexton, eds., *The global Lincoln* (New York; Oxford, 2011), pp. 107-22; Mark Bennett, 'Confederate supporters in the West Riding, 1861-1865: "Cranks of the worst English species"', *Northern History*, 51 (2014), pp. 311-29; Hugh Dubrulle, *Ambivalent nation: how Britain imagined the American civil war* (Baton Rouge, 2018).

<sup>88</sup> See Elizabeth J. Clapp and Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Women, dissent, and anti-slavery in Britain and America, 1790-1865* (Oxford, 2011); William Mulligan and Maurice Bric, eds., *A global history of anti-slavery politics in the nineteenth century* (Basingstoke, 2013); Bronwen Everill, 'British West Africa or "the United States of Africa"? Imperial pressures on the transatlantic anti-slavery movement, 1839-1842', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 9 (2011), pp. 136-50; Cornelis A. van Minnen and Manfred Berg, eds., *The U.S. South and Europe: transatlantic relations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2013); Marc-William Palen, *The 'conspiracy' of free trade: the Anglo-American struggle over empire and economic globalization, 1846-1896* (Cambridge, 2016). On the role of the media and of diasporic communities in mediating these interactions see, respectively, Joel H. Weiner and Mark Hampton, eds., *Anglo-American media interactions, 1850-2000* (Basingstoke, 2007); and Stephen Tuffnell, *Emigrant foreign relations: nation and empire in Britain's American community* (forthcoming).

<sup>89</sup> H.S. Ferns, *Britain and Argentina in the nineteenth century* (Oxford, 1960); Leslie Bethell, *The abolition of the Brazilian slave trade: Britain, Brazil and the slave trade question, 1807-1869* (Cambridge, 1970); Alan Knight, 'Britain and Latin America', in Andrew Porter, ed., *The Oxford history of the British empire, volume III: the nineteenth century* (Oxford, 1999); Rory Miller, 'Informal empire in Latin America', in Robin W. Winks, ed., *The Oxford history of the British empire, volume V: historiography* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 437-49; Matthew Brown, ed., *Informal empire in Latin America: culture, commerce and capital* (Oxford, 2008); Deborah Cohen, 'Love and money in the informal empire: the British in Argentina, 1830-1930', *Past and Present*, 245 (2019), pp. 79-115.



mining speculations.<sup>90</sup> The relationship has been left to cultural historians.<sup>91</sup> There is much more to say about Latin America as a political issue. It is true that the Victorians could be dismissive of its politics, with one writer in the 1860s calling them ‘the most uninteresting of any on the surface of the globe’.<sup>92</sup> But South America also presented the only large-scale nineteenth-century case study in the process of imperial emancipation; a series of experiments in revolutionary republican versions of democracy; and the evolution of a species of ‘republican’ military dictatorship peculiar to the region. These were all, under certain circumstances, subjects of abundant interest to Victorian political commentators. Gabriel Paquette’s work on British ideas about imperial Spain and the new republics in nineteenth century’s early decades hints at how the subject might be approached.<sup>93</sup> Elsewhere, historians of international law have noted British adventurers in South America offering highly-coloured versions of their experiences to the domestic public in the hope of shifting British policy.<sup>94</sup> Studies of the intellectual and political encounter between France and the ‘Latin’ continent cast further light on the possibilities of the theme, though French engagement with the region was certainly more closely textured.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *Hansard*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 16:397, 12 Dec. 1826. On the pre-Canning period see Rebecca Cole Heinowitz, *Spanish America and British romanticism, 1777–1826: rewriting conquest* (Edinburgh, 2010). On speculation see Michael P. Costeloe, *Bubbles and bonanzas: British investors and Mexico, 1821–1860* (Lanham, 2011). See also Geneviève Verdo, ‘Les britanniques et les indépendances hispano-américaines’, in Bensimon and Enders, eds, *Le siècle britannique*, pp. 307–36.

<sup>91</sup> Robert D. Aguirre, *Informal empire: Mexico and central America in Victorian culture* (Minneapolis, MN, 2005); Luz Elena Ramirez, *British representations of Latin America* (Gainesville, FL, 2007).

<sup>92</sup> ‘The war in South America’, *London Review*, (1865), pp. 417–8, at p. 417.

<sup>93</sup> Gabriel Paquette and Matthew Brown, eds., *Connections after colonialism: Europe and Latin America in the 1820s* (Tuscaloosa, 2013); Gabriel Paquette, ‘The intellectual context of British recognition of the South American republics, c. 1800–1830’, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 2 (2004), pp. 75–95; and on the eighteenth-century context, Gabrielle Paquette ‘The image of imperial Spain in British political thought, 1750–1800’, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 81 (2004), pp. 187–214.

<sup>94</sup> Benton and Ford, *Rage*, ch. 6.

<sup>95</sup> Edward Shawcross, *France, Mexico, and informal empire in Latin America, 1820–1867* (Basingstoke, 2018); Nancy Nichols Barker, *The French experience in Mexico, 1821–1861: a history of constant misunderstanding* (Chapel Hill, 1979), and Guy-Alain Dugast, *La tentation mexicaine en France au XIXe siècle: L’image du Mexique et l’intervention française (1821–1862)* (Paris, 2008); Michel Gobat, ‘The invention of Latin America: a transnational history of anti-imperialism, democracy, and race’, *American Historical Review*, 118 (2013), pp. 1345–1375; Paul Edison, ‘Colonial models for new world spaces: French reflections on Mexico, 1830s–1860s’, *Journal of the Western Society for French History*, 43 (2015), pp. 121–32; Federica Morelli, Clément Thibaud, and Geneviève Verdo, eds, *Les empires atlantiques des Lumières au libéralisme (1763–1865)* (Rennes, 2009).

Investigations of British attitudes towards other empires have proceeded in fits and starts. Though the study of Victorian ideas about the empires of antiquity goes back a long way, the subject has become considerably more popular in the last two decades.<sup>96</sup> Historians have drawn out British thought on the analogies between the Indian empire and that of ancient Rome with particular thoroughness.<sup>97</sup> But there is still remarkably little literature on British thinking about other contemporary colonial empires.<sup>98</sup> Historians of several other European empires – and indeed of Japan and the United States – have begun to conduct detailed work on how imaginative engagement with other nineteenth-century imperial projects worked in party political struggles, and especially in imperial political thought.<sup>99</sup> Some of these studies are conceptualised in terms of the growing number of ‘hyphenated imperialisms’ – ‘trans-imperialism’, ‘co-imperialism’, ‘sub-imperialism’ – around which research into the global history of empire is increasingly arranged.<sup>100</sup> In Britain’s case, however, work in this area is

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<sup>96</sup> Norman Vance, *The Victorians and ancient Rome* (Oxford, 1997); Norman Vance, ‘Imperial Rome and Britain’s language of empire, 1600-1837’, *History of European Ideas*, 26 (2000), pp. 211-24; Mark Bradley, ed., *Classics and imperialism in the British empire* (Oxford, 2010); Krishan Kumar, ‘Greece and Rome in the British empire: contrasting role models’, *Journal of British Studies*, 51 (2012), pp. 76-101.

<sup>97</sup> Sarah J. Butler, *Britain and its empire in the shadow of Rome: the reception of Rome in socio-political debate from the 1850s to the 1920s* (London, 2012); Christopher Hagerman, *Britain’s imperial muse: the classics, imperialism, and the Indian empire, 1784-1914* (Basingstoke, 2013).

<sup>98</sup> On this theme’s potential significance see Bell, ‘Empire and international relations’, p. 288. For an earlier period, see Matthew Wyman-McCarthy, ‘Perceptions of French and Spanish slave law in late eighteenth-century Britain’, *Journal of British Studies*, 57 (2018), pp. 29-52.

<sup>99</sup> For France see David Todd, ‘Transnational projects of empire in France, c. 1815- c. 1870’, *Modern Intellectual History*, 12 (2015), pp. 265-93; Michael Drolet, ‘Failed states and modern empires: Gustave de Beaumont’s *Ireland* and French Algeria’, *History of European Ideas*, 33 (2007), pp. 504-24; Martyn Cornick, ‘Representations of Britain and British colonialism in French adventure fiction, 1870-1914’, *French Cultural Studies*, 17 (2006), pp. 137-54; for Russia, Alexander Morrison, ‘Russian rule in Turkestan and the example of British India, c. 1860-1917’, *Slavonic and East European Review*, 84 (2006), pp. 666-707; for Japan, Jordan Sand, ‘Subaltern imperialists: the new historiography of the Japanese Empire’, *Past and Present*, 225 (2014), pp. 273-88; and for America, Ian Tyrrell and Jay Sexton, eds, *Empire’s twin: U.S. anti-imperialism from the founding era to the age of terrorism* (Ithaca, 2015); Frank Ninkovich, *Global dawn: the cultural foundation of American internationalism, 1865-1890* (Cambridge, MA, 2009); Leslie Butler, *Critical Americans: Victorian intellectuals and transatlantic liberal reform* (Chapel Hill, 2007), ch. 6; Paul A. Kramer, ‘Empires, exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: race and rule between the British and United States empires, 1880-1910’, *Journal of American History*, 88 (2002), pp. 1315-1353. On American Anglophobia see Nathan Jessen, *Populism and imperialism: politics, culture, and foreign policy in the American West, 1890-1900* (Lawrence, 2017).

<sup>100</sup> See e.g. Kristin L. Hoganson and Jay Sexton, eds., *Crossing empires: taking U.S. history into transimperial terrain* (Durham, NC, 2020); Benjamin Mountford, *Britain, China, and colonial Australia* (Oxford, 2016); James Onley, ‘The Raj reconsidered: British India’s informal empire and spheres of influence in Asia and Africa’, *Asian Affairs*, 40 (2009), pp. 44-62.

still limited to a handful of studies, clustered counter-intuitively in the early part of the nineteenth century, well before the emergence of the competitive ‘high’ or ‘new’ imperialism we might assume must have generated more acute forms of comparative consciousness.<sup>101</sup> Martin Thomas and Richard Toye’s recent *Arguing about empire* (2017) marks out one path forward for inquiries of this kind, examining the workings of cross-imperial argument at the levels of high politics and diplomacy.<sup>102</sup> So far historians of political thought have treated the theme only incidentally, probably because the more prominent figures in nineteenth-century intellectual life do not appear to have taken other contemporary European empires very seriously.<sup>103</sup> There is, however, a mass of material with which to investigate wider attitudes towards other contemporary imperial projects.<sup>104</sup>

The Ottoman empire presented a different set of problems. The literature on the ‘Eastern Question’ is vast, and continues to unfold in new directions, though most recent work is concerned primarily with diplomacy and local politics.<sup>105</sup> There is a large historiography on British religious and aesthetic engagement with the near East. But our understanding of the place of the Ottoman world in the Victorian political imagination, and especially of British attitudes towards Ottoman political order, remains underdeveloped. Olive Anderson’s 1967

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<sup>101</sup> P.J. Marshall, ‘British assessments of the Dutch in Asia in the age of Raffles’, *Itinerario*, 12 (1988), pp. 1-16; Alex Middleton, ‘French Algeria in British imperial thought, 1830-70’, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 16 (2015).

<sup>102</sup> Martin Thomas and Richard Toye, *Arguing about empire: imperial rhetoric in Britain and France, 1882-1956* (Oxford, 2017).

<sup>103</sup> For instance Claeys, *Imperial sceptics*, p. 91.

<sup>104</sup> Alex Middleton, ‘European colonial empires and Victorian imperial exceptionalism’, in Willibald Steinmetz, ed., *The force of comparison: a new perspective on modern European history and the contemporary world* (New York, 2019), pp. 164-90.

<sup>105</sup> See James Onley, *The Arabian frontier of the British raj: merchants, rulers, and the British in the nineteenth-century Gulf* (Oxford, 2007); and Allan Cunningham, ed. Edward Ingram, *Anglo-Ottoman encounters in the age of revolution* (Abingdon, 1993). Ingram’s own highly textured oeuvre deserves more attention than it has received. He noted that his colleagues ‘would go to the stake before reading one of my books’: Edward Ingram, *Empire-building and empire-builders: twelve studies* (Abingdon, 1995), p. xvi. See also the intellectual-historical perspective now being developed by Georgios Giannakopoulos, in e.g. ‘Re-staging the “Eastern question”: Arthur J. Evans and the search for the origins of European civilization in the Balkans’, *History of European Ideas*, 46 (2020), pp. 601-13.

monograph about the politics of the Crimean war is still the most substantial study of these problems.<sup>106</sup> Other work is suggestive, but fragmented. Studies of the archaeologist-politician A.H. Layard, who made his name excavating the Assyrian palaces at Nineveh and Nimrud, hint at the intriguing ways in which a reputation for knowing the East could be deployed to domestic advantage.<sup>107</sup> Some accounts of Disraeli's career examine what his travels in, and writing about, the Ottoman dominions did for his politics – notably Miloš Ković's exceptionally detailed study of his ideas about the Eastern Question.<sup>108</sup> Intellectual historians have conducted slightly more wide-ranging investigations. They have become increasingly interested in concepts of 'Oriental despotism', which in this period depended to a significant extent on attempts to understand Ottoman practice.<sup>109</sup> Students of international law, most recently Jennifer Pitts, have also done important work on the ways in which the Ottoman state was understood by legal scholars and commentators.<sup>110</sup> Again, however, this is an area in which a huge amount of work remains to be done. Jonathan Parry's recent article on Disraeli's novel *Tancred*, which makes the simple yet wholly novel argument that Disraeli wrote a book about the near East in part to make points about politics in the near East, highlights just how poorly we currently understand Britain's political and intellectual relationships with the Ottoman world.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Olive Anderson, *A liberal state at war: English politics and economics during the Crimean war* (London, 1967); Olive Anderson, 'The reactions of Church and Dissent towards the Crimean war', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 16 (1965), pp. 209-20.

<sup>107</sup> Gordon Waterfield, *Layard of Nineveh* (New York, 1968); Timothy Larsen, 'Austen Henry Layard's Nineveh: the bible and archaeology in Victorian Britain', *Journal of Religious History*, 33 (2009), pp. 66-81.

<sup>108</sup> Miloš Ković, *Disraeli and the Eastern question* (Oxford, 2007). See also H.C.G. Matthew, 'Gladstone, Vaticanism, and the question of the East', *Studies in Church History*, 15 (1978), pp. 417-42.

<sup>109</sup> Michael Curtis, *Orientalism and Islam: European thinkers on Oriental despotism in the Middle East and India* (Cambridge, 2009); Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi, 'Romantic attitudes towards Oriental despotism', *Journal of Modern History*, 85 (2013), pp. 280-320. For an excellent account of the deeper contexts here see Noel Malcolm, *Useful enemies: Islam and the Ottoman empire in Western political thought, 1450-1750* (Oxford, 2019); and filling in the chronological gap, James Watt, *British Orientalisms, 1759-1835* (Cambridge, 2019).

<sup>110</sup> Pitts, *Boundaries of the international*.

<sup>111</sup> Jonathan Parry, 'Disraeli, the East and religion: *Tancred* in context', *English Historical Review*, 132 (2017), pp. 570-604. See also J.P. Parry, 'Steam power and British influence in Baghdad, 1820-1860', *Historical Journal*, 56 (2013), pp. 145-73.

Looking towards East Asia, the literature is similarly fragmented. Neither the large historiography on British policy towards and activity in China does, nor the numerous studies of China in British aesthetic and literary subcultures, comments extensively on domestic politics.<sup>112</sup> Work on the relations between Victorian public politics and China centres almost exclusively on the Opium Wars.<sup>113</sup> It is hard to imagine that subject ever being treated more authoritatively and imaginatively than it has been in J.Y. Wong's *Deadly Dreams* (1998), which works through the politics of the 1850s 'Arrow War' in a series of formidably well-researched concentric circles.<sup>114</sup> This massive book is, in fact, one of the most impressive scholarly monuments in the whole of the literature reviewed here, and historians working on other regions would benefit from giving it closer attention. There is not yet much work on China as a subject in Victorian political thought, beyond commentaries on J.S. Mill's concept of 'Chinese stationariness', and it is not clear how substantial the problem is.<sup>115</sup> Even this fairly slight literature on China's role in the nineteenth-century British political imagination, however, goes well beyond what is available on Japan. This is as we would expect, given that Japan does not seem to have presented itself as a major political or intellectual problem until the very end of the nineteenth century, when it started winning military victories against rival powers. So far we have only hints about reflection on Japanese practices in policy debates,

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<sup>112</sup> Robert Bickers and Jonathan J. Howlett, *Britain and China, 1840-1970: empire, finance and war* (Abingdon, 2016); Ulrike Hillemann, *Asian empire and British knowledge: China and the networks of British imperial expansion* (Basingstoke, 2009); T.G. Otte, *The China question: great power rivalry and British isolation, 1894-1905* (Oxford, 2007); See Shanyn Fiske, 'Orientalism reconsidered: China and the Chinese in nineteenth-century literature and Victorian studies', *Literature Compass*, 8 (2011), pp. 214-26; Ross G. Forman, *China and the Victorian imagination: empires entwined* (Cambridge, 2013).

<sup>113</sup> Shijie Guan, 'Chartism and the first opium war', *History Workshop*, 24 (1987), pp. 17-31; J.A.G. Roberts, "'The rights and wrongs of the war with China": Edward Akroyd, Richard Cobden and the 1857 general election in Huddersfield', *Transactions of the Halifax Antiquarian Society*, 18 (2010), pp. 95-112;; Song-Chuan Chen, *Merchants of war and peace: British knowledge of China in the making of the opium war* (Hong Kong, 2017); Hao Gao, *Creating the opium war: British imperial attitudes towards China, 1792-1840* (Manchester, 2020).

<sup>114</sup> J.Y. Wong, *Deadly dreams: opium and the Arrow war (1856-1860) in China* (Cambridge, 1998).

<sup>115</sup> Robert Kurfirst, 'John Stuart Mill's Asian parable', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 34 (2001), pp. 601-19; Michael Levin, *J.S. Mill on civilization and barbarism* (London, 2004), ch. 6. On a slightly earlier period see Phil Dodds, "'One vast empire": China, progress, and the Scottish enlightenment', *Global Intellectual History*, 3 (2018), pp. 47-70.

mainly in wider studies of attitudes towards Japanese culture.<sup>116</sup> As Chika Tonooka has recently demonstrated, however, Japan became after its startling defeat of Russia in 1905 a landmark in British political debates about political ‘modernisation’ and ‘national efficiency’. It may be that we have misunderstood its Victorian role.<sup>117</sup>

## IV

Recent assessments of the state of Victorian political history have been sombre. In 2013, David Craig and James Thompson described the field as being in a ‘curiously unsatisfactory condition’, lacking in dynamism, and cluttered up with generations of forbiddingly detailed historiography.<sup>118</sup> This is hard to argue with. But it is certainly true that the study of the relationships between Victorian politics and the wider world is one of the field’s bright spots, and that it holds particular promise as an area for future research. This article has already identified some blank spaces on the map of Victorian Britain’s global political sympathies and demonologies. In conclusion, it reflects on some broader conceptual agendas, all implicit in the existing literature, which may emerge more clearly in the next generation of studies.

First, studies of opinion might think more systematically across geographical categories. It is clear that the attention of nineteenth-century politicians and commentators flitted between

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<sup>116</sup> Mari Hiroaka, ‘Images of the Japanese education system as a possible model for reforming British education, 1868-1914’, *History of Education Researcher*, 85 (2010), pp. 1-10; Colin Holmes and Hamish Ion, ‘Bushidō and the samurai: images in British public opinion, 1894-1914’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 14 (1980), pp. 309-29; Terry Bennett, ed., *Japan and the Illustrated London News: complete record of reported events, 1853-1899* (London, 2006); Olive Checkland, *Japan and Britain after 1859: Creating cultural bridges* (London, 2003); Gordon Daniels and Chushichi Tsuzuki, eds, *The history of Anglo-Japanese relations, 1600-2000, vol. 5: social and cultural perspectives* (Basingstoke, 2002); Toshio Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian mind: a study of stereotyped images of a nation, 1850-80* (Basingstoke, 1987).

<sup>117</sup> Chika Tonooka, ‘Reverse emulation and the cult of Japanese efficiency in Edwardian Britain’, *Historical Journal*, 60 (2017), 95-119. Tonooka’s monograph in progress, which reaches back into the nineteenth century, promises to solve the problem of Japan in Victorian politics.

<sup>118</sup> David Craig and James Thompson, ‘Introduction’, in idem, eds., *Languages of politics*, pp. 1-20, at p. 1. For a more optimistic take, see the editors’ introduction in Brown et al., eds., *Oxford handbook*, pp. 1-12.

foreign politics, sometimes quite rapidly, as their domestic political salience rose and fell. This important point is only partially captured by a literature which still focuses mainly on attitudes towards specific states, and which mostly maintains a rigid division between ideas about ‘imperial’ and ‘foreign’ issues. Making sense of these shifts of interest, and of the shared principles which lay behind the analysis of different regions, is most straightforward when working on individuals or small groups: it is no surprise that political biographers and historians of political thought have done some of the best work showing how these parts fitted together.<sup>119</sup> Indeed the very idea of studying ‘international thought’, still a relatively novel one, is an important step forward in tracing connections between nineteenth-century attitudes towards different parts of the world.<sup>120</sup> But how cross-regional thinking worked in relation to larger political alignments and themes remains elusive.<sup>121</sup> There is a need both for better synthesis of existing scholarship, and for new studies based on new patterns of reading.

In particular, historians might examine more closely the relationships between highly engaged, slowly evolving specialist debates about particular parts of the world, and the ways in which international issues functioned in mainstream public politics. Most of the existing literature deals with one or other of these problems. But external issues worked differently in Victorian politics in cases where political actors could draw on pre-existing expert analyses, as compared to cases where unheralded problems and sometimes whole continents seemed to emerge out of the ether. There was always a heightened flexibility inherent to the interpretation of political affairs over distance: but the freedom with which overseas

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<sup>119</sup> Georgios Varouxakis, *Liberty abroad: J.S. Mill on international relations* (Cambridge, 2013); H.C.G. Matthew, *Gladstone, 1809-1874* (Oxford, 1986); H.C.G. Matthew, *Gladstone, 1874-1898* (Oxford, 1995); and see Anthony Howe’s introductions to four volumes of his ed., *The letters of Richard Cobden* (Oxford, 2007-15).

<sup>120</sup> Ian Hall and Lisa Hill, eds., *British international thinkers from Hobbes to Namier* (Basingstoke, 2010).

<sup>121</sup> For an examples of how connected debates can be brought together see Robert Saunders, *Democracy and the vote in British politics, 1848-1867: the making of the second Reform Act* (Farnham, 2011), ch. 5. For an even broader perspective, see Tom Crook, Rebecca Gill, and Bertrand Taithe, ‘Liberal civilisation and its discontents: evil, barbarism and empire’, in idem, eds., *Evil, barbarism and empire*, pp. 1-29.

developments could be read was constrained to a greater or lesser extent by established arguments and assumptions. This is one of the intersections at which intellectual history may prove of greatest benefit to political historians.

Second, there is more to say about direct interactions between Victorian public politics and those of other polities. Imperial historians interested in networks and circuits within the empire have made progress here; so have historians of Anglo-American relations, especially in work on allied pressure groups and expatriate enclaves. But this might become a much bigger theme, especially in the European context.<sup>122</sup> A point rarely emphasised strongly enough in work on representations of European politics is that British politicians and commentators were very often reading and responding to Continental texts, newspapers, and letters. What they said about European politics and policy, especially imperial policy, was often taken directly from the public presses in the countries concerned, rather than originating in a specifically British tradition of analysis. In addition to this cross-national fluidity in political argument, there was also more explicit engagement: London newspapers frequently entered into spats about domestic and imperial policy with their counterparts in other European capitals. Much the same was true of British debates about the United States, and, in different ways, about parts of the British empire. Sometimes the privileged access of certain states to certain regions introduced further distortions, which shaped Victorian thinking while rarely being explicitly discussed. Attitudes towards Latin American politics, for instance, owed much to copious and politically interested North American writing on the subject. Thinking more systematically about international influences on, and audiences for, British political argument must strengthen our understanding of the architecture of Victorian politics.

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<sup>122</sup> See Joanna Innes and Mark Philp, eds., *Re-imagining democracy in the Mediterranean, 1780-1860* (Oxford, 2018).



Again, this is a point that has not escaped historians of nineteenth-century British political thought, as they demonstrate when they consider the intellectual formation and global reception of certain canonical intellectuals, but it could be applied more widely.

Finally, at the very broadest level, historians might push ahead with efforts to immerse readings of Victorian politics more fully within wider European, imperial, and Atlantic trends. Continental scholars dating back to the generation of Élie Halévy have been willing to make efforts in this direction, as to a lesser extent have American historians and political scientists.<sup>123</sup> Mainstream British scholarship, however, has rarely followed suit. Some commentators have suggested that there are ingrained cultural and institutional reasons for modern British historians' reluctance to adopt comparative perspectives.<sup>124</sup> But this is perhaps starting to change: an increasing number of studies have appeared over the last decade which place nineteenth-century Britain's political experiences, both domestic and imperial, alongside those of other states.<sup>125</sup> The ability to situate British political history within these broader frameworks has obvious interpretative benefits, and is likely to encourage further study of international interactions. There is, then, plenty to be getting on with in making sense of the relations between Victorian politics and politics overseas.

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<sup>123</sup> For instance Vincent E. Starzinger, *The politics of the center: the juste milieu in theory and practice, France and England, 1815-1848* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1991).

<sup>124</sup> Susan Pedersen, 'What is political history now?', in David Cannadine, ed., *What is History Now?* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 36-56, at p. 47. See also Michael Bentley, 'The British state and its historiography', in Wim Blockmans and Jean-Philippe Genet, eds., *Visions sur le développement des états européens: theories et historiographies de l'état modern* (Rome, 1993), pp. 153-68.

<sup>125</sup> Joanna Innes and Mark Philp, eds., *Re-imagining democracy in the age of revolutions: America, France, Britain, Ireland, 1750-1850* (Oxford, 2013); John M. MacKenzie, *European empires and the people: popular responses to imperialism in France, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Italy* (Manchester, 2011); Steinmetz, ed., *The force of comparison*; Henk te Velde, 'Democracy and the strange death of mixed government in the nineteenth century: Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands', in Jussi Kurunmäki, Jeppe Nevers, and Henk te Velde, eds., *Democracy in modern Europe: a conceptual history* (New York, 2018), pp. 42-64.