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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

ALYS DYSON BEVERTON

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

“THE RISING SUN OF EMPIRE”: WILLIAM H. SEWARD’S MEXICAN POLICY

1861-1865

JANUARY 2013

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

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ALYS DYSON BEVERTON MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

“THE RISING SUN OF EMPIRE”: WILLIAM H. SEWARD’S MEXICAN POLICY
1861-1865SUMMARY

Historians argue that Secretary of State William H. Seward abandoned the pursuit of his expansionist vision during the Civil War. They interpret his conduct of wartime Mexican policy as a case in point for this argument. Although Seward wished to see the Mexican republic stabilised and eventually incorporated into the United States, he allegedly remained neutral towards the French invasion of Mexico 1862-67 in order to prevent Emperor Napoleon III from striking up an alliance with the Confederacy.

This thesis argues that Seward never gave up expansionism and that his wartime Mexican policy was designed to facilitate the future absorption of that country into the U.S. republic. Seward believed the Civil War signalled the coming demise of slavery, which had complicated previous instances of national territorial growth, in the United States. He also saw the French invasion of Mexico as an opportunity for the Mexicans to prove their commitment to republicanism and therefore their readiness to become citizens of the U.S. republic. Once both these crises had passed, Seward predicted, the next stages of U.S. expansionism – the peaceful incorporation of Mexico into the United States – would follow. As secretary of state, Seward used his influence over Mexican policy to facilitate the realisation of this goal.

This thesis tracks the development of Seward’s pre-war expansionist outlook and compares it to his approach to wartime relations with Mexico, an undertaking not yet attempted by historians. During the antebellum era Seward advocated a method for expansion whereby the United States would build relations based on non-intervention, ideological affinity, and commercial cooperation with those countries it wished to absorb. These same principles guided and shaped Seward’s Mexican policy and his response to the French invasion in 1862. In regards to Mexico, Seward made significant advances towards furthering his expansionist ambitions during the Civil War.

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Abbreviations

ALP	The Abraham Lincoln Papers
Cong. Globe	Congressional Globe
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
<i>SRE</i>	<i>Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores</i>
WWHS	The Works of William H. Seward

Introduction

Union lieutenant general Ulysses S. Grant was understandably tired of warfare by the time he returned to Washington D.C. in the spring of 1865. After four years of fighting the Confederates he had led his troops to victory at Appomattox on 9 April, forced the surrender of Southern general Robert E. Lee, and effectively ended the American Civil War. Yet on 16 June, at the invitation of President Andrew Johnson, Grant attended a cabinet meeting in which he proposed that the administration send an army of U.S. volunteers into Mexico to help President Benito Juárez throw out his country's French invaders. Grant insisted that French emperor Louis Napoleon III's ultimate goal was to use his foothold in Mexico to launch an attack on the United States. Napoleon's scheme was aided, Grant continued, by the large number of ex-Confederates crossing the border and joining the French forces in hopes of receiving glory, land, and power in return. Grant told the cabinet that, in view of this, the "Civil War should not be considered completely ended while the French remained in Mexico."¹

Grant had worked closely with Mexican minister to the United States Matias Romero in designing this plan for U.S. military action in Mexico.² Upon hearing Grant's report of the administration's reaction to the proposal, Romero was disappointed but unsurprised to learn that Secretary of State William H. Seward "took the floor at once" to oppose the scheme.³ Since the start of the French invasion in 1862 Romero's efforts to build up popular and political support in the United States for intervention in Mexico had been repeatedly resisted and thwarted by Seward. The secretary, Romero surmised, wished to follow a policy of compliance towards the French in order to avoid pushing Napoleon into an alliance with the Confederacy.⁴ By mid-1865, with the Civil War over and France's position in Mexico weakening, Romero

¹ Matias Romero to *Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE)*, memorandum, 18 June 1865, in *Mexican Lobby: Matias Romero in Washington, 1861-1867*, trans. and ed. Thomas D. Schoonover (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 67. During his time in Washington Romero sent roughly seventy-five memorandums to his government's foreign affairs department, *Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores*, detailing major events in the United States and his communications with Northern statesmen and officials. *Mexican Lobby* is a collection of these memorandums, edited by Romero after his departure from the United States and later translated, edited, and organised for publication by Schoonover.

² Romero served as chargé d'affaires to the United States until he resigned in mid-1863 due to lack of funds for the conduct his lobbying campaign in the Union. He returned to Washington D.C. in October 1863 after the Juárez government granted him increased funds and the rank of minister to the United States.

³ Romero to *SRE*, memorandum, 18 June, 1865, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 67.

⁴ *Ibid.*

found it difficult to understand why Seward continued to refuse to offer U.S. assistance to Mexico.

Scholarly analyses of Seward's response to the French invasion echo the interpretation Romero made in 1865. Throughout the Civil War the Lincoln administration feared European interference in its war with the Confederates. France's textile industry suffered as a result of the Union's blockade of Confederate ports, which prevented the exportation of Southern materials. Napoleon frequently considered granting recognition to the Confederacy and even intervening in the Civil War as a way of gaining access to Southern cotton. Marvin Goldwert argues that when Napoleon invaded Mexico, Seward acted with "cautious moderation" by remaining neutral towards the conflict in order to avoid giving France a reason to align itself with the Confederacy.⁵ Jay Sexton corroborates this view when he concludes that the "constraints of the Civil War" compelled Seward to allow Napoleon's invasion of Mexico to proceed.⁶

This interpretation of the secretary's Mexican policy stands as a case in point for the broader conclusions drawn by historians regarding Seward's time in the State Department. Scholarly research has established Seward as one of the most committed expansionist U.S. politicians of the nineteenth century.⁷ Throughout his career he pushed for the physical enlargement and commercial advancement of the United States. He also wished for a Western Hemisphere, defined as North, South, and Central America and the Caribbean, of republican nations gathered under the economic and ideological influence of the U.S. republic. Historians say, however, that Seward made little or no effort to further this expansionist agenda during the Civil War. The notable exceptions are scholarly analyses of his Far Eastern policy.⁸ Seward viewed U.S. commercial penetration of the Far East as integral to the realisation of his vision for the

⁵ Marvin Goldwert, "Matias Romero and Congressional Opposition to Seward's Policy toward the French Intervention in Mexico," *The Americas* 22, no. 1 (July 1965), 36.

⁶ Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 150.

⁷ Richard H. Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 98-106; Thomas D. Schoonover, "Dollars over Dominion: United States Economic Interests in Mexico, 1861-1867," *Pacific Historical Review* 45, no. 1 (February 1976), 26; Sexton, *Monroe Doctrine*, 128-30; Walter G. Sharrow, "William Henry Seward and the Basis for American Empire, 1850-1860," *Pacific Historical Review* 36, no. 3 (August 1967), 325; Major L. Wilson, "The Repressible Conflict: Seward's Concept of Progress and the Free-Soil Movement," *Journal of Southern History* 37, no. 4 (November 1971), 540-41.

⁸ Tyler Dennett, "Seward's Far Eastern Policy," *American Historical Review* 28, no. 1 (October 1922), 45-62; Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1963), 26-31.

United States' future. Tyler Dennett notes that throughout his tenure as secretary of state Seward advanced the traditional U.S. "open door" policy in the region by conducting it through a co-operative method. In May 1861, for instance, Seward proposed a joint expedition with Great Britain, Russia, France, and the Netherlands to ensure the Japanese did not renege on the terms of the Ansei Treaties.⁹ Seward was "willing to pay the price of co-operation" with the Europeans and thereby significantly alter U.S. policy in the Far East.¹⁰ In doing so, Dennett argues, the secretary "felt himself to be preparing the way" for U.S. global commercial ascendancy.¹¹

For historians, Far Eastern policy marks the beginning and end of Seward's wartime expansionism. Richard Immerman concludes that, despite being one of the most ardent expansionists of his generation, Seward's "stewardship of the Lincoln administration's foreign affairs during the Civil War provided little hint of ... his robust influence on the growth of America's empire."¹² Immerman's assumption is the result of the Euro-centric perspective which dominates academic studies of Civil War diplomacy. Research on the international dimensions of the Civil War has been growing in recent decades, yet historians principally focus on Union and Confederate relations with the European powers.¹³ This has led Immerman and other scholars to approach Seward's wartime Mexican policy with the assumption that the secretary's main concern was how his conduct of relations with Mexico would affect his nation's relationships with the European powers. Historians have yet to fully examine the ways in which Seward's Mexican policy was shaped and driven by his desires and ambitions for the future of the U.S.-Mexican relationship. This thesis attempts this undertaking.

This thesis addresses another oversight in scholarly research regarding U.S. wartime Mexican policy. Given their belief that Seward's response to Napoleon's invasion of Mexico was designed to prevent French intervention in the Civil War, Goldwert and Sexton find it intriguing that the policy faced substantial domestic political opposition, particularly from Northern congressmen. Goldwert characterises this opposition as a "significant "round" in the historic struggle between the executive

⁹ Dennett, "Seward's Far Eastern Policy," 49.

¹⁰ Ibid., 51.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*, 117.

¹³ Howard Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy: A History of Union and Confederate Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Dean B. Mahin, *One War at a Time: The International Dimensions of the American Civil War* (Washington D.C.: Brassey's, 1999).

and the legislature for control of United States foreign policy.”¹⁴ It took on particular vehemence, he adds, because of the animosity building throughout the Civil War between Radical Republicans in Congress and the largely moderate Lincoln administration.¹⁵ Goldwert concludes that although most Northern congressmen agreed with Seward’s Mexican policy, they publicly criticised it in order to undermine the administration and wrest control over policy-making from the executive branch.

An element of partisan politicking was responsible for the rise of Mexican policy in Northern political discourse during the Civil War. Goldwert, however, does not sufficiently answer the question of why Mexican policy became such an effective political weapon in the early 1860s. Sexton’s research goes some way in addressing this issue. He notes that Northern Democrats, consistently the targets of “charges of disloyalty” during the Civil War, condemned the administration’s neutrality towards the French invasion as un-republican.¹⁶ This allowed the Democrats to cast themselves as patriots and defenders of republican values. Sexton goes on to note that during the final year of the Civil War Northern politicians of all stripes began to call for intervention in Mexico as a means of expressing their loyalty to the U.S. republic and its founding principles. By the end of the Civil War, Sexton concludes, the policy of intervention in the Western Hemisphere to fight imperialism and defend republicanism had become a “nationalist symbol.”¹⁷

Sexton is correct in noting that during the early 1860s the question of what the U.S. response should be to the French invasion of Mexico became fused with Northern politicians’ attitudes regarding their country’s identity, role, and responsibilities. Sexton confines his study, however, to the final months of the Civil War. He therefore mistakenly accounts for Northern political support for intervention in Mexico by pointing to a resurging sense of national strength which was allegedly sweeping across the Union as the Civil War drew to a close. As the reunification of the United States seemed increasingly certain, Sexton argues, Northern politicians wished to demonstrate the renewed power and unity of their country in the eyes of the international community.¹⁸ Calls for military action in Mexico to throw out the French increased as a result. This thesis tracks the development of domestic political discourse surrounding

¹⁴ Goldwert, “Matias Romero,” 22.

¹⁵ Sexton, *Monroe Doctrine*, 151-58.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

Mexican policy throughout the entire Civil War. In doing so, it reveals a different motivation working upon the Northern political advocates of intervention in Mexico.

Historical analyses of Seward's conduct of Mexican policy and his struggle with his domestic critics creates a picture which this thesis will show to be incomplete. What Romero failed to perceive in 1865, although it is doubtful whether it would have brought him much consolation even if he had, was that Seward's response to the French invasion was driven by more than a wish to stay on good terms with Napoleon. It was created within a conceptual framework of expansion and geared towards laying the groundwork for the future peaceful absorption of Mexico into the United States. Due to the outbreak of concurrent crises in the United States and Mexico, the 1860s was a period of serious uncertainty regarding the future of republican government in North America. Seward, however, possessed an unerring faith that the North would win the Civil War and the Mexicans would throw out their French invaders. This outlook allowed him to see the potential advantages which the American Civil War and the French invasion of Mexico held for future of the U.S. republic.

In the antebellum period slavery had been the principal cause of conflict and obstruction in instances of U.S. continental expansion. At the outset of the Civil War, Seward perceived that a Northern victory would also mean the end of the peculiar institution in the United States. This accomplished, the country would be able to embark on a programme of territorial extension free from the hindrance of sectional disputes. One of Seward's chief expansionist objectives was the peaceful incorporation of Mexico into the United States. Throughout his pre-Civil War career he had consistently stipulated that this should occur only once the Mexicans had proven themselves committed to and capable of defending their own republican institutions. By adopting a neutral stance towards Napoleon's attempt to impose a monarchy on Mexico, Seward believed he was providing the Mexican people with an opportunity to demonstrate this commitment. A Mexican victory over the French, moreover, would prove to the European imperialist nations that republicanism had taken root in the Western Hemisphere, and that the region could therefore no longer be considered prey for schemes of re-colonisation. Seward's confidence in the power of republican principles and ideals allowed him to predict that this period of crisis in North America would end with the restoration of both the U.S. and Mexican republics, and that the absorption of Mexico into the United States would soon follow.

Domestic political criticism of Seward's wartime Mexican policy was fuelled by a different interpretation of the events of the early 1860s. Gregory P. Downs notes that in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, a discourse emerged in U.S. politics rooted in the fear that the United States was becoming "Mexicanized."¹⁹ The basis of U.S. "exceptionalism" lay in the notion that the United States was immune to the devolutionary process of disorder, anarchy, and disintegration which had ruined other republics. In the 1870s, however, U.S. politicians were concerned that the "line between violence and politics" had been irrevocably blurred by the Civil War.²⁰ The disputed 1876 presidential election made many worry that this line might evaporate entirely and the nation would "fall into a spiral of civil wars."²¹ Downs concludes that analogies with Mexico, a country which represented the typical failings of republican government, revealed the concern held by politicians that the United States was not an "exceptional" republic.

A similar phenomenon occurred in the early 1860s. The secession of the Southern states and persistent instability within the Union during the Civil War led some Northern politicians to fear that the U.S. republic was degenerating. The French invasion of Mexico exacerbated this concern. Given their country's weakened state, certain Union politicians saw this event as an ominous premonition of what would soon befall the U.S. republic. Like republics which had preceded it, the United States could be dismantled and returned to colonial rule. Wartime calls for intervention in Mexico were partially motivated by a perceived need to pre-emptively strike at the French. They were also driven by a desire to pull the United States out of its current crisis and enable the nation to reclaim its "exceptionalist" identity. A foreign venture to fight imperial monarchism, advocates of intervention claimed, would reawaken the shared republican sentiments of the people of the United States, bring the Northern and Southern states back together, and reassert the U.S. republic's position as paramount nation in the Western Hemisphere.

The narrative of "exceptionalism" runs deep throughout the history of the United States. Having assessed the relative success and failure of the ancient republics, classical political writers Niccoló Machiavelli and Baron de Montesquieu concluded that small republics were more likely to enjoy social harmony, stability, and therefore

¹⁹ Gregory P. Downs, "The Mexicanization of American Politics: The United States' Transnational Path from Civil War to Stabilization," *American Historical Review* 117, no. 2 (April 2012), 387-409.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 387.

²¹ *Ibid.*

longevity.²² As republics inherently rejected the use of force to manage their populations, they were instead “held together by those invisible, intangible - but nevertheless quite real - links of nationalism and patriotism.”²³ In the cases of Rome and Sparta, their “ever-increasing” populations had weakened these links.²⁴ Too much diversity had diminished a sense of shared identity amongst their citizens, leading to internal disturbance and conflict. Such republics “became too populous, and too extensive for the simple democratical form” and one of two fates universally followed.²⁵ One was that these republics descended into anarchy, with domestic conflict causing regions of these countries to separate from the whole. The other was that, in an effort to draw together and control the diverse elements of their populations, the governments of these republics centralised and “degenerated convulsively into monarchies.”²⁶

Machiavelli and Montesquieu claimed that these fates also applied to republics which had embarked on expansionist foreign policies. Rome’s quest for empire had led to its government prioritising “opulence” over “conserving liberty” in the republic.²⁷ Although landed expansion jeopardised the republic’s internal harmony and the integrity of its institutions, Rome had pursued it as a means of gaining wealth and power. “Virtue” amongst Romans, defined by the classical writers as loyalty to the republic and a willingness to sacrifice to preserve it, decayed as a result.²⁸ By contrast, republics which had focussed solely on “self-preservation” were more successful.²⁹ Montesquieu noted that Attica, Genoa, Venice, and Switzerland had all refrained from schemes of expansion and aggrandisement.³⁰ Their small populations bred domestic tranquillity and ensured that the integrity of their institutions remained intact for longer.

The warnings of Machiavelli and Montesquieu weighed heavily on the minds of the Founders of the United States as they searched for a means to create a stable republic which at its beginning already encompassed a vast amount of land. Their solution was the “confederate” republic. The system of checks and balances would

²² Greg Russell, “Madison’s Realism and the Role of Domestic Ideals in Foreign Affairs,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (Fall 1995), 714.

²³ Nolan Fowler, “Territorial Expansion – A Threat to the Republic?,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (January 1962), 36.

²⁴ William Mullen, “Republics for Expansion: The School of Rome,” *Arion* 3, no. 3 (1976), 298.

²⁵ Andreas Kalyvas and Ira Katznelson, “The Republic of the Moderns: Paine’s and Madison’s Novel Liberalism,” *Polity* 38, no. 4 (October 2006), 463.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Mullen, “Republics for Expansion,” 312.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 329.

²⁹ Russell, “Madison’s Realism,” 714.

³⁰ Fowler, “Territorial Expansion,” 34.

ensure that no branch of the federal government was able to amass too much power. By granting each state a limited degree of sovereignty the Founders hoped to ensure that local and regional interests were served. The system of representative democracy, meanwhile, would allow for elected representatives to determine and create consensus around the national interest.³¹

The Founders believed that the establishment of the U.S. republic therefore marked a “separation from the rest of the world and development of unprecedented forms of society and politics.”³² They had created a republic which was immune to the flaws and weaknesses of those which had preceded it and was therefore “exceptional.” “Like the famed ghost of Banquo,” however, uncertainty regarding U.S. “exceptionalism” persisted.³³ This was particularly true at times of contemplated or actual territorial expansion. The extension of the nation’s boundaries frequently gave rise to concerns that the country was pushing the limits of its system and that its institutions would be unable to withstand the pressures of enlargement. Different methods for “safe” and “appropriate” expansion which would allow the United States to maintain its integrity as it grew emerged and were integrated into the ideologies of the nation’s principal political parties.

The Democratic-Republicans of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and their Democratic ideological descendants, advocated a method of expansion premised on the notion that “an agrarian empire supported a republican political economy better than the urban-dominated manufacturing alternative.”³⁴ One of the theory’s most prominent and articulate spokesmen was Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson believed that landed expansion was “healthy” because it allowed U.S. citizens to sustain agrarian lifestyles.³⁵ Farmers and agricultural yeomen were, according to his interpretation, the preferred citizenry of a republic because their self-sufficiency allowed them to live and think free from the influence and control of employers, masters, and corporations. Jefferson envisioned “an empire without a metropolis” in which U.S. citizens would spread across the North American continent and settle its vacant lands.³⁶ They would establish local governments modelled on those of the

³¹ Kalyvas and Katznelson, “The Republic of the Moderns,” 464-65.

³² Joyce E. Chaplin, “Expansion and Exceptionalism in Early American History,” *Journal of American History* 89, no. 4 (March 2003), 1432.

³³ Fowler, “Territorial Expansion,” 35.

³⁴ Andrew Burstein and Nancy Isenberg, *Madison and Jefferson* (New York: Random House, 2010), 389.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 391.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

existing states which, once stabilised and sufficiently populated, would be incorporated into the Union. By granting each new territorial addition the same rights held by the original states, the federal government would not need to centralise as a means of controlling its growing population. Jefferson also stipulated that the republic should consist of a racially “homogeneous” citizenry, which he believed would ensure internal social harmony and peace.³⁷ By growing through these means, Jefferson believed, the United States’ capacity for expansion was “illimitable.”³⁸

Federalists such as Alexander Hamilton offered a counter-theory to the agrarian expansionist model. They “envisioned qualitative, not just quantitative, progress for America.”³⁹ Concerned that rapid landed expansion could jeopardise the stability of the Union, they instead advocated the economic, industrial, and commercial diversification and development of the United States.⁴⁰ Whig politicians Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams adapted this theory into a method and vision for national commercial expansion. Though they differed on much of the detail, both envisioned a kind of “American system” in which the United States would enjoy paramount economic and ideological influence over the nations of the Western Hemisphere.⁴¹ This would be achieved by encouraging all American countries to adopt republican governments in order to infuse them with a sense of ideological affinity. The United States would also promote the proliferation of commercial networks and relationships based on free trade and liberal enterprise principles throughout the Western Hemisphere. By opening up the markets and resources of the region, the United States would be able to develop into a global commercial power. Like Jefferson, Adams and Clay also believed that racial homogeneity within the United States was preferable in order to maintain domestic harmony. While they “emphasized their ideological solidarity” with Spanish America, therefore, they did not racially or culturally identify with those nations.⁴²

Seward drew on both of these theories to inform his own unique method for national expansion. Like Jefferson, he advocated that the U.S. “eagle be sent abroad to gather in the nations on the American continent,” and anticipated that the United States

³⁷ Ibid., 396.

³⁸ Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 1.

³⁹ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 62.

⁴⁰ Sexton, *Monroe Doctrine*, 22.

⁴¹ Ibid., 75.

⁴² Ibid.

would one day be coextensive with North America.⁴³ He also agreed that this should be achieved primarily through the spread of U.S. settlers, principally agriculturalists, who would fill out the corners of the region, put the land under cultivation, and establish local governments which would one day be incorporated into the Union. Unlike Jefferson and many other expansionists, however, Seward had faith in the capacity of the non-white peoples of North America to establish, sustain, and participate in republican government. He insisted that, through a method termed “osmosis” by Seward’s biographer Glyndon G. Van Deusen and “democratic imperialism” by Walter Sharrow, the United States should extend its physical boundaries by exposing neighbouring nations to the “renovating influence” of the U.S. republic.⁴⁴ Inspired and encouraged by the U.S. example, Mexicans and Cubans, as well as Canadians, would erect their own republics, practice the skill of self-governance and democracy, and at some future stage seek admittance into the Union.

In Seward’s view, therefore, expansion offered U.S. citizens a “powerful incentive for reform” as the most effective means of territorial enlargement was the qualitative improvement of the U.S. republic.⁴⁵ Seward’s outlook was heavily influenced by the tradition of classical liberalism and its convergence with capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He saw republican government as being well-suited to encouraging individual social and economic liberty and supporting a free market and liberal trade economy. While he saw the spread of agriculturalists throughout the continent as important, therefore, Seward simultaneously championed the diversification and development of his nation’s industrial, commercial, and manufacturing capabilities. To facilitate this process, he advocated the growth of communication and transportation networks across the country and the establishment of a national universal education system. These programmes, Seward believed, would lead to wealth, social mobility, and equality amongst the people of the United States. He predicted that, when combined with the evident political and personal freedom enjoyed by U.S. citizens, these achievements would convince neighbouring nations that

⁴³ William H. Seward, “Speech at a Whig Mass Meeting,” Yates County, NY, 29 October 1844, in *The Works of William H. Seward (WWHS)*, ed. George E. Baker (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1887), 3: 273.

⁴⁴ Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 208; Sharrow, “William Henry Seward,” 325; Seward, “Henry Clay,” Speech, United States Senate, 30 June 1852, in *WWHS*, ed. Baker, 109.

⁴⁵ Sharrow, “William Henry Seward,” 327.

republican government was the best means of achieving individual and national prosperity, security, and liberty.

Trade, Seward believed, was the “vehicle for the commerce of ideas.”⁴⁶ To augment expansion through improving the model of the United States, Seward proposed developing his country’s commercial relations with those nations which it sought to bring into its Union. He advocated seeking out economic relations with these countries based on liberal trade, which he perceived to be the most profitable and effective means of developing international commerce. This would open up the markets of neighbouring nations to the United States, thereby bolstering the nation’s manufacturing industry and giving it access to the natural resources of North America. More importantly, trade and cooperative economic relations would expose neighbouring nations to the culture, ideals, and principles of the United States and quicken their adoption of republican governments.

Seward also believed that in order for the U.S. “eagle” to gather in the nations of the continent, the United States must establish relations based on “fair, open, single-handed, single-hearted,” non-aggressive, and non-interventionist diplomacy with the countries it wished to absorb.⁴⁷ Like Adams, Seward drew a “sharp line between intervention and sympathy in behalf of those fighting for freedom.”⁴⁸ While he believed that all the nations of North America were capable of becoming republics, Seward nonetheless insisted that Cubans, Mexicans, and Canadians prove themselves to be sufficiently practised in the art of self-governance before they became part of the United States. If these countries could establish, stabilise, and sustain their own republican governments without outside assistance, they could be “received and absorbed” into the Union without compromising the harmony and integrity of the United States.⁴⁹ Seward also believed that if these countries were ever to willingly seek admittance into the Union they must first feel a sense of trust and ideological affinity with the United States. Gaining these lands through aggressive acquisition ran the risk of bringing new peoples into the Union before they were ready to be responsible citizens of a republic, and would also eliminate any affection they might have felt towards the United States.

⁴⁶ Dennett, “Seward’s Far Eastern Policy,” 47.

⁴⁷ Seward, “Relations with Mexico, and the Continental Railroad,” speech, U.S. Senate, 8 February 1853, in *WWHS*, ed. Baker, 651.

⁴⁸ Greg Russell, *John Quincy Adams and the Public Virtues of Diplomacy* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 140.

⁴⁹ Seward, “Relations with Mexico,” 655.

Seward had ambitions beyond the extension of the United States' physical boundaries. In a vision similar to Clay's "American system," he anticipated that at some stage all the countries of the Western Hemisphere would be bound together by ties of ideological solidarity and commercial activity. Seward anticipated that this could largely be achieved through the same methods he advocated for territorial enlargement. The example of the United States would encourage all American nations to adopt republican governments. Seward, moreover, subscribed to the liberal economic theories of Immanuel Kant, Frédéric Bastiat, and the British Radicals of the nineteenth century that republics "were more likely to engage in trade."⁵⁰ Once the hemisphere was united in ideological uniformity, liberal trade between all American nations would follow. Markets would open up and flourish across the region, and the movement of goods and materials would flow freely.

This ideologically united and economically integrated Western Hemisphere would act as a "solid base" for the United States' "commercial ascendancy" as a "world power."⁵¹ Deriving economic and industrial strength from liberal commercial relationships with the nations of the Western Hemisphere, the United States would be in a position to participate in global commerce as a dominant world power. The ideological and economic integration of the Western Hemisphere, moreover, would compel the European imperialist nations to retreat entirely from the region. The United States and the European powers could then establish relations based on mutual respect for their respective spheres of influence. This would allow them to then cooperate and collaborate in international trade, working together to open up areas of common commercial interest around the world, such as the Far East.

Van Deusen describes Seward's vision as a "vast, federal American empire."⁵² The use of the term "empire," however, is somewhat problematic. Seward's vision involved both formal and informal means of imperialism.⁵³ He wished for the extension of the United States' physical boundaries until the nation encompassed the whole of North America, and for U.S. cultural and economic penetration of the remaining countries of the Western Hemisphere. While the system he envisioned was designed to promote liberty and prosperity amongst its members, it would be structured

⁵⁰ Daniel Verdier, "Democratic Convergence and Free Trade," *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (March 1998), 1.

⁵¹ Wilson, "Repressible Conflict," 543.

⁵² Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward*, 209.

⁵³ Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, *Global Capitalism and American Empire* (London: Merlin Press Ltd., 2004), 7.

hierarchically. The United States would be the chief economic and commercial beneficiary of the system and would hold paramount political and ideological influence over the nations collected within it. Seward insisted, however, that the realisation of his vision would be peaceful, and that all the countries it incorporated would be willing participants. It is therefore necessary to clarify that what Seward envisioned was a uniquely *American* empire, based on free will, liberty, republican principles, and liberal trade.

Seward believed that the accomplishment of his vision was “regulated by laws higher than the caprice or policy of princes, kings, and states.”⁵⁴ An interpretation of the nature of human progress which had been current since the Age of Enlightenment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had, due to advances made in Europe and the United States in wealth and invention, received impetus during the nineteenth century. This interpretation consisted of a “faith in the progressive improvement of the condition of mankind.”⁵⁵ Seward subscribed to this teleological theory and understood it to mean that republicanism, which he believed to be the best form of government for providing for the safety, prosperity, and liberty of its adherents, would eventually be adopted by all nations. He was confident, moreover, that the United States would lead and guide this process. “There is a time,” Seward stated, “for colonization, and there is a time for independence” in the Western Hemisphere.⁵⁶ The American Revolution had triggered a series of independence movements across the region. The spread of republicanism and the ascendancy of the United States as a world power would naturally follow. “It is a work,” Seward continued, “that does not go on as broadly and as rapidly as we could wish, but it does not go backward.”⁵⁷ Seward was convinced that his vision for the future of his country was inevitable.

Seward nonetheless believed that progress “came by degrees in a cumulative fashion through the process of time.”⁵⁸ The adoption of republican governments by all nations would be achieved in gradual stages, and each nation could experience difficulties during the process. The specific destiny of the United States to extend to the reaches of North America and hold paramount influence over the rest of the hemisphere would be achieved through the work of successive generations which would each

⁵⁴ Seward, “Continental Rights and Relations,” Speech, U.S. Senate, 26 January 1853, in *WWHS*, ed. Baker, 617.

⁵⁵ Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward*, 206.

⁵⁶ Seward, “Continental Rights,” 617.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Wilson, “Repressible Conflict,” 535.

contribute to this larger goal. Seward was aware, however, that the prospects and opportunities of the Western Hemisphere could seduce his countrymen and cause them to act rashly to quicken this process. The work of statesmen, Seward believed, was to act as a moderating force, tempering the “popular passions” of the people of the United States if needed and urging action when required so that the larger destiny of the nation could be achieved peacefully and in stages.⁵⁹

For Seward, the Mexican War 1846-48 revealed what work needed to be done before the United States could move on to the next stage of its hemispheric destiny. The interests of slaveholders had driven the nation into a war of aggression against a fellow republic. Seward perceived that slavery had to be removed from the United States before the nation could expand peacefully. Chapter one of this thesis charts how Seward saw the fierce sectionalism of the antebellum period as an encouraging sign that social and economic forces within the nation were moving against slavery. The outbreak of the Civil War, though undesirable, nevertheless signalled to Seward the death knell of slavery. Once the conflict was over, the United States would be able to embark on a programme of peaceful expansion. When Seward became secretary of state in 1861, therefore, he viewed his role as preparing the way for this process. With regard to Mexico, he determined to establish a relationship with his country’s southern neighbour based on the principles of ideological support and commercial cooperation which he believed would facilitate its future incorporation into the United States.

While Mexico was significant in Seward’s long-term expansionist vision, it was the French invasion of that nation in 1862 that moved it to the centre of Seward’s wartime expansionist efforts. He was aware that the Mexican republic had made advances in recent decades, particularly after the victory of the Liberals over the Conservatives in the War of Reform 1857-61. The country remained, however, economically unstable and socially fragmented. Mexican Conservatives had long been trying to convince the European powers to intervene in their country to help them defeat the Liberals, and in 1862 their efforts came to fruition when Napoleon launched an invasion to overthrow the Liberal Juárez government and replace it with a monarchy. Chapter two examines how Seward saw this crisis as a test of the Mexican peoples’ determination and ability to defend their republic. He resolved, therefore, to maintain a

⁵⁹ Ibid., 545.

strict neutrality towards the conflict, confident that the Mexican republic would be preserved without the aid of the United States.

As the end of the Civil War approached, Seward saw the necessity of maintaining U.S. neutrality towards the French invasion as greater than ever. Chapter three charts how Seward insisted that by refusing to intervene in Mexico, the United States could demonstrate to Mexico, France, and the rest of the world that, rather than being the product of the restrictions of the Civil War, its policy of non-intervention would be a defining characteristic of its future approach to foreign relations. From now on, the United States would build relations with all countries based on economic cooperation and respect. By doing this, Seward aimed to establish permanent changes in the United States' relationships with Mexico and the European powers which would be congenial to the long-term accomplishment of his continental and hemispheric vision.

Throughout the Civil War Seward faced growing domestic opposition to his handling of the French invasion of Mexico. Calls from Northern politicians from both parties for intervention were based on a fear of "unexceptionalism." The secession of the Southern states 1860-61 and continued instability within the Union throughout the Civil War convinced them that the U.S. republic was declining and disintegrating like those which had preceded it. In its current state, they believed, the United States was particularly vulnerable to a French attack. They advocated military action in Mexico, therefore, in order to pre-emptively strike at the French. They also anticipated that in doing so, the Lincoln government would be able to reawaken in both Northerners and Southerners a sense of their common nationality and fraternity. Military action in Mexico, advocates of intervention believed, could end the Civil War.

The struggle between Seward and his domestic critics over wartime Mexican policy reflected a conflict between two fundamentally different outlooks in the 1860s regarding the future of the United States. Seward saw the Civil War and the French invasion of Mexico as stages of progress which would contribute to the long-term accomplishment of his goal to see Mexico incorporated peacefully into the United States. His domestic opponents, conversely, were concerned that that United States was descending into the type of anarchy which had characterised Mexico for many decades.

Chapter One; “A New Era of Things”: U.S. Relations with Mexico at the Outset of the American Civil War, 1861.

After weeks of deliberation and debate with his cabinet, President Abraham Lincoln finally decided in March 1861 to order the re-provisioning of the garrison stationed at Fort Sumter, South Carolina.⁶⁰ Secretary of State William H. Seward was against the decision. For months he had been searching for a way to compromise with the seceded Southern states. The president’s decision, however, made a peaceful end to the secession crisis unlikely. On 6 April 1861, as a Union flotilla departed for Fort Sumter, Seward wrote to Thomas Corwin, the newly-appointed U.S. minister to Mexico. Seward told Corwin that in light of the impending conflict between the Northern and Southern states, his mission in Mexico was “at this juncture ... the most interesting and important one within the whole circle of our international relations.”⁶¹

Mexico, Seward perceived, would play an important role in the event of civil war in the United States. If the Lincoln administration blockaded Southern ports, the Confederates would likely seek an alliance with the Mexicans as a means of exporting their cotton and importing munitions and other materials to support their war effort. Even if such an alliance were not made, the unsettled and lawless nature of Mexico’s northern frontier meant that this trade could be carried out covertly. The unstable condition of Mexico could also “operate as a seduction” to those wanting to gain a foothold in the country.⁶² One of the principal reasons for the Southern rebellion, Seward believed, was the slaveholders’ wish to create a “Golden Circle” of slavery across the southern half of the continent. In the event of war in the United States, Southern adventurers could take advantage of the disorder to move into Mexico and take possession of its territory. The European powers had also long had their eye on

⁶⁰ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The American Civil War* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), 267.

⁶¹ William H. Seward to Thomas Corwin, 6 April 1861, Foreign Relations of the United States at the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections (FRUS), <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=article&did=FRUS.FRUS1861v01.i0007&id=FRUS.FRUS1861v01&size=M>(accessed 16 October 2012).

⁶² Ibid.

Mexico. Seward feared that one of them might form an alliance with the South and then “establish a protectorate” over Mexico, allowing it to extend its presence in the Western Hemisphere free from Union interference.⁶³

Mexico was important to Seward for another reason. He interpreted the impending civil war as the final conflict between two incompatible systems of production: slavery and free labour. Convinced of the socially, economically backward, and therefore transitory nature of slavery, Seward believed that this conflict would end with the demise of the peculiar institution in the United States. In previous decades, the issue of slavery had complicated and hindered acts of national territorial expansion. Without it, the United States could embark on a career of physical enlargement without causing disturbance at home. The country’s government would be free from the control of slaveholders and their efforts to push for foreign policies of aggressive territorial acquisition. In 1861 Mexico was emerging from its own civil war, led by a Liberal administration which wished to model Mexico’s system of government on the U.S. republic. Seward saw this as a promising sign of progress and anticipated that once the conflict in the United States had been resolved, the absorption of Mexico into the Union would soon follow. Throughout 1861 Seward used his influence over relations with Mexico to lay the groundwork for the realisation of this long-term goal.

During the 1850s most Whigs firmly opposed policies for territorial acquisition in an effort to bridge the sectional divides which had been inflamed in the United States by the Mexican War 1846-48.⁶⁴ Scholars agree that during this time Seward, as senator of New York, lent his support principally to policies for federal spending in the South, the building of the transcontinental railroad, and the settlement of western lands.⁶⁵ There is disagreement amongst historians as to whether these policies reflected Seward’s willingness to join his party in abandoning the issue of national territorial extension, or if they were part of his continuing expansionist efforts. Van Deusen argues that Seward followed a policy of general conciliation in the 1850s.⁶⁶ During previous decades Seward had gained a reputation as an anti-slavery radical, yet he was an ambitious politician. As such, in the 1850s Seward allegedly followed the Whig Party line and

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 762-836; Michael A. Morrison, *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 69-80.

⁶⁵ Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward*, 129-46; Sharrow, “William Henry Seward,” 328-40; Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*, 113-15.

⁶⁶ Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward*, 129-143.

refrained from advocating landed expansion in order to avoid the politically-toxic issue of slavery and cultivate a more moderate political image. According to Van Deusen's interpretation, Seward's support of policies for internal improvements and federal spending in the South was designed to make him appear as a "conservative-liberal" and thereby further his career.⁶⁷

Seward was certainly an ambitious politician. Van Deusen's argument that political expediency alone shaped his actions in the 1850s, however, ignores the fact that the policies of apparent conciliation which Seward followed were consistent with the unique method of national expansion which he had been developing throughout his career. Sharrow notes that Seward advocated policies for land settlement and the construction of railroads in order to encourage U.S. settlers to "form new states from the American territories" and with the "combined influences of commerce, American settlers abroad, and the freely expressed desires of alien peoples ... add foreign areas to the United States."⁶⁸ Immerman agrees with Sharrow and adds that Seward also aimed to expand his nation's commercial capabilities during this period. In the 1850s the untapped markets and resources of East Asia were the focal point of the world powers' commercial ambitions. Seward knew that the United States would have to act quickly to prevent the region being cut off to it by the European powers. Immerman argues that Seward's support of policies for landed settlement, the improvement of national communication and transportation networks, and the stimulation of underdeveloped regions of the United States were designed to improve the country's economic, industrial, and therefore commercial capabilities.⁶⁹

This chapter shows that Seward did not give up expansionism during the 1850s. It also explains why he deviated from the Whig Party line during this period, a question which has not been sufficiently addressed by Immerman or Sharrow. Seward believed that all forms of national expansion and development – the spread of U.S. settlers across the continent, the proliferation of U.S.-inspired governmental institutions across the Western Hemisphere, and the extension of U.S. commerce throughout the world – were part of an inevitable, unstoppable, and even preordained process. He therefore saw Whig and then Republican efforts to stymie and prevent these advances as futile.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 141.

⁶⁸ Sharrow, "William Henry Seward," 326.

⁶⁹ Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*, 113-15.

Instead, during the 1850s Seward sought to channel and guide national expansionist impulses into what he saw as the most profitable and peaceful routes.

Born in Florida, New York, Seward practised law until entering politics in 1830 when he was elected to the New York state senate as an Anti-Mason. In 1833 he joined the Whig Party and in 1838 was elected governor of New York. During his time in state politics Seward followed the Whig programme of “economic diversity and cultural uniformity.”⁷⁰ This involved encouraging the development of all areas of national economic and industrial production, as well as cultivating amongst the population adherence to shared values and principles. By doing so, Seward and his fellow Whigs believed that national prosperity and economic advancement could be achieved while maintaining domestic social harmony.

In order to achieve “cultural uniformity,” as governor Seward proposed the establishment of a board of education in New York, the inclusion of the children of all immigrants into the education system, and the improvement of the curricula in state schools and colleges.⁷¹ He believed that all children should be taught an “enlightened understanding of responsible citizenship,” including the functions of the nation’s governmental institutions and the expectations placed on them as citizens of a democratic republic.⁷² As Seward stated in 1839, by imbuing in all U.S. citizens an “undoubted loyalty ... toward the institutions” of “republican America,” the education system could guarantee the nation domestic tranquillity even as it brought in peoples from diverse backgrounds.⁷³ Seward also anticipated that universal education could instil in the population a form of “virtue,” which he defined as an awareness of the need constantly to improve the republic. Seward feared that as the United States grew in wealth, his countrymen could become infused with “an undue feeling of contentment and self-complacency.”⁷⁴ By teaching them to “cherish the legacy of their republican heritage” and the importance of the U.S. republic to human history and development, the education system could instil in U.S. citizens a sense of the need to continuously improve their republic so that it could fulfil its role.⁷⁵ A virtuous citizenry would be able

⁷⁰ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 583.

⁷¹ Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward*, 55-71.

⁷² Vincent Peter Lannie, “William Seward and Common School Education,” *History of Education Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (September 1964), 181.

⁷³ Seward, “Address,” speech, Ogdensburgh, NY, 15 August 1839, in *WWHS*, ed. Baker, 212.

⁷⁴ Seward, “Education,” speech, Westfield, NY, 26 July 1837, in *WWHS*, ed. Baker, 136.

⁷⁵ Lannie, “William Seward,” 181.

to guard against “vice, luxury, and corruption” as the United States continued to develop, improve, expand, and grow wealthy.⁷⁶

Seward also followed “the policy of our ancestors, which freely opened our ports and offered an asylum to the exiles of every land.”⁷⁷ Mass immigration to the United States increased rapidly in the 1830s, with roughly 50,000 immigrants entering the country each year.⁷⁸ Most came from Ireland, Germany, and Central Europe. Seward encouraged this movement and advocated the speedy inclusion and assimilation of all foreigners. He encouraged them to “disperse themselves over the country” and settle unused lands to give strength to national agricultural production and enable the exploitation of the country’s natural resources.⁷⁹ Seward also anticipated that immigrants who settled in cities would supply necessary manpower to the country’s industrial production. Immigrants, he believed, would play a vital role in the economic, industrial, and commercial advancement of the United States.

To facilitate land settlement and industrial development, Seward supported the growth of a “system of internal improvements by means of railroads and canals” which would “enable all the different sections of the country to enjoy, as equally as possible, a speedy communication” with one another.⁸⁰ He believed that transportation networks would encourage the movement of settlers into new lands and also improve the nation’s internal trade. Northern and Northwestern farmers, for instance, could grow foodstuffs such as livestock and cereals which would in turn allow Southern farmers to concentrate on specialised crops for exportation. Transportation networks, moreover, would further the exploitation and movement of the nation’s natural resources which could then be exported or used to fuel the domestic manufacturing industry.

“Home industry,” Seward insisted, must be encouraged and have “equal advantages” with other areas of national production through protective tariffs which would ensure that U.S. markets were not flooded with foreign manufactured goods.⁸¹ Seward favoured liberalism in international trade. He was aware, however, that the United States would first have to use protective tariffs to allow its manufacturing

⁷⁶ Seward, “Internal Improvements and Education,” speech, Auburn, NY, 14 October 1835, in *WWHS*, ed. Baker, 132.

⁷⁷ Seward, “Agriculture,” Speech, Albany, NY, 29 September 1842, in *WWHS*, ed. Baker, 168.

⁷⁸ Peter d’A. Jones, *An Economic History of the United States Since 1783* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), 38.

⁷⁹ Seward, “Agriculture,” 168.

⁸⁰ Seward, “New York and Erie Railroad,” speech, Auburn, NY, 20 October 1834, in *WWHS*, ed. Baker, 418.

⁸¹ Seward, “The Election of 1844,” speech, Syracuse, NY, 13 July 1844, in *WWHS*, ed. Barker, 248-49.

industry to grow if it were ever to become a truly global commercial power. He also believed that by encouraging domestic industry, the United States would be able to bring in foreign capital and investment “in those places where domestic capital is most liberally and profitably employed.”⁸² His domestic agenda amounted to a scheme in which all of the nation’s regions, industries, and systems of production were supported, protected, and encouraged to improve.

Seward was a staunch opponent of slavery and during the 1830s and 40s he gained a reputation as a prominent anti-slavery politician.⁸³ His hostility towards the institution stemmed to a large degree from his commitment to national social and economic integration and development. Slaveholders’ undue influence in Congress, derived principally from the three-fifths law, allowed them to enact policies which benefitted their region at the expense of true comprehensive national development. The slaveholders’ “false free-trade system,” for instance, which was designed to support the exportation of Southern cotton and other slave-grown materials, meant that the U.S. market was saturated with European-manufactured goods. This left domestic “productions without adequate reward,” thereby stifling the nation’s manufacturing industry.⁸⁴ Low tariffs for the benefit of slaveholders also limited sources of revenue for the Southern states. This forced them to maintain high levels of debt and taxation, “prostrating government credit, and driving states to insolvency.”⁸⁵ Lack of revenue, Seward argued, meant that slavery “impoverished the states where it exists so much, that they are incapable of endowing schools, maintaining mails, constructing roads, or supporting armies.”⁸⁶ By refusing to let their exports compete in a truly free market, moreover, slaveholders kept the price of their cotton artificially high. Southern planters felt no pressure to improve the efficiency of their system of production and consequently slavery was a “waste of the national domain.”⁸⁷ In short, Seward believed slavery hindered the nation’s ability to develop economically.

Members of the Liberty Party, founded by abolitionists in 1839, urged Seward to run for Congress in 1842 and appealed to him to be their candidate in the 1844 presidential election. Rising antislavery politician Salmon P. Chase avowed that Seward

⁸² Seward, “Internal Improvements and Education,” 128.

⁸³ Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward*, 65-7.

⁸⁴ Seward to George R. Babcock, Esq., 30 January 1844, in *WWHS*, ed. Baker, 393.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Seward to the Chautauque Convention, 31 March 1846, in *WWHS*, ed. Baker, 408.

⁸⁷ Seward, “The Election of 1844,” 252.

would be the right candidate for the Liberty Party in the 1848 presidential election.⁸⁸ Seward, however, consistently refused their appeals and insisted that he would remain loyal to the Whigs, even supporting slaveholders Henry Clay and General Zachary Taylor for the presidency in 1844 and 1848 respectively. Seward's refusal to join the abolitionists was due to his belief in the inevitable fall of slavery. "The laws of political economy," he stated in 1844, "combining with the inevitable tendencies of population, are hastening emancipation, and all the labors of statesmen and politicians to prevent it are ineffectual."⁸⁹

Although cotton production and the exportation of other slave-grown goods were thriving throughout the 1840s, other aspects of U.S. industry were also developing. In the North and Northwest foodstuffs such as livestock and cereals were growing in abundance. Transportation and communication networks were opening up new regions for cultivation and raw materials for exploitation, fuelling an internal trade which benefitted Northern industry and manufacturing. By 1840 total national exports amounted to \$132 million and imports \$107 million. On a global level, Seward saw encouraging signs that the world powers were moving towards economic integration and liberal trade. In 1846, for instance, the British parliament voted in favour of repealing the Corn Laws and in 1851 the submarine telegraph cable was laid under the English Channel, linking the financial markets of London, Paris, and other European capitals.⁹⁰ Seward believed that as the U.S. and world economies became more diversified and integrated, slavery would be exposed to market forces. The inefficiencies of the institution would render it unable to compete and keep up with these national and global developments. For the same reasons that Seward opposed slavery – namely, because it was a backward system of production which inhibited national development – he also believed its days were numbered.

Seward's conviction in the ultimate demise of slavery removed any sense of urgency from the means he proposed to eradicate it. The forces of international trade, domestic industrial development, and social enlightenment would ensure that the peculiar institution would eventually become obsolete. Accordingly, Seward believed supporting the Whig Party, which encouraged these forces through policies of industrial growth and economic diversification, was the best means of achieving emancipation

⁸⁸ Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward*, 67.

⁸⁹ Seward, "Speech at a Whig Mass Meeting," 270.

⁹⁰ Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 1-2.

peacefully. In the meantime, Seward advised, politicians could facilitate the process by enfranchising free blacks (albeit with a property qualification), limiting the internal slave trade, resisting “unceasingly the admission of slave states,” and urging abolition in the District of Columbia.⁹¹ Through the application of these measures, Seward insisted, “the obstacles in the way of emancipation will no longer appear insurmountable.”⁹²

In 1842 Seward left the governorship and spent some time out of office. He commented frequently on political events, however, and during the late 1840s he joined his fellow Whigs in condemning the Mexican War. The Whigs’ principal complaint was that the war was prosecuted for the purpose of extending slavery, yet they also expressed other objections regarding the conflict. President James K. Polk’s means of instigating the war, for instance, struck Seward and other Whigs as a dangerous abuse of constitutional power. As Seward asked at a Whig mass meeting in 1848, “Is the war itself just? Who provoked, and by what unpardonable offence?”⁹³ Another complaint was the cost of the conflict. Warfare, Seward noted in his speech, required “new loans and levies” to be waged on U.S. citizens and channelled funds away from programmes for national economic, social, and commercial development.⁹⁴ Perhaps most worryingly, Seward concluded, the war against Mexico was “scandalous to democratic institutions.”⁹⁵ By waging war against a fellow republic for the purposes of territorial gain, the United States was contradicting its own principles of self-governance and liberty.

Whigs had long preferred commercial and industrial development over territorial extension as a means of national advancement. The virulent sectionalism which swept across the country in response to the Mexican War, however, pushed many towards a more staunch anti-territory position. During the 1850s most Whigs openly rejected “expansion and a too rapid growth of territory” in an effort to avoid the divisive issue of slavery and heal the sectional splits wrought within both their party and nation.⁹⁶ Seward, however, was not among them. In February 1849 he was elected senator for New York. During his first two years in the Senate the principal question facing U.S. politicians was what would be the future of slavery in the lands of the Mexican Cession.

⁹¹ Seward to S. P. Chase, Samuel Lewis, and Others, 26 May 1845, in *WWHS*, ed. Baker, 442.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Seward, “John Quincy Adams,” speech, New York state legislature, 6 April 1848, in *WWHS*, ed. Baker, 75.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Morrison, *Slavery and the American West*, 75.

With a view to settling the issue, Whig senator Henry Clay from Kentucky presented a series of resolutions to the Senate on 29 January 1850 which provided for no restrictions on slavery in the organisation of this new territory. On 11 March 1850 Seward delivered a speech to the Senate outlining both why he was firmly opposed to any compromise which would provide for the extension of slavery into any new lands, and why he would not join his fellow Whigs in their anti-territory position as a means of encouraging domestic harmony.

Seward began his speech by noting that the “fierce conflict of parties that we are seeing and hearing” was the result of the “moral question” of slavery “transcending the too narrow creeds of parties.”⁹⁷ Slavery and freedom were incompatible systems of labour which were destined to collide as the nation became more socially and economically integrated. Seward viewed the sectionalism growing within the country as indicating that the United States had “arrived at that stage of national progress when that crisis” between slavery and freedom was “directly before us.”⁹⁸ He was certain about the outcome of this final conflict. “Slavery,” Seward proclaimed, “is only a temporary, accidental” institution which was “incongruous” to the interests and character of the United States. Freedom, meanwhile, was a “perpetual, organic, universal” system of labour.⁹⁹ Echoing the arguments he had made as governor, Seward insisted that because slavery was an inefficient and backward institution, it could not hope to survive in a nation which was rapidly progressing towards a state of social enlightenment and economic and commercial advancement. Indeed Seward saw the virulence of slaveholders in the 1850 Compromise debates as indicating “on which side the balance is inclining ... the slave states have always been losing political power, and they always will be while they have any to lose.”¹⁰⁰

Seward was therefore able to find cause for optimism in the fierce debates taking place across the country. The work of emancipation was underway, and while Seward conceded that “I do not say that there may not be disturbance,” he was nonetheless cheered by the evident progress the nation was making towards emancipation.¹⁰¹ Seward believed, moreover, that the current period of sectionalism was “premonitory”

⁹⁷ *Congressional Globe at the Library of Congress (Cong. Globe)*, 31st Cong. 1st Sess., (11 March 1850), 266, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llcg&fileName=024/llcg024.db&recNum=285> (accessed 16 October 2012).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 265.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 266.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

of the nation's "restoration, with new elements of health and vigor to be imbibed from that spirit of the age which is so justly called Progress."¹⁰² Once the conflict between slavery and freedom had been decided, the nation could achieve true social and economic integration.

Seward did not share the concerns of his fellow Whigs that sectionalism was threatening to destroy the country. Nor did he agree with the policy of no-territory as a means of maintaining its unity. To Seward the notion that politicians in Washington D.C. could limit and restrain national expansion was absurd. "We have taken a breathing spell," he told the Senate, "from the annexation of territory to divide the gains. The division once made, no matter how, the national instinct ... will hurry us on in a career that presents scarcely formidable obstacles."¹⁰³ "Our pioneers are already abroad in those inviting regions," he continued, "our capital is making passages through them from ocean to ocean; and within ten years those passages will be environed by American communities, surpassing in power and wealth, if not in numbers, the unsettled and unenterprising states now existing here."¹⁰⁴ The spread of U.S. settlers, capital, and commerce across the continent was an unstoppable process dictated by the laws of human ambition, economic development, and national destiny. Attempts to halt these movements would be unsuccessful. As historian Major L. Wilson puts it, Seward never abandoned expansionism because he believed his country "did not have much choice in the matter."¹⁰⁵

The Mexican War, however, had demonstrated to Seward the destructive effects of the slaveholders' preferred form of expansion and the danger of allowing them to continue these policies unchecked. Slaveholders, he told the Senate, had been "misled by a new and profitable culture" which caused them to demand more territory for slavery regardless of the fact that their institution inhibited true national social and economic integration and development.¹⁰⁶ The natural "popular passion" for expansion had been misguided by slavery.¹⁰⁷ Seward believed that "the real task of statesmen was not to resist this passion," which was organic and unavoidable, "but to give orderly

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 267.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Wilson, "Repressible Conflict," 541.

¹⁰⁶ *Cong. Globe*, 31st Cong. 1st Sess., (11 March 1850), 268, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llcg&fileName=024/llcg024.db&recNum=287> (accessed 16 October 2012).

¹⁰⁷ Wilson, "Repressible Conflict," 545.

expression to it.”¹⁰⁸ He therefore resolved to channel these “passions” into more profitable and productive forms of national growth and expansion.

Democratic senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois managed to get Clay’s 1850 proposal passed in Congress through a series of piecemeal bills. In these bills, popular sovereignty was to decide whether slavery would be permitted in New Mexico and Utah. Slaveholders were pessimistic about their institution taking root in these lands, however, and throughout the 1850s they continued to push for further territorial additions to the country. In the run-up to the 1852 presidential election the “spread-eagled nationalism” of the “Young America” element of the Democratic Party made Cuba an important campaign issue.¹⁰⁹ After his election, Democratic president Franklin Pierce instructed his minister to Spain, Pierre Soulè, to negotiate the purchase of Cuba from Spain. The scheme collapsed, however, when Soulè’s Ostend Manifesto came to public light in October 1854 and caused outrage in Madrid.¹¹⁰

Attention also frequently centred on Mexico.¹¹¹ After the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 disputes between the United States and Mexico continued, principally regarding the ownership of the Mesilla Valley. U.S. interest in the region stemmed from the need to find viable routes for railroads to connect the Atlantic and Pacific shores of the United States. For these same reasons many U.S. politicians also advocated acquiring the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Mexican president Mariano Arista had given Mexican promoter Don Josè de Garay permission to build colonies for U.S. settlers on the Isthmus using funds from the Tehuantepec Railroad Company of New Orleans. When Juan Bautista Ceballos succeeded Arista as president in January 1853, however, he revoked the contract, fearing that settlers on the Isthmus would rebel and detach the region from Mexico as the Texans had done in 1835.

Ceballos’ decision provoked an angry reaction from the Tehuantepec Railroad Company of New Orleans as well as U.S. investors, and the issue was eventually discussed in Congress. In February 1853 Seward addressed the Senate to express his opposition to the company’s claims. He viewed the affair as an attempt by Southern expansionists to interfere in and destabilise areas of Mexico in order to bring about their annexation to the United States. Seward was in favour of the absorption of Mexico into the U.S. republic. In the wake of the Mexican War, however, he believed more firmly

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 545-56.

¹⁰⁹ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 107.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 110.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 111.

than ever that policies of forced acquisition were not the way to achieve this goal. Instead he proposed a method of expansion which was peaceful, gradual, and, in his mind, beneficial to both the U.S. and Mexican people.

Seward was convinced that Mexicans were capable of self-government. The success of the U.S. republic in comparison to that of Mexico was, he argued, the result of circumstance rather than the racial characteristics of their respective populations. Under British rule, Seward stated, American colonists had learnt how to participate in “fixed, domestic, constitutional, representative systems and habits of government” which “rested upon the foundations of popular education, freedom of the press, toleration of conscience, and, above all, upon the sacredness ... of the rights of trial by jury, and habeas corpus.”¹¹² Mexico, by contrast, had been ruled by the Spanish “despotic power.”¹¹³ Under Spanish rule Mexicans had been left “ignorant of any system or principle of representative legislation, or freedom of the press, or of toleration of religion, or of guaranties of personal liberty.”¹¹⁴

The American Revolution, Seward continued, had nonetheless “fostered a spirit of revolt” amongst Mexicans and in 1810 they had begun their own war for independence.¹¹⁵ In 1824 Mexico adopted a constitution based on the model of the United States. Since that time Mexico had been “rent often and in every part by the struggle between the North American principle of federalism, and its antagonist, the European principle of centralism.”¹¹⁶ At the time Seward was speaking Mexico was still in what historians term the “Age of Santa Anna.”¹¹⁷ The country lacked central authority and state governors often enjoyed semi-autonomous control over their regions. In the 1830s several states had rebelled and formed their own governments, including the Republic of the Rio Grande, the Republic of Yucatan, and the Republic of Texas, although Texas was the only one to succeed in gaining independence. Coups by ambitious politicians and military leaders, rather than popular elections, often decided presidents. Santa Anna, who ruled Mexico in 1853, had repealed the 1824 Constitution, dissolved Congress, and formed a dictatorial, Catholic regime.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Seward, “Relations with Mexico,” 624.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 626.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Michael P. Costeloe, “Mariano Arista and the 1850 Presidential Election in Mexico,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 18, no. 1 (January 1999), 51.

¹¹⁸ David K. Burden, “Reform Before *La Reforma*: Liberals, Conservatives and the Debate over Immigration, 1846-1855,” *Mexican Studies* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2007), 292-94.

Seward believed that despite the difficulties they had experienced since independence, Mexicans “will bear no government but a federal one.”¹¹⁹ While Mexico was plagued with domestic instability, economic uncertainty, and despotic military-backed rulers, elements of democratic activity did exist within its system of government. Although Mexico’s presidents were often decided by military coups, “the whole structure of government at national, provincial and municipal levels was based on a representative system.”¹²⁰ Elections for legislatures and local councils were regular. Conservatives, who were backed by the Catholic Church, generally favoured centralised forms of government. There were, however, significant numbers of Liberals who advocated “equal rights and guarantees for all citizens, administration within the clearly defined limits of the law, and the principle of state autonomy as long as the states did not interfere with the rights and general interests of the republic.”¹²¹ Seward was certain that before long these Liberals would take control of the government, stabilise Mexico, and establish a functioning democratic republic.

Seward thought it essential that the United States allow the Mexican republic time to stabilise before bringing it into the Union. In the 1830s and 40s he had expressed the opinion that free African Americans, who were often ex-slaves or had otherwise been deprived of educational opportunities, must prove themselves sufficiently “uplifted” by passing a property qualification before they could vote.¹²² Similarly, Seward believed that due to their lack of experience with democratic institutions, Mexicans also had to prove themselves capable being citizens of the U.S. republic. This could be done through their successful stabilisation of their republic, which would demonstrate that they were committed to the principles of republicanism and capable of sustaining them. Only then could Mexico, “with her one million of whites, her two millions of mixed races, and her five millions of Aztecs and other aboriginals ... be received and absorbed” into the United States “without disturbing national harmony, impairing the national vigor, and even checking, for a day, the national progress.”¹²³

Seward’s method for the future absorption of Mexico also rested on his belief that the Mexicans would willingly join the Union. He had several reasons for

¹¹⁹ Seward, “Relations with Mexico,” 626.

¹²⁰ Costeloe, “Mariano Arista,” 51.

¹²¹ Walter V. Scholes, *Mexican Politics during the Juárez Regime, 1855-1872* (Columbia: University of Missouri Studies, 1957), 43.

¹²² Seward to William Jay and Gerrit Smith, Esq., 22 October 1838, in *WWHS*, ed. Baker, 426-32.

¹²³ Seward, “Relations with Mexico,” 655.

anticipating this. He firmly believed that wherever the influence of the U.S. republic was felt, “desire for protection under those institutions is awakened.”¹²⁴ The shared values of the two countries would create an affinity between their people. Mexicans, moreover, would feel grateful and loyal to the United States as the country which had guided them through their journey towards becoming a republic. These bonds would be strengthened by the continuous flow of U.S. settlers into Mexico. Seward also believed that the Mexicans would see the economic advantages of becoming part of the United States. By entering the Union, Mexicans could share in the benefits of U.S. industrial and economic power. Finally, Seward put his faith in the somewhat vague yet significant notion that the North American continent defined the natural boundaries of the U.S. republic. The incorporation of Mexico into the United States, Seward told the Senate, was inevitable, and soon Mexico “shall implore you to give her ... safety by admitting her to your confederacy, as before long, in any event, she surely must and will do. That time is coming soon.”¹²⁵

Inevitability, however, did not mean passivity.¹²⁶ Throughout the 1850s Seward proposed and supported a variety of policies designed to bring about his plan for continental territorial expansion. He submitted resolutions proposing that land grants be given to refugees of the 1848 Hungarian Revolution and supported the passage of the Grow Bill, which was designed to encourage the settlement of western lands. Seward encouraged these measures to “facilitate the most rapid peopling of American territory” and thereby “allow peaceful American expansion beyond her present borders.”¹²⁷ He also made substantial efforts towards national commercial development, introducing a resolution for the survey of the Arctic and Pacific oceans to aid the whaling industry and encourage U.S. trade in East Asia. Seward also tried to convince President Millard Fillmore to purchase the commercially important Sandwich Islands and advocated government subsidising of the Collins’ Overland Project.¹²⁸ He continued to refute schemes of conquest, moreover, and insisted that the United States build relations with neighbouring nations including Mexico based on “fair, open diplomacy” to further national economic and territorial interests.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Seward, “Henry Clay,” 109.

¹²⁵ Seward, “Relations with Mexico,” 655.

¹²⁶ Sharrow, “William Henry Seward,” 328-42.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 328.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* The Collins’ Overland Project was an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to establish telegraphic communications between North America and Europe via the Bering Strait.

¹²⁹ Seward, “Henry Clay,” 110.

Having established himself during the 1850s as one of the leaders of the Republican Party, Seward believed by 1860 that the presidency was within his grasp.¹³⁰ Despite his experience and the efforts of his political manager Thurlow Weed, however, Seward's bid for the Republican nomination was unsuccessful. The Chicago Convention nominated Abraham Lincoln instead, and in November 1860 the one-term representative from Illinois won the election and became president-elect of the United States. Soon after his election victory Lincoln wrote to Seward offering him the post of secretary of state. In his letter, Lincoln noted that Seward's "position in the public eye, your integrity, ability, learning and great experience" would make him an invaluable member of the cabinet.¹³¹ Seward, still bruised at having lost out at the nomination but drawn to the possibilities for influence over policy which the role of secretary would bring, accepted.

Lincoln's election triggered the secession of the Southern states from the Union. During the crisis Seward played a key role in searching for a compromise which would bring these states back into the Union and avoid war. He was part of a Senate committee charged with the task of considering various compromise proposals and gave his endorsement to several, one of which called for a thirteenth amendment to the Constitution to guarantee slavery in existing states against future interference by the federal government. Seward also attended a peace convention in Washington on 4 February 1861. None of the seceded states attended and five Northern states also failed to do so. The debates were "aimless or acrimonious" and the participation of many Republicans was either "perfunctory or hostile."¹³² After three weeks the convention produced a modified Crittenden Compromise which stated that the 36° 30' line would only apply to present territory and that a majority vote from both free and slave states would be necessary for the admission of any new territory. When the proposal went before Congress it "suffered an unceremonious defeat, mainly by Republican votes."¹³³

Seward's conciliation efforts during the secession crisis 1860-61 were a stark contrast to the vehement no-compromise stance he had adopted towards slavery in the 1850s. His efforts to persuade both Northerners and Southerners to accept compromise showed his willingness to make concessions which would see slavery preserved and

¹³⁰ Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward*, 211-27.

¹³¹ Abraham Lincoln to William H. Seward, 8 December 1860, Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress (ALP), <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mal:@field%28DOCID+@lit%28d0488800%29%29> (accessed 16 October 2012).

¹³² McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 256-57.

¹³³ Ibid.

even extended in the Union. There was, however, consistency in Seward's actions. They were based on his "faith in the power" of freedom over slavery.¹³⁴ In the 1840s Seward had chosen to remain loyal to the Whigs rather than join the Liberty Party because he was convinced that the Whigs encouraged the social and economic forces which would bring about the end of slavery through natural, peaceful means. A similar viewpoint directed his response to the secession crisis. He was willing to make short-term concessions to slaveholders in order to preserve the country which he believed would, in time, abandon slavery as an economically inefficient and socially backward institution. In 1850, moreover, Seward had not seriously believed the unity of the Union to be at stake. In 1860 he was willing to compromise with slaveholders because, like many other politicians, Seward insisted that the survival of the U.S. republic was paramount.

One of Seward's last conciliation efforts also revealed the doubts he harboured regarding Lincoln's leadership abilities. On 1 April 1861 Seward sent Lincoln a memo entitled "Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration." A month had passed, Seward noted, since the president's inauguration without any definite foreign or domestic policy having been decided upon by the cabinet. Seward went on to propose, among other things, that the Union abandon Fort Sumter as an act of conciliation to the South and a last-ditch effort to avert war between the states. By implying that he, Seward, should take direction of the nation's policy, "the memo reflected Seward's lack of confidence" in Lincoln and his persisting resentment at having lost out on the Republican nomination.¹³⁵ Lincoln replied to the memo the same day and "served notice" to Seward "kindly but firmly, that he was the master in his own house."¹³⁶

Lincoln and Seward collaborated with greater success in staffing the State Department. This was Seward's first substantial act in shaping the purpose and nature of U.S. foreign policy under his stewardship. Carl Schurz, a German-born anti-slavery Republican, was appointed minister to Spain. Lincoln had originally preferred William L. Dayton for the post of minister to Great Britain, but Seward persuaded the president to send Charles Francis Adams, son of the secretary's political mentor John Quincy Adams, to London instead.¹³⁷ Dayton, who in 1856 had beaten Lincoln to the

¹³⁴ Wilson, "Repressible Conflict," 534.

¹³⁵ Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 7.

¹³⁶ Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward*, 283.

¹³⁷ Lincoln to Seward, 11 March 1861, ALP, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mal:@field%28DOCID+@lit%28d0796200%29%29> (accessed 16 October 2012).

Republican Party's vice-presidential nomination, was appointed minister to France. Representative Thomas Corwin from Ohio, who had been an outspoken critic of the Mexican War, was chosen as minister to Mexico. This decision by Seward was significant in its evident design to convey a gesture of goodwill to the Mexican republic.

On 6 April 1861 Seward sent his first letter of instruction to Corwin. He began by noting "the pleasure" which the Lincoln government felt in witnessing the recent events which had occurred in Mexico.¹³⁸ Less than four months earlier the civil war in Mexico fought between Liberal and Conservative factions had come to an end. The Liberals had triumphed and established a government headed by President Benito Juárez. The Juárez administration's agenda was based on the Liberals' July 1859 manifesto. This manifesto endorsed the "separation of church and state," the nationalisation of the clergy's wealth, the nationwide establishment of primary and secondary schools, and freedom of the press.¹³⁹ In order to bring more land under cultivation, the Liberals also pledged to modernise Mexico's roads, reduce the price of land, fund the construction of railroads, and encourage immigration by granting foreigners Mexican citizenship upon their arrival to the country. The manifesto also promised to "stimulate foreign commerce by simplifying the commercial regulations established under existing laws and by reducing taxes."¹⁴⁰

The Liberals had mixed feelings regarding the United States. In light of the events of recent decades, they were "concerned about continuing expansionist pressures by the United States" and were fearful that it would seek to "exploit Mexico's chronic internal disorder" as the nation recovered from its recent war.¹⁴¹ Much of the Liberals' programme for the economic, social, and political development of Mexico, however, "drew its inspiration from the U.S. model."¹⁴² Indeed, the Liberals' domestic agenda sought to "beat the United States at its own game."¹⁴³ By stabilising and strengthening their country through these methods, Liberals hoped to protect Mexico from future U.S.

¹³⁸ Seward to Corwin, 6 April 1861, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=article&did=FRUS.FRUS1861v01.i0007&id=FRUS.FRUS1861v01&isize=m> (accessed 16 October 2012).

¹³⁹ Scholes, *Mexican Politics*, 44.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Don M. Coerver, "Mexico: Conflicting Self-Interests," in *United States-Latin American Relations, 1850-1903: Establishing a Relationship*, ed. Thomas M. Leonard (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 14.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Burden, "Reform Before *La Reforma*," 287.

incursions. They also wished to convince the United States to see their country as a sister republic, rather than a failed state ripe for territorial conquest.

In January 1861 Mexican chargé d'affaires to the United States Matias Romero had visited Lincoln. Romero began the meeting by informing Lincoln that the Juárez government “had viewed the recent triumph of Republican ideas in this country with satisfaction.”¹⁴⁴ The chargé then expressed his government’s hope that “the policy of the Republican administration with regard to Mexico” would be “truly fraternal and not guided by the egotistic and antihumanitarian principles which the Democratic administration had pursued in respect to Mexico.”¹⁴⁵ Romero concluded by noting that the United States and Mexico were “travelling the same path” of republicanism and should therefore support and encourage one another’s success.¹⁴⁶

Seward’s 6 April letter to Corwin contained a similar sentiment regarding the future of the U.S.-Mexican relationship. The secretary noted that the establishment of the Lincoln administration marked the “inauguration of a new condition of things” in U.S. Mexican policy.¹⁴⁷ The United States did not wish to acquire any more Mexican territory and indeed was convinced that the “safety, welfare, and happiness” of both countries would be “more effectively promoted” if Mexico “should retain its complete integrity and independence.”¹⁴⁸ Instead, the Lincoln administration wished to establish a relationship with its southern neighbour based on “commercial and conventional amity” which would be “directly conducive to the prosperity and happiness of both nations, and ultimately auspicious to all other republican States throughout the world.”¹⁴⁹

Seward noted, however, that there would be boundaries in this new relationship. While pleased with the Liberals’ victory in the War of Reform, he was aware that Mexico had not yet completely stabilised. Conservatives were still a powerful element in Mexican society. Many state governors, such as Santiago Vidaurri of Nuevo Leon, remained largely outside the control of the federal government. The country’s debt, moreover, was large due to the international loans taken out by Conservative and Liberal factions during the civil war. Seward instructed Corwin to impress upon the Mexicans that “the surest guaranty of their safety” lay in the “ability of the government

¹⁴⁴ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 23 January 1861, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 2.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Seward to Corwin, 6 April 1861, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=article&did=FRUS.FRUS1861v01.i0007&id=FRUS.FRUS1861v01&isize=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

and people of Mexico to preserve and maintain the integrity and the sovereignty” of their own country.¹⁵⁰ While they could rely on the ideological support and commercial cooperation of the United States, the Mexicans could not depend on unlimited or unconditional U.S. assistance to sustain their republic.

The relationship Seward laid out to Corwin was based on the principles the secretary had outlined in the 1850s for guiding U.S. relations with Mexico. He viewed the Liberal triumph in the War of Reform and the Juárez government’s agenda for Mexican development as signs that Mexico was progressing. Indeed, as Seward stated to Corwin, he was now convinced that the “republican system is to pass safely through all ordeals and prove a success” in Mexico.¹⁵¹ The secretary therefore sought to build a relationship with Mexico based on ideological fraternity, commercial collaboration, and a mutual respect of each other’s sovereignty as a means of encouraging the Mexican republic to stabilise and flourish. What Seward did not reveal to the Juárez government was that the long-term objective of the relationship he was proposing was to facilitate the advancement of the Mexican republic until it was ready to be incorporated into the United States.

Corwin’s communications to the Mexican government were well received. By the summer of 1861 he was able to report to Seward that the Juárez government “regards the United States as its true and only reliable friend ... That this should be so is somewhat remarkable, when we regard the deep prejudices engendered in the general Mexican mind by the loss of Texas ... and the compulsory cession of territory which was a consequence of our war with them.”¹⁵² Positive developments in the U.S.-Mexican relationship followed. When the Mexican government suggested “negotiating a new and beneficial treaty with the United States,” Seward granted Corwin “liberal instructions and ample power to negotiate” a U.S. loan to the Juárez government to bolster Mexico’s economy.¹⁵³ In August the Juárez administration gave permission for Union troops to enter Guayamas and cross Mexican territory to access Arizona from the south. The Mexican government explained that they had allowed this as “proof of their

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Corwin to Seward, 29 June 1861, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1861v01.p0070&id=FRUS.FRUS1861v01&size=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

¹⁵³ Seward to Matias Romero, 7 May 1861, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS186566p3.p0620&id=FRUS.FRUS186566p3&size=M&q1=romero> (accessed 21 December 2012).

sincere desire” to “draw closer the relations of friendship which happily exist” between Mexico and the United States.¹⁵⁴

When Confederate agent John K. Pickett arrived in Mexico in early 1861 his overtures were firmly rebuffed by the Juárez government.¹⁵⁵ This was welcome news to Seward as other Southern diplomatic ventures had been more successful. In February 1861 Confederate president Jefferson Davis created a three man commission with instructions to persuade the governments of the European powers to recognise the South as an independent nation. The Confederacy’s diplomatic strategy was principally based on the notion that the European powers would grant it recognition out of economic necessity.¹⁵⁶ Europe’s textile industries were largely dependent on Southern cotton. The Confederates believed that the Europeans would recognise them and possibly even intervene in the Civil War in order to gain access to this cotton. This notion appeared to have some ground when, following Lincoln’s proclamation in April of a Union blockade of Southern ports, Britain and France announced their neutrality towards the conflict in the United States and thereby tacitly recognised the status of the South as a belligerent. This acknowledged the Union and Confederacy as two entities at war and gave equal rights to their ships in British and French ports. This was a serious blow to the Lincoln government, which feared that the Europeans’ recognition of Confederate independence would soon follow.

During the latter half of 1861 international events brought Mexico to the centre of the Union’s concerns regarding European interference in the Civil War. In the summer the Mexican economy reached a crisis point and on 17 July Juárez was compelled to declare the suspension of the payments of interest on his country’s foreign debts. Mexico’s principal creditors, Great Britain, France, and Spain, were three of Europe’s most powerful imperialist nations.¹⁵⁷ Corwin believed that direct action was needed to avert a conflict between Mexico and its creditors. On 29 July he wrote to Seward suggesting that the United States offer to pay three percent of the interest (\$2 million a year) of Mexico’s foreign debts for a period of five years. As a guarantee, he suggested, Mexico could mortgage land in its western states.

¹⁵⁴ Romero to Seward, 26 August 1861, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS186566p3&entity=FRUS.FRUS186566p3.p0621&q1=fresh%20proof> (accessed 16 October 2012).

¹⁵⁵ Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 228.

¹⁵⁶ Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy*, 84.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

On 2 September Seward replied to Corwin's proposal. The United States would agree to the loan, he stated, as long as Mexico would repay the debt within six years at a rate of six percent interest. If Mexico failed to do so, the United States would receive the states of Lower California, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Sinola. Seward's final stipulation was that before any money changed hands, Great Britain, France, and Spain would all have to endorse the agreement. Seward knew that the Juárez government would never sign a treaty which could potentially lead to such a substantial loss of territory. Nor did Seward think it likely that the European creditors would agree to the plan. Indeed, Seward outlined these requirements to ensure that no such treaty was made.¹⁵⁸ In May he had given Corwin permission to negotiate a loan with the Juárez government to stabilise Mexico's economy. Juárez's suspension of payments, however, had altered circumstances greatly. The European creditors had a legitimate grievance against Mexico. Any action by the United States to aid the Juárez government could be seen by the European powers as an act against them. This in turn could trigger the recognition of the Confederacy by one of the Europeans. Seward continued to appear to consider the possibility of a loan, however, as a show of sympathy to the Mexicans.

Throughout this period the "only safe passage along the bandit-infested road between Vera Cruz" and Mexico City was a monthly escorted British courier.¹⁵⁹ Communications between Washington D.C. and the Mexican capital were therefore slow. As Corwin waited for Seward's reply to his proposed treaty he grew increasingly fearful that one or all of the European creditors planned to take military action against Mexico. He began to discuss another plan with the Juárez government. This time Corwin suggested that the United States give Mexico a direct loan of between \$5-10 million. The purpose of this loan would be to give Mexico an injection of money so that it could organise its defences. On 7 September Corwin wrote a dispatch to Seward outlining this scheme, and on 2 October the secretary replied. This time Seward flatly refused Corwin's proposal, noting that the Union could not afford such an expense at a time when it was mobilising its own military forces.¹⁶⁰ As Seward well knew, a direct loan to Mexico would be a blatant act of partiality on the part of the Union against the Europeans.

¹⁵⁸ Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 117.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 115.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 114.

In October representatives of Great Britain, France, and Spain convened in London to decide on a course of action regarding Mexico. On 31 October all three nations signed the Treaty of London. The Treaty bound the signatories in a joint venture to Mexico to negotiate with the Juárez government and bring about the recommencement of payments. Each of the European nations agreed to contribute a small portion of their armies or navies to add weight to their demands. A clause was drawn up in the Treaty, however, which specifically forbade any of the signatories from interfering in Mexico's form of government. A portion of the Spanish navy left Cuba and arrived at Vera Cruz on 8 December, to be followed by the British and finally the French in January 1862.¹⁶¹

In early November Corwin received Seward's 2 October letter refusing to grant the Mexicans a direct loan. By this time Corwin was convinced that one or all of the Treaty of London powers, or Allies, meant to use the affair as an excuse to invade Mexico. He was determined to prevent this from occurring and continued discussions with the Juárez administration. On 29 November, despite Seward's previous instructions, Corwin sent the secretary another draft of a treaty for a direct loan to Mexico. The crisis in Mexico had now become a topic of great interest and discussion in the United States. When Seward presented Corwin's latest treaty to the cabinet, it was decided that it should be passed on to Congress for discussion. Lincoln did this on 17 December, offering Congress neither his preference nor opinion regarding the proposal.

Romero held a similar view to Corwin regarding the proper role of the United States in relation to the crisis developing between Mexico and its European creditors. "The contest," he proclaimed, was "between republican institutions and monarchy, between America and Europe."¹⁶² Convinced that the European powers intended to invade and take possession of Mexico, Romero insisted that the United States was morally obliged to intervene. He was wary, however, of any agreement between his government and the United States which could involve the loss of Mexican land. Even a direct loan with no lien on Mexican territory could later result in the United States claiming it was owed compensation for its expenses. Romero searched for another means by which the United States could prevent a European attack on Mexico.

¹⁶¹ Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy*, 79.

¹⁶² Romero to SRE, memorandum, 22 December 1861, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 12.

When the Allies signed the Treaty of London they had also invited the United States to join the agreement.¹⁶³ On 4 December Romero met with Postmaster General Montgomery Blair, with whom he had regular contact, and suggested that the Lincoln administration take up the Europeans' offer. By doing so, Romero explained to Blair, the United States could introduce discord between the Allies and sabotage the entire venture. Blair liked the idea and immediately relayed it to Seward, who in return expressed interest in the proposal and asked for it in writing. Blair and Romero were unaware, however, that Seward wrote to the Allies that same day declining their invitation to join their expedition.¹⁶⁴

When Seward entered the State Department he had a clear notion of the potential significance of the Civil War in regard to his long-term expansionist ambitions for his country. He also saw the Juárez government as well-suited to overseeing the development of Mexico into a stable republic and therefore determined to build cooperative relations with Mexico with a view to facilitating its future incorporation into the Union. Although he was committed to his long-term vision, Seward was nonetheless a pragmatist and understood the necessity of ensuring the Union was able to carry out its war effort free from the interference of the European powers. When Mexico became embroiled in a crisis involving Great Britain, France, and Spain, therefore, Seward was compelled to make adaptations to his original Mexican policy. He distanced his country from the Juárez government and refused to offer Mexico assistance in order to avoid retaliation from the European powers. As will be discussed in the following chapter, however, as the European expedition to Mexico developed, Seward would find ways to continue to make progress in laying the groundwork for his goal of seeing Mexico absorbed into the United States.

¹⁶³ Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 115.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

Chapter Two: “Neither the Right nor the Disposition to Intervene”: Seward and the
European Expedition to Mexico, 1862-63

Robert M. McLane was familiar with the nature of Mexican politics. In 1859 he had been appointed U.S. envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to Mexico, marking the beginning of U.S. relations with the newly-established Juárez government. During the American Civil War, McLane temporarily retired from political life and in 1862 he visited Europe. His political stature gained him access to the governing circles of Europe, and when he returned to the United States Romero questioned him about the attitude in France regarding Napoleon’s venture in Mexico. “The success or failure of the French forces in imposing monarchy on Mexico,” McLane informed Romero, “will depend exclusively on the means that are chosen to make it appear in Europe that the Mexican people really desire monarchy.”¹⁶⁵

The question of whether the Mexican people wanted a monarchy or a republic was an important aspect of the Treaty of London expedition and the subsequent French invasion of Mexico. It related to the broader issue surrounding these events of the current and future state of republican government in North America. The Allies argued that the United States had abandoned its self-proclaimed mission to lead the world towards republican government in favour of a career of aggressive imperialism. They also claimed that Mexico’s economic distress proved that republicanism had failed in that country and that its people yearned for a centralised form of government which could give them order and stability. Napoleon built on both of these themes to justify his invasion of Mexico. He argued that by overthrowing the Juárez government and replacing it with a monarchy, he was giving the Mexican people the security they desired, as well as strengthening the country against future U.S. attacks. The European expedition and French invasion of Mexico were based on and legitimised by the notion that republicanism had failed in North America.

In the image which the Allies sought to present to the world, the United States and Mexico had succumbed to the common states of decay for republics. The United States had turned into an imperialist nation, motivated by a desire for power and land at the expense of other countries. Mexico, meanwhile, had devolved into a state of internal

¹⁶⁵ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 5 November 1863, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 30.

chaos, factionalism, and disorder. Seward recognised the potential implications of this image for the United States and the future of republican government in the Western Hemisphere. Such an interpretation could be used by one or more of the European powers to justify intervention in the Civil War against the Union, and indeed was used by the French government to legitimise the attempted dismantling of the Mexican republic. If the image gained traction in Europe and around the world it could also lay the groundwork for the extension of European imperialism in the Western Hemisphere. Republicanism, the European powers could argue, had been tested and found inadequate, and therefore imperial monarchism was required to re-establish order in the New World.

Seward was determined to counter this image and limit its harmful effects. His approach to the European expedition and the French invasion of Mexico was designed to present the United States as a non-interventionist, benign republican power which neither needed nor wished to use force to further its interests. Simultaneously, Seward aimed to show the Allies that the Mexicans were both able and willing to defend their republic without the help of the United States. By doing so, Seward hoped to demonstrate to the Allies that republicanism had taken root in Mexico and could not be removed. He anticipated that this would allow him to inaugurate a new era in U.S. relations with the principal European powers based on respect for what he viewed as their respective spheres of influence, and cooperation in areas of common interest around the world.

Seward's wartime approach to relations with Great Britain, Spain, and France is a topic of interest and debate amongst historians. Particular attention is paid to the apparent transformation Seward's style of diplomacy underwent during the early years of the Civil War. In his first year as secretary, Seward earned a reputation amongst the governments of Europe as a jingoist and Europhobe. In his April 1861 "Thoughts" memo he had suggested that the United States declare war on Spain, Great Britain, and Russia if it did not receive adequate explanations from each for their recent policies in the Western Hemisphere. Later that same year during the *Trent* affair, Lincoln was compelled to tone down the language of Seward's dispatches to London in order to avoid triggering a war with Great Britain.¹⁶⁶ When the Allies sent a portion of their military forces to Mexico in late 1861, however, Seward took no action. When the

¹⁶⁶ Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 8-9.

French declared war on the Mexican republic in 1862, he issued a declaration of U.S. neutrality and refused to offer the Mexicans any assistance throughout the conflict.

Seward's seeming inconsistency has been accounted for by Immerman through the secretary's evolving understanding of the severity of the Southern rebellion. Seward's wish to see the Union preserved "drove him to try desperately to avoid a civil war."¹⁶⁷ He sought a foreign conflict to "shift the attention of both North and South toward an external enemy" and "unite the country in a burst of patriotic fervor."¹⁶⁸ As the Civil War developed it became clear to Seward that a foreign conflict would not be enough to bring the states back together. By 1862, Immerman argues, Seward "opposed proposals that the United States deploy its forces to Mexico" because he realised that the Confederates would likely welcome a European attack on the Union.¹⁶⁹ Other historians note that Lincoln played a role in bringing about Seward's apparent transformation. According to Dean Mahin, Seward's "Thoughts" memo was partly based on the secretary's "lack of confidence" in Lincoln's abilities as chief executive and his belief that he, Seward, was better suited to steer the United States through its crisis.¹⁷⁰ Van Deusen also argues that Lincoln was obliged to bring Seward under control, and adds that over time an effective relationship developed between the two based on Seward's "acceptance of Lincoln's authority and responsibility in all spheres."¹⁷¹ Both Van Deusen and Mahin conclude that when France invaded Mexico in 1862, Seward sought Lincoln's opinion and refrained from a rash response before deciding on a course of action.

There are elements of truth in these arguments. Initially Seward, like many of his contemporaries, did underestimate the seriousness of the Southern rebellion. Indeed, he frequently made references to the fleeting and transitory nature of the rebels' "passions."¹⁷² Seward also doubted Lincoln's abilities as commander-in-chief during the early months of the administration. Certain historians have noted, however, that the argument that these were the principal factors influencing Seward's diplomacy in 1861 overlooks the fact that the secretary's pre-Civil War outlook was based on a "strong aversion to war and a disposition to discuss, conciliate, and negotiate, rather than to

¹⁶⁷ Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*, 117.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 120.

¹⁷⁰ Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 7.

¹⁷¹ Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward*, 283-84; Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 9.

¹⁷² Seward to William L. Dayton, 20 June 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0421&q1=empire%20on%20the%20foundation%20of%20human%20slavery> (accessed 16 October 2012).

bluster, boast, confront, and combat.”¹⁷³ Sexton views Seward’s “Thoughts” memo as part of a diplomatic strategy which was designed to compel the European powers to exercise caution in their dealings with the United States.¹⁷⁴ Seward allegedly sought to cultivate an image of himself as an aggressive, sabre-rattling, and unpredictable secretary who was liable to retaliate at any perceived slight by a foreign nation. Sexton adds that Seward was keenly aware of the necessity of avoiding war with any foreign nation while the Civil War continued. Therefore, he argues, while Seward had judged it possible to employ this somewhat risky diplomatic strategy in 1861, when the Allies’ military forces landed in Mexico in 1862 he erred on the side of caution and adopted a decidedly conciliatory approach in his dealings with the European powers.

Sexton’s interpretation comes closest to accurately accounting for Seward’s seemingly contradictory actions with regard to relations with the European powers in 1861 and 1862. His attempt to understand Seward’s diplomacy by looking to the secretary’s antebellum principles, however, is incomplete because it does not include an analysis of whether Seward’s neutrality towards the conflict between Mexico and France was also influenced by his pre-Civil War outlook. This chapter argues that Seward underwent no transformation over the course of the Civil War. He was a shrewd politician and keenly aware of the importance of perception and image in diplomacy. The impression which he created of himself as a potentially volatile element within the Lincoln administration was a useful strategy he briefly employed in 1861. His goal in cultivating this image, however, was to avert, not cause, war. Throughout his pre-Civil War career Seward had proven himself to be vehemently anti-war except in cases of self-defence. This extended to refusing to intervene in foreign conflicts, even to protect fellow republics. Indeed, as a senator in the 1850s Seward had insisted that non-intervention should be a guiding principle in the United States’ method for territorial expansion. His response to the French invasion of Mexico was, therefore, consistent with the method for national expansion which he had been advocating throughout his political career.

By 8 January 1862 all three of the Allied powers had landed a portion of their military forces at Veracruz, Mexico. In February representatives of the Allies entered into negotiations with Mexican minister of foreign affairs Manuel Doblado. Talks

¹⁷³ Norman B. Ferris and Richard N. Current, “Lincoln and Seward in Civil War Diplomacy: Their Relationship at the Outset Reexamined,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 12 (1991), 37.

¹⁷⁴ Sexton, *Monroe Doctrine*, 139-41.

concluded on 19 February with the signing of the Soledad Convention. The Convention authorised the Allied troops to move from Veracruz, an area prone to outbreaks of yellow fever, to Cordova, Orizaba, and Tehuacan. It also contained a formal refusal by the Juárez government of the Europeans' offer to help put down elements of "intestine rebellion" supposedly present in Mexico.¹⁷⁵ Finally, the Convention agreed that further talks concerning the issue of debt and other Allied grievances would commence at Orizaba on 15 April.¹⁷⁶

In his 6 April 1861 letter to Corwin, Seward had expressed his concern that a European power might seek to take possession of or extend its influence in Mexico.¹⁷⁷ By early 1862 he had reason to believe that France and Spain in particular were harbouring such designs. Queen Isabella II ruled Spain in conjunction with the *Cortes*, the national democratic parliament, which at the time was headed by General Leopoldo O'Donnell's Liberal Union Party. Napoleon had been elected president of France in 1848. In 1851 he had staged a coup d'état which proclaimed that he would remain "in office for ten years and assigned him massive executive powers to command the armed forces, declare war ... and to make new laws."¹⁷⁸ In both countries domestic politics were volatile. Liberals and republicans were oppressed, frustrated, and eager for governmental reform.¹⁷⁹ In both Paris and Madrid the U.S. republic was viewed as a dangerous inspiration to those seeking structural change in the political system.

Both governments, moreover, felt that their interests in the Western Hemisphere were threatened by the growing power and size of the United States. By the 1860s Spain retained control over only two colonies – Puerto Rico and Cuba – from its formerly large American empire. In recent decades Madrid's policy in the Western Hemisphere had been geared towards maintaining its control over these possessions and extending its influence over new regions at opportune times. This had frequently brought Spain into conflict with the United States. In the 1850s proposals by U.S. politicians for the annexation of Cuba greatly angered Madrid. Conversely, Spain's efforts throughout the

¹⁷⁵ "From Mexico: The Convention of La Soledad Ratified by Juárez's Government," *The New York Times*, 18 March 1862, <http://www.nytimes.com/1862/03/18/news/mexico-convention-la-soledad-ratified-juarez-s-government-movements-allied.html?pagewanted=2> (accessed 12 July 2011).

¹⁷⁶ Corwin to Seward, 22 February 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0799&q1=corwin> (accessed 16 October 2012).

¹⁷⁷ Seward to Corwin, 6 April 1861, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=article&id=FRUS.FRUS1861v01.i0007&id=FRUS.FRUS1861v01&isize=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

¹⁷⁸ James F. McMillan, *Napoleon III* (London: Longman, 1991), 49.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 53-72

1840s and 50s to increase its influence in Santo Domingo offended Washington. By the time Seward became secretary, a “tradition of conflict” had been firmly established in U.S.-Spanish relations.¹⁸⁰

Napoleon followed an adventurist, expansionist foreign policy which he believed would help ease political tensions at home. He often pursued the “aggrandisement of France under cover of promoting a limited degree of nationalism” in the countries which he sought to possess.¹⁸¹ In 1858, for example, Napoleon negotiated a treaty with Italian minister Camillo Benso stipulating that France would help the Italians overthrow their Austrian rulers in return for Savoy and possibly Nice. Napoleon, moreover, was an opportunist, and as he witnessed the United States descend into civil war he began to develop plans for the reconstruction of a French American empire. In 1860 he appointed Dubois de Saligny, a firm supporter of French re-colonisation of the Western Hemisphere, minister plenipotentiary to Mexico.¹⁸²

The third Allied nation, Great Britain, caused less concern to the Lincoln administration. Aside from Canada, Britain had been reducing its commitments in the Western Hemisphere in recent decades. In 1846 Britain had conceded Oregon Territory to the United States. In 1850 the United States and Britain signed the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty in which they agreed to joint control of the canal which was to be built across the Isthmus of Panama, and to refrain from further efforts to take possession of any part of Central America. These actions were the result of the opinion gaining ground in London that possessions in the Western Hemisphere were burdensome and unprofitable. The Palmerston government was turning its attention to other areas, such as East Asia, which held new possibilities for commercial gain.¹⁸³

The European powers also had a history of interference in Mexico. The country’s economic fragility, political instability, abundant natural resources, and advantageous geo-political position made it an attractive site for European schemes of re-colonisation. In times of national crisis, Mexico had even applied to the governments of Europe for assistance. While negotiating the sale of the area south of the Gila River

¹⁸⁰ James W. Cortada, “Spain and the American Civil War: Relations at Mid-Century, 1855-1868,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 70, no. 4 (July 1980), 5.

¹⁸¹ McMillan, *Napoleon III*, 84.

¹⁸² Nancy N. Barker, “Monarchy in Mexico: Harebrained Scheme or Well-Considered Prospect?,” *Journal of Modern History* 48, no. 1 (March 1976), 55.

¹⁸³ Kenneth Bourne, “The Clayton-Bulwer Treaty and the Decline of British Opposition to the Territorial Expansion of the United States, 1857-60,” *Journal of Modern History* 33, no. 3 (September 1961), 287-91; John Lowe, *Britain and Foreign Affairs, 1815-1885: Europe and Overseas* (London: Routledge, 1998), 40-65.

to the United States in 1853, for instance, Mexican president Santa Anna had appealed to France and Britain to intervene militarily and save Mexico from the rapacity of the United States. Two factors prevented the intervention from occurring. Firstly, the United States could be expected to offer “active resistance” to European interference in the affair.¹⁸⁴ Secondly, the outbreak of the Crimean War in late 1853 “absorbed the energies of England and France” and diverted their attention from Mexico.¹⁸⁵

In 1862 circumstances were more congenial for interference in Mexico. Europe was in a state of relative peace whereas the United States was in the throes of civil war. Furthermore, since the election of Juárez in 1861 growing numbers of Mexican Conservatives had been attempting to persuade the governments of Europe to help them overthrow the Juárez administration. Juan Nepomuceno Almonte was one such notable Conservative. Almonte was a prominent Mexican politician and had served in a range of posts, including secretary of war and minister to the United States, under various governments. In 1856 Mexican president Ignacio Comonfort appointed Almonte minister to Britain, France, and Spain. When the War of Reform began, Almonte used his position to garner European ruling class support for the Conservatives, negotiate foreign loans to aid the Conservative war effort, and devise schemes for European intervention in the war. Almonte and many other Conservatives hoped that European intervention would lead to the overthrow of the Juárez government, the banishment of the Liberals, and the establishment of a centralised government in Mexico. While they conceded that such a government might necessarily be headed by a European monarch, they anticipated that it would otherwise be staffed with Conservatives.

Corwin’s analysis of the Allies’ monetary claims on Mexico confirmed Seward’s suspicion that France and Spain were intending to use Juárez’s suspension of payments as a pretext for interference in Mexico. Britain, Corwin believed, posed the least threat to Mexico. “The money demands of England,” he wrote to Seward in early 1862, “are in the main, if not altogether, just.”¹⁸⁶ Corwin described Spain’s monetary demands as “an outrageous fraud” because they were based on a loan negotiated with Almonte to aid anti-Juarist forces during the War of Reform.¹⁸⁷ The legitimate claims of the French, Corwin continued, were small, and as such the large amounts Paris

¹⁸⁴ Barker, “Monarchy in Mexico,” 59.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Corwin to Seward, 20 March 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0800&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&size=M&q1=corwin> (accessed 16 October 2012).

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

demanded from Juárez were “so enormously unjust as to be totally inadmissible as to the amounts claimed.”¹⁸⁸

Seward was not alone in his concerns. Romero in Washington D.C. and Corwin in Mexico City were both convinced that a European attack on Mexico was imminent. By January 1862 the November 1861 draft of Corwin’s treaty was being considered by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Romero used his contact with the Committee’s chairman, Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, to track its progress. Sumner, a radical anti-slavery Republican, was sympathetic to the Mexican republic. He also disliked Seward and was eager to “undermine respect for the secretary of state at home and abroad.”¹⁸⁹ Sumner’s enmity towards Seward was rooted in their pre-war ideological differences, particularly over the issue of slavery. During the 1850s, furthermore, Sumner and Seward had been rivals “for leadership within the Republican Party” and Sumner was convinced that, due to his own foreign policy credentials, he would be the next choice for secretary of state if Seward were to lose his post.¹⁹⁰ Perceiving that Romero sought to advance a Mexican policy which countered Seward’s, Sumner was willing to offer the chargé his assistance.

Sumner informed Romero that the Committee was hesitant to approve Corwin’s treaty. At the time, the *Trent* Affair had not yet been resolved and tensions were running high between the United States and Great Britain.¹⁹¹ Senators were wary of angering the British further and were also hesitant to do anything which might incur the disapproval of France and Spain. Romero suggested to Sumner that the Senate delay its consideration of the loan. He hoped that once the *Trent* Affair had blown over, Northern politicians would be more willing to offer aid to the Mexicans. On 28 January Romero made an additional suggestion. He had long been sceptical that a financial loan to Mexico would be enough to prevent an Allied invasion. He therefore put the idea to Sumner that if the Corwin treaty were approved by Congress, the United States should also “offer to mediate the present difficulties between the European powers and Mexico” to bring about a peaceful end to the expedition.¹⁹² Sumner liked the proposal and together they drafted a resolution which contained “(1) an offer of mediation; (2) payment by the United States of the *immediate* claims of the allies against Mexico,

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 11.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 58-82.

¹⁹² Romero to SRE, memorandum, 28 January 1862, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 16.

which also will be done immediately; (3) payment for five years of the interest on Mexico's foreign debt; (4) payment of the foreign conventions, consolidating them into a fund that will be paid off within a period of five or ten years; (5) no arrangement except in concert with and to the satisfaction of the allies."¹⁹³

Seward was aware that Senate approval of Corwin's treaty would contradict the position he wished to maintain towards the Allied expedition. In early February the secretary got wind of Sumner and Romero's plan to suggest the United States mediate the affair. When the proposal was discussed in a cabinet meeting, Seward suggested that his old friend General Winfield Scott be appointed to head any mediation commission sent to Mexico.¹⁹⁴ Seward's suggestion leaked and was soon being widely discussed by Union politicians. The notion of appointing "an aging and infirm general" with the delicate task of mediation and negotiation was absurd enough.¹⁹⁵ That this general had overseen the U.S. capture of Mexico City in 1847, moreover, would offend Mexico and raise serious doubts in the minds of the Allies as to whether the United States intended to interfere in Mexico itself.¹⁹⁶

Romero and Sumner's resolution was submitted to the Senate on 18 February and Seward's scheme soon had its desired effect. The association of Scott with the Corwin treaty raised "enough questions" to cause the Senate to reject the idea of offering assistance to Mexico altogether.¹⁹⁷ On 25 February the Senate voted 28 to 8 for a substitute resolution introduced by Senator John Sherman of Ohio which stated that "it is not advisable to negotiate a treaty that will require the United States to assume any portion of the principal or interest of the debt of Mexico, or that will require the concurrence of the European powers."¹⁹⁸ Three days later Seward sent Corwin a copy of Sherman's resolution along with instructions to act accordingly in his relations with the Juárez government. What Seward would not discover until many weeks later was that his directions to Corwin had not reached their destination soon enough. The minister had already signed a treaty with the Juárez government, soon to be sent back to the United States for ratification, which provided for a direct loan to Mexico.

Believing that he had successfully eliminated congressional support for a loan to Mexico, Seward turned his attention to reports from his ministers in Europe that France

¹⁹³ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 9 February 1862, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 19-20.

¹⁹⁴ Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 117

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 117-8.

and Spain were progressing in their plans to interfere in Mexico. Horatio Perry, former U.S. secretary of legation in Spain, had replaced Carl Schurz as minister to Spain in December 1861 after the latter requested a role as general in the Union Army. In March Perry reported that Paris and Madrid were discussing potential monarchs to replace Juárez. “We have heard the name of the Count of Flanders (younger brother of Brabant) mentioned frequently of late in connexion with the projected throne in Mexico,” Perry wrote.¹⁹⁹ The count, it was rumoured, was expected to marry the eldest daughter of Montpensier, a Spanish infante.²⁰⁰ Meanwhile, Perry continued, “the candidacy of the Archduke Maximilian of Austria for the projected throne in Mexico” had been put forward by the French.²⁰¹ The Austrians resented Napoleon for having sent French armies into northern Italy in 1859 and driving them out of Lombardy.²⁰² Napoleon was anxious to put an Austrian noble on the throne of Mexico as a means of having the Austrians back on side “in the delicate but deadly game of diplomacy and war among the Continental powers.”²⁰³

Perry’s communications to Seward also revealed that tensions were emerging between the Allies. Madrid, he explained, had expected “to take the direction of the land operations in Mexico.”²⁰⁴ Spanish troops were the first to arrive in Mexico in 1861, having been called in from Cuba. Madrid had also expected that any monarch established in Mexico would be Spanish. Mexico was, after all, a formerly colony of theirs. Napoleon’s decision in early 1862 to send additional troops to Mexico had therefore “produced surprise and chagrin” in Madrid.²⁰⁵ French preparations to bring in the Austrian archduke Ferdinand Maximilian for the Mexican throne constituted “another blow upon Spanish hopes.”²⁰⁶ Tension was also growing between Spanish and French military officials in Mexico as they vied for control over the expedition. As a

¹⁹⁹ Horatio Perry to Seward, 15 March 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0554&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&size=M&q1=Count%20of%20Flanders> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 96

²⁰³ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 683.

²⁰⁴ Perry to Seward, 15 March 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0553&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&size=M&q1=Count%20of%20Flanders> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

result the Spanish, Perry reported, were moving towards a “close and intimate” understanding with the British.²⁰⁷

On 8 April, before negotiations had begun at Orizaba, the Allies disagreed over “the proper construction of a clause in the treaty of London, and agreed that each party should act without reference to that treaty.”²⁰⁸ Britain and Spain announced their withdrawal from Mexico, and by 24 April only French forces remained. Perry perceived Spanish resentment of Napoleon’s assumption of control over the expedition, as well as his insistence that Maximilian take the Mexican throne, as the principal reasons behind Madrid’s decision to abandon the expedition. British and Spanish representatives remained to negotiate further with the Juárez government. Napoleon, meanwhile, claimed that he could not trust Juárez to honour any agreement made between their two countries. Instead, French officials made contact with anti-Juárez Conservative elements in Mexico.²⁰⁹

Dispatches to Seward sent by his ministers abroad gave information regarding both Allied plans to install a European monarch in Mexico, and how they justified the scheme. Paris and Madrid, Seward learned, were constructing an image of the United States devised to undermine its credibility as a “beacon of liberty.” French and Spanish politicians, particularly conservatives, insisted that recent acts of aggressive acquisition by the United States necessitated outside intervention in Mexico. During the past three decades the United States had absorbed Texas, acquired Oregon Territory from Britain, forcibly taken roughly half of Mexico, and attempted to annex Cuba. In March 1862 Spanish foreign minister Fernando Calderon Collantes informed Perry that the overwhelming opinion in Europe was that the United States was “overbearing and aggressive, displaying little courtesy towards other nations, and little consideration for their rights.”²¹⁰ The expedition had been necessary to prevent “the establishment of a protectorate by the United States over Mexico.”²¹¹ The Allies were able to cast their

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Corwin to Seward, 28 April 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0809&q1=proper%20construction%20of%20a%20clause%20in%20the%20treaty%20of%20London> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Perry to Seward, 30 March 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0559&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&size=M&q1=overbearing%20and%20aggressive> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²¹¹ Perry to Seward, 15 March 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0555&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&size=M&q1=overbearing%20and%20aggressive> (accessed 16 October 2012).

venture in an altruistic light, claiming their motivation was to save Mexico from the United States' territorial ambitions.

William L. Dayton's report of a debate which took place in the French parliamentary body, the *Corps Legislatif*, revealed another way in which European conservatives used recent U.S. expansionism to justify their expedition. Adolphe Billault, a conservative legislator whom Dayton described as the mouth-piece of the emperor, argued that the United States had set a precedent for intervention in Mexico. In 1846, Billault noted, the United States had also had grievances against the Mexican government.²¹² The United States had invaded Mexico, addressed its complaints, and claimed compensation from the Mexican government, after which "the American army was able to leave."²¹³ Since that time "governmental organization" in Mexico had "disappeared" and the country was now even more incapable of honouring its international obligations and agreements.²¹⁴ Billault insisted that France had just as much right to land its armies in Mexico as the United States had in 1846.

This image of the United States as an aggressive nation was also applied to the Civil War. In May 1861 Dayton sent Seward an extract from a conservative French newspaper, *Le Constitutionnel*, which read, "The north is fighting for supremacy; the south is fighting for independence."²¹⁵ Perry explained that the governing classes of Europe were "deeply imbued with the ... notion of an aristocratical and chivalrous society in the south of the United States, armed to resist the aggressions of an underbred *sans culotte* democracy at the north."²¹⁶ "They were still full of the resentments," he continued, "produced by our filibustering exploits of former years, which were for them connected only with the name of the United States. The Confederate States was a new name, as yet unsullied," and therefore "could not but be the friends of Spain."²¹⁷ Perry added that the Lincoln administration's refusal to state emancipation as a Union war aim gave weight to this interpretation of the Civil War, as it denied him the ability to

²¹² Dayton to Seward, 28 June 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0432&q1=that%20unfortunate%20country> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Dayton to Seward, 26 May 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0414&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&isize=M&q1=that%20unfortunate%20country> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²¹⁶ Perry to Seward, 21 September 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0585&q1=armed%20to%20resist%20the%20aggressions> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²¹⁷ Ibid.

argue that the Confederacy was fighting for slavery, rather than democracy and freedom.²¹⁸

French and Spanish policy-makers also argued that republicanism had failed in Mexico. A belief had long been harboured amongst the governing classes of Europe that the Mexicans were incapable of self-government. As Nancy Barker notes, the Europeans had accounted for the difficulties which Mexico had experienced since gaining independence by pointing to the Mexicans' "ineptitude and weakness" and the "deplorable absence of any sense of national identity or patriotism" within their country.²¹⁹ Paris and Madrid also argued that, as with the Union's use of force against the Confederacy, Juárez had betrayed his republican principles by employing tactics of repression against his own citizens. On 18 December 1861 the Juárez administration had passed a law providing for the imprisonment of "disloyal" citizens in order to prevent Mexican Conservative leaders from conspiring with French officials. Billault seized upon the law as an example of the "reckless tyranny" of the Juárez administration and characterised the legislation as a "violent" measure designed to stifle "within the country any opinions hostile" to Juárez's interests.²²⁰ Billault went on to explain that the Allies were "importing into Mexico" much needed "ideas of civilization and public rights."²²¹ The Mexican republic was in a state of anarchy, and the Europeans saw "monarchy as a cure" to this problem.²²²

Using the diplomatic means at his disposal, Seward aimed to counter the European conservatives' interpretation of the state of republicanism in North America. Firstly, he constructed an alternative narrative of recent U.S. history in order to place the blame of previous acts of expansion on the shoulders of the Southern slaveholders. Under Seward's instructions, Perry explained to Collantes that in recent decades U.S. foreign policy had been "overshadowed, overlaid by the will" of the "overbearing and

²¹⁸ Ibid. Slow means of communication between the United States and Europe meant that at the time of writing this letter, Perry was unaware that Lincoln had decided to include emancipation as a Union war aim and that the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation would be announced the next day.

²¹⁹ Barker, "Monarchy in Mexico," 53.

²²⁰ Dayton to Seward, 28 June 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSIdx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0435&q1=reckless%20tyranny> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Barker, "Monarchy in Mexico," 53.

aggressive” Southerners.²²³ They had pushed for national expansion in order to provide for the “perpetuation of African slavery in North America.”²²⁴

Seward then insisted that it was this same minority of power-hungry slaveholders who had manipulated the Southern states into seceding. “This is a struggle of factious leaders in the south,” Seward wrote to Dayton in June 1862, “to build up a political empire on the foundation of human slavery.”²²⁵ The Civil War, Seward argued, was not rooted in Southern dissatisfaction with supposed Northern domination of the federal government. Nor did it signal the deterioration of republican government in the United States. Rather, it was the result of the “popular passions” of a faction of slaveholders who, “in an unhappy moment” distracted and consumed by greed, had sought to expand their immoral institution.²²⁶ These passions, Seward continued, were “subsiding” and soon the Civil War “will be remembered only as a calamity to be deplored, and a crime never again to be repeated.”²²⁷

Having established that the Union did not harbour schemes of territorial conquest, Seward was able to impress upon the Allies that a new era in U.S. foreign policy had begun. “The American people,” Perry told Collantes on Seward’s instructions, “desired peace and the peaceful development of their industry and commerce without attacking the rights or prejudicing the interests of any other people.”²²⁸ Henceforth, Seward insisted, the United States would focus on developing cooperative commercial relations with the nations of the Western Hemisphere. He reasoned that the European powers should no longer see the United States as a threat to their interests in the region or elsewhere in the world. Instead, the United States and the powers of Europe should forge relations based on mutual respect and commercial cooperation, together coordinating the development of areas of shared economic interest around the world.

²²³ Perry to Seward, 30 March 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0559&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&isize=M&q1=overbearing%20and%20aggressive> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²²⁴ Perry to Seward, 15 April 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0563&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&isize=M> (accessed 12 July 2011).

²²⁵ Seward to Dayton, 20 June 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0421&q1=empire%20on%20the%20foundation%20of%20human%20slavery> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Perry to Seward, 30 March 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0559&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&isize=M&q1=overbearing%20and%20aggressive> (accessed 16 October 2012).

Following the split between the Allies in April 1862, the French embarked on an independent venture in Mexico and their plans to overthrow the Juárez government were revealed to the international community. The first major conflict, the Battle of Puebla, took place on 5 May and resulted in a victory for the Juarist forces under General Ignacio Zaragoza. The tide of the war quickly turned, however, and with the addition of several thousand troops the French were able to make gains throughout the rest of 1862, taking Orizaba in June and Tampico in October. The summer of 1862 also saw the Confederacy “counterpunch” against recent Union gains in the Civil War.²²⁹ From 25 June to 1 July Confederate general Lee drove Union general George B. McClellan’s forces back from Richmond in the Seven Days Battle. In August Confederate general Braxton Bragg was able to recapture part of Tennessee and invade Kentucky while Lee led his troops to victory at Second Manassas before moving northward towards Maryland.

Reports started to feed back to the State Department that Madrid was beginning to reconsider its decision to pull out of Mexico. As Perry noted to Seward in August 1862, “The vacillation of the O’Donnell government has been great” over the Mexican question.²³⁰ Although there had been disagreements between the French and Spanish over the conduct of the venture, Perry informed Seward, Madrid was beginning “to entertain some apprehensions” about its withdrawal from Mexico.²³¹ The O’Donnell government believed that, in the light of recent French and Confederate victories, it might be in its interests to re-enter Mexico in order to ensure the extension of Spanish influence in Latin America.²³²

One of the contributing factors to this change of opinion in Spain were rumours that the Lincoln administration had agreed to give a loan to the Juárez government in return for liens on Mexican land. The treaty for a direct loan which Corwin had negotiated with the Mexican government in February had been sent back to the United States and in May Lincoln had submitted it to Congress. Collantes warned Perry that the ratification of the treaty could provide the basis for a new diplomatic arrangement

²²⁹ James M. McPherson, “No Peace without Victory, 1861-1865,” *American Historical Review* 109, no. 1 (February 2004), 2.

²³⁰ Perry to Seward, 1 August 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0580&q1=vacillation%20of%20the> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

between the European powers in regard to Mexico.²³³ Seward responded quickly, using the loan as an opportunity to prove the validity of his claim that the United States had abandoned its territorial expansionist agenda. He ordered Perry to inform Collantes that Corwin had negotiated the loan “in the absence of any instructions, and that it may perhaps be thought by the Senate to conflict with the policy that it has heretofore indicated.”²³⁴ In subsequent letters, Seward impressed upon Perry the importance of convincing Madrid that the United States “needs no more territory, and it will scrupulously respect the rights of other nations.”²³⁵ On 3 July the Senate decided not to approve the loan and, not wishing to offend the Juárez government, left the treaty permanently pending on the table.²³⁶

News of the Senate’s effective rejection of the Corwin loan had not reached Madrid soon enough. On 1 August Perry informed Seward that Spanish General Jose de la Concha, former general captain of Cuba, had been appointed ambassador to Paris.²³⁷ De la Concha was an ardent advocate of increasing Spanish possessions in the Western Hemisphere. Accordingly, the appointment was seen in Washington as a sign of the possible renewal of the Franco-Spanish alliance in Mexico. Dayton confirmed these fears, informing Seward that in Paris the move was viewed as an indication that the Spanish were “willing again to co-operate with France in Mexico.”²³⁸

Seward now sought to prevent a renewal of this alliance. Having established that the United States no longer had an expansionist agenda, Seward began to insist that the United States was Spain’s best ally with regards to affairs in the Western Hemisphere. “The visible policy of the Emperor,” Perry informed Collantes, “was to increase the

²³³ Perry to Seward, 30 May 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0574&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&isize=M&q1=basis%20for%20a%20new%20diplomatic%20arrangement> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²³⁴ Seward to Perry, 24 June 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0542&q1=absence%20of%20any%20instructions> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²³⁵ Seward to Perry, 5 August 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0543&q1=scrupulously%20respect%20the%20rights> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²³⁶ Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 120.

²³⁷ Perry to Seward, 1 August 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0580&q1=vacillation%20of%20the> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²³⁸ Dayton to Seward, 8 August 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0455&q1=concha> (accessed 16 October 2012).

maritime power of France.”²³⁹ “The geographical and strategical position of the Spanish colonies in the West Indies,” he continued, “with their magnificent harbors on the road between France and Mexico, ought to make the government of her Catholic Majesty careful as to the consequences of the present French intervention in the interior affairs of that country.”²⁴⁰ Perry went on to impress upon the Spanish that the leaders of the Confederacy “were holding up to the population of the South the plan of immediately annexing Cuba, San Domingo, and Mexico.”²⁴¹

Perry was then able to argue that Spain and the United States had a “similarity of interest” in regard to both Mexico and the Western Hemisphere.²⁴² The minister even suggested that the two countries would benefit from taking “a common line of action in America” against the expansionist ambitions of France and the South.²⁴³ By September Seward had reason to believe his efforts had been successful. Perry informed him that “Calderon was persuaded that my representations of a change in the tendencies of the government of the United States, since our southern statesmen had ceased to be dominant at Washington, were just.”²⁴⁴ Seward’s careful diplomacy had helped to ensure that Madrid did not enter into a new alliance with Napoleon. The secretary had, moreover, made significant progress in altering Spanish perceptions of the United States and laying the groundwork for new, more cooperative relations between the two countries in the future.

With the threat of Spanish re-entry into Mexico receding, Seward focussed on relations with France. When war broke out between France and the Juarists, French foreign minister Edouard Thouvenel explained to Dayton that his government did not

²³⁹ Perry to Seward, 30 May 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0576&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&size=M&q1=basis%20of%20a%20new%20diplomatic%20arrangement> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Perry to Seward, 21 September 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0585&q1=armed%20to%20resist%20the%20aggressions> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁴² Perry to Seward, 25 May 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0569&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&size=M&q1=French%20intervention%20in%20the%20interior%20affairs%20of%20that%20country> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Perry to Seward, 18 September 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0564&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&size=M&q1=tendencies%20of%20the%20government%20of%20the%20united%20states> (accessed 12 July 2011).

intend to “interfere with the form of government” in Mexico.²⁴⁵ Nor did it wish to “acquire an inch of territory, nor remain indefinitely in the country.”²⁴⁶ Napoleon’s only objectives were to see that France’s grievances were settled and that some form of government was established in Mexico “which other countries could treat with.”²⁴⁷ Napoleon himself insisted that “it is contrary to my interest, my origin, and my principles to impose any kind of government whatever on the Mexican people; they may freely choose that which suits them best.”²⁴⁸ The emperor openly admitted, therefore, that his goal was to overthrow the Juárez administration. He insisted, however, that the Mexican people would choose what government would replace it.

Officially, Seward took Napoleon at his word. “France has a right to make war against Mexico,” he directed Dayton to relay to Thouvenel, “and to determine for herself the cause.”²⁴⁹ He insisted that as the French invasion of Mexico was not for the purposes of imperial conquest and had a legitimate basis in French monetary grievances against the Juárez administration, the United States had no right to object or intervene. Seward qualified his comments, however, by stating that “we do not desire to suppress the fact that our sympathies are with Mexico” and that the United States “do not disapprove” of the Juárez administration.²⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Seward vowed that his country would remain neutral towards the conflict.

The Confederates, however, were willing to take sides. By late 1862 they had “realized that any chance of British diplomatic recognition had evaporated.”²⁵¹ This was largely due to the work of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. On 22 September, after Union forces had successfully repelled the Confederates from Maryland at the battle of Antietam, Lincoln issued a declaration to the Southern states warning them that unless they re-joined the Union by 1 January 1863, their slaves would be freed.²⁵² Seward immediately used the proclamation to his diplomatic

²⁴⁵ Dayton to Seward, 5 June 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0418&q1=with%20the%20for%20of%20government> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Dayton to Seward, 23 October 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0471&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&size=M&q1=freely%20choose%20that%20which%20suits%20them%20best> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁴⁹ Seward to Dayton, 21 June 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0424&q1=France%20has%20a%20right%20to%20make%20war%20against> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 209.

²⁵² McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 557-8.

advantage. “Are the enlightened and humane nations Great Britain and France,” he asked Dayton, “to enter, directly or indirectly, into this conflict” which has “become a war between freedom and human bondage?”²⁵³

The Confederates anticipated that this argument would resonate with the British and in turn decided to redouble their diplomatic efforts on France. In September Confederate envoy John Mason was withdrawn from London and British consuls were expelled from the South.²⁵⁴ Mason was moved to Paris, where Napoleon’s government still had incentives for recognising the Confederacy. Britain was able to compensate partially for the loss of Southern cotton by turning to Egypt. France, however, had no such alternative source. As a result France’s textile industry was grinding to a halt and domestic unrest in the country was growing.²⁵⁵ By striking up an alliance with the Confederacy, Napoleon might be able to gain access to Southern cotton through trade across Mexico’s northern border. By helping the South claim its independence, moreover, Napoleon could establish a bulwark between Mexico and the Union and thereby reduce the threat of Northern interference in his war against the Juarists. Seward understood that if he showed any partiality towards the Juarists, Napoleon would immediately ally himself with the South.

Most Union politicians believed that the United States ought to distance itself from the conflict in Mexico. By early 1863 even Sumner was entreating his fellow senators “not to present anything or say anything” in Congress regarding Mexico “that would be offensive to France.”²⁵⁶ Sumner’s resentment towards Seward had not lessened. Indeed, he had recently been part of an effort to remove the secretary from the cabinet. Seward was known to be influential with Lincoln and to “oppose the extreme views of the Radical Republicans.”²⁵⁷ In December 1862 a group of Radical Republican senators including Sumner met with Lincoln and asked for Seward’s removal from the administration. In response, Seward submitted his resignation, as did Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, who supported the Radicals. Lincoln adroitly solved the cabinet crisis by refusing both resignations, thereby “demonstrating that both radical

²⁵³ Seward to Dayton, 20 October 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0468&q1=freedom%20and%20human%20bondage> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁵⁴ Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 210.

²⁵⁵ Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*, 119.

²⁵⁶ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 18 January 1863, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 28-9.

²⁵⁷ Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 11.

and conservative viewpoints would continue to be heard” in his administration.²⁵⁸ The incident also revealed the “effective relationship” which had developed between Lincoln and his secretary since the early months of the administration.²⁵⁹

Sumner’s changing opinion regarding Mexico was reflective of the mood across the Union that neutrality towards the French invasion was a necessary evil. The war against the South was turning into a long slog and Northern politicians, including Sumner, placed greater importance on ensuring the Union was able to fight unmolested by foreign interference than they did on undermining Seward or saving the Mexican republic. This left Romero in a difficult position, and his efforts to generate support amongst Union politicians for U.S. assistance to the Mexican republic yielded few results. In early 1863, however, he made contact with one politician who was deeply concerned about the conflict in Mexico. Senator James McDougall of California had during his time in the Californian state senate in the 1850s been a strong advocate of western development and the building of the transcontinental railroad.²⁶⁰ He was a Democrat who had no sympathy for the anti-slavery cause. During the secession crisis, however, he had declared the Union inviolate and journeyed to Washington to replace then-California senator and secessionist William Gwin.²⁶¹

McDougall had written a resolution to submit to the Senate, and on 18 January 1863 he met with Romero to discuss its contents. The resolution accused Napoleon of violating “the established and known rules of international law” by attempting to “subject the republic of Mexico to her authority by armed force.”²⁶² McDougall rejected the argument that the French had a legitimate reason for taking military action against the Juárez government and insisted that the invasion was driven purely by Napoleon’s imperial ambitions. The resolution went on to proclaim that the United States should “lend such aid to the republic of Mexico as is or may be required, to prevent the forcible interposition of any of the states of Europe in the political affairs of that republic.”²⁶³ Knowing the mood amongst Northern congressmen regarding Mexico, Romero intimated through dispatches to his government that he had not “the remotest hope that

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 9.

²⁶⁰ James Farr, “Not Exactly a Hero: James Alexander McDougall in the United States Senate,” *California History* 65, no. 2 (June 1986), 106-9.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² *Cong. Globe*, 37th Cong. 3rd Sess., (19 January 1863), 120, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?hlaw:5::/temp/~ammem_eZ1z:: (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁶³ Ibid.

McDougall's resolutions will be approved by the Senate."²⁶⁴ Nonetheless, he hoped that "the mere fact of their presentation and the subsequent discussion ... will produce results favourable" to the Mexican republic.²⁶⁵ The chargé gave the resolution his full approval and on 19 January McDougall submitted it to the Senate.

On 3 February McDougall gave a speech to the Senate in support of his resolution. He began by stating that, once the conquest of Mexico was accomplished, Napoleon "will then directly seek the possession and control of the territories south and west of the Mississippi river."²⁶⁶ "It will not be long," McDougall warned, "before the front of an undisguised enemy will be exhibited to this Republic, and simultaneous with that will be the attempt to seize upon all there is of our Republic on the shores of the Pacific."²⁶⁷ The invasion of Mexico, McDougall declared, was the first stage in Napoleon's plan to re-establish a French American empire which would encompass large parts of the United States. The acquisition of California, which offered access to Pacific commercial trading routes and the Far East, was undoubtedly one of Napoleon's chief objectives.

The Union, McDougall continued, was particularly vulnerable to the "false and fraudulent pretexts" which Napoleon typically employed when commencing an invasion.²⁶⁸ In Mexico, the emperor had encouraged elements of internal dissatisfaction within the nation and then pointed to this domestic discontent as proof that the Juárez government was incapable of controlling the country. McDougall alleged that the French had been employing this same strategy in California for over a decade. In 1850 France had sent a portion of the *Garde Mobile* to San Francisco under the "protection and patronage" of the French consul, thereby establishing a "military nucleus" in the United States.²⁶⁹ Napoleon had then attempted to use his "military and physical power in California" to cultivate and exacerbate unrest within the state.²⁷⁰ The disturbances which had occurred in San Francisco in 1856, McDougall argued, had been the work of French soldiers who "took up arms against the authorities" in an attempt to establish a "reign of terror" in the city.²⁷¹ "Their watchword," he insisted, "was revolution," and

²⁶⁴ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 18 January 1863, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 29.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ *Cong. Globe*, 37th Cong. 3rd Sess., (3 February 1863), 94, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llcg&fileName=063/llcg063.db&recNum=773> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 95,

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

their purpose had been to destabilise and weaken California to make it ripe for French conquest.²⁷²

McDougall argued that California in 1863 was even more unstable than it had been in 1856, and therefore more vulnerable to a French invasion. “The southern part of our state of California,” he warned, “is none too loyal.”²⁷³ Federal military presence in the state, moreover, was “scarcely sufficient for the purposes of our Indian frontier,” let alone warding off foreign invasion.²⁷⁴ The strength of pro-Southern sentiment in California was compounded, McDougall continued, “by some law, which I will not undertake to expound, our people hardly ever understand anything that is further West than they have been.”²⁷⁵ Californians felt a lack of affinity with the rest of the nation. McDougall’s concern was not only the secession of the Southern states, but future secessions and separations within the Union. “When anarchy shall have fully taken the place of the order that once pervaded throughout our States,” he warned, the French would be able to easily invade.²⁷⁶

U.S. military intervention in Mexico would pre-emptively strike at the French and improve the internal harmony and cohesiveness of the Union. “An expedition south,” McDougall insisted, “would unite firmly the people of all the loyal states, and renew that war spirit that seems to have faded before military management and congressional legislation.”²⁷⁷ Intervening in Mexico, moreover, could end the Civil War. As McDougall asked, “How would the truly democratic masses of the South care to band with the Emperor of the French against the United States? I am of the opinion that it would greatly impair, not aid, the home strength of the rebellion.”²⁷⁸ “This assault on free institutions by the French Emperor,” he continued, “will detach from the rebellion many true republicans, who from this, taking warning, will seek the old standard and with us once more join hand in hand in the maintenance of the cause of free institutions.”²⁷⁹ Northerners and Southerners, McDougall believed, needed to be reminded of their common republican loyalties and reclaim their shared national identity as leader and defender of self-governance, liberty, and democracy in the New World.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid. 99,

²⁷⁴ Ibid. 99,

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 100,

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

McDougall's resolutions failed to pass the Senate. Romero was not surprised, surmising that, as he had expected, senators were reluctant to do "anything that would be offensive to France."²⁸⁰ McDougall continued to submit resolutions to the Senate advocating U.S. military, material, or monetary aid to Mexico. He failed to gain much support for his cause. This was in part because McDougall's resolutions were extreme. In January 1864, for example, he proposed that the United States declare war on France if Napoleon did not agree to withdraw his troops from Mexico immediately.²⁸¹ McDougall's reputation in Washington, furthermore, was declining throughout 1863 and 1864. He had made many enemies amongst Radical Republicans in Congress, particularly Sumner, and was often accused of being a Southern sympathiser.²⁸² McDougall was also an alcoholic, and by 1864 his habit of appearing in the Senate inebriated resulted in his political reputation being widely discredited.²⁸³

Seward, meanwhile, believed his own policy of studied neutrality was the best means of preventing a French attack on the United States. By the summer of 1863 the Confederacy was making progress in its effort to gain French recognition. On 26 June Dayton reported to Seward that Napoleon had met with Confederate envoy John Slidell to discuss the idea of France and Britain offering to mediate the Civil War.²⁸⁴ The Confederates knew that the Lincoln administration would reject the offer. This would then pave the way for France to intervene in the war on the side of the Confederacy by claiming that the North was not interested in peace and only sought domination over the South. "We have interfered with the dominion or the ambitious designs of no nation," Seward replied to the French government, "we have seen San Domingo absorbed by Spain, and been content with a protest. We have seen Great Britain strengthen her government in Canada, and have approved it. We have seen France make war against Mexico, and have not allied ourselves with that republic."²⁸⁵ "Under these circumstances," he concluded, "if intervention in any form shall come, it will find us in

²⁸⁰ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 18 January 1863, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 29.

²⁸¹ *Cong. Globe*, 38th Cong. 1st Sess., (11 January 1864), 66, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?hlaw:16::/temp/~ammem_pnS4:: (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁸² Farr, "Not Exactly a Hero," 111-113.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ Dayton to Seward, 26 June 1863, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1863p2.p0068&id=FRUS.FRUS1863p2&isize=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁸⁵ Seward to Dayton, 10 July 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0442&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&isize=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

the right of the controversy and in the strong attitude of self-defense.”²⁸⁶ By not interfering in the conflict in Mexico, Seward was able to insist that Napoleon’s government remain neutral to the war in the United States.

Seward was also convinced that the Mexicans did not require U.S. assistance. Napoleon had based his invasion on the erroneous assumption that the Mexicans would welcome the overthrow of their republic. Seward assured Dayton in April that as “difficult as the exercise of self-government” had been for the Mexicans, “it is, nevertheless, quite certain that the attempt to maintain foreign authority there would encounter insurmountable embarrassment.”²⁸⁷ Previous decades of internal factionalism and disorder in Mexico were not, Seward insisted, the result of the inability or unwillingness of the Mexicans to establish a republic. They were part of the natural process most nations experienced when transitioning from a colony to a self-governing democracy. Indeed, during recent decades the Mexicans had been “steadily advancing” in this process and were now on the cusp of cementing the “permanent institutions” of their republic.²⁸⁸ They could not now be deterred from accomplishing their goal, and Napoleon could expect to encounter “most annoying and injurious hindrance and resistance” to his effort to force a monarchy on Mexico.²⁸⁹

Seward anticipated that other factors would also hinder Napoleon’s venture. French liberals, such as politician Jules Favre, strongly opposed the invasion. In 1862 Favre had vehemently condemned the emperor’s attempt to “overthrow the established government” of Mexico and “erect a monarchy in its place.”²⁹⁰ He opposed the “adventurous” expedition because it embroiled France in “a distant and expensive war” at a time when “strict economy” was a “bounden duty.”²⁹¹ Favre also questioned the wisdom of expanding France’s possessions overseas, warning that “after victory will come responsibility. The stable government that would be established would cause an expense of thirty millions to be inscribed in the Budget.”²⁹²

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Seward to Dayton, 24 April 1863, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1863p2&entity=FRUS.FRUS1863p2.p0055&q1=difficult%20as%20the%20exercise> (accessed 14 January 2013).

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Dayton to Seward, 28 June 1862, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1862v01.p0426&id=FRUS.FRUS1862v01&size=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

Seward hoped that liberal dissent in France would pressure Napoleon to terminate the expedition, and that his own policy of neutrality would strengthen the French liberals' arguments. "I cannot doubt," Seward wrote to Dayton in June 1863, "that the republicanism of France has derived some strength from violence done, by real or seeming imperial organs, to the cause of republicanism in America."²⁹³ By refraining from intervening in Mexico, Seward aimed to undermine French conservative arguments that the United States was an aggressive and dangerous neighbour to Mexico. In doing so, he hoped to assist the French liberals as they sought to counter the arguments put forward by Napoleon to justify the invasion and ultimately bring about an end to the venture.

Despite growing domestic opposition to the venture, Napoleon's invasion of Mexico was progressing. In July Seward received news that French authorities had established a provisional government in Mexico. Almonte and other prominent Mexican Conservatives been chosen to form a superior junta of "distinguished notables" to represent the Mexican people.²⁹⁴ The junta convened and declared that the Mexicans desired a limited hereditary monarchy as their form of government with a Catholic monarch on the throne. The position of emperor of the "Mexican Empire" was then offered to Archduke Maximilian.²⁹⁵

These events contradicted Napoleon's continual reassurances to the United States that he would never institute a government in Mexico without the peoples' consent. When Dayton made enquiries to the French government in October, he was informed that a "vote of the entire country, and of all its departments, whether the French were or were not in their possession, would be taken, and if upon its registries it should appear that a large majority of the whole population ... were favorable to a monarchical form of government ... that would be sufficient."²⁹⁶ Napoleon's government also noted to Dayton that the principal danger now facing the "Mexican Empire" came from the United States. The sooner the Lincoln administration showed

²⁹³ Seward to Dayton, 20 June 1863, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1863p2.p0068&id=FRUS.FRUS1863p2&size=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁹⁴ J. M. Arroyo to Seward, 20 July 1863, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1863p2&entity=FRUS.FRUS1863p2.p0097&q1=arroyo> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Dayton to Seward, 9 October 1863, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1863p2.p0111&id=FRUS.FRUS1863p2&size=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

itself “satisfied, and manifested a willingness to enter into peaceful relations with the government, the sooner would France be ready to leave Mexico and the new government to take care of itself.”²⁹⁷

Seward replied that his country would recognise no change of government in Mexico while the Juárez administration still stood. “The United States,” he insisted, “continue to regard Mexico as the theatre of a war which has not yet ended in the subversion of the government long existing there, with which the United States remain in the relation of peace and sincere friendship; and that, for this reason, the United States are not now at liberty to consider the question of recognizing a government which, in the further chances of war, may come into its place.”²⁹⁸ He would not, moreover, support any government that had not been shown to have the support of the Mexican people. Nor would the United States anticipate their choice by trying to “interfere with their proceedings, or control or interfere with their free choice.”²⁹⁹ “The United States,” Seward concluded, “consistently with their principles, can do no otherwise than leave the destinies of Mexico in the keeping of her own people, and recognize their sovereignty and independence in whatever form they themselves shall choose.”³⁰⁰ While Napoleon still promised to leave the future of Mexico to be decided by the will of the people, Seward maintained that it would be in conflict with his country’s principles to intervene.

Privately, Seward expressed to Dayton his confidence regarding the will of the Mexican people. “The inherent and normal opinion of Mexico,” he wrote, “favors a government there in republican form and domestic in its organization, in preference to any monarchical institutions to be imposed from abroad.”³⁰¹ Napoleon was attempting to push against the natural “progress of civilization on the American continent.”³⁰² The emperor did not yet fully realise that any “foreign resistance, or attempts to control American civilization, must and will fail before the ceaseless and ever-increasing activity of material, moral, and political forces, which peculiarly belong to the

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Seward to Dayton, 23 October 1863, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1863p2.p0121&id=FRUS.FRUS1863p2&size=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Seward to Dayton, 26 September 1863, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1863p2.p0104&id=FRUS.FRUS1863p2&size=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³⁰² Ibid.

American continent.”³⁰³ Seward was convinced that, either through popular vote or continuous fighting, the Mexican people would demonstrate to Napoleon and the world their commitment to republican government.

Seward hoped that studied neutrality towards the conflict between Mexico and France would protect the Union from French interference in the Civil War. It would also undermine some of the arguments made by Napoleon to justify his invasion of Mexico, and thereby possibly bring about a quicker end to the venture. Non-interventionism had long been a guiding principle in Seward’s outlook regarding foreign relations. By distancing his country from the war developing in Mexico, Seward aimed to demonstrate to the world that the U.S. government, freed from the influence of Southern slaveholders, had turned a corner in its approach to foreign policy. Henceforth the U.S. republic would pursue relations with all countries based on peaceful commercial cooperation and collaboration. In contradiction to the European conservatives’ arguments, Seward aimed to show that the United States had not abandoned its republican principles and mutated into an aggressive imperialistic nation. The secretary, furthermore, anticipated that soon Napoleon and the European powers would be offered resounding proof that the Mexicans had also not given up on republicanism.

³⁰³ Ibid.

Chapter Three: “Abide the Trial of Experiment”: Domestic Opposition to Seward’s
Mexican Policy, 1864-65

“Do you bring us peace, or bring us war?”³⁰⁴ According to Dayton, these were the first words the French minister of foreign affairs Edouard Drouyn de l’Huys said to him when he entered the Frenchman’s office on 21 April 1864.³⁰⁵ Drouyn de l’Huys had received news of a resolution regarding the conflict in Mexico which had recently passed the U.S. House of Representatives. The resolution, submitted by Maryland’s Radical Republican representative Henry Winter Davis, vehemently condemned Napoleon’s attempt to overthrow the Juárez administration. Drouyn de l’Huys went on to explain to Dayton that his government was concerned that the resolution signalled the Lincoln administration’s intent to take military action in Mexico against the French.

The House’s approval of Davis’ resolution reflected a rising tide of interest amongst Union politicians in the nation’s Mexican policy. During 1864 and 1865 calls from politicians for the Lincoln government to either offer monetary and material aid to the Mexicans, or intervene directly to put an end to the French invasion grew in intensity. The cause gained greater political support as a Northern victory in the Civil War was viewed as more likely. This rise in interest was born in part from a desire to unite the disparate factions of the United States. Advocates of intervention argued that a foreign venture to fight imperial monarchism would reawaken the shared republican sentiments of Northerners and Southerners. In this way, they hoped, intervention would end the Civil War and, after April 1865, help bridge divisions wrought in the nation by decades of sectionalism and years of warfare. They also believed that by ousting the French from Mexico the United States would demonstrate to the world that it was ready to reclaim its position as the paramount nation in the Western Hemisphere. The symbolism of this act would impress upon the international community that the United States still held its place as an “exceptional” republic, and that the Western Hemisphere should not be considered prey by the European imperial powers.

Historians note that Seward’s approach to the French invasion altered slightly during the final months of the Civil War. As military fortunes turned in the North’s favour, popular and political support throughout the Union for intervention in Mexico

³⁰⁴ Dayton to Seward, 22 April 1864, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1864p3.p0096&id=FRUS.FRUS1864p3&size=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³⁰⁵ Drouyn de l’Huys had replaced Thouvenel as French minister of foreign affairs in October 1862.

grew. Maximilian's position in Mexico was weakening, as was Napoleon's commitment to supporting the "Mexican Empire." Sexton notes that in response, Seward adopted a firmer tone in his communications with the French. The secretary used congressional demands for U.S. intervention in Mexico "to his diplomatic advantage" by warning Napoleon that "domestic pressure would give him no choice but to adopt more forceful tactics" if the emperor did not withdraw from Mexico.³⁰⁶ In 1865 Seward also chose General John A. Logan, a bitter critic of the French invasion, to be Corwin's replacement in Mexico. Van Deusen describes this as a strategy of "pin pricks" which was designed to subtly apply pressure on Napoleon to end his venture in Mexico.³⁰⁷ Van Deusen and Sexton agree, however, that Seward remained loyal to his basic policy of non-intervention by continuing to oppose direct military action in Mexico.

Van Deusen and Sexton are among those historians who argue that Seward based his wartime neutrality policy towards Mexico on his wish to prevent French interference in the Civil War. They fail, however, to explain why the secretary continued this policy throughout late 1864 and 1865 as the Civil War was drawing to a close and France's position in Mexico weakened. Goldwert attempts to account for this seeming inconsistency in Seward's actions. Throughout most of the Civil War, Goldwert alleges, Seward's neutrality policy was geared towards avoiding French retaliation. He notes that by the end of 1864, however, Seward's attention had shifted to the future of the U.S.-Mexican relationship. Goldwert concludes that Seward was concerned that U.S. intervention to end the French invasion would cause Mexico to "become financially dependent on the United States," and that U.S. "troops might never leave" Mexico once they had become necessary for that republic's survival.³⁰⁸

While Goldwert is correct in noting that Seward was wary of Mexico becoming reliant on the United States, he repeats the mistake made by other scholars of neglecting to analyse the entirety of Seward's wartime Mexican policy in light of the secretary's desires for the long-term nature and purpose of relations with Mexico. Seward believed that non-intervention in the affairs of foreign nations was essential for successful peaceful national expansion. Throughout the Civil War he sought to impress upon the international community that non-interventionism would henceforth be the cornerstone of the United States' approach to foreign relations. This chapter shows that Seward

³⁰⁶ Sexton, *Monroe Doctrine*, 155.

³⁰⁷ Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward*, 488.

³⁰⁸ Goldwert, "Matias Romero," 38.

believed the final months of the Civil War and its immediate aftermath were a critical time in proving the validity of this claim. During this period the United States was emerging from the Civil War reunified and with significantly improved military capacities. By refusing to use this strength to intervene in Mexico, Seward believed, the United States could demonstrate its commitment to peaceful landed and commercial growth. Domestic support for intervention made Seward even more determined to maintain his neutrality policy. To him, political appetite for intervention was an ominous sign that the United States' expansionist path might be disrupted just as the nation was recovering from its most recent crisis. Seward did not abandon his neutrality policy towards Mexico as the Civil War came to an end because his motivations behind the policy were unchanged.

Archduke Maximilian had informally accepted the throne of the "Mexican Empire" in October 1863. He then commenced a tour of Europe to visit the royal courts before his scheduled departure for Mexico in early 1864. Confederate president Jefferson Davis was quick to take advantage of these developments to try to gain French recognition of the South. An independent Confederacy, Davis perceived, could help "guarantee Mexico against invasion from the United States."³⁰⁹ Before Maximilian had arrived in Mexico, therefore, Davis appointed William Preston, former minister to Spain under President James Buchanan, as minister plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary to the imperial court of Mexico.³¹⁰ Preston's task was to negotiate a deal with the "Mexican Empire" whereby the South would recognise and support Maximilian's regime in return for recognition from Mexico and, if possible, France.

"Popular indignation in the United States" against the French invasion "mounted steadily" in response to these developments.³¹¹ Napoleon's monarchical schemes were unfolding and the South's moves to form an alliance with the "Mexican Empire" brought home to the people of the Union the potential danger posed to them by the overthrow of the Juárez government. Politicians were quick to respond to the changing tide of public opinion. In early 1863 McDougall had struggled to find much support in Congress for his proposals to intervene in Mexico. Although military action in Mexico was still viewed as extreme, by 1864 politicians of all stripes were taking a keener interest in the nation's Mexican policy. A discourse surrounding the issue

³⁰⁹ Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 219.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 229.

³¹¹ Goldwert, "Matias Romero," 26.

emerged which reflected growing antipathy towards Napoleon and sympathy for the Juárez government.

Romero, now minister to the United States, sought to capitalise on this shift in political opinion. In early 1864 he made several new contacts, such as Senators John Conness of California and Zachariah Chandler of Michigan. He met regularly with these politicians and provided them with information pertaining to recent developments in Mexico. He hoped his efforts would make them useful allies in his mission to pressure the Lincoln administration to offer assistance to the Juárez government. The growth in political interest in the situation in Mexico was reflected most clearly in the House of Representatives. The House was “more sensitive to popular discontent than the Senate” and was not subject to the influence of Sumner, who was now actively resisting resolutions for a change in Mexican policy, as the chair of its committee on foreign relations.³¹² In January 1864 Republican representative John A. Kasson of Iowa met with Romero to discuss Mexican policy. On 29 January Kasson submitted a resolution to the House which stated that Congress viewed the French invasion with the “deepest regret” and regarded it as “a menace to the dignity and permanence of popular government” on the continent.³¹³

One of the most fruitful contacts Romero made was Henry Winter Davis. Davis was a Radical Republican and chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Relations. He had been a prominent player in the growing rift between Radical Republicans in Congress and the Lincoln administration.³¹⁴ Friction between the two wings of the Republican Party had continued to build since the cabinet crisis of December 1862. The tension had been displayed most recently in Radical reactions to Lincoln’s issuance of the Ten Percent Plan in December 1863. The plan, which proposed means by which the Southern states could be re-admitted into the Union, was seen by many Radicals including Davis as too lenient. Davis’ wish to undermine the Lincoln administration and give more power over domestic and foreign policy-making to the Radicals in Congress would make him a useful ally to Romero.³¹⁵

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ *Cong. Globe*, 38th Cong. 1st Sess., (29 January 1864), 202, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?hlaw:4::/temp/~ammem_AaSz:: (accessed 16 October 2012).

³¹⁴ Goldwert, “Matias Romero,” 27-28.

³¹⁵ Davis’ anger towards Lincoln, and the rift between congressional Radical Republicans and the administration, grew after the president pocket-vetoed the Wade-Davis Bill in July 1864.

On 31 January Davis visited Romero with the intention, as Romero understood it, to “concern himself with our affairs.”³¹⁶ After several meetings in which they discussed the situation in Mexico, Davis submitted a resolution to Congress on 4 April. The resolution stated that “the Congress of the United States are unwilling by silence to leave the nations of the world under the impression that they are indifferent spectators of the deplorable events now transpiring in the Republic of Mexico.”³¹⁷ “They therefore think fit,” the resolution continued, “to declare that it does not accord with the policy of the United States to acknowledge any monarchical Government erected on the ruins of any republican Government in America under the auspices of any European Power.”³¹⁸ While the Lincoln administration’s official position stated that it would not recognise any new government in Mexico until all fighting in the country had ceased, Davis insisted that the United States would never hold relations with the “Mexican Empire.” In the debate following the submission of his resolution, Davis also expressed his opinion that the United States should intervene in Mexico “by force of arms, when the time shall come, and if this warning be not effective.”³¹⁹

In the speech Davis gave in support of his resolution he accused the Lincoln administration of holding tyrannical control over the conduct of foreign policy. “No President,” Davis declared, “has ever claimed such an exclusive authority ... It is certain that the Constitution nowhere confers such authority on the President.”³²⁰ The administration had used this power, Davis continued, to maintain a position towards the French invasion of Mexico which was “meek, inoffensive,” and “pusillanimous.”³²¹ Davis proclaimed that, in his effort to placate the French, Lincoln had disregarded the fate of the Mexican republic. This policy, he concluded, did not differ much from those of the antebellum Democratic administrations, which had “hectorred, bullied, and plundered” Mexico “without even stretching out the hand of republican sympathy.”³²²

Davis insisted that the solution was to restore Congress to its rightful role in shaping foreign policy. “We wish,” he stated, “to cultivate friendship with our

³¹⁶ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 31 January 1864, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 33.

³¹⁷ *Cong. Globe*, 38th Cong. 1st Sess., (4 April 1864), 1408, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llcg&fileName=065/llcg065.db&recNum=433> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ Henry Winter Davis, “4 April Joint Resolution on Mexican Affairs,” in *Speeches and Addresses Delivered in the Congress of the United States, and On Several Public Occasions* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1867), 457.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 470.

³²² *Cong. Globe*, 38th Cong. 1st Sess., (4 April 1864), 1408, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llcg&fileName=065/llcg065.db&recNum=433> (accessed 16 October 2012).

republican brethren of Mexico ... to aid in consolidating republican principles, to retain popular government in all this continent from the fangs of monarchical or aristocratic power.”³²³ Davis’ resolution was designed to signal Congress’ intent to reclaim its authority over deciding foreign policy. In doing so, Congress would check the rapid expansion of executive power. It would also ensure that the nation conducted its policies, specifically regarding Mexico, in accordance with its republican principles.

The resolution passed the House and then moved on to the Senate for approval. On 13 April Romero met with Sumner to discuss how the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations would act. Sumner told Romero that he wished to know Seward’s opinion regarding the resolution before taking any action. Romero replied that the resolution did not contradict Seward’s policy in any substantial way, and argued that it could in fact prove useful to the secretary as he could “shield himself with it when France asked for recognition of Archduke Maximilian as emperor of Mexico.”³²⁴ Romero doubted that his arguments had any effect on Sumner, whose “timid character” made him “even more complacent toward the French than Seward himself.”³²⁵ Romero’s pessimism was justified. By the end of June Sumner had successfully blocked the passage of the resolution by repeatedly delaying its discussion in the Senate.³²⁶

Davis’ resolution came at an uneasy time in U.S.-French relations. During early 1864 Napoleon’s government made several complaints to the State Department accusing the United States of violating its neutrality towards the conflict in Mexico. In January, for instance, Seward received word that J. H. Mansfield, the U.S. consul in Tabasco, had been imprisoned by French authorities for allegedly cooperating with Juarist forces in the region.³²⁷ Seward sent a nearby Union ship-of-war to the port of Tabasco, “not to use any force, but to inquire on the spot as to the facts” as “it was naturally felt that it would have been but just to the United States that they should have been notified of any complaint against their consul.”³²⁸ The French minister in Washington, Louis de Geofroy, wrote to Seward to register his “astonishment at the

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 13 April 1864, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 40.

³²⁵ Ibid., 41.

³²⁶ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 29 June 1864, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 45.

³²⁷ Seward to Dayton, 16 January 1864, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=goto&id=FRUS.FRUS1864p3&isize=M&submit=Go+to+page&page=20> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³²⁸ Dayton to Seward, 4 March 1864, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1864p3.p0069&id=FRUS.FRUS1864p3&isize=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

measures taken by the government of the United States” which had “in appearance at least, the character of a certain minatory pressure, which is without justification in the incident itself.”³²⁹ Mansfield was eventually restored to his consulate, with the French claiming that it had been Juárez’s authorities which had imprisoned him without reason, and the incident eventually came to nothing.³³⁰

In February the French government yet again accused the United States of violating its neutrality when it received reports that the commander of Union forces at Brownsville, General Francis J. Herron, had sent troops into Matamoras.³³¹ The French authorities claimed that Herron had used the pretext of wanting to protect the U.S. consul at Matamoras in order to join forces with Mexican general Juan Cortina and help re-establish Juarist control in the region.³³² The allegation proved false. Although Herron had sent some of his troops into Matamoras, he had done so in order to protect U.S. consul Leonard Pierce and had not cooperated with the Juarist military. Indeed, the incident had even elicited an objection from Romero, who had been ordered by his government to protest against U.S. forces entering Mexico.³³³

Cooperation between U.S. citizens and the Juarists also provoked angry objections from the French. On 26 April de Geofroy wrote to Seward complaining of an association based in New Orleans named the Defenders of the Monroe Doctrine.³³⁴ De Geofroy claimed that the organisation consisted of Mexican refugees, U.S. citizens, Federal Army officers, and local politicians who were employing “all measures of propaganda” to transmit “arms and munitions ... toward the frontier of the Rio Grande” to aid the Juarists.³³⁵ Seward forwarded de Geofroy’s complaint to General

³²⁹ Louis de Geofroy to Seward, 7 April 1864, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1864p3&entity=FRUS.FRUS1864p3.p0234&q1=geofroy> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³³⁰ Dayton to Seward, 8 July 1864, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1864p3.p0144&id=FRUS.FRUS1864p3&size=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³³¹ Edward R. S. Canby to Seward, 10 February 1864, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1864p3&entity=FRUS.FRUS1864p3.p0222&q1=canby> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³³² De Geofroy to Seward, 11 March 1864, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1864p3.p0221&id=FRUS.FRUS1864p3&size=M&q1=geofroy> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³³³ Seward to de Geofroy, 12 March 1864, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1864p3.p0221&id=FRUS.FRUS1864p3&size=M&q1=geofroy> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³³⁴ De Geofroy to Seward, 26 April 1864, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1864p3&entity=FRUS.FRUS1864p3.p0236&q1=geofroy> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³³⁵ Ibid.

Nathaniel P. Banks stationed in Louisiana who, after investigation, assured Seward that the organisation was not engaged in any illegal activity. It was a collection of unimportant citizens, Banks reported, whose objective was to lobby the Lincoln administration to send troops into Mexico.³³⁶

Despite France's evident suspicions that the United States was covertly aiding the Juarists, Seward had reason to believe that Napoleon's forces would soon leave Mexico. Information he received from his ministers in Europe assured him that, now that Maximilian was travelling to Mexico to take control of the "Mexican Empire," Napoleon was looking to wash his hands of the expedition. On 18 April Dayton wrote a report to Seward detailing the transcript of a convention held between the governments of France and the "Mexican Empire" negotiating the terms of French withdrawal. "The French troops at present in Mexico," the convention stated, "shall be reduced as soon as possible to a corps of 25,000 men ... this corps, in order to safeguard the interests which led to the intervention, shall remain temporarily in Mexico" until Maximilian "... shall be able to organize the troops necessary to replace them."³³⁷ The French would then leave the Foreign Legion, "composed of 8,000 men," at the service of Maximilian for a period of six years.³³⁸

It was in these precarious diplomatic circumstances that news reached Paris of Davis' resolution. It seemed to the French that the United States was preparing to officially abandon its neutrality and send troops into Mexico. In response to these concerns, Dayton insisted to Drouyn de l'Huys that the French should not assume the United States intended to invade Mexico "on account of anything contained in those resolutions."³³⁹ The resolution, he continued, "embodied nothing more than had been constantly held out to the French government from the beginning."³⁴⁰ Having attempted to allay the French government's alarm, Dayton awaited further directions from Seward.

Seward sent his instructions to Dayton three days after the House had passed Davis' resolution. He began by acknowledging that "this resolution truly interprets the

³³⁶ Seward to de Geofroy, 28 May 1864, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS1864p3&entity=FRUS.FRUS1864p3.p0239&q1=geofroy> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³³⁷ Dayton to Seward, 18 April, 1864, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1864p3.p0094&id=FRUS.FRUS1864p3&size=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid

³⁴⁰ Ibid

unanimous sentiment of the people of the United States in regard to Mexico.”³⁴¹ He continued that “it is, however, another and distinct question, whether the United States would think it necessary or proper to express themselves in the form adopted by the House of Representatives at this time.”³⁴² Foreign policy, Seward asserted, “is a practical and purely executive question, and the decision of it constitutionally belongs, not to the House of Representatives, nor even to Congress, but to the President of the United States.”³⁴³ “While the President receives the declaration of the House of Representatives with the profound respect to which it is entitled,” Seward concluded, “he does not at present contemplate any departure from the policy which this government has hitherto pursued in regard to the war which exists between France and Mexico.”³⁴⁴

Seward had successfully “cooled the crisis” in Paris.³⁴⁵ Rather than allow Davis’ resolution appear to contradict his policy, the secretary underplayed its importance by diminishing “the validity of the House’s role in foreign affairs.”³⁴⁶ By doing so, he was able to assure the French government that no change in U.S. policy towards the war in Mexico was occurring. Seward had also made a note of informing Dayton that his instructions were the result of a meeting between himself and President Lincoln. No doubt this intimation was designed to add more weight to Seward’s assurances. It also showed the correspondence of opinion between Seward and Lincoln regarding Mexican policy, which was significant in light of the growing public and political criticisms of the State Department’s position towards the French invasion.

Although his resolution did not pass in the Senate, Davis was undeterred and he continued in his efforts to wrest control over foreign policy from the executive branch.³⁴⁷ On 25 May he submitted a resolution requesting that the administration give Congress all State Department correspondence relating to Mexican affairs. The resolution passed and the details of Seward’s instructions to Dayton regarding the 4 April resolution were made public. Davis was incensed that the secretary had belittled the importance of the House to the French and was convinced that this was further proof

³⁴¹ Seward to Dayton, 7 April 1864, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS186566p3&entity=FRUS.FRUS186566p3.p0438&q1=truly%20interprets%20the%20unanimous%20sentiment> (accessed 5 September 2011).

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Goldwert, “Matias Romero,” 30.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 22-40.

that the Lincoln administration wished to cut Congress out of the foreign policy-making process. On 15 December Davis submitted a retaliatory resolution which stated that “Congress has a constitutional right to an authoritative voice in declaring and prescribing the foreign policy of the United States ... and it is the constitutional duty of the President to respect that policy.”³⁴⁸ Congressional resolutions, the resolution concluded, should never be a “topic of diplomatic explanation with any foreign power.”³⁴⁹

As 1864 progressed Seward began to use popular and political expressions of antipathy towards the French invasion “to his diplomatic advantage.”³⁵⁰ In June he replied to repeated French claims that U.S. citizens were illegally trading with Juarist forces across the Mexican border. The Lincoln administration, Seward insisted, did not wish to start a war with France. “On the contrary,” he stated, “it is an administration which, by its very constitution, would be pacific and friendly towards France, and towards all nations.”³⁵¹ “Nevertheless,” Seward continued, “it is not well to overlook the fact that a large mass of the American people, owing to the war of France against Mexico, are not less open to alienating influences in regard to France than the government of France can be in regard to the United States.”³⁵² The Lincoln administration, Seward concluded, was finding it increasingly difficult to control public outrage over French actions and must therefore “calmly abide events which must determine whether in spite of our devotion to peace, the field of war on this continent must be enlarged.”³⁵³

During the summer of 1864 Romero lobbied Union politicians with even greater energy and he succeeded in finding more congressmen willing to take up his cause. In May Senator Benjamin Wade from Ohio agreed to submit a resolution drafted by Romero which requested the State Department publish its correspondence with all nations relating to the situation in Mexico.³⁵⁴ In June McDougall asked Romero for information regarding the most recent developments in Mexico so that he could

³⁴⁸ *Cong. Globe*, 38th Cong. 2nd Sess., (15 December 1864), 49, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?hlaw:2::/temp/~ammem_xMaZ:: (accessed 16 October 2012).

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ Sexton, *Monroe Doctrine*, 155.

³⁵¹ Seward to Dayton, 27 June 1864, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS1864p3.p0135&id=FRUS.FRUS1864p3&isize=M> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 26 May 1864, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 42.

distribute it amongst Democratic politicians in preparation for the Democratic Chicago Convention, where the Party would nominate its 1864 candidate for president.³⁵⁵ In September Zachariah Chandler, a member of the Committee on the Conduct of the War, assured Romero that within six months the United States would be in a position to send troops into Mexico to help Juárez oust the French.³⁵⁶

Yet most politicians continued to be wary of advocating immediate military intervention in Mexico. “The most widely held opinion here,” Romero informed his government in May, “is that it is best for Congress not to occupy itself with Mexican affairs until General [Ulysses S.] Grant’s campaign results in the destruction of the Confederate army ... and the subsequent capture of Richmond.”³⁵⁷ Sumner corroborated this analysis, telling Romero in June that only a minority of politicians “believed that a war with France suited the interests of the United States because it would arouse the public spirit, not only to fight that power, but also more easily to subjugate the South.”³⁵⁸ A larger section thought that the United States should “assume a decisive, public position in opposition to the French intervention in Mexico” but not threaten military action.³⁵⁹ The majority of politicians, Sumner concluded, “believed it undesirable to give the French the slightest pretext of an excuse to intervene in favor of the South or indirectly aid the Confederates.”³⁶⁰

As the Civil War progressed into the spring and summer of its fourth year, many in the Union were questioning whether the South could be defeated militarily. Having mounted a massive spring campaign against Lee’s army, General Grant was bogged down in trench warfare with the Confederates at Petersburg, Virginia, and by the summer seemed no closer to defeating Lee. Union general William T. Sherman’s forces were similarly stationed outside Atlanta, unable to take the city. With Northern advances having ground to a halt, few politicians wished to divide the nation’s forces by sending them abroad to fight in a foreign war. Romero’s success in persuading congressmen to take up his cause is therefore best understood in light of the approaching 1864 presidential election. Earlier in the year, political debate regarding Mexican policy had reflected a power struggle between the branches of the federal

³⁵⁵ Romero to *SRE*, memorandum, 31 July 1864, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 46-7.

³⁵⁶ Romero to *SRE*, memorandum, 10 September 1864, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 47.

³⁵⁷ Romero to *SRE*, memorandum, 26 May 1864, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 41.

³⁵⁸ Romero to *SRE*, memorandum, 23 June 1864, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 44.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

government.³⁶¹ By the summer, criticising Seward's Mexican policy had become a useful strategy used by Northern politicians to attack the Lincoln administration and score points for their respective parties. This was most clearly displayed in the platforms each party wrote for the campaign.

The Radical Republicans' platform contained criticisms of the Lincoln administration similar to those articulated by Davis earlier in the year. Their convention, which met in Ohio in May, nominated John C. Frémont as their candidate and created a platform which proclaimed that the powers of the executive branch had become swollen during the war and needed to be retracted. To do this, the Radicals endorsed a one-term presidency, the protection of the rights of free speech and press, and the reinstatement of the writ of habeas corpus. Their platform also pledged to uphold and defend the principles of the Monroe Doctrine, a clear reference to the situation in Mexico.³⁶² The Radicals did not specifically outline what action should be taken with regard to Mexico, nor did they advocate outright military intervention. Their platform's reference to the Monroe Doctrine, however, revealed the Radicals' belief in the need to reinstate republican principles in the nation's foreign policy.

The Democratic Party nominated George B. McClellan as its presidential candidate and wrote a platform which also condemned the Lincoln administration for abusing its constitutional powers and violating the rights of U.S. citizens. The platform also insisted that the war effort to force the Southern states to rejoin the Union was futile and only served to further fracture the republic. Only by ending the war and beginning peace negotiations, the Democrats claimed, could the country hope to stabilise and reunify. At the Democratic Convention in August a delegate from Pennsylvania named Hamilton Allricks suggested the Party adopt a resolution into its platform which read, "We cannot view with indifference the open repudiation and violation of the Monroe doctrine, the establishment of an empire on the ruins of a neighboring republic."³⁶³ As Dexter Perkins notes, although "there were certainly Democrats who would have liked to see" the United States intervene in Mexico, the Party had "adopted the extraordinary and injudicious course of seeking to capitalize the

³⁶¹ Goldwert "Matias Romero," 30.

³⁶² Robert C. Kennedy, "Presidential Elections: 1864: Frémont and the Radical Democracy," HarpWeek: Explore History, <http://elections.harpweek.com/1864/Overview-1864-2.htm> (accessed 21 January 2013).

³⁶³ James H. Goodsell, *Official Proceedings of the National Democratic Convention Held in 1864 at Chicago* (Chicago: The Times Steam Book and Job Printing House, 1864), 10-11.

war weariness of the North.”³⁶⁴ It was therefore “hardly in a position” to formally advocate military intervention in Mexico.³⁶⁵ Allricks’ plank was not incorporated into the final platform.

Domestic political discourse which cast the administration’s policy of neutrality towards Mexico as un-republican and unpatriotic put the Republican Party under considerable pressure during the campaign. Although the Republicans could not openly attack the administration’s policy, they recognised the need to express a bold position regarding Mexico. At the National Union Party Convention in June, therefore, the Party adopted a resolution which stated, “We approve the position taken by the Government that the people of the United States can never regard with indifference the attempt of any European Power to overthrow by force ... the institutions of any Republican Government on the Western Hemisphere and that they will view ... as menacing to the peace and independence of their own country, the efforts of any such power to obtain new footholds for Monarchical Government ... in near proximity to the United States.”³⁶⁶ In this way, the Republicans attempted to show the strength of their commitment to defending republicanism abroad without undermining the Lincoln administration.

As the 1864 party platforms reveal, Mexican policy had become fused with various programmes for the restoration of the U.S. republic to its original model and founding principles. Indeed, this was why Mexican policy had been such an effective partisan weapon throughout 1864. The question of what the proper response should be to a European monarchical power invading a fellow republic tapped into Northern politicians’ notions about the identity and role of their own nation. Each party felt that the integrity of the United States had been compromised as a result of the Civil War, and that their republic was in danger of either disintegrating or mutating into something other than its original model. As the parties pushed their agendas for the restoration of the country, they included the realignment of the nation’s foreign policy in keeping with its founding values as part of this process. Advocating aid or even intervention in Mexico had become a way for Union politicians to demonstrate their nationalism and loyalty to their nation’s republican principles.

³⁶⁴ Dexter Perkins, *The Monroe Doctrine, 1826-1867* (Gloucester, MA: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), 453.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ National Republican Party, “Republican Platform of 1864,” in *National Party Platforms, 1840-1956*, comp. Kirk H. Porter and Donald B. Johnson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), 63.

When Lincoln accepted the Republican nomination for president on 27 June, he did so on the condition that the plank referring to Mexican policy was removed from the platform.³⁶⁷ Lincoln's show of support for the administration's current Mexican policy was reflective of the deeper understanding between himself and his secretary of state. Even within the Republican Party there were many who resented Seward's apparent influence in the cabinet. At the Baltimore Convention anti-Seward elements had called for New York Democrat Daniel Wilkinson to be nominated for vice president. Support for Wilkinson was "essentially a move against ... Seward" as no single state could be allowed to hold two prestigious positions in the cabinet.³⁶⁸ Despite opposition to both Seward's Mexican policy specifically and the secretary of state more broadly, however, Lincoln remained loyal to Seward and never considered his removal from the cabinet.

During the spring and summer of 1864 Lincoln's prospects for re-election looked dim. Grant and Sherman's campaigns had stalled and the Republican Party had splintered. The president managed to nullify the threat of the Radicals by brokering a deal with Frémont whereby the Radical agreed to drop out of the presidential race in return for the removal of conservative Republican Montgomery Blair from the cabinet. The compromise once again unified the Republican vote and lessened McClellan's chances of election. In autumn military fortunes turned in the North's favour. Mobile Bay fell to the Federal Navy in August, and in September Sherman's forces managed to finally break through and capture Atlanta. In October General Philip Sheridan secured Virginia's Shenandoah Valley for the Union. Resurgence in national enthusiasm and support for the administration followed, and in November Lincoln won re-election by a large majority, making him the first president to gain a second term since Andrew Jackson in 1832.

After Lincoln's re-election, military efforts progressed rapidly and Northern victory in the Civil War looked increasingly certain. In mid-December General George H. Thomas' troops destroyed Confederate general John Hood's forces at Nashville. After gaining Atlanta, Sherman pressed on and reached the Atlantic Ocean at Savannah. He then advanced through South and North Carolina. Under severe pressure, the Confederate government's diplomatic efforts became desperate. In late 1864 President Davis authorised a final appeal for European recognition. He sent letters to Mason and

³⁶⁷ Goldwert, "Matias Romero," 32.

³⁶⁸ John M. Taylor, *William Henry Seward: Lincoln's Right Hand* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 232.

Slidell to be relayed to the British and French governments. The letters stated that the Confederacy's sole objective was "the vindication of our right to self-government and independence. For that end no sacrifice is too great, save that of honor."³⁶⁹ The sacrifice Davis was proposing was the emancipation of the South's slaves in return for European assistance in the Civil War.

Davis' government also appealed to the "Mexican Empire." In September Confederate Trans-Mississippi commander general Edmund Kirby Smith, following the suggestions of governors and judges in Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas, asked Slidell to implore the French to occupy both banks of the Rio Grande. A Union invasion of Mexico, Slidell warned the French, could only be prevented if France helped the Confederacy gain its independence and thereby create a buffer between the United States and the "Mexican Empire."³⁷⁰ This Confederate scheme was put to an end in early November when Brownsville was taken by Union troops. In December, Slidell also urged Napoleon's government to take possession of Matamoros, the Mexican port across the river from Brownsville. This was necessary, Slidell argued, so that the French could counteract any Union efforts to aid the Juarists.³⁷¹

In another sign of Southern desperation, growing numbers of ex-Confederates were crossing the border into Mexico and joining Maximilian's army "before the forces of the United States could shut the door against them by taking the line of the Rio Grande."³⁷² Two weeks after Lincoln's re-election Romero was informed by "a friend" in New York that "there were serious intrigues on the part of many northern men, disgusted with the result of the late presidential election, in connexion with a considerable number of prominent men at the south" to recruit volunteers to fight for Maximilian.³⁷³ Maximilian was encouraging this emigration. The budget of the "Mexican Empire," Romero informed Seward in December, "approaches forty millions of dollars, and the portions of Mexican revenue which are in the hands of the French are reckoned at four millions."³⁷⁴ To cover this deficit, Maximilian was planning to sell or mortgage public domain to Southern emigrants. With the help of the French minister to the "Mexican Empire," Marquis de Montholon, Maximilian had begun "alienating"

³⁶⁹ Mahin, *One War at a Time*, 216.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 226

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² Romero to Seward, 3 December 1864, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS186566p3.p0581&id=FRUS.FRUS186566p3&isize=M&q1=portions%20of%20Mexican%20revenue> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

lands in Sonora and Lower California for this purpose.³⁷⁵ In return for joining his army, Maximilian promised these emigrants that they could “operate in the development of the mines and extension of agriculture” in Mexico and eventually settle there.³⁷⁶

Private citizens from the Union were also crossing the border into Mexico, although their purpose was to aid the Juarists. Throughout late 1864 and early 1865 Seward received numerous complaints from de Geofroy that Juarist agents were operating in cities across the North to recruit volunteers for their forces. In February 1865 the French Legation in the United States, headed by de Geofroy, informed Seward that Juarist agents “are busied in New York in organizing an emigration which would be directed towards Mexico, with an object hostile to the government of the emperor Maximilian.”³⁷⁷ “Brooklyn, Cincinnati, and Santa Fe,” the legation noted, “are the points of rendezvous for the emigrants,” which included ex-Federal Army officers and who had the financial support of some Northern bankers.³⁷⁸ Lincoln’s re-election had ensured the continuance of Seward’s non-intervention policy, and yet popular sympathy for the Mexican cause continued to run high. Convinced that their government could not be persuaded to intervene, these volunteers took it upon themselves to help defend the Mexican republic.

Romero perceived that he could take advantage of this spontaneous Northern emigration southward. “If we must choose,” he wrote to his government, “between the aid offered us by this government and by private persons who are willing to bring forces to our country, evidently we ought to prefer this government because it is more responsible than the private individuals.”³⁷⁹ As Lincoln’s re-election had made it unlikely that the government’s neutrality could be reversed, however, “we are not faced with a situation that would allow us to accept one and reject the other.”³⁸⁰ “I believe,” he concluded, “we ought to extract the best possible deal out of what is proposed to us.”³⁸¹ Romero convened regularly with his government’s agents in the United States to help coordinate their efforts in finding recruits for the Juarist army.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ French Legation to Seward, memorandum, 4 February 1865, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS186566p3.p0513&id=FRUS.FRUS186566p3&isize=M&q1=are%20busied%20in%20New%20York%20in%20organizing%20an%20emigration> (accessed 12 December 2012).

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 10 January 1865, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 52.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

His efforts did not stop at encouraging voluntary emigration to Mexico. Romero had long believed that the ending of the Civil War would be his government's best hope of receiving aid from the United States. The emigration of Unionists and Confederates to Mexico threatened to complicate matters and perhaps prolong the Civil War. In response, Romero devised a plan whereby Mexico would be the basis of Northern and Southern reconciliation, rather than their continued fighting. In November he volunteered himself to Seward to travel to Richmond as a representative of Mexico, "a nation most directly interested in the Civil War," perhaps joined by other "Hispanic American representatives resident in Washington" such as the ministers of Venezuela, Columbia, and Chile.³⁸² Romero proposed that he would then reason with the Confederate government and warn them that "Europe was stirring up discord and rejoicing at seeing the only republic that inspired respect on this continent divided and debilitated. France is preparing soon to do to the United States what it has been doing to Mexico."³⁸³ The objective of this mission would be to persuade the Confederacy to discourage its citizens from joining Maximilian's ranks and possibly convince it to lay down its arms and rejoin the Union in the face of a greater, foreign threat.

Seward replied "with complete frankness" that the Union could not consider peace with the South until slavery, the cause of the rebellion, had been completely destroyed.³⁸⁴ He predicted that this would occur within five or six months, at which point the North and South would be ready to begin peace negotiations. Despite having received a resounding rejection from Seward, Romero did not give up his scheme and even developed it further to make use of the Southern emigration into Mexico. On 10 January 1865 he met with Montgomery Blair, his most consistent ally and close friend. Romero suggested to Blair that "when the Southern cause should be deemed hopeless, which ... would occur within a month, Confederate President Jefferson Davis should be invited to lead an army of 200,000 men of all three arms to the Mexican Republic to throw the French out and, in this manner, to vindicate himself before his fellow citizens."³⁸⁵

Romero conceded that the "principal drawback to this arrangement exists in the danger to our independence" posed by having such a large number of Southerners in

³⁸² Romero to SRE, memorandum, 24 November 1864, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 48.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 10 January 1865, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 51.

Mexico.³⁸⁶ If it wished, the army could easily take possession of Mexican territory or even annex Mexico to the United States. Having spent four years in Washington, however, Romero was confident that the Lincoln administration did not desire any Mexican land. Even if the Confederates still harboured ambitions for territorial acquisition, “maintaining the equilibrium in the forces sent between the officers and soldiers from the North and South and taking other precautions would reduce this danger” to Mexican sovereignty.³⁸⁷ Romero therefore stipulated that the force should consist of equal proportions of Northern and Southern troops, and should be led by both Union and Confederate generals.

Following much discussion, Blair approached his father Francis P. Blair Sr., long-time friend of Confederate president Davis, with Romero’s plan. Blair Sr. thought the idea had some merit and offered to present the proposals to Davis himself. Blair Sr. approached Lincoln with the idea in December 1864. The president replied that he could not permit any attempt to contact the Confederacy with a proposal for reconciliation until Savannah had fallen into Union control.³⁸⁸ This occurred on 21 December and Lincoln, perhaps keen to make up for the slight he had inflicted on the influential Blair family after he had asked for Montgomery’s resignation from the cabinet, gave Blair Sr. a pass to cross enemy lines and travel to Richmond. The plan was conducted in secrecy. The ostensible purpose of Blair Sr.’s trip was to recover papers which had been taken from his home at Silver Spring, Maryland, by Confederate soldiers the previous summer.³⁸⁹

On 12 January Blair Sr. addressed Jefferson Davis. “Slavery,” he began, “is admitted now on all sides to be doomed – as an institution, all the world condemns it.”³⁹⁰ The only “obstruction to pacification” between the North and South, therefore, was overcome.³⁹¹ The Confederacy, however, continued to fight and the “the issue is changed and War against the Union becomes a War for Monarchy.”³⁹² Blair Sr. noted that the Confederacy was willing to emancipate its slaves and hold relations with a

³⁸⁶ Ibid. 52.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 52.

³⁸⁸ Charles W. Sanders Jr., “Jefferson Davis and the Hampton Roads Peace Conference: “To Secure Peace to the Two Countries,”” *Journal of Southern History* 63, no. 4 (November 1997), 809.

³⁸⁹ Francis P. Blair Sr. to Jefferson Davis, 30 December 1864, ALP, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mal:2:/temp/~ammem_zCUl:: (accessed 16 October 2012).

³⁹⁰ Blair Sr. to Davis, address, 12 January 1865, ALP, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mal:@field%28DOCID+@lit%28d3997500%29%29> (accessed 16 October 2012).

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

foreign monarchy established on the ruins of an American republic in return for European recognition. It was also willing to allow its citizens to join the forces of this same monarchy, and invite foreign troops into its country for this same purpose. The cry for Southern independence, Blair Sr. surmised, “is converted into an appeal for succor to European potentates, to whom they offer, in return, homage as dependencies!”³⁹³

Southern concessions and negotiations with Napoleon and Maximilian, Blair Sr. continued, constituted “the most modern exemplification of this programme for discontented Republican States defeating their popular institutions by intestine hostilities.”³⁹⁴ Just as McDougall had done when he stood before the Senate in January 1863, Blair Sr. evoked the historic and modern strategies used by predatory powers to conquer republics. He noted that throughout history imperial powers had sought to weaken and destabilise independent republics by encouraging internal discontent and making contact with dissatisfied factions within them. Most recently, Napoleon had sought and utilised connections with Mexican Conservatives in order to gain their cooperation in his invasion. By aligning itself with Napoleon and Maximilian, Blair Sr. argued, the Confederacy was ensuring the destruction of the U.S. republic by these same means.

Blair Sr. continued that though the Civil War had profoundly shaken the United States, the U.S. republic nonetheless remained “exceptional.” “With the blessing of Heaven,” he insisted, “the Great American Republic, will foil this design of the central Despotism of Europe.”³⁹⁵ Despite the conflict which had separated them from their Northern brethren, Southerners were bound to the people of the Union by their shared “love of liberty nurtured by popular institutions.”³⁹⁶ Now that the chief cause of the Civil War was removed, all that remained was to remind the people of the Union and Confederacy of their shared identity. If Davis would accept an armistice with the Union, the North and South could assemble a “force on the banks of the Rio Grande” which would cross into Mexico with the purpose of “expelling the invaders, who taking advantage of the distractions of our own Republic, have overthrown that of Mexico.”³⁹⁷ By fighting together against a monarchical enemy, the North and South could be reconciled on the basis of their common adherence and allegiance to republicanism.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

By invading Mexico, Blair Sr. continued, Napoleon's government had attempted to "rule that land" and "spread its power over ours" in North America.³⁹⁸ He argued that part of the United States' role and destiny as the "exceptional" republic was that it "claims the Continent for its pedestal."³⁹⁹ If the United States went into Mexico and triumphed over the French, it would demonstrate to the world that it was ready to reclaim its role as paramount nation in the Western Hemisphere. The venture would impress upon the European powers that the region was destined to be a republican, U.S.-led sphere of influence and could never again be considered suitable for re-colonisation.

Blair Sr. concluded by informing Davis of the support which this plan had in the Union. In this, he made some exaggerations, neglecting to inform Davis that Lincoln had requested the plank referring to Mexican policy be removed from the 1864 Republican platform. "The Republican party," Blair Sr. stated, "has staked itself on the assertion of the Monroe doctrine."⁴⁰⁰ "The Democrats of the North," he continued, "have proclaimed their adhesion to it and I doubt not from the spirit exhibited by the Congress now in session, however unwilling to declare war, it would countenance all legitimate efforts short of such result, to restore the Mexican Republic."⁴⁰¹ Peace between the North and South, the vindication of the Confederate leaders in the eyes of the people of the Union, and the restoration of the U.S. republic to its rightful place and role in the Western Hemisphere could all be achieved through military action in Mexico.

Davis refused Blair Sr.'s offer. The president was still hopeful that recognition of Confederate independence by Maximilian, Napoleon, or both would soon be forthcoming. From Davis' meeting with Blair Sr., however, it was agreed that Confederate and Union representatives would meet at Hampton Roads to continue talks on the possibility of peace.⁴⁰² Meanwhile news of Blair Sr.'s visit to Richmond spread to Europe. In March Seward received reports that Napoleon's government was concerned about rumours that the United States intended to reunify on the basis of a venture into Mexico. Many in Paris were questioning the wisdom of withdrawing from Mexico if it meant leaving Maximilian's regime to the mercy of an invading U.S. force.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Sanders Jr., "Jefferson Davis," 814.

Seward replied to the French government that, in keeping with its republican principles, the United States “firmly repels foreign intervention here, and looks with disfavor upon it anywhere.”⁴⁰³ The Lincoln administration therefore disapproved of Napoleon’s invasion of Mexico. By the same token, Seward continued, “for us to intervene in Mexico would be only to reverse our own principles, and to adopt in regard to that country the very policy which in any case we disavow.”⁴⁰⁴ Any attempt by France or the United States to force a particular form of government on the Mexican people would be useless because the “traditions and sympathies” of peoples and nations “could not be uprooted by the exercise of any national authority.”⁴⁰⁵ Seward concluded that “it would seem that all parties must abide the trial of the experiment, of which trial it will be confessed that the people of Mexico must ultimately be the arbiters.”⁴⁰⁶ In his official communications with the French, therefore, Seward continued to accept Napoleon’s assurances that the Mexican people would be given the opportunity to vote for the form of government they desired.

Seward believed that his confidence in the Mexicans’ preference for a republic was being shown to be well-founded. On 10 April Maximilian announced the formal constitution of the “Mexican Empire.” The constitution provided for a thirty-four member council which would be elected through popular vote, as well as the preservation of the rights to equality before the law and equality of worship for Mexican citizens. These concessions were a bid by Maximilian to win the support of a greater proportion of the Mexican population, particularly Liberals. His efforts were unsuccessful, however, and failed to attract more support for his regime.⁴⁰⁷ In his attempt to conciliate Liberals, moreover, Maximilian lost the support of much of the clergy, the traditional ally of the Mexican Conservatives.

This lack of popular support for Maximilian’s regime was noted by politicians in Paris. On 17 April John Bigelow sent a report to Seward of a debate which had taken place in the *Corps Legislatif* regarding a resolution submitted by Jules Favre.⁴⁰⁸ The resolution called for the immediate withdrawal of French troops from Mexico.

⁴⁰³ Seward to John Bigelow, 17 March 1865, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS186566p3&entity=FRUS.FRUS186566p3.p0469&q1=firmly%20repels%20foreign%20intervention> (accessed 16 October 2012).

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Robert H. Duncan, “Political Legitimation and Maximilian’s Second Empire in Mexico, 1864-1867,” *Mexican Studies* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1996), 33-7.

⁴⁰⁸ Bigelow had replaced Dayton as minister to France after the latter’s death on 1 December 1864.

Napoleon and his conservative supporters, Favre stated, had led the French people to believe that the expedition would be “received with universal enthusiasm” by the Mexicans.⁴⁰⁹ “Unhappily,” Favre continued, “this was not the case.”⁴¹⁰ French blood had “freely flowed” in the face of the overwhelming opposition of the Mexican people.⁴¹¹ Mexico was still in a state of war and yet, Favre asked, “once placed upon the throne” shouldn’t Maximilian “be able to defend himself?”⁴¹² Maximilian’s regime could not exist without French troops, and therefore the French government must either withdraw immediately, or commit itself to an “interminable war” in Mexico.⁴¹³

The assassination of Lincoln on 14 April and the subsequent inauguration of President Andrew Johnson was seen by Romero as an opportunity to bring about a change in U.S. Mexican policy. The close agreement between Seward and Lincoln had meant that over the course of the Civil War Romero had largely given up trying to directly lobby the administration to change its course. Now that the Civil War was over and a new president had taken control of the administration, Romero attempted yet again to work through the executive branch. He also had reason to be hopeful that Johnson would be more disposed to help the Mexican republic than Lincoln had proven himself to be. Romero noted to his government that in July 1864 Johnson had given a speech in which he endorsed “without reservation that part of the convention’s platform relative to the Monroe Doctrine” and “demonstrated full comprehension of the importance and the significance of the French intervention in Mexico.”⁴¹⁴

Romero used his connection with Preston King, former senator from New York and close friend of Johnson, to gain a private interview with the new president on 24 April. As he had to Lincoln in 1861, Romero began by noting the similarities in principles and interests which existed between the Juárez government and the United States. He then informed Johnson that the objective of Napoleon’s expedition was “more hostile toward the United States ... than toward Mexico itself.”⁴¹⁵ Conducted at a moment when the U.S. republic was split apart in civil war, Romero noted, France’s aim in the invasion could only have been to aid in the destruction of the United States.

⁴⁰⁹ Bigelow to Seward, 17 April 1865, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS186566p2.p0332&id=FRUS.FRUS186566p2&isize=M> (accessed 16 October 2012)

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 24 April 1865, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 56.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

There was, he added, a “very profound and open sympathy between the Southern rebels and the traitors in Mexico” based largely on their shared hatred of the Union.⁴¹⁶ Romero considered registering with Johnson his dissatisfaction with Seward’s approach over the past three years towards the French invasion. He decided, however, that this was unwise considering that “upon recovering [Seward] might well return to the State Department, in which case I would be placed in a very false position in regard to him.”⁴¹⁷

When Romero questioned the president regarding the speeches in which he had proclaimed his support for upholding the Monroe Doctrine, Johnson replied that he had “not changed his ideas nor would he change them ... They would remain his guide when the hour to act arrived.”⁴¹⁸ This was encouraging, yet vague support. Although Johnson expressed sympathy for the Mexican cause and gave some indications that he would be willing to consider a policy different from Seward’s, he did not outline what that policy might be or when the “hour to act” might occur. Unwilling to rely solely on these uncertain signals, Romero continued to pursue other channels. He remained attached to the idea of sending a voluntary force into Mexico. With public spirits running high at the end of the Civil War and popular sympathy towards Mexico gaining strength, Romero perceived that involving some popular public figure in his cause would generate the support he desired.

Just such a figure came in the form of Union Army hero General Grant. Romero had met Grant on several occasions over the course of the Civil War and judged him to be sympathetic to the Mexican republic’s cause. On 30 April Romero visited Grant in order to gain a clearer understanding of the general’s opinion of the French invasion. After a long discussion, Romero concluded that “although he is tired of war,” Grant’s “major desire is to fight in Mexico against the French.”⁴¹⁹ Above all, Grant believed that the “Monroe Doctrine has to be defended at any price.”⁴²⁰ In particular, Grant was concerned about the number of Southern refugees spilling over the border into Mexico, and believed that this could complicate the process of reunifying the United States.

Throughout May Romero and Grant met regularly to discuss how to bring about U.S. military action in Mexico. An unofficial intervention through the use of volunteers

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 57. Seward had also been attacked by a would-be assassin on the night that Lincoln was killed. Although gravely wounded, the secretary survived and eventually made a full recovery.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 30 April 1865, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 58.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

seemed to both to be the best means. Veteran forces on the Texan border could be “mustered out” and then led into Mexico to join Juárez’s forces. This way, the intervention would take on an unofficial nature. They hoped that by not formally implicating the U.S. government the venture would be more likely to gain the Johnson administration’s approval. Determined to circumvent Seward, Romero and Grant both visited the president to put their plan before him directly.

On 18 July Romero met with Johnson and proposed to him his plan for sending a voluntary force of veterans into Mexico. Romero suggested that a commander of the Union Army should be appointed with the ostensible purpose of escorting U.S. “emigrants” across the border into Mexico. These “emigrants” would be armed and once in Mexico would take on Mexican citizenship. They would then join the Juarists and help to dismantle Maximilian’s regime. Romero was frustrated when Johnson replied that the minister must present the plan to Seward before any discussion or action could take place. When Romero insisted that the “plan would encounter the secretary of state’s open opposition,” Johnson disagreed, adding mildly that “it will do no harm.”⁴²¹

Grant was more successful in his meeting with the president. On 20 July Johnson gave the general permission to “proceed on his own account without consulting or arranging prior approval for his actions.”⁴²² Johnson had decided that if the scheme were to maintain an unofficial character, it would be better to avoid any further governmental involvement in its arrangement. Romero and Grant were encouraged by this tacit approval from the president and renewed their efforts. On 27 July General John M. Schofield accepted their offer to coordinate the voluntary emigration of veterans into Mexico.⁴²³ He was to go to Texas in the role of inspector of the United States Army, oversee the discharge of the troops stationed along the border, and then guide them as private citizens into Mexico.

Romero’s plans soon met with an obstacle. On 4 August he learned that Schofield had discussed his up-coming mission with Seward. The secretary had assured the general that he “looked with favor on the project” but wished to add “another step which would contribute to the fuller success of the enterprise.”⁴²⁴ Seward proposed that Schofield first travel to France and meet with Napoleon “as a confidential agent” of the

⁴²¹ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 18 July 1865, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 80.

⁴²² Romero to SRE, memorandum, 20 July 1865, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 82.

⁴²³ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 30 July 1865, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 83.

⁴²⁴ Romero to SRE, memorandum, 4 August 1865, in *Mexican Lobby*, trans. and ed. Schoonover, 90.

U.S. government.⁴²⁵ Schofield should then explain to the emperor “the existing danger of a rupture between France and the United States if Napoleon would not withdraw his forces from Mexico.”⁴²⁶ Schofield, “captivated” and flattered by the prospect of such an important mission, agreed to Seward’s proposal.⁴²⁷ Romero was incensed, convinced that Seward “desires to undo the arrangement” by separating Schofield “from the undertaking, and then, by presenting delays, allow enough time to transpire to abort the project or allow Seward’s other plans to mature.”⁴²⁸ Romero’s fears were realised. Schofield was appointed a special agent of the U.S. government and arrived in France in December. During his six month visit he met with Napoleon, but never had a private interview with the emperor and ultimately “played absolutely no part in high-level negotiations” between his government and the French.⁴²⁹

Throughout the second half of 1865 Maximilian continued to encourage the emigration of Southerners to Mexico. On 5 September he issued a series of decrees. One of them, Corwin informed Seward, sanctioned de facto slavery “with the view of inducing our southern planters to emigrate, with their slaves, to Mexico.”⁴³⁰ In October Maximilian’s efforts to draw in the “discontented citizens of the United States who are not disposed to acknowledge the authority of this government, nor accept the consequences of the late civil war” developed.⁴³¹ Dozens of prominent ex-Confederate officials had been appointed by Maximilian as agents of colonisation.⁴³² Matthew F. Maury, formerly a Confederate agent in Europe, was appointed “imperial commissioner of immigration” and John B. Magruder, a Confederate general who had been stationed in Texas, was “charged with the supervision of the survey of lands for colonization.”⁴³³ Their roles involved surveying Mexican land, setting aside suitable portions specifically

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Arnold Blumberg, “The Diplomacy of the Mexican Empire, 1863-1867,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series* 61, no. 8 (1971), 82.

⁴³⁰ Corwin to Seward, 10 September 1865, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS186566p3.p0556&id=FRUS.FRUS186566p3&isize=M&q1=corwin> (accessed 16 October 2012).

⁴³¹ Romero to Seward, 20 October 1865, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS186566p3&entity=FRUS.FRUS186566p3.p0604&q1=discontented%20citizens%20of%20the%20United> (accessed 16 October 2012).

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Corwin to Seward, 28 October 1865, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS186566p3&entity=FRUS.FRUS186566p3.p0542&q1=charged%20with%20the%20supervision> (accessed 16 October 2012).

for the use of Southern emigrants, and encouraging the flow of people from the United States into Mexico.

Seward viewed Maximilian's efforts as reflecting the "emperor's" inability to find elements of support in Mexico to sustain his regime. The secretary saw the time as right, therefore, to alter the tone of his dispatches to the French in the hopes of pressuring Napoleon to hasten his withdrawal from Mexico. In response to a comment by Drouyn de l'Huys that the French would leave Mexico sooner if the United States would recognise Maximilian's government, Seward replied with forceful language. "The presence and operations of a French army in Mexico," he wrote, "and its maintenance of an authority there, resting upon force and not the free will of the people of Mexico, is a cause of serious concern to the United States."⁴³⁴ The U.S. government, Seward continued, "regard the effort to establish permanently a foreign and imperial government in Mexico as disallowable and impracticable."⁴³⁵ Therefore, Seward concluded, "they are not prepared to recognize, or to pledge themselves hereafter to recognize, any political institutions in Mexico which are in opposition to the republican government with which we have so long and so constantly maintained relations of amity and friendship."⁴³⁶ In a significant departure from his previous communications to the French, Seward now insisted that the United States would never recognise a non-republican government in Mexico.

In December Seward explained to Napoleon's government why the United States would never hold relations with the "Mexican Empire." In doing so, the secretary abandoned all pretence that he believed the Mexican people would be permitted to vote for the form of government they desired. "The French army which is now in Mexico," Seward stated, "is invading a domestic republican government there which was established by her people, and with whom the United States sympathize most profoundly."⁴³⁷ The United States would not intervene in Mexico because it did not feel itself "called upon to make a war of propagandism throughout the world, or even on this continent, in the republican cause."⁴³⁸ "We have sufficient faith," Seward continued,

⁴³⁴ Seward to Bigelow, 6 November 1865, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=turn&entity=FRUS.FRUS186566p3.p0504&id=FRUS.FRUS186566p3&isize=M&q1=maintenance%20of%20an%20authority%20there> (accessed 16 October 2012).

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Seward to Marquis de Montholon, 6 December 1865, FRUS, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUSidx?type=turn&id=FRUS.FRUS186566p3&entity=FRUS.FRUS186566p3.p0532&q1=the%20United%20States%20sympathize%20most%20profoundly> (accessed 16 October 2012).

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

“in the eventual success of that cause on this continent, through the operation of existing material and moral forces.”⁴³⁹ Seward concluded that, by their continuous fighting and refusal to tolerate the “Mexican Empire,” the Mexican people had given “decisive and conclusive, as well as very touching proofs” that they preferred republicanism as their form of government.⁴⁴⁰ The United States would acquiesce to the Mexican peoples’ choice and continue to recognise only the Juárez administration.

Seward then made another significant change in his approach to relations with the French. Having spent much of the Civil War convincing the Europeans that the United States had abandoned its schemes of expansion, Seward revealed to Napoleon’s government his vision for the U.S. republic’s future in North America. There had long been the belief amongst the governing classes of Europe, Seward wrote, that “we intend to spread our armies not merely over the slaveholding States, but over Canada on the one side, and Mexico on the other.”⁴⁴¹ “Were it admitted to be our policy to acquire those countries,” he continued, “the true way to bring it about would be by patience, conciliation, and the establishment of a harmony of interests that would bring on that end as a perfectly natural result.”⁴⁴² “There is an irresistible logic of events,” Seward concluded, “which requires that Europeans shall confine their rule to the eastern continent” and retreat from North America.⁴⁴³ Seward insisted that the Northern victory in the Civil War and the crumbling of the “Mexican Empire” had validated republicanism in North America. The European powers, he believed, could no longer expect to hinder the United States as it embarked on the next stage of its programme for peaceful landed expansion and commercial growth.

The final years of the Civil War were a critical time for Seward in maintaining his neutrality policy towards Mexico. The domestic opposition which he faced put pressure on the secretary to aid the Mexican republic. Seward had faith, however, that the Mexicans were able and willing to defend their republican institutions, and by the end of 1865 the secretary believed this faith had been validated. The “Mexican Empire” was deteriorating and the French were planning the withdrawal of their troops. By allowing the Mexicans to fight alone, Seward believed he had offered the international

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Seward to Bigelow, 16 December 1865, FRUS, <http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/FRUS>, (accessed 5 September 2011).

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

community resounding proof that republicanism would henceforth be a permanent fixture in North America and across the Western Hemisphere.

Conclusion

Seward's wartime Mexican policy was designed to forward his pre-Civil War expansionist vision. Scholarly studies regarding his time as secretary of state have overlooked this fact.⁴⁴⁴ Historians assume that Seward abandoned his expansionist agenda during his time in the State Department because of the constraints of the Civil War. They argue that steering the nation through its crisis and preventing foreign interference in the war was a higher priority for Seward than advancing his programme for the physical enlargement of the United States. Any bold acts of expansion, they add, were risky in a diplomatic environment in which relations with the European powers were precarious and often tense. Seward's Mexican policy is used as a case in point for this argument. His apparent compliance towards Napoleon III as the emperor attempted to conquer Mexico fits neatly into the argument that Seward had to give up his expansionist ambitions during the Civil War in order to protect the Union from a foreign attack.

Historians' failure to identify the expansionist elements in Seward's wartime Mexican policy is principally due to their lack of appreciation for the secretary's interpretation of the nature of human, national, and global progress. Seward subscribed to the teleological theory that mankind was always improving and progressing towards its ideal state, which he believed to be republican government. Seward was influenced by the values of classical liberalism and saw republicanism as the best means of advancing them. It provided for individual political freedom through a system of representative democracy and was well-suited to supporting an economic system based on free market and liberal trading principles. Republicanism, Seward believed, was the most efficient means of achieving national economic diversity, prosperity, social mobility, and liberty and would therefore eventually be adopted by all nations.

Seward proclaimed that in this inevitable and unceasing global journey, the United States had an important role to play. As the first American republic, it would act as a guide and example to the other nations of the world as they strove towards republicanism. Once sufficiently practised in the art of self-governance, Canada, Mexico, and Cuba were, Seward believed, destined to seek admittance into the United States and become part of the Union. The other nations of the Western Hemisphere

⁴⁴⁴ Goldwert, "Matias Romero," 22-40; Immerman, *Empire for Liberty*, 98-127; Sexton, *Monroe Doctrine*, 123-58.

would model their governments on that of the United States and the region would evolve into a community of ideological affinity and commercial interest. The United States could then use the Western Hemisphere as an economic base from which to develop into a world power.

Seward believed that before the United States could fulfil its role in the Western Hemisphere, certain national and global requirements needed to be met. During his pre-Civil War career he identified three requirements which he viewed as rapidly moving towards completion. The first was the economic, industrial, and social consolidation of the United States. Slavery, Seward believed, was the principal obstacle to this process. The institution inhibited domestic industrial and economic integration and hindered the social and financial advancement of the Southern states. Slaveholders in government pushed for policies of aggressive acquisition, a style of expansion Seward viewed as counter-productive to the nation's interests and contradictory to its principles. The question of whether slavery ought to be permitted in new territories, moreover, caused substantial internal division in the United States and complicated the process of extending its boundaries. As long as slavery remained in the United States, the consolidation of the country and the peaceful extension of its physical limits could not occur.

The second requirement was the adoption and stabilisation of republican governments by the nations of the Western Hemisphere, particularly those which Seward anticipated would be brought into the United States. This process had begun in earnest in the 1810s and 20s when a series of independence movements had swept across the region and struck a serious blow to the power of the European empires. Seward insisted that once the process from colony to independent state to republic had begun, it could not be reversed. Nevertheless, by the mid-nineteenth century many of these newly-independent nations were still experiencing severe economic distress, social disorder, and political factionalism. Few had managed to establish sound democratic institutions and none had reached the level of stability Seward saw as necessary before they could be considered functioning and successful republics.

The third requirement was the absolute retreat of the European powers from the Western Hemisphere and their acquiescence to U.S. preponderance in the region. Seward believed that the governments of Europe did not understand the nature of republican government or the pull it had over the people of the Western Hemisphere. Nor did they realise that republicanism had already taken root in the region and could

not be forcibly removed. Consequently, the European powers continued to create schemes for re-colonising independent American nations. In the antebellum period Seward expressed his belief that when a European imperial power next attempted to extend its presence in the Western Hemisphere, it would encounter unceasing resistance and experience a resounding defeat. This would prove to the world that the people of the region were committed to republicanism and that European colonies could no longer exist there.

In the 1860s Seward perceived that these three requirements were nearing completion and were manifested in the concurrent crises of the American Civil War and Napoleon's attempt to overthrow the Mexican Juárez government. When the Civil War began in 1861 Seward believed it signalled the coming end of slavery in the United States. At the time the Mexican republic was emerging from its own civil war and had established a Liberal government which pledged to model Mexico's economic, commercial, and political systems on those of the United States. When the French invasion began in 1862 Seward viewed it as a test of the Mexicans' commitment to republicanism. Confident that they would pass this test and throw out their French invaders, he anticipated that Napoleon's venture would stand as proof to the other European powers that they could no longer hope to re-establish their rule over the nations of the Western Hemisphere. Once the Mexicans had restored their republic and the United States had abolished slavery, Seward predicted, the peaceful incorporation of Mexico into the Union could follow.

Seward's wartime approach to relations with Mexico was constructed to facilitate the accomplishment of this goal. Beginning in 1861 he made significant efforts to reverse the recent trend in U.S.-Mexican relations, which had been characterised by conflict and conquest. Seward renounced territorial gain as an objective of U.S. Mexican policy, insisting instead that the United States wished to build a relationship with Mexico based on commercial cooperation and ideological fraternity. This policy, Seward believed, would allow and encourage the Mexicans to politically stabilise and economically develop their republic.

When the French invaded Mexico in 1862 Seward invoked his long-held belief that American republics should be capable of sustaining and defending themselves without the need for U.S. support. He perceived that republicanism had already become sufficiently entrenched in Mexico to make it impossible for a foreign monarchy to exist there for long. Accordingly, Seward followed a policy of studied neutrality towards the

conflict, insistent that once they had thrown out the French and put down the internal disloyal factions which had cooperated with them, the Mexicans would have advanced another step towards establishing a functioning republic.

Seward's non-intervention policy also had an international dimension. He wished to demonstrate to the world that since the secession of the Southern states, the United States was no longer a grasping, acquisitionist power and instead wished to pursue relations with all countries based on peaceful commercial cooperation. American nations should therefore no longer regard the United States as a threat to their sovereignty, and the European powers should not consider it a physical threat to their possessions and interests in the Western Hemisphere. Accordingly, all countries should seek to collaborate with the U.S. republic in developing global commerce. By not intervening in Mexico, Seward also hoped to prove to the European powers that the United States did not need to use force to sustain republican government in the Western Hemisphere. The people of the region had chosen republicanism and could not be compelled to give it up. The European powers must therefore accept that the Western Hemisphere was a republican sector, a U.S. sphere of influence, and no longer fit for monarchical imperialism.

Much of what Seward anticipated came to fruition. In December 1865 the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution outlawed slavery in the newly-reunited U.S. republic. The French invasion of Mexico was unsuccessful despite U.S. neutrality towards the conflict. Napoleon's failure to re-establish a French American empire had a profound impact on the European powers. It compounded their opinion that imperial ventures ought to be focussed in other areas around the world, and they henceforth refrained from attempting to extend their influence in the Western Hemisphere. Seward also made significant gains in redefining the purpose and tone of U.S. foreign policy. He repaired much of the damage done in previous decades to relations with Mexico and began to rebuild the relationship on a basis of mutual respect and cooperation. By rejecting aggressive territorial acquisition, moreover, Seward left the door open for future commercial collaboration with the European powers.

Seward's success in changing the long-term U.S. approach to national physical enlargement and economic growth in the Western Hemisphere is more uncertain. Although he was successful in maintaining his country's neutrality towards the French invasion of Mexico, Seward was battling against a rising tide of interventionism in U.S. politicians' attitudes towards foreign policy. Domestic wartime political support for

intervention in Mexico was largely based on concerns surrounding the United States' "exceptional" identity. The notion of U.S. "exceptionalism" was based on the belief that other republics, past and present, were susceptible to internal discontent, factionalism, and disorder. This would frequently lead to the rise of centralised governments or dictatorships in these countries. In other cases, such republics would separate and fall apart, often with the agency of predatory foreign powers.

The narrative of U.S. "exceptionalism" claimed that the United States was immune to these weaknesses. There was, however, a persistent undercurrent of uncertainty regarding this myth which showed itself most plainly at times of national expansion. The Mexican War 1846-48, for instance, caused many U.S. politicians to question whether the institutions and framework of their country could withstand the extension of its boundaries. They worried that too large an expanse of land and diversity of population could weaken bonds of national identity, strain economic and communication networks, and dilute chains of government authority. A foreign policy geared towards landed expansion, they added, could easily turn aggressive and imperialistic and therefore contradict the United States' mission to promote republican government in the Western Hemisphere.

The Civil War was the greatest blow to the myth of U.S. "exceptionalism." The secession of the Southern states showed that regional and sectional interests could trump bonds of national identity. Instability within the Union over the course of the Civil War gave some, such as Senator James McDougall, reason to believe that further separations would follow. The splintering of the Republican Party signalled rising factionalism while conflicts between the branches of the federal government displayed anxiety regarding the integrity of the nation's political institutions. Some politicians, such as Representative Henry Winter Davis, believed that the executive branch was capitalising on the nation's crisis to expand its powers. The United States, in short, seemed to be falling into the states of chaos and despotism which had overwhelmed those republics which had preceded it.

In these circumstances, the French invasion of Mexico constituted to some Union politicians a dire warning for the future of the United States. Napoleon's attempt to re-colonise Mexico would have offended the United States at any time as support for republican institutions and antipathy towards European imperialism in the Western Hemisphere had been a traditional tenet of its foreign policy. In the context of the Civil War, however, what was occurring in Mexico was construed by some Northern

politicians as a sign of what would soon befall their country. Secession, the ongoing Civil War, continued disorder within the Union, and uncertainties regarding the balance of power within the federal government caused them to believe that the Union was vulnerable to foreign invasion. This fear led them to advocate giving assistance to or even intervening in Mexico to repel the French.

Advocates of intervention in Mexico based their appeals on the need to both protect the U.S. republic and regain and reassert its republican principles and “exceptionalist” identity. McDougall, for instance, believed that a foreign venture to fight imperial monarchism would reinvigorate amongst U.S. citizens a sense of their shared nationality and detach Southerners from the Confederate cause. The political discourse surrounding Mexican policy during the 1864 presidential campaign cast giving aid to Mexico as a necessary part of realigning the United States’ foreign policy with the nation’s republican values. It was also set within the wider context of the perceived need to restore the U.S. republic to its original model. By the end of the Civil War individuals such as Francis P. Blair Sr. who called for a joint North-South expedition to Mexico argued that such a venture would demonstrate to the world that the United States was ready to reclaim its dominant position in the Western Hemisphere.

Domestic political support for assistance to Mexico gained strength over the course of the Civil War. The policy of direct intervention in Mexico, however, was advocated in earnest by relatively few Northern politicians. Nevertheless, the discourse which emerged surrounding wartime Mexican policy associated interventionism in foreign policy with notions of nationalism and fidelity to republican principles. This attitude would contribute to the emergence of the interventionism which directed U.S. policy in the Western Hemisphere during the 1880s and 90s.⁴⁴⁵ In this sense Seward, who wished to alter fundamentally the course of U.S. expansionism, failed in one of his principal goals as secretary of state.

The dynamics of the struggle between Seward and his domestic critics over Mexican policy can be understood through the notion of confidence. In the midst of the Civil War many Northern politicians feared that the U.S. republic was in decline. Somewhat paradoxically, this fear and doubt contributed to calls for the United States to embark on a robust interventionist policy abroad. Seward, however, never doubted the ultimate survival of both the U.S. and Mexican republics. Indeed, he viewed the

⁴⁴⁵ Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865-1898* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 16; Sexton, *Monroe Doctrine*, 151-58.

countries' respective crises as hallmarks of progress which would usher in the next stage of the United States' continental destiny. This confidence led Seward to use his influence over relations with Mexico to prepare the way for a new era of U.S. expansionism by adopting a policy towards that country based on ideological support, commercial cooperation, and non-intervention.

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