Liberal supporters of the Confederacy

An examination of the motives of two contrasting Liberal MPs who chose to support the South during the American Civil War. By Graham Lippiatt.

Commerce, conscien

Shortly after 4.30 a.m. on the morning of 12 April 1861, the first Confederate shells began to fall on Fort Sumter, the Union-held military installation in the harbour of Charleston, South Carolina. To borrow a phrase from an earlier conflict on American soil, these were shots heard round the world. As the American diplomat and historian George Bancroft wrote in the year after the Civil War ended, 'For a time the war was thought to be confined to our own domestic affairs, but it was soon seen that it involved the destinies of mankind: its principles and causes shook the politics of Europe to the centre and from Lisbon to Pekin divided the governments of the world.'[1] The American Civil War added a new fire to the arguments which were raging on the virtues or vicissitudes of Republicanism, democracy, nation-building; and, of course, on the question of slavery.

The impact of the American Civil War on British political and public opinion reflected this reaction. Keen debates followed on the causes and consequences of the war across the political spectrum; and these deepened and changed as the conflict progressed, particularly given the impact of the Cotton Famine in Lancashire and after the Emancipation Proclamation seemed to make it more explicit that the war was being fought to end slavery. As Turner has pointed out, however, it would be a mistake to assume that the whole of British society was aflame with opinion. There was indifference in many quarters and the strength of opinion changed and shifted with events. There was no clear division of view based on class, political or religious allegiance, or economic or social status.[2] Historians used to assume that working men, Radicals and reformers automatically supported the North, while Conservatives and Whigs sided with the South. As long ago as 1953, a study of Conservative and aristocratic attitudes to the Civil War concluded that the Conservative Party did not take a deep interest in the war and that the assumption that Conservatives collectively hoped for a Confederate victory was not a given.[3] In addition, previous studies of Liberal and Radical politicians have revealed significant sympathy and support for the Confederacy.[4]

Against this fluid background, it is clearly unsafe to assume that Liberals in the early years of the Civil War would instinctively line up with the Union against the Confederacy. Notwithstanding the passionate support for the North given by Liberal intellectuals such as John Stuart Mill, by anti-slavery campaigners like Harriet Martineau or by radical politicians like John Bright or Richard Cobden (both of whom earned the soubriquet Members for the United States, or Members for the Union), there were those among the Liberal ranks who wanted to see a victory for the Confederacy. More surprisingly, perhaps, there were those who supported the Southern cause even after Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. The purpose of this article is to consider the lives and motives of two such Liberal members of parliament during the Civil War: John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton (from 1869, Lord Acton) and William Schaw Lindsay.

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These two men had different careers during the Civil War. Lindsay was active in politics and diplomacy. He used his time and position to argue in the House of Commons in favour of British intervention in the war. He joined pro-Confederate organisations such as the Manchester Southern Club, of which he was a vice-president, and was a founder member of the London branch of the Southern Independence Association, which aimed to mobilise support for recognition of the Confederacy.[5] He

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also visited Napoleon III of France to lobby for French intervention and was in regular contact with Confederate diplomats and commissioners.[6] By contrast, Acton was inactive as an MP. He spoke in the House of Commons just three times in the six years he sat there,[7] and none of these interventions were to do with the American Civil War.[8] Acton's position on the Civil War was expressed through his writings. It was not specifically designed to stimulate support for the Confederacy but was, rather, a part of his scholarship around the history of liberty, democracy, unrestricted majority rule and the protection of minorities.

William Schaw Lindsay (1815–1877)[9]

W. S. Lindsay was born at Ayr in December 1815. He was orphaned young and brought up by an uncle, William Schaw, a Free Church minister. At age 15, he left Ayr and went to Glasgow and soon embarked on a seafaring life. He led a dangerous and exciting existence at sea. He was once washed overboard, suffering serious injury to his legs. On another occasion he received a sabre wound in a fight with pirates and shot one of his attackers dead. This may have been enough adventure for him, for about a year later he retired from the sea and became a port agent, specialising in coal and later in pig iron, at Hartlepool. He became a financial success and married into a ship-owning family, eventually moving to London to become a shipbroker. He later opened an agency in Sunderland, during which time he expanded to own a large number of ships. Lindsay built up contacts with other ship-owners and shipbuilders. His commercial interests made him a fierce proponent of free trade, unrestricted access to markets and freedom of the seas. As a prominent man of international commerce, Lindsay would have been more than aware of the policies of United States' governments from the Embargo Act of 1807, the introduction of protectionist measures in 1816, and further tariffs imposed during the presidency of Andrew Jackson in 1828. These measures had impacted

William Schaw Lindsay (1815–77), 1855 (unknown artist)

on Southern products and trade much more than on the Northern economy[10] and were a factor in Lindsay's sympathy for the efforts of the South to argue states' rights to try and nullify these policies. As Lindsay said of himself, he was 'a plain man whose business was his politics and with a leaning towards Free Trade principles.' These were important motivations when it came to Lindsay's attitudes and opinions on the American Civil War, both as the conflict approached and during its course.[11]

As Lindsay's business life flourished, he began to harbour political ambitions. In April 1852 he unsuccessfully contested Monmouth for the Liberals at by-election and then stood, again without success, in the general election of that year in the naval seat of Dartmouth. In 1854 he was narrowly elected MP for Tynemouth and North Shields. He was returned unopposed there in 1857, and in 1859 he transferred to Sunderland, being one of the two Liberals returned in that constituency. He held the seat throughout the duration of the parliament and the American Civil War.[12]

Lindsay's interests took him to the United States in 1860. By this time, US overseas trade was growing fast, and Lindsay had developed strong business connections with many American ship-owners. It is clear that this visit had British government approval and was sanctioned by the United States. While Lindsay acknowledged that his mission was not in an official capacity, he was supplied with copies of government correspondence concerning maritime issues by the foreign secretary, Lord John Russell.[13] Back home, Lindsay began to speak publicly about the dangers of the approaching conflict between the States, voicing his concerns on commercial, maritime, legal and moral grounds. Lindsay was among the many in Britain who felt the interests and culture of the Northern and Southern states made it increasingly impossible for them to remain together as one nation. This was the age of nationalisms. Nationalist movements in Italy and Hungary, exemplified by the figures of Garibaldi and Kossuth, had attracted Liberal support. There was no natural reverence for existing Unions, and this extended to America. In 1860, for example, Lord Russell seemed in tune with wider opinion when he reflected that peaceful disunion in the United States would benefit both North and South and, by extension, the international community.[14] Many democrats would struggle over the issue of secession, but many would nod in consent when hearing the words of Jefferson Davis giving his inaugural presidential address to the Congress of the Confederate States:

> Our present condition … illustrates the American idea that governments rest upon the consent of the governed, and that it is the right of the people to alter or abolish governments whenever they become destructive of the ends for which they were established.[15]

In addition, many also believed that that the Confederacy could not be conquered militarily, or only, if at all, at great and senseless loss of life and destruction. The seceding states formed a huge geographical area, providing a vast hinterland into which forces could retreat, perhaps recalling the failure of British arms to secure the dauntingly large area of the colonies during the American Revolution. In 1861, Lindsay wrote to New York banker and member of the February Peace Conference in Washington DC, Alexander Duncan, setting out his views on the likely conflict:

> I look at history and consider the vast extent of your country and I find the interests of the South are opposed to the policy of the North. When I see that the two sections of your people differ in almost everything except language, and when I hear that they are resolved by the vote of several of their State legislatures to arm themselves and raise a vast army, not to coerce other States or attack the North but to defend themselves, I could not but feel that there must be a separation and that no force which the North could bring to bear will ever re-unite the Southern with the Northern States.[16]

Lindsay took a businessman's view that separation would be better for the American economy and its international trade, since a long, costly and deadly war, whatever the outcome, could bring on a decline from which it might take America decades to recover. Lindsay's predictions on the human cost of the war were shared by many in Britain, adding to the pressure on the government to offer mediation as the conflict progressed. And when the South was victorious in the first major battle of the war, at Bull Run (First Manassas) in July 1861, it seemed to underline the belief that war would not only be prolonged and bloody, but that separation had become a fait accompli.

During the course of the war, Lindsay took up other themes resonating with public opinion in Britain. A widespread fear existed that opposition to slavery, and the way the war was explicitly being seen a war for emancipation,

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would result in a slave insurrection. A long history of slave revolt in America going back to the earliest settlements[17] had been followed by serious incidents in the British West Indian colonies and by the slave rebellion in Haiti. Memories of these events and of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 were fresh in people's minds. Pro-Southern voices tried to exploit these concerns with predictions of the murder and rape of white women and children by slaves encouraged by a desperate and vindictive Union government,[18] but there was genuine fear which needed little stirring up. Lindsay took up this call following the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863.[19] Writing in the *Sunderland Times* in October 1863, he claimed that the Proclamation was a call to slaves to massacre 'your masters, massacre your mistresses, and massacre their children, so that you may obtain your freedom.'[20]

Yet Lindsay was not favourable to the continuation of slavery in America. When, because of his knowledge of commerce and international shipping, he agreed in 1861 to meet with Williams Lowndes Yancey, the Confederate diplomat, he professed a wish to aid the South in gaining independence but only on the understanding that slavery would eventually be abolished.

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Another issue Lindsay stressed was the impact of the war and the blockade of Southern ports on the Lancashire cotton trade, which caused much hardship and unemployment as the war dragged on. In the House of Commons, in July 1862, he referred to the damage caused to the cotton industry and claimed that Lancashire cotton workers had told him that the South deserved their independence. In general, however, the sympathy of the cotton workers was towards the Union, despite the hardships they were themselves suffering from, mainly because of their animosity towards slavery. However not all working men were pro-North. Many important voices from the Chartist era took an unsympathetic view of American capitalism and exploitation of the working man, which they saw as the dominant force in US industrial development, and for this reason they supported Southern independence.[22]

During the course of the Civil War, Lindsay continued his political and diplomatic efforts to bring about British and French intervention, in the hope of progressing, through offering mediation, to recognition of the Confederacy. Lindsay worked closely with John Arthur Roebuck, the nominal Liberal MP for Sheffield. Roebuck was a former radical, but he was fluid in his political loyalties, was often out of step with Sheffield Liberals and was determinedly independent of party and government ties in the House of Commons. He ended up being made a Privy Counsellor by the Conservatives.[23] Roebuck had attempted and failed to get debates in the House on the war, so Lindsay took up the mantle, allied with the Liberal-Conservative MP for County Galway, William Gregory. As early as February 1862, Lindsay and Gregory were looking to get a debate in the House to discuss the Northern blockade, hoping to get the government to intervene.[24] The following month, Lindsay undertook another meeting with Napoleon in France (with whom he met a number of times and for whom he prepared briefing papers throughout the conflict) to press for French recognition of the Confederacy. Lindsay next tried to take advantage of the outrage provoked by the notorious 'Woman Order' issued by Major-General Butler in occupied New Orleans of May 1862, under which Southern women showing disrespect to Union soldiers were to be treated 'as a woman of the town plying her avocation', in other words as a common prostitute. Despite Lindsay's expressing the opinion that nine-tenths of members were at that time sympathetic to intervention, he was unable to find enough support for a debate. Although he could not get the issue before parliament at this stage, Lindsay was right that opinion was shifting away from the US and from the British policy of neutrality. The Lancashire unemployment figures were dire, and Lindsay started making preparations for a speech on a debate he wanted to initiate in July 1862.[25]

The debate which Lindsay brought before the House of Commons on 18 July was his principal attempt to persuade MPs to force the government into intervention. It took place against the background of a false report of a Union defeat in the Seven Days Battles (25 June – 1 July 1862). The Union forces had retreated but their army was still intact. William Forster, the Liberal MP for Bradford, took an American newspaper to the House to show the report wasn't true. A large crowd had turned up for the debate and there was much jostling for seats in the public gallery between supporters of both sides. It was believed that news of the Union defeat would push the government towards recognition of the Confederacy. Lindsay told the House that the break between North and South was irreparable, with justice on the Confederate side. He tried to focus on the issue of mediation rather than immediate recognition of the South, but he was not a good speaker and failed to get the House on his side. He raised the issue of the cotton shortage and its impact

on Lancashire. Perhaps out of frustration he abandoned his arguments around trade. He said slavery was not the cause of the war and that the North was fighting out of a desire for greed and power. He declared that he 'desired the disruption of the American Union, as every honest Englishman did, because it was too great a power and England should not let such a power exist on the American continent.'[26] Although his points were not seriously challenged, when it came time for the debate to be wound up it was Palmerston, the prime minister, who dealt the death bow to Lindsay's pleas for intervention. Palmerston said that recognition or mediation were not to be considered lightly and that it was for the government alone to decide.[27] In July 1864, Lindsay proposed yet another parliamentary resolution in favour of recognition and mediation, against the background of the increasing loss of life and the sufferings on both sides, but it again came to nothing.[28]

Despite all Lindsay's political and diplomatic efforts, the British government never wavered from its policy of neutrality and France never resorted to acting alone. While sympathy for the South remained widespread and was boosted by events such as the death of Stonewall Jackson, it was more than countered by the odium of most British opinion against slavery. Lindsay published an open letter against the institution of slavery, asking the South to devise a way of abolishing it, and undertook to broaden the base of popular support for Confederate causes in Britain.[29] In August 1864, Lindsay suffered a stroke which diminished his powers and weakened his influence. As a consequence, he did not stand for re-election in Sunderland at the 1865 general election. He maintained his pro-Southern views in retirement. His continuing interest in American maritime affairs and the Civil War is reflected in his post-war letters with former leading Confederates, expressing regret that 'the Southern people who fought so nobly and so well' were not able to achieve their independence.[30] He died, having suffered another stroke, on 28 August 1877.

John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton (1834–1902)

Acton was one of the great historical thinkers of the Victorian age. Through his personality, journalism and scholarship, he established himself as an important figure in liberal Catholic thought. From his study of religious and secular history, Acton came to understand that '… power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.'[31] The key conclusions of Acton's thinking around the state, liberty and democracy were that liberty was the foundation of the good society; that the role of the state must be limited but must ensure the liberty of the individual; that reason took precedence over will, that might was not right; that power was corrupting in any system, and that the test of liberty and democracy is the amount of protection afforded to minorities.[32] Against that background, it might seem incongruous that Acton chose to side with the slave-owning South in the American Civil War.

It is in Acton's study of liberty that we will find the answer to how, despite his views on the immorality of slavery, he came to support the Southern cause.

Acton was born in 1834 in Naples. His family were Shropshire baronets with German connections but also related to French and Italian nobility. His father died young, and his mother then married Earl Granville. Acton followed his Whig stepfather in political affiliation, but his mother insisted on a Roman Catholic upbringing, and Acton studied in France and then under the future Cardinal Wiseman at Oscott College before going to Munich in 1850 to study with the church historian Dr Ignaz von Döllinger. Under Döllinger, Acton became a perceptive student of history, particularly of the church and its tendency to absolutism. Through Döllinger, he became immersed in the liberal Catholic movement. Later he travelled widely, including to the United States, Russia and Mexico, and in 1857, on a visit to Italy with Döllinger, he met Pope Pius IX, although he remained unimpressed by Roman institutions.[33]

Acton's main contributions to religious thinking were later to be developed through his editorship of and writings for the Catholic monthly publication *The Rambler,* in which he argued against papal infallibility and for which he narrowly escaped excommunication. Later still, he followed an academic career with his appointment to the Regius Chair of Modern History at Cambridge. But, from the late 1850s, Acton chose – and his chief biographer believes somewhat reluctantly – a political path.[34] A more recent investigation of Acton's search for a political career in Ireland, however, where his Catholic faith would not be the bar to success it would be in Great Britain, has shown that he was considerably more motivated to find a seat than previously thought. Through his stepfather and through his own efforts to make the most of the patronage of important Catholic contacts, a seat was found for him in Ireland at Carlow.[35] At the general election of 1859, he took the seat from the sitting Conservative John Alexander, a Protestant, by 117 votes to 103.[36] It was in the early 1850s that Acton first came to know W. E. Gladstone, through his

connections to Döllinger and his interest in religious and intellectual affairs. Acton called on Gladstone in London before setting out for Ireland and the election to quiz him on political matters. Thereafter they became more closely acquainted, exchanging views and papers, with Acton becoming Gladstone's confidant and adviser and eventually his friend.[37] As noted above, Acton was not drawn to speak much in parliament, but at the 1865 election he stood again, this time switching to the Shropshire constituency of Bridgnorth, near his home at Aldenham. He won by a single vote but was unseated after scrutiny and, when he stood there again in 1868, he failed to get elected.[38] It was Gladstone who raised Acton to the peerage in 1869, although he spoke in the Lords as rarely as he had done in the Commons.[39]

In 1866 Acton wrote to General Robert E. Lee, the commander of the Confederate States Army during the Civil War, saying, 'You were fighting the battles of our liberty, our progress and our civilization …',[40] and it is in Acton's study of liberty that we will find the answer to how, despite his views on the immorality of slavery, he came to support the Southern cause.

First, however, it is right to point out that Acton came from a family of Whig landowners, and traditionally this group has been seen as typical of British supporters of the Confederacy, identifying with the dominant, plantation-owning aristocratic Southern class, who looked back to their English heritage. It is not clear how much of this sentiment Acton inherited, but he did spring from this background and did mix in Whig and aristocratic circles. In one important regard, however, he differed from the characteristics of this group, traditionally identified as typical of their distaste for the United States (and consequently the Union in the Civil War). This was his esteem for American political arrangements following the Revolutionary War and, in particular, his approval for the principles and mechanisms of American democracy.

Acton had great admiration for the Founding Fathers of the United States. He thought particularly highly of the members of the political elites who participated in the Constitutional Convention. He approved of the way they drew on the political histories of ancient Greece and Rome as well as the English tradition, building into the constitution strong limitations and checks on the power of the state but also of direct democracy. The Founding Fathers were right, in Acton's view, to distrust state power, which had to be defended against abuse. They instituted the separation of powers and

John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, Lord Acton (1834–1902)

followed the federal principle, and Acton saw in this that it caused no danger to liberty and that the new nation was founded on rights.[41]

But Acton looked to the criticisms of the constitution voiced by the Founding Fathers themselves to help explain why things could go wrong in the future. As Colley has recently noted, the Civil War was bound from the outset with debates over written constitutions.[42] In his lecture 'The Civil War in America: Its Place in History', delivered in 1866, Acton said that George Washington had warned against a possible rule in the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia that might have given a greater blocking power to a minority of states. Acton believed Washington foresaw the danger of putting too much into democratic hands. Alexander Hamilton thought that dissolution of the Union was the most likely eventual result. Later in his life, Hamilton called the constitution a frail and worthless fabric, and a temporary bond, although he always thought of himself as a strong defender of the constitution for all its failings. The second president, John Adams, said 'he saw no possibility of

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continuing the Union of the States; that their dissolution must necessarily take place.'

So, while Acton admired the American constitutional system, he thought that it clearly had defects if it led to civil war; defects which had been anticipated by the Founding Fathers. The checks and balances had failed. The experiment of an advanced polity with a large territory, which the United States seemed to have created, had broken down and was no longer an example of a successful democracy combining freedom, equality and strong authority. He had to look again at his ideas on liberty and democracy in the light of events. Acton believed that individual freedom is dependent on the right of self-government, ending ultimately with the state. But he distrusted central authority, and the federal government had come to represent this. Democracy, like any form of government, can degenerate, and clearly this had happened in America. The federal state had become overmighty. It justified its actions by appealing that it represented the majority, but, with J. S. Mill, Acton understood that majority rule can become the tyranny of numbers. For Acton, as Himmelfarb has pointed out, the South was in the position of a young state for whom tyranny seemed to be an appropriate means of augmenting its power.[43]The South felt it was particularly discriminated against by federal actions over tariffs and trade embargoes and in the area of political patronage. Northern manufacturers, unable to compete with European competitors, wanted protection of the home market; but the US market accounted for only around a quarter of Southern cotton production, and the Southern economy was based primarily on cotton. Agricultural producers in the South were for free trade, moderate taxation, and limited government spending.[44] These differences helped bolster Southern support for states' rights, nullification, and limited government along the lines propounded by John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, the seventh vice-president of the United States. Calhoun characterised the relationship between the states as the North playing 'an overweening Sparta to the South's more democratic Athens'.[45] To Acton, it was Calhoun who was the true defender of the Union. He thought Calhoun's theory of nullification 'the very perfection of political truth.'

Acton would surely have approved of the constitution of the Confederate States which specifically strengthened states' rights. The preamble to the constitution read, 'We the people of the Confederate States, each state acting in its sovereign and independent character …'.[46] On Abraham Lincoln's pronouncement that it was the creation of the Union that converted the colonies to states, setting limits to their independence and liberty, Acton wrote, 'This is the extreme logical result of the democratic theory, according to which the whole is the author of the parts, and absolute master of them. In the face of such a doctrine it is obvious that state rights are the only security for freedom'.[47] Thus, could Acton also write in his letter to Robert E. Lee, 'I saw in States Rights the only availing check upon the absolutism of the sovereign will, and secession filled me with hope, not as the destruction but as the redemption of Democracy.'[48]

It seems hard to reconcile Acton's view that the wrong side won the American Civil War with his statement that slavery was an evil to be deplored and that, as it existed in America, the country had become essentially immoral.[49] Acton did not view slavery in absolute terms of right and wrong, however. As Lazarski describes it, 'In his hierarchy of values civilization and political liberty take precedence over the abolition of slavery.… The progress of civilization requires a passage through a phase of slavery and all societies must experience it.'[50] As a Christian, Acton was steeped in the knowledge that historically Christianity had never opposed slavery and that there were many passages of the bible in which it was favourably mentioned.[51] Acton's conscience allowed him to believe that the South should and would come to abolish slavery, as had happened in most Union states and elsewhere, as attitudes and working conditions changed. But, in judging the actions of the Union government during the war and the effects of the Emancipation Proclamation, Acton believed emancipation had been 'an act of war, not of statesmanship, or humanity. They have treated the slave owner as the enemy, and have used the slave as an instrument for his destruction. They have not protected the white man from the vengeance of barbarians, nor the black man from the pitiless cruelty of a selfish civilisation.'[52] In Himmelfarb's words, for Acton the 'collapse of the Union came about when the North added to the iniquities of democracy the fanatical intolerance of an idea, the idea of abolitionism.'[53]

This verdict, delivered as it was in 1866, has been viewed by some biographers of Acton to have lacked sufficient distance and perspective from the events of the Civil War. They see a mellowing of opinion across a range of Acton's thinking on America, liberty and democracy, but he remained a critic of pure democracy and the tyranny of the majority throughout his life. Some of Acton's worst fears for American

democracy were not realised but he stuck to his ideas on state authority and personal liberty. For Acton, as Clausen has pointed out, absolute power corrupts democracy as surely as any other sort of government.[54]

Commerce, conscience and constitutions

The motivations of these two contrasting Liberals in supporting the Confederate cause sprang from their different careers and political interests. Lindsay, the man of international commerce, typified the dogmatic commitment to the principle of free trade of the nineteenth-century Liberal Party and the business community's pragmatic response to the war. Lindsay would have been aware, from his commercial activities and his own visit to the Southern states, that the area was centre of capitalist growth, with a vast internal infrastructure of railroads, warehousing, ports, and shipping concerns based on cotton production which he felt was threatened by Northern actions on tariffs. From his statements in parliament, we know that he felt the Union was unreasonably aggressive and that he feared the damage to trade and prosperity which would and did come from war. Acton represented a more philosophical Whig concern with the concepts of liberty (often more enthusiastically applied overseas than in the United Kingdom). Acton's sympathies for the Southern plantocracy may have reflected his own privileged, landed, and aristocratic heritage; and his willingness to put aside his own rejection of slavery was clearly influenced by his knowledge of Biblical references and his studies of liberty. As he wrote in 1881 to Mary Gladstone, 'The law of liberty tends to abolish the reign of race over race, faith over faith, class over class.' Acton took an intellectual view of the struggles over states' rights and the wording and meaning of constitutions. The positions Lindsay and Acton took were not taken up by the majority of other Liberal MPs, who increasingly came to regard the Civil War as a crusade against slavery.

Lindsay's interventions in parliament made little impact. Acton did not really make his views known widely until after the war ended. While Liberal colleagues may have shared an element of pragmatic support for British intervention on economic or humanitarian grounds in the first years of the war, the Emancipation Proclamation and the gradual turning of the tide of war in favour of the Union helped solidify support for an ending of the war in a victory for the North and the abolition of slavery. However, even at the end, Liberal opinion remained divided. The *Manchester Guardian* editorial of 27 April 1865, in the immediate aftermath of the assassination of President Lincoln, contained the words: 'of [Lincoln's] rule we can never speak except as a series of acts abhorrent to every true notion of constitutional right and human liberty.'[55] It is hard to imagine Lindsay and Acton dissenting from such an assessment.

Graham Lippiatt is a contributing editor to the Journal of Liberal History.

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A Liberal Democrat History Group evening meeting

The fall of the Lloyd George coalition

2022 marks the centenary of the departure from office of the last Liberal to hold the post of Prime Minister; on 19 October 1922 David Lloyd George resigned after six years as premier. His fall followed the decision of Conservative MPs, meeting in the Carlton Club earlier that day, to end the post-war coalition; the Conservative parliamentary party's 1922 Committee is named after that meeting.

Discuss why the Lloyd George coalition fell with **Lord Lexden** (official historian of the Conservative Party) and **Dr Matthew Johnson** (Associate Professor of Modern British History, University of Durham) (*to be confirmed*).

6.30pm, Monday 11 July
Lady Violet Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE
(We are aiming for this to be a hybrid meeting, with an in-person audience and access via Zoom. Further details will be posted nearer the time on our website at https://liberalhistory.org.uk/events/.)

9 T. Little, '"An Undoubted Error, the Most Singular and Palpable": Gladstone and the American Civil War', below.
10 Eugenio F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860–1880* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 67–84.
11 Josh Gibson, 'The Chartists and the Constitution: Revisiting British Popular Constitutionalism', *Journal of British Studies*, 56/1 (2017), pp. 70–90. doi:10.1017/jbr.2016.121. The most systematic discussion is in Id. 'The political thought of the Chartist movement' (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 2016), especially chapter 7, https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.24324. For the significance of emigration see James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The settler revolution and the rise of the Anglo-world, 1783–1939* (Oxford, 2009).
12 C. W. Dilke, *Greater Britain: A record of travel in English-speaking countries in 1866–7* (London, 1868). For its influence see D. Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860–1900* (Princeton, 2007).
13 Eugenio F. Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, 1876–1906* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 245–7.

Commerce, conscience and constitutions

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33 Josef L. Althotz, 'Acton' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sep. 2004.
34 Roland Hill, *Lord Acton* (Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 81–5.
35 Colin Barr, 'Lord Acton's Irish Elections', *The Historical Journal*, 51/1 (March 2008).
36 J. Vincent and M. Stenton, *McAlmont's Parliamentary Poll Book* (Harvester Press, 1971), p. 49.
37 Hill, *Acton*, pp. 86–7.
38 Craig, *Election Results*, pp. 59–60.
39 Altholtz, ONDB.
40 Hill, *Acton*, p. 387.
41 Lazarski, *Power*, p. 144.
42 Linda Colley, *The Gun the Ship and the Pen: Warfare, Constitutions and the Making of the Modern World* (Profile Books, 2021), p. 329.
43 Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Lord Acton: A Study in Conscience and Politics* (Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1993), p. 78.
44 Hill, *Acton*, p. 88.
45 James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (OUP, 2005), pp. 42–3.
46 However, it should be noted that this independence did not extend to the abolition or liberalisation of slavery which was expressly denied in the constitution. See Colley, *Gun*, p. 333.
47 Acton, *Political Causes of the American Revolution* (1861).
48 Jerry Salver, 'Lord Acton and the American Civil War', *The Imaginative Conservative*, https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2019/02/lord-acton-american-civil-war-jerry-salyer, 7 Feb. 2019.
49 Hill, *Acton*, p. 88.
50 Lazarski, *Power*, p. 161.
51 A. C. Grayling, *Towards the Light: The Story of the Struggles for Liberty and Rights That Made the Modern West* (Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 164.
52 Acton, *The Civil War in America* (1866).
53 Himmelfarb, *Acton*, p. 78.
54 Christopher Clausen, 'Lord Acton and the Lost Cause', *American Scholar*, 69/1 (Winter 2000), pp. 49–58.
55 Quoted in Alfred Grant, *The American Civil War and the British Press* (McFarland & Co. 2000), p. 182.