

The London School of Economics and Political Science

'Continuity of Moral Policy': A Reconsideration of British Motives for the Partition of East Africa in light of Anti-Slave Trade Policy and Imperial Agency, 1878-96.

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London, 1st May 2015.

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I declare that my thesis consists of 95,850 words.

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Abstract

In the century and a half since the days of the 'scramble for Africa' a vast body of literature has emerged attempting to disentangle the complexities of the 'New Imperialism'. One of the most prominent and enduring theories was proposed by Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher in *Africa and the Victorians*, which linked the partition of East Africa with geo-strategic concerns connected to Egypt and India. Building upon John Darwin's initial critique, this thesis will re-examine the partition of East Africa in an attempt at offering a comprehensive refutation of the Egypto-centric interpretation. The explanatory model will be exposed as a *post-hoc* fallacy, neither grounded in documentary evidence nor consistent with the sequence of events and policy-decisions. An alternative understanding will be proposed in which the partition of East Africa in successive stages from 1884 to 1895 formed part of a British policy-continuum in the region, wherein protection of commercial interests and suppression of the slave trade were the principal determinants. By tracing the chronology of the partition it will be contended that its ultimate geographical scope was substantially determined at the very beginning of the colonisation process; whilst imperial agency were decisive in expanding the British sphere of influence to comprise Uganda in 1890 and similarly, public opinion was crucial for retaining it in 1892. In particular it will be argued that partition largely represented the cost-effective transplantation of British anti-slave trade policy from the maritime to the continental sphere, a shift enabled by the use of railway technology.

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Abbreviations

BFASS	The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society
BI	British-India Steam Navigation Company
BL	British Library
CMS	The Church Missionary Society
DWG	The German Witu Company (Deutsche Witugesellschaft)
GCS	The German Colonial Society (Deutscher Kolonialverein)
GELMB	The German Evangelical Lutheran Mission of Bavaria
Granville	Granville Leveson-Gower, 2nd Earl Granville (1815-1891)
HoC	House of Commons, British Parliament
HoL	House of Lords, British Parliament
IBEA	The Imperial British East Africa Company
KCL	King's College, University of London
LSE	The London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London
RGS	The Royal Geographical Society
Rosebery	Archibald Primrose, 5th Earl of Rosebery (1847-1929)
Salisbury	Robert Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury (1830-1903)
SFGC	The Society for German Colonisation (Gesellschaft für deutsche Kolonisation)
SOAS	The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
TNA	The National Archives, UK
UMFC	The United Methodists Free Church of Sheffield

Introduction

On 15 September 1884, *The Times* announced:

Africa's time had apparently come [and that] the parcelling out of the heritage of Ham, which had been going on spasmodically for four centuries, would probably be completed in a few years.

The writer marvelled at the 'bewildering rapidity' with which the 'annexations and "protections"' took place, and unwittingly coined the sobriquet 'the scramble for Africa.'¹ Also noteworthy is the biblical reference to slavery, epitomised in the so-called 'curse of Ham', since it reveals the associations Africa still conjured among informed circles at the dawn of the partition. As bewildering it may have been to contemporary observers, the scramble has remained perplexing to historians who have been attracted to its complexities ever since. It certainly represents the high-water mark of Victorian imperialism; and to many observers today it embodies the very essence of an aggressive Western subjugation of the global south. However, because this last hurrah of large-scale territorial conquest occurred with such rapidity, the documentary evidence left over from the period has often been scant, fragmented and inconclusive. Hence, the very speed with which the partition took place made it not only compelling for historical analysis, but gave rise to fruitful ground for speculation over motives. The sheer scale of scholarly attention and theorising is encapsulated in Cain and Hopkins cautionary introduction to the topic: 'Nowhere does the weight of historiography press so insistently upon the study of imperialism as in the case of the partition of Africa.'²

¹ 'The Scramble for Africa,' *The Times*, 15 September 1884, p. 15.

² P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism 1688-2001, 2nd edition* (Harlow: Longman, 2002). p. 303.

Explanatory models have ranged from emphasising economic,³ strategic,⁴ technological or ideological factors,⁵ and have been placed in metropolitan⁶ or peripheral⁷ frameworks. Naturally, combinations of all these aspects were at work during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. As such, the plethora of theories seeking to determine the motives of European policymakers is not only testament to the ambiguity of the documentary record, but reflective of the local factors involved in each particular region of Africa.

As is often the case with rough-grained historical theories, they have upon close examination proved unequal to the task of rendering intelligible the full complexity of each individual case. Indeed, Cain and Hopkin also notes that: 'the growth of knowledge has had the perplexing result of making it easier to say what is wrong with current interpretations than what is right [...] and that this '[d]isarray may well be a faithful representation of historical reality [that] accords with a view of history which denies that there is a whole to be grasped.'⁸

Yet as Ian Phimister reminds us, the purpose of explanatory models are not merely 'oversimplifications to be exposed' but should rather be understood as frameworks which can

³ See: J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: Archibald Constable, 1902); Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism; a popular outline* (1928); P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas II: New Imperialism, 1850-1945," *The Economic History Review* 40, no.1 (1987): 1-26. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-0289.1987.tb00417.x; Cain et al., *British Imperialism*.

⁴ See: William Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism 1890-1902, Volume I* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1935); William Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism 1890-1902, Volume 2* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1935); or Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, (London: Macmillan & Co, 1961).

⁵ See: Godfrey Uzoigwe, *Britain and the Conquest of Africa: The Age of Salisbury*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1974); Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion, 3rd edition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2012).

⁶ Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

⁷ See: Åke Holmberg, *African tribes and European Agencies: Colonialism and Humanitarianism in British South and East Africa, 1870-1895* (Göteborg: Akademiförlaget, 1966); or Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians* 'man on the spot' theory.

⁸ Cain et al., *British Imperialism*, pp. 303-4.

introduce 'order and intelligibility' to a complex array of data.⁹ Whilst oversimplifications are, to a certain degree, an unavoidable aspect of historical analysis, there is a distinct difference between a reductive understanding of the historical process and a misunderstanding which has little to no basis in the documentary evidence or the sequence of events. Indeed, this thesis will seek to expose the dominant historiographical model of the East African partition as one such misunderstanding, and also argue that it was a misinterpretation of motives that was fomented by the interested parties at the time in the years succeeding the partition to better justify the significant costs associated with the annexation.

In the words of John Darwin, the partition of what today constitutes Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania long represented the '*locus classicus*' of late-Victorian grand strategy.¹⁰ The negligible British economic interests in the region, combined with a sceptical disregard for the abolitionist engagement, have led many historians to deduce that the partition of East Africa was a result of strategic concerns. But despite its seductive geographically-derived logic, the strategic model raises more questions than it answers. As this thesis will demonstrate, the strategic interpretation is inconsistent with both the documentary evidence and the policy decisions. Instead of entertaining novel grand-defensive concerns, it will be proposed that British policy toward the region formed a continuum in which the annexation constituted a natural part, and to an extent, a conclusion. The basis on which this Victorian doctrine of continuity in foreign policy toward East Africa rested was the commitment to end the slave trade. Hence, it will be argued that it was the cost-effective execution of anti-slave trade policy

⁹ Robin Law, "Imperialism and Partition," *Journal of African History* 24, no. 1 (1983): 101-104. DOI: 10.1017/S0021853700021551 cited in Ian Phimister, "Africa Partitioned," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 18, no. 2 (1995): 355-81. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40241314>

¹⁰ John Darwin, "Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion," *The English Historical Review* 112, no. 447 (1997): 614-42. DOI: 10.1093/ehr/CXII.447.614

rather than imperial security considerations that constituted the central element of British East Africa policy over the 1880-90s.

To demonstrate this argument the thesis incorporates two main themes. On the one hand it will establish that the strategic model is a *post hoc* fallacy and that it is an interpretation that has been excessively influenced by the benefit of hindsight and the study of maps, to the detriment of contemporary correspondence, analysis and policy decisions. It will also be contended that British control of the Nile's headwaters was a result of coincidence rather than a carefully laid-down plan, conceived and directed by British policymakers such as Lord Salisbury or Lord Rosebery.

The second main component to the thesis concerns the primacy of anti-slave trade policy; in particular how the British efforts at halting the East African slave trade influenced the key stages of the partition process. It contends that the abolitionist cause had by the 1880s matured sufficiently to saturate the body politic; it no longer formed the exclusive concern of vanguard activists, but had become a mainstream issue among the public and political establishment. Thus Britain's encounter with a revived East African slave trade triggered a form of 'moral panic' that significantly influenced policy decisions toward the region. In addition to these two broad themes, other factors which determined the annexation will be explored. These include the dynamics between Anglo-German intergovernmental co-operation and local rivalry; the influence exerted by pressure groups and public opinion upon the formulation of policy; and how exploration, economic expectations, local crises and indeed coincidence determined the geographical scope of the partition.

Although economic motives will be investigated and recognised, it will be argued that they do not constitute the exclusive or overarching impetus behind the scramble. In this respect it is

worth considering that the entirety of events which comprised the partition took place within a period of economic recession in Britain, what has been termed 'the Great Depression' of 1873-96.¹¹ These general economic conditions might account for some of the unrealistic commercial expectations that were entertained for the little explored regions surrounding the Equatorial great lakes. As the second chapter will show, key characters in the early stages of the process, such as the Manchester cotton magnate Frederick Hutton or the Scottish shipowner William Mackinnon, were more akin to pawns of Foreign Office officialdom than free agents motivated by purely economic rewards. However the period in which this argument is most persuasive is during the interval between the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886 and the Anglo-German Heligoland Treaty of 1890; when Mackinnon's quest to secure the Equatorial Province, out of financial concerns, influenced the pattern of territorial claims. Whilst the later decision to hold Uganda in 1892 was certainly not a result of 'gentlemanly capitalism.'¹² This commercial aspect, or lack thereof in favour of personal philanthropy and prestige is comprehensively detailed in Marie de Kiewiet's¹³ excellent doctoral dissertation, and building upon the former's unpublished research, John Galbraith's later account.¹⁴

The thesis expends considerable effort upon the ideological and moral dimensions of imperial policymaking during the scramble. The origins of these 'Empires of sentiment' directly preceding the partition were recently explored by Joanna Lewis in her research pertaining to

¹¹ D. J. Coppock, "British Industrial Growth during the 'Great Depression' (1873-96): A Pessimist's View," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1964): 389-96. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2593014>

¹² See: Cain et al., *British Imperialism*, pp. 303-39; Raymond E. Dumett, ed., *Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Imperialism: The New Debate on Empire* (London: Longman, 1999); D. K. Fieldhouse, *The Theory of Capitalist Imperialism* (London: Longmans, 1967).

¹³ Marie de Kiewiet, "The History of the Imperial British East Africa Company," (PhD diss., King's College London, 1955). Later surname: Hemphill.

¹⁴ John S. Galbraith, *Mackinnon and East Africa 1878-1895: A Study in the 'New Imperialism'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

the memorialisation of David Livingstone.¹⁵ Since the thesis explores how the execution of anti-slave trade policy became a motive for imperial expansion, it forms part of what has become a growing body of literature which investigates the humanitarian element of late-Victorian imperialism.¹⁶

Whilst there were other 'good causes' liberal or religious groups sought to incorporate in imperial policy, such as temperance or arms-control; none were as prominent, nor have drawn similar levels of historiographical attention as abolitionism. Much has been written about the slave trade and anti-slavery, but there have been few detailed studies into the effects of abolitionist activism and ideology upon decision-making in regard to the partition of East Africa. Suzanne Miers,¹⁷ Seymour Drescher¹⁸ and Frederick Cooper¹⁹ have all written extensively upon the topic of slavery and abolition, but have not delved deeply into how it translated into annexation. Likewise have the excellent works of William Mulligan,²⁰ Richard Huzzey,²¹ who both explore the abolitionist element of British imperial policy, not offered a

¹⁵ Joanna E. Lewis, "Empires of Sentiment; Intimacies from Death: David Livingstone and African Slavery 'at the Heart of the Nation'," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43, no. 2 (2015): 210-37.

DOI:10.1080/03086534.2014.974874

¹⁶ See: Andrew Porter, "Trusteeship, Anti-slavery, and Humanitarianism," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century Volume III*, eds. Andrew Porter and Alaine Low (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 198-221.; Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon, eds., *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade 1807-1975* (Brighton, Sussex Academic Press, 2009); Brendan Simms and D. J. B. Trim, eds, *Humanitarian Intervention: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*; Bronwen Everill and Josiah Kaplan, eds, *The History and Practice of Humanitarian Intervention and Aid in Africa* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Amalia Ribi Forclaz, *Humanitarian Imperialism: The Politics of Anti-Slavery Activism, 1880-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁷ See: Suzanne Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade* (London: Longman, 1975); Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

¹⁸ Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹⁹ Frederick Cooper, *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya 1890-1925* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

²⁰ William Mulligan, "British Anti-Slave Trade and Anti-Slavery Policy in East Africa, Arabia and Turkey in the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, eds. Brendan Simms and D. J. B. Trim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 257-80.

²¹ Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*.

sufficiently comprehensive analysis into the particular details of the scramble for East Africa. The historiographical dominance of the Egyptocentric explanatory model may account for some of this scholarly oversight.

The Strategic Explanatory Model and ‘Nile Valley Doctrine’

Within a decade of the Berlin West African Conference the East African mainland – what today constitutes Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda – had, in successive stages, been incorporated into a British and German colonial empire.²² Although the thesis will argue that the most significant bilateral treaty in terms of determining the geographical scope of the partition was the one negotiated at the start of the process, the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886; it was the later Anglo-German ‘Heligoland-Zanzibar’ Treaty of 1890 that finally reconciled the outstanding territorial disputes between the two nations in Africa. Due to its ostensibly greater historical significance, the historiography focusing on this treaty has eclipsed that of the former. As will be detailed in chapter four, this chronological bias has substantially influenced the

²² A selection of the principal historical accounts pertaining to the partition of East Africa listed in chronological order P.L. McDermott, *British East Africa, or IBEA: A History of the Formation and Work of the Imperial British East Africa Company* (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd, 1893); Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert: Marquis of Salisbury Vol. IV 1887-1892* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932); William Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, 2 Volumes (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1935); Reginald Coupland, *The Exploitation of East Africa 1856-1890: The Slave Trade and the Scramble* (London: Faber & Faber, 1939); Kiewiet, *History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*; Roland Oliver, *Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957); Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*; George Neville Sanderson, *England, Europe and the Upper Nile 1882-1899* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1965); Gifford et al., *Britain and Germany in Africa*; Galbraith, *Mackinnon and East Africa*; Muriel Evelyn Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa* (London: Longman, 1974); Uzoigwe, *The Age of Salisbury*; Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*; Woodruff D. Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978); Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa 1876-1912* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1991); Darwin, *Dynamics of Territorial Expansion*; Colin Newbury, "Great Britain and the Partition of Africa, 1870-1914," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century Volume III*, eds. Andrew Porter and Alaine Low (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 624-650.; Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*; Arne Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism 1856-1918: A Political Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*.

understanding of the partition and in particular the motives behind it.

Over the course of the twentieth century the historiography of the partition underwent radical changes. Two distinct and opposing interpretations of British motives came to the fore, namely a collection of individual analyses which might be loosely termed a 'composite' model²³ emphasising Britain's commercial, political and humanitarian engagement with the region; and, a rivalling geo-strategic model.²⁴ However the strategic interpretation has arguably gained status as the orthodox wisdom. Testament to its overarching dominance is not only the sheer volume of scholarship published on the subject since its initial proposal in 1935, but also the number of casual mentions ostensibly accepting the hypothesis as an

²³ Composite, non-strategic model: Coupland, *The Exploitation of East Africa*; Charles Miller, *The Lunatic Express: An Entertainment in Imperialism* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 153-286, Uzoigwe, *The Age of Salisbury*; Darwin, *Dynamics of Territorial Expansion*, pp. 634-40.; Cain et al., *British Imperialism*, pp. 333-5., Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, pp. 227-31.

²⁴ Pre-1997 literature subscribing to the Egypto-centric hypothesis: Cecil, *Life of Robert IV*; Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism 2 Vols.*; Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1952), p. 160.; John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review* 6, no. 1 (1953): 14. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-0289.1953.tb01482.x; Kiewiet, *History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*; Oliver, *Harry Johnston*; Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*; Sanderson, *England, Europe and the Upper Nile*; Wm. Roger Louis, "Great Britain and German Expansion in Africa, 1884-1919," and Robert O. Collins, "Origins of the Nile Struggle: Anglo-German Negotiations and the Mackinnon Agreement of 1890," in Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 3-46, 119-151.; D.A. Low, *Buganda in Modern History* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971), p. 78.; Herbert Paul Meritt, "Bismarck and the First Partition of East Africa," *English Historical Review* 91, No. 360 (Jul., 1976), p. 585. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/566628>; Galbraith, *Mackinnon and East Africa*, p.181.; C. C. Eldridge, *Victorian Imperialism* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1978), pp. 163-7.; John Mackenzie, *The Partition of Africa: And European Imperialism 1880-1900* (London: Methuen, 1983), p.38.; Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, pp. 297-357. Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience, from 1765 to the Present* (London: Fontana Press, 1996), p. 127.

undisputed fact even in research published after²⁵ Darwin's critique in 1997.²⁶

Certainly the most prominent of these analyses was proposed by Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher in *Africa and the Victorians*.²⁷ The documentary basis of this interpretation derived from an assertion made by Lady Gwendolen Cecil in her biography of her late father Robert Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, published in 1931. She claimed that from 1889, the security of the Nile Valley had become a 'separate and dominating factor' in Lord Salisbury's foreign policy.²⁸ Some four years later the Harvard historian William Langer published his two-volume opus *Diplomacy of Imperialism*²⁹ which contained the original narrative which was to feature so prominently in the publications of Robinson et al.³⁰ and Sanderson³¹ in the 1960s.

As a reaction to the domination of Marxist economic interpretations of imperial history,³² Robinson and Gallagher revived Langer's Nile hypothesis to construe the partition of East

²⁵ Post-1997 literature subscribing to the Egypto-centric hypothesis: Newbury, *Great Britain and the Partition of Africa*, p. 639.; John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 196., Piers Brendon, *Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007), p. 198.; M.E. Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, 3rd Edition, (Harlow: Longman, 2010), pp.61-8.; Terje Tvedt, "Hydrology and Empire: The Nile, Water Imperialism and the Partition of Africa," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 39, no. 2 (2011): 173-194. DOI: 10.1080/03086534.2011.568759; T. G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 183, 194.; Tim Jeal, *Explorers of the Nile: The Triumph and Tragedy of a Great Victorian Adventure* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 376-77., Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A History of British Imperialism 1850-2011*, 5th edition (Harlow: Pearson, 2012), pp. 138-41.; Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p. 164.; Frits Bolkenstein, *The Intellectual Temptation: Dangerous Ideas in Politics* (Leiden: Author House, 2013), pp. xv-xvi; Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny and foreword by Wm. Roger Louis, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2015).

²⁶ Darwin, *Dynamics of Territorial Expansion*, pp. 614-42. The refutation of the strategic explanatory model is included on pages 634-40. See also: Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, pp. 227-31, and Jonas Fossli Gjersø, "The Scramble for East Africa: British Motives Reconsidered, 1884-95," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* (2015) DOI: 10.1080/03086534.2015.1026131

²⁷ Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*. Although Robinson et al.'s strategic hypothesis is almost identical to the one first posited by Langer, it is the former which have risen to prominence in the historiography. All later literature subscribing to this explanatory model of the East African partition cites Robinson et al. and as such this thesis will heretofore refer to Robinson et al. when referring to the Egypto-centric strategic hypothesis.

²⁸ Cecil, *Life of Robert IV*, pp. 139-40.

²⁹ Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism Vol II*, pp. 537-580.

³⁰ Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, pp. 274-338.

³¹ Sanderson, *England, Europe and the Upper Nile*, pp. 1-66.

³² For a succinct overview of the theoretical basis of 'Capitalist Imperialism' see: Fieldhouse, *Capitalist Imperialism*.

Africa in strategic terms, as it was argued 'British Africa was a gigantic footnote to the Indian Empire.'³³ The essence of Langer's analysis centres on the alleged primacy that British policy-makers attached to securing the Nile. The absence of regular rains made the Egyptian agricultural sector reliant on the river flowing from the Ethiopian highlands and Central Equatorial Africa. Langer and his subsequent adherents argue that there was a contemporary fear that the Nile, as Egypt's *Achilles heel*, could simply have been dammed or deflected by any European Power desiring to destabilise the country. It was held that such an eventuality would have rendered both Egypt useless as a British base and closed the Suez Canal for the Royal Navy and British merchant shipping – thus severing the shortest link between Britain and British India.

Notwithstanding the absence of any evidence to suggest that such fears were actually entertained, the model's relevance for Uganda derives from the country's geographical position as it straddles the north-western shores of the Victoria Nyanza, the region encompassing the source of the White Nile. Yet in total, the water supplied by this tributary is meagre compared to the Blue Nile and Atbara River that take their source from north-east Africa. Egypt's annual floods are due to the seasonal rains that fall on the Ethiopian highlands which are the Blue Nile and Atbara River's catchment area. However during the summer season these rivers are laid dry and the White Nile provides the majority of the water that reaches Egypt. This reversal of roles is one of the key points that support the 'Nilotic

³³ Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, "The Partition of Africa," in *The New Cambridge Modern History. Volume 11 Material Progress and World-wide Problems 1870-1898*, ed. F.H. Hinsley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 616.

explanatory model'³⁴ in regard to East Africa.³⁵ The Nilotic narrative formed part of what Robinson et al. termed the 'New Frontiers of Insecurity' which placed the partition of East Africa in a wider framework of imperial security centred on India and the Mediterranean.³⁶

According to this analysis, at the end of the 1880s Salisbury transplanted the focus of his defensive policy from Afghanistan to the Upper Nile Valley since Ottoman weakness had forced Britain to revise its Mediterranean security policy, replacing the former strategic pivot of Constantinople with Cairo.³⁷ It is argued that this revision had come about after the Ottoman capital was judged indefensible against Russia, and it was feared that the continued maintenance of the Straits' integrity against Russia and its potential French ally, would lead Britain into a dependency upon the Triple Alliance. By focusing on Cairo as a Mediterranean foothold Salisbury hoped to disentangle Britain from a deepening reliance on Bismarck.

The geo-political relevance for East Africa was certainly well articulated:

...the Mediterranean and Indian interest, like a driving wheel in some vast machine, was now engaging the lesser wheels of eastern-central Africa and connecting them one by one to its own workings. At the turn of Salisbury's strategy, these once remote and petty interests in the Sudan, Uganda and northern hinterlands of Zanzibar were changing into safeguards of Britain's world power.³⁸

In the model's most recent incarnation, Terje Tvedt contends that he has introduced a novel interpretation of the events that included the partition of East Africa. Yet the primacy of the

³⁴ The 'Nilotic explanatory model' refers to the hypotheses which have afforded primacy to the River Nile and the Nile Valley as the central geographical motive of European policymakers in regard to the partition of East Africa. This includes the strategic model, as espoused by Robinson et al., and the economic model as per Tvedt, *Hydrology and Empire*.

³⁵ Sanderson, *England, Europe & The Upper Nile*, p. 10.

³⁶ Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, pp. 288-9.

³⁷ See: Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, Chapter 8: 'Cairo or Constantinople?' pp. 254-73.

³⁸ Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, pp. 272-3, 284.

Nile is retained. He claims that British policy makers *did not* react in a defensive manner, but entertained an offensive strategy, that of boosting Egypt's summer supply of water in order to maximise cotton production.³⁹ This would be achieved through the construction of barrages or dams up-stream capable of storing some of the excess water to be released in time of peak summer demand. Hence, by technical means Britain would increase the production volume of Egypt's principal cash-crop through reducing the volatility of its water supplies. This policy is held to have been the brainchild of the Egyptian civil service, in particular the British hydrologists William Willcocks and Colin Scott Moncrieff.⁴⁰ Yet apart from its stronger agricultural and thus economic focus, Tvedt's analysis retains the essence of Langer's original geo-strategic account: namely that Egypto-centric British policy makers perceived the Nile as paramount to their interests, and was thus the principal factor which determined the annexation of Uganda in 1894 and consequentially the remaining East African territories in 1895.

Until Robinson et al.'s publication, the most comprehensive scholarship concerning the British presence in East Africa had been written by Reginald Coupland in his volumes *East Africa and its Invaders* and *The Exploitation of East Africa*.⁴¹ It was the latter which dealt with the scramble and in it Coupland deduced that the definitive partition occurred with the ratification of the Anglo-German Boundary Agreement in 1886. No more analysis than a brief epilogue was devoted to the later 'Heligoland-Zanzibar Agreement' of 1890.⁴² However for any adherent of the Nile hypothesis *it is vital* to discredit the political significance of the 1886

³⁹ Tvedt, *Hydrology and Empire*, pp. 173 -194.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 173 -194.

⁴¹ Reginald Coupland, *East Africa and Its Invaders: From the Earliest Times to the Death of Seyyid Said in 1856* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938).

⁴² Coupland, *The Exploitation of East Africa*.

Agreement, simply because no discernible interest was shown by British policymakers at the time in securing the Nile or protecting the Nile Valley.⁴³ Indeed there was a virtual consensus among the British political establishment in the 1880s that Britain's occupation of Egypt was of a temporary character.⁴⁴

To circumvent this problem Robinson et al. afforded prominence to the later treaty of 1890 and belittled the significance of the 1886 Agreement. Thus the initial partition of 1886, which in most respects determined the modern borders between Kenya and Tanzania, was dismissed as 'the slightest, the most tentative advance towards a more direct commitment, and it was far from denoting any new "imperialist" urge.'⁴⁵ Robinson et al. argued that it had come about as a result of 'the collapse of the old system of influence' and as such the 'government had rigged up a new "sphere of interest" over part of the region.'⁴⁶ What, however, is distinctively ironic about this assertion, when perceived in the context of the importance that the same authors attached to the 1890 treaty, is the fact that this later agreement *merely enlarged* the existing sphere of influence to comprise Uganda. If Salisbury, as Darwin rightly questions in his critique, had attached such overriding importance to securing Uganda for the British Empire in order to safeguard Egypt, would he then not have awarded it and the remaining territories in mainland East Africa at least protectorate status, as he did Zanzibar? The issues briefly raised in this introductory section are examined at length in chapters two, four and five, with a view at refuting the Egypto-centric explanatory model.

⁴³ Britain's policy toward Egypt over the 1880s is dealt with in chapter four.

⁴⁴ M.P. Hornik, "The Mission of Sir Henry Drummond-Wolff to Constantinople, 1885-1887," *The English Historical Review* 55, no. 220 (1940): 598-623. DOI: 10.1093/ehr/LV.CCXX.598; and F.H. Hinsley, "Bismarck, Salisbury and the Mediterranean Agreements of 1887," *Historical Journal* I, no. 1 (1958): 79. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3020370> cited in Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 264.

⁴⁵ Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 198.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

Methodology

The hypothesis that forms the main body of this study was an unintended consequence of my master's research into the Uganda Railway. Although I had at the time little reason to doubt that the large volume of historiography suggesting that East Africa was annexed out of strategic reasons was incorrect, I struggled to find a clear and unambiguous reference in the primary sources. Darwin was certainly right in characterising the evidence underpinning the Nilotic hypothesis as 'astonishingly slender and extremely speculative.'⁴⁷ The citations listed by the main literature were either circular, in that they simply referred to other scholarship that posited the same argument, particularly Langer or Robinson et al.,⁴⁸ or they were, upon close investigation, misquotations taken out of context.

This includes, but is not limited to, the correspondence and memoranda of Evelyn Baring, Clement Hill, Percy Anderson, Salisbury and Rosebery as is detailed in chapters four and five. An example of this practice of selective citation is the assertion that Salisbury demonstrated his commitment to 'Nile Valley Doctrine' during the Anglo-German negotiations in 1890.⁴⁹

Robinson et al writes:

Early in May Salisbury made his position still clearer. The German Ambassador asked for a standstill agreement, but Salisbury told him that: "Africa was a very large place; we had interests in every part of it; the negotiations [*sic*] at Berlin might take a long time; and that we could not undertake to maintain the status quo throughout the continent until those negotiations were concluded ... as far as I could see upon the map, Uganda was within the English and not the German hinterland...". In the event he won his point with surprising ease. After three

⁴⁷ Darwin, *Dynamics of Territorial Expansion*, p. 637.

⁴⁸ See: footnotes 23 and 24 concerning the pre- and post-1997 historiography subscribing to the Egypto-centric hypothesis.

⁴⁹ Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 292.

days of talks between the experts, the Germans agreed in principle to renounce Uganda...⁵⁰

However by simply including more of the quotation, a different meaning emerges which no longer infers Salisbury's designs for Uganda:

With reference to the particular matter to which he referred, I said that in the first place, as far as I could see upon the map, Uganda was within the English & not the German hinterland; that my belief was that no treaties had been concluded; & that if they had been concluded it must have been as far back as last Autumn; long before Sir Percy Anderson's mission was thought of. Until our own official information was more complete, I should abstain from either approving or disapproving of the supposed treaties.⁵¹

This was simply a factual observation made by Salisbury at the time and a geographical reality for the region ever since the 'hinterland understanding' of 1887,⁵² not some admission of a newly developed grand strategy focused on Uganda and the Upper Nile as Robinson et al. implies. As chapter four demonstrates, the IBEA's treaty with *kabaka* Mwanga of Buganda had been obtained the preceding autumn by Frederick Jackson who had acted on his own initiative and indeed against his orders 'not to get into Uganda.'⁵³ Moreover, the partition of Uganda was quickly settled since Anderson suggested at the opening of the negotiations that their 'work would be facilitated by settling at once points which were not contended; regarding the 'Hinterland' Agreement of 1887 in this light.'⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 292. And Salisbury to Malet, 5 May 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

⁵¹ Salisbury to Malet, 5 May 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA

⁵² Salisbury to Malet, 2 July 1887, FO 403/102, TNA.

⁵³ Charles Stokes to Euan Smith, 25 February 1890 enclosed in Euan Smith to Salisbury, 15 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA. Also see: Frederick Jackson, *Early Days in East Africa* (London: Edward Arnold & Co, 1930), pp. 222-3.

⁵⁴ Malet to Salisbury, 8 May 1890, FO 881/6146, TNA.

Another grave example of these speculative citations was made to support the entire Nilotic hypothesis. At the beginning of the chapter entitled 'Salisbury's Watch on the Nile, 1890' Robinson et al. stated:

By the end of 1889 Salisbury was clear that the whole of the Nile Valley must be reserved, yet December's proposals breathed no word about Uganda. But by raising the Zanzibar issue, the Prime Minister had found a way of probing German intentions and measuring the scope of German concessions in east Africa. What he was after was a large-scale African agreement, which would launch the new strategy of defending the Valley of the Nile.⁵⁵

In support of this wide-ranging assertion Robinson et al. cited a memorandum written by Anderson which in no way refers to the Valley of the Nile or of Salisbury's alleged grand strategy: '...if a general settlement were arrived at on the basis discussed with Count Hatzfeldt this question would be included in it.'⁵⁶ The short handwritten note is partially illegible, but neither the typed version included in the Foreign Office records lends credence to the assertion; it simply stated that the question of the Witu delimitation would be included in a general settlement.⁵⁷ As will also be detailed in chapter four the matter of Witu was a local concern, detached from the questions pertaining to the interior.

However, perhaps the most notorious of these misquotations⁵⁸ was made by virtue of a despatch that Baring sent Salisbury warning him about the Italian offensive toward Kassala in modern-day northern Ethiopia.⁵⁹ Although Baring did refer to this as the 'Nile Valley' and recommended that it be incorporated into Egypt, he explicitly warned against any Egyptian

⁵⁵ Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 291.

⁵⁶ Anderson, Memorandum, 15 January 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

⁵⁷ Salisbury to Malet, 5 January 1890, FO 403/136, TNA.

⁵⁸ This is also mentioned by John Darwin in his critique, see: Darwin, *Dynamics of Territorial Expansion*, p. 637.

⁵⁹ Baring to Salisbury, Secret, 15 December 1889, FO 78/4243, TNA.

re-conquest of territories south of Khartoum. These warnings were even included in the same letter.⁶⁰ However this did not prevent Robinson et al. from citing it and Salisbury's much later reply (which neither mentions Uganda),⁶¹ as evidence for Salisbury's strategic designs for what is referred to as the 'Upper Nile.'⁶² One of Robinson et al.'s principal adherents, G. N. Sanderson even remarks that:

Baring seems to have believed that Egypt was safe so long a no European Power reached the Nile near Khartoum; it does not seem to have occurred to him that the Nile waters might be threatened in the far south.⁶³

A much simpler explanation would certainly be that Baring never actually entertained these fears. Rather, this preoccupation with the threat to 'the Nile waters [...] in the far south' was the obsession of a cadre of historians eager to revise the history of East Africa's partition, not one that occupied contemporary policymakers.

What is also sometimes invoked as a last-ditch effort at defending the Nilotic explanatory model is the theory of tacit assumptions. In other words that the primacy of the Nile was so well-known in diplomatic and political circles that it was unnecessary to mention it, either in correspondence, memoranda or speeches. However, a detailed examination of the considerable volume of records that were produced by Foreign Office officials throughout this period reveals that very little, if anything, of British interests pertaining to the region was left unmentioned or not analysed in the documents.

⁶⁰ See: Baring to Salisbury, Secret, 15 December 1889, FO 78/4243 and Baring to Salisbury, 15 March 1890, FO 78/4308, TNA.

⁶¹ See: Salisbury to Baring, Private, 28 March 1890, FO 633/7, TNA.

⁶² Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, pp. 283-9.

⁶³ Sanderson, *England, Europe and the Upper Nile*, p. 18.

In the comprehensive memoranda drawn up by mandarins such as Anderson, Hill, Holmwood or Kirk it is inconceivable that an overarching policy-objective such as this should have gone unstated. Nor is it credible that this concern was not mentioned by the matter-of-fact Salisbury or Rosebery in their private or secret communications with cabinet colleagues. Strategy and the Nile were among the many factors discussed among the policymaking *milieu*, but not in the terms argued by Robinson et al., rather as geographical points of reference. What was most frequently mentioned in the files were Britain's commercial and anti-slave trade interests in the region, which is probably more reflective of British motives than some novel strategic concern veiled in a conspiracy of silence. In order to demonstrate this and to avoid making similar errors of misquotation, this thesis incorporates what may at sometimes be construed as long extracts, as these are less liable to be misrepresented.

The findings presented in the thesis are principally drawn from the memoranda and correspondence of the Foreign Office. In particular, the Anglo-German correspondence relating to Zanzibar has been extensively researched as these files offer the most comprehensive repository of contemporary analysis and communications regarding 1880-90s East Africa. It is worth noting that the sources concerning German policy are derived from British records and as such would also be reflective of British interpretations and prejudice. Yet, it is this understanding of German thinking that would also have shaped contemporary British analysis and policymaking. *In lieu* of German-derived primary material, the thesis has relied on secondary literature on German imperialism in East Africa.

Apart from the official correspondence deposited at the National Archives, various private and semi-official correspondences have been consulted. These include the Cromer Papers and the Malet Papers at the National Archives, the Mackinnon Papers held at the School of

Oriental and African Studies, the Salisbury Papers held at Hatfield House, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society Papers and the Gerald Portal Papers held at the University of Oxford, the Church Missionary Society Papers held at the University of Birmingham, the Joseph Thomson Papers held at the Royal Geographical Society, the Archbishop of Canterbury and other Church of England records held at Lambeth Palace Library, the Gladstone Papers held at the British Library and the Harry Johnston Papers held at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. In addition to these main sources of archival evidence, both Hansard parliamentary records and digitalised press sources such as *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* have been consulted. Furthermore a wide range of contemporary literature and memoirs has been referred to complement the large body of documentary evidence.

Of these sources the archival material held at Lambeth Palace has not earlier been consulted with regard to the partition and they shed light upon the importance of abolitionist agitation and the Church of England's role during 1888 and 1889. Although the Foreign Office material has been used extensively by historians investigating the partition, the contextual interpretation of them have, as the thesis attempts to demonstrate, been lacking. This reconsideration has been enabled by appreciating more of the frequent references made to anti-slave trade policy in the primary material – particularly confidential correspondence and memoranda – at face value, and not simply disregarding these as rhetoric. Robinson et al. certainly dismissed these references outright:

It mattered little that informed men knew that slave-trading in these regions was on the wane. The Foreign Office habitually explained its Africa moves to

the ordinary voter as measures against the slave trade, for this was all he knew or cared about tropical Africa.⁶⁴

Structure

The thesis is divided into six chapters, all of which conform to a chronological format, although both the first and last chapters incorporate thematic elements. Whilst the thesis investigates events from the early 1870s to the late 1890s, it is the interval between 1882 and 1894 that retains the greatest focus. It is within this relatively short time period that the key events and policy decisions that are most directly relevant to the East African partition took place.

The first chapter explores the East African slave trade, the institution of slavery in Zanzibar, the development of Britain's anti-slave trade policy and its effect upon public opinion.⁶⁵ Since it is partially thematic, it covers the time period from Sir Bartle Frere's⁶⁶ 1873 treaty with the Sultan Barghash of Zanzibar to the collapse of this abolitionist framework, and corresponding revival of trafficking, in 1888. Importantly the chapter demonstrates that there was a sharp increase in the slave trade during this year, which is a fact that has been neglected by the existing volume of historiography. It is further established that this revived slave trade was a

⁶⁴ Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 308.

⁶⁵ Some of the most influential literature on East African slavery, the slave trade and plantation economies include: Edward Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves: Changing Pattern of International Trade in East Central Africa to the Later Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*; R. W. Beachey, *The Slave Trade of Eastern Africa* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1976); Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*; Norman Robert Bennett, *A History of the Arab State of Zanzibar* (London: Methuen, 1978); Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices, & Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873* (London: Currey, 1987); Abdul Sheriff, "The Slave Trade and its Fallout in the Persian Gulf," in *Abolition and its Aftermath in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia*, ed. Gwyn Campbell (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 103-119.; Drescher, *Abolition*, pp. 380-411.

⁶⁶ See: John Benyon, 'Frere, Sir (Henry) Bartle Edward, first baronet (1815–1884)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10171, accessed 19 March 2015]

direct cause of the Brussels Anti-Slave Trade conference in 1889-90 which shifted Britain's abolitionist focus from the coast to the mainland.

The second chapter considers the first partition of East Africa and the circumstances which led to the ratification of the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886. It highlights the importance of how both British anti-slave trade policy and the pre-partition Anglo-German exploration of the mainland influenced the geographical scope of the partition. Notably, the chapter traces the north-south division of the mainland to Carl Peters and his colleagues in the Society for German Colonisation's decision to pursue the southern caravan route into the interior.⁶⁷ Both this and the following chapters explore the role played imperial agents such as William Mackinnon and Carl Peters in determining outcomes.

The dynamic between metropolitan policymakers, public opinion and the agents of European imperialism is detailed in the third chapter. In particular it is hypothesised that the British and German governments subscribed to a doctrine of co-operation and that expressions of rivalry largely derived from the private colonial companies, fomented by public opinion.⁶⁸ The chapter also considers the contrasting British and German approaches to colonialism and how indigenous discontent with German tactics morphed into open rebellion. The exigencies of the insurrection complicated the co-operative dimension to Anglo-German official relations since Bismarck relied upon the assistance of the Royal Navy to counter the insurgency. Similarly, British policymakers were reluctant to associate too closely with their German counterparts, since this could risk bringing the rebellion into the British sphere. As the chapter

⁶⁷ *Gesellschaft für deutsche Kolonisation (GfdK)* and not to be confused with the German Colonial Society (*Deutscher Kolonialverein*). For a detailed study of his significance in relation to German colonialism and the partition, see: Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*.

⁶⁸ This apparent doctrine of co-operation between the European governments during the partition is also examined by Ronald Hyam, see: Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, pp. 203-79.

demonstrates the result was the imposition of a joint naval blockade of the East African coastline.

The fourth chapter investigates the circumstances surrounding the Anglo-German 'Heligoland-Zanzibar' Treaty of 1890 with a view at exposing it as entirely divorced from geopolitical concerns relating to Egypt. Firstly, by considering issues such as the relief of Emin Pasha, Frederick Jackson's expedition and the instability in Buganda, it seeks to clarify how and why Mackinnon's IBEA gained a foothold in Uganda. Secondly, it attempts to determine why the Anglo-German negotiations came about and connects it with the respective governments' need to contain local colonial rivalry, particularly over Witu and the adjoining islands Manda and Patta. Thirdly, the chapter considers how the orthodox historiography is inconsistent with the documentary evidence and policy-decisions: some of which include Sir Evelyn Baring's Sudan policy and Salisbury's geopolitical priorities in regard to Egypt and the Nile Valley. It is contended that the *de facto* formulators of policy were the imperial agents, and that the extension of Britain's sphere of influence in East Africa to comprise Uganda was sanctioned by the prime minister as a way in which to preserve the IBEA, maintain the British presence and execute anti-slave trade policy cost-effectively.

The fifth chapter examines British Uganda policy during the first four years of the 1890s. This includes Salisbury's decision to twice sanction the evacuation of Uganda and of his successor Rosebery's intervention which prevented the execution of this policy. Hence, the chapter considers the circumstances surrounding the retention of Uganda, which includes both an examination of Rosebery's personal agency and the effect of the great mobilisation of public

opinion upon the policymaking of Gladstone's cabinet.⁶⁹ The roles of groups such as the Church Missionary Society, the Anti-Slavery Society and indeed the IBEA are investigated with a view at determining the influence of their lobbying activity upon public opinion, policymaking and indeed the historiography of the partition.

The final chapter concerns the decision to construct the Uganda Railway and in particular how the idea of a line connecting the coast and Mombasa with the great inland sea of the Victoria Nyanza was fundamental to British designs for the region throughout the partition process.⁷⁰ Apart from its economic purpose the railway included a significant abolitionist element, a dimension which positioned it at the heart of British anti-slave trade policy. Courtesy of this dual purpose the railway was championed by both the humanitarian anti-slavery and missionary lobby in addition to the commercial interests represented by the IBEA. The chapter argues that the line assumed the status of a *sine qua non* to the retention and development of Britain's sphere of influence in East Africa; and, by virtue of this important position in the chain of causation, the reasons given for why the railway was built represented also in large part the reasons for why Uganda and the territories separating it from the coast were declared British protectorates in 1894-5.

⁶⁹ For an excellent account of the proposed abandonment of Uganda and British public opinion, see: Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, pp. 55-83.

⁷⁰ The two volumes written specifically about the Uganda Railway include: Merwyn F. Hill, *Permanent Way: The Story of the Kenya and Uganda Railway. Being the Official History of the Development of the Transport System in Kenya and Uganda* (Nairobi: East African Railways and Harbours, 1961); and Miller, *The Lunatic Express*.

Chapter One:

The East African Slave Trade and its Influence upon the Early Partition, 1873-1888

The issue of the East African slave trade emerged over the course of the 1880s from relative obscurity – as the concern of a few specialists in the Foreign Office and the British and Foreign Anti-Slave Trade Society (BFASS) – to one of Europe-wide notoriety. It is this rise to prominence and the British response that will form the subject of this chapter, while the practical policy implications of the slave trade's later development will be investigated in subsequent chapters. Although anti-slavery formed a significant component of British foreign policy throughout the nineteenth century,⁷¹ its notoriety outside a circle of Westminster bureaucrats, naval officers and philanthropic interest groups had faded by the late 1870s. In itself, this was nothing new as interest for abolitionism among the political establishment and general public had waxed and waned since the late eighteenth century. Since the decades of Wilberforce's activism of the late 18th and early 19th century, attention to the plight of African slaves had been raised in the 1830-40s, early 1870s and then finally in the late 1880s and early 1890s.

Whilst British diplomatic and naval actions successfully ended the West African trade, the East African slave trade blossomed in the 1840-60s on the back of increased labour demand from Zanzibar's clove plantations. But it was not until Livingstone witnessed the massacre at Nyangwe in 1871 that serious political attention again was devoted to the problem. In 1873,

⁷¹ For a comprehensive recent study of abolition and empire in nineteenth century Britain, see: Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*; or see Suzanne Miers' path-breaking research into the Brussels Conference: Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*; for a general comprehensive survey of abolition as a global phenomenon, see: Drescher, *Abolition*; for an African perspective, see: Derek Peterson, *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic* (Athens, USA: Ohio University Press, 2010).

Sir Bartle Frere was despatched on a diplomatic mission to the Sultan of Zanzibar to negotiate a new anti-slave trade treaty. Although not changing the legal status of slavery, it did result in the closure of Zanzibar's slave markets. From an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 slaves imported annually to Zanzibar and Pemba before the treaty, the number fell to an estimated 6,000 p.a. in the decade succeeding it.⁷²

By the early 1880s, both the political circumstances in East Africa and British slave trade suppression tactics had changed dramatically. Initially it was the physical removal of the Royal Navy's anti-slave trade squadron's flagship – namely the decommissioning of the stationary HMS London – that forced a reconsideration of tactics. On the advice of the British Consul-General Sir John Kirk, the liberal Foreign Secretary Earl Granville sanctioned the deployment of Vice-Consuls to enforce the abolitionist treaty network on the mainland. Subsequently, it was the appearance of Germany upon the East African scene which undermined British political hegemony in the region and with it British efforts against the slave trade.

What, however, will be emphasised in this chapter is firstly how the exigencies of Britain's anti-slave trade policy led to a mainland presence - a proto-partition - planned and in part executed prior to the appearance of German agents; and secondly, how the breakdown of the British-imposed institutional framework of slave trade suppression in East Africa spurred a substantial revival of the traffic in 1888. The data used to demonstrate this trend has been extracted from individual *dhow* capture reports issued by the Royal Navy and, although a brief mention of this increased slave trade in general terms was made by Suzanne Miers,⁷³ there has been no presentation of detailed statistics in the literature which reveals the true extent

⁷² Miles to Granville, 1 March 1883, T 1/14421, TNA.

⁷³ Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, p. 195.

of the traffic's surge. Hence, the causal relationship between the slave trade's volatility and British policy responses will be explored with a view at demonstrating how the 1888 revival prompted the Brussels Anti-Slave Trade Conference of 1889-90 and thus indirectly formed the grounds upon which the partition was legitimised.

Slavery in Zanzibar and Pemba

The engine of the East African slave trade was the Sultanate of Zanzibar's slave-based socio-economic model. Accounting for the majority of the slave labour demand in the decades of the mid- to late-19th century was the Island of Zanzibar and Pemba's plantation economies. Although this chapter will not attempt to replicate Frederick Cooper's excellent studies of East African plantation slavery, a brief mention of the underlying structures driving demand for slaves is warranted in a study of the slave trade and its suppression.⁷⁴

In the two millennia before the Anglo-German partition, the archipelago of Zanzibar, Pemba and Mafia had formed an important *entrepôt* in the Indian Ocean trading network. The monsoon winds had brought Arab, Persian and West-Indian traders to the islands on which they settled in small numbers during the 11th and 12th centuries. The Swahili patois language and culture emerged when these intermixed with the indigenous African population. Two centuries of Portuguese rule began with the visit of Vasco da Gama to the islands in 1499, whilst the conquest of the islands in 1698 by the Sultan of Oman heralded the start of a corresponding period of Arab sovereignty. As Cooper argues, it was the Omani colonisation of Zanzibar that forged a link between the sources of slaves and ivory in Central Equatorial

⁷⁴ Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*; and Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters*.

Africa and the markets for these commodities in Arabia, the Persian Gulf region and India.⁷⁵ Hence, the Omani introduction of long-distance caravan trade enabled exchanges between the communities settled around the great lakes and modern-day western Congo with the East African coastal region. By virtue of this geographical location, straddling both the Indian Ocean and Equatorial Africa, Zanzibar emerged over the course of the 18th century as the region's chief supplier of slaves.

However, its status as principally a trans-shipment hub was not challenged until the emergence of both internal and external pressures to end the export trade; what British officials referred to as the 'northern slave trade' on account of its usual destination. Slavery had existed in the archipelago and the African mainland communities for centuries within the kinship and dependency model.⁷⁶ Unlike the quasi-industrialised model of plantation slavery European powers had introduced to the West-Indies, traditional modes of slavery in East Africa existed within the extended family and tribal group whereby slaves, rather than exclusively a source of labour, were dependents and thus contributed to the head of the tribe's status and power. Slavery was similarly enmeshed in the social organisation of the Omani Arab-derived polity established in Zanzibar and filled a wide-ranging array of domestic roles. However by the late 18th and early 19th centuries the rise of a plantation economy fuelled domestic demand at the expense of slave exports. But despite the growth in domestic demand and the legal commitments entered into with Britain in 1822 and 1873, the export

⁷⁵ Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, p. 38.

⁷⁶ See: Richard Reid, *A History of Modern Africa: 1800 to the Present, 2nd edition* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 15-6.; Iliffe, *Africans*, pp. 112-21. For studies relating to the Omani and Swahili presence in East Africa, see: Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast 1856-1888* (London: Heinemann, 1995); John Craven Wilkinson, *The Arabs and the Scramble for Africa*, (Sheffield: Equinox, 2015).

of slaves from Zanzibar continued, albeit at a much reduced level, well into the rest of the nineteenth century and beyond.⁷⁷

In the 1840s, the plantation-style economy based on production of cloves reached its apogée and eclipsed the traditional model of slave re-exports to the Persian Gulf region.⁷⁸ Due to the labour-intensive nature of clove plantations, in concert with the treaties the Sultan had undertaken with Britain; Zanzibar and Pemba thereafter formed the principal end-destination of slaves trafficked from the African mainland. By the time of the partition, Zanzibar and Pemba's total population of 400,000 were divided into four main groups: Omani Arabs (2.5%), indigenous Africans and freedmen (ca. 29%), British Indians (ca. 2.1%) and slaves (ca. 66.5%).⁷⁹ The Island of Pemba alone was estimated to contain a population of 100,000 of which 5% were Omani Arab, 7% Indigenous Wa-Pemba, 1% British Indian and 87% slaves.⁸⁰ In addition there were, according to Sultan Barghash's estimates, approximately 200 European and Goanese residents on the two islands.⁸¹

Naturally not all of the Sultanate's 266,000 slaves were employed on the clove plantations of Zanzibar and Pemba. Indeed, by the early 1880s nearly all of the Sultanate's clove plantations were situated on the Island of Pemba which serves to explain why the majority of *dhow* captures were made in these waters.⁸² In similarity with other slave-holding economies, the slaves of Zanzibar also filled other roles such as domestic slaves, secretarial positions in the

⁷⁷ The East African slave trade to the Persian Gulf and Arabia continued long after the European colonisation of the region which is beyond the scope of this thesis, see Suzanne Miers' excellent studies of the slave trade and British response, in particular: Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*; and Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*.

⁷⁸ Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, p. 44.

⁷⁹ Donald Mackenzie, *A Report on Slavery and the Slave Trade in Zanzibar, Pemba, and the Mainland of the British Protectorates of East Africa* (London: British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1895), p. 15, The Library of Economic and Political Science Archive.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.9.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁸² 'The Zanzibar Slave Trade', *The Times*, 5 January 1882, p. 3.

Sultan's administration and in his harems as concubines and eunuchs. Due to the variable labour requirements of the clove crop, mostly around the short time window of harvesting, the slaves were said to enjoy more freedom than their counterparts in the West Indies did a century earlier.⁸³ In fact the most frequently touted excuse against the abolition of slavery as an institution in Zanzibar by British bureaucrats and politicians' dealing with the question was that Arab domestic slavery was ostensibly a benign form of bonded servitude beneficial to both the economy and the slave.⁸⁴ Kirk reminds us of this argument in 1885:

...cultivation can never repay the settler unless he makes use of slave labour in some form or other. The truth is, the native populations are happy as they are, having few wants, and those obtainable without labour, in our acceptance of the term, unless under compulsion; therefore they can never be relied on to work when required, while without a command of regular labour, no undertaking in the tropics can be expected to prove remunerative.⁸⁵

Since the Indian population were also British subjects they were barred from owning or hiring slaves which included ownership of the plantations which employed them – a criminalisation that was formalised by the 1873 treaty. This, however, did not prevent the Indian merchants from financing either the plantations or the caravans and indirectly profiting from both the slave trade and slave labour. Hence a form of labour division between the three main ethnic communities had emerged roughly divided into Indian control of finance, Arab control of policy and with the forced labour supplied by the bonded Africans trafficked from the mainland.

⁸³ Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, pp. 156-70.

⁸⁴ Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 31-2.

⁸⁵ Kirk to Salisbury, 1 August 1885, FO 881/5366, TNA.

The East African Slave Trade and its Suppression, 1873-85

Preceding Sir Bartle Frere's Mission to Zanzibar in 1872 and the ensuing treaty of 1873, an estimated 20,000-25,000 Africans were imported annually from the mainland primarily to work as slaves on the *shambas* or plantations of Zanzibar and Pemba.⁸⁶ In the decade succeeding the treaty, only an estimated total of 55,000 had been illicitly trafficked. Whilst this certainly was a considerable reduction in numbers, the problem still drew the attention of abolitionist politicians such as the Liberal Foreign Secretary Earl Granville who considered alternative suppression tactics in the early 1880s.⁸⁷

Although the sums represented the total of actual individuals landed on the islands, it did not take into account the substantial mortality among the captives *en route* to the coast. Frere himself estimated in 1872 that 'for every slave exported, from eight to ten perished before reaching the Coast, leaving large districts of the country for many miles utterly depopulated in consequence of the ravages of the slave hunters.'⁸⁸ Hence, British authorities estimated in the early 1870s that the human toll of the East African slave trade ranged from 160,000 to 250,000 captives per annum, the vast majority of which died on the long march toward the coast and during transshipment.⁸⁹ A decade later the Royal Navy estimated the number of slaves imported annually to the islands to range between 6,000 to 8,000. Applying the same multiple of deaths *en route* to the coast would suggest the total number of captives was 48,000 to 80,000, a significant reduction, but it hardly marked an end to the trade.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Miles to Granville, 1 March 1883, T 1/14421, TNA.

⁸⁷ Hill, Memorandum, 23 August 1882, FO 881/4676, TNA.

⁸⁸ Memorandum of Conversation with HH Khedive 17 December 1872, enclosed in Frere to Granville, 1 January 1873, FO 881/2270, TNA.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Miles to Granville, 1 March 1883, T 1/14421, TNA.

Due to the ineffectiveness of the 1822 treaty with the Sultan of Oman, British anti-slave trade suppression in East Africa prior to the 1873 treaty had relied on the cruisers of the Royal Navy's East India Station. A squadron of naval vessels patrolled the coast from the Mozambique Channel to the Arabian Peninsula and intercepted *dhow*s suspected of carrying slaves. While it doubtlessly reduced the scale of the trafficking, it had been unsuccessful in stopping it altogether or even to such an extent as to prevent the inland massacre committed by slavers as witnessed by Livingstone at Nyangwe in 1871.⁹¹ But with Sir Bartle Frere, came a two-pronged approach, of combining naval repression with the earnest execution of treaty obligations by the Sultan of Zanzibar. Hence the new tactic revolved around strengthening and co-opting the authority of the Sultan – using the existing local power structures to further British imperial policy objectives.

By the mid-nineteenth century Britain had strengthened its influence over Zanzibar. The increasing economic importance of the archipelago had led the Sultan of Oman to move his capital there in 1840. But upon his death in 1856, a succession dispute arose between his two sons; Thuwaini of Muscat and Majid of Zanzibar, during which the British Governor-General of India Lord Canning acted as an arbitrator.⁹² The British government of India became involved due to its interest in avoiding the instability that would ensue in the Indian Ocean from an Omani civil war. Britain underwrote Zanzibar's independence and thus the bifurcation of the Omani Sultanate by agreeing to provide an annual subsidy to Thuwaini paid

⁹¹See: Tim Jeal, *Livingstone, Revised and expanded edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 333-4. The Livingstone Field Diary was deciphered and published online in 2011, it can be accessed here: http://livingstone.library.ucla.edu/1871diary/letter_massacre.htm This diary, in which Livingstone recorded the event, was handed to Henry Morton Stanley who met him in Ujiji in November 1871. See: Henry Morton Stanley, *How I found Livingstone* (New York: Scribner, 1872), p. 331.

⁹² See: Robert J. Blyth, "Redrawing the Boundary between India and Britain: The Succession Crisis at Zanzibar, 1870–1873," *The International History Review* 22, no. 4, (2000): 785-805. DOI: 10.1080/07075332.2000.9640916

over the Indian treasury – the so-called Canning Award or Muscat Subsidy.⁹³ By virtue of its role as kingmaker Britain also co-opted Zanzibar as a client state, a position it informally maintained until it was declared a British protectorate in 1890.⁹⁴

A decade after the Canning Award, Britain sought to expand the return it received from this subsidy to more than just the avoidance of piracy and disruption to Indian seaborne trade. Anti-slavery had again risen to prominence in metropolitan public opinion and London sought to include active measures against the slave trade – materialised in the treaty of 1873. As will be shown below, the elapse of another decade brought demands for further expansion of British influence in East Africa. At first indirectly via its proxy Zanzibar, but over the course of the 1880s through more direct means. In similarity with the 1870s these demands came as a response to anti-slavery concerns, in particular fanned by the persistence, and in 1888 the substantial revival, of the East African slave trade.

The East African Slave Trade, Post-1873 Treaty

Writing in 1883, Lieutenant-Colonel S.B. Miles observed that:

The Treaty of 1873 marked a new era in the history of the suppression of the Slave Trade on the East Coast of Africa, and there is a very wide difference between the condition of the Trade prior to that date and what it is as present.⁹⁵

⁹³ Treasury to FO, 22 December 1880, T 1/12832, TNA

⁹⁴ For some authoritative accounts of Zanzibar's history, see: Coupland, *East Africa and its Invaders*; Bennett, *History of Zanzibar*; Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*; R.W. Beachey, *A History of East Africa, 1592-1902* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996).

⁹⁵ Miles to Granville, 1 March 1883, T 1/14421, TNA

The three main effects of the treaty were identified as:

(1) the final and almost complete annihilation of the Trade from Zanzibar to the Persian Gulf ; (2) the diminution of the Trade between the mainland and the Islands of Zanzibar and Pemba ; and (3) the better care and treatment of the slave in these islands from his having become a more valuable commodity.⁹⁶

Immediately prior to the treaty, a hurricane had swept over Zanzibar and destroyed most of the clove plantations. Pemba, however, had been left unscathed and emerged as the principal destination for the ensuing slave smuggling trade. The physical destruction of a major slave market combined with the promulgation by the Sultan to halt slave exports to the Persian Gulf led to a temporary cessation of the trade. In addition to the legal measures, a new naval suppression tactic had also proven successful. The novel technique was based on the use of *HMS London*, a stationary naval vessel anchored in Zanzibar Harbour. Instead of relying exclusively on the cruisers of the East India Station, the navy would thus also employ a collection of smaller boats better suited to intercepting the *dhow*s engaged in the smuggling trade. Indeed it was the light craft of *HMS London*, two steam launches and two 45ft boats in addition to a corvette that captured the majority of the slave *dhow*s over the following decade.⁹⁷ Their speed and manoeuvrability was advantageous during pursuit of shallow draught *dhow*s along a coastline dotted with coves, sandbanks and reefs.

Between 1874 and 1881, the Royal Navy captured 2,761 slaves with an annual average of around 300. The trend was unequivocally negative: in 1874 there had been 674 captures made, whilst five years later the number was only 74. But to contemporary experts such as Kirk the Navy's capture statistics belied the true scale of the import trade. In Kirk and Miles's

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Hill, Memorandum, 23 August 1882, FO 881/4676, TNA

calculations of actual imports, a multiple of twenty was applied which brought the annual average to around 6,000.⁹⁸ This figure corresponded better to both the mortality and manumission rate of the slave stocks at Zanzibar and Pemba. If these were on the order of 266,000 as was suggested by Sultan Barghash, and the annual mortality rate was between 8-12% as suggested by the Royal Navy, it would require annual births and imports to total 21-32,000 in order to maintain slave stocks at the same level.⁹⁹ Similarly, if Sir Bartle Frere's 1872 assumption were to be applied – that for each slave transhipped, eight or ten had died on the march – it would indicate that the annual scale of the East African slave trade in the decade after the 1873 treaty were on the order of 48-60,000 individuals.

Whether or not this is an exaggeration is difficult to verify other than through the testimony of missionaries and explorers who at times reported of depopulated districts in the mainland's interior. Vice-Consul Frederick Holmwood had reported in 1876 that approximately 30,000 slaves had been taken north from Pangani in 1876.¹⁰⁰ It could however be assumed that the *en route* mortality rates had been reduced due to the increased value of the slaves, which would suggest that the total human toll of the East African slave trade was lower than 50,000 per annum. Kirk, in his eager defence of the Sultan's sincerity in suppressing the trade and thus the very structure of authority he had carefully constructed since the early 1870s, subscribed to this minimalist projection. He had found that most of the Navy's captives were both old and 'true domestics' which would imply that a form of second-hand trade had emerged to replace the old land-based trade in so-called 'fresh' slaves. Accordingly Kirk believed the annual import estimate should be revised down to half, around

⁹⁸ Miles to Granville, 1 March 1883, T 1/14421, TNA

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ W. M. Torrens, 'The East African Slave Trade', *The Fortnightly Review*, May 1888; 43, 257.

3,000 and be considered a simple 'smuggling business.'¹⁰¹ Kirk's views were corroborated by the Commander of the East Indies Station Admiral Sir John Corbett who in 1879 had declared:

We have certainly stamped out the slave carriage at sea as a regular trade [...] but the smuggling still goes on, and may be expected to continue, in spite of our precautions, so long as there are human beings to be bought in Africa, and so long as [...] Pemba [...] is dependent on slave labour for its prosperity.'¹⁰²

The diminution of the trade during this period could not be solely nor, according to the Royal Navy even partly, be ascribed to British actions. It was the fall in demand for slaves on Pemba and Zanzibar's clove plantations that had caused this reduction. This reduced labour demand had come as a result of falling international clove prices and not from some moral reflections on behalf of the plantation-owning Omani elite, although the Sultan's increase of the clove-tax had also contributed to the decline in profitability.¹⁰³

However, questions had also been raised about the sincerity with which the Sultan actively had suppressed the trade:

Very little discernment is needed to perceive that His Highness' spasmodic and ostentatious efforts are more indicative of a desire to attract favourable notice than of an honest resolve to sweep away the Slave Trade.'¹⁰⁴

As opposed to his position in 1873: 'comparatively poor; surrounded by his kinsmen – intolerant Metowwas and influential Arabs – on whose counsels and support he was dependent', the Sultan Barghash had in the early 1880s emerged as the undisputed ruler of the archipelago and the mainland dominions.

¹⁰¹ Kirk to Granville, 14 April 1883, T1/14421, TNA.

¹⁰² Hill, Memorandum, 23 August 1882, FO 881/4676, TNA

¹⁰³ Miles to Granville, 1 March 1883, T 1/14421, TNA.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

His power was in large part based on his land-holdings and tax income:

By means of the large revenue which he derives from his estate and custom-house, and which is in a large degree a result of the Treaty of 1873, he has succeeded in consolidating his rule and raising himself to an independent position. There is no public voice to oppose him.¹⁰⁵

Testament to the effectiveness of his collaboration was the capture of 453 slaves in 1877 which surpassed the Royal Navy's 294.¹⁰⁶ Evidently the Sultan could have stopped the trade if he so desired, but in the balance between placating British public opinion and the betterment of his own finances he chose the latter. Britain in the late 1870s paid little attention to the plight of such humanitarian concerns; thus the Sultan could afford to display a lacklustre interest.

'Striking at the Root of the Evil in the Interior'¹⁰⁷: Revised Suppression Tactics, 1882-4

However by the early 1880s, both the East African slave trade and British interest for it had re-emerged - a revival that would have severe political consequences for both the Sultanate and the British position in the region. A range of factors conspired to thrust the issue back on the political agenda. In December 1881, Charles Brownrigg, the captain of *HMS London*, had been killed while boarding a *dhow* holding around a hundred slaves destined for Pemba.¹⁰⁸ The public outcry did not fall on deaf ears as Britain had elected a Liberal government sympathetic to the abolitionist cause and was about to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Hill, Memorandum, 23 August 1882, FO 881/4676, TNA.

¹⁰⁸ 'The Zanzibar Slave Trade', *The Times*, 5 January 1882, p. 3

the emancipation of the slaves held in British colonies. The depot ship itself was due to be decommissioned after almost a decade of service as a hulk in Zanzibar harbour. Additionally, 1884 was a famine year which caused a substantial increase in slave trafficking.

The Foreign Office clerk Sir Clement Lloyd Hill in consultation with Kirk drew up a memorandum in August 1882 which considered a radical change in Britain's anti-slave trade policy toward East Africa: 'The policy which was inaugurated in 1873 has been costly, but effective as far as it went. The present moment would, however, appear singularly opportune to effect a change in it.'¹⁰⁹ The radical proposal involved a mainland presence: 'the time has come when suppression of the Zanzibar Slave Trade by means of our navy can be superseded by other agencies working on shore.'¹¹⁰ This measure, Hill argued, would incur an annual cost-saving to the Treasury of £54,000. Not an insignificant sum when compared to the annual outlay spent on cruisers and naval bounties were estimated to be £82-110,000.¹¹¹

A mainland presence had been contemplated by the navy since the early 1870s. A naval officer, Captain Owen, had even declared Mombasa a British protectorate in 1824 so as to put a stop to the slave trade.¹¹² His initiative met however little sympathy or sanction by London and the affair wound up only after two years. Some fifty years later, Owen's naval colleagues lauded the decision to establish a British consulate in Mozambique. Captain War, commanding the 'Thetis' wrote in 1875 that: 'The establishment of an English Consulate at Mozambique in August last has probably been a greater blow to the Slave Trade in those

¹⁰⁹ Hill, Memorandum, 23 August 1882, FO 881/4676, TNA.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Treasury to FO, 10 February 1891, FO 84/2156; and Hill, Memorandum, 23 August 1882, FO 881/4676, TNA.

¹¹² See: J. Gray, *The British in Mombasa 1824-1826 - Being the History of Captain Owen's Protectorate* (London: Macmillan, 1957).

waters than many captures could have been.’¹¹³ Indeed the venture had proved so successful that his colleague Captain Foot declared five years later that:

I can suggest no other means of effectually stopping this Traffic than the striking at the root of the evil in the interior; and I believe co-operation with the Sultan of Zanzibar on the mainland would effect the object in view, be a saving of expense to the nation, and benefit to the trading community at large.¹¹⁴

Hill’s suggestion of a British proto-incursion to the mainland had come shortly after the conservative Lord Salisbury had in 1878 pursued the exact opposite policy. In Salisbury’s capacity as Secretary of State for India, he had secretly spoiled the Scottish shipowner William Mackinnon’s plans for gaining a concession from the Sultan to develop his mainland dominions.¹¹⁵ Marie de Kiewiet speculated whether Salisbury’s actions were not so much a result of conservative policy, than of him having ‘a more sure grip on imperial affairs than his predecessor’ Lord Derby.¹¹⁶ Salisbury was wary of embroiling Britain in potentially costly imperial ventures without the sanction of Parliament. But in 1880 the Conservatives had been swept from power in favour of Gladstone’s second Liberal government. Gladstone’s foreign secretary, Earl Granville, was a prominent abolitionist and favoured a strengthening of Britain’s anti-slave trade policy in East Africa. Granville had also served as foreign secretary in Gladstone’s first ministry between 1870-4 and had overseen the first treaty – and it would not seem unlikely that he saw an opportunity to repeat his earlier success. The question had become particularly urgent due to the impending decommissioning of the ‘rotten’ two-decker

¹¹³ Hill, Memorandum, 23 August 1882, FO 881/4676, TNA.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Kiewiet, *History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*, pp. 43-5.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 44-5.

ship of the line *HMS London* which had formed the cornerstone of suppression tactics since 1874.¹¹⁷

The new régime would marginalise the navy's role and instead make the soft power exerted by the consuls combined with the co-operation of the Sultan the main tactic. This 'increase of Consular supervision on the mainland' it was held, would 'develop trade and civilization, attract settlers, and strengthen the hands of the Sultan's authorities.'¹¹⁸ However, regardless of the somewhat naïve confidence in a diplomatic approach, it was the reliance on the Sultan's authority as the iron fist beneath the velvet glove that ultimately proved the policy flawed.

In practical terms, *HMS London* and her boats were to be replaced by three 'travelling Vice-Consuls [...] who would be attached to the head-quarters at Zanzibar, with residences on the mainland, where they would move about as occasion required.'¹¹⁹ The second component to Hill and Kirk's new policy was the addition of an agency steamer since hitherto the Agent and his staff had been largely tied to Zanzibar 'having no means of locomotion but the dangerous and undignified native craft, or the occasional use of a man-of-war.'¹²⁰ Indeed it was held that:

with a steam-vessel under his orders, the Agent would be incalculably more useful in every respect, in preventing native outbreaks and missionary quarrels, in encouraging British subjects, in developing trade, in keeping the Sultan's authorities up to the mark and in supporting British influence on the mainland.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ 'The Zanzibar Slave Trade', *The Times*, 5 January 1882, p. 3

¹¹⁸ Hill, Memorandum, 23 August 1882, FO 881/4676, TNA.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Hill, Memorandum, 23 August 1882, FO 881/4676, TNA.

¹²¹ Ibid.

The last component of this three-pronged tactic was the continuation of the mail subsidy. The bi-monthly visit of steamers from Aden employed by the Mackinnon-owned British-India Steam Navigation Company (BI) was thought to ensure the maintenance of the British presence. Hill believed the annual allocation of £10,000 as money well-spent:

the continuance of a line of steamers is essential, both for the suppression of the Slave Trade by the extension of legitimate trade, and for the maintenance of our communications with the whole East African Coast.¹²²

Hence, in Hill's view it was the 'intermingling of races' and Britain's 'civilizing influence' that would bring about the end of the East African slave trade rather than the brute force of the naval suppression strategy employed thus far. In fact he had quoted Captain Sullivan of the *HMS London* who, in 1876, certainly had been ahead of his time by advising a comprehensive development policy *in lieu* of naval tactics: 'Religion, education, trade, and agriculture must go hand in hand... and the Slave Trade will be abolished, not by the capture of slaves or slavers'.¹²³ This tightened integration was what this naval officer had construed as the key for progress:

'politically, commercially, and socially the East Coast of Africa, India, and Great Britain will be benefited by substituting measures on shore for those now employed afloat in suppressing the Slave Trade.'¹²⁴

In the years which immediately preceded partition, British authorities had mediated a new strategy for suppressing the slave trade which involved a mainland presence. Although little else resulted from this than a strengthened consular supervision of the coastal regions, it was nonetheless a tentative premonition of what followed after the conclusion of the West

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

African Conference at Berlin in 1885. Unlike during the heyday of the scramble proper, a proto-partition was considered exclusively on grounds of slave-trade suppression, by virtue of the impending decommissioning of *HMS London*. As will be shown below and in the following chapters, execution of anti-slave trade policy featured prominently in the deliberations over the extension of British imperial control in East Africa for the duration of the partition.

The East African Famine, Public Opinion and the Mahdist Threat, 1884-5

By the autumn and winter of 1884-5 the East African slave trade was again made notorious among the British public. This time it was not the death of a heroic naval officer that made news headlines, but rather the traffic's 'sudden renewal.'¹²⁵ As a result of Granville's revised policy, Vice-Consuls Gissing, Smith and Haggard had been despatched to the region to assist Kirk.¹²⁶ Until 1884, the fresh recruits had been occupied in dealing with the French 'engagé' trade. French planters in the Comoro Islands had attempted to evade British measures by issuing the slaves imported from the mainland with free papers, despite never intending to actually grant these individuals their freedom.¹²⁷ Additionally the French presence in Madagascar and the Comoros undermined British efforts through the issuing of Arab *dhow* owners with the French flag. By flying the tricolour as a flag of convenience, *dhow* captains evaded the British naval patrol since Britain did not have a mutual right of search treaty with France. On this account *dhow*s that had no connection to France, other than having been measured by its Consulate at Mayotte, and despite holding large numbers of slaves, could not

¹²⁵ The Times, East African Slave Trade, 28 January 1885, p. 10.

¹²⁶ Kirk to Granville, 19 December 1883, FO 881/5165, TNA.

¹²⁷ Kirk to Granville, 21 January 1884, FO 881/5165, TNA.

be intercepted and searched as such steps would constitute a violation of French sovereignty.¹²⁸

In September, Kirk reported of a 'drought, which over the whole of east tropical Africa has this year been severe, has caused famine and death in some of the inland districts, and everywhere raised the prices of all articles of food.'¹²⁹ Only the coastal towns had been spared from the ravages of the famine due to the deliveries of grain made by the mail-steamers. Already in September Kirk made the causal link between the famine and the resultant slave trafficking clear:

It was evident from what Captain Gissing and I saw and heard in the Malindi district that this famine would offer an occasion for the renewal of the Slave Trade, for not only were the Giriama people parting with their slaves to the people of the coast in exchange for grain, but some had sold their children; indeed as things then were it was difficult to say much against such transfer, so long as the slaves were not passed and trafficked with elsewhere.¹³⁰

The pawning of children and slaves was a customary survival tactic employed in times of famine. However the transaction was not intended to be permanent, rather a temporary expedient to ensure the survival of kin until rains again ensured stable food crops.¹³¹ Despite the dire situation Kirk believed it would soon be improved due to reports of rains having fallen.

However a month later conditions on the mainland had only deteriorated and the newly appointed Vice-Consul Gissing had to correct his earlier report of improving weather

¹²⁸ Statement of Juma Wadi Hassan, Mgao. Enclosed in Kirk to Granville, 21 January 1884, FO 881/5165, TNA. See also: Kirk to Rosebery, 3 June 1886, FO 881/5459, TNA.

¹²⁹ Kirk to Granville, 23 September 1884, FO 881/5165, TNA.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Iliffe, *Africans*, p. 214.

conditions. This had only been true to the extent of his travels to the Malindi district. As conditions had worsened, Kirk reiterated his warning of a revived slave trade:

Under such circumstances it will be very difficult to stop slaves from being sold or pawned. When I was at Takaungu, fathers were in some cases selling their children as a last recourse, and as the only way that presented of keeping either alive, and unless we offer them an alternative, it is not easy to put a stop to such things.¹³²

By the year's end, the situation in East Africa had gained notoriety in Britain and critics had linked the revival of the slave trade with the decommissioning of the *London*. Acting Consul at Zanzibar, Frederick Holmwood, wrote to *The Times* in January 1885 and testified that the famine had over the past twelve months indeed been 'unprecedented in severity' and caused the death of 'thousands' in the Sultan's mainland dominions.¹³³ As for the interior region beyond the Sultan's auspices the consequences of the absence of rains had been even more severe with 'the populations of whole districts being swept away.' Holmwood corroborated Kirk's six month earlier report of parents, even those who inhabited the coastal towns, had sold their children into slavery as testament to the scale of the calamity.¹³⁴

But the consul was eager to impress upon British policymakers and public that the revived slave trade was not a result of any failing in the execution of Britain's anti-slave trade policy, and in particular that it was not caused by the withdrawal of HMS London. In his letter to the editor Holmwood also assured *The Times'* readership that both Kirk and the Sultan had done everything in their power to redress the situation, but that the scale of the humanitarian

¹³² Kirk to Granville, 24 October 1884, FO 881/5165, TNA.

¹³³'East African Slave Trade', *The Times*, 28 January 1885, p. 10.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

catastrophe was such that even their best efforts in the form of grain distribution was not sufficient to 'alleviate a tithe of the prevailing distress.'¹³⁵

Complicating the situation in East Africa was the ongoing Mahdist insurrection in the Sudan. The rebellion which had ousted Egyptian rule from the region had been instigated by the Muslim slave trading community who had been dissatisfied with Egyptian attempts to stop the trade.¹³⁶ The two most famous executors of this British-derived policy objective were Sir Samuel Baker and General Charles Gordon – the latter was overrun and killed by the Mahdists in February 1885. Kirk thought that the revival of the slave trade came at a 'peculiarly awkward time' since according to intercepted letters from Zanzibar to Oman, there circulated rumours that Britain had softened its anti-slave trade policy and associated 'this supposed weakness [...] directly with the reported slaughter of 30,000 Christians in the Soudan.'¹³⁷ According to Kirk, the author of this letter was an 'Ibadhia' Muslim – a puritanical sect of Islam predominant in Oman and Zanzibar – and accordingly did not: 'believe in the coming of a Mahdi; yet, in writing to a relative engaged in the Slave Trade, he approved the Soudan-Mahdi's doings, showing how closely related such risings as these in the Soudan are with the Slave Trade.'¹³⁸ Hence, Kirk entertained a fear that if Britain should appear permissive toward the slave trade, if only to alleviate suffering caused by the famine, it would send a signal in a domino-like fashion to the Arab community in Zanzibar that they could revive the trade by means of 'a fanatic movement' akin to that in the Sudan.¹³⁹ The alarming reports led Granville

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ See: Alice Moore-Harrell, *Gordon and the Sudan: Prologue to the Mahdiyya 1877-1880* (London: Frank Cass, 2001); Robert O. Collins, *A History of Modern Sudan*, (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 10-32.; Kim Searcy, *The Formation of the Sudanese Mahdist State: Ceremony and Symbols of Authority 1882-1898* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

¹³⁷ Kirk to Granville, 20 December 1884, FO 881/5366, TNA.

¹³⁸ Ibid. For recent research into the Ibadhi-sect of Islam and the Arab reaction to European imperialism in East Africa, see: Wilkinson, *Arabs and the Scramble*.

¹³⁹ Kirk to Granville, 20 December 1884, FO 881/5366, TNA.

to instruct the Admiralty to 'exercise a strict as possible supervision over the coast' and to demand of the Sultan to issue a notice negating any such rumours.¹⁴⁰

Despite the growing concerns over the famine's apparent effect upon slave trafficking and the perception of increases taking hold, this was not reflected in the Royal Navy's capture statistics. Only 201 were captured in 1884 and a similar number of 221 were recorded in 1885.¹⁴¹ In fact, the vast majority of 1884's total was made up of one single capture – a *dhow* caught in November by HMS Osprey containing 169 slaves – predominantly 'starving Wazaramo, emaciated to skeletons, carried from a famine-stricken district where the population is dying of hunger and disease.'¹⁴² Compared to the average of 184 witnessed over the five preceding years, both 1884-5 were unremarkable.¹⁴³ However any data for this period should be qualified by the absence of the HMS London who had proved effective in countering the asymmetric nature of the smuggling trade.

The re-emergence of the East African slave trade in the British political discourse in 1884 was not only due to news from Zanzibar; rather it was the fiftieth anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the British colonies that brought the issue back to public attention. The occasion had been marked with much fanfare in London's Guildhall with Prince Edward presiding and Earl Granville delivering the keynote address. It was at this 'densely crowded' assembly of the great and good of London's high society that the awkward persistence of the Zanzibar slave trade and 'Mahometan slavery' was raised. In his speech, Granville declared that 'immense

¹⁴⁰ Lister to Kirk, 30 January 1885, FO 881/5366, TNA.

¹⁴¹ Royal Navy Slave Capture Statistics, 1884: 201, 1885: 221, extracted from: FO 881-5165, FO 881-5366, FO 881-5459, TNA.

¹⁴² Kirk to Granville, 20 December 1884, FO 881/5366, TNA.

¹⁴³ Royal Navy Slave Capture Statistics, 1879: 73, 1880: 263, 1881: 343, 1882: 105, 1883: 136, extracted from: T 1/14421 and HCA 35/87, TNA. For a graphical presentation of the Royal Navy's slave capture statistics between 1873 and 1890 in East Africa and Arabia, see: Appendix figure 3.

progress' had been made in suppressing the trafficking thanks to the work of Kirk and the Sultan, whilst 'great assistance was expected from the establishment of vice consuls on the mainland.'¹⁴⁴ At this event, as it would turn out on the cusp of the partition, it was this latter point that gained traction among the assembly in their proposal for a resolution. In particular that 'slavery must be destroyed at its source' and that 'legitimate trade must be introduced into the heart of Africa.'¹⁴⁵ These were the principal ways, in the former Conservative Foreign Secretary Earl Derby's words, to end 'the indescribable horrors of the Central and East African slave trade, as fatal to human life on shore as the dreaded passage formerly was at sea.'¹⁴⁶

Naturally then, when the British explorer Harry Johnston¹⁴⁷ had offered his self-proclaimed territorial rights just north of the Kilimanjaro to Granville's deputy Edmund Fitzmaurice, Granville's reply in October 1884 was consistent with these earlier pronouncements. Granville found:

...it would be undesirable that an opportunity should be neglected of securing a hold over a territory adapted for British enterprise and favourably situated for striking a blow at the Slave Trade.'¹⁴⁸

A territorial presence on the mainland followed as a natural conclusion to the gradual intensification of the Liberal party's anti-slave trade policy in the region. But before any steps could be taken for establishing a British protectorate in the hills north of the Kilimanjaro, as will be investigated in the following chapter, the plans had been forestalled. Unknown to British policymakers the representatives of a private German colonial society had at the time

¹⁴⁴ 'The Jubilee of Emancipation-Day', *The Manchester Guardian*, 2 August 1884.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ See: Roland Oliver, 'Johnston, Sir Henry Hamilton (1858–1927)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34211>, accessed 8 April 2015]

¹⁴⁸ Granville to Kirk, Confidential, 9 October 1884, FO 881/5037, TNA.

already taken steps toward establishing a German colony on the East African mainland. The Berlin Conference, the anniversary of abolition, and the unfolding Gordon drama in Khartoum, all positioned Africa and the Arab slave trade squarely in the public eye during the autumn and winter months of 1884-5. Evocative reports of famine and its associated slave trafficking strengthened Granville's political resolve to tackle the problem at its root, whilst Johnston's treaties enabled the establishment of a British mainland presence. Hence, it was on anti-slavery grounds Britain committed itself as a participant in the partition of East Africa in the autumn of 1884.

Suppression of the Slave Trade during the Early Partition, 1885-88

If 1884 proved a bad year for Britain's agents in Zanzibar and the mainland, little improvement was achieved in the one that followed. In August of 1885, Kirk had the dubious honour of reporting to his new superior Lord Salisbury of 'a marked revival of the slave trade from the coast of the mainland opposite Zanzibar.'¹⁴⁹ Of all the changes that both Britain and East Africa had undergone in the year that had elapsed since the autumn of 1884, the slave trade did not count among them.

In May, the price of slaves at the horn of Africa had ranged from 50 to 60 dollars each whilst during the famine the selling price at the coast opposite Zanzibar was around 4 to 10. It was this substantial arbitrage that the 'Muscat shippers and Somali Chiefs' had exploited, and in Kirk's opinion, accounted for the increased trafficking.¹⁵⁰ Of the five *dhow*s that had been captured in quick succession during the autumn of 1885, over forty slaves had been liberated

¹⁴⁹ Kirk to Salisbury, 1 August 1885, FO 881/5366, TNA.

¹⁵⁰ Kirk to Granville, 30 May 1885, FO 881/5366, TNA.

and all of which were 'strong and healthy' despite coming from the districts hit by the famine – a fact which indicated that the crisis was over.¹⁵¹

The arrival of Germany in the territories of Usagara, what the Sultan of Zanzibar considered his vassal dominions on the mainland, was a complicating factor for the execution of Britain's anti-slave trade policy. Since Britain had relied on local power structures to enforce its policy objectives, the German intrusion undermined these efforts. The Sultan was reluctant to introduce any strict countermeasures so as not to prejudice his own position among the Omani-elite.¹⁵² Witu on the mainland, under his vassal Chief Simba, had already been absorbed as a German protectorate courtesy of a treaty signed in 1866, whilst a growing section of the region interior from Dar-es-Salaam and Pangani also had come under German protection.¹⁵³ Kirk was the one who had done most to forge the superstructure of British authority in Zanzibar and he was disinclined to let it be sabotaged by the newcomers. Although Kirk had professed to insist upon the abolition of slavery in Zanzibar and Pemba, he was sympathetic to the Sultan's reluctance in the matter due to the new geo-political circumstances: 'His Highness seems little disposed further to complicate his compromised position at the present time by adding to his difficulties a social revolution...'¹⁵⁴

The Sultan was not the only member of the *ancien régime* whose position had become tenuous. Ironically Kirk would fall victim to his own success two years later, when he in 1887, was unofficially dismissed from his role as Consul-General. The decision had come as a result of German diplomatic pressure since Bismarck's administration perceived him to be the

¹⁵¹ Kirk to Salisbury, 1 August 1885, FO 881/5366, TNA.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ See: Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, pp. 67-130.

¹⁵⁴ Kirk to Salisbury, 1 August 1885, FO 881/5366, TNA.

principal hindrance to their interests in East Africa.¹⁵⁵ With Kirk's dismissal also went the incisive analyses of the regional slave trade. His services were retained, but from his address in Sevenoaks rather than on-the-spot in Zanzibar.¹⁵⁶ His successor Colonel Charles Euan Smith's more descriptive style offered little in the way of analysis of the underlying factors which drove the trade. Euan Smith also fell victim to German ire in March 1889 when details of a bribery scandal came to light and he also was recalled, albeit temporarily.¹⁵⁷

Already by 1885-6 the Vice-Consular system had 'broken down altogether' and, according to the naval officers responsible for the region, there appeared to be few signs of any diminution of the trade.¹⁵⁸ The Slave Trade adviser to the Treasury had even recommended trebling the slave trade vote from £2,000 to £6,000 since, 'contrary to Sir John Kirk's anticipation, the Slave Trade on the East Coast of Africa had suddenly broken out afresh.'¹⁵⁹ In total, 116 slaves were freed which represented a near halving of the captures made the previous year.¹⁶⁰ Yet, despite the apparent decline in scale, no victory was declared by the men-on-the-spot. As Rear-Admiral Sir Frederick Richards stated:

The number of captures made is small, owing to the inadequacy of the force which I have been enabled to station upon the division, and to the fact that the cruisers have been for the most part diverted to other duties owing to the recent action of Germany in these waters...'¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ Scott to Salisbury, 13 August 1885, FO 403/94, TNA.

¹⁵⁶ See: Letters from Kirk to Mackinnon, 1888-91, Box 25, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS.

¹⁵⁷ Hatzfeldt to FO, Memorandum, 27 March 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

¹⁵⁸ Rear-Admiral Sir F. Richards to Mr Macgregor, 30 August 1886, enclosed in Evan Macgregor to Lister, 20 October 1886, FO 881/5459, TNA, and Kirk to Rosebery, 1 July 1886, FO 881

¹⁵⁹ Rothery to Treasury, 16 November 1886, HCA 35/87, TNA.

¹⁶⁰ Royal Navy Slave Capture Statistics 1886, FO 881/5459 and FO 881/5616, TNA.

¹⁶¹ Rear-Admiral Sir F. Richards to Mr Macgregor, 30 August 1886, enclosed in Evan Macgregor to Lister, 20 October 1886, FO 881/5459, TNA.

Regardless of British naval actions, without abolition the demand for slaves at Pemba remained constant and 'the export thither from the mainland is more or less continuous throughout the year.'¹⁶² Kirk corroborated the Navy's speculation of a hidden trade to Muscat, whilst he also relayed rumours that 'private Germans' had enticed the local population with the prospect of freely trading in slaves should they accept German protection.¹⁶³

The Rear-Admiral's report also hid a rather more ominous tale from the northern hunting-grounds of his squadron which betrayed both the humanitarian implications of the trafficking and how it evaded naval detection. A Swedish medical missionary had, upon venturing 10 miles from the coast, travelled with a caravan of about 700 child slaves. The caravan had come from Ethiopia and the slaves 'were intended for the Jeddah market.' According to the missionary's report: 'the boys had nearly all been made eunuchs, they being more valuable as such in the Turkish and Egyptian markets.'¹⁶⁴ Kirk had also reported of the Sultan of Zanzibar's importation of eunuchs to his harem two years earlier. Although a violation of the 1873 treaty, the Consul had turned a blind eye to this 'consignment' of ten Georgian women and nine eunuch boys.¹⁶⁵ Kirk was philosophical about the issue:

The difficulty of dealing with the case of such women is, that being brought up from childhood to look forward to harem life, they think when taken up by a Sovereign Prince that they have drawn the highest prize in the lottery of life; and in cases of this sort, with which we have before attempted to deal, it has been found impossible to do anything, owing to the determination of the women themselves to reach their destination. The case of eunuchs is different;

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Kirk to Rosebery, 1 July 1886, FO 881/5459, TNA.

¹⁶⁴ Rear-Admiral Sir F. Richards to Mr Macgregor, 30 August 1886, enclosed in Evan Macgregor to Lister, 20 October 1886, FO 881/5459, TNA.

¹⁶⁵ Kirk to Granville, 20 December 1884, FO 881/5366, TNA.

once reduced to that state it is difficult to say what else, out of Europe, they are fit for; but surely the mutilation of boys for the Oriental market ought to be treated as a capital crime.’¹⁶⁶

However, the most important development in terms of the slave trade was the disintegration of the Sultan’s authority on the mainland. The consequences of this political change were not apparent in the Royal Navy’s capture rate for 1886 or 1887. Yet the Anglo-German partition and in particular Barghash’s death in March 1888 caused a sharp surge in the slave trade as witnessed by the quadrupling of liberated slaves compared to the five previous years.¹⁶⁷ In fact the total of 841 slaves liberated in 1888 by the Royal Navy’s cruisers, were the highest number on record since the ratification of the 1873 treaty and substantially higher than the 277 of 1887.¹⁶⁸ In the years prior to his retirement in 1887, Kirk had reiterated the negative consequences of the power vacuum that had emerged on the mainland for Britain’s suppression of the slave trade: ‘the cause is evident in the unsettled state of government on this coast due to German claims and hostile demonstrations in that region.’¹⁶⁹ Whilst local instability in East Africa had increased export, a similar erosion of the Sultan of Muscat’s authority in Oman – and with it the British Agent’s ability to prevent the landing of slaves – had occurred which increased demand. This external effect was of particular importance seeing that Muscat was the trade’s principal transshipment hub on the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Royal Navy Slave Capture Statistics 1888, FO 881/5896 and FO 881/6009, TNA. 1888: 841, Average 1883-7: 190.

¹⁶⁸ Royal Navy Slave Capture Statistics 1887, FO 881/5616 and FO 881/5896, TNA.

¹⁶⁹ Kirk to FO, Memorandum, 22 January 1887, FO 881/5616, TNA.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

The Last Abolitionist Awakening: Britain and the East African Slave Trade, 1888

The first six months of 1888 the Anti-Slave Trade Squadron logged a record 323 captured slaves and by the end of the year the total had reached 841.¹⁷¹ Applying this number to Kirk's 1887 estimate, that the Royal Navy 'never have been able to intercept more than 5 per cent of the slaves taken afloat', the actual scale of slave imports were around 16,000 that year, roughly equal to pre-1873 levels.¹⁷² The surge in trafficking was so substantial that a suggestion was made by the Foreign Office to 'fit out native vessels' in order to intercept slave *dhow*s more effectively, a proposition which was met with little enthusiasm by the Admiralty.¹⁷³

Although the new Consul-General Charles Euan Smith never delved into much analysis of what may have caused this revival, he was clear about the limited 'moral influence' exercised by Barghash's successor the Sultan Khalifa bin Said on the mainland: 'His Highness the present Sultan cannot be anticipated to wield the tenth part of the authority exercised by his predecessor.'¹⁷⁴ Apart from the death of Barghash which arguably was the proximate cause of the 1888 surge, most of the anti-slavery institutions in East Africa had over the course of the 1880s been eroded. The highly successful depot ship *HMS London* and her boats had been decommissioned in 1883, by 1885-6 the new Vice-Consular system instituted by Kirk had broken down, in 1885 a German protectorate was declared on the mainland thus undermining the authority of the Sultan, and the 1887 departure of Kirk who was the individual that more than any other could be credited for devising and executing Britain's anti-

¹⁷¹ Royal Navy Slave Capture Statistics 1888, FO 881/5896 and FO 881/6009, TNA. 1888: 841, Average 1883-7: 190. See: Figure 3 in the Appendix for Royal Navy Slave Capture Statistics, 1873-1890.

¹⁷² Kirk to FO, Memorandum, 22 January 1887, FO 881/5616, TNA.

¹⁷³ Admiralty to FO, Confidential, 30 April 1888, FO 881/5896, TNA.

¹⁷⁴ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 2 July 1888, FO 881/5896, TNA.

slave trade policy in the region. All these conspired to mark an end to what had constituted the superstructure of British anti-slave trade suppression in East Africa since 1873 – the result of which was a resurgence of trafficking not witnessed since the decades before those very institutions had been put in place.

These developments had not gone unnoticed in Europe and especially not in Britain. In fact they set the stage for an abolitionist ‘awakening’ not witnessed since the early 1870s. In July and August several questions were raised in the House of Commons as a direct result of this newfound interest for the East African slave trade.¹⁷⁵ The MP for South Donegal, John MacNeill questioned on the 30 July whether the decision to decommission the *HMS London* had encouraged the revived trafficking. The issue had been raised earlier that month in an article published in the *Contemporary Review* which proclaimed that ‘the Slave Trade in Africa “has been resumed with redoubled energy,” and “has become more rampant than ever”’ The Under-Secretary for State James Fergusson denied any such suggestion and argued to the contrary that: ‘the withdrawal of this particular vessel was part of a scheme for more effectual suppression,’ a reference to Kirk’s Vice-Consular scheme that had failed in 1885-6.¹⁷⁶

The day following MacNeill’s questions in parliament, the French Cardinal Charles Lavigerie gave a speech in London upon the invitation of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS).¹⁷⁷ According to the *New York Times* Lavigerie had come on a mission by the Pope to ‘arouse English public opinion concerning the slave trade in Africa.’¹⁷⁸ The ‘very influential’ meeting was held in Prince’s Hall in Piccadilly and presided over by Earl Granville;¹⁷⁹ the

¹⁷⁵ Hansard, HoC Debate, 30 July 1888 vol 329 cc738-9 and Question asked in the House of Commons, 30 July 1888, FO 881/5896, TNA.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Raffles to Allen, 31 July 1888, C66/43, C65 & C66, Anti-Slavery Papers, Rhodes House, Oxford University.

¹⁷⁸ ‘To Stop the Slave Trade: Cardinal Lavigerie’s Mission to England’, *New York Times*, 31 July 1888.

¹⁷⁹ British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society to Salisbury, 10 August 1888, FO 881/5896, TNA.

former liberal foreign secretary had thought it an 'honour' to chair the meeting. On the stand together with Granville, stood the Roman-Catholic Bishop Manning, the Archbishop of Canterbury had declined his invitation.¹⁸⁰ Lavigerie was the founder of the White Fathers mission, a Roman-Catholic missionary society based in Algiers, but with activity throughout the continent. He had since 1886 led a campaign against the African slave trade, but the interest garnered by his petition to the Foreign Office in 1886 which urged 'collective action' against the East African slave trade stood in stark contrast to his reception two years later.¹⁸¹ The Cardinal's visit revitalised the anti-slave trade campaign in Britain which had been lacklustre for over a decade and had profound policy-implications for the partition of Africa.¹⁸² As the historian Richard Huzzey pointed out, the arousal of British interest was also in part due to the public resentment of rival 'Johnny-come-lately' European powers apparent usurpation of what had been a distinctly British cause for almost a century.¹⁸³

In his speech the Cardinal cited the British explorer Verney Lovett Cameron¹⁸⁴ that 'half a million slaves at the least are sold every year in the interior of Africa' a number allegedly confirmed or even raised by the testimony of his own missionaries.¹⁸⁵ After recounting in graphic detail the scale of human suffering that was caused by the trade, Lavigerie pronounced that the nations of Europe had through their partition acquired duties as well as rights. One of these duties was the stamping out of the slave trade in the interior, not simply by persuasion or legitimate trade, but through force. Lavigerie proposed at the end of his

¹⁸⁰ Allen to Benson, 26 July 1888, ff. 41, Benson Papers, Volume 62, Lambeth Palace Library.

¹⁸¹ Playfair to Lister, 3 September 1886, FO 403/98, TNA.

¹⁸² Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, pp. 203-5.

¹⁸³ Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p. 162.

¹⁸⁴ See: B. A. Riffenburgh, 'Cameron, Verney Lovett (1844–1894)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2005 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4452>, accessed 8 April 2015]

¹⁸⁵ Richard Clarke, *Cardinal Lavigerie and the African Slave Trade* (London: Longman, 1889), p. 275.

speech an abolitionist 'crusade' against the Islamic slave trade that ravaged the interior of Africa:

But though I appeal to the Christian charity of all, though I ask for your pity and compassion for the black slaves, remember this - charity is much, compassion is much, but force is absolutely necessary. Nor can the opposition be successful merely by hindering the transport of slaves into Asia by means of cruisers; it is necessary to strike the evil at its root, and to destroy the markets of the interior, or to render them useless by establishing as your great Gordon wished to do for the basin of the Nile barriers against slavery composed of natives, led and instructed by Europeans, in order to supplement the maritime barriers formed by your cruisers.¹⁸⁶

His proposal was a radical one and if enacted would represent a complete alteration of British anti-slave trade policy – a shift which would clad territorial expansion in the guise of humanitarianism.

What followed Lavigerie's rousing agitation was yet another question from MacNeill in parliament. This time the question he directed to Salisbury was simply what the government intended to do to stop the slave trade in central and eastern Africa.¹⁸⁷ Although not admitting any increase in the traffic, Fergusson's reply revealed both Salisbury's strategy and his reluctance to commit additional funds to slave trade suppression: 'The Slave Trade should be more completely checked when the British and German East African Companies administer the coast under their Concessions from the Sultan.'¹⁸⁸ According to Salisbury's representative, it was:

¹⁸⁶ Clarke, *Cardinal Lavigerie*, pp. 282-3.

¹⁸⁷ Hansard, HoC Debate 3 August 1888 vol 329 cc1398-9, and Question asked in the House of Commons, 3 August 1888, FO 881/5896, TNA.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

...obviously impossible for Her Majesty's Government to follow the Arab slave-traders into the interior of the continent, but good results may be anticipated from the opening of trade routes by powerful Companies and from the increasing difficulties of exporting the slaves.¹⁸⁹

Salisbury's reliance upon private companies in executing imperial policy objectives stood in contrast to his liberal predecessor and would, as will be detailed in chapter five, inform his policy toward the evacuation of Uganda three years later.¹⁹⁰

In August, the BFASS sent Salisbury what became one of the Society's most important resolutions, it signalled an appeal to a tradition and aligned the question of anti-slavery with that of national prestige. On the back of the Lavigerie meeting, the resolution urged that:

it devolves upon England, from the position which she has always held with regard to this question, to take the initiative in obtaining a consensus of the Powers of Europe to carry out [...] such measures as shall secure the extinction of the devastating Slave Trade.¹⁹¹

Upon receipt of the resolution the Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Sir Thomas Villiers Lister drew up a memorandum that considered the policy response. Although he found it 'an invidious task to explain the objections to any chivalrous movement having a philanthropic object,' Lavigerie's suggestions for an 'Anti-Slave Trade Crusade' gave him little choice but to deem them both 'impossible' and 'absurd.'¹⁹² The practical details of the Cardinal's proposal were to impose a ban on the importation of firearms into Africa and to recruit a detachment of a hundred Europeans to physically stop the trade. Whilst the weapons

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Verney Lovett Cameron, 'Slavery in Africa. The Disease and the Remedy.' Reprinted from the *National Review*, October 1888, p. 56, Benson Papers, Volume 62, Lambeth Palace Library.

¹⁹¹ British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society to Salisbury, 10 August 1888, FO 881/5896, TNA.

¹⁹² Lister, Memorandum, 29 August 1888, FO 84/1927, TNA.

embargo later became official policy, the plan to despatch '100 Belgians with £40000 in their pockets [...] to govern Africa' seemed naïve to both Lister and Salisbury.¹⁹³

Despite his reservations against the 'crusade' Lister ended his memorandum by echoing the BFASS's resolution for a conference of the powers:

How far England as the founder of the Anti-Slavery movement can take part in the new crusade without encouraging schemes which are futile or mischievous, is the problem before us – a discussion with their Governments as to the measures practicable at the present moment would probably offer the safest solution.¹⁹⁴

Salisbury concurred in Lister's analysis in that he thought government interference ought to be limited to the coast and that 'this generation will have done its part, if it destroys the export slave trade.' Further he instructed the British Ambassador to Belgium Lord Vivian to 'sound the Belgians whether they would be willing to summon a conference of the Powers controlling the coast of Africa for this purpose.'¹⁹⁵ Hence, as Suzanne Miers makes clear, it was upon Salisbury's prompting that the Anti-Slave Trade Conference in Brussels was held the following year.¹⁹⁶ The public attention and agitation that followed the great increase in the East African slave trade had thus resulted in concrete political action and it is these political implications that form the subject of the following chapters.

It had been no coincidence that Lavigerie quoted Cameron. His careful choice of words actually betrayed a schism in the British anti-slave trade campaign. Whilst the BFASS was, out of loyalty to its Quaker roots, a strictly pacifist organisation, Commander Cameron who had

¹⁹³ Lister, Memorandum, 29 August 1888, FO 84/1927, TNA.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, p. 208.

been engaged in naval suppression of the East African slave trade since 1872, did certainly not subscribe to this doctrine of non-violence. The BFASS's insistence, under the leadership of its Secretary Charles Allen, upon moral persuasion, had led Cameron to form his own anti-slavery campaign that year. Cameron had even confided to the Archbishop of Canterbury Edward Benson of a personal antipathy against the rivalling humanitarian: 'Mr Allen will not show me open hostility lest a new and more active association than his should either sweep it away or swallow it up and therefore lest his post of Secretary should vanish.'¹⁹⁷ It was this 'new and more active association' that he sought support for from the Archbishop and which shortly after the Cardinal's visit published a polemical booklet in the *National Review* entitled: 'Slavery in Africa. The Disease and the Remedy.'¹⁹⁸ The account included long and graphic depictions of the brutality committed by the Arab slavers in East and Central Africa:

Remember that these horrors are not of occasional occurrence, but are happening every day, every hour, every moment that we breathe. Remember that we are told that this infernal demon of slavery costs Africa every year the life-blood of two millions of her children.'¹⁹⁹

While ultimately not successful in usurping the BFASS's position as Britain's principal anti-slavery organisation, Cameron's testimony of 'a formidable increase' in the slave trade did influence Salisbury's decision to institute the Anglo-German blockade of the East African coast in November of 1888.²⁰⁰ And as the following chapters will demonstrate, Salisbury decided to make good use of Cameron's representations to justify the conclusion of the Anglo-German

¹⁹⁷ Cameron to Benson, 26 October 1888, ff. 43, Volume 62, Benson Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.

¹⁹⁸ Booklet by Cameron 'Slavery in Africa. The Disease and the Remedy' October 1888, ff. 56-60, Volume 62, Benson Papers, Lambeth palace Library.

¹⁹⁹ Booklet by Cameron 'Slavery in Africa. The Disease and the Remedy' October 1888, ff. 56, Volume 62, Benson Papers, Lambeth palace Library.

²⁰⁰ Salisbury to Malet, 5 November 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty of 1890.²⁰¹ Unlike the pacifist BFASS who only advocated legitimate trade and moral persuasion, Cameron's more muscular recommendations of a territorial incursion fitted well with the results of the bilateral partition treaty. The timing of Lavigerie's speech coincided with the transformation of William Mackinnon's Syndicate into the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) and a relief expedition had been despatched to amalgamate the Equatorial Province of Emin Pasha with that of the British sphere.²⁰² Hence, the agitation for a territorial intervention had come at a time when Britain already had taken the tentative steps toward a final partition of East Africa, a process which would be completed within two years and in part accelerated by the anti-slavery focus raised by Lavigerie, Cameron and the BFASS campaigns.

Conclusion

To the British public and political establishment, the East African slave trade emerged from relative obscurity in the first half of the 1880s to one of general notoriety in the second. At the turn of the nineteenth century's penultimate decade, veteran activists of the BFASS like Joseph Sturge might have been forgiven for thinking that the days of Wilberforce, Livingstone and the Clapham sect were long since gone. Instead, a renaissance of abolitionist fervour gripped the nation and contributed to forming a moral dimension and *raison d'être* to imperial expansion in Africa. Whilst the 1880s marked a feverish high-point in the European scramble for African territories, it also set the scene for the last great mobilisation of British

²⁰¹ Salisbury to Malet, 24 November 1890, FO 84/2013, TNA.

²⁰² Syndicate for establishing British Commerce & Influence in East Africa & for relieving Emin Bey, Memorandum, private & confidential, 27 November 1886, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS cited in Galbraith, *Mackinnon and East Africa*, pp. 114-5.

abolitionist public opinion. For politicians such as Granville or anti-slavery advocates such as Lavigerie and Cameron, the two went hand in hand. In their eyes, territorial acquisitions were simply useful means with which to end the slave trade that ravaged the interior of the continent and a 'crusade' was the tool of choice. No wonder then that it was Cameron and Lavigerie that Salisbury chose to refer to after concluding the East African partition in 1890 and not the pacifist BFASS. For Britain, the anti-slavery cause was particularly evocative in that it represented a longstanding tradition and was associated with national prestige. Once the mantle had been taken up by the Frenchman Lavigerie, the British public and political establishment was not difficult to mobilise to guard and promote what was considered a highly respectable national cause.

Both the East African slave trade itself and awareness of it outside an intimate circle of specialists had been in a state of slow decline in the decade leading up to the Anglo-German partition of 1885. Despite that the treaty Britain concluded with the Sultan of Zanzibar in 1873 represented the most comprehensive act of abolitionist legislation enacted in East Africa thus far; it failed to completely eradicate the traffic. Since the institution of slavery remained a key component of the archipelago's economic structure a smuggling trade emerged to replenish slave stocks. This trade continued relatively unabated by the efforts of the Royal Navy, but on a level that was too low to attract much in the way of metropolitan attention. By the early 1880s this changed when a famine broke out on the East African mainland. Harrowing reports of widespread suffering and coupled with the evocative image of parents selling their children into slavery was enough to prompt limited press attention and laid the foundations for a British presence on the mainland that predated the German declaration of a protectorate in

1885. But more importantly, it was the decommissioning of the cornerstone of Britain's anti-slave trade policy in Zanzibar, *HMS London*, which forced a reconsideration of British tactics.

Kirk's proposal of an extension of the direct diplomatic supervision of the Sultan's treaty commitments to the mainland and Granville's endorsement of the scheme marked a radical departure from what had been British policy in the region for half a century. Naval officers had throughout the 1870s lobbied for a consular presence on the mainland opposite Zanzibar similar to what had been adopted in the Portuguese possessions to the south, but their suggestions had been ignored by the Foreign Office. Mackinnon had similarly been rebuffed when he attempted to gain a concession from the Sultan of Zanzibar to develop his mainland dominions. No extension of British influence on the lines of the previous year's annexation of the South African Republic was countenanced by Disraeli's government, in fact Salisbury had personally sabotaged the plan. However, the most important aspect of Granville's decision was the fact that Britain's plans for a proto-partition of the mainland in 1884 came largely as a consequence of its anti-slave trade policy and not simply as a reaction to great power rivalry.

Whilst the deliberations concerning British policy in East Africa over 1882-5 were largely internal to the government and various interested parties such as the BFASS and Mackinnon's syndicate, this changed abruptly three years later and the issue of the East African slave trade positioned itself squarely in the centre of public debate. As this chapter has demonstrated, the slave captures made by the Royal Navy in 1888 were the highest in more than a decade; indeed it indicated a revival of the slave trade on par with a scale not witnessed since the half-century prior to the 1873 treaty. This rekindling of the traffic combined with Lavigerie's abolitionist campaign prompted a British policy response which eventually resulted in the Anti-Slave Trade Conference in Brussels, 1889-90. Hence, the East African slave trade

constituted a significant component in the chain of causation that led to the final partition of East Africa in 1890. But as the next chapter will show, the proximate cause of the process which replaced British informal hegemony with a direct territorial presence was the German incursion of 1885.

Chapter Two:

'Now or Never'²⁰³: The First Partition of East Africa, 1884-7

The years 1884-7 marks in many respects the start of East Africa's entry into modern political world history. It is within this short time-interval that events, executed through individual agency and sanctioned by two powerful states, that both largely determined the territorial scope of the partition and formally integrated the region within the European imperial system. The culmination of this initial partition was the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886. And it was from this crucible, this chapter asserts, that the geographical and, to some extent, institutional framework of both the colonial and later independent states would develop. Although greatly determined by the peripheral forces of imperial agency, the establishment of the British and German spheres of influence did not occur in a political vacuum unaffected by wider concerns. Powerful metropolitan factors also formed a backdrop to the events. For Britain, these included its long-established anti-slave trade policy and sub-imperial commercial interests.

As the last chapter showed, the Sultanate of Zanzibar and its adjoining mainland dominions had since the Canning Award of 1862 formed part of Britain's informal empire in Africa. A significant number of Indian traders resided in this regional entrepôt and gave Britain an indirect commercial interest in the Sultanate. It was an economic interest that eclipsed any of Zanzibar's other trading partners.²⁰⁴ However Britain's engagement with the region was not one limited to trade, it was the humanitarian anti-slave trade policy that in successive stages since the 1820-30s had taken pre-eminence. In addition to maintaining a naval anti-slave trade

²⁰³ Hill to Kirk, Confidential Memorandum, 9 December 1884, FO 81/5037, TNA.

²⁰⁴ See: Abdul Sheriff and Ed Ferguson (eds.), *Zanzibar Under Colonial Rule* (London: J. Currey, 1991), pp. 9-35, 165-71.

squadron, a complex of treaties had been enacted in order to suppress the export of slaves from the mainland to Zanzibar and the Persian Gulf.²⁰⁵ For British policymakers the region served as a useful theatre in which to display their commitment to virtues the socio-economic elite perceived as identical to Britain's moral character and international position.

The appearance of Dr Carl Peters and his *Society for German Colonization* in the summer and autumn of 1884 and subsequent declaration of a German protectorate on the mainland ended Britain's hegemonic position in East Africa.²⁰⁶ Despite the Liberal Foreign Secretary Earl Granville had decided to form a colony in the Kilimanjaro in October 1884,²⁰⁷ based on Harry Johnston's treaties, the British move had come too late.

The British reaction was hesitant as it needed to balance its imperial interests elsewhere with those of East Africa. Anglo-German relations in the years 1884-7 were dominated by British relations with Russia and the 'Eastern Question' which included the 'Panjdeh incident' in Afghanistan and French hostility toward Britain's occupation of Egypt. The German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck was the protagonist in this relationship and he exploited British imperial overstretch to German advantage; bartering diplomatic support for wide-ranging colonial concessions in Africa and the Pacific.

After a decade of successfully staying aloof from European intrigues, the 1880s drew Britain back into continental affairs. Bismarck's mid-1884 *Pauline conversion* to a colonial policy was long undetected by the Foreign Office, but once recognised Whitehall used the German desire for territorial expansion as a *quid* for Germany's *quo*. However in 1885, London needed Berlin

²⁰⁵ Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp. 150-4.

²⁰⁶ For some literature on the pre-partition political history of East Africa, see: Coupland, *East Africa and its Invaders*; Bennett, *History of Zanzibar*; Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices & Ivory*; R.W. Beachey, *A History of East Africa*.

²⁰⁷ Granville to Kirk, 9 October 1884, Confidential, FO 881/5037, TNA.

more than Berlin needed London; it was the year which saw the fall of Khartoum, French antagonism over Egypt and Britain edging toward war with Russia over Afghanistan. The result was substantial African territories, some of which in regions where Britain had strong sub-imperial interests such as South-West Africa and East Africa, falling into German hands with the active co-operation of the British government.

Yet, compared to other contemporary issues East Africa played a relatively minor role in the Anglo-German relationship. This 'colonial affair' did at sporadic intervals merit such attention as to be included in the new British ambassador to Berlin Sir Edward Malet's private correspondence, but would inexorably take the form of an irritation.²⁰⁸ Bismarck expressed his annoyance with both the Sultan of Zanzibar and the British consul Sir John Kirk, both of whom he perceived to conspire against German pretensions.

As it will be shown in this chapter, once the German presence was a reality, Britain's policy would principally come to be formulated by a combination of private commercial interests and a cadre of diplomatic agents on the spot. In an almost prophetic vision, Frederic Holmwood, the Acting Consul General in Zanzibar, laid out what would become British policy over the following two decades in 1885; shortly after the German protectorate was declared.²⁰⁹ This despatch included both recommendations that Britain should secure the northern territories of the mainland and that it should commence construction of a railway to link the Victoria Nyanza with the coast. As Holmwood argued, the actions would not only ensure the rights of British subjects trading in the region and increase its commercial potential, but would also put a final end to the East African slave trade. These claims would

²⁰⁸ See the volumes of private correspondence from Malet to Granville, Salisbury, Rosebery and Iddesleigh between 1885-1887 in FO 343/7 and FO 343/8, TNA.

²⁰⁹ Holmwood to Granville, 27 March 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

resurface regularly over the next eight years, most notably in Sir Gerald Portal's report to Parliament in 1892 which will be detailed in the final two chapters.

Peters' incursion in East Africa signalled the start of two years of intensive Anglo-German diplomacy culminating in the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886. The treaty's proximate cause was not high politics, nor a carefully conceived British strategy, but the result of a private agreement between the two principal imperial agents: Carl Peters and William Mackinnon. This fact, as the current and further chapters will demonstrate, is crucial for understanding both how and why Britain eventually would hold Uganda and the remaining territories separating the interlacustrine kingdom with the coast.

The historiography dealing with the 1886 treaty is largely lacking despite its overwhelming importance in determining the geographical pattern of the East African partition. This scholarly oversight has arguably in turn contributed to the well-established speculation that British policymakers were actuated by securing the Nile. By examining the negotiations between Peters and Mackinnon, it is evident that Britain were awarded the northern territories and by extension these territories' hinterland containing the sources of the White Nile by chance, rather than through calculated grand strategy. Despite the award not covering the entirety of what later would become the British East Africa Protectorate, it covered enough to give Britain a realistic claim to the Nile watershed, six years before any mention of securing the river for strategic purposes was made.

This chapter will first outline the pre-partition Anglo-German exploration of the mainland and then consider the British schemes for establishing a presence at Kilimanjaro during the autumn of 1884. Further it will examine the British reaction to the German protectorate and the circumstances which culminated in the first bilateral treaty of partition in 1886.

Prelude to Partition: Exploration of East Africa, 1848-84

In the decades prior to the partition of East Africa, the region had been visited by a small number of predominantly British and German explorers. Although peripheral to the annexation proper, the explorers' choice of routes either directly or indirectly influenced the geographical dispersal of British and German territorial claims. From the coast opposite Zanzibar there were three main caravan routes that led into the interior trading region which encompassed the Victoria Nyanza and Buganda: the northern route from the port of Mombasa; and the two southern routes from Pangani and Bagamoyo. Whilst German exploration focused on the southern section of the mainland, British efforts concerned the north and used Mombasa as a point of departure. This *de facto* north-south division of the mainland formed the basis of the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886.²¹⁰

The first Europeans to trek beyond the immediate coastline were the German missionary-explorers Johannes Rebmann and Johann Ludwig Krapf.²¹¹ They discovered Mount Kenya in 1848²¹² and Mount Kilimanjaro the following year.²¹³ Later in 1861-2, their compatriot Karl Klaus von der Decken attempted to scale the mountain, but was unsuccessful on both occasions.²¹⁴ Concurrently the two Britons; John Hanning Speke and James Augustus Grant, who had set out from Zanzibar in 1860, explored the territories north and west of the Victoria Nyanza, visited Buganda and discovered in 1862 the source of the White Nile.²¹⁵ A decade

²¹⁰ Anderson, Memorandum, 13 September 1892, Confidential, FO 84/2258, TNA.

²¹¹ Christine Nicholls, *Red Strangers: The White Tribe of Kenya* (London: Timewell Press, 2005), p. 3.

²¹² Halford Mackinder, "A Journey to the Summit of Mount Kenya, British East Africa." *The Geographical Journal* 15, no. 5 (1900): 453–476. DOI: 10.2307/1774261

²¹³ Johannes Rebmann, "Bericht einer Reise zum Kilimandscharo," in *Reisen in Ost-Afrika ausgeführt in den Jahren 1837-55*, ed. Johann Ludwig Krapf (Stuttgart: Kornthal, 1858), pp. 456-505.

²¹⁴ Incidentally Karl Claus von der Decken was a friend of Dr Carl Peters' father, and, it was according to Peters' own account, his tales of exploration that had stimulated his interest for African colonisation. See: Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, p. 14.

²¹⁵ Royal Geographical Society, Twelfth Meeting, Monday Evening, 11 May 1863, in Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London 7 (3): 108–110. (London, 1863).

later, between November 1871 and August 1872, David Livingstone explored the regions south of the Victoria Nyanza between Ujiji and Unyanyembe.²¹⁶ It was on an expedition just prior to this, on 15 July 1871, that Livingstone witnessed the massacre at Nyangwe where he reported that Arab slave traders had killed approximately 4-500 villagers.²¹⁷ Reports of this event were among the factors that triggered the despatch of Sir Bartle Frere's mission to Zanzibar and the Anti-Slave Trade treaty of 1873 with Sultan Barghash.²¹⁸

As the previous chapter made clear, Britain's engagement with the region was gradually transformed during the 1870s; from an indirect, maritime influence to a more direct, land-based. This included Henry Morton Stanley's visit to the kingdom of Buganda in 1875 which laid the foundations of the civil strife that would embroil the kingdom in the 1880s.²¹⁹ Since it was upon his prompting that missionaries from both the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the French White Fathers arrived in 1877²²⁰ and 1879²²¹ respectively. But these private British incursions also comprised William Mackinnon's abortive 1877-8 attempt at gaining a concession from the Sultan of Zanzibar to establish a proto-colony on the mainland.²²²

²¹⁶ Parliamentary Papers of 1872, vol. LXX [C-598], 10-15, House of Commons Library.

²¹⁷ The Livingstone Field Diary was deciphered and published online in 2011, it can be accessed here: http://livingstone.library.ucla.edu/1871diary/letter_massacre.htm Livingstone's field diary was handed to Henry Morton Stanley who met him in Ujiji in November 1871; see: Henry Morton Stanley, *How I found Livingstone travels, adventures, and discoveries in central Africa; including four months' residence with Dr. Livingstone*, (London, 1880) p. 331.

²¹⁸ See: Sir Bartle Frere's mission to Zanzibar correspondence, 1872-3, FO 96/175, TNA.

²¹⁹ The consequences for the partition of the Bugandan civil war form the subject of later chapters.

²²⁰ Anderson, Memorandum, 10 September 1892, FO 84/2258, TNA and Précis of Events on the Upper Nile and Adjacent Territories, Including Bahr-el-Ghazal and Uganda from 1878 to March 1898, Section III Uganda (p. 8), FO 881/7042X, TNA.

²²¹ Jean-Claude Ceillier, *History of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers): From the beginning of their Foundation by Msgr Lavigerie until his death (1868-1892)*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2011), pp. 136-169.

²²² Kiewiet, *History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*, pp. 43-5.

Anglo-German Exploration and the North-South Division, 1882-4

However, the exploration that directly preceded the partition took place between 1882 and 1884. The German explorer Dr Gustav Fischer had between December 1882 and November 1883 explored the East African highlands inhabited by the Masai. Fischer had chosen to pursue the central caravan route into the interior, so had set out from the coastal settlement of Pangani lying south of Mombasa in order to follow both the Pangani river and associated caravan routes into the Masai country. Upon returning to Germany, he had presented his findings to his patron the Hamburg Geographical Society. In the concluding remarks of this meeting held on 6 December 1883 Fischer estimated that:

...the territories situated south of Kilimanjaro and between this and Mount Meru, viz. Chaga Land and the two Arushas, are well adapted for European settlement. In this climate, which is not too hot, these districts are watered by a network of small streams always containing water, and [...] that an important trade could be developed with the Masai.²²³

Apart from the presentation made to the Hamburg Geographical Society, Fischer's findings were publicly exhibited in Hamburg the following January and a report of the meeting was published by the Royal Geographical Society in February 1884.²²⁴

Fischer's British counterpart Joseph Thomson had in 1883 been sent on an expedition by the Royal Geographical Society to explore the territories separating the Victoria Nyanza from the coast, in particular 'to ascertain if a practicable direct route existed through the Masai Country

²²³ Royal Geographical Society, "Dr. Fischer's Journey in the Masai Country," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography New Monthly Series* 6, no. 2 (Feb., 1884): 82-3. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1800440>

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-3.

to the Lake.²²⁵ Thomson set out on this expedition in February 1883 from Mombasa and followed the northern caravan routes through the territories dubbed Masailand.²²⁶

In similarity with Fischer, Thomson found the region to be 'a veritable Arcadia in respect of its charming scenes.'²²⁷ In Livingstone's tradition and contrary to his more brash counterparts, the young Scot had adopted a restrained approach to the business of exploration and taken the motto: 'He who goes gently goes safe; he who goes safe goes far.'²²⁸ Perhaps testament to this, Thomson had avoided Fischer's mistake of skirmishing with the Masai which caused him to cut his mission short.²²⁹ Thomson had trekked beyond Kilimanjaro via 'Ngare-na-Erobi,' and arrived at the eastern shores of Lake Victoria on 10 December 1883, some 40 miles from the outlet of the White Nile, from which he returned to the coast via a northerly route bypassing Mount Elgon.²³⁰ In the district of Masawa he encountered a village 'devastated by a coast caravan,' testament to the on-going slave-raiding activities in the East African interior.²³¹

Upon his return to England in November 1884 Thomson's discoveries in East Africa were jubilantly covered in the press. In an editorial *The Times* pronounced:

Civilization would have been a physical impossibility for a population cursed with a native country of the sort Africa appeared to the imagination of Europe half a century since. It seems tho the most natural thing in the world for the smiling plains, the umbrageous forests, the valleys laughing with rills, and the snowcapped mountains Mr. Thomson has been traversing. He is an excellent

²²⁵ Joseph Thomson, "Through the Masai Country to Victoria Nyanza," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography New Monthly Series* 6, no. 12 (Dec., 1884): 690-712.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1800706>

²²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 690.

²²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 692.

²²⁸ Thomson's Manuscript submitted to Lord Aberdare, JMS 2/235, p. 53, Royal Geographical Society Archive.

Also see: Thomson, *Through the Masai Country to Victoria Nyanza*, p. 696

²²⁹ Thomson, *Through the Masai Country to Victoria Nyanza*, p. 696

²³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 707.

²³¹ *Ibid*, p. 708.

example of the class of pioneers wanted to set the work going.²³²

'Now or Never'²³³: A Foiled Plan, July-December 1884

Nevertheless, the work which would lead East Africa into 'the fold of civilization' had already been initiated earlier that summer by a more unassuming candidate than a representative of the RGS; namely, Kew's man on the spot Henry Hamilton 'Harry' Johnston. In May 1884 Johnston had set out for Kilimanjaro to collect botanical specimens for the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.²³⁴ Later that year the 'rather too cocky'²³⁵ Johnston returned to England with treaty-forms signed by six chiefs of Taveta, the settlements lying just north of the peak.²³⁶ Just as Thomson, Johnston had also encountered the local chief Mandara and noted that he was 'very anxious for British protection, and has asked for a Union Jack.'²³⁷

Before his departure from Kilimanjaro, Johnston had authored a letter to Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, the Liberal Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. In this letter of 10 July 1884, Johnston echoed Thomson and Fischer's descriptions of the region as 'eminently suited for European colonization' and warned that it 'within a few years' it probably would fall to English, French or German control.²³⁸

Receipt of Johnston's communication sparked a debate among the policymakers of the ruling Liberal party and the Africa experts in the Foreign Office over the autumn of 1884. The offer

²³² 'Mr. Joseph Thomson delighted the Royal Geographical Society,' *The Times*, 4 November 1884, p.9.

²³³ Hill to Kirk, Confidential Memorandum, 9 December 1884, FO 81/5037, TNA.

²³⁴ Kirk to Granville, 5 May 1884, AEX/3/1, Part 3, Folio 104, The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

²³⁵ Sclater to Hooker, 12 December 1883, AEX/3/1, Part 2, Folios 60 – 100, The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

²³⁶ Johnston to Hutton, 31 October 1885, Box 17, Files 66-68, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS. Treaty enclosed in Johnston to Anderson, 29 October 1885, FO 403/95, TNA.

²³⁷ Johnston to Fitzmaurice, 10 July 1884, FO 881/5037, TNA.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

had evidently renewed attention for the land-based anti-slavery scheme Clement Hill had proposed in 1882.²³⁹ Granville wrote to Kirk for advice as to how to proceed and noted that:

Mr. Johnston's representations appear to Her Majesty's Government to be worthy of consideration. His knowledge of the country, when he wrote, was recent, and his acquaintance with the natives necessarily imperfect; but his impression of the general qualifications of the country for European colonization could not be altogether erroneous, and if more mature experience should have confirmed his views it would be undesirable that an opportunity should be neglected of securing a hold over a territory adapted for British enterprise and favourably situated for striking a blow at the Slave Trade.²⁴⁰

In his brief confidential despatch, Granville revealed the two most important considerations relevant to the liberal government's policy toward East Africa: its commercial potential by way of European settler-colonisation; and, its suitability as a base from which to suppress the slave trade. The views were certainly in line with Hill's 1882 proposal of changing the focus of British anti-slave trade policy from a maritime strategy to one of using 'agencies working onshore.'²⁴¹

Time was recognised as a crucial factor as Granville noted:

I am specially to point out to you that at the present moment the attention of European Powers is directed to an unprecedented extent to the question of the formation of Settlements on the African coast, that action has been in recent cases prompt and secret, and that it is essential that a district situated like that of Kilimanjaro, if Mr. Johnston's descriptions of it are correct, should not be placed under the protection of another flag to the possible detriment of British interests.²⁴²

The Foreign Secretary had thus on commercial and humanitarian grounds committed Britain

²³⁹ Hill, Memorandum, 23 August 1882, FO 881/4676, TNA.

²⁴⁰ Granville to Kirk, 9 October 1884, Confidential, FO 881/5037, TNA.

²⁴¹ Hill, Memorandum, 23 August 1882, FO 881/4676, TNA.

²⁴² Granville to Kirk, 9 October 1884, Confidential, FO 881/5037, TNA.

to be a participant in the partition of East Africa in October 1884.

Next, on Granville's request Hill produced an extensive memorandum concerning the Kilimanjaro region and placed it in the wider question of African partition. His memorandum offers an insight into what leading Foreign Office mandarins considered Britain's principal territorial interests in Africa at the dawn of the 'scramble.'²⁴³ Over the coming two decades the geographical dispersion of British imperial possessions in Africa would largely reflect the early analysis made by Hill in the months leading up to the West African 'Congo Conference' in Berlin 1884-5. Hill argued that:

The geographical position of the East Coast lays it more within the general area of our foreign policy than that of the West Coast. Our alternative route by the Cape to India may at any time make it important that we should have possession of, or at least free access to, good harbours.²⁴⁴

Hill's views were influenced by current developments in the surrounding regions, in particular the threat posed by the popular Islamic movement of the 'Mahdi' in the Sudan and the recent French annexation of Madagascar. The substantial Indian community that resided in Zanzibar was also cited in favour of Britain exercising a 'preponderating influence' in East Africa. Apart from the strategic considerations which evidently derived from concerns over the Cape sea-route to India and not the Nile as is claimed by Robinson et al.,²⁴⁵ Hill considered the economic potential of the region to be substantial. Revealing his adherence to the contemporary belief in the economic benefits of suppressing the slave-trade, Hill stated: 'Commercially, it has

²⁴³ For an analysis of the Hill memoranda's significance in regard to the East African partition, see: M. E. Chamberlain, "Clement Hill's memoranda and the British interest in East Africa," *The English Historical Review* 87, no. 344 (Jul., 1972): 533-547. DOI: 10.1093/ehr/LXXXVII.CCCXLIV.533

²⁴⁴ Hill, Memorandum, 20 October 1884, FO 881/5037, TNA. This quote is also featured in Robinson et al. *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 191., although omitting the following sentence in which Hill clearly states that he refers to the Cape sea-route to India and not the Nile or Nile Valley.

²⁴⁵ Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 191.

made great strides in the ten years which have elapsed since the slave export was checked and an impulse given to legitimate trade.' The range of economic factors cited included mineral wealth believed to be situated between the coast and the Victoria Nyanza, agricultural production capacity for both cattle and grains, a healthy climate with an abundance of sanatoriums for European agents, and that the local population would be more 'industrious than most of the West Coast tribes.'²⁴⁶

Hill ended his influential memorandum with a précis of what became official Britain's Africa strategy at the dawn of the partition, a policy which was focussed on the Indian Ocean littoral:

Is it not worth considering whether, in view of the European race for territories on the West Coast, and the consequent jealousies and dangerous rivalries, we might not confine ourselves to securing the utmost possible freedom of trade on that coast, yielding to other Powers the territorial responsibilities, so far as compatible with the maintenance of our existing possessions, and seeking compensation on the East Coast, where, to the north of the Portuguese dominions, we are at present, but who can say for how long, without a European rival; where the political future of the country is of real importance to Indian and Imperial interests; where the climate is superior; where commerce is capable of vast extension, and where our influence could be exercised, unchecked by the rivalry of Europe, in the extension of civilization, and the consequent extinction of the Slave Trade, for which we have so long laboured?²⁴⁷

Hill's mention of 'Indian and Imperial interests' were references to the sea-route to India via the Cape of Good Hope, and the imperial policy concern of anti-slavery, particularly since this region was the last remaining redoubt of any significant slave trafficking. The reflections were corroborated by Holmwood who also warned of the great public interest in East Africa that

²⁴⁶ Hill, Memorandum, 20 October 1884, FO 881/5037, TNA.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

had been raised in Germany after the return of Fischer.²⁴⁸ Holmwood had already at the time of Stanley's expedition to Buganda in 1878 alerted the RGS of the region as a field for exploration. Financial limitations had however delayed any action until Thomson's expedition in 1883.²⁴⁹

As a consequence, Granville instructed Kirk in December 1884 confidentially to ask Britain's client, the Sultan of Zanzibar, to extend his mainland dominions to include the territories encompassing Kilimanjaro. In reference to Chief Mandara's earlier proposition of accepting British protection, Granville thought that: 'it may not be unreasonable to suppose that there are others who, [...] would equally welcome a Government which could put down the system of petty wars and attendant Slave Trade which now disturbs their country.' However, any such extension of territory for the Sultanate was subject to a British caveat: 'It would further be understood that the Sultan would proclaim the abolition of slavery throughout the whole district which would thus come under his control.'²⁵⁰

Hill was then tasked with evaluating the feasibility of such an 'Embassy' to extend Britain's client state, the Sultanate of Zanzibar, suzerainty over the tribes populating the immediate interior. Despite presuming the costs involved would be slight, Hill believed it would be most expedient to justify the expense to Parliament on anti-slavery grounds. But he added that: 'the commercial advantages would [...] fully repay it. The capabilities of East Africa, when once the devastating slave-raids are put down, are immense.'²⁵¹

To Hill, the anti-slavery considerations were paramount, but neither Indian commercial

²⁴⁸ Holmwood, Memorandum, undated, No.4, FO 881/5037, TNA.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Granville to Kirk, Confidential, 5 December 1884, FO 881/5037, TNA.

²⁵¹ Hill to Kirk, Confidential Memorandum, 9 December 1884, FO 81/5037, TNA.

interests nor the strategic value of holding bases on the Cape-route to India was lost sight of. Regarding the additional burden indirect control of East Africa would place upon the British Empire, Hill ventured to believe that they would not be greater in the future than they currently were, and he was fully cognizant of Britain's position as Zanzibar's heir to the territories should the Sultanate collapse:

There is a very large commercial connection already between it and India; the local trade is almost entirely in the hands of Indian subjects; we cannot refuse to protect them, and we are pledged irrevocably to the extinction of the Slave Trade. How, then, will our responsibility be materially increased by the addition of the healthiest, and, perhaps, the most valuable portion of East Africa to the dominions of Zanzibar? If that Power should fall to pieces, who must be its successor? Could we admit another occupation like that of Madagascar on our alternative route to India? Is it not better to forestall others by encouraging this very moderate, but most precious, extension of territory on the part of the Power whose natural, though it may be reluctant, heirs we may hereafter become?²⁵²

What, however, is evident from the Foreign Office memoranda is that Britain had three main interests in the region which required a territorial presence via its client state Zanzibar: the sub-imperial economic concern for Indian commerce; the imperial humanitarian concern for anti-slavery, and; the imperial strategic concern for holding coastal ports on the Cape-route to India. Two of these derived from Britain's position on the subcontinent, but certainly not via the proxies of the Nile, Nile Valley nor Egypt. Additionally it was hypothesised that suppression of the slave trade would unleash the commercial potential of the region and thus recompense any costs associated with annexation. Despite Kirk's warning in November that: 'there are mysterious Germans travelling inland, and a German man-of-war is expected on the

²⁵² Ibid.

coast.²⁵³ Hill prematurely declared: 'at least there is no European Power yet at Kilimanjaro.'²⁵⁴

The Foreign Office estimated a worst possible scenario would be being forestalled by France or Germany. On this basis Hill urged in December 1884 that prompt action should be taken; it was indeed 'now or never.'²⁵⁵

The German Protectorate, 1884-5

The Foreign Office's worst case scenario had however in the autumn of 1884 already been realised. Kirk's cryptic report of 'mysterious Germans travelling inland' was in fact Dr Carl Peters and his associates of the German Colonial Association. Their decision to follow in Fischer's footsteps, by using the southern caravan route into the Usagara, largely determined the geographical scope of the partition.²⁵⁶

In January 1885 the British press had speculated about an impending German incursion; it was rumoured that a war ship carrying German diplomatic agents was despatched to Zanzibar. The rumours had prompted Granville to contact Bismarck about his intentions. But Bismarck had as late as 28 November 1884 given his assurance to Malet that: 'Germany was not endeavouring to obtain a Protectorate over Zanzibar.'²⁵⁷ Despite these assurances, the British Ambassador Sir Edward Malet had noticed a deterioration in Bismarck's attitude to Britain and speculated whether it was a calculated ploy: 'Is this not due to the intention to maintain a grief against us to be used as an excuse at the opportune moment...?'²⁵⁸

²⁵³ Kirk to Anderson, 24 November 1884, FO 881/5037, TNA.

²⁵⁴ Hill to Kirk, Confidential Memorandum, 9 December 1884, FO 81/5037, TNA.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Anderson, Memorandum, 13 September 1892, Confidential, FO 84/2258, TNA.

²⁵⁷ Granville to Malet, 14 January 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

²⁵⁸ Malet to Granville, 27 December 1884, FO 343/6, TNA.

The German Ambassador Count Münster's reply to Granville was more ambiguous than Bismarck's earlier response. Although he recognised 'the services of the British Government in the suppression of the Slave Trade on the coast in the interest of humanity and civilization [as] notorious' he was 'unacquainted with the amount of direct influence which the United Kingdom and the Indian Government [...] exercised over Zanzibar during the present century.'²⁵⁹ The mysterious naval vessel turned out to be the German frigate 'Gneisenau', which had spent nine weeks in Zanzibar harbour attempting to intimidate the Sultan through gun-boat diplomacy.²⁶⁰

By the end of January 1885 Malet was again speculating over Bismarck's intentions. Anglo-French relations were now at low ebb over Egypt and Britain needed Bismarck to halt Germany's support of France. The Chancellor was however reluctant, but Malet calculated that:

Prince Bismarck would find a way to detach himself, if the bait were big enough.
– He however, declines to say what that bait is, but I cannot help thinking that he wants us to offer something.²⁶¹

Bismarck had initially been unaware of Peters' incursion into East Africa.²⁶² But the news of Peters' treaty-making had evidently reached him by the end of 1884 and he had decided to ratify them.²⁶³ Before he would finally show his hand to Gladstone's government, Bismarck

²⁵⁹ Münster to Granville 6 February 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

²⁶⁰ Kirk to Granville, 9 April 1885, FO 403/93, TNA. Gneisenau had apparently taken '...every possible opportunity [to] impress on the Sultan the power of Germany; landing parties have been exercised on shore, guns fired, torpedoes practised in harbour, and the idea given somehow or other that this vessel would be made use of on the coast.'

²⁶¹ Malet to Granville, 24 January 1885, FO 343/6, TNA.

²⁶² Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, pp. 51-66.

²⁶³ Bismarck's motives for suddenly pursuing a colonial policy are still debated, but thought to derive from domestic politics and in particular as a bid to gain voters' support for the National Liberals in the 1884 general election, see: H. Pogge von Strandmann, "Domestic Origins of Germany's Colonial Expansion under Bismarck," *Past and Present* 42, no. 1 (1969):140-59. DOI: 10.1093/past/42.1.140.; Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, pp. 41-6.

spent the last weeks of December 1884 and the first two months of 1885 preparing the diplomatic ground for immediate British recognition. By maintaining a hostile attitude when Britain required his assistance, whilst simultaneously hinting that this hostility could be remedied by British concessions, Bismarck calculated that German claims in East Africa would receive few objections from London.

On 3 March 1885, Kirk informed Granville of the German declaration of a protectorate over the territories west of the Sultan of Zanzibar's mainland dominions.²⁶⁴ The following day the imperial '*schutz-brief*' was published in *The Times*, with the announcement timed so as to coincide with the completion of the Berlin Conference.²⁶⁵ Details of the clandestine proceedings had emerged from the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Peters and his German companions Count Joachim von Pfeil, Dr Karl Jühlke and the Austrian-national August Otto had purchased third-class tickets under assumed names and sailed from Trieste to Aden. At this British outpost they had boarded Mackinnon's British-India Steam Navigation Company's ship 'Bagdad' for the last leg of their voyage to Zanzibar.

They reached the Sultanate in October 1884 and some weeks later had set out for an expedition to Usagara, in the southern section of the Zanzibari mainland dominions, instead of travelling onwards toward the Transvaal which had been falsely rumoured. Perhaps as a reflection of the educated opinion which prevailed in Germany at the time of the proclamation; neither the *Frankfurter Zeitung* nor the *National Zeitung* expressed much support of, or belief in, the colonial venture. Having reported that both Peters and Jühlke had fallen ill whilst Otto had died, they proclaimed that the fate of the expedition was yet 'another

²⁶⁴ Kirk to Granville, 3 March 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

²⁶⁵ 'England and Germany,' *The Times*, 4 March 1885, p. 5.

proof that Europeans cannot survive the climate of this part of Africa' and that the 'late catastrophe will certainly not be the last.'²⁶⁶ Both papers argued that any schemes of German colonization should instead be focussed on West Africa and in particular the Upper Congo.

Nevertheless, the annexed territory lay entirely to the south of the River Wami on the East African mainland, some eighty miles inland from the coast.²⁶⁷ As Kirk had previously informed the Foreign Office, the location of the German protectorate indicated 'Dar [es] Salaam [as] requisite port.'²⁶⁸ Whilst Kirk's analysis was correct, the German territories would remain landlocked until the Anglo-German Heligoland Treaty of 1890. Peters' expedition had followed one of the main southern caravan routes that connected Zanzibar with Ujiji on the eastern shores of Lake Tanganyika. Once they had reached the table lands of Usagara, Peters acquired twelve 'treaties' with the indigenous population which were ratified by Kaiser Wilhelm I the following spring.²⁶⁹ Thus, the actions of a private group of Germans had forestalled Granville's plans of extending British influence to the East African mainland via the proxy of Zanzibar. Their decision to pursue the southern caravan route, as the next section will show, formed the basis of the territorial north-south division laid down in the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886.

²⁶⁶ Scott to Granville, 7 March 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

²⁶⁷ Holmwood to Granville, 23 March 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

²⁶⁸ Kirk to Granville, 5 March 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

²⁶⁹ Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, p. 1.

Britain's Response: The Salubrious Highlands

When news of the ratification reached the Foreign Office it unleashed a frantic response from Britain's man on the spot in Zanzibar. Frederic Holmwood²⁷⁰ thought the German intrusion constituted a 'grave danger' to British interests and called for 'serious attention' to be given his proposals for 'utilizing the healthy and fertile regions lying to the north of the German territory.'²⁷¹ Apart from the fertile districts of Usagara which had passed into German hands, the most valuable lands in East Africa were perceived to be situated in the northern interior.²⁷² These were the salubrious highlands in the territories separating Mount Kenya, Mount Kilimanjaro and the Victoria Nyanza, and more importantly the regions littoral to the equatorial lake. Moreover, asserting British administration of these territories would, it was argued, also put a final end to the East African slave trade.²⁷³

As the previous chapter made clear, the humanitarian-derived rationale was not empty rhetoric and Holmwood's suggestions echoed those made by Hill in 1882.²⁷⁴ There had been an upsurge in the traffic during the winter months of 1884-5, with attention heightened over the question due to the sitting West African Conference in Berlin. Even Salisbury, whilst in opposition, had hinted that British anti-slave trade policy in East Africa might shift its focus to the interior. In November 1884, he had suggested to a deputation of the Anti-Slavery Society that their proposals for the legal assimilation of slave trading with piracy '...ought to apply to

²⁷⁰ Frederic Holmwood served at the time as the Acting Consul General to cover for Sir John Kirk's leave of absence. Although Holmwood was a central character in British policymaking and execution toward East Africa during the 1870-80s, very little scholarship is devoted to analysing his role and influence.

²⁷¹ Holmwood to Granville, 27 March 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

²⁷² Ibid. Uganda was only five years later dubbed 'the pearl of Africa' by an unnamed director of the German East Africa Company, a designation that has later been attributed Henry Morton Stanley. See: 'Mr. Stanley at Glasgow,' *The Times*, 13 June 1890, p. 5.

²⁷³ Holmwood to Granville, 27 March 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

²⁷⁴ Hill, Memorandum, 23 August 1882, FO 881/4676, TNA.

great rivers and lakes' as 'before long the great African lakes might be opened to commerce.'²⁷⁵ In January 1885, an article detailed the capture of 180 slaves by the British cruiser HMS Osprey, and emphasised that 'the trade, so far from having ceased, as appears to be the idea in England, was still in full swing' and urged the annexation of East Africa.²⁷⁶ Holmwood explained that the background for this great increase in trafficking was a result of the on-going famine in the region, and not a consequence of any fault of local authorities in executing Britain's anti-slave trade policy.²⁷⁷ But despite the famine ending in 1884, reports of a 'marked revival of the Slave Trade' were received by London in August 1885.²⁷⁸

Holmwood underlined his objection to any outright British annexation, which would be met by opposition from Gladstone's government, but urged for 'immediate action' to be taken and sketched the outlines of a territorial presence borne out of a chartered company acting under the nominal auspices of the Sultan of Zanzibar.²⁷⁹ As will be detailed in the final chapter, Holmwood's main proposal was the construction of a railway from the coast to the Victoria Nyanza. Such a railway, Holmwood argued, would:

...offer a safe and advantageous deviation for the present trade routes, by opening up the mountain districts of East Africa and the sources of the Nile, a region far richer, more fertile, and incomparably healthier than any part of Tropical Africa, and the only one that is really adapted for the settlement of large colonies of Europeans; and, finally, if accompanied with the political measure, by completing the work which has so long been carried on, at such an immense

²⁷⁵ 'The Slave Trade and the Berlin Conference,' *The Times*, 20 November 1884, p.10.

²⁷⁶ 'The Slave Trade Off the East African Coast,' *The Times*, 20 January 1885, p. 10. The article warned that if Britain does not '...acquire this protectorate, the Germans who are exceedingly anxious for a port on the East African coast, will. They could not have a better excuse for annexation... [and whether it should be] possible that we shall be willing, after all the sacrifices we have made in this good cause, to see also so important a market pass from our hands without an effort or a remonstrance?'

²⁷⁷ 'East African Slave Trade,' *The Times*, 28 January 1885, p. 10.

²⁷⁸ Kirk to Salisbury, 1 August 1885, FO 403/94, TNA.

²⁷⁹ See: IBEA Royal Charter, concession from Sultan of Zanzibar and dissolution documents, TS 18/260, TNA.

cost, by England in connection with her anti-slavery policy.²⁸⁰

Holmwood thus proposed that Britain should secure the temperate territories north of the German nucleus protectorate and connect it to the coast with a railway. This course of action would address the composite policy-considerations Britain faced in East Africa; from protecting the interests of its British Indian subjects to suppressing the slave trade.

A Liberal Welcome, 1885

Whilst Gladstone's cabinet outwardly praised Germany's 'civilising aspirations' as long as Zanzibar was left 'in peace,'²⁸¹ the Foreign Office instructed Kirk to 'ascertain, privately and unofficially' whether the Sultan would consider re-awarding Mackinnon's 1877 concession to the north of the new German protectorate.²⁸² Concurrently Holmwood attempted to entice the cotton magnate and President of Manchester's Chamber of Commerce, James Hutton²⁸³ to realise the railway scheme; and, by implication, founding a British proto-colony.²⁸⁴

Hutton was a close friend and business associate of William Mackinnon, who was now approached to re-acquire the concession he was sabotaged by Salisbury from gaining in 1878.²⁸⁵ Mackinnon had considerable wealth due to his ownership of the world's largest shipping company, the British-India Steam Navigation Company, and he had long maintained

²⁸⁰ Holmwood to Granville, 27 March 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

²⁸¹ Count Herbert Bismarck to Prince Bismarck, 7 March 1885, cited in: Dugdale, *German Diplomatic Documents Vol. 1*, pp. 190-3.

²⁸² Lister to Kirk, 27 April 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

²⁸³ See: J. Forbes Munro, *Maritime Enterprises and Empire: Sir William Mackinnon and his Business Network 1823-1893* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 358-80. James Frederick Hutton served as a Conservative MP for Manchester North between 24 November 1885 and 1 July 1886. Hutton took a great interest in African colonial affairs and among other things supported the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition in 1886 and was a member of the Imperial British East Africa Company's court of directors in 1888.

²⁸⁴ Holmwood to Hutton, 10 April 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

²⁸⁵ Kiewiet, *The History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*, pp. 43-5.

an interest in East Africa. During the negotiations for the Anglo-Zanzibar Anti-Slave Trade Treaty in 1872, Mackinnon had established a mail-packet service between Aden and Zanzibar.²⁸⁶ The line was later subsidised by the Treasury on abolitionist grounds. Mackinnon's friend Colonel Charles Euan Smith, who became Kirk's successor as Consul General in 1888, had accompanied Sir Bartle Frere on his Mission to Zanzibar and enticed Mackinnon to contemplate the potential for establishing a business venture on the island.²⁸⁷ Mackinnon's motives had however remained more nuanced than simply the pursuit of profit. Throughout the period he was involved in East Africa there was a considerable philanthropic aspect to his operations; he perceived legitimate trade as the most efficient way in which to suppress the slave trade and a British-led company the most capable vehicle from which to 'spread civilisation'.²⁸⁸

The British inquiry about a renewed concession went disregarded by the Sultan as he sent his general, the former Royal Navy lieutenant Lloyd Mathews to hoist the Zanzibari flag in Chagga, the next territory anticipated to be annexed by the German agents.²⁸⁹ At the end of May, Gladstone's government again reassured Germany that:

'Britain had no intention of opposing the German schemes of colonization in the neighbourhood of Zanzibar [...] Her Majesty's Government, on the contrary, view with favour these schemes, the realization of which will entail the civilization of large tracts over which hitherto no European influence have been exercised, the co-operation of Germany [...] in the work of suppression of slave gangs, and the encouragement of the efforts of the Sultan both in the extinction of the Slave

²⁸⁶ Galbraith, *Mackinnon and East Africa*, p.29.

²⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 41. See: Euan Smith to Mackinnon, 8 March 1873, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS. See also: Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p. 151.

²⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 41-2.

²⁸⁹ Kirk to Granville, 28 April 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

Trade and in the commercial development of his dominions.¹²⁹⁰

However, Germany was also alerted to the fact that the British businessmen Mackinnon and Hutton had: 'originated a plan for a British settlement in the country between the coast and the lakes, which are the sources of the White Nile, and for its connection with the coast by a railway.'¹²⁹¹ In an effort to avoid Anglo-German tensions over Zanzibar, Rosebery then serving as Lord Privy Seal,¹²⁹² suggested that the boundaries of the Sultan's dominions 'might be settled by a Joint Commission,' a proposal accepted by Bismarck's administration.¹²⁹³ Hence, once the German protectorate had been formally declared, the Foreign Office began tentative soundings in both Zanzibar and among the British business-networks to ensure that some of the mainland remained subject to British influence.

Sovereign Status of Zanzibar and the Mainland Dominions

By June 1885, Germany had extended its domains in East Africa to encompass Witu, a small protectorate subject to the German merchant brothers Gustav and Clemens Denhardt far to the north of Peters' inland Usagara protectorate.¹²⁹⁴ Not only did this afford Germany a coastal foothold, it drove a wedge through the Sultan's mainland dominions. In light of these radical events Kirk deduced that: 'Zanzibar must soon break up or pass bodily to Germany.' He telegraphed Granville to question whether the 'British Government, in case of opportunity

¹²⁹⁰ Granville to Malet, 25 May 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

¹²⁹¹ Ibid.

¹²⁹² John Davis, 'Primrose, Archibald Philip, fifth earl of Rosebery and first earl of Midlothian (1847–1929)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35612, accessed 15 March 2015]. Rosebery also accepted in February 1885 the position of commissioner of works in Gladstone's cabinet.

¹²⁹³ Granville to Malet, Secret, 30 May 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

¹²⁹⁴ Coupland, *East Africa and its Invaders*, pp. 416-7. See also: H. P. Meritt, "Bismarck and the German Interest in East Africa, 1884–1885," *The Historical Journal* 21, no. 1 (1978): 97-116. DOI: 10.1017/S0018246X00000376

offering, would now consider acquisition or local Protectorate of a district with a naval port.²⁹⁵

Malet had also recognised that the recent events marked a watershed moment for British policy in East Africa: 'If we go in with Germany, we must be prepared to go in for a complete reversal of our previous policy with regard to the Sultan on the mainland.' He also added a damning remark about his colleague Sir John Kirk: '...but I doubt it being possible to work it through the agent who has previously upheld the opposite system.'²⁹⁶

Despite Sultan Barghash's diplomatic offensive, Germany had little reverence for Zanzibar's sovereign claims to the mainland.²⁹⁷ In a letter to the German Emperor the Sultan had specified his territorial claims as extending from Warsheikh on the northern Somali coast to Tungi Bay to the south and as far into the interior as the great lakes of Tanganyika and Nyassa.²⁹⁸ The man Prince Bismarck referred to as 'the best horse in the diplomatic stable,' namely the German Ambassador to the Court of St James, Count Paul von Hatzfeldt, dismissed the Sultan's letter as 'an insult.'²⁹⁹

The irony that Peters, the man so eagerly defended by Hatzfeldt, only had managed to get to Usagara due to the sovereign letters of recommendation the Sultan had issued to his officials was lost on the German diplomat. In his opinion, the Sultan's representatives on the mainland were not 'Governors or other political officers, but commercial agents, who assist the Sultan in his commercial undertakings, and in addition trade in slaves.'³⁰⁰ No recognition was thus bestowed on the Sultanate's claims to the mainland on grounds of contemporary international

²⁹⁵ Kirk to Granville, 4 June 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

²⁹⁶ Malet to Granville, 4 June 1885, FO 343/7, TNA.

²⁹⁷ Sultan Barghash to Prince Bismarck, enclosed in Count Hatzfeldt to Baron Plessen, 19 June 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

²⁹⁸ Hatzfeldt to Plessen, in Plessen to FO, 26 June 1885, FO 403/94 Part II, TNA.

²⁹⁹ Hermann von Eckardstein, *Lebenserinnerungen u. Politische Denkwürdigkeiten* (Leipzig: Verlag Paul List, 1919), 174.

³⁰⁰ Hatzfeldt to Plessen, in Plessen to FO, 26 June 1885, FO 403/94 Part II, TNA.

law – a situation which could, according to the Head of the Foreign Office’s Africa Section³⁰¹ Sir Percy Anderson, easily have been avoided if ‘the Sultan had had the foresight to become a party to the Act of Berlin.’³⁰²

In European eyes Zanzibar had, in terms of statehood, eccentric qualities and did not fit the conventional mould due its configuration as a caravan-based trading empire. The Sultan’s authority outside the coastal regions hence assumed an ephemeral quality corresponding to the movements of his subjects’ commercial ventures. However, as Wilkinson argues, Zanzibar had nonetheless a far stronger *de facto* claim to the East African territories than any of the European Powers.³⁰³ It is probable that German policymakers perceived Britain’s insistence on upholding the Sultan’s claims as merely a policy of exclusion; whereby Britain positioned Zanzibar both as a client and a buffer state.

However from this early date in the partition process, both the British and German governments appeared to subscribe to a doctrine of mutual solidarity and co-operation, in particular with regard to suppression of the slave trade and in preventing the spread of ‘Arab fanaticism akin to the Mahdi movement.’³⁰⁴ This co-ordination of Anglo-German efforts and policy, what Malet referred to as ‘England and Germany [...] acting together on a complete understanding’³⁰⁵ is detailed further in the following chapter and supports Ronald Hyam’s theory that European governments were less in direct competition over territories, than

³⁰¹ The Africa section of the Foreign Office had until its 1883 rebranding been termed the Slave Trade Department, see: Hamilton et al., *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire*, p. 34; Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp. 158-60.

³⁰² Anderson, Memorandum, 9 June 1885, FO 881/5122, TNA.

³⁰³ John Craven Wilkinson, "The Zanzibar delimitation commission 1885–1886," *Geopolitics and International Boundaries* 1, no. 2 (1996): 134. DOI: 10.1080/13629379608407563. See also: Wilkinson, *The Arabs and the Scramble for Africa*.

³⁰⁴ Prince Bismarck to Münster, 2 June 1885, in Münster to Granville, 6 June 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

³⁰⁵ Malet to Granville, 4 June 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

engaging in a 'search for stability'.³⁰⁶ Both the doctrine and what were defined as contemporary British interests are however encapsulated in Anderson's memorandum of June 1885:

The British interests are humanitarian and commercial. The first concern the Slave Trade, as regards which there can be no doubt that the substitution of German rule for Arab misrule would be a gain.³⁰⁷

During Bismarck's meeting with Rosebery in May 1885, the former expressed a nominal willingness to negotiate with Britain over the partition of East Africa; although current annexations and their unspecified western boundaries were off the table, which left little to determine.³⁰⁸

A casualty of the major alteration of British policy toward East Africa was Kirk's career. As the former chief assistant to David Livingstone and British agent at Zanzibar in various capacities since 1866, Kirk embodied Britain's hegemonic *ancien régime* in the region.³⁰⁹ As such it was not surprising that, over the summer months of 1885, he assumed the role as the Sultan Barghash's principal advocate in the Foreign Office. Kirk had lobbied vociferously to preserve the Sultan's authority on the mainland and by implication the system of British indirect rule. Both the Sultan's actions against the slave trade which it was argued a German annexation would undermine, and the altered sovereign status of Britain's Indian subjects were brought forward as arguments for the maintenance of the status quo.³¹⁰ Although even Kirk conceded

³⁰⁶ Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, pp. 203-79.

³⁰⁷ Anderson, Memorandum, 9 June 1885, FO 881/5122, TNA.

³⁰⁸ Prince Bismarck to Count Münster, 2 June 1885, in Münster to Granville, 6 June 1885), FO 403/93, TNA.

³⁰⁹ Michael D. McMullen, 'Kirk, Sir John (1832–1922)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34336>, accessed 15 March 2015]

³¹⁰ See: Kirk to Granville, 23 June 1885; Kirk to Granville, 24 June 1885; and Kirk to Granville, 6 July 1885, FO 403/94, TNA.

that 'the Sultan's claims to the interior [were] undoubtedly weak', he doubted in the prospects of finding a better alternative:

...will any other nation do more? A European Colony is out of the question, except, perhaps, in the mountain districts inland from Mombasa, and as a possession the interior is of questionable value without the coast.³¹¹

Berlin's views on Kirk were made quite clear to Malet after his meeting with Prince Bismarck's son Herbert.³¹² The chief formulators of Germany's foreign policy had evidently perceived Kirk as a major stumbling-block in Anglo-German relations over Zanzibar and East Africa.³¹³ The man that had done most in forging Zanzibar into the role of an Anglo-Indian satellite state 'retired' the following year from his position as Consul-General. Apart from having voiced his contempt for Kirk, Herbert Bismarck informed Malet that: '...Germany denies the right of the Sultan to any territory on the Continent beyond a strip of coast and is only willing to examine the title of the Sultan to that strip.'³¹⁴

Anglo-German Relations over Zanzibar and Anderson's Secret Intervention

The General Election of June 1885 swept Gladstone's government from power in favour of Salisbury's first short-lived government. Salisbury favoured closer Anglo-German ties, declaring that 'a leading principle of the Conservative Party would be to reach and maintain a good understanding with Germany.'³¹⁵ Bismarck sought at the time to entice Britain to join

³¹¹ Kirk to Granville, 6 July 1885, FO 403/94, TNA

³¹² Count Herbert von Bismarck served at the time as Germany's Undersecretary of State, he became German Foreign Secretary the following year.

³¹³ Scott to Salisbury, 13 August 1885, FO 403/94, TNA.

³¹⁴ Malet to Granville, 4 June 1885, FO 343/7, TNA.

³¹⁵ Münster to German Foreign Office, 26 June 1885, cited in: E.T.S. Dugdale, *German diplomatic documents 1871-1914, volume 1 Bismarck's Relations with England 1871-1890* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969). p. 207.

the Triple Alliance, but Salisbury regarded a formal alliance with Germany as detrimental to British interests.³¹⁶

Apart from avoiding a continental war, British foreign policy objectives in which Germany played a key role were to maintain the territorial integrity of British India and to defuse tensions with France over Egypt. In both cases, Britain would profit from a close relationship with the newly emerged continental power, but a formalisation of ties could prejudice Britain's long-term security.³¹⁷ This helps to explain Britain's pragmatic and welcoming attitude to German encroachments in East Africa: a proportion of the Sultan's mainland dominions were certainly expendable in the effort to maintain amicable Anglo-German relations. Additionally, another European power could share in the cost of executing Britain's anti slave-trade policy in the territories:

This result must for a time at least be subversive of British influence, but civilization and humanity can hardly fail to benefit by the efforts of Germany to suppress the Slave Trade, and our Indian commerce, with security free of competition, ought to hold its own.³¹⁸

The slave trade had certainly not abated during the summer of 1885.³¹⁹ Kirk believed the revival was a consequence of the Sultan withdrawing his troops from the mainland, so as not to afford Germany a *casus belli*. He added that he had 'urged the Sultan to abolish the status of slavery in his dominions,' but that the suggestion had not been heeded: 'His Highness seems little disposed further to complicate his compromised position at the present time by adding

³¹⁶ Smith, Paul. 'Cecil, Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoyne-, third marquess of Salisbury (1830–1903)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32339, accessed 27 Aug 2012]

³¹⁷ See: John Lowe, *The Great Powers, Imperialism and the German Problem 1865-1925* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 66-9.

³¹⁸ Anderson, Memorandum, 9 June 1885, FO 881/5122, TNA.

³¹⁹ Kirk to Salisbury, 1 August 1885, FO 403/94, TNA.

to his difficulties a social revolution.'³²⁰ The situation for the Sultan was certainly dire: the Germans had taken the rebel Chief Simba under their protection and had threatened Zanzibar with a 'naval demonstration.'³²¹

As early as the second day of Salisbury's new tenure in office, Malet reported of discussions with Herbert Bismarck regarding East Africa. The German administration had been favourable toward the British scheme and thought:

...an understanding, rounding off the different territories, could always be come to between the two Governments in a friendly manner, as had recently been done on the West Coast.³²²

Concurrently Salisbury had laid the foundation for the forthcoming boundary commission. France had sought to maintain the status quo with regard to safeguarding Zanzibar's independence and had thus agreed to Germany's condition for recognising the Anglo-French Agreement of 1862; that the precise territorial extent of the Sultanate would need to be determined through a survey.³²³

However, by July 1885, it transpired that the Sultan, in fear of prejudicing his claims to sovereignty over the mainland, would not grant a new concession to the British businessmen. Hutton and a 'half-hearted' Mackinnon had also reconsidered their earlier enthusiasm, doubting 'in the likelihood of a railway paying for many years to come.'³²⁴ Despite these obstacles, Anderson had attempted to entice them with the economic prospects of eastern Africa, a personal intervention which might shed light upon Manchester's reversal, what

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Malet to Salisbury, 27 June 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

³²³ Salisbury to Walsham, 2 July 1885, FO 403/93 Part II, TNA.

³²⁴ Anderson, Memorandum, 2 July 1885, FO 403/94, TNA.

Munro has described as 'a puzzle'.³²⁵

Anderson also entertained the views earlier expressed by Johnston and Holmwood that the interior region had great commercial potential. In a private meeting with Hutton at the Foreign Office, Anderson expressed that:

...his personal opinion was that, if the tribes on the Nile lakes could be reached there was a greater opening for trade than among the Congo tribes, as the habits of the former would make them more likely than the latter to take European goods, and that the climate of the Kilimanjaro was apparently admirably suited for a European Settlement...³²⁶

Hutton authored two weeks later a new letter to Salisbury on behalf of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce where he indicated its continued interest in East Africa. He desired another meeting to discuss how British interests could be safe-guarded against the 'actions of any foreign Power' and indirectly asked for financial support for the construction of a railway. Hutton pointed to the conclusions drawn by Holmwood, that such a railway would 'develop the natural resources of the country in a way beneficial both to the natives and to the general trade of this Empire.'³²⁷

Regardless of the diplomatic discussions in Europe, the German East African Company had over the summer and autumn of 1885 expanded its territorial remit unabated.³²⁸ Indeed, according to Anderson's recollections seven year later: 'German agents were annexing all that was valuable.'³²⁹ To local observers the process and legality of the treaty-making was 'simply absurd.' According to a local missionary of six years, Joseph Thomas Last, the native chiefs and

³²⁵ Munro, *Maritime Enterprise and Empire*, p. 372.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Holmwood to Salisbury, 15 July 1885, FO 403/94, TNA.

³²⁸ Kirk to Salisbury, 20 August 1885, FO 403/94, TNA.

³²⁹ Anderson, Memorandum, 13 September 1892, Confidential, FO 84/2258, TNA.

people would never sell any of their land to anyone on the simple basis that it was ‘...not theirs to sell, only to hold and use.’ To that effect Last quoted the local saying: ‘All the land is God’s; we are not able to sell it.’³³⁰ Lasts’ statements were corroborated by his missionary colleague Dr Edward John Baxter who did ‘not suppose that they have purchased any land, as it is the custom here for people to cultivate anywhere they please, providing the Chief does not object.’³³¹

In October 1885, Anderson had again secretly intervened in the partition proceedings and met Johnston to discuss his treaties with the Chiefs of Taveta. Both expressed a keen interest in preventing the Kilimanjaro region from falling under German influence. The timing of the meeting was critical. Anderson advised Johnston ‘strictly in his private capacity’ that he should transfer his concessions to a suitable candidate and then notify the Delimitation Commission through Kitchener. Johnston had on Anderson’s advice chosen Hutton as beneficiary of his concession. As Herbert Kitchener, Britain’s representative on the Boundary Commission, would leave for Zanzibar only a week later on 6 November, it was important that Hutton communicated his intention to acquire the treaties immediately.

Anderson had assured Johnston that his claims had already been ‘recognised by the Foreign Office as perfectly legal’ and that they would ‘receive due support from Her Majesty’s Commissioner on the Zanzibar Delimitation Commission.’ Johnston reiterated that Anderson’s involvement be kept private and added a post script that Hutton should ‘write the letter in the capacity of President of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce’ since he believed that this

³³⁰ Last to Kirk, 24 August 1895 enclosed in Kirk to Salisbury, 30 August 1895, FO 403/94, TNA.

³³¹ Baxter to Hutchinson, 15 June 1885 enclosed in Hutchinson to Villiers Lister 20 November 1885, FO 403/95, TNA.

would afford the claims greater authority in the eyes of their German counterparts.³³²

Concurrently, Johnston authored an official letter to Anderson in which he outlined his communication to Hutton and attached the treaty he had entered into with the chiefs of Taveta.³³³ Anderson thought it 'very useful as regards the Kilimanjaro question' and that:

Here is a Concession, quite as good as the ordinary African Commercial Concession, though not conferring sovereign rights, which Mr. Johnston can make over to any Company formed to take it up. It is the very thing we want – a Concession to a British subject anterior to the German Protectorate, and subsequent rush to Kilimanjaro.³³⁴

On 3 November, the British commercial interests, represented by Hutton had decided to make use of Johnston's Kilimanjaro concession. He notified Johnston that he would take steps to form a syndicate, and invited Mackinnon to join him in immediately securing 'British rights' in the region.³³⁵ Both Anderson and his future son-in-law Johnston³³⁶ were however contemptuous of their mercantile counterparts Hutton and Mackinnon. Johnston thought:

British merchants [to be] the most unreasonable of men nowadays [and that they] expect the Government to do everything for them, and see no occasion for private enterprise of their own. What they would like is for large territories like Kilimanjaro to be annexed, opened up, civilized, cleared, swept, and garnished, and then handed over to them to ply a profitable and ready-made trade.³³⁷

Anderson added an ironic comment of his own: 'The truth is, that we not only do not neglect

³³² Johnston to Hutton, 31 October 1885, Box 17, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS.

³³³ Johnston to Anderson, 31 October 1885, FO 403/95, TNA.

³³⁴ Minute by Anderson in Johnston to Anderson, 31 October 1885, FO 403/95, TNA.

³³⁵ Hutton to Johnston, 3 November 1885, FO 403/95, TNA.

³³⁶ Walter H. Wills, *The Anglo-African Who's Who and Biographical Sketch-Book* (London: George Routledge, 1905), p. 87.

³³⁷ Johnston to Anderson, 29 October 1885, FO 403/95, TNA.

the Manchester interests, but have to stir Manchester up to look after its interests.’³³⁸ Evidently the metropolitan commercial interest for East Africa over the summer and autumn of 1885 was one orchestrated by Johnston and Anderson. In particular, Anderson used Mackinnon and Hutton as pawns in order to gain a viable British claim to the Kilimanjaro region. His confidential scheme managed to position British commercial interests so as to gain the most from the delimitation commission’s proceedings and from Britain’s negotiations with Germany. Without this government official’s intervention and ‘chessboard mentality,’³³⁹ British claims to this region of Africa would doubtless have stood in a much weaker position as German agents would have had free reign to seize a greater share of the mainland.

The Zanzibar Boundary Commission: Delimitation of the Mainland

On 10 December 1885, the three representatives from Britain, France and Germany commenced their work on the Zanzibar Boundary Commission.³⁴⁰ Over the course of 1886, the commission surveyed the Sultan's mainland dominions with the nominal objective of determining the extent of the Sultan's sovereignty defined by 'effective occupation' as laid down in the Berlin Act. The almost farcical proceedings of the commission’s work strained Anglo-German relations almost to breaking point.

Kitchener reported that the French commissioner Patrimonio had eloped on a ‘secret mission’ only two weeks before the survey was due to commence’...and that no one knew where he

³³⁸ Minute by Anderson on Hutton to Johnston, 3 November 1885, FO 403/95, TNA.

³³⁹ Although assumptions regarding Anderson’s motives are incorrect, Louis’ article still demonstrates the central role Anderson played in formulating British Africa policy during the partition: Wm. Roger Louis, "Sir Percy Anderson's Grand African Strategy, 1883–1893," *The English Historical Review* 81, no. 319 (1966): 292-314. DOI: 10.1093/ehr/LXXXI.CCCXIX.292

³⁴⁰ Pauncefote to Kitchener, 4 November 1885, FO 403/95, TNA and Hansard, HoC Debate, 11 March 1886, vol 303, c468.

had gone to or how long he was likely to be absent.³⁴¹ When he failed to re-appear, the local French consul Raffray was appointed as his substitute. Three months into the commission's work, Bismarck's government had become concerned with Raffray's influence on Kitchener. Herbert Bismarck, who had sustained a bullet wound whilst serving in the Franco-Prussian war, thought Raffray was of the '*Revanche* school' and intentionally sabotaged the commission's work. In his conversation with Malet, the Chancellor's son and recently appointed German Foreign Secretary, scorned Kitchener for being 'under the thumb of M. Raffray' and thought the cause of this behaviour was due to Kitchener having '... fought in the German war on the French side...'³⁴² Malet, who was unaware of Kitchener's youthful war-time adventure in a French ambulance company, denied this accusation outright.

Despite finding the German commissioner Dr Schmidt's complaints as relayed by Bismarck to be 'gossipy' he advised Rosebery whether:

...it might be possible to let Kitchener know that it was very desirable that he should be on very friendly terms with his German colleague and support him when his doing so did not clash with his duty to H.M.G.³⁴³

Raffray was replaced by Lemaire in April after German pressure, and work on the commission was suspended until the new commissioner's arrival.³⁴⁴ However, the tone had not changed when Malet reported that he thought that 'Prince Bismarck is just at present rather out of humour with us.' The ambassador attributed the chancellor's dismay to:

...the delays which have occurred in the signature of the Pacific demarcation declaration, to dissatisfaction at the proceedings of the Zanzibar Commission

³⁴¹ Kitchener to Salisbury, 21 December 1885, FO 403/96, TNA.

³⁴² Malet to Rosebery, 16 March 1886, FO 343/7, TNA.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Rosebery to Kirk, 2 April 1886 and Rosebery to Waddington, 9 April 1886, FO 403/97, TNA.

and the Samoa difficulty. These are all colonial matters and I believe he attributes all the difficulties to Lord Granville.³⁴⁵

Further complaints were received in late-April, when Bismarck characterised the commission's work as a 'farce'. The Sultan had allegedly moved the same set of soldiers around on the mainland to create the impression of having permanently garrisoned troops stationed at every significant village in the interior. It was reported that: 'Dr Schmidt had observed that they were often the same soldiers, used as a minué soldiers in the theatre over and over again to look more.'³⁴⁶

Bismarck suspected that British officials were responsible for the Sultan's actions against Germany, in particular that Kirk had: '...attempted to thwart German interests at every point...'³⁴⁷ From Berlin the difficulties in East Africa were regarded so serious that it threatened to remove German support for 'English policy on the Eastern Question.'³⁴⁸ The antipathy proved short-lived as Herbert Bismarck came, some three days later, under the 'sudden conviction' that the German company's resources were unequal to the task of keeping order in 'the newly acquired territory, and as Germany cannot give them assistance the only aid they have to fall back upon is the Sultan.'³⁴⁹ Regardless of this realisation that defused some of the tension between the two European states, the Zanzibari Sultanate would still only be left with a token strip of land along the coast.³⁵⁰

Throughout the deliberations and in his concluding report, Kitchener accused the German Commissioner Dr Schmidt of sabotaging any equitable determination of the Sultanate's

³⁴⁵ Malet to Rosebery, 3 April 1886, FO 343/7, TNA.

³⁴⁶ Malet to Rosebery, 20 April 1886, FO 343/7, TNA.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Malet to Rosebery, 23 April 1886, FO 343/7, TNA.

³⁵⁰ See: Wilkinson, *Zanzibar Delimitation Commission*, pp. 130-158.

geographical extent.³⁵¹ It later transpired that Bismarck had negotiated an agreement with France which would only enable unanimous decisions to be recorded in the Commission's final report; in effect awarding a veto to the dissenting German representative. Despite Kitchener's protests, the Sultanate did not receive recognition for more than the East African coast line with a 10 mile strip extending from the coast including the islands.³⁵²

The Value of Mombasa

Bismarck had been right to worry about Kirk's influence. The British Consul, had in October 1885, considered the potential of Britain gaining a protectorate over Ushambala, a region situated north of the river Pangani. Kirk had also analysed the trade implications of the German intrusion on the mainland:

...seeing that the Germans have placed themselves astride the main road now in use, by taking Usagara and the countries adjacent [...] I am satisfied that no port on the coast can compare with that of Mombasa, in case it is ever seriously intended to construct a railway to the interior.³⁵³

Just like Kirk and Holmwood, Kitchener had come to appreciate the value of Mombasa. All argued for the town's strategic importance, since it was anticipated that Dar-es-Salaam, which the German Company leased from the Sultan, posed a security threat to the British presence in East Africa and the Indian Ocean; most notably the Cape route to India.³⁵⁴ Although the Admiralty did not share these views, the Intelligence Department of the War Office did.

³⁵¹ 'Report on the Delimitation of the Sultan of Zanzibar's Territories on the Coast to the North of Lamou and in the Interior of Africa' enclosed in Kitchener to Rosebery, 30 June 1886, FO 403/98, TNA.

³⁵² Wilkinson, *Zanzibar Delimitation Commission*, pp. 130-158.

³⁵³ Kirk to Salisbury, 26 October 1885, FO 403/95, TNA.

³⁵⁴ Kirk to Rosebery, 4 June 1886, FO 403/98, TNA; and; Kitchener to Kirk, 27 May 1886, FO 403/98, TNA.

In August 1886, a memorandum listing reasons for why Britain should secure Mombasa was produced; the principal grounds were defence of Britain's economic interests and of the Zanzibar telegraph cable ensuring communications with the Cape. The War Office also revealed some of Britain's contingency planning:

In the event of war with France, the Mediterranean, and, consequently, the Suez Canal, will, owing to the prohibitory rates of insurance which would be charged, cease to be available as a commercial route; and almost the whole of our commerce with India and the Pacific must pass round the Cape.³⁵⁵

Notwithstanding the absence of any comments regarding the strategic importance of securing the Nile, the presumption that the Suez Canal would be rendered useless for commercial traffic during a potential war with France certainly serves to weaken the Egypto-centric explanatory model.

The Anglo-German Agreement, 1886-7

Finally, the stage was now set for a major agreement between Britain and Germany over each nation's territorial claims in East Africa. In January 1886 the German government issued a protest against the 'British merchants' Hutton and Mackinnon who sought a concession from Sultan Barghash.³⁵⁶ Whilst the German government objected to the activities of British private interests, no such restraint applied to their own private company which engaged in treaty-making on the mainland. However the protests were only pro-forma; made in order to avoid

³⁵⁵ 'Memorandum on the Proposal to Obtain Certain Rights over the Port of Mombasa, in the Sultanate of Zanzibar,' enclosed in Sir Ralph Thompson to Sir J. Pauncefote, 25 August 1886, FO 403/98, TNA.

³⁵⁶ Plessen to Salisbury, Memorandum, 25 January 1886, FO 403/96, TNA.

implicitly affording recognition to the Sultan's sovereign claims to the Kilimanjaro.³⁵⁷ The German position was further clarified by Hatzfeldt in March. He noted that:

The English Company was therefore [...] free to secure its private rights accruing from the Treaty concluded by Mr. Johnston with the Chief of the Taveta district on the 27th September, 1884, by sending out agents.' [...] '... Dr. Peters, the President of the German East African Company, had meanwhile put himself in communication with the leaders of the English Company, and believed that an arrangement satisfactory to both parties was on the point of being concluded.³⁵⁸

Mackinnon had been met with a proposal from Peters' business associates for the sale of the so-called Mackinnon Road, a 70 mile road extending westwards from Dar-es-Salaam he had constructed with the abolitionist Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton (grandson of the prominent social reformer and abolitionist of the same name), in the late 1870s.³⁵⁹ Mackinnon had agreed to this transaction: 'after ascertaining at the Foreign Office that the retaining of our rights to this road would be of no service to British interests in the altered state of our relations with Zanzibar.'³⁶⁰

In the autumn of 1886, Peters travelled to Argyllshire to personally meet with Mackinnon at his Balinakill estate. The results of this meeting formed the basis of the Anglo-German Boundary Agreement of 1886. According to Peters' minutes Mackinnon thought:

...it a necessary condition that the British Crown should have sovereignty over one part or the other of East African territory, in order to induce British subjects to invest their money in East Africa...³⁶¹

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Rosebery to Malet, 24 March 1886, FO 403/96, TNA.

³⁵⁹ See: Mulligan, *British Anti-Slave Trade Policy*, p. 264.

³⁶⁰ Mackinnon to Lister, 9 April 1886, FO 403/97, TNA.

³⁶¹ Peters to Foreign Office, 14 August 1886, FO 403/98, TNA.

The discussions proceeded to evaluate 'the geographical position of the country which Mr. Mackinnon would like to acquire for England' in which Peters recorded Mackinnon's reply as 'he expresses the wish to take the northern part of the Kilimanjaro.' Peters' response and Mackinnon's subsequent reply to this is crucial:

Dr. Peters does not think the German Company would like to cede a part of the Kilimanjaro district to the English, but he asks whether Mr. Mackinnon would not be satisfied with the provinces between Kilimanjaro and Tana, perhaps including the Kenia, which Mr. Mackinnon does not deny.³⁶²

Peters had thus in August 1886 freely offered the northern territories to Mackinnon, which through the later bilateral treaty between Britain and Germany would form the basis of the British and German zones.

In October, Bismarck expressed his hope that the Zanzibar question would be brought to a 'speedy and [...] satisfactory conclusion.' His intention was to send Dr Friedrich Krauel³⁶³ to London in order to negotiate the terms.³⁶⁴ By 26 October, Anderson and Krauel had come to an agreement sanctioned by the Foreign Secretary the Earl of Iddesleigh regarding the delimitation of the Zanzibari Sultanate, in addition to the British and German spheres of influence on the East African mainland.

The Sultan of Zanzibar's dominions were recognised as comprising the islands of Zanzibar, Pemba, Lamu and Mafia, and the coastal zone as recommended by the Boundary Commission. The other important aspect to the Agreement was the determination of the line of demarcation separating the countries' respective spheres of influence in which Germany was

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ See: Smith, *German Colonial Empire*, Ch. 3.

³⁶⁴ Malet to Iddesleigh, First telegram, 2 October 1886, FO 403/99, TNA; and; Malet to Iddesleigh, Second Telegram, 2 October 1886, FO 403/99, TNA.

awarded the southern section and Britain the territories to the north.³⁶⁵ The Tana River was given as the territory's north-eastern boundary, whilst the Rovuma River bounded it to the south. No western boundary was stipulated.³⁶⁶ In a clarification made in July 1887, Salisbury promised the German government:

...to discourage British annexations in the rear of the German sphere of influence, on the understanding that the German Government will equally discourage German annexations in the rear of the British sphere.³⁶⁷

No promise however, was made to discourage British annexations in the rear of the British sphere. Indeed in Salisbury's words, 'England... would confine herself to opening up the territories lying to the north of the agreed line.'³⁶⁸ These territories included both the kingdom of Buganda and the Nile Valley.³⁶⁹

The despatch was sent after German apprehensions were raised regarding the activities of Stanley. He had been engaged by the Emin Pasha Relief Committee of which Mackinnon was the greatest benefactor, to rescue Emin Pasha from Egypt's Equatorial Province, a territory lying directly north-west of Buganda.³⁷⁰ The German government feared that Mackinnon was using Stanley to obtain treaties from the chiefs situated to the south of the demarcation line; however Salisbury gave his assurances that any such actions would not receive support from

³⁶⁵ Iddesleigh to Hatzfeldt, 1 November 1886, FO 403/99, TNA.

³⁶⁶ Salisbury to Malet, 2 July 1887, FO 403/102, TNA.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ See: Figures 1 and 2 in the Appendix for a Map of British and German Spheres of Influence, 1888, FO 403/106, TNA.

³⁷⁰ There is an extensive body of literature concerning the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition, see: Iain R. Smith, *The Emin Pasha Relief Expedition 1886-1890* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); Thomas Heazle Parke, *My Personal Experiences in Equatorial Africa: As Medical Officer of the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition. With Map and Numerous Illustrations* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co, 1891); Gaetano Casati and Emin Pasha, *Ten years in Equatoria and the Return with Emin Pasha* (London: Warne, 1891); Henry Morton Stanley, *In darkest Africa, or the quest, rescue and retreat of Emin, Governor of Equatoria* (New York: Scribner, 1890).

the British government.

The basis of the bilateral treaty and, importantly how the 'hinterland understanding' would determine the partition of Uganda, was enumerated by Anderson in 1892:

German agents were annexing all that was valuable. Their activity was checked by the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886, by which a boundary was drawn. The guiding principle of this demarcation was a partition of the caravan routes to Uganda; the route reaching the coast at Mombasa was placed on the English, that terminating at Pangani on the German, side. Both parties recognized Uganda as a trade centre. The line was not carried beyond the eastern shore of Victoria Nyanza, consequently did not deal with the main portion of Uganda, which was, however, indirectly severed from German influence by the subsequent "Hinterland" understanding.³⁷¹

Anderson's recollections mirrored those transmitted by the Foreign Office to the Universities Mission to Central Africa in 1888, and due to its historiographical significance the quote is included in full:

...no useful step was omitted at the time of the demarcation to secure the largest possible field for the exclusive scope of English influence. At that date, however, it was impossible to obtain the trade routes both from Mombasa and Pangani. The German East African Company had then already developed considerable activity, and claimed to have relations with the coast tribes behind the 10-mile limit of the Sultan's possessions, even near Mombasa, whereas the British Company had at that time shown no signs of activity. The compromise by which the Mombasa trade route to the interior went into one sphere, and that of Pangani into the other, was the best that was practicable after every existing interest had been carefully gone into in consultation with Sir John Kirk.³⁷²

³⁷¹ Anderson, Memorandum, 13 September 1892, Confidential, FO 84/2258, TNA.

³⁷² FO to Universities Mission, 15 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

Both quotes underline Britain's reactive role and that the partition of the mainland was largely determined by the trade routes from the coast into the inter-lacustrine interior. As will be shown in the following chapters, the extension of Britain's sphere of influence to comprise the 'trade centre' Uganda, followed as a natural result of the bilateral treaty of 1886.

Conclusion

The Anglo-German Agreement of 1886 was not the final act of delimitation of the East African mainland, but in terms of the partition it certainly was the most important. This bilateral treaty divided the landmass into two distinct spheres: a southern German zone; and, apart from the enclave of Witu, a northern British zone. These two *nuclei* regions were separated by a line of demarcation still extant today between modern Kenya and Tanzania. And although the boundary terminated at the eastern shores of the Victoria Nyanza, the so-called 'hinterland understanding of 1887' ensured that a *de facto* border was drawn across the lake to the Congo Free State. Hence, already by the conclusion of this agreement the kingdom of Buganda formed part of a British exclusion zone or 'hinterland' and was recognised as such by Britain's regional rival Germany.

Nevertheless, a retrospective focus on Buganda is misplaced since contemporary policymakers attached little importance to the kingdom, and the treaty had not been negotiated with this in view. Rather it had come about as a way to minimise the loss of regional influence to Germany, and indeed to execute Britain's anti-slave trade policy on the cheap. As the previous chapter demonstrated, Britain had long enjoyed a hegemonic position in East

Africa. Via its client-state Zanzibar, Britain had maintained the commercial interests of its resident Indian subjects and through the co-opted political authority of the Omani-elite could implement its anti-slave trade policy through a treaty-framework. However this position of privilege had come to an abrupt end in 1885 when a German protectorate was declared in the Usagara region on the mainland opposite Zanzibar.

Already during the six months that immediately preceded the German incursion, British policymakers had resolved to establish a mainland presence north of Kilimanjaro. With regard to Johnston's proposal, Kirk and Hill's 1882 scheme to suppress the slave trade through 'agencies working onshore'³⁷³ was revived. Indeed Granville thought that no opportunity should be neglected for securing 'a territory adapted for British enterprise and favourably situated for striking a blow at the Slave Trade.'³⁷⁴ The same heightened European interest in African colonisation that had spawned the Berlin Conference also transformed British anti-slave trade policy into both a means and an end to imperial expansion.

Thus, by following the same southern route as their compatriot Gustav Fischer had done in the previous year, Peters and his men had, through coincidence, largely determined the geographical scope of the East African partition by the autumn of 1884. But since Germany desired British recognition of its territorial claims, the northern section of the mainland – in particular the lands traversed by the northern caravan route from Mombasa to the Victoria Nyanza and Uganda – was offered up to the principal agent of British imperialism in East Africa, William Mackinnon. And as both Anderson and Kirk had made him well aware, the financial success of the venture depended upon extending the territorial remit of the British sphere to

³⁷³ Hill, Memorandum, 23 August 1882, FO 881/4676, TNA.

³⁷⁴ Granville to Kirk, 9 October 1884, Confidential, FO 881/5037, TNA.

comprise the Equatorial Province and the inter-lacustrine interior. This view was based on the understanding that the great cost of territorial administration only could be shouldered by integrating these rich trading networks with the international economy through the port of Mombasa. Naturally a railway was central to these plans since it was the only mode of transport capable of rendering high-bulk produce from the interior marketable at the coast, or indeed of facilitating European settlement of the temperate highlands.

In 1886, Kirk would write to congratulate Mackinnon at the conclusion of the Anglo-German Agreement. His words summarised both the new status of Britain's influence in East Africa, but also the expectations that was entertained for territorial expansion toward the interior:

Thus we have Mombasa under the Sultan and a free run inland to the Lake etc. but not Kilimanjaro. We have the best of any line for rail if ever one is made. We also have the Equatorial Province now held by the brave Emin Bey, well-governed and quiet to this day.³⁷⁵

Although Kirk was right about Mombasa and the railway, as will be detailed in the following chapters, his declaration about holding the Equatorial Province was premature. By a coincidental sequence of events, the kingdom of Buganda took its place; and, despite its peripheral location within the British Empire, it assumed a highly contentious position in Britain's political discourse over the early 1890s. As the following two chapters will show, the doctrine of Anglo-German governmental co-operation over East Africa continued to the end of the decade, whilst Britain's client state Zanzibar would collapse and be formally incorporated into the British Empire.

³⁷⁵ Kirk to Mackinnon, 30 October 1886, Box 94, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS. Also quoted in Smith, *Emin Pasha Relief Expedition*, p. 52.

Chapter Three:

Anglo-German Metropolitan Co-operation and Local Rivalry: The Blockade and the Prelude to a Final Partition, 1888-9

By the summer of 1888, the political situation in East Africa had changed radically from what it had been only three years earlier. The Sultan Barghash had died in March and was succeeded by his brother Khalifa, whilst the mainland had by virtue of the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886 been divided into two British and German 'spheres of influence.' The Sultanate still held onto its last vestiges of mainland territories, the twelve mile coastal zone extending from Cape Delgado in the south to Juba in the north. Yet even these rump dominions were in August absorbed by the European colonial companies as concessions, despite *de jure* subject to Zanzibari suzerainty until the Anglo-German Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty of 1890.³⁷⁶

However the political circumstances in Europe had also changed. Germany had in the course of less than 100 days been ruled by three emperors – 1888 was the so-called *Dreikaiserjahr* - and the young emperor Wilhelm II who had acceded the throne in June had showed far more interest in pursuing a German colonial policy than his predecessors.³⁷⁷ As the first chapter has shown, the slave trade had increased to alarming levels in 1888 due to the collapse of Britain's institutional framework of slave trade suppression, the basis of which was the co-opted

³⁷⁶ See: Edward Hertslet, *Map of Africa by Treaty* (London: H.M.S.O., 1894), pp. 925-65; see also: Norman Robert Bennett, *Arab Versus European: Diplomacy and War in Nineteenth-Century East Central Africa* (New York, Africana Publishing, 1986).

³⁷⁷ For an appraisal of Kaiser Wilhelm II's 'Weltpolitik', see: Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "Kaiser Wilhelm II and German Politics," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, no. 2/3 (1990): 289-316. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/260734>; Annika Mombauer and Wilhelm Deist, eds. *The Kaiser: New Research on Wilhelm II's Role in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

authority of the late Sultan. The successor had proved far less co-operative and led British anti-slave trade policy to rely on the use of force exerted by the naval squadron. The significant attention to the East African slave trade in Europe also placed pressure upon British and German authorities to at least be seen as to be taking some immediate action to counter the trafficking.

The British Consul-General at Zanzibar, believed the new Sultan had seriously underestimated the power of the British and German colonial agents:

...the Sultan and his advisers are unaware of the real extent and true scope of the Concessions that have been given to the two European Companies; the phraseology employed in the Concessions themselves; the inadequate translation into Arabic of unaccustomed English business idioms [...] His Highness will ere long learn by practical experience that he has virtually ceased to wield any power at all upon the coast-line, but this lesson will not be learnt by him without much discontent and many heart-burnings.³⁷⁸

In fact the 'heart-burnings' came to be equally shared between the Sultan and the German imperialists. The *de facto* cession of the coastline in August 1888 was the final straw for the discontent that had been brewing among the Omani elite resident in the mainland trading ports and sparked an insurrection led by the Arab chief and slave trader Bushiri bin Salim.³⁷⁹

German authorities found it helpful to clad their suppression of this insurgency in the guise

³⁷⁸ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 26 July 1888, FO 403/106, TNA.

³⁷⁹ For a recent and detailed study of the Arab response to European, and in particular German, colonialism in East Africa, see: Wilkinson, *Arabs and the Scramble*. Although the apprehension of Bushiri lies outside the scope of the study, see: Glassman, *Feasts and Riot*. For a recent study of the German enlisted Sudanese soldiers post-1890, see: Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent intermediaries: African soldiers, conquest, and everyday colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens, USA: Ohio University Press, 2014). For a study which contends that there was a continuity in German foreign policy from the late-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, see: Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

of anti-slavery. By so doing the assistance of Britain was elicited since public opinion could be mobilised to compel the authorities into action.

This chapter will examine events post-1888. The subsequent blockade of the East African coast instituted by Britain and Germany represented a continuation of the doctrine of co-operation that had been in place between the two powers since the declaration of the German protectorate in 1885.³⁸⁰ However a complicating factor for the Anglo-German *détente* was the rivalry between the two colonial companies, particularly with regard to the miniature protectorate of Witu and its adjoining islands Manda and Patta, in addition to the allegiance of Emin Pasha in the Sudan's Equatorial Province. Both cases comprised a dynamic that involved fierce peripheral competition which was fanned by metropolitan public opinion through media reporting, but received little in the form of official countenance from the British or German governments. Indeed the high profile of these issues and their lack of political support, are what Carl Peters' political biographer Arne Perras argues was a key factor behind the dismissal of Otto von Bismarck by the young Wilhelm II in 1890.³⁸¹

The chapter will first explore the British involvement in the Anglo-German blockade of the East African coast-line and test whether the understanding of it purely as a public relations exercise divorced from anti-slavery concerns is correct. It will then compare the contrasting approaches to colonisation employed by the British and German colonial companies in an effort to understand why Bismarck's government sought British military and political co-operation. Finally, the chapter will investigate the local rivalry that took place between the British and German colonial agents over the Island of Lamu, off the coast of Witu, and the

³⁸⁰ Anderson, Memorandum, 9 June 1885, FO 881/5122, TNA.

³⁸¹ Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, p. 167.

competition between Mackinnon and Peters over Emin Pasha's allegiance and the control of his Equatorial Province. Although it ultimately proved abortive, the latter was of great significance for determining both the scope and timing of the final partition of East Africa in 1890.

Toward an Anglo-German Blockade, 1888

Following his discussions with Prince Otto von Bismarck's son and Foreign Secretary Count Herbert Bismarck, and other officials in the German Foreign Office, by September 1888 it was clear to the British Ambassador Sir Edward Malet, that Germany would not withdraw their engagements from East Africa.³⁸² The increasing opposition they had met from the local population and the little in way of economic returns the German colony had made in the three years of its existence had not swayed the nation's determination to continue in its empire-building in the region. Rather, British assistance was to be enlisted in an effort to increase the pressure upon the Sultan and against the mainland insurgents:

The point for us to bear in mind is, that the Germans have put their hand to the plough, and they will persevere [...] they rely upon our co-operation in the civilizing mission, which they consider that Germany and England have undertaken conjointly.³⁸³

However the German Under-Secretary of State Maximilian Berchem was apparently also aware of the role played by the German Company in fomenting local opposition: 'They appear

³⁸² Malet to Salisbury, 18 September 1888, FO 403/106, TNA.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

to acknowledge that the agents of the German Company are over active, and [...] the Government was doing its utmost to moderate their zeal and make them cautious.³⁸⁴

This somewhat understated 'zeal' stood in marked contrast to the British approach to colonisation in East Africa.³⁸⁵ Whilst British agents relied on the co-option of local elites and existing power-structures, German agents had adopted a more direct approach. Shortly after the Sultan had doled out the mainland concessions in August, the *Auswärtiges Amt* recorded that 'the whole extent of the East African territory appears to be in a state of feverish agitation.'³⁸⁶ In an attempt at understanding the reasons for this sudden uprising, Prince Bismarck had even consulted Leopold II, still at the time renowned for his African expertise and humanitarianism. Despite no insurrection having occurred, nor would occur over the following twelve months in the British sphere of influence, German officials put the blame upon both colonial companies, particularly the 'very powerful' IBEA. Berchem also alludes to the negative publicity the East African affair had caused Bismarck and he implores Salisbury to 'work upon the press with a view to preventing disputes between our Companies and presses.'³⁸⁷ This issue of containment features prominently in Anglo-German correspondence over East Africa during the months leading up to Germany's federal elections of 20 February 1890.

The final section of Berchem's memorandum betrayed the German Foreign Office's strategy for handling the situation. By spinning the insurrection as largely to do with the slave trade, Germany could manipulate the British press and public opinion to force Salisbury's hand: 'The

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Perhaps the British had taken heed of Niccolò Machiavelli's advice: '...one may be very strong in armed forces, yet in entering a province one has always need of the goodwill of the natives.' See: Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 7-15.

³⁸⁶ Berchem, Memorandum, 16 September 1888, FO 403/106, TNA.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

animosity against our Treaty arrangement is to be traced principally to the slave-dealers. This circumstance, if properly turned to account in influencing public opinion in England, would afford that public opinion a motive for co-operating with us.³⁸⁸

As a continuation of the Anglo-German co-operation doctrine, Salisbury 'entirely agreed' with Bismarck and committed Britain to assist Germany in what two months later, became a naval blockade of the East African coast:

The English and German Governments have undertaken a civilizing mission on the East Coast of Africa, in which they can greatly help each other. It would be the height of madness if they were to throw away their strength in intriguing against each other, or in trying to filch advantages from each other.³⁸⁹

The bilateral understanding between Germany and Britain was in particular facilitated by Herbert Bismarck who, by force of his position as Foreign Secretary had taken a leading role in colonial affairs. The younger Bismarck had become convinced that the insurrection was principally caused by Arab slave traders and that any strategy for establishing European control over the mainland would first involve suppression of the slave trade. In a meeting with Malet, he admitted that the disturbances on the coast was due to 'a certain amount of mismanagement' but that the principal cause of the insurrection was the fear of abolition entertained by the 'Mussulman Chiefs.' Once Britain and Germany was established in the region it 'would prove a death-blow to the Slave Trade,' hence the resistance mounted against Germany was simply the regressive elite concerned with maintaining the status quo. The first priority, in Herbert Bismarck's mind was thus to remove their main source of strength and

³⁸⁸ Berchem, Memorandum, 16 September 1888, FO 403/106, TNA.

³⁸⁹ Salisbury Memorandum, enclosed in Salisbury to Malet, 25 September 1888, FO 403/106, TNA.

revenue, namely the slave trafficking, in order to quell the resistance. Bismarck 'would be very glad if Germany and England could work hand in hand towards this end.'³⁹⁰

In October the German government had however come to a different conclusion altogether. In a review of the situation, the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck had thought 'that the hoisting of the German flag in the dominions of the Sultan [...] was a mistake, and that the rough treatment of the natives [...] on the part of the German Company's officials has mainly contributed to rouse the Arabs.'³⁹¹ Despite the acknowledgement of German agency in causing the insurrection, the elder Bismarck still placed the majority of the blame upon the slave traders and perceived the politico-religious conditions in East Africa as analogous to those of the Sudan. To Bismarck the 'mistakes of the German Company's officials' was simply used as a 'pretext' for the rebellion of 'the slave-traders and Mussulmans against the work of the Anti-Slavery Societies and their efforts to introduce Christian culture. This spirit would resemble the one which caused the movement of the Mahdi.'³⁹²

With the Chancellor's review came also the proposal of a maritime blockade of the East African coast, a naval action that would be enforced con-jointly by Germany and Britain. Bismarck stressed the importance of working within the existing structures of authority centred on the Sultan – his proposal was to offer support to his rule, which at this point bore the resemblance of a puppet regime, against the so-called 'fanatical and stranger-hating ("Fremden-feindliche") Arab element.'³⁹³ Military expeditions on the mainland were ruled out

³⁹⁰ Malet to Salisbury, 26 September 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

³⁹¹ Bismarck Memorandum, enclosed in Leyden to FO, 8 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

in favour of maritime action since: 'Standing garrisons of European troops could be maintained in the interior only, if at all, by the heaviest sacrifice of men and money.'³⁹⁴

Hence, Bismarck was in the 1880s keenly aware of the pitfalls of asymmetric warfare. Conventional European armies enjoyed few advantages when combatting native guerrillas and any engagement would lead to substantial casualties. The only alternative to a direct military intervention was a blockade which Bismarck proposed would extend from Kipini to the River Rovuma in order 'to cut off all traffic with the insurgent coast districts, and especially that in slave-vessels, and the carriage of arms and ammunition.'³⁹⁵

Although the insurrection had forced Bismarck's hand, the Secretary of the Emin Pasha Relief Committee and subsequent IBEA agent, Sir Francis de Winton,³⁹⁶ feared for the consequences of any further ill-judged German action or indeed British participation. The old Africa-hand confirmed that 'the rising of the natives against the German Company has not, up till now, extended against other white nations'. And he 'hoped that the Germans will, in the future, avoid such actions as would bring about a general rising against the white man, for we might then have a similar state of affairs to that existing at Suakin and the Red Sea Littoral.'³⁹⁷ De Winton's views were echoed by Salisbury who feared that 'any naval measures Germany may wish to take, however innocent in name, will not be safe unless they are shared and controlled by at least an equal English force.'³⁹⁸ The Prime Minister also doubted in the sincerity of the

³⁹⁴ Ibid. 'besides the extent and pathlessness of the land, the enemy who knows the country will always be able to avoid the shock of a superior force, and renew the struggle at places and times of his own choosing.'

³⁹⁵ Bismarck Memorandum, enclosed in Leyden to FO, 8 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

³⁹⁶ See: J. H. Leslie, 'Winton, Sir Francis Walter de (1835–1901)', rev. Roger T. Stearn, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32806, accessed 10 April 2015]

³⁹⁷ Francis de Winton to FO, 10 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

³⁹⁸ Salisbury to Euan Smith, Confidential, 11 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

German abolitionist motives and suspected that the whole idea was an exercise in window-dressing for the German public:

The avowed ground of this measure is the renewed activity of the slave-traders, as evidenced in the movements on Nyassa, in the Soudan, and on the coast of Zanzibar. The real object is, probably, to provide a demonstration which shall persuade German public opinion that something is being done.³⁹⁹

However, there was no consensus. Britain's Consul-General at Zanzibar, Colonel Charles Euan Smith, warned against any British naval co-operation with Germany. He believed that the 'Arab and native public would view with an absolute distrust sudden and novel co-operation of Germany with ourselves in measures against Slave Trade' and feared that they would think such action to be 'secretly directed against [the] Sultanate.'⁴⁰⁰ Hence, it was not only Salisbury that doubted in the sincerity of the new-found German abolitionist agenda. To evaluate the matter comprehensively, Clement Hill drew up a memorandum which recounted the events which had led to the region's disturbances. He shared in the views expressed by Salisbury and Euan Smith of the insincere 'Johnny come lately' German measures against the slave trade. Hill, whom Wm Roger Louis scorned as an 'unimaginative bureaucrat',⁴⁰¹ thought the absence of a revolt in the British sphere was due to Britain's long-standing humanitarian engagement with the region. In his view:

...the knowledge which the Arabs had of English ways in dealing with Mussulmans and slavery and Slave Trade made them bow to the inevitable when they saw we were in earnest in 1872-73, and the great blow then struck at the slave-trading interests gave rise to nothing in the shape of a national or

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 12 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴⁰¹ Wm. Roger Louis, "Great Britain and German Expansion in Africa, 1884-1919" in *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, eds. Gifford Prosser and Wm. Roger Louis (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 4-5, cited in Chamberlain, *Hill's Memoranda*, pp. 533-547.

religious movement. It was an English craze. England was, after all, the great supporter of all Mussulman races; the English recognized religious feeling; Allah willed it. The Germans altered all that. They are known on the coast by the name of "Enemies of God." They are hated for their militarism and irreligion.⁴⁰²

Attached to the memorandum was a document with the understated title: 'Instances of German want of Tact on East Coast of Africa' based on reports by the Church Missionary Society's Archdeacon Farler. In it Hill listed five points which demonstrated how German agents either had committed atrocities against the local population or in other ways provoked antipathy. All the instances included either extra-judicial killings or disrespect for local customs and religion: 'on one occasion a German tied a native to a tree and used him as a target for pistol practice.'⁴⁰³ This report was followed up a few days later with a less euphemistic 'Memorandum on the Misdoings of the Germans' by the Universities Mission in which the two first points of a list of seventeen included:

1. Taking possession of lands and countries by absolutely sham Treaties, which the natives had nothing to do with, and did in any way agree to.
2. Preliminary exploring parties shooting the natives on the slightest provocation with their revolvers, and sometimes in mistake shooting a man who had nothing to do with them.⁴⁰⁴

Hill was concerned over whether the German 'want of tact' would also taint Britain's reputation and hamper the IBEA's work if it were to be 'confounded with the German Company,' but he could reassure his FO readership that 'at present everything points to the distinction being maintained.'⁴⁰⁵ His memorandum concluded with advising against joint

⁴⁰² Hill, Memorandum, 12 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ The Universities Mission to Central Africa to FO, Memorandum, 17 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴⁰⁵ Hill, Memorandum, 12 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

naval action. Since Germany had not signed any mutual right of search treaties with any other powers than Britain, Austria and Russia it could not, in practical terms, police any other vessels than those of the Royal Navy. The result would thus be that 'England would continue alone to do the Slave Trade repression, whilst she would be associated politically with the unpopular German.' Instead of a blockade, Hill recommended that the forthcoming Brussels Anti-Slave Trade Conference 'would be a better point of departure for any combined action against the Slave Trade, which would then be intelligible to the Arabs and natives, unpopular though it might be.'⁴⁰⁶

The question over Germany's action in East Africa was so serious that also the recently retired Kirk, at this point a member of the IBEA's court of directors, was consulted. He also doubted in the efficacy of a blockade against the slave trade.⁴⁰⁷ To his mind it was 'physically impossible' to blockade such a long coast-line. The only option that could be realistically entertained was to 'erect and hold military stations' on the mainland. But even this 'would have no effect on the inland Slave Trade, for slaves from Uganda or the Congo almost never reach the coast. The result of raids in the interior are absorbed in the continent itself.'⁴⁰⁸ Instead Kirk suggested the abolition of slavery in Zanzibar and Pemba as the only real way in which to halt the slave trade. In his letter to Anderson, Kirk also included a letter from the Sultan of Zanzibar's military commander General Mathews. Apart from stating that 'the whole coast and interior is in a ferment' Mathews told of almost farcical conditions among the Europeans at Zanzibar. For example, the administrator of the German East Africa Company, Ernst Vohsen, had 'completely lost his head' and did not 'get on well' with the German Consul-

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Kirk to Anderson, 1 November 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

General, whilst the Italian contingent were 'doing nothing but looking on, just as if they were stationed here for no purpose whatever.' Mathews ended his letter on a personal note:

Tell Lady Kirk Zanzibar is not what it was. Nothing but trouble, trouble, trouble since the Germans came here. No peace or quietness, nothing but bother. You are well out of it, Sir John. It now remains for Germany either to take over the whole coast by force and under military administration by the Government, or to give up the whole business and squash the Company.⁴⁰⁹

Salisbury was not unmoved by the advice from the experts and recommended his German counterparts not to proceed with their plans for a blockade.⁴¹⁰ However, only two days later on the 15 October, this British decision was reversed. Despite Salisbury having 'strongly advised against the blockade', Bismarck's administration persevered. The Prime Minister's resolution was thus: 'if Germany persisted, England would, with the assent of the Sultan, join in the operation as an operation against the Slave Trade.'⁴¹¹ Three deserters from the German naval vessel 'Möwe' had reportedly been 'killed and eaten' by tribes the previous day, and the unfortunate incident had placed additional pressure upon German authorities.⁴¹² With Salisbury's decision the blockade was a *fait accompli*, although it would not be imposed for another two weeks. The Island of Zanzibar itself however was not to be subjected to any naval action.

The grounds upon which Salisbury committed Britain to the maritime blockade were two-fold: firstly, by participating in the naval action Britain could exercise limited control of German actions in the region and impose an element of restraint, so as to prevent hostilities

⁴⁰⁹ Mathews to Kirk, 25 September 1888 enclosed in Kirk to Anderson, 1 November 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴¹⁰ Salisbury to Euan Smith, 13 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴¹¹ Salisbury to Euan Smith, 15 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴¹² Euan Smith to Salisbury, 14 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

spilling into the British sphere. Secondly, Salisbury's government could not be seen as not contributing to an operation directed against the slave trade. Salisbury maintained his doubt of German sincerity in the matter and confided to Euan Smith that Bismarck's 'main object really is to announce a striking measure to satisfy his own public opinion' rather than having undergone a *Pauline conversion* to the cause of abolitionism.⁴¹³

Regardless of either statesmen's personal motives, the Anglo-German correspondence betrays the importance of public opinion in formulating policy. As the first chapter demonstrated, the East African slave trade had been subject to considerable attention over the summer of 1888. The naval reports received by the Foreign Office over the autumn months of 1888 did not indicate that the volume of the traffic had receded. In fact Admiral Fremantle reported in late September of an 'unceasingly active' trade and that his cruisers had intercepted five *dhow*s carrying a total of 258 slaves.⁴¹⁴ A month later a British naval officer was killed when boarding a *dhow* which held eighty slaves, hence at the time of Salisbury's reconsidered decision to join the blockade there was substantial pressure upon the government to act decisively against the traffickers.⁴¹⁵

The German press had been particularly scathing of its compatriots. Both the *Berliner Tageblatt* and the quasi-official *Norddeutsche Allgemeine* had called for 'new measures and new men.' Indeed the latter had judged:

the conduct of those German East African colonists, whose greatest energy consisted for a long time in toasting each other at dinners as national heroes, only to display themselves afterwards, when it became a question of doing

⁴¹³ Salisbury to Euan Smith, 25 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴¹⁴ Rear-Admiral Edmund Fremantle to Admiralty, 25 September 1888 enclosed in Admiralty to Foreign Office, 23 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴¹⁵ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 19 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

something on the spot, as incapable chatterers. The utter hopelessness of the situation in East Africa is now entirely admitted even by those who never tired of singing the praises of the tremendous advances of the German East African Company, and of the powers of organization of Dr. Carl Peters.⁴¹⁶

German abolitionist sentiment had also been stirred during the autumn of 1888. On 27 October, an anti-slavery meeting had been held in Cologne which according to the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine* had gathered 'distinguished men of all classes of society and all political parties.'⁴¹⁷ The meeting passed a resolution 'that it was the common duty and task of all Christian nations to co-operate for the suppression of the abominable cruelties of the Slave Trade; and that, [...] England and [...] Germany [should] combine for that purpose.'⁴¹⁸ Hence, in the months leading up to the blockade Bismarck's government had come under increasing popular pressure to deal with the rebellion that threatened Germany's new empire in East Africa, and it was a force he translated into diplomatic efforts vis-à-vis Britain.

'Hand in hand'⁴¹⁹: A Blockade of the East African Coast, 1888-9

On the 5 November, Salisbury gave formal notice of the blockade 'against the importation of munitions of war and the exportation of slaves' along the coastline of the Zanzibari mainland dominions.⁴²⁰ Predictably the formal notice blamed the slave trade for the institution of the blockade although Salisbury earlier had expressed scepticism of this as a mere pretext. But these doubts had seemingly vanished by November, when Salisbury, in a comprehensive

⁴¹⁶ Extracts from *Berliner Tageblatt* and *Norddeutsche Allgemeine*, Beauclerk to Salisbury, 24 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴¹⁷ Beauclerk to Salisbury, 31 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Malet to Salisbury, 26 September 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴²⁰ Salisbury to Hatzfeldt, 5 November 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

despatch to the German Ambassador, confided that: 'there is considerable foundation for the belief that the apprehensions and the resentment of the slave-traders have been a potent cause of the disturbances which have taken place.'⁴²¹ In similarity with Bismarck, Salisbury placed the events of East Africa in context with those of the entire region, 'from Lake Nyassa in the south, to Suakin in the north' and blamed the 'slave-trading Arabs' for their attempts at repulsing European colonialism.

The abolitionist campaigns that had been increasingly prominent over the latter half of the 1880s had evidently also influenced Salisbury's decision to institute the blockade since he referred to: 'the testimony of Mr. Cameron and of Cardinal Lavigerie combine to establish the fact that there has been a formidable increase in the activity of this hateful Traffic during the last few years'.⁴²² This was the second time Salisbury had cited the abolitionist campaigners Cameron and Lavigerie to justify a policy decision, the previous year he had, as the first chapter showed, called for the institution of the Brussels Anti-Slave Trade Conference on the basis of their evidence.⁴²³ In November 1888, he similarly stated to Malet:

there is no doubt whatever that the Slave Trade, both by land and sea, has recently undergone a considerable revival; and I think it probable that the circumstances has borne its share in the disturbances which have been so fatal to the German Company.⁴²⁴

Other European nations such as Portugal, Italy and France were also induced to join the blockade, a call which was only partially heeded. Apart from the deployment of an Italian naval vessel, there was lacklustre interest for participating in the operation. Salisbury also

⁴²¹ Salisbury to Malet, 5 November 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Lister, Memorandum, 29 August 1888, FO 84/1927, TNA.

⁴²⁴ Salisbury to Malet, 5 November 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

feared Germany was using the blockade to worsen Anglo-French relations. In a 'most secret' despatch to Euan Smith, Salisbury confided that 'I am not free from the suspicion that Germany wishes to make a difficulty between us and France.'⁴²⁵

Since France had not signed a right of search treaty with Britain, British cruisers could not intercept *dhow*s flying the French tricolour. And the Arab slavers exploited this legal loophole by obtaining insignia from the French consulate; hence co-operation of France was viewed as critical for any effectual stop to the slave trade.⁴²⁶ Strictly in regard to counter-trafficking measures the German desire to stop all vessels including the French flagged ones was rational. Yet both French and British diplomats thought that any such seizure would be unacceptable to French public opinion and thus make it very difficult for the French government to yield a right of search.⁴²⁷ It was this potential scenario that Salisbury feared might 'make a difficulty' between Britain and France, a bilateral relationship already strained over the British occupation of Egypt.⁴²⁸

Simultaneously with the institution of the blockade, the Sultan of Zanzibar issued a letter of introduction to his vassals for the IBEA's administrator George Sutherland Mackenzie. He was about to take up the concession awarded to the British company and the Sultan's generous introduction read:

They wish to make roads, and to trade and to do you good. The English have always been our friends, and [...] if they want anything from you, you will give it to them. If they wish to make any Agreement with you, you should make and sign such Agreement, and you should give them help and assistance, and men

⁴²⁵ Salisbury to Euan Smith, Most Secret, 17 November 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴²⁶ For an excellent study of the Royal Navy's efforts in East Africa, see: Raymond Howell, *The Royal Navy and the Slave Trade* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 197.

⁴²⁷ Malet to Salisbury, 16 November 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴²⁸ Salisbury to Euan Smith, Most Secret, 17 November 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

to work if they require it. By doing this we shall be pleased. The English are our friends.⁴²⁹

The letter to the Sultan's mainland chiefs underlined the schism between the Sultanate's relations with the British versus the German newcomers. The Sultan was clearly under the impression that he could retain some political influence by maintaining good relations with Britain and the IBEA, whilst any relinquishment to Germany represented a complete loss of both territories and face among the Arab community. No rebellion had taken place in the British sphere, nor did any occur for the duration of the blockade.

On 29 November, the British and German admirals had decided that the blockade was to be commenced on the 2 December at noon and be declared in the name of the Sultan. By this time the Arab chieftain Bushiri-bin-Selim of Pangani had been identified as the leader of the insurgency.⁴³⁰ Although demonised by the Germans, his image among the British missionary community was more nuanced. Bishop Charles Alan Smythies of the Universities Mission to Central Africa was indebted to him for earlier having saved his life: 'The credit of my safety from some violence is almost entirely due to Bushiri. He stood in the door and said he was answerable for the English missionaries, and unless they killed him they should not touch them.'⁴³¹

In early December, the focus of the rebellion against the German company had shifted from the coastal town of Pangani to the port town of Bagamoyo further south. Bushiri and his 2,000

⁴²⁹ IBEA Concession from Sultan of Zanzibar enclosed in Euan Smith to Salisbury, 17 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴³⁰ Fremantle to Admiralty, 23 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA. Also see: Wilkinson, *Arabs and the Scramble*, chapters 9-10.

⁴³¹ Smythies to Euan Smith, 15 November 1888, FO 403/107, TNA. Also see: Gertrude Ward, *The Life of Charles Alan Smythies* (London: Office of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, 1898), Chapter VII 'The Insurrection,' 1888.

men armed with breech-loading rifles and some small calibre cannon were rumoured to have established their head-quarters in the vicinity of the town on 4 December. Over the following two days Euan Smith reported of a 'considerable amount of desultory and resultless fighting between the Germans and the native insurgents' and added that 'the latter, as usual, sustaining a heavy loss of life, while the former escaped practically unhurt.'⁴³² The German soldiers had killed over a hundred insurgents and suffered only one casualty. Their tactics had included several naval bombardments and a nightly deployment of sailors to take the local fighters by surprise. Faced with an overwhelming force Bushiri retired his men to a village called Chem Chem five miles west of Bagamoyo on 7 December. However prior to this tactical retreat, atrocities had been committed against the members of an ivory caravan who had hid from the fighting. These actions contrasted with his earlier defence of Bishop Smythies:

Bushiri and his men surrounded the house, took possession of the ivory, seized the leaders of the caravan, and gave the option to the remaining portion of joining their cause or being mutilated or killed. Many who refused to join are said to have been either killed on the spot or to have had both their hands cut off.⁴³³

Contrary to Fremantle's predictions of the blockade having only a negligible effect on the slave trade due to it not being the season of the south-west monsoon,⁴³⁴ a month into operations the German man-of-war 'Leipzig' had intercepted two *dhow*s containing a total of 192 slaves.⁴³⁵ Hostilities had also escalated with Bushiri having launched an attack on the other German base at Dar-es-Salaam in which a hundred of the slaves liberated by 'Leipzig'

⁴³² Euan Smith to Salisbury, Confidential, 14 December 1888, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Fremantle to Admiralty, 2 December 1888, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴³⁵ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 22 December 1888 and Euan Smith to Salisbury, 29 December 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

were re-enslaved.⁴³⁶ Britain's consul at Zanzibar reported an 'incipient famine' on the German coast which was worsening 'from day to day.'⁴³⁷ The deteriorating conditions on-shore was mirrored in the German fleet which had suffered outbreaks of fevers.

With these factors in mind, the German Admiral had telegraphed Berlin with recommendations for raising the blockade 'on grounds of inefficiency' and instead substituting it with a 'strict blockade of Zanzibar and Pemba.'⁴³⁸ However the German government had gone even further and questioned whether also Britain would consider substituting the naval blockade with land-based military operations, since 'control could be more easily exercised on land and with less cost than by blockading continually a coast extending over 600 miles.'⁴³⁹

Salisbury was naturally reluctant to partake in any such scheme as it would both be very costly and risk making the IBEA a target for the native insurgency. Suspicions were also entertained that Germany would use the insurrection as a pretext to annex Zanzibar. In a premonition of the bilateral negotiations that resulted in the Anglo-German Heligoland-Zanzibar treaty the following year Salisbury made it clear that 'English opinion would not tolerate an abandonment of the Sultan of Zanzibar.'⁴⁴⁰

The events on the 'German coast' stood in marked contrast to the British sphere. Freemantle remarked that 'the whole north or English sphere is at present perfectly quiet; but at the south, where we have had to assist the Germans, there is sullen discontent, which is ready to

⁴³⁶ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 15 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴³⁷ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 2 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴³⁸ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Secret, 4 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴³⁹ Leyden to Salisbury, Memorandum, 4 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁴⁰ Salisbury to Malet, 21 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

break out into active hostility.⁴⁴¹ In January, a spiral of violence unravelled yet again as the German mission station at Pugu fifteen miles west of Dar-es-Salaam was attacked. The result of the attack was the re-enslavement of the remainder of the slaves liberated by 'Leipzig' and a massacre: 'three missionaries – two men and one woman – undoubtedly cut in pieces; their bodies have been seen.'⁴⁴² The remaining four missionaries were kidnapped and held ransom – a public relations disaster for both the German Colonial Company, but as it turned out also for the insurgents and their leader – since from this point German public opinion prevented a de-escalation or retreat from the region.

Euan Smith believed however that the Germans themselves were to blame: 'German blockading squadron, while patrolling coast, ceaselessly bombard open country day and night. German Admiral told me this himself. It has roused the natives to absolute fury.'⁴⁴³ Indeed, in a 'most secret' despatch telegraphed to Salisbury only days later Euan Smith believed the 'absolutely unprecedented' incident in which a female missionary was mutilated and killed as evidence of the 'intensity of Arab hatred.' The Consul feared that the insurrections on the coast and recently in Uganda were strengthening the resolve of the insurgents and that they believed it would 'bring about the entire destruction of all Missions.'⁴⁴⁴

Whilst the would-be German colonists were occupied in asserting their authority by militarily defeating the native insurgency, the IBEA had adopted a very different approach aimed at winning over hearts and minds. During his survey of the British sphere, the IBEA's new administrator George Mackenzie had noticed the great number of escaped slaves harboured

⁴⁴¹ Fremantle to Admiralty, 18 December 1888, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁴² Euan Smith to Salisbury, 16 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁴³ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Secret, 16 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁴⁴ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Most Secret, 19 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

at the mission stations.⁴⁴⁵ Mackenzie feared that the harbouring of 'runaway slaves' would constitute a growing source of friction between the Arab slave-holding community and the European missionaries, a grievance liable to break out into active hostility toward all Europeans including the IBEA. The distinction between the slaves held in bondage on Arab plantations; those freed by the naval cruisers and settled at Freretown; and those who had themselves sought refuge and emancipation with the missionaries, was not one made by all members of the Arab community. Mackenzie relayed an anecdote to highlight this to his friend Euan Smith:

The freed slaves, it should be remembered, are worked on the Mission plantations, and an Arab naïvely remarked to me, "Sahib, the missionaries are just as great slave-holders as we are, the only difference is they take or get their slaves for nothing, while we have to pay for ours."⁴⁴⁶

The resolution arrived at by the IBEA was one of payment to stabilise the area through the manumission of 1,421 slaves held by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the United Methodists Free Church of Sheffield (UMFC) and the German Evangelical Lutheran Mission of Bavaria at a cost of £3,500. The Treasury contributed £800 whilst the CMS and UMFC contributed £1,200 and £400 respectively; the IBEA covered the balance of £1,100.⁴⁴⁷ The missionary societies were after this outlay made to promise not to harbour any further runaway slaves.⁴⁴⁸ During his tour of the mainland placing 'free papers in the hands of every individual at the mission stations' Mackenzie was naturally warmly received: 'people at once gave in their full and hearty support to the Company, and did everything possible by outward

⁴⁴⁵ For a comprehensive study of freed slaves in East Africa during this period see: Fred Morton, *Children of Ham: freed slaves and fugitive slaves on the Kenya coast, 1873 to 1907* (London: Westview Press, 1990).

⁴⁴⁶ Mackenzie to Euan Smith, 18 October 1888, enclosed in Euan Smith to Salisbury, 22 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA. See also: Mackenzie to Euan Smith 18 October 1888, Box 63, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS.

⁴⁴⁷ Treasury to FO, 14 March 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁴⁸ FO to CMS, 12 February 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

and visible signs to show their delight at our coming.’⁴⁴⁹ Little ‘delight’ was shown in the rebellious German sphere, but the exigencies of popular imperialism forced Bismarck’s hand.⁴⁵⁰

The German expansionist policy in East Africa was in large part the result of public opinion. During a debate on the ‘East African Question’ in the German *Reichstag*, Prince Bismarck expressed himself as ‘fully pledged’ to a forward policy in the region. He admitted an earlier scepticism but that he now had yielded ‘to the stream in favour of colonial undertakings.’ He explained his *volte face* thus: ‘Common opinion has given way four years ago so completely to this stream, that, in my opinion, it cannot recede, nor do I think it would regard any retrograde movement as practicable.’⁴⁵¹ Bismarck’s speech also revealed some of the dynamics in Anglo-German relations over East Africa. The Chancellor’s opinion was at odds with that generally held among the policy establishment. Whilst many desired that Germany should act unilaterally, Bismarck perceived co-operation with Britain as crucial for a successful German colonial policy:

...we have only advanced after coming to an understanding with England. Therefore I absolutely reject the thought that we should act against the Sultan of Zanzibar in opposition to England. We are absolutely agreed with the English Government in Zanzibar [...] and go with it hand in hand.⁴⁵²

Indeed Salisbury was also conscious of this driver of German foreign policy when commenting upon a possible £100,000 German grant-in-aid for ‘a native police’ force for use on the coast.

⁴⁴⁹ George Mackenzie to Euan Smith, 27 December 1888, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁵⁰ See: Lowe, *German Problem*, pp. 96-100.

⁴⁵¹ Prince Bismarck speech to Reichstag during debate on the East African Question, 26 January 1889, extract from *Norddeutsche Allgemeine* 27 January 1889, enclosed in Malet to Salisbury, 30 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁵² Malet to Salisbury, 27 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

He damningly judged that: 'They are anxious to do as little as possible on account of the expense, but they have a strong Chauvinist opinion to deal with, as ignorant as such movements of opinion usually are.'⁴⁵³ In late January, the *Reichstag* passed, with 'a very great majority,' a bill which both allocated 2 million marks to strengthen the German presence in the region and placed the control of Peters' colonial company in the hands of the newly appointed Imperial Commissioner Hermann von Wissmann.⁴⁵⁴

Freemantle reported in early February a steady deterioration in attitudes toward Europeans and that the violence had claimed its first British victim, Mr Brooks of the London Mission and 'fourteen of his porters'.⁴⁵⁵ The admiral suspected that the British missionary had been killed by foreign fighters that had come to support Bushiri's insurgency, in particular 'to some Oman slave-dealers who have recently arrived from Muscat, and no doubt are fanatics.'⁴⁵⁶

Contrary to the claims made by the historian Suzanne Miers, the military operations against Bushiri was not entirely divorced from anti-slave trade policy.⁴⁵⁷ The Arab-leader had established 'a slave mart near Bagamoyo' and Freemantle thought slave trading would increase significantly if the blockade was raised. The slave prices on the coast were 'very low' and since the clove harvest had just begun at Pemba labour demand would make trafficking irresistible.⁴⁵⁸ Although the conditions on the coast improved a little in the following month they constituted a low point, since from the spring onwards the Germans met with more success in their counter-insurgency tactics.

⁴⁵³ Salisbury to Euan Smith, 23 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁵⁴ Salisbury to Euan Smith, 29 January 1889 and Malet to Salisbury, 31 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁵⁵ Fremantle to Admiralty, 2 February 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, pp. 209-16.

⁴⁵⁸ Fremantle to Admiralty, 2 February 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

The foremost indicator of this turn in Germany's fortunes on the battlefield was Bushiri's proposal of surrender. Apparently 'influenced by fear of treachery among his coast followers' Bushiri had secretly offered to surrender himself at the British Agency in Zanzibar if Euan Smith could 'guarantee his safety and immunity from punishment.'⁴⁵⁹ According to Salisbury, the German government would be 'glad if Bushiri disappeared' but they could not give any 'formal assent to sparing his life' because he had killed so many Germans.⁴⁶⁰ Salisbury even asked Euan Smith whether he could ask the Sultan if he could smuggle him to India and pay for his sustenance there,⁴⁶¹ however nothing came of this proposal.⁴⁶²

Meanwhile, the new German Commissioner Wissmann had recruited a small force of 650 Sudanese soldiers at Cairo which he efficiently deployed in East Africa.⁴⁶³ Wissmann's offensive, strengthened by imperial funds and fresh Sudanese recruits led over the following nine months to a gradual German victory over the Arab insurgents, and instead of a new life in India, Bushiri was caught and then executed by Wissmann and his soldiers on 15 December 1889.⁴⁶⁴ In terms of liberated slaves the blockade had not been a great success. The Royal Navy intercepted a total of 238 slaves in 1889,⁴⁶⁵ which was a substantial reduction from the 841 intercepted the previous year. The German Admiral wanted as early as January the blockade raised 'on grounds of inefficiency,' but due to the instability on the mainland it was continued.⁴⁶⁶ The question was however again raised in the spring when it was clear that the

⁴⁵⁹ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Secret, 9 March 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁶⁰ Salisbury to Euan Smith, Secret, 13 March 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² See: Steven Fabian, "Locating the local in the Coastal Rebellion of 1888–1890," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7, no. 3 (2013): 432–449. DOI:10.1080/17531055.2013.770680.

⁴⁶³ Baring to Salisbury, 10 March 1889, FO 403/117, TNA. For a recent publication analysing the agency of these Sudanese soldiers in asserting a German colonial presence, see: Moyd, *Violent intermediaries*.

⁴⁶⁴ Mark R. Lipschutz and R. Kent Rasmussen, *Dictionary of African Historical Biography* (London: Heinemann, 1978), p. 245.

⁴⁶⁵ Royal Navy Slave Capture Statistics, FO 881/6009, FO 881/6010, FO 881/6052, FO 881/6053.

⁴⁶⁶ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Secret, 4 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

insurrection was about to be defeated. Due to the low number of liberated slaves – only 66 had been caught in the first six months of 1889 – and the fact that the prevailing winds were about to change and thus also become the ‘high season’ for slaver interception, Salisbury refused. There would have been little purpose in an anti-slavery blockade with such meagre results.⁴⁶⁷

By August, the German government again contacted Salisbury about lifting the blockade out of ‘financial reasons’. But Count Bismarck wanted to ‘finish it with a flourish’ which involved ‘to induce the Sultan to abolish slavery by Decree upon the mainland, and to declare free all persons entering the Island of Zanzibar and Pemba after a fixed date, not affecting the status of those who are in the islands now.’⁴⁶⁸ This ‘flourish’ was duly enacted by the Sultan in a decree that stipulated ‘from the 1st November next, all slaves landed in any part of the country under his rule shall be free.’⁴⁶⁹ Hence, the blockade resulted in at least the nominal abolition of slavery in Zanzibar and Pemba since no further individuals could be made slaves and the institution would die with the death of those enslaved. It was hoped a more comprehensive international agreement against the slave trade would be come to at the Brussels Anti-Slave Trade Conference which was about to convene concurrently with the raising of the blockade.⁴⁷⁰

This conference and the subsequent status of East African slavery and trafficking lies outside the scope of this thesis, but has been investigated in great detail by Suzanne Miers.⁴⁷¹ Her research has shown that the East African slave trade continued, albeit at a very limited level,

⁴⁶⁷ Salisbury to Portal, 4 April 1889, private, A 79, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House, cited in Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, p. 216.

⁴⁶⁸ Salisbury to Portal, Secret, 22 August 1889, FO 403/119, TNA.

⁴⁶⁹ Dering to Crispi, 22 September 1889, FO 403/119, TNA.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*; and Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*.

well into the twentieth century. Indeed Arabian slave markets were in operation until the 1960s.⁴⁷² In Zanzibar the legal status of slavery was not abolished until 1897, whilst on the Kenyan Coast it lasted until 1909 when also the category of ‘concubines’ were subject to abolition, the remaining categories having been freed in 1907.⁴⁷³

Anglo-German Territorial Rivalry: Witu, Lamu and Emin Pasha, 1888-9

The other main aspect of Anglo-German relations over East Africa during 1888-9 concerned the territorial rivalry between the countries’ colonial companies. Whilst the British and German governments co-operated closely, albeit at times somewhat reluctantly in enforcing a naval blockade of the coastline, the IBEA and its German counterparts were engaged in a fierce competition over control of Witu, the island of Lamu and Emin Pasha’s Equatorial Province.

Although the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886 had divided the mainland into two spheres of influence, a German enclave lay within the northern British zone. The Sultanate of Witu had become a German protectorate in 1885 as a result of the explorers Gustav Denhardt and his brother Clemens having obtained a treaty with the local Sultan Ahmed ibn Fumo Bakari, otherwise known as Simba.⁴⁷⁴ As such the territorial rights to German Wituland did not belong to Carl Peters’ DOAG, but to a separate entity, the *Deutsche Witugesellschaft* (DWG). Outside Witu’s coastline lay a string of islands including Lamu which constituted the diminutive territory’s natural harbour, but these still formed a part of the Sultan of Zanzibar’s

⁴⁷² Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, p. 25.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴⁷⁴ Johannes Sigleur, *Kampf um Wituland: Clemens u. Gustav Denhardt erwerben f. d. Deutsche Reich e. Kolonie* (Berlin: Steiniger, 1942).

dominions.⁴⁷⁵ In January 1889, a controversy arose when it became clear that: ‘the Germans [had] established a German post-office at Lamu, and [...] hoisted a large German flag over it.’⁴⁷⁶ Apart from the violation of the Sultan’s sovereign territory, Euan Smith feared that a cession of these islands to Germany ‘would produce [an] insurrection there and along [the] British coast-line, and strangle [the] British Company.’⁴⁷⁷

Anderson however was sympathetic to the DWG who ‘understanding the natives, has worked on the right lines’ and had avoided an uprising. According to the Foreign Office’s foremost Africa-expert:

Lamu has always practically been the port of Witu, and it would be intolerable to the Witu Company to see a rival Company established there, collecting the dues, and managing the Administration. It would be like having a German Company established off Mombasa.⁴⁷⁸

Anderson suggested that, by mutual agreement, both companies should leave the island a *de facto* neutral territory.⁴⁷⁹ Salisbury concurred in part to Anderson’s suggestion, but embellished it by proposing to Bismarck that the issue be resolved through international arbitration.⁴⁸⁰ Since ‘Prince Bismarck was very anxious to avoid all friction between the two Governments’ he acceded to Salisbury’s suggestion.⁴⁸¹ Over the following three months several international legal experts were considered for the job of arbitrator, but the choice fell upon the Belgian Baron Lambermont who accepted the offer in March.⁴⁸² Importantly, this tentative sounding over a small island off Witu marks the start of the Anglo-German

⁴⁷⁵ Anderson, Memorandum, 14 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁷⁶ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Secret, 10 January 1888, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Anderson, Memorandum, 14 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Malet to Salisbury, 19 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Vivian to FO, 26 March 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty 1890. As the following chapter will show, the ‘Lamu arbitration’ was expanded to a general settlement of all outstanding territorial disputes between Britain and Germany.

The British and German Emin Pasha Relief Expeditions

Nevertheless, the jostling over the territory of Witu was a mere irritant compared to the far more important rivalry between Mackinnon and Peters over Emin Pasha’s allegiance. By the end of 1889, two rivalling European expeditions, clad in the guise of philanthropy, had been present in the interlacustrine region, both with the ostensible goal of rescuing the erstwhile Ottoman administrator. In 1885 the German-born Egyptian governor of Equatoria, Dr Eduard Schnitzer or Emin Pasha as he was known, had become cut off from Cairo due to the Mahdist insurrection.⁴⁸³ The Mahdists had consolidated their rule over most of the Sudan in the intervening years. But Emin’s Equatorial Province had escaped conquest and remained under nominal Egyptian control. Courtesy of his role as General Charles Gordon’s lieutenant, the fate of his administration was well-known in European circles, and by 1886, William Mackinnon and Frederick Hutton had established the ‘*Emin Pasha Relief Committee*’ with the stated aim of rescuing the Egyptian governor.⁴⁸⁴ The protagonist himself had however little desire for any rescue. In a letter to his friend the missionary and explorer Dr William Robert Felkin, Emin expressed his ‘extreme pleasure’ and gratitude for the ‘generous thoughts’ of Great Britain in despatching a relief expedition, but insisted that he would remain in the province with his

⁴⁸³ F.R. Wingate, *Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan: being an account of the rise and progress of Mahdiism, and of subsequent events in the Sudan to the present time*, 2nd edition (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1968).

⁴⁸⁴ Smith, *Emin Pasha Relief Expedition*, pp.49-60. It was a mission to which the well-known explorer and journalist Henry Morton Stanley had immediately volunteered. Also see: Munro, *Maritime Enterprise and Empire*, pp. 389-400.

people. Emin's twelve years in the isolated territory had made him relatively self-sufficient and the only assistance he required from Britain was stability in the kingdoms of Uganda and Unyoro, and 'a safe road to the coast.'⁴⁸⁵

Although in part philanthropic, there is little doubt that there were considerable ulterior motives which led Mackinnon to organise an expedition to Equatoria, a region which was conveniently situated just north of what would later form the British sphere's hinterland. Indeed he outlined his plans in a confidential memorandum aptly entitled: '*Syndicate for establishing British Commerce & Influence in East Africa & for relieving Emin Bey*'.⁴⁸⁶ By persuading Emin to amalgamate his province into that of his coastal concession, Mackinnon would control most of the valuable trading-networks of Central Africa.⁴⁸⁷ In fact by March 1889, the IBEA claimed to have received 'from Dr. R. W. Felkin, of Edinburgh, all the rights conferred upon him by Emin Pasha in respect of the provinces of Equatorial Africa under the government and control of the latter. These rights are contained in certain letters from Emin Pasha [...] which confer upon Dr. Felkin the authority to arrange for the transfer of Emin Pasha's province to any British corporation in which Dr. Felkin may have confidence, subject to Emin Pasha's final approval.'⁴⁸⁸

After the despatch of Stanley, a rivalling German Emin Pasha Committee was formed under the auspices of Carl Peters in 1888.⁴⁸⁹ As Peters had been convinced by his associate Karl von

⁴⁸⁵ Emin to Felkin, 17 April 1887, cited in G. Schweinfurth, et al., *Emin Pasha in Central Africa. Being a collection of his letters and journals* (London: G. Philip & Son, 1888), pp. 508-11.

⁴⁸⁶ Mackinnon, Memorandum, private & confidential, 27 November 1886, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS cited in Galbraith, *Mackinnon and East Africa*, pp. 114-5. Also see

⁴⁸⁷ Anderson and Fergusson's Memoranda, 23 November 1886, FO 84/1794, TNA cited in Kiewiet, *The History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*, pp. 83-8. Kiewiet argues however that Mackinnon might only have entertained an interest in rescuing Emin for use as a 'Governor, or Administrator, of the central African province of the projected East Africa Company' and that Mackinnon did not desire to annex the Equatorial Province itself.

⁴⁸⁸ IBEA to FO, Confidential, 27 March 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁸⁹ See: Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, pp. 131-67.

der Heydt, the Equatorial province represented the ideal territory for his strategy of enveloping the British sphere. Indeed it formed a key component to his later vision of a German '*Mittelafrika*'.⁴⁹⁰ The German Colonial Company⁴⁹¹ had in September 1888 passed a resolution that the policy of Germany was to extend its sphere to the region encompassing the Albert Nyanza and Wadelai.⁴⁹² Count Bismarck viewed the plans with deep distrust. In a conversation with Malet he insisted that:

the Government had already refused to have anything to do with it [and] the Chancellor intended now to go further, and to write to Prince Hohenlohe Langenburg, the President of the East African Company, and to Herr von Benningsen, one of its principal promoters, to endeavour to dissuade them from the enterprise.⁴⁹³

However it was evident that Bismarck's government faced a challenge in communicating this restraint to a German policy establishment and public that was largely in favour of the expansionist agenda. Testament to these popular sentiments was an article published the following month in 'Bismarck's semi-official organ' the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine* which 'strongly advocated' the proposed German Emin Pasha Relief Expedition.⁴⁹⁴

Peters himself had already by October lost 'the confidence of the German Government'⁴⁹⁵ and his resignation soon followed in January.⁴⁹⁶ It was on these grounds that Wissmann was dispatched 'to supervise the action of the German East African Company' before Bismarck

⁴⁹⁰ Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, pp. 133, 135-6. Perras argues that Peters was motivated to embark on the expedition in order to restore his tarnished reputation in German colonial circles.

⁴⁹¹ Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft (DKG)

⁴⁹² P.L. McDermott, *British East Africa, or IBEA: A History of the Formation and Work of the Imperial British East Africa Company* (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd, 1893).

⁴⁹³ Malet to Salisbury, 26 September 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴⁹⁴ Beauclerk to Salisbury, 31 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴⁹⁵ Beauclerk to Salisbury, 27 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴⁹⁶ Extract from the Times of 22 January 1889 enclosed in Mackinnon to Salisbury, 18 February 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

presented his East African bill to the *Reichstag*.⁴⁹⁷ Peters' loss of favour had hardly come as a surprise to diplomatic circles; Euan Smith was scathing in his remarks of Mackinnon's German counterpart:

Dr. Peters' name very often comes under discussion in connection with the agitation concerning East Africa that is at present taking place in Berlin. I have never heard him spoken of otherwise than as a pretentious but very energetic charlatan and "poseur." I have no personal acquaintance with Dr. Peters, but the reputation he has left behind him in Zanzibar is the reverse of favourable.⁴⁹⁸

Although Peters had resigned from the German East Africa Company, he did not disappear from the East African political scene. Rather, his resignation, or 'leave of absence' as he himself put it, came 'in order to take over the leadership of the Emin Pasha Expedition.'⁴⁹⁹ Indeed only a month later Peters announced that he too would shortly form an expedition into the interior, traversing the British sphere.⁵⁰⁰

The IBEA strongly protested this projected intrusion into their territory and made Salisbury aware that Stanley already had 'accomplished the relief of Emin Pasha.'⁵⁰¹ The German government's response continued on the same lines: Peters' activities would not receive 'countenance or support.'⁵⁰² Peters had attempted to land his expedition at Lamu in March, but had been prevented by the Sultan. The German government's policy toward the private venture had not thawed, according to Count Bismarck: 'Dr. Peters was entirely discredited with the German Government, and [...] they had nothing to do with the Emin Relief

⁴⁹⁷ Malet to Salisbury, 5 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁴⁹⁸ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 1 December 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁴⁹⁹ Extract from the Times of 22 January 1889 enclosed in Mackinnon to Salisbury, 18 February 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁵⁰⁰ McDermott, *British East Africa*, pp. 84-6.

⁵⁰¹ IBEA to Salisbury, 27 March 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

⁵⁰² Malet to Salisbury, 4 May 1889, FO 403/118, TNA.

Expedition.’ Quite on the contrary ‘they had been very glad that he should leave Germany, where he was embarrassing the Government by getting up meetings at various towns, at which he made high-flown and over-coloured speeches.’⁵⁰³

Prince Bismarck even went so far as to prohibit Peters from arming his expedition, and cited the friendship of England to be infinitely more valuable than any new territories to be gained in East or Central Africa.⁵⁰⁴ In a later meeting between Euan Smith and Herbert Bismarck, the latter expressed his exasperation with the ‘unfortunate jealousies existing between the two Companies’ and that he agreed the German company should be entirely confined to the southern section of the mainland. Count Bismarck was said to be ‘...very sick and tired of Zanzibar complications’ and had little belief in the region’s economic potential. Indeed Euan Smith reported to Salisbury that he ‘gathered from his manner that he would be ready to go very far to meet any propositions you might think it necessary to advance, and that would result in a final solution to East African difficulties.’⁵⁰⁵ As it will be detailed in the following chapter Salisbury waited another six months before taking any heed of this advice, namely the negotiations which resulted in the Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty. In similarity with the agreement over the Lamu arbitration, the conversations between Euan Smith and Herbert Bismarck, in the summer of 1889, thus foreshadowed the following year’s bilateral negotiations in substance. In particular with respect to the north-south division of the mainland and from the fact that it was Germany that first suggested a comprehensive treaty.

The Bismarck administration’s policy toward Peters and the German Emin Pasha Relief Committee garnered substantial negative attention among the German public who welcomed

⁵⁰³ Malet to Salisbury, 16 March 1889

⁵⁰⁴ Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, pp. 139-40, 145.

⁵⁰⁵ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 19 July 1889, FO 403/119, TNA.

Peters' expansionist objectives. The jingoist publicity from the press was not abated by what was perceived to be bullying tactics employed by the British. Since the Anglo-German blockade on the coast was still in force, the Royal Navy had confiscated Peters' arms and his steamer the *Neera*.⁵⁰⁶ That Bismarck nonetheless continued his policy against Peters in the face of so much popular opposition is testament to the true nature of Anglo-German rivalry in East Africa: it was a rivalry that derived from imperial agents in the form of the British and German companies. It was also a rivalry both governments attempted to contain, but which was prone to being stirred by jingoist sentiments among the press and general public. Despite Salisbury and Bismarck both being sensitive to public opinion and the lobbying from special interest groups, they were not willing to let a local conflict in the imperial periphery escalate so much as to jeopardise their bilateral relations.⁵⁰⁷ But this seemingly permissive policy toward Britain would come at a great cost to Bismarck who, as Perras argues, had mortally weakened his position in German politics partly over his opposition to Peters' Emin Pasha Relief Expedition.⁵⁰⁸

Finally, Peters landed on the coast of Witu in June and commenced his expedition the next month by following the Tana River into the interior via the Kenia Mountains.⁵⁰⁹ Despite its ostensibly obvious purpose, Peters' motives in setting out into the interior were at the time somewhat unclear to British authorities. According to intelligence obtained by the new Consul-General, Gerald Portal, from his Agent at Lamu, R.T. Simons:

⁵⁰⁶ Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, p. 150.

⁵⁰⁷ Malet to Salisbury, 20 February 1890, FO 403/137, TNA.

⁵⁰⁸ Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, p. 167.

⁵⁰⁹ Extract from German Newspaper of 2 November 1889, enclosed in Trench to Salisbury 2 November 1889, FO 403/120, TNA and McDermott, *British East Africa*, p. 91.

No one knows his object or intentions in proceeding up the Tana. The Germans here laugh at the Peters Emin Relief Expedition, and state Dr. Peters intends proceeding as far as possible, forming a new German Colony somewhere...⁵¹⁰

As the following chapter will demonstrate, Peters' expedition spurred an unintended scramble between the IBEA and their German counterpart over the control of Uganda. It was a local rivalry that threatened Anglo-German bilateral relations. In an effort to defuse these tensions a general settlement of all outstanding colonial disputes was agreed – what became known as the Anglo-German 'Heligoland-Zanzibar' Treaty of 1890.

Conclusion

Two European colonial powers, one old and established, and the other a new-comer to the business of empire, had in East Africa been thrust together in close proximity. Complicating Anglo-German relations in this newfound neighbourliness was a combination of unwieldy men-on-the-spot and a jingoistic public opinion that forced the countries into a position of apparent competition. The political leadership in Britain and Germany were however both eager to defuse any notion of rivalry and conducted diplomatic relations on the most amicable terms, even as it turned out, to the cost of Bismarck's political career. The most visible manifestation of this Anglo-German détente was the imposition of a joint naval blockade in 1888. Although it was obvious that German high-handedness had incited Bushiri's rebellion that embroiled it's 'sphere' for the best part of eighteen months and that suppression of the

⁵¹⁰ Simons to Portal, 14 October 1889 enclosed in Portal to Salisbury, 28 October 1889, FO 403/120, TNA.

insurgency was the blockade's main purpose, it would be disingenuous to suggest that British involvement was completely divorced from anti-slavery concerns.

East Africa distinguished itself in the late 1880s within European public opinion as the last redoubt of any significant slave trafficking. The West African trade had long since been eradicated and so had slavery as an institution been abolished throughout the British colonies and most of the Western hemisphere. The issue had even been brought to the attention of Queen Victoria during the celebrations of her golden jubilee in 1887, which was testament to both the scale of the East African slave trade and the status of anti-slavery as a respectable and noble pursuit.⁵¹¹ In an elaborate memorial presented to her by the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, she was congratulated for her own and her ministers' efforts to end the slave trade, although the work was 'still very far from being complete.' In particular it was the 'desolating Slave Trade in Central and Eastern Africa which the noble-hearted Livingstone so earnestly drew attention to' that the BFASS had singled out as the last remaining field for Britain's efforts. According to the memorial the East African slave trade was:

...still carried on with almost undiminished vigour, and the necessity exists for continued vigilance on the part of the Anti-Slavery Society, in order to influence public opinion and the Governments of the civilised world on behalf of the thousands carried off into captivity and Slavery to supply the demand throughout the Mohammedan countries of the East.'⁵¹²

The campaigns that followed in 1888-9 did certainly 'influence public opinion' in a way that must have exceeded even the BFASS' most optimistic expectations. The revival of the slave trade in 1888 to pre-1873 levels accompanied by the agitation of the BFASS, Lavigerie and

⁵¹¹ BFASS to Queen Victoria, Memorial, 21 June 1887, PP 1/50, TNA.

⁵¹² Ibid.

Cameron conspired to rekindle the almost century-long abolitionist sentiment in the British public. Once the outrages of the East African slave trade had become common knowledge, the moral impetus for the political establishment to act became irresistible. The new-found notoriety of the trade presented both a challenge and an opportunity to British policymakers. On one hand it required a potentially significant outlay of funds to redouble the naval efforts to halt the trade; on the other hand it gave politicians and interested parties such as the Imperial British East Africa Company the opportunity to justify their colonisation of the region as a calculated measure against the slave trade.

Some of the first practical consequences of this revamped commitment to anti-slave trade policy were the call for a second conference of the European powers concerning Africa. The Berlin Conference's successor, what was termed the Anti-Slave Trade Conference, was held over the autumn, winter and spring of 1889-90 in Brussels. But the campaign's most imminent effect was the imposition of an Anglo-German blockade of the East African coast. The blockade lasted a year from November 1888 and succeeded in reducing both slave trafficking and arms trading, but first and foremost indigenous resistance to German colonisation. As Miers drily remarked, the Germans 'had early appreciated the propaganda value of stating their aims in humanitarian terms.'⁵¹³ The weight of Britain's long-term abolitionist commitment forced it into colluding with Germany's counter-insurgency, clad as a mutual effort against the slave trade. Whilst the sincerity of German motives were questionable, the British motives were more nuanced. The joint naval action offered an unprecedented opportunity for the Royal Navy to monitor the entirety of the coast and French concessions finally afforded a limited right of search of vessels flying the *tricolour*, which were exactly the

⁵¹³ Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, p. 209.

ones guilty of carrying the most slaves. Despite these efforts, British cruisers intercepted far fewer slaves during the blockade than what it had in the year prior to it, but this was in part compensated for by Germany's cruiser 'Leipzig' who liberated almost two hundred slaves during the operations.

Yet, it would also be all too simple to dismiss the humanitarian justification as mere rhetoric. Politicians such as Salisbury were very much aware of the threat the actions of slave-raiders posed to the economic development of African colonies. In particular the Prime Minister referred in 1890 to the favourable effect on trade that the abolition of slave trading had had on West African commerce in the years following 1815.⁵¹⁴ So even taking a cynical view of British motives, suppression of the slave trade could be construed as a self-interested rational economic choice.

As regard to the territorial rivalry between the IBEA and their German counterparts, the main geographical areas of contention were the Island of Lamu directly outside Witu and the Equatorial Province of Emin Pasha in Southern Sudan. Whilst the former was quickly resolved by an agreement to forward it to an international arbitrator, the latter morphed into a major domestic problem for Bismarck and, although a complete failure for all parties involved, resulted in determining the scope of the East African partition. How it came to determine the geographical scope of the Anglo-German Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty of 1890 will be the subject of the following chapter. The lengths to which the Bismarck administration distanced itself from Peters' popular Emin Pasha Relief Expedition demonstrated his commitment to Anglo-German co-operation over East Africa. It also illustrates this chapter's contention that

⁵¹⁴ Salisbury to Malet, 24 November 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

the rivalry between the two nations was not of an inter-governmental character, but derived from the men-on-the-spot fanned by a 'Chauvinist' public opinion.

Chapter Four:

The Second Partition of East Africa: British Imperialism by Proxy, 1889-90

It was the second Anglo-German Agreement, the 'Heligoland-Zanzibar' Treaty of 1890 that determined the geographical scope of the East African partition. In return for the small island of Heligoland, Britain gained German recognition for a protectorate over Zanzibar, the cession of Witu and extension of its sphere of influence to comprise Uganda; in addition to further German concessions in eastern western and south-western Africa.⁵¹⁵ The Sultanate of Zanzibar, what Britain's Ambassador at Lisbon Sir Robert Morier only thirteen years earlier had described as one of the 'four great landlords' of the African continent together with Britain, Portugal and Egypt, had thus been formally incorporated into the British Empire.⁵¹⁶

Yet Zanzibar's transition from a client-state to protectorate is not what has drawn the attention of most imperial historians who have examined the treaty's role in the partition of East Africa. This privilege has largely been the preserve of the kingdom of Buganda which straddled the north-western banks of the Victoria Nyanza. It had over three centuries emerged as one of the most sophisticated and powerful polities in Central Africa, but by the 1870-80s its position had come under threat from both external and internal forces.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁵ For the full treaty text, see: Edward Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty Volume II, Third Edition* (London: H.M.S.O., 1909), No. 270, pp. 899-906.

⁵¹⁶ Morier to Derby, 15 May 1877, cited in R. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 86 and G. N. Sanderson, "The European Partition of Africa: Coincidence or Conjunction?," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 3, no. 9 (1974): 1-54. DOI: 10.1080/03086537408582421

⁵¹⁷ See: Semakula Kiwanuka, *A history of Buganda: from the foundation of the kingdom to 1900* (London: Longman, 1971); and Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, pp. 13-54.

Threatened by Egyptian expansion from the north, the *kabaka* Mutesa had come to rely on Arab traders from Zanzibar for modern arms and ammunition, a presence which had also introduced Islam.⁵¹⁸ Henry Morton Stanley's encounter in 1875 prompted the CMS to despatch missionaries to Buganda, the first of which arrived on 30 June 1877.⁵¹⁹ Only two years after the appearance of Protestant missionaries, ten French missionaries from the Catholic missionary society of the White Fathers based in Algiers arrived.⁵²⁰ When the *kabaka* Mwanga II ascended the throne upon the death of his father in October 1884, a systematic persecution of the growing numbers of Christian converts was instigated.⁵²¹ It was also upon his orders that the Anglican Bishop James Hannington was executed *en route* from Zanzibar in October 1885. These politico-religious tensions between the Christian, Muslim and traditional factions in Buganda had in 1888 culminated in a *coup d'état*, an event which heralded the beginning of a civil war that continued into the early 1890s.⁵²²

Whilst this chapter contends that this instability formed one of the most important reasons for why the kingdom was incorporated into the British sphere of influence in 1890, the dominant explanatory model has linked this expansion in East Africa with a geostrategic concern for Egypt and the Nile Valley. Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher's Egypto-centric proposition⁵²³ was seemingly a natural inference mostly derived from circumstantial

⁵¹⁸ Jean Brierley and Thomas Spear, "Mutesa, The Missionaries, and Christian Conversion in Buganda," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 21, no. 4 (1988): 601-2. DOI: 10.2307/219743

⁵¹⁹ Anderson, Memorandum, 10 September 1892, FO 84/2258, TNA and Précis of Events on the Upper Nile and Adjacent Territories, Including Bahr-el-Ghazal and Uganda from 1878 to March 1898, Section III Uganda (p. 8), FO 881/7042X, TNA.

⁵²⁰ Ceillier, *White Fathers*, pp. 136-169.

⁵²¹ J. A. Rowe, "The Purge of Christians at Mwanga's Court," *The Journal of African History* 5, no. 1 (1964): 55-72. DOI: 10.1017/S0021853700004503

⁵²² For a recent study into precolonial Bugandan nationhood, see: Elliott Green, "Ethnicity and Nationhood in Precolonial Africa: The Case of Buganda," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 16, no. 1 (2010): 1-21. DOI: 10.1080/13537110903583310

⁵²³ See the thesis' main introduction and the section on the 'Strategic Explanatory Model and Nile Valley Doctrine', in particular: Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, recently re-published (March, 2015) in a new edition with a foreword by Wm. Roger Louis.

geographical evidence. In particular the alleged strategic importance of the River Nile which extends from the Victoria Nyanza to its delta by the Mediterranean. Due to Egyptian agriculture's reliance on the river for irrigation, it was argued that British policymakers thought it imperative to secure its entire length, from the delta to its source. Egypt had assumed strategic importance for the British Empire, both as a base for the Royal Navy in the Eastern Mediterranean and as an international waterway since the Suez Canal provided the shortest navigable route between Britain and India. As the theory suggests, a succession of governments, most notably those led by Salisbury, would not let a rivalling European power establish itself in the Nile Valley and imperil Britain's grip on Egypt by damming or deflecting the Nile.

Such a general strategic explanation of the scramble renders intelligible not only why British policymakers were so preoccupied with a region of the world which had negligible economic value, but also why the map of Africa at the end of the partition was 'coloured red' in an almost unbroken line from Cairo in the north, to Cape Town in the south. Thus the explanatory model draws its strengths from the benefit of hindsight, and a bird's eye view of late-Victorian imperial expansion, placing the partition of East Africa in a wider framework of imperial security centred on British India.

But it is therein, through these rough grained generalisations and neglect of temporal sequence, that the model also finds its greatest weaknesses. Chapter two has demonstrated that long before the 1890 bilateral treaty with Germany, the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886 and the adjoining hinterland understanding of 1887 had positioned the districts containing the Upper Nile within the British exclusion zone. Arguably, the initial treaty's significance has been understated by the Egypto-centric historiography as no discernible

interest was displayed for Egypt at this time. And as this chapter will demonstrate, the IBEA's protectorate over Uganda was obtained by the actions of a man-on-the-spot and ratified by Mackinnon *in lieu* of the lost Equatorial Province; none of which had been directed by either Salisbury or the 'official mind' of the Foreign Office.

In order to comprehensively challenge once more the Egypto-centric interpretation of the Anglo-German Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty, this necessarily long chapter – the crux of the thesis – outlines three main arguments. Part one will show that the IBEA's expansion into Uganda had resulted from imperial agency and economic expectations,⁵²⁴ not a consequence of grand strategy directed from London. Building on John Darwin's path-breaking research.⁵²⁵ Part two will scrutinise the evidence and assumptions underpinning the Egypto-centric model with a view at demonstrating that its basis is false: both in documentary terms, but also by virtue of the sequence of events and policy-decisions. Part three proposes a new interpretation of the treaty's motives: a complex of factors, in which the cost-effective execution of Britain's anti-slave trade policy; containment of local rivalry; and the acquisition of the regional trading port Zanzibar, feature most prominently.

Part One: Uganda, the Men-on-the-Spot and an Unintended Treaty, 1889-90

The IBEA had in June 1889 dispatched Frederick Jackson into the interior to avoid being outmanoeuvred by Peters' Emin Pasha Relief Expedition.⁵²⁶ Jackson's caravan reached the

⁵²⁴ See: Hansard, HoC Debate, 17 December 1888, vol 332 cc554 and Euan Smith to Salisbury, Private, 31 March 1890, Vol. 80, No. 8, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House.

⁵²⁵ Darwin, *Dynamics of Territorial Expansion*, pp. 614-42. In addition to the critique of the Egypto-centric interpretation of the East African partition, it is valuable for the theoretical concept: 'the bridge-head model.' For 'sub-imperialism', see: John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 175, 228-9, 522.

⁵²⁶ Portal to Salisbury, 15 June 1889, FO 403/119, TNA.

company's station Machakos 250 miles from the coast and proceeded from there in August, for the purpose of consolidating the IBEA's influence within the British sphere.⁵²⁷ The company's agent Sandys had received a similar set of orders from the directors to 'forestall any attempt by Dr. Peters to annex the north bank of the Tana'. Thus he also organised an expedition aimed at treaty-making with the local chiefs.⁵²⁸ Stanley was reported to be in the vicinity of the Victoria Nyanza at this time with Emin Pasha, but after his farcical rescue of Emin, the expedition had descended into shambles.⁵²⁹ By September, Jackson had reached the territories of Usoga directly east of Uganda and his mission had been renamed the 'Stanley Relief Expedition'.⁵³⁰

Jackson's proximity to the Kingdom of Buganda in the autumn of 1889 was thus, in terms of colonial expansion, perfectly - albeit unintentionally - timed: Mwanga had been deposed by the Muslim faction and his half-brother Kalema held the throne.⁵³¹ Mwanga, supported by the Christian factions, was in September 1889 understood to be 'eager to have the assistance of the English to replace him'.⁵³² The Scottish missionary Alexander Mackay wrote concurrently letters to Mackinnon advocating annexation, however due to the long delay in communications neither Mackay nor Mwanga's letters arrived until December. In Mackay's view, securing the IBEA a protectorate over Uganda would mean holding the Victoria Nyanza

⁵²⁷ IBEA to FO, 22 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA.

⁵²⁸ Sandys to Portal, 21 July 1889, FO 403/119, TNA.

⁵²⁹ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 30 December 1889, Vol. 79, No. 81, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House. For the official account Stanley presented to both houses of Parliament about the circumstances of the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition see: Correspondence Respecting Stanley's Relief of Emin Pasha, File 58, Box 94, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS.

⁵³⁰ Mackay to IBEA, 2 September 1889 enclosed in IBEA to FO, 28 Nov 1889, FO 403/120, TNA.

⁵³¹ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 15 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA.

⁵³² Mackay to IBEA, 2 September 1889, enclosed in IBEA to FO, 28 November 1889 (pp. 187-8), FO 403/120, TNA.

and the 'only market for ivory and for disposal of barter goods in all this vast region'. The other component to his argument derived from local strategic concerns:

If Buganda continues to be in the hands of hostile Arabs, your Company will never be able to effect anything that signifies within the whole region of the Victoria Nyanza. The Equatorial Province is meantime lost. In lieu of it, and much better than it, lies Uganda, which must become a Protectorate of the Company unless you mean to have it your most powerful enemy. Now is the time for action, and for acquiring the right to hold the finest land in all East Africa.⁵³³

Mackay's words were echoed by Stanley as he returned from his Emin Pasha Relief Expedition, recommending: 'the conquest or the entire subjugation of Uganda to English interests' and the immediate construction of a railway from Mombasa to the Victoria Nyanza.⁵³⁴

Jackson arrived at the company's outpost Mumias on 7 November where he found a 'long and rambling' letter from Mwanga dated 15 June in which the ousted *kabaka* pleaded for his assistance.⁵³⁵ If Jackson could 'be good enough to put [Mwanga] on [his] throne' he would in return receive 'plenty of ivory,' 'do any trade in Uganda' and all he would 'like in the country'.⁵³⁶ In addition there was a letter from the CMS's Reverend Edward Cyril Gordon, which is also cited in Jackson's memoir:

⁵³³ Mackay to IBEA, 2 September 1889, enclosed in IBEA to FO, 28 November 1889 (pp. 187-8), FO 403/120, TNA. Hence, Mackay's letter to the IBEA did not arrive until long after any new orders could have been issued to Jackson.

⁵³⁴ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 30 December 1889, Vol. 79, No. 81, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House.

⁵³⁵ Jackson, *Early Days*, p. 222.

⁵³⁶ Mwanga to Jackson, 15 June 1889, in Jackson, *Early Days*, p. 222, cited in Kiewiet, *History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*, p. 193.

Mwanga is willing to offer you the most favourable terms he can for future use. We think that if you help him now you will be able to ask what terms you like, as they are in great distress.⁵³⁷

However with the help of the Irish trader Charles Stokes and the Christian faction, Mwanga had by October managed to defeat Kalema and his Arab allies and reconquered his position.⁵³⁸ Jackson proceeded to formulate a new letter to Mwanga to clarify the situation. Yet from his new vantage of power Mwanga was 'in no immediate need of assistance'.⁵³⁹ In the IBEA's efforts to secure paramountcy in the Equatorial Province the company's directors had explicitly excluded Jackson from venturing into Uganda.⁵⁴⁰ So despite the fact that 'Mwanga had offered almost all the Company could wish,' Jackson, with 500 men armed with breech-loaders at his disposal, could not offer Mwanga any assistance, since: 'he could do nothing without further instructions from home, as he had been ordered not to get into Uganda.'⁵⁴¹ Nevertheless prior to departing Mumias for Mount Elgon, Jackson sent Mwanga 'one of the Company's flags, with the intimation that his acceptance of it would lay upon the Company the obligation to come to his assistance as a protecting power.'⁵⁴²

Mwanga's luck turned yet again when he was defeated by his brother Kalema's allies in November 1889. On the advice of both Christian factions Mwanga wrote on 1 December a

⁵³⁷ Edward Cyril Gordon, *The Revolution in Uganda. Letters from the Revs. E. C. Gordon and R. H. Walker, and Mr. A. M. Mackay. Printed from the "Church Missionary Intelligencer," etc.* (London: Church Missionary House, 1889).

⁵³⁸ Raymond Moloney, "Charles Stokes (1852-1895): An Irishman in 19th Century Africa," *Irish Quarterly Review* 87, no. 346 (1998): 128-134. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30091886> After his successful reinstatement Mwanga presented Stokes with a wife as a reward for his assistance.

⁵³⁹ Jackson, *Early Days*, p. 223, cited in Kiewiet, *History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*, p. 194.

⁵⁴⁰ Charles Stokes to Euan Smith, 25th February 1890 enclosed in Euan Smith to Salisbury, 15 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA.

⁵⁴¹ Charles Stokes to Euan Smith, 25 February 1890 enclosed in Euan Smith to Salisbury, 15 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA. Also see: Jackson, *Early Days*, pp. 222-3: 'We were in a dilemma. My orders were that we were on no account to go anywhere near Uganda, and as the messenger was confident that his latest information was correct, I wrote requesting full particulars of the situation, and decided to wait 30 days for a reply.'

⁵⁴² Jackson, *Early Days*, p. 223.

new letter to Jackson in which he accepted his terms.⁵⁴³ Although no formal treaty of protection was signed, it was later recorded that the implication of Mwanga's acceptance was tantamount to 'practically coming under the Protectorate of the country'.⁵⁴⁴ Jackson himself did however not discover that Mwanga had sanctioned his proposal until his return to Mumias in March 1890.

By January Mwanga had reconquered his capital Mengo. Arab letters that had arrived in Zanzibar bore a definitive message: 'Uganda is spoiled; all Arabs are killed. The place and country is now in the hands of Mwanga and the Europeans.' The 'downfall of Arab power' was said to be 'absolute and complete'.⁵⁴⁵ In March a letter dated 11 January from Stokes corroborated the earlier reports. Mwanga had 'declared himself a Christian' and used the allied Christian faction to vanquish the Swahili Arabs.⁵⁴⁶ However the Foreign Office was still unsure as to exactly which Europeans had assisted him. There were even reports suggesting that 'the Belgians have been foremost in aiding Mwanga, and that the Belgian flag is flying at the capital of Uganda'.⁵⁴⁷ The reports seem to have caused little concern in the Foreign Office and Salisbury issued no orders to take control of the country.

The IBEA was however not the only contender for Mwanga's favour. Peters, who headed the German Emin Pasha Relief Expedition, arrived at the Bugandan capital Mengo in February 1890 after having the previous month discovered both that Emin already had been rescued by Stanley and Mwanga's letters in the IBEA station in Mumias. With only Buganda remaining as a potential field of colonisation, his intention was to sign a treaty of protection with the

⁵⁴³ Kiewiet, *History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*, p. 195.

⁵⁴⁴ Précis of Events on the Upper Nile and Adjacent Territories, Including Bahr-el-Ghazal and Uganda from 1878 to March 1898, Section III Uganda (p. 8), FO 881/7042X, TNA.

⁵⁴⁵ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 14 February 1890, FO 403/136, TNA.

⁵⁴⁶ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 3 March 1890, FO 403/136, TNA.

⁵⁴⁷ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 14 February 1890, FO 403/136, TNA.

kabaka.⁵⁴⁸ But Peters was unsuccessful and the only treaty signed was a ‘treaty of friendship’ between Buganda and Germany which committed the former to the principles of the Congo Act.⁵⁴⁹ Peters left Buganda in March 1890 and would, upon reaching the coast in June, discover that his efforts to further German territorial interests into the interior north of the British hinterland had been futile.

Hence, the IBEA’s initial incursion into Uganda had come as a result of the failure to establish control of the Equatorial Province due to the collapse of Emin’s regime following Stanley’s rescue; whilst the decision to engage in talks with Buganda’s exiled ruler had been one taken solely by the IBEA’s man-on-the-spot Frederick Jackson in contradiction to his orders to avoid Uganda. Therefore, it is thus fair to conclude that this initial contact and treaty had not come about as a result of the IBEA’s nor indeed Salisbury’s alleged designs for the region.

The Race for Uganda, 1890

By the spring of 1890, a race was afoot for the control of Uganda. Bismarck’s resignation heralded uncertainty about German policy for the region; in particular whether Germany would move away from the doctrine of co-operation that was described in the foregoing chapter, and adopt a more expansionist stance. Peters had been unsuccessful in obtaining a Ugandan protectorate due to poor timing. As opposed to Jackson, he had met Mwanga after his victory when the *kabaka* had enjoyed a position of relative strength. Emin had arrived at Zanzibar on 3 March, and much to the regret of the IBEA, he had by April taken up service

⁵⁴⁸ Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, pp. 161, 165.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-6, also: Karl Peters, *Die deutsche Emin-Pascha expedition* (München, Leipzig: R. Oldenbourg, 1891), p. 326.

with the Germans under Major Wissmann.⁵⁵⁰ With Emin in the service of Germany, Mackinnon could no longer realistically entertain any hope of amalgamating the Equatorial Province with that of the British sphere. However courtesy of Jackson's unintended treaty, nearby Uganda assumed the status of a consolation prize.

In early March, there were rumours that Wissmann was planning a large expedition into the interior to secure Uganda for Germany. Euan Smith speculated that the German Imperial Commissioner would use the rivalry to his advantage; specifically whether Wissmann would offer support to the Catholic 'Wa-Fransa' faction and thereby eject British influence. He warned that: 'If Uganda passes under German influence, [the] British Company has no future before it.'⁵⁵¹ The consul's analysis was an economic one; he believed the IBEA's financial future was linked to the exploitation of the rich trading networks of the inter-lacustrine region and not to the barren coast and its immediate hinterland. If Germany took control of Uganda, the privately funded and hitherto highly unprofitable IBEA would be left with little but the largely unproductive and sparsely populated territories of East Africa. This was a prospective future which offered little but financial ruin for the company.

Nevertheless, the rumours of Wissmann's expedition were only five days later contravened with intelligence reports suggesting that Berlin had issued 'stringent orders' that 'Wissmann would have to abandon for the present all designs on Uganda.'⁵⁵² The reports were followed on 21 March by news from Berlin: Bismarck had resigned as German chancellor.⁵⁵³ His

⁵⁵⁰ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 3 March 1890, FO 403/136, TNA and Euan-Smith to Salisbury, Secret, 3 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA.

⁵⁵¹ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Secret, 13 March 1890, FO 403/136, TNA.

⁵⁵² Euan Smith to Salisbury, 18 March 1890, FO 403/136, TNA.

⁵⁵³ Malet to Salisbury, 21 March 1890, FO 403/136, TNA.

retirement heralded uncertainty for Germany's East African policy.⁵⁵⁴ The German Consul-General had been convinced:

that the conduct of East African affairs would now be taken charge of by His Majesty himself, and that German enterprise in these latitudes would either be pushed with a wholly unexpected impetus, or would be suffered to collapse.⁵⁵⁵

The British Ambassador to Berlin, Sir Edward Malet, had in February made it clear that the Emperor was an 'ardent supporter of [...] colonial policy' which would presuppose the new direction assumed by German policymakers in regard to East Africa.⁵⁵⁶ Despite the Emperor's explicit reassurances that German foreign policy would 'continue absolutely on the same lines as heretofore' the aftershock of the iron chancellor's fall was felt in distant Zanzibar.⁵⁵⁷ Since on the same day as Bismarck's resignation, Wissmann had reassumed the preparations for his expedition and requisitioned 500 porters from the Sultan.⁵⁵⁸ The Imperial Commissioner's plans were however thought to be independent of the German Consul-General and it was unclear whether the new government would sanction any future treaties gained by an expedition into the interior.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁴ There is growing evidence to suggest that Bismarck's downfall in part was caused by his moderate colonial policy. See: Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, p. 167.

⁵⁵⁵ Euan Smith to FO, 24 March 1890, FO 403/137, TNA.

⁵⁵⁶ Malet to Salisbury, 20 February 1890, FO 403/136, TNA.

⁵⁵⁷ Malet to Salisbury, 21 March 1890, FO 403/136, TNA.

⁵⁵⁸ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Secret, 21 March 1890, FO 403/136, TNA. After the conclusion of the Anglo-German Heligoland Treaty, Wissmann was prevented from immediately being appointed governor on behalf of his opposition to Caprivi's moderate colonial policy, he was not promoted until 1895. See: Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, p. 171.

⁵⁵⁹ Salisbury to Malet, Secret, 16 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA.

The German expedition planned to set out on 20 April under the leadership of Emin to gain treaties from the tribes surrounding the Victoria Nyanza and Uganda.⁵⁶⁰ Euan Smith was persuaded that:

The future of English interests in Central Africa depends on our immediate action in regard to Uganda, whose King is now ready to ally himself with first comers, believing his present position wholly insecure unless supported by white men.⁵⁶¹

In order to forestall the German plans, he recommended the immediate appointment of an officer to act as 'Her Majesty's Consul for the North Victoria Nyanza and Kingdom of Uganda.'⁵⁶² 'His early appearance upon the scene of action...' he argued 'would be a great desideratum at the present juncture of affairs.'⁵⁶³ Thus, through official diplomatic means Uganda would be secured by the British Empire.

However, in complete contradiction to any suggestion of an imperial grand strategy to safeguard Uganda, Salisbury refused Euan Smith's suggestion, notifying him that: 'it is not advisable in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government to appoint at present a British Consular officer to reside in Uganda.'⁵⁶⁴ Surprised by recent events, Salisbury had sought to verify and learn the 'exact nature' of the IBEA's intentions of 'securing paramount influence in Uganda.'⁵⁶⁵ The company later informed him that 'a special caravan' under the leadership of Captain Frederick Lugard had been sent 'with the utmost dispatch' for the purpose of 'concluding a Treaty with Mwanga and promising him the support of the Company'.⁵⁶⁶ Hence,

⁵⁶⁰ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 1 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA. Even Tippu Tip, the notorious Swahili slave trader, was said to be enlisted for the mission.

⁵⁶¹ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 31 March 1890, FO 403/136, TNA.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

⁵⁶³ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 3 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA.

⁵⁶⁴ Salisbury to Euan-Smith, 9 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA.

⁵⁶⁵ FO to IBEA, 2 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA.

⁵⁶⁶ IBEA to FO, 22 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA.

a local scramble for Uganda had taken place in the spring of 1890, entirely divorced from any geo-strategic considerations.

‘The great trade markets of Central Africa’⁵⁶⁷: Uganda, the Upper Nile and Imperial Interests, 1890

Prior to the company’s despatch of Lugard, both the IBEA and the Foreign Office experts considered an expansion into the interior important only in relation to the viability of Britain’s position in East Africa. At this juncture, the plight of the CMS missionaries was hardly mentioned, which stands in stark contrast to political deliberations and public campaigns organised by the society in regard to the proposed evacuation of Uganda in 1892. As will be demonstrated below, the bilateral negotiations of May 1890 resulted from Anglo-German friction over the small German protectorate at Witu and its adjoining islands Manda and Patta. This local arbitration was later expanded to a general settlement of outstanding colonial disputes.

The developments in East Africa and the impending negotiations with the new German Chancellor Leo von Caprivi, led Salisbury to order a memorandum to be drawn up in order to evaluate the status quo with regard to Anglo-German territorial disputes in Africa. On 24 March, Anderson presented his memorandum which listed thirteen separate issues. He believed Britain stood a good chance of winning all the issues pending in East Africa which included the islands of Patta and Manda, and the right of the IBEA to ‘conclude Treaties behind Witu’.⁵⁶⁸ The Foreign Office had interviewed key stakeholders to inform government

⁵⁶⁷ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Private, 31 March 1890, Vol. 80, No. 8, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House.

⁵⁶⁸ Anderson, Memorandum, 24 March 1890, FO 403/141, TNA.

policy in the region. These included the former Consul to Zanzibar Sir John Kirk (at this point an IBEA director), the current Consul-General Gerald Portal and IBEA's chairman William Mackinnon.

Kirk had attached such importance to the consolidation of the British sphere that he had advised the government to relinquish Zanzibar altogether in return for a German cession of Witu to Britain.⁵⁶⁹ The advice was a surprising one, seeing that Kirk was perhaps the individual that had done the most to mould Zanzibar into a British client state.⁵⁷⁰ Regardless, the Foreign Office chose to ignore Kirk's advice, construing his analysis and conclusion of inevitable German supremacy over the region as flawed. Anderson doubted both the *Reichstag's* continued appetite for funding their costly East African colonial venture, or that British public opinion would allow for a cession of Zanzibar to Germany.⁵⁷¹ However should Britain have made concessions to Germany in Zanzibar it would be expected that this would lead to the cession of Witu and leave the entire northern sphere British.

In concluding the East African section of the memorandum, Anderson speculated about a scenario in which Germany kept Witu. In such a case, the region separating the Tana River to the south and the Abyssinian border to the north would fall to German hands in the event of a final delimitation. This arrangement would entail Mackinnon giving up his claims to 'Lamu and Kismayu, [...] Patta and Manda, and his Treaties north of the Tana, behind Witu'. Anderson noted that: 'Sir W. Mackinnon would assent to this, but would require something

⁵⁶⁹ Anderson, Memorandum, 24 March 1890, FO 403/141, TNA

⁵⁷⁰ Daniel Liebowitz, *The physician and the slave trade: John Kirk, the Livingstone expeditions and the crusade against slavery in East Africa* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1999); see also: Bennett, *History of Zanzibar*. It might be speculated that he gave the radical advice as a result of his bitterness of being side-lined after German political pressure had been exerted on the British Government for him to resign some years earlier.

⁵⁷¹ Smith, *German Colonial Empire*, pp. 42-5.

more, and reasonably, for the Nile Basin is properly in our “Hinterland.”⁵⁷² Hence, Anderson confirmed that the region of the Upper Nile, which included Uganda and potentially the Equatorial Province, was already within the British hinterland and as such not subject to negotiation. Mackinnon would be willing to accept that Germany kept Witu only as long as he received a substantial reward such as the Kilimanjaro and the port of Tanga.⁵⁷³

Mackinnon took the opportunity to impress upon Salisbury the achievements of his company in the British sphere. In the two years since it had received its royal charter, the IBEA had constructed infrastructure such as telegraph wires, inland stations and was operating steamers on the Tana River. More was planned such as placing steamers on the Victoria Nyanza and laying 30 miles of light railway track from Mombasa.⁵⁷⁴ But he also warned that he considered the German company a mortal threat to the IBEA and by extension the British presence in East Africa. Unless this threat could be neutralised, he hinted that the company might consider retiring:

If we can be assumed of your Lordship’s support against German encroachments, we can continue to prosecute our enterprise with vigour and energy. Otherwise we feel that in the face of the embarrassment and difficulties which continuous hostile German action and fresh German claims raise, it may become a question for the grave and earnest deliberation of the Directors how far they are justified in proceeding with an enterprise which has so much to discourage it.⁵⁷⁵

In similarity with Kirk and the Foreign Office, Mackinnon expressed his fears of being enveloped by German spheres to both the north and south.⁵⁷⁶ Mackinnon did little to hide his

⁵⁷² Anderson, Memorandum, 24 March 1890, FO 403/141, TNA

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ Mackinnon to Salisbury 26 March 1890, FO 84/2078, TNA.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Mackinnon to Salisbury 26 March 1890, FO 84/2078 and FO 403/136, TNA.

animosity to his German counterpart and cited one of Peters' self-proclaimed actions in East Africa:

In his own letter, published a short time ago in the German press, he stated that he had shot the Sultan of the Gallas, that he had caused the British flag to be handed down and burnt in the presence of the tribe, and had taken over the goods deposited in this Company's station.⁵⁷⁷

Although the story is liable to have been exaggerated, Peters' recent violent actions during his expedition up the Tana River, in which he attempted to forestall Mackinnon in securing the Equatorial province, afford credibility to his anecdotal evidence.⁵⁷⁸ In his letter, Mackinnon also put forward a veiled threat of the company evacuating East Africa, leaving the British sphere vacant to German exploitation or, in the event of state intervention, adding to the financial burdens of the British government:

we feel that the actions of the Germans in endeavouring to surround us with their territory is forcing us into a position of extreme gravity, which renders it questionable whether we are justified in expending more of the money entrusted to our charge without some clear understanding that the interests of the Company and its shareholders shall be safeguarded and protected by Her Majesty's Government.⁵⁷⁹

Mackinnon's argument is important for understanding why the British government was eager to sanction the IBEA's claims in Uganda. Without it, the company was likely to fail and the expensive responsibility of exerting effective occupation over East Africa would instead fall upon the government.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸ Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, pp. 153-61.

⁵⁷⁹ Mackinnon to Salisbury 26 March 1890, FO 84/2078 and FO 403/136, TNA.

Only a week after the circulation of the Foreign Office memorandum, Charles Euan Smith, the British Consul-General to Zanzibar, also seized on the opportunity to influence the impending negotiations. He pressed upon the Prime Minister the importance of the IBEA securing the interior and 'the great trade markets of Central Africa.'⁵⁸⁰ According to the Consul, the IBEA should immediately:

...change its line of policy, to strive after the line substance which awaits them in the interior instead of attempting to grapple the shadow which eternally eludes them upon the coast⁵⁸¹

Just like Kirk and Mackinnon, Euan Smith was persuaded that the German company seemingly had 'unlimited power to draw upon Imperial German resources' to develop its East African sphere. The spending power was ostensibly substantial: 'For every rupee the British Company spend in Zanzibar the Germans spend at least two thousand.' It was an impossible situation for the IBEA, already struggling financially, unless it sought out the allegedly lucrative markets for trade in the inter-lacustrine region.

If Britain was not to completely lose its position in the region to Germany, radical changes would have to be made to the company's policy. Indeed Euan Smith had unambiguous advice for Mackinnon:

...they should gird themselves to the task and decide on the construction and immediate commencement on a large scale of the railway from Mombasa to Victoria Nyanza and that they should at all costs, without one moment's unnecessary delay, make their position unassailable in Uganda and upon the Lake.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸⁰ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Private, 31 March 1890, Vol. 80, No. 8, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² Ibid.

The Consul trivialised what would be such an ambitious scheme's principal stumbling block, namely the considerable cost of financing a 600 mile railway traversing a desolate region of Africa.⁵⁸³ Euan Smith obviously subscribed to the orthodox wisdom, hitherto professed by Anderson and Holmwood,⁵⁸⁴ that it was the interior region that represented the IBEA's economic future. The earlier the company could secure its position in Uganda and connect it with the coast, the sooner it could turn a profit and thus secure Britain's position in East Africa.

Euan Smith hints at the race which was at the time afoot for control of the interior:

Now that the Germans have cast their eyes upon Equatorial Africa as the battlefield for future supremacy, it is in those regions, to a certainty, that the battle will have to be fought. The British Company therefore, must recognize this fact without delay and having recognized it must decide to accept or to retire from the conflict.⁵⁸⁵

This line of reasoning is divorced from the substantial historiography which suggests British policymakers were actuated by the strategic imperative of securing the Nile to protect Egypt. Whilst there was a push for the interior, it came about for economic reasons: the River Nile or the Upper Nile Valley were simply geographical designations and not objectives *per se*. Despite what is alluded to by Ronald Hyam, no mention was either made of the Mahdist threat in the Sudan nor of the CMS presence in regard to Uganda.⁵⁸⁶ The internal Foreign Office deliberations were entirely focussed on what expansion would mean in commercial terms.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ Holmwood to Granville, 27 March 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

⁵⁸⁵ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Private, 31 March 1890, Vol. 80, No. 8, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House.

⁵⁸⁶ Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 223-31.

The British Consul concluded his letter to Salisbury with a postscript: 'I believe Mr. Rhodes would at any time be prepared to accept any responsibilities in connection with Mombasa, the Victoria Nyanza and the Kingdom of Uganda.'⁵⁸⁷ Euan Smith was probably correct in his presumption. Rhodes offered two years later to hold Uganda for a 'relatively minor annual subsidy', although his offer would be denied by Rosebery as he considered it an 'evasion of our responsibilities,' indicating that the occupation of Uganda was an imperial concern for the government.⁵⁸⁸

At the beginning of April, Malet met with Count von Berchem, Caprivi's Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Berchem categorically denied the press speculations of a German plan to use the expedition headed by Emin to encroach on the British sphere.⁵⁸⁹ Emin was confined to operate entirely within German hinterland. Berchem further thought it advisable to reopen the negotiations over Witu with a view of enabling the IBEA to purchase it from the German company, as this would avoid further friction between the chartered companies.⁵⁹⁰ Salisbury had evidently been convinced by Berchem's assurances since he proceeded to deny Euan Smith's suggestion of despatching a diplomatic official to Uganda. At the end of April, the IBEA announced that they had ratified the agreement between Jackson and Mwanga of December 1889. Consequently their agent Mackenzie declared: 'that Uganda and the countries dependent on it are now included in within the sphere of influence of the British Company.'⁵⁹¹ It was in this period of heightened tension over the interior and, as the following section will show; over Witu and the adjoining islands of Manda and Patta, that it was agreed

⁵⁸⁷ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Private, 31 March 1890, Vol. 80, No. 8, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House.

⁵⁸⁸ Rosebery, Memorandum, 3 November 1892, FO 403/173, TNA.

⁵⁸⁹ Malet to Salisbury, 4 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 15 April 1890 and Euan Smith to Salisbury, 30 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA.

to settle the disputed African territories diplomatically through bilateral discussions in Berlin.⁵⁹²

Part Two: Witu and the Prelude to Partition, 1889-90

Based on a treaty with the local chief Ahmed ibn Fumo Bakari, Germany had declared 'Wituland' a protectorate in May 1885, shortly after those of Carl Peters' Society for German Colonisation's territories in Usagara.⁵⁹³ Whilst the majority of Germany's East African holdings were situated in this southerly region courtesy of the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886, Witu was a political and geographical anomaly. Held by the brothers Clemens and Gustav Denhardt through their *Deutsche Witugesellschaft* (DWG), it was an enclave that was entirely separate from Peters' venture.

The miniature protectorate had long been a bone of contention for the IBEA, especially since the British company had maintained an ambition of consolidating its territorial holdings in an unbroken line between the rivers Umba in the south to Juba in the north.⁵⁹⁴ As was shown in the foregoing chapter, Salisbury and Bismarck had already in January 1889 agreed to arbitration over the island of Lamu just off the coast of Witu after the German Witu Company had, contrary to the provision of the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886, annexed it.⁵⁹⁵

When Witu had been expanded in October 1889 to comprise the Somali port of Kismayu, the IBEA had complained to Consul Euan Smith that they 'are desirous of establishing the most

⁵⁹² FO to Treasury, 16 April 1890, FO 403/137, TNA.

⁵⁹³ Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, pp. 46–66. Peters' group was in 1887 merged with the German Colonial Society to form the German Colonial Company.

⁵⁹⁴ Anderson, Memorandum, 24 March 1890, FO 403/141, TNA.

⁵⁹⁵ Malet to Salisbury, 19 January 1889, FO 403/117, TNA.

friendly relations with them to the south, but this can only be when they cease to hamper and weary us to the north.⁵⁹⁶ Indeed the company's director George Mackenzie could only foresee: 'endless worry and annoyance to the Foreign Office, the Zanzibar Consulate, and the Company [...] if these disputes are not finally and promptly settled'⁵⁹⁷

Euan Smith met the former German Foreign Secretary, the Ambassador Paul von Hatzfeldt in November, and had brought an offer from the IBEA. The company were: 'willing to compensate the Witu Company for their outlay [...] if the German Government will withdraw their Protectorate over the Sultan of Witu'.⁵⁹⁸ From what he had gathered from his conversations with Hatzfeldt, Euan Smith speculated whether the German government was mediating a new policy toward East Africa. It included the assumption of direct control over its chartered companies and the absorption of Zanzibar into a European colonial empire. Another calculated aspect to this policy was:

...the intention so to develop the situation at Witu, and within the newly-declared Protectorate, as to render the position extremely difficult and disagreeable to the British Government and to the English Company, and so to bring about the compulsory offer of a sufficient quid pro quo in order to insure the complete withdrawal of the Germans from the north.⁵⁹⁹

And lastly; '[t]hat such compensation is hoped for in the direction of South Africa, and with reference to the new Charter granted to the South African Company.'⁶⁰⁰ Evidently, Euan Smith

⁵⁹⁶ IBEA to Euan Smith, 16 October 1889, FO 403/120, TNA.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid. IBEA's agent George Mackenzie argued further that: 'The Germans have sufficient territory lying between the Umbe and Rovuma to tax their political and commercial resources for the next century, and if, instead of frittering away their energies as they are doing by striving to hamper us in the north, they were to confine themselves to their proper sphere of influence [...] it would be more profitable for themselves.'

⁵⁹⁹ Memorandum of a Conversation held between Count Hatzfeldt and Euan Smith enclosed in Euan Smith to Salisbury, 3 November 1889, FO 403/120, TNA.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

speculated whether Germany was using Witu simply as a pawn to induce British concessions elsewhere.

Already by the summer of 1889, the German authorities had lost its hope for any substantial economic rewards in East Africa. It had only been the expansionist German public opinion that had kept the government from evacuating the region. According to Euan Smith, who had met Count Herbert Bismarck, the German foreign secretary reportedly:

...believed that the commercial value of East African enterprise was altogether fictitious; that it was by no means the El Dorado expected; but that he had to consider German public opinion, however wrongfully informed it might be.⁶⁰¹

These sentiments were certainly not exclusive to German policymakers. Seemingly exasperated by the unrealistic economic expectations a jingoistic public opinion had entertained for East Africa, Salisbury had in the following spring echoed the younger Bismarck's pronouncements to Malet almost verbatim:

To some minds just at present, both in Germany and in England, the interior of Africa in the line of the great lakes occupied the position & offered the attractions of the El Dorado of the 16th century, I do not think such anticipations were grounded upon fact, & these feelings would probably melt away as practical experience increased.⁶⁰²

The other important aspect Euan Smith had gauged from his discussions which he communicated to Salisbury, particularly with regard to the 'Lamu arbitration',⁶⁰³ was that

⁶⁰¹ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 19 July 1889, FO 403/119, TNA.

⁶⁰² Salisbury to Malet, 21 May 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

⁶⁰³ The proposed arbitration over the island of Lamu (and Manda and Patta) off the coast of Witu. Although belonging to the Sultan of Zanzibar's dominions, the islands formed Witu's natural harbour and had been occupied by German colonists. The IBEA and Salisbury had protested the matter and referred it to arbitration.

Bismarck: 'would be ready to go very far to meet any propositions you might think it necessary to advance, and that would result in a final solution to East African difficulties.'⁶⁰⁴

As the Anglo-German negotiations of May 1890 revealed, the territories surrounding Lake Nyassa was the region which 'the Emperor had set his heart.'⁶⁰⁵ But any exchange of Witu for a district which had been subject to such heavy involvement by British missionaries was completely unacceptable to the British government. The expectation of the British public's negative reaction to such a scenario was enough to immediately exclude it from any serious contemplation. In fact, Britain would rather let Germany keep Witu than relinquish 'the country in which Livingstone had died.'⁶⁰⁶ This underlines the importance of the memorialisation of Livingstone in the decades after his death;⁶⁰⁷ the sentimental attachment to this 'imperial martyr' was indeed sufficient to influence the geographical scope of the partition.

Between October and December 1889, the IBEA continued its extensive lobbying campaign to rid itself of its German competitor in Witu. It was during this frantic campaign that the company first launched the argument that its position in East Africa excluded any other power from holding the Nile basin.⁶⁰⁸ However, as Anderson made clear five months later, the 'Upper Nile' had throughout the proceedings remained within the British hinterland, irrespective of the power which held Witu.⁶⁰⁹ This Nilotic argument would resurface again in another campaign, but not until 1892 when the IBEA had depleted its financial reserves and were in

⁶⁰⁴ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 19 July 1889, FO 403/119, TNA.

⁶⁰⁵ Salisbury to Malet, 21 May 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ For the origins of this memorialisation, see: Lewis, *Empires of Sentiment*.

⁶⁰⁸ IBEA to Salisbury, 31 October 1889, FO 403/120, TNA. Also see: D. R. Gillard, "Salisbury's Heligoland Offer: The Case against the 'Witu Thesis'," *The English Historical Review* 80, no. 316 (Jul., 1965): 538-552. DOI: 10.1093/ehr/LXXX.CCCXVI.538

⁶⁰⁹ Anderson, Memorandum, 24 March 1890, FO 403/141, TNA.

urgent need of government assistance to maintain its occupation of Uganda as is detailed in the following chapter.⁶¹⁰

Its countermoves were also transmitted to the Foreign Office over the following weeks: the company had entered into treaties with all the chiefs between the Juba and Tana Rivers.⁶¹¹ By securing the Witu hinterland, it could effectively envelop the German protectorate at Witu, but this required both the British government's sanction and recognition by Germany. It even emerged in November 1889 that the IBEA had initiated negotiations with the German Wituland Company over the sale of the latter's rights and assets.⁶¹² This private solution proved however to be short-lived, for three weeks later the German Company informed the IBEA that the German protectorate could not be withdrawn, which precluded a sale.⁶¹³

In December 1889, Salisbury contacted his German counterparts and suggested the disputed territory of Witu and the adjacent islands of Manda and Patta should be subject to arbitration.⁶¹⁴ The following February, Hatzfeldt met Salisbury at his estate in Hatfield to discuss East African affairs, and suggested expanding the negotiations to include other outstanding colonial matters.⁶¹⁵ Yet when the German ambassador suggested that the IBEA should immediately be forced to relinquish the concession it had gained from the Sultan to administrate the islands of Manda and Patta (situated just off the Witu coastline), Salisbury refused. Hence, no changes would be made until the negotiations had taken place. More importantly, Germany had, following its own suggestion, expanded the remit of the

⁶¹⁰ Handbook to the Uganda Question and the Proposed Uganda Railway, Ernest L. Bentley, 12 November 1892, p. 8, FO 84/2263, TNA.

⁶¹¹ IBEA to FO, 9 November 1889, FO 403/120, TNA.

⁶¹² IBEA to FO, 6 November 1889, FO 403/120, TNA.

⁶¹³ German Witu Company to IBEA, 21 November 1889, FO 403/120, TNA.

⁶¹⁴ Salisbury to Hatzfeldt, 21 December 1889, FO 403/120, TNA.

⁶¹⁵ Salisbury to Malet, 4 February 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

discussions and by way of arbitration committed to a general settlement of its colonial affairs in Africa.⁶¹⁶

The question of these seemingly insignificant islands of Manda and Patta was raised again on 20 February 1890. The geographical proximity of the islands to the German protectorate, according to the head of the German Foreign Office's Colonial Department Dr Friedrich Krauel, formed an 'impediment' to the development of its trade.⁶¹⁷ However the main issue at hand from Bismarck's perspective was that the 'unexpected occupation' of the islands by the IBEA had 'given rise to strong expressions of feeling in the German press, and had led to articles insulting to himself for permitting it.'⁶¹⁸

Apart from the negative press this garnered for the German government, just prior to the 1890 election, Bismarck was concerned that Kaiser Wilhelm II disapproved of his permissive policy. As Malet put it, Bismarck '...had an Imperial master who was a more ardent supporter of the Colonial policy than he was himself.'⁶¹⁹ Bismarck did also recognise Salisbury's 'difficulty in dealing with the question in consequence of the necessity of keeping on good terms with certain Parliamentary supporters'.⁶²⁰ And he was keen to stress that the 'importance of friendly relations between England and Germany was of far greater moment than the ownership of Manda and Patta.'⁶²¹ But it was exactly on this issue that he hoped Britain could consider 'German susceptibilities' in dealing with the question.⁶²² The evidence presented in this chapter thus lends further credence to the theory that Bismarck's moderate colonial

⁶¹⁶ Salisbury to Malet, 4 February 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

⁶¹⁷ Malet to Salisbury, 26 February 1890, FO 403/136, TNA.

⁶¹⁸ Malet to Salisbury, 20 February 1890, FO 403/136, TNA.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Ibid.

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² Ibid.

policy contributed to his downfall in March 1890: both due to his non-support for Peters' Emin Pasha Expedition, as posited by Arne Perras,⁶²³ and also over the small islands of Manda and Patta.

The Second East African Partition: Anglo-German Negotiations, 1890

The bilateral negotiations that resulted in the Anglo-German Zanzibar-Heligoland Treaty commenced in May 1890 upon German initiative. Indeed, Hatzfeldt had been 'impressed with the importance to the two countries, of a general settlement on a broad basis, which would appease and avert the jealousies and rivalries now unfortunately existing.'⁶²⁴ It was the two countries' respective Africa experts that would lead the discussions: Anderson and Krauel.⁶²⁵ Both were well acquainted, having both been delegates at the recently concluded Anti-Slavery Conference in Brussels.⁶²⁶ Anderson had been given a set of instructions which included stipulations that the Germans should be induced to sell Witu to the IBEA and if they were unwilling, that the matter should be referred to judgement by an arbitrator. Of the thirteen points to be raised, the question of the 'East African "Hinterland"' figured a rather lowly number eleven. Upon this point, Salisbury had instructed Anderson that:

The claim on our side to be that the line of latitude for us in the north should run from Kilimanjaro, not from Kavirondo, and that we ought to hold the whole of the Nile watershed; to the south that we must hold the territory to the west

⁶²³ Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism*, p. 167. Also: von Strandmann, *Domestic Origins*; and J. C. G. Röhl, "The Disintegration of the Kartell and the Politics of Bismarck's Fall from Power, 1887-1890," *Historical Journal* 9, no. 1 (1966): 75. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2637730>

⁶²⁴ Anderson, Memorandum, 29 April 1890, FO 881/6146, TNA.

⁶²⁵ Salisbury to Malet, 30 April 1890, FO 881/6146, TNA.

⁶²⁶ For a comprehensive analysis of the Anti-Slave Trade Conference in Brussels 1889-90, see: Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*.

of the Stevenson road.⁶²⁷

Salisbury added that: 'The discussion [was] to be opened on this basis, and the Germans to be drawn to show their hand.'⁶²⁸ Implicitly, Salisbury did not attach an overarching importance to the Nile. It was neither a foremost priority, nor was it a definitive demand. The negotiations were merely to be opened on a basis in which the British side indicated an interest for territories that included the Nile watershed. Perceived in this light it may be argued that the 'Nile watershed' was simply used as a convenient geographical point of reference, rather than as an explicit expression of Salisbury's unwavering interest in the Nile *per se*.

However since both parties had informally agreed to separate the British and German spheres into a northern and southern zone, Anderson suggested at the opening of the negotiations that their 'work would be facilitated by settling at once points which were not contended; regarding the 'Hinterland' Agreement of 1887 in this light.' It was thus consented in:

Germany's having the east coasts of the Nyassa and Tanganyika, whilst it is agreed to by them that a line of demarcation shall be drawn to the Congo State, west of Victoria Nyanza, along the 1st parallel of south latitude.⁶²⁹

Hence, Uganda was among the first territories secured by Britain owing to the fact that it was not disputed by Germany. The *hinterland doctrine* ensured that the territories north-west of the Victoria Nyanza belonged within the British sphere; a natural consequence of the earlier 1886 Agreement which was somewhat clarified in regard to adjoining hinterlands in 1887. It was also a result of the independent actions of the IBEA, which had, crucially, not been directed by the Foreign Office. The matter was kept secret,⁶³⁰ even from the party with the

⁶²⁷ Memorandum of Instructions to Sir P. Anderson, FO 881/6146, TNA.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ Malet to Salisbury, 8 May 1890, FO 881/6146, TNA.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

greatest stake in the proceedings, the CMS. A week later, its secretary George Hutchinson, urged Mackinnon to secure Uganda out of concern for the society's missionaries: 'I am anxious that Lord S[alisbury] should declare the entire Uganda Kingdom including its tributaries as within English influence.'⁶³¹ The CMS's tentative lobbying was a premonition of its heavy involvement in influencing public opinion upon the occupation of Uganda in 1891-2, which is a matter that is considered in detail in chapter five.

Mackinnon's designs on the interior comprising the regions to the west of the Victoria Nyanza, and potentially by extension the 'Nile watershed,' had been unknown to Salisbury until February 1890.⁶³² The German ambassador Hatzfeldt had presented him with copies of Mackinnon's letters to Stanley. The correspondence had taken a circuitous route: Bushiri's men had likely seized them from one of the IBEA's messengers and Herrmann von Wissmann had in turn confiscated the letters upon apprehending the Arab insurgency's leader Bushiri bin Salim in December 1889,⁶³³ whereupon they had been transmitted to Berlin. In addition to revealing Mackinnon's desire to annex parts of the German hinterland, the letters also made clear what Salisbury considered Mackinnon's 'intensely hostile animus' toward the Germans, and the grounds on which he had despatched the Emin Expedition:

[t]he important part of them is that which reveals Sir W. Mackinnon's designs on what the Germans would call their "Hinterland". It may serve to explain the Emin Expedition.⁶³⁴

The letters illustrate why the British and German governments thought it expedient to come to a settlement over the African partition: since the rivalry between the two countries'

⁶³¹ Hutchinson to Mackinnon, 19 May 1890, Hutton Correspondence, Vol. 66-68, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS.

⁶³² Salisbury to Malet, 6 May 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

⁶³³ For a study which positions the 'Abushiri Revolt' in the wider context of African resistance to colonialism, see: Fabian, *Coastal Rebellion*, p.432-449.

⁶³⁴ Salisbury to Malet, 6 May 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

respective agents was spiralling. It was a rivalry that could potentially stir up public opinion with its associated negative consequences for Anglo-German relations.⁶³⁵ Additionally, in contravention of the orthodox historiography, it demonstrates that Salisbury had not directed the IBEA into the region comprising the Nile watershed; the Emin Relief Expedition came as a result of Mackinnon's own initiative, and Salisbury had not even been privy to Mackinnon's expansionist agenda.

The conclusion of the negotiations resulted in German territories being entirely confined to the southern section of the mainland and the British to the north. This was in line with the views Count Herbert Bismarck had expressed already in July 1889.⁶³⁶ Moreover, it led to Zanzibar being incorporated as a British protectorate. No such honour was bestowed upon the territories held on the mainland, including Uganda and the Nile watershed. *Thus Salisbury's decision not to declare Uganda a protectorate simultaneously with Zanzibar is wholly inconsistent with the Nilotic explanatory model.* Should he have attached such significance to defending the source of this river, he surely would have afforded the region protectorate status. Instead, it merely formed part of a British 'sphere of influence,' the lowest rung in the British Empire's territorial hierarchy and only recognised as such by Germany.

Testament to the prevailing sentiment among British business circles and public opinion is Salisbury's portrayal in one of London's most popular satirical magazines. Before the results of the negotiations had been announced, Salisbury had held a speech at the Merchant and Taylors' Company in London where he had termed Africa as a 'most embarrassing and

⁶³⁵ This containment of imperial agents is an aspect of the partition that has been neglected by the historiography, but is investigated by Ronald Hyam in his chapter 'The Search for Stability, 1880-1914'. See: Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, pp. 203-79.

⁶³⁶ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 19 July 1889, FO 403/119, TNA.

inconvenient continent'.⁶³⁷ Salisbury's apparent reluctance to expand the empire in East Africa had attracted criticism and the prime minister was, rather undeservedly in light of the treaty's results, lampooned in the weekly magazine *Punch*.⁶³⁸ For German concessions in Africa, Britain would in return cede the north-sea island of Heligoland to Germany.⁶³⁹ Although an expression of the principle of *do ut des* as Anderson remarked immediately prior to the negotiations, it had been very much in Britain's favour.⁶⁴⁰

Part Three: The Partition of 1890 and the Inconsistencies of the Egypto-centric Explanatory Model

Thus, as the chapter already has established, the extension of the British sphere of influence to comprise Uganda was principally a result of sub-imperial agency and economic expectations. Salisbury recognised the expansion in order to maintain the financial viability of Britain's commercial and humanitarian policy-tool in the region. Equally, the negotiations which culminated in this partition was a consequence of the Salisbury and Bismarck administrations' efforts at defusing the local rivalry over Witu and attendant public agitation, and had been planned long in advance of the latter's resignation. Yet, historians have positioned the Anglo-German Heligoland Treaty of 1890 within an Egypto-centric paradigm of geo-strategy.

⁶³⁷ 'Lord Salisbury at the Merchant Taylors' Company, *The Times*, 23 May 1890, p. 10.

⁶³⁸ 'Embarrassing,' *Punch*, Volume 98, 7 June 1890, pp. 266-7. The caricature portrays Stanley offering a man dressed in a leopard skin with the words East Africa written on it to a Salisbury with his hands up in the air, visibly rejecting the offer. See: Appendix, Figure 4.

⁶³⁹ Anglo-German Delimitation Agreement, 1 July 1890, FO 84/2032, TNA.

⁶⁴⁰ Anderson, Memorandum, 29 April 1890, FO 881/6146, TNA.

The documentary basis of this interpretation, what Darwin termed ‘astonishingly slender’,⁶⁴¹ rested on Gwendolyn Cecil’s uncited assertion that Salisbury became preoccupied with the Nile Valley during the autumn of 1889;⁶⁴² the correspondence of Britain’s proconsul in Egypt Sir Evelyn Baring; and lastly, Salisbury’s statements to the House of Lords in July 1890. In addition to this, a new theory has emerged which suggests British authorities were actuated by ‘water imperialism’ in their ostensible quest to hold the Nile and thus annex East Africa.⁶⁴³

The principal assumption underpinning the strategic model is the geopolitical primacy of Egypt and, by extension, the Nile Valley. An inconvenient aspect to this Egypto-centric interpretation is the cross-party consensus to evacuate Egypt that remained evident throughout the 1880’s. While this desire was more keenly expressed by the Liberals, Salisbury’s two administrations had both in 1885 and in 1887 dispatched Sir Henry Drummond-Wolff to Constantinople in order to negotiate the terms of a British evacuation with the *Sublime Porte*.⁶⁴⁴ The incentive was undoubtedly strong: if Salisbury could rid Britain of the Egyptian millstone he would normalise Anglo-French relations and loosen his dependence upon German diplomatic support. However, both diplomatic missions failed to achieve a Turkish ratification due to the heavy pressure exerted upon the *Porte* by France and Russia. Since neither approved of the clause which gave Britain a right of reoccupation should renewed disturbances arise in Egypt.⁶⁴⁵

The ‘right of re-entry’ was important to Britain as its main policy objective was to restore Egyptian finances. This would enable the country to pay off its debts to the European

⁶⁴¹ Darwin, *Dynamics of Territorial Expansion*, p. 637.

⁶⁴² Cecil, *Life of Robert IV*, pp. 139-40.

⁶⁴³ Tvedt, *Hydrology and Empire*, pp. 173-194.

⁶⁴⁴ Hornik, *Drummond-Wolff to Constantinople*, pp. 598-623.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 599.

bondholders and ensure political stability; as Salisbury expressed to the House of Lords in 1885: 'finance is really the question of the first importance [...] nothing can be done until a satisfactory balance-sheet is established in Egypt'.⁶⁴⁶ Once the *Porte* had failed to ratify the treaty, Salisbury decided to await the situation, but this did not imply a decision to effect a permanent occupation, rather 'to sit still and drift awhile'.⁶⁴⁷ Indeed his under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, Sir James Fergusson, expressed to Parliament as late as February 1891 that the government: 'have given ample proofs of their intention that their occupation and their direct influence in Egypt shall not be permanent.'⁶⁴⁸ Hence, it is beyond doubt that Egyptian security concerns were divorced from the decision to enter into the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886 since Salisbury was actively seeking a British withdrawal from Egypt at the time.

However, Robinson et al. argues that by the autumn of 1889, Salisbury's policy with regard to Egypt and the Nile Valley had, allegedly, completely changed; and this *volte face* led him to arrange for what became the Heligoland Treaty of 1890. Robinson et al.'s principal causal connection between this newfound concern for the Nile valley and the partition of East Africa was the letter Britain's resident at Cairo had sent Salisbury in December 1889. It suggests Baring had been convinced of the necessity of securing Egypt's water supplies: 'Whatever Power holds the Upper Nile Valley must by the mere force of its geographical position, dominate Egypt.'⁶⁴⁹ It is further suggested that Salisbury attached particular importance to Baring's advice and that it was on this basis that the prime minister contacted his German

⁶⁴⁶ Hansard, HoL Debate, 6 July 1885, vol 298 cc1655-6.

⁶⁴⁷ Salisbury to Lyons, 20 July 1887, cited in Hornik, *Drummond-Wolff to Constantinople*, pp. 621-2.

⁶⁴⁸ Hansard, HoC Debate, 23 February 1891, vol 350 cc1440-1.

⁶⁴⁹ Baring to Salisbury, 15 December 1889, (Secret), FO 78/4243, TNA. See: Robinson et al, *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 285.

counterpart the following week to arrange for an arbitration to take place over East Africa. Thus, Robinson et al. links Baring's 'Sudan policy,' otherwise known as his proposal to reconquer the Sudan, with the westerly expansion of the British sphere in East Africa to comprise Uganda.⁶⁵⁰

Whether Salisbury, by the end of 1889 suddenly had changed his mind about the occupation of Egypt and by extension the Nile Valley including Uganda, as argued by Robinson et al., is extremely doubtful. A sudden preoccupation with the Nile Valley, what Darwin terms a 'Pauline conversion',⁶⁵¹ would certainly have constituted a radical departure from his previous held views and policies. In December 1888, he had scorned those in favour of a forward policy in the region as a 'curious collection of fanatics who believe that by some magic wave of the diplomatic wand the Soudan can be turned into a second India.'⁶⁵² Not to mention his curt characterisation of Baring's military advisers' suggestion of Turkish troops occupying the Red Sea port of Tokar in March 1890:

I would not be too much impressed by what the soldiers tell you about the strategic importance of those places. It is their way. If they would be allowed full scope, they would insist on the importance of garrisoning the Moon in order to protect us from Mars.⁶⁵³

And, as the former section made clear, even Mackinnon himself had not been aware of his agent's illicit *rendezvous* with Buganda's exiled ruler in November 1889, much less

⁶⁵⁰ Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, pp. 274-338.

⁶⁵¹ Darwin, *Dynamics of Territorial Expansion*, p. 636.

⁶⁵² Salisbury to Baring, 22 December 1888, FO 633/7/101, TNA cited in Smith, *Emin Pasha Relief Expedition*, p. 49.

⁶⁵³ Salisbury to Baring, private, 28 March 1890, cited in Earl Cromer (Evelyn Baring), *Modern Egypt* (London: Macmillan Press, 1908), pp. 518-9.

Salisbury.⁶⁵⁴ Nor had Salisbury been privy to Mackinnon's expansionist agenda for the Equatorial Province until February 1890.⁶⁵⁵ Hence, Salisbury's suggestion of arbitration with Germany over Witu and the islands of Manda and Patta in December 1889 had not derived from concerns over Uganda: his suggestion implied no ulterior motives, they were quite simply an effort to resolve the local dispute concerning Witu and the adjoining islands.⁶⁵⁶ It was the Germans who, later in February 1890, desired to expand the arbitration into a general settlement of all outstanding disputes over African territories between the two countries, out of concern for public opinion in the run-up to the election.⁶⁵⁷

The Limits to Sir Evelyn Baring's Nile Valley Doctrine

Notwithstanding the body of evidence which has been presented in this and previous chapters which demonstrates that the linkage made between Baring's 'Sudan policy' and the partition of East Africa was incorrect, it was also a misquotation of Baring's correspondence. Indeed, Baring never suggested that Britain should occupy Uganda in order to secure the Nile Valley, as was alluded to by Robinson et al. Baring even issued a few months' later explicit warnings against any such expansion.⁶⁵⁸ What he had referred to was the Nile's south-eastern affluent, the Atbara River, and *not* the White Nile which takes its source from the Victoria Nyanza. Italy had at the time threatened to occupy the city of Kassala, through which ran the Atbara River, and Baring had been convinced that an Italian occupation of the city would

⁶⁵⁴ There was a three month lag in receiving news from Uganda, see: 'it takes three months for a communication from Uganda to reach the coast.' Rosebery to D'Etournelles, October 1892, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44290, BL.

⁶⁵⁵ Salisbury to Malet, 6 May 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

⁶⁵⁶ Salisbury to Hatzfeldt, 21 December 1889, FO 403/120, TNA.

⁶⁵⁷ Salisbury to Malet, 4 February 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

⁶⁵⁸ Baring to Salisbury, 15 March 1890, FO 78/4308, TNA.

damage Britain's prestige in Egypt.⁶⁵⁹ Indeed, Baring elaborated his Nile argument in two passages by specifically excluding the Equatorial Province and by implication Uganda: 'that the Government which rules the delta of the Nile should also hold the banks of the river, *if not to its source*, at all events for a long way up its course.'⁶⁶⁰ And when he mentioned the 'stigma' attached to the British government for its loss of the Sudan to the Mahdist insurrection, he argued:

it would eventually be possible to bring back the greater portion, if not the whole, of the Soudan to Egyptian rule, - not, indeed, the Egyptian rule of former times, - but to an improved Egyptian domination acting under English control and guidance.'⁶⁶¹

Baring reiterated in March 1890 his antipathy toward any conquest of territories south of Khartoum, such as the Equatorial Province:

The great mistake of Ismail Pasha was that, before he had learnt to administer efficiently the delta of the Nile, he endeavoured to extend Egyptian territory to the centre of Africa. It will be wise to accept a warning from his experience.⁶⁶²

If perceived in light of the ongoing private scramble for Uganda and the deliberations over whether the government should sanction the IBEA's forward policy in the region, Baring's stance was completely the opposite of what Robinson et al.'s has interpreted and claimed it to be. In fact Baring warned the government *against* an expansion into Uganda.

⁶⁵⁹ Baring to Salisbury, Secret, 15 December 1889, FO 78/4243, TNA. 'I should in the first place, observe that a good deal of prestige attaches itself to the possession of Kassala. The English Government would certainly incur a good deal of unpopularity amongst the natives of Egypt if they were to acquiesce in an Italian occupation of Kassala.'

⁶⁶⁰ Baring to Salisbury, Secret, 15 December 1889, FO 78/4243, TNA.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶⁶² Baring to Salisbury, 15 March 1890, FO 78/4308, TNA.

A reply to Baring's alarmist telegram in reference to Kassala was not forthcoming from Salisbury until Baring had used the same Nile-related arguments in regard to the port of Tokar on the Red Sea. But in his brusque response Salisbury demonstrated that he was not acutely concerned with the Nile Valley:

As far as I can see matters, I should say that until you have money enough to justify you in advancing to Berber you had better remain quiet. When that time has arrived, you may possibly go to Khartoum, and you may possibly contemplate the railway, from Berber to Suakin. Such measures may be necessary for the purpose of protecting your Nile Valley against the dominion of any outside Power; and if you have any money to throw away, or any money to justify an expenditure which would not yield an immediate return, the operation may not be without profit. After that time, when you are masters of the Nile Valley, you may as a matter of pure luxury, extend your dominion to the Red Sea.⁶⁶³

Hence, from a close examination of the correspondence on which the Nilotic explanatory model rests, it is clear that neither party advocated British domination of the Nile Valley from the delta to the Victoria Nyanza. From Salisbury's eventual reply it can be gathered that the Nile was at best lowly ranked on his list of territorial priorities. Baring's telegrams were concerned with the territories immediately to the south and south-east of Egypt proper, in particular the cities of Khartoum, Kassala and Tokar; he plainly excluded Uganda and the Equatorial Province as instances of overreach.

⁶⁶³ Salisbury to Baring, Private, 28 March 1890, FO 633/7, TNA.

The Nile and 'Water Imperialism'

Terje Tvedt's article is testament to how the orthodox historiography has persisted by reinventing itself. It is certainly the most recent incarnation of the Egypto-centric interpretation of the East African partition, although traditional grand strategy is replaced with economic motives.⁶⁶⁴ Tvedt contended that British policymakers were actuated by what he termed 'water imperialism' and desired to secure the Nile in order to boost Egyptian cotton production. Critics, however, might speculate whether this analysis is yet another example of the *post hoc* interpretations of the East African partition, coloured by the jostling over the Nile water supplies that has taken place between the countries along its banks during the 20th and 21st centuries. Tvedt attempted to circumvent the primary material's deafening silence by implicitly asserting that the volume of historiography *per se* is proof enough of Britain's designs on the Nile.⁶⁶⁵ The novel interpretations are based on reports produced by the Egyptian civil service. However, these are neither suggestive let alone conclusive as to London's motives in regard to Uganda or the remainder of East Africa.

Whilst it is correct that it had been the hydrologist Colin Scott Moncrieff who inspired Baring's Nile-deflection warnings to Salisbury, the advice was given in regard to the Atbara River – the tributary which together with the Blue Nile were responsible for the annual Nile floods – and not the White Nile which flows from the Victoria Nyanza.⁶⁶⁶ William Willcock's comprehensive publication of 1889 entitled '*Egyptian Irrigation*',⁶⁶⁷ contains no reference to potential dam construction south of Egypt whatever, despite presumably detailing every aspect of Nile hydrology from the Victoria Nyanza to the Mediterranean known at the time. If deflection or

⁶⁶⁴ Tvedt, *Hydrology and Empire*, pp. 173 -194.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁶⁶⁶ Baring to Salisbury, Secret, 15 December 1889, FO 78/4243, TNA

⁶⁶⁷ William Willcocks, *Egyptian Irrigation*, (London: E. & F.N. Spon, 1889).

blockage of the Nile was considered a real and likely scenario by British policymakers in 1890, leaving out any mention of this possibility in a book such as *Egyptian Irrigation* which was published the preceding year was a peculiar omission to make by one of the leading experts in the field. Some four years later, Garstin's foreword to his subordinate Willcock's report on perennial irrigation of Egypt of May 1894, makes clear that any dam construction south of Aswān was considered nigh impossible on economic grounds due to the lack of limestone.⁶⁶⁸

Salisbury's sanction of the Mackinnon Agreement between the IBEA and the Congo Free State is also inconsistent with any personal designs for securing the Nile. The treaty between Mackinnon and Leopold II ensured the IBEA a lease of a corridor of land behind the German sphere, whilst in return gave the Congo Free State territorial access to the Nile's western basin, later dubbed the Lado Enclave.

Although Rosebery later repudiated the validity of this agreement on the grounds that the chartered company did not possess the legal privileges necessary to 'bargain away Imperial rights,' the fact that Salisbury first thought the treaty 'unobjectionable', questions whether he was foremost concerned with the Nile.⁶⁶⁹ Also, since France enjoyed succession rights as Leopold's heirs to the Congo Free State in the likely prospect of the king's bankruptcy, the agreement would have acted as a door-opener to a far more formidable rival in the Upper Nile region.⁶⁷⁰ Thus it is unlikely that Salisbury would have sanctioned this agreement if he perceived the region and river itself as of vital geo-strategic or economic significance.

⁶⁶⁸ The Technical Commission on Reservoirs, *Perennial Irrigation and Flood Protection for Egypt* (Cairo: National Printing Office, 1894), p. xiii.

⁶⁶⁹ Rosebery, Memorandum, 16 December 1892, FO 84/2268, TNA.

⁶⁷⁰ Anderson, Memorandum, Confidential, 12 September 1890, FO 84/2258, TNA.

The Post-Hoc Defence Assumption

The final strand of evidence which has been cited to support the Egypto-centric hypothesis is Salisbury's statements to the House of Lords on 10 July 1890, prior to Britain's formal ratification of the Anglo-German Heligoland-Zanzibar treaty. Despite the favourable terms of the territorial agreement, it had attracted criticism for its cession of Heligoland to Germany. Queen Victoria had been particularly critical of the exchange and the precedent it set:

It is [a] very serious question, and bad precedent which I don't like. It is a shame to hand such very loyal people over to the unscrupulous German Govt. We shall propose to give up Gibraltar &c next. Nothing will be secure. I will not give my consent, unless feeling of the inhabitants consulted, and their rights respected.⁶⁷¹

In his defence of the treaty, Salisbury argued that the small archipelago situated three-hours sailing from Cuxhaven and populated by 2,000 Frisians represented little of strategic or economic value to Britain.⁶⁷² The aspect of the speech which has been cited in support of the Nile-thesis was Salisbury's statement that:

The advantage of the acquisition of Witu is that it cuts off any rivalry in this respect, and that, save for the Italian dominion over Abyssinia and its dependencies, we have no rivalry to fear from any European civilised Power until we reach the confines of Egypt.⁶⁷³

Further, Salisbury is likely to have made a reference to both the Mahdists and the IBEA since he stated: 'But the advantage of limiting our rivalry to an *Asiatic or African tribe* is one which *those who are engaged in these enterprises* appreciate very highly.'⁶⁷⁴ Instead of 'candidly'

⁶⁷¹ Queen Victoria to Salisbury, 9 June 1890, Vol. 45, No. 88, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House

⁶⁷² Hansard, HoL Debate, 10 July 1890, vol 346 cc1258-92.

⁶⁷³ Robinson et al. *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 299 and Hansard, HoL Debate, 10 July 1890, vol 346 cc1258-92.

⁶⁷⁴ Hansard, HoL Debate, 10 July 1890, vol 346 cc1258-92.

displaying his adherence to 'Nile Valley Doctrine,' as argued by Robinson et al,⁶⁷⁵ Salisbury might have made the rhetorical decision to focus on the concrete reward of the familiar Nile-region in his speech. This is likely to have made his resolution to exchange European Heligoland for the somewhat obscure territory of Witu more palatable to an assembly of politicians largely unacquainted with the region, rather than the more abstract potential for an economic reward for the IBEA in Uganda or possibly Equatoria. Hence, he retrospectively invoked the familiar Egyptian question with the decision to consolidate and extend the British sphere in East Africa in order to better defend his choice to cede Heligoland to Germany.

A prominent adherent to the Nile-hypothesis, the historian George Neville Sanderson cited Robinson et al. and the correspondence between Salisbury and Malet as *prima facie* evidence for these strategic motives:

The effect of this arrangement will be that, except as far as the Congo State is concerned, there will be no European competitor to British influence between the 1st degree of S. latitude and the borders of Egypt, along the whole of the country which lies to the south and west of the Italian Protectorate in Abyssinia and Gallaland. England will further assume, with the consent of the Sultan of Zanzibar (which has been given), the exclusive Protectorate over that Sultanate, including the Islands of Zanzibar and Pemba; and this assumption will be made with the full concurrence of Germany.⁶⁷⁶

Sanderson contends that: 'Salisbury emphasised the value of excluding all European competition' between Uganda and the borders of Egypt in his justification of the Anglo-German Agreement of 1890.⁶⁷⁷ However, in his letter to Malet, Salisbury never 'emphasised'

⁶⁷⁵ Robinson et al. *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 299.

⁶⁷⁶ Salisbury to Malet, 14 June 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

⁶⁷⁷ Sanderson, *England, Europe and the Upper Nile*, p. 63 and Salisbury to Malet, 14 June 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

this fact.⁶⁷⁸ Without perceiving the text through the prism of ‘Nile Valley Doctrine’ it might be argued that it merely was a matter of fact statement about the practical effects, in geographical terms, of the agreement

Following this, Sanderson questions the absence of Nile-related motives in the Anglo-German correspondence:

In the negotiation with Hatzfeldt the real importance of this region was not however explicitly revealed – the word “Nile” does not even appear in the published German documents. Nor did the project of bases, as initialled on 17 June, contain any specific reference to a British sphere in the Nile Valley or even to the Nile Valley at all.⁶⁷⁹

The answer to this alleged conundrum might be that the contemporary policymakers attached less *real importance* to the Upper Nile than did the later historians interpreting their motives. Since on close reading of the parliamentary debates of May and July 1890, a very different picture emerges of the priorities British politicians perceived in relation to Britain’s colonial policy in Africa: indeed, a focus that reflects the results of the ‘*Heligoland-Zanzibar*’ treaty. Whilst the region surrounding the Nile watershed is hardly mentioned, attention was focussed on the archipelago of Zanzibar; it was this newly declared British protectorate, which was hailed as Britain’s strategic lynchpin in East Africa. The former Indian administrator and Liberal MP for Worcester Sir Richard Temple dubbed the island, apart from the British Dominions, ‘the sixth most important strategic point in the world, the other five being

⁶⁷⁸ Salisbury to Malet, 14 June 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA

⁶⁷⁹ Sanderson, *England, Europe and the Upper Nile*, p. 63.

Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, Hong Kong, and Singapore.’ The cession of Heligoland for Zanzibar was in his eyes not merely a ‘quid pro quo’ but ‘an island worth to us ten thousand Heligolands.’⁶⁸⁰

When the region encompassing Uganda and the Nile watershed was then broached, it was not because of its allegedly pivotal role for imperial defence, but in economic terms. The Liberal MP for Whitby, Ernest Beckett, made this aspect clear when he drew attention toward the great discrepancy between British support of the IBEA and the German governmental support of its colonial company:

Mr. Stanley pointed out that our English Companies cannot compete with the German on equal terms [...] if there is to be any more surrender he should "advise the British East African Company to retire altogether and give it up as a bad job."⁶⁸¹

Implicitly, should the British sphere of influence not have been extended westward to comprise Uganda, Britain’s principal policy-tool in the region would be forced to evacuate East Africa. The Conservative MP for Liverpool, William Lawrence, later elaborated the point: ‘This Treaty is not only to be looked on as beneficial to the East African Company, but to the whole country, as it opens up a route for trade to the Nile.’⁶⁸² Whilst admittedly these remarks were not expressions of official government policy, they did reflect the correspondence of the Foreign Office and other stakeholders of Britain’s engagement with East Africa antecedent to the 1890 Agreement. Indeed, the few instances in which Uganda had received a mention

⁶⁸⁰ Hansard, HoC Debate 25 July 1890, vol 347, cc930.

⁶⁸¹ Hansard, HoC Debate 22 May 1890, vol 344, cc1644. ‘The Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs acknowledges that an understanding was arrived at with Germany, and this understanding was embodied in the Agreement of 1887, quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Leith. That understanding, though in general terms is quite precise enough for our purpose, and on their own initiative excludes the Germans from the territory in the centre of Africa, which was expressly reserved for British influence, but which they now wish to occupy so as to place them selves across our highway to the Great Lakes to the North, which is absolutely indispensable to the successful and profitable issue of our undertakings.’

⁶⁸² Hansard, HoC Debate 25 July, 1890, vol 347, cc944.

in Parliament over the two years prior to the debates concerning the 'Heligoland Treaty', was in relation to commerce and Britain's suppression of the slave trade.

Moreover, the former political agent at Zanzibar and Conservative MP for Hackney, Sir Lewis Pelly, mentioned the IBEA's designs on the East African interior in a House of Commons debate in December 1888:

What was called Lake Victoria Nyanza was really an inland sea, being some 120 miles long by 80 wide. The Company intended to put steamers on that inland sea, and thus create an interior commercial circle, from the circumference of which they could develop trade in all directions through the centre of Africa. They would thus soon get in peaceful communication with that much dreaded Uganda Land. The Company's determination was to attract and conciliate, and to trust to commerce and the civilizing influence of improved transit. They hoped eventually to introduce a train.⁶⁸³

Pelly had formed part of Sir Bartle Frere's mission to Zanzibar in 1873 and in similarity with Kirk and Mackinnon owed much of his career to '*Frere's powers of patronage*.'⁶⁸⁴ Both as a director of the IBEA and as Mackinnon's friend it would be reasonable to suggest that Pelly was well-informed of the company's strategy in East Africa.

The Contemporary Importance of Anti-Slave Trade Policy

The other aspect to Salisbury's speech which Robinson et al. failed to mention despite it immediately followed his remarks about the Nile, was his emphasis on how Britain's protectorate over Zanzibar would assist in halting the slave trade:

⁶⁸³ Hansard, HoC Debate, 17 December 1888, vol 332 cc554.

⁶⁸⁴ Munro, *William Mackinnon*, p. 184.

the closer our influence over the Government of the Sultan becomes, the more we may hope we shall succeed in that great effort for which this country has sacrificed so much—the effort to destroy the slave trade and gradually to extirpate domestic slavery.⁶⁸⁵

These words echoed the pronouncement Salisbury had made directly upon conclusion of the treaty:

The direct control and extensive influence which this arrangement will confer upon Great Britain will furnish a powerful assistance to the efforts which are being made for the suppression of the maritime Slave Trade, as well as for the extirpation of slavery itself.⁶⁸⁶

Should the mention of the Nile be taken at face value, it would follow that Salisbury's remarks about the benefits to Britain's anti-slave trade policy be equally accepted as a guiding motive. This, however, is simply dismissed by Robinson et al as 'hoary generalities about the slave trade.'⁶⁸⁷

As the first chapter demonstrated, the East African slave trade reached levels in 1888 not witnessed since the mid-1870s. Public attention over the matter was raised throughout Europe courtesy of Cardinal Lavignerie's campaign and the Anti-Slave Trade Conference in Brussels had just been adjourned. It is unlikely that this concern should have been an irrelevant factor for British policymakers when debating the annexation of that very region, in which Salisbury thought 'all the living slave trade, all the slave trade which is now actually

⁶⁸⁵ Hansard, HoL Debate, 10 July 1890, vol 346 cc1258-92.

⁶⁸⁶ Salisbury to Malet, 14 June 1890, FO 881/6146, TNA.

⁶⁸⁷ Robinson et al. *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 299.

in operation' was taking place and which was [...] fed by the Arab traders from Pemba and Zanzibar'⁶⁸⁸

Such dismissals have however been commonplace in the post-war literature concerning the partition of Africa.⁶⁸⁹ But Richard Huzzey arrives at the opposite conclusion in his recent publication concerning the British Empire and slavery.⁶⁹⁰ Setting out to test whether anti-slavery ideology really was a deciding factor in preventing a British evacuation of Uganda in the early 1890s, Huzzey concludes that this humanitarian impetus was not a mere 'decoy', but conversely constituted a key consideration.⁶⁹¹

Indeed Salisbury made his reasons for pursuing anti-slave trade policy clear in a despatch to Malet in November 1890, a rationale that was derived from economic concerns rather than out of moral considerations:

...I can hardly conceive that it will be doubtful that expenses incurred for the purpose of preventing Slave Trade, and the slave raids which support it are expenses useful for commerce. By the light of the information which we now possess, and which has been set forth by Lavigerie, by Cameron, and by Stanley and others, we can entertain no doubt, not only that the suppression of slave raids is useful for commerce, but that it is a condition of commercial progress so indispensable that without it all other expenditure will be in vain. We know that devastation, depopulation, the destruction of villages and of cultivations, the scattering and extermination of the inhabitants, mark the course of an Arab slave-raiding expedition; and that there are large districts in Africa, measured by hundreds of square miles, which formerly bore a teeming population, and which, under the hands of the slave-raider, have relapsed into the condition of

⁶⁸⁸ Hansard, HoL Debate, 10 July 1890, vol 346 cc1258-92.

⁶⁸⁹ See the main thesis introduction concerning literature subscribing to the Egypto-centric hypothesis.

⁶⁹⁰ Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp. 132-74.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 166-76.

a desert. It is evident that, while this scourge exists, any progress in cultivation or in the development of resources is impossible: and these are the foundations on which a more extended commerce must of necessity be built.⁶⁹²

Salisbury proceeded to illustrate his point by referring to the 'marvellous effect' abolition had upon commerce in West Africa following Britain's control of the region after 1815. The figures Salisbury cited were Lord Castlereagh's estimates that the value of Britain's trade had increased in value from £80,000 to £1,000,000 annually. He added that: 'It would not be difficult to multiply the illustrations of this kind, but the point will hardly be disputed.'⁶⁹³

As the following chapter will demonstrate, Uganda assumed a controversial position in British politics in the early 1890s, largely inconsistent with any Nilotic policy-objective. Salisbury would not lend military or any significant financial support to the IBEA to aid their occupation of the kingdom. The country would be held by Frederick Lugard, who reached Uganda in December 1890 and garrisoned Kampala Hill with a 'quite insufficient force.'⁶⁹⁴ Instead of a strategic policy tool there is much evidence to suggest that Salisbury viewed the IBEA largely as a philanthropic venture.⁶⁹⁵ Indeed, Salisbury generously described the IBEA as being:

...far more purely philanthropic than any of the other [British chartered companies]. Its object, I believe, has been to deal a deadly blow at the slave-trade, the destruction of which has been, along with our own commercial and material progress, the animating impulse of English policy in those regions for nearly a century⁶⁹⁶

But it was not just in public speeches that Salisbury had made these statements. He had

⁶⁹² Salisbury to Malet, 24 November, FO 84/2030, TNA.

⁶⁹³ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁴ Lugard to FO, 18 March 1891, FO 84/2173, TNA.

⁶⁹⁵ FO to Treasury, Draft, 20 December 1890, FO 84/2097, TNA. Salisbury's minute: 'a very good draft'.

⁶⁹⁶ Speech held by Salisbury in Glasgow 20 May 1891, cited in McDermott, *British East Africa*, pp. 184-9.

repeated this view to the Treasury in December 1890 when he referred to the IBEA as ‘actuated rather by philanthropic’ motives.⁶⁹⁷ This charitable aspect was not only reflected in the Royal Charter it had obtained in 1888,⁶⁹⁸ but also by the composition of its court of directors.⁶⁹⁹ Although Marie de Kiewiet, who authored one of the most authoritative accounts about the IBEA, found that ‘no single interest – neither commerce nor philanthropy nor empire – dominated the court’, she also drew attention to the fact that three of the IBEA’s principal backers ‘Brassey, Buxton and Burdett-Coutts were leading British humanitarians.’⁷⁰⁰

In her estimation:

[t]he I.B.E.A. Company belonged less to the period of Joseph Chamberlain and the new imperialism than to the period of David Livingstone and the great discoveries.⁷⁰¹

The Vice-President, Lord Brassey, was a ‘former liberal MP who had devoted his parliamentary career to a campaign for higher wages for the working man; [Sir Thomas Fowell] Buxton was active in the Anti-Slavery Society and the Church Missionary Society; [William] Burdett-Coutts followed the Baroness in promoting a great variety of humane causes.’⁷⁰² Also Anderson candidly observed this non-commercial aspect in 1892: ‘There is no question that the objects of the founders of this Company [IBE] were primarily humanitarian, though it was hoped that it might pay its way.’⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁷ FO to Treasury, Draft, 20 December 1890, FO 84/2097, TNA.

⁶⁹⁸ IBEA Royal Charter, Article 10: ‘The Company shall, to the best of its power, discourage, and, so far as may be practicable and as may be consistent with existing treaties between non-African powers and Zanzibar, abolish by degrees any system of slave trade or domestic servitude in the Company’s territories.’ See: McDermott, *British East Africa*, pp. 282-91.

⁶⁹⁹ Kiewiet, *History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*, pp. 99-102.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁷⁰³ Anderson, Memorandum, 10 September 1892, FO 84/2258, TNA.

Salisbury's remarks concerning both the Anglo-German treaty and about the IBEA are telling as to his motives for East Africa. It might be argued that he perceived the territory as a region in which Britain could execute its anti-slave trade policy on the cheap; as a theatre in which to demonstrate his commitment to a long-standing British policy objective, the eradication of the slave trade and potentially the institution of slavery itself. Thus with no expense to the British tax-payer, the cost of suppressing the slave trade, through policing and legitimate trade, would be borne by Mackinnon's chartered company.⁷⁰⁴ This also serves to explain his ambivalence in dealing with the region. That no protectorate had been declared can only be reconciled with the prevailing idea that Uganda and the mainland was not perceived to constitute any significant geo-strategic or commercial region of interest to the British Empire. Conversely, East Africa represented a potential liability to the Treasury should the IBEA fail. The only way in which to ensure the company's financial future was through expansion, especially to a region which was thought to hold valuable trading networks; namely the Great Lakes-region which contained the Nile watershed.⁷⁰⁵

Conclusion

The circumstances in which the IBEA acquired a protectorate over the kingdom of Buganda in 1889 represent a classic example of how individual agency or a man-on-the-spot could influence the scope of imperial expansion during the scramble. In direct contravention to what has been claimed in the Egypto-centric historiography, the IBEA's extension of its sphere of influence was not so much a result of the Foreign Office's 'official mind' nor of Salisbury's

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid.

alleged designs for the interior, as the coincidental actions of one single individual. This imperial agent had even acted against his explicit orders which precluded him from venturing into the kingdom. Hence, not even Mackinnon had been privy to Jackson's rendezvous in Central Africa, and certainly not Salisbury; any communications from Uganda took at least three months to reach the nearest telegraph station at the coast.⁷⁰⁶

Although the political instability that had engulfed Uganda since the late-1880s, had made it susceptible to external influence, the IBEA would not have obtained a treaty with Mwanga had it not been for the coincidental timing of Jackson's appearance, in particular at an time in which the deposed ruler sought assistance for reinstatement to his throne. This is demonstrated by the simple fact that Peters, who arrived only some weeks after Jackson's departure, was unsuccessful in his corresponding attempts at obtaining a treaty since Mwanga already had regained his position and thus negotiated from a vantage of power.

Salisbury's decision to arrange for arbitration over the disputed territory of Witu and its adjoining islands Manda and Patta in December 1889⁷⁰⁷ – what over the following six months evolved into a general Anglo-German settlement of all disputed territories in Africa including Uganda – were, as such, wholly divorced from Baring's anxieties over the Nile Valley. Salisbury had not even been aware of Mackinnon's designs on the Equatorial Province until February 1890.⁷⁰⁸ Indeed the uncertain route of arbitration would also have been an unlikely choice for a British prime minister actuated by vital geo-strategic concerns. As the treaty's title implies, the most significant aspect of the bilateral agreement was the exchange of Heligoland for the

⁷⁰⁶ Rosebery to D'Etournelles, October 1892, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44290, BL.

⁷⁰⁷ Salisbury to Hatzfeldt, 21 December 1889, FO 403/120, TNA.

⁷⁰⁸ Salisbury to Malet, 6 May 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

important trading hub Zanzibar, which, contrary to Uganda, was declared a British protectorate.

From both the internal deliberations of the Foreign Office and of Mackinnon's correspondence to Salisbury, it is evident that the expansion into Uganda resulted from the economic expectations this imperial *milieu* entertained for the interior regions that comprised the great lakes, the Upper Nile and the kingdom. Mackinnon had secretly attempted to gain the allegiance of Emin Pasha⁷⁰⁹ and so to amalgamate the IBEA's sphere of influence in East Africa with that of the Equatorial Province in the Southern Sudan. However this plan was foiled when Emin enlisted with Mackinnon's German rivals. In lieu of the Equatorial Province was Jackson's treaty with Mwanga and the extension of the British sphere of influence to include Uganda.

Courtesy of the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886 and the hinterland understanding of 1887, Uganda and the territories surrounding the Nile watershed belonged within the British exclusion zone. This is both evident from contemporary maps⁷¹⁰ and the fact that Uganda featured among the 'points which were not contended'⁷¹¹ during the Anglo-German negotiations of 1890. Following from this status, Uganda were among the first territories subject to partition since it was not disputed by Germany.

Thus Salisbury sanctioned this extension of the British sphere in order to ensure the economic survival of the IBEA. As a proxy for British imperial rule, it constituted Britain's principal policy-tool in the region and a bankruptcy would either force the government to assume direct

⁷⁰⁹ See: 'Précis of certain proposals addressed to Dr. Emin Pasha on behalf of the British East African Company' in Euan Smith to FO, 26 August 1888, FO 403/106, TNA.

⁷¹⁰ Map of the British and German Spheres of Influence, 1888, FO 403/106, TNA.

⁷¹¹ Malet to Salisbury, 8 May 1890, FO 881/6146, TNA.

control or forfeit British influence in East Africa. Either scenario posed an unappealing option since a British protectorate directly administered by the Foreign Office implied a considerable expenditure for the Treasury; whilst a withdrawal would prove unpopular to a potent constellation of economic and humanitarian interest groups, and an imperially minded public opinion.

Firstly, East Africa had throughout most of the nineteenth century been one of the principal theatres in which Britain could demonstrate its commitment to anti-slave trade policy; and by the late 1880s the Arab-Swahili led slave trade had reached levels not witnessed in over a decade. While the conclusion of the Anti-Slave Trade Conference in Brussels maintained that efforts still should primarily be directed by naval suppression of the trafficking, it also bound the signatories to engage in land-based countermeasures. Thus by preserving the IBEA's financial position through expansion into the inter-lacustrine interior, the British government could execute its anti-slave policy 'on the cheap' since the company's royal charter was expressly awarded on the grounds that it would 'tend to the suppression of the slave trade.'⁷¹² By halting the trade inland, or at its source, the naval squadron's workload would be reduced whilst both the responsibility and heavy expenditure of executing this policy would be placed with the imperial proxy, safely away from imperial coffers and direct government accountability.

Thus the IBEA served the dual purpose of both acting as a cost-saving measure and for deflecting criticism over governmental failure to efficiently stamp out the slave trade, one of the most prominent and influential humanitarian causes of the Victorian age. But this would

⁷¹² Royal Charter of the Imperial British East Africa Company, 3 September 1888, cited in McDermott, *British East Africa*, p. 283. Also see: IBEA Royal Charter and dissolution documents, TS 18/260, TNA.

only succeed if the company itself could survive, which was an unlikely scenario should it have been confined to the coast and not expanded into what was perceived to be the rich interior that comprised Uganda. The point was summarised in the words of Euan Smith: 'If Uganda passes under German influence, [the] British Company has no future before it.'⁷¹³

This alternative interpretation of British expansion is validated by Anderson's seminal memorandum of September 1892. Drawn up during the deliberations over whether Britain should relinquish control over Uganda, it affords a brief summary of the reasons why British policymakers and the IBEA thought it imperative to expand into the kingdom in 1890. Whereas recognition is made of the strategic position of Uganda for the conquest of Equatoria, Britain's principal architect of policy toward Africa, only two years after the events occurred, did not in a single instance in his comprehensive and confidential memorandum, construe Uganda as relevant for the defence of Egypt. Instead, Anderson underlined 'the importance of Uganda as a trade centre' and as 'an important factor in the anti-slavery struggle.'⁷¹⁴

However, as the next chapter will show, the IBEA's occupation of Uganda did nothing to improve the company's earnings. That the company managed to retain its position in the kingdom over the following two years was certainly not owing to Salisbury's agency. Whilst in 1892 this once obscure imperial outpost was elevated to the centre of a national publicity campaign orchestrated by some of the most influential pressure groups of the age.

⁷¹³ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 13 March 1890, Secret, FO 403/136, TNA.

⁷¹⁴ Anderson, Memorandum, 10 September 1892, FO 84/2258, TNA.

Chapter Five:

The Retention of Uganda: The Continuity of Anti-Slave Trade Policy, Pamphlet Wars and Public Opinion, 1890-93

'The kingdom of Uganda is probably the most important and most highly civilized of any native state in Africa.'⁷¹⁵ These were the generous words chosen by Staff Captain Hubert Foster to introduce the topic of his memorandum, drawn up as a result of the extraordinary attention lavished on it in the autumn months of 1892. Uganda had come to occupy the forefront of British public and political attention as a consequence of the Imperial British East Africa Company's decision to withdraw from the kingdom, only two years after Uganda had been incorporated into the British sphere.⁷¹⁶ It was during the last decade of the nineteenth century that Britain's engagement with East Africa was transformed from one of exercising informal influence to that of assuming full executive powers. This formalisation of British rule resulted from a culmination of separate factors that had both spurred and haunted policymakers dealing with the region throughout the 1880s. Namely, the balancing act between a reluctance to commit scarce imperial funds and strategic resources, on the one hand, against the vested interests of missionary societies and chartered company; public opinion; anti-slave trade policy and the legal obligations Britain had undertaken at Brussels in 1890.

⁷¹⁵ Hubert Foster Memorandum, 5 September 1892, FO 84/2258

⁷¹⁶ By virtue of the Anglo-German Agreement of 1890 and Lugard's treaty of 26th December the same year, see: Sir Percy Anderson, Memorandum, 10 September 1892, FO 84/2258, TNA.

Britain had in East Africa repeated its Indian experiment of imperial rule by proxy, albeit at a far more rapid rate. Whilst the East India Company had successfully served its interests on the sub-continent for over two centuries, its Victorian equivalent on the East African mainland lasted little more than half a decade.⁷¹⁷ What had proved so successful in western and southern Africa was a complete failure in its eastern sphere. In fact, only four years after the IBEA had been granted its royal charter in 1888, its funds had been depleted. It was this acute liquidity shortage that forced upon Westminster a choice of whether to supplant the company's administration or to relinquish British influence in the kingdom altogether.

The public and political debates that arose after the IBEA decided to extinguish its occupation of Uganda for the second time in 1892 sparked what the historian D.A. Low termed 'a very remarkable movement in Victorian public opinion.'⁷¹⁸ Aside from its importance in influencing the future decision of declaring Uganda and the mainland territories a British protectorate, the campaigns and debates offers a glimpse into how late-Victorian society perceived and justified imperial expansion.

Since the historiography of the British annexation of East Africa has overwhelmingly construed the partition in strategic terms, most analyses have overlooked the wealth of imperial interests that mobilised in a fevered campaign to prevent a retreat from the newly acquired 'pearl of Africa.' As the former chapter has demonstrated, the extension of the British sphere of influence in East Africa to comprise Uganda was not a result of strategic concerns. Since historians have attached such central importance to these supposed strategic imperatives, little scholarly attention has been devoted to an analysis of the various other

⁷¹⁷ See: Kiewiet, *History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*.

⁷¹⁸ Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, p. 61.

interests relevant to policymakers in the Uganda debates. By eliminating strategy and recognising that Britain had few other vested interests in the kingdom apart from its missionaries, it can be argued that the debates regarding the retention of Uganda offers a unique insight into contemporary British attitudes to empire. Indeed both the scope and scale of public engagement over the 'Uganda Question' during the early 1890s serves as a limited retort to Bernard Porter's thesis of the 'absent-minded imperialists'.⁷¹⁹

From the conclusion of the Heligoland Agreement of July 1890 and until the fall of Salisbury's Conservative government in August 1892, little official interest was shown to East Africa. The IBEA's financial resources proved over this period to be inadequate when put to the task of administering a region twice the size of modern Germany. The company itself estimated that its cost of holding this region was £85,000 p.a. whilst it garnered only £35,000 in revenues,⁷²⁰ only Uganda itself cost £40,000 and returned a meagre £8,000.⁷²¹ Marie de Kiewiet speculated that the substantial costs of occupying Uganda derived not so much from the directors' grand designs for the kingdom, but from the dynamics that existed between the spendthrift Lugard and Francis de Winton.⁷²² But irrespective of financial imprudence, for a relatively small, private company such a state of affairs was untenable over the longer term. Without either a substantial reduction in expenditure or a corresponding increase in revenues, the occupation would lead to the company's bankruptcy. With no support forthcoming from the government to remedy the situation it was decided to evacuate Uganda – the most costly of all the IBEA territories, due to its associated transportation costs – on two occasions: August 1891 and May 1892. It is the public debates and internal Foreign Office

⁷¹⁹ Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, pp. 164-254.

⁷²⁰ Portal to Salisbury, 3 February 1892, Vol. 80, No. 60, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House.

⁷²¹ Anderson Memorandum, 10 September 1892, FO 84/2258, TNA.

⁷²² Kiewiet, *The History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*, p. 208.

discussions pertaining to these junctures that will be the subjects of analysis in this chapter, to discover the motives that lay behind the policy-decisions.

Building on the previous chapter's argument, this chapter will initially investigate the policies of the Salisbury government toward the IBEA's administration of Uganda and will demonstrate how these policies run directly counter to the orthodox strategic historiography. For crucially, if the retention of Uganda within the British sphere of influence was perceived as critical for the security of Egypt, the fact that Salisbury did not intervene to prevent the IBEA from evacuating the region runs directly counter to this explanatory model. Secondly, the internal debates of the Foreign Office concerning the IBEA evacuation will be analysed with the aim of highlighting the factors that are deemed important to the key formulators of British Africa policy such as Rosebery and Anderson. Thirdly, the spectrum of factors considered by the Gladstone cabinet will be enumerated and Rosebery's role as gatekeeper and midwife to the cabinet's Uganda policy will in particular be highlighted to show that strategic concerns were entirely absent from the deliberations. Fourthly the chapter will consider the public relations campaign launched by the company, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and the Church Missionary Society in 1892 and consider their role in influencing British policymakers, public opinion and indeed the historiography.

Reluctant Imperialism: British Policy toward the IBEA's Occupation of Uganda, 1890-2

On 26 December 1890, *Kabaka* Mwanga II of Buganda signed a treaty with Frederick Lugard which placed the kingdom under the protection of the IBEA. After he reached Uganda in December 1890, Lugard had relieved the company's agent Gedge and garrisoned Kampala Hill

with a limited number of troops. Despite the 'quite insufficient force' which the IBEA had deployed in the country, the criterion of effective occupation as laid down by the Berlin Act of 1885 was fulfilled.⁷²³ Both German and Italian recognition of British claims to the region had already been obtained during the six months which preceded Lugard's treaty. Only France remained as a viable threat to British paramount influence in Uganda and the territories surrounding the Upper Nile.

However, in complete contravention to the orthodox historiography which affords Uganda pride of place in the imperial grand strategy of Salisbury's government, little official interest was exhibited for the guarantor of British paramountcy in this allegedly critical region. On behalf of the company, the British Consul-General to Zanzibar, Charles Euan Smith, had asked for a loan of 'a limited number of Indian troops for a limited time: or failing this to grant a small subsidy for a limited time in order to enable them to consolidate their position and enforce the anti-Slavery policy of Her Majesty's Government.'⁷²⁴ Already at this early date, suspicions were entertained that the IBEA's resources were 'inadequate to meet any fresh demands' and that government subsidies were required if to render the British position in East Africa 'invulnerable.'⁷²⁵ However any proposals of direct governmental involvement in the region or of financial support to the company were rejected by Salisbury: 'The H. of C. [House of Commons] would scoff at the idea of a subsidy.'⁷²⁶ Euan Smith, went as far as to interpret Salisbury's disinterest as outright hostility to the company and questioned whether it 'must now sink or swim by its own efforts' and urged that 'a radical change seems necessary

⁷²³Lugard to FO, 18 March 1891, FO 84/2173, TNA.

⁷²⁴ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Secret, 1 December 1890, FO 84/2069, TNA.

⁷²⁵ Ibid.

⁷²⁶ Minute by Salisbury, Euan Smith to Salisbury, Secret, 1 December 1890, FO 84/2069, TNA.

all along the line.⁷²⁷ This exchange of correspondence which came only six months after the conclusion of the Heligoland Treaty was a premonition of Salisbury's *laissez faire* attitude toward the region.

The Brussels Act and Humanitarian Lobbying

Instead of a vehicle with which to secure British control of the Nile, the IBEA was perceived by British policymakers as a commercial and philanthropic venture; present in East Africa, in part, to fulfil the treaty obligations Britain had acceded to at the Brussels Anti-Slave Trade Conference. The conference, which originally was proposed by Salisbury himself in 1888, had taken place in Brussels over the autumn, winter and spring of 1889-90.⁷²⁸ Anderson and Kirk had represented Britain at this meeting of 17 Powers with varying levels of interests in Africa.⁷²⁹ On 2 July 1890, the 'General Act for the Repression of the Slave Trade' was concluded, but due to delays in ratification, the treaty stipulations did not come into force until 1892.⁷³⁰

In similarity with the West Africa Conference held in Berlin five years earlier, the Brussels Conference placed an impetus on the European powers to extend their imperial control to the interior of the continent.⁷³¹ It marked a watershed in the execution of Europe's anti-slave trade policy as the suppression of slave trafficking was transformed from a largely maritime

⁷²⁷ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Private, 2 December 1890, Vol. 80, No. 39, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House.

⁷²⁸ Salisbury Minute on T. Villiers Lister Memorandum, 1 September 1888, FO 84/1927, TNA.

⁷²⁹ Hertslet, *Map of Africa III*, No. 128, pp. 468-87. For what is still the most authoritative and comprehensive analysis of the conference, see: Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*.

⁷³⁰ Portal to Salisbury, 8 January 1892, Vol. 80, No. 58, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House.

⁷³¹ For the full text of the 'Congo Conference' or the General Act of the Conference of Berlin, relative to the Development of Trade and Civilization in Africa; the free Navigation of the Rivers Congo, Niger, &c.; the Suppression of the Slave Trade by Sea and Land; the occupation of Territory on the African Coasts, &c. Signed at Berlin, 26th February 1885, see: Hertslet, *Map of Africa III*, No. 128, pp. 468-87.

endeavour, to that of land-based operations on the mainland or 'place of origin.'⁷³² This radical alteration of focus is evident from the Act's first article, section two and three which held that: 'the most effective means of counteracting the slave-trade in the interior of Africa [is the] gradual establishment in the interior [...] of strongly occupied stations [and] the construction of roads, and in particular of railroads, connecting the advanced stations with the coast'⁷³³

The implication for all signatory states was that their land grab in Africa became honour bound, sanctioned by the solemn humanitarian and moral ideals of anti-slavery. What had until the late 1880s been predominantly 'an English craze',⁷³⁴ was appropriated as policy by other European states with interests in Africa. The Brussels Act obliged Britain, under international law to maintain a territorial presence in East Africa, one of the last regions which were subject to large scale slave trading. Whilst this obviously could be disregarded by accomplished practitioners of *realpolitik* such as Salisbury, it did offer a legal baton to a varied selection of pressure groups interested in the preservation of a British presence in the region. Indeed, to put into effect the stipulations of this conference – 'the noblest of political achievements in modern times'⁷³⁵ – was an issue Salisbury was frequently reminded of by the lobbying activities of pressure groups. A petition dispatched by the BFASS in December 1890 is testament to the widespread interest this garnered among missionary, anti-slavery and temperance societies across Great Britain at the time. Fifteen different groupings signed the memorial which urged the foreign secretary to do his utmost to ensure that all major powers

⁷³² For the full treaty text of the General Act of the Brussels Conference relative to the African Slave Trade, &c. see: Hertslet, *Map of Africa III*, No. 130, pp. 488-517.

⁷³³ Ibid.

⁷³⁴ Hill, Memorandum, 12 October 1888, FO 403/107, TNA.

⁷³⁵ British and Foreign Anti-Slave Trade Society to Salisbury, Petition, 16 December 1890, FO 84/2097, TNA.

ratified the treaty: 'not, only for the extension of Christian civilisation and of legitimate commerce in Africa, but for the extinction of two of the greatest curses which still afflict mankind...'⁷³⁶ Despite the absence of slave trading in Uganda, the kingdom was subject to strong missionary interests, particularly the CMS which had maintained a presence in the kingdom since 1879.

Since the mid-1880s, Buganda had been the scene of fierce factional rivalry between the nominally Protestant followers of the CMS, dubbed the *Wa-Ingleza*, and their Roman Catholic counterparts, the converts of the French White Fathers - the *Wa-Franza*. The schism between the two Christian denominations and the Muslim section of Bugandan society had sustained a protracted civil war that had simultaneously undermined the position of the *Kabaka* and the Bugandan state. And it was this instability that had led the British, via their proxy agent, the IBEA, into Buganda in 1890 as a military and political force. But the advent of Lugard in December of that year failed to calm the tense relations between the two opposing groups. In fact the conflict escalated into war on two occasions until August 1892. Hence, the plight of the missionaries became central to government deliberations over the fate of the IBEA administration. Should British political power be withdrawn, then it was feared that both the British missionaries and their Protestant *Wa-Ingleza* followers would be massacred. But as will be demonstrated, the missionary issue was not one that captured the attention of

⁷³⁶ British and Foreign Anti-Slave Trade Society to Salisbury, Petition, 16 December 1890, FO 84/2097, TNA. Undersigned: The Church Missionary Society, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, the Foreign Missions of the Church of Scotland, the Foreign Missions of the Free Church of Scotland, the Wesleyan Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society, the Baptist Missionary Society, the Universities Mission to Central Africa, the Congo Mission, Native Races and the Liquor Traffic United Committee, the United Kingdom Alliances, the Church of England Temperance Society, the Church of Scotland Committee on Temperance, the National Temperance League and the Peace Society.

Salisbury's government, but rather that of his liberal successor in the Foreign Office, Lord Rosebery.

Salisbury's Implicit Policy of Evacuation from Uganda, 1891-2

Despite the unrest brewing in Uganda, Salisbury pursued a policy toward East Africa over the remaining eighteen months of his second premiership which was marked largely by inertia. The only exception to this disinterest was the suggestion to subsidise a survey of the region to facilitate the construction of a railway from Mombasa to the Victoria Nyanza. The Uganda Railway as it was known had been identified as a *sine qua non* to the retention and development of both Uganda and the wider region (and is an issue that will be considered in detail in the following chapter).

Pressured by the cost of occupying Uganda, the IBEA had by August 1891 resolved to evacuate the country by the end of the year. In contrast to its German counterpart, the IBEA did not receive much in the way of state support for its colonial undertakings. The company itself estimated the cost of garrisoning Uganda came to £40-50,000 p.a. and already by August 1891, sixty percent of its initially subscribed capital had been expended on this largely fruitless occupation.⁷³⁷ It was supposedly only a temporary expedient in which the company was to 'restrict its operations to the coast' until sufficient funds had been raised to reinstate the occupation of Uganda.⁷³⁸ On grounds that the abandonment was only temporary, Salisbury instructed the company not to make its decision public.⁷³⁹ Wary of public opinion he candidly

⁷³⁷ IBEA to FO, 4 September 1891, FO 84/2174, TNA

⁷³⁸ IBEA to Lugard, Confidential, 10 August 1891, FO 84/2174, TNA.

⁷³⁹ Lister to IBEA, 8 September 1891, FO 84/2174, TNA.

minuted that the company's orders to evacuate Uganda 'would not look well if published.'⁷⁴⁰ When perceived in the light of the following autumn's uproar, Salisbury proved to be far more adept at anticipating the explosive effect the abandonment of Uganda had on the public feeling than Gladstone's successor cabinet. But Salisbury's reluctance to intervene is also indicative of how little he valued Uganda. Had the country really posed, in Salisbury's mind, a pivotal geo-strategic territory for Britain's hold on Egypt and by extension the route to India, then surely a £40,000 subsidy would not have prevented an intervention.

Since Salisbury was reluctant to offer anything more than a survey party for the railway, the company looked to the other significant interested party, the Church Missionary Society for financial support. Although the CMS was obviously only a religious and philanthropic body, it had wealthy backers which the company could benefit from. Already on the 9 September, Mackinnon had met with Bishop Tucker and other CMS representatives on his estate and informed them of Lugard's orders to withdraw.⁷⁴¹ Tucker, perhaps not unsurprising, as he served as the Bishop of East Africa, had taken a particularly dire view of Lugard's impending retreat. But it was reported that also the nominally impartial former Consul-General to Zanzibar, Charles Euan Smith, had 'concurred [...] in the serious view which [Bishop Tucker] took of the consequences to the Mission which might follow the withdrawal of the Company.'⁷⁴² There was unanimity in the expectations of these 'dangerous consequences,' but before committing any funds the CMS meeting resolved to formulate a memorial to

⁷⁴⁰ Salisbury Minute on IBEA to FO, 2 September 1891, FO 84/2174, TNA.

⁷⁴¹ General Secretary's Minute Book, Special Committee Meeting 29 September 1891, pp. 645-9, CMS/G/C1/55, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

⁷⁴² Ibid.

Salisbury in order to 'earnestly request the assistance of the Government.' But as nothing had come of this, the CMS was left to its secondary resolution, namely an 'appeal for money.'⁷⁴³

The IBEA confidentially promised it would contribute £20,000 if the CMS could raise the remaining £20,000 so that it could sustain its occupation for another year.⁷⁴⁴ This, it was hoped, would tide the company over for enough time to enable the government to intervene, compelled by its ratification of the Brussels Act. As long as the IBEA could construct a railway, the company would be profitable and Uganda secured.⁷⁴⁵ In the CMS's 'urgent and special' appeal for funds which it had circulated to a select few 'God had given the means to help', the opinion of the society's leaders Tucker, Kennaway and Hutchinson was unequivocal:

The burden of developing British East Africa and protecting British interests and preserving peace is left in private hands, and the progress of civilization, the security of the C.M.S. Mission, and the honour of the British name, are in peril for the lack of adequate funds.⁷⁴⁶

By November, the required amount had been raised – what was described as 'never a more wonderful exhibition of the power of the grace of God'.⁷⁴⁷ So the IBEA could sustain its occupation for another twelve months.

Yet only six months later, on the 17 May 1892 the IBEA again gave notice to Salisbury's Government of the company's intention to evacuate Uganda by the 31 December 'owing to the excessive costs of transport and other consequent difficulties of communication with the

⁷⁴³ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁴ Urgent and Special: Withdrawal of the Imperial British East Africa Company from Uganda, Private, November 1891, CMS/G/Y/A7/1/2, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

⁷⁴⁵ General Secretary's Minute Book, Special Committee Meeting 29 September 1891, pp. 645-9, CMS/G/C1/55, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

⁷⁴⁶ Urgent and Special: Withdrawal of the Imperial British East Africa Company from Uganda, Private, November 1891, CMS/G/Y/A7/1/2, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid.

interior of Africa.⁷⁴⁸ The company's message came as no surprise to Salisbury. In February he had received a warning from the new Consul-General to Zanzibar, Gerald Portal, that 'their financial position is very shaky indeed.'⁷⁴⁹ According to a conversation Portal had had with the IBEA director William Berkeley, the company was operating with an annual loss of £50,000 and there were few signs that its revenue would increase in the foreseeable future. Portal also remarked that the IBEA was unable to raise any further capital to cover the shortfall, thus making it reliant upon a government intervention.⁷⁵⁰ Indeed, Portal had at the end of February again notified Salisbury about this 'very serious question' and stated that he had: 'written a letter to Percy Anderson on the subject of the rapidly approaching break-up of the E. African Co.'⁷⁵¹

Salisbury's reply to IBEA's resolution to again abandon Uganda was brief and again offered no opposition. He acknowledged the company's decision and made but a single remark. Namely upon a set of orders that had been issued to Lugard - the company's agent was upon his exit *not* to allow any 'surplus arms or ammunition' to get into the hands of the local population that had been loyal to the IBEA. This, it was held, was 'contrary to the spirit of the provisions of the Brussels Act.'⁷⁵² Hence, Salisbury had in May 1892, again sanctioned the IBEA's policy of abandoning Uganda. Indeed, rather than issuing any plea to reconsider the company's decision, his reply was analogous to asking a guest to close the door on the way out. Just as he had done in the autumn of 1891, he did neither in 1892 lend, nor promise to lend, any financial or material support to safeguard the company's occupation.⁷⁵³ Moreover, Salisbury's

⁷⁴⁸ IBEA to Salisbury, 17 May 1892, FO 84/2249, TNA.

⁷⁴⁹ Portal to Salisbury, 3 February 1892, Vol. 80, No. 60, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁵¹ Portal to Salisbury, 27 February 1892, Vol. 80, No. 61, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House.

⁷⁵² Salisbury to IBEA, 26 May 1892, FO 84/2250, TNA.

⁷⁵³ McDermott, *British East Africa*, p. 203.

reply was a letter which Gladstone later used as evidence of the Salisbury government's complicity in an attempt to persuade Rosebery to change his opinion on the Uganda question:

...they prove that the decision of the Co. to withdraw to Dagoreti was fully accepted by the late Ministry – Lord Salisbury; letter of May 26 in answer to one of May 17 is, both from its date & its matter, a well considered document, & leaves the question a settled evacuation. (a settled question).⁷⁵⁴

Indeed, the Foreign Office's letter to the IBEA of September 1892 further corroborates Salisbury's policy of evacuation: 'The final determination of your Directors to evacuate Uganda on the 31st December next which was notified to the late Government and accepted by them in May last...'⁷⁵⁵

Why this official acceptance of the IBEA's decision to evacuate Lugard's administration from Uganda is so significant, is that it runs directly counter to the dominant historiographical narrative; of the strategic explanatory model of the East African partition. Since the interpretation affords Salisbury particular agency in both acquiring and holding Uganda, allegedly to safeguard Egypt, his decision to sanction an evacuation of the country already in 1891 and 1892 invalidates the model. The decision to evacuate was taken *despite* Uganda was being under the potential threat of a French annexation, due to the preponderance of the Catholic *Wa-Fransa* faction and of the French succession rights to the neighbouring Congo Free State. Salisbury did not attach enough importance to Uganda to warrant his government allocating an annual subsidy of £20-40,000 required for the IBEA to sustain its occupation.⁷⁵⁶

In conclusion, had imperial considerations of such geo-strategic significance as Egypt and the

⁷⁵⁴ Gladstone to Rosebery, 23 September 1892, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

⁷⁵⁵ FO (P.W. Currie) to IBEA, 30 September 1892, CMS/G/Y/A7/1/2, CMS Papers, University of Birmingham.

⁷⁵⁶ P.L. McDermott to Thomas Fowell Buxton, 11 August 1891, Anti-Slavery Papers, S 22/G4 (Uganda), Rhodes House, University of Oxford.

Suez Canal really posed as key factors in the government's deliberations over Uganda, then it is unlikely that such a relatively small sum would have prevented Salisbury's administration from ensuring the continued presence of the IBEA in the kingdom.

A '*Damnosa Hereditas*'⁷⁵⁷: Rosebery and the Uganda Debates, Aug. – Sept. 1892

After Salisbury's defeat in the 1892 general election over the question of Irish Home Rule, Gladstone formed his fourth and last government on 15 August. Since July, Gladstone had pleaded with a highly reluctant Archibald Primrose, Lord Rosebery, to again serve as his foreign secretary. The popular Rosebery had repeatedly rebuked these invitations and had cited his 'family and fortune' as grounds for refusing the offer.⁷⁵⁸ Writing from the 'Yacht Christine off Poolewe', Rosebery confided to Gladstone that:

For more than a year past – during the whole period that I have spent in retirement – my constant preoccupation has been to extricate myself from politics. For public life I have ceased to feel either taste or aptitude, and my one pessimistic wish is to retire into private life, and the most private.⁷⁵⁹

Despite these initial protestations he 'kissed hands' with Queen Victoria on 18 August.⁷⁶⁰ As will be detailed below, his initial reluctance is however important to consider in light of his dissent on the Uganda question, and in particular why the remaining cabinet chose to acquiescence to his insistence.

⁷⁵⁷ Rosebery to Gladstone, 20 September 1892, Confidential, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

⁷⁵⁸ Rosebery to Gladstone, 31 July 1892, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁰ Rosebery to Gladstone, 22 September 1892, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

At the very top of the new foreign secretary's list of priorities in the autumn of 1892 were the 'ticklish [...] and [...] pressing business' of the Uganda troubles and the announced evacuation of the country by the IBEA.⁷⁶¹ Reports of an alleged massacre possibly instigated by the company's agent Frederick Lugard, had circulated in British newspapers some months earlier.⁷⁶² Due to the delay in receiving news from the landlocked kingdom, the events which were said to have occurred in January were not in the press until late-May. Salisbury's government had even faced questions in the House of Commons from the Irish nationalist MP Sir Thomas Esmonde. The response offered little more than to await Lugard's forthcoming despatches.⁷⁶³ It transpired later that Lugard had taken the side of the Protestants in the civil-war between the *Wa-Ingleza* and the nominally Catholic, *Wa-Fransa* factions, in which he had exacted upon the latter a crushing defeat.⁷⁶⁴ But the three-month delay in communications was not only inconvenient for the receipt of news. The IBEA had announced it would withdraw from Uganda by the 31 December, which meant that any potential counter-orders to prolong the occupation would have to be issued by 1 October.⁷⁶⁵

Testament to Rosebery's strong views in favour of retention, he commissioned a range of memoranda about the subject only days after he had assumed office.⁷⁶⁶ According to Under-Secretary Phillip Currie, his superior wanted an 'impartial statement' which he could present to his cabinet colleagues.⁷⁶⁷ The War Office produced the first of the memoranda, which in essence were a brief history of Uganda and a *précis* of British interests in the kingdom.⁷⁶⁸ The

⁷⁶¹ Rosebery to Gladstone, 19 September 1892, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

⁷⁶² Extract from the Daily News London 'The Bloodshed in Uganda,' 26 May 1892, FO 84/2258, TNA.

⁷⁶³ FO Memorandum, 26 May 1892, FO 84/2250, TNA.

⁷⁶⁴ War Office (Hubert Foster), Memorandum, 5 September 1892, Confidential, FO 84/2258, TNA.

⁷⁶⁵ Rosebery, Memorandum, Undated (p.134), FO 84/2258, TNA.

⁷⁶⁶ Rosebery, Memorandum, 24 August 1892, FO 84/2258, TNA.

⁷⁶⁷ Currie to Anderson, 23 August 1892, Private, FO 84/2258, TNA.

⁷⁶⁸ War Office (Hubert Foster), Memorandum, 5 September 1892, Confidential, FO 84/2258, TNA.

thirteen typed pages presented by Staff Captain Hubert Foster contained no mention of Uganda's significance with regard to the Nile or Egypt. Which itself would have been a remarkable omission by the WO's Intelligence Division should Nile deflection and Egyptian security really have posed as an important factor in deliberations over Uganda. Instead, it focused its attention on the civil strife that had embroiled the kingdom since the late 1880s.

The second and third memoranda were compiled by the Anglo-Egyptian army. Predictably Major Reginald Wingate of the Egyptian Intelligence Department focussed on what, ostensibly, would be the consequences for Egypt in the event of a British withdrawal. He believed that any European state holding Uganda could easily re-conquer the former Egyptian Equatorial Province from the Mahdists.⁷⁶⁹ However, Wingate's commanding officer, the Egyptian Army's Brigadier-General, or *Sirdar*, Sir Horatio Herbert Kitchener also offered his thoughts in a memorandum concerning the importance of maintaining British rule over Uganda. Among his reflections, no mention was made of the defence of Egypt in a *Nile Valley Doctrine* fashion. Instead, his emphasis was laid upon stemming the tide of 'Mahommedan Arabs' that with 'religious fanaticism [...] would be enabled to push back our efforts for improvement of Africa'. Despite presumably being the most strategically inclined of all government officials, Kitchener did not attach importance to Uganda, as he even proposed to cede the territory to Belgium or Germany, had they not had 'their hands full.'⁷⁷⁰

The fourth and most important of the memoranda that circulated in September 1892, was the one compiled by Whitehall's most senior and influential Africa expert, Sir Percy Anderson.⁷⁷¹ He had been responsible for formulating most of Salisbury's policy toward the

⁷⁶⁹ Major Wingate Memorandum cited in Anderson, Memorandum, 13 September 1892, Confidential, FO 84/2258, TNA.

⁷⁷⁰ Kitchener Memorandum, 3 Oct 1892, FO 84/2258, TNA.

⁷⁷¹ For an analysis of Anderson's role in the Foreign Office, see: Louis, *Sir Percy Anderson*, pp. 292-314.

region; served as the British delegate at the West African Conference in Berlin in 1884-5 and conducted the Anglo-German negotiations over Africa in 1890. Additionally he had given private advice to both the directors of the IBEA⁷⁷² and the Church Missionary Society.⁷⁷³ Thus, in terms of ascertaining British motives for the acquisition of Uganda, the memorandum is of great significance as it was compiled by the originator of these policies at a time when the decisions and events were still relatively fresh in his mind.

In his section enumerating why Uganda had come to form part of the British sphere of influence, Anderson stated that it had done so simply as a consequence of the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886 and the hinterland understanding of July 1887.⁷⁷⁴ His recollections confirm the thesis enumerated in the previous chapters that the establishment of British paramount influence in Uganda derived *de facto* from the initial 1886 treaty. And, importantly, that this was done for economic reasons as Uganda was regarded an important regional 'trade centre'.⁷⁷⁵ Throughout his memorandum Anderson placed emphasis both on the slave trade and on the plight of the British missionaries as the principal grounds for past and projected intervention:

Whatever may be its future, it must be an important factor in the anti-slavery struggle. Its resources would be invaluable to the slave-traders; on the other hand, it is the only native State that can resist Arabs of the type found in the Upper Basin of the Congo.⁷⁷⁶

Hence, Anderson held that Uganda posed an excellent vantage from which to execute Britain's anti-slave trade policy in the interior of Africa, particularly against the slave raiders

⁷⁷² Harry Johnston to James Frederick Hutton, 31 October 1885, Box 17, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS.

⁷⁷³ J.H. Kennaway to Edward Benson, 24 June 1887, f. 219, Vol. 54, Benson Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.

⁷⁷⁴ Salisbury to Malet, 2 July 1887, FO 403/102, TNA.

⁷⁷⁵ Anderson, Memorandum, 13 September 1892, Confidential, FO 84/2258, TNA.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

operating around the Upper Congo River. In contrast to Kitchener, Anderson issued a stern warning against a policy of evacuation:

All those who know the country have grave apprehensions. They see the possibility of the return of the slave-traders, massacres of missionaries and of their flocks, the resumption of the old system of wars and depopulation of the neighbouring countries. Their fears may be exaggerated; they cannot be groundless.⁷⁷⁷

It is likely that Anderson was deliberate in his allusion to a repeated Gordon incident by his mention of the CMS's Bishop Tucker and the missionaries' resolve to remain in Uganda: 'whatever may be their fate.' Only seven years had passed since Gladstone's government had presided over General Charles Gordon's famous transition into the ranks of imperial martyrs. The words '*remember Gordon*' had in some jingoist quarters become an epithet for liberal wavering in imperial affairs.⁷⁷⁸

Anderson also broached local geo-strategic concerns in his comprehensive memorandum. He claimed that the effect of a British evacuation would be either a Belgian, or more likely, a French incursion into the region of the Upper Nile. A British evacuation, it was speculated, would lead to 'the Nile Basin, in its upper waters, and the Equatorial Provinces, being brought under French rule.'⁷⁷⁹ But despite what is frequently claimed in the historiography, Anderson never directly linked the retention of Uganda to the defence of Egypt in his memorandum.⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁸ See: Patricia Knight, "British public opinion and the rise of imperialist sentiment in relation to expansion in Africa, 1880-1900" (PhD diss., University of Warwick, 1968). Section entitled 'The Gordon Cult,' pp. 179-200. Also see: Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 167.

⁷⁷⁹ Anderson, Memorandum, 13 September 1892, Confidential, FO 84/2258, TNA.

⁷⁸⁰ For a non-exhaustive list of literature which have made assertions that the Foreign Office, and in particular Anderson, linked the retention of Uganda with the defence of Egypt, see: Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism I*, p. 124.; Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 315.; Sanderson, *England, Europe and the Upper Nile*, p. 100.; Louis, *Sir Percy Anderson*, pp. 292-314.; Gordon Martel, *Imperial Diplomacy: Rosebery and the Failure of Foreign Policy* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), p. 81.; Otte, *Foreign Office Mind*, p. 194.

Whilst he did mention the 'Equatorial Provinces', this was hardly out of Egyptian concerns, since the territories were perceived as a distinct region.

The erstwhile southernmost of Egypt's African provinces had since the mid-1880s been 'envisaged as an enclave of order, prosperity and progress in the heart of an Africa threatened by "barbarism"'⁷⁸¹ It was hoped, in the words of the historian Iain Smith, that Emin Pasha's old province of Equatoria, as a part of the British Empire, 'might act as a nucleus from which "civilization" might be extended to neighbouring territories.'⁷⁸² Hence, the region surrounding the Upper Nile was in 1892, as it had been prior to the 1890 Heligoland Treaty, perceived in largely humanitarian and economic terms, as a humanitarian bridgehead - divorced from some alleged geo-strategic vision of East Africa which hinged on the defence of Egypt.

However, in terms of deciphering motives, Anderson's memorandum is most valuable in enumerating the reasons for why Uganda came to form part of the British sphere in 1890, not necessarily as the basis on which the Liberal government took the decision to delay evacuation. Rosebery approved of Anderson's analysis as 'a good memorandum'. In fact the foreign secretary had edited it heavily after it first had been presented on the 25 August until a finished version was published on the 13 September.⁷⁸³ One of these edits was the striking out of a sentence which professed Wingate's insistence on holding Uganda, ostensibly for Egyptian reasons.⁷⁸⁴ Anderson's memorandum did however fail to impress Gladstone: 'I

⁷⁸¹ Smith, *Emin Pasha Relief Expedition*, p. 208.

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁷⁸³ Minute by Rosebery, Anderson Memorandum, 10 September 1892, FO 84/2258, TNA.

⁷⁸⁴ Sentence stricken out by Rosebery: 'Major Wingate, who has studied this subject with exceptional advantages, has expressed himself strongly in favour of the retention of our hold on Uganda.' Draft Memorandum, 12 September 1892, Confidential, FO 84/2258, TNA.

thought it was a pleading from a Missionary Society or from the Company, or should have thought so but for the date from the F.O.’⁷⁸⁵

Importantly for the purposes of determining British motives, Currie revealed in his letter to Anderson in August 1892 that he thought Rosebery was ‘favourable to retention’ but that he had Cabinet colleagues who would ‘make difficulties.’⁷⁸⁶ Notwithstanding the fact that Rosebery had personally ordered the memoranda to be produced only five days after assuming office, which in itself would indicate positive interest. The issue of Uganda was at the top of his agenda and dominated his correspondence with Gladstone for the whole of September 1892, despite the remainder of the cabinet was set against it. This is also revealed in Currie’s private letter; Rosebery was the only member of Gladstone’s government who was in favour of retention.⁷⁸⁷ Gladstone himself corroborated Rosebery’s singular dissent on the issue.⁷⁸⁸ Hence, it is very likely that the new Foreign Secretary already had come to a decision about holding Uganda *before* any of the memoranda were presented. Prominent members of the cabinet such as the Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir William Harcourt were pledged against any imperial expansion. Harcourt even scorned Anderson’s memorandum as written in ‘the highest jingo tone [since it was advocating] the annexation of the whole country up to the Albert Lakes with a view to the “reconquest” of the Sudan.’⁷⁸⁹

For the 81 year-old Gladstone, the situation was unprecedented: indeed it had been the first time in his long prime ministerial career that his foreign secretary took dissent over an important foreign policy issue.⁷⁹⁰ In a private letter to Gladstone immediately prior to the

⁷⁸⁵ Gladstone to Rosebery, 17 September 1892, Private, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

⁷⁸⁶ Currie to Anderson, 23 August 1892, Private, FO 84/2258, TNA.

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁸ Gladstone to Rosebery, 24 September 1892, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

⁷⁸⁹ A.C. Gardiner, *Life of Sir W. Harcourt* (London: Constable & Company, 1923), pp. 191-3.

⁷⁹⁰ Rosebery to Gladstone, 26 September 1892, Confidential, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

Cabinet meeting which delayed evacuation another three months, Rosebery made an implicit threat of resignation due to this 'most heartfelt and bitter' difference of opinion between them.⁷⁹¹ Rosebery's reticence against assuming the position of foreign secretary only weeks earlier would suggest that the potential threat was perceived as sincere. Hence, since Rosebery alone had forced the decision to postpone evacuation, it is only necessary to determine the convictions held by him to discover the motives of the British government.

The private correspondence between Rosebery and Gladstone is revealing as to the foreign secretary's reasons for 'holding' Uganda and leaves little to conjecture. Rosebery was consistent in his references to the 'most grave' and 'disastrous' consequences that would result from a policy of abandonment.⁷⁹² This language is echoed in the memorials presented to the government by pressure groups and interested parties such as the CMS and the BFASS.⁷⁹³ In no uncertain terms Rosebery invoked the fear of a repeated Khartoum. To this effect he cited in his correspondence to Gladstone Consul-General Gerald Portal's words that nothing less than 'a general massacre' [original underlining] would ensue upon the company's evacuation.⁷⁹⁴ Little evidence suggests that this was an insincere or contrived fear, despite the assertions made by the historian Gordon Martel.⁷⁹⁵ Portal himself noted in his personal diary that an evacuation would 'inevitably cause massacres.'⁷⁹⁶ Indeed, Rosebery thought

⁷⁹¹ Rosebery to Gladstone, 27 September 1892, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

⁷⁹² Rosebery to Gladstone, 19 September 1892, and Rosebery to Gladstone, 29 September 1892, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

⁷⁹³ Anti-Slave Trade Society Memorial, 20 October 1892, Vol. 113, ff. 482, Benson Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.

⁷⁹⁴ Rosebery to Gladstone, 29 September 1892, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

⁷⁹⁵ Martel, *Imperial Diplomacy*, p. 82.

⁷⁹⁶ Gerald Portal Diary Entry, 15 September 1892, Gerald Portal Papers, Rhodes House, Oxford University.

Uganda to be 'one of those more or less damnosus hereditates that one government leaves, not unwittingly, to its successor.'⁷⁹⁷

And why was Uganda such a burdensome inheritance? Simply because Gladstone's government found itself in a predicament which was analogous to what had occurred in Khartoum seven years earlier. But at this time, it would be Rosebery, not only in the capacity as Lord Privy Seal as he was in 1885, but as foreign secretary and possible successor to the Liberal party's leadership, who would preside over the inevitable scandal.⁷⁹⁸ Although Gladstone had argued that the public would hold the IBEA and Salisbury jointly responsible for any potential massacre, Rosebery differed: 'Unluckily, public opinion will, roughly, attach the responsibility to the Govt.'⁷⁹⁹ Where Gladstone's third government had wavered and belatedly decided to despatch a relief expedition to Gordon in 1884, Rosebery was adamant that his fourth government would not repeat this error. Hence, Rosebery found himself in a dilemma over Uganda. He could pursue the path of least resistance and follow the opinion of the Prime Minister, his new cabinet colleagues and the *Manchester Guardian*, which was generally 'held to be the voice of liberal opinion,' and sanction an evacuation; or, he could attempt to postpone an evacuation through persuasion by way of an information campaign.⁸⁰⁰ These were likely the grounds upon which he commissioned the memoranda to be drawn in August 1892. Rosebery had already made up his mind and only needed an 'impartial statement' covering all possible reasons for retention in order to prevent the new government from being discredited already at its inception.⁸⁰¹

⁷⁹⁷ Rosebery to Gladstone, 20 September 1892, Confidential, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

⁷⁹⁸ Hansard, HoC Debate, 13 April 1885, vol 296 cc1484-5.

⁷⁹⁹ Rosebery to Gladstone, 20 September 1892, Confidential, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

⁸⁰⁰ Rosebery to Gladstone, 27 September 1892, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

⁸⁰¹ Rosebery to Gladstone, 22 September 1892, Confidential, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

Hence, the decision to delay evacuation for three months had little or nothing to do with strategic concerns. Indeed, the most strategically minded of the memoranda, namely that of Wingate's which stressed the consequences for Egypt, did Rosebery 'not think very highly of.'⁸⁰² Since Rosebery was the only member of Gladstone's cabinet in favour of retention and since he had made up his mind about this prior to production of any memoranda on the issue, it renders their projections largely irrelevant. Strategic aspects are completely omitted from the copious correspondence between the two political protagonists Rosebery and Gladstone in the month leading up to the cabinet decision. Perhaps this was not unsurprising since Gladstone was staunchly in favour of evacuating Egypt. But Rosebery was hardly a 'jingo' on the matter himself, as he stated six months later: 'No one is more sensible than I am of the delicacy and perplexity of our position in Egypt. Were we out of it I should on the whole rejoice.'⁸⁰³ But although a massacre of missionaries and their converts was in any case a grim prospect, it is not unlikely that Rosebery was also concerned about how this would affect his political reputation: a consideration of particular importance since his aged chief Gladstone was nearing the end of his political career.

'An Appeal to the Nation',⁸⁰⁴ Sept. – Oct. 1892

Among the interested parties of the time to the IBEA's occupation of Uganda were the Church Missionary Society and the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Both had organised deputations that had been received by Rosebery on 23 September and 20 October

⁸⁰² Rosebery, Minute on Wingate Memorandum, Director of Military Intelligence in Cairo to FO, 23 August 1892, FO 84/2257, TNA. Also cited in Robinson et al, *Africa and the Victorians*, pp. 314-5.

⁸⁰³ Rosebery to Gladstone, 16 April 1893, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44290, BL.

⁸⁰⁴ The Record Supplement, 14 October 1892, CMS/G/Y/A7/1/2, CMS Papers, University of Birmingham.

respectively.⁸⁰⁵ The first deputation was organised by the CMS, the organisation which arguably had the greatest interests at stake in Uganda. CMS missionaries had been present in Uganda since 30 June 1877. Even though the missionaries only numbered seven, their converts represented one of the largest factions in Uganda at an estimated 25,000.⁸⁰⁶ By 1892 Mwanga had converted to Catholicism and Lugard had driven him and his followers into exile to the Sesse Islands in the Victoria Nyanza. Hence it was feared that Mwanga and the *Wafransa* faction would exact revenge upon the CMS missionaries and their Protestant converts upon the IBEA's evacuation.⁸⁰⁷ Although Rosebery was the only member of the cabinet in favour of retention, he concealed this from the CMS so as not to pre-emptively commit the government, confessing to Gladstone that: 'I was as loyal to you all that I left them fear under the impression that I was a strong evacuationist!'⁸⁰⁸

After the cabinet meeting of 30 September 1892, which postponed the evacuation another three months, a feverish pamphlet war was unleashed, in a partially concerted action by the CMS, the BFASS and the IBEA.⁸⁰⁹ The editor of the missionary periodical *The Record* contacted the CMS's Secretary, Frederic Edward Wigram on 5 October and asked him whether the newspaper should: 'issue a special Uganda supplement [...] especially showing the endangered & the present state of affairs; [...] & any such statement or appeal as the Secretaries may wish to make at this crisis.'⁸¹⁰ The free supplement entitled 'the Fate of Uganda,' richly illustrated over eight densely typed pages, was published on the 14 October,

⁸⁰⁵ Rosebery to Gladstone, 22 September 1892, Confidential, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL, and W.H. Wylde to Sturge, 21 October 1892, Private, S 22 / G4 (Uganda), Anti-Slavery Papers, Rhodes House, Oxford University.

⁸⁰⁶ The Record Supplement, 14 October 1892, CMS/G/Y/A7/1/2, CMS Papers, University of Birmingham.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁸ Rosebery to Gladstone, 23 September 1892, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

⁸⁰⁹ FO (P.W. Currie) to IBEA, 30 September 1892, CMS/G/Y/A7/1/2, CMS Papers, University of Birmingham.

⁸¹⁰ Editor of the Record to Wigram, 5 October 1892, Private, CMS/G/Y/A7/1/2, CMS Papers, University of Birmingham.

a week earlier than originally proposed. As the editor had suggested, the pamphlet was a powerful piece of propaganda aimed at rallying support for the continued occupation of Uganda.

It offered a detailed account of the history of the CMS's mission and listed several warnings against evacuation from interested parties such as Bishop Tucker, Stanley, Frederick Lugard, the IBEA and Gerald Portal. The warnings were unanimous in their predictions of the 'disastrous results' that was certain to follow a withdrawal of British influence.⁸¹¹ Over the final pages, meticulous instructions on how to formulate petitions to both Houses of Parliament were included. Among the main consequences emphasised by the petition were: 'anarchy and bloodshed,' 'the continuance and revival of the slave-trade in East Africa,' 'native distrust of the English Government,' and 'great injury to English commercial interests.'⁸¹² The collection of petitions received by the Foreign Office identical in format and argumentation is testament to the influence of *The Record's* special supplement.⁸¹³

Meanwhile, meetings had been held across Britain in support of the missionaries' plight. In a speech at the Sectional Hall, the Bishop of Exeter drew both a parallel with the Sudan and of Britain's moral obligations:

And God also, in His great mercy, grant that we never withdraw the protecting *ægis* of England's name, and England's voice, and England's hand from regions once sheltered by it, as was so disastrously done in Khartoum, as is now threatened in Uganda.⁸¹⁴

⁸¹¹ The Record Supplement, 14 October 1892, CMS/G/Y/A7/1/2, CMS Papers, University of Birmingham.

⁸¹² Ibid.

⁸¹³ Petitions to the Foreign Office, FO 84/2192 and FO 84/2241, TNA.

⁸¹⁴ Speech held by the Bishop of Exeter at the Sectional Hall, Thursday 13 October 1892 cited in *The Record*, No. 7685, Vo. XI (N.S.), Friday 14 October 1892, pp. 1046-7, in CMS/G/Y/A7/1/2, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

Interest for Uganda had been 'steadily rising' over the autumn. A full gathering at the CMS had already been held and public meetings at the Guildhall and Mansion House were planned.⁸¹⁵ The issue had even been raised at the Church of England's Ruri-Decanal Conference at Greenwich in which the delegates resolved that an evacuation: 'would be prejudiced to the honour of this country, and unjust to the people and the Christian converts in Uganda, who would thus be abandoned.'⁸¹⁶

A substantial number of petitions regarding Uganda were received at the Foreign Office over the months October and November 1892. Apart from the volume, 174 in total, the breadth of groups interested in the issue, bore not only testament to late-Victorian civic engagement in a general sense, but to the heightened mood of public opinion in this particular question.⁸¹⁷ The petitioners ranged from influential religious bodies such as the Church of Scotland, the Presbyterians of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland and the Church of Ireland to an assortment of Chambers of Commerce such as that of Glasgow, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newport, Leith and Blackburn, to a collection of petitions from towns and cities such as Bristol, Swansea and Chester.⁸¹⁸ None of the resolutions and memorials were concerned with any strategic aspect of holding Uganda. Rather they focussed on a number of issues already familiar to, and argued by, Rosebery. In near uniformity, all the petitions raised the holy trinity of consequences that would occur upon abandonment, namely: massacres of missionaries and converts; a resumption of the slave trade; and a blow to British trade.

⁸¹⁵ Weekly Notes, The Record, No. 7685, Vo. XI (N.S.), Friday 14 October 1892, in CMS/G/Y/A7/1/2, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

⁸¹⁶ Samuel Giles to the Bishop of Rochester (Davidson), 9 November 1892, Vol. 33, ff. 34-7, Davidson Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.

⁸¹⁷ See: Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, p. 62, and: Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp. 164-9.

⁸¹⁸ See petitions to the Foreign Office in FO 84/2192, TNA.

Naturally, the missionary bodies were most attuned to the human and spiritual consequences of an evacuation. The clergy of Hull were under the persuasion that it would be: 'most disastrous to the cause of Christianity & Civilisation in Central Africa, & would probably open the door to bloodshed & slavery.'⁸¹⁹ Whilst the members of the public who attended the meeting at Chester Town Hall resolved: 'that the Slave Trade would be grievously promoted, and that the cause of Christ as well as lawful commerce and national honour would be injured by the evacuation of Uganda.'⁸²⁰ And although Swansea Town Council believed that the IBEA had: 'destroyed the government of that country', it thought 'the abandonment of it now, would place its people at the mercy of fanaticism and the evil passions of men, and would be a retrograde movement, and inimical to the honour and best traditions of our country.'⁸²¹ Hence, many of the petitions were also concerned with *how an evacuation would damage British prestige and honour*, particularly in Africa. Perhaps somewhat predictably, the Scottish petitioners laid emphasis on what their great explorer-missionary son had achieved in the region and how this had animated public opinion:

In none of the Christian Missions which have gone forth from Scotland have its people, of all classes, shown so keen an interest as in those founded in Central Africa since the action of David Livingstone, thirty years ago.⁸²²

Just as Salisbury had invoked Livingstone during the Anglo-German negotiations over East Africa in 1890,⁸²³ the Church of Scotland did at the next crossroads in 1892.

⁸¹⁹ Petition from the Meeting of the Clergy of the Rural Deanery of Hull, 27 October 1892, FO 84/2192, TNA.

⁸²⁰ Petition from the Public Meeting in Chester Town Hall, 4 November 1892, FO 84/2192, TNA.

⁸²¹ Petition from Swansea Town Council, 3 November 1892, FO 84/2192, TNA.

⁸²² Petition by the Presbyterians of Scotland, 3 November 1892, FO 84/2192, TNA.

⁸²³ Salisbury to Malet, 21 May 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

Simultaneously with the campaigning efforts of the CMS, the BFASS organised a deputation, 150 strong, which met with Rosebery on 20 October.⁸²⁴ In an eagerness to make the deputation as large and influential as possible, the Anti-Slavery Society's secretary Charles Allen invited dignitaries such as the Archbishop of Canterbury Edward Benson, and the Archbishop of Westminster Herbert Vaughan. The latter, a Roman Catholic Archbishop and later Cardinal, was even a life-member of the society.⁸²⁵ Benson had been unable to attend the deputation himself. However he did express his support of its cause in an open letter to Allen: 'I hope for many reasons that the British Government will be able to adopt a policy which will prevent the disaster which it is naturally feared would follow withdrawal from Central Africa.'⁸²⁶

The petition presented to Rosebery had unsurprisingly focussed on the effects that a withdrawal would have on the slave trade. It was taken as a matter of course that the 'Slave-Trade and Slave-hunting' had 'long prevailed' in the region. The Society had viewed with 'deep apprehension' the consequences of a 'retirement of British Agents' and that it would '... be followed by an outburst of hostilities, and an immediate expansion of the Slave-trade.' As a remedy the petitioners recommended that Uganda should be declared a protectorate and that a railway should be constructed to connect it with Mombasa in adherence to articles I and IV of the Brussels Act.⁸²⁷ A day after their meeting with the foreign secretary, William Henry Wylde, the former head of the Foreign Office's Slave Trade Department, wrote a letter

⁸²⁴ Chas. H. Allen to Archbishop of Canterbury, 17 October 1892, (479), Volume 113, Benson Papers, Lambeth Palace Library, and Committee Meeting 7 October 1892, Paragraph 438, Minute Books of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Vol 6, E2/11, Anti-Slavery Papers, Rhodes House, Oxford University.

⁸²⁵ Chas. H. Allen to Archbishop of Canterbury, 29 October 1892, (489), Volume 113, Benson Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.

⁸²⁶ Benson to Allen, 18 October 1892, (483-4), Volume 113, Benson Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.

⁸²⁷ Memorial to be presented to Lord Rosebery on Thursday, October 20th, 1892, (482), Volume 113, Benson Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.

of congratulations for the deputation's 'great success' to the Society's board member Joseph Sturge. In a reference to the deputation's leader Reginald Bosworth Smith's phrase 'continuity of the moral policy'⁸²⁸ – which Rosebery later had made his own⁸²⁹ – Wylde was certain that Rosebery's 'words respecting the "continuity of Policy" as regards Slave Trade suppression which he says this Country is bound to carry out' must afford them all 'sincere pleasure.'⁸³⁰ He also confided that some of the MP's against the retention of Uganda were 'wavering and would be glad to find a decent excuse to "volte face" [and] a little more exposure of Public Opinion will afford the required excuse.'⁸³¹

In historiographical terms, Wylde's remarks concerning the 'continuity of policy' is hugely significant. Rosebery's intention, both from the context in which the phrase was pronounced, and from the policy Britain had long pursued in this region, all indicate that Wylde's interpretation was correct: that Rosebery revealed that he was committed to preserving the continuity of Britain's anti-slave trade policy in East Africa through the retention of Uganda. But instead of construing it in what arguably was its proper context; historians subscribing to the strategic hypothesis have cited Rosebery's statement as evidence of his collusion with Salisbury's alleged, and distinctly novel strategic motives.⁸³²

Rosebery himself, however, cautiously confided to Gladstone that he did not think the deputation was 'very effective' and proceeded to assure him that he had not made any

⁸²⁸ Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p. 166.

⁸²⁹ Lord Rosebery's Speech to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 20 October 1892, cited in *New Zealand Herald and Daily Southern Cross*, Volume XXIX, Issue 9053, 5 December 1892, Page 4.

⁸³⁰ Wylde to Sturge, 21 October 1892, S 22 / G4 (Uganda), Anti-Slavery Papers, Rhodes House, Oxford University.

⁸³¹ Ibid.

⁸³² Robinson et al., *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 312; Sanderson, *England, Europe and the Upper Nile*, pp. 99-100; Gordon Martel, *Imperial Diplomacy: Rosebery and the Failure of Foreign Policy* (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1986), pp. 81-9; Munro, *Maritime Enterprise and Empire*, pp. 467-8.

promises to the Society either way.⁸³³ He also reported that he had taken up an idea briefly proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir William Harcourt, namely of ‘handing over Uganda to Zanzibar.’ This, Rosebery recommended was the ‘best arrangement’ and despite also requiring an annual subsidy was ‘beyond all doubt the cheapest arrangement.’⁸³⁴ Gladstone seemingly approved of the suggestion, but Rosebery reported only a week later that there were legal and constitutional ‘difficulties’ that prevented them from following through with the plan.⁸³⁵ The CMS and BFASS had certainly succeeded in mobilising popular support for the retention of Uganda during the autumn of 1892. A mobilisation that was crucial for achieving a metropolitan intervention, what Huzzey describes as the nationalisation of ‘responsibility for imperial interests [...] through deft appeals to existing sentiments’.⁸³⁶

IBEA’s Campaign and Rosebery’s Resolution, Sept. – Dec. 1892

Campaigning was not only the preserve of adept and well-connected pressure groups. The IBEA also launched a publicity offensive aimed at influencing policymakers and public opinion. The man disparagingly described by the staunch ‘evacuationist’ Harcourt, as a ‘mischievous lunatic’, namely the IBEA’s man-on-the-spot Captain Frederick Lugard, returned home to Britain in October to assist in the company’s public relations campaign.⁸³⁷ Whilst Lugard went on a public-speaking tour and worked on a book that would be published the following year,

⁸³³ Rosebery to Gladstone, 20 October 1892, Confidential, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44290, BL.

⁸³⁴ Ibid.

⁸³⁵ Rosebery to Gladstone, 28 October 1892, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44290, BL.

⁸³⁶ Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, p. 169.

⁸³⁷ Rosebery to Gladstone, 22 September 1892, Confidential, Gladstone Papers, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44289, BL.

the IBEA's director Ernest Bentley had already published a pamphlet.⁸³⁸ It was entitled: 'Handbook to the Uganda Question and Proposed East Africa Railway' and, perhaps somewhat ambitiously, cost twopence. It contained a volley of 237 arguments in favour of retention and construction of a railway, whilst also included 60 passages which rhetorically caricatured the opposing arguments.⁸³⁹

Every conceivable reason for retaining Uganda for the Empire was trumpeted, from humanitarian to commercial and strategic. The pamphlet's most important function, however, came much later than the autumn of 1892. Its main role has been to influence and frame the historiography of the partition of East Africa. Bentley identified the arguments most likely to gain support from policymakers as geo-strategic, in particular those connected to 'protecting' a river known to all Englishmen versed in the Old Testament, namely the Nile. He lavished attention on the company's vital role as the gatekeeper to Egypt - instead of mainly focusing on the more emotionally and morally evocative sentiments such as the slave trade or the plight of the missionaries and their converts. After all, the CMS and the BFASS had already laid claim to these good causes. If only used as a convenient, albeit speculative excuse at the time, it certainly captured the imagination of generations of historians hence that have interpreted the events and their motives.

One of the most notorious examples of these arguments were:

⁸³⁸ Example of Lugard's public speaking tour: Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce to Foreign Office, 18 November 1892, FO 84/2192, TNA.

⁸³⁹ Handbook to the Uganda Question and the Proposed Uganda Railway, Ernest L. Bentley, 12 November 1892, FO 84/2263, TNA.

That the relinquishment of Uganda to a civilised power immediately imperils the safety of Egypt, as the diversion or blocking of the head-waters of the Nile could stop her water supply and starve her population.⁸⁴⁰

IBEAs agent Lugard would later include a similarly worded argument in his semi-biographical account published in 1893 that: 'Egypt is indebted for her summer supply of water to the Victoria lake, and a dam built across the river at its outlet from the lake would deprive Egypt of this'.⁸⁴¹ Terje Tvedt even falsely cited Lugard's assertion as evidence of the British government's official policy and basis of decision to retain Uganda.⁸⁴² However the argument formed merely a part of the IBEA's propaganda campaign aimed at protecting its investments in the kingdom.

In November, Rosebery produced a comprehensive memorandum in which he evaluated the government's options with regard to Uganda. In his characteristic fashion the Foreign Secretary offered a numbered list of five possible alternatives Britain could pursue; all of which were different variations of direct and indirect control, so complete abandonment was eliminated as a policy option. Rosebery believed, however, that declaring Uganda a protectorate was unrealistic since his cabinet colleagues would find this 'distasteful'.⁸⁴³ Whilst the other proposals concerned various forms of ways in which Uganda could be ruled by proxy from Zanzibar. These were dismissed in favour of what Rosebery deemed the 'best plan': 'to send a Commissioner there to superintend the Company's evacuation, and to make arrangements for an organized Government.'⁸⁴⁴

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

⁸⁴¹ Frederick Lugard, *The Rise of our East African Empire. Early efforts in Nyasaland and Uganda* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1893), p. 584.

⁸⁴² Tvedt, *Hydrology and Empire*, p. 187.

⁸⁴³ Rosebery Memorandum, 3 November 1892, FO 403/173, TNA.

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid.

It had also come to light that the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony and industrialist Cecil Rhodes had submitted two offers to the government regarding Uganda. In his proposal he would, free of charge, extend the Cape telegraph system to the country. In his other and unofficial offer he suggested to 'manage and keep Uganda' for a government subsidy of £24,000 per annum.⁸⁴⁵ Hence, among the many sub-imperial stakeholders to the political drama unfolding over Uganda, the arch-imperialist Rhodes also saw occasion to act. Almost a decade later it also emerged that Rhodes had, in 1891, secretly paid the Liberal Party's election campaign organiser Francis Schnadhorst £5,000 on the condition that Britain remained in Egypt.⁸⁴⁶ Thus it was not the first time Rhodes had attempted to covertly influence Westminster's Africa policy. Rosebery characterised Rhodes's offer as 'simple and tempting', but thought it would 'drain Zanzibar dry of all commerce from Uganda' and that it would be 'an evasion of our responsibilities.'⁸⁴⁷ If Rosebery only had been concerned with holding Uganda irrespective of other 'responsibilities' such as the slave trade or missionaries, as has been suggested in the strategic historiography, he is unlikely to have rejected this offer.

On the 29 November, Gerald Portal received the news that Rosebery had appointed him the commissioner for Uganda and that he was to 'start as soon as possible.'⁸⁴⁸ Portal was a rising star among British diplomatists, having recently served as Sir Evelyn Baring's assistant in Egypt. The young Consul-General and Commissioner also had clear views on the inadequate nature of the IBEA's administration of the British sphere; views that would be expressed in both the numerous despatches he sent back over the summer of 1893, and in his final report submitted

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁶ 'The Rhodes-Schnadhorst Correspondence', *The Times*, 12 October 1901, p. 9.

⁸⁴⁷ Rosebery Memorandum, 3 November 1892, FO 403/173, TNA.

⁸⁴⁸ Gerald Portal Diary Entry, 29 November 1892, Gerald Portal Papers, Rhodes House, Oxford University.

to Rosebery upon return to Britain the following year.⁸⁴⁹ What, however would form the main topic of Portal's official report, was the question of 'transport and communication,' namely the Uganda Railway – a tool of imperialism perceived to be essential for the retention and development of Uganda, and a question which will be detailed in the following chapter.

In anticipation of the report that would seal both Uganda and the IBEA's fate, the company launched a second wave of its public relations campaign in the autumn of 1893. This came in the form of two books: *The Rise of Our East-African Empire*⁸⁵⁰ and *British East Africa*.⁸⁵¹ The former was two volumes by Frederick Lugard and the latter, a more academic account of the IBEA's history, by its Assistant Secretary P.L. McDermott. Perhaps unsurprising, what Low terms McDermott's 'apologia' was overshadowed by Captain Lugard's 'handsome' tales from Africa.⁸⁵² But also unlike Lugard, McDermott did not assert that the company was present in East Africa on geo-strategic grounds. His summary of events, largely based on his own recollections, press clippings from *The Times* and official government speeches, left out geo-strategy. It is unlikely that such a centrally placed agent of the IBEA would avoid raising this issue, had it not been for the fact that it was simply irrelevant.

⁸⁴⁹ Portal to Rosebery, Private, 4 February 1893, Gerald Portal Papers, Rhodes House, Oxford University.

⁸⁵⁰ Frederick John Dealtry Lugard, *The Rise of our East African Empire. Early efforts in Nyasaland and Uganda* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1893).

⁸⁵¹ P.L. McDermott, *British East Africa, or IBEA: A History of the Formation and Work of the Imperial British East Africa Company* (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd, 1893).

⁸⁵² Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, p. 81.

Conclusion

The events outlined above which transpired between 1890 and 1893 are relevant to the history of the partition of East Africa on three separate accounts. Firstly, they challenge the orthodox historiography which suggests Salisbury attached primacy to the retention of Uganda; secondly they demonstrate Rosebery's crucial agency and his motives; and thirdly it shows both how important the Uganda question was to the British public and how influential public opinion was to policymaking over the issue. In this respect it also exposes how influential networks and religious leaders rapidly could mobilise popular support over issues which intersected concepts such as national honour, anti-slavery or Christianity. The policy-decisions made in the autumn of 1892 proved to be of equal significance to those of 1886 and 1890 in terms of facilitating the eventual annexation of East Africa to the British Empire. Without Rosebery's decisive intervention, the IBEA would not have been able to sustain its occupation and Uganda would likely have fallen outside the British orbit.

Apart from its potential for counterfactual speculations, the period is particularly well-suited for testing the dominant historiographical narrative and has revealed that Salisbury made policy-decisions entirely inconsistent with this strategic explanatory model. The Conservative Prime Minister exposed himself as largely indifferent to the fate of Uganda on two separate occasions. He refused to assist the IBEA to sustain its occupation both in the autumn of 1891 and in the spring of 1892. Instead of dispensing a relatively minor annual subsidy of £40,000, Salisbury indirectly left the responsibility of holding this territory, which allegedly was of critical geo-strategic significance to the British Empire, on the narrow financial shoulders of a missionary organisation – the Church Missionary Society. If Salisbury had perceived Uganda to be of any strategic relevance for Egypt or, in particular the route to India, then surely a

grant of this diminutive magnitude would not have prevented his government from taking decisive action.

Evidently the protagonist himself did not ascribe Uganda anywhere near the same importance as the later generations of imperial historians eager to posit novel interpretations of British expansion during the partition of Africa. Although Salisbury's sanction of the company's withdrawal was done with little fanfare, it was far from inadvertent, hence his actions undermines the whole interpretative framework that has been constructed surrounding British policy in 1880-90s East Africa.

With this historiographical 'red herring' extricated, the true range of motives which eventually led to the full incorporation of East Africa into the British Empire can be fully explored and elucidated. Contrary to what Low claimed in his analysis of the public campaigns concerning the Uganda question in 1892, the British public were not ignorant of the Foreign Office's ostensible 'real thinking' on the matter.⁸⁵³ Perceived in terms of the arguments Rosebery himself used in his private correspondence with Gladstone, the petitioners were remarkably well informed about the factors which ultimately led to the Liberal government's intervention: massacres of missionaries and their converts; resumption of the slave trade; a blow to British trade; and a dishonour to the British name were the same reasons Rosebery had argued privately. Presiding over a repeated Khartoum was also a disastrous spectre which haunted the new foreign secretary, surely aware that his political reputation relied on avoiding another 'Gordon incident,' but at this time with a Bishop Tucker rather than a General Gordon.

⁸⁵³ Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, p. 78.

Although it is evident that the slave trade was not prevalent in any substantial measure in the kingdom of Buganda at the time, it was that particular matter, however erroneous, which the British public primarily associated with the wider region. The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society pushed this agenda both as a genuine expression of concern, but also from a need to remain relevant in a world which increasingly had rid itself of slavery. The 'Uganda Question' had struck a powerful resonance in late-Victorian civic consciousness; a consciousness that was eager to export its Victorian brand of values encapsulated in Livingstone's three tenets to far flung imperial outposts. But it was the risk of abandonment, the removal of Britain's protecting and 'civilising' *aegis* that was the most emotionally evocative for the British public in the heyday of the 'New Imperialism.' To do so, it was believed, would not only lead to disastrous consequences in Uganda, but perhaps more importantly, it would constitute a national humiliation and dishonour the British name. Since Britain, the nation which had identified itself as the strongest and most civilised among the civilised nations, would be exposed as too weak to live up to its professed ideals.⁸⁵⁴

This may serve to explain why the question over the evacuation of a country, which few had heard of until that very same autumn of 1892, caused such a fervent public response. What the campaigns orchestrated by the three parties most interested in the plight of Uganda, namely the IBEA, the CMS and the Anti-Slavery Society initiated, soon took on a life of its own in the imagination of the British public. The 'Uganda Question' should thus not be simply perceived as a question of whether or not to abandon an obscure kingdom in Equatorial

⁸⁵⁴ See: Seymour Drescher, "Emperors of the World: British Abolition and Imperialism," in *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic*, ed. Derek R. Peterson (Athens, USA: Ohio University Press, 2010), pp. 129-49.

Central Africa, but as one of whether to abandon the very ideals and values which defined the British imperial identity.

The final chapter concerns the technology which enabled Britain to substitute its predominantly maritime engagement with a continental presence in East Africa. The Uganda Railway, as it became known, was central to the British vision for the region throughout the partition process, both in terms of economic development and for execution of anti-slave trade policy.

Chapter Six:

The Full Incorporation of East Africa and the Uganda Railway: Anti-Slave Trade Policy on the Cheap, 1885-96

The Uganda Railway, extending from Mombasa to the eastern shores of the Victoria Nyanza, was one of the British Empire's costliest infrastructure projects. Despite the substantial capital outlay of £5.5 million,⁸⁵⁵ it served upon completion in 1902 only a miniscule market and it was this seeming futility that quickly earned it the epithet 'the lunatic line'.⁸⁵⁶ Retrospectively the railway may have epitomised the epoch of new imperialism's naïve fervour for territorial expansion – an enthusiasm for empire that neither did, nor ever could, meet the expectations invested in it. However, to its contemporary promoters the railway was regarded as anything but an ill-conceived vanity project. It was heralded a *sine qua non* to the retention and development of East Africa, no less than an essential component for the spread of 'legitimate commerce' and the civilisation that it was believed attended it to the interior of the continent. It represented a logical conclusion to the continuing influence of Britain's honourable anti-slave trade policy.

The way in which the majority of the historiography has reconciled its substantial cost with its apparent lack of commercial utility, has been to position the railway within the orthodox strategic explanatory model – since naturally, no expense was too great for the defence of the empire. But although this line of reasoning offers a tempting proposition, it is divorced

⁸⁵⁵ Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, "Coping with the contradictions: the development of the colonial state in Kenya, 1895–1914," *The Journal of African History* 20, no. 4 (1979): 487-505. DOI: 10.1017/S0021853700017503

⁸⁵⁶ Miller, *The Lunatic Express*.

from the documentary evidence which suggests that a very different set of considerations were at play antecedent to the decision to construct the line. It is clear that from very early on in the process which eventually led to the incorporation of East Africa into the British Empire, the question of transport, and in particular the construction of a railway, was integral to William Mackinnon's vision. Due to geographical features such as the absence of navigable rivers and biological quirks such as the tse-tse fly, all movement of goods relied on human porters. Obviously this was a mode of transport which was too slow, too expensive and too unreliable as any permanent solution.

However, it should also be seen in conjunction with the other railway projects that had either already been realised or were under way in the European colonial empires such as in the Congo Free State or in South Africa. By the 1890s, the Indian railway network had matured to an extent that it had given rise to its own railway construction industry, and it was these Indian master masons that would eventually construct the Uganda line.⁸⁵⁷ One might suggest that this revolutionary piece of transportation technology formed one of the key factors that enabled the partition of Africa – from Leopold's Congo Free State in the west, to the northward expansion of the Cape Colony in the south, and indeed of Mackinnon's sphere in the east. The railways enabled the European powers to expand their domains from small coastal footholds to vast continental holdings that extended into the very interior of Africa. Thus, regions which had been regarded about as accessible as the far side of the moon became – once the rails had been laid – only a few days train ride away.

⁸⁵⁷ See: Hill, *Permanent Way*, p. 151.

The railways had in the decades prior to the 1890s, enjoyed remarkable international success and not only in densely populated regions.⁸⁵⁸ When constructed in more desolate areas – epitomised by the Pacific Railways crossing the American West – they had created markets where there were none, so there was little reason for its contemporary promoters to doubt in its inevitable success even in underpopulated East Africa. By linking the coastal city of Mombasa with the Victoria Nyanza, Mackinnon could tap into what was hoped to be a large inland market, since the lake could be plied by steamers so as to connect the various producers with the network hub at Kisumu for transport to the coast and trans-shipment on British-India Steam Navigation Company steamers to international markets.⁸⁵⁹ What the railway then facilitated was that it made landlocked high-bulk products such as agricultural produce marketable. Testament to this transformative effect is the subsequent status of the Kenyan highlands as the granary of East Africa.

Although it was not only in commercial terms that the railway was regarded by the British policy establishment or public – it was its potential as a tool with which to suppress the slave trade that the line became notorious in Britain’s imperial *milieux*. As both the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and indeed Salisbury were aware, a railway constructed to the interior would also shift British anti-slave trade policy from its focus on the coast to the inland. The former had advocated this strategy for years, but with the conclusion of the General Act at Brussels in 1890, and Britain’s ratification in 1892, the radical change in policy became sanctioned under international treaty obligations.⁸⁶⁰ Contrary to what is suggested in most of

⁸⁵⁸ See: Francois Crouzet, *The Victorian Economy* (London: Methuen, 1982), pp. 278-316.

⁸⁵⁹ See: Munro, *Maritime Enterprise and Empire*, pp. 417-21, 453-6.

⁸⁶⁰ Brussels Act, Article 1, Sections 2-3. ‘the most effective means of counteracting the slave-trade in the interior of Africa [is the] gradual establishment in the interior [...] of strongly occupied stations [and] the construction of roads, and in particular of railroads, connecting the advanced stations with the coast.’ For the full treaty text of the General Act of the Brussels Conference relative to the African Slave Trade, &c. see: Hertslet, *Map of Africa III*, No. 130, pp. 488-517.

the historiography of the Uganda Railway, it will be argued that Salisbury was genuinely motivated by philanthropic concerns in his advocacy of the railway. In particular it will be demonstrated that there was a prevailing perception of the line as a cost-saving and humanitarian measure, a way in which Britain could execute its anti-slave trade policy on the cheap. Although this might seem counterintuitive, or perhaps ironic, granted what would ultimately be the tremendous cost of the project, it was held that by constructing the railway Britain would be enabled to suppress the inland slave trade and eradicate the trafficking at its source. This would render the costlier East African anti-slave trade naval squadron redundant.

The chapter will first examine how the railway was integral to Mackinnon's plans for East Africa over the 1880s and it will then consider how the prospect influenced government policy toward the Imperial British East Africa Company. It will then investigate the effect of humanitarian lobbying activity and how the railway became an important issue for British pressure groups such as the Anti-Slavery Society or the Church Missionary Society. Lastly it will demonstrate the extent to which the Uganda Railway was a result of Salisbury and Rosebery's agency and that their motives for advancing it in Parliament were principally out of economic and humanitarian considerations.

The Partition of East Africa and the Railway, 1885-90

The construction of the Uganda Railway commenced in 1896, a full six years after the kingdom of Buganda was incorporated in the British sphere of influence and a year after the region was declared a British protectorate. But despite the fact that building only began after the

formal annexation process was completed, the plans for its construction had been a key determinant of British planning and policymaking toward East Africa over the almost two preceding decades – initially on a private level, but as British involvement increased the question assumed an official character. The first recorded instance of the railway being mentioned was during the National Trade Union Congress of 1879.⁸⁶¹ William Mackinnon, the owner of the British-India Steam Navigation Company had in 1872 expanded his steamship packet service to Zanzibar and half a decade later his commercial vision for the region had evolved into something altogether more comprehensive.⁸⁶² Pre-dating the European scramble for African territories in the 1880-90s, he sought in 1877, a concession from the Sultan of Zanzibar to establish a new ‘East India Company in Africa.’ The plan was however scuppered by Salisbury who secretly intervened by instructing the Sultan Barghash not to award Mackinnon the rights to the mainland.⁸⁶³ Marie de Kiewiet who authored the first scholarly account of the IBEA, rightly hypothesised Salisbury’s motives as derived from a wish not to precipitate a large-scale partition of the region.⁸⁶⁴ But this early sojourn proved not to be the conclusion to British involvement in Zanzibar and its environs, rather the prologue to the partition proper of the 1880s and 90s.

It was not until the German declaration of a protectorate on the East African mainland in the spring of 1885 that the question of a railway re-emerged. With Germany’s challenge to British hegemony, came the retort from Britain’s men on the spot; Consul-General Sir John Kirk and his deputy Frederic Holmwood. The latter lobbied for the construction of a railway with such

⁸⁶¹ Trades Union Congress Report, 1879, p. 31 cited in Knight, *Imperialist Sentiment*, pp. 20-1.

⁸⁶² See: Munro, *Maritime Enterprise and Empire*, pp. 181-212.

⁸⁶³ Kiewiet, *The History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*, pp. 1-45.

⁸⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-5.

zeal that it provisionally came to be known as the 'Holmwood railway scheme.'⁸⁶⁵ As a man of his time, he held unflinching belief in the radical transformative power of railways and stated to Mackinnon's business partner, the Manchester cotton magnate James Hutton, that 'it is impossible to believe [...] that any forces could successfully continue to resist the civilizing influences of a railway...'⁸⁶⁶ Holmwood had the preceding month argued in similar terms in a despatch to the foreign secretary, 'the proposed railway [...] will most effectually neutralize every pending evil, as well as confer incalculable good on African and our commerce.'⁸⁶⁷ Hence the railway was brought forward as a catch-all solution to the composite policy-considerations Britain faced in East Africa.

Holmwood's views were echoed by both Kirk and the young Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Kitchener who, in his report concerning 'British Lines of Communications with the Indian Ocean', had identified Mombasa as the ideal vantage from which to strategically counter the German position at Dar-es-Salaam, and to pursue Britain's anti-slave trade policy. Importantly Kitchener perceived the coastal-town as the only suited terminus for the Uganda Railway:

Mombasa is the most probable port from which any railway system for the opening up of the interior would start, and its possession would give England a commercial base, without which it would be impossible to develop the trade of Central Africa.⁸⁶⁸

Whilst Kirk had briefly contemplated the port of Ushambala which commanded the Pangani Valley, he found it unsuitable for large vessels and too unhealthy for Europeans. Instead he

⁸⁶⁵ Anderson, Memorandum, 2 July 1885, FO 403/94, TNA.

⁸⁶⁶ Holmwood to Hutton, 10 April 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

⁸⁶⁷ Holmwood to Granville, 27 March 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

⁸⁶⁸ Kitchener to Foreign Office, Memorandum, 22 December 1885, FO 403/96, TNA.

was 'satisfied that no port on the coast can compare with that of Mombasa, in case it is ever seriously intended to construct a railway to the interior.'⁸⁶⁹

As declared by Anderson in the summer of 1885, Britain's interests in East Africa were exclusively 'humanitarian and commercial.'⁸⁷⁰ What Holmwood had alluded to in his reference to 'every pending evil' was the slave trade – the illicit human trafficking Britain was pledged against. Indeed he professed explicitly that construction of the railway: 'if accompanied with the political measure [would] complete the work which has so long been carried on, at such an immense cost, by England in connection with her anti-slavery policy.'⁸⁷¹ Hence, the railway posed such an ideal proposition since it addressed both aspects of British interests in the region: it would facilitate legitimate trade and suppress the slave trade. In particular it would make British commercial activities on the mainland sustainable over the long term – a form of 'effective occupation' which was essential to check any further expansion of the German protectorate. Implicitly, the railway question turned on whether Britain desired to maintain a presence in East Africa or retire in favour of Germany. This commercial and humanitarian formula was the guise the railway assumed in 1885 and would remain so throughout the following decade.

Despite Holmwood's internal Foreign Office advocacy, it was private actions that took place outside official channels which determined British reactions to Germany's intrusion. Nevertheless, the railway assumed primacy also in these plans. Harry Johnston, on a botanical expedition for Kew Gardens to Mount Kilimanjaro, had in 1884 acquired treaty rights to a small section of land in Taveta next to the mountain.⁸⁷² He had initially offered the treaty to

⁸⁶⁹ Kirk to Salisbury, 26 October 1885, FO 403/95, TNA.

⁸⁷⁰ Anderson, Memorandum, 9 June 1885, FO 881/5122, TNA.

⁸⁷¹ Holmwood to Granville, 27 March 1885, FO 403/93, TNA.

⁸⁷² Johnston to Fitzmaurice, 10 July 1884, FO 881/5037, TNA.

the Foreign Office, recommending the construction of a railway so as to make it commercially sustainable, but governmental inaction led him to instead present the treaty to Hutton and Mackinnon.⁸⁷³ It was thus on the basis of Johnston's territorial rights that the 'Syndicate for establishing British Commerce & Influence in East Africa,' which in 1888 would receive a royal charter as the Imperial British East Africa Company, was formed in 1885. From its very inception and pre-dating the chartered company itself, British commercial interests in the region viewed a connection with the interior as paramount. Indeed, the second of the syndicate's three stated aims was 'To open a direct route to Victoria Nyanza & the Soudan & thereby establish stations & commerce in the interior of E Africa.'⁸⁷⁴ The recollections contained in Anderson's September 1892 memorandum confirm the emphasis on reaching the interior.⁸⁷⁵ Uganda and its Upper Nile environs were perceived to be the economic heartland of the region – controlling it was the key to the British syndicate and later chartered company's commercial success. This was understood to be only achievable with a railway.

Prior to the negotiation of the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886, the railway was vociferously lobbied for by every interested party, from Mackinnon to Stanley and in particular by the new Consul General to Zanzibar, Charles Euan Smith. Upon his arrival at Zanzibar from his ill-fated Emin Relief Expedition, Stanley had made three recommendations or 'great measures' to the IBEA, the second of which was: 'the immediate construction of a railway between Mombasa and Port-Kavirondo on the Victoria Nyanza'⁸⁷⁶ This measure was held by Stanley to be critical for achieving the first on his list of priorities: 'the entire

⁸⁷³ Harry Johnston to Hutton, 31 October 1885, Box 17, Files 66-68, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS.

⁸⁷⁴ 'Syndicate for establishing British Commerce & Influence in East Africa & for relieving Emin Bey.'" 27 November 1886, Box 17, Files 66-68, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS.

⁸⁷⁵ Anderson, Memorandum, 13 September 1892, FO 84/2258, TNA.

⁸⁷⁶ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Private, 30 December 1889, Volume 79, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House.

subjugation of Uganda to English interests.⁸⁷⁷ Euan Smith estimated the cost of constructing such a line to be between '2 ½ to 3 millions sterling' but despite the substantial capital requirements involved, he entertained 'little doubt that, with the enthusiasm that will be aroused by Stanley's presence and personal pleading, this sum will be easily obtainable. The construction of a railway would mean the commercial downfall of Zanzibar and would greatly aid in the satisfactory solution of the East-African question.'⁸⁷⁸

Once news of the personal scramble for Uganda between Jackson and Peters had become known in Zanzibar three months later, Euan Smith reiterated his arguments, but with a new-found urgency: '...they [IBEA] should gird themselves to the task and decide on the construction and immediate commencement on a large scale of the railway from Mombasa to Victoria Nyanza...'⁸⁷⁹ Again the issue of cost was trivialised by the man on the spot who thought that 'in the present temper of the English people and backed by the eloquence of Mr. Stanley, Sir William Mackinnon should have no difficulty in attaining any quantity of money for the realization of the schemes in question.'⁸⁸⁰ Clearly, Foreign Office officials judged public opinion to be supportive of the venture.

A Railway Survey, 1890-92

As the previous two chapters demonstrated, the political landscape in East Africa had by 1890 been significantly altered. Whilst the Anglo-German Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty had incorporated Uganda into the British sphere, the conclusion of the Brussels Anti-Slave Trade

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁹ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Private, 31 March 1890, Volume 80, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House.

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid.

Conference afforded a legal rationale to construct the railway. Britain's ratification of the General Act for the Suppression of the Slave Trade in 1892 led to a radical shift in British anti-slave trade policy.⁸⁸¹ It was a move away from an entirely maritime focus on suppression of slave trafficking, or the 'export trade' through the use of naval squadrons stationed off the east coast of Africa, to a continental and land-based strategy in which railways formed a fundamental part. It was also a shift in policy that Salisbury initially had been reluctant to commit to.⁸⁸² These new treaty commitments had certainly not gone unnoticed to the parties most interested in Britain's East Africa policy such as the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, the Church Missionary Society or indeed the IBEA – in particular the two former made their voices heard during the Uganda debates in the autumn of 1892.⁸⁸³

Over the next two years, all three bodies seized upon the treaty's Article I Section III which emphasised 'The construction of roads, and in particular railways, connecting the advanced stations with the coast.'⁸⁸⁴ A railway had however already been constructed in the British sphere in East Africa.⁸⁸⁵ The 'ambitiously' entitled Central African Railway was inaugurated at Mombasa on 29 August 1890, but the 30 miles of light railway was obviously unequal to the task of connecting the coast with the Victoria Nyanza.⁸⁸⁶ Mackinnon seized quickly on the opportunity offered by the Brussels Act and was first to point out the impending change in official policy. Not entirely deprived of self-interest, he reminded Salisbury of these obligations:

⁸⁸¹ See: Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, pp. 292-314, 315-19.

⁸⁸² Minute by Salisbury, 1 September 1888, FO 84/1927, TNA.

⁸⁸³ See: Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, p. 62, and: Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, pp. 147-76.

⁸⁸⁴ General Act for the Repression of African Slave Trade, Brussels 2nd July 1890 [translation] printed in full S. Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, p. 346.

⁸⁸⁵ Euan Smith to Salisbury, 29 August 1890, FO 84/2063, TNA.

⁸⁸⁶ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Private, 2 September 1890, Volume 80, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House, and Mackinnon to Salisbury 26 March 1890, FO 84/2078, TNA.

When the Company was formed the British Government had not promised specifically to do more for the slave trade suppression than might be implied by the continuance of the Cruisers on the Coast. At Brussels however they came under heavy engagements to do a great deal more, and it is on the shoulders of this Company as representing British Dominion in East Africa that the tasks must fall.⁸⁸⁷

The company had however an excellent track record of upholding this imperial interest in their sphere of influence. According to Mackinnon his company had 'secured the freedom of 4000 slaves, while the average number liberated by the operations of Her Majesty's Cruisers does not exceed 200 annually.'⁸⁸⁸ One of these 'new and most onerous duties' was railway construction which he urged Salisbury's government to support, either through a guarantee of 3 per cent of a capital outlay of 1 to 1.5 million or a direct grant of between £30-40,000 p.a. for twenty five years.⁸⁸⁹ IBEA planned not only a railway to the lake, but also to 'place steamers upon it [so as to] thereby prevent the iniquitous raids made by the Arabs for the purpose of procuring slaves.' In Mackinnon's estimation the railway would reduce transportation costs by 'over 80 per cent' relative to slave porterage, thus removing the demand for porter slaves: 'The Government can thus convert the cruel and guilty slave borne traffic into a legitimate and useful trade.'⁸⁹⁰

Evidently suppression of the slave trade formed the IBEA's principal argument in their quest for a government subsidy. However this humanitarian engagement was also reflected in Salisbury's *own* pronouncements and correspondence. As the fourth chapter has already shown, Salisbury had declared at the conclusion of the Anglo-German Heligoland-Zanzibar

⁸⁸⁷ Mackinnon to Salisbury, 17 December 1890, FO 84/2097, TNA.

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid.

treaty that it would 'furnish a powerful assistance' against the slave trade.⁸⁹¹ In a speech given almost a year later, he predicted that 'whenever that railway can be made I believe that the end of the African exportation of the slave will have been attained.'⁸⁹²

But it was not just rhetoric playing to an audience sympathetic to anti-slavery. In an internal memorandum he argued that: 'the railway would dry up the machinery by which the slave caravans are kept in action.'⁸⁹³ Salisbury clearly linked construction of the railway with slave trade suppression. The Prime Minister offered a detailed explanation of the mechanism with which the railway would achieve this abolitionist end:

But if the caravans for the purpose of legitimate commerce were to cease, as under the influence of the railway they must necessarily do, slave caravans could not possibly continue. In the first place the occupation of those who accompany caravans, & of those who feed them on the road, would be so greatly destroyed by the disappearance of the legitimate traffic, that they would not remain in existence in quantities sufficient to maintain the slave traffic. The slave traffic by itself, hampered & hindered, always uncertain of success, & liable to the greatest risks, would not be a sufficient occupation to maintain the numbers whose cooperation would be necessary; [...] But the railway would have a still more effective operation, in that it would make the use of a caravan at all so suspicious as to carry with it in every case the condemnation of slave trading. A man could use a caravan for no purpose except for slave trading; & therefore the knowledge that he used it would expose him to punishment; & would still more expose to punishment the merchants by whose aid alone such things could be organised. Conducting,

⁸⁹¹ Salisbury to Malet, 14 June 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA

⁸⁹² Speech held by Salisbury in Glasgow 20 May 1891, cited in Cecil, *Life of Robert IV*, p. 311.

⁸⁹³ Salisbury Memorandum, 13 January 1891, FO 84/2156, TNA.

taking part in, aiding, organising, or supplying a caravan, would all become synonymous with slave trading.⁸⁹⁴

It was on these grounds that Salisbury, in January 1891, sought Parliamentary funds for a survey of the terrain traversed by the projected railway.⁸⁹⁵ Naturally Salisbury was also cognisant of its economic potential. Without one it could hardly be expected that the company could attain profitability or that the region would attain any measure of economic self-sufficiency.

An entire network of railways had been built in India over the mid-nineteenth century and by the 1880s and 1890s reports of their profitability was being received in Whitehall.⁸⁹⁶ If the railway had the desired effect of eliminating the slave trade in the region, the Royal Navy would also free up the capacity and cost of the five cruisers it maintained in East African waters and make them deployable in areas of greater strategic interest.⁸⁹⁷ It was with these arguments in mind, that Salisbury, the former chairman of the Great Eastern Railway Company,⁸⁹⁸ already responsible for expanding the British rail network together with his board member George Wodehouse Currie,⁸⁹⁹ sent a letter to the Treasury which argued strongly for the necessary funds to construct the line.⁹⁰⁰

In the two letters he sent to the Treasury, Salisbury stated 'that the construction of a railway is the most economical as well as the most effective' way in which Britain can meet its

⁸⁹⁴ Salisbury to Treasury, Memorandum, 13 January 1891, FO 84/2156, TNA.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁶ Government of India to FO, FO 2/558, TNA. Administration Report on the Railways in India for 1894-95, Chapter VIII, pp. 110. Net earnings as a percentage of capital outlay derived from all Indian railways up from 5.46% to 5.69% p.a.

⁸⁹⁷ Treasury to FO, 10 February 1891, FO 84/2156, TNA.

⁸⁹⁸ Board of the Great Eastern Railway Company (G.E.R. Co), 6 February 1868, RAIL 227/6, TNA. As Chairman Viscount Cranbourne MP, appears as The Marquis of Salisbury MP on the 21 April 1868, RAIL 227/6, TNA.

⁸⁹⁹ The G.E.R. Co's Chairman of the Finance Committee was George Wodehouse Currie, the elder brother of Sir Philip Currie, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1889-1894.

⁹⁰⁰ Salisbury to Treasury, Memorandum, 13 January 1891, FO 84/2156, TNA.

humanitarian obligations under the Brussels Act.⁹⁰¹ A great inland trading network was envisioned with the railway as a land corridor and, with the introduction of steamers, the lake itself an equatorial hub. But Salisbury emphasised that the project was principally of a humanitarian nature – ‘actuated rather by philanthropic’ than commercial motives.⁹⁰² Despite what arguably would have been an opportune moment to invoke a weighty imperial concern such as the defence of Egypt, he concluded his letters *without mentioning any strategic considerations*. Rather, he sketched a potential profit sharing arrangement between the company and the government whereby any revenues exceeding 5% p.a. would be equally shared between the two parties. The Treasury did not offer any objections. In embellishing Salisbury’s arguments, the Treasury even added that the cost of the railway would be partly offset by the £100,000 annual maintenance costs in addition to £8-10,000 in payable bounties of the Anti-Slavery Squadron operating outside the East African coast.⁹⁰³

It would thus lay weight to two principal considerations when giving assent to grant the necessary funds; the legal obligations Britain had recently undertaken at the Brussels Conference; and secondly that the railway was an economising measure, saving the annual expenditure of the East African Naval Squadron and of manning the coast to interior corridor with a string of armed posts.⁹⁰⁴ Granted that the House of Commons would continue its anti-slavery policy, implying the maintenance of an anti-slavery squadron costing £110,000 p.a. and assuming that the railway would make this naval unit redundant through the total eradication of slave trafficking within the British sphere, the annual cost saving would amount to £85,000 p.a. over the 25-year period. It is likely that the Treasury had taken due note of

⁹⁰¹ Ibid.

⁹⁰² FO to Treasury, Draft, 20 December 1890, FO 84/2097, TNA. Salisbury’s minute: ‘a very good draft’.

⁹⁰³ Treasury to FO, 10 February 1891, FO 84/2156, TNA.

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Salisbury's argument as to the favourable effect upon 'commerce & industry' it would have, as opposed to the singular humanitarian purpose fulfilled by a purely military cordon.⁹⁰⁵ Hence, the railway project advanced by Salisbury was by its contemporaries perceived to be a form of *humanitarianism on-the-cheap*, which is a point often obscured by its substantial expense of £5.5 million. The IBEA had thus in January 1891 secured the assent for a 25-year Treasury guarantee of 2% annual interest on a capital sum not exceeding £1.25 million to finance a metre gauge railway from Mombasa to the Victoria Nyanza, but a Parliamentary approval still remained. Parliament, it was calculated, would be more inclined to provide a financial guarantee with a surveyed route so as to avoid future cost overruns.

The Issues Raised by a Railway Survey

'In short' the Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir George Goschen informed IBEA director and MP Sir Lewis Pelly, 'the House of Commons would reject a Bill unsupported by a Survey'.⁹⁰⁶ In anticipation of parliamentary opposition to any bill expanding Britain's imperial commitments, Goschen would 'test the feeling of the House' by presenting an estimate for a railway survey. Although the survey was less than the full loan guarantee the IBEA had requested from Salisbury, it was 'better than nothing' as it would make public the company's connection with the government.⁹⁰⁷ It was anticipated that the official affiliation would serve to reduce the risk associated with the project in the eyes of private investors. However, the decision came late in the parliamentary year and with the summer adjournment at the end of July imminent, the Leader of the House had promised not to introduce any matter of a

⁹⁰⁵ Salisbury to Treasury, 13 January 1891, FO 84/2156, TNA.

⁹⁰⁶ Pelly to Mackinnon, 24 June 1891, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS.

⁹⁰⁷ Ibid.

contentious nature.⁹⁰⁸ Describing the bill as ‘in the highest degree contentious’,⁹⁰⁹ Sir William Harcourt urged Goschen to postpone its debate until the next session of parliament. In agreement he replied that the postponement did not imply any deviation from the policy the government had obliged itself to follow under the General Act.⁹¹⁰ Jackson, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, had assured Pelly of ‘no withdrawal or change of policy on the part of Government’ and suggested the IBEA proceed with the survey in order to save time.⁹¹¹ The commencement of a survey would supposedly not confer any financial risk to the directors as they ‘may not only trust but may rely upon the Government introducing and doing their best to pass the vote and reimburse moneys.’⁹¹² Under this understanding the IBEA sent an expedition under the leadership of Captain Macdonald to survey the projected route of the railway. Although the postponement made political sense, the logic did not translate to the IBEA’s financial liquidity, which at this point was under severe duress.⁹¹³

Salisbury had himself written to Goschen earlier in September and stated that if he examined the IBEA’s finances he would ‘not be very much pleased by the result’ and that they had ‘undertaken a speculation which cannot pay unless there are minerals.’ Despite admitting that ‘there is not much to be done in the way of trade, there is a great work of civilisation before them.’⁹¹⁴ Salisbury also invoked the economising rationale, as the government ‘is under a permanent obligation to spend money upon the slave trade, judicious assistance in

⁹⁰⁸ Kiewiet, *History of the British East Africa Company*, p. 284.

⁹⁰⁹ Hansard, HoC Debate, 20 July 1891, col. 1760.

⁹¹⁰ Hansard, HoC Debate, 20 July 1891, cols. 1759-60.

⁹¹¹ Memorandum of an interview between Pelly, Jackson and Welby, 20 July 1890, FO 84/2173, TNA.

⁹¹² *Ibid.*

⁹¹³ 60% of the initial subscribed capital had been spent by the 3rd quarter 1891 Financial Statement, 3rd February 1892, Mackinnon Papers, SOAS.

⁹¹⁴ Salisbury to Goschen, 20 September 1891, cited in Cecil, *Salisbury Vol. IV*, pp. 313-14.

measures which will kill the slave trade may be a very profitable outlay of money.⁹¹⁵

Importantly he sketched a compromise solution:

If I had my way and could command the assent of the House of Commons, I should put two steamers on each of the three lakes – Nyasa, Nyanza, and Tanganyika. Then put two more on the Tana and make the short railway from Tana to Nyanza lake. The slave trade off the East African coast south of Gardafui would be at an end. Nothing would then remain except watching the Red Sea...⁹¹⁶

Nor in his letter to Goschen had Salisbury made any mention of strategic concerns. Rather he had construed his arguments favouring railway construction entirely within the framework of Britain's anti-slave trade policy.

Salisbury's proposed compromise of a 'short railway' coupled with the use of steamers would not only incur cost savings for the Treasury, but the proposition also runs counter to any strategic intention. Indeed Salisbury's suggestion was a modified version of a proposal Mackinnon had sent to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society only two weeks earlier.⁹¹⁷ The Tana River was not easily navigable, only light craft was able to negotiate the distance between the coast and the inland railway terminus due to the highly variable water levels – this consequently reduced the entire transport system's troop carrying potential. Should the railway have been intended as a strategic weapon providing logistical support for an offensive against the Mahdist Sudan, both reliability and a much greater volume of soldiers and impedimenta would be needed than what was required for the protection of native villages against the operations of slave raiders. The fact that Salisbury was willing to offer this

⁹¹⁵ Ibid.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid.

⁹¹⁷ Mackinnon to Thomas Fowell Buxton, 8 September 1891, S22-G4, Territorial, Anti-Slavery Papers, Rhodes House, University of Oxford.

compromise solution, and thus reduce the railway to simply a facilitator for low-volume trade and the provider logistical support for a relatively small number of troops would indicate that his motives, *as he himself stated*, were principally rooted in advancing legitimate trade and suppressing the slave trade.⁹¹⁸

Since Lugard's administration of Uganda drained the company's coffers of £40,000 annually and contributed nothing in return, a decision to evacuate the kingdom was reached to prevent bankruptcy.⁹¹⁹ In the hope of forcing the government's hand, the board of directors communicated the result of their deliberations to the FO on 31 July 1891 that the IBEA's presence in Uganda would be extinguished by the end of that year.⁹²⁰ But as was described in the previous chapter, the Church Missionary Society did not welcome the news of the company's impending withdrawal. After Mackinnon had himself pledged £10,000, the CMS managed to raise the remaining £30,000 through private donations and the IBEA was thus able to sustain Lugard's administration for another year.⁹²¹

The CMS had by the autumn of 1891 not only identified the continued presence of the company as important for the security of their missionaries and converts in Uganda, but had also deduced that the railway was vital for the survival of the company itself.⁹²² In a special committee meeting of the CMS, where both the former Consul-General to Zanzibar Charles Euan Smith and the IBEA director George Mackenzie were in attendance, the railway question was raised. The board-members, who doubtlessly had been well-advised by the IBEA

⁹¹⁸ Salisbury to Goschen, 20 September 1891, cited in Cecil, *Salisbury Vol. IV*, pp. 313-14.

⁹¹⁹ Anderson, Memorandum of an interview with Lorne, Kirk and Mackinnon, 31 July 1891, FO 84/2171, TNA.

⁹²⁰ Ibid.

⁹²¹ IBEA to FO, 11 October 1891, FO 84/2249, TNA, see also IBEA Report to Shareholders, 25 April 1892, FO 84/2248, TNA.

⁹²² CMS Appeal, Urgent and Special: Withdrawal of the Imperial British East Africa Company from Uganda, November 1891, CMS/G/Y/A7/1/2, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

representative, held that the company's survival was inextricably linked to what was euphemistically termed the 'cooperation' of the government whose policy in turn was ultimately derived from 'the declaration of the Brussels Conference for the suppression of slavery.'⁹²³ The CMS hoped that this 'cooperation' would be forthcoming as earmarked subsidies and hence take 'the form of constructing a Railway to the lake.'⁹²⁴ With such guarantees it was believed that:

...the prospects of the Company's enterprise would be so favourably affected as to justify the confidence of the Board in its ability thereon to raise the required capital to warrant their continued occupation of Uganda.⁹²⁵

The railway was also an issue that the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society had raised at frequent intervals in its committee meetings between October 1891 and August 1894.⁹²⁶ Prompted by the prominent abolitionist Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton⁹²⁷ about the 'great danger which would befall the Antislavery cause by the abandonment of the Kingdom of Uganda' the society had in October 1891 resolved to urge Salisbury both to halt the abandonment and 'facilitate the construction of the proposed railway.'⁹²⁸ Hence, the railway assumed the position of a lynchpin not only for the commercial interests of the IBEA, but also as a *cause célèbre* of Britain's humanitarian lobby.

⁹²³ Special Committee Meeting, 29 September 1891, pp. 645-8, CMS General Secretary's Minute Book, CMS/G/C1/55, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

⁹²⁴ Ibid.

⁹²⁵ Ibid.

⁹²⁶ See: Committee Meeting Minutes, October 1891-August 1894, Vol 6, E2/11, Minute Books of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Anti-Slavery Papers, Rhodes House, University of Oxford.

⁹²⁷ See: Kiewiet, *History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*, p. 102. He was a grandson of the famous abolitionist of the same name. Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton was also active in the CMS.

⁹²⁸ Committee Meeting 2 October 1891, para 365, Vol 6, E2/11, Minute Books of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Anti-Slavery Papers, Rhodes House, University of Oxford.

Over the course of 1892, the IBEA spent the remainder of its £500,000 initially subscribed capital, but courtesy of the campaigning efforts of the CMS and Anti-Slavery Society the government was aware that the railway discussion had been raised from being largely an internal IBEA and FO matter to a national concern.⁹²⁹ Thus on 3 March 1892, these two factors pressured the government to finally act out the promise it had made to the IBEA some nine months earlier and introduce the survey vote with a request for a grant-in-aid of £20,000.⁹³⁰ The inconspicuous sum hid the fact that it represented a major alteration of British imperial policy – a fact which was not lost on the anti-imperialist opposition.

A perceptive Liberal MP, James Bryce had argued against the proposal on the grounds that: ‘a survey involves defence, defence involves annexation; and so what we are substantially asked to do is to take the first step to annexation.’⁹³¹ If the vote failed, the company would have little recourse but bankruptcy since its potential profitability was entirely dependent upon the future railway. The situation also exposed two choices for the government: either to assert effective occupation through direct administration of the territory; or to let the claim to the British sphere of influence lie fallow and thus forfeit British jurisdiction and potentially lose the territory to a rival power. Both parties perceived the survey as a foot in the door for imperial expansion, hence its contentious nature, and the two days its debate tolled the House of Commons. It also revealed the almost identical association the railway had with the retention of Uganda. A line from the coast would present Parliament with a *fait accompli* for incorporating Uganda into the British Empire, the absence of which would free her from additional imperial entanglements.

⁹²⁹ A. W. Clarke, Cabinet Memo, 1 November 1892, FO 84/2263, TNA.

⁹³⁰ Hansard, HoC Debate 3 March 1892, vol 1 cc1836-83.

⁹³¹ Hansard, HoC Debate, 3 March 1892, col. 1862.

However, as Sir Lewis Pelly argued on behalf of the Government: 'empire never stands still, and empire founded largely on trade least of all.'⁹³² The vote passed, but Salisbury did not press the matter further. As the previous chapter demonstrated, Salisbury did not offer any resistance to the IBEA's decision to withdraw from Uganda in the autumn of 1891, nor did he protest at their resolution to evacuate the country in May 1892.⁹³³ In June, a month before the general election he lost to Gladstone's coalition with the Irish nationalists, Salisbury declared that:

With respect to the holding of Uganda, I quite admit that, as long as communications are as difficult as they are now, it would be very arduous for our country to maintain our position there. I have a remedy which I hope the new Parliament will adopt, and that is to encourage the making of a railway.⁹³⁴

To cheers in the House of Commons, Salisbury also added: 'As soon as a railway is made there will not be the slightest difficulty in retaining our hold over Uganda.'⁹³⁵

Factors Leading to the Decision to Construct the Railway, 1892-96

It was a late-Victorian celebrity and a favourite of the Queen who took his seat in the grand office overlooking St. James's Park in August 1892.⁹³⁶ Due to Archibald Primrose's popularity among voters and within the Liberal Party, the new foreign secretary Lord Rosebery was the predicted successor and heir to the ageing stalwart William Gladstone. After the 1892 general election, Gladstone had formed a minority government which relied upon the support of the

⁹³² Hansard, HoC Debate, 4 March 1892, col. 64.

⁹³³ Salisbury to IBEA, 26 May 1892, FO 84/2250, TNA.

⁹³⁴ Extract from *The Times*, 14 June 1892, FO 2/61, TNA.

⁹³⁵ Ibid.

⁹³⁶ Prince of Wales to Rosebery, 14 August 1892, cited in Marquess of Crewe, *Lord Rosebery, vol. II* (London: J. Murray, 1931), p. 400.

Irish nationalists. The combination of the new government's weak political base and Rosebery's personal popularity and position within the party enabled him to pursue a foreign policy somewhat independent of the resolutions adopted by the Cabinet.⁹³⁷

As the previous chapter demonstrated, the retention of Uganda was in large measure a consequence of Rosebery's agency, since he had been convinced of the substantial human and political costs associated with abandonment. Rosebery's accession to the Foreign Office heralded continuity in British foreign policy, but not of the geo-strategic and Egyptocentric kind that has been ascribed to both incumbent and predecessor by the orthodox historiography,⁹³⁸ but rather in terms of Britain's anti-slave trade policy.⁹³⁹ The outcomes were the same with regard to holding Uganda and ensuring the construction of a railway from the coast, but they derived from a very different set of motives. As the general public debates and political deliberations concerning the retention of Uganda also have been detailed, this section will seek to emphasise the significance of the railway as a rallying cause of both the IBEA and the humanitarian lobbying groups – and in particular, how it influenced policymaking over this period. The other causal factor which will be examined is Gerald Portal's report in order to show how it afforded political legitimacy to the transfer of governmental responsibility in East Africa, from the sub-imperial vehicle that was the IBEA to the government. In other words, the substitution of indirect British influence enacted through a chartered company to that of formal protectorate status under the auspices of the Foreign Office.

⁹³⁷ 'The General Election. The Polls'. *The Times*, 7 July, 1892, p. 6.

⁹³⁸ See: Robinson et al, *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 312.

⁹³⁹ Wylde to Sturge, 21 October 1892, S 22 / G4 (Uganda), Anti-Slavery Papers, Rhodes House, Oxford University.

The Uganda Debacle and the Railway

'Uganda has lately been the subject of so much attention that I think the following notes may be of interest'⁹⁴⁰ reads the first page of the extensive memorandum written by Staff Captain Hubert Foster and circulated in the Foreign Office early September 1892. Foster's remarks aptly described the position Uganda had assumed within the FO and more importantly in British public opinion during the summer and autumn of 1892. In May, the IBEA had again announced its decision to withdraw from Uganda to the outpost of Dagoreti.⁹⁴¹ The projected evacuation unleashed an outcry in late-Victorian public opinion, stoked by the interested parties' publicity campaigns.⁹⁴² It was a public uproar over defeatist imperial policy which had little to do with geo-strategic concerns. Rather it was centred on the presumed massacres of British missionaries and their converts, the loss of potential markets and indeed the damage to national prestige.⁹⁴³ For the new government, time was of the essence. Lugard's men in Uganda had already been given their new year's marching orders and considering that the voyage from the coast to the interior took three months, they had only until 1 October to decide the fate of his administration.⁹⁴⁴

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, a number of memoranda were drawn up for the benefit of informing policy in September 1892. The most influential of these was the one compiled by Anderson. In his memorandum, which strongly urged for the retention of Uganda, Anderson invoked the old IBEA adage that 'with communication by rail, the cost of

⁹⁴⁰ Hubert Foster, Memorandum, Confidential, 5 September 1892, FO 84/2258, TNA.

⁹⁴¹ IBEA to Lugard, 16 May 1892, FO 84/2249, TNA.

⁹⁴² Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, p. 61.

⁹⁴³ Various Petitions October to December 1892, FO 84/2192, TNA.

⁹⁴⁴ Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, p. 57.

holding Uganda would be trifling.⁹⁴⁵ Anderson, in league with the other old Africa hands Euan Smith and Kirk – both friends of Mackinnon and subordinates of Sir Bartle Frere in 1873, Kirk had even taken up employment with the IBEA – were unanimous about the desirability of constructing the railway.⁹⁴⁶ But it was not just Mackinnon's influential network close to decision makers that lobbied for a railway.⁹⁴⁷ Both the CMS and the Anti-Slavery Society mobilised in force. Only a year had passed since the last campaign for the retention of Uganda and whilst the first effort was a low-key affair internal to the CMS, the 1892 campaign was a full-scale mobilisation aimed at convincing both the British public and policy establishment.

The railway took pride of place in not only the memorials the humanitarian organisation presented to Rosebery, but also in the numerous petitions the foreign office received during the campaign.⁹⁴⁸ In the CMS' influential supplement to the missionary newspaper *The Record*, Stanley's testimony was published which urged for a government intervention to ensure the immediate construction of the railway. Stanley issued a dramatic warning: 'postponement of the railway would be disastrous to humanity and most injurious to the moral, religious, commercial, and political interests of the Empire.'⁹⁴⁹

Although the CMS had taken a lead in both Uganda campaigns, in 1892 there seem to have been an unstated, but natural division of responsibilities between it and the Anti-Slavery Society. Key issues both years had been those pertaining to the mission itself, namely the missionaries and their converts, and that of the slave trade. Whilst the CMS had pushed both

⁹⁴⁵ Anderson, Memorandum, 13 September 1892, FO 84/2258, TNA. It was a direct citation of Mackinnon, made on 17 December 1890.

⁹⁴⁶ See: Kiewiet, *History of the Imperial British East Africa Company*, pp. 270-304.

⁹⁴⁷ For an analysis of Mackinnon's business network, see: Munro, *Maritime Enterprises and Empire*.

⁹⁴⁸ Various Petitions October to December 1892, FO 84/2192, TNA.

⁹⁴⁹ The Record Supplement, 14 October 1892, p. 1078, CMS/G/Y/A7/1/2, CMS Papers, University of Birmingham.

issues in 1891,⁹⁵⁰ the dynamics of the 1892 campaign was one which was clearly divided between the two respective societies and the railway had been identified as a slave trade issue. Thus it was the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society which fronted the Uganda Railway project in the autumn of 1892.⁹⁵¹ It had been a matter the society had studiously considered internally for a year prior to the campaign. In April a sub-committee had even been formed singularly 'for the purpose of drawing up a statement exhibiting facts and arguments that should be made public in the interest of promoting the proposed Railway.'⁹⁵² In early June a special committee meeting was held 'with reference to the proposed Mombasa and Victoria-Nyanza Railway' and somewhat unusually the society had the minutes of the meeting printed – doubtlessly in order to ensure its rapid distribution since the IBEA had only a fortnight earlier notified its retirement from Uganda. The minute included a long extract from the speech Salisbury had given in Glasgow a year earlier in which he professed that Britain was pledged to uphold the resolutions concluded at the Slave Trade conference in Brussels to 'pursue the evil to its home and kill it at its root.'⁹⁵³

Not only was the relevant article 1 section 3 of the General Act invoked, which recommended the construction of roads and railways, but also, on the authority of an unnamed 'Indian Administrator' that affording an 'Imperial Guarantee, not exceeding £70,000 per annum would, to a large extent, render needless a service so costly in lives and treasure as has been

⁹⁵⁰ Special Committee Meeting, 29 September 1891, CMS General Secretary's Minute Book, 10 Oct 1890 – 3 November 1891, pp.645-8, CMS/G/C1/55, CMS Papers, University of Birmingham.

⁹⁵¹ See: Committee Meeting, 9 April 1892, Para. 397 (b), Vol 6, E2/11, Minute Books of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Rhodes House, University of Oxford.

⁹⁵² Committee Meeting 9 April 1892, para 406, Vol 6, E2/11, Minute Books of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Rhodes House, University of Oxford.

⁹⁵³ Committee Meeting 3 June 1892, para 397b, Vol 6, E2/11, Minute Books of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Rhodes House, University of Oxford.

described.⁹⁵⁴ Evidently BFASS echoed Salisbury's economic reasoning by referring to the East African anti-slave trade squadron; a railway would render the cruisers which had for decades patrolled the East African coast costing the treasury an approximate £100,000 a year redundant. Apart from the cost-saving rationale, the society also raised the argument that the railway would open up new markets for British industry, a particularly salient point when considered in light of the contemporary financial crisis unleashed by Baring's Bank in 1890. This was of particular importance to 'the British working classes' since the region would be free of the 'hostile protective duties' so many existing colonies had implemented. The Society concluded that: 'the Mombasa Railway and similar undertakings should hold a prominent position and be advocated upon Anti-Slavery grounds.'⁹⁵⁵

The Anti-Slavery Society's interest in the railway was reflected in the memorial it presented to Rosebery on 20 October which demanded only two actions from the government: a treasury guarantee on the interest for the capital required for construction of the railway and that the entire region was to be declared a British protectorate.⁹⁵⁶ Reginald Bosworth Smith, a published author and schoolmaster, led the influential deputation to Rosebery and in his speech he enlarged on Britain's duty of 'maintaining a continuity of the moral policy of England with regard to the slave-trade.'⁹⁵⁷ Rosebery's reply to the BFASS reflected both his avowed motives and belief in liberal imperialism; as such it is worth quoting in full:

⁹⁵⁴ Committee Meeting 3 June 1892, para 397b, Vol 6, E2/11, Minute Books of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Rhodes House, University of Oxford.

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁶ Memorial to be presented to Lord Rosebery on Thursday, October 20, 1892, para 482, Benson 113 ff. 479-94, Benson Papers, Lambeth Palace Library.

⁹⁵⁷ Eric Graham, 'Smith, Reginald Bosworth (1839–1908)', rev. M. C. Curthoys, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36153>, accessed 10 June 2014], and Lord Rosebery's Speech to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 20 October 1892, cited in *New Zealand Herald and Daily Southern Cross*, Volume XXIX, Issue 9053, 5 December 1892, Page 4.

That continuity of moral policy is a moral force by which, in my opinion, this country is to be judged; it is the salt which savours our history; it is the spirit which has exalted it; and in my belief it is by that, when we have to pass away, that we shall come to be judged. It is not by exploits in the field that Greece remains to us; it is by the spirit and form of her literature. It is not by her campaigns that Rome is best remembered, but by her laws, and, in a lesser degree, by her roads and aqueducts which are the signs of her civilisation; and, in the same way, I believe when this country come to stand before the bar of history, she will stand when all else has passed away, not by her fleets nor her armies and commerce – because other nations have fleets and armies and commerce – but by the heroic self-denying exertions which she has put forward to put down this iniquitous traffic. (Cheers.) I know that when we speak of extending commerce other nations look upon us askance. They believe us to be occupied by selfish, grasping, and greedy motives; but there is one point on which they cannot deny that we have been actuated by a higher and purer spirit, and that this is the cause which you represent. My belief is, gentlemen, that, having put our hands to the plough in this great enterprise, we should not be able, even if we were willing, to look back with regard to Uganda.⁹⁵⁸

Rosebery, a prolific amateur historian,⁹⁵⁹ certainly offered a lofty defence of Britain's 'moral policy' in his speech. It also offers a rebuke to the subsequent generations of historians who have 'looked askance' to his motives. Despite the fact that the cabinet was deeply divided on the issue, with Harcourt arguing that: 'we have already as much Empire as the nation can carry',⁹⁶⁰ the reluctance to force a confrontation with Rosebery who had implicitly threatened

⁹⁵⁸ Lord Rosebery's Speech to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 20 October 1892, cited in *New Zealand Herald and Daily Southern Cross*, Volume XXIX, Issue 9053, 5 December 1892, Page 4.

⁹⁵⁹ Some of Rosebery's bibliography includes: Archibald Primrose Earl of Rosebery, *Pitt* (London: Macmillan, 1891); Archibald Primrose Earl of Rosebery, *Oliver Cromwell: a eulogy and an appreciation* (London: A. Melrose, 1899); Archibald Primrose Earl of Rosebery, *Napoleon: The Last Phase* (London: A. L. Humphreys, 1900).

⁹⁶⁰ Gladstone to Harcourt, 29 September 1892, cited in: Gardiner, *Life of Sir William Harcourt*, Vol. 2, p. 196, and Crewe, *Lord Rosebery*, Vol II, p. 406.

to resign from the cabinet,⁹⁶¹ as demonstrated in the previous chapter, pushed the government into the decision to delay the evacuation of Uganda⁹⁶² until 31 March 1893.⁹⁶³ In terms of his views on the railway, Rosebery had in an interview with Mackinnon expressed his stance: Rosebery did 'not hold out any prospect of the Gov[ernment] proposing that railroad. The cost was too great...' Mackinnon quipped that British public opinion was staunchly for it, to which Rosebery replied: 'if that is so, I should have no objection to being forced by the country in that direction, but I fear that nothing would be done spontaneously by H.M.G[overnment] and [you] must remember that several of my colleagues hold the strongest opinions and are publicly pledged against it'.⁹⁶⁴

Portal's Report and the Railway Question

Ultimately the deliberations ended with a resolution to send an Imperial Commissioner to Uganda in order to ascertain the potential of filling the administrative vacuum left by a departed IBEA with what had been referred to as '*organized Government*'.⁹⁶⁵ The man chosen for the task of preparing a report of the situation in Uganda and the potential for a railway was the Consul-General in Zanzibar, Sir Gerald Portal. The athletic Old Etonian was a rising star in the diplomatic service (his life was cut short when he died of typhoid fever in January 1894). Despite his relatively young age of 35, he had already served 14 years as a diplomat which included a six year spell under Sir Evelyn Baring at Cairo, a mission to Abyssinia about

⁹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 196, 29 September 1892, Gladstone to Harcourt: 'lest we drive our friend to despair'. and Crewe, *Lord Rosebery*, Vol II, p. 406.

⁹⁶² Rosebery to Queen Victoria, 29 September 1892, cited in George Earle Buckle (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, 3rd Series, Vol. 2. (London: J Murray, 1932).

⁹⁶³ FO to IBEA, 30 September 1892, FO 84/2259, TNA.

⁹⁶⁴ Rosebery interview with Mackinnon, 17 November 1892, FO 84/2263, TNA.

⁹⁶⁵ Ibid.

which he later published a book and five years in Zanzibar and the British sphere of influence in East Africa.⁹⁶⁶ Portal's background is of particular historiographical interest in relation to this thesis due to his close association with Baring; indeed the British resident at Cairo regarded him as his successor and as such it would be reasonable to presume that Portal might have subscribed to the same views on 'Nile Valley Doctrine' as its supposedly greatest proponent.⁹⁶⁷ However neither Portal's despatches to the Foreign Office, nor his personal diary entries, or indeed his posthumous publication concerning the 'mission to Uganda' are suggestive of any particular interest in the Nile.⁹⁶⁸

The most characteristic aspect of Portal's writing, both privately and official, was his strong resentment of the IBEA and the company's administrative failings: whether it was their 'swashbuckling mode of proceeding' or propensity 'to "let things slide" & to leave disagreeable questions to look after themselves'.⁹⁶⁹ Indeed, he candidly declared to Rosebery at the end of January 1893 that:

I contend that after 5 years of fair trial the Company has utterly failed to carry out the conditions of their Royal Charter, & that they have forfeited their right to hold it any longer, & this conclusion may I submit, be strengthened & confirmed by their acknowledged failure in evacuation of Uganda.⁹⁷⁰

⁹⁶⁶ C. A. Harris, 'Portal, Sir Gerald Herbert (1858–1894)', rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22555>, accessed 12 June 2014]

⁹⁶⁷ Gerald Portal, *The British Mission to Uganda in 1893* (London: Edward Arnold, 1894), Lord Cromer's Introduction.

⁹⁶⁸ See: Portal, *Mission to Uganda* and: Gerald Portal's Personal Diary, Gerald Portal Papers, Rhodes House, Oxford University.

⁹⁶⁹ See: Portal to Rosebery, Private, 24 January 1893; Portal to Rosebery, Private, 3 March 1893; Portal to Rosebery, Private & Confidential, 22 March 1893, in Gerald Portal Papers Afr s 109-111, Rhodes House, University of Oxford.

⁹⁷⁰ Portal to Rosebery, Private, 24 January 1893, Gerald Portal Papers Afr s 109-111, Rhodes House, University of Oxford.

And added a week later that:

there is no hope of any improvement or development of this part of E. Africa so long as the IBEACo continue to exercise any political or administrative powers, either here or on the coast.⁹⁷¹

Even long before his fact-finding mission, Portal had expressed his views to Anderson that any official support to the IBEA would be akin to ‘throw[ing] good money after bad.’⁹⁷² However Salisbury thought the IBEA could still for a time retain its use: ‘to help a Company into liquidation before its time is not regarded as a friendly act.’⁹⁷³ Gordon Martel alleges that Rosebery had privately instructed Portal to write a favourable report.⁹⁷⁴ Since Harcourt had already agreed to the Zanzibar proposition, the scheme that involved Zanzibar taking the administrative and financial responsibility for holding Uganda, it is argued that Portal’s conclusions as to the fate of the kingdom had already by November 1892 been an open secret to the British policy establishment at Westminster.⁹⁷⁵

By the summer of 1893, the Foreign Office received the first of Portal’s dispatches. In line with his earlier pronouncements, Portal found it ‘difficult to be too severe’ on the IBEA’s administration⁹⁷⁶ and let the Union Jack promptly fly over Uganda upon the company’s departure.⁹⁷⁷ He was disappointed by ‘the burnt, brown, arid plains and hills’⁹⁷⁸ he had traversed, and threw cold water on the company’s claims ‘that 500,000,000 acres of fertile

⁹⁷¹ Portal to Rosebery, Private, 4 February 1893, Gerald Portal Papers Afr s 109-111, Rhodes House, University of Oxford.

⁹⁷² Portal to Anderson, 26 February 1892, FO 84/2229, TNA.

⁹⁷³ Salisbury minute, Portal to Anderson, 26 February 1892, FO 84/2229, TNA.

⁹⁷⁴ Martel, *Imperial Diplomacy*, p. 87. See also: Robinson et al, *Africa and the Victorians*, pp. 319-27.

⁹⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁶ Portal to FO, 22 February 1893, FO 403/182, TNA. ‘As regards the work done by the Company in all this “Hinterland”, it is difficult to be too severe’.

⁹⁷⁷ Portal to Rosebery, 1 April 1893, FO 403/182, TNA.

⁹⁷⁸ Portal to FO, 22 February 1893, FO 403/182, TNA.

land are waiting to be tickled by a hoe to smile into plenty'.⁹⁷⁹ The Imperial Commissioner's report on the infertility of the land was substantially corroborated by the Railway Survey Report presented by Captain Pringle; despite that both held that certain highland districts were well suited for European colonisation. The Royal Engineer did also factually describe the ongoing Arab slave trading in the region and detailed the techniques adopted by Arab traffickers to avoid detection. He argued that a railway would partially alleviate these humanitarian issues by making the use of caravans imply illegal slave trafficking and thus make them more vulnerable to detection. Pringle further stated that the IBEA had freed 2,364 slaves during its operations, whilst the equivalent for the government was only around 600 in the corresponding period.⁹⁸⁰

Although Portal was unequivocal in his criticism of the IBEA's operations in the interior, his conclusions as to Uganda and the railway were more opaque. It has already been suggested in the historiography that Rosebery himself re-wrote Portal's report to suit his agenda,⁹⁸¹ but no evidence has been produced to support this claim.⁹⁸² However, by 30 August 1893 a draft of Portal's report had been completed since Anderson in his letter to his superior the Permanent Under-Secretary Sir Philip Currie pronounced that:

I have read attentively Portal's admirable report. I have not a word of criticism to say on the practical character of his recommendations, nor on the details of his remarks.⁹⁸³

⁹⁷⁹ Handbook to the Uganda Question and Proposed East Africa Railway by Ernest L. Bentley, 1892, FO 84/2263, TNA.

⁹⁸⁰ Report on Mombasa Victoria Lake Railway Survey. Capt Pringle 11 May 1893, FO 83/1240, TNA.

⁹⁸¹ See: Frederick. D. Lugard, *The Story of the Uganda Protectorate* (London: Horace Marshall & Son, 1900), p. 133; and E. R. Vere-Hodge, *Imperial British East Africa Company* (London: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 81-82.

⁹⁸² See: Harris, *Sir Gerald Portal*, Oxford DNB.

⁹⁸³ Anderson to Currie, 30 August 1893, FO 83/1242, TNA.

But Portal's report itself is omitted from the relevant files and does not emerge until 1 November.⁹⁸⁴ Rosebery himself wrote to Gladstone in November and informed him of Portal's arrival. The foreign secretary had: 'seen him for a few minutes' before he left for the countryside 'for two or three days to mature his report.' Rosebery assured Gladstone that: 'As soon as I receive it, I will send it myself and circulate it. Honestly, I have not touched it...'⁹⁸⁵ There must at the time have circulated rumours concerning the report as despite these assurances Rosebery felt again compelled to reassure Gladstone in December: 'As regards Portal's report. I have considered myself bound in honour not to look at it until it was circulated to the Cabinet, and, consequently, I have only a very recent acquaintance with it.'⁹⁸⁶

In his report published in November, Portal listed twenty-five factors which detailed the Uganda question and stated that:

those of a purely economic character would appear to weight on the side of evacuation since no hope need be entertained of Uganda being able, at all events for some years to come, to repay the cost of its occupation; while those of a philanthropic or strategical nature may be quoted in favour of the maintenance of some form of British preponderance.⁹⁸⁷

Of those 'philanthropic' factors mentioned, was 'the danger, or indeed the certainty of an almost immediate resuscitation of slave-raiding and slave-trading in the event of the withdrawal of European control.'⁹⁸⁸ Portal also described Uganda as occupying 'a strategical position of great natural importance, dominating the northern and western shores of Lake Victoria, holding almost the only access to Lakes Albert and Albert Edward and controlling the

⁹⁸⁴ Portal to Rosebery, 1 November 1893, FO 2/60, TNA. See also: Parliamentary Papers, 1894 LVII, Africa No. 2 [C.7303].

⁹⁸⁵ Rosebery to Gladstone, 25 November 1893, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44290, Gladstone Papers, BL.

⁹⁸⁶ Rosebery to Gladstone, confidential, 27 December 1893, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44290, Gladstone Papers, BL.

⁹⁸⁷ Portal to Rosebery, 1 November 1893, FO 2/60, TNA.

⁹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

head waters of the Nile.’ Hence, Portal also invokes the argument that the IBEA had launched during its 1892 campaign.⁹⁸⁹ Following his analysis of whether or not to retain Uganda, Portal evaluated the question of the railway:

The whole problem of the development of East and Central Africa, the prospect of the creation of a profitable British trade, the suppression of internecine religious wars, the security of European travellers, the control of the Lake district and of the upper waters of the Nile, and, above all, I may confidently add, the only hope of really and definitely killing the slave-trade within a reasonable time, - all resolve themselves into the all important and overshadowing question of Transport and Communication.⁹⁹⁰

Evidently Portal perceived the railway as essential to a British retention of the kingdom, and afforded humanitarian concerns substantial weight. Despite his tutelage by Baring in Cairo, Portal made no references to the security of Egypt in his report. Instead he framed his arguments for the retention of Uganda within the rhetoric of the British civilising mission and anti-slave trade policy.

Moreover, in February 1892, Portal had produced a despatch which resembles in wording his final November report: ‘That the whole question of the development of East Africa resolves itself ultimately with a question of transport.’⁹⁹¹ But unlike its successor, this report does not mention any railway, instead Portal suggested a string of stations, or: ‘a system of depots or relays of men & beasts who could be hired from station to station. These stations should be

⁹⁸⁹ See: Handbook to the Uganda Question and the Proposed Uganda Railway, Ernest L. Bentley, 12 November 1892, p. 8, FO 84/2263, TNA; and: Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire*, p. 584.

⁹⁹⁰ Portal to Rosebery, 1 November 1893, FO 2/60, TNA.

⁹⁹¹ Portal to Rosebery, Private, 4 February 1893, Letters, Portal Papers, Rhodes House, University of Oxford.

at interval of not more than 10 days journey.⁹⁹² Hence, instead of a railway Portal suggested the adoption of a sort of 'pony express' from the coast to the lake.

However, in 1894 Portal posthumously published a book entitled *The British Mission to Uganda*,⁹⁹³ in this account which is based on Portal's notes and diary entries, few explicit mentions are made of the railway. Portal himself warned that:

Throughout this chapter I have been careful to avoid any mention of a railway. It would hardly be proper for me to discuss here the pros and cons of this scheme. If a railway is ever built the whole way to the Lake, that would of course in itself settle all the questions which have been raised above.⁹⁹⁴

The issues raised in the foregoing pages were the problems of slave-trading and how it was interlinked with human portage, the penetration of British commerce and indeed transport: '...like almost every other East African problem which can be presented, [it] resolves itself at once into the great all-shadowing question of transport.'⁹⁹⁵ Frequent mentions were also made of a book entitled *The Development of Africa* of which emphasis is laid on navigable rivers and railways.⁹⁹⁶ This adds weight to the view that Rosebery did not alter the report, despite his strong convictions he had no need to.

Regardless of whether Rosebery had influenced or indeed edited the report, it does illustrate the grounds on which British policy toward East Africa was formulated. If both Rosebery's and what, ostensibly are Portal's words are taken at face value, it does suggest that the report was genuine and not doctored by Rosebery. Indeed, Portal's posthumously published book

⁹⁹² Ibid.

⁹⁹³ Portal, *Mission to Uganda*.

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 178.

⁹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 157.

⁹⁹⁶ Arthur Silva White, *The Development of Africa* (London: George Philip & Son, 1890).

corroborates this interpretation as it mirrors the November 1893 report – namely that he did recommend the railway’s construction, since in his eyes, it would solve all of East Africa’s pending problems, be it the introduction of legitimate commerce or suppression of the slave trade.

A Fait Accompli: Uganda and the Railway, 1894-96

Whilst the final decision to construct the railway was not announced in Parliament until August 1895, it could be argued that by the time Rosebery had taken the Liberal party leadership, and *ipso facto* the British premiership in March 1894, the project was a *fait accompli*. Only a month after Portal’s untimely death, Rosebery forcefully set out his East Africa policy in a memorandum circulated in the Cabinet. Doubtlessly inspired by Portal, it made clear that Rosebery had lost all confidence in the IBEA who in his view merely ‘block the way, or at any rate largely hamper our action.’⁹⁹⁷ In his eyes the company was unfit for purpose since it had been both unable and unwilling ‘to carry out the obligations of its Charter, which are the promotion of trade and good government, the civilization of the natives, and the suppression of the Slave Trade.’⁹⁹⁸

The other aspect to Rosebery’s memorandum concerned Uganda, which he divided into administration of the country and the railway. Rosebery believed ‘that the railway would be of incalculable value to the development of [Britain’s] position in East Africa’ – firstly since it would ‘attract to ours all the commerce of the region’ and secondly because it would deal ‘a mortal blow to the Slave Trade within it.’⁹⁹⁹ The only two problems Rosebery thought stood in its way were the substantial cost and the political opposition. However he was confident

⁹⁹⁷ Rosebery Memorandum, 12 February 1894, FO 403/193, TNA.

⁹⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁹ Ibid.

that both hurdles would be overcome: the railway would not in any case be proposed 'in this financial year'; and the opposition to the project 'were uttered under different circumstances, and need not be held binding should it be resolved to maintain the occupation of Uganda.'¹⁰⁰⁰

The cost of the railway was not believed to be more excessive than the expenditure of 'France or Germany in their spheres of influence' so Rosebery found it 'right to contemplate a not extravagant expenditure in the development of the Uganda Protectorate, should such a Protectorate be established.' Hence, the railway and the retention of Uganda were perceived as two facets of the same issue.

What makes this memorandum so significant, apart from Rosebery's first mention of a 'Uganda Protectorate' and his candid advocacy of the railway, was the fact that Gladstone retired less than a month later and Rosebery succeeded him as Prime Minister which gave the policy-statement added weight. Whether Rosebery was aware of Gladstone's impending retirement at the time of writing is unknown, but he did express his 'anguish' in a secret letter to him twelve days later.¹⁰⁰¹ In his heartfelt letter to the man he had been 'personally attached to' since 1879, he acknowledged that:

it would be affectation to deny that there is also a difference of opinion; - opinion perhaps is too weak a word, for with me it is a matter of faith. In this one point at any rate we are agreed – that it involves the peace of the world. Unfortunately we are at two poles asunder as regards the means.¹⁰⁰²

What Rosebery alluded to was his own stance as a liberal imperialist whilst Gladstone preferred to avoid imperial entanglements.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰¹ Rosebery to Gladstone, Secret, 24 February 1894, Vol. CCIV, ADD MS 44290, Gladstone Papers, BL.

¹⁰⁰² Ibid.

Portal's report was finally presented to parliament in April with a vote upon its recommendations held in June.¹⁰⁰³ According to the Radical MP Labouchère's line of arguments, the IBEA, and implicitly the entire expansionist policy of the liberal government, was 'a damnosa hereditas'¹⁰⁰⁴ from Salisbury. In his attack on the proposition, the 'Little Englander' denounced it as jingoism, reiterated the lack of commercial potential in the region and rejected the existence of a slave trade originating in Uganda.¹⁰⁰⁵ But the vote over administrative expenses and by implication the incorporation of Uganda into the British Empire did carry, with a protectorate declared 27 August. However the cabinet's railway proposal was rejected in line with Rosebery's February prediction. At the end of May 1895, two Cabinet meetings were held devoted fully to East Africa and it was agreed 'after a long windy and irrelevant discussion' that a Protectorate over the remaining portion of land separating Uganda from the sea was to be declared, what eventually would form the British East Africa Protectorate.¹⁰⁰⁶

Rosebery pressed hard for a decision to construct the railway and would tolerate no delay as 'the matter touched his honour and his conscience'.¹⁰⁰⁷ His patience would not be challenged, as a 'harmonious' Cabinet meeting held the next day could dispatch to the Queen 'that the railroad must be made forthright and that it will be commenced as soon as the necessary arrangements can be completed'.¹⁰⁰⁸ But less than a month passed when on 25 June, Salisbury was back in power and he lost no time in completing his project. In August 1895 the Government submitted the cost estimates for a railway to parliament and the vote for the

¹⁰⁰³ Hansard, HoC Debate, 6 April 1894, vol. 22, col. 1516.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Hansard, HoC Debate, 1 June 1894, vol. 25, col. 212.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Hansard, HoC Debate, 1 June 1894, vol. 25, col. 215.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Lord Rosebery, 27 May 1895, CAB 41/23/36, TNA.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Rosebery Memorandum, 28 May 1895, CAB 41/23/38, TNA.

initial £20,000 of expenses carried.¹⁰⁰⁹ The Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs George Curzon, declared that his government had 'decided that the railway is to be constructed the whole way from the ocean to the lake' and received applause from the House.¹⁰¹⁰ The railway was by now an accomplished fact: a permanent Railway Committee had been established and appointed a chief engineer to lead the construction.¹⁰¹¹ On 2 July 1896, the Uganda Railway Bill was introduced to parliament, and although Labouchère bitterly exclaimed that whenever 'they annexed some wretched, miserable jungle in the centre of Africa they would be called upon to build a railroad to it', the vote carried.¹⁰¹² The last key in the last rail was hammered in at the Victoria Nyanza on 21 December 1901, which completed a permanent way all the 582 miles from Mombasa.

Conclusion

In the two decades prior to its construction, the Uganda Railway was perceived as an essential prerequisite for the development of East Africa. Its identical association with the retention of Uganda was clearly demonstrated during the autumn of 1892 when both the lobbying activities of pressure groups and the internal deliberations of the government, revealed that the Uganda question was inseparable from that of the railway. This propelled, what was ostensibly the innocuous issue of transportation infrastructure in a remote region of Britain's informal empire, into the very heart of British imperial discourse.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Hansard, HoC Debate, 30 August 1895, vol. 36, col. 1290.

¹⁰¹⁰ Hansard, HoC Debate, 30 August 1895, vol. 36, col. 1292.

¹⁰¹¹ Miller, *The Lunatic Express*, p. 285.

¹⁰¹² Hansard, HoC Debate, 2 July 1896, vol. 42, col. 559.

Despite the overwhelming documentary evidence to the contrary, the railway has been wedded to the Egypto-centric historiographical narrative. This was the way in which generations of historians of the partition reconciled the project's substantial cost with its minimal commercial utility. However this *post facto* explanation fails to take into account Britain's prevailing interests in East Africa during the time of the project's conception and the expectations entertained for the region. These imperial interests, equally commercial and humanitarian, were also reflected in the rationale to construct the railway. It was not unreasonably anticipated that a transport link between the coast and the great interior lake the Victoria Nyanza would generate trade, indeed enough to make the chartered company independent of external sources of finance. At the same time it was also held, in league with similar projects in the Congo that a railway would stamp out the inland slave trade. This was neither an unreasonable assumption since the maritime suppression strategy had proven woefully inadequate to handle the upsurge in trafficking over the 1880s – a railway would 'open up' the region and make human portage redundant and thus remove local demand for slaves, whilst slavers themselves would be left vulnerable to detection.

A 'cynical commentator'¹⁰¹³ might also recognise that it was convenient for the IBEA to clad the project in the high-worthy ideals of anti-slavery in order to gain public support. Influential supporters such as the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and the Church Missionary Society were useful allies to have in order to sway public and political opinion. Whilst recognising that IBEA did entertain commercial objectives, it would be disingenuous to suggest that the IBEA simply manipulated these humanitarian groups and ideals for their own

¹⁰¹³ Cecil, *Life of Robert IV*, pp. 223-4., cited in Simms et al., *Humanitarian Intervention*, pp. 257-8. Salisbury's daughter Lady Gwendolen Cecil rebuked those who doubted in the sincerity of her father's anti-slave trade policies in East Africa as 'cynical commentators'.

purely economic motives. Mackinnon's company was never a purely commercial enterprise. Notwithstanding the philanthropic obligations in its charter which stressed suppression of the slave trade, or the company's public pronouncements in the press, it is unlikely that a man of Mackinnon's business acumen would have ventured on such an expensive enterprise with his eyes closed to the low probability of financial reward. Indeed, it is not improbable that Mackinnon, at the end of an accomplished career in which he had built one of the world's largest shipping companies desired to partially venture into the realm of philanthropy, hardly an unprecedented choice among the wealthy.

The concept of a line connecting the coast with the Equatorial lakes – the Uganda Railway – was nearly as old as Britain's direct engagement with Zanzibar and East Africa itself, coming in the wake of Sir Bartle Frere's Mission in the 1870s and a natural next step after the construction of the Mackinnon-Sclater road. But it was not until the partition proper of the 1880-90s that the railway emerged as a serious proposition, as a way in which to counter German preponderance on the mainland and indeed to combat the slave trade.

The plethora of motives for advocating the railway reflected the diversity of stakeholders, although two main reasons remained constant throughout: economic and humanitarian. The IBEA required its construction so as to survive financially, and it was on this basis that the CMS appropriated the project. Via the vicarious motive of sustaining the IBEA's presence in Uganda, the future of its own missionaries and converts would be safeguarded. Thus a missionary society, in league with an abolitionist society came to campaign for an infrastructure project. In the same vein is the personal agency of both Salisbury, and courtesy of his adherence to the doctrine of continuity in foreign policy, Rosebery, in spearheading the project politically. In Gwendolen Cecil's biography of her father Lord Salisbury, she remarks

upon the sentimental value he attached to his 'cherished project' which he guarded with 'militant paternity,' no doubt testament to his personal enthusiasm for railway construction attained through his years in the industry.¹⁰¹⁴ But what should not be lost sight of, however, is the railway's symbolic role as a prestige project – both a material representation of Britain's commitment to anti-slavery, but also of its status as a first rate world power and coloniser. The enabler of what Rosebery referred to as Britain's 'moral policy' was the Uganda Railway – both a permanent way and a permanent reminder of what he termed the 'heroic self-denying exertions' that aimed to put a final end to the East African slave trade.¹⁰¹⁵

¹⁰¹⁴ Cecil, *Life of Robert IV*, p. 315.

¹⁰¹⁵ Lord Rosebery's Speech to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 20 October 1892, cited in *New Zealand Herald and Daily Southern Cross*, Volume XXIX, Issue 9053, 5 December 1892, Page 4.

Conclusion

The annexation of East Africa represented a natural part, and indeed a conclusion, to the humanitarian engagement Britain long had maintained in the western sphere of the Indian Ocean. To paraphrase Clausewitz, partition was in-part the continuation of anti-slave trade policy by other means.¹⁰¹⁶ Yet, despite its importance, this humanitarian concern was still only one among a range of metropolitan and sub-imperial interests that are evident from the documentary record left from the period. Far from being an abrupt event, the incorporation of East Africa into the British Empire was a gradual process in which a spectrum of factors, such as: missionary interests, commercial opportunity and trading interests, publicity concerns and public opinion, national honour and imperial prestige, Indian interests and indeed strategic concerns – local and imperial, all, at various junctures, came to influence decision-making.

However, contrary to the interpretation that dominates the historiography, the partition of Zanzibar, Uganda and the remaining mainland territories were divorced from Egyptian security concerns. When these geo-strategic concerns eventually achieved any form of prominence in public or political discourse it was at the very end of the partition process, once incorporation as protectorates were *faits accomplis*. Moreover, the particular agency afforded to Salisbury in bringing about the incorporation of Uganda and the ‘Upper Nile Valley’ is entirely in conflict with his policy decisions which suggest that he maintained a largely disinterested stance toward the East African territories.

¹⁰¹⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), chapter 1, section 24.

Whilst Germany declared a portion of the East African mainland a protectorate in 1885, it took almost a decade for Britain to do the same. A corresponding British status was granted to Zanzibar in 1890, to Uganda in 1894, and to the remaining territories separating the kingdom of Buganda with the coast in 1895. Both the chronology of protectorates and indeed the final bilateral agreement's unofficial name – the Anglo-German Heligoland-Zanzibar treaty¹⁰¹⁷ – should have offered the historian simple clues as to what British priorities in the region were. This, however, is not reflected in the majority of the historiography which holds that the British expansion into East Africa instead was connected to the alleged security considerations of a different geo-political zone altogether, and indeed, held as a classic example of how grand strategy influenced the scramble for Africa.

Perceiving the East African partition through the prism of Fashoda, or positioning Uganda within a vast Egyptian hinterland certainly made for a seductive proposition; as witnessed by the volume of scholarship devoted to the explanatory model after it was first proposed by Langer in 1935.¹⁰¹⁸ A geo-strategic model such as this could also render intelligible why, at the end of the partition, the distribution of British territories in Africa ran in an almost unbroken line from Cairo in the north to Cape Town in the south. Naturally the primacy of India and by extension, its strategic lynchpins to the north and south of the African continent, dictated its own geo-strategic logic to policymakers such as Salisbury and Rosebery. Not even remote backwaters such as Uganda escaped India's gravitational pull and required incorporation into an immense British exclusion zone so as not to prejudice Britain's hold on these pivotal regions of imperial defence. After all, Rosebery himself quoted in 1901 the subject of his

¹⁰¹⁷ The official name was: 'The Anglo-German Agreement, 1 July 1890'. For the full treaty text see: Hertslet, *Map of Africa III*, No. 270, pp. 899-906.

¹⁰¹⁸ Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism Vol II*, pp. 537-580.

biography, Napoleon, that 'the master of Egypt is the master of India.'¹⁰¹⁹ However, as the evidence put forward in this thesis has established, the Egypto-centric interpretation might rather be understood as a classic example of a reductive and fallacious retrospective historical analysis.

The Nilotic model was in part launched as a revisionary retort to the dominance of Marxist analyses of imperial expansion. But instead of nuancing the interpretations of the East African partition, its legacy has been to obscure Britain's efforts to suppress the Indian Ocean slave trade, a regional engagement that had lasted from the beginning of the nineteenth century to well into the twentieth. It is not without irony that by persistently second-guessing the volumes of contemporary correspondence and analyses, the revisionist historians instead perpetuated the narrative the interested parties themselves spun at the end of the process, in order to justify the substantial and, to a degree, unexpected cost of imperial occupation and construction of a railway that seemingly had very little purpose.

As the first two chapters made clear, it was on anti-slavery logic that a mainland presence was contemplated by the Liberal government during the years prior to the German incursion. Partition reflected the shift in the execution of Britain's anti-slave trade policy, from a maritime to a shore-based approach. Such a radical change would likely never have been contemplated had it not been for the prospect of using a railway. This path-breaking new technology represented, in transportation terms, a paradigm-shift in the way it obscured the contrast between movement by sea and land. For East Africa in particular the effect was substantial. The region had little road infrastructure, few natural harbours or navigable rivers,

¹⁰¹⁹ Rosebery, *Napoleon*, p. 208.

whilst the *tsetse* fly rendered the use of horses or other beasts of burden impracticable. As such, the Uganda Railway offered the logistical framework for transplanting slave trade suppression from the sea and coastal zone to 'its root' in the interior.

Britain had from the early 1870s built a system of slave trade suppression based on both naval force and a treaty network, the latter executed through the co-opted political influence of its client-state Zanzibar. However, as the first chapter demonstrated, this system broke down a decade later. At first it was the decommissioning of the highly successful stationary depot ship *HMS London* that forced a reconsideration of tactics. Later, the declaration of a German protectorate in 1885 critically undermined the Sultan of Zanzibar's authority and by extension British influence. In 1882 Hill had recommended substituting the naval patrol with 'agencies working onshore'.¹⁰²⁰ Whilst little resulted from this apart from the despatch of Vice-Consuls, it did mark the tentative beginning of the shift toward a land-based presence. An intensification of this policy, and indeed a direct reversal of Salisbury's 1878 decision to sabotage Mackinnon's plans for a mainland concession, occurred in 1884 when Granville sanctioned Johnston's scheme to establish a proto-colony near Kilimanjaro as a base from which to attack the slave trade.

Whilst slave trafficking had remained at relatively stable levels throughout most of the 1880s, it revived substantially in 1888. Germany's presence on the mainland, the departure of Kirk and in particular the death of Sultan Barghash, all had contributed to this end. Yet it was the reaction to this revived slave trade that had direct consequences for the partition. Pressure from public opinion and the organised campaigns directed by Cardinal Lavigerie and the BFASS, led Salisbury to call for the convening of the Brussels Anti-Slave Trade Conference and,

¹⁰²⁰ Hill, Memorandum, 23 August 1882, FO 881/4676, TNA.

in concert with Germany, the institution of a blockade of the East African coastline. Whilst the Anglo-German blockade did little but highlight Anglo-German governmental co-operation and the markedly different approaches to colonialism adopted by British and German agents, Britain's ratification of the Brussels Act institutionalised the new shore-based focus of anti-slave trade policy, in particular by committing it to construct railways.

It was via the vector of the Uganda Railway that the British mainland presence in East Africa was construed by contemporary policymakers, such as Salisbury, as a cost-saving measure, or indeed as anti-slavery on the cheap. It was a generally held notion that railways were the best tool available to suppress the slave trade, and that offering the IBEA a guarantee on the interest for a loan to finance the railway was far cheaper than the annual expenditure on the then redundant naval patrol. By linking Mombasa with the interior and the vast inland lake, the Victoria Nyanza, the railway would also enable the IBEA to control what was expected to be substantial trade flows to and from Central Africa, and render high-bulk produce marketable at the coast. This railway was throughout the partition process perceived as a *sine qua non* to the retention and development of East Africa and a solution to the composite challenges that faced the British colonisers in the region.

Importantly, the second chapter demonstrated that the geographical scope of the partition was substantively determined already at the start of the partition process. By following in the footsteps of their German compatriot the explorer Gustav Fischer, the members of the Society for German Colonisation had used one of the southern caravan routes into the interior and established the nucleus protectorate to the west of Zanzibar. British exploration activity, on the other hand, had focussed its efforts on the northern mainland and used the route terminating at Mombasa as a vantage. When a German protectorate was formally declared

in the spring of 1885, the Foreign Office discretely scrambled to enlist private British interests to prevent the entirety of the mainland falling to German hands. This was achieved when Hutton and Mackinnon formed a syndicate, the IBEA's precursor, to develop the territories to the north of the German protectorate with Mombasa as the requisite port.

In order to avoid territorial disputes and achieve British recognition for German claims, Peters offered the northern territories to Mackinnon in the autumn of 1886. It was on this basis that the geographical north-south division of the mainland was formally laid down in the Anglo-German Agreement of the same year. The following 'hinterland understanding' of July 1887 excluded Germany from making treaties in the territories anterior to the British sphere of influence. Hence, the first bilateral partition treaty had already by 1886-7 ensured that the territories encompassing Uganda and the White Nile lay within the British exclusion zone – a coincidental result of Peters' choice of forming a German protectorate on the southern mainland.

Contrary to what has been claimed by the Egypto-centric historiography, the expansion of the British sphere of influence to comprise Uganda in 1890 was not the product of Salisbury's grand strategy, but rather a combination of unintended individual agency and economic expectations for the interior. The IBEA's treaty with *kabaka* Mwanga of Buganda had come about as a coincidental result of Frederick Jackson's presence near the kingdom, indeed even against his explicit orders to avoid Uganda. Mackinnon's later ratification of Jackson's treaty occurred after his designs on the Equatorial Province had been dashed by Emin's enlistment with his German counterparts. The inclusion of Uganda was thus a form of consolation prize *in lieu* of Equatoria and a way in which the IBEA could tap into what was believed the 'great

trade markets of Central Africa.’¹⁰²¹ The company’s survival depended upon this expansion since its control of the coast and the immediate hinterland was insufficient to make it commercially viable. Whilst retrospectively these economic expectations for Equatorial Africa might appear naïve, they should be perceived in conjunction with the generally lacklustre financial conditions of a British economy affected by the ‘Great Depression’ of the 1870-90s.

The bilateral negotiations between Britain and Germany which resulted in the Anglo-German ‘Heligoland-Zanzibar’ Treaty in 1890 had been arranged by the two states as a way in which to contain the local rivalry between the colonial companies. This arbitration which had been agreed a year in advance and initially only concerned a dispute over two islands off Witu had, upon German initiative, been expanded to comprise all outstanding territorial disputes between Britain and Germany. Salisbury had certainly not timed the negotiations so as to take maximum advantage of an ostensibly weak German counterpart or indeed arranged them for the purposes of securing the Nile Valley. Since the partition of Uganda was among the ‘points which were not contended’¹⁰²² it was also resolved at the very beginning of the negotiations.

Salisbury had not sanctioned the company’s expansion for geo-strategic reasons, but in order to ensure the economic viability of Britain’s imperial policy-tool. Should the IBEA collapse it would forfeit British territorial claims due to the absence of ‘effective occupation’ and leave a region which for decades had been subject to a wide range of British imperial interests such as missionary-work, exploration, anti-slave trade policy and the British Indian trading community, open to annexation by a rivalling European power. Preserving the IBEA kept both the financial costs and accountability in terms of anti-slave trade policy execution with the

¹⁰²¹ Euan Smith to Salisbury, Private, 31 March 1890, Vol. 80, No. 8, Salisbury Papers, Hatfield House.

¹⁰²² Malet to Salisbury, 8 May 1890, FO 881/6146, TNA.

private imperial proxy and at a safe distance from Salisbury's government, whilst still retaining East Africa within the British orbit.

Salisbury's disinterest in Uganda, and by extension the region which comprised the Nile watershed, was demonstrated in the following two years when he twice approved of the company's decision to evacuate the kingdom. No assistance was offered by his government to the IBEA to hold its position, and had it not been for private donations from the CMS, the IBEA would have been forced to extinguish its presence already in 1891. Whilst news of the first potential evacuation received little publicity, the second occasion in 1892 was a highly public affair. This episode which Low termed a 'very remarkable movement in Victorian public opinion'¹⁰²³ serves to reveal the considerable force popular imperialism exerted upon contemporary policymakers. But it also betrays the erroneous grounds on which the Egyptocentric historiography has based its interpretations: since it was during these publicity campaigns, orchestrated by the CMS, BFASS and IBEA, that the argument which positioned the company as a gatekeeper to Egypt and the Nile was launched. Although the argument does not appear in official or private correspondence between key policymakers such as Rosebery or Gladstone, and was only used as a speculative excuse by the IBEA's agents Frederick Lugard and Ernest Bentley, it certainly has had great historiographical significance.

The retention of Uganda was almost entirely due to Rosebery's agency. His motives for doing so were consistently expressed as the prevention of massacres of British missionaries and their converts. Rosebery did not want to preside over another imperial scandal analogous to that of Gordon at Khartoum which had taken place some seven years earlier. As Rosebery had

¹⁰²³ Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, p. 61.

used the expert opinion drawn up during the autumn of 1892 as an 'impartial opinion'¹⁰²⁴ to influence his other Cabinet members to accede to his 'retentionist' stance; the decision to despatch Gerald Portal to Uganda in 1893 was the final component to this nominally impartial information campaign. Naturally Portal's conclusions were in favour of retention and paved the way for the declaration of Uganda as a British protectorate in 1894, with the remaining territories separating it from the coast incorporated in 1895.

As Rosebery himself declared to the Anti-Slavery Society, he was committed to the 'continuity of moral policy'¹⁰²⁵ in regard to Uganda. This was a policy of liberal imperialism which both had led Granville to sanction a British territorial presence in East Africa in 1884, and which prevented Rosebery from sanctioning abandonment of Uganda in 1892. Perhaps it was the keen foreign policy observers at Swansea Town Council who petitioned Rosebery 'in the interest of trade, humanity and good government' that best summarise these Victorian sensibilities and the British stance:

This Council is further of opinion that as the advent of the Imperial British East Africa Company to Uganda has destroyed the government of that country by its native chiefs, the abandonment of it now, would place its people at the mercy of fanaticism and the evil passions of men, and would be a retrograde movement, and inimical to the honour and best traditions of our country.¹⁰²⁶

The partition of East Africa marked no discontinuity in British policy. It was not spurred by sudden defensive concerns external to the region. On the contrary it was the result of local dynamics and represented the continuation of Britain's longstanding dual engagement:

¹⁰²⁴ Currie to Anderson, 23 August 1892, Private, FO 84/2258, TNA.

¹⁰²⁵ Lord Rosebery's Speech to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 20 October 1892, cited in *New Zealand Herald and Daily Southern Cross*, Volume XXIX, Issue 9053, 5 December 1892, Page 4.

¹⁰²⁶ Petition from Swansea Town Council, 3 November 1892, FO 84/2192, TNA.

protection of commercial interests and the execution of anti-slave trade policy. Within a decade this presence simply transitioned from being pursued informally via the client-state of Zanzibar, to an indirect presence through the IBEA, until the territories were finally placed under the direct control of the Foreign Office. Rather than indicating any unwavering British interest for the region, the incremental evolution in sovereign-status reflected the geopolitical change brought about by the European contestation over African territories. And, it was rather the absence of weighty imperial concerns such as geo-strategy, in favour of softer humanitarian and commercial factors which reconciles Salisbury's ambivalent interest for the region. Indeed the time he showed most concern for East Africa was during the 1888 revival of the slave trade.

Any such renewal of slave trafficking was deemed unacceptable to a potent combination of public opinion, influential pressure groups and policy-makers. Britain had aligned its national and moral prestige with the eradication of this 'scourge' of humanity, while the anticipated social stability that resulted from ending the slave trade was perceived to be beneficial for commercial development.¹⁰²⁷ Conversely, by not asserting sovereignty, British policy-makers would antagonise not only the 'jingoist' segments of its electorate, but also those inclined to humanitarianism and commercial enterprise. Annexation was, incidentally, the path of least resistance and East Africa was the ideal theatre in which to display Britain's commitment to, and bask in the reflected glory of, these professed values; values which were perceived to be integral to the British imperial identity and prestige. Against this backdrop it is unnecessary to invoke an Egypto-centric explanatory model that has little to no basis in documentary evidence. The annexation of East Africa is no historical conundrum. It formed a policy

¹⁰²⁷ Salisbury to Malet, 24 November 1890, FO 84/2030, TNA.

continuum, a natural consequence of Britain's self-proclaimed 'civilising mission' rooted in the Livingstonian tenets of 'commerce, Christianity and civilisation'.

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Appendix

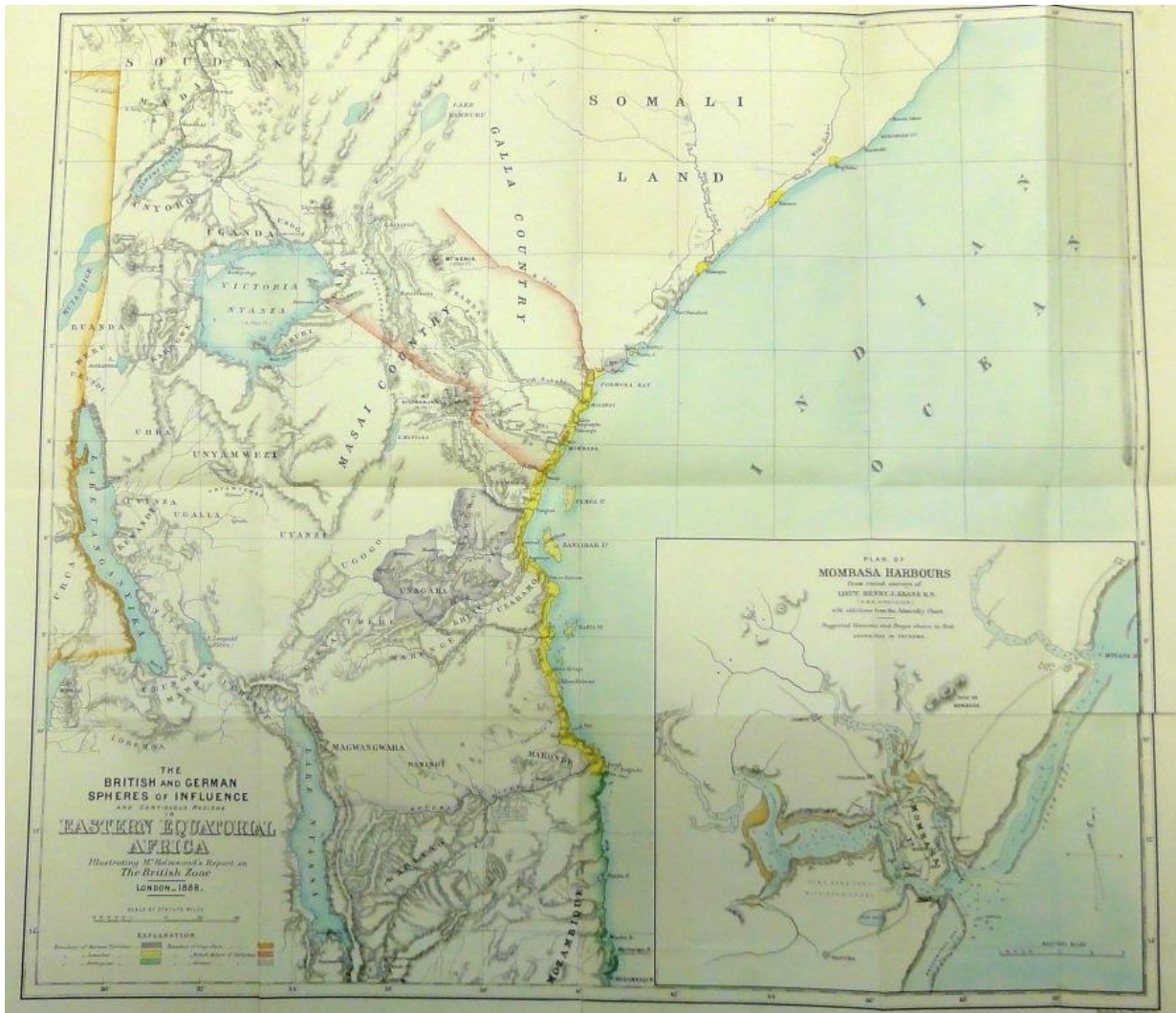


Figure 1: British and German Spheres of Influence, 1888, FO 403/106, TNA.



Figure 2: British and German Spheres of Influence, 1888, FO 403/106, TNA.

Slave Trade Statistics

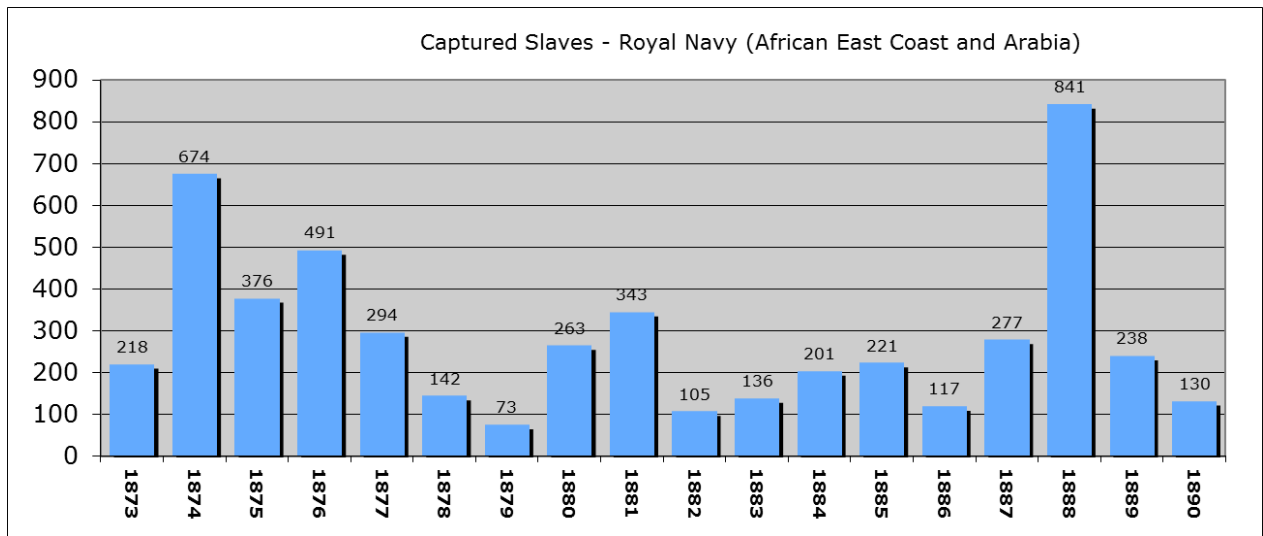


Figure 3 Slaves Captured by the Royal Navy's Anti-Slave Trade Squadron, 1873-90

Source:

Data extracted from: FO 881/4676, T 1/14421, HCA 35/87, FO 881/5165, FO 881/5366, FO 881/5459, FO 881/5616, FO 881/5896, FO 881/6009, FO 881/6010, FO 881/6052, FO 881/6053, FO 881/6199, TNA.



"EMBARRASSING!"

Figure 4 'Embarrassing,' *Punch*, Volume 98, 7 June 1890, pp. 266-7.

Before the results of the Anglo-German 'Heligoland-Zanzibar' Treaty had been announced, Salisbury had held a speech at the Merchant and Taylors' Company in London where he had termed Africa as a 'most embarrassing and inconvenient continent'.¹⁰²⁸ Salisbury's apparent reluctance to expand the empire in East Africa had attracted criticism and the prime minister was, rather undeservedly in light of the treaty's results, lampooned in the weekly magazine *Punch*.¹⁰²⁹ It seems his contemporaries were better attuned to Salisbury's hesitant stance toward imperial expansion than the later cadres of Egypto-centric historians who painted him an imperialist *par excellence*. It also bears testament to the irresistible power popular imperialism constituted among all layers of Victorian society, including the chattering classes (readers of *Punch*).

¹⁰²⁸ 'Lord Salisbury at the Merchant Taylors' Company, *The Times*, 23 May 1890, p. 10.

¹⁰²⁹ 'Embarrassing,' *Punch*, Volume 98, 7 June 1890, pp. 266-7.