AMERICANS IN EASTERN ASIA, REVISITED: ANGLO-AMERICAN RIVALRY AND THE CHINA MARKET

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ABSTRACT

In the early to mid-nineteenth century a bitter rivalry between the US and Britain over world markets shaped US East Asia policy and determined how the West interacted with East Asia. I argue that contrary to the standard interpretation of US and British cooperation in the region, the two countries were in fact engaged in a rivalry over how to define and shape the spatial order of the earth. The US sought to route all trade, commerce, and financing through New York, while Britain fought to keep it in London. I further argue that as part of a larger American vision of world hegemony, the US government assumed a positive role in East Asia at mid century with the first articulation of US China and East Asia policy in 1844 with the Treaty of Wangxia—not, as commonly held, in 1898 with the Open Door Notes—and the opening of Japan in 1853.
In memory of John Ardent (1960-2005), the superior man
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project developed from the idea of Anglo-American rivalry and of reinvestigating the literature on Western relations with China under this early phenomenon. Such a task necessitated expertise in numerous disciplines and I have been fortunate to have the guidance of a man whose knowledge spans many fields: Edward McCord. I have relied on Professor McCord’s input, advice, comments, and breadth of knowledge at every stage of this thesis, from its inception to the final copy edit. His insights into the historiography and historical developments, from China to the United States, helped me push through some early stumbling blocks and always pointed me in the right direction when I began to go astray. It would be an understatement to say this thesis would not be half of what it is without him.

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this thesis is borrowed from Tyler Dennett’s extremely influential work *Americans in Eastern Asia: A Critical Study of the Policy of the United States with reference to China, Japan and Korea in the 19th Century*. First published in 1922, this work has defined the field of US diplomatic history in East Asia ever since. Positing cooperation among Western powers in their penetration of East Asia in the nineteenth century, Dennett’s thesis has remained unquestioned for almost a century now and has been integrated into almost every study of US diplomatic history in the Pacific. Overlooked by Dennett and his successors in their analysis is the bitter rivalry between the US and Britain, which came to define how each country would interact with the East Asia region and their respective quests for global order in their respective images. My response to this is a revision of our understanding of the history in the context not of cooperation among Western powers but of conflict. In the struggle to feed their growing economy, and to command world trade in their favor, Americans looked to the Pacific, where they locked horns with Britain in a quest for the China market. It was here, as the
American republic blossomed, that its citizens began to conceive of a new institutional order by which space and time would be rewritten, and by which control of the ports of China and the Pacific would yield forth mastery of the earth at the expense of the British.

Americans in the late-eighteenth and early-to-mid-nineteenth centuries sought to build a new world order with themselves at the center. Such a world order would form by penetrating and controlling the markets and resources of China and the Pacific. The entire westward march of Americans across the North American continent can be seen as a quest to reach the markets of China, to seize the riches and make them flow back to their own shores. Goods would move from the Far East, across the Pacific Ocean, through the US and then across the Atlantic to the old world. Britain would no longer command transportation and finance and trade, for Americans would tear it from their grasp and the spatial order of the earth would be reconstituted. Henceforth sprang a China policy, a Japan policy—in short, an East Asia policy.

Yet the formation of this policy by Americans evolved over a period of more than half a century. We must ask, then, at what point do those with the motives for power and wealth create and call on an institutional order to intervene on their behalf; to work for them in a way that will further their interests by means that they themselves can no longer pursue? At what point do human societies form bodies to facilitate the realization of ideals and goals? What is the justification that allows the human rational to move from an ideology of freedom to a practice of intervention and restriction, and even racial subjugation? In this narrative of Americans and East Asia, that point came when they were threatened with preclusion from the Pacific market; when competitors seized an
opportunity and pressed for advantage and threatened absolute exclusion of others and thus monopoly of what could become the key to the future of all Americans and their United States.

This is a history of the aspirations of Americans and their government. It is a history of the markets of East Asia and the competition that ensued among Western powers for access and control of those markets. It is a story about how mastery of the world would be won or lost. The story goes like this: Americans, having emerged from their war of independence, harbored a bitter hatred of the British and an attitude of moral superiority of themselves and their new nation. They had begun to conceive of the world differently from that of a Eurocentric globe and came to posit a new order with America at the center. After the war for independence, Americans were now free, but cut out of the British mercantile system, and thus had to go forth on their own and find new markets and avenues of trade. They came to view the Pacific as the harbinger of a new spatial order in which trade would flow from East Asia through the US and to the markets of Europe, thus removing the centrality of British commercial dominance and world power. This view developed gradually over the course of the first half of the nineteenth century. Overseas American trade with China grew, and at home the push westward secured harbors on the western coast in order to facilitate access to the Pacific trade. As British activity intensified in China and Japan, Americans saw their interests threatened. Here, under the impingement of British monopolization, the US government came to play a
positive role in forming treaties with these countries and securing control of the Pacific trade.

History of this US interaction with East Asia has been written many times over by many a renowned scholar, and yet it leaves us wanting. Historians have done a fine job in recounting the narrative of early Americans in China, yet we still fail to understand the formation of US China policy in the first treaty with China in 1844, preferring instead to posit its inception in 1898. We have tied ourselves in knots attempting to explain the Japan expedition in 1853, resulting in the opening of Japan, yet see no link to a greater US East Asia policy. We have allowed ourselves to read our sources backwards and give the British absolute agency in the China Theater in the nineteenth century, rendering us blind to the evidence of a clear and independent US China policy that grew not out of cooperation with Britain but a bitter rivalry. The historiography has presented a picture of nineteenth century Americans in East Asia and the US policy that facilitated their interaction as a disjointed narrative of individuals and lackluster policy making. We continue to view China as an anomaly in US foreign policy, refusing to recognize in East Asia the same Anglo-American animosity that drove Americans against their former masters everywhere else in the world. We continue to boil down US intentions in the region to single truths and small groups of men, prescient in their vision and giants in their political command.

Two works have shaped such an understanding of the US in East Asia: Dennett’s *Americans in Eastern Asia* and John King Fairbank’s writings on the subject, most notably, “American China Policy to 1898: A Misconception,” published in 1970. The
core of Dennett’s argument is the necessity of the US working with other Western powers to create a stable and peaceful order in East Asia. Sections under titles like “The Cooperative Policy” emphasize cooperation between the US and Britain, each of which, Dennett argues, jointly pursued the united goal in East Asia of order and market penetration. Dennett neatly deals with the contradictions in the historical record of such a policy under the section entitled “A Period of Confusion.” All scholarship that has since followed, although sometimes notes the contradictions between Britain and the US, takes Dennett as the foundation and continues the analysis of collaboration of Western powers in China and East Asia. Most notably are those of Fairbank, who builds on Dennett’s thesis to argue that the US had no China policy in the nineteenth century and all claims to the contrary are a “misconception.” For Fairbank, decisions over US activities in China were made in London. Not until the Spanish-American War and John Hays did the US formulate an independent policy.

More broadly, historians and political scientists began to consider the question of American order and the rise of the United States at the end of World War II. Common

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3 Fairbank, "American China Policy to 1898: A Misconception."
interpretations pin the ascent of the US as a world power at the beginning of the twentieth century and the growth of US world order in the period between the wars, with the push for and establishment of US hegemony occurring after WWII. The growth of what many commentators call “American Empire” was not, in these scholars’ view, premeditated and conceived in the past, to fester and grow like a virus, but stumbled upon in the first half of the twentieth century as its power grew and institutional influence spread. Much of the literature on this topic does not even discuss the nineteenth century, but rather begins analysis with 1898 and the occupation of the Philippines, and from here charts the upward growth of US world power as its industrial and military strength expanded and European order collapsed into the political and economic disaster of two great wars. The literature, therefore, sees the rise of the US as a world power as contingent upon two developments: the immobilization of the old world powers, and the growth of the US manufacturing economy. The new status of the US was something that was seemingly bestowed upon Americans without their asking, and they begrudgingly took over the institutions of globalization.

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6 The exceptions to this view are Walter LaFeber and William Appleman Williams. These authors note that American imperialism did not suddenly appear at the end of the nineteenth century to create a historical break with the past century, but rather was an outgrowth of developments during the second half of the
Across disciplines and within subfields, therefore, the idea that the US bid its time developing in isolation for over a hundred years and was then propelled onto the world stage by forces beyond its doing has seeped into the historical conscious. Overlooked is the evidence of Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century reconceiving of the spatial order of the earth, the attempts and policy to realize the reconstitution of a spatial order, and the deep rivalry with Britain over markets and the definition of this order.

In the exposition of these overlooked developments that characterize the era I have found theoretical inspiration in the works of German legal scholar Carl Schmitt, primarily his *The Nomos of the Earth. Nomos* analyzes the nature and the demise of the old world order and the rise of the US as the harbinger of the new order, or nomos of the earth. The old nomos—which Schmitt sees having governed the order of the world from the sixteenth century through the twentieth—was defined by European international law bracketing continental war and giving free hand to states in overseas ventures. As such, all land on the earth belonged to European states or was free land to be occupied by European states. European states may have struggled against one another, but war was confined to the public realm, and thus private interests and social order upheld. Schmitt calls the judicial framework of the old nomos the “*Jus Publicum Europeum,*” which acted as the legal grounds and the moral justification for land appropriation. Through the

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Jus Publicum Europeaum the spatial order of the earth was defined, and all land outside of Europe was not administered by European international law.

The United States challenged the old nomos as it came into existence and began to exert itself around the world. Schmitt sees the enactment of a US nomos beginning with the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. In this proclamation the US legally defined a new spatial order of the earth. The Monroe Doctrine excluded other European powers from further territorial appropriations in the Americas and gave the US legal justification to use any means it deemed necessary to prohibit them. Schmitt sees the Monroe Doctrine as “both the fundamental moral tone of repudiation of the whole political system of the European monarchies, and the moral and political significance and mythical power concealed in the American line of separation and isolation.”7 Here the US as the new West had begun to lay the institutional and legal grounds to supersede the old West, to reorient the world order to become the center of the earth.

The pages that follow contribute to the general thesis Schmitt has laid forth. Within the desires of antebellum Americans—which underscored their China policy and interaction with East Asia—what Schmitt calls a new nomos of the earth developed. This American nomos stood counter to Britain and the old world, and attempted to create its own order and the institutions to uphold that order. Americans and their government rejected the mercantile system of Britain, as well as the order of colonial imperialism with formal colonies. Instead the US pursued indirect imperialism in the control of regional markets and trade, enacted through treaties, agreements and footholds. Activity

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in East Asia allowed the US to reformulate the spatial order of the earth, decentralizing Europe to shift the globe westward and put the US at the center of the earth.

A corollary to this framework of markets and institutions is that of race and an ideological judgment of superiority or inferiority based on the color of a man’s skin. In the same way that the justification of racial inferiority allowed European-arrived Americans to evict and destroy Native Americans and to enslave Africans,8 a popular ideological rational for Americans’ interference in the affairs of overseas peoples and their foreign states was that of racial superiority and the hubris of either what is best for a lesser people, or that a yellow or brown skinned population does not deserve the gifts of Divine Providence and thus must be dispossessed.9 American policy in East Asia is, in fact, a fine example. American merchants in China did not hold high opinions of their Chinese brethren;10 and the New York Daily Times took racial views to their logical conclusion when writing of Japan in 1852: “if she refuses to be enlightened, it is the duty of those who know her, even better than she knows herself, to force upon her the dawning of a better day.”11 The man responsible for instigating the US mission to Japan that year, Secretary of State Daniel Webster, once spoke of the “Anglo-American race” which had

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8 This ideology and rationalization is explored in detail in Peter Onuf’s study of race and slavery in the thought of Thomas Jefferson. Peter S. Onuf, “‘To Declare them a Free and Independent People’: Race, Slavery, and National Identity in Jefferson’s Thought,” Journal of the Early Republic, 18 (Spring 1998): 1-46. Onuf argues that this founding father, although committed to the emancipation of black slaves, believed that the two different races—black and white—could not coexist side by side, and that given the opportunity, black slaves would revolt to establish their own nation of Virginia, excluding or enslaving whites. For this reason, blacks had to be expatriated.


"issued from the great Caucasian fountain."\textsuperscript{12} And the commodore charged with the enactment of the mission, and credited with its success, Matthew C. Perry, dotted his journals with anthropological descriptions of the Japanese—"of a yellowish color all over"—as well as unglamorous personality traits—"treacherous," "crafty," etc.\textsuperscript{13} The American nomos could thus be split into two contemporary and self-reinforcing nomoi: one of global trade and market capitalism, and one of the conquering and subjugation of other peoples according to their complexion. As we will see, these two entangled nomoi at times complemented each other, and, at other times, conflicted with each other as the US interfered in Asia and constructed a new spatial order.

Under such a framework, this thesis attempts to facilitate a better understanding of the history in question and the contradictions within the current literature, and force a re-evaluation of the growth of the role of the US in the international order and the importance of China and East Asia in this development. American penetration of China and Japan are not isolated events in and of themselves, but rather part of a broad development in early American history. With such a realization our understanding of the history of the region needs to be recalibrated as well. Rivalry and antagonism between the US and Britain in China did exist, just as it did between these two powers everywhere else in the world. The system of Western penetration into China (or the treaty port

\textsuperscript{12} Daniel Webster and Edward Everett, \textit{The Works of Daniel Webster} (Boston,: C.C. Little and J. Brown, 1851), v. 2, p. 214.

\textsuperscript{13} Perry also argued for the use of force against the Japanese in order to show them the power of Western civilization. In his meanders around the Pacific region before and after the Japan mission he explored a number of Pacific islands, to which he advocated colonization and occupation by America. This was justified to Perry because the native islanders had no concept of nation and were of a lesser civilization. Matthew Calbraith Perry, Francis L. Hawks, and Sidney Wallach, \textit{Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan, under the Command of Commodore M.C. Perry, United States Navy} (New York,: Coward-McCann, 1952), v. 1, p. 75.
system), Japan and the rest of East Asia that emerged following the Opium War did not occur, as often portrayed, as a collaborative conspiracy among Western powers, but rather as a competition among them. Here we find each nation vying for economic power in a land of quiescent yet latent profit, and determined not to let the other gain an advantage.
CHAPTER ONE: A NEW SPATIAL ORDER OF THE EARTH

In the nineteenth century London defined the order the world. Home to the bankers and capitalists that lubricated the gears of global trade and commerce, London had become the focal point of international exchange and finance. The world’s outstanding international traders sailed from here to the far reaches of the globe to peddle British wares, and to return with goods that made up the primary commodities of the world. At the main British ports, and especially London, stood the great warehouses that fed international trade and the immense traffic that came and went, buying and selling everything from precious stones to basic foodstuffs. This was the source of business and international short-term credits on which London thrived.¹⁴ Around the world, from Latin American ports in the Atlantic, to Asian harbors, all trade, transport, and communications flowed through England or were carried on British ships. United States Senator Thomas Rusk articulated this monopoly in a frustrated report before his colleagues in 1850:

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"There was not a letter sent by ocean steam conveyance, in these quarters, which did not pay its tribute to the British crown, and not a passenger nor parcel of merchandize transported, by the agency of steam, upon the ocean, which did not furnish profit to the British capitalist. Great Britain asserted her right to be the 'queen of the ocean,' and, as such, she levied her imports upon the industry and intelligence of all of the nations that frequented that highway of the world."\(^{15}\)

Through their grip on the transport of goods and intelligence, the British controlled the flow of wealth and how it was dispersed. By doing such the British could set the terms by which the non-Western world could interact with the Western world, or, as Rusk said, how the Western world could interact with the rest of the world. Here Britain had created a spatial order of the earth with itself at the center.

The young American republic began to challenge this order, however. By promoting itself as the long sought passage to India, the thoroughfare of world commerce, Americans here attempted to reposition the spatial order with the US at the center. Emerging from their newly won independence into a world devoid of the advantages of British colonial marketplaces, the now free American merchants were forced to find new markets. The profitable markets in the Atlantic and the East Indies remained restricted to subjects of the British Empire, which forced American merchants to go anywhere and everywhere else. As J.N. Reynolds, the diarist of the four year voyage of the *U.S.S. Potomac* into the Pacific Ocean in the early 1830s, put it, "When the war of our revolution had been so gloriously terminated in establishment of our independence, that the maritime spirit and intelligence of our own merchants, no longer

\(^{15}\) *Senate Report* 267:32-1, serial 631, p. 2.
shackled by oppressive colonial restrictions, looked abroad to all parts of the globe.”¹⁶ As Americans explored the waters of the world in search of avenues of commerce in the antebellum era they, along with their young government, concluded commercial agreements with over forty countries. By 1860 the growing nation, led by righteous and ambitious men, had established an extensive global commercial network, built a steam marine with the dual function of civilian and military use, made sufficient steps for controlling the Pacific, and was well on the way to reconstructing the global order with the US at the center of the earth.

The necessity of overseas expansion was compounded by another problem the US faced at home, that of economic growth. The economic reality was a bit less sanguine than Reynolds’ idealism, for the US economy was severely restricted in the late eighteenth century by the size of the domestic market and the inability to expand into foreign markets due to the British mercantile system and the stagnation of foreign markets. At the turn of the century, when the merchants of Reynolds optimistic descriptions did begin to find new markets and penetrate old ones, the US export economy grew fivefold. This led subsequently to growth in the domestic economy and further investment. Between 1820 and 1860 industrialization was already well underway, with the manufacturing industry driving economic growth. With investment increasing at a dizzying pace, and the economy growing faster, the 1830s saw prices rise on uninhabited expansion and productive capacity. Panic struck in 1837 producing what is

called the worst economic crisis in American history and prices collapsed. This collapse resulted from a production glut that flooded the market with more goods than it could consume.\textsuperscript{17} The crisis awakened Americans from the illusion that they could forever remain self-sufficient and they realized the necessity of overseas markets for American products and raw materials. Time and again politicians and merchants of the day raised the urgent issue of markets for US raw materials—mainly cotton—and manufacturing goods.

Such circumstances created aspirations among Americans to tap the wealth of the China market. In the imagination of its citizens, America was the long sought passage to the Far East that their forefathers had pursued centuries before; it stood as the land that would link the old markets of Europe with the fabulous wealth of the East, complete with ivory and apes and peacocks and gold. President John Tyler in his 1842 address to Congress talked of China’s “three hundred millions of subjects, fertile in various rich products of the earth, not without the knowledge of letters and of many arts, and with large and expansive accommodations for internal intercourse and traffic.”\textsuperscript{18} As merchants took to the seas to discover the wealth of the China trade in the late eighteenth century, editorials assuaged the fantasies of a young America, and politicians waxed on the glory it would bring. Thomas Hart Benton, the Senator and Congressman from Missouri, concluded some years after meeting with Thomas Jefferson in 1824 that Jefferson “was the first to propose the North American road to India, and the introduction of Asiatic


trade on that road, as well as the strength of growth that it would infuse in the US.”\textsuperscript{19}

Indeed, American politicians and merchants saw Asia as the foundation of commerce from the earliest times, responsible for the rise and fall of nations, and the basis of Britain’s strength and greatness in the nineteenth century. Americans fancied how the seizure of the Far East trade would bring the US to its rightful seat of permanent grandeur. A speech Benton delivered in the Senate in 1849 captured this mood:

“The trade of the Pacific Ocean, of the western coast of North American, and of Eastern Asia, will all take its track; and not only for ourselves, but for posterity. That trade of India which has been shifting its channels from the time of the Phoenicians to the present, is destined to shift once more, and to realize the grand idea of Columbus. The American road to India will also become the European track to that region. The European merchant, as well as the American, will fly across our continent on a straight line to China. The rich commerce of Asia will flow through our center. And where has that commerce ever flowed without carrying wealth and dominion with it?”\textsuperscript{20}

Or, as the New York merchant Asa Whitney put it in an address before the Pennsylvania Legislature in 1848: “Here we stand forever. We reach out one hand to all Asia, and the other to all Europe, willing for all to enjoy the great blessings we possess, claiming free intercourse and exchange of commodities with all, seeking not to subjugate any, but all...tributary, and at our will subject to us.”\textsuperscript{21}

Out of this conviction of the US as the land straddling the old markets of Europe and Asian wealth, the US, from very early on, formulated a policy of penetration into the

\textsuperscript{19} Quoted in Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (Cambridge,; Harvard University Press, 1950), 24. Benton made this claim after a meeting with Jefferson in 1824.

\textsuperscript{20} Feb. 7, 1849 Congressional Globe, Senate 30\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess., 473.

\textsuperscript{21} Quoted in Smith, Virgin Land, 35-36.
Pacific and active commercial engagement with China. Although policy makers did not articulate a China policy per se, the US government did plan the enactment of a more expedient and efficient means to tap the wealth of the Asian market. Or, as Congressman Benton put it in a speech before the Boston Mercantile Library Association: “The channel of Asiatic commerce which has been shifting in its bed from the time of Solomon, and raising up cities and kingdoms wherever it went—(to perish when it left them)—changing its channel for the last time—to become fixed upon its shortest, safest, best, and quickest route, through the heart of our America…”\textsuperscript{22}

Prominent historians of American history have made the case that westward expansion in the nineteenth century took place at the impetus of accessing Asian markets. Henry Nash Smith in \textit{Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth} calls Thomas Jefferson “the intellectual father of the American advance to the Pacific.”\textsuperscript{23} In the 1820s and 1830s, when American and British trappers struggled for economic domination of the northwest, Jefferson began to entertain the idea of an overland route to the Pacific. He sent Lewis and Clark into the West to navigate the waterways to the Pacific. Although Jefferson did not mention China or Asia markets, Smith says that “Jefferson could hardly have discussed the possibility of a transcontinental route without having the China trade in mind.”\textsuperscript{24} Indeed, an examination of the correspondence between Jefferson and Lewis, as undertaken by Joseph Schafer in “The Western Ocean and Oregon History,” reveals the orientation of the mission to Asian commerce. Upon returning from their journey

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\item \textsuperscript{22} Quoted in Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 15.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 20.
\end{itemize}
Lewis wrote to Jefferson that “In obedience to your orders we have penetrated the Continent of North America to the Pacific Ocean and sufficiently explored the interior of the country to affirm that we have discovered the most practicable communication which does exist across the continent by means of the navigable branches of the Missouri and Columbia Rivers.” Lewis went on to discuss the “immense advantages” to trade the route would have for commerce to China.\textsuperscript{25} When the route was discovered, the task of occupation began. Norman Graebner, in \textit{Empire on the Pacific: A Study in American Continental Expansion}, argues that the American government and people had a clear calculated policy to undertake the possession of the West coast (as opposed to the innate calling of manifest destiny). The motivation for this policy came by way of mercantile interests seeking deep-water harbors at the edge of the Pacific, which would allow easy penetration into Asia and determine the course of American empire. Key to Graebner’s argument is that the US had a unified plan for westward expansion that moved it across the North American continent and into the Pacific Ocean for the sake of acquiring ports as launching points into Asia. Congressional debates in the early 1820s clearly reflect this.\textsuperscript{26} In December of 1822 and January of 1823, the House took up a bill to make provisions for the occupation of the mouth of the Columbia River, which empties “into the Pacific” which meant merchants’ “trade will naturally be China, Japan and the Philippine Islands.”\textsuperscript{27} This trade, Congressman Colden noted on January 13, 1823, has


\textsuperscript{26} See \textit{Annals of Congress}, 17\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess., 389, 418, 423-4, 583-4

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Annals of Congress} 17\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess. (Dec. 18, 1822), 423.

18
yielded "profits so large, that they formed the capitals of several mercantile houses, which were considered among the opulent of the city."\textsuperscript{28} Or as Caleb Atwater stated in 1829: "That this will be the route to China within fifty years from this time, scarcely admits of a doubt."\textsuperscript{29}

This is not hard to fathom as the entire Western world viewed East Asia as the greatest market on earth. As British diplomat Sir Henry Pottinger put it, "all the mills in Lancaster could not make stocking stuff sufficient for one of [China's] provinces."\textsuperscript{30} China not only boasted half a billion people, whom, under ideal conditions, ought to all be consumers, but was also one of the last markets on earth to remain untapped. Everywhere else European powers had made their inroads and either closed the market to all trade save their selves (e.g. India) or, in the case of Europe, the market had already reached its full potential. East Asia had long presented opportunity and riches for whomever could reach those shores and establish trade with those people.

These East Asian markets came to be synonymous with the Pacific, which promised brighter horizons and rejected the order on the other side of the world. As The Barre Patriot put it in 1852, "What the Mediterranean Sea was in the early ages of the world, the Pacific Ocean promises to become in the future."\textsuperscript{31} While Europe riled in upheaval and stagnation and pauperism, and the Atlantic had exhausted its potential to squeeze greater growth forthwith, the Pacific beckoned with new markets and opportunity. The Liverpool Journal wrote in 1851 that,

\textsuperscript{28} Annals of Congress 17\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess. (Jan. 13, 1823), 584.
\textsuperscript{29} Quoted in Smith, Virgin Land, 23.
\textsuperscript{31} "A Highway to the Pacific," The Barre Patriot, Nov 26, 1852, v. 9, no. 20, p. 1.
“The Pacific become the high way of nations, and enterprises unheard of approach maturity, while the mind of the ancient world is absorbed on the miserable subjects of divine right and sectarian controversy. The majesty of civilization and commerce brightens regions rich and vast, while Europe passes to parley with idiot legitimists and ancient nonentities.”

Senator Seward drove this point home in front of his colleagues on the Senate floor in the summer of 1852:

“Who does not see, then, that every year hereafter, European commerce, European politics, European thoughts, and European activity, although actually gaining greater force, and European connections, although actually becoming more intimate, will, nevertheless, ultimately sink in importance; while the Pacific ocean, its shores, its islands, and the vast regions beyond, will become the chief theater of events in the world’s great Hereafter?”

Here a new order was taking shape on the other side of the world, commanded by the markets at home and the merchants who sailed the globe searching for raw materials and consumers. Where the old world had at one time led to its great prosperity and the enriching of nations, it had passed its maturity and a new wealth was being tapped.

While some drew parallels to what had come before with the discovery of the Mediterranean or South American, others rejected any comparison outright and maintained the formation of a whole new order. The Farmers’ Cabinet detailed this in January 1853 in a front-page article entitled “The Pacific Civilization.”

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32 Quoted in The Farmers’ Cabinet, Jan 30, 1852, p. 2.
“What is certain in the new colonization of the Pacific is, that the infant establishments there are not to be mere ‘factories’ of distant powers, trading ports, bearing the same relation to home ports and mother countries which the South American States have borne to Europe. The whole order of Providence since Balboa looked upon the glittering waters of the ‘South Sea,’ shows that the great sea which he called ‘the Pacific’ is yet to be the basin of an order of commerce and civilization of its own. So vast are its resources, so countless the people on its shores, that, as this commerce develope[s] [sic], it must become the largest commercial system of the world. As the civilization takes form which follows commerce, it will be on a scale which will not readily submit to the fashions borrowed from the little Atlantic, or the still more remote Mediterranean.”

*The Farmers’ Cabinet* here posited a precedence for the rising new order that it called “The Pacific Civilization.” For the “nations which are to form it are more varied and of greater power than have ever dealt together easily before.”33 And America, it claimed, was poised to command it.

Americans’ conception of difference, it was held in the logic of those like the editors of *The Farmers’ Cabinet*, positioned the country to become the next great power and recreate the order of the earth. It was out of this conception of difference from which grew ideas of racial superiority and subjugation. We must remember that at this time—the first half of the nineteenth century, and especially the 1830s and 1840s—the US wrought military aggression on peoples of different colors, dispossessed them of their land, or enslaved them. The wars against the Native Americans to drive them from their land was in full bloom in the early part of the nineteenth century; the Mexican-American War of the late 1840s was fought not without a bit of hubris and racial superiority; slavery on American plantations prospered on the grounds of the inferiority of black

Africans. These events at home seeped into the American psyche and manifest themselves in American foreign policy as Americans took themselves and their ideological justification overseas. The new order of the earth, the Pacific Civilization—the American nomos—would all contain hints of difference based on racial superiority in the very same manner as US domestic policy.

ASIA IN THE NEW SPATIAL ORDER

As US networks and influence expanded, Americans began to think not only in terms of individual markets and trade, but to reconceive of the structural order of the world and the flow of trade and finance. They began to see a new spatial order of the earth with the US at the center conducting global trade from East to West. As the antebellum periodical The Farmers’ Cabinet wrote in an article in January 1851 under the header “A Shorter Route to India”: “Our now wild and unbroken wilderness will become the thoroughfare of the world, as over it would inevitably pass not only our own trade with Asia but also that of all Western Europe.” Here the US was redrawing the spatial order of the earth by placing the Western hemisphere at the center and legal codes extenuating from it. For the US it was a struggle to manufacture a new order in which all

35 The Farmers’ Cabinet, Jan 23, 1851, v. 49, n. 24, p. 2.
trade and communications would pass from the Far East through America and to the old world. Poised to capture the wealth of the markets of East Asia, the US sought to assert itself and its interests. In real terms this meant signing treaties and creating the conditions of trade and interaction on its own terms, not on Britain’s or Europe’s. It meant building the means to exert its control through treaties and agreements and creating the force to uphold them. *The Farmers’ Cabinet* put it in exactly these terms in an 1849 article entitled “A Short Cut to Asia,” which discussed how the US would become the “commercial center of the globe.”

Americans envisioned themselves and their young country at the center of the earth, fighting to remain free from the influence and pollution of the old world, and to extend their commerce and influence overseas. *The Southern Literary Messenger* took up this theme in a six-page article published in January 1850, just one year before instructions for the Perry mission, entitled “Our Foreign Policy.” It is important to note that this article was penned in the style of a response to a pamphlet by a Mr. Trescot, who had laid out a program for American expansion overseas. *The Southern Literary Messenger* took up the debate, not to criticize Mr. Trescot and his call for an expansive foreign policy, for this was a given, but rather to extend the debate and discuss the means of carrying this goal forward. *The Southern Literary Messenger* article opened by recounting the recent extensions of American territory and the possession of a Pacific coastline, and preached,

"We must become a great naval power as well as a great commercial people: we cannot long maintain our position as the latter without assuming our proper position as the former. To ascertain with precision what that position is, to count the cost thereof, we must look to the position of other powers similarly situated. We must look to the Balance of power between the great naval powers. Our interest being involved in the preservation of that Balance of Power, we have a diplomatic right to concert measures for its preservation, or for effecting such changes shall secure it, to the protection of our own interests."

This passage, hinting at a new spatial order and the means by which the US could achieve it, reflected a staple view held by Americans of the US and its new position in the world. The domestic debate, as exhibited in this article’s dialogue with Mr. Tescot, centered on the means of practice, not motivation.

The US government did not fail to act to facilitate the realization of this spatial order through the penetration and control of the Pacific. In 1842 President Tyler announced the Tyler Doctrine, which effectively gave the US legal jurisdiction of the Pacific Ocean, and placed within its own legal capacity the right to exclude other Western powers from the Pacific. Speaking of Hawaii and the seas surrounding the Pacific islands, Tyler said,

"It cannot but be in the conformity with the interest and wishes of the Government and the people of the United States, that this community, thus existing in the midst of a vast expanse of ocean, should be respected, and all its rights strictly and conscientiously regarded...Far remote from the dominions of European Powers, its growth and prosperity as an independent State may yet be in a high degree useful to all whose trade is extended to those regions."

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Tyler continued to say that European states and vessels attempting to take control of outposts in the Pacific or monopolize the Pacific trade “could not but create dissatisfaction on the part of the United States.” Here the first steps were taken to assert US interest and control in the Pacific theater, and to give the US legal precedence to take action against other states that might oppose American interests. Two years later (1844) the US had signed its treaty with China, and ten years later one with Japan, solidifying its control over the Pacific.

It was no accident that President Tyler announced the doctrine that bears his name in the same speech in which he called for a mission to China. The entire operation then was one of US penetration into the Pacific. And here we must view the missions to China and Japan within this context of a new spatial order of the earth. The public speeches as well as the private correspondence of the Cushing mission, and the instructions of the Perry mission, betray the true sentiments of the Americans that initiated and undertook them. These missions to open the major markets and ports of East Asia were not undertaken *ipso facto* in and of themselves, but part of a much larger overreaching vision of nineteenth century Americans. This vision was not held by one man but had become a general discourse on America’s place in the world and how to effectuate and strengthen that position. As *The Farmers’ Cabinet* put it in an article entitled “A Short Cut to Asia,” the attempt was nothing less than to “transfer the commercial centre of the globe from England to the United States.”

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under Abraham Lincoln, articulated this view at length in a speech before his Senate colleagues in 1852:

“This movement is not a sudden, or accidental, or irregular, or convulsive one; but it is one for which men and nature have been preparing through near four hundred years. During all that time merchants and princes have been seeking how they could reach cheaply and expeditiously, ‘Cathay,’ ‘China,’ ‘the East,’ that intercourse and commerce might be established between its ancient nations and newer ones of the West. To these objects Da Gama, Columbus, Americus, Cabot, Hudson, and other navigators, devoted their talents, their labors, and their lives. Even the discovery of this continent and its islands, and the organization of society and government upon them, grand and important as those events have been, were but conditional, preliminary, and ancillary to the more sublime result, now in the act of consummation—the reunion of the two civilizations, which, having parted on the plains of Asia four thousand years ago, and having traveled ever afterwards in opposite directions around the world, now meet again on the coasts and islands of the Pacific ocean. Certainly no mere human event of equal dignity and importance has ever occurred upon the earth.”40

Indeed, politicians and policy makers and the press often articulated the reconstitution of a new spatial order in such terms. When Cushing talked of establishing a belt of fortresses around the Pacific in his correspondence with President Tyler, and Webster wrote of securing the last link in the Great Chain of Being in the Far East in the Japan instructions, they were articulating the American vision of a new spatial order, by which the Pacific would replace the Atlantic and Mediterranean as the bosom of trade and civilization, and America would become positioned at the center of the earth. Their task at hand was to make policy that would increase American influence and trade throughout

the world, and their true desires, found within the unconscious ideology of the American psyche, was to create a whole new system of interaction through a new spatial order of the earth.

AMERICAN DIFFERENCE

Americans’ idea of a new spatial order of the earth grew out of an understanding of difference. From very early on Americans saw themselves as distinct and morally superior to Britain, Europe and the old world. Since the dawn of the revolution, Americans thought of themselves as creating a new order free of monarchy, corruption, and oppression. It was an order of political, economic and social institutions, which recognized the inherent rights of every human being—the freedom to make their own choices without the oversight or control of a higher human authority. Americans came to conceive of themselves and their nation as different, pure, and deserving. In this separation from the old world, a reconception of the spatial order of the earth began, with America coming to occupy the spatial center in the minds of her citizens. With themselves at the center, Americans redrew the mental map of the earth, and worked to realize a new reality in institutions and market order that would carry the wealth of China through America and to the markets of Europe. As the republic matured, its economic and political interests came into conflict with those of the old world, namely Britain, and
a full fledged competition ensued with the globe at stake, which came to define how the US would interact with China and Japan.

The American break with the British Empire was a bitter one and it redefined their consciousness.\textsuperscript{41} Americans came to see England and Europe as corrupt and morally degenerate. Not only did the early Americans reject all things European ideologically but they also redefined the physical boundaries, drawing a line in the Atlantic. Thomas Jefferson spoke of it as “a meridian of partition through the ocean which separates the two hemispheres.”\textsuperscript{42} Americans conceptualized a new spatial order of the earth, in which the United States stood at the center, replacing Europe. This idea of themselves, once born, defined Americans’ interaction with the world. No plans were drawn up in the State Department to overthrow Britain, or to militarily challenge Europe; rather an idea of greatness and a discourse of superiority governed the thoughts and actions of Americans. They went forth into the world, not to merely interact with it, but to conquer and mold it. As the \textit{Liverpool Journal} wrote in early 1851, “The republic of America bids fair for the mastery of the world, and will achieve it.”\textsuperscript{43}

This conception of a new spatial order of the earth must be understood against Americans’ identity of themselves in relation to Europe. T.H. Breen, in his article “Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution,” shows how British exclusion of Americans from the rights enjoyed by the English created a deep sense of


\textsuperscript{42} Quoted in Schmitt, \textit{The Nomos of the Earth}, 288.

\textsuperscript{43} Quoted in \textit{The Farmers' Cabinet}, Jan 30, 1851, v. 49, no. 25, p. 2.
humiliation and resentment in the American colonists. By denying Americans full
equality within the British Empire, it was the English, Breen argues, who pushed the
Americans to adopt a universalist vocabulary of natural rights (as opposed to rights
granted by a monarch) and eventually forced them to revolt.\textsuperscript{44} Americans here drew on
the tradition of the English moral and political philosophers to create an identity and legal
justification of individual rights inherent in human beings.\textsuperscript{45} They came to see themselves
as the purveyors of liberty and justice, fighting against monarchy and tyranny,
conservativism, corruption and conspiracy. By the end of the eighteenth century even the
European thinkers of the Enlightenment began to talk of the US as free and independent,
unspoiled by the corruption and over-civilization plaguing Europe. Indeed, the natural
condition of America was viewed as normal and pacific, while that of Europe as
abnormal and combative. The US was considered to be the refuge of justice and
efficiency; a state where conditions existed by which laws and freedom were possible in a
normal situation, not needed to be imposed by monarchical figures.

In this idea of themselves, Americans first conceptualized and then formalized a
separate sphere of peace and freedom, distinct from a sphere of despotism and corruption.
This distinction led, by necessity, to the formulation of a new order, which would redraw
the spatial map of the earth. All European claims to the soil were canceled and American
soil acquired a new formal status in the minds of its citizens, distinct from the former
territorial claims of the old world. This was enacted in the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, and
then in Tyler’s extension of the doctrine into the Pacific with the Tyler Doctrine in 1842.

\textsuperscript{44} Breen, "Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution."
\textsuperscript{45} Yuhtaro, "The Artillery of Mr. Locke".
It was thus that the line was drawn; a global line that served ideologically as a quarantine, or pest control. As Senator Thomas Rusk put it in a report before his colleagues: "We are aspiring to the first place among the nations of the earth...a place which belongs to us as a matter of right—and are we to suffer ourselves to be overcome by British commercial capitalists under the auspices of the British crown?" The answer to his rhetorical question was no, of course, from which the birth of a new spatial order of the earth would be born.

In this context of building itself up and asserting itself and interests in the world the US needed to keep the other Western powers in check; failing to do so would compromise the global position of the US and keep the spatial order of the earth focused on Europe. The Southern Literary Messenger argued in a front page 1850 article that,

“We cannot consent to connect this dominion with the local system of Europe. That system must keep out of the fray of ours, and confine itself to the corner of the earth where it originated; for we must follow the counsel of our Washington, and have no entangling connections with European powers. Our god Terminus, like the Roman, may advance, but he never recedes.”

The article further discussed the designs of European powers in the Western hemisphere and attempted to use Texas and Mexico to extend their influence into the new world. It was by calculation that the US thwarted these designs and kept Europe at bay: “the European system was driven back within its natural limits, and the United States again left free to follow the maxims of Washington.” The journal concluded by confirming

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diplomatic aggression against Europe and calling for the extension of US interests in other parts of the world "when occasion offers, and by proper means." Indeed, for The Southern Literary Messenger, the US had arrived to play the predominate role in the future relations of the world through the construction of "a school of American diplomacy, sound in its attainments, sagacious in its means, and governed as to its ends by a strong sense of national power, and a solemn conviction of national responsibility."49

ANGLO-AMERICAN RIVALRY

In this quest for markets, influence and a new order of the earth, Americans viewed Britain as their enemy. Bradford Perkins, who devoted a distinguished career to the study of Anglo-American relations, argued in The Great Rapprochement that the antagonism between the two countries did not subside until the First World War. "Generation after generation [of Americans] had learned to look upon England as the enemy," he wrote. He noted that John Adams and his contemporaries developed the attitude from events surrounding the American Revolution. John Quincy Adams and his generation, including the merchants who would come to carry out trade with China, learned it from the War of 1812. John Quincy's grandson, Henry Adams, continued the Anglophobic sentiment when recalling his experiences in London during the Civil War,

49 "Our Foreign Policy," The Southern Literary Messenger, Jan 1850, p.6:1-2.
"It was the hostility of the middle-class which broke our hearts, and turned me into a lifelong enemy of everything British."\textsuperscript{50} Indeed, from the time of Thomas Paine, Americans saw their republic as a challenge to the European forms of monarchy and repression; a land of freedom and virtues that would herald a better future for the human race. Britain was the target of the American Revolution and later the foreign antagonist at which abuse would continuously be hurled for its aristocratic and unjust form of government and world domination. As historian Cushing Strout writes, "The role of England in American demonology has been a special one. As America’s most ancient enemy she has been the prime villain of the Old World."\textsuperscript{51}

Yet more than just ideological differences divided the two peoples; very concrete conflicts of interest often put the two countries at odds, and at times very near war. Between 1815 and 1860, for example, the US concluded commercial agreements with forty-three countries. In each case, and especially in Latin America, the US came into conflict with British diplomats as they struggled to gain similar advantages as those already granted to British merchants.\textsuperscript{52} In his article "The United States and British Imperial Expansion, 1815-60", Kinley Brauer has shown the threat that British expansion in North America and throughout the world presented to the US. American merchants saw the British acquisition of colonies as an obstacle to trade and their ability to compete with British merchants; Southern planters viewed British acquisition of African, South American and Latin American colonies as a strategy to break the South’s monopoly in

\textsuperscript{52} Kinley J. Brauer, "The United States and British Imperial Expansion 1815-60," Diplomatic History 12 (winter 1988): 29.
cotton production; and manufacturers worried that Britain would gain control over world markets, saturating them with goods cheaper than they could produce. In the early nineteenth century many believed that the US was in grave economic danger as Britain used its industrial, financial and commercial resources to build an empire of economic domination. As Massachusetts Representative Francis Baylies put it in 1826, Britain pursued a conscious policy “to check, to influence, and to control all nations, by means of her navy and her commerce...she has pursued this grand design, with an energy and perseverance, which does infinite credit to her political sagacity and foresight.” Or the New York Herald noted in 1841: “The progress of British aggrandizement in every part of the world, savage and civilized, ought to alarm all independent nations.”

The US furthermore faced the threat of British territorial encroachment at home over what Congressman Caleb Cushing called “rival interests.” From very early on Britain had designs on California and its deep-water ports. The Royal Navy had surveyed the California coast in 1827 and reported that San Francisco “possesses all the requisites for a great naval establishment, and is so advantageously situated with regard to North America and China and the Pacific in general.” By the late 1830s Britain had a program to acquire California, Mexico and much of what is today the Southwestern United States. In the 1840s Britain actively discouraged Texas from becoming part of the US, instead recommending that it continue as an independent state and come under the protection of the British Empire. And in the Pacific Ocean it moved on Hawaii. These

53 Quoted in Ibid.: 23-34.
54 Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot, July 11-14, 1837, Cushing on the Northeast Boundary, Cushing Papers box 204, p. 8.
acts led president Tyler to force the annexation of Texas and to extend the Monroe Doctrine into the Pacific Ocean to keep Britain from anchoring its naval ships there and turning Hawaii into a colony. The United States’ northeastern boundary with British Canada remained unresolved for nearly half a century, and continued to inspire criticism of “our greatest enemy” who has “endeavored to deprive us of this [codfishery in the northern seas],” as Congressman Cushing wrote in a letter to the Massachusetts governor over the border problem. “She sought to cripple our growing strength on the Ocean. She claimed to be allowed military possession of the Lakes. She demanded the use of the Mississippi, though it is wholly within the United States.”56 In the late 1830s the “Aroostook War” exploded over the Maine boundary, the New Hampshire boundary had isolated private and public conflicts, and the New York-Niagara border saw inflammatory incidents such as a British Canadian force destroying an American steamboat moored on the US side of the river.57 As these problems festered, American politicians began supporting an expulsion of Britain from Canada and a Canadian revolutionary movement.58 Some even began talking of war with Britain. “If the pretensions of Great Britain should unhappily force the United States into war,” Cushing told his Congressional colleagues in 1839, “I shall not stop to dispute which of the two, my native

56 Cushing Papers “Claims of Citizens of the United States on Denmark” (1826), box 200, p. 16; Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot, July 11-14, 1837, p. 3, Cushing on the Northeast Boundary, Cushing Papers box 204.
57 See Frederick Merk, “The Oregon Question in the Webster-Ashburton Negotiations,” The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 43, no. 3 (1956).
58 See Cushing Papers, Articles in the New York Daily Express, Dec. 1837, box 204.
land or its foreign enemy, is in the right; but I will be the forced in the tented field, where death is to be met, or honor won, at the cannon’s mouth.”

As contentious as the Maine boundary appeared, the Oregon Territory probably stood as the most potentially explosive confrontation between Britain and the US, and which nearly did lead them to war. Territorial claims and crises rose and fell for nearly half a century until Polk averted war and negotiated a compromise in 1846. The crisis in the mid 1820s ratcheted up tensions when the British seized Astoria; war averted only by declaration of joint occupation in 1827. The British fur trading company, the Hudson Bay Company, was established on the north Pacific coast in 1825, and even as the fur trade declined, the growing importance of the China trade increased the desirability of the Pacific coast ports. “The commerce of the whole world in the Pacific Ocean,” commented the French minister in Washington in 1843, “is going to acquire a development that will give to all places on its shores, susceptible of being used for ports of repair or of commerce, a considerable importance.”

As American migration into Oregon increased, and trade grew, the rivalry with Britain flared again. “I think it is our duty to speak freely and candidly, and let England know she can never have an inch of Oregon...” said Congressmen John Wentworth of Illinois over the controversy. Missouri Congressman Thomas Hart Benton, proposed, “Thirty thousand rifles on Oregon will annihilate the Hudson’s Bay Company.” The 1844 elections sent several hawkish and Anglophobic Democrats to the twenty-ninth Congress who called to retain every inch of

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60 Quoted in Graebner, Empire on the Pacific, 31.
61 Quoted in Ibid., 36-37.
Oregon. The cry became “fifty-four forty or fight,” in reference to not giving up any land south of the parallel at 54°40’. Elected on the Democratic platform of holding all of Oregon, President Polk felt he had to hold the line, though as tensions rose he privately questioned “whether the judgment of the civilized world would be in our favor in a war waged for a comparatively worthless territory north of forty-nine degrees, which [my] predecessors had over and over again offered to surrender to Great Britain, provided she would yield her pretensions to the country south of that latitude.” Publicly he held fast and the British press grew more antagonistic, with the London Times writing that the British people are “prepared to defend the claims of this country to the utmost, wherever they are seriously challenged.” Even the US minister in London, Louis McLane, wrote home to say that Britain would rather fight than concede more than the territory south of the forty-ninth parallel.62

This Anglo-American rivalry went to the heart of US foreign policy. From Canada to Latin America, the respective governments and diplomats constantly attempted to outdo one another. At stake were the markets of the world and economic hegemony. As The Southern Quarterly Review wrote of the competition in 1848:

“The books of the treasury department show that if our tonnage shall continue to increase for the next four years at its average rate for the last three, that the shipping of the United States will then exceed that of Great Britain. After that time America, not England, is to be the great maritime and commercial power of the world.”63

62 Ibid., 104-105.
For Britain, with its empire spanning the globe, the aim was to maintain its trade advantage and access to markets and ports. For the US, the young nation of incipient merchants with a growing economy, the objective was to break into as many markets as possible. These two goals ultimately came into conflict with each other in East Asia.

ANGLO-AMERICAN RIVALRY IN EAST ASIA

Many saw East Asia as the grounds where the contest for influence and order would be waged. It was here in the Pacific that the emerging markets lay, and here, as we have seen, that the US sought control in order to shift the balance of power from the old world to the new. As Americans penetrated East Asia, however, they constantly ran up against the presence of Britain, which threatened at times to monopolize the entire market. This necessitated a strong role by the US to keep Britain in check and extend American influence and commercial reach. The government needed to play a positive role, and this became critical in the extension of American rights in China and the opening of Japan to foreign trade. *The Southern Literary Messenger* alerted its readers in early 1850 of the presence and threat of Britain, which had recently “placed herself on Hong Kong and Labuan, and is menacing Japan and Borneo.”64 Quoting another source, the journal chimed that the US has too great an interest in China and Japan to allow

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64 “Our Foreign Policy,” *The Southern Literary Messenger*, Jan 1850, p. 4:2.
Britain to form a relationship with either of those countries in the mold of India.\textsuperscript{65} Indeed, Commodore Perry suggested seizing islands as bases in order to thwart British designs in the region, as well as to serve as US launching points in the ensuing conflict with Britain that he saw exploding in the future.

Where the idea of difference and spatial order set the tone for American construction of a new order, conflict with Britain forced the US government to play a positive role in pursuing this new order. These two developments cannot be seen as mutually exclusive of each other, but rather linked in a dance of act and react. The mission to China was dispatched to establish diplomatic relations with China only after the British had already done so creating fear among Americans of British monopolization, or worse, colonization. The China mission would thus not only counter British encroachment but also work to secure American influence in the region. Likewise, the Japan mission occurred over increased competition to throw open that country, long closed to the outside world, to trade and commerce. The actual market was questionable, but the rewards of regional power were immense. For the US, Japan presented an opportunity to encircle the Pacific. Standing at the edge of what they considered their Far West, Japan could act as a base for penetration to the China market and control of the Pacific trade. Perry also made it painfully clear that such bases were necessary in order counter the British presence. Or, as \textit{The Farmers' Cabinet} put it in an article about the American expedition to Japan:

\textsuperscript{65} "Our Foreign Policy," \textit{The Southern Literary Messenger}, Jan 1850, p. 2:2.

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"The project seems to have arrested the attention of European observers everywhere, as a new manifestation of the growing power and resources of the United States. Our commercial enterprises are securing for us due consideration in the world which is now beginning to reckon us in the first rank of nations."^{66}

Pinned upon a rivalry with Britain and a quest for a new world order, US China policy, coupled with its East Asia policy, and inseparable from its global foreign policy, had taken a clear form in the first half of the nineteenth century.

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^{66} "Japan Expedition," *The Farmers' Cabinet*, Feb 24, 1853, v. 51, no. 29, p. 3.
CHAPTER TWO: THE CHINA MISSION

In the spring of 1843, after a number of lively and often heated debates, the United States Congress approved funds for the first US mission to China. President John Tyler spoke of the mission as one of great "magnitude and importance,"\(^67\) and Secretary of State Daniel Webster called it "a more important mission than ever proceeded from this Country, and more important mission than any other, likely to succeed it, in our day."\(^68\) Indeed, this mission, led by former congressman Caleb Cushing, resulted in the first US treaty with China (the Treaty of Wangxia, 1844), which secured trading privileges for American merchants and opened a host of Chinese ports to serve as outlets for surplus American production. Contained within the treaty was also the first appearance of a most favored nation clause—inserted in order to assure the US of the same privileges in China as might be granted any other nation.


The impetus for this mission was the threat of British monopoly of the Pacific markets. American rivalry with Britain for the markets and influence in the Pacific forced US politicians and bureaucrats to assume a positive role in East Asia in the early 1840s. For decades, American merchants in China had requested greater US government presence, but these requests went ignored until Britain gained new and improved trading rights in the wake of the Opium War in 1842. These new rights by their rivals forced American politicians either to move to formalize trade relations with China and secure similar privileges, or to face the possibility of the loss of a potentially large market to the British. The mission to China in 1843-44, and the treaty that resulted from it was the reflection of a strong and autonomous China policy; a policy that found another voice in the Open Door notes half a century later.

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CHINA MISSION

The US mission to China of 1843-44—also known as the Cushing mission in honor of the man who led it—initiated the long and still evolving history of the United States government’s positive role in the affairs of its interests and its citizens’ interests in East Asia. The treaty that resulted from the mission secured early advantages and inaugurated a positive position for US representatives to act in China. This built a counterbalance to Britain and allowed the US to begin shoring up regional influence and
control in the construction of its East Asia link in the new spatial order, and from which everything else would follow.

Historians seeking the origins of the United States’ China policy have, however, dismissed the Cushing mission and the Wangxia treaty. Overlooking this seminal development in the first half of the nineteenth century, they have instead placed the inception of US China policy at the turn of the century with the proclamation of the Open Door Policy in 1898 and the possession of the Philippines as a means to access the China market. Not until this time, the conventional argument goes, did the US begin to play an active and independent role in the region as it took colonies and exerted its will in the face of European colonial aggression in the region. Working on the thesis that cooperation and comity existed between the United States and Britain, these scholars argue that prior to the Open Door policy the US merely followed the lead set by Britain in China. Seeing the absence of a truly independent American China policy, the eminent China historian John King Fairbank termed the notion of a US China policy prior to 1898 a “misconception.”

Historians have not completely ignored the Cushing mission, to be sure. Rather than interpreting this mission as the expression of a US China policy, they have instead read their sources in a way that has turned the treaty of Wangxia into a mimesis of British activity and China policy. Myopic views of Americans in East Asia and their

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70 Fairbank, "American China Policy to 1898: A Misconception."
government’s role have blinded us to the global order at stake. Indeed, China scholars have consistently emphasized cooperation rather than conflict in Anglo-American relations in China in the nineteenth century. A corollary to this view of Anglo-American comity downplays the independence of US foreign policy in regard to China in deference to Britain’s dominant role. Scholars argue that Britain held the initiative in China, and the US remained content to allow the British to dictate the terms of trade in China, accepting and taking advantage of the British use of force to open the country to Western penetration. That is, the US simply followed in Britain’s wake. In this context, the Treaty of Wangxia is commonly seen not as an American initiative, but rather as a Chinese response. In the words of historian Tong Te-kong, the treaty becomes merely “a natural sequence of the growing Chinese policy of appeasement that followed the Opium War.”

Tyler Dennett’s Americans in Eastern Asia set a precedence for the field, and historians have yet been unable to overcome it. Published in 1922, Americans in Eastern Asia was the first comprehensive work to cover US foreign relations in East Asia in the nineteenth century, and has remained to this day the primary reference on the subject. Organized as a chronological, blow-by-blow account of American diplomacy, Dennett’s theme revolved around the necessity of American cooperation with other Western powers, especially Britain, in shaping a stable and peaceful Asian order conducive to US commercial interests. This cooperative policy, according to Dennett, waxed in the mid-nineteenth century (only encountering minimal friction in the 1850s), and waned in the late-nineteenth century with the emergence of an isolationist agenda and the 1898

occupation of Philippines. In explaining the US government’s decision to pursue a treaty with the Chinese in 1843, Dennett moved effortlessly from the complaints of American merchants in 1839 and their petition to Congress for greater representation, to the point where “Congress becomes interested.” Dennett simply credited the growth of trade and a new found interest of the American public in China as the motive behind this action.

For Dennett, US action in China did not rise to an expression of its own independent US China policy. In fact, Dennett never comes out and expresses exactly what American action constituted beyond the groping for direction in the young republic. Instead he emphasizes cooperation where a framework of rivalry might have served as a better explanatory tool: “cooperation failed because other cooperating powers sought to wrest the power of that cooperation to serve their separate purposes.” Unable to place this breakdown of relations among the powers within a cooperation predetermined by the historian, and the origins of the US government initiatives for Asia, Dennett passed it off with the repeated emphasis of “confusion”: American confusion over China, over the international situation, over the role of diplomats in the China trade, (Dennett’s own confusion on how to comprehend the Anglophobic policies of the US ministers to China). All this under the book’s section heading “A Period of Confusion.”

Dennett’s contemporary influences betray the book’s prejudices. Working shortly after World War I, Dennett’s era was pregnant with international comity. The Allies,

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73 Ibid., 91-108. Hunt pursues a similar line of reasoning in Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*.
consisting of the strongest bond between the US and Britain, had just defeated Germany, Wilsonian democracy was on the march, the League of Nations enjoyed considerable prestige, and in 1922 the Washington Conference was underway, creating treaties to limit armament and establish a lasting peace through the cooperation of states. In short, the modern world appeared to have been built on international cooperation. It was a world in which Dennett could conceive of nothing other than cooperation among Western powers, not to mention the bond between the two English-speaking partners. Even in their own self-interests, the order of cooperation stood as the cornerstone of all world history. Dennett says as much in his preface: “The real issue was whether the United States should follow an isolationist or cooperative policy.” For Dennett, in the end the US chose cooperation, which failed due to other powers’ sabotage. Such a fate, Dennett warns in 1922, we should learn from for “The present policy may easily be wrecked upon a similar reef.”

Dennett’s successors never broke free from his influence. Building on Dennett’s theme of cooperation, historians made the jump to posit the benefits this cooperation brought to China. Indeed, Western involvement in China was seen as an action that resulted in something positive—namely the modernization of China—and was accomplished through cooperation. British and American interaction with China brought China into the international community, established functioning institutions of trade, commerce and finance. Without the presence of these powers, China would have been left behind and cut out of the international system, to suffer dearly for it later in the

75 Ibid.
twentieth century. An “Us versus Them” picture was painted, and the West cast as a cooperative whole led by Britain and its empire. As a result, historians read their sources in a way reflective of their worldview, sweeping aside any dissonance. Take for example John King Fairbank when forced to confront blatant animosity towards the British by a US trade official: “The real American policy,” Fairbank checked, “was usually to acquiesce...with British policy.”

Fairbank took this point to an extreme. In his article “‘American China Policy’ to 1898: A Misconception”, published in 1970, and in his general history *The United States and China*, Fairbank argued that the US had no China policy prior to 1898. For Fairbank, Britain’s involvement and activity in China dictated American involvement in China for the entire nineteenth century. “The most basic decisions affecting American activity in China were made in London,” Fairbank wrote. For Fairbank, American Far East involvement can only be understood in the broader context of British imperial policy in the region. The US did not have a voice in the treaty system institution. Rather the entire institution ran on British decisions and for the eventual advantage of all Western capitalists. As such, the US did not have a China policy. Rather the British controlled everything and Americans took advantage of the benefits secured by the British. Fairbank noted that this situation led scholars to the misconception that the US had purely economic rather than political interests in China. Because Americans articulated political neutrality at the time, Fairbank argued, they came to believe that the US indeed maintained complete political neutrality. In fact, according to Fairbank, the international

76 Fairbank, *The United States and China*, 313.
system backed by Britain allowed the US the space to take a political interest in China but abstain from forming a political agenda; to reap the privileges gained by Britain while evading the moral burden that came with securing those privileges. “Our national interest was to keep up with the Joneses, and also be friends with the Wangs and Lins whose house the Joneses were breaking into.”

Other histories of modern China generally follow Fairbank’s lead. Warren I. Cohen glossed over US diplomatic presence in China in the nineteenth century, summing up with the statement that, “the Americans followed the British.” Immanuel Hsu, in his much acclaimed and many times reprinted *The Rise of Modern China*, recounted this period of history by emphasizing the cooperation of the Western powers in China. He detailed how the US plenipotentiary Reed in the first treaty revision in 1858 was instructed to “cooperate” with the British and French while reassuring the Chinese that the US had no designs on its territory. Hsu has also emphasized Commodore Tatnall’s famous utterance “blood is thicker than water” as he went to the aid of British marines under fire from the Chinese in a conflict at Tianjin in 1860.

By positing cooperation and not rivalry between Britain and the US in China, the literature on US-China relations has created an anomaly in the history of US diplomatic history. Kinley J. Brauer’s excellent study of Anglo-American conflicts in economic

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78 Ibid.: 413.
79 Michael Hunt’s book on US-China relations in the nineteenth century, *The Making of a Special Relationship*, deviates slightly from the Dennett-Fairbank thesis of cooperation by positing the US as an independent actor in its economic, political and cultural interaction with China. Although he even gives mention to the sometimes blatant animosity of Americans to the British, he fails to develop this theme and focuses exclusively on the intimate American relations with China.
expansion from 1815-60, for example, explores the rivalry between the two powers around the globe stating that “In virtually all instances...[American diplomats] found themselves in conflict with British diplomats...Only in China did British and American merchants function in substantial harmony.” While puzzling, or even suspicious, in the face of Anglo-American rivalry elsewhere in the world, this picture of Anglo-American harmony in China has largely been accepted on the authority of the works cited above. Nonetheless, by merely scratching the surface of the archives one can in fact find a plethora of correspondence and speeches pronouncing the animosity between British and Americans in China.

In contrast to conventional interpretations, this chapter argues that United States China policy—that is, active government participation in promoting its merchants’ interests in China and a positive role in the penetration of the China market—began more than a half century before the Open Door notes and was in fact reflected in the Treaty of Wangxia. What follows is an exploration of why and at what point US politicians and officials became interested in direct intervention in China, and thus constructed the United States’ foundational China policy. If Britain secured privileges and monopolized the Pacific market, it would shut the US out of a lucrative market and challenge this forming concept of a new spatial order of the earth. This made a mission to China of immediate and utmost importance, just as those in the highest political offices in the United States articulated. Recognition of the role of Anglo-American rivalry should change the conventional understanding of the development of US-China relations and

82 Brauer, "The United States and British Imperial Expansion 1815-60," 29.
force us to revise our premises of Western penetration in China. I here challenge this assumption of Anglo-American comity in China in the early and mid-nineteenth century—something that even the purveyors of this view admit was an anomaly to the general antagonistic state of Anglo-American relations in this period. This understanding forces us to revise our views of the system of Western penetration into China (or the treaty port system) that emerged following the Opium War. This penetration did not occur, as often portrayed, as a collaborative conspiracy among Western powers to exploit China, but rather as a competition among them. Here we find each nation vying for economic power in a land of quiescent yet latent profit, and determined not to let the other gain an advantage.

THE CHINA TRADE

Early American trade with China has been well documented.83 In 1784 the first American merchant ship—the Empress of China—reached Canton carrying ginseng and returning with black tea. The cost of the voyage came to around $120,000, while returns yielded an insubstantial $37,727.84 Although not profitable, it captured the imagination of the American merchant community and that by the end of the decade American trade in

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84 See Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia, 7.
Canton had become firmly established. The christening voyage carried American ginseng, yet given the American consumer's growing appetite for Chinese tea, and the limited need of the Chinese for American ginseng, the US needed to find more trade goods to sell to China. Struggling to keep a trade balance, American merchants soon discovered the attraction of Oregon furs to the Chinese. By 1801 at least fourteen American merchant ships took part in the fur trade; buying pelts from Northwestern American Indians to shuttle to China and sell for large profits and return to New York loaded with tea. High profits attracted more traders so that prior to the outbreak of the War of 1812, over forty American merchant ships frequented Canton each year, delivering almost $6 million worth of US goods annually, which accounted for around ten percent of total US exports.

After a lull due to British military activity against American merchants during the War of 1812, US trade with China resumed with increasing vigor. By the early 1830s, for example, over sixty US ships visited Canton yearly, exchanging over US$8 million in trade annually. US total annual exports in the same period averaged $70-90 million. The China trade had become a major staple now in the US export market, averaging just under ten percent of total exports annually. The US House Committee on Commerce remarked as early as 1822 that “with China the American trade is inferior to that of no nation, Great Britain excepted.” Included in this burgeoning trade were new products

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85 Latourette, The History of Early Relations between the United States and China, 48.
86 North, The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860, 26, 221.
89 1822 American State Papers: Commerce and Navigation, 2: 637
that contributed directly to the US economy. Cotton, for one, first went out to China in 1826, and increased steadily over the following decades. By the end of the 1830s, US cotton exports to China had increased almost twenty fold to over a quarter million US dollars. In 1845, the US exported US$2 million worth of cotton to China, accounting for four percent of total US cotton exports—making China an increasingly important market for US agriculture.\footnote{Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia, 74, Hunt, The Making of a Special Relationship, 55, North, The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860, 233.} In order to help pay for the amounts of tea and silk Americans consumed, American merchants participated in the burgeoning illegal opium trade with China, where huge profits were made.\footnote{Michael H. Hunt, The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 7-9.}

The growing American presence in the Chinese ports came at the expense of their British counterparts, which ultimately pitted the two powers against each other. Peddling furs in Canton, Americans could beat the British to market and sell teas and silks in England quicker than the British merchants. This created, what historian J. Wade Caruthers calls, "ill feeling and mistrust." A comparison of the number of ships trading between the American Northwest coast and China shows the correlation between the rise of American ships and the decline of British ships. From 1788-1794, Britain had thirty-five ships and America fifteen. From 1795-1804, British ships had declined to nine and America increased to fifty. From 1805-1814, Britain had only three ships and America forty.\footnote{J. Wade Caruthers, American Pacific Ocean Trade: Its Impact on Foreign Policy and Continental Expansion, 1784-1860 (New York:, Exposition Press, 1973), 20.}
Still, on average, British merchants outdid their American counterparts. They generally exported four or five times as much tea as the Americans, and sometimes over fifteen times as much, and continuously had more vessels exporting the product.\(^3\) During the War of 1812 American merchants nearly stopped visiting China altogether out of fear of capture by the British, and those that did continually found themselves victim to British blockades and pirating. In one instance a clash between US and British merchant ships resulted in the death of the US captain and the seizing of his ship.\(^4\) Indeed, as J.N. Reynolds wrote in the early 1830s, "Our grand competitors, the English, are looking out for every advantage which the new state of things may offer in China—we cannot be idle or indifferent spectators."\(^5\)

Despite the increasing Anglo-American competition in the China market, and the numerous calls on the US government by diplomats and merchants like Reynolds, Washington remained aloof. Decades of American merchant and consular requests for government involvement and diplomatic action failed to elicit even a response from the state department. This was in part due to the fact that the US was still small and government resources limited—the government had not the funds to freely spend on diplomacy.\(^6\) Similarly, the China trade had not yet reached the imagined potential of those involved. Chinese imports were high, to be sure, but American exports were not. In fact, Americans had created a huge trade imbalance in China’s favor. In the decade from

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\(^3\) See Dennett, *Americans in Eastern Asia*, 45.
\(^5\) Reynolds, *Voyage of the United States Frigate Potomac*, 384.
\(^6\) Debates in the Congress on whether or not to approve funds for the Cushing Mission highlight this concern. See *Cong. Globe, 27th Cong.*, 3rd Sess., 323-325 (Feb. 21, 1843); *Appendix to the Cong. Globe, 27th Cong.*, 3rd Sess., 162-165, 198-203 (Feb. 1843).
1831-1841 the US exported $14.2 million worth of goods to China, but imported $65.2 million, realizing a trade imbalance of over $50 million. This is to highlight that China had not become the giant market Americans of the day thought it was destined to be.

But furthermore, a positive government role in the private sphere stood against the philosophical convictions of Americans who railed against monarchical control and the invasion of the state into the affairs of its citizens. Yet there would come a point—indeed many points in time—in which the state needed to play a positive role not only to guarantee economic advantages for its subjects, but also for the sake of its very own survival. In China that point would come both because of the reality of a market under threat and as a step to realize the new spatial order of the earth. When Britain negotiated superior trade advantages with China through military means, and threatened to lock up the Pacific order, then, and only then, the US government saw the need to send an official mission to China to negotiate a treaty of its own. It was the conception of a new spatial order of the earth compounded by the Anglo-American rivalry that pushed the US to move from a neutral role to a positive one and act in China.

AMERICA'S CHINA INTERESTS AND THE BRITISH THREAT

As Americans' interaction and fascination with China grew, conflicts with the Chinese government arose which became more than just grievances, and actually

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hindered Americans conducting trade in China. There were no set taxes or duties in China, but rather a collection of fees that fluctuated arbitrarily. On top of these trade fees, extractions such as measurement duties for the size of the ship, a “cumshaw tax” in the form of extralegal fees and percentages to Chinese officials, as well as linguist and comprador fees also were paid out to the Chinese. For example, the owner of the ship Lion from New York had a fine of $2,000 charged to him in 1816 “by the Hoppo [the Western name for the Chinese official in charge of trade at Canton] for suspicion of smuggling on board ship,” which his Chinese trade partner said he better pay without complaint.98 On top of this, the Chinese government placed various restrictions on trade, such as the prohibition of ships carrying only specie, trading in opium, or the export of bullion or rice. And saltpeter—a key ingredient in the making of gunpowder—could only be sold to the government. Furthermore, the government put strict limitations on the movement of foreign merchants. This became a serious issue among all foreign merchants doing business in China, not just Americans, as they were confined to only the single port of Canton to trade and could not enter the cities; could not bring women; and were limited in the number of servants they employed.99 All this created a general feeling of inequality and resentment among all foreign merchants residing and doing business in China. But more so, the merchants had no channel through which to address grievances; no diplomatic envoy existed to represent their interests. The ransacking of the ship Wabash of Baltimore and the killing of its crew by fifteen Chinese as it anchored at Macao in 1817, for example, left the surviving crew with no other course of grievance

98 Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia, 59.
99 Latourette, The History of Early Relations between the United States and China, 25.
than a letter home to the State Department. Then there was the case of Francis Terranova, who accidentally killed a Chinese woman in 1821. Chinese authorities demanded that the American captain of the ship which employed Terranova turn him over so that justice could be served. To achieve this end, the Chinese enacted an embargo against American trade. Without any diplomatic channels, the American merchants could do nothing but oblige. Terranova was subsequently executed by strangulation by the Canton government.

Confronting such an atmosphere, American merchants in China had, from the beginning, petitioned the US government for representation. Although a US consul in Canton was appointed as early as 1786, the appointees were either supercargoes or merchants who stayed on from a journey to oversee trade; they had no funds or resources and often did not draw a salary. As early as 1807 a group of thirteen American merchants, headed by Daniel Stansbury of Perkins and Company, penned a letter to the President of the United States requesting "a more efficient consular establishment be formed." They further bemoaned that "every European nation has one or more experienced physicians attached to their factories, who take no pay for their services; this has brought the Americans of all classes to the situation of paupers, degrading to themselves as individuals, and to the flag they sail and live under." In his records of the

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100 Mr. Wilcocks to Mr. Adams, Canton, Sept. 22, 1817, enclosed in House Documents 26th Cong., 2nd sess., no. 71, p. 7, fiche 383.
101 For full account see Hunt, The Making of a Special Relationship, 1-2.
103 Daniel Stansbury, et. al. to the President of the United States, Nov. 14, 1807, enclosed in House Documents 26th Cong., 2nd sess., no. 71, p. 7, fiche 383.
Pacific voyage of the U.S.S. Potomac, J.N. Reynolds suggested that “it is time our public vessels were on the ground, under judicious instructions, that our knowledge may keep pace with the events as they transpire...At no period of our history has this knowledge of China been so essential to our interests as at the present moment.” He went on to quote a British writer who suggested that Her Majesty’s Government pursue a more active policy in China and demand diplomatic equality from the Chinese. Reynolds writes that “We too, must be on the alert, to show the Chinese that we have naval power to any extent we please.”

In the mid 1830s the US consul in Batavia, John Shillaber, wrote a letter to the US president and another letter to the Secretary of State about the need for a greater US role in China, even suggesting to send a US naval force to the China coast to protect merchants there. “American interests would probably be more or less served by a consul with some peculiar powers and instructions to meet the expected changes and exigencies...and with official Powers from the American government to present himself to the Chinese authorities, as its representative, and for the care and protection of American citizens and their rights and property.”

The US government remained aloof to these merchant cries in the early half of the nineteenth century. Happy that their citizens’ had met success in the Far East and prospered in trade, the US expressed only its contentment to have trade continue with minimal interferences. Merchant requests for diplomatic representatives and a naval force went unanswered. Even the portrait of an impending crisis painted by the experienced

104 Reynolds, _Voyage of the United States Frigate Potomac_, 384-385.
Consul Shillaber, and his urgent recommendations for a US ministerial presence in China, fell on deaf ears.\textsuperscript{106} As President Andrew Jackson put it in his annual message to the Congress in 1831, “To China and the East Indies our commerce continues its usual extent.” He elaborated no further, and said nothing of diplomatic representation with China throughout his presidency, nor did any of his nineteenth-century predecessors or successors until Tyler in 1842.\textsuperscript{107} Not until Britain threatened to monopolize China trade did Washington politicians begin to listen to its merchants’ cries.

From 1839 to 1842 Britain engaged China in what became known as the Opium War. Facing the same confining conditions of trade and movement in China as their American counterparts, Britain did not fail to press the case through military pressure when the opportunity presented itself. Acting on the “illegal” seizure of British opium bound for the China market, the British government demanded redress; and failing to get it, shelled Canton and sent gunboats north towards the Chinese capital. As part of the settlement of the war, signed in 1842 as the Nanjing Treaty, Britain secured for its merchants a host of trade privileges, including greater access to Chinese markets through the opening of more ports to British ships.

Cooperation between Britain and the US in exploiting China was not a feature of the Anglo-American relationship during this war. In fact American suspicion increased as Britain prepared for hostilities against China in 1839. Catching word of the impending British blockade of Canton in early 1840, the US Consul, P.W. Snow, wrote a stern letter to the senior officer commanding the British fleet: “I now enter my most solemn protests

\textsuperscript{106} See Ibid.  
against the establishment of a blockade so illegal, and consequently, unjust. And I do hereby declare, in behalf of my Government, that I shall hold the Government of Great Britain responsible for any act of violence on citizens of the United States, or their property." Or Cushing, who took the floor in the House in March 1840 and decried not the behavior and attitude of the Chinese but rather British action, and who denounced rumors that the US was “to join heart and hand with the British Government, and endeavor to obtain commercial treaties from the authorities in China.” Such a disposition of cooperation, Cushing said, “is a great misconception...God forbid that I should entertain the idea of co-operating with the British Government in the purpose—if purpose it have—of upholding the base cupidity and violence, and high handed infraction of all law, human and divine, which have characterized the operations of the British, individually and collectively in the seas of China.”

Conflict between Britain and China did however provoke new calls for action by Americans in China. On the eve of British hostilities, American merchants sent a number of pressing letters to Washington politicians warning of a possible British monopoly and requesting immediate government diplomatic and naval support. The first of these letters, dated May 25, 1839, and signed by eight American merchants, recount the beginnings of the Opium War then stirring between Britain and China, and how, as Western merchants, they had been caught in the middle. The merchants’ letter relates how Chinese officials seized and destroyed British opium, made the Americans prisoners in their own factories and threatened them with severe penalties for refusing to sign a bond prohibiting the trade

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108 House Documents 26th Cong., 2nd sess., no. 71, fiche 383.
of opium, the breaking of which would sentence the trader to death. Vexed at the “injustice of China to arbitrarily end opium trade and seize property,” the merchants drew up a list of six demands for the US government to press upon China. These demands included a minister in Beijing, fixed tariffs, a system of warehouses, opening of more ports, compensation for the loss of trade, and only the enactment of US laws for American citizens. The eight cosigners “express our opinions that the United States Government should take immediate measures” to send a commercial agent to negotiate a treaty with China and to send a naval force for the protection of Americans’ property.\textsuperscript{110}

In similar tone but with greater urgency came another letter signed by thirty-eight Boston and Salem merchants in China. Sent directly to the House of Representatives. The merchant consortium wrote to inform their government that British hostilities had indeed broken out against China, and that pirating on the China coast disrupted trade. “We have reason to fear that hostilities will ensue between British and Chinese, during the spring and summer, and that, upon the general ground of protection to our citizens and property from the violence and chaos which always accompanies war, American interests require the presence of a respectable national force in the China waters.”\textsuperscript{111} Under the new circumstances accompanying the Opium War, these letters found an audience in the US House of Representatives. Massachusetts Congressman Lawrence presented the first letter to the House on January 9, 1840, which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.\textsuperscript{112} His colleague, Congressman Abraham Lincoln, presented the memorial from

\textsuperscript{110} House Document 26\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., no. 40, Fiche 364.
\textsuperscript{111} House Document 26\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., no. 170, Fiche 366.
\textsuperscript{112} House Journal 26\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., 189; Congressional Globe 26\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., 109; House Document 26\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., no. 40, Fiche 364.
the Boston and Salem merchants on April 9, 1840, which also went to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.\textsuperscript{113}

It was at this point, then, that US politicians began to take an intense interest in the affairs of China and the rights of its merchants. Certainly trade with China had grown to a point in which it was “only exceeded by that of trade with Britain, France and Spain,” as Congressman Cushing pointed out in 1840 in a letter to the Secretary of State and copied to the President. Trade, and the facilitation of trade, did play a role in the US decision to secure its own treaty with China. As Cushing said: “I feel strongly persuaded that the foremost... [illegible]...is to enter into relations with China.”\textsuperscript{114} But Britain loomed large. When the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, on which Cushing sat as a leading Whig, passed a resolution on February 7, 1840 requesting all White House and Treasury reports on China, it also called for an investigation into British intentions in China.\textsuperscript{115} Thus the British threat in combination with growing trade drew American attention to this issue. A secret letter to Secretary of State Webster from an American in Britain summed up the situation in China: “England can have the whole empire if they want it. I have seen a letter from a [British] Gentleman in Ningpho who wrote that he is a civil Governor and Judge, and that he proceeds from place to place, in carriage, with two Chinese, with Bamboos, to clear the road for him of the multitude...and that he governs nearly a million of people without difficulty.”\textsuperscript{116} Through such correspondence

\textsuperscript{113} House Journal 26\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., 781.
\textsuperscript{114} Cushing to Foryth, Jan. 9, 1840. Cushing Papers, box 21.
\textsuperscript{115} House Journal 26\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., 368.
politicians in Washington came to find the British assuming greater and greater control in China, which they feared could ultimately be used to exclude the US.

The next January (1841), as hostilities between China and Britain raged, President Van Buren and his Secretary of State Forsyth held a special meeting with Peter Parker, a Protestant medical missionary who had lived in China since 1834. Parker had returned home for a visit and to argue the need for an official diplomatic treaty between the US and China. He met later that month with Daniel Webster—who would become the Secretary of State with the new administration in March—and explained “the expediency of improving the present unprecedented Crisis in the relation of this Government and China, to Send a Minister Plenipotentiary, direct and without delay to the Court of Taou Kwang [Daoguang, the emperor of China].”\textsuperscript{117} Parker met again with the highest echelons of the US government before he returned to China, holding audience with President Tyler and Secretary Webster on September 14, 1841. Congressman John Quincy Adams, whom Parker visited after his meeting, wrote, “Dr. Parker said...he had seen the President, who assured him that he had his eye fixed upon China, and would avail himself of any favorable opportunity to commence negotiation with the Celestial Empire.”\textsuperscript{118}

US merchants cried vehemently in their letters, and politicians passed resolutions in Congress, yet still the US government took no action to actively address the situation in China. Not until the British signed the first commercial treaty with China in August 1842 did the US administration find itself in a position where it could no longer afford to

\textsuperscript{117} Wiltse and Moser, eds., The Papers of Daniel Webster: Diplomatic Papers V. 1, 885.
\textsuperscript{118} John Quincy Adams and Charles Francis Adams, Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848 (Philadelphia; J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1874), v. 11, p. 167.
remain diplomatically aloof from developments. This resulted in the President’s special message to Congress, drafted by Webster, requesting funds to send to China what would become the Cushing Mission.

Britain’s position in East Asia and the Pacific threatened the Americans and an increasingly important American market. Or, as Caleb Cushing put it in a personal letter to President Tyler,

“It is said that Sir Henry Pottinger [British diplomat and first governor of Hong Kong] contemplates if permitted by his government to move his forces against Japan and compel the government of Japan to open its ports to the commerce of England. If the British Empire should accomplish this further object possessing as it now does a strong position on the Columbia River in constant intercessions with Canada it needs only then to seize on the Sandwich Islands [Hawaii] to have a complete belt of fortresses environing the globe, to the immense future peril, not only of our territorial possessions, but of all our vast commerce on the Pacific.”

When Cushing dashed off this letter to the President in December 1842 Britain had just signed the first commercial treaty with China securing greater trading privileges and giving them unparallel influence and markets in the region. Cushing believed that in order to counter this threat the US needed to act swiftly and sign a commercial treaty with China giving American merchants similar if not better trading privileges than their European counterparts, and it was Cushing, the ardent Anglophobe, who would lead the charge.

CALEB CUSHING AND THE CUSHING MISSION

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119 Cushing to Tyler, Dec. 27, 1842 Cushing Papers Box 35.
Caleb Cushing takes center stage in the formation of early US China policy, if not stealing the show. As a representative in the United States Congress he was one of the first politicians to argue for a US government presence in China to protect the interests of American merchants. He was a close friend of both President Tyler and Secretary of State Daniel Webster, and served as an advisor to both men. The speeches and documents of the President and Secretary of State in their own arguments for a China mission reflect the arguments and at times even wording of Cushing’s private correspondence with each of them. It thus comes as no surprise to find Cushing leading the mission to China and his signature on the treaty beside his Chinese counterpart.

As important an agent as Cushing was in the formation of US China policy, we must view the man not as an individual subject who promoted and developed policy, but rather as the embodiment of the forces and attitudes that gave rise to the policy. Cushing represents both literally and figuratively the interests of Americans in China and their Anglophobic sentiment. As a United States Congressman he represented the interests of his Massachusetts constituents, most of whom owed their wealth and prosperity to overseas trade. As the eldest son of a merchant family he had personal ties with the China trade. His father had a trading establishment in Oregon, which, as detailed above, was poised to access the China market, and his cousin, J.P. Cushing was head of Perkins and Company, one of the largest American merchant houses in China. Furthermore, Cushing, like many of his contemporaries, held the deep convictions of the moral supremacy of the United States and its destiny to expand to all quarters of the earth through the strength and character of its people not the power of its government. Likewise, his bitter and often
rapacious hatred of the British resounded the sentiments of most Americans. In Caleb Cushing, therefore, we find not an exception who bent the age to his will, but rather the embodiment of Americans’ interests, ideologies, and desires through which America’s China policy was articulated.

Cushing was born in 1800 on the coast of Massachusetts in the port town of Newburyport. At seventeen years old he graduated from Harvard as what his biographers describe as a “master botanist and brilliant linguist.” Ralph Waldo Emerson considered Cushing the most eminent scholar of the era, and House member Robert Winthrop wrote of his then colleague’s “wonderful versatility…and prodigious intellectual and physical energy.” Even those who found fault with Cushing’s personality gave him the their utmost respect. As Washington observer Benjamin B. French said, “brilliant and cold as an icicle. A man of splendid intellect and of the best possible education, but of unbounded ambition.” Cushing entered law and established his own very successful law practice in Newburyport. At twenty-four years old he was elected to the state legislature, and two years later made a failed bid for the House. Nine years later, in 1835, he was elected to the House on an anti-Jackson ticket and held his seat for three terms before stepping down in 1841.\textsuperscript{120} He worked on presidential campaigns and was later appointed Attorney General of the United States in the Pierce administration.

Cushing was from the very beginning an Anglophobe. He hated the British whom he referred to as “our greatest enemy,”\textsuperscript{121} and waged a verbal war against England his


\textsuperscript{121} “Claims of Citizens of the United States on Denmark” (1826) p. 16 \textit{Cushing Papers} box 200.
entire career. So often did Cushing revile against Britain that his senior colleague in the House, John Quincy Adams, said, "Cushing thought that inflammatory declamations against England upon all possible topics was the short cut to popularity, and he speechified accordingly." Cushing's biographer Claude M. Fuess draws this Anglophobia back to his childhood where the Napoleonic wars put New England ship owners in danger of destruction by British cruisers and President Jefferson prohibited all export trade. This subsequently ruined the livelihood of Cushing's hometown, not to mention his father's trading business. "Even a visit to England," Fuess writes of Cushing's trip to Britain in 1830, "could not eradicate Cushing's insuperable prejudice against the people of that country."

Cushing's abhorrence of Britain went beyond mere childhood resentment, however. Like his contemporaries, and the founding fathers, his philosophy railed against the monarchs of Europe and the aristocracy of the old world—which, he said, "held the whole country and drained its population to augment their own already opulence and luxury"—to embrace what he saw as "the highest civilization of Christendom," in the form of the United States. Britain represented "monarchy in its worst form," while American superiority in political institutions, scientific knowledge, and moral cultivation led it above and beyond its European counterparts. Indeed, Protestantism combined with constitutional liberty created the American culture which encouraged both material and moral greatness. Cushing thus compared the US to those "nations, distanced by us in the

124 Speech on Treaty with Great Britain, Aug. 26, 1842, Cushing Papers box 205.
race for wealth and power, who gaze on our marvelous progress with admiration and awe."¹²⁵ He felt, however, that Britain did not gaze upon the US as it so deserved, but instead showed marauding contempt and pretentious insolence, continuously infringing upon US territory and rights. As he declaimed in a speech before the House in May 1838 on the Oregon conflict, “The conduct of Great Britain has, I am compelled to say, been marked by rapacity, illiberality, and gross disregard of our just rights.”¹²⁶ British activity in the Americas, infringing upon what Cushing saw as American territory, and around the world, attempting to thwart American trade and progress, infuriated Cushing so that “to the end of his days,” Fuess writes, “Cushing had a distrust of England and the English.”¹²⁷

Cushing had begun to nurture an interest in the China trade in the late 1830s. Undoubtedly his constituents, the Massachusetts merchants and traders, influenced their representative and his policy positions. But it also appears that his father, John N. Cushing, had brought the matter to his attention through a series of letters to Cushing from Oregon. “It is destined to be what I have ever told you,” his father wrote to him in 1842, “a great country, it can’t be otherwise from its nearness to China, Manilla [sic] and all the Islands in the Pacific which are daily becoming of more importance.”¹²⁸ A merchant who had lost his business during the War of 1812, John N. was attempting to find his way back into the trade through Pacific commerce. Correspondence on the issue between father and son had actually begun sometime in late 1836 or early 1837, with

¹²⁵ See Belohlavek, "Race, Progress and Destiny: Caleb Cushing," 24-25.
¹²⁶ "The Subject of the Oregon Territory" May 17, 22, 1838 p.5 Cushing Papers box 204.
¹²⁸ John N. Cushing to Caleb Cushing, Nov. 13, 1842, Cushing Papers box 34.
father Cushing imploring Representative Cushing to take up the issue of Oregon before the Congress. Correspondence on the matter continued at least through 1838. Within those two years Cushing delivered at least two speeches before the House on “The Subject of the Oregon Territory,” and gained a reputation as someone in government who would fight “for the protection of citizens of the US in the territory of Oregon,” as the Secretary of the Oregon Provisional Emigration Society remarked. Such developments tied Cushing to China, and when, in early 1840, the issue came before the Committee of Foreign Affairs, on which he sat as a ranking member, Cushing began to fervently press his case. On the same day that Congressman Lawrence presented the memorial from the eight American merchants in China (January 9, 1840), Cushing wrote to the Secretary of State to argue the case of opening official relations with China. Given that Lawrence and Cushing were both representatives from Massachusetts, we can surmise that Cushing very probably had previously seen the merchants’ letter and that the two Congressmen perhaps even coordinated their petitions.

Not until the following year, however, when Tyler occupied the White House and Webster ran the State Department, did Cushing, with his rampant Anglophobia, wield an unparalleled influence on the China issue through his strong personal friendships with both men. Tyler admired Cushing’s vast intellect, and constantly called on him asking for advice and comments on issues on everything from foreign affairs to the postal system in the Northeastern US. Cushing visited the White House frequently to meet with Tyler,

130 F.P. Tracy to Caleb Cushing, Dec. 19, 1838, Cushing Papers box 18.
131 Cushing to Foryth, Jan. 9, 1840, Cushing Papers box 21
often joining him for dinner with other distinguished guests. With Webster, Cushing had an even closer relationship. He would dine at Webster’s home at least once a week, and between 1837-1843 Cushing lent Webster upwards of $10,000 dollars with no mention of interest or date of repayment.132 Through these intimate relationships with the country’s most powerful men, Cushing became integral in the formation of policy, and his views on China resonated with both the Secretary of State and the President. For these policy makers the time had come to act; Cushing argued that the United States could no longer passively observe the China trade and hope that its merchants succeed. Now that the British had taken the initiative and gained an advantage in the Far East, the day was coming for a showdown in the Pacific between the old West and the new. “The British government,” Cushing wrote to President Tyler on December 27, 1842, “has succeeded in forcing China to admit British vessels into five ports in the Chinese Empire and to cede to England in perpetual sovereignty a commercial depots...[illegible]...on the coast of China.” If the US did not act in the Far East, Cushing warned, the British would seize Japan and Hawaii giving them control of the Pacific “to the immense future peril, not only of our territory possessions, but of all our vast commerce on the Pacific.” Cushing recommended dispatching a mission to China to negotiate a commercial treaty for the US.133 Three days later, in a special message to Congress, Tyler announced the Pacific Ocean and Hawaii within the US sphere of influence, effectively extending the Monroe

132 Fuess, The Life of Caleb Cushing, 397-398.
133 Cushing to Tyler, Dec. 27, 1842, Cushing Papers box 35.
Doctrine to the Pacific, and asked Congress for funds for a commissioner to reside in China.  

DESPATCHING THE CUSHING MISSION

These developments appeared amidst a crescendo in the rivalry between Britain and the US. In fact, 1842 had almost brought the two sides to war. Tyler's annual message to Congress (today's State of the Union), delivered on December 6, 1842, opened by recounting the past year of conflict between Britain and the US, which had "threatened most seriously the public peace." Indeed, the first two and one half pages of the address dealt with "the question of peace or war between the United States and Great Britain." The previous week of White House correspondence with the Congress further illustrates the tension: on December 23, the Congress was informed of the breakdown of the Treaty of Washington (over the Northeast boundary conflict) and the reasons which prevented "any agreement upon the subject at present." That same day a State Department report from the minister in London informed the Senate of the British refusal to assume state debts. On December 29, the Congress also received correspondence between the US minister in London and the British government on the conflict over slave trading.

135 Ibid., v. 4, p. 194-196, 210-211.
The significance of the British treaty with China was not lost on Washington policymakers. Former Secretary of State, President, and now chairman of the House Committee of Foreign Affairs, John Quincy Adams took up the cause of pushing for official relations with China. Just months after his meetings with Peter Parker in 1841, for example, he delivered a speech before the Massachusetts Historical Society on the need to press China to allow diplomatic relations. And in the debates following Tyler's request, although he himself stood on the opposite side of the political divide from the president, Adams led the charge against Tyler's political enemies to secure the necessary funds for a mission for the purpose of "providing the means of future intercourse between the United States and the Government of China."\footnote{House Document 27th Cong., 3rd sess., no.93. Fiche 426; House Journal 27th Cong., 3rd sess., 419-420; see also Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia, 106-107.} The three-hour debate that ensued in the House on February 21, 1843, touched on the absolute economic necessity for the US government to do all in its power to promote and expand trade with China. As Congressman Holmes put it: "The trade of South America and Europe is fixed on an established basis. But, by the opening of intercourse with China, three hundred and twenty millions of people (hitherto shut out from the rest of the world) would be brought within the entire circle of commercial republics." The depression at the end of the 1830s weighed heavy on politicians' minds, and constant concern of a commodity glut forced them to think in terms of new and larger overseas markets. They knew very well that this put them in direct competition with Britain; a race, if you will, for the markets of the world. As Holmes articulated that day, "When England is advancing in this matter, and preparing to take to herself the exclusive benefits of the new state of things in China—is
it wise for us to stand still until that nation should have arranged the treaties between herself and China, so as to exclude the United States from all advantages whatever?"\(^{137}\)

The House approved funds for the mission to China by a vote of ninety-six to fifty-nine, paving the way for a mission that President Tyler termed of great "magnitude and importance"\(^{138}\), and Secretary of State Daniel Webster called "a more important mission than ever proceeded from this Country, and more important mission than any other, likely to succeed it, in our day."\(^{139}\) The details of the preparation for this mission, and the mission itself, have been thoroughly explored elsewhere.\(^{140}\) Here it is important to note two developments: that the mission's most vocal advocate, the British-hating Caleb Cushing, was chosen to lead the mission; and that the nature of the instructions to Cushing, which were composed by himself and Webster, pertained specifically to securing trading rights weighed in relation to Britain. Through an understanding of the Anglo-American rivalry of the day it becomes clear that the US acted first and foremost to counter British influence and the perceived threat of British monopoly of markets in East Asia. Viewed in this way, the emphasis of the mission in Cushing's instructions shows not just the US trying to gain most favored nation status but to actively counter the threat of Great Britain:

\(^{137}\) Congressional Globe 27\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 3\textsuperscript{rd} sess., 325
\(^{139}\) House Journal 27\textsuperscript{th} Cong. 3\textsuperscript{rd} sess. 31 December 1842, 122-124; House Document 27\textsuperscript{th} Cong. 3\textsuperscript{rd} sess. 31 December 1842, no. 35, Fiche 420; Wiltse and Moser, eds., The Papers of Daniel Webster: Diplomatic Papers V. 1, 900.; Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, v. 4, p. 211-214.
“A leading object of the mission in which you are now to be engaged is to secure the entry of American ships and cargoes into these ports on terms as favorable as those which are enjoyed by English merchants...It cannot be wrong for you to make known, where not known, that the United States, once a country subject to England, threw off that subjection years ago, asserted its independence, sword in hand, established that independence after a seven years' war, and now meets England upon equal terms upon the ocean and upon the land.”

Here, in the archival records, the rivalry between Britain and the US shines through as the predominant factor shaping US governmental interest and action in China in the mid-nineteenth century. Belying common assumptions of Anglo-American cooperation, the first US mission to China was as much about America’s rivalry with Britain as it was about America’s maturing trade with China.

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CHAPTER THREE: THE JAPAN MISSION

The US mission to China in 1843 was more than an isolated policy of opening relations with a foreign country—it was about access to an entire market that would reposition the spatial order of the earth. This development in plan and in action went beyond the negotiations of a single treaty with a single country; it encompassed the entire region. Cushing had articulated as much in his private correspondence with President Tyler when he warned of British intentions in the Pacific. In the same breath in which Cushing suggested immediate steps be made to send a mission to China, he also said that upon successful negotiations with China the envoy ought to sail to Japan and preempt British designs by being the first to secure a diplomatic treaty with that country.  

Prior to the Opium War, Americans had sought the opening of Japan in the spirit of accessing markets after being expelled from the British mercantile system. Here the US government did come to assume a positive role as early as 1815. The difference in the case of Japan compared with China was that the Japanese offered no avenues of trade

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142 Cushing to Tyler, Dec 27, 1842, Caleb Cushing Papers, box 35.
with the outside world. Whereas the Chinese allowed trade through Canton, the Japanese had shut themselves off from foreign commerce and interaction since the early seventeenth century and rebuked all attempts by merchants to visit their ports, allowing only the Dutch to carry on a meager and strictly regulated trade at Nagasaki. Not until after the Opium War, however, with the now articulated need of action by the US government to establish an American presence in the region, did consideration in earnest begin to open Japan. While speculation on the Japan market did entertain Americans, it was really the desire to integrate Japan into the forming American spatial order, and the rivalry with Britain for the Pacific trade that gave urgency to such a mission. In the mid-to-late 1840s and early 1850s the US began to establish steam lines to carry communications and passengers to important destinations around the globe. Through steam routes from East Asia to North America and then onto Europe the US saw the ability to control intelligence, transportation and commerce. Such technology would put the US at the center of the earth and, in the words of one US senator, “make New York, what London now is, the great settling house of the world.”^{143} In order to create the steam route from the American west coast to China a coaling station was needed. Japan, possessed of the necessary resource, and directly on route to Shanghai, stood positioned to fulfill this role.

Unlike the China mission, however, no single event or factor can explain the motivation for the Japan mission and why it occurred when it did. In the late 1840s and early 1850s a general consensus had formed in America on Japan and the action needed

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^{143} T. Butler King, _Steam Communications with China, and the Sandwich Islands, House Report 596:30-1, serial set 526, p. 16._
to be taken by the US government. From all sides of the debate—merchants, whalers, transportation investors, politicians, the Navy—voices pointed to the necessity for one reason or another to open Japan to American commerce and interaction by entering into direct diplomatic relations with that country. What this myriad of voices did have in common however, and the theme that knitted them together in the fabric of an expedition to Japan, was the idea of American spatial order of the earth, and the systems and institutions that would build this order. Under this general sentiment, the spark for positive government action came when the British press, reflective of public opinion, began a systematic campaign in the late 1840s to open Japan, and British diplomats began to draw up plans to realize this opening; Americans once again felt the threat and rushed to move before the British did and be the first to open Japan; to set the terms of interaction of that country with the West, giving America primacy and thus order. So it was that at this time, in the summer of 1851 that Daniel Webster, again Secretary of State, now under President Millard Fillmore, drew up instructions to send a mission to Japan and negotiate a treaty on behalf of the United States.

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE JAPAN MISSION

Like the treaty of Wangxia, the opening of Japan by Commodore Matthew C. Perry in 1854 stands as a focal point of early US foreign policy. The Perry mission aimed at and succeeded in throwing open an isolated Japan to the commerce of the world,
convinced Japan to welcome shipwrecked sailors, and laid the grounds for a merchant base to access the China market. As the US worked to reinvent interaction with Asia in terms of the Pacific trade running through the American continent, the incorporation of the Japan islands into the global commercial system by Americans' own design strengthened the US hand. Unlike the case of China, however, the US initiated the first treaty with Japan and thus set the terms by which this Asian country would interact with the world. This not only gave American merchants an advantage of primacy, but also allowed the US to shape the relationship to its liking and gain greater control over the Pacific and the Pacific markets.

Scholarship on the Perry mission has focused on creating a narrative of the Japan mission. Not surprisingly, Perry's own account of his expedition, *Narrative of the Expedition to the China Seas and Japan*, which was compiled by Francis Hawks with Perry's notes and under the Commodore's instruction, together with a number of transcripts and reports from the contemporary Congress, has formed the basis of the academic analysis on the mission.\(^{144}\) Overwhelmingly historians have drawn on a few passages from these sources to explain the origins of the mission.\(^{145}\) A paraphrasing of the narrative goes something like this: 'American whalers who had been frequenting Japanese waters since the early nineteenth century were in need of ports of refuge and


supplies. Compounding this requirement was the acquisition of the Oregon Territory and California in the late 1840s, which gave the US a new expansive coastline and at least four good Pacific harbors. With the discovery of gold in California, thousands of Americans began to populate the West coast. A new Whig president in office sought to expand US trade, and his Secretary of State and Secretary of the Navy were towering individuals with purpose of mind to penetrate the Pacific markets with steam powered ships. Japan, standing on the edge of the Pacific and rich in coal, was desired as a refueling depot for steam powered ships, and needed to be persuaded to open its harbors to American trade.' This reasoning, in some type of rhetorical or polemic variation can be found in Hawks, a few reports and speeches by Congressmen, and some newspapers and journals of the day.146 These sources and the explanation provided have remained the lynchpin for historians moving their narrative from recognizing Japan, to interest in the island, to positive action.

To be sure, historians have done a fine job of telling this story of Perry and the Japan mission—of recreating the narrative of the mission’s inception to its success, complete with details about the Commodore’s habits of command. But lacking in the oft told story is a deeper understanding of what the opening of Japan meant to Americans of the day. Discussion of a Pacific steam route, for example, cannot be read simply as an explanation for opening Japan, but must be seen in the context of the day of establishing a network of trade, penetration into Asia, and international rivalry. Read in this manner, Japan appears in the historical record as but a piece of a larger regional—and even

global—strategy. This is the greater story that the sources tell but is rarely recognized in
the historical literature. The acquisition of the West coast, the movement of people, the
patrolling of the Pacific, the individuals who formed East Asia policy, are all but parts to
the larger picture of US activity. Viewed this way the horse returns to its position in front
of the cart, or in our case, pretensions of global dominance precedes the land based
empire.

The historical literature on the opening of Japan generally takes the event as a
microcosm in and of itself, settling on a narrow frame of reference, which allows the
construction of a linear causal link in the narrative, and which, by default, hinders any
broader analysis of the true desires of the US government in its decision to play a positive
role in forcing the Japanese government to open the island to trade and interaction. The
literature further fails to explain why the US did so at this particular moment in history.
In the words of one historian after outlining the plight of whalers and the acquisition of
the West coast: “Whatever the case, at some point in 1850, Commodore Perry began to
outline a plan for a major diplomatic undertaking.”147 Through the use of such
mechanisms, the historical narratives focus on the story telling, the causality of events,
and the individuals involved. The narratives do not attempt to explain how the events or
people are quilted together, or the greater meaning or strategies behind the seemingly
straightforward foreign policy decision. What these narratives do do is recount the failed
attempts to open Japan prior to Perry, and then tell of the arrival of majestic individuals

who strut onto the scene in 1850, and who, through their prescience, willpower, and genius, succeed where others had failed.

Much like the Cushing mission, Tyler Dennett’s *Americans in Eastern Asia* has served as the basis of modern scholarship on the Perry mission. Published in 1922, *Americans in Eastern Asia* is very much a product of its time. Relying on the outcome of the policies of individual diplomats and officials, the work is thick with official documents and thin on analysis, giving absolute agency to the men who spoke for history, and little primacy to the trends of the times which informed these men’s decisions and desires. Dennett reads the historical record as a collection of interests and failed attempts to open Japan, and then the successful acts of one man, Perry, which led to the accomplishment of the mission. Dennett dutifully notes the rise of the whale industry and the increasing need to repatriate shipwrecked sailors and to find ports of refuge for American ships. He embodies the push for markets in an American merchant’s ceaseless proposals for a Japan mission. Dennett does justice in one paragraph to the need for coal and a coaling station in the East, and hinges the cumulative effort by Americans in the early 1850s on the settlement of the West coast and the discovery of gold in California.¹⁴⁸ This “all created an atmospheric condition favorable to still further adventures,” Dennett wrote, continuing with a truism that “the times were quite different” in 1850 than they were of decades past. And therefore the Perry mission.¹⁴⁹

Subsequent scholarship has kept Dennett’s basic interpretations and moved to fill in more story in greater detail. Peter Booth Wiley’s *Yankees in the Land of the Gods*

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¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 254.
follows Dennett’s theme and only adds more story to the narrative. In exhaustive detail and with liberal historical imagination Wiley tells the tales of shipwrecked whalers and the intimacies of the personal lives of commodores and the glory of steamships. He remarks on Perry’s close ties with New York merchants and his role in supervising the construction of new steamships. The significance of such a connection, however, Wiley does not tell, and when it comes time to explain the impetus for the mission, Wiley resorts to the practice of his predecessors and lists the events. Similarly, John Schroeder, in his biography of Perry, writes of the US expansion westward in the late 1840s and the logical move across the Pacific. For Schroeder, President Fillmore, Secretary of State Daniel Webster, and Naval Secretary William Graham came into office in 1850 with desires to expand trade. Perry thus “responded to the nation’s growing interest in Japan,” and the mission was born.\textsuperscript{150} Likewise, the editors of the \textit{Papers of Daniel Webster} draw the reasoning for the mission to having obtained the West coast and the natural desire to build a steam line across the Pacific, at which time Webster and Fillmore, “resolved to send a mission to that secluded country.”\textsuperscript{151} The editors conclude that coal was the reason for opening Japan.

In all of these accounts the said authors give absolute agency to one man, Commodore Matthew C. Perry, or, at best, include Secretary of State Daniel Webster and Secretary of the Navy William Graham as fellow conspirators. Such analysis stems from a traditional school of scholarship on diplomatic history in which a president or

\textsuperscript{150} Schroeder, \textit{Matthew Calbraith Perry}, 165-167.

secretary’s policies are analyzed and judged as the movers of history. More immediate to the historiography of US East Asia policy, Dennett’s influence is again unmistakable. His chapter on the opening of Japan is aptly titled “Commodore Perry’s Policy” and focuses—to no surprise—exclusively on Perry. Dennett summed up his philosophy of diplomatic history with the statement: “American policies in Japan, as in China, were largely personal.”¹⁵² Scholarship on the mission has predominately followed this lead.

The challenge then, is to deduce the true desires of these men who made policy and played an active role in shaping history. Instead of interpreting the might of their character and the resolve of their spirit as some innate driving force that separates them from other men of their day or that propels them to do great things where others demure, we must ask what led these actors to make the decisions they made and to act in the ways that they did. This is not to deny the role these men played, but rather to understand from a position of greater clarity what drove them to do what they did. That is, we must abandon the subject as the ultimate historical cause and look to a broader framework and trends that may or may not have informed the agent, but certainly framed the world within which the agent operated.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia, 260. As might be expected from an analysis working off of such a premise, Dennett calls the late 1840s and the 1850s outside of the Perry mission the “Period of Confusion” because no single individual came forth with a single articulated policy stamping direction on the means of micro-interaction with East Asian states.
¹⁵³ Two works appearing around the hundred-year anniversary of the Perry mission did attempt to remove agency from the individual and investigate the ideological background of the mission and the forces leading to its inception. William Neumann’s 1954 article, “Religion Morality, and Freedom: The Ideological Background of the Perry Expedition,” argued that Americans of the day linked commerce and civilization. Neumann thus put the mission to Japan in the light of Americans going forth to “liberate and educate the less fortunate peoples of the world” (p. 247). For Neumann, the Japan mission was as much about civilization as it was about trade, coal, and ports of refuge. Americans saw the isolated Japan existing in an unnatural state, refusing to bow to the divine laws of trade, commerce and interaction, and natural rights that ought to be guaranteed to all. The US, therefore, would free Japan and turn it into a liberal republic.
The historiography we have, therefore, fails to take us beyond the story of the Japan mission and into a deeper analysis of why it happened and what it meant. The scholarship is limited to the mission itself within the single context of the Japan mission in the early 1850s. (To be fair, the literature has tried to do nothing more.) Yet in order to understand what drove contemporary Americans' interest in Japan and why it was enough for the US government to intervene positively, we must look at the role Americans wanted their United States to play in the world and the spatial order they had set about to reconstruct. We must understand the importance of Japan in context of the American nomos and what the island meant to the new spatial order of the earth. Primary sources relating to those involved and the sentiment at the time of the Japan mission cannot be separated from the larger goals of the US in Asia and the world. It thus becomes necessary to reintegrate the events of the Japan expedition back into US foreign policy of the day and the narrative of US spatial order. Once we see Japan and the mission sent to open it not as an event in and of itself but as an integral piece to larger desires of Americans, then the world order that the US built over the course of its history become clear.

But owing to their own history, Americans believed that all nations have the right to self-determination and decide its own course. This led Americans to regard Japan like the American Indians, as peoples living outside of the law of nations and undeserving of civilized treatment. Under this logic, the US gave itself the right to use military threats, or to use force in order to bring Japan and the Japanese into the “natural” order of things.

Claude Phillips did a similar outline of holistic factors contributing to the origins of the mission in his 1956 article “Some Forces Behind the Opening of Japan.” Whereas Neumann focused on the ideological reasoning, Phillips took up the material forces, arguing that various commercial trends in contemporary America led to extensive Congressional debates on extending commercial relations with other countries. In the case of Japan, Congressmen and their constituents believed that Japan possessed a worthwhile market that could be a profitable outlet for American agriculture products. Phillips outlined the business interests pressing for government action since 1837, and the culmination of these demands bringing the issue to greater and greater prominence through continued lobby. Congressmen ultimately took up the call and voiced their own concern about opening the Japan market.
THE JAPAN MARKET

Although Japan never held the allure of the markets of China, the fact that Japan lay closed to the outside world led to a good deal of mystique and speculation about the riches of the island. Americans first explored Japanese waters in 1788 when whalers sailed the north Pacific. Within thirty years the fertile waters of the Pacific had produced five grounds for American fishing men, and in 1843 over one hundred whaling ships sought out the small circle between the fifty-first and fifty-sixth degrees of north latitude.\textsuperscript{154} In 1847, American whaling vessels in the Pacific exceeded six hundred, giving employment to over twenty thousand men. This far outweighed the number of merchant vessels calling on ports in the Pacific and East Indies, which amounted to only 181.\textsuperscript{155} In the summer of 1848 American whaler Captain Roys sailed north of Japan to fish and brought home tales of success, which inspired 154 whale ships the next year to sail forth and bring home 206,850 barrels of whale oil and 2,481,600 pounds of bone. In 1850, 144 American ships of larger stock brought home 243,680 barrels of whale oil and 3,654,000 pounds of bone. "In these two years," Navy Secretary William Graham remarked, "more American seamen were engaged in that small district of ocean than are employed in our whole navy at any one time."\textsuperscript{156} By the 1850s, estimated annual worth of whaling in the North Pacific waters was estimated at $7 million, employing some 18,000 men on 700 ships, outnumbering the rest of the world's whaling fleets put together. Such

\textsuperscript{154} House Report 596:30-1, serial set 526, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{155} Palmer to Polk, Jan. 10, 1848, Senate Executive Document 80:30-1, serial set 511, p.1.
\textsuperscript{156} Graham to King, April 5, 1852, Senate Executive Documents 55:32-1, serial set 619, p. 1-2.
a presence led to Herman Melville’s novel *Moby Dick*, in which he wrote of Japan: "If that double-bolted land, Japan, is ever to become hospitable, it is the whale-ship alone to whom the credit will be due; for already she is on the threshold."\(^{157}\)

Whalers had unsuccessfully attempted numerous times to obtain supplies from Japan, and shipwrecked sailors found themselves at the unwelcome mercy of Japanese captors, but none of these whaling expeditions attempted to trade directly with Japan. In 1791 the first American ship sailed into Japanese ports and requested permission to trade. On his way to China peddling furs from the Oregon territory, John Kendrick hoped to test the Japanese market. Refused entry and driven off he did not try again nor press the matter. Americans took part in the Dutch monopoly during the Napoleonic war, however. Due to the English prowess of the European continental commerce, the Dutch hired Americans as neutrals to carry trade in and out of Japan. When the wars ended in 1807, however, the Dutch took back the trade and cut out the Americans. Some three decades later the American traders Olyphant and Company based in Guangdong (Canton) sent their ship the *Morrison* to Japan to request trading privileges. As missionary Wells Williams, who sailed with the *Morrison*, wrote, "Free trade begets a free interchange of thought; with the goods, the civilization and Christianity of foreign nations will extend."\(^{158}\) Although the *Morrison* carried Japanese shipwrecked sailors to repatriate, the Japanese refused the ship entry and fired warning shots driving the American merchants away.\(^{159}\)

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\(^{158}\) Wells Williams, “Narrative of the Morison,” *Chinese Repository* VI (Sept-Dec) 1837.

\(^{159}\) See Dennett, *Americans in Eastern Asia*, 246.
American reports in the first half of the nineteenth century exhibited wide speculation on the worth that prospective trade with Japan could bring. US Consular at Batavia John Shellaber wrote in the 1830s of the benefits of opening trade with Japan, including an annual tonnage of 5,000 amounting to $300,000.\textsuperscript{160} Twenty years later the New Orleans Journal \textit{De Bow's Review} reported the Japan market was worth $200 million annually—surprising growth considering the country was still closed to the world.\textsuperscript{161} Other American press quoted the more realistic British \textit{United Service Magazine} as saying that "What [Japan] trade would really be, it is impossible, \textit{a priori}, to determine, because we neither know with certainty the population of the empire, nor the extent of its resources."\textsuperscript{162}

Following the opening of more ports of trade with China in 1844, a type of market fever gripped Americans. The Secretary of the Navy, John Kennedy, reported to the Senate in 1853 that US trade with China "must necessarily increase," and that the "same causes which produce this increase must augment our trade with the continent of Asia and the islands of the Pacific." Kennedy continued to say that, "These consequences are so apparent and inevitable that it is not deemed necessary to repeat what has been so often said in relation to the trade here referred to."\textsuperscript{163} In addition to the China market, which would rescue the south from its cotton glut, the other markets of East Asia also

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 245.
\textsuperscript{162} "Commercial Mission to Japan," \textit{Littell's Living Age}, v. 25, April, May, June, 1850, p. 551.
held promising allure, and led to vast discursive speculation. Japan stood in prominent view of Americans in these debates. As Commodore Biddle wrote to Navy Secretary George Bancroft in 1846, “the supply of American cotton in Japan may, perhaps, become equal to the demand.”164 Corn too was viewed as a commodity which the Japan market would consume.165 Congressman Pratt took the debate to the House floor pontificating on the Japanese population “exceeding fifty millions, (about thrice as numerous as the whole population of the United States)” and the great strength of Japanese industry “comparable with that of the Chinese.” Although Pratt noted that foreign trade remained forbidden, he pointed out that “the internal commerce of Japan is very extensive,” which, if the US could tap, would yield forth great wealth.166

Americans viewed the Japan market as a natural right to access. Ideologically, trade was not a choice but something open to and deserved by all, and which would serve the greater benefit of humanity. These views were prominently expressed for the American public in the spring and summer of 1852 by both the Whig and Democratic parties in extensive articles in their respective journals. The article “Japan,” published in the Democratic Review of April 1852, opened with a long discursive on free commerce and the ills of a despotic system that kept its subjects trapped in tyranny and locked out from the wider world. Such a system, the editors continued while still employing an ambiguous and abstract tone lacking a subject, defies “a natural right which every being possesses...that of traffic with any other being who will trade with him.” Should a legal

bind governing the rules and stipulation of trade not yet exist between two countries then
"all our citizens retain their natural right to trade with the citizens of such nation."
Indeed, "if no treaty exists, then my natural right claims full force." This means, by
ideological definition of the understanding of the term, and inherit in being, that "every
citizen of our country has a natural right to convey his goods to the ports of another
country, and trade, if he can." However, for a state that closes itself off to the world and
denies "the right" of trade and intercourse with others, "denies them every good which
lies beyond their borders, and chains them to a routine of unnatural and soulless customs
and traditions." The journal then directly referred to such a state as Japan by name. The
article continued to provide for its readers a detailed description of a Japanese
government enacting "a system of espionage, distrust, and hatred in society, sanguinary
Draconism in law, and arbitrary distinctions in rank." This government kept its people in
"a most unnatural and repugnant system of political and social coercion; that, naturally a
trading nation, they are debarred from extended trade." For such reasons the Democratic
Review argued, the opening of Japan "is demanded by reason, civilization, progress, and
religion."\footnote{\textsuperscript{167}}

Echoing similar sentiments, the American Whig Review published a similar article
two months later with the title "Japan—the Expedition" arguing that the "Japanese can be
brought into commercial and friendly relations with other nations." Like their partisan
counterparts, the editors here decried the Japanese as "a rude, intractable nation; selfish,
unsocial, and uninteresting." Important for the Whigs was the freedom of commerce and

\footnote{\textsuperscript{167} "Japan," \textit{Democratic Review}, April 1852, p. 322-324, 328, 332.}
allowing enterprising American merchants to have free reign of the sea and to trade with whomever they may desire. To this end the *Review* quotes Secretary of State Daniel Webster’s instructions for the opening of the country: “steps should be taken at once to enable our enterprising merchants to supply the last link in that great chain which unites all nations of the world.”

Although lacking the theoretical discursive of the *Democratic Review*, the *American Whig Review* article maintained a similar moralizing tone and proselytizing discourse about the natural rights of free trade and the demonism of the Japanese system of government.

Given their righteous understanding of this natural right, it followed for Americans that free trade begat liberalism and civilization. “It is the mission of commerce to civilize the world,” said Senator Miller of New Jersey in 1852. “It is commerce, aided by steam, that is to carry those principles of liberty and enterprise which have given this country its prominence and its glory throughout the world to the other races and nations of mankind.” Should Japan open its harbors and cease its practice of “unnatural seclusion”, then, Americans of the day argued, all the evil practices and institutions that have oppressed the Japanese people, the “cruel feudal regulations oppressing the peasantry, degrading servitude fettering the nobles, utter contempt visited upon the merchants, arbitrary laws impeding agriculture, joined with a sanguinary code of laws, a vagabond priesthood, a corrupt police, and a thousand debasing superstitions,”

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170 *Congressional Globe*, 32-1, p. 1166.
as expressed in the Democratic Review, all these uncivilized ways of a nation “out of the pale” would be transformed.\textsuperscript{171}

For Westerns of the day, such developments were certainly in the best interests of the world, and justified the use of force if necessary. In the words of Commodore James Glynn in early 1851, if “They won’t willingly comes to terms—make them; we could convert their selfish government into a liberal republic in a short time; such an unnatural system would at the present day fall to pieces upon the slightest concussion.”\textsuperscript{172} Glynn drove this point home in a letter to the president later that year arguing that “the progress of civilization demands” that Japan enter into relations with the US and the rest of the world, by force if necessary.\textsuperscript{173} Or, as the New York Daily Times admonished in early 1852: “Japan has no right to bury her treasures behind her walls, and to imprison her people under the cover of loathing and ignorant superstition...it is the duty of those who know her, even better than she knows herself, to force upon her the dawning of a better day.”\textsuperscript{174}

The spread of these “natural rights” and social and political values were integral to the US project. In view of itself as distinct from Britain, Europe and the rest of the old world, the US world order likewise needed to distinguish itself from that of monarchy, class, commercial regulation, political and social restriction, and most of all the colonial British empire. By propagating itself as the pinnacle of freedom and civilization the US could at once justify its maneuvers to secure markets under contest by force if necessary,

\textsuperscript{172} Glynn to Howland and Aspinwall, Feb. 24, 1851, S. Ex. Doc. 59:32-1, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{173} Glynn to Fillmore, June 10, 1851, S. Ex. Doc. 59:32-1, p. 74.
and at the same time begin to build a world order based on open trade in lands that it held a superior geographical advantage, and not on subjugation, colonization and exclusion. A new spatial order began to form in the physical act of drawing geographical access based on new legal justifications, and it swirled like the eddies of the black ditch current in the South Japan seas around the China markets and access to those markets.

STEAM IN THE NEW SPATIAL ORDER

Yet the Japan market was not the only cause for active engagement with the closed state; in fact, the drive for the Japan market only occupied a peripheral concern in the lager strategic goals of the US for total access and control of the region. In consideration of Japan, the American agenda focused on building an institutional order that would at once secure all the markets of the Pacific and the trade ushering on that great ocean. It would do this through treaties and footholds and funnel trade through the US, and in doing this counter European influence and order. Fast, reliable transportation and communication was necessary. Poised on the Pacific Rim, Japan would complete what Daniel Webster, the Secretary of State in the early 1850s, called “the great chain of being.” The US had consolidated the western American coast fulfilling the goal of obtaining the prime ports for access to the China market. With this complete, Americans continued the cause by building more invasive structures that would give them control of the region. The Democratic Review noted in 1852:

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“It is beginning to be pretty well understood that these coasts are a sort of key to Eastern Asia, and that a commanding influence established upon them by a civilized nation, will give it the sway of the Pacific, and of all benefits which may hereafter flow from a great maritime outlet of Asiatic trade.”

But more than that, by opening Japan to American ships under their own terms, the US saw, as expressed in the Democratic Review “a new highway for all the most valuable exchanges of east and west.” For the US, then, access to Japan meant putting American “mercantile power in the position of warders to the whole Asiatic continent.” This was not a partisan issue, but something that all Americans agreed on as their destiny as they built an empire. The American Whig Review echoed the view when it discussed

“The establishment of a steam marine on the California coast, by which the celerity of our commerce with China will be vastly increased, and the influence of the United States extended over the entire East, is vividly suggested by this step towards opening an intercourse with that long-secluded and inhospitable nation of which we have been speaking [i.e. Japan].”

Only then, the journal continued, “When this step of progress is consummated, the destiny of the Republic of the United States will but have commenced.”

In pursuit of these goals, Japan and its geographical position beckoned. Americans saw the need to bring Japan into that “great chain of being” to solidify the emerging US spatial order. Standing at the edge of the Pacific, American ships encountered Japan first on their route to Asia. For Americans, therefore, a port of entry

175 “Japan,” Democratic Review, April 1852, p. 331.
was needed in accessing Asia, as was a reliable supply station for ships coming and
going. As Webster’s instructions for the opening of Japan read:

“The moment is near when the last link in the chain of oceanic steam navigation is to be formed.
From China and the East Indies to Egypt, thence through the Mediterranean and Atlantic ocean to
England, thence again to our happy shores, and other parts of this great continent; from our own
ports to the southernmost part of the isthmus that connects the two western continents; and from
its Pacific coast, north and southwards, as far as civilization has spread, the steamers of other
nations and of our own carry intelligence, the wealth of the world, and thousands of travelers.”\textsuperscript{177}

This opening paragraph in the brief two pages of instructions to the Commodore assigned
to open Japan emphasize the US construction of a new spatial order in which Japan,
positioned at the edge of an important market, serves as a key link.

Although Americans recognized Japan as an important link, it was the
introduction of steamship navigation that accelerated the necessity to incorporate this link
into Webster’s chain. American naval, merchant, but especially mail steamers from San
Francisco to Shanghai needed a refueling station in Asia, and Japan was widely believed
to be possessed of an abundance of suitable coal. As Webster wrote in the instructions for
the Japan expedition:

\textquote{The interests of commerce, and even those of humanity, demand, however, that we should make
another appeal to the sovereign of that country, in asking him to sell to our steamers, not the
manufacturers of his artisans, or the results of the toil of his husbandmen, but a gift of}

\textsuperscript{177} Webster to Aulick, June 10, 1851, \textit{Senate Executive Document} 59:32-1, p. 80; Webster, \textit{The Papers of
Daniel Webster: Diplomatic Papers} V. 2, 289-290.
Providence, deposited, by the Creator of all things, in the depths of the Japanese islands for the benefit of the human family."178

When Americans went forth to demand Japan open its shores, they did so asking them not to buy American goods, or allow American merchants access to the Japan markets. Rather they went asking only to purchase coal to fuel their hegemonic desires.

AMERICAN STEAMSHIPS

The rise of the technology of steam driven ships in the early to mid-nineteenth century was akin to the advances in astrological navigation in the fifteenth century. Where the use of chronometers and star maps allowed ships to sail with precise coordinates of longitude, steam allowed a system of regularity and speed in transportation and communication never seen before. Whereas merchants and mail ships once had to rely on weather patterns and fear storms, which could delay transportation by weeks and months, steam powered ships could arrive at their destination within a predictable number of days. Furthermore, the speed of steam could outpace sail by twice as much or more. As David B. Tyler, the historian of steam power, wrote in Steam Conquers the Atlantic, "Steam shrunk the ocean to an eighth of its size in the day of the sailing ship...commerce attained a degree of regularity and reliability that rivals transcontinental

178 Ibid.
More polemical, but ever as apt in catching the mood of the time, Commodore Perry wrote in 1838, “The destines of nations are henceforth to be in a great measure controlled by a power of which steam will be the great governing element.”

Despite such proclaimed advantages, the US government was slow to accept the benefits of the steamship advancement. In the late 1830s the British and French governments had subsidized steamship ventures and were regularly commissioning steamship construction to carry mail and passengers. The US, however, had not commissioned steam routes and did not support the construction of steam ships. Part of the reason was that Americans made sailing ships of superior quality and was thus reluctant to promote steam. Furthermore, the US had not yet begun to exploit its coal supply, providing an obstacle and a cost that a country like Britain did not face. This all added up to the problem of cost; ocean steamships were not profitable unless supported by government subsidy. American capitalist R.B. Forbes found this out firsthand when he built steamships in the mid-1840s to take advantage of the newly opened China ports. His first attempt led to a breakdown and had to rely on sail to return home. The second attempt in 1845 sailed to Bombay and then Hong Kong but was refused opium supplies for trade out of fear that the heat of the steamship would destroy the drug. He later chartered his ship to the US government for use in the Mexican War.

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181 Tyler, *Steam Conquers the Atlantic*, 100.
182 Ibid., 122.
183 Ibid., 134, 128.
American entrepreneurs however had a close relationship with steam. In 1815 steam power for river transportation had begun to be realized, and within two years ten steamboats ran between New York City and Albany, and eight to nine between New York City and New Jersey. That year (1817) an American ship, the Savannah, was the first steamship to cross the Atlantic. Making it from New York to London in twenty-nine days and eleven hours. Numerous times over the decades the US government attempted to build war steamers, authorizing construction in 1814, 1829, and 1839, but construction did not commence until 1842 due to lack of funds.184

By this time the US had begun to notice the rest of the world had outpaced it in steam development. Engineering advances since the Savannah first crossed the Atlantic had halved the time it took to sail from New York to London in the late 1830s, making steam travel not only practical but a growing necessity. As President Tyler said in his 1844 annual address:

"I cannot too strongly urge the policy of authorizing the establishment of a line of seam ships regularly to ply between this country and foreign ports, and upon our own waters...We cannot be blind to the fact, that other nations have already added large numbers of steam ships to their naval armaments, and that this new and powerful agent is destined to revolutionize the condition of the world. It becomes the United States, therefore, looking to their security, to adopt a similar policy."185

On this initiative the Congress passed a bill in the last days of the Tyler presidency to subsidize steam lines. As the cost of building and maintaining steam still appeared too

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184 Ibid., 11-16, 137.
great for the infant government, and the technology still advancing, the US government opted for a policy borrowed from Britain of subsidizing the building of steamships and the routes they would run to carry mail regularly. In the event of war the Navy would purchase the ships and outfit them for battle. The first step taken to achieve this end was the passage of a bill that authorized the postmaster general to contract the carrying of mail to private and foreign companies. Foremost, the mail could be carried by private companies running the steam lines, and in the event of war and the government possession and use of these ships the mail could be contracted out to foreign companies. On October 4, 1844 the government opened bidding for four steam driven mail routes: transatlantic, Cuba, the Gulf of Mexico, and Panama with an extension to Oregon.\textsuperscript{186}

By the late 1840s the US had thus begun to build a network of steamers carrying communications around the Western hemisphere. Legislation in early 1847 approved a line from Panama to a port on the western coast of the US, establishing what the Chairman of the House Committee on Naval Affairs, T. Butler King, said afforded “frequent and regular means of intercourse with all places on the American shores of the Pacific.”\textsuperscript{187} These lines carried regular correspondence to and from ports, as well as encouraged the timely transportation of passengers.

With the establishment of regular steam lines the US spatial order of the earth took on a new dimension, shrinking both time and space. Americans were able to work with this new technology to methodologically extend their influence when possible and

\textsuperscript{186} Tyler, \textit{Steam Conquers the Atlantic}, 144.
solidify it where needed. For the US at mid-century, this meant the establishment of a steamer line across the Pacific. The treaty with China in 1844 and the solidification of American territory on the Pacific coast led Americans to take the next step and carve out footholds in the Pacific and extenuate its control in that region. The recent developments, King said in a report in 1848, “have placed in our power, ultimately, to communicate with China almost as rapidly as we now do with Europe. To accomplish this, however, we must extend telegraphic wires across the continent, and establish a line of steamers from San Francisco or Monterey to Shanghai and Canton.”\textsuperscript{188} This proposed line from China to the western US coast and across the American continent to connect to the steam lines crossing the Atlantic, would cut the time required for communications from Canton or Shanghai to less than half the time required by the overland route, from sixty days to twenty-seven days. Add on the sixteen days necessary for British steamers to sail from Calcutta to Canton, to make forty-three days from Calcutta to London, a few days less than the British line. “We, therefore, have it in our power, ultimately,” King wrote, “to establish and control the most rapid means of communication with all India as well as China.”\textsuperscript{189} But why stop there? In a letter to Senator King, Navy Lieutenant Maury informed him of the ability to use such a line to convey communications “from China, through the United States, to the people of St. Petersburg and Moscow, and, perhaps, at no distant day, to Constantinople also, within 45 days.”\textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{190} Maury to King, Jan. 10, 1847, House Report 596:30-1, serial set 526, p. 23.
From an intelligence point of view this had its obvious strengths: the US would be able to control the flow of information and receive correspondence and intelligence before its European rivals. From a commercial point of view, this would allow American merchants to relay information and instructions back and forth at a faster rate than before as well as ahead of their competitors. As M.F. Maury, a navy lieutenant wrote to King in 1847, "In the progressive sprite of the age, time has become to be reckoned as money."\textsuperscript{191} This point was emphasized by Senator Rusk in 1850 in a report to the Senate on the need to build steamships for the necessity of rapid travel which would beget the accumulation of wealth. "Wherever facilities of rapid travel exist, trade will be found with its attendant wealth...the commercial history of England has shown that mail facilities have uniformly gone hand in hand with the extension of trade."\textsuperscript{192} Before his peers in Congress King here emphasized this point of commercial advantage, which would "give the American merchants and manufacturers greatly the advantage of those of Europe, in the means of communicating with correspondents in China." He also continued to outline the possibility of passenger transport from China to New York and London, which could take place at the rate of twenty and thirty-two days respectively, "Bringing them to New York in less than one third, and to London in about one half the time now required to pass over the British, or overland route." So great where the prospects of this system of communication and transport that King prophesized that "in a few years, cause the

\textsuperscript{191} Maury to King, Jan. 10, 1847, \textit{House Report} 596:30-1, serial set 526, p. 24
\textsuperscript{192} \textit{S. Ex. Doc.} 50:32-1, serial set 619, p. 17.
balance of trade with all nations to turn in our favor, and make New York, what London now is, the great settling house of the world.”

The strategic and commercial goals here articulated by the United States Congressman were embedded in the true desires of Americans and the US government as they sought to impose their order in the Pacific. The nuts and bolts of the new nomos being formed were bound up in this steam line. As Glynn wrote to New York merchants Holland and Aspinwall, the steamship line across the Pacific is

“the most magnificent and perhaps profitable projects that has ever entered the mind of a practical man—that of diverting the commerce of half the human family from its foreign channels into the bosom of his own country. The steam line between Asia and America is by common consent considered the very foundation of this splendid structure.”

This idea swirled in the mind of many Americans. The US stood poised to capture the riches of East Asia and the commerce of Europe as goods flowed across oceans and through the American continent. The transpacific steam line shuttling goods to and from the shores of America would allow the US to capture the commerce and trade of transport and finance, enriching its people and thus the country. Here indeed, as Francis L. Hawks wrote in the *Narrative of the Expedition to the China Seas and Japan* in 1856, “our continent must, in some degree at least, become a highway for the world.”

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In the Congress, King’s oratory and report led to a series of joint resolutions in May 1848 by both Houses to establish lines to steam the Pacific from California to China, and California to Hawaii. Citing “extensive and rapidly increasing commerce” on the Pacific, the primary resolution noted the necessity to provide the means of frequent and timely communication with whaling vessels in Hawaii and the principal ports in China. The Congress thus directed the Secretary of the Navy to employ one war steamer to transport mail and passengers from a port in California to Hawaii and back once a month, and a line of three or four war steamers to proceed once a month from a port on the US west coast to Shanghai and then onto to Canton.\footnote{House Report 596:30-1, serial set 526, p. 17.} In a corollary resolution, the Congress authorized the Secretary of the Navy to establish coal depots to supply the said steamers.\footnote{House Report 596:30-1, serial set 526, p. 18.}

As the matter of the establishment of a Pacific line was discussed, the issue of coal supply constantly haunted the debate. The US had not tapped its continental coal supplies, nor did it have immediate access to any in the Pacific. For King this did not provide an obstacle even if “the difficulties which may arise in the establishment of depots of coal cannot be foreseen.” He proposed that the US tap China, Japan and Taiwan, which he believed would hold abundant coal supplies.\footnote{T. Butler King, \textit{Steam Communications with China, and the Sandwich Islands}, House Report 596:30-1, serial set 526, p. 14.} Others, however, were less sanguine on the prospect of obtaining coal from China or Taiwan, neither of which were known to contain sources of adequate supplies. Due to the New York capitalist Aaron Palmer’s research on Asian states not having relations with the US, Japan was
widely believed to have an abundance of coal. The convenient necessity of Japanese coal was made all the more appealing because the southern part of Japan lay directly on the shortest line from San Francisco to Shanghai. Palmer was quick to point this out to the Secretary of State in a letter in September 1849, advising him to request permission from the government of Japan to establish coaling stations “at a port or ports in Japan proper.”

Likewise, Naval Commander James Glynn, in a letter to the owners of the shipping company Howland and Aspinwall, who were, at the time, running the subsidized steam route from Panama to California, wrote “there are, too, I have no doubt, abundance of coals in Japan that could be delivered at a comparatively low cost, in consequence of the very low rate of wages in that country.” Having spent two years patrolling the Pacific and paying port call in Japan in order to argue for the release of shipwrecked American whalers, Glynn saw the desirability of Japan as a coaling station and refueling station for American ships sailing the Pacific. “No country in the world is more conveniently separated into sections by the sea,” he wrote. Glynn knew the challenge of obtaining supplies and refuge from Japan. “The diplomatic influence of our government will be required to secure the privilege of establishing a depot as well as for the supply of the coal, as I have stated, and it is time that something had been done.”

In the debate on the American spatial order and linking that spatial order through steam transportation and communication, Americans in the late 1840s and early 1850s...

came to see the importance of Japan. The country stood at the edge of the Pacific, projecting outwards across the ocean, and controlling maritime access to China’s eastern seaboard. Japan would help link the US from its west coast to China and the markets of the Pacific. It was at this time that Americans came to see the importance of steam and the role that it could play in realizing the construction of their new order of the earth. A Pacific route from California to Shanghai and Hong Kong would give the US control of information and economically empower the US, helping solidify not only regional hegemony but global dominance of trade and information. Japan was key to this enterprise because of its position and its natural coal resources. By opening Japan on American terms and using the islands as a coaling station, the US could shore up its hold.

THE BRITISH STEAM THREAT

Rivalry with Britain added a dimension of urgency to the debates in the US. Americans saw themselves in a struggle for power of the earth with Britain. While Britain asserted itself where it so desired with force and pomp, Americans had not the ability to extend themselves and create a military presence in other parts of the world. The US thus attempted to build a system of spatial linkages within which it could maintain influence through a legal system of treaties, contracts and footholds, thereby denying other powers monopoly of markets, and constructing a world order that funneled all commerce and exchange through the space of the United States. East Asia stood as the
proving grounds, through which markets and dominance would be won or lost. Here specifically the US kept a close watch on the “blood-thirsty” British whose “foreign policy has lost that purity which belongs to ours, and which seems inherent in its very nature; and they are uneasy at the contrast,” as the American Whig Review wrote.202

Strategically the US felt threatened and confined by British strength; as if they had been caught napping while their rivals conquered the world and dissected it. Matthew Perry had traveled to England in 1838 in order to assess the extent of British steam development in their naval capacity. His letters back to the US relate the superior advancement by the British in this important regard.203 With more than a bit of alarm, over such developments Congressman King discussed the British naval threat in a comprehensive report to his House colleagues:

“The amount of our tonnage on the Pacific and in the China trade is much larger than that of Great Britain, yet she maintains a strong military establishment at her newly acquired posts in China, and a naval force almost equal to our whole navy, and also a large squadron on the west coast of America, with mail steamers conveying passengers and intelligence in all directions, for the protection and encouragement of that commerce, while our government has not, until recently, taken the first step towards placing our merchants on a footing, in these respects, with their British competitors.”204

This statement could be said to sum up the entire debate on steamship navigation and American penetration in Asia. If the US did not act, then someone else would. Or more to

202 “Japan—the Expedition,” American Whig Review, June 1852, p. 513:1
203 Perry to [illegible], Jul 8, 1838, Perry Papers, correspondence, Library of Congress manuscript division.
the point, if the US failed to act, Britain’s hold on its order would strengthen and the ability to secure American interests would come increasingly under threat from its rival. Here Americans found themselves in a double bind of anxiety and threat. As Senator Miller put it before his colleagues in 1852: “The English Government will have the control of the transportation of every letter, and every pound of specie, of passengers, and of most of the freights...then, indeed, we shall be subject to a complete monopoly.”

Because Britain posed a very real threat to the US, Americans watched British naval capacity and steamship development closely and pushed to check aggressive moves. In a report to the Senate in September 1850, Senator Rusk laid out charts and tables of British steamer construction, and devoted nearly half of his report to intelligence of British ships and the system by which Britain facilitated the building of its ships. “We have beheld England increasing her steam-marinie at an enormous expense,” Rusk said, and then detailed the pending threat of Britain’s steam ships to the US coast.

“In carrying out this system, the steam-marinie of England has been extended to a limit that startles belief, and suggests to every reflecting mind the propriety, on the part of other and rival nations, of taking steps to guard themselves from the attacks of so overwhelming a force, in the event of a collision with that great power.”

Since 1847, Britain had stationed twenty steamers on the US coast, “which could at a moment’s warning have been employed in burning down our cities and ravaging the seacoast.” His colleague, Senator Miller, warned again of the British threat two years

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205 Congressional Globe 32-1, April 22, 1852, p. 1167.
later, detailing the five routes of the British mail steamers, and emphasized twice in his speech that all sixty-three of these British steamers could be converted into war steamers and used for nefarious purposes. He echoed the sentiments of many of his Congressional colleagues, his merchant constituents, and the Navy when he said,

"England is plowing the oceans from pole to pole with her mighty fleet of steamers, and sowing the seeds of a commerce and of trade from which she will hereafter reap a harvest such as no nation on this earth ever garnered before. That is her policy. It should be ours. It is our mission."\textsuperscript{207}

With such inspiration debates over steam competition with the British occupied the Congress in the early 1850s, as representatives constantly took up the issue of funding for a merchant marine. Rusk had made steam his issue and promoted its importance to no end. In a separate report to the Senate in order to garner more funds for the construction of steamships Rusk outlined the historical necessity of steam:

"In this way the commercial interests of the United States were, on the one hand, entirely at the mercy of British steamers which plied along our southern coast, entering our ports at leisure and thereby acquiring an intimate knowledge of the soundings and other peculiarities of our harbors—a knowledge which might prove infinitely injurious to us in the event of a war with Great Britain; and on the other, of a foreign line of ocean mail steamers, which, under the liberal patronage of the British government, monopolized the steam mail postage and freights between the two countries. Under such a state of things, it became necessary to choose whether American commerce should continue to be thus tributary to British maritime supremacy, or an American medium of communication should be established through the intervention of the Federal government, in the form of advances of pecuniary means in aid of individual enterprise."

\textsuperscript{207} Congressional Globe 32-1, April 22, 1852, p. 1166.
Rusk continued in warning that it had become impossible for American merchants to compete against their British counterparts so aided by their government. Indeed, for Rusk, "American interests were becoming every day more and more tributary to British ascendancy on the ocean." Such a phenomena affected not only American merchants but was contextualized in the perspective of the entire nation and the order of the earth. Rusk again spelled out the alarm:

"Great Britain was exerting herself, successfully, to make the United States, in common with the rest of the world, tributary to her maritime supremacy. She possessed the monopoly of steam connection between the United States and Europe, the West Indies and South America. There was not a letter sent by ocean steam conveyance, in these quarters, which did not pay its tribute to the British crown, and not a passenger nor parcel of merchandize transported, by the agency of steam, upon the ocean, which did not furnish profit to the British capitalist. Great Britain asserted her right to be the 'queen of the ocean,' and, as such, she levied her imports upon the industry and intelligence of all of the nations that frequented that highway of the world."

This necessitated the full backing of an expanded steam marine by the US government:

"The question is no longer whether certain individuals shall be saved from loss or enabled to make fortunes, but whether the American shall succumb to the British lines, and Great Britain be permitted to monopolize ocean mail steam transportation, not only between Europe and America, but, through the world."\(^{208}\)

\(^{208}\) *Senate Report 267:32-1, serial 631, p. 2, 4, 6-7.*
In the context of this rivalry with Britain, the subsidization of mail steamers also met the contingency of warships in addition to establishing communication lines and probing regions in US spheres of interest. Lacking the funds to build a steam navy the US would subsidize its building in the construction of dual-use steamers. As the Secretary of the Navy said in the late 1840s, “steamers shall be so constructed as to be easily convertible into war steamers.” This meant that the Navy Department would “at all times exercise control over them, and shall at any time have the right to take them for the exclusive use and service of the United States.” In order to meet this requirement the steamers subsidized by the government on mail lines were to be built of larger capacity and with platforms to accommodate large guns. This would allow the US to maintain a check on “the temper of the times,” according to Senator Rusk, which “requires that we shall keep pace with the rapid improvements of other nations in their commercial and military marine.”

In East Asia, the urgency was not diminished. The US feared British control of intelligence and commerce in the Pacific due to the strength of its navy and mail steamers. As Navy Secretary John Kennedy warned in 1853, “The numerous lines of English mail-steamers place in the hands of Great Britain almost an entire monopoly of the wealth of the East.” All mail out of the Pacific ran through London, either by overland route through India, or by sea around the African cape. Such control enabled British merchants and officials to receive information before their American counterparts.

Furthermore, the threat of severed communication lines due to hostilities between the powers constantly haunted the Americans. In addition to this, British coaling stations around the region overwhelmed the US. The English held what were seen to be the most important points in the East India and China seas: Hong Kong, Singapore and Borneo. With these possessions Britain had “the power of shutting up at will, and controlling the enormous trade of those seas,” according to Commodore Perry. From these bases Britain could patrol the seas and regulate or control what came in and out, set the terms of engagement, or even choose to colonize the region and refuse trade and commerce from any outside of the British mercantile system. Even as it stood, Britain controlled the major coal depots in Singapore and Hong Kong, and had set the terms of interaction with China, considered to be the largest untapped market on earth. Indeed, as Perry wrote in his Narrative:

“When we look at the possessions in the east of our great maritime rival, England, and of the constant and rapid increase of their fortified ports, we should be admonished of the necessity of prompt measures on our part...Fortunately the Japanese and many other islands of the Pacific are still left untouched by that gigantic power, and as some of them lay in a route of a commerce which is destined to become of great importance to the United States, no time should be lost in adopting active measures to secure a sufficient number of ports of refuge...Commercial settlements in the China and Pacific seas will be found to be vitally necessary to the continued success of our commerce in those regions.”

\[212\] Perry, Hawks, and Wallach, Narrative, v. 2, p. 179.
For Perry, as for his countrymen, steam navigation and the use of a steam merchant marine and navy in East Asia was vital for the expansion and protection of US interests. Such a system folded into the enactment of the new spatial order of the earth.

AMERICA VS. JAPAN BEFORE THE OPIUM WAR

Following merchant failures to open Japan, American diplomatic and military officials began to conceive of the government as a vehicle to facilitate the rights of American commerce and trade. Formal proposals to open Japan began soon after the war of 1812. Commodore David Porter, who led the first warship to fly the American flag in the Pacific, and who had been captured by the British while engaging this enemy in South Pacific waters, first wrote an extensive memo to the Secretary of the Navy in 1814 and then to President Monroe in 1815 requesting to lead an exploratory mission into the North Pacific and then connect to an expedition in Oregon to seek another transcontinental route in addition to the one explored by Lewis and Clark. “Washington,” Porter wrote to President Monroe, “might be made a first Meridian.” Porter’s ambition and enthusiasm also led him to propose the opening of Japan to American commerce. As he wrote to President Monroe, “The important trade of Japan has been shut against every nation...the time may be favorable, and it would be a glory...for us, a nation of only forty

years standing to beat down their rooted prejudices—secure to ourselves a valuable trade, and make that people known to the world.”

The Monroe administration here took a keen interest and began to plan for such an expedition and allocate resources. The Secretary of the Navy assigned vessels and men for the expedition giving Porter the flagship Java and two captains commanding frigates under Porter’s command. In 1816, just as preparations were being made, the mission was canceled due to US-Spanish animosities in the Caribbean. The rumor of a Spanish invasion of New Orleans caused the Navy Secretary to order all ships to the Gulf and Caribbean. Despite the mission’s failure to materialize some historians have credited the general goal of throwing open Japan to Western trade to Porter, claiming that it “all developed from the idea of which the proposal of 1815 initiated.”

If such ambition did influence Porter’s successors, the historical record does not reflect it. John Shillaber, US consul at Batavia, does not mention Porter in any of the writings or records he left, but some fifteen years later he also floated the idea of opening Japan. In his dispatches in the late Spring and Summer of 1831, Shillaber outlined the possibility of profitable trade with Japan and the necessity for positive government action in opening the country:

“Previous missions had failed,” he postulated, “owing to the jealous fears entertained by the Japanese Emperors that those powers would sooner or later, if any intercourse was opened,

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214 Quoted in Ibid.: 64.; see also David Foster Long, Nothing Too Daring: a Biography of Commodore David Porter, 1780-1843 (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1970), 173.
216 See Ibid., 174.
interfere with the internal affairs of the Empire, attempt to subvert its Government and probably make a conquest of the country. I allude more especially to England and Russia.”

Thus, the US, Shillaber wrote, owning to its Republican nature and historical stand against tyranny and foreign conquest, would not be stigmatized with such desires and the Japanese would freely enter into relations with America. Within three to four years of such an opening, he said, trade with Japan could exceed five thousand tons annually worth three hundred thousand dollars. For this reason Shillaber strongly recommended that a merchant rather than naval vessel undertake the proposed expedition to Japan.\textsuperscript{217}

These proposals kept Washington focused on the possibility of opening Japan, as well as understanding the island’s importance for the spread of US influence and presence in the region. When the State Department sent supercargo Edmund Roberts to negotiate treaties with South East Asian states in 1832, he was also instructed to go to Japan, although no treaty was mentioned. On October 28, 1832, Secretary of State Edward Livingston wrote to Roberts en-route to inform him that “We have it in contemplation to institute a separate mission to Japan; but if you find the prospect favorable, you may fill up one of the letters of credence with the appropriate title of the Emperor, and present yourself there for the purpose of opening a trade.” He instructed Roberts to continue to Japan in a merchant vessel if he were to go so as not to “submit to the indignity of being disarmed” in a national vessel.\textsuperscript{218} Lacking the funds to complete the voyage to Japan, Roberts returned to Washington in 1834 after negotiating treaties

\textsuperscript{217} Dennett, \textit{Americans in Eastern Asia}, 245-246.
\textsuperscript{218} Livingstong to Roberts, Oct. 28, 1832, \textit{Senate Executive Documents} 59:32-1 p. 63
with Siam and Muscat. He reported to the Secretary of State about Japan, stating that the
way to trade with Korea and China would be through Japan. When Roberts returned to
Asia the next year in order to exchange treaty ratifications he was instructed under
secrecy to negotiate a treaty with Cochin China (Vietnam) and then proceed to Japan. He
fell sick in South East Asia, however, and died at Macao in 1836.

AMERICA VS. JAPAN POST OPIUM WAR

British military action against China in the Opium War of 1839-1842 created a
new precedence for Western penetration of Eastern markets. For states that refused to
open their doors to Western trade on Western terms the military option now appeared
absolutely justified. As King William II of the Netherlands wrote to the Japanese emperor
in 1844 in friendly advise to accommodate Western demands, “lest happy Japan be
destroyed by war.”219 Although the US never gave accolade to British aggression against
China, and often railed against it, they knew that Britain would not hesitate to use the
means of its military for commercial and hegemonic ends. This is best reflected in
Cushing’s letter to President Tyler immediately after the Opium War warning of British
hegemony in the Pacific.220 Furthermore, now that China had been “thrown open for the
enterprise of Americans,” as US Congressman Zadoc Pratt put it the year after the treaty

220 See page 59 above.
was signed—a precedent had been set in the minds of Americans for the rest of East Asia to enter into the Western world of trade and commerce. Americans and Europeans looked eagerly to increase commerce with other Asian countries “long barricaded against commercial intercourse or diplomatic relations.” “The day and the hour’ have now arrived,” Pratt read before the House, “for turning the enterprise of our merchants and seamen into the harbors and markets of those long-secluded countries.” Indeed, for politicians like Pratt, “there is much reason for believing that a judicious embassy, characterized by the justice which should ever sway our government, will succeed in establishing intercourse with Japan and Corea that may be largely beneficial to the American people.”

It is no coincidence then that Cushing recommended sailing to Japan and negotiating a treaty there after completing discussions with China. Cushing pointed out the necessity of Japan in the US spatial order in his letter to President Tyler dated December 27, 1842. After warning of the British threat in the Pacific should they seize Japan, Cushing recommended taking the initiative and opening Japan first. Cushing’s instructions for the China mission make no reference to Japan, however, and when he sailed in the summer of 1843, the Tyler administration had made no official declarations on a Japan policy. We may surmise that the reason for the omission of the Japan mission by Cushing himself in the final instructions was due to political necessity and the danger of the heavily partisan congress getting held up in debate not just about China but the necessity of other unproven East Asian markets. We find, therefore, Cushing’s

222 Cushing to Tyler, Dec 27, 1842, Caleb Cushing Papers, box 35.
authorization to head to Japan after China in a secret letter dated August 15, 1844 from
the Secretary of State. With Cushing already in East Asia, the administration bypassed
the congress—which had completely abandoned President Tyler—to give Cushing “a full
power to treat with the Japanese authorities...in accordance with your desire.”223 Cushing
had left Asian waters long before the instructions had reached him in Hong Kong,
however, and he never made it to Japan.

Despite this failure due to communications, the American government looked to
use the mission to East Asian waters for the purpose of exchanging treaty ratifications
with China as a convenient mission to attempt negotiations with Japan. To this end
Congressman Pratt proposed before his House colleagues in February 1845 a mission to
Japan and Korea:

“Whereas it is important to the general interests of the United States that steady and
persevering efforts should be made for the extension of American commerce, connected
as that commerce is with the agriculture and manufacturers of our country: be it therefore

“Resolved, That in furtherance of this object, it is hereby recommended that immediate
measures be taken for effecting commercial arrangements with the empire of Japan...Little as we
know of Japan, in comparison with our knowledge of other countries, we know enough of it to
render us desirous of a closer acquaintance...

“Another year will not elapse before the American people will be able to rejoice in the
knowledge that the “star-spangled banner” is recognized as an ample passport and protection for
all who, of our enterprising countrymen, may be engaged in extending American commerce into

Meriwether, William Edwin Hemphill, and Clyde Norman Wilson (Columbia: University of South Carolina,
1959), v. 19, p. 589.
the countries to which it is now proposed to dispatch suitable diplomatic and commercial agents on behalf of our governments.”

Later that spring, Secretary of State James Buchanan instructed his commissioner bound for China, Alexander Everett, to negotiate a treaty with Japan. “Should the opportunity arise of effecting such an arrangement,” Buchanan wrote referencing Cushing’s desires over Japan, Everett had full powers to negotiate a treaty with Japan. And Navy Secretary George Bancroft instructed Commodore Biddle, who was assigned to carry Everett to the East to lend his squadron to the new commissioner’s disposal for such a purpose. In the event that Everett should “decline to [proceed to Japan], you may yourself, if you see fit, persevere in the design...” Everett did decide against sailing to Japan, and Biddle’s instructions did not give him full command of the expedition, nor the means to exercise his own judgment or means to handle the situation. This effectively constrained the Biddle’s mission to Japan, so that when he sailed into the Edo bay in 1846—without the accomplice of Everett—he not only failed to land or discuss trade terms, but was also physically insulted by a Japanese sailor.

Such rejection did not discourage the US, however. Eighteen months later, the Navy sent Commodore Glynn to Japan in order to secure the safe release of a number of American sailors that had been shipwrecked on the coast of Japan. Glynn had no

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226 Bancroft to Biddle, May 22, 1845, Senate Executive Document 59:32-1, p. 64.
authority to discuss treaties or trade with the Japanese, but his presence in those waters, and his forcing of the Japanese to enter into negotiations over American sailors being held by Japanese authorities, did push Japan into a type of informal diplomacy with the US. The mission was ordered by and undertaken completely by the Navy out of reports on Americans being held captive in Japan. The congress was not informed until three years later, and the overriding concern in Glynn’s reports and letters from his expedition is that of naval intelligence. Glynn devoted almost half of his fifty-page report on the expedition to accounts of Japan and its waters by shipwrecked sailors. The expedition brought the importance of the geographical position of Japan to Glynn’s attention, and he wrote to the New York merchants Howland and Aspinwall upon his return to American waters on the necessity to use Japan as a weigh station to tap the Pacific market.

“Gentlemen [Glynn wrote]: During the two years just past [1848-1850], I have been constantly cruising about the North Pacific Ocean, and have visited nearly every port of every commercial importance upon its eastern or western shore. In all these places, not even excepting the excluded territories of Japan, I have found the strongest interest existing on the prospect of establishing a line of steamers between Asia and America...If I read the signs aright, this is the time for action. Our country, the whole world is impatient to secure the arrangement, and will be willing to grant liberal terms to whoever will undertake to complete them. The prize is too great to remain long in view without exciting competition, and he who moves first will stand the best chance of being victorious in the race.”

It was a race for the control of East Asia and the dominance of the region through treaties, influence, coaling stations, and steam. A race against Britain and Russia.

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228 S. Ex. Doc. 59:32-1, p. 6-57
For Americans, the race was on. In the late 1840s, American newspapers, magazines, and journals began a systematic campaign reflective of the American sentiment to throw open Japan to the commerce of the world. A debate about the US relationship to Japan arose in all corners of the nation, and was taken up again and again in the country’s largest papers. And once the US government had sent a squadron to the Japan seas to request and negotiate a treaty, the domestic press followed events closely. As The Farmers’ Cabinet journal put it in a front page article in 1849 entitled “Japan”: “Public attention is now turned towards the empire of Japan, which has so long remained a sealed book in the history of the world.”

Many of the early articles on the subject devote space to general interest about Japan, informing their readers of the practices and history of the country. The Christian Advocate and Journal, for example, ran an article in the fall of 1849 detailing the history of Japan, the government, and previous attempts to open trade. The Semi-Weekly Eagle wrote in a brief note, “The Island of Japan is said to be the only country where a change in the fashion of dress has not occurred during a period of two thousand five hundred years.” The Farmers’ Cabinet took a particular interest in all aspects of the country and

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its people, publishing numerous articles each month over the years on everything from Japanese literature, to flower arrangement, to religion.\textsuperscript{233}

RIVALS TO THE US: BRITAIN VS. JAPAN

The American public debate arose in response to that being conducted in Britain. The British media had begun a campaign in the late 1840s to convince the government to take action and open Japan. The issue was championed in London by the \textit{Morning Chronicle}, which prevailed on the British government to send a commercial mission to Japan to negotiate a treaty. In a leading article, the \textit{Morning Chronicle} laid out the necessity for a mission and how to go about organizing it. Two days later other papers took up the debate, and soon a proliferation of articles devoted to the subject blossomed, investigating and developing the means by which a mission should occur and how it could meet success. The leading papers in India, Singapore and Hong Kong subsequently took up the issue so that such a clamor sounded throughout the British Empire that by 1850 the English \textit{United Service Magazine} would write, “it now remains therefore for Great Britain to make her appearance in a becoming manner on the scene.”\textsuperscript{234}

The \textit{United Service Magazine} brought the fervor in Britain over Japan to an articulated height in early 1850. In an eight-page article the magazine laid out a proof of

\textsuperscript{233} See for example \textit{The Farmers’ Cabinet}, Nov 19, 1851, v. 50, n. 15, p. 2; \textit{The Farmers’ Cabinet}, Oct 15, 1851, v. 50, n. 10, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{234} Reference to British papers and quote in “Commercial Mission to Japan,” \textit{Littell’s Living Age}, v. 25, April, May, June, 1850, p. 550.
why Japan should be opened and the benefits that it would bring to Britain. This sole article is worth investigating in detail for it was picked up by the American journal *Littell’s Living Age* in the spring of 1850, and many of its arguments reappear throughout the American press and in the justification of policy by US politicians.

Linking commerce with human freedom and natural rights, the *United Service Magazine* opened its article with the argument with the maxim that Japan has not the right to isolate itself from the rest of the world. In the same tone and language that the US journals, the *Democratic Review* and the *American Whig Review*, would take up two years later, the *United Service Magazine* set forth the laws of nature which forebade the inhabitants of one part of the world to shut themselves away from another part and refuse to interact socially or economically with others. Those that do as much live in an unnatural state and ought to be corrected. “We are fully persuaded that the Japanese government had no right to sever the link of commerce which bound it to the rest of the world.” In the view of this journal, therefore, it was the duty of Britain, therefore, to bring enlightenment of the natural ways of the world to those uneducated in these manners, “with a cordon of steam and fire” if necessary.235

The markets of Japan beckoned. Rich in natural resources and possessing a population of consumers for British manufacturing goods, trade with Japan could only be advantageous to Britain. The gold mines were prophesized to be another California in scale, the copper supplies inexhaustible, and silver and iron produced in abundance. The picture here painted of Japan was one of riches waiting to be tapped. It was a land with

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the best silk and tea, and the “finest rice in Asia.” Indeed, for the United Service Magazine, “our object being to convince the manufacturing and commercial classes of Great Britain that a vast and wealthy market might immediately be thrown open to their goods, could they be persuaded to bestir themselves, and exert that legitimate influence, which they obviously possess, on the proceedings of ministers.” To this end, they portrayed a Japanese market rich in resources and desirous of British manufacturing goods.

Strategically, Japan held the key to China and control in the region, the magazine argued. Preying on the desires of the Old China Hands, the article reasoned that by securing a base near China it would lead necessarily to further engagement and influence in that great market and pave the way for possession of China. As such this would secure the region for Great Britain. “China must one day be ours,” the article said, “in which case Japan would almost necessarily follow. But were its possession to precede that of China, the inversion of circumstances might be highly advantageous, because, in the language of Archimedes, this conquest would be securing to ourselves a point on which to plant our lever for moving the whole mass of Eastern Asia.” For the United Service Magazine the time to act is in the present, for other Western power designs on the island could snatch it away cutting Britain out of this important market and strategic stronghold. In conclusion, they write in the last paragraph,

“The privilege of clothing forty millions of people may be secured to the merchants and manufacturers of this country, if they will at once exert themselves and induce our government to

236 Ibid., 552-3, 554:1.
take the lead in throwing open Japan to the trade of the civilized world. What has already been
done by America and France is sufficient to show that if we remain negligent much longer, others
will, eventually, snatch the honor, and much too of the profit, out of our hands; since it is
impossible to doubt that the nation which shall be first in the field will enjoy many advantages
over those that come after.”\textsuperscript{237}

Such views were not obscure, but in fact characteristic of a portion of the British
public. Such debate swirled in Britain at this time. In the summer of that same year
(1850)—less than twelve months before US Secretary of State Daniel Webster’s directive
to send a mission—the English journal \textit{Albion} ran an article entitled “Embassy to Japan,”
in which it made the case of the necessity for Britain to open Japan and to act
immediately. Commercially, the article noted the riches in minerals, particularly gold, as
well as the textile market. Strategically, the journal argued,

“Japan bears somewhat the same relation to the rest of Asia as Great Britain does to the European
continent...Should Japan become open to us, the frequent navigators of those seas would create
for us a line of ports from one extremity of the Archipelago to the other, up along the kingdom of
Siam, and Cochin China, to the coasts of the Celestial Empire, as far as Japan. Thus from
Singapore and Sarawak to Nangasaki and Yeddo, markets would be opened fro the disposal of
our merchandise, and incalculable stores of wealth be returned to the home producer.”\textsuperscript{238}

With British presence in the region on the rise, and its power having been flexed in
China, India and Greece, the journal called for a mission at the present time. It is the
government’s duty, the article said, to facilitate its merchants’ commerce, especially at a

\textsuperscript{237} Ibid., 555:1-2.
\textsuperscript{238} “Embassy to Japan,” \textit{Albion}, Jul 20, 1850, v. 9, n. 29, p. 340:2.
time when overproduction hampered industrial growth. But more so, “If we allow the Russians, or Americans, or any of the nations, who are eager to gain admission into these territories, to anticipate us, we shall find a stronger monopoly effected, and the system of seclusion much more rigidly maintained.”\textsuperscript{239} In this way, the rivalry spread both ways, and as the Americans feared the British, so to did the British view themselves in the race for Japan.

British East Asia colonial operations and network brought merchants and officers into contact with Japan. Like the Americans, a strong will arose to open the country and exploit the prophesized lucrative trade. In 1808, in the midst of the Napoleonic Wars, the British attempted a hostile takeover of their European rival’s trading operations, the Dutch in Nagasaki. Having seized the Dutch territory of Java some years earlier, the British also looked to take over the Japan trade and establish a permanent British foothold in the North Pacific. This attempt failed, but the British governor-general in Batavia sent two more missions in 1813 and 1814, which resulted in an agreement in which the Dutch would act as middlemen in securing Japanese goods (mainly copper ore) and the British selling it on the world market. This deal ceased with the end of the Napoleonic wars and the Dutch regained full command of their meager trade monopoly.\textsuperscript{240} British interest in Japan lulled while its China hands clamored to open the China market and the government took action there. But the Anglo-American rivalry intensified and word of the US mission to Japan by Commodore Biddle reached the intelligence of British

\textsuperscript{239} Ibid., 340:3.
\textsuperscript{240} Perry, Hawks, and Wallach, \textit{Narrative}, 43-44.
superintendent of trade and Governor of Hong Kong, Sir John Davis, in December 1845. Davis reported this intelligence back to the Foreign Office in London and was approved to undertake a secret mission to Japan. The British mission was postponed indefinitely, however, due to the inability to raise a large enough force to match the US mission. Furthermore, continuing squabbles with China over treaty interpretations kept British attention in the Far East focused on the continent.\textsuperscript{241}

With the Foreign Office occupied pursuing treaty negotiations with China and fending off merchant cries to occupy the country,\textsuperscript{242} the British government could devote little attention to preparing an expedition to move against Japan at this time. When the Perry mission sailed, however, the British government kept careful watch, and the foreign secretary was urged in private correspondence to forestall the US in Japan lest Britain lose its Pacific markets. The US expedition was followed closely in the British newspaper in China, \textit{The China Mail}, which was quoted in the Indian papers. Other British papers such as \textit{The Times} covered the expedition, and \textit{Bentley’s Miscellany} leveled strong criticisms. John Bowring, the British superintendent of trade in Hong Kong in the early 1850s, reported back to London on the mission. Indeed, when the Russian minister in London told the Foreign Office that they were to send an admiral into the Pacific to keep an eye on Perry, Foreign Secretary Malmesbury instructed Bowring to assist the Russians in any way.\textsuperscript{243}

\textsuperscript{241} See Beasley, \textit{Great Britain and the Opening of Japan}, 57, 59, 70, 196.
\textsuperscript{242} See Pelcovits, \textit{Old China Hands and the Foreign Office}.
\textsuperscript{243} See Beasley, \textit{Great Britain and the Opening of Japan}, 89-93. According to Beasley’s analysis, however, the British welcomed American attempts to open Japan to international commerce out of the understanding that it would, in the end, be beneficial to British commercial interests.
RIVALS TO THE US: RUSSIA VS. JAPAN

Russia posed a similar threat to US designs of spatial order and regional hegemony. Moving east across Siberia, Russians attempted to access Japan and the Pacific from the north. Russian territory already stretched to the North Pacific, which posed a particularly dire threat to the US. As Hawks wrote:

“There is no power in the other hemisphere to which the possession of Japan, or the control of the affairs, is as important as it is to Russia. She is on one side of the islands, the United States on the other. The Pacific ocean is destined to be the theatre of immense commercial undertakings...with such harbors on the Pacific as Japan would give her, she might hope to become the controlling maritime power of the world.”244

This passage reflects the spatial order Americans saw themselves attempting to create and the outside threats that other Western powers posed to its construction. Russia on one side of the Pacific not only necessarily limited the boundaries of American geographical reach, but also presented the specter of rivalry. Should Russia control the markets and access of the East it would, in the words of Hawks, “make her unrivalled in the world for excellency, and with her resources would control the commerce of the Pacific.” Indeed, Hawks wrote, Russia, like the US, aimed “to be a great maritime power, and to rule as mistress of the Pacific.” This would hem in American ambitions, not the least so due to the possibility of land appropriation and market monopolization, canceling all other

244 Perry, Hawks, and Wallach, Narrative, 62.
claims to East Asia and its riches. "It is not, therefore," Hawks wrote in the righteous manner Americans were coming to see themselves as the upholders of freedom and trade, "the interest of any part of the commercial world that Russia should ever own Japan." 245

From the Russian perspective, access to the North Pacific and regional markets would give the growing empire a source of wealth not just in the local trade but would also terrestrially connect Europe with Asia. Throughout the eighteenth century, Russia had made numerous unsuccessful attempts to find a year-round route to Japan and the North Pacific. At one point in the 1770s, it formed an agreement with Japan in the north to trade on the northern islands but frozen weather constantly thwarted such ambitions. By the nineteenth century with the growth of British and American merchant and naval activity in East Asia, Russia saw that it had to assert itself more forcefully in the region lest lose out in markets and influence. Having watched Britain take the initiative in China and American merchants gain a stronger foothold in that market, Russia could not allow either the US nor Britain to gain as much influence in Japan as they did in China and moved accordingly to outdo the Perry mission and attempted to open Japan first. On October 19, 1852 the Russian expedition sailed in attempt to beat the US to Japan. They arrived in the fall of 1853, right after Perry had paid his first visit and gave Japan the ultimatum. 246 Having failed to beat Perry to Japan, the Russians actually succeeded in inciting the American Commodore to move quicker to press for and conclude treaty negotiations lest the Russians "interfere very seriously with my operation," Perry wrote

245 Ibid., 45.
246 See Lensen, The Russian Push toward Japan.
in his journal. Hawks reemphasized this point: "The Commodore, suspecting that the Russians contemplated the design of returning to Japan and of ultimately going to Yedo, which might seriously interfere with his operations...induced him to alter his plans." So Perry sailed sooner rather than later, and Russia ended up negotiating and signing a treaty with Japan a year later (1855), opening three ports to Russian trade.

The US government had taken a peripheral interest in Japan early on, which then evolved into a mini-crisis as competition to be the first to open the closed country intensified. In the early nineteenth century Americans went forth and sought new markets and moved towards facilitation of greater access and penetration of the China market. Japan being closed to American traders, came under US scrutiny as a target for government intervention in order to guarantee access for its merchants and establish holds in the Pacific trade. Cushing put Japan in perspective of the forming US spatial order when he advised President Tyler to secure treaties with both China and Japan on the same expedition, thus solidifying American interests in the Pacific and preempting perceived British designs on the region. Although Cushing and his immediate successor failed to travel to Japan and carry out the proposed negotiations, the importance of Japan began to overtake Americans. The island as a strategic post in the large American vision of the spatial order of the earth grew in stature.

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249 See Lensen, *The Russian Push toward Japan*, 337.
DESPATCHING THE PERRY MISSION

European interests in Japan created an immediacy for Americans to open the country. Both Britain and Russia had designs on the island for many of the same reasons as did the US. What is of utmost concern is the perception this created in the US and how this perception influenced the decision to send a mission to Japan at a certain time. The debate in Britain became a burning public cry in the late 1840s as the media began to demand action by the government. This public debate informed the policy circles which did discuss the matter amongst themselves and watched the American mission closely. The US remained absolutely aware of the growing sentiment in Britain, which did create the ultimate urgency to act. In many ways the race had intensified and much more was at stake in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Likewise, Russian movements on Japan and actions in the North Pacific were threatening, forcing Perry to change his schedule, if not also have some responsibility in the reasons for dispatching Perry in the first place.

When the United States government made the decision to dispatch a naval mission to Japan with diplomatic objectives, all of the factors explored above mattered. A general consensus had formed in American on Japan and the action needed to be taken by the US government. From all sides of the debate—merchants, whalers, transportation investors, politicians, the Navy—voices pointed to the necessity for one reason or another to open Japan to American commerce and interaction by entering into direct diplomatic relations with that country. Those in commerce viewed Japan as a ripe market waiting to buy American products and offer the US goods of the Orient. They made their case to their political representatives, in the media, and contributed to press for a formal treaty
guaranteeing free commerce and free trade. The whalers prowling the North Pacific for their prey needed ports of refuge to refuel and repair, which few other lands beside Japan could offer. Furthermore, frequent shipwrecks off the coast washed many Americans to Japanese shores, whose safe return was demanded. Those in the transportation business joined forces with Naval reformers and pushed the case of steam routes in the Pacific. These steam lines would need a refueling station on their way to China, and Japan would fulfill this role with the appropriate resources and its geographical position. The threat that another Western power would achieve the prize first and set the wider world’s terms of interaction with Japan threatened the US and its interests. All these points were increasingly brought to the public’s attention through the general discourse as it appeared in the halls of Congress to the nations periodicals.

In this manner, no single reason arises as the answer to why the US government decided to send a mission to Japan. Rather a myriad of voices, interests and concerns, converging into a general discourse to negotiate a treaty and throw open the country to free trade with America fueled the decision to open Japan. Historians have attempted to analyze the words of President Fillmore or the instructions to Commodore Perry to find motive and desire for the motion to embark on a mission and bring the Japanese government into diplomatic relations with the US. They have attempted to pin motives on economic concerns and the Pacific market, treating Japan as an isolated entity in itself in relation to American desires, and the event that brought the US to its shores in 1853 as an alienated time in America’s broader history. Historians have sought a single truth to explain the Perry expedition, emphasizing one reason and dismissing others. In doing so
they have missed the larger picture of the broad debate occurring in America at that time. Not one reason framed that debate but many and all reasons.

What all these reasons did have in common was a discourse within the context of an American world order. Trade was discussed in moral terms; as a natural right, which no government or ruler ought to be able to restrict. Only when all men could interact freely with each other sans the intervention of an intervening body could men truly be free and all people benefit. This argument was pursued with the righteousness of empire and without the consideration of other peoples or other systems of social existence. The universal stood on their side and the power of the American economy would win the right of nature. The advocates of steam and a Japanese coaling station had redrawn the spatial order of the earth and extended lines outwards through which the US would seize control. Japan, although discussed in a micro context of a Pacific steam line, fit into a new world order emanating from the American continent. Control the Pacific and control the world, was their motto. The rivalry with Britain in Japan was but an extension of the global battle being fought to resituate the order of the earth; to move the center of the world from Europe to America. The two powers were engaged in a competition for markets and influence of the world, taking colonies or establishing spheres of influence. Japan was seen in the context not as a single entity in Asia, but as a link in a global chain of commerce, influence, and control.

Thus, when the crescendo of the cacophony of cries converged into a widespread and high pitched harmonious demand, the time had arrived when those in power would come to make the decision to enact a policy. On May 9, 1851, Secretary of State Daniel
Webster wrote to Navy Secretary William Graham revealing intentions to send a mission to Japan and requesting the necessary armada. The next day Webster drafted the president’s letter to the Emperor of Japan requesting official relations, and within a month he had written the instructions for the mission. Although an expedition would not sail for another fourteen months due to logistic complications and the removal of the original commanding commodore for legal breaches, the policy was born and the US committed.

We lack any unofficial correspondence surrounding this decision, which could give us insight into the mechanism of making the policy. However, the timing of this official correspondence corresponds with a number of well-placed letters to high officials and those with access and influence to those in power. In this manner, the impetus to act was heightened. Foremost was an awareness by Americans of the increasing British cry to act in Japan. As noted above the British press began a campaign to press the case to open Japan, which the American media picked up in the spring and summer of 1850. Coupled alongside the brewing debate in the US, Commodore Glynn presented the case to President Fillmore in 1851 in this way:

“Opposition may be anticipated from Europeans in China, and particularly from the English, unless measures are taken to neutralize their power. They are always jealous of our commercial

success, and they are getting alarmed at the rapid strides we are making towards the weak side of their possession in Asia."253

This international challenge to American interests weighed constantly on the minds of policy makers and it is no surprise to find the Anglo-American rivalry as a key consideration in the decision to open Japan.

In early 1851 the push for a mission to Japan had begun in earnest, and the use of force if necessary would not be ruled out, as the letters among those in positions to carry out such a policy exhibit. In late January Perry wrote to Navy Secretary Graham in great detail on how to carry out such an expedition. His letter opened with the perplexing paragraph on what the mission was actually about: "The real object of the expedition should be concealed from public view, under a general understanding, that its main purpose will be to examine the usual resorts of our whaling ships, with special reference to their protection, and the opening to them of new ports of refuge and refreshment."254 Perry continued about how to succeed in achieving this goal where others had failed, including the use of force.

"With respect to the force necessary to insure success to the enterprise so far as success can be commanded, four armed vessels would be required, three first class steamers, and a sloop of war...the squadron should suddenly appear, and then demand, upon the just grounds of public utility and the rights of nations; free access to one, or both of them, to American vessels, for refreshment and repair."255

253 Glynn to Fillmore, June 10, 1851, S. Ex. Doc. 59:32-1, p. 75.
254 Perry to Graham, Jan. 1851, Graham, Papers, v. 4, p.16. Perry never divulged what was the "real object," but we may deduce from his push for a steam navy and his later writings on Pacific geography and strategy that Perry was plugged into the broad goals of US position in the world.
255 Perry to Graham, Jan. 1851, Ibid., v. 4, p.19, 17.
Perry recommended that the expedition “should be strictly naval, untrammeled by the interference of diplomatic agents.” In a like manner Perry’s naval colleague, Commodore Glynn had written to the New York merchants Howland and Aspinwall, who were connected to Webster, telling them of his recent travels to Japan to rescue shipwrecked sailors. He discussed the desire to throw open Japanese ports to refuge and commerce in integral link to the system of American interaction with East Asia. “We want accommodations for fuel, and a depot for our steamers; we have a good cause of a quarrel, and as I told the Japanese officer who received my demand, ‘they have no friends in the wide world,’” Glynn wrote. He continued in hypothesizing the stubbornness of the Japanese in refusing to open their shores, in which case “make them; we could convert their selfish government into a liberal republic in a short time; such an unnatural system would at the present day fall to pieces upon the slightest concussion.” We have no records of whether this correspondence reached Webster (although Howland and Aspinwall did get the contract to supply coal for the expedition). However, another merchant, Aaron Palmer had written to President Fillmore in January 1851 making a similar case: “The government of that country [i.e. Japan] must, ere long, be compelled, by the force of circumstances, and especially by the presence of our people on the Pacific, to succumb to the progressive commercial spirit of the age.”

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256 Perry to Graham, Jan. 1851, Ibid., v. 4, p. 20.
258 Palmer to Fillmore, Jan 6, 1851, Palmer, Documents and Facts, 19.
debates on trade, steam, international rivalry and these correspondences, the decision to send a mission was made.

In this manner, agency cannot be assigned to one individual or even a few men. Ultimately it was the decision of the President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Navy, to be sure, but not by circumstances of their own choosing. The decision converged from all corners and forced itself upon those in the position to legislate. When Webster and Fillmore enacted the policy in mid-1851, they did so not as individuals with independent desires, but as social entities operating within spheres of diverse interests intersecting over the issue of Japan. By the time Webster wrote to Graham, the country had already taken such an acute interest in the prospect of opening Japan, of Japan's importance for the proposed steam line, and its utility in building the American spatial order of the earth, that the motivation could not rest in the hands of any one or two individuals. The discourse only needed to be institutionalized, and when the tone reached a pitch high enough in 1851 those in power would do so.

259 It is interesting to note that Webster, the individual assigned key agency by historians, died before the expedition sailed. His ill health and then death did nothing to derail preparation and execution.
CONCLUSION

In 1859, the British attempted to sail up the Beihe River to Beijing with the aim of exchanging ratifications of the new Anglo-Chinese treaty, which was renegotiated the year before. Having given them permission to travel to Beijing by land but not by water, the Chinese saw the British move up the river as an assault and attacked the British ships as they attempted to break a blockade the Chinese had erected. The Chinese opened fire with surprising accuracy, killing 434 British sailors, sinking four vessels, and severely wounding the British Admiral. Watching the onslaught from anchor just off the coast was the American commander of the East India station, Josiah Tattnall. Although he had strict instructions to remain neutral throughout the Anglo-Chinese negotiations and any hostilities that might ensue, he went to the aid of the British under fire crying as justification of his disobedience: “Blood is thicker than water.”

Tattnall’s utterance achieved international fame almost immediately. President Buchanan confirmed Tattnall’s breach of neutrality, and upon receiving a formal expression of appreciation from London for Tattnall’s help in China, commended the captain for his acts and bravery. His action also won him life long friends among Her Majesty’s Navy. Later in life, when Tattnall came into financial need, British servicemen put together a fund to aid the American captain.

Historians have drawn on this event to exhibit the close and cooperative relationship between the powers in East Asia. Dennett devoted an entire chapter section to Tattnall’s role in the second Opium War, giving the individual American’s aid representative primacy in the relationship between Britain and the US in China. And other historians followed Dennett’s lead to use Tattnall’s words and actions as the demarcating character of Anglo-American relations. From this individual’s temporal role historians have defined an age and a relationship, moving backwards and forwards in time from that moment on June 25, 1859 to blanket American involvement in East Asia for all of the nineteenth century as one of ambivalence and cooperation. This single instance of expressed cooperation between Americans and English operating in China, is no more than that, an aberration from the animosity between the two Western powers in China that preceded it, and the reflection of interests in America that had begun to operate outside of the Pacific theater.

Indeed, missing from this interpretation of Tattnall’s actions and words in June of 1859, is an understanding of how the men of the times viewed the world. By focusing on

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these five words, the color of Tattnall’s character has not only been ignored, but also the entirety of the statement left out. In view of who Tattnall really was and the entirety of what he really said, the American aid to the British under fire appears less as a shining moment of a policy of cooperation and more like the racist reaction of American Southerners on the eve of a nation about to be torn asunder over the issue of slavery. From the person of Josiah Tattnall the second nomos of race appears alongside that of markets.

Captain Josiah Tattnall was a southern estate owner who had deep ties to England. Both his parents were of English stock, and his father’s family were loyalists during the Revolutionary war and moved to England in the midst of the fighting. His father returned to the US in 1780 and later served as a member of the Georgia legislature; was elected to the US Senate representing Georgia in 1796, and went on to become the governor of Georgia in 1800. Josiah Tattnall was born in 1795 and sent to England when he was six to be educated under the care of his grandparents. He returned to the US in 1811 and joined the Navy in 1812, though saw little action against the British in the war of that year. Tattnall had a rather distinguished naval career seeing action in the Mexican war and later being promoted to the rank of captain. In 1857 he was appointed commander of the East India station, but resigned that post and his commission as a US navy captain in 1861. His loyalties remained with his home state of Georgia, which honored him numerous times for his service throughout his career. During the Civil War, Tattnall became a senior flag officer of the Georgia Navy, and then later a captain in the Confederate Navy, commanding the defense of Georgia and South Carolina. In June

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1866, following the defeat of the Confederacy, Tattnall joined the exodus of southern patriots to Canada.262

This brief biographical sketch of Tattnall is meant to point to the motivations behind his words and actions in China in 1859, which gainsay not only his instructions, but also the US policy that the preceding pages have laid forth. If it is the case that US East Asia policy formulated around a rivalry with Britain for the China market, as this thesis has argued, and that Americans entertained open hostility against the English in their own quest to steal the markets of the world from them, then how are we to understand this supposed example of cooperation that historians have seized upon as an explanation for all the nineteenth century? Given his background there is nothing to betray any Anglophobia in Tattnall’s sentiments. On the contrary everything indicates that he was not of the same mind as many of his contemporaries and possessed a rather favorable bearing towards Britain. His family were loyalists, he was educated in England, he served in the Confederate Navy and received the assistance of the British Navy in the war against the north, and upon defeat he moved to British Canada. This is not to say that Tattnall shunned his loyalty to America—for he served a long and distinguished naval career—but rather that the hatred and animosity of Britain that enveloped a man like Caleb Cushing did not burn in the breast of Captain Tattnall, and he would have had no qualms about assisting the white British men in a battle against the yellow Chinese.

Tattnall likely put race before national rivalry. He was the owner of a large estate outside of Savannah Georgia, and more than likely owned slaves. Furthermore, he served on the side of the Civil War that fought for the right to continue to enslave men based on the color of their skin. The hypothesis of racial motivation in Tattnall’s actions on June 25, 1859 off the coast of northern China gets further support when we examine the entirety of the account of Tattnall’s command in China. In May 1858, the American East India squadron under Tattnall anchored in Hong Kong next to the British warship Chesapeake, which was named after an American frigate destroyed by the British in the War of 1812. Having been granted twenty-four hours shore leave, the American crew, taking offense at British hubris, promptly insulted British sailors and ignited a tempestuous brawl that lasted for most of the day. Rear Admiral Stephen Decatur Trenchard recorded in his diary that “for some months after that it got to be quite the proper thing to thrash an English sailor on sight.” Here we find confirmation of the continuing animosity between the Americans and English in China. The assumed cooperation and geniality emphasized in the scholarship on this period is not found in the character of the men of the times, and in fact conversely reflected by their Anglophobic action. Admiral Trenchard’s recording of the blood-is-thicker-than-water incident shows that Tattnall was motivated not by an Anglo-American union or agreement to exploit China, but rather the march of the White man and Western civilization. As Trenchard wrote in his diary, Tattnall exclaimed, “‘Blood is thicker than water’ and that ‘He’d be damned if he’d stand by and see white men butchered before his eyes. No sir; old Tattnall isn’t that kind, sir. This is the cause of humanity. Is that boat ready? Tell the men there is
no need of side-arms." In this comprehensive context, Tattnall's comments appear racially motivated. His blood-is-thicker-than-water remark refers not to the Anglo-American bond, but the community of white men, which took superior precedence over other races in times of crisis.

In this regard Tattnall was not unique. The new minister to China, John Ward, also a Georgia southerner, supported Tattnall, and President Buchanan, a Democrat whose support came from the south, sustained him. While the prejudices of these American southerners were amplified by such acts, the idea of racial superiority was not confined to southerners or a few individuals. US East Asia policy balanced the ideals of freedom and the contradictions of race. The ideological justification for American involvement in East Asia was to keep the British from colonizing and enslaving populations. Americans talked of the service they would do—and claimed that they did do—for China and Japan by checking British monopoly and imperial expansion; that through US treaties and presence the peoples of East Asia would reap the benefits of civilization on their own terms through free trade and commerce. Such arguments were taken to the most articulate degree by the journals of the two American political parties in 1852, which both argued for the need of opening Japan to the commerce of the world, and the great benefits the Japanese would gain alongside all of humanity. While Britain and Europe served as the scourge of all civilization and the depredation of society and morality, America represented the freedom of man and the naturalness of society—the

263 Quoted in Maclay, "New Light on the 'Blood Is Thicker Than Water' Episode," 1093, 1100. Dennett mentioned the second quote in a footnote, but uses it to explain the nature of the statement about blood and water, rather than why Tattnall aided the British. For Dennett, Tattnall’s motivation for action was still Anglo-American cooperation. Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia, 340f.
pure state of humanity. Yet at the same time, Americans subjugated peoples of non-European descent and created racial justifications to impose American order and interests upon others whose skin was of a color other than white. Tatnall's famous utterance, therefore, is not, as historians have long held, a declaration of a bond between the US and Britain in East Asia, but rather the expression of the other side of American foreign policy, that of racial subjugation in order to impose a world order in their own image.

Such an expression was very much part of the order Americans built. I have argued that US China and East Asia policy grew out of a conception of a new spatial order of the earth, and was impelled by the rivalry with Great Britain. But it must be made clear that the Anglo-American rivalry in East Asia did not facilitate a Sino-American friendship. As the Western powers competed amongst themselves for the markets of the East Asia, they did so at the expense of Asian countries, attempting to impose their own terms, distinct from their competitor’s, upon China and Japan. For Americans, these were peoples not deserving of the land, resources, or markets they possessed, but must be made to yield them to Americans who, by virtue of their civil and racial superiority, knew what was best. The term “special relationship” is often invoked to explain Sino-US relations in the nineteenth century. The benevolent image of the US promoting amiable relations with China while avoiding hostilities must be replaced with one of the US moving to bring China and all of East Asia into its world order as it attempted to outdo the British in the quest for markets and influence.
The US formulated an East Asia policy in the first half of the nineteenth century, which centered on accessing the China market, and which was motivated by a rivalry with Great Britain not cooperation based on the principle that “blood is thicker than water.” Contrary to standard interpretations, US China policy did not acquiesce to British policy, nor did it follow in the British wake, or evolve solely from growing trade with China. Rather, official US China policy developed in reaction to the threat of British monopolization of East Asian markets. Americans had indeed long held a fascination with the China market, believing that there lay the keys to the riches of world trade, and that America, straddled between Europe and Asia, stood as the doorway to this trade. As trade increased and the American economy grew, China became an important market, but still the US government took no action to establish formal relations. Even at the request of its merchants’ and trade officials for involvement and diplomatic representation, the US government stood silent. Not until Britain used military force to press the Chinese government into signing a treaty and open more markets did the US government act. This action was not, however, just a matter of the US taking advantage of an opportunity provided by the British victory. Rather, fearful that Great Britain, their rival for the world’s markets, would establish itself in China and completely monopolize Pacific trade, the US government hastily assembled a mission to China to be led by Caleb Cushing, the ardent Anglophobe, to secure similar trade advantages for the United States.

It was under these circumstances that the United States government came to establish an independent China policy that had remained unspoken since the beginnings of the Republic: the penetration of and facilitation of access to the China market, over
which the US economy would rise or fall. Americans consistently saw their future as one of expansion westward to the markets of East Asia, where the riches of China could be had and the clutches of the old world discarded. The US government formed its domestic policy around this vision, and moved the nation westward in construction of a natural infrastructure to access this market. When the time came in Washington to enter into formal state-to-state relations, the US did so reluctantly and only under threat of dire economic and political consequences if it remained mute. Here we find the origins of US China policy—not at the turn of the nineteenth century—but born with the Republic and manifest in the Treaty of Wangxia.

Around this China policy grew an entire East Asia policy. In the quest to facilitate greater access to the China market, Americans sought bases, footholds, and outposts in the region. This physical presence would not only provide staging points and rest stations on the way to China, but also allow the US to keep its Western competitors in check. As steam developed, the necessity of coaling stations became a key issue and Americans turned to Japan as the possible source to provide this resource, and the US moved to impose itself upon the secluded nation. In 1854 Commodore Perry successfully negotiated a treaty with Japan, which opened the country to Western interaction and gave the US primacy in the Pacific trade.

These developments cannot be understood as isolated relations with particular states, or even as an insular regional policy. Rather, US East Asia policy was a global agenda of realizing the reconception of a new spatial order of the earth and building the institutions that would put the US at its center. By capitalizing on the China market the
US hoped to not only tap its riches and gain command of the Pacific trade, but also to control the trade of all other nations which anchored their ships in the Asian harbors. Americans envisioned the movement of goods and communication from Asia, across the Pacific, through the US, and across the Atlantic to the markets of Europe. Such a route would put the wealth of global trade into the economy of America and make New York the financial capital of the world. London would be outdone as a new spatial order of the earth emerged. Seen in this light, Caleb Cushing’s mission to China was not a minor footnote in US-China relations but the opening shot in the American quest for mastery of the globe. The East Asia policy that followed led directly to the opening of Japan and the shoring up of the Pacific trade. From here, the American nomos extended, yielding the institutions and the prowess that would build empire in a wholly new image.
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