

Who Killed King Cetshwayo? A Case Study of Ethical Foreign Policy

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E H Carr famously argued in his work *What is History?* that history is the study of causes, that events have multi-causal explanations and that there is always a hierarchy of causes rather than a randomly jumbled set of events. The role of the historian was to show the relationship between these causes and attempt to identify the single, major cause of that event, and if we take this as our starting point, it has to be said that historians of the Anglo-Zulu War have not really done very much to answer the question of who was responsible for the death of Cetshwayo, King of the Zulus. I hope, in this article, to perhaps go some way towards remedying this.

Suspects

Cetshwayo died at Eshowe on the afternoon of 8 February 1884, of heart failure. The cause of death was certified by the medical men on the spot at the time but it wasn't long before the rumour got about that he had been poisoned by his rival, the powerful leader of the Zulu *Mandlakazi* faction, Zibhebhu. Here then is our first suspect. Zibhebhu certainly had good reasons for assassinating Cetshwayo: they were involved in a bloody civil war that had erupted after the end of the Anglo-Zulu War, and it was rumoured that Cetshwayo was attempting to have him poisoned first. Furthermore, their rivalry had a long history going back before the civil war, even before the Anglo-Zulu War, right back to the battle of Ndongakusuka in 1856 when Zibhebhu's *Mandlakazi* had intervened on Cetshwayo's side to tip the victory to him in his bid to establish his claim to the succession. From that point on, Zibhebhu had considered himself Cetshwayo's virtual equal, despite submitting to him at his coronation in 1873. He had resisted Cetshwayo's centralizing tendencies and had done as much as he could to maintain his independence by protecting the access to firearms outside the royal monopoly that his position in the north of Zululand astride the routes to Delagoa Bay afforded him. He had had serious reservations about war with the British in 1878 when Cetshwayo appeared to be falling under the influence of younger warriors too eager to wash their spears but had loyally fallen into line as *induna* of the uDloko and had been wounded during the pursuit after Isandlwana and so did not take part in the battle of Rorke's Drift, but was present at the battles of Khambula and Ulundi. When Cetshwayo was captured and sent into exile, Zibhebhu was one of the first leaders to recognize the new order and set about reasserting his independence. His violent opposition to the restoration of Cetshwayo as the man who had led the Zulus into a disastrous war and who would no doubt set about reducing the power of the faction leaders if he could, when taken with everything else, certainly made him a prime suspect for the murder.

However, the despatch of Cetshwayo by poison might more profitably be seen in the light of a *coup de grace* administered long after the preconditions for his death had been established by wider political processes. In this respect it might fairly be said that the man most responsible for Cetshwayo's death was the man who destroyed his power in the first place, Sir Bartle Frere. Indeed, Norman Etherington was explicit in blaming Frere for being 'part of a conspiracy' which 'put the gun to Cetshwayo's head.' Such claims make good, sensational reading but do not represent any recognizable truth. There can be no doubt that Frere was responsible for starting the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, but equally, he was not responsible for the conditions in Zululand at its end. Frere believed that the dispute with Cetshwayo was merely the latest in a series of chronic border problems that, between his arrival at the Cape in 1877 and 1879 and which included Boers in the Transvaal, freebooters and bandits in Bechuanaland, digger republicans at Kimberley, Basutos, Xhosa and mPondo, had taxed his patience at a time when he was supposed to be preparing the defences of South Africa for a Russian war which many, Frere included, expected to break out at any moment between 1876-79. The Zulu violations of the Natal border in the southern winter of 1878 came as a last straw to him as he emerged from the Xhosa revolt of 1877-78 rather than allowing him a convenient pretext to pick a fight with Cetshwayo as has often been claimed. It is certainly true that Frere was revolted at the barbarities of Cetshwayo's rule and that he had no qualms about deposing such a tyrant, but it was his belief in the inability of Cetshwayo to prevent his warriors from engaging in raiding British or British protected peoples, which in 1878 meant

the Boers and the Swazis as well as the Natal Zulus and European settlers, that drove him to issue the ultimatum that led to the war of 1879. Even then, Cetshwayo might have kept his throne and wide powers over the Zulus if he had accepted subordination under a resident and British control of his coastlines and external relations. Frere had spent most of his career in India and the settlement he had in mind was based on those common to the Princely states in India – i.e., internal autonomy, but external dependence. The defeat at Isandlwana at the outset of the war removed Frere from both its direction and any influence over the post-war settlement and so, although we must accept that Frere was responsible for the destruction of Zulu power by war, he cannot be held directly responsible for its consequences, one of which was Cetshwayo's murder.

The next suspect must, therefore, be the man responsible for the settlement of Zululand, Sir Garnet Wolseley. To be fair, the news that Wolseley was to be entrusted with the political settlement in the Transvaal and Zululand had filled Frere with alarm.

He may make a peace to the satisfaction of the penny Press and be home by Christmas, but he will not make one to quiet South Africa for ten years...nor one that will promote Confederation, nor pay for the next war, nor secure you against having to pay for South African wars hereafter.(1)

This was not a case of sour grapes either, as he made clear a month later.

Wolseley is an old personal friend of mine and I have a very high opinion of his military ability; whether he possesses equal capacity for civil administration in countries like these or for framing settlements for Zululand or constitutions for Natal or Transvaal, you will soon be able to judge. (2)

This was a substantially sound judgement. After running Cetshwayo to ground in August 1879 without recourse to genocide, as one writer has ludicrously asserted, (3), Wolseley, acting under the influence of Theophilus Shepstone, the Natal secretary for native affairs and lately administrator of the Transvaal (until Frere sacked him for incompetence), broke up the Zulu kingdom into thirteen smaller ones in an attempt to find 'an economical and speedy peace' rather than a long-term solution. Paramount was the security of the Natal border, now that annexation had been ruled out by the government in London, reeling under the bad publicity of the defeat at Isandlwana, and as a result the Tlokwa, who had fought for the British during the war, were allocated the lands around Rorke's Drift previously in possession of the unfortunate Sihayo, whose son had provoked the British to war through his border raids. Next to him, John Dunn, Cetshwayo's British born *induna* who had defected before the war began, was given control of all the lands along the River Tugela to complete a buffer zone along the Natal border. Further north, the land was divided up among those chiefs, such as Zibhebhu, who had some reason to resist the re-imposition of a strong, centralized monarchy or who had given some form of material assistance to the British during the war. Cetshwayo was taken to Cape Town to an enforced residence, first at the castle and then on a farm on the Cape Flats next to Langalibalele, the rebel Hlubi of 1873; a comfortable exile. To maintain the settlement, Melnoth Osborn was appointed as resident in Zululand but without any armed force to make his influence potent. The consensus now, as then, is that this was a rotten settlement guaranteed only to encourage faction fighting and to prevent the possibility of a strong resident from restraining it. For the subsequent civil war, Wolseley must take his share of the blame but, in fairness, we must acquit him of murder. Cetshwayo was not in Zululand when Wolseley handed on the reins of power and the settlement that he devised was conditioned by an absolute injunction from London not to acquire any more territory, control or responsibilities in Zululand than could be avoided.

Our next suspect is, on first impression, perhaps an unlikely one: John Bright MP. The election of 1880 returned a Liberal government believing that there should be a new basis on which British foreign policy should be conducted and that the invasion of Zululand, amongst other imperial adventures, should never be allowed to happen again. The author of this new basis, Bright, was a veteran radical MP, now promoted to Cabinet rank. His basic view was that 'the moral law was not written for men alone...[but] as well for nations,' and that only by following such 'eternal principles' could greatness and happiness be achieved by a nation. Failure to do so, he claimed, would bring down God's wrath upon the nation and only expiation of past wrongs would ward off disaster. Taxation for defence and imperial purposes was 'draining the veins of the body to supply ulcers'; war was a device of those 'jackals of the desert' the international landed interest, and its prosecution no more than a 'gigantic system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy', the empire a 'showy equipage' based on no logic but pride. Bright believed that the whole foreign policy of Britain since the time of William III had been a mistake; even fighting Bonaparte had had no 'visible result'. The correct policy to follow, in his view, was to avoid any entanglement abroad and eschew war except in strictest self-defence in the firm belief

that righteous conduct would encourage (or shame) other nations into equally virtuous behaviour. Unfortunately, Bright could not conceive of another nation acting in a less ethical fashion than Britain or that rational men should choose evil over virtue or, indeed, might count the military and political virtues that he regarded as evil as very proper virtues.

Bright was, however, tapping into a developing vein of feeling within a Britain rediscovering its religious feeling. Nonconformism was a powerful and growing force at local, municipal and national level and many of its worthies were apt to find echoes of their own moral feelings within Bright's outpourings. An increasingly literate, but essentially uneducated, public opinion existed to which simplistic moral notions in foreign policy were an attractive alternative to an equally simplistic bombastic jingoism and its force was making itself felt through municipal and local institutions, and thus onto the national political scene. There was a groundswell of vague feeling that material progress might be matched by moral progress; and that the beneficial British example of thrift, trade and godliness might be extended beyond her shores; that the industrial revolution might translate eventually into a New Jerusalem of the brotherhood of man, if only Britain gave a lead.

What made Bright's alternative vision important was its partial adoption by Gladstone when, on succeeding to the leadership of the Liberal party in 1867, he fused it with his Aberdeensian inheritance of adherence to international law in the guise of the European Concert, of abandonment of the colonies, of leadership by example, of conciliation rather than coercion, of, ultimately, appeasement. Bright's basic principles of non-intervention and anti-imperialism, were accepted by the new Prime Minister, William Gladstone, with the proviso that Britain might find it necessary to intervene selectively in certain issues, but that a fund of goodwill should be built up in advance by altruistic acts to ensure success. Foreign policy was, however, never Gladstone's strong point and he had shown little aptitude for its practice. Indeed it is difficult to point to any particular issue in which his policy can be said to have been successful without defining success exclusively in Gladstone's own convoluted terms. His internationalism presaged that of Woodrow Wilson and the United Nations in its idealism and, like Wilson and others after him, he was prepared to sacrifice immediate practical advantage for theoretical future gains that were never guaranteed to materialize. That this was a potentially disastrous approach, based as it was on a 'curious ignorance of mankind, never seemed to occur to him, while his capacity to convince himself of the primacy of idealism over realpolitik was enormous. As W. Forster pointed out during the Gordon debates of 1885: 'he can persuade most people of most things, and, above all, he can persuade himself of almost anything.' 'Behold at long last, the realization of the philosopher's dream,' scoffed the Russian Ambassador to Berlin, in response to Gladstone's election in 1880. 'The Concert of Europe is established.' The accepted creed in St. Petersburg, Paris and Berlin was that European diplomacy was based on the negotiation of differences by states pursuing their own self-interests and was thus predictable if sometimes unattractive. Policies based on 'morality' could only introduce unpredictable variables into diplomatic practice and thus produce either wary distrust or cynical manipulation. To work, they also had to be based on common assumptions of what 'morality' consisted of, which clearly did not exist, while Gladstone's hopes that by setting an example others would follow had about as much chance of success as his efforts at reforming prostitutes. There can be little doubt that a man as intelligent as Gladstone was able to perceive these contradictions and it is this that leads one to conclude that his attitude might be based on a thinly sublimated desire to be perverse, or at least an unwillingness to admit an error in his theory. More likely, his 'ethical' foreign policy was not geared to the advantage of the country but to the discrediting of his political opposition, which he disparaged as the 'Jingoes' in order to gain some increase in moral, political or personal advantage over them. We can, therefore, put Gladstone in the dock alongside Bright as a co-conspirator.

Gladstone was determined that something should be done to rectify the situation in Zululand and, armed with his ethical foreign policy and a predisposition to restore Cetshwayo to Zululand in an attempt to make restitution, he set out to make amends for the sins of Frere and Wolseley. His first step was to restore control of affairs in Zululand to Sir Henry Bulwer who, despite having concurred in Frere's ultimatum to the Zulus which provided the immediate cause of the war (it was his name on the document), had done enough to hinder both Frere and Chelmsford's efforts to remove the perceived Zulu threat by force, to have earned Gladstone's good will.

Unfortunately it was not possible to turn the clock back in Zululand. The defeat and capture of Cetshwayo had unleashed all the separatist, decentralizing forces that had existed in the kingdom before Cetshwayo's coronation. His faction, the *uSuthu*, was weak and the great leaders Hamu and Zibhebhu were agreed with Osborn and the people of Natal that they should remain so. By October 1881, internecine strife had begun as the *Mandlakazi* faction began to attack and dispossess those loyal to the *uSuthu*. Returning Cetshwayo would have the consequences of either releasing full-scale civil war as he attempted to re-establish his kingdom or, if he was successful, reconstituting the Zulu threat to Natal that the battle of Ulundi had removed. Alarm bells should have rung in the Colonial Office

when the Boer leader Joubert began to press for Cetshwayo's restoration in 1881-2. Civil war in Zululand could only aid Boer encroachment – they had already been allocated a belt of disputed territory on the border with Zululand by Wolseley and there was always the possibility of gaining more. The Colonial Secretary, Lord Kimberley, feared that to restore Cetshwayo would be a 'gross breach of faith' with the other chiefs but Gladstone, influenced by the moral entrepreneur Frances Colenso's description of Cetshwayo as 'a prince of Humanity' and the steady campaigning of her supporters, and insisting that the man had been 'vilely used,' invited Cetshwayo to London in the summer of 1882 to negotiate a new settlement of Zululand.

The revised settlement that emerged was as bad as the original one, in that Cetshwayo was restored to the central part of the kingdom, including the territory of the now deposed Hamu, while Dunn expanded his possessions in the 'Reserve Territory' along the Natal Border. In the north, Zibhebhu's territory was also expanded which had the overall effect of clearing the decks for action; Cetshwayo would have to fight to assert his authority while Zibhebhu would have to fight to resist it. At the same time, Cetshwayo was forced to agree not to revive the military system and was deprived of the right to regain the royal cattle lifted by the other chiefs. In short, Gladstone, through his ignorance of the realities of Zulu culture, the brutality of its politics and the changed conditions of post-war Zululand, sent Cetshwayo back to face serious rivals without the means to support his authority and with one hand tied behind his back, over-ruling Lord Kimberley, who understood exactly what that meant, the Queen, and the Natal officials, in the hope of salving his conscience. For this, Gladstone must bear a heavy burden of guilt.

Cetshwayo, himself, must also bear some responsibility. His tyranny made him feared and there were plenty of young men and women who remembered his murder of the *iNgcugce* girls who had refused their enforced marriage in 1875. His conspicuous lack of valour – or even appearance – at any of the battles of the Anglo-Zulu War must have undermined his prestige with his valiant *indunas*. He misunderstood the usefulness of 'public opinion' as represented by the British press and the campaigning of well-meaning ladies with guilt complexes – Frances Colenso – and drew the conclusion that he need not accept the restraints placed on him by Gladstone as a condition of his restoration. Almost immediately on arrival back in Zululand in January 1883, he had, by March, given at least tacit consent to an attack on Zibhebhu by his faction, the *uSuthu*. The expedition was a terrible failure which resulted in the massacre of the *uSuthu* by the *Mandlakazi* in the Msebe valley, the rebellion of Hamu and the defection of Bulwer to the side of the Natalian officials who had always opposed the restoration. On 21 July 1883, Cetshwayo's forces were decisively defeated at oNdini by the *Mandlakazi* and he fled, wounded, into hiding in the Reserve Territory, which had been specifically created to keep him away from Natal. From there Bulwer suspected him of attempting to forge an alliance with the Boers and pushed for action against him and his suspected Boer allies.

Unfortunately, Bulwer was behind developments. Gladstone now rated appeasement of Boer expansion in Bechuanaland and Zululand as more important than the fate of the Zulus and favoured a Boer annexation of Zululand if it allowed him an exit strategy from this embarrassingly poor practical example of his ethical foreign policy at work. The new Colonial Secretary, Lord Derby, therefore both forbade the use of force against Cetshwayo and the extension of authority into the now anarchical Zululand, while Gladstone's response was to try to sack Bulwer and post him to Jamaica. 'Zulus outside the Reserve Territory [are] to settle their own affairs,' ordered Derby, despite Bulwer's trenchant comments that 'Zulus [are] unaccustomed to elect rulers; dare not express preference, fearing consequences,' and that there was a very real possibility that the Transvaal Boers would intervene there in force. It was at this point that Cetshwayo was poisoned and Zululand dissolved into the butchery and hunger of a 'self-destructive stalemate.'

Ethical Foreign Policy

The ethical foreign policy had thus proved itself to be unworkable on the ground. An unwanted tyrant had been sent back against the wishes of all parties involved, without either the means to support his tyranny or the support necessary to restrain the factions who would overthrow him. The tyrant had immediately rejected all restraint, had failed and been murdered. Zululand dissolved again into a torment of butchery and rapine which created further opportunities for the unscrupulous and the power hungry. Neither had Gladstone showed any consistency in the application of that policy. He had sent Cetshwayo back as a rebuke to Frere and the Jingoists, but effectively disarmed him (which was what Frere had tried to do), then abandoned him, and then attempted to hand over Zululand to his Boer enemies. Such a confusion arose from the utterly flawed concept of an 'ethical' foreign policy; his 'ethics' were not the same as those of Cetshwayo or the Boers. Had Frere been left to continue his

policy after Isandlwana, he could not have made such a disaster as Gladstone had now inflicted on this tortured land.

From late 1883, Cetshwayo had been in touch with Boer frontier farmers, who had already begun encroaching on Zululand in increasing numbers, with a view to enlisting their support against the *Mandlakazi* and in April 1884, Cetshwayo's heir, Dinuzulu, was spirited across the border into the Transvaal while Sihayo's son, the soon to be twice ill-fated Mehlokazulu, opened up negotiations for support with Coenraad Meyer, Jacobus van Staden and other prosperous Boer farmers which resulted in the Committee of Dinuzulu's Volunteers – a commando – subsequently entering Zululand in May 1884 in alliance with the *uSuthu*. Melnoth Osborn understood the danger and requested that the 58th Regiment at the Cape should be called up to defend the Reserve Territory, a request supported by Bulwer and the GOC South Africa, but which 'Her Majesty's Government [were] exceedingly unwilling' to sanction. The crowning of Dinuzulu by the Commando on 21 May 1884 along with an attack on Osborn's Reserve Territory Carbineers (a Hlubi police unit of some efficiency) by Dabulamanzi in June served notice to both Natal and Britain of the earnestness of this alliance, and another regiment was quickly sent out to South Africa on Derby's condition that it would not operate beyond the Reserve Territory, and Gladstone's insistence that it should not be used to halt the Boer offensive.

Is it unreasonable to think that as the Dutch have Africa for their country...as they have solved the native question within their own borders, they are perhaps better qualified to solve the Zulu question...than we can in dealing with it from Downing Street? (4)

The *Mandlakazi* appealed to Natal for aid but, once again, Derby vetoed it and Zibhebu and the *Mandlakazi* were defeated at the battle of Tshaneni on 5 June 1884, largely through Boer firepower Zibhebhu appealed again for British support but Derby denied it again and restricted his help to allowing him to seek sanctuary in the Reserve Territory as long as he did not 'abuse his position' to try to regain his territory as Cetshwayo had done.

As soon as Zibhebhu's defeat became known, hundreds of freebooters flocked to the Boer camp demanding a share in the spoils and hundreds of potential Natal freebooters met in Pietermaritzburg to propose a similar expedition with Zibhebhu as their puppet. Contemptuous of the predictable appeasement of Gladstone's government, the Committee also demanded that the Reserve Territory should be handed over to them as the representatives of Dinuzulu, but Osborn, showing more backbone than the Cabinet, dismissed the demands outright while Bulwer stamped on the Natal freebooters by quickly legislating to make any such activity illegal. Thus halted, the Committee of Dinuzulu's Volunteers decided to divide up the spoils on their own terms which, being at the mercy of an 800 strong Commando (Meyer had originally started with around 120), Dinuzulu had no choice but to accept; he ceded over a million hectares to the new Boer state and accepted their sovereignty over the rest of Zululand. On 16 August 1884, with the last organized Zulu resistance, the *uSuthu* in the Reserve Territory, being put down by *British* forces, Lucas Meyer proclaimed the New Republic and drove the Zulus off their lands. So far, Gladstone's ethical foreign policy had benefited neither of the combatants of the Anglo-Zulu War, British or Zulus, but only their common enemy.

By 1884, however, there was a new factor in Zululand politics: Germany. Bismarck's colonial policy had no aim other than to provide some leverage over Britain in time of need. Germany had little to gain economically from her colonies and they were far more of a strategic liability than a gain in any potential war. It is possible that colonies were sought for domestic reasons, but there is a consensus that Bismarck was not interested in them for their own sake. However colonies in the Pacific could be used to irritate Anglo-Australasian relations while colonies in South Africa placed a small but sharp blade on the British carotid when viewed in conjunction with the discontent of the Boer Republics. This, in fact, was a complete lesson in the *Realpolitik* that was the opposite to Gladstone's moral foreign policy and the fact that neither Gladstone or his foreign secretary, Lord Granville, 'were...well-equipped to deal with, or even to understand.' Bismarck's colonial policy was really no surprise. An ethical foreign policy assumed that other powers would respond reasonably and in an equally generous spirit of forbearance to international issues; Bismarck, however, wanted 'to squash Gladstone against the wall, so that he can yap no more...so that his prestige will vanish even among the masses of the stupid English electorate.' Derby simply couldn't believe that the Germans might have 'a desire to pick a quarrel,' which at least gave the German ambassador, Count Munster, a laugh. Gladstone, amazingly, thought German colonies in South Africa, astride the route to India, a good idea if they prevented any further British imperial advances.

There had been rumours of German ambitions in southern Africa since 1877 but the activities of a few Hamburg merchants and individual explorers had raised few real fears for the British 'Monroe Doctrine' over Africa. Throughout 1877-79 Frere and General Cunynghame made prescient warnings

about the possibilities open to European powers establishing themselves on the coasts of Southern Africa in conjunction with Boer freebooters at any one of a dozen places.

You have no idea how much trouble you may have, any day, if the Americans or Germans were to take a fancy to hoist their flag at any of the anchorages or watering places on the coast, now little known to any but a few old whaling and guano-collecting captains. (5)

We cannot, I think, be too energetic in closing the door to any risk of foreign interference of a character calculated to set up a rivalry with England as the supreme power in South Africa.(6)

These had been given credence by Hicks-Beach and Carnarvon, to the point where Frere had been authorized to annex Walfisch Bay and St John's River in Pondoland, but had then been forgotten in the crisis over the Zulu war. As soon as the war was over, however, Frere returned to the subject with a despatch of July 1880, which included a long article detailing the potential for a Boer-German colony in SW Africa. Granville, Odo Russell, British ambassador to Berlin, and Kimberley all discounted the warning.

In August 1883, however, Frere's warnings came true when the ex-guano captain, Adolf Luderitz, asked for German Consular protection for his trading post and 215 square miles of territory acquired from the Namaquas at Angra Pequena on the Skeleton coast, about half way between Walfisch Bay and Cape Town. Bismarck recognized the potential for another colonial caltrop and went on a fishing trip with the question of who actually owned Angra Pequena, to which neither Granville or the dilatory Derby could give any good answer. Granville asserted a vague claim to a 'sphere of influence' over the area while Derby thought a decision on the matter was an issue for the Foreign Office rather than him and while he, Granville and Kimberley dithered for almost a year over whether they should annex it, get the Cape government to annex it or simply 'establish a *modus vivendi* for the time' Bismarck first asserted that the British had no claim and then sent the Kriegsmarine to claim all the coastline between the Orange River and 26S, i.e., between the Cape Colony and a point roughly 220 miles south of Walfisch Bay. Granville and Derby meekly accepted it. Derby had even gone so far as to send a gunboat to Angra Pequena to prevent a party of English traders throwing Luderitz off what they claimed was their own property. The significance of taking Angra Pequena lay in the fact that it was at the end of one of the very few practicable routes across Namaqualand, skirting the southern Kalahari and following seasonal river beds along the Kuruman or Molopo rivers to emerge at the Boer freebooter republics at Stellaland and Goschen. Now the Boers, simultaneously pressing into Zululand and Bechuanaland, had two potential outlets to the sea, one of which was outside British control and which, if it could be reached in time, would free them from any residual dependence on the British. By October 1884, it looked like this might occur on either coast and Derby, reluctantly, and only under extreme pressure from a Cape Colony government that looked like it might demand independence if its wishes in the matter were not adhered to, authorized the Bechuanaland Field Force to prevent further Boer advances towards the west coast.

In Zululand, the concurrent Boer advance on St Lucia Bay in August and September 1884 was, again, a step too far and Derby under pressure from both the Cape High Commissioner, Sir Hercules Robinson and Bulwer, was forced by the realities of the situation to act. His reluctance to do so was evident from the way in which he asked the Cabinet for permission not to occupy St. Lucia Bay 'in the nature of *annexation*...[but] merely [as] the assertion of an old-established right' inherited (allegedly) from Mpande. On 26 December 1884, he assured Granville and Gladstone, who still insisted that Britain had no rights beyond the Reserve Territory and that both Boer and German advances were preferable to British ones, that there would be no 'increase of existing responsibilities' if a protectorate were established over both the Zululand and Pondoland coasts and that it was necessary to pre-empt 'trouble with German adventurers.' The depth of Derby's reluctance to break this change of policy to Gladstone and Granville can be gauged by the fact of his dissembling; Bulwer had already told Osborn a week before that St. Lucia was to be annexed on the 18 December 1884 and HMS *Goshawk* had already sent the cipher signal 'BREATHFUL GAVELKIND REEDMACE BAY PURTENANCE OSCITATION' which announced that the annexation had already taken place. There remains the tantalizing possibility that Derby *did not know about the annexation in advance*. The fact that Bulwer and Robinson worked through the Admiral of the Cape Station may indicate that it was Lord Northbrook at the Admiralty who authorized it and left Derby with a *fait accompli*. Although the paper trail for this is inconclusive, the Memorandum 'CO 879/22 African No.293 Confidential Memorandum for the Cabinet; St. Lucia Bay,' drawn up by the senior official R Herbert is undated, which might indicate a post-facto justification. Similarly the code phrase 'PURTENANCE OSCITATION' translates into a question as to whether the annexation should be publicly announced or kept secret. Certainly, Gladstone was still under the impression that the coast had not been annexed as late as 30

December 1884 – he was, predictably, hoping that the Germans would indeed establish a colony there – and the matter was not raised in cabinet until 7 March 1885. Derby seems to have avoided private meetings with Gladstone until 13 January 1885. In either case, it shows Derby being pushed into something that he did not want to do. He had, after all, categorically declined to annex Zululand at the request of the shipping magnate Donald Currie as late as 3 November 1884. It is also ironic that this was precisely the policy that Frere had advocated from the beginning.

It seems clear then, that the prime responsibility for the murder of Cetshwayo and the subsequent destruction of Zululand must lie with Gladstone and his ‘ethical’ foreign policy. Frere’s aim was to remove the threat from Zululand and prevent European intervention on South Africa’s coastline, not the reduction of Zululand to a vale of tears. ‘Ethical’, it was not but, as a solution to the competing demands for security and peace in South Africa and as a way of achieving a less tyrannical government for the Zulus, it was far better for all concerned than Gladstone’s misty eyed idealism. The civil war occurred because Frere was not allowed to see his policy through in the face of demands from ‘ethical’ politicians, ill-informed public opinion and noisy newspaper sensationalism which caused the Conservative government of the day to lose its nerve in the heated atmosphere of an approaching general election. Force of circumstance had driven Bulwer and, reluctantly, Derby to admit that Frere’s policy was, after all the correct one – to admit an error was something beyond Gladstone’s capability – but not until there had been five miserable years of rapine and slaughter and the complete destruction of the Zulu polity. The rest of the country was annexed by Britain in 1887, at Bulwer’s suggestion, to prevent a further round of civil war and dispossession.

The lessons that we can draw from this for the conduct of foreign policy remain as true today as they were then: that the maintenance of the aim of any policy or military expedition should not be allowed to waver in the face of liberal ‘ethical’ concerns or ill-informed campaigns masquerading as ‘public opinion’ such as the film *Fahrenheit 9/11* or Piers Morgan’s *Daily Mirror* ‘atrocities’ stories; that wavering will inevitably invite interventions from those whose motives are geared more to self-interest than so called ‘ethical’ considerations. In the end, perhaps the correct approach is that put forward by the man who started the Zulu war in the first place. ‘The essence of the whole business,’ he had written in 1865,

is first to put down all violence with a strong hand; then, your force being known, felt and respected, endeavour to excite men's better nature, till all men seeing that your object is good and of the greatest general benefit to the community, join heart and hand to aid in putting down or preventing violence.(7)

References.

1. Frere to Hicks-Beach, 26th August 1879. Reproduced in W. B. Worsfold, *Sir Bartle Frere*, (London, 1923), pp.292-302.
2. Frere to Hicks-Beach, 22nd September 1879. Reproduced in W. B. Worsfold, *Sir Bartle Frere*, (London, 1923), pp.292-302.
3. M. Lieven, ‘‘Butchering the Brutes all over the place’’: Total War and Massacre in Zululand, 1879,’ *History* (Vol. 84, No. 276 October 1999). Professor Laband refuted this argument in detail during a lecture given at the National Army Museum, Chelsea in 2001.
4. Gladstone to Derby, 11th June 1884, reproduced in H.G.C. Matthew, *op. cit.*
5. Frere to Hicks-Beach 10th August 1878, cited in Worsfold, p. 85; Frere to Carnarvon 24th August 1877, PRO 30/6/33.
6. Frere to Hicks-Beach 5th September 1878. PRO CO 879/14 No.196.
7. Frere to Lord Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay 28th May 1855, quoting Jacob. IOR MSS EUR F.75/7 No. 49. John Jacob Collection.