ADAM CHAMBERLAIN

Perceptions and Policy Failure: Explaining President James Buchanan's Policy Priorities Through Latent Opinion

Abstract: This article evaluates the policy positions of President James Buchanan through the concept of latent opinion, or politicians worrying less about current public opinion and more about what it will be at the next election. Though Buchanan is often viewed as disconnected from the public's opinions, the evidence shows that his positions on Kansas statehood and the acquisition of Cuba (or Mexican territory) were shaped by his perceptions of, and concerns over, what future public opinion would be in 1860. Though Buchanan was ultimately unsuccessful on both fronts, this study reveals that he was not simply unresponsive to public opinion, which is the common interpretation. Instead, the president's policy positions were firmly tied to his views on latent opinion. Thus, the findings add a new dimension to scholarly understandings of James Buchanan's policy priorities while displaying how latent opinion can be a beneficial construct in policy history.

Keywords: Public opinion, President James Buchanan, nineteenth-century newspapers, Kansas Statehood, U.S.-Mexico relations, latent opinion

Presidential efforts at shaping public policy have, naturally, often included considerations of the public's opinions. Yet scholars, when evaluating such efforts, overwhelmingly ignore the concept of latent opinion, which is concerned with what public opinion will look like at the next election.[1] This is a critical oversight, as simply responding to mass demands is quite different from strategizing about how to navigate the public's changing whims, in consideration of elections that are not imminent. Will the public forget about an unpopular policy, or will it exact revenge at the ballot box? Likewise, could

THE JOURNAL OF POLICY HISTORY, Vol. 30, No. 3, 2018.

doi:10.1017/S0898030618000167

efforts to change policy made without public input, in fact, garner support for a president and his party, or will it lead to defeat?

Because of this, the venerable political scientist V. O. Key Jr. believed latent opinion was the type of opinion policymakers care most about. He argued that elite decision-makers try to figure out when, how, and if an issue or potential issue will draw the ire or applause of the public because they are concerned chiefly with how it could affect their chances, or a party's chances, of reelection. Since "public opinion does not emerge like a cyclone . . . rather, it develops under leadership,"[2] this gives politicians, and especially presidents, the potential to mold latent opinions through policy proposals.

Nevertheless, Key warns that "until the opinion moves by activation from its state of hibernation, one can know neither its form nor its direction";[3] the various ways the public could react to a politician's positions and actions (or inactions) generates anxiety for elected officials. Latent opinion, then, is a factor continually present in democratic governance, since the "estimation of the electoral bite in opinion" is fraught with uncertainty.[4] Thus, presidents have to tread carefully when pursuing policy, taking into consideration existing conditions, what conditions might be in the future, and what they want to accomplish and by what means.

Even though it is a concept considered to be nonquantifiable and hence difficult to ascertain,[5] it is viewed by some as absolutely essential for a proper understanding of politicians' decision-making. One such scholar who sees the concept as vital to understanding public opinion and policymaking is John Zaller. In a series of publications on latent opinion, he showed how presidents can and do act in opposition to what public opinion polls tell them at times.[6] For example, Bill Clinton chose to prop up the Mexican economy in 1995, even though polling told him it was not popular. Realistically, he understood the issue was not salient to the public, and a bailout to prevent a broader economic downturn throughout North America would help both the United States' economy and his reelection prospects in the future.[7]

Historically, though, presidents did not have the luxury of public-opinion polls. This does not mean they were blind to the ideas and positions that were gaining traction or slipping into obscurity, but it did make navigating the policymaking process, in relation to the public's future opinions, that much more difficult. Because of this, presidents assuming office during contentious times were faced with tough choices when it came to latent opinion; reacting to perceptions of current public opinion would not guarantee success, but

overlooking them could cause one's goal of improving future public opinion for himself and his party to fail.

One president who faced such a challenge was James Buchanan. He is viewed as one of the worst presidents in the nation's history and is consistently near the bottom of presidential rankings.[8] Outside of the biography by Klein, who sees him as a stereotypical Northern Democrat, modern scholarship tends to portray him as incompetent, disinterested, lazy, unknowing, a puppet of Southern slave interests, or some less than savory combination of these (and other) negative characteristics.[9] Considering his inability to stop secession in the South after the 1860 election, these descriptions are not surprising from a historical or biographical perspective.

Yet the argument put forth here is that James Buchanan's perceptions of latent opinion were a key factor to his unpopularity and his inability to strengthen the Democratic Party in the run-up to the 1860 election. Though I will not discuss all of his presidency's foibles, such as his preinauguration tampering with the Supreme Court in the *Dred Scott* case, the Covode Committee's investigation of his corrupt practices, and his handling of tensions between federal troops and Mormon citizens in the Utah Territory, I will focus on two key policy goals of the Buchanan administration: settling the ongoing dispute in Kansas and the expansion of the United States by obtaining Cuba and/or additional Mexican territory. Through a detailed study of these policy goals, readers will see how Buchanan's perceptions about the public's future opinions drove his policy choices and, in the end, his policy failures. In the process, the study shows how the use of latent opinion as a conceptual construct appears promising for future policy history research.

CHOOSING TO STUDY THE CASE OF PRESIDENT JAMES BUCHANAN

To properly understand these two issues in relation to Buchanan's perceptions of latent opinion, the case study hones in on how he tried to balance his desires to press forward with these issues, if they came into conflict with currently activated public opinions, and why he perceived his positions to be appropriate given the circumstances. These are especially pertinent points since latent opinion can pose vexing problems when the possible choices a president faces could all potentially inflict damage on an administration.

And Buchanan certainly found himself in such a position. His presidency started amid the reawakening of sectional divisions over the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854.[10] Formerly a supporter of the Compromise of 1850, which was intended to settle the question of slavery's expansion, Buchanan was forced,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898030618000167 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in many respects, to accept the dictates of popular sovereignty, whereby the citizens of a territory could vote to enter the union as a slave or free state.

This situation came to a head in 1855–56, when the so-called Bleeding Kansas episode led to direct conflict between free-state settlers and proslavery supporters. Caused by the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, settlers moved into the Kansas territory rapidly; while people from the neighboring slave-state Missouri dominated initially, emigrants from other Midwestern states and the Northeast began to enter as well. With different beliefs about slavery, the importance of free labor, and how popular sovereignty would be implemented, conflicts arose that reflected the deep-seated sectional differences within the nation.[11] On top of this, the Panic of 1857 struck in the first year of Buchanan's administration, creating economic uncertainty that helped aid the Republican Congressional surge in 1858. Thus, he was thrust into the presidency during a time of strife and had to strategize as to how to accomplish his goals, given the current set of circumstances.[12]

Within those circumstances, then, latent opinion is not just picking which option will work best; it is often anticipating which option will create the fewest problems come the next election. As will be seen, though Buchanan could have tried to interpret national sentiment and act on its behalf, he consistently avoided it by fixating his gaze on actions that would, in his mind, matter more for future elections than for garnering immediate public approval. Furthermore, Buchanan was not acting solely out of self-interest, as he stated that he would serve one term as president, overcome sectional differences, and leave the Union strong and intact (which, in turn, would help the Democratic Party). To him, it was not just about the next election for the candidate himself; assessments of latent opinion shaped how he, as a leader, thought about his party's chances for electoral victory in 1860.

THE POLICY POSITIONS OF JAMES BUCHANAN THROUGH THE LENS OF LATENT OPINION

In such an environment, Buchanan plotted his course, and his decisions were intended to improve the public's opinion of the Democrats by 1860. Early on in his presidency, and to help calm the sectional crisis, he wanted a swift decision on Kansas, regardless of its entry as a slave or free state, and he wanted to project an image of national unity in his Cabinet, which featured "not one factionist [from the Democratic Party] or one sectional fanatic."[13] While the latter was seemingly accomplished, it would be criticized for a lack of Northern and Western Democrats and for making him look pro-Southern;[14]

it does not help that numerous members would defect to the Confederacy before he left office.

At least until that point, then, it has been said that it injured his domestic decision-making. Historians claim that his so-called miscalculations could have been caused in part by the Cabinet, which was comprised of a group that was older and Jacksonian in outlook. Because of this, Buchanan "got only a partial and antiquated view of the forces astir in the land."[15] After all, he needed to play to two audiences within his party—the Southern, proslavery fire-eaters, with whom he developed close personal relationships, and Northern party members who were increasingly skeptical of the spread of slavery—while undercutting Republican support, which was adept at using the Slave Power argument to agitate against the Democratic Party as a whole. Because Northern representation was missing from his Cabinet and circle of friends, scholarship indicates that Buchanan's associates provided him with an incomplete assessment of the current state of public opinion.

These apparent miscalculations appear greatest in the Kansas episode, which ultimately would not be resolved until the state entered the Union in 1861 as a free state. Under Buchanan's watch, the situation continued to be a political nightmare. His first gubernatorial appointment to Kansas, Robert Walker, started in the right direction, but proslavery elements believed Walker was rigging the upcoming vote on the state's constitution to create a free state; the governor had suggested that slave owners might find it better to go south to the Indian territory.[16] Then, in the election to select delegates to a constitutional convention, the free-soilers believed the voting process was rigged against them; in response, they refused to go to the polls and allowed proslavery delegates to win. These delegates then drafted a constitution and, against Walker's admonition to submit the whole document for the public's approval, gave voters in the territory only the choice of voting the document with or without slavery. But, since "those slaves in the territory and their descendants would remain," regardless of the outcome of this vote, Kansas would be a slave state.[17]

Buchanan promised in his inaugural address to submit any constitution proposed through an organized election to Congress, and thus he supported the submission of the so-called Lecompton Constitution.[18] Even though it was amended to appease Northern Congressmen, with one provision allowing Kansas to ban slavery immediately upon statehood, Republican representatives and some Northern Democrats still saw it as an illegitimate document; it would ultimately fail in the House after passing the Senate. The problems in Congress were also exacerbated by Republicans in Kansas, who won control

of the territorial legislature in 1858 and called for the election of delegates to a new constitutional convention at Leavenworth; it would rapidly draft its own constitution in less than three weeks.[19]

The matter also created conflict between Buchanan and up-and-coming Democrat Stephen Douglas, who opposed the Lecompton Constitution.[20] This was much to the consternation of Buchanan, since Douglas's push for the Kansas-Nebraska Act created the crisis.[21] In fact, the Buchanan administration put an anti-Douglas ticket of Democrats up for election in Illinois in 1858, though it was unsuccessful.[22] Regardless, a quick settlement in Kansas, which Buchanan thought would quell sectional tensions and improve the image of the party and his administration for the 1860 election, did not come to fruition. Instead, the Democrats and his administration would be blamed for the debacle.

While many might read this failure as a lack of focus on current opinion or rank incompetence, viewing Buchanan's actions through the lens of latent opinion shows a different story; it appears that his beliefs about future opinions were the root cause of the approach he took. In his first annual address to Congress on December 8, 1857, he made his opinions clear on Kansas, arguing that it "has for some years occupied too much of the public attention. It is high time this should be directed to far more important objects."[23] Furthermore, the president continued, "When once admitted to the Union, whether with or without slavery, the excitement beyond her own limits will speedily pass away."[24] This phrasing is similar to Key's view that "as time moves, the crisis may be dissipated; the activated opinion again becomes latent."[25] The goal was for a quick resolution, regardless of the outcome of the slavery question that had roused the public to attention. Once agitation diminished, issues more advantageous to his administration could be primed.

Buchanan also made it known that the continued threat posed by Kansas would hurt the Democratic Party in future elections, another indication that he was thinking in terms of latent opinion. In early 1858, after the Lecompton Constitution was strongly rejected by voters in the state on January 4, but prior to its push through the Senate, its modified incarnation as the "English Bill" (which was sent to the people of Kansas for a yes-or-no vote), and its overwhelming defeat by Kansas voters in August, the president remained hopeful. He wrote on January 11 to Joseph B. Baker, his Pennsylvania political ally and collector of the port of Philadelphia, that "there will be an end of it speedily."[26] But "Kansas must be brought into the Union at the present session, or many of the Democratic members who now hesitate will be certain to lose their seats at the next election (in 1858)."[27] Similar views were expressed

in a letter to the new Kansas territorial governor, James W. Denver, on March 27, written prior to the completion of the English Bill. If the state constitution submitted to voters was rejected, statehood prior to 1860 was improbable, and "they (Kansas) will be the sport and capital of the Black Republicans in the Presidential Election of 1860."[28]

To him, the lingering issue of Kansas statehood would work against his party unless the state was admitted rapidly, even if it meant opposing a faction in his own party. In fact, Robert Walker, once removed from his post in Kansas after raising concerns over the legitimacy of the Lecompton Constitution, aligned himself with Stephen Douglas.[29] Still, Buchanan believed that with agitation tempered, and through other political actions, he could unite Northern and Southern Democrats and by extension save the Union. In this way, he was continuing to think in terms of latent opinion, though saving the party through domestic policy was increasingly unlikely.

By mid-1858, and with Douglas's opposition becoming more vocal, Buchanan continued to emphasize the need to calm sectional agitation "to maintain the integrity of the Democratic Party" while also "strengthen[ing] by all honorable means the Democratic party in whose continued ascendancy I believe the prosperity & probably the perpetuity of the Union depend."[30] But the elections themselves proved him wrong: Douglas and his allies overcame Buchanan's allies in Illinois,[31] and this momentum would help to carry him into the 1860 election as the standard-bearer of the Northern Democrats. Furthermore, the Republicans swept into Congress throughout the North with gains in the critical Mid-Atlantic region. And though traditional interpretations place the blame on the Kansas issue, other works paint a complex picture that also involves demands for higher tariffs after the Panic of 1857 and patronage concerns.[32] For example, in Buchanan's home state of Pennsylvania, the substantial Democratic losses have been attributed to a mixture of anti-Lecompton sentiment, increased demand for a tariff, and local policy issues, all of which were capitalized upon by an emerging Know-Nothing and Republican alliance, via the People's Party.[33] But Buchanan's efforts to modestly revise tariffs to win over voters in those states were anathema to his Southern compatriots, free-trade Democrats, and staunch protectionists in the Republican Party, and thus his appeal on this matter related to the 1858 midterms failed.[34]

The Democratic Party was shattered, and the Republicans proved that their messaging was working as the party press, along with members of Congress, used the Kansas issue and slavery/Slave Power arguments to some success (so, too, did anti-Lecompton Democrats).[35] Because of this, the course of public opinion Buchanan envisioned upon his election had been rerouted in

the opposite direction. Thus, Buchanan devised another plan for improving the Democratic Party's image as the 1860 election approached. Granted, the key component of this plan, territorial expansion in Cuba, was perhaps a poor target given the North's feelings on additional slave territory coming into the Union. But with the options severely curtailed, Buchanan sought to gain territory to win voters, like past Democratic presidents, while providing olive branches to hesitant Northern voters through crackdowns on illegal slave-trading. Clearly, it is debatable how realistic this vision was, but given his previous government experiences, past presidential actions by Democrats, and the continuing problem of Kansas, this strategy for shaping future public opinion became Buchanan's focus.[36]

Given his foreign policy background as a former secretary of state, he attempted to turn the focus of Americans to world affairs and specifically territorial expansion, diverting their attention from the domestic front. Following in the tradition of previous Democratic administrations, he wanted to obtain Cuba. It was not as if the attentive public was unaware of his feelings on territorial expansion, either; Buchanan was the lead author of the Ostend Manifesto (1854), which explained why Cuba should be obtained by the United States.

It did not help, though, that Cuba was often a target for filibustering, or the efforts made by citizens to raise armed forces that would be used to establish new regimes in Central America and the Caribbean. It also did not help that these efforts were often tied to prominent Democratic politicians. So even though President Polk wanted to purchase the island, and President Pierce followed in his footsteps,[37] the unofficial efforts tended to hinder legitimate government attempts to obtain the island. One backer of filibustering was John Quitman, a noted Democratic politician from Mississippi who was associated with Narciso López's filibustering plans in the early 1850s;[38] he later tried to raise his own army in 1854 for the conquest of the island.[39] Another example is Pierre Soulé, who served as Pierce's representative in Spain and was one of the coauthors of the Ostend Manifesto.[40] He was a financial backer of William Walker's efforts to control Nicaragua and, after it failed, ventures to create a secure route for shipping goods across southern Mexico.[41]

Despite the riskiness of the proposition, Buchanan's sentiment takes flight in his second and third annual addresses to Congress in 1858 and 1859, after the Panic of 1857 created economic turmoil and the Republicans gained control of the House in the 1858 midterm elections. Though Buchanan clearly had a personal interest in obtaining Cuba, the evidence reveals that he also saw it as a maneuver to alter public opinion and ensure future electoral success for the party.

In his 1858 address, Buchanan spends some time going after the Spanish government and boldly asserting U.S. claims to Cuba; he also elaborates extensively on the country's relationship with Mexico and other Latin American nations. In the 1859 address, much of it too focuses on foreign affairs, touching only briefly on the raid on Harper's Ferry, in the beginning, and on issues concerning the Post Office and the Treasury, at the end. And, on Harper's Ferry, Buchanan still felt sectional tensions would die away at some point, and his language dovetails with the modern conception of latent opinion: "We ought to reflect that in this age, and especially in this country, there is an incessant flux and reflux of public opinion. Questions which in their day assumed a most threatening aspect have now nearly gone from the memory of men."[42] A focus away from tensions could, in Buchanan's mind, still overcome the current agitated state of affairs at the end of 1859.

In his focus on foreign policy, Buchanan expands on previous remarks in two ways that are relevant here. First, he reiterates that Congress needs to support efforts to purchase Cuba from Spain; this was done after noting how detrimental the slave trade in Cuba was to the people of that island and to the people in Africa. As he stated in his Second Address to Congress, "It has been made known to the world by my predecessors that the United States have on several occasions endeavored to acquire Cuba from Spain by honorable negotiation. If this were accomplished, the last relic of the African slave trade would instantly disappear."[43]

Second, he devotes significant attention to the state of the Mexican government. At this time, the liberal government of Benito Juárez, under the Constitution of 1857, was fighting for control against the conservative revolt led by characters such as Generals Félix María Zuloaga and Miguel Miramón, who had support from the Catholic Church and the army. In supporting Juárez, who had lost control of Mexico City, and to protect U.S. interests abroad, the president urged Congress to grant him greater powers to direct the military, if necessary, to take action in Mexico.

For Buchanan, though, obtaining Cuba was the key issue that he believed would bring him and his party praise by activating the public's latent patriotism and nationalism, which lay dormant during the sectional battles. Though Cuba allowed slavery, it also had legal slave-trading, which was banned in the United States in 1808. Controlling Cuba would allow the nation to end legal and illegal slave-trading that was funneled through the island, both practices Buchanan detested (and many Southerners tacitly supported and/or took part in).[44] As a concomitant policy, the president made strides to stop and then prosecute slave-trading that was coming into the United States,

emphasizing enforcement in 1858 and strengthening the U.S. Navy's ability to stop it.[45]

At the same time, acquiring Cuba would open up additional markets for U.S. goods. It is true that Northern elites often framed this as an attempt to create another slave state, but to Buchanan, the issue was not so simple. Political value could be gained by ending slave-trading there, as an appeal to the North, while connecting its markets with those of the United States, which appealed more to Southerners.[46] By providing something to both sectional interests with the acquisition of Cuba, it might heal the regional divides tearing the Democratic Party asunder, making it more electorally viable than the strictly sectional Republican Party.

Given Buchanan's views on the subject, some appealed to him directly on this matter, early in his administration. For example, Robert Walker mentioned that "Cuba (or Porto [*sic*] Rico if possible) should be the *countersign* of your administration & it will close in a blaze of glory"; the North might give in on this issue if Kansas entered as a free state, too.[47] Jane Cazneau, a prominent journalist and noted advocate for the acquisition of all of Mexico and Central America for the United States, encouraged Buchanan "to take the stern, iron hearted position in pushing Spain to the wall on our claims" because conditions were possibly ripe for Cuba's purchase in 1858.[48] Furthermore, his Secretary of State, Lewis Cass, was a longtime proponent of Cuba's annexation.[49] Thus, the president was receiving encouragement on a matter he thought was critically important to the nation and the party, at a time when the mass public's views on this subject (if they had any) remained latent.

A plan of action was, not surprisingly, quick to take flight. Days after his 1857 State of the Union on December 8, in which he faced the nation's economic woes, the continuing Kansas crisis, and unresolved tensions with Great Britain, yet a year prior to his bold claims against Spain in his 1858 address, he began investigating the possibility of acquiring Cuba. Christopher Fallon, a friend of the president and a financier from Philadelphia who had close connections with Spanish financial interests and royalty, had an unrecorded meeting with the president, but which is mentioned in their correspondences. In this conversation, Buchanan tasked Fallon with going abroad to determine what it would take to purchase Cuba from Spain. Buchanan wrote to Fallon soon after the meeting, stating, "It is now, I think manifest that a transfer of the Island to the United States for a reasonable & fair price would greatly promote the interests of both countries."[50] Fallon replied days later, "I will spare no effort, which discretion may allow" to win over the Spanish government.[51] Of course, Fallon was chosen to keep the dealings outside official government

channels, likely to avoid drumming up Republican opposition so early in his presidency, but even the shrewd financier understood its significance when framing a sentence with the passage, "if the acquisition of Cuba is to be the glory of your administration . . ."[52] The importance of this to Buchanan's image and the Democratic Party was understood, even if the public's attention was focused on other matters.

But, once abroad, Fallon's findings emphasized Spanish reluctance to sell Cuba. If the sale was to take place, it was "absolutely necessary that public opinion in Spain should be changed," so that "with judicious managesment [*sic*] this great measure can be effected during your administration."[53] Knowing this, Buchanan replaced Augustus Dodge as minister to Spain, in his place putting an individual whose sole goal would be to obtain Cuba. Though William Preston agreed in 1859, Florida Senator Stephen R. Mallory was first contacted for the job by Buchanan, who wrote to him, "The mission is one of a highly honorable and responsible character, & if you should prove successful, you will identify your name with one of the greatest Events in our history." Even a good-faith but failed attempt "will still be an additional step towards the accomplishment of an object which cannot much longer be delayed."[54] His offer to Louisiana Senator Judah P. Benjamin also emphasized the importance of the position.[55] Such phrasing, used in appeals to multiple Democrats, indicates that Buchanan saw Cuba as a boon to both the nation and the party.

In pursuing this goal, Buchanan was trying to guide public attention in a new direction by creating an external struggle; these are often critical to elite control of latent opinion.[56] Fellow politicians believed that this was his goal, too. As one historian noted, "Contemporaries like Crittenden [Senator from Kentucky] and others suspected that he was trying to restore national unity by acquiring a common enemy or enemies."[57] These assertions were also boldly laid out by his critics in Congress. When considering a bill on executive funding for purchasing Cuba, Senator John P. Hale of New Hampshire, the former Democrat-turned-Free Soil presidential candidate-turned-Republican, stated that his constituents saw this bill "as a great measure that is got up not so much for the acquisition of Cuba as for the acquisition of this country in the next presidential election."[58] To support this, Hale provides a vivid assessment in terms of latent opinion:

> They [the Democratic Party] have been kept alive by tonic and stimulants. They took the annexation of Texas, and that was a very salutary dose. It gave them new life. Then they have taken various measures, until they have run out all the ordinary nostrums that are

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898030618000167 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> advertised in the catalogue of patent political medicines; and there has been a Cabinet council got together, and they recommend now a strong dose of Cuba as the only thing by which the party can possibly survive another presidential election.[59]

But opposition party members were not the only ones to suggest this. Spanish officials believed the emphasis placed on Cuba in Buchanan's second address to Congress was linked to electoral fortunes. Cortada argues that "the [Spanish] envoy hypothesized that Buchanan made them [his comments on Cuba] in order to reorganize and expand his party since the crisis in Kansas posed serious political threats to his position."[60] It seems, then, that the renewed effort to acquire Cuba was widely viewed by elites for its clear effort to swing public attention to another topic and help the Democrats secure victory in 1860. Naturally, the reaction by Spanish officials was one of stern opposition to selling the island.[61]

However, William Preston, the Kentucky politician who accepted the appointment to Spain, pressed forward with the president's agenda. Encouraged by Winfield Scott, who believed Preston's appointment and his ability to wrest Cuba from Spain might lead to a position of power on the island, and family and Democratic friends, who alluded to an acquisition as a stepping stone to the White House,[62] Preston himself reciprocated by encouraging friends back home to promote Buchanan's efforts.[63] Needless to say, Preston had high expectations, but he quickly realized that its purchase was out of the question for the Spanish government and had little chance with the opposition in Congress.[64] Nevertheless, Preston wrote to Buchanan in May 1859 to explain how war in Europe seemed possible and that the acquisition of Cuba by force appeared promising. Though France would not help, because of the emperor's connections with Spain, the British would either try to take it themselves or allow the United States to do so. Thus, Preston wrote, "If things go, as I suppose, our star is in the ascendant. Time will bring good fortune."[65] He urged President Buchanan that "every effort should be made to prepare for decisive action at home," though the ambassador himself could "only stand as a sentry to watch the enemy" until Congress endowed him with either money or more power. Perhaps most important, though, is what Preston stated about the party: "If the democracy [Democratic Party] have no nobler aspirations than the perpetuation of party power at home, they may rest assured that . . . the most ready method to effect their object, is by the constant and recurrent endorsement of the measures connected with our foreign policy."[66] It is a definitive statement that Buchanan and his allies saw the party's electoral power linked closely to foreign affairs.

Yet Cuba was not the only target; Buchanan also wanted to take advantage of the tumultuous situation in Mexico. He felt the establishment of a military protectorate in northwestern Mexico would help the United States expand its scope of power. It would stabilize the rocky governmental situation there, potentially protecting U.S. territory in the Southwest while keeping out European intervention.[67]

But Buchanan also craved territory. He was open to purchasing Lower (Baja) California from Mexico, along with parts of Sonora and Chihuahua, even before Senator Judah P. Benjamin suggested it to Secretary of State Lewis Cass in 1857. The American minister in Mexico, John Forsyth, was told by the Buchanan administration to discuss the matter of purchasing territory, though Mexican officials refused. When Forsyth failed in this endeavor and wanted out, his replacement, Robert McLane, successfully formulated the McLane-Ocampo Treaty in 1859 with the Juárez government, though it did not include purchasing territory.[68] Still, as late as early 1859, the president conveyed sentiments regarding territorial expansion in Mexico to Cass, stating, "I am intent on the acquisition of Lower California," but conceding that this might not happen.[69] In sum, he "attempted to rejuvenate Manifest Destiny—to refill old wine into new bottles in an effort to advance the Democratic vision of America, expand the commercial and physical boundaries of the nation, save the Union, and perhaps even add luster to the presidency."[70]

Ultimately, Congress rejected Buchanan's proposals in relation to money for purchasing Cuba and the McLane-Ocampo Treaty with Juárez's government, which supported the United States' involvement, both commercially and potentially militarily, in Mexico. But, these political setbacks do not necessarily lead to the conclusion that Buchanan "[was] displaying a lack of ability to both read the public mood and [had] no talent to rouse popular support."[71] Instead, Buchanan's desire to shift to a foreign policy focus in the second half of his term reveals a president quite aware of how latent opinion could shape political outcomes. He understood that his success in the realm of public opinion required the ability to overcome sectional divisions, and diversion by activating or reorienting opinions on foreign policy was, to him, his best remaining tool (even if the public's true sentiments on the matter were unknown).

In other words, Buchanan tried to cause a "rally-around-the-flag" effect.[72] If sectional divisions could not be overcome via domestic policy solutions, and public opinion was opposed to his administration, then a unified national response to foreign threat and territorial expansion might divert attention away from sectionalism, healing wounds between the North and South while

uniting Democrats. He is not of course the first president to try and shift the public's focus on policy to improve his and his party's image. For example, Nixon's first term was based on shifting topics to try and stimulate (prime) a public focus on issues more advantageous to his administration, while downplaying those where he disagreed with the public, with the motive of securing reelection in 1972.[73]

Buchanan, beset with seemingly intractable sectional demands from within his party and the nation as a whole, responded in a way that reflected, to him, his best options for securing a Democratic victory in 1860. Though biographer Elbert B. Smith maligns the choices of enemies, arguing that Buchanan was "not a careful student of Northern public opinion" if he thought Mexico and Spain were the right ones,[74] at least it reflects a belief by Buchanan that there was a latent opinion that *could* be stimulated under the right circumstances. It shows him acting like many future presidents, thinking in terms of diverting attention away from domestic problems by focusing on international ones.

However, these efforts were continually stymied by Congress, especially Republicans from districts where attentive publics were motivated by antislavery sentiment. Granted, a modern president would likely act more aggressively and without congressional approval, but given the era, Buchanan's approach to foreign affairs was not without precedent. This said, his failure parallels Key's assertion that the public's current voice can win the day if presidents interpret their role as one of passivity. Specifically, he writes, "A President who recognizes no role for himself in initiative of policy or leadership of opinion is without effect on mass opinion about policy."[75] While the latter is not true of Buchanan, as his public pronouncements showed an attempt to lead opinion,[76] the former is true, due to his belief in limited executive powers on matters of policy.

Had he not felt obligated to follow a traditional, Constitution-bound view of the presidency, perhaps Buchanan would have acted more aggressively. And had Congress supported his initiatives regarding Cuba and Mexico, he might have been able to strengthen his presidency outside the domestic domain and rally popular support around him and the party. This did not happen, and his inability to settle domestic issues splintered the Democrats nationwide, leading to the four-party presidential election of 1860 that resulted in Republican victories and the subsequent secession of the Southern states. Still, the key finding here is that Buchanan's understanding of latent opinion shaped his presidency and his goals in office, even if his proposed actions either failed or never materialized.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The description of President James Buchanan's presidency through the lens of latent opinion provides a new interpretation of his thoughts and actions with regard to two policy issues he deemed important (and, in the case of Kansas, other politicians and the public deemed important). While this interpretation does not necessarily change the long-standing views on Buchanan's inadequacies, it does paint them in a different hue. Therefore, Baker's concluding sentence in her biography of the president, which reads, "Ultimately Buchanan failed to *interpret* the United States,"[77] can be reoriented to state that Buchanan's *interpretation of latent opinion* led him to failed policy choices.

Given his views concerning the excited state of public opinion upon taking office, he assessed the Kansas debate as one best disposed of quickly, regardless of outcome. In his view, public sentiment would return to a less agitated state, as other issues demanded mass attention. This is not unreasonable given what scholars know about public opinion and agenda setting; an issue's importance fluctuates across time as the public's and media's attention turn to other concerns. Yet, this clearly was an issue where congressional politicians saw value in keeping it alive in the minds of citizens and newspaper editors.

When a quick resolution appeared unlikely, Buchanan relied on foreign policy, his strength, and specifically territorial expansion, a crux of the Democrat's program since the Polk administration, as a means of activating latent opinion to support the party in 1860. And, once more, scholarship often notes the value in the "rally-around-the-flag" effect for politicians seeking to garner more approval through successful foreign policy.[78] Buchanan's logic was not wholly inappropriate given his limited options, but previous disagreements over territorial expansion, and his belief that he could balance territorial gain in Cuba, which included slavery, with promises of shutting down the international slave trade, again which existed in Cuba, were likely misplaced. However, we cannot be sure exactly how the public would have reacted to gaining Cuba or even more Mexican territory, as his reliance on congressional approval for support faced opposition from equally election-minded (and unsupportive) politicians.

Thus, it appears that President Buchanan's understanding of latent opinion was shaped strongly by a desire for a continuation of Manifest Destiny. Stephen Skowronek's work on the presidency sheds light on the fact that presidents are parts of regimes, created by reconstructive presidents (in this case, Jackson) and refined by those who articulate the party's message (in this case, Polk). Subsequent presidents work to maintain the regime and its commitments,

though opposition to its main principles grows. These affiliated presidents, like Buchanan, find themselves in a "politics of disjunction," in which they struggle to maintain their commitments to the regime's policy orientation, in the face of staunch opposition, yet fear changing because it can upset the president's closest allies.[79] As Skowronek argued:

> Each time a regime affiliate comes to power and constitutes a politics of articulation, it becomes more difficult to hold the old coalition together and stave off the spectre of complete political breakdown. The more fragmented the political establishment becomes and the farther it gets from the historical circumstances of its founding, the more ideologically attenuated and politically shallow are the prospects for defending it and the more awkward is the job of its leading defender.[80]

Buchanan was the last president of the Jacksonian regime, and one who took over from Franklin Pierce, himself a failed president who was displaced by his party after serving one term. Given his socialization in the norms of Jacksonian politics, Buchanan reverted to what he knew, foreign policy, and what had worked for Polk, expanding the nation, as the means for strengthening the party. During an earlier period, when he forged his career, this might have been adequate and the tools at his disposal could have won support in Congress. But by 1857, discord within his own party upon taking office (which did not improve after the 1858 midterm elections) was exacerbated by his own personality and friendships with Southerners, and this did not create an environment conducive to supporting the president's agenda. At such junctures, Skowronek claims that "these presidents have less authority than any others over the terms of national political debate, and they are the most severely handicapped in penetrating extant governmental arrangements."[81] Efforts to lead become "hapless struggles for credibility" that benefit those seeking to create their own regime more than the dying one.[82] Thus, while Buchanan himself believed in these policies as benefiting the nation over section, his framing of the policies did not carry weight with other members of his party, Republicans, or the public during this era. These were the last gasps of this presidential regime, and it was through this regime that Buchanan perceived the state of affairs that led him to his failed interpretation of latent opinion.

The case study of these two issues, then, provides a different account of Buchanan's policy failures and their place in policy history. Instead of his failures simply being caused by an incorrect evaluation of current public opinion,

they are best understood as being caused by a serious concern with latent opinion, which shaped his views on what public policies were necessary to help aid his party's electoral prospects in 1860. Certainly, Buchanan's concern did not translate into effective actions; his policy goals were not met, and he did not prevent a fractured and factionalized Democratic Party from running two candidates in that election. Yet, one could envision a somewhat different scenario had Buchanan's push to resolve Kansas been quickly accomplished, or if he could have rallied the public behind successful American territorial expansion. While evaluations of Buchanan's policy positions and actions to shape policy can be substantively critiqued, one must remain cognizant that his actions were grounded in what is essential to elected politicians: working to ensure a party's success at the next election.

Further, this case study brings attention to latent opinion, a concept that is not explicitly used in policy history studies yet demands a more prominent position. Elected politicians often fear that they will not be reelected and that their party will suffer come the next election, yet figuring out where public opinion will end up is difficult; the mass public's concerns and desires are open to shifts, some small yet some large, some fleeting while some are permanent. Naturally, the strength, duration, and permanence of these fluctuations cannot always be predicted, and are often subject to enough variation to render predictions too imprecise for wary politicians. In turn, this affects how presidents (and other politicians) perceive what issues they should focus on, at what times, and in what ways. As displayed here, policy failures can be the result, but success can be had as well.

Because of these factors, the explicit use of latent opinion would aid studies of policy history and, in relation to this study, the Second Party System. Issues related to sectionalism and the efforts of political leaders to unify the nation within a partisan framework seem ripe for interpretation through the concept. For the national parties, winning the presidency and control of Congress required figuring out how to keep Whig and Democratic voters in different regions within the party fold, and exacerbating sectional differences would make it difficult to secure victory. Earlier Democratic administrations unified the country behind territorial expansion with some success; for example, Polk could quiet critics with expansionist policies framed in a light of national unity to ensure national victories for the party. Even Whig presidential candidates were most successful when their personas involved strong military leadership and weak policy priorities, allowing the party's sectional leaders to frame the candidates in a way best suited to appeal to that region's voters; both William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor fit

this bill. To secure the executive branch and prevent partisan fissures, concerns over where public opinion would be at the next election were vitally important to party leaders, and this involved attempts to dampen sectional agitation through a variety of policies and the ways in which those policies were framed. Thus, future research should expand on the use of latent opinion in policy history by focusing on the issue of sectionalism in partisan politics of the antebellum era. The concept's utility could be greatly expanded in this context.

Overall, then, this article reveals how President James Buchanan's perceptions of latent opinion helped lead to his policy positions and failed presidency. For the study of policy history, the case shows how presidential public policy at this critical juncture in American history was dictated by Buchanan's hopes for a tamed public opinion, once Kansas quickly entered the Union and time separated the agitated public from its admission, and then how it could be inspired, if Cuba and/or Mexican territory were added to the Union and treated as signals of unity rather than as sectional victories. Additionally, the application of latent opinion in this case provides an example of what can be done with the concept, connecting policy history to a theoretic construct used, at times, in public opinion scholarship.

Coastal Carolina University

NOTES

1. In a systematic manner, this is best expressed by V. O. Key Jr., in the following way: "It may not do violence to the argument to translate it into the observation that certain attitudes or opinions may exist in the minds of men without their being activated politically. Given the relevant or appropriate stimulus, the opinion will be triggered into expression or action." See V. O. Key Jr., *Public Opinion and American Democracy* (New York, 1961), 264.

2. Ibid., 285.

3. Ibid., 263.

4. Ibid., 268.

5. John Zaller, "Positive Constructs of Public Opinion," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 11 (September 1994): 276–87.

6. John Zaller, "Elites Leadership of Mass Opinion: New Evidence from the Gulf War," in *Taken By Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*, ed. W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz (Chicago, 1994), 186–209; Zaller, "Strategic Politicians, Public Opinion, and the Gulf Crisis," in *Taken By Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*, ed. W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz (Chicago, 1994), 250–74.

7. John Zaller, "Coming to Grips with V. O. Key's Concept of Latent Opinion," in *Electoral Democracy*, ed. Michael MacKuen and George Rabinowitz (Ann Arbor, 2003), 311–36.

8. For examples, see Robert K. Murray and Tim H. Blessing, "The Presidential Performance Study: A Progress Report," *Journal of American History* 70 (December 1983): 535–55; Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "Rating the Presidents: Washington to Clinton," *Political Science Quarterly* 112 (Summer 1997): 179–90; Dean Keith Simonton, "Presidential IQ, Openness, Intellectual Brilliance, and Leadership: Estimates and Correlations for 42 U.S. Chief Executives," *Political Psychology* 27 (August 2006): 511–26.

9. Philip Shriver Klein, *President James Buchanan: A Biography* (University Park, Pa., 1962). Other modern biographies, which are more negative, include Elbert B. Smith, *The Presidency of James Buchanan* (Lawrence, Kans., 1975), and Jean H. Baker, *James Buchanan* (New York, 2004). For a critical interpretation of Buchanan during the era, see Michael Todd Landis, *Northern Men with Southern Loyalties: The Democratic Party and the Sectional Crisis* (Ithaca, 2014). For an overview of such negative perspectives, see Michael J. Birkner, "Introduction: Getting to Know James Buchanan, Again," in *James Buchanan and the Political Crisis of the 1850s*, ed. John W. Quist and Michael J. Birkner (Selinsgrove, Pa., 1996), 17–36.

10. Interestingly, Stephen Douglas framed his support for this measure in terms of ending sectional questions once and for all, much like Buchanan would seek a quick decision on Kansas to do the same, and as a means to speed up the process of western expansion. See Roy F. Nichols, "The Kansas-Nebraska Act: A Century of Historiography," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43 (September 1956): 187–212; Gerald M. Capers, *Stephen A. Douglas: Defender of the Union* (Boston, 1959): 90; Allen Johnson, *Stephen A. Douglas* (New York, 1983), 237; Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas* (New York, 1973): chaps. 16 and 17; Michael A. Morrison, *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, 1997).

11. Nicole Etcheston, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence, Kans., 2004); Tony Mullis, *Peacekeeping on the Plains: Army Operations in Bleeding Kansas* (Columbia, Mo., 2004); Thomas Goodrich, *War to the Knife: Bleeding Kansas, 1854–1861* (Mechanicsburg, Pa., 1998); David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: 1848–1861* (New York: 1963), 199–224.

12. Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Imperiled Union* (New York, 1980), 245. Stampp notes that the "irrepressible conflict" leading to the Civil War may have reached "the point of no return . . . in 1857."

13. Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 269.

14. Kenneth M. Stampp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York, 1990), 49–52. On the conservative nature of the Cabinet, and special rules for the South in terms of the Democratic Party, see Roy F. Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York, 1967 [1948]): 86–103.

15. Klein, *President James Buchanan*, 280; Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy*, 92.

16. Michael A. Morrison, "President James Buchanan: Executive Leadership and the Crisis of Democracy," in *James Buchanan and the Coming of the Civil War*, ed. John W. Quist and Michael J. Birkner (Gainesville, 2013), 134–64 (143–44); H. Donaldson Jordan, "A Politician of Expansion: Robert J. Walker," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 19

(December 1932): 362–81, esp. 377–79. Walker also claimed slavery could not survive that far north; see Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 301; Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 565.

17. Morrison, "President James Buchanan," 145.

18. James Buchanan, "Inaugural Address," March 1857, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29498.

19. David E. Meerse, "Buchanan, the Patronage, and the Lecompton Constitution: A Case Study," *Civil War History* 41 (December 1995): 291–312.

20. James A. Rawley, "Stephen A. Douglas and the Kansas-Nebraska Act," in *The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854*, ed. John R. Wunder and Joann M. Roos (Lincoln, 2008), 67–92, esp. 77; James A. Rawley, *Race and Politics: "Bleeding Kansas" and the Coming of the Civil War* (Lincoln, 1979): 225–26; Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 581–84; Johnson, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 329–33; Capers, *Stephen A. Douglas: Defender of the Union*, 161–62.

21. Douglas R. Egerton, *Year of Meteors: Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, and the Election That Brought on the Civil War* (New York, 2010), 40–42.

22. Stephen Hansen and Paul Nygard, "Stephen A. Douglas, the Know-Nothings, and the Democratic Party in Illinois, 1854–1858," *Illinois Historical Journal* 87 (Summer 1994): 109–30, esp. 122; Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 645–55; Johnson, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 391–92; Capers, *Stephen A. Douglas: Defender of the Union*, 166–67.

23. James Buchanan, "First Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union," December 1857, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29498.

24. Ibid.

25. Key, *Public Opinion*.

26. James Buchanan to Mr. Baker, 11 January 1858, in John Bassett Moore, ed., *The Works of James Buchanan Comprising His Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondences*, vol. 10 (Philadelphia, 1910): 176–77(177).

27. Ibid., 177.

28. James Buchanan to Mr. Denver, 27 March 1858, in Moore, ed., *The Works of James Buchanan*, vol. 10, 200–202(202).

29. Jordan, "A Politician of Expansion," 379.

30. James Buchanan, "Letter from James Buchanan to C. Zarley, 22 July, 1858," *The Papers of James Buchanan*, Microfilm Reel 50(1858).

31. Hansen and Nygard, "The Democratic Party in Illinois"; Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 625–79; Johnson, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 381–93; Capers, *Stephen A. Douglas: Defender of the Union*, 168.

32. For those arguing that the Kansas issue was paramount in the Democratic fall, examples include Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy*; Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln* (New York, 1950). For those arguing that a mixture of reasons needs to be considered, examples include David E. Meerse, "The Northern Democratic Party and the Congressional Elections of 1858," *Civil War History* 19 (June 1973): 119–37; Bruce Collins, "The Democrats' Loss of Pennsylvania in 1858," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 109 (October 1985): 499–536; Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York, 1978), 212–13.

33. Michael F. Holt, *Forging A Majority: The Formation of the Republican Party in Pittsburgh, 1848–1860* (Pittsburgh, 1990 [1969]); Collins, "The Democrats' Loss of Pennsylvania"; Glyndon G. Van Deusen, "Why the Republican Party Came to Power," in *The Crisis of Union*, ed. George Harmon Knoles (Baton Rouge, 1965): 3–20, esp. 5–7.

The Panic of 1857 is argued to have precipitated the alliance between Know-Nothing and Republican supporters. See James L. Huston, "The Demise of the Pennsylvania America Party, 1854–1858," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 109 (October 1985): 473–97, but esp. 478. Nevertheless, slavery was paramount according to Fehrenbacher. See Don E. Fehrenbacher, "Comment on Why the Republican Party Came to Power," in *The Crisis of Union*, ed. George Harmon Knoles (Baton Rouge, 1965), 21–29.

34. Van Deusen, "Why the Republican Party Came to Power," 6; Phillip W. Magness, "Morrill and the Missing Industries: Strategic Lobbying Behavior and the Tariff, 1858–1861," *Journal of the Early Republic* 29 (Summer 2009): 287–329. As noted in Magness's article, Richard Bensel shows that the inability to settle on a tariff revision advantaged the Republicans. See Richard F. Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859–1877* (Cambridge, 1995), 50–56.

35. On Republican success in taking advantage of the "Bleeding Kansas" issue and the caning of Charles Sumner over the topic, see Michael D. Pierson, "'All Southern Society Is Assailed by the Foulest Charges': Charles Sumner's 'The Crime against Kansas' and the Escalation of Republican Anti-Slavery Rhetoric," *New England Quarterly* 68 (December 1995): 531–57; Bernard A. Weisberger, "The Newspaper Reporter and the Kansas Imbroglio," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 36 (March 1950): 633–56. On the Republican reaction to the *Dred Scott* decision, see Ford Risely, *Abolition and the Press: The Moral Struggle Against Slavery* (Evanston, 2008): 145–46. On the use of newspapers nationwide to stoke sectional debates, see Lorman A. Ratner and Dwight L. Teeter Jr., *Fanatics and Fire-Eaters: Newspapers and the Coming of the Civil War* (Champaign, 2010). On the development of this Republican message, see Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (Oxford, 1995).

36. Interestingly, Stephen Douglas supported the administration's stance on Cuba after his opposition to Lecompton. See Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 683; Johnson, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 396–97. He had been a noted advocate for Cuban annexation earlier, too. See Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 528–29. This focus by Buchanan, then, could be viewed as an effort to mend internal party divides at the elite-level.

37. Larry Gara, *The Presidency of Franklin Pierce* (Lawrence, Kans., 1991), 149–50; Roy Franklin Nichols, *Franklin Pierce: Young Hickory of the Granite Hills* (Philadelphia, 1964), 266–67, on his initial interest in the island.

38. Tom Chaffin, *Fatal Glory: Narciso López and the First Clandestine U.S. War Against Cuba* (Baton Rouge, 1996); Tom Chaffin, "'Sons of Washington': Narciso López, Filibustering, and U.S. Nationalism, 1848–1951," *Journal of the Early Republic* 15 (Spring 1995): 79–108; Anderson C. Quisenberry, *Lopez's Expeditions to Cuba, 1850 and 1851* (Louisville, 1906): Filson Club Publication No. 21.

39. Robert E. May, *John A. Quitman: Old South Crusader* (Baton Rouge, 1985); Robert E. May, "John A. Quitman and the Southern Martial Spirit." On Cuban émigré consideration of Quitman, but reluctance with López, see Gerald E. Poyo, *With All, and for the Good of All: The Emergence of Popular Nationalism in the Cuban Communities of the United States, 1848–1898* (Durham, 1989), 7–8.

40. A. A. Ettinger, *The Mission to Spain of Pierre Soulé, 1853–1855: A Study in the Cuban Diplomacy of the United States* (New Haven, 1932); J. Preston Moore, "Pierre Soulé: Southern Expansionist and Pioneer," *Journal of Southern History* 21 (May 1955): 203–23; Michael J. Connolly, "'Tearing Down the Burning House': James Buchanan's Use of Edmund Burke,"

American Nineteenth Century History 10 (June 2009): 211–21, esp. 214–15; for one interpretation of William Marcy's handling of Soulé's behavior, and of Quitman's, see Sidney Webster, "Mr. Marcy, the Cuban Question and the Ostend Manifesto," *Political Science Quarterly* 8 (March 1893): 1–32.

41. Moore, "Pierre Soulé." For a detailed study of the connections between Democratic politicians and filibustering efforts, see Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854–1861* (Athens, 1989).

42. James Buchanan, "Third Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union," December 1859, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29500.

43. James Buchanan, "Second Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union," December 1858, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29499.

44. John M. Belohlavek, "In Defense of Doughface Diplomacy: A Reevaluation of the Foreign Policy of James Buchanan," in *James Buchanan and the Coming of the Civil War*, ed. John W. Quist and Michael J. Birkner (Gainesville, 2013), 111–33, esp. 114–20. On Cuban slave-trading and U.S. citizen involvement, see Gerald Horne, *Race to Revolution: The United States and Cuba During Slavery and Jim Crow* (New York, 2014), 95–99.

45. Robert Ralph Davis Jr., "James Buchanan and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1858–1861," *Pennsylvania History* 33 (October 1966): 446–59; Robert Ralph Davis Jr., "Buchanian Espionage: A Report on Illegal Slave Trading in the South in 1859," *Journal of Southern History* 37 (May 1971): 271–78; Harral E. Landry, "Slavery and the Slave Trade in Atlantic Diplomacy, 1850–1861," *Journal of Southern History* 27 (May 1961): 184–207.

46. Landry, "Slavery and the Slave Trade," 205.

47. Robert J. Walker, "Letter from Robert J. Walker to James Buchanan, 28 June 1857," *The Papers of James Buchanan*, Microfilm Reel 33 (1857).

48. Jane McManus [Storms] Cazneau, "Letter from Jane Cazneau to James Buchanan, 14 Nov. 1857," *The Papers of James Buchanan*, Microfilm Reel 33 (1857).

49. William Carl Klunder, *Lewis Cass and the Politics of Moderation* (Kent, Ohio, 1996), 289–90.

50. James Buchanan, "Letter from James Buchanan to Christopher Fallon, 14 December, 1857," *The Papers of James Buchanan*, Microfilm Reel 50 (1857).

51. Christopher Fallon, "Letter from Christopher Fallon to James Buchanan, 16 December, 1857," *The Papers of James Buchanan*, Microfilm Reel 34 (1857).

52. Ibid.

53. Christopher Fallon, "Letter from Christopher Fallon to James Buchanan, 14 January, 1858," *The Papers of James Buchanan*, Microfilm Reel 34 (1858).

54. James Buchanan, "Letter from James Buchanan to Stephen R. Mallory, 7 July, 1858," *The Papers of James Buchanan*, Microfilm Reel 50 (1858).

55. James Buchanan, "Letter from James Buchanan to Judah P. Benjamin, 31 August, 1858," *The Papers of James Buchanan*, Microfilm Reel 50 (1858).

56. Key, *Public Opinion*, 284–87.

57. Smith, *The Presidency of James Buchanan*, 78.

58. Congressional Globe, "35th Congress, 2nd Session" (1858–59), 905.

59. Ibid., 905.

60. James W. Cortada, "Spain and the American Civil War: Relations at Mid-Century, 1855–1868," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 70 (July 1980): 1–121(26).

61. Frederick Moore Binder, *James Buchanan and the American Empire* (Selinsgrove, Pa., 1994), 251–59; Cortada, "Spain and the American Civil War."

62. Peter J. Sehlinger, *Kentucky's Last Cavalier: General William Preston, 1816–1887* (Lexington, Ky., 2004), 99.

63. Ibid., 106.

64. Ibid., 108–10, 121.

65. William Preston, "Letter from William Preston to James Buchanan, 8 May, 1859," *The Papers of James Buchanan*, Microfilm Reel 37 (1859).

66. Ibid. The handwriting in this portion of Preston's original letter is a bit hard to read. But, of the parts shown, the only word that gave the author trouble in interpretation was "recurrent."

67. Ibid., 122.

68. Klunder, *Lewis Cass*, 290.

69. James Buchanan, "Letter from James Buchanan to Lewis Cass, 27 January, 1859," *Lewis Cass Papers*, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

70. Ibid., 113.

71. William E. Gienapp, "'No Bed of Roses': James Buchanan, Abraham Lincoln, and Presidential Leadership in the Civil War Era," in *James Buchanan and the Political Crisis of the 1850s*, ed. Michael J. Birkner (Selinsgrove, Pa., 1996), 93–122(117).

72. John E. Mueller, "Presidential Popularity from Truman to Johnson," *American Political Science Review* 64 (March 1970): 18–34.

73. James N. Druckman, Lawrence R. Jacobs, and Eric Ostermeier, "Candidate Strategies to Prime Issues and Image," *Journal of Politics* 66 (November 2004): 1180–1202.

74. Smith, *The Presidency of James Buchanan*, 78.

75. Key, *Public Opinion*, 284.

76. Mel Laracey, *Presidents and the People: The Partisan Story of Going Public* (College Station, Tex., 2002), 95–97.

77. Baker, *James Buchanan*, 152.

78. Mueller, "Presidential Popularity," 1970.

79. Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997[1993]), esp. 39–41. See also Skowronek, "Notes on the Presidency in the Political Order," *Studies in American Political Development* 1 (March 1986): 286–302; Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, "Regimes and Regime Building in American Government: A Review of Literature on the 1940s," *Political Science Quarterly* 113 (Winter 1998–99): 689–702. For work building on, and critiquing, Skowronek's regime approach, see Curt Nichols and Adam S. Meyer, "Exploiting the Opportunity for Reconstructive Leadership: Presidential Responses to Enervated Political Regimes," *American Politics Research* 38 (September 2010): 806–41; Andrew J. Polsky, "The 1996 Elections and the Logic of Regime Politics," *Polity* 30 (Autumn 1997): 153–66; Polsky, "Partisan Regimes in American Politics," *Polity* 44 (January 2012): 51–80.

80. Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make*, 50.

81. Ibid., 40.

82. Ibid.