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Josipa G Petronic* (j.petronic@ucl.ac.uk), Department of Science and Technology Studies, University College London, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT, England. *Mathematics as imperialism? The role of mathematicians in the political expansion of British mathematical practices.*

A series of government-led initiatives in Britain – all of which took the form of Royal Commissions exploring the status of university curricula across the country – changed the manner in which mathematics was taught, learned and practiced from the 1830s onwards. From the mid-1850s to the 1880s, a second series of government-led reforms married mathematical teaching to natural philosophic or, rather, “scientific,” practices, especially with regards to experimentation in chemistry and dynamics (or “physics”). The political motives underpinning those reform efforts were imbued with conceptions of imperial greatness and patriotic expansion abroad. In this paper, I will demonstrate how the British government’s educational reforms from the 1850s onwards were part of a grander imperial process that sought to situate British mathematics and scientific innovation at the center of an expanding global economy and polity. Mathematicians were not neutral actors in this process. The case study of Isaac Todhunter, a mathematician who developed a series of widely-used mathematical textbooks throughout the mid-century, and whose career spanned the reform periods mentioned above, demonstrates that mathematicians were political agents, whether they chose to be or not. (Received September 21, 2009)